DOD has relied extensively on contractors for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past decade. At the height of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the number of contractors exceeded the number of military personnel, and a similar situation is occurring in Afghanistan. In January 2011, the Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum noting the risk of DOD’s level of dependency on contractors and outlined actions to institutionalize changes necessary to influence how the department plans for contracted support in contingency operations. The memorandum also called for leveraging the civilian expeditionary workforce to reduce DOD’s reliance on contractors, but this workforce is not yet fully developed. GAO was asked to examine DOD’s progress in planning for operational contract support. Our review determined how DOD is integrating operational contract support into its planning through efforts of the (1) OSD, Joint Staff, and military services, and (2) combatant commands and their components. To conduct its work, GAO evaluated DOD operational contract support guidance and documents and met with officials at various DOD offices.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force provide guidance on planning for operational contract support; that the Joint Staff provide training for all planners; that the planners broaden their focus to include areas beyond logistics; and that expertise is offered to service components to further integrate operational contract support into plans. DOD generally agreed with the recommendations.

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