



DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

More Progress Needed for DOD to Meet Outstanding Statutory Requirements to Improve Collaboration

Accessible Version

January 2020

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-20-312](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD has had longstanding organizational and management challenges that hinder collaboration. Section 911 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017 directed the Secretary of Defense to, among other things, issue an organizational strategy that identifies critical objectives that span multiple functional boundaries, establish cross-functional teams to support this strategy, and provide related guidance and training.

The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017 also included a provision for GAO periodically to assess DOD's actions in response to section 911. GAO has issued a series of reports since June 2017 and made a number of recommendations to DOD. This report assesses the extent to which DOD has made progress in (1) implementing the requirements of section 911 and (2) establishing cross-functional teams.

GAO reviewed documentation, interviewed cross-functional team members and other DOD officials, and compared DOD's actions to section 911 requirements and leading practices for cross-functional teams.

What GAO Recommends

In this report, GAO recommends that DOD identify and document specific implementation steps to advance a collaborative culture, consistent with GAO's leading practices. GAO also reiterates the importance of addressing its prior recommendations. DOD concurred with GAO's recommendation.

View [GAO-20-312](#). For more information, contact Elizabeth Field at (202) 512-2775 or fielde1@gao.gov

January 2020

DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

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What GAO Found

Since GAO's August 2019 report, the Department of Defense (DOD) has taken actions to complete three additional statutory requirements of section 911 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017, but has not completed three remaining requirements. These requirements are intended to support cross-functional teams and to promote department-wide collaboration (see table). Cross-functional teams rely on individuals with different types of expertise to work toward a common, well-defined goal, and are thought to deliver better and faster solutions to complex and fast-moving problems.

Recently Addressed and Remaining Statutory Requirements from Section 911 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017

Requirement	Due date	Status
Issue organizational strategy	September 1, 2017	Complete
Streamline the Office of the Secretary of Defense	June 23, 2018	Complete
Issue guidance on cross-functional teams	September 30, 2017	Complete
Provide training for cross-functional team members and their supervisors	Not specified	Not complete
Provide training for presidential appointees	Within 3 months of appointment	Not complete
Report on the successes and failures of cross-functional teams	February 25, 2019	Not complete

Source: GAO analysis of legislation and Department of Defense information. | GAO-20-312

DOD's approved organizational strategy addresses key requirements of section 911, including identifying critical objectives that would benefit from the use of cross-functional teams and providing for the appropriate use of these teams. However, the strategy did not include practical, specific implementation steps to guide DOD's efforts to advance a collaborative culture, which had been included in earlier draft versions of the strategy. These steps had aligned with GAO's leading practices for mergers and organizational transformations. Specific implementation steps like those included in earlier drafts of the organizational strategy offered DOD a clear path forward for pursuing the goals of section 911 and for promoting a collaborative culture. Absent identifying and documenting specific implementation steps, it is less clear how DOD intends to implement the organizational strategy and assess progress toward its goals.

DOD's existing cross-functional team charged with improving electromagnetic spectrum operations and defending its communication systems from attacks is continuing its work by issuing a statutorily mandated report, among other efforts, but DOD has not clarified responsibility for funding the team. GAO will continue to monitor DOD's progress toward providing such support to the team as GAO recommended in August 2019. In addition, DOD has designated the Close Combat Lethality Task Force and the Protecting Critical Technology Task Force as new cross-functional teams, although they meet only some of the section 911 requirements. DOD officials said they will ensure that the newly designated teams meet these requirements, including providing required training.

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Abbreviations

CMO	Chief Management Officer
DMAG	Deputy's Management Action Group
DOD	Department of Defense
EMSO	Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
OCMO	Office of the Chief Management Officer

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January 30, 2020

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Chairman
The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Three years ago, in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017, Congress required the Department of Defense (DOD) to take specific actions to address longstanding organizational and management challenges that were hindering department-wide collaboration and integration.¹ While DOD had improved coordination across the combatant commands and Joint Chiefs of Staff, Congress was concerned that the department was continuing to face organizational and management challenges among the military departments and within the Office of the Secretary of Defense. In particular, DOD's military departments and functional organizations were not always working well together to accomplish departmental objectives.²

Section 911 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017 directed the Secretary of Defense to, among other things:

- formulate and issue an organizational strategy for DOD that identifies the critical objectives and other organizational outputs that span multiple functional boundaries and would benefit from the use of

¹Pub. L. No. 114-328, § 911 (2016).

²DOD's functional organizations include financial management, acquisition, defense security enterprise, installations and environment, logistics and materiel readiness, security cooperation, enterprise information technology infrastructure, and human resources management.

cross-functional teams to ensure collaboration and integration across the department;

- establish cross-functional teams that, among other things, address the critical objectives and outputs outlined in the department's organizational strategy;
- issue guidance on cross-functional teams and provide training to members of those established teams and their supervisors on elements of successful cross-functional teams; and
- provide training on leadership, modern organizational practice, collaboration, and the operation of cross-functional teams to individuals who have been appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate to a position within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, or request waivers from this requirement.

The John S. McCain NDAA for Fiscal Year 2019 subsequently introduced new requirements on DOD's implementation of section 911. Among other things, sections 918 and 1053(c) of the act required the Secretary of Defense to establish a cross-functional team pursuant to section 911 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017 on electronic warfare to identify gaps in electronic warfare and joint electromagnetic spectrum operations, capabilities, and capacities within the department across personnel, procedural, and equipment areas.³

Cross-functional teams rely on individuals with different types of expertise to work toward a common, well-defined goal, and are thought to deliver better and faster solutions to complex and fast-moving problems. As of our August 2019 report, DOD had established two cross-functional teams under section 911: the Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (EMSO) cross-functional team, which was formed in February 2019, and one that has since been disestablished.⁴ The disestablished team had been

³Pub. L. No. 115-232, §§ 918 and 1053(c) (2018).

⁴DOD established this team as the EMSO cross-functional team, with electromagnetic spectrum operations comprised of electronic warfare and spectrum management. See Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *Establishment of the Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Cross Functional Team*, (Feb. 2, 2019). As a result, we use the term electromagnetic spectrum operations when referring to the team in this report. See GAO, *Defense Management: DOD Should Set Deadlines on Stalled Collaboration Efforts and Clarify Cross-Functional Team Funding Responsibilities*, [GAO-19-598](#) (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 20, 2019). In addition, as we reported in January 2019, the department previously considered its cross-functional business reform teams to be responsive to section 911, but no longer does so. See GAO, *Defense Management: DOD Needs to Implement Statutory Requirements and Identify Resources for Its Cross-Functional Reform Teams*, [GAO-19-165](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 17, 2019).

responsible for managing the transfer of background investigations for certain DOD personnel from the Office of Personnel Management to DOD. Because those responsibilities were transferred to a newly created Personnel Vetting Transformation Office within DOD, department officials made the decision to disestablish the team. The team was disestablished as of January 2019. As discussed later in this report, DOD has since identified two additional cross-functional teams related to close-combat lethality and protecting critical technology.

