



Information Technology: Management Improvements Needed on the Department of Homeland Security's Next Generation Information Sharing System

Briefing to the Staff of the

House Committee on Homeland Security

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- Attachment I: Scope and Methodology

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is responsible for coordinating the federal government's homeland security communications with all levels of government—including state and local. In support of this mission, the department implemented, and has been enhancing, the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) as part of its goal to establish an infrastructure for sharing homeland security information.¹ Recently, DHS proposed a follow-on system to HSIN, which it refers to as Next Generation HSIN (HSIN Next Gen).

In 2005,² and more recently in January 2007,³ we designated homeland security information sharing as a high-risk area. Consequently, it is important that federal networks and associated systems, applications, and data facilitate this vital information sharing, and do so in a manner that produces effective information sharing among and between the various levels of government. This is particularly crucial for DHS's HSIN, which is the department's primary information technology (IT) system for sharing terrorism and related information.

¹The Homeland Security Act of 2002 directed DHS to establish communications to share homeland security information with federal agencies, state and local governments, and other specified groups.

²GAO, *High-Risk Series: An Update*, GAO-05-207 (Washington, D.C.: January 2005).

³GAO, *High-Risk Series: An Update*, GAO-07-310 (Washington, D.C.: January 2007).

As agreed, our objectives were to determine whether

- DHS has stopped further improvements on HSIN and if so, the department's rationale for doing so and plans for acquiring its proposed follow-on system called HSIN Next Gen system, and
- the department is effectively managing the HSIN Next Gen acquisition.

For our first objective, we analyzed documentation and interviewed DHS officials from the office responsible for managing HSIN and HSIN Next Gen, the Office of Operations Coordination and Planning (OPS), to assess efforts planned and underway to implement HSIN system improvements and acquire HSIN Next Gen.

