GAO

Report to the Ranking Member, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

May 2007

MILITARY OPERATIONS

Actions Needed to Improve DOD's Stability Operations Approach and Enhance Interagency Planning

GAO

Accountability ★ Integrity ★ Reliability

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Why GAO Did This Study

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has frequently been involved in stability and/or reconstruction operations that typically last 5 to 8 years and surpass combat operations in the cost of human lives and dollars. A 2005 presidential directive requires DOD and State to integrate stability activities with military contingency plans. GAO was asked to address (1) DOD's approach to enhance stability operations capabilities, and challenges that have emerged in implementing its approach; (2) DOD planning for stability operations and the extent of interagency involvement; and (3) the extent to which DOD is applying lessons learned in future plans. To address these issues, GAO assessed DOD policy and planning documents, reviewed planning efforts at three combatant commands, and evaluated DOD's use of lessons learned. GAO is also conducting a related study of the Department of State's efforts to lead and coordinate stability operations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends DOD take several actions to improve its approach to stability operations and interagency planning. DOD partially agreed with GAO's recommendations, but did not specify actions it would take to address them. Therefore, GAO recommends Congress require DOD to develop an action plan and report annually on its efforts to address GAO recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-549.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Janet St. Laurent, (202) 512-4402 or stlaurentj@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

DOD has taken several steps to improve planning for stability operations, but faces challenges in developing capabilities and measures of effectiveness, integrating the contributions of non-DOD agencies into military contingency plans, and incorporating lessons learned into future plans. These challenges may hinder DOD's ability to develop sound plans. Since November 2005, the department issued a new policy, expanded its military planning guidance, and defined a joint operating concept to help guide DOD planning for the next 15–20 years. These steps reflect a fundamental shift in DOD's policy because they elevate stability operations as a core mission comparable to combat operations and emphasize that military and civilian efforts must be integrated. However, DOD has yet to identify and prioritize the full range of capabilities needed for stability operations because DOD has not provided clear guidance on how and when to accomplish this task. As a result, the services are pursuing initiatives to address capability shortfalls that may not reflect the comprehensive set of capabilities that will be needed by combatant commanders to effectively accomplish stability operations in the future. Similarly, DOD has made limited progress in developing measures of effectiveness because of weaknesses in DOD's guidance.

DOD is taking steps to develop more comprehensive military plans related to stability operations, but it has not established adequate mechanisms to facilitate and encourage interagency participation in its planning efforts. At the combatant commands, DOD has established working groups with representatives from several key organizations, but these groups and other outreach efforts by the commanders have had limited effect. Three factors cause this limited and inconsistent interagency participation in DOD's planning process: (1) DOD has not provided specific guidance to commanders on how to integrate planning with non-DOD organizations, (2) DOD practices inhibit sharing of planning information, and (3) DOD and non-DOD organizations lack a full understanding of each other's planning processes, and non-DOD organizations have had a limited capacity to participate in DOD's full range of planning activities.

Although DOD collects lessons learned from past operations, planners are not consistently using this information as they develop future contingency plans. At all levels within the department, GAO found that information from current and past operations are being captured and incorporated into various databases. However, planners are not consistently using this information because (1) DOD's guidance for incorporating lessons into its plans is outdated and does not specifically require planners to take this step, (2) accessing lessons-learned databases is cumbersome, and (3) the review process does not evaluate the extent to which lessons learned are incorporated into specific plans.

_____ **United States Government Accountability Office**

Contents

Figures

Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
JIACG	Joint Interagency Coordination Group
NSPD	National Security Presidential Directive
State	Department of State
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

May 31, 2007

The Honorable Christopher Shays
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security
  and Foreign Affairs
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Shays:

In the ongoing war on terrorism, the United States government is
confronting a host of challenges requiring a capability to conduct what has
been termed stabilization, security, transition, and reconstruction
operations in various countries around the world. The Department of
Defense (DOD) has defined "stability operations" as an overarching term
encompassing various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted
outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of
national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment,
provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure
reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.[1] Since the end of the Cold War,
DOD's involvement in stability operations activities has been significant,
as evidenced by reconstruction and transition operations in Afghanistan
and Iraq, humanitarian relief efforts in Pakistan, and security operations in
Bosnia and Kosovo. DOD's increased role in these types of activities has
also required it to employ an increasing number of personnel with specific
skills and capabilities, such as those in civil affairs and psychological
operations units. This shift in DOD's role was captured in The Defense
Science Board's 2004 Summer Study on Transition to and from Hostilities,
which highlighted that since the end of the Cold War, the United States has
been involved in either a stability or reconstruction operation every 18 to
24 months, that these operations typically last 5 to 8 years, and that these
activities surpass combat operations in the cost of human lives and
dollars.

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[1]Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Sep 2006). This term and
definition was also added to the Department of Defense *Dictionary of Military and
Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02, as amended through September 17, 2006.

GAO-07-549 Military Operations

In December 2005, President George Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD-44) which directed U.S. government agencies to increase efforts to better coordinate stability operations. NSPD 44 also states that, when relevant and appropriate, reconstruction and stabilization contingency plans and missions will be coordinated with U.S. military contingency plans to ensure harmonization with any planned or ongoing U.S. military operations. The Department of State (State) and DoD have highlighted that success in stabilization and reconstruction efforts will depend heavily upon the ability to develop an integrated, interagency approach, and have initiated steps to facilitate this shift in focus. But this shift will require cultural changes throughout government that will take years or perhaps decades to achieve, according to DOD and State officials.

In the near term, DOD's combatant commanders routinely develop a wide range of military contingency plans, many of which involve consideration of stability operations capabilities. As discussed in this report, DOD's military planning efforts are being expanded to include actions intended to stabilize regions before conflict develops, deliver humanitarian assistance, or provide postconflict reconstruction support. In many cases, these actions will require coordination with non-DOD organizations, such as State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department of Justice.

You asked us to examine DOD's capabilities related to stability operations, and the extent to which DOD integrates its military planning efforts with other government agencies. In response to your request, this report addresses (1) DOD's approach to enhance stability operations capabilities and challenges that have emerged in implementing this approach, (2) DOD military planning for stability operations and the extent to which the department's planning mechanisms facilitate an interagency approach; and (3) the extent to which DOD is applying stability operations-related lessons learned from past operations as future plans are developed. As agreed with your office, we have additional work underway to address your request to examine the Department of State's efforts to lead and coordinate stabilization operations in conjunction with DOD, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and other U.S. agencies, and plan to report on those issues separately.

To evaluate DOD's approach to enhance stability operations capabilities, and the challenges that have emerged in implementing this approach, we obtained and analyzed relevant departmentwide polices and implementing guidance from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the services, and selected combatant commands, and we discussed with each organization

the challenges that exist in implementing DOD's approach. We also discussed DOD's approach with Department of State and USAID officials to obtain their perspectives on these issues. Within DOD, we analyzed documentation and interviewed officials from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, the Joint Staff, the services, three combatant commands (Central Command, European Command, and Pacific Command) and fourteen of their related component commands. To evaluate DOD's stability operations planning and the extent to which the department's planning mechanisms encourage and facilitate an interagency approach, we reviewed relevant DOD guidance and portions of selected planning documents that pertain to interagency coordination. Our review did not include the planning for ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. We also discussed the planning process and impediments to interagency coordination with representatives from non-DOD agencies assigned to the combatant commands to gain their perspectives, understand the extent to which these agencies are represented, identify their roles and responsibilities, and determine the extent to which they participate in the DOD planning process. We did not, however, assess the extent to which these roles and responsibilities, including those of DOD, are appropriate. To determine the extent to which DOD planners are applying lessons learned from past operations and exercises in planning, we reviewed relevant DOD guidance, discussed with DOD officials the consideration of lessons during planning, and analyzed information in lessons-learned databases maintained by each service and Joint Forces Command, and two non-DOD organizations. With the information from both DOD and non-DOD sources, we developed a database with over 3,500 individual lessons and observations from 38 reports or studies, identified strategic-level lessons learned related to stability operations using a process of independent coding and review, and then grouped the selected lessons into 14 major themes.

We conducted our review from October 2005 through March 2007 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Additional information on our scope and methodology appears in appendix I.

