DEFENSE TRADE

State Department Needs to Conduct Assessments to Identify and Address Inefficiencies and Challenges in the Arms Export Process

What GAO Found

Three key trends indicate that DDTC’s arms export licensing process is under stress. First, the number of arms export cases processed by DDTC increased 20 percent between fiscal years 2003 and 2006. Most of this increase was for licenses for permanent export. Second, during the same period, median processing times almost doubled. Third, the number of open arms export cases increased 50 percent from about 5,000 in October 2002 to about 7,500 in April 2007, with a high of more than 10,000 cases in September 2006. At the beginning of fiscal year 2007, DDTC launched a campaign to reduce the growing number of open cases. Through extraordinary measures—such as canceling staff training, meetings, and industry outreach, and pulling available staff from other duties to process cases—DDTC was able to cut the number of open cases by 40 percent in 3 months. However, such measures are not sustainable in the long term, do not address underlying inefficiencies and problems, and may have negative unintended consequences for the mission.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on GAO-08-89.

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