



May 2018

COUNTERTERRORISM

DOD Should Fully Address Security Assistance Planning Elements in Global Train and Equip Project Proposals

Accessible Version

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-449](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The United States has undertaken several efforts, including DOD's Global Train and Equip program, to help foreign partners strengthen their security capacity. *Presidential Policy Directive 23* states that agencies should target security assistance where it can be effective and highlights the importance of addressing several planning elements in project proposals. DOD develops proposals, using guidance implementing the directive, and selects projects with the Department of State.

The fiscal year 2015 National Defense Authorization Act included a provision for GAO to review the Global Train and Equip program. In this report, GAO examines (1) the status of funding DOD allocated for Global Train and Equip projects in fiscal years 2009 through 2017, (2) the extent to which DOD addressed key security assistance planning elements in project proposals in fiscal years 2016 and 2017, and (3) DOD's reporting on the achievement of Global Train and Equip project objectives and any factors affecting its ability to achieve those objectives. GAO analyzed agency data and program documents and interviewed DOD and State Department officials in Washington, D.C., and at selected combatant commands and embassies.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends DOD (1) update project proposal guidance to include instructions for documenting sustainment planning and (2) formalize as written policy its informal process for ensuring Global Train and Equip project proposals fully document the four required planning elements. DOD agreed with the recommendations.

View [GAO-18-449](#). For more information, contact Brian Mazanec at (202) 512-5130 or mazanecb@gao.gov.

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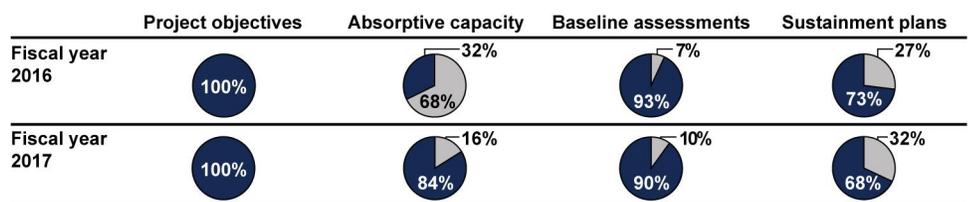
DOD Should Fully Address Security Assistance Planning Elements in Global Train and Equip Project Proposals

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) obligated \$3.7 billion of \$4.1 billion allocated for the Global Train and Equip program in fiscal years 2009 through 2017 to build partner nations' capacity to counter terrorism. DOD increased allocations for the program in 2016, responding to an influx of funding from appropriations to the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund. As of December 2017, DOD had disbursed about \$2.5 billion of the obligated funds.

Global Train and Equip project proposals for fiscal years 2016 and 2017 consistently addressed only one of four elements of security assistance planning outlined in *Presidential Policy Directive 23*. GAO found all 72 proposals in those years included the first element, project objectives. From 2016 to 2017, the percentage of proposals addressing the second element—absorptive capacity—rose from 32 percent to 84 percent. Most 2016 and 2017 proposals included the third element, baseline assessments, but less than three-quarters included complete sustainment plans, the fourth element. DOD guidance for 2016 and 2017 did not include instructions for addressing project sustainment when sustainment was not anticipated, though the 2017 guidance included instructions for addressing the other three planning elements. According to DOD officials, they have developed an informal quality review process to better ensure that 2018 project proposals address all four planning elements. However, DOD has not formalized this informal process as written policy. *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* calls for documenting internal control activities and policies. Formalizing the proposal review process would help DOD provide consistent oversight of project development and ensure access to complete information about each planning element, including sustainment needs. Such information is critical in helping decision makers ensure efficient use of funding to build partners' capacity.

Percentages of Global Train and Equip Project Proposals Addressing Four Required Planning Elements, Fiscal Years 2016-2017



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense data. | GAO-18-449

DOD reporting for 2016 and 2017 indicates progress in building partner capacity to combat terrorism and conduct stability operations as well as factors affecting the progress achieved. According to DOD documents, partner nation recipient units' overall capabilities were greater after implementation of 8 of 21 Global Train and Equip projects, and some of the remaining 13 projects produced some positive results. DOD documents and officials also identified factors—such as equipment suitability and procurement issues—that may have limited the achievement of project objectives.

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Abbreviations

CTPF	Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund
DOD	Department of Defense
DSCA	Defense Security Cooperation Agency
ERI	European Reassurance Initiative
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
NDA	National Defense Authorization Act
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
PPD 23	Presidential Policy Directive 23 on Security Sector Assistance
SO/LIC	Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict
State	Department of State

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May 30, 2018

Congressional Committees

Transnational terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, continue to threaten the national security of the United States and its partners. The United States has long recognized that the diversity and complexity of threats to our national security require a collaborative approach, both within the U.S. government and among allies, partners, and multilateral organizations. A goal of U.S. security assistance policy is to help partner nations build sustainable capacity to address challenges such as transnational threats.¹ Programs to build foreign partner capacity can help partners to confront extremists before such threats require U.S. military intervention or to work alongside U.S. forces to confront terrorist threats. The United States has undertaken several efforts, including the Department of Defense's (DOD) Global Train and Equip program, to build the capacity of its foreign partners to counter terrorism.²

The Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2015 included a provision for GAO to conduct biennial audits of programs conducted pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 2282 for the Global Train and Equip program.³ In April 2016, we issued our first report addressing this provision.⁴ In this report, we

¹The White House, *Presidential Policy Directive 23: U.S. Security Sector Assistance Policy*, Apr. 5, 2013.

²The Global Train and Equip Program has previously been called the "Section 1206" program, as it was originally authorized in section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006; see Pub. L. No. 109-163, § 1206, 119 Stat. 3456, Jan. 6, 2006. The Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 authorized a permanent program codified at 10 U.S.C. § 2282, and the program is often referred to as "Section 2282." See Pub. L. No. 113-291, § 1205(a)(1), 128 Stat. 3533, Dec. 19, 2014. The fiscal year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act repealed Section 2282 and replaced it with 10 U.S.C. § 333, which authorizes the same activities as are carried out under Section 2282, among other things. This report covers periods of time during which both "Section 1206" and "Section 2282" were common nomenclature. Throughout this report, we refer to the program as "Global Train and Equip" or "the program."

³Pub. L. No. 113-291, § 1205(e)(1), Dec. 19, 2014.

⁴See GAO, *Counterterrorism: DOD Should Enhance Management of and Reporting on Its Global Train and Equip Program*, [GAO-16-368](#) (Washington, D.C.: April 18, 2016).

examine (1) the status of funding that DOD allocated for Global Train and Equip projects in fiscal years 2009 through 2017, (2) the extent to which DOD addressed security assistance planning elements in project proposals in fiscal years 2016 and 2017, and (3) DOD's reporting on the achievement of Global Train and Equip project objectives and any factors affecting its ability to achieve those objectives.⁵

To examine the status of funds allocated, obligated, and disbursed for Global Train and Equip projects in 2009 through 2017, we analyzed program funding data. To determine the extent to which DOD addressed key elements of security sector assistance in project proposals in 2016 and 2017, we reviewed *Presidential Policy Directive 23: Security Sector Assistance* and DOD guidance, which identify four planning elements to be considered for security assistance programs. We then analyzed the content of agency-approved 2016 and 2017 project proposals, as well as congressional notifications developed subsequent to agency approval of the proposals, to determine the extent to which those documents include information about the four planning elements. To examine the results that DOD has reported related to project objectives, we analyzed DOD assessment reports for 2016 and 2017. Specifically, we compared baseline assessments of recipient unit capability and performance levels when the projects were proposed with assessments of the recipient unit's capability and performance levels after program assistance was delivered. We also reviewed the 2016 and 2017 assessment reports to identify factors affecting the extent to which project objectives were achieved.

To address multiple objectives, we discussed the project proposal process and key elements of project planning, documentation, and assessment with officials from DOD and the Department of State (State); relevant geographic combatant commands; and U.S. embassies in Jordan, Niger, and Uganda.⁶ We selected these countries on the basis of

⁵In this report, all years cited are fiscal years (Oct. 1–Sept. 30) unless otherwise noted.

⁶The six geographic combatant commands are the U.S. Africa Command, the U.S. Central Command, the U.S. European Command, the U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. Southern Command, and the U.S. Northern Command. Partner nations in the areas of responsibility of the first five commands listed here received Global Train and Equip assistance in 2016 and 2017. We interviewed officials from the U.S. Africa Command, the U.S. Central Command, and the U.S. European Command. These three geographic combatant commands received 92 percent of funds that DOD allocated for Global Train and Equip projects in 2016 and 2017.

their having received a higher proportion of DOD's allocations for the Global Train and Equip program in fiscal years 2016 and 2017; we also considered factors such as embassy officials' project assessment experience and the countries' regional geographic distribution. To assess the reliability of the data we obtained, we took steps such as comparing funding data with previously published information and interviewing cognizant agency officials about funding data and project assessments; we determined that all of the data were sufficiently reliable for the purpose of our review. We relied on DOD's assessment reports and did not systematically validate the assessment results. For more details of our scope and methodology, see appendix I.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2017 to May 2018 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Global Train and Equip Authority to Build Foreign Partner Capacity

DOD has used the Global Train and Equip program to provide training, equipment, and small-scale military construction activities intended to build the capacity of partner nations' military forces to conduct counterterrorism operations. The program was originally authorized under Section 1206 of the 2006 NDAA and has been amended several times.⁷ The 2015 NDAA permanently authorized the Secretary of Defense, with concurrence of the Secretary of State, to conduct programs to (1) build the capacity of a foreign country's national military forces to conduct counterterrorism operations or participate in, or support, ongoing allied or coalition military or stability operations that benefit the national security interests of the United States; (2) build the capacity of a foreign country's

⁷Although the authorizing legislation uses "program" to refer to individual assistance efforts, this report generally uses "project" to refer to individual assistance efforts as proposed, approved, implemented, and assessed and uses "program" to refer to the entirety of the Global Train and Equip program.

national maritime or border security forces to conduct counterterrorism operations; and (3) build the capacity of a foreign country's national-level security forces that have among their functional responsibilities a counterterrorism mission in order for such forces to conduct counterterrorism operations. The fiscal year 2017 NDAA repealed Section 2282 of Title 10 of the U.S. Code and created Section 333 of the same title (Section 333).⁸ Section 333 authorized DOD to continue providing training and equipment to the national security forces of foreign countries for the purpose of building the capacity of such forces to conduct counterterrorism operations, among other things. The fiscal year 2017 NDAA also contained several administrative and organizational instructions for the management and oversight of DOD security cooperation policy.