Results in Brief

DOD has developed and continues to evolve an approach to enhance its stability operations capabilities, but it has encountered challenges in identifying and addressing capability gaps and developing measures of effectiveness, which are critical to successfully executing this approach. Among the many improvement efforts underway, the department has taken three key steps that frame this new approach. Specifically, the

department (1) formalized a new stability operations policy, DOD Directive 3000.05, that elevated stability operations to a core mission on par with combat operations, (2) expanded DOD's planning construct to more fully address pre- and postconflict operations, and (3) defined a new joint operating concept that will serve as a basis for how the military will support stabilization, security, transition, and reconstruction operations in the next 15 to 20 years. Notwithstanding these positive and important steps, however, DOD has encountered challenges in identifying stability operations capabilities and developing measures of effectiveness—both of which are key tasks required by DOD Directive 3000.05 and important steps in performance-based management. Specifically, the services are each pursuing efforts to improve current capabilities, such as those associated with civil affairs and language skills. However, DOD has yet to systematically identify and prioritize the full range of needed capabilities because DOD has not provided clear guidance, including timeframes for completion, on how and when to accomplish these tasks. As a result, the services are pursuing initiatives to address capability shortfalls that may not reflect the comprehensive set of capabilities that will be needed to effectively accomplish stability operations in the future. Similarly, DOD has made limited progress in developing measures of effectiveness required by DOD Directive 3000.05 because the current guidance does not clearly articulate a systematic approach for developing measures of effectiveness. Without agreed-upon measures of effectiveness, DOD will not be able to assess the extent to which its efforts are enhancing stability operations capabilities. We are recommending DOD provide more comprehensive guidance, including a clear methodology and time frames for completion, to combatant commanders and the services on how to identify and prioritize needed capabilities and develop measures of effectiveness.

DOD is taking steps to develop more comprehensive military plans to address stability operations, but it has not established adequate mechanisms to obtain input from other federal agencies to incorporate into its planning efforts. Recent changes in national security strategy and policies and DOD guidance require State and DOD to integrate stabilization and reconstruction plans with military contingency plans where relevant and appropriate, and to coordinate those plans with relevant government and nongovernment organizations.[2] DOD has begun

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[2]Recent changes are included in the National Security Strategy, NSPD-44, DOD Directive 3000.05, and DOD Joint Publications.

taking steps to better coordinate with other U.S. government agencies by establishing working groups with representatives from several key organizations, such as the Department of State and USAID, but these working groups are comprised of liaison officers with limited planning experience and training, the representatives are few in number, and the representatives do not consistently participate in DOD's planning process. In addition, some DOD organizations are reaching out to country teams in embassies within their areas of responsibility on an ad hoc basis, but this approach can be cumbersome because of the large number of countries that may be affected by a regional plan. Combatant Commanders have achieved limited interagency participation in the development of military plans because: (1) DOD has not provided specific guidance to commanders on how to integrate planning with non-DOD organizations, (2) DOD practices inhibit the appropriate sharing of planning information with non-DOD organizations, and (3) DOD and non-DOD organizations lack an understanding of each other's planning processes and capabilities, and have different planning cultures and capacities. As a result, the overall foundation for unity of effort—common understanding of the purpose and concept of the operations, coordinated policies and plans, and trust and confidence in key participants—in military operations that involve stabilization and reconstruction activities is not being established. To increase unity of effort in these operations, we are recommending the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of State, provide implementation guidance on the mechanisms needed to facilitate and encourage interagency participation in the development of military plans, develop a process to share planning information with non-DOD agencies early in the planning process as appropriate, and orient DOD and non-DOD personnel in each agency's planning processes and capabilities.

Although DOD has spent considerable time and resources to collect lessons learned from past and ongoing operations, DOD planners are not consistently using these lessons learned as they develop future contingency plans. Department policies and guidance encourage the consideration of lessons learned during the planning process, and information from current and past operations is being incorporated into various databases.[3] For example, our analysis of DOD's databases

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[3]Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual 3122.0l, Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES) Volume I (Planning Policies and Procedures) (Sept. 29, 2006); Department of Defense Directive 3000.05, Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations (Nov. 28, 2005); and Department of Defense, Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations, Joint Operating Concept (Washington, D.C., December 2006).

identified lessons learned related to the need for (1) the military to work more closely with other agencies during stability operations, (2) DOD to develop knowledge of other agencies and the capabilities they can contribute, and (3) commanders to ensure that military sectors during operations correspond with civil geopolitical boundaries. However, we found that DOD planners are not using lessons-learned information on a consistent basis as plans are developed or revised because (1) Joint Staff guidance for incorporating lessons into its plans is outdated and does not specifically state that planners are required to include lessons learned in the planning process, (2) accessing and searching lessons-learned databases is cumbersome, and (3) the planning review process does not evaluate the extent to which lessons learned are incorporated into specific plans. DOD has recently initiated an effort to develop an information system to improve access to lessons learned within the department and between non-DOD agencies, and although this is a positive step, this effort is in its early stages. Moreover, it is not clear how the system will accommodate interagency needs, and when it will be fully operational. In addition, without a comprehensive and timely approach to improve guidance, information systems, and the planning review process, DOD's efforts to improve information systems alone may not enable the department to fully leverage lessons learned from past operations into its future plans, and past mistakes could be repeated. We are recommending that DOD update its planning guidance to: (1) direct planners to include lessons learned as plans are developed, and (2) require that the plan review process include a step to verify lessons learned have been considered and adopted as appropriate. We are also recommending that DOD include the interagency stakeholders in the development of its new lessons-learned information system earlier than currently planned.

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD partially agreed with our eight recommendations but did not discuss what specific steps, if any, it plans to take to implement our recommendations. (DOD's comments appear in their entirety in app. III.) State was also afforded an opportunity to comment on this report, but declined to do so. In its written comments, DOD highlighted traditional DOD methodologies and approaches to developing capabilities, measures of effectiveness, coordinating with other agencies, and incorporating lessons learned that it believes are adequate to address our recommendations. Although DOD is making progress in achieving a greater focus on stability operations through its new directive, our report notes it has made limited progress in certain areas, such as establishing measures of effectiveness, due to the limited guidance provided to DOD components. As a result, we continue to believe our recommendations are warranted and that DOD should take specific steps
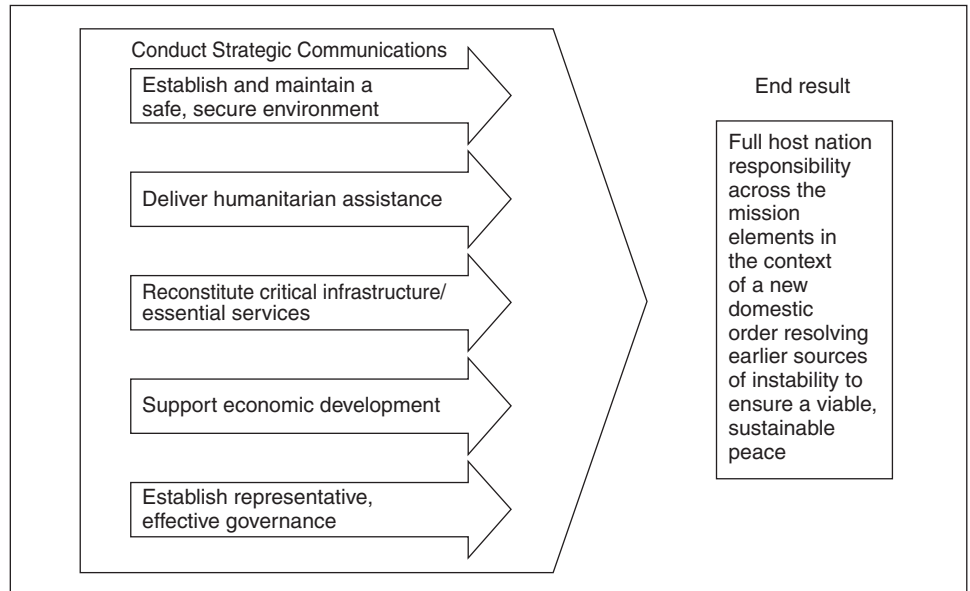
to address them. Because it is unclear what specific steps, if any, DOD plans to take to implement our recommendations we have added a matter for congressional consideration suggesting that the Congress require the Secretary of Defense to develop an action plan and report annually on the specific steps being taken to address our recommendations and the current status of its efforts. The report should also identify challenges to achieving an integrated interagency approach to stability operations, and potential solutions for mitigating those challenges.

Background

According to DOD's guidance, the immediate goal of stability operations often is to provide the local populace with security, restore essential services, and meet humanitarian needs. The long-term goal is to help develop indigenous capacity for securing essential services, a viable market economy, rule of law, democratic institutions, and a robust civil society.[4] Stability operations include a continuum of activities that can occur throughout the spectrum of conflict ranging from preconflict stabilization to postconflict reconstruction and transition to effective governance. DOD has identified six major activities, or major mission elements, that U.S. military forces, civilian government agencies, and in many cases multinational partners may need to engage in to stabilize an environment and build sustainable host-nation capabilities. Figure 1 depicts these major mission elements.

