Defense Capabilities and Management

Since the end of the cold war, the United States has emerged as the sole superpower, with military forces unchallenged in capability. Sustaining this force costs taxpayers about $300 billion annually, and charting a course for the future makeup and use of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps is a major issue facing the Congress and the President. By conducting a wide range of studies on current and future defense issues, Defense Capabilities and Management (DCM) is leading GAO's efforts to assist the Department of Defense (DOD), the Congress, and the President as they undertake the challenges of defending the United States into the 21st century.

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Description of *our work*

Our work provides timely analyses, recommendations, and policy options to congressional and executive branch officials on ways to improve the government's policies and programs in the following areas: defense planning and force structure, operations and readiness, diffuse threats, military and civilian personnel, logistics, defense infrastructure, and defense resources.

The 230 analysts in Defense Capabilities and Management are responsible for planning and carrying out work at locations in the United States and around the world. For example, in the past year, DCM teams have been in the United Kingdom, Germany, Hungary, the Balkans, Korea, Guam, Hawaii, the Persian Gulf, and military installations across the continental United States. We work mainly on programs of the military services; DOD agencies; and federal agencies involved in counterterrorism response issues, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Our staff are located in Washington, D.C., and in several field offices across the country, with concentrations of staff in Los Angeles, Seattle, Atlanta, Norfolk, Dallas, and Dayton.

We are particularly focused on helping the Congress

- determine an appropriate and ready force structure of people, weapons, and facilities for the post-Cold War period,
- understand the complexities of keeping forces ready while meeting commitments around the world,
- assess the effectiveness of federal agency programs to combat terrorism and respond to terrorist acts,
- evaluate DOD's efforts to recruit, retain, and create a quality of life that will maintain a highly skilled military and civilian workforce,

DESCRIPTION OF *our work*

- improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of DOD's logistical systems to provide better support at less cost,
- evaluate DOD's management of military facilities, using best business practices, and
- analyze DOD's future year budgets for affordability and realism and evaluate DOD's efforts to adopt modern management principles.

IMPACT OF *our work*

Our work in these areas has made a significant difference. In the past year, it resulted in savings of over $2.9 billion to the government and the American taxpayer. For example, based on our report on DOD's funding of contingency operations in Kosovo, DOD cut Air Force projects totaling $48 million that did not meet funding criteria. In another case, the Congress reduced DOD's military personnel budget request by $335 million because our analysis pointed out that it exceeded DOD's needs. Our work provides valuable assistance to the Congress and the executive branch in other ways, even when federal dollars are not saved. For example, based on our recent report evaluating DOD's ability to conduct military operations in an urban environment, the Congress required DOD to develop and coordinate a master plan for improving its capabilities in this area.

HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT and *future projects*

- Assessment of U.S. military force protection against terrorist or other attacks in the United States and around the world
- Evaluation of service efforts to transform from a Cold War to a 21st century fighting force
- Studies on the lessons learned from military participation in the Kosovo air campaign
- Analysis of the handling of absentee ballots from military personnel during the recent presidential election
- Evaluation of efforts to reform the military transportation system to make it more efficient and economical
- Analysis of the outsourcing or privatization of functions that could be performed by entities other than DOD