According to DOD, counterterrorism and stability operations assistance generally consist of security capability projects that fortify a partner nation's land, sea, or air capability. Projects often provide equipment or training intended to build partner communications, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities. Figure 1 shows an example of a UH-60 helicopter—a type of equipment that has been provided through Global Train and Equip projects.

⁸10 U.S.C. §333; see Pub. L. No. 114-328, § 1241(d)(1), Dec. 23, 2016.

Figure 1: Jordan Special Operations Training on a UH-60 Blackhawk Helicopter in Amman, Jordan



Source: Petty Officer 2nd Class Christopher Lange. | GAO-18-449

U.S. Security Assistance Policy

Presidential Policy Directive 23, published in April 2013, was aimed at strengthening the ability of the United States to help allied and partner nations build their own security capacity. The directive states that U.S. agencies should target security sector assistance where it can be effective. The directive identifies principal goals of, and guidelines for, security sector assistance that highlight the importance of including the following four planning elements in project design and execution:

- identifying objectives that address partner nation needs;
- considering partner nations' capacity to absorb U.S. assistance;
- integrating assessment, monitoring, and evaluation to provide policymakers, program managers, and implementers with information and evidence necessary to make effective decisions and maximize program outcomes; and
- anticipating sustainment needs.

Global Train and Equip Program Management and Project Planning

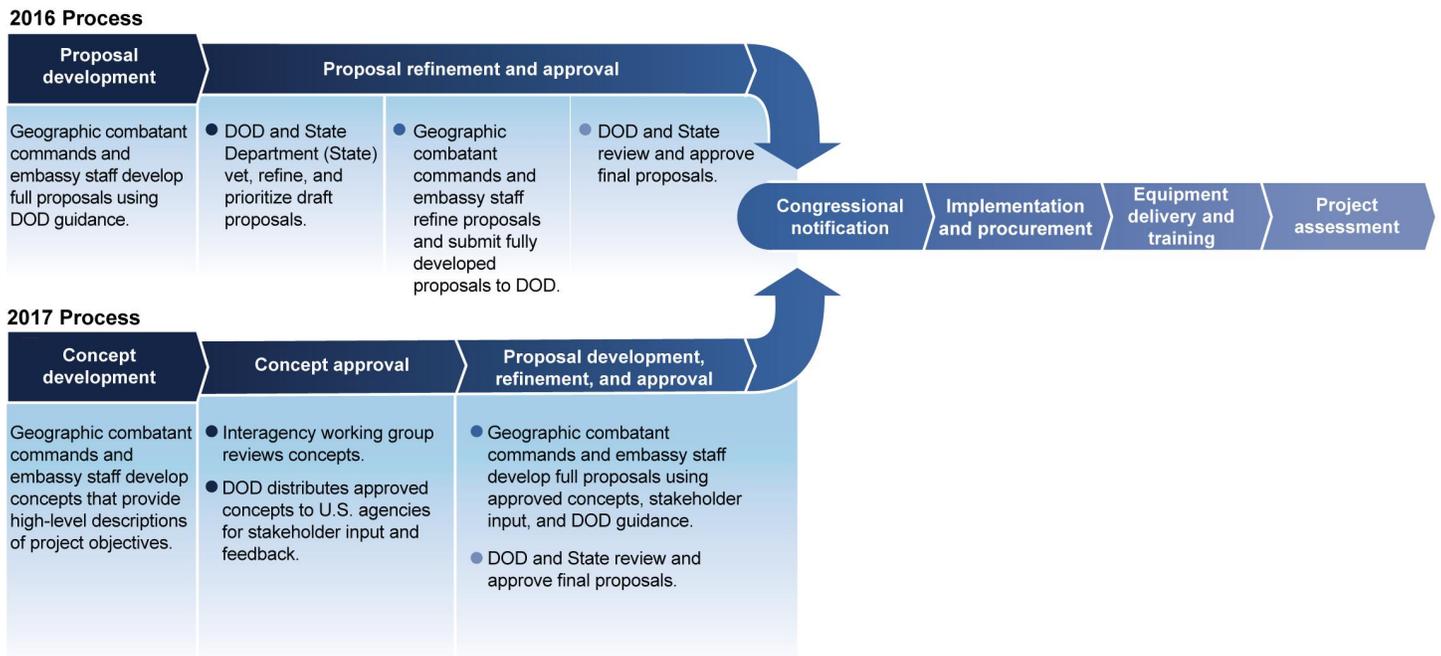
During the reporting period covered by this review, DOD's Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict was responsible for providing policy guidance and oversight of the Global Train and Equip program.⁹ The office coordinated with State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs and other stakeholders in an interagency process to solicit project proposals annually, in accordance with guidance that DOD revises each year to reflect lessons learned, congressional concerns, and other considerations.¹⁰ DOD 2016 and 2017 guidance implements *Presidential Policy Directive 23*, requiring that project proposals for the Global Train and Equip program address the four planning elements highlighted in the directive.

Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual framework of the project proposal, approval, and implementation processes in 2016 and 2017. According to DOD officials, various elements of the proposal development, review, selection, and notification process occurred simultaneously, as proposal submission and review occurred on a rolling basis and agency-approved projects were notified to Congress in multiple groups throughout each fiscal year.

⁹The fiscal year 2017 NDAA moved some of these functions to DOD's Defense Security Cooperation Agency by designating the agency as responsible for the execution and administration of all DOD security cooperation programs and activities involving the provision of defense articles, military training, and other defense-related services by grant, loan, cash sale, or lease. 10 U.S.C. § 382(b). DOD officials told us that the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Security Cooperation will provide policy guidance for programs under the Section 333 authority.

¹⁰DOD guidance for 2016 and 2017 included a written manual from 2016 that, according to DOD officials, applied to the proposal planning processes in both fiscal years. Additionally, we considered the 2016 and 2017 project proposal templates to be guidance, because they included instructions for filling out the required fields (e.g., sustainment costs).

Figure 2: Global Train and Equip Project Proposal, Approval, and Implementation Processes, Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) documents. | GAO-18-449

As figure 2 shows, DOD instituted some changes to the proposal development and approval process for projects notified to Congress in 2017. According to DOD officials, for 2017, geographic combatant commands and embassy staff first submitted high-level concepts for review rather than fully drafted project proposals. These concepts were intended to provide information on project objectives for an interagency working group’s review and approval before further resources were committed to developing full proposals. DOD officials told us that the 2017 process remains in place for 2018 and 2019 projects. DOD officials said that in prior years, including 2016, geographic combatant commands and embassy staff were required to draft full proposals without confirmation that DOD and State would approve the proposals for notification to Congress.¹¹

In 2016 and 2017, DOD and State officials reviewed proposals—approved by the geographic combatant command and ambassador or chief of mission—and selected projects to recommend to the Secretaries

¹¹We previously reported on the Global Train and Equip project proposal, approval, and implementation process for 2015. See [GAO-16-368](#).

of Defense and State. Following approval by the Secretary of Defense, with concurrence from the Secretary of State, DOD prepared and submitted congressional notifications for each project it intended to fund through the program. These notifications summarized project information such as the project's objectives, the partner nation's absorptive capacity, the baseline assessment of the recipient unit's capabilities, and arrangements for the project's sustainment. Congressional notifications were submitted for each project to the appropriate committees at least 15 days before activities were initiated.¹² According to DOD, project implementation did not begin immediately after the 15-day notification period if congressional staff requested additional time for briefings and for DOD to ensure that the congressional committees agreed with the proposed activities. After congressional notification, DOD's Defense Security Cooperation Agency assumed responsibility for overseeing the obligation of funds for training and equipment procurement before the end of the relevant fiscal year, while officials from the security cooperation office at U.S. embassies were responsible for coordinating in-country project implementation. DOD planned to conduct assessments of selected projects 12 to 18 months after delivering major project components, to evaluate the extent to which U.S. assistance has contributed to building recipient unit capabilities and the extent to which the partner nation applied its capabilities consistent with the project's intent.

DOD Has Obligated the Majority of Over \$4 Billion Allocated for Global Train and Equip Projects since 2009 and Disbursed About Two-Thirds of Obligated Funds

Of the \$4.1 billion allocated for Global Train and Equip projects in 2009 through 2017, DOD has obligated approximately \$3.7 billion and

¹²DOD sends notifications to the Senate Committees on Appropriations, Armed Services, and Foreign Relations and the House Committees on Appropriations, Armed Services, and Foreign Affairs. According to DOD officials, although DOD is not required by law to receive the committees' approval, as a matter of comity DOD waits to receive the committee's approval before implementing a project.

disbursed \$2.5 billion.¹³ Table 1 details Global Train and Equip program funding, by fiscal year of appropriation, in 2009 through 2017. As table 1 shows, DOD reported no unobligated balances as of December 2017.¹⁴

Table 1: Global Train and Equip Program Assistance, by Year of Appropriation, Fiscal Years 2009-2017

Dollars in millions

Category	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 ^a	2016 ^b	2017 ^c	Total
Allocations	340	324	232	209	252	302	1,241	963	278	4,140
Obligations	335	293	180	190	239	290	1,197	737	244	3,704
Amounts reallocated	5	31	53	19	13	11	44	226	34	435
Unobligated balances	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unliquidated obligations ^d	3	16	30	29	60	41	369	447	228	1,224
Disbursements	332	277	150	160	178	249	828	290	16	2,480

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense data. | GAO-18-449

Note: Amounts are shown according to the fiscal year when program funds were appropriated; funds may have been allocated, obligated, or disbursed in subsequent fiscal years. Amounts shown were current as of December 7, 2017, but because of rounding, may not sum precisely to totals shown. According to DOD officials, the amounts that DOD originally allocated for projects represent the projects' estimated costs as notified to Congress. Amounts reallocated were available for obligation for other authorized uses until the end of the relevant fiscal year. As contracts conclude, disbursement amounts are revised to reflect final contract costs. For additional information about GAO budget terms, see [GAO-05-734SP](#).