Section 911 included a provision for us—every 6 months after the date of enactment on December 23, 2016, through December 31, 2019—to submit to the defense committees a report setting forth a comprehensive assessment of the actions that DOD has taken pursuant to section 911 during each 6-month period and cumulatively since the enactment of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017. Since June 2017, we have issued five reports and made 11 recommendations to DOD.⁵

In our most recent report, issued in August 2019, we reported that DOD was up to 21 months late in fully addressing several requirements of section 911, largely because the Chief Management Officer (CMO) had not approved the documents drafted to meet the requirements or coordinated department-wide review of the documents and provided them for Secretary of Defense issuance.⁶ We also reported that DOD had established its cross-functional team on EMSO, but that funding for the team was delayed in part because of disagreements over responsibility for funding the team. We recommended, and DOD concurred, that the Secretary of Defense ensure that the CMO meets specific internal deadlines for review and approval of outstanding requirements of section 911, and that DOD clarify roles and responsibilities for providing funding for the EMSO cross-functional team. See table 1 below for an overview of DOD actions and GAO reports in response to section 911. Additionally, see appendix I for more information on the status of DOD's implementation of the recommendations made in these reports.

⁵GAO, *Defense Management: DOD Has Taken Initial Steps to Formulate an Organizational Strategy, but These Efforts Are Not Complete*, [GAO-17-523R](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 23, 2017); *Defense Management: DOD Needs to Take Additional Actions to Promote Department-Wide Collaboration*, [GAO-18-194](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2018); GAO, *Defense Management: DOD Senior Leadership Has Not Fully Implemented Statutory Requirements to Promote Department-Wide Collaboration*, [GAO-18-513](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 25, 2018); [GAO-19-165](#); and [GAO-19-598](#).

⁶[GAO-19-598](#). DOD's CMO is leading the department's efforts to implement section 911.

Table 1: Department of Defense (DOD) Actions and GAO Reports in Response to Section 911 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017 from December 2016 through August 2019

Date	Actions
December 2016	NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017 is enacted
June 2017	DOD awards the contract for a study on leading practices of cross-functional teams GAO issues <i>Defense Management: DOD Has Taken Initial Steps to Formulate an Organizational Strategy, but These Efforts Are Not Complete</i> (GAO-17-523R)
August 2017	DOD completes its first draft of the organizational strategy DOD completes an internal study of cross-functional teams within the department DOD establishes its first cross-functional team to address backlog of security clearance investigations
September 2017	DOD develops its draft guidance on cross-functional teams DOD develops its draft training curriculum on cross-functional teams for team members and their supervisors DOD develops its draft training curriculum on cross-functional teams for presidential appointees DOD submits its study on leading practices of cross-functional teams to Congress
February 2018	GAO issues <i>Defense Management: DOD Needs to Take Additional Actions to Promote Department-Wide Collaboration</i> (GAO-18-194)
February-March 2018	DOD revises its draft organizational strategy and guidance to address GAO recommendations
June 2018	DOD submits report on the establishment of cross-functional teams to Congress GAO issues <i>Defense Management: DOD Senior Leadership Has Not Fully Implemented Statutory Requirements to Promote Department-Wide Collaboration</i> (GAO-18-513)
October 2018	DOD revises its draft organizational strategy to address additional legislative requirements
January 2019	GAO issues <i>Defense Management: DOD Needs to Implement Statutory Requirements and Identify Resources for Its Cross-Functional Reform Teams</i> (GAO-19-165)
July 2019	Chief Management Officer approves the draft organizational strategy and submits it for department-wide review
August 2019	GAO issues <i>Defense Management: DOD Should Set Deadlines on Stalled Collaboration Efforts and Clarify Cross-Functional Team Funding Responsibilities</i> (GAO-19-598)

Source: GAO analysis of statute and Department of Defense information. | GAO-20-312

In this sixth and final report required by section 911, we assess the extent to which DOD has made progress in implementing (1) the requirements of section 911 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017 related to DOD’s organizational strategy and associated guidance and training, and (2) cross-functional teams under section 911.

To address our first objective, we reviewed documentation and interviewed Office of the CMO (OCMO) officials on DOD’s efforts to finalize its draft organizational strategy; DOD’s guidance on cross-functional teams; and its training for cross-functional team members, their supervisors, and presidential appointees. We interviewed OCMO officials regarding DOD’s report on the successes and failures of cross-functional

teams. We compared DOD's efforts to the requirements in section 911 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017.

To address our second objective, we reviewed documentation and interviewed OCMO and other officials involved in the establishment of cross-functional teams to discuss their efforts to implement these teams. We also interviewed and surveyed the members of the EMSO cross-functional team about their experiences on the team. While designing the survey, we pretested the instrument with two members of the EMSO team and took their feedback into account when finalizing the survey instrument. Twelve of the 13 members of the EMSO team responded to our survey. We evaluated the information collected against the requirements for cross-functional teams in section 911 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017, as well as leading practices from our prior work on implementing effective cross-functional teams.⁷

We conducted this performance audit from August 2019 to January 2020 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.

⁷We previously reported on eight leading practices for implementing effective cross-functional teams. See [GAO-18-194](#). We identified these leading practices by reviewing literature and case studies on the use of cross-functional teams in the private and public sectors, as well as interviewing six academic and practitioner experts. Leading practices for effective cross-functional teams are aligned with leading practices for interagency collaboration. See GAO, *Managing for Results: Key Considerations for Implementing Interagency Collaborative Mechanisms*, [GAO-12-1022](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 27, 2012).

DOD Finalized Its Organizational Strategy and Guidance on Cross-Functional Teams but Removed Specific Implementation Steps from the Strategy and Has Not Implemented Remaining Section 911 Requirements

DOD has completed three additional statutory requirements of section 911 since our August 2019 report, but has not completed three remaining requirements, as shown in table 2. We previously reported that DOD had completed four of the statutory requirements, specifically awarding a contract for a study to determine how to best implement cross-functional teams, providing the results of the study to Congress, establishing any cross-functional teams to address critical department objectives and outputs, and reporting to Congress on the establishment of the cross-functional teams. Thus, in total, DOD has completed seven of the 10 statutory requirements. For more detail on all 10 statutory requirements, see appendix II.