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[4]Department of Defense Directive 3000.05.

Figure 1: Major Mission Elements of Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations

Conduct Strategic Communications

Establish and maintain a safe, secure environment

Deliver humanitarian assistance

Reconstitute critical infrastructure/ essential services

Support economic development

Establish representative, effective governance

End result

Full host nation responsibility across the mission elements in the context of a new domestic order resolving earlier sources of instability to ensure a viable, sustainable peace

Source: GAO presentation of DOD information.

As Figure 1 illustrates, the mission elements, or dimensions, of stability operations range from establishing and maintaining a secure environment to delivering humanitarian assistance, economic support, and establishing effective forms of governance. As shown in the figure, DOD envisions one key element—strategic communications—as encompassing all of the other five mission elements. DOD guidance recognizes that many stability operations are best performed by indigenous, foreign, or U.S. civilian professionals and that DOD's participation may be in a supporting role. However, this guidance also states U.S. military forces shall be prepared to perform all tasks necessary to establish or maintain order when civilians cannot do so.

NSPD-44 outlines the major roles and responsibilities throughout the government for stability operations, including the responsibilities of the National Security Council, State, non-DOD agencies, and DOD. In November 2005, DOD issued DOD Directive 3000.05, which established the department's overall policy and assigned responsibilities within DOD for

planning, training, and preparing to conduct and support stability operations.[5] Table 1 highlights several key responsibilities established by NSPD-44 and DOD Directive 3000.05.

Table 1: Selected U.S. Government Responsibilities Related to Stability Operations

Organization	Key Responsibilities
National Security Council[a]	• Co-Chair to Policy Coordination Committee established for Reconstruction and Stabilization[b] • Designate lead and supporting responsibilities as outlined in National Security Presidential Directive-1[c] for stability operations.
Department of State	• Coordinate and lead integrated U.S. Government efforts, involving all U.S. departments and agencies with relevant capabilities, to prepare, plan for, and conduct stabilization and reconstruction activities. • Develop and approve strategies, with respect to U.S. foreign assistance and economic cooperation, for reconstruction and stabilization activities directed toward foreign states and regions at risk of, in, or in transition from conflict or civil strife. • Coordinate interagency process to identify states at risk of instability, lead interagency planning to prevent or mitigate conflict, and develop detailed contingency plans for integrated U.S. government reconstruction and stabilization efforts for those states and regions and for widely applicable scenarios, which are integrated with military contingency plans, where appropriate. • Provide U.S. government decision makers with detailed options for an integrated response in connection with specific reconstruction and stabilization operations. • Coordinate U.S. government responses for reconstruction and stabilization with the Secretary of Defense to ensure harmonization with any planned or ongoing U.S. military operations, including peacekeeping missions, at the planning and implementation phases; develop guiding precepts and implementation procedures for reconstruction and stabilization which, where appropriate, may be integrated with military contingency plans and doctrine. • Lead U.S. government development of a strong civilian response capability including necessary surge capabilities; analyze, formulate, and recommend additional authorities, mechanisms, and resources needed to ensure that the United States has the civilian reserve and response capabilities necessary for stabilization and reconstruction activities to respond quickly and effectively. • Resolve relevant policy, program, and funding disputes among U.S. government departments and agencies with respect to U.S. foreign assistance and foreign economic cooperation related to reconstruction and stabilization, consistent with Office of Management and Budget's budget and policy coordinating functions.

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[5]Department of Defense Directive 3000.05.

Organization	Key Responsibilities
Other Executive Departments and Agencies	• Support stability operations activities and requirements with agency resources. • Coordinate with the Department of State's Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization during budget formulation for relevant reconstruction and stabilization activities prior to submission to the Office of Management and Budget and Congress, or as required to coordinate reconstruction and stabilization activities. • Identify, develop, and provide Department of State's Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization with relevant information on capabilities and assets. • Identify and develop internal capabilities for planning and for resource and program management that can be mobilized in response to crises. • Identify within each agency current and former agency personnel skilled in crisis response, including contract employees, and establish under each agency's authorities mechanisms to reassign or reemploy these personnel and mobilize associated resources rapidly in response to crises. • Assist in identifying situations of concern, developing action and contingency plans, responding to crises that occur, assessing lessons learned, and undertaking other efforts and initiatives to ensure a coordinated U.S. response and effective international reconstruction and stabilization efforts.
Department of Defense	• Institutionalize stability operations within DOD and prioritize them comparable with combat operations. • Integrate stability operations across all DOD activities including doctrine, organizations, training, education, exercises, material, leadership, personnel, facilities, and planning. • With the Secretary of State, integrate stabilization and reconstruction contingency plans with military contingency plans when relevant and appropriate. • Develop general framework with the Secretary of State to fully coordinate stabilization and reconstruction activities and military operations at all levels where appropriate. • Provide and seek assistance and advice from the Department of State and other U.S. departments and agencies, as appropriate, for developing stability operations capabilities. • Develop greater means to help build other countries' security capacity quickly to ensure security in their own lands or to contribute forces to stability operations elsewhere. • Be prepared to perform all necessary tasks to establish or maintain order when civilians or other agencies cannot do so. • Lead and support the development of military civilian teams to support stability operations activities. • Share information with U.S. departments and agencies, foreign governments and forces, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and members of the private sector supporting stability operations, consistent with legal requirements.

Source: GAO analysis of DOD and non-DOD data.

Note: Data are from NSPD-44 and DOD Directive 3000.05.

[a]In those instances when we refer to the National Security Council as it relates to NSPD-44, the directive generally refers to the National Security Presidential Directive-1 (NSPD-1), Organization of the National Security Council System (Washington, D.C., Feb. 13, 2001).

[b]National Security Council/Policy Coordination Committees manage the development and implementation of national security policies and serve as the mechanism for interagency coordination of national security policy. They provide policy analysis and ensure timely responses to decisions made by the President.

Within DOD, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy is responsible for developing stability operations policy options for the Secretary of Defense and, according to DOD officials, provides oversight for the implementation of DOD's stability operations policy. Under DOD Directive 3000.05, the Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, shall each develop stability operations capabilities. Commanders of the geographic combatant commands through the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, shall identify stability operations requirements within their areas of responsibility, shown in figure 2. Combatant commands are also directed to engage other organizations in stability operations planning, training, and exercises, in coordination with the Joint Staff and the Office of Policy.

Figure 2: Geographic Combatant Commands' Areas of Responsibility
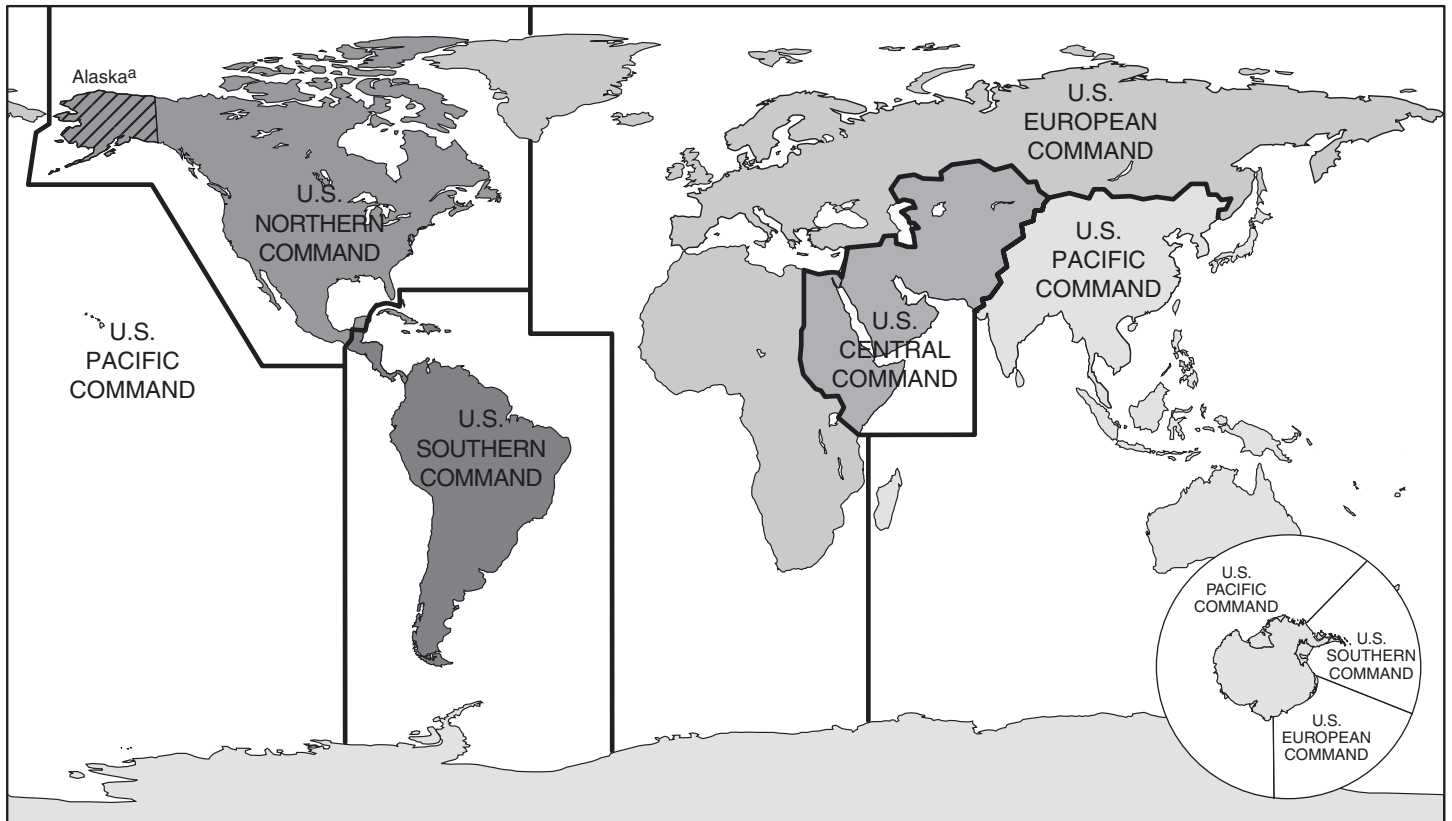
Source: GAO presentation of DOD data.

