

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-149](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

For many years, DOD has reported that it faces challenges in carrying out realistic training because of the cumulative result of outside influences—such as urban growth and endangered species habitat—that DOD refers to as encroachment. In January 2014, DOD reported concerns with security encroachment by foreign entities conducting business near its test and training ranges.

GAO was mandated by the House Armed Services Committee report accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 to review encroachment on DOD's test and training ranges. This report examines the extent to which DOD has (1) conducted a risk assessment to identify the existence and extent of any threats of foreign encroachment and (2) obtained information needed on specific transactions to determine if they pose a threat. GAO reviewed statutes, regulations, and guidance on federal agency oversight of transactions on federal land. GAO interviewed DOD and service officials, as well as officials from other federal agencies identified by DOD as having a role in such transactions.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD (1) develop and implement guidance for conducting a risk assessment on foreign encroachment and (2) collaborate with other federal agencies to obtain additional information on transactions near ranges. In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with both recommendations.

View [GAO-15-149](#). For more information, contact Brian Lepore at (202) 512-4523 or leporeb@gao.gov.

December 2014

DEFENSE INFRASTRUCTURE

Risk Assessment Needed to Identify If Foreign Encroachment Threatens Test and Training Ranges

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) has not conducted a risk assessment that includes prioritizing test and training ranges based on mission criticality, determining their vulnerabilities to foreign encroachment (i.e., foreign entities acquiring assets, such as mines or energy projects, or otherwise conducting business transactions near test and training ranges), and assessing the degree to which foreign encroachment could pose a threat to the mission of the range. Some DOD officials stated that they are concerned about foreign encroachment, which may provide an opportunity for persistent surveillance of DOD test and training activities. However, DOD has not prioritized its ranges or assessed such threats because, among other things, there is no clear guidance on how to conduct assessments of the risks and threats posed by foreign encroachment. Some DOD officials told GAO they have considered conducting such assessments, but DOD has not issued guidance directing the services to conduct these assessments. Officials from the Navy and the Air Force stated that given the unique nature of each range, it would be difficult to assess their criticality. However, Navy officials stated that they had expected to issue guidance for conducting risk assessments sometime in 2015. Without clear guidance from DOD for the services to follow in conducting a risk assessment, DOD may not be able to determine what, if any, negative impact foreign encroachment may be having on its test or training ranges.

Elements of a Risk Assessment

Criticality	Vulnerability	Threats
Identifies the consequence of the loss of a particular asset.	A weakness or susceptibility of an asset.	An adversary having the intent, capability, and opportunity to cause loss or damage.

Source: GAO analysis of DOD information. | GAO-15-149

DOD has not obtained sufficient information on commercial activity being conducted near test and training ranges in the level of detail officials say they need—such as if a U.S.-based entity is owned or controlled by a foreign entity—to determine if specific transactions on federally owned or managed land in proximity to ranges pose a threat to the range. Such information is generally not collected by other agencies with responsibilities for these transactions because, in some cases, legal, regulatory, or resource challenges may prevent them from collecting information that is unrelated to their agencies' missions. For example, the Federal Aviation Administration collects information about proposed structures that are more than 200 feet in height to support the agency's mission of maintaining a safe and efficient aerospace system, but does not collect information on the ownership of the companies building the structures because it is beyond the scope of its mission. DOD has identified some potential sources of information, but it has not formally collaborated with other federal agencies on how to gather this information. Leading practices state that agencies can enhance and sustain collaboration by engaging in several practices, including addressing needs and leveraging resources and agreeing on roles and responsibilities. Without engaging potential sources of information on commercial activities near its ranges, DOD is hindered in its efforts to determine if a project could present a threat to test or training range activities.