Table 2: Status of DOD Actions in Response to Statutory Requirements from Section 911 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (since GAO’s August 2019 Report)^a

Requirement	Due date	Status of Department of Defense actions, as of December 2019
Issue organizational strategy	September 1, 2017	Complete; approved on October 29, 2019
Take actions to streamline the organizational structure and processes of the Office of the Secretary of Defense	June 23, 2018	Complete; actions identified in approved organizational strategy on October 29, 2019
Issue guidance on cross-functional teams	September 30, 2017	Complete; approved on December 12, 2019
Training for cross-functional team members and their supervisors	Not specified	Not complete; curriculum drafted, not approved
Training for presidential appointees	Within 3 months of appointment	Not complete; curriculum drafted, not approved
Analysis of the successes and failures of cross-functional teams	February 25, 2019	Not complete; work on assessment underway

Source: GAO analysis of statutes and Department of Defense information. | GAO-20-312

^aGAO-19-598. We previously reported that DOD had completed four other statutory requirements.

DOD Finalized Its Organizational Strategy but the Strategy Lacks Specific Implementation Steps

On October 29, 2019, the Secretary of Defense approved DOD's organizational strategy.⁸ In preparing the strategy for review and approval, OCMO obtained input on the draft organizational strategy from other DOD and OSD components, consistent with a recommendation from our February 2018 report that OCMO obtain stakeholder input on the development of the organizational strategy.⁹ We found that the strategy addresses key requirements of section 911, including identifying critical objectives that would benefit from the use of cross-functional teams and providing for the appropriate use of these teams. As part of the organizational strategy, DOD also identified the actions it has taken to streamline the organizational structure and processes of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, another requirement of section 911. For example, the strategy states that DOD has delegated authority to approve certain global force management actions to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and delegated certain acquisition oversight functions to the military departments. Further, consistent with our recommendation from our February 2018 report that the CMO address how the department will promote and achieve a collaborative culture, the organizational strategy includes a short reference to our leading practices for mergers and organizational transformations.

However, while the approved organizational strategy cites the leading practices, it does not include specific implementation steps that explain how DOD will follow these practices. Earlier drafts of the organizational strategy that we had reviewed included more specific implementation steps, but those steps were removed during the internal DOD review process. As we reported in August 2019, a January 2019 draft of the organizational strategy included practical implementation steps DOD planned to take to advance a collaborative culture, each of which were shown to align with our leading practices for mergers and organizational

⁸DOD, *Organizational Strategy for the Department of Defense Cross-Functional Teams*, (Oct. 29, 2019). Section 911 required the organizational strategy to be issued by September 1, 2017.

⁹[GAO-18-194](#).

transformations.¹⁰ For example, consistent with the leading practice for establishing a coherent mission and integrated strategic goals to guide the transformation, the January 2019 draft proposed that the CMO develop an implementation plan with goals and milestones for its efforts to implement the organizational strategy, communicate those goals and milestones, and report periodically on the achievement of the goals. However, in place of these specific steps, the approved organizational strategy simply lists these leading practices and makes a broad statement that DOD is committed to further incorporating and institutionalizing these practices at every opportunity.

An OCMO official told us these implementation steps were removed as the OCMO prepared the draft for department-wide coordination and submission to the Secretary of Defense for review and approval. According to that official, OCMO officials made this change because the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense were newly confirmed, and OCMO officials did not want to commit them to a specific course of action. That official also told us that DOD might use its senior leadership forums, such as the Deputy's Management Action Group (DMAG), to monitor implementation of the organizational strategy and identify opportunities to improve collaboration, including implementation of our leading practices.¹¹

¹⁰For prior assessments of DOD's draft organizational strategy, see [GAO-18-194](#) and [GAO-19-598](#). For leading practices see GAO, *Results-Oriented Cultures: Implementation Steps to Assist Mergers and Organizational Transformations*, [GAO-03-669](#) (July 2, 2003). We identified leading practices and implementation steps for mergers and organizational transformations that can help agencies transform their cultures so that they are more results-oriented, customer-focused, and collaborative. The leading practices include: (1) ensure top leadership drives the transformation; (2) establish a coherent mission and integrated strategic goals to guide the transformation; (3) focus on a key set of principles and priorities at the outset of the transformation; (4) set implementation goals and a timeline to build momentum and show progress from day one; (5) dedicate an implementation team to manage the transformation process; (6) use the performance management system to define responsibility and assure accountability for change; (7) establish a communication strategy to create shared expectations and report related progress; (8) involve employees to obtain their ideas and gain their ownership for the transformation; and (9) build a world-class organization.

¹¹According to DOD, the DMAG is the primary civilian-military management forum that supports the Secretary of Defense, and addresses top departmental issues that have resource, management, and broad strategic and/or policy implications. The DMAG's primary mission is to produce advice for the Deputy Secretary of Defense in a collaborative environment and to ensure that the DMAG execution aligns with the Secretary of Defense's priorities as well as the planning and programming schedule. The DMAG is cochaired by the Deputy Secretary of Defense and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with Secretaries of the military departments, Chiefs of the military services, and DOD Principal Staff Assistants holding standing invitations.

However, the official acknowledged that any plan to use such forums for monitoring implementation has not been finalized.

As we stated in making our February 2018 recommendation that the department address how it would promote and achieve a collaborative culture, section 911 identified several outcomes that DOD should achieve to advance such a culture.¹² We also noted that DOD could use our leading practices for mergers and organizational transformations to address how the department will advance a culture that is collaborative, team-oriented, results-driven, and innovative. We further stated that DOD would be better positioned to transform and meet its mission if it incorporated these leading practices in its organizational strategy as a way to better articulate how the department will achieve the outcomes that advance a collaborative culture across DOD and address the requirements of section 911.

Specific implementation steps like those included in earlier drafts of the organizational strategy offered the department a clear path forward for pursuing the goals of section 911 and promoting a collaborative culture. Absent these steps, such as developing an implementation plan with goals and milestones, it is less clear how DOD intends to implement the organizational strategy and assess progress toward its goals. Identifying and documenting specific implementation steps to advance a collaborative culture—such as those OCMO included in earlier drafts of the organizational strategy—is necessary to fully address the requirements of section 911.

DOD Finalized Guidance on Cross-Functional Teams and Plans More Detailed Guidance to Fulfill All Section 911 Requirements

On December 12, 2019, the Secretary of Defense approved DOD's guidance on cross-functional teams.¹³ We found that this two-page guidance addresses most, but not all, of the 911 requirements and leading practices for cross-functional teams. Specifically, it addresses in

¹²[GAO-18-194](#).