Note: As of October 1, 2006.

[a]The state of Alaska is assigned to the U.S. Northern Command's Area of Responsibility. Forces based in Alaska, however, may be assigned to multiple commands.

The department has recently announced that it plans to realign these areas of responsibility to establish a new geographic combatant command for the continent of Africa. As of February 2007, the details of this realignment had not been finalized.

DOD Has Developed an Approach to Improve Stability Operations Capabilities, but Faces Challenges in Identifying Capability Gaps and Measures of Effectiveness

DOD has developed and continues to evolve an approach to enhance its stability operations capabilities, but it has encountered challenges in identifying capability gaps and developing measures of effectiveness, which are critical to successfully executing this approach. Among the many improvement efforts underway, the department has taken three key steps that frame this new approach. Specifically, the department has: (1) formalized a new stability operations policy that elevated stability operations to a core mission and gave them priority comparable to combat operations, and assigned numerous responsibilities to DOD organizations, (2) expanded DOD's planning construct to more fully address stability operations, and (3) defined a new joint operating concept that will serve as a basis for how the military will support stabilization, security, transition, and reconstruction operations in the next 15 to 20 years. However, DOD has made limited progress in identifying and prioritizing needed capabilities, and in developing measures of effectiveness, which are critical steps required by DOD's new directive and important tenets of performance-based management. Capability gaps are not being assessed because the department has yet to issue adequate guidance on how to conduct these assessments or set specific time frames to complete them. Similarly, the department has made limited progress in developing measures of effectiveness because current guidance does not clearly articulate a systematic approach on how to develop measures of effectiveness. Without a comprehensive assessment of stability operations capability gaps and clear measures of effectiveness, the department may not be appropriately prioritizing and developing the needed capabilities, or measuring its progress toward achieving these goals.

DOD's Approach to Stability Operations Includes a New Policy, Planning Guidance, and a Joint Operating Concept

In the past 18 months, DOD has taken positive steps to improve stability operations capabilities by establishing a new and comprehensive policy, planning guidance, and joint operating concept. First, in November 2005, DOD published DOD Directive 3000.05, which established DOD's stability operations policy and assigned responsibilities within the department for planning, training, and preparing to conduct and support stability operations. This directive reflects a fundamental shift in DOD's policy because it designates stability operations as a core mission that shall be given priority comparable to combat operations and emphasizes that integrated military and civilian efforts are key to successful stability operations efforts. According to DOD officials, this publication is intended to serve as a catalyst, pushing DOD to develop methods to enhance its own capabilities and integrate the capabilities and capacities of the defense, diplomatic, and development communities for achieving unity of effort in stability operations. The policy emphasizes that integrating

civilian and military efforts is key to successful stability operations and recognizes that stability operations will not always be led by the military, and that DOD needs to be prepared to provide support to both government and nongovernment organizations when necessary.

The directive assigns responsibility for approximately 115 tasks to 18 organizations in the department, such as the Under Secretaries for Policy and Intelligence, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Combatant Commanders, and the Secretaries of the Military Departments. The directive states that stability operations skills, such as language capabilities and regional area expertise, be developed and incorporated into professional military education at all levels, and that information shall be shared with U.S. departments and agencies, foreign governments and forces, international organizations, Nongovernmental Organizations, and the members of the private sector supporting stability operations, consistent with legal requirements. The policy also states that military plans shall address stability operations throughout all phases of an operation or plan as appropriate, and that stability operations dimensions of military plans be exercised and tested, when appropriate, with other U.S. departments and agencies. In addition, the directive states that the Under Secretary for Policy shall submit a semiannual report developed in coordination with responsible DOD components to the Secretary of Defense evaluating the department's progress in implementing the directive.

A second step taken by DOD to improve stability operations was to broaden its military planning guidance for joint operations to include noncombat activities to stabilize countries or regions and prevent hostilities; and postcombat activities that emphasize stabilization, reconstruction, and transition governance to civil authorities. Figure 3 illustrates the change in DOD planning guidance.

Figure 3: Prior and Current Phases of Military Operations
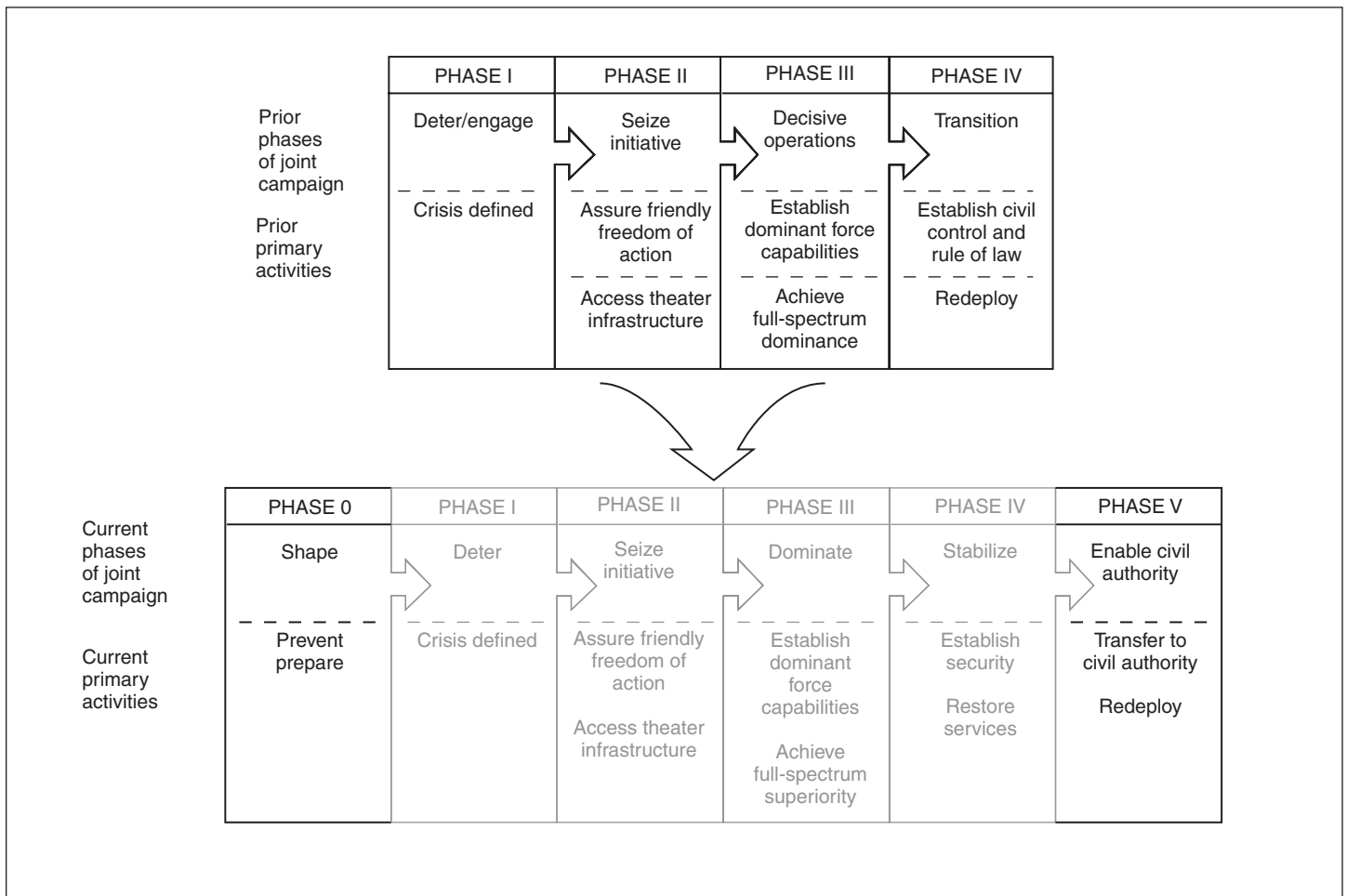
Source: GAO analysis of DOD information.

