



Highlights of [GAO-10-364](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Numerous occurrences in the United States—both scheduled events and emergencies—require the Department of Defense (DOD) to coordinate, integrate, and synchronize its homeland defense and civil support missions with a broad range of U.S. federal agencies. In response to congressional inquiry, GAO examined the extent to which DOD has (1) identified clearly defined roles and responsibilities for DOD entities to facilitate interagency coordination for homeland defense and civil support missions, (2) articulated to its federal partners the DOD entities' approach toward interagency coordination, and (3) adopted key practices for managing homeland defense and civil support liaisons. GAO reviewed numerous DOD policy and guidance documents and interviewed officials from DOD and its partner agencies, including the departments of Homeland Security, Justice, Health and Human Services, and Agriculture; and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD update and integrate its strategy, policy, and guidance; develop a partner guide; and implement key practices for management of homeland defense and civil support liaisons. DOD agreed with these recommendations and noted several actions it is taking or plans to take to address them.

View [GAO-10-364](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Davi M. D'Agostino at (202) 512-5431 or dagostinod@gao.gov.

HOMELAND DEFENSE

DOD Needs to Take Actions to Enhance Interagency Coordination for Its Homeland Defense and Civil Support Missions

What GAO Found

DOD has many strategy, policy, and guidance documents on interagency coordination for its homeland defense and civil support missions; however, DOD entities do not have fully or clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Key DOD documents are outdated, not integrated, or not comprehensive. Three separate directives, for example, respectively assign overlapping responsibilities related to law enforcement support to three different DOD entities. Because DOD's law enforcement support directive has not been updated or superseded since 1989, it is unclear which entity is responsible for certain coordination activities with law enforcement agencies. By updating, integrating, and ensuring the comprehensiveness of its strategy, policy, and guidance, DOD will be better positioned to enhance and institutionalize its interagency coordination efforts for homeland defense and civil support.

DOD makes great effort to communicate with its federal partners through conferences and other forums and multiple documents, but it lacks a single, readily accessible source for its interagency partners to find needed information about its processes. The 2008 *National Defense Strategy* notes that a unified "whole-of-government" approach to national security issues requires that federal partner agencies understand core competencies, roles, and missions, and the *National Response Framework* highlights the value of using a common concise partner guide for this purpose. DOD's communication approach, however, relies largely on personal relationships that are subject to frequent rotation of both DOD and non-DOD personnel. DOD identified over 30 documents that embody its approach and processes for interagency coordination. A concise and readily accessible partner guide would provide incoming personnel from both DOD and other agencies information that could enhance their mutual understanding and facilitate a unified and institutionalized approach to interagency coordination.

DOD has taken some actions to adopt key practices for managing homeland defense and civil support liaison personnel, but it has not fully implemented these practices. Key practices include situational awareness, staffing-needs assessments, position descriptions, training, and performance assessments. For example, while individual DOD entities may know the liaisons they have assigned to their federal partners, no single DOD entity knows the number or locations of all liaisons exchanged with other federal agencies. Also, while DOD policy recognizes the need to conduct personnel performance assessments, such assessments of its liaisons are not focused on coordination competencies, and DOD does not consistently request input from federal partners on the performance of its liaisons or provide feedback to its federal partners about their liaisons' performance. DOD could optimize its use of liaisons if it fully implemented current DOD human capital policies and issued policies and guidance for the remaining key practices identified above.