^aIncludes \$175 million from the European Reassurance Initiative and \$747 million from the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund.

^bIncludes \$685 million from the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund.

¹³The allocations data we provide reflect allocations only for Global Train and Equip projects authorized under Sections 1206 of the 2006 NDAA, as amended, and under 10 U.S.C. § 2282 before it was repealed. According to DOD officials, in 2017, DOD allocated about \$35 million for Global Train and Equip projects authorized under 10 U.S.C. § 333.

¹⁴Traditionally, resources for Global Train and Equip program activities have been provided through funds appropriated for DOD's Operation and Maintenance, Defense-Wide (O&M) account. O&M funds must be obligated by the end of the fiscal year in which they are appropriated. DOD has also funded Global Train and Equip projects by transferring funds from the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (CTPF) and European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) accounts to the O&M account before obligating funds. DOD transferred funds from the ERI account to the O&M account in 2015 and transferred funds from CTPF to the O&M account in 2015, 2016, and 2017 before obligating the funds. Once funds are transferred from CTPF to the O&M account, they must either be obligated by the end of the fiscal year in which they were appropriated or be transferred back to CTPF. Because funds transferred from the ERI account were available for obligation for only 1 year, our analysis assumes that they were transferred to the O&M account and obligated by September 30, 2015.

^cIncludes \$75 million from the Security Cooperation Overseas Contingency Operation Fund. These funds are available for obligation for 2 years from the Operations and Maintenance, Defense-wide account.

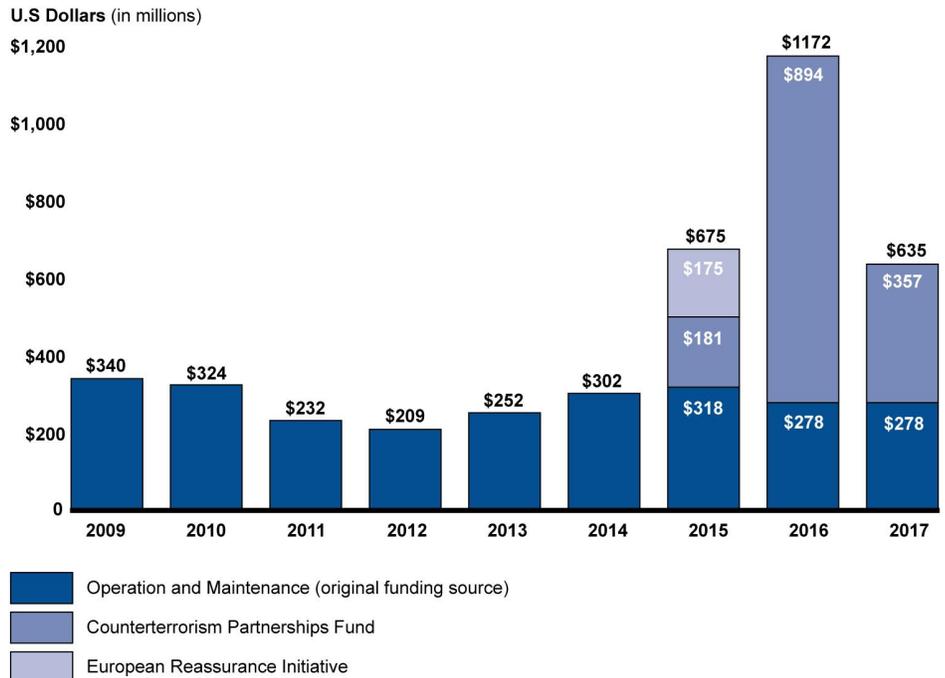
^dAccording to DOD officials, \$10.9 million in unliquidated obligations from fiscal years 2009 to 2012 have been cancelled and returned to the Department of the Treasury.

Figure 3 details Global Train and Equip allocations in 2009 through 2017, according to the fiscal year in which DOD allocated the funds.¹⁵ As figure 3 shows, allocations averaged about \$276 million in 2009 through 2014 and about \$827 million in 2015 through 2017. DOD's allocations for Global Train and Equip activities increased from \$675 million in 2015 to about \$1.2 billion in 2016 because of an influx of funding from the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund, which was created in 2015 and authorized to fund Global Train and Equip projects.¹⁶ In addition, in 2015, DOD allocated funds from the European Reassurance Initiative, which also was created that year and authorized to fund Global Train and Equip projects. DOD's allocations for Global Train and Equip activities for 2017 totaled \$635 million.

¹⁵Because figure 3 shows allocations according to the fiscal year when DOD allocated funds for activities, the allocations shown in figure 3 may differ from those shown in table 1 by fiscal year of appropriation.

¹⁶Congress appropriated \$1.3 billion for CTPF in 2015 and an additional \$1.1 billion in 2016. While no new funds were appropriated for CTPF in 2017, DOD allocated \$357 million for Global Train and Equip activities that year from the funds appropriated for CTPF in 2016.

Figure 3: Funding Allocated for Global Train and Equip Projects, by Source, Fiscal Years 2009-2017

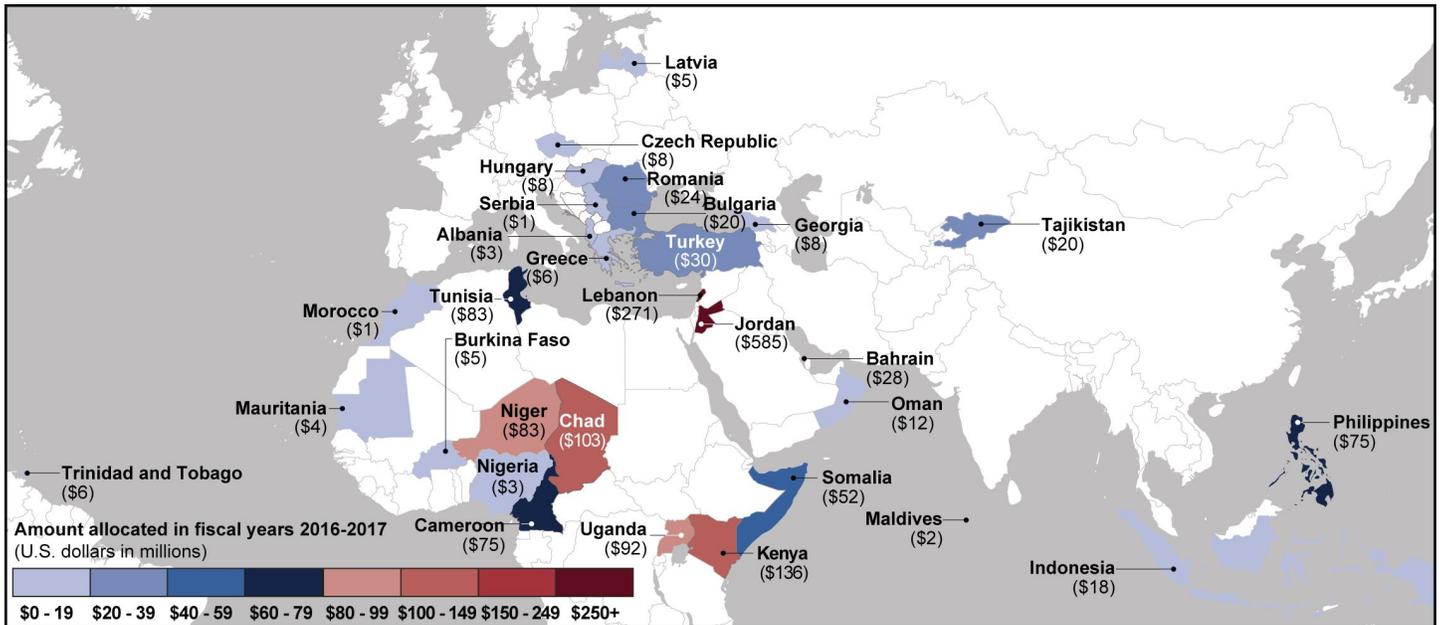


Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense budget data. | GAO-18-449

Notes: Funding is shown according to the fiscal year in which the Department of Defense (DOD) allocated funds for activities rather than the fiscal year in which the funds were appropriated. The authorizations for the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund and European Reassurance Initiative accounts require that moneys from these accounts be transferred to the Operation and Maintenance, Defense-Wide account before being made available for obligation for Global Train and Equip program activities.

DOD concentrated allocations of Global and Train Equip funding in 2016 and 2017 on projects for Jordan and Lebanon, which received a combined total of \$856 million, or 47 percent of total allocations during that period (see fig. 4). In 2016, allocations for projects in Jordan and Lebanon amounted to about \$579 million—nearly 50 percent of approximately \$1.2 billion in total allocations that year. In 2017, allocations for projects in those countries amounted to about \$279 million—44 percent of \$635 million in total allocations. For more information about allocations for specific Global Train and Equip projects in 2016 and 2017, see appendix II.

Figure 4: Geographic Distribution of Allocations for Global Train and Equip Projects in Fiscal Years 2016-2017



Sources: GAO analysis of Department of Defense data; Map Resources (map). | GAO-18-449

DOD Consistently Addressed Only One of Four Planning Elements in 2016 and 2017 Proposals but Reported Efforts to Ensure Inclusion of All Elements in 2018

DOD’s 2016 and 2017 proposals for Global Train and Equip projects consistently addressed only one of the four security assistance planning elements called for by DOD guidance,¹⁷ but agency officials reported implementing an informal process to improve coverage of these planning elements in 2018 proposals. DOD’s 2016 and 2017 guidance for Global Train and Equip project proposals called for proposal packages to address (1) project objectives, (2) partner nation absorptive capacity, (3) baseline assessments of partner nation capabilities, and (4) project

¹⁷DOD, *Building Partner Capacity for the 21st Century, Section 2282 (formerly “Section 1206”) Global Train and Equip Program for Fiscal Year 2016* (Feb. 6, 2015).

