

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-291](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

The President has special legal authorities that allow him to direct the drawdown of defense articles, such as vehicles, food, or medical equipment, and services, such as airlift support, as well as military education and training, to provide assistance in response to an international crisis. Since 2011, there have been 13 drawdowns. The President may authorize up to \$325 million each year in drawdowns.

A House Armed Services Committee report accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 included a provision for GAO to conduct a review of drawdown authority. This report examines, since 2011, (1) the U.S. government's process for planning and executing drawdowns, (2) State efforts to manage records on decisions to use drawdown authorities, and (3) the status of drawdowns and DOD efforts to report to Congress on defense articles and services delivered through drawdowns to recipient countries or international organizations. GAO analyzed documents relevant to drawdowns and interviewed State and DOD officials.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that (1) State should assign responsibility or establish a mechanism to maintain key drawdowns documents and (2) DOD report more frequently on defense articles and services provided through drawdowns. State did not concur with GAO's recommendation to establish a mechanism to maintain documents, but GAO stands by its recommendation, as discussed in the report. DOD agreed that it should report more frequently on drawdowns.

View [GAO-16-291](#). For more information, contact Charles Michael Johnson, Jr., at (202) 512-7331 or [johnsoncm@gao.gov](mailto:johnsoncm@gao.gov), or Zina Merritt, at (202) 512-5257 or [merrittz@gao.gov](mailto:merrittz@gao.gov).

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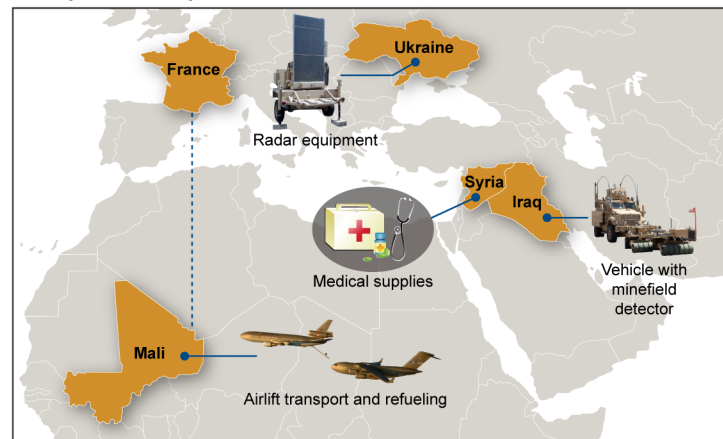
## SECURITY ASSISTANCE

### Better Records Management and More Reporting Needed on Presidential Drawdowns

## What GAO Found

Drawdown proposals to provide U.S. assistance for an international crisis are typically developed through an interagency process led by the Departments of State (State) and Defense (DOD), and involving the National Security Council and the Executive Office of the President. State and DOD work with other agencies to determine whether to use a drawdown authority and identify the assistance to be provided. Based on the estimated value and availability of the articles and services, the agencies agree on the parameters of the drawdown. State prepares a justification package, and the President signs a Presidential Determination to authorize the drawdown. DOD then executes the drawdown by working with the military services to provide the articles and services.

#### Examples of Recipients of Defense Articles and Services from Drawdowns, 2013–2015



Source: GAO analysis of Departments of State and Defense data. | GAO-16-291

State policy specifies that the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs leads State and interagency processes for presidential drawdowns. Key documents for this process include a memorandum of justification containing background information about the drawdown. However, inconsistent with federal internal control standards, State lacked readily available documents related to drawdowns, and there is no central office or official responsible for maintaining key drawdown documents. As a result, it took several months for State to fully respond to our request for drawdown documents. For example, State officials initially did not provide documentation for the 2011 drawdown to Libya, but provided the documents over 4 months later. Without a mechanism to ensure that key documents relating to the use of drawdown authorities are readily available, State is unable to produce documents in a timely manner.

DOD provided some reports to Congress on the execution of drawdowns in 2011 and 2013. However, DOD has not submitted certain reports to Congress since 2011 despite a legal requirement to keep Congress fully and currently informed regarding assistance provided through drawdowns under one specific authority. DOD officials said that they have not submitted these reports because they have not closed any of the 13 drawdowns since 2011— articles and services are still to be delivered. Nevertheless, without periodic reports to indicate the status of drawdowns, Congress may not have detailed information about the extent of the President's use of drawdown authority.