



Highlights of [GAO-10-829T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representative

Why GAO Did This Study

For decades, the Department of Defense (DOD) has relied on contractors to support contingency operations and recognizes them as part of the total force. In Iraq and Afghanistan contractor personnel now outnumber deployed troops. In Iraq more than 95,000 DOD contractors support 92,000 troops, and in Afghanistan more than 112,000 DOD contractors support approximately 94,000 troops. DOD anticipates that the number of contractors will grow in Afghanistan as the department increases its troop presence in that country.

Several long-standing challenges have hindered DOD's ability to manage and oversee contractors at deployed locations. Since 1992, GAO has designated DOD contract management as a high-risk area, in part because of concerns about the adequacy of the department's acquisition workforce, including contract oversight personnel. GAO has reported on many of the challenges that DOD faces and has made several recommendations aimed at improving the oversight and management of contracts in contingency operations. DOD has addressed some, but not all of these recommendations.

This testimony addresses the extent to which DOD has institutionalized operational contract support. It is based on GAO's recently published reports and testimonies on planning for operational contract support and on DOD's efforts to manage and oversee contractors and ongoing audit work in Iraq and Afghanistan.

[View GAO-10-829T](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact William M. Solis at (202) 512-8365 or solisw@gao.gov.

WARFIGHTER SUPPORT

Cultural Change Needed to Improve How DOD Plans for and Manages Operational Contract Support

What GAO Found

In response to congressional direction and GAO recommendations, DOD has taken some actions to address challenges in overseeing and managing contractors in ongoing operations. However, DOD still faces challenges that stem from the department's failure to fully integrate operational contract support within DOD, including planning for the use of contractors, training military personnel on the use of contractor support, accurately tracking contractor use, and establishing measures to ensure that contractors are accountable. A cultural change in DOD that emphasizes an awareness of operational contract support throughout all aspects of the department, including planning, training, and personnel requirements, would help the department address these challenges in ongoing and future operations.

Developing guidance. DOD has issued some guidance to assist in planning for and conducting and assessing operational contract support, but it has yet to finalize joint policies required by Congress in the National Defense Authorization Acts for Fiscal Years 2007 and 2008.

Planning for operations. DOD has not fully planned for the use of contractors in support of ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, although some efforts are under way at the individual unit level. In addition, while the department has started to integrate operational contract support into plans for future operations, it has not made significant progress.

Tracking contractor personnel. DOD has developed a system to track contractor personnel deployed with U.S. forces, but the data collected by the system are unreliable.

Providing oversight personnel. DOD continues to face challenges in ensuring that it has an adequate number of personnel to provide oversight and management of contracts. DOD has acknowledged shortages of personnel and has made some efforts to address them, but these efforts are in the early stages of implementation.

Training non-acquisition personnel. DOD continues to be challenged in ensuring that nonacquisition personnel, such as unit commanders, have been trained on how to work effectively with contractors in contingency operations. As a result, officials from several units that recently redeployed from Afghanistan indicated that a lack of knowledge of contracting resulted in shortfalls in critical oversight areas.

Screening contractor personnel. While a significant number of contractor personnel supporting DOD are local or third-country national personnel, DOD has yet to develop a departmentwide policy for screening them.