

Why GAO Did This Study

EOD forces are a high demand, critical asset that support DOD's ability to execute military operations. DOD increased the number of EOD forces by more than 70 percent from 2002 to 2012 because of increased demand. When not deployed, EOD forces provide support to civil authorities. One of these missions is protecting U.S. and foreign dignitaries—also referred to as VIP support missions.

House Report 115-200 included a provision for GAO to review matters related to EOD capabilities and requirements. This report assesses the extent to which (1) the military services consider all combatant command EOD requirements, including DSCA, in determining the number of EOD personnel needed, and (2) DOD evaluates the effect of VIP support missions on the military preparedness of EOD forces. GAO reviewed relevant guidance, analyzed EOD data, and interviewed EOD and manpower officials. This is a public version of a sensitive report that GAO issued in July 2019. Information that DOD deemed sensitive has been omitted.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations including that DOD (1) update the appropriate service guidance to ensure that all EOD missions, including DSCA missions, are considered in determining the required number of EOD forces, and (2) incorporate into appropriate guidance a requirement for the military services to notify the Joint Staff and combatant commands when VIP support missions negatively affect the military preparedness of EOD units. DOD did not provide comments on the draft of this report.

View [GAO-19-698](#). For more information, contact Cary Russell at (202) 512-5431 or russellc@gao.gov.

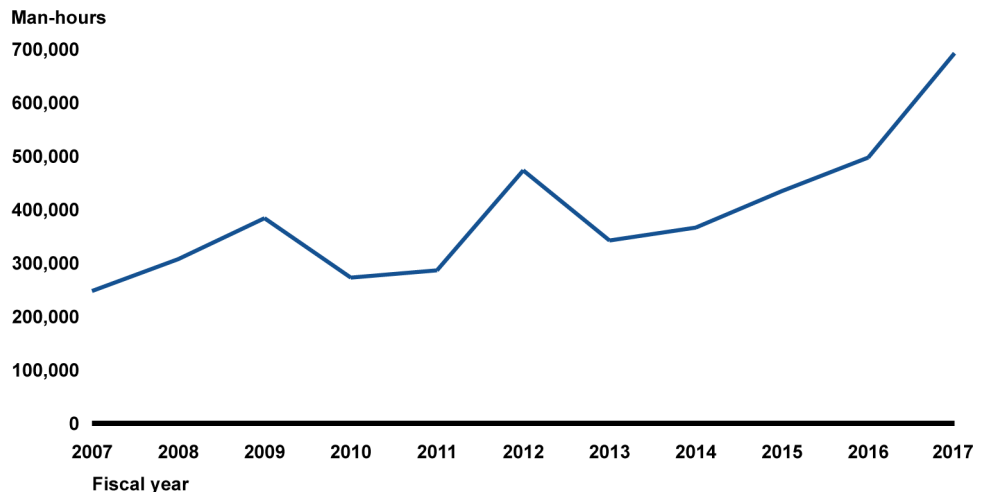
WARFIGHTER SUPPORT

Actions Needed to Improve Explosive Ordnance Disposal Forces Planning

What GAO Found

The military services' processes for determining the necessary number of explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) personnel are based on combat-related missions. However, these processes do not fully consider some defense support of civil authority (DSCA) missions that EOD forces conduct. Demand for EOD forces for DSCA missions can be manpower-intensive and frequent. For example, EOD forces' workload for protecting U.S. and foreign dignitaries—also referred to as Very Important Person (VIP) support missions—increased from about 248,000 to over 690,000 man-hours in fiscal years 2007 to 2017 (figure). However, according to officials, the services do not consider DSCA missions in determining the number of EOD personnel needed, instead focusing on combat-related missions. Unless the Department of Defense (DOD) ensures that the services update guidance to consider the total EOD force required to support both missions, decision makers cannot accurately assess the EOD forces' sufficiency.

Total Explosive Ordnance Disposal Man-hours Spent on Very Important Person Support Missions, Fiscal Years 2007-2017



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Northern Command data. | GAO-19-698

DOD guidance specific to VIP support missions does not include a requirement for the services to report on the effect of VIP support missions on military preparedness. According to officials, military preparedness is degraded when the services' EOD forces are unable to concurrently complete predeployment tasks such as training for combat. Per DOD guidance, Secret Service support requests are to be evaluated based on their effects on military preparedness. Without this information, decision makers are precluded from understanding the risk to EOD forces' military preparedness resulting from the routine VIP support missions. Decision makers need this information to ensure efficient and effective accomplishment of both VIP support missions and preparation for combat-related missions for affected combatant commands.