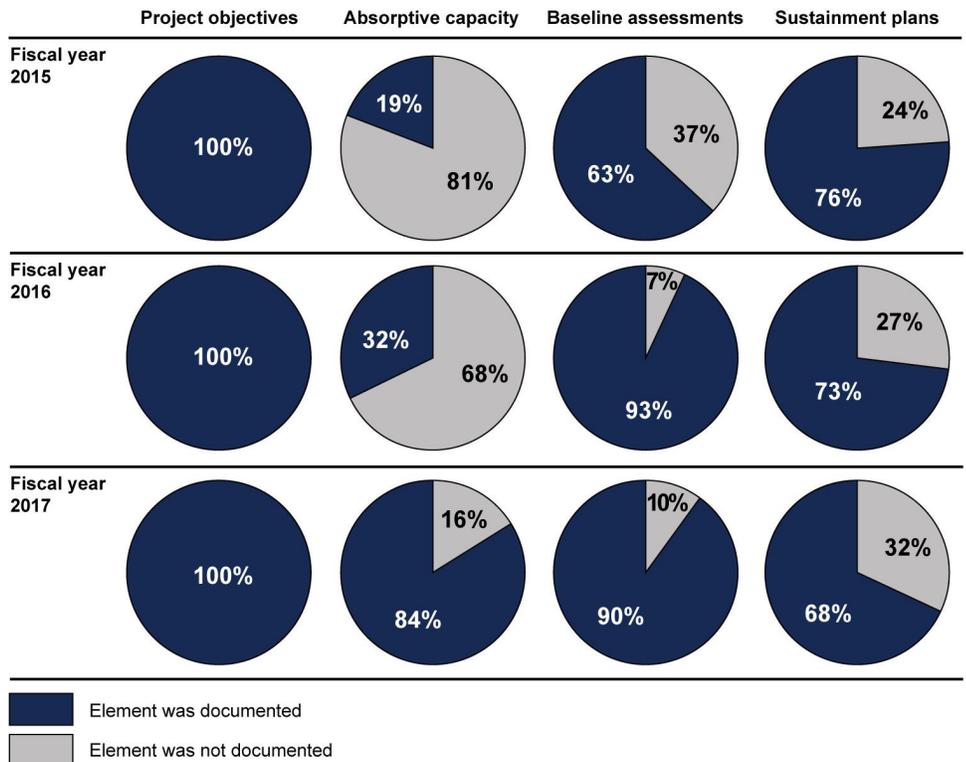
sustainment needs.¹⁸ All 72 proposal packages we reviewed for 2016 and 2017 included project objectives. Slightly more than 30 percent of proposal packages in 2016 and over 80 percent in 2017 included information about partner nations' absorptive capacity, compared with 19 percent in 2015 (see fig. 5).¹⁹ More than 90 percent of 2016 and 2017 proposal packages included baseline assessments, in contrast to 63 percent in 2015. However, less than three-quarters of proposal packages in 2016 and 2017 included complete sustainment plans, with the percentage that did so declining from 73 percent in 2016 to 68 percent in 2017. Although DOD's 2016 and 2017 guidance called for proposals to address sustainment planning, it did not provide instructions for doing so when sustainment was not anticipated. According to DOD officials, the department has hired additional staff and developed an informal quality review process to better ensure that proposal packages include all key elements but, as of February 2018, had not documented this process as written policy. *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* calls for documenting internal control activities aimed at ensuring effective use of resources and documenting in policies an organization's internal control responsibilities.²⁰ More complete information about each of the four planning elements—including sustainment costs, even when negligible—would improve DOD's ability to plan and allocate funding for the program, while formalizing the quality review process would also enable DOD to provide greater consistency in its oversight of project development.

¹⁸DOD officials said that they considered each element as part of interagency discussions about project proposals. Additionally, DOD submitted congressional notifications for agency-approved 2016 and 2017 projects that included information related to each of the four security assistance planning elements, as required by the 2015 NDAA. We reviewed these congressional notifications and determined that those elements were considered, even if not documented in the project proposal documents, before the notifications were submitted to Congress.

¹⁹We previously found that DOD did not fully document consideration of three of the four planning elements in 2015 proposal packages, and we recommended that DOD take steps to require information about the absorptive capacity of recipient units to be documented in project proposal packages. In response, DOD updated its 2017 project proposal template to include a required field for absorptive capacity. See [GAO-16-368](#).

²⁰GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO-14-704G](#) (Washington, D.C.: September 2014).

Figure 5: Percentages of Global Train and Equip Project Proposals Addressing Four Security Assistance Planning Elements, Fiscal Years 2015-2017



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense data. | GAO-18-449

Notes: We reviewed 54 proposals for fiscal year 2015, 41 proposals for fiscal year 2016, and 31 proposals for fiscal year 2017. DOD guidance for fiscal year 2015 and 2016 Global Train and Equip projects required proposal packages to address four project planning elements: (1) project objectives that address partner nation needs, (2) absorptive capacity, (3) baseline assessments, and (4) project sustainment. However the fiscal year 2016 project proposal instructions did not require documentation of absorptive capacity. DOD updated the project proposal instructions in fiscal year 2017 to require documentation of partner nations' absorptive capacity.

Percentages shown for fiscal year 2015 are based on data in GAO, Counterterrorism: DOD Should Enhance Management of and Reporting on Its Global Train and Equip Program, [GAO-16-368](#) (Washington, D.C.: April 18, 2016).

Project Proposals in 2016 and 2017 Consistently Addressed Only Project Objectives but Improved Coverage of Absorptive Capacity and Baseline Assessments

All 2016 and 2017 Project Proposals Included Information about Project Objectives

We found that DOD included information that addressed project objectives in all 72 proposals for Global Train and Equip projects in 2016 and 2017. We previously reported that all 2015 proposals for the program addressed project objectives.²¹ DOD's guidance notes that it is important for geographic combatant commands and chiefs of mission to produce proposals that include a clear narrative about how the proposed capability-building effort will fit into the theater campaign plans and integrated country strategies and advance U.S. interests. DOD officials from one geographic combatant command noted that 2017 Global Train and Equip project objectives were initially developed at the country level by the Security Cooperation Office and other embassy personnel and were based on theater campaign plans. Each proposal we reviewed from 2016 and 2017 outlined the objectives for the project. For example, one proposal stated that the training and equipment outlined in the proposal would enhance the partner nation's armed forces' ability to effectively conduct border security, counterincursion, and other night operations.

Less Than Half of 2016 Project Proposals Included Information about Absorptive Capacity, but Most 2017 Proposals Addressed This Element

DOD improved its efforts to include information about partner nations' absorptive capacity in Global Train and Equip project proposals in 2016 and 2017. Thirty-two percent (13 of 41) of 2016 proposals and 84 percent (26 of 31) of 2017 proposals addressed this planning element. We previously reported that less than 20 percent (10 of 54) of 2015 proposals addressed absorptive capacity.²² Before 2017, DOD guidance called for project proposals to address absorptive capacity, but the project proposal template did not include a required field for it. However, DOD updated its

²¹[GAO-16-368](#).

²²[GAO-16-368](#).

proposal template in 2017 to include a required field for analyzing and assessing the partner nation's security forces' current capability and current performance level in employing the proposed counterterrorism capabilities while serving in the desired counterterrorism role.²³ According to DOD officials, they updated the proposal template to better identify problems with absorptive capacity because of its importance and because it is an area of high congressional interest.

DOD assessments of partner nations' absorptive capacity noted a range of abilities to absorb assistance. For example, DOD assessed one country as having the capacity to immediately employ new equipment once training was completed and assessed another country's ability to absorb training and equipment as average, noting that previous training had resulted in continuous improvements. DOD officials acknowledged that assessing absorptive capacity has been a consistent challenge. One senior official also noted that pressing national security goals, such as quickly developing the capabilities of strategic partners for ongoing operations, required the U.S. government to assume some risk by supporting a project without fully assessing or documenting a partner nation's absorptive capacity.

Most Project Proposals Included Baseline Assessments in 2016 and 2017

We found that 92 percent (66 of 72) of 2016 and 2017 Global Train and Equip proposal packages included baseline assessments, compared with 63 percent (34 of 54) of 2015 proposal packages. DOD's assessment framework is based on a dual-purpose document that includes portions for assessing the recipient unit's capabilities at baseline—that is, before a project begins—and after project delivery and implementation. DOD's 2016 and 2017 program guidance states that a baseline assessment of recipient unit capabilities should be completed prior to submission of each proposal. According to DOD officials, baseline assessments are the primary mechanisms to identify and document the recipient unit's capabilities at the time the project is proposed and its needs to improve

²³In April 2016, we recommended that DOD take steps to require information about the absorptive capacity of recipient units to be documented in project proposal packages. See [GAO-16-368](#).

its capabilities to meet its mission.²⁴ The baseline assessments are intended to be submitted with project proposals and later used for project outcome assessments by assessment teams, policy officials, embassy staff, and other stakeholders.

Less Than Three-Quarters of Proposals Included Complete Sustainment Plans in 2016 and 2017

Less than three-quarters of Global Train and Equip proposals included complete sustainment plans in 2016 and 2017, and the percentage of proposals with complete plans declined from 2016 to 2017. While 73 percent (30 of 41) fully addressed this planning element in 2016, 68 percent (21 of 31) fully addressed it in 2017. We previously reported that 76 percent of 2015 proposals included complete sustainment plans.²⁵ According to DOD's Global Train and Equip guidance for 2016 and 2017, complete sustainment plans include three elements: (1) an identification of funding sources for project sustainment, (2) an estimate of the annual sustainment costs, and (3) an assessment of the sustainment capability of the partner nation. Most 2016 and 2017 proposals included information about sustainment funding sources and the partner nation's sustainment capability.²⁶ However, the percentage of proposals that estimated annual sustainment costs varied: 85 percent of proposals estimated sustainment costs in 2016 and 71 percent of proposals estimated such costs in 2017.

DOD officials told us that sustainment costs may not have been documented in some cases if sustainment was not expected to be a significant factor in the proposed project. For example, officials explained that some projects provided assistance, such as ammunition and training, that is expendable and does not require sustainment. Officials also noted that other projects provided assistance that may not have been intended to be sustained. For instance, long-term sustainment would be unnecessary for a project with a discrete objective, such as providing equipment to allow for closer coordination with U.S. and North Atlantic

²⁴Project proposal templates include three components related to baseline assessments: (1) the baseline assessment section, (2) the baseline portions of the project summary, and (3) the certification sections of that document. We determined that DOD addressed baseline capabilities if the baseline assessment section was complete.