¹³Secretary of Defense, *Guidance on Secretary of Defense-Empowered Cross-Functional Teams*, (Dec. 12, 2019). Section 911 required the guidance on cross-functional teams to be issued by September 30, 2017.

whole or in part six of the seven section 911 requirements and six of the eight leading practices.

The Secretary-approved guidance also directs the CMO to develop more detailed implementing guidance. It will be important for the CMO to develop and issue this detailed implementing guidance to fully address section 911 requirements and our leading practices for effective cross-functional teams, consistent with a recommendation in our February 2018 report.¹⁴ According to an OCMO official, OCMO plans to use previously drafted terms of reference as the basis for the CMO's more detailed implementing guidance. Based on our review, when the Secretary of Defense approved guidance is considered along with the draft terms of reference expected to serve as detailed implementing guidance, both documents will fully address all section 911 requirements and leading practices for effective cross-functional teams. We will monitor the department's progress in issuing this guidance as part of our normal process of assessing DOD's efforts to implement our recommendations.

DOD Has Not Addressed Requirements for Training and Analysis

Training for Cross-Functional Teams Members and Their Supervisors

DOD has not approved its curriculum for training for cross-functional team members and their supervisors. In February 2018, we reported that DOD's draft curriculum for cross-functional team members and their supervisors addressed the section 911 requirements for that training.¹⁵ We reported in August 2019 that DOD had provided required training using its draft curriculum to members of the EMSO team—DOD's only established section 911 team at the time—but had not provided training to their supervisors.¹⁶

According to DOD's comments on our August 2019 report, DOD expected the draft curricula for training for cross-functional team members and their supervisors to have been approved simultaneously with the issuance of the Secretary's guidance on cross-functional teams. According to OCMO

¹⁴[GAO-18-194](#).

¹⁵[GAO-18-194](#).

¹⁶[GAO-19-598](#).

officials, however, DOD has contracted for the delivery of the required training for cross-functional team members and their supervisors. One of those officials also told us OCMO now expects that training to be completed in 2020. Another OCMO official told us that the OCMO has been further refining the draft curriculum based on feedback from the members of the EMSO team and external experts before submitting the curriculum for review and approval.

Training for Presidential Appointees

DOD has not provided required training on cross-functional teams and related subjects to presidential appointees and the curriculum has not been approved. Section 911 required presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed officials to receive training on leadership, modern organizational practice, collaboration, and the operation of cross-functional teams within 3 months of their appointment or to receive a waiver from the President of the United States. As of October 2019, 23 of 36 such positions had been filled and the officials had been in their positions for more than 3 months; none had received the statutorily mandated training.

According to DOD's comments on our August 2019 report, DOD expected the draft training curricula for presidential appointees to have been approved simultaneously with the issuance of the Secretary's guidance on cross-functional teams. According to OCMO officials, however, DOD has contracted for the delivery of the required training for presidential appointees. One of those officials also told us they now expect that training to be provided in 2020. An OCMO official told us that OCMO has been further refining the draft curriculum and discussing possible venues for providing this training for presidential appointees, including one of the weekly meetings that the Deputy Secretary of Defense has with all Office of the Secretary of Defense presidential appointees.

Analysis of Successes and Failures of Cross-Functional Teams

DOD has not completed the required analysis of the successes and failures of its cross-functional teams. Section 911 requires DOD's analysis to be completed with support from external experts in organizational and management sciences within 18 months of the establishment of the first cross-functional team under section 911. Because the first cross-functional team was established in August 2017, this analysis was due in February 2019. According to OCMO officials, DOD has contracted with an organization to help develop the analysis.

One of the officials also told us DOD expects the analysis to be completed in 2020. Another OCMO official told us in December 2019 that work on the assessment, including a survey and structured interviews, was underway, and that an initial draft report was expected by the end of December 2019.

DOD's Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Cross-Functional Team Is Continuing Its Work and DOD Has Expanded the Number of Teams

DOD's Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Cross-Functional Team Is Continuing to Work toward Its Mission but Resource Issues Remain

DOD's EMSO team is continuing to work toward its mission to develop requirements and specific plans to improve EMSO capabilities across the department and to achieve operational superiority.¹⁷ The team is developing 13 initiatives in four areas—governance, organization, capabilities and gaps, and training and readiness. In addition, the team issued a report required by section 1053 of the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, which included the mandated assessments of the electronic warfare capabilities of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China in consultation with the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency.¹⁸ Section 1053 also required the team to, among other things, update the department's Electronic Warfare Strategy in coordination with the Electronic Warfare Executive Committee. According to an EMSO official, the team is developing a new strategy, which is scheduled for completion in June 2020.

¹⁷According to DOD, joint electromagnetic spectrum operations are those activities consisting of electronic warfare and joint electromagnetic spectrum management operations used to exploit, attack, protect, and manage the electromagnetic operational environment to achieve the commander's objectives. Department of Defense, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, (as of May 2019). Such operations would include, for example, attacking an enemy's transmittal of radio or other communications or defending DOD systems from similar attacks.

¹⁸Pub. L. No. 115-232, § 1053 (2018).

The EMSO team is continuing to demonstrate leading practices for effective cross-functional teams, similar to what we reported in August 2019.¹⁹ Specifically, at that time, we reported that the EMSO team was demonstrating leading practices for effective cross-functional teams, such as a well-defined team structure and well-defined team goals. Based on the results of our recent survey of individual team members, most team members believe the team is demonstrating open and regular communication, an inclusive team environment, has an empowered cross-functional team leader, and has well-defined team goals.

However, our survey results show that team members responded less favorably to questions about senior management support than to questions about the other leading practices. Specifically, less than half of the respondents agreed with the statements that DOD's senior leadership provides the team with sufficient resources for its work, supported the team as a priority, and supported the team's goals and objectives. In their survey responses and during interviews, team members expressed their concerns about the lack of resources, such as funding and sufficient office space to perform their work.

According to team officials, they are continuing to work with the OCMO to resolve the team's resource issues. In our August 2019 report, we stated that the team's progress was negatively affected by funding delays resulting from disagreements among senior leadership over the responsibility for funding the team. The disagreement had been resolved for fiscal year 2019, but had not yet been resolved for future fiscal years. We recommended, and DOD concurred, that the CMO and EMSO cross-functional team clarify roles and responsibilities for providing administrative support and funding for the team beyond fiscal year 2019 in accordance with the memorandum establishing the team.