As shown in Figure 3, previous Joint Staff planning guidance considered four operational phases, including deter and engage the enemy, seize the initiative, conduct decisive operations, and transition to peaceful activities. The revised planning guidance now directs consideration of six phases of an operation, which include shaping efforts to stabilize regions so that conflicts do not develop, and expanding the dimensions of stability operations that are needed in more hostile environments after conflicts

occur.[6] This new planning guidance requires planners to consider the types of activities that can be conducted to help a nation establish a safe and secure environment, eliminating the need for armed conflict, and activities to assist a nation in establishing security forces and governing mechanisms to transition to self-rule. These are also the phases of an operation that will require significant unity of effort and close coordination between DOD and other federal agencies.

In December 2006, DOD took a third step in outlining its approach to stability operations when the Joint Forces Command published the Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations Joint Operating Concept.[7] This operating concept describes how the future Joint Force Commander will provide military support to stabilization, security, transition, and reconstruction operations within a military campaign in pursuit of national strategic objectives in the 2014–2026 time frame. The operating concept focuses on the full range of military support that the future Joint Force might provide in foreign countries across the continuum from peace to crisis and conflict in order to assist a state or region that is under severe stress or has collapsed due to either a natural or man-made disaster. This publication provides a conceptual framework for how future commanders can provide military support in foreign countries to a full range of stabilization, security, transition, and reconstruction operations, such as

- assist an existing or new host nation government in providing security, essential public services, economic development, and governance following the significant degradation or collapse of the government's capabilities due to internal failure or as a consequence of the destruction and dislocation of a war;
- provide support to stabilize and administer occupied territory and care for refugees in major combat operations fought for limited objectives that fall short of forcibly changing the adversary regime;
- support a fragile national government that is faltering due to serious internal challenges, which include civil unrest, insurgency, terrorism and factional conflict;

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[6]Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations.

[7]DOD defined stability, security, transition, and reconstruction missions as activities that support U.S. government plans for stabilization, security, reconstruction, and transition operations, which lead to sustainable peace while advancing U.S. interests. In many cases stability operations and stability, security, transition, and reconstruction terminology is used interchangeably.

- assist a stable government that has been struck by a devastating natural disaster;
- provide limited security cooperation assistance to a state that is facing modest internal challenges; and
- provide military assistance and training to partner nations that increase their capability and capacity to conduct stabilization, security, transition, and reconstruction operations at home or abroad.

This publication is intended to complement both policy and planning guidance by expanding the understanding of stability operations and by providing leaders with a conceptual explanation of the strategic considerations, solutions, risks and mitigations, and implications to consider when planning a stability operation.

In addition to establishing a new policy, revising planning guidance, and developing a new joint operating concept, DOD has taken other complementary actions to address stability operations capabilities within the department. For example, in order to follow up on initiatives identified in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, the department has published a series of roadmaps on specific topics such as Building Partnership Capacity. The Building Partnership Capacity Roadmap provides an action plan to meet objectives focused on strengthening interagency planning and enhancing both DOD and non-DOD capabilities in this area. Another step taken by DOD was to work with the Department of State to develop a draft planning guide for other federal agencies that is intended to assist these organizations in the planning for reconstruction and stabilization operations.[8]

DOD Has Encountered Challenges in Identifying and Prioritizing Stability Operations Capabilities

DOD Directive 3000.05 tasked several organizations within the department to take specific actions to identify and prioritize stability operations capabilities, but the department has made limited progress in meeting this goal. Specifically, the directive states that the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy shall identify DOD-wide stability operations capabilities and recommend priorities to the Secretary of Defense. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is tasked to identify stability operations capabilities and assess their development. The Geographic Combatant Commanders, responsible for contingency planning and commanding U.S. forces in their

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[8]United States Joint Forces Command, J7 Pamphlet, *U.S. Government Draft Planning Framework for Reconstruction, Stabilization, and Conflict Transformation* (December 2005).

regions, shall identify stability operations requirements. Finally, the Secretaries of the Military Departments and Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command are required to develop the required stability operations capabilities and capacity in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

Officials from the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy's office stated they intended to meet the requirement to identify capabilities and recommend priorities to the Secretary of Defense through an iterative process known as capability gap assessments. Policy officials envisioned that the geographic combatant commands would conduct theater-specific, scenario-driven assessments of forces and capabilities required for contingencies through DOD's planning process. They also expected that the geographic commands would compare the planned requirements for stability operations with the current available forces and military capabilities, and propose remedies for eliminating the gaps. DOD officials described the Joint Staff's role as to review each of the combatant command assessments and provide guidance, including common standards and criteria, to the combatant commands to assist them in identifying their requirements. The combatant command requirements were then expected to drive each service's development of stability operations capabilities and capacity.

As discussed below, as of March 2007, DOD has made limited progress in identifying and prioritizing needed capabilities following this iterative capability gap assessment process. At the three combatant commands that we visited, we found that the identification of stability operations requirements was occurring in a fragmented manner. At Central Command, officials from the command's assessment branch explained that there has been increased emphasis on stability operations across the command, especially for nonlethal activities, such as civil military operations. Officials explained that organizations at the command level routinely conduct capability assessments and turn in a list of shortfalls for incorporation into the command's consolidated integrated priority list that the Combatant Command Commander submits annually to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[9] They envision that in the future these lists will include stability operations requirement shortfalls. Similarly, in the European Command, various organizations are independently conducting

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[9]The Integrated Priority List is a succinct statement, prepared annually, of key capability gaps that could hinder the performance of a combatant commander's assigned missions.

assessments within their respective areas. For example, within the combatant command headquarters, training officials explained that they were working on a consolidated and prioritized list of stability operations training requirements, while at the Naval component command they are evaluating each country within its region to identify the specific stability operations requirements for that country. At the Pacific Command, officials stated that they had not tasked any of their component commands to identify stability operations requirements. However, component command officials indicated that capability requirements would be identified through routine processes, such as DOD's required Joint Quarterly Readiness Review.[10]

Notwithstanding the lack of identification of specific requirements from combatant commanders, each service is taking some steps to improve stability operations capabilities, but each service is using a different approach. For example, Marine Corps officials highlighted the establishment of a program to improve cultural awareness training, increased civil affairs planning in its operational headquarters, and the establishment of a Security Cooperation Training Center as key efforts to improve stability operations capabilities.[11] Navy officials highlighted the service efforts to align its strategic plan and operations concept to support stability operations, the establishment of the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, and the dedication of Foreign Area Officers to specific countries as their key efforts.[12] Army officials highlighted the establishment of an office dedicated to stability operations policy and strategy, the development of Army doctrine related to stability operations, and an ongoing process to address gaps in Army stability operations

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[10]The Joint Chiefs of Staff are responsible for conducting a Joint Quarterly Readiness Review, which is a scenario-based readiness assessment that identifies capabilities and risks associated with missions that support strategic-level planning guidance. Participants in this review include the Combatant Commanders, senior representatives from DOD, the Military Services, and other DOD components.

[11]The Marine Corps's Security Cooperation Training Center coordinates Marine Corps education and training programs in support of Department of Defense Security Cooperation efforts to enhance interoperability with allied and coalition partners in the conduct of traditional and irregular warfare and in support of the global struggle against violent extremism.

[12]Foreign Area Officers are a group of military officers with a broad range of military skills and experiences; knowledge of political-military affairs; familiarity with the political, cultural, sociological, economic, and geographic factors of the countries and regions in which they are stationed; and professional proficiency in one or more of the dominant languages in their regions of expertise.

capabilities and capacities. Army officials expect to approve an action plan by the end of fiscal year 2007 that is intended to provide solutions for improving its capabilities to conduct stability operations. Air Force officials emphasized the service's use of an analytical capabilities-based planning model that has identified and begun to address specific shortfalls related to stability operations.