²⁵See [GAO-16-368](#).

²⁶In both 2016 and 2017, 90 percent of proposals identified funding sources for project sustainment. In 2016, 98 percent of proposals assessed the partner nation's sustainment capability; in 2017, 94 percent of the proposals assessed sustainment capability.

Treaty Organization forces in support of the International Security Assistance Force–Afghanistan. Nevertheless, DOD officials said that when project sustainment is not anticipated, proposals for the projects should explain why sustainment costs are not included.

DOD’s 2015 guidance for Global Train and Equip proposals included instructions for addressing sustainment planning when sustainment is not anticipated; however, the guidance for 2016 and 2017 did not include these instructions.²⁷ *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* states that internal control activities aimed at ensuring effective use of resources should be clearly documented and that documentation should be readily available for examination.²⁸ Updating the guidance for Global Train and Equip proposals to include instructions addressing sustainment planning when sustainment is not anticipated would help ensure decision makers’ access to complete information on annual sustainment costs, including costs expected to be negligible.

DOD Recently Implemented an Informal Process to Ensure Proposals Address All Four Planning Elements but Has Not Formalized the Process as Policy

To improve management of the Global Train and Equip program, DOD officials told us that they developed an informal quality review process designed to ensure that proposals in 2018 and subsequent years address required elements. According to DOD officials, this informal process includes the following steps:

- Interagency “red teams” evaluate each proposal line by line to verify that the proposal is complete.
- Proposals with missing elements are returned to the drafters for revision and reevaluation.
- After proposals clear interagency review, senior DOD officials also review the proposals for completeness before approving them.

²⁷ DOD’s 2015 program guidance instructed officials developing proposals to provide context for any decisions to forego planning for the sustainment of training or equipment to be provided and to identify, if possible, the expected lifespan of the equipment if it will be used in a combat setting.

²⁸ [GAO-14-704G](#).

According to DOD officials, the department is developing this process as part of its review and approval of proposals under the new Section 333 authority to build partner capacity and is in the process of hiring staff to support this effort. For example, in February 2018, DOD officials said they had created a position for a full-time contractor who will be based at headquarters and charged with verifying that proposal packages include all required security assistance planning elements. DOD officials told us in February 2018 that they were also soliciting feedback on the process from relevant stakeholders. However, according to the officials, DOD had not yet determined whether to formalize the proposal review process as written policy. According to *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, management should document in policies the internal control responsibilities of an organization.²⁹ Formalizing as written policy its informal process to ensure that proposals address all four required planning elements would enable DOD to provide consistent oversight of Global Train and Equip project development and ensure decision makers have access to complete information about each element. Such information would, in turn, help DOD and State decision makers to ensure the efficient use of funding under the new Section 333 authority.

DOD Reported Progress in Achieving Project Objectives, Factors Limiting Progress, and Efforts to Improve Assessments

DOD reporting on the achievement of Global Train and Equip project objectives in 2016 and 2017 indicated progress in building partner capacity to combat terrorism and conduct stability operations as well as factors that affected the progress achieved. According to DOD assessment reports and supporting documents, partner nation recipient units' overall capabilities were greater after implementation of 8 of 21 Global Train and Equip projects, and some of the remaining 13 projects produced some positive results. (See app. III for the number of assessment reports conducted between 2006 and 2015 out of the total number of projects implemented in those years.) DOD documents and officials also identified several factors—including proposal design weaknesses, equipment suitability and procurement issues, partner nation shortfalls, and workforce management challenges—that may have

²⁹[GAO-14-704G](#).

affected the extent to which DOD was able to achieve project objectives. DOD officials described several changes they are making to improve assessments of Global Train and Equip projects.

Reports on Projects Assessed in 2016 and 2017 Indicate Some Progress in Building Partner Capacity

DOD assessment reports for 2016 and 2017, which included baseline and post-implementation assessments of recipient units' capabilities for 21 Global Train and Equip projects, indicated some progress in building partner capacity. For 8 of the 21 projects, the recipient units' capability levels were assessed as having increased by at least one rating level after the project's implementation (see fig. 6).

Figure 6: Changes in Recipient Unit Capability Levels Reported in DOD’s Fiscal Year 2016 and 2017 Global Train and Equip Project Assessments

Fiscal year assessed	Project	Change in recipient unit capability level				
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
2017	2013 - Counterterrorism Capability Enhancement		●○			
2016	2013 - Special Operations Counterterrorism Capability Enhancement		●○			
2016	2013 - Aircraft and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Capability	●-----○				
2016	2013 - Aircraft and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Capability	●-----○				
2016	2014 - Light Armor Reconnaissance Company		●○			
2016	2015 - Ranger Regiment (Training)		●○			
2016	2015 - Ranger Regiment (Support Unit)		●○			
2016	2009 - Military Operations in Urban Terrain			●○		
2016	2009 - Armed Caravan			●-----○		
2016	2010 - Special Operations Forces Counterterrorism Capability			●○		
2016	2013 - Border Security			●○		
2016	2014 - Border Security			●○		
2016	2014 - Border Security			●○		
2016	2015 - Border Security			●○		
2016	2012 - Logistics Support Package for Counterterrorism Operations		●○			
2016	2013 - Aircraft and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Capability		●-----○			
2016	2013 - Contract Logistics Support		●-----○			
2016	2014 - Aviation and Medical Capabilities Enhancement		●-----○			
2016	2012 - Air Logistics and Communications Enhancement		●-----○			
2016	2014 - Aircraft and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Capability		●-----○			
2017	2015 - Marine Special Operations Group			●○		

Legend: ● Represents the recipient unit’s baseline capability and performance rating
 ○ Represents the recipient unit’s post-implementation capability and performance rating
 ----- Represents the change in the recipient unit’s capability and performance rating between the baseline and post-implementation assessments
Level 1 The ability to perform some basic tasks to at least a low standard of performance
Level 5 The ability to perform most of the advanced tasks for the unit’s missions and to operate almost continuously throughout its assigned area of operations

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-18-449

Although the recipient units for the remaining 13 projects were assessed as showing no change in capability levels, the assessment reports for some of these projects described some positive project outcomes. For example, one 2017 assessment report of a project initiated in 2015 found that, while the recipient unit had not yet been integrated into the special operations force (a stated goal of the project), the project had resulted in some increased capacity for the recipient unit. Specifically, the assessment found that the project increased the recipient unit’s capability to support counterterrorism operations while also enhancing command and control capabilities and interoperability. Further, the 2016

assessment report for several related projects in one country found that, although the recipient unit had not increased its overall capability level, the equipment provided by the Global Train and Equip projects had assisted the recipient unit in executing its border security mission. Additionally, the 2016 assessment report for a 2010 project found that, whereas the recipient unit's overall capability level had not changed, the unit's abilities to conduct internal defense operations throughout the country had increased as a result of Global Train and Equip assistance.

To conduct the assessments, DOD uses a standard framework for evaluating the capabilities and performance of each recipient unit before and after a project has been implemented. For the baseline assessments, DOD rates the recipient unit's level of capability and performance on a 5-point scale; 1 is defined as the ability to perform some basic tasks to at least a low standard of performance and 5 is defined as the ability to perform most of the advanced tasks for the unit's missions and to operate almost continuously throughout its assigned area of operations. After project implementation, DOD uses the same 5-point scale to identify any changes in the recipient unit's level of capability and performance since receiving the assistance. As we have previously reported, these ratings do not represent only the effect of the provision of training and equipment on the recipient unit's capability and performance, as other factors may contribute to changes in performance level.³⁰

DOD Reports and Officials Described Several Factors That Can Limit Achievement of Global Train and Equip Objectives

DOD's assessment reports and supporting documents, as well as agency officials we interviewed, described several factors that can affect the extent to which DOD is able to achieve Global Train and Equip project objectives. These factors—project design weaknesses, equipment suitability and procurement issues, partner nation shortfalls, and workforce management challenges—are consistent with the challenges noted in our April 2016 report.³¹

³⁰We relied on DOD's assessment reports and did not conduct independent assessments to systematically validate the results included in the reports.

³¹See [GAO-16-368](#).

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- **Project design weaknesses.** According to DOD assessment reports, project designs that did not adequately reflect a partner nation's ability to contribute resources to a project or sufficiently address recipient unit needs and capabilities challenged the achievement of project objectives. For example, DOD's 2016 assessment of several projects in one partner nation indicated that small-scale construction projects often present problems in achieving objectives. According to the assessment, these problems are largely due to the limited number and capability of construction firms willing to bid on work in remote locations and a dollar ceiling for small-scale projects (\$750,000) that often cannot cover all expenses at such sites. The assessment found that relying on a partner nation to provide the additional funds frequently results in the construction not being completed. In addition, DOD's 2016 assessment report indicated a problem with the adequacy of an airplane spare-parts package provided in some Global Train and Equip projects. The assessment found that the Cessna Caravan spare parts, intended to cover 2 years of maintenance, proved insufficient for high-speed combat flight operations. (See fig. 7 for an example of a Cessna Caravan at a partner nation airbase.) The report also noted that this problem had been identified in other Global Train and Equip projects that included spare-parts packages for Cessna Caravans. The report indicated that the equipment manufacturers determine the package contents without regard to the unique operational and environmental conditions in the receiving partner nation.

Figure 7: Example of a Cessna Caravan at a U.S. Partner Nation Airbase



Source: Staff Sergeant Stephany Richards. | GAO-18-449

- **Equipment suitability and procurement issues.** A lack of suitability of equipment provided by Global Train and Equip projects, as well as problems with procuring the equipment, can make it difficult to achieve desired capability-building objectives. For example, a 2017 assessment report of a 2015 project found that size distributions for body armor and helmets were not aligned with the general size requirements—an issue that had been identified in other countries receiving Global Train and Equip assistance. Additionally, the assessment noted that consideration was not given to providing body armor with built-in buoyancy for personnel operating in a maritime environment. Further, the assessment noted that bright orange life jackets were provided as tactical equipment, when a subdued color would have been more appropriate. Moreover, the 2016 assessment report found that equipment procurement issues in a 2012 project caused maintenance problems for the partner country. According to the report, the U.S. Army did not have an existing contract to obtain diesel vehicles from the manufacturer specified in the project proposal and congressional notification and therefore used an existing contract to obtain vehicles from a different manufacturer. The assessment observed that, while delivery of available vehicles provides some value, in this case it created maintenance problems for the partner nation because there was no dealership in the country to provide repairs and spare parts for the vehicles. The assessment found that in

such situations it may be best to delay fulfillment until a contract is available to procure vehicles from the specified manufacturer.

