MILITARY OPERATIONS:

Implementation of Existing Guidance and Other Actions Needed to Improve DOD's Oversight and Management of Contractors in Future Operations

What GAO Found

DOD leadership needs to ensure implementation of and compliance with existing guidance to improve the department’s oversight and management of contractors supporting deployed forces. While DOD issued a comprehensive guidance on contractor support to deployed forces in 2005, we found little evidence that DOD components were implementing this and other guidance. As a result, several long-standing problems have hindered DOD’s management and oversight of contractors at deployed locations, even in cases where DOD and its components have developed guidance related to these problems. These problems include failure to follow planning guidance, an inadequate number of contract oversight and management personnel, failure to systematically collect and distribute lessons learned, and lack of comprehensive training for contract oversight personnel and military commanders. Our previous work in this area has identified several instances where poor oversight and management of contractors led to negative monetary and operational impacts.

Based on our past work, several challenges will need to be addressed by DOD to improve the oversight and management of contractors supporting deployed forces in future operations and ensure warfighters are receiving the support they rely on in an effective and efficient manner. Those challenges include: (1) incorporating contractors as part of the total force, (2) determining the proper balance of contractors and military personnel in future contingencies and operations, (3) clarifying how DOD will work with other government agencies in future contingencies and operations, and (4) addressing the use and role of contractors into its plans to expand and transform the Army and the Marine Corps.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on GAO-08-436T. For more information, contact William M. Solis at (202) 512-8365 or solisw@gao.gov.