According to EMSO team officials, however, funding for future years has not been identified. The team has discussed its funding needs with the OCMO and staff from the Office of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, but there is still no clarity regarding responsibility for funding the team. The team's budget submission as part of DOD's fiscal year 2021 budget

¹⁹[GAO-19-598](#). In our February 2018 report, we identified eight leading practices associated with effective cross-functional teams: (1) open and regular communication, (2) well-defined team goals, (3) inclusive team environment, (4) senior management support, (5) well-defined team structure, (6) autonomy, (7) committed cross-functional team members, and (8) an empowered cross-functional team leader. See [GAO-18-194](#). These leading practices and their related key characteristics are reproduced in appendix III.

process was withdrawn because the amount requested was smaller than the amounts typically reviewed in the process. According to an EMSO team official, the OCMO is providing funding for the team incrementally on a quarterly basis, and is facing challenges with funding the team's request for a contract due to the department operating under a continuing resolution. According to another EMSO team official, the team is maintaining the status quo with its current funding and is not considering any additional initiatives.

We also reported in our August 2019 report that, according to a team official, while the team had its own office space, the space did not have the level of security required to allow the team to work on a third of its initiatives. Team officials have since told us the team plans to move to an appropriately secure space in early 2020. We will continue to monitor DOD's progress to secure resources and office space for the team as part of our normal process of assessing DOD's efforts to implement our recommendations.

DOD Has Expanded the Number of Cross-Functional Teams

In its approved organizational strategy, DOD identified two existing task forces to expand the number of cross-functional teams.²⁰ First, the Secretary of Defense established the Close Combat Lethality Task Force in February 2018 to develop, evaluate, recommend, and implement improvements to U.S. squad-level infantry combat formations and strengthen the combat, lethality, survivability, resiliency, and readiness of infantry squads.²¹ Second, the Secretary of Defense established the Protecting Critical Technology Task Force in October 2018 to address concerns over the security of the department's critical technology and the loss of classified information and controlled unclassified information that puts DOD's investments at risk and erodes the lethality and survivability of U.S. forces.²² According to an OCMO official, the OCMO updated the

²⁰As we discussed earlier in this report, DOD had established two cross-functional teams: the EMSO team, and the team that was disestablished but had been responsible for managing the transfer of background investigations for certain DOD personnel from the Office of Personnel Management to DOD.

²¹Secretary of Defense, *Directive-type Memorandum (DTM)-18-001 – "Establishment of the Close Combat Lethality Task Force (CCLTF),"* (Mar. 16, 2018, Incorporating Change 1, Dec. 28, 2018).

²²Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *Establishment of the Protecting Critical Technology Task Force,* (Oct. 24, 2018).

organizational strategy and designated these two task forces as cross-functional teams as a result of input from DOD senior leadership during their review of the draft organizational strategy.

Based on our review of the documents used to establish the two task forces, we found that they would meet only some of the requirements we reviewed for cross-functional teams as mandated by section 911. For example, we found that the documentation for the Close Combat Lethality Task Force, as it was established, shows that the task force has a clearly established objective; is directed to develop recommendations such as policy changes and investment decisions; and is directed to make decisions on cross-functional issues—some of the key section 911 requirements. Similarly, we found that the documentation for the Protecting Critical Technology Task Force, as established, shows that the director of the task force has the authority to select the membership from across the department, another key requirement. However, based on the documents we reviewed, we found that the teams would not meet other requirements. For example, we found that the documentation for both teams did not ensure that those team members and leaders who are supervisors receive training in elements of successful cross-functional teams. According to an OCMO official, the OCMO will ensure that these task forces identified as cross-functional teams meet the requirements of section 911. For example, the OCMO will provide the required training.

DOD's newly issued guidance on cross-functional teams could help ensure that existing and any new cross-functional teams meet section 911 requirements. In addition, it could help provide these existing and any new teams with the information, direction, and authority they need to comply with mandated requirements for cross-functional teams. For example, section 911 permits the Secretary to delegate to cross-functional teams any decision-making authority that the Secretary considers appropriate to achieve the objectives of the teams; DOD's guidance delineates the decision-making authority of cross-functional teams.

Conclusions

More than 3 years after the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, DOD has begun to take key steps to address the requirements of section 911 and to promote a more collaborative culture in the department, including issuing its organizational strategy and making greater use of cross-functional teams under the act.

Even as it has taken these steps, challenges for the departments' ongoing implementation of section 911 remain. The department has still not addressed key requirements to help promote a collaborative culture and, according to officials, still has not identified responsibility for funding one of its cross-functional teams established under section 911. Further, specific implementation steps that would have offered the department a clear path forward for pursuing the goals of section 911 and promoting a collaborative culture at DOD were removed from DOD's approved organizational strategy—a disappointing development. Identifying and documenting specific implementation steps to encourage a collaborative culture is necessary to fully address the requirements of section 911 and encourage such a culture.

Recommendation for Executive Action

The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Chief Management Officer identify and document specific implementation steps to advance a collaborative culture, consistent with our leading practices for mergers and organizational transformations.

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to DOD for review and comment. In its written comments, which are reproduced in Appendix IV, DOD concurred with our recommendation. DOD also provided additional information on the steps that DOD has taken or plans to take to advance a collaborative culture, such as the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense's use of DOD's senior governance forums to encourage collaboration across the department. DOD also stated that it plans to incorporate policies based on best practices for cultivating a collaborative organizational climate into the CMO's guidance on the implementation of cross-functional teams as well as future National Defense Strategies and National Defense Business Operations Plans.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees and to the Secretary of Defense and Chief Management Officer. 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) 512-2775 or fielde1@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 are listed in appendix V.



Elizabeth Field
Director
Defense Capabilities and Management

Appendix I: Prior GAO Reports on the Department of Defense's (DOD) Implementation of Section 911 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017

Section 911 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017 included a provision for us—every 6 months after the date of enactment on December 23, 2016, through December 31, 2019—to submit to the congressional defense committees a report. Each report is to set forth a comprehensive assessment of the actions that DOD has taken pursuant to section 911 during each 6-month period and cumulatively since the NDAA's enactment. Table 3 identifies our five prior reports on DOD's implementation of section 911 and the status of the 11 recommendations from those reports.