- **Partner nation shortfalls.** Shortfalls of partner nations, including not using assistance for the envisioned purposes, inability to maintain and sustain equipment, and difficulty in manning and training recipient units, can negatively affect the achievement of project objectives. For example, the 2016 assessment report for a 2015 project found that, although the recipient unit was able to plan and execute more complex operations to combat regional threats, such as Boko Haram, in a professional manner, the assessment team received no evidence that the unit had played more than a minor role in counter-Boko Haram operations. In a separate review of a partner nation's Global Train and Equip projects, the 2016 assessment found that the recipient unit had difficulties in maintaining weapons in a fully mission-capable status. The assessment found that a number of the unit's small arms were old and many had warped barrels, making them much less accurate. A 2017 assessment of a 2013 project found that the recipient unit suffered from shortages of junior noncommissioned officers and officers. The unit was also found to have few soldiers in specialty jobs who had received school training. The assessment report acknowledged that certain conditions in the partner nation, such as low levels of education, presented a multitude of problems in ensuring the development and maintenance of national security forces capable of working with, and integrating, a range of modern combat systems.
- **Workforce management challenges.** DOD officials indicated that workforce challenges, particularly related to turnover and staffing levels, can inhibit effective project design, program implementation, and oversight. DOD officials acknowledged that staff turnover, an issue that we previously identified, remains a challenge.³² According to the officials, there is a high degree of institutionalized turnover, particularly among security cooperation officers, at U.S. embassies and to some extent within the geographic combatant commands.³³ As a result, the officials overseeing project implementation may not have been responsible for project development and are less likely to understand the capabilities of the intended recipient units or the

³²See [GAO-16-368](#).

³³Under 10 U.S.C. § 384, DOD is required to carry out a program, to be managed by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, to oversee the development and management of a professional workforce supporting DOD security cooperation programs and activities.

capability gaps that could be addressed by equipment and training. DOD officials also told us that they have been challenged to meet programmatic demands with current staffing levels, particularly given the influx of funds appropriated for the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund in 2015. DOD officials said that the volume of Global Train and Equip projects expanded with the large increase in funding in 2015 and 2016, which stressed the foreign military sales system as well as geographic combatant commands' ability to plan for, and manage, the program with existing resources. For example, DOD officials said that teams of three staff at geographic combatant commands were managing over three times more funding than in prior years. As a result, staff were unable to maintain consistent levels of due diligence on issues such as ensuring that proposal packages addressed absorptive capacity and sustainment planning. According to DOD officials, negative effects of this inconsistent due diligence included the arrival of equipment not suitable for operations and overestimation of one partner nation's absorptive capacity, necessitating unplanned training and resulting in project delays. DOD officials said that they are now in the process of acquiring additional staffing to address capacity constraints.³⁴

DOD Officials Described Several Ongoing Changes to Improve Assessments

DOD officials told us that they are in the process of evaluating the effectiveness of the assessment process conducted in 2016 and 2017 and described a variety of changes that they are making to improve assessments of Global Train and Equip projects. DOD officials acknowledged that baseline and post-implementation assessments, as well as monitoring activities, had been conducted inconsistently in prior years, including for the projects developed and implemented in 2016 and 2017. DOD officials said that staffing constraints were a contributing factor. In March 2017, we also identified some weaknesses in the design

³⁴A 2017 assessment of DOD's Global Train and Equip program by DOD's Inspector General recommended that DOD ensure the designated program management office has sufficient professional staff with necessary expertise and appropriate resources to effect timely procurement and delivery of appropriate equipment components, training, and other services necessary for enabling partner nations to reach the intended full operational capability. For more information, see U.S. Department of Defense Inspector General, *Evaluation of Department of Defense Efforts to Build Counterterrorism and Stability Operations Capacity of Foreign Military Forces with 1206/2282 Funding* (Washington, D.C.: July 21, 2017).

of evaluations for Global Train and Equip projects and recommended that DOD develop a plan for improving the quality of these evaluations.³⁵

While prior laws required DOD to conduct assessments and evaluate the program's effectiveness, the fiscal year 2017 NDAA requires that DOD maintain a program of assessment, monitoring, and evaluation in support of the agency's security cooperation programs and activities.³⁶ Given the requirements for an assessment, monitoring, and evaluation program, and recognizing the importance of improving the assessment processes, DOD officials said they are developing an enhanced assessment process that includes increased staffing dedicated to monitoring and evaluation. For example, DOD officials said that they had hired several full-time contractors to perform key tasks related to monitoring and evaluation. According to the officials, several full-time contractor positions will be located in the various geographic combatant command locations, with responsibilities to

- develop baseline assessments in coordination with the geographic combatant commands and oversee the quality and completeness of those assessments;
- write performance indicators and performance plans into every Global Train and Equip project proposal;
- conduct monitoring and provide reports to the geographic combatant command and to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency on the status of project objectives and performance indicators; and
- conduct annual, independent evaluations to assess a few Global Train and Equip projects in detail.

In addition, DOD officials stated that they had hired a full-time contractor who will be based at headquarters and provide further support for each geographic combatant command and who will be charged with

³⁵For example, we identified weaknesses in the implementation of the evaluations' designs in terms of target population and sampling, data collection, and analysis. DOD partially concurred with our March 2017 recommendation and indicated that the department had established a policy on assessment, monitoring, and evaluation for security cooperation in January 2017 to improve the quality of program evaluation across the department. See GAO, *Foreign Assistance: Agencies Can Improve the Quality and Dissemination of Program Evaluations*, [GAO-17-316](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 3, 2017).

³⁶10 U.S.C. § 383. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency is also required to submit quarterly monitoring reports to the appropriate congressional committees. 10 U.S.C. § 333(f).

documenting that baseline assessments were completed and conducting quality reviews of assessment-related documents.

Conclusions

The Global Train and Equip program is a critical tool for building partner capacity to counter terrorism worldwide, and allocations for the program totaled more than \$4.1 billion in 2009 through 2017. DOD has established an interagency process to develop and select Global Train and Equip projects that takes into account four required security assistance planning elements. However, although DOD consistently addressed project objectives in its 2016 and 2017 project proposals, DOD did not consistently address the other three planning elements. In addition, DOD guidance no longer includes instructions for addressing one of these elements, sustainment planning, in proposals for projects for which DOD does not intend or anticipate sustainment. Updating its guidance to include such instructions would help ensure decision makers' access to complete information on annual sustainment costs, even costs anticipated to be negligible. Moreover, although officials reported having recently developed an informal quality review process designed to ensure that proposal packages address all required planning elements, DOD has not formalized this process as written policy. Formalizing the process would enhance DOD's ability to provide consistent oversight of project development and to ensure that decision makers have access to complete information about each planning element for proposed projects. This information would, in turn, help DOD and State decision makers ensure the efficient use of funding under the new Section 333 authority to build partner capacity.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making the following two recommendations to DOD:

The Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency should update guidance for project proposal packages to require an explanation when sustainment plans are not documented for projects for which sustainment is not intended or anticipated. (Recommendation 1)

The Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency should formalize as written policy its informal process for ensuring that project

proposal packages fully address and document all four required security assistance planning elements. (Recommendation 2)

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to DOD and State for comment. In its comments, DOD concurred with our recommendations and noted that the Defense Security Cooperation Agency will seek to update guidance for project proposal packages. DOD's comments are reproduced in appendix IV. State did not provide comments.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretaries of Defense and State, and the Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-5130 or mazanecb@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix V.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Mazanec". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Brian Mazanec
Acting Director, International Affairs and Trade

List of Committees

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
The Honorable Bob Corker
Chairman
The Honorable Bob Menendez
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Chairman
The Honorable Dick Durbin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Department of Defense
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
The Honorable Lindsey Graham
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The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives
The Honorable Ed Royce
Chairman
The Honorable Eliot Engel
Ranking Member
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Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The Carl Levin and Howard P. “Buck” McKeon National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2015 contains a provision for GAO to conduct biennial audits of such program or programs conducted or supported pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 2282 during the preceding 2 fiscal years. This report examines (1) the status of funding that the Department of Defense (DOD) allocated for Global Train and Equip projects in 2009 through 2017; (2) the extent to which DOD addressed security assistance planning elements in project proposals in 2016 and 2017; and, (3) DOD’s reporting on the achievement of Global Train and Equip project objectives and any factors affecting its ability to achieve those objectives.¹

To address these objectives, we analyzed funding data, program guidelines, project proposal documents, and congressional notifications. We discussed the funding data, project proposal process and key elements of project planning, documentation, and assessment with officials from DOD and the Department of State (State); geographic combatant commands in whose areas of responsibility partner nations received 2016 or 2017 assistance—the U.S. Africa Command, the U.S. Central Command, and the European Central Command; and the U.S. embassies in Jordan, Niger, and Uganda. We selected these countries on the basis of their having received a higher proportion of DOD’s allocations for the Global Train and Equip program in fiscal years 2016 and 2017; we also considered factors such as the number of project assessments conducted in each country, the maturity of projects, embassy officials’ project assessment experience, and the countries’ geographic distribution.

To identify the status of funding that DOD allocated for Global Train and Equip projects in fiscal years 2009 through 2017, we assessed funding data for 2009 through 2017. DOD provided data on allocations, amounts reallocated, unobligated balances, unliquidated obligations, and disbursements of funds for program activities according to the fiscal year when the funds were appropriated. We analyzed these data to determine

¹In this report, all years cited are fiscal years (Oct. 1–Sept. 30) unless otherwise noted.

the extent to which funds had been allocated, obligated, and disbursed. DOD also provided data on project funding by year of allocation. We used these data to report allocations for Global Train and Equip projects by fiscal year and recipient country. We assessed the reliability of these data by interviewing cognizant agency officials and comparing the data with previously published data. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for our purposes.

