

Highlights of [GAO-13-212](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Contracting Oversight, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD has relied extensively on contractors for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past decade. At the height of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the number of contractors exceeded the number of military personnel, and a similar situation is occurring in Afghanistan. In January 2011, the Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum noting the risk of DOD's level of dependency on contractors and outlined actions to institutionalize changes necessary to influence how the department plans for contracted support in contingency operations. The memorandum also called for leveraging the civilian expeditionary workforce to reduce DOD's reliance on contractors, but this workforce is not yet fully developed. GAO was asked to examine DOD's progress in planning for operational contract support. Our review determined how DOD is integrating operational contract support into its planning through efforts of the (1) OSD, Joint Staff, and military services, and (2) combatant commands and their components. To conduct its work, GAO evaluated DOD operational contract support guidance and documents and met with officials at various DOD offices.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force provide guidance on planning for operational contract support; that the Joint Staff provide training for all planners; that the planners broaden their focus to include areas beyond logistics; and that expertise is offered to service components to further integrate operational contract support into plans. DOD generally agreed with the recommendations.

View [GAO-13-212](#). For more information, contact Cary Russell at (202) 512-5431 or russellc@gao.gov.

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WARFIGHTER SUPPORT

DOD Needs Additional Steps to Fully Integrate Operational Contract Support into Contingency Planning

What GAO Found

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Joint Staff, and the services have taken steps to integrate operational contract support into planning for contingency operations. For example, in April 2011, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, working with the Joint Staff, revised the Guidance for the Employment of the Force to require planning for operational contract support in all phases of military operations. Further, in December 2011, the Department of Defense (DOD) revised an instruction and issued corresponding regulations establishing policies and procedures for operational contract support. The Army issued service-specific guidance that describes roles, responsibilities, and requirements to help integrate operational contract support into its planning efforts for contingency operations. However, the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force have not issued similar comprehensive guidance for integrating operational contract support throughout each service. Instead, these services have taken actions such as developing training and other individual efforts to familiarize servicemembers with operational contract support. According to service officials, one reason that they have not issued comprehensive guidance similar to the Army's guidance is because the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force have not been the lead service for contracting in recent operations. However, these services combined spent over a billion dollars for contracted services in Afghanistan in fiscal year 2011. Without specific, service-wide guidance, the other services' future planning efforts may not reflect the full extent of the use of contract support and the attendant cost and need for oversight.

The combatant commands and their components have begun to incorporate operational contract support into their planning for contingencies, but they have not fully integrated operational contract support in all functional areas. We found that the combatant commands and components are not planning for the potential use of contractors in areas where they may be needed beyond logistics such as communications. Recognizing the problem, DOD, in October 2012, issued guidance that calls on functional planners beyond the logistics area to identify major support functions planned for commercial support sourcing. GAO also found that officials involved with logistics planning at the commands receive training from the Joint Staff and assistance from embedded operational contract support planners to help integrate operational contract support into logistics planning. However, officials involved in planning for other areas—such as intelligence—that have used contractors in past operations, do not receive such training. Further, the embedded operational contract support planners do not focus on areas beyond logistics. Moreover, while the combatant commands have embedded experts to assist with operational contract support planning, the military service components do not have such expertise. Without training for all planners, a broader focus beyond logistics for embedded planners, and expertise offered at the military service components, DOD risks being unprepared to plan and manage deployed contractor personnel and may not be able to provide the necessary oversight during future contingencies.