



MILITARY OPERATIONS

DOD Needs to Provide Central Direction for Supporting Coalition Liaison Officers

Highlights of [GAO-04-452](#), a report to the Chairmen and Ranking Minority Members of the Senate and House Committees on Armed Services

Why GAO Did This Study

In the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003, Congress authorized the Secretary of Defense to provide administrative services and support to foreign coalition liaison officers temporarily assigned to the headquarters of a combatant command or any of its subordinate commands. Congress required GAO to assess the implementation of this legislation. Specifically, GAO's objectives were to determine (1) what guidance the Department of Defense (DOD) has provided on the implementation of this legislation, (2) the extent to which the commands are aware of and are using this legislation, and (3) the level of support being provided by commands using this legislation and the benefits derived from it.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense take the following two actions: (1) designate an office within DOD to take responsibility for this legislation and (2) direct this designated office to promulgate and issue guidance on how to implement this legislation.

DOD officials concurred with the report in official oral comments. DOD stated that it would designate the Joint Staff as the office responsible for implementing the legislation and issuing appropriate guidance.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-452.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Neal P. Curtin at (757) 552-8100 or curtinn@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

GAO could find no evidence that DOD had issued any guidance to combatant commanders on how to implement this legislation. In addition, GAO was unable to identify an office within DOD that has responsibility for implementing this legislation. The DOD Office of the Inspector General, as GAO's focal point within DOD, was also unable to identify a responsible office.

Although the legislation was inspired by the needs of the coalition assembled for the Global War on Terrorism, its authority is available through the Secretary of Defense to all combatant commanders. According to the results of GAO's research, the combatant commands' awareness of and need to use the legislation varied widely with Central Command being the only command using the authority to support liaison officers.

Awareness and Use of the Legislation by Combatant Commands

Commands not aware of and not needing to use the legislation	Commands aware of but not needing to use the legislation	Commands using the legislation
Northern Command	Pacific Command	Central Command
Southern Command	Joint Forces Command	
European Command	Special Operations Command	
Strategic Command		
Transportation Command		

Source: GAO.

Central Command and MacDill Air Force Base, as the host location for Central Command, spent \$17 million in fiscal year 2003 to provide administrative services and support to more than 300 coalition liaison officers from over 60 countries. As allowed by the legislation, the command also paid the travel, subsistence, and personal expenses of over 70 of these officers from more than 30 developing countries.

Fiscal Year 2003 Costs by Type of Support Provided to Foreign Coalition Liaison Officers

Administrative support	\$14,475,179
Travel and personal expenses	2,582,000
Total costs	\$17,057,179

Source: Unaudited DOD data analyzed by GAO.

Central Command officials stated that they could not accomplish the coalition integration planning and coordination important to the Global War on Terrorism as effectively or efficiently as they are doing without the liaison officers. They also commented that the legislation helps facilitate the participation of a developing country in the coalition if the command can pay for travel and subsistence.