To assess the extent to which DOD addressed key elements of security sector assistance for projects it planned to implement in 2016 and 2017, we analyzed agency documents and interviewed agency officials. We reviewed *Presidential Policy Directive 23 on Security Sector Assistance*, which identified four key elements to be considered for security sector assistance programs: (1) project objectives that address partner needs, (2) the absorptive capacity of the recipient unit, (3) the baseline capabilities of the recipient unit, and (4) the arrangements for the sustainment of the project. We also reviewed DOD guidance, which requires these elements to be considered in project proposal development.² To determine the extent to which DOD addressed these elements in project proposals, we analyzed the content of agency-approved project proposals in 2016 and 2017. Two reviewers independently analyzed 41 proposal packages for 2016 and 31 proposal packages for 2017.³ The reviewers resolved any disagreements through discussion of the information used to make their independent determinations. We also interviewed State and DOD officials who develop and review proposals, discussing (1) how they use information in the project proposal packages to consider planning elements and (2) other factors they may consider in developing and reviewing proposals.

Further, we reviewed congressional notifications DOD developed subsequent to agency approval of Global Train and Equip project to determine the extent to which those documents included information about the four planning elements. With respect to our reporting on support for information about baseline assessments, congressional notifications lay out a standardized assessment framework to be used to assess the effects of projects. This framework includes a baseline

²DOD, *Building Partner Capacity for the 21st Century, Section 2282 (formerly "Section 1206") Global Train and Equip Program for Fiscal Year 2016* (Feb. 6, 2015).

³We excluded proposals for three 2016 projects that were notified to Congress but were not implemented.

assessment that DOD requires to be completed for inclusion in project proposal packages. DOD provided baseline assessments for 38 of 41 project proposals notified to Congress in 2016 and 30 of 31 project proposals notified to Congress in 2017. To evaluate the completeness of the required baseline assessment sections, we compared these 38 baseline assessment documents included in 2016 project proposal packages and 30 baseline assessment documents in 2017 project proposal packages with DOD internal guidance. To assess the completeness of sustainment plans, we used DOD's Global Train and Equip guidance for 2016 and 2017, which defined complete sustainment plans to include three elements: (1) an identification of funding sources for project sustainment, (2) an estimate of the annual sustainment costs, and (3) an assessment of the sustainment capability of the partner nation.

To examine DOD reporting on the achievement of project objectives in 2016 and 2017, we reviewed agency documents and interviewed agency officials. In particular, we analyzed DOD's annual project assessment reports and supporting documents for 2016 and 2017 as well as the assessment framework handbook. DOD submitted an annual assessment report to Congress in 2016 but was not required to submit an annual assessment report in 2017.⁴ As a result, DOD prepared country-level assessments in 2017 but did not compile them and submit them to Congress as it did in 2016. To examine the extent to which DOD's assessments and supporting documents indicated progress in building partner capacity, we compared baseline assessments of recipient unit capability and performance levels, conducted when projects were proposed, with post-implementation assessments of recipient unit capability levels, conducted after the delivery of program assistance. DOD uses a standard framework for evaluating the capabilities and performance of each recipient unit. Baseline assessments rate the recipient unit's level of capability and performance before project implementation on a 5-point scale, with 1 defined as the ability to perform some basic tasks to at least a low standard of performance and 5 defined as the ability to perform most of the advanced tasks for the unit's missions and to operate almost continuously throughout its assigned area of operations. After project implementation, project assessments and supporting documents use the same 5-point scale to rate any changes

⁴The fiscal year 2017 NDAA repealed Section 2282 of Title 10 of the U.S. Code and created Section 333 of the same title, which did not require DOD to submit a 2017 assessment report. 10 U.S.C. §333; see Pub. L. No. 114-328, § 1241(d)(5), Dec. 23, 2016.

(positive or negative) in the recipient unit's level of capability and performance. DOD's 2016 assessment report and 2017 country-level assessment reports included information on 84 Global Train and Equip projects; of these, 21 projects included both a baseline and a post-implementation assessment of the recipient unit.⁵ We relied on DOD's assessment reports and did not systematically validate the assessment results because it was beyond the scope of this engagement to assess the reliability of the assessments.⁶ However, for the purposes of this analysis, we met with DOD and contracted officials responsible for conducting and reviewing project assessments to gather information about their processes for assessing recipient unit capabilities. In addition, we reviewed DOD's project assessment guidance and their template for conducting project assessments, which was consistently used in the assessments we reviewed.

Finally, to examine DOD reporting on factors affecting the achievement of project objectives, we reviewed the assessment reports and interviewed DOD officials responsible for implementing the program, including officials from DOD's policy guidance and oversight office and its geographic combatant commands; officials at embassies in the three selected countries; and officials at State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. We also considered the factors that we identified as affecting the achievement of project objectives for our 2016 report that considered 2015 project proposals.⁷ On the basis of our review of DOD's assessments and supporting documents and our interviews with agency

⁵The 2016 assessment report included assessments of 48 Global Train and Equip projects in six countries. Of these 48 projects, 19 had a unit-level assessment for which a baseline and post-implementation assessment was conducted and 10 projects had a unit-level assessment for which only the baseline assessment had been completed. DOD did not provide unit-level assessments for 19 projects in 2016; in some of these cases, DOD officials said that they were unable to gain access to the unit for the assessment. The 2017 assessment report included assessments of 36 Global Train and Equip projects in six countries. Of these 36 projects, 2 had a unit-level assessment for which a baseline and post-implementation assessment was conducted and 18 projects had a unit-level assessment for which only the baseline assessment had been completed. DOD did not provide unit-level assessments for 16 projects. In some of these cases, DOD officials said the unit was a support unit and the assessment team was unable to gauge the unit's impact on counterterrorism operations; in other cases, DOD officials cited security concerns that limited access to conduct the assessment.

⁶In March 2017, we identified some weaknesses in the design of evaluations for Global Train and Equip projects, and we recommended that DOD develop a plan for improving the quality of these evaluations. See [GAO-17-316](#).

⁷See [GAO-16-368](#).

officials, we grouped the key factors they identified into four categories: (1) proposal design weaknesses, (2) equipment suitability and procurement issues, (3) partner nation shortfalls, and (4) workforce management challenges.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2017 to May 2018 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix II: Allocations for Global Train and Equip Projects in Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017

Table 2 shows the total amount of funding DOD allocated for Global Train and Equip projects in 2016 and 2017 combined.

Table 2: Funding Allocated for Global Train and Equip Projects, Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017

Geographic combatant command	Recipient country	Project name	Funding allocated (dollars) ^a
U.S. Africa Command	Burkina Faso	Border Security Enhancement	4,995,880
	Cameroon	Command and Control Node	75,419,432
		Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Enhancement	
		Fixed Wing Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance	
	Chad	Fixed Wing Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance	102,530,000
		Command and Control and Intelligence Fusion Center	
		Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Enhancement	
		Logistical Company	
	Kenya	Lift Helicopter	136,035,032
		Expeditionary Artillery	
		Huey II Supplemental	
	Mauritania	Counterterrorism Border-Security Enhancement	4,370,000
	Morocco	Special Forces Development	1,000,000
	Niger	Force Structure and Generation	82,731,000
		Command and Control Node and Signal	
		Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Enhancement	
		Agadez Quick Reaction Force	
		Counterterrorism Company Re-notification	
	Nigeria	Advanced Infantry Training / Special Operations Force Development	2,666,575
	Somalia	1st Danab Battalion	52,121,871
Somali National Army Galwaade Support Battalion			

Appendix II: Allocations for Global Train and Equip Projects in Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017

Geographic combatant command	Recipient country	Project name	Funding allocated (dollars)^a
	Tunisia	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance	83,132,872
		Advanced Rotary Wing Training	
		Maritime Border-Surveillance System	
		Advanced Rotary Wing Enhancement	
		Military Intelligence Company	
	Uganda	Light Helicopters	92,086,896
		Counterterrorism Joint Task Force	
		Raven Support	
		Force-Protection Enhancement	
	U.S. Central Command	Bahrain	Response Boats for Maritime Counterterrorism
Jordan		Enhancing Border Security (UH-60s)	585,374,544
		Operational Engagement Program	
		Rotary-Wing Lift for Quick Reaction Force	
		Operational Equipment for Counterterrorism	
		Special Operations Equipment for Counterterrorism	
		Howitzers	
		Operational Engagement Program	
		Rotary-Wing Lift Logistics Enhancement	
Lebanon		Protected Mobility	271,053,907
		Special Operations Equipment	
		Close Air Support Enhancement	
		Communications Enhancement	
		Tactical Unmanned Aerial Systems	
Oman		Ground Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Optics	11,835,000
Tajikistan		Border Security Program	20,125,000
	Ground Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance		
U.S. European Command	Albania	Counterterrorism Operational Analysis Network Development	3,480,000
	Bulgaria	Counterterrorism Capability Development	20,100,000
		Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance System	
	Czech Republic	Special Operations Forces Development	8,280,000
		Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Equipment	
		Explosive Ordnance Disposal Equipment and Training	
	Georgia	Counterterrorism Tactical-Skills Development	8,200,000
		Counterterrorism	
		Direct Action Forces	
	Greece	Domestic Maritime Counterterrorism Force Enhancement	6,070,000

Appendix II: Allocations for Global Train and Equip Projects in Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017

Geographic combatant command	Recipient country	Project name	Funding allocated (dollars)^a
		Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance System for Maritime Interdiction	
	Hungary	Communications Capability Development	7,580,000
	Latvia	Joint Terminal Attack Controller Capability	5,000,000
	Romania	Operational Training Capability	24,450,000
	Serbia	Counterterrorism Operational Analysis Network Development	870,000
	Turkey	Counterterrorism Operations and Training Capability	29,520,000
U.S. Pacific Command	Indonesia	Maritime Communications	17,880,000
	Maldives	Intelligence Enhancement	2,060,000
		Counterterrorism Enhancement	
	Philippines	Manned Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance	75,151,100
		Joint Precision Strike	
		Maritime Special Operations Group Armor	
		Tactical Unmanned Aerial Systems	
		Joint Special Operations Tactical Enhancement	
U.S. Southern Command	Trinidad and Tobago	Counterterrorism Enhancement	6,270,000
	Various	Transportation and Human Rights Training	37,698,908
Total			1,806,581,160

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-18-449

Note: Projects shown are those implemented under the Global Train and Equip program as authorized by the Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 and previously codified at 10 U.S.C § 2282. See Pub. L. No. 113-291, § 1205(a)(1), 128 Stat. 3533, Dec. 19, 2014.

