

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2004, the Department of Defense (DOD) announced sweeping changes to restructure U.S. military presence overseas and reduce military posture in Europe. In August, 2010, the Secretary of Defense called for a review of DOD operations and activities to identify opportunities to decrease costs in order to free funds to support other DOD priorities. The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs asked GAO to determine the extent to which the European Command (EUCOM) (1) estimates and reports the total cost of DOD's installations in Europe and (2) has defined methods for evaluating posture alternatives and including the views of interagency stakeholders in its posture planning process. To address these objectives, GAO assessed DOD plans and guidance, reviewed planning efforts in EUCOM, and collected obligations data from the military services for the military construction, family housing, and operation and maintenance appropriations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD revise posture planning guidance to require comprehensive estimates of posture costs and provide for consistent analysis of posture alternatives, and that EUCOM clarify its posture planning process and methods to regularly obtain interagency perspectives. DOD agreed with GAO's recommendations and identified corrective actions, but additional steps are needed to fully address the recommendations.

View [GAO-11-131](#) or key components. For more information, contact John Pendleton at (404) 679-1816 or pendletonj@gao.gov.

DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

Additional Cost Information and Stakeholder Input Needed to Assess Military Posture in Europe

What GAO Found

DOD posture planning guidance does not require EUCOM to include comprehensive cost data in its theater posture plan and, as a result, DOD lacks critical information that could be used by decision makers as they deliberate posture requirements. DOD guidance requires that theater posture plans provide specific information on, and estimate the military construction costs for, installations in a combatant commander's area of responsibility. However, this guidance does not require EUCOM to report the total cost to operate and maintain installations in Europe. GAO analysis shows that of the approximately \$17.2 billion obligated by the services to support installations in Europe from 2006 through 2009, approximately \$13 billion (78 percent) was for operation and maintenance costs. Several factors—such as the possibility of keeping four Army brigades in Europe instead of two—could impact future costs. DOD is drafting guidance to require more comprehensive cost estimates for posture initiatives; however, these revisions will not require commanders to report costs, unrelated to posture initiatives, for DOD installations. GAO's prior work has demonstrated that comprehensive cost information is critical to support decisions on funding and affordability. Until DOD requires the combatant commands to compile and report comprehensive cost data in their posture plans, DOD and Congress will be limited in their abilities to make fully informed decisions regarding DOD's posture in Europe.

EUCOM has developed an approach to compile posture requirements, but it does not have clearly defined methods for evaluating posture alternatives or routinely incorporating the views of interagency stakeholders. EUCOM has taken several steps to assign responsibilities for developing its posture plan and established an Executive Council to deliberate posture issues and work with the service component commands, but the process of developing a theater posture plan is relatively new and is not yet clearly defined and codified in command guidance. While EUCOM's steps to date have improved its ability to communicate with stakeholders and resolve conflicting views on posture issues, it has not been clearly defined and codified in command guidance. Furthermore, it does not provide for the analysis of costs and benefits, because the combatant commander has not been required to include such analysis in developing the theater posture plan. In addition, the Interagency Partnering Directorate—which was established by the EUCOM commander to improve interagency coordination within the command—has been included in the Executive Council, but EUCOM has not defined how interagency representatives can regularly participate in ongoing posture planning activities. As a result of these weaknesses in EUCOM's posture planning approach, the command is limited in its ability to consider and evaluate the cost of posture in conjunction with the strategic benefits it provides, and it may not be fully leveraging interagency perspectives as it defines future posture requirements.