

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-25-107030](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

In June 2021, the White House NSC released a Strategy that aims to provide a framework to address domestic terrorism, which it identified as an urgent priority. The FBI Director testified in December 2023 that domestic terrorism investigations had more than doubled since 2020.

GAO was asked to review the Strategy. This report examines, among other things, (1) steps agencies have taken to implement the Strategy, (2) the extent to which the Strategy includes desirable characteristics for an effective national strategy, and (3) challenges identified by federal and nonfederal partners in implementing the Strategy.

GAO reviewed the Strategy and related documents, analyzed NSC information, and interviewed officials from eight federal agencies. GAO also interviewed nonfederal partners and Joint Terrorism Task Force personnel in seven geographically dispersed states that had experience with domestic terrorism incidents, as well as 12 domestic terrorism experts.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the NSC ensure any domestic terrorism strategy reflects all desirable characteristics and that DHS and DOJ inform nonfederal partners about roles to combat domestic terrorism. In response to comments, GAO modified the recommendations to apply them to any national domestic terrorism strategy as well as DOJ and DHS's broader missions. NSC did not provide comment and DOJ concurred. DHS did not concur but will work with nonfederal partners to counter domestic terrorism.

View [GAO-25-107030](#). For more information, contact Triana McNeil at [mcneil@gao.gov](mailto:mcneil@gao.gov).

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# DOMESTIC TERRORISM

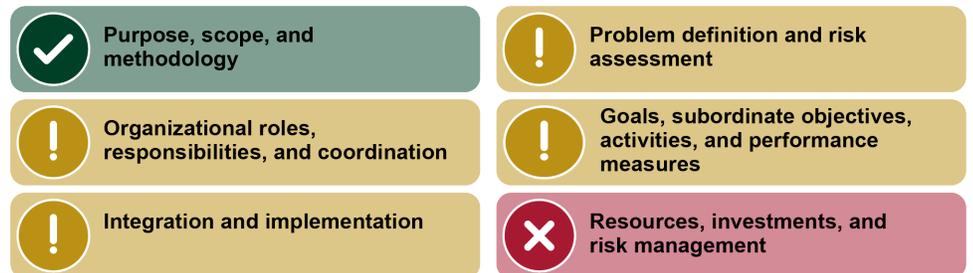
## Additional Actions Needed to Implement an Effective National Strategy

### What GAO Found

The 2021 National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism (Strategy) tasked the Departments of Homeland Security (DHS) and Justice (DOJ), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and other federal agencies to implement activities to counter domestic terrorism. Agencies have taken steps to implement most of these activities (49 of 58 activities identified by GAO) through both new and preexisting efforts. For example, agencies shared online resources for terrorism prevention with nonfederal partners and the public and updated screening procedures for federal and military personnel. The Strategy also states that nonfederal partners, such as state and local entities, play a role in countering domestic terrorism.

The Strategy, however, does not fully address most of the six desirable characteristics that GAO has previously reported comprise an effective national strategy. For example, the Strategy does not include a risk assessment or clarify which federal entity is responsible for oversight. Further, it does not consistently include milestones, performance measures, or resource information. By including such information in the Strategy, or any national strategy, in effect, to combat domestic terrorism, the National Security Council (NSC) could improve how it oversees activities. In turn, this could enable the NSC and relevant agencies to measure progress in meeting goals to successfully address domestic terrorism and enhance public safety.

### Extent to Which the 2021 National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism Addresses GAO's Desirable Characteristics of an Effective National Strategy



Assessment Yes - addressed Partial - partially addressed No - not addressed

Source: GAO analysis of the 2021 National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism; GAO (icons). | [GAO-25-107030](#)

Federal and nonfederal partners identified challenges related to the Strategy, such as not knowing which agencies were responsible for specific activities. DHS and DOJ, two agencies with statutory missions to combat domestic terrorism and tasked with the most Strategy activities, have shared some details about Strategy implementation, such as providing domestic terrorism-related information on publicly accessible websites. However, they could further clarify their roles and efforts to counter domestic terrorism and communicate such to nonfederal partners to ensure their contributions effectively assist federal efforts. In doing so, DHS and DOJ would be better equipped to address their missions related to countering domestic terrorism. Also, nonfederal partners could better align their resources to support federal efforts.