

Highlights of [GAO-11-827T](#), a testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

Since 2001, strategic human capital management for federal agencies has been on GAO's high-risk list. Although some progress has been made, GAO reported in February 2011 that the area remains on the high-risk list because of the need for agencies, including DOD, to address current and emerging skill gaps that are undermining their ability to fulfill their missions. The Department of Defense (DOD) had about 718,000 civilians as of March 2010, which includes its senior leader and acquisition workforces. DOD has noted that approximately 30 percent of its civilian workforce—and 90 percent of its senior leader workforce—will be eligible to retire by March 31, 2015.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 required (1) DOD to report on plans for its overall civilian, senior leader, and acquisition workforces for 2009 through 2012; (2) DOD to address a series of legislative requirements for each workforce; and (3) GAO to review and report on these plans. DOD has informed GAO that it expects to issue its next set of plans in September 2011. In anticipation of these plans, it is helpful to understand key issues identified during GAO's review of DOD's 2009 plans.

This statement discusses DOD's progress in addressing selected legislative requirements, especially as they relate to the human capital management challenges included in GAO's 2011 high-risk report and the federal government's current budget environment. Specifically, this statement summarizes GAO's observations on DOD's plans for its (1) overall civilian, (2) senior leader, and (3) acquisition workforces.

View [GAO-11-827T](#) or key components. For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-3604 or [farrellb@gao.gov](mailto:farrellb@gao.gov) or John P. Hutton at (202) 512-7773 or [huttonjp@gao.gov](mailto:huttonjp@gao.gov).

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## DOD CIVILIAN PERSONNEL

### Competency Gap Analyses and Other Actions Needed to Enhance DOD's Strategic Workforce Plans

## What GAO Found

In DOD's 2009 overall civilian workforce plan, GAO found that the department had assessed the critical skills of its existing civilian workforce. Specifically, DOD's plan discussed 22 mission-critical occupations that, according to DOD, represented the results of the department's assessment of critical skills. However, GAO found that DOD had not completed (1) an assessment of gaps in the existing or projected overall civilian workforce, (2) a plan of action identifying recruiting and retention goals and funding, and (3) an assessment of its progress in implementing the legislative requirement for the plan using results-oriented performance measures. For example, DOD's plan only discussed competency gap analyses for 3 of its 22 mission-critical occupations. Moreover, while DOD's plan identified recruiting and retention goals, GAO found that some of these goals were not based on competency gap analyses and the plan lacked information regarding needed funding to achieve these goals. Additionally, GAO found that although other DOD documents—for example, *DOD's Civilian Human Capital Management Report for Fiscal Year 2009*—provided some information on performance measures, DOD's plan did not report on the progress the department made on specific goals using results-oriented performance metrics.

GAO found that DOD's senior leader workforce plan included a plan of action to address gaps in critical skills and competencies that included changes in the number of personnel authorized in categories of the senior leader workforce. Specifically, DOD's plan identified changes needed in the number of personnel authorized and, at the time of GAO's review, stated that it expected executive requirements to increase by more than 400 positions by fiscal year 2015. However, GAO found that while DOD had conducted a baseline review to assess and validate its civilian senior leader requirements, it did not document its analysis or summarize the results of its review—resulting in a recommendation that DOD do so in future reviews. DOD generally concurred with this recommendation. GAO will be evaluating DOD's progress in implementing the recommendation, especially in light of the impact of the Secretary of Defense's efficiency initiatives that propose reductions in the number of senior leaders. GAO also found that the department had not assessed the critical skills for its existing and future senior leader workforce. While the plan notes the need for skills in areas such as leadership and management, it does not provide details for these skills and does not identify skills related to senior leader or scientific and professional positions.

With regard to DOD's acquisition workforce plan, GAO found that DOD identified the need to increase the size of its acquisition workforce (totaling about 118,000 civilians, as of September 2009) by 20,000 personnel by fiscal year 2015. To do so, DOD outlined its strategies for growing the acquisition workforce through retention, new hiring, and in-sourcing, which involves the conversion of functions currently performed by contractor personnel to performance by federal civilians. DOD, however, had not (1) completed assessments of the skills and competencies of its acquisition workforce; (2) included in its plan an assessment of what the appropriate mix of its total acquisition workforce should be; and (3) at the time of our report, included information on the funding needed to achieve DOD's human capital initiatives for the acquisition workforce.