Because of the fragmented efforts being taken by combatant commands to identify requirements, and the different approaches taken by the services to develop capabilities, the potential exists that the department may not be identifying and prioritizing the most critical capabilities needed by the combatant commanders, and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy has not been able to recommend capability priorities to the Secretary of Defense. The department recognizes the importance of successfully completing these capability assessments, and in the first semiannual report on stability operations to the Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary stated that the department has not yet defined the magnitude of DOD's stability operations capability deficiencies, and that clarifying the scope of these capability gaps continues to be a priority within the department.[13]

We identified two factors that are limiting DOD's ability to carry out the capability gap assessment process envisioned by the Office of Policy. First, at the time of our review, DOD had not issued guidance or set specific timeframes for the combatant commands to identify stability operations capability requirements. Joint Staff officials explained that the combatant commanders were expected to identify capability requirements based on operational plans, and DOD has not issued its 2007 planning guidance to the combatant commanders that reflect the new six-phase approach to planning previously discussed in this report.[14] Joint Staff officials expressed concerns that if the combatant commands based their

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[13]Interim Progress Report on DOD Directive 3000.05, Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations (Washington, D.C., August 2006).

[14]To focus the guidance provided in the national strategy, and to meet statutory requirements of Title 10 of the United States Code, the Secretary of Defense provides written policy guidance to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the preparation and review of contingency plans every 2 years, or more frequently as needed. This written guidance, called the Contingency Planning Guidance includes the relative priority of plans and drives DOD's contingency planning efforts. To meet the requirements of the Contingency Planning Guidance, combatant commanders develop plans focused on their specific areas of responsibility.

requirements on existing plans that have not been updated to reflect new planning guidance, the requirements would not reflect the more comprehensive stability operations capabilities needed.

A second factor contributing to the limited progress in completing capability gap assessments is confusion over how to define stability operations. For example, Air Force officials stated in their May 22, 2006, Stability Operations Self Assessment that the absence of a common lexicon for stability operations functions, tasks, and actions results in unnecessary confusion and uncertainty when addressing stability operations. In March 2007 they reiterated that they still consider this lack of a common lexicon an issue in identifying stability operations capabilities. Central Command and Pacific Command officials equated stability operations with activities conducted under the auspices of Theater Security Cooperation, while European Command officials stated that stability operations are what they do in every country they have a presence. This lack of a clear and consistent definition of stability operations has caused confusion across the department about how to identify activities that are considered stability operations, and commanders have difficulty identifying what the end state is for which they need to plan. Officials with DOD's Office of Policy have recognized that confusion exists surrounding the definition of stability operations, and stated they are taking actions to clarify it. For example, Office of Policy officials cited a revised definition of stability operations that has been incorporated into DOD's September 2006 planning guidance discussed previously in this report, and the office is considering a more aggressive outreach program that will help DOD officials at all levels better understand the definition and application of stability operations concepts in identifying and addressing capability gaps.[15] However, without clear guidance on how and when combatant commanders are to develop stability operations capability requirements, the combatant commanders and the military services may not be able to effectively identify and prioritize needed capabilities.

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[15]Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations.

DOD Has Made Limited Progress in Developing Measures of Effectiveness

Past GAO work on DOD transformation reported the advantages of using management tools, such as performance measures, to gauge performance in helping organizations successfully manage major transformation efforts.[16] Good performance measures are an important results-oriented management tool that allows DOD to determine the extent to which individual goals contribute to progress in achieving the overall goal of increasing stability operations capability. GAO's previous work highlighted that the elements of a performance measure should include a baseline and target; be objective, measurable, quantifiable; and include a time frame. Clear, well-developed and coordinated performance measures help ensure that stakeholders are held responsible and accountable for completing their tasks in a timely manner and to an agreed-upon standard. Results-oriented measures further ensure that it is not the task itself being evaluated, but progress in achieving the intended outcome.

DOD has recognized the need for performance measures to evaluate its progress in enhancing stability operations goals and objectives. Specifically, DOD Directive 3000.05 requires each organization tasked under the directive to develop measures of effectiveness to evaluate progress in meeting its goals. According to Office of Policy officials the intent for developing measures of effectiveness was to let stakeholders take ownership in identifying the metrics and procedures for evaluating their assigned tasks. These officials also explained that as each organization develops a measure of effectiveness, the Office of Policy will review the proposed measure, provide feedback, and assist the stakeholders in refining the metrics to ensure that the measure is adequate. Policy officials expect that some measures will be quantitative, while others will be qualitative. This approach is based on the premise that the directive did not intend to place a fixed methodology on the stakeholders, would allow development of a process that was flexible enough to evolve with future stability operations activities and requirements, and would motivate change at the lowest level.

Despite this emphasis on developing performance measures, however, as of March 2007 we found that limited progress has been made in developing measures of effectiveness because of significant confusion over how this task should be accomplished, and because of minimal guidance provided

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[16]GAO, *Military Transformation: Clear Leadership, Accountability, and Management Tools Are Needed to Enhance DOD's Efforts to Transform Military Capabilities*, GAO-05-70 (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 16, 2004).

by the Office of Policy. Specifically, in initial discussions with us, the Army had indicated that it was working on an Action Plan for Stability Operations, but had placed the process on hold pending guidance from DOD. More recently, despite the lack of guidance, the Director of the Army's Stability Operations Division told us that it is taking steps to finalize the Action Plan for Stability Operations and once it is approved will track all of the responsibilities outlined in DOD 3000.05 through its Strategic Management System. Army officials have also established May 2007 as an objective for developing and refining its performance-based metrics. Air Force officials explained that they already conduct a biennial review of Air Force Concepts of Operations that produces a stability operations assessment and that the results of its 2005 review were summarized and provided to DOD. Air Force officials indicated that in their opinion, this satisfied the requirement to develop performance measures for stability operations. As of March 2007, officials from the Navy's Office of Strategy and Concepts explained that the Navy has begun efforts to implement a stability operations action plan that includes developing metrics and measures of effectiveness, but have put the process on hold pending metrics guidance from DOD. Similarly, the Marine Corps's Action Plan for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction dated February 2007 shows that the Marine Corps is also still waiting for additional guidance from DOD on developing measures of effectiveness. Within the combatant commands, Pacific Command officials explained that they were still waiting for guidance on implementing the directive from the Office of Policy and had not tasked the component commands with any implementing tasks, including developing metrics. At Central Command a policy official told us that there had been no development of measures of effectiveness relative to the directive. In DOD headquarters, officials in the Office of Personnel and Readiness stated that they expected the development of measures of effectiveness to be problematic, for both themselves and the Office of Policy, and that they were unsure how the measures would be developed for their office.

Officials from DOD's office for stability operations stated they are aware of the confusion surrounding the development of measures of effectiveness and that in the next few months they plan to sponsor a workshop to help train individuals on developing measures of effectiveness. While these workshops can be a positive step, they will only benefit those who participate. Without clear departmentwide guidance on how to develop measures of effectiveness and milestones for completing them, confusion may continue to exist within the department and progress on this important management tool may be significantly hindered. Moreover, without central oversight of the process to develop measures of

effectiveness, including those that address identifying and developing stability operations capabilities, the department will be limited on its overall ability to gauge progress in achieving stability operations goals and objectives.

DOD Lacks Adequate Mechanisms to Facilitate Interagency Planning for Stability Operations

DOD is taking steps to develop more comprehensive plans related to stability operations, but it has not established adequate mechanisms to facilitate and encourage interagency participation in the development of military plans developed by the combatant commanders. Recent military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, along with the overall war on terrorism, have led to changes in national security and defense strategies and an increased governmentwide emphasis on stability operations. NSPD-44 states that lead and supporting responsibilities for agencies and departments will be designated using the mechanism outlined in NSPD-1. In some cases, per NSPD-44, the National Security Council may direct the Department of State to lead the development of stabilization, security, transition, and reconstruction plans for specific countries.[17] However, the combatant commanders also routinely develop a wide range of military plans for potential contingencies for which DOD may need to seek input from other agencies or organizations. Within the combatant commands where contingency plans are developed, the department is either beginning to establish working groups or is reaching out to U.S. embassies on an ad hoc basis to obtain interagency perspectives. But this approach can be cumbersome, does not facilitate interagency participation in the actual planning process, and does not include all organizations that may be able to contribute to the operation being planned for. Combatant Commanders have achieved limited interagency participation in the development of military plans because: (1) DOD has not provided specific guidance to commanders on how to integrate planning with non-DOD organizations, (2) DOD practices inhibit the appropriate sharing of planning information with non-DOD organizations, and (3) DOD and non-DOD organizations lack an understanding of each other's planning processes and capabilities, and have different planning cultures and capacities. As a result, the overall foundation for unity of effort in stability