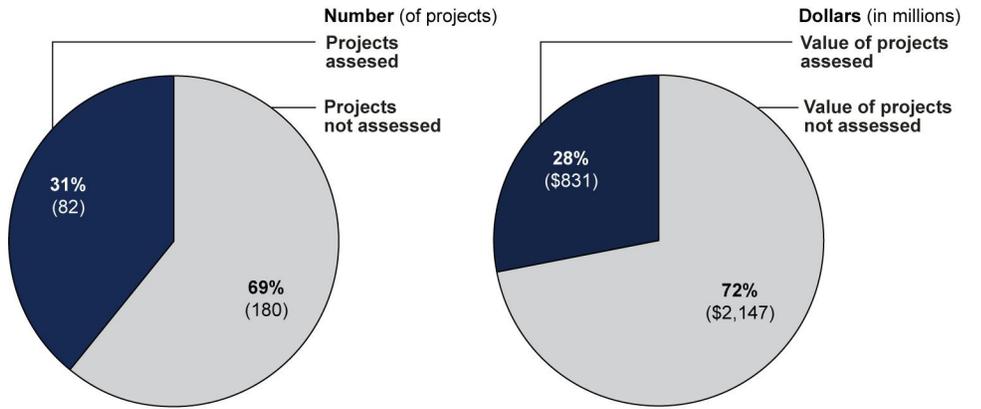
^aFunding shown was allocated by DOD in fiscal years 2016 and 2017 but may have been appropriated in prior years.

Appendix III: Global Train and Equip Projects and Allocations Included in DOD's 2012-2017 Assessment Reports

As figure 8 shows, in 2012 through 2017, the Department of Defense (DOD) prepared assessment reports for 31 percent of the projects (82 of 262 projects) it had implemented in 2006 through 2015.¹ These 82 projects account for 28 percent of the nearly \$3 billion DOD allocated for the program in those fiscal years. The Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 required DOD to assess the results of the Global Train and Equip program; however, DOD was not required to assess a specific number or percentage of projects in each fiscal year.

¹Our analysis does not include projects implemented in 2016 and 2017, because as of December 31, 2017, DOD had not yet completed assessments of these projects. We previously reported on the number and value of projects assessed in 2006 through 2013; see [GAO-16-368](#). Our current analysis updates that information.

Figure 8: Fiscal Year 2006-2015 Global Train and Equip Projects and Allocations Included in DOD's Fiscal Year 2012-2017 Assessment Reports



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-18-449

Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Defense



OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
2500 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2500

Brian M. Mazanec, PhD
Acting Director, International Affairs & Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington DC 20548

Dear Dr. Mazanec,

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO Draft Report GAO-18-449SU, "COUNTERTERRORISM: DoD Should Fully Address Security Assistance Planning Elements in Global Train and Equip Project Proposals," dated March 30, 2018 (GAO Code 102163).

Attached is DoD's proposed response to the subject report's recommendations.

The point of contact for further questions or concerns regarding this response is Alan Gorowitz, Director for Planning and Program Design, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, who can be reached at 703-697-3085 or email at Alan.G.Gorowitz.civ@mail.mil

Sincerely,

5/18/18

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Roh".

Daniel K. Roh
Director, Special Operations &
Combatting Terrorism Partnerships



**GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED MARCH 30, 2018
GAO-18-449SU (GAO CODE 102163)**

**“COUNTERTERRORISM: DOD SHOULD FULLY ADDRESS SECURITY
ASSISTANCE PLANNING ELEMENTS IN GLOBAL TRAIN AND EQUIP PROJECT
PROPOSALS”**

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
TO THE GAO RECOMMENDATION**

RECOMMENDATION 1: The GAO recommends that the Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency should update guidance for project proposal packages to require an explanation when sustainment plans are not documented for projects for which sustainment is not intended or anticipated. (Recommendation 1)

DoD RESPONSE: The Defense Security Cooperation Agency concurs with the recommendation, and will seek to update guidance for project proposal packages.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The GAO recommends that the Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency should formalize as written policy its informal process for ensuring that project proposal packages fully address and document all four required security assistance planning elements. (Recommendation 2)

DoD RESPONSE: The Defense Security Cooperation Agency concurs with the recommendation, and will seek to update guidance for project proposal packages.

Appendix V: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Brian Mazanec, (202) 512-5130, or MazanecB@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Drew Lindsey (Assistant Director), Jon Fremont (Analyst-In-Charge), Emily Desai, Reid Lowe, Martin de Alteriis, and Ashley Alley made key contributions to this report. In addition, Chris Keblitis provided technical assistance.

Appendix VI: Accessible Data

Data Tables

Accessible Data for Percentages of Global Train and Equip Project Proposals Addressing Four Required Planning Elements, Fiscal Years 2016-2017

	Project Objectives		Absorptive Capacity		Baseline Assessments		Sustainment Plans	
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
Yes	41	31	13	26	38	28	30	21
Percent	100%	100%	32%	84%	93%	90%	73%	68%
No	0	0	28	5	3	3	11	10
Percent	0%	0%	68%	16%	7%	10%	27%	32%
Total	41	31	41	31	41	31	41	31

Accessible Data for Figure 3: Funding Allocated for Global Train and Equip Projects, by Source, Fiscal Years 2009-2017

	Operation and Maintenance (original funding source)	Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund	European Reassurance Initiative
2009	\$340	0	0
2010	\$324	0	0
2011	\$232	0	0
2012	\$209	0	0
2013	\$252	0	0
2014	\$302	0	0
2015	\$318	\$181	\$175
2016	\$278	\$894	0
2017	\$278	\$357	0

Accessible Data for Figure 4: Geographic Distribution of Allocations for Global Train and Equip Projects in Fiscal Years 2016-2017

Country	Dollars (in millions)
Albania	\$3

Country	Dollars (in millions)
Bahrain	\$28
Bulgaria	\$20
Burkina Faso	\$5
Chad	\$103
Cameroon	\$75
Czech Republic	\$8
Georgia	\$8
Greece	\$6
Hungary	\$8
Indonesia	\$18
Jordan	\$585
Kenya	\$136
Latvia	\$5
Lebanon	\$271
Maldives	\$2
Mauritania	\$4
Morocco	\$1
Niger	\$83
Nigeria	\$3
Oman	\$12
Philippines	\$75
Romania	\$24
Serbia	\$1
Somalia	\$52
Tajikistan	\$20
Trinidad and Tobago	\$6
Tunisia	\$83
Turkey	\$30
Uganda	\$92
TOTAL	\$1,769

Accessible Data for Figure 5: Percentages of Global Train and Equip Project Proposals Addressing Four Security Assistance Planning Elements, Fiscal Years 2015-2017

Project Objectives	Absorptive Capacity	Baseline Assessments	Sustainment Plans
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	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Yes	54	41	31	10	13	26	34	38	28	41	30	21
Percent	100%	100%	100%	19%	32%	84%	63%	93%	90%	76%	73%	68%
No	0	0	0	44	28	5	20	3	3	13	11	10
Percent	0%	0%	0%	81%	68%	16%	37%	7%	10%	24%	27%	32%
Total	54	41	31	54	41	31	54	41	31	54	41	31

Accessible Data for Figure 6: Changes in Recipient Unit Capability Levels Reported in DOD's Fiscal Year 2016 and 2017 Global Train and Equip Project Assessments

Project Name	Fiscal Year Assessed	Project Year	Pre-Overall	Post-Overall
Counterterrorism Capability Enhancement	2017	2013	2	2
Special Operations Counterterrorism Capability Enhancement	2016	2013	2	2
Aircraft and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Capability	2016	2013	1	3
Aircraft and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Capability	2016	2013	1	3
Light Armor Reconnaissance Company	2016	2014	2	2
Ranger Regiment (Training)	2016	2015	2	2
Ranger Regiment (Support Unit)	2016	2015	2	2
Military Operations in Urban Terrain	2016	2009	3	3
Armed Caravan	2016	2009	3	4
Special Operations Forces Counterterrorism Capability	2016	2010	3	3
Border Security	2016	2013	3	3
Border Security	2016	2014	3	3
Border Security	2016	2014	3	3
Border Security	2016	2015	3	3
Logistics Support Package for CT Operations	2016	2012	2	2
Aircraft and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Capability	2016	2013	2	3
Contract Logistics Support	2016	2013	2	3
Aviation and Medical Capabilities Enhancement	2016	2014	2	3
Air Logistics and Communications Enhancement	2016	2012	2	3
Aircraft and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Capability	2016	2014	2	3

Project Name	Fiscal Year Assessed	Project Year	Pre-Overall	Post-Overall
Marine Special Operations Group	2017	2015	3	3

Accessible Data for Figure 8: Fiscal Year 2006-2015 Global Train and Equip Projects and Allocations Included in DOD's Fiscal Year 2012-2017 Assessment Reports

	Number of Projects	Value of Projects (Dollars in millions)
Assessed	82	\$831
Percent	31%	28%
Not assessed	180	\$2,147
Percent	69%	72%
Total	262	\$2,978

Agency Comment Letter

Accessible Text for Appendix IV Comments from the Department of Defense

Page 1

Brian M. Mazanec, PhD

Acting Director, International Affairs & Trade

U.S. Government Accountability Office

441 G Street, NW

Washington DC 20548

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Sincerely,

Daniel K. Roh

Director, Special Operations & Combatting Terrorism Partnerships

Page 2

GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED MARCH 30, 2018 GAO-18-449SU (GAO CODE 102163)

“COUNTERTERRORISM: DOD SHOULD FULLY ADDRESS SECURITY ASSISTANCE PLANNING ELEMENTS IN GLOBAL TRAIN AND EQUIP PROJECT PROPOSALS”

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