

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-105](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

Since its establishment in 2008, AFRICOM has increased its footprint in Africa to support its mission—building African partner capabilities and deterring threats to regional security. In tandem with AFRICOM's growing footprint will be a continued reliance on contractors to support the command's operations. Accordingly, AFRICOM and subordinate commands must be able to plan for and integrate OCS during operations. House Report 113-446 included a provision for GAO to review OCS in Africa.

This report examines the extent to which AFRICOM (1) has an organizational structure in place to manage, plan for, and assess OCS; (2) accounts for contractor personnel; and (3) vets non-U.S. contractors and contractor employees. To conduct this work, GAO evaluated AFRICOM's OCS organizational structures and conducted site visits to Djibouti, Niger, and Uganda to collect information on accountability and vetting processes. GAO selected these locations based on the types of contractor employees represented, among other factors.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO made recommendations to DOD regarding types of contractor personnel to account for, foreign vendor vetting process development, and guidance for contractor accountability and employee screening, among others. DOD generally concurred, but did not concur that AFRICOM should develop contractor accountability guidance because it was in the process of doing so. GAO continues to believe the recommendations are valid, as discussed in this report.

View [GAO-16-105](#). For more information, contact Cary Russell at (202) 512-5431 or [russellc@gao.gov](mailto:russellc@gao.gov).

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## OPERATIONAL CONTRACT SUPPORT

### Additional Actions Needed to Manage, Account for, and Vet Defense Contractors in Africa

## What GAO Found

U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) has established a formal operational contract support (OCS) organizational structure at its headquarters to serve as the central coordination point to manage, plan for, and assess OCS. However, except for U.S. Army Africa, AFRICOM's subordinate commands do not have OCS organizational structures with dedicated personnel to manage OCS. Officials from AFRICOM's subordinate commands stated that applying OCS concepts would be helpful to avoid duplication of work and increased costs. One structure that the Department of Defense (DOD) has introduced is an OCS Integration Cell, an entity with dedicated personnel to provide staff integration and promote coordination on OCS issues; such a cell could help identify and address gaps at AFRICOM's commands, especially in a joint environment like Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, where contracting officials stated that some military tenants have arrived without informing responsible officials about the number of contractors accompanying them. AFRICOM has also developed a scorecard to assess OCS management capabilities at the subordinate commands against certain standards, but these assessments have not always been accurate because the standards have not been clearly defined or consistently applied. Without clearly defined assessment standards, AFRICOM cannot accurately assess the OCS actions taken by subordinate commands.

AFRICOM does not have a complete picture of the number of contractor personnel supporting its operations in the region. AFRICOM uses two primary sources—daily personnel status reports and the Synchronized Predeployment and Operational Tracker, a DOD contractor personnel accountability database—to collect contractor personnel accountability information, but neither source provides comprehensive accountability or visibility of DOD contractor personnel on the continent because the total number of local national contractor personnel are not being included in either, and the numbers of U.S. citizen and third country national contractor personnel vary between the two. Without clear guidance on how to comprehensively account for contractor personnel, it will be difficult for AFRICOM to ensure that it has full visibility over who is supporting its operations.

AFRICOM conducts some limited vetting of potential non-U.S. contractors, also referred to as vendors, but it has not established a foreign vendor vetting process or cell that would preemptively identify vendors who support terrorist or other prohibited organizations. AFRICOM has not yet established a foreign vendor vetting cell because while DOD guidance discusses the benefit of a cell, it does not require it or specify under what conditions it would be appropriate. Additionally, DOD sites in Africa use background investigations to determine the trustworthiness of contractor employees with access to DOD facilities. However, not all AFRICOM sites are incorporating additional screening measures, such as biometric screening or counterintelligence interviews, based on the specific risks at each site. As a result, AFRICOM is at risk of not exercising the appropriate level of vendor vetting or contractor employee screening on the African continent to protect DOD personnel from insider threats.