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[17]NSPD-44 directs this through NSPD-1. Specifically, NSPD-44 states "Within the scope of this NSPD, and in order to maintain clear accountability and responsibility for any given contingency response or stabilization and reconstruction mission, lead and supporting responsibilities for agencies and departments will be designated using the mechanism outlined in NSPD-1. These lead and supporting relationships will be redesignated as transitions are required."

operations—common understanding of the purpose and concept of the operation, coordinated policies and plans, and trust and confidence between key participants—is not being achieved.
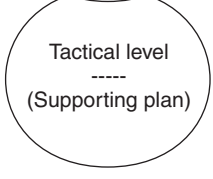
Interagency Coordination is Necessary at Strategic, Operational and Tactical Levels of Planning

As previously discussed, NSPD-44 states that the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State will integrate stabilization and reconstruction contingency plans with military contingency plans when relevant and appropriate and will develop a general framework for fully coordinating stabilization and reconstruction activities and military operations at all levels where appropriate. DOD Directive 3000.05 has placed significant emphasis on the interagency nature of stability operations and the need for a coordinated approach to integrate the efforts of government and nongovernment organizations. Specifically, the Directive requires the geographic combatant commanders to engage relevant U.S. departments and agencies, foreign governments and security forces, international organizations, nongovernment organizations, and members of the private sector in stability operations planning, training, and exercising, as appropriate, in coordination with the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy.[18] Beyond this directive, combatant commanders also have the overall responsibility to plan for a wide range of military operations, such as potential military conflicts, other operations to stabilize fragile governments or regions, or to respond to unexpected events such as the Tsunami relief effort in 2005. As a result, combatant commanders now have an expanding responsibility to coordinate these planning efforts with representatives from various U.S. agencies, organizations, other governments, and the private sector.

Combatant commanders develop military plans focused at three distinct, yet overlapping, levels that help commanders at each level visualize a logical arrangement of operations, allocate resources, and assign tasks. Figure 4 illustrates these levels, and the type of planning that occurs in each.

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[18]Department of Defense Directive 3000.05.

Figure 4: Strategic, Operational, and Tactical Levels of Military Planning

Strategic level ----- (Supported plan)	• Level at which combatant commanders employ the Secretary of Defense's Contingency Planning Guidance to develop the military strategy to guide the development of plans for conducting operations specific to their area of responsibility
Operational level ----- (Supporting plan)	• Level where Joint Force and service component commanders design strategies, campaigns, and major operations and organize and employ military forces. • Level at which tactical employment of forces are linked to national and military strategic objectives.
Tactical level ----- (Supporting plan)	• Level where planning is focused on executing battles, engagement, and activities to achieve military objectives.

Source: GAO analysis.

As illustrated in figure 4, at the strategic level, planners prepare what is known as the supported plan, which describes how a combatant commander intends to meet the national or high-level goals for his geographical area of responsibility. These plans assign responsibilities for specific strategic goals to other organizations and subordinate commands, but do not provide the details for how these goals will be accomplished. Generally, component commands (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force forces assigned to the combatant commander) prepare operational and tactical level plans, which are intended to provide an increasing level of detail and fidelity to the plans and are referred to as supporting plans. It is at this level of planning that planners develop specific details about actions that will be taken and how resources will be applied to achieve the objectives outlined in the strategic level plan. At the operational and tactical levels, military planners need knowledge of the resources they can rely on from other agencies for conducting operations and who will be on the ground that they can coordinate with for information and integration of activities.

To achieve a fully integrated strategic, operational, or tactical plan, DOD planners require increased knowledge of the roles, responsibilities, and capabilities that all agencies and organizations can contribute to stabilization efforts. DOD policy officials responsible for developing

planning guidance have stated that interagency planning in military operations can no longer be an afterthought, but is critical to realizing U.S. interests in future conflicts. We found almost universal agreement between all organizations included in our review that there needs to be more interagency coordination in planning, and that these coordination requirements differ at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of planning. For example, officials agreed that at the strategic level, the many organizations that can play a key role in stability operations should be present to represent their respective organizations, and that those representatives can help facilitate a mutual understanding of the overall contributions, capabilities, and capacity of each organization. These representatives can also develop a better understanding of DOD and the process used to develop military plans. At the operational and tactical level, DOD officials agreed that, ideally, they need consistent access to interagency personnel from other government agencies that have been authorized by their organizations to establish coordinating relationships with the military. Specifically, European Command officials commented that they would benefit from subject matter experts from non-DOD organizations at the operational level who can (1) participate in the planning process and (2) increase the probability that planned contributions from non-DOD organizations in stability operations can actually be provided. Similarly, Pacific Command officials stated that to facilitate interagency coordination at the operational and tactical levels, several issues such as liaison authority, willingness on the part of other agencies to work with DOD, and coordinating mechanisms must be addressed. The department has also recognized that nongovernmental organizations should participate in DOD's planning process, where appropriate.[19]

DOD Has Not Achieved Consistent Interagency Participation in the Military Planning Process

DOD has taken steps to establish interagency coordination mechanisms and to improve interagency participation in its planning efforts, but it has not achieved consistent interagency representation or participation at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of planning. At the strategic level, DOD's primary mechanism for interagency coordination within each combatant command is the Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG). As shown in Table 2, the size and composition of these groups varied within each combatant command we visited, but in general, they have been comprised of a limited number of representatives from State,

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[19]Department of Defense Directive 3000.05.

USAID, the Department of Treasury, the Drug Enforcement Agency, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Table 2: JIACG Membership at the Central, European, and Pacific Commands

	JIACG membership (proposed staffing)								
	Department of Defense (DOD)		Department of State	Federal Bureau of Investigations	Drug Enforcement Agency	Department of Homeland Security	Department of the Treasury	USAID	Department of Transportation
	Military	Civilian							
U.S. Central Command	41	8	1	2	1	1	1	1	0
U.S. European Command	13	2	1	2	0	0	1	1	0
U.S. Pacific Command	8	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	1

Source: GAO analysis of DOD information.

The organization and functions of the JIACGs are evolving. At the time of our review, each JIACG we examined had an overall function to improve general coordination between DOD and the agencies represented in the group and were not intended to be actively involved in DOD's planning efforts. At each command we visited, we found JIACG participants served primarily as advisors and liaisons between DOD and their parent organizations, had limited planning experience and training, and were not consistently engaged in DOD's planning process. However, officials commented that the role of the JIACG was changing. Specifically, Central Command officials expected that the JIACG within their command would begin to assume a more active role in the planning process, but they did not have specific details on how or when this would occur. At the Pacific Command, the JIACG was being refocused by the commander from coordinating counterterrorism activities to more of a "full spectrum" approach that would include stability operations activities. At the European Command, officials also expected the focus of the JIACG would expand from a counterterrorism focus to a fuller spectrum of operations, which, in their opinion, could include participating in the planning process.

Below the strategic level, at the operational and tactical levels, some service component commands are reaching out to country teams in embassies within their areas of responsibility on an ad hoc basis to obtain

interagency perspectives during their planning efforts. But this approach can be cumbersome because of the large number of countries that may be affected by a regional plan. Generally, component command officials we contacted agreed that the primary mechanism available to them for interagency coordination was establishing personal relationships and direct dealings with country teams and other embassy personnel. For example, according to Naval Forces Europe, it is developing new contingency plans, and one of its first steps in this effort is to identify the key participants and resources available within its area of operations and to develop individual relationships that will help it accomplish more. In Central Command, both the Army and Navy component commands commented that they work directly with the embassies in the area of operations in order to interface with other agencies.

Limited Guidance, Information Sharing and Training Hinder Interagency Participation in the Development of Military Plans

Combatant Commanders have achieved limited interagency participation in the development of military plans because: (1) DOD has not provided specific guidance to commanders on how to integrate planning with non-DOD organizations, (2) DOD practices inhibit the appropriate sharing of planning information with non-DOD organizations, and (3) DOD and non-DOD organizations lack an understanding of each other's planning processes and capabilities, and non-DOD organizations have limited capacity to fully engage in DOD's planning efforts. At each combatant command we visited, planners acknowledged the requirement to include interagency considerations in planning, as required by recent DOD policy. But command officials stated they did not have any guidance on how to meet the requirement, or on the specific mechanisms that would facilitate interagency planning at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. For example, numerous DOD publications and documents discuss the JIACG organizations at each combatant command, but there is no published DOD guidance that establishes policy governing the JIACGs or that outlines the responsibilities for establishing and managing them. Officials from the DOD and State also commented that the JIACG organizations were not intended to be a coordinating body for military planning, and questioned if this was an appropriate mechanism for integrating the planning efforts between DOD and other agencies.

The second factor inhibiting interagency participation is that DOD does not have a process in place to facilitate the sharing of planning information with non-DOD agencies, when appropriate, early in the planning process without specific approval from the Secretary of Defense. Specifically, DOD policy officials, including the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations, stated that it is the department's policy

not to share DOD contingency plans with agencies or offices outside of DOD unless directed to do so by the Secretary of Defense, who determines if they have a need to know. In addition, DOD's planning policies and procedures state that a combatant commander, with Secretary of Defense approval, may present interagency aspects of his plan to the Joint Staff during the plan approval process for transmittal to the National Security Council for interagency staffing and plan development. This hierarchical approach limits interagency participation as plans are developed by the combatant commands at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. State officials also told us that DOD's current process for sharing planning information limits non-DOD participation in the development of military plans, and inviting interagency participation only after the plans have been formulated is a significant obstacle to achieving a unified government approach in those plans. In their opinion, it is critical to include interagency participation in the early stages of plan development at the combatant commands.

Additionally, according to combatant command officials, non-DOD personnel do not always have the necessary security clearances required by DOD for access to the department's planning documents or participation in planning sessions. In its recent interim report to the Secretary of Defense on DOD Directive 3000.05, DOD acknowledged the current challenges in information sharing and predicts that DOD will continue to face serious problems concerning the release and sharing of information among DOD, other U.S. government agencies, international partners, and other nongovernmental organizations. In the report DOD attributed information-sharing issues to restrictions based on current information-sharing policies and emphasized that to improve information-sharing capabilities senior leadership direction is required.

The third factor limiting the effectiveness of interagency coordination efforts is that DOD and non-DOD organizations lack an understanding of each other's planning processes and capabilities, and have different planning cultures and capacities. DOD and non-DOD officials repeatedly emphasized in their discussions with us the cultural and capacity challenges that the two communities face. Within DOD, officials discussed a lack of formally trained DOD planners within the combatant commands. For example, only two of the six planners at U.S. Army Europe were formally trained, and another official noted that it takes a planner about a year on the job to become proficient in what is generally a 2-year assignment. Even if combatant command planners are experienced, they may lack knowledge of interagency processes and capabilities. For example, a Pacific Command planner stated that they had to guess about

interagency capabilities during planning. Senior Pacific Command officials cited a need to educate DOD planners on U.S. government agencies strengths and weaknesses and where expectations may exceed an agency's capabilities. Similarly, European command JIACG officials commented that DOD needs to institutionalize the interagency education piece at its schools for professional planners, and a European Command planner stated that it is essential to understand what the various non-DOD agencies do and what they need to know about DOD capabilities.

Our analysis of DOD's lessons-learned databases from current and past military operations provided details that specifically addressed the training differences between DOD and non-DOD agencies and the limited knowledge of each other's capabilities. For example, the databases can contain lessons learned such as: (1) DOD needs to develop knowledge of other agencies and the capabilities they bring to operations, (2) significant improvements could be made in military education by the development of interagency programs of instruction, and (3) DOD should work to aggressively include State in the process of project development.[20] Furthermore, DOD officials described what they believe is a significant difference in the planning cultures of DOD and non-DOD organizations. They stated that DOD has a robust planning culture that includes extensive training programs, significant resources, dedicated personnel, and career positions. Conversely, officials from the Joint Staff, the Office of Policy, Joint Forces Command, and the combatant commands explained that many agencies outside of DOD do not appear to have a similar planning culture and do not appear to embrace the detailed planning approach taken by DOD. In addition, these officials repeatedly stated that their efforts to include non-DOD organizations in planning and exercise efforts has been stymied by the limited number of personnel those agencies have available to participate. DOD has attempted to mitigate some of these challenges by sharing its planning resources to projects such as the development of a draft joint planning concept with State, offering DOD personnel to provide training to non-DOD organizations, and encouraging non-DOD agencies to participate in exercise planning. We did not examine the planning capability and capacity of non-DOD organizations in this review, but we do have ongoing work that is examining this issue in more detail.

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[20]Our analysis of DOD's lessons learned data is discussed in more detail in the next section of this report.

The difference in planning between DOD and other U.S. departments and agencies was also highlighted in the first semiannual report to the Secretary of Defense on stability operations. In that report, the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy states, "The difference between DOD and other U.S. Departments and Agencies is that DOD plans and prepares for current and future operations and other U.S. Departments and Agencies plan and prepare for current operations. This is reflected in the different planning processes across the U.S. Government and the relative spending on training, education, and exercises."[21]

Officials from State offered similar perspectives on the planning capabilities and capacities of non-DOD organizations. They stated that State planning is different from military planning, with State more focused on current operations, and less focused on the wide range of potential contingency operations that DOD is required to plan for. As a result, State does not allocate planning resources in the same way as DOD, and therefore does not have a large pool of planners that can be deployed to the combatant commands to engage in DOD's planning process. These officials agreed, however, that participating in DOD's planning efforts as plans are being formulated is necessary to achieve a unified government approach in the military plans, and suggested alternative methods to accomplish this goal. For example, State officials discussed a current initiative to test methods to "virtually" include State planners in a DOD contingency planning effort in the European Command using electronic communication tools, and stated that State personnel could potentially participate in a large number of planning efforts if this approach were expanded. State officials also suggested that DOD policies may need to be revised to authorize combatant commanders to reach back directly to State and other government agencies as plans are being developed, instead of through the hierarchical approach through the Joint Staff and the National Security Council as previously discussed.

Without clear guidance to the combatant commanders on how to establish adequate mechanisms to facilitate and encourage interagency participation in planning at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of planning, a process to share planning information as plans are being developed, and methods to orient and include professional planners from key organizations in DOD's planning process, the contributions and

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[21]Department of Defense, *Interim Progress Report on DOD Directive 3000.05.*

capabilities of these organizations may not be fully integrated into DOD's plans, and a unified government approach may not be achieved.

Inadequate Guidance, Information Systems, and Processes Contribute to Inconsistent Use of Lessons Learned in Stability Operations Planning

DOD planners are not consistently using lessons learned from past operations as they develop future contingency plans. NSPD-44 and DOD policies highlight the importance of incorporating lessons learned into operational planning. Lessons learned from current and past operations are being captured and incorporated into various databases, but our analysis indicates that DOD planners are not using this information on a consistent basis as plans are revised or developed. Three factors contribute to this inconsistent use of lessons learned in planning: (1) DOD's guidance for incorporating lessons learned into plans is outdated and does not specifically require planners to include lessons learned in the planning process, (2) accessing and searching lessons-learned databases is cumbersome, and (3) the planning review process does not evaluate the extent to which lessons learned are incorporated into specific plans. As a result, DOD is not fully utilizing the results of the lessons-learned systems and may repeat past mistakes.

NSPD-44 and DOD guidance stress the importance of incorporating lessons learned into operations and planning. Furthermore, the recently released Joint Operating Concept for stability operations envisions that the Joint Force will implement a continuous learning process that incorporates lessons learned into ongoing and future operations through constant observation, assessment, application, and adaptation of tactics, techniques, and procedures. The Joint Operation Planning and Execution System manual, which provides planners with the step by step process for planning joint operations, states that a regular review of lessons information can alert planners to known pitfalls and successful and innovative ideas. Prior GAO work on DOD's lessons learned noted that effective guidance and sharing of lessons-learned are key tools to institutionalize and facilitate efficient operations, and failure to utilize lessons heightens the risk of repeating past mistakes and being unable to build on the efficiencies others have developed during past operations.[22]

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[22]GAO, *Force Structure: Navy Needs to Fully Evaluate Options and Provide Standard Guidance for Implementing Surface Ship Rotational Crewing*, GAO-05-10 (Washington, D.C.: Nov 10, 2004); *Chemical Weapons: Lessons Learned Program Generally Effective but Could Be Improved and Expanded*, GAO 02-890 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 10, 2002).

Lessons Learned are Being Captured but Not Incorporated into Plans

DOD has established comprehensive joint lessons learned programs at all levels within the department, and lessons learned from exercises and operations are being captured. The department's Joint Lessons Learned Program is a federation of separate lessons-learned organizations embedded within the Joint Staff, combatant commands, the Services and Combat Support Agencies that focus upon capturing information, data, and lessons based upon each command's priorities. Each lessons-learned organization within this program has developed its own processes, systems, and information products for capturing, storing, and retrieving lessons and observations based upon each organization's requirements and resources.

The various organizations in the Joint Lessons Learned Program focus on capturing lessons learned at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. These lessons tend to be oriented toward a specific customer and are disseminated through a variety of different products. For example, the services tend to collect tactical- and operational-level lessons that they use to address command and service-specific issues for resolution. Similarly, the combatant commands