Table 3: Prior GAO Reports on the Department of Defense's (DOD) Implementation of Section 911 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017 and Status of Recommendations, as of December 2019

Report title	Report issuance date	Recommendation	Status of DOD's implementation
Defense Management: DOD Has Taken Initial Steps to Formulate an Organizational Strategy, but These Efforts Are Not Complete, GAO-17-523R	June 23, 2017	We did not make recommendations in this report.	Not applicable
Defense Management: DOD Needs to Take Additional Actions to Promote Department-Wide Collaboration, GAO-18-194	February 28, 2018	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the CMO, in its revisions to the draft organizational strategy, address how the department will promote and achieve a collaborative culture, as required under section 911 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017. The CMO could accomplish this by incorporating our leading practices on mergers and organizational transformations.	Implemented

**Appendix I: Prior GAO Reports on the
Department of Defense's (DOD)
Implementation of Section 911 of the National
Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal
Year 2017**

Report title	Report issuance date	Recommendation	Status of DOD's implementation
Defense Management: DOD Needs to Take Additional Actions to Promote Department-Wide Collaboration, GAO-18-194	February 28, 2018	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the CMO obtain stakeholder input on the development of the organizational strategy from key stakeholders, including the Secretary of Defense, the military departments, the combatant commands, and defense agencies.	Implemented
Defense Management: DOD Needs to Take Additional Actions to Promote Department-Wide Collaboration, GAO-18-194	February 28, 2018	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the CMO fully address all requirements in section 911 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017 and incorporate leading practices for effective cross-functional teams in guidance on Secretary of Defense-empowered cross-functional teams.	Partially implemented
Defense Management: DOD Needs to Take Additional Actions to Promote Department-Wide Collaboration, GAO-18-194	February 28, 2018	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the CMO either: (a) provide training for presidentially-appointed, Senate-confirmed individuals in the Office of the Secretary of Defense that includes the required elements—leadership, modern organizational practice, and collaboration—in section 911 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2017, or (b) develop criteria for obtaining a waiver and have the Secretary of Defense request such a waiver from the President for these required elements if the individual possesses—through training and experience—the skill and knowledge otherwise to be provided through a course of instruction.	Not implemented
Defense Management: DOD Senior Leadership Has Not Fully Implemented Statutory Requirements to Promote Department-Wide Collaboration, GAO-18-513	June 25, 2018	We did not make recommendations in this report.	Not applicable
Defense Management: DOD Needs to Implement Statutory Requirements and Identify Resource for Its Cross-Functional Reform Teams, GAO-19-165	January 17, 2019	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Chief Management Officer (CMO) establishes a process for identifying and prioritizing available funding to develop and implement initiatives from the cross-functional reform teams. ^a	Not implemented
Defense Management: DOD Should Set Deadlines on Stalled Collaboration Efforts and Clarify Cross-Functional Team Funding Responsibilities, GAO-19-598	August 20, 2019	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the CMO meets DOD's August 2019 deadline for final submission of the organizational strategy to the Secretary of Defense for review and issuance.	Implemented

**Appendix I: Prior GAO Reports on the
Department of Defense's (DOD)
Implementation of Section 911 of the National
Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal
Year 2017**

Report title	Report issuance date	Recommendation	Status of DOD's implementation
Defense Management: DOD Should Set Deadlines on Stalled Collaboration Efforts and Clarify Cross-Functional Team Funding Responsibilities, GAO-19-598	August 20, 2019	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the CMO meets DOD's September 2019 deadline for review and approval of DOD's guidance on cross-functional teams and final submission to the Secretary for review and issuance.	Implemented
Defense Management: DOD Should Set Deadlines on Stalled Collaboration Efforts and Clarify Cross-Functional Team Funding Responsibilities, GAO-19-598	August 20, 2019	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the CMO meets DOD's September 2019 deadline for review and approval of DOD's training curriculum for cross-functional team members and their supervisors.	Partially implemented
Defense Management: DOD Should Set Deadlines on Stalled Collaboration Efforts and Clarify Cross-Functional Team Funding Responsibilities, GAO-19-598	August 20, 2019	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the CMO meets DOD's September 2019 deadline for review and approval of DOD's training curriculum for presidential appointees.	Partially implemented
Defense Management: DOD Should Set Deadlines on Stalled Collaboration Efforts and Clarify Cross-Functional Team Funding Responsibilities, GAO-19-598	August 20, 2019	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the CMO meets DOD's November 2019 deadline for drafting, review, and approval of DOD's report on the success and failures of cross-functional teams and final submission to the Secretary for review and approval.	Not implemented
Defense Management: DOD Should Set Deadlines on Stalled Collaboration Efforts and Clarify Cross-Functional Team Funding Responsibilities, GAO-19-598	August 20, 2019	The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the CMO and the electromagnetic spectrum operations cross-functional team clarify roles and responsibilities for providing administrative support and funding for the team beyond fiscal year 2019 in accordance with the memorandum establishing the team.	Partially implemented

Source: GAO analysis of DOD information. | GAO-20-312

^aThe department previously considered its cross-functional business reform teams to be responsive to section 911, but plans to no longer do so. The National Defense Business Operations Plan for Fiscal Years 2018-2022, issued in May 2018, stated that these teams were established pursuant to section 911. However, DOD's organizational strategy states that these teams were not established in response to section 911. Instead, it describes them as a second layer of cross-functional coordination that will aid in ensuring broader implementation of collaborative and team-oriented practices in the department.

Appendix II: Summary of Requirements in Section 911 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017

Section 911 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 requires the Secretary of Defense to take several actions. Table 4 summarizes these requirements, the due date, and the date completed, if applicable, as of December 2019.

Table 4: Status of Requirements in Section 911 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, as of December 2019

Not later than . . .	The Secretary of Defense is to . . .	Date completed
Not specified	Ensure that team members and all leaders in functional organizations that are in the supervisory chain for personnel serving on such team receive training in elements of successful cross-functional teams, including teamwork, collaboration, conflict resolution, and appropriately representing the views and expertise of their functional components.	Not completed
3 months of the appointment of an individual to a position in the Office of the Secretary of Defense appointable by and with the advice and consent of the Senate	Send the individual to a training course in leadership, modern organizational practice, collaboration, and the operation of cross-functional teams. This training requirement can be waived under certain circumstances.	Not completed
March 15, 2017	Award any necessary contract for a study to determine how to best implement effective cross-functional teams in the Department of Defense (DOD). This study should include (1) lessons learned, as reflected in academic literature, business and management school case studies, and the work of leading management consultant firms, on the successful and failed application of cross-functional teams in the private sector and government, and on the cultural factors necessary to support effective cross-functional teams and (2) the historical and current use by DOD of cross-functional working groups, integrated process teams, councils, and committees, and the reasons why such entities have or have not achieved high levels of teamwork or effectiveness.	June 9, 2017
July 15, 2017	Provide the results of the study to the congressional defense committees.	September 28, 2017

**Appendix II: Summary of Requirements in
Section 911 of the National Defense
Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017**

Not later than . . .	The Secretary of Defense is to . . .	Date completed
September 1, 2017	Develop and issue an organizational strategy that (1) identifies the critical objectives and other organizational outputs for DOD that span multiple functional boundaries and would benefit from the use of cross-functional teams; (2) improves the manner in which DOD integrates the expertise and capacities of the functional components of DOD for effective and efficient achievement of such objectives and outputs; (3) improves the management of relationships and processes involving the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the combatant commands, the military departments, and the defense agencies with regard to such objectives and outputs; (4) improves the ability of DOD to work effectively in interagency processes with regard to such objectives and outputs in order to better serve the President; and (5) achieves an organizational structure that enhances performance with regard to such objectives and outputs.	October 29, 2019
September 30, 2017	Establish cross-functional teams to address critical objectives and outputs for such teams as determined to be appropriate in accordance with the organizational strategy. ^a	August 25, 2017
September 30, 2017	Issue guidance on cross-functional teams (1) addressing the role, authorities, reporting relationships, resourcing, manning, training, and operations of cross-functional teams; (2) delineating decision-making authority of such teams; (3) providing that the leaders of functional components of DOD that provide personnel to such teams respect and respond to team needs and activities; and (4) emphasizing that personnel selected for assignment to such teams shall faithfully represent the views and expertise of their functional components while contributing to the best of their ability to the success of the team concerned.	December 12, 2019
18 months after the date of the enactment of the act (i.e., June 23, 2018)	Submit to Congress a report on the establishment of cross-functional teams, including descriptions from the leaders of teams on the manner in which the teams were designed and how they functioned.	June 21, 2018
18 months after the date of the enactment of the act (i.e., June 23, 2018)	Take actions, as the Secretary considers appropriate, to streamline the organizational structure and processes of the Office of the Secretary of Defense in order to increase spans of control, achieve a reduction in layers of management, eliminate unnecessary duplication between the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff, and reduce the time required to complete standard processes and activities.	Completed; actions identified in organizational strategy
18 months after the date on which the first cross-functional team is established (i.e., February 25, 2019)	Complete an analysis of the successes and failures of teams established, and determine how to apply the lessons learned from that analysis.	Not completed

Source: GAO analysis of legislation and DOD information. | GAO-20-312

^aFor each cross-functional team established pursuant to section 911, the Secretary of Defense is required to (1) assign as leader of such team a senior qualified and experienced individual, who shall report directly to the Secretary regarding the activities of such team; (2) delegate to the team leader authority to select members of such team from among civilian employees of the department and members of the armed forces in any grade who are recommended for membership on such team by the head of a functional component of the department within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and the military departments, by the commander of a combatant command, or by the director of a defense agency; (3) provide the team leader with necessary full-time support from team members, and the means to collocate team members; and (4) ensure that the congressional defense committees are provided information on the progress and results of such team upon request.

Appendix III: Leading Practices for Implementing Effective Cross-Functional Teams

In February 2018, we reported on eight leading practices for implementing effective cross-functional teams.¹ Table 5 identifies these leading practices and their related key characteristics.

Table 5: Leading Practices and Key Characteristics of Cross-Functional Teams

Leading practice	Description	Key characteristics
Open and regular communication	Efficient cross-functional teams have effective communication mechanisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-functional teams should openly share information within the team. Teams should proactively seek feedback and information from stakeholders. Cross-functional teams should have open and regular communication with team members, team leaders, and management.
Well-defined team goals	Effective cross-functional teams have clear, updated, and well-defined goals common to the team, team leader, and management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team goals should be clear, well defined, linked, updated, and commonly shared with team members, team leaders and senior leaders (management). Team objectives should have linkages to the organization's goals. Team members and leaders should be supportive of the cross-functional team's goals.

¹GAO, *Defense Management: DOD Needs to Take Additional Actions to Promote Department-Wide Collaboration*, [GAO-18-194](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2018). We identified these leading practices by reviewing literature and case studies on the use of cross-functional teams in the private and public sectors, as well as interviewing six academic and practitioner experts. Leading practices for effective cross-functional teams are aligned with the leading practices for interagency collaboration we have identified in our prior work. See GAO, *Managing for Results: Key Considerations for Implementing Interagency Collaborative Mechanisms*, [GAO-12-1022](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 27, 2012).

**Appendix III: Leading Practices for
Implementing Effective Cross-Functional
Teams**

Leading practice	Description	Key characteristics
Inclusive team environment	Effective cross-functional teams invest in a supportive and inclusive team environment where all team members have collective responsibility and individual accountability for the team's work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-functional teams should invest in a single team culture with shared values of inclusiveness and collective responsibility. • Cross-functional team members should be supportive and trusting of one another. • Cross-functional team members should have mutual respect and cooperation with each other. • Individual team members should participate and be accountable for the team's work.
Well-defined team structure	Effective cross-functional teams have well-defined team operations with project-specific rules and procedures established for each team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-functional teams should have a well-defined structure, project-specific rules, and procedures. • Cross-functional teams should be colocated within the same physical proximity. • Cross-functional teams should have appropriate training and learning environments.
Autonomy	Effective cross-functional teams are independent and have the ability to make decisions independently and rapidly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-functional teams should be empowered to make decisions. • Cross-functional teams should be able to creatively solve problems.
Senior management support	Effective cross-functional teams have senior managers who view the teams as a priority within the organization and provide these teams with resources and rewards to recognize their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior management should support cross-functional teams as a priority. • Senior management should provide cross-functional teams with access to resources and rewards. • Senior management should provide career advancement opportunities, recognition, and incentives for cross-functional team leaders and members.
Committed cross-functional team members	Effective cross-functional teams have members committed to the team's goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-functional team members should have a wide diversity of knowledge and expertise. • Cross-functional team members should be committed to working toward achieving the team's goals.
Empowered cross-functional team leader	The selected cross-functional team leader should be clear in guidance for team members, be proactive, empowered to make decisions and provide feedback and developmental opportunities to team members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-functional team leaders should be empowered to provide clear guidance and be proactive in decision making. • Cross-functional team leaders should provide feedback and developmental opportunities to team members. • Cross-functional team leaders should regularly interact with senior management.

Source: GAO. | GAO-20-312

Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Defense



CHIEF MANAGEMENT OFFICER
9010 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-9010

JAN 22 2020

Ms. Elizabeth Field
Acting Director, Defense Capabilities Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington DC 20548

Dear Ms. Field,

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report GAO-20-312, "Defense Management: More Progress Needed for DoD to Meet Outstanding Statutory Requirements to Improve Collaboration," dated December 20, 2019 (GAO Code 103714).

Enclosed is the DoD response to the Report's draft recommendation. My point of contact is Mr. Brian Helmer, who can be reached at brian.w.helmer.civ@mail.mil or 703-614-4783.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa W. Hershman".

Lisa W. Hershman

Enclosure:
As stated

GAO Draft Report Date December 20, 2019
GAO-20-312 (GAO CODE 103205)

GAO-20-312, “Defense Management: More Progress Needed for DoD to Meet Outstanding
Statutory Requirements to Improve Collaboration”

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS TO THE GAO RECOMMENDATION

GAO Recommendation for Executive Action

RECOMMENDATION: “The SecDef should ensure the Chief Management Officer identify and document specific implementation steps to advance a collaborative culture, consistent with our leading practices for mergers and transformational transformations.”

DoD RESPONSE

The Department concurs that it is important to continue to identify and document specific implementation steps to advance a collaborative culture consistent with leading practices, but offers the following comments to the statement in the draft report’s Conclusions that, “the Department has still not addressed key requirements to help promote a collaborative culture.”

The Report would benefit from the inclusion of the enhanced institutional practices, which have been actively led by the current Secretary of Defense (SecDef), Deputy Secretary of Defense (DepSecDef), and Chief Management Officer of the DoD (CMO); all three of whom recognize and embrace the importance of a collaborative culture in effectively advancing defense reform and transformation.

In this regard, in addition to the October 2019, approved Organizational Strategy and its design based on a foundation of collaborative culture, on December 12, 2019, the SecDef followed with specific written guidance to the Department on SecDef-empowered Cross-Functional Teams (CFTs), stating “I fully embrace this enhanced management arrangement and am committed to using these empowered CFTs in the areas where they can enrich collaboration and integration across the Department.” In the Organizational Strategy, the SecDef also designated two entities established prior to his tenure in 2018 as SecDef-empowered CFTs – the Close Combat Lethality Task Force (TF) and the Protecting Critical Technology TF – and committed to making them fully compliant with the requirements of Section 911 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 National Defense Authorization Act by providing targeted training. The curriculum for this training of CFT members is infused with guidance and best practices for promoting Department-wide collaboration, as is the training curricula for Office of the Secretary of Defense senior leaders and supervisors in parent organizations detailing personnel to CFTs.

Further, the SecDef and DepSecDef have instantiated a highly integrated governance framework, which includes three of the Department’s senior governance fora—the SecDef’s Weekly Priorities Review and the National Defense Strategy Implementation Forum, and the DepSecDef’s Deputy’s Management Action Group—designed with broad membership participation spanning all stakeholder equities, and often including invited participation from

other Executive Branch agencies. All three forums use web-based collaborative tools to support disciplined, transparent, broad, and timely information sharing, including the distribution of comprehensive briefing material in advance of meetings, and formal documentation of the deliberations and decisions following each meeting. Any issues brought before each of the three forums are fully informed and vetted in a supporting tier of senior leader governance fora, almost all of which leverage formal Action Officer-led sub-committees or working groups to solicit and develop stakeholder input and recommendations. The CMO, as the policy proponent for DoD governance and decision support, will document the value and necessity of such bottom-up, working-level fueled issue development in the impending update of DoD Directive 5105.79, "DoD Senior Governance Councils."

In a similar vein, as directed in the December 12, 2019, SecDef guidance on SecDef-empowered CFTs, the CMO, as the official with principal responsibility for oversight of the section 911 actions, will issue follow-on detailed instructions for the implementation of CFTs. In addition to addressing the attributes, composition, and use/application of CFTs, the guidance will incorporate policies based on best practices for cultivating a collaborative organizational climate.

The SecDef recently led a comprehensive Defense-Wide Review (DWR) to improve and transform the alignment of time, money, and people to the National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the National Defense Business Operations Plan (NDBOP) priorities. In total, the SecDef and/or the DepSecDef, hosted 21 successful review sessions examining \$99 billion of appropriated resources across roughly 50 organizations and activities. Effective collaboration at all levels was required for the DWR's success in resource savings and reform implementation throughout the Fourth Estate. Going forward, there is every expectation that the execution of the SecDef's 2020 Reform efforts will leverage a similarly broad approach, with involvement and input from all organizational levels, in order to maximize enterprise solutions and outcomes for the productive transformation of the Fourth Estate.

The 2018 NDS and the NDBOP provide a clear roadmap for the DoD to focus on increasing lethality, strengthening relationships with allies and partners, and reforming how the DoD does business, highlighting the need for collaborative transformation in a number of areas. In future NDSs and NDBOPs, the Department is committed to documenting guidance and leveraging actions for promoting collaboration based on best practices.

The Department also notes funding requirements for all SecDef empowered CFTs is in place for FY20. The Department is exploring options for dedicated funding line(s) for CFT implementation in future annual defense appropriations. Congress's support in meeting this objective is most welcomed.

Appendix V: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Elizabeth Field, (202) 512-2775 or fielde1@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Margaret Best (Assistant Director), Daniel Ramsey (Analyst-in-Charge), Sierra Hicks, Alexa Kelly, Richard Powelson, and Paulina Reaves made key contributions to this report. Other contributors included Tracy Barnes, Arkelga Braxton, Michael Holland, Ned Malone, Judy McCloskey, Jeremy Rogers, Ron Schwenn, and Sarah Veale.

Appendix VI: Accessible Data

Agency Comment Letter

Accessible Text for Appendix IV Comments from the
Department of Defense

Page 1

JAN 22 2020

Ms. Elizabeth Field

Acting Director, Defense Capabilities Management

U.S. Government Accountability Office

441 G Street, NW

Washington DC 20548

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Enclosure:

As stated

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The SecDef recently led a comprehensive Defense-Wide Review (DWR) to improve and transform the alignment of time, money, and people to the National Defense Strategy (NOS) and the National Defense Business Operations Plan (NDBOP) priorities. In total, the SecDef and/or the DepSecDef, hosted 21 successful review sessions examining \$99 billion of appropriated resources across roughly 50 organizations and activities. Effective collaboration at all levels was required for the DWR's success in resource savings and reform implementation throughout the Fourth Estate. Going forward, there is every expectation that the execution of the SecDefs 2020 Reform efforts will leverage a similarly broad approach, with involvement and input from all organizational levels, in order to maximize enterprise solutions and outcomes for the productive transformation of the Fourth Estate.

The 2018 NOS and the NDBOP provide a clear roadmap for the DoD to focus on increasing lethality, strengthening relationships with allies and partners, and reforming how the DoD does business, highlighting the need for collaborative transformation in a number of areas. In future NDSs and NDBOPs, the Department is committed to documenting guidance and leveraging actions for promoting collaboration based on best practices.

The Department also notes funding requirements for all SecDef empowered CFTs is in place for FY20. The Department is exploring options for dedicated funding line(s) for CFT implementation in future annual defense appropriations. Congress's support in meeting this objective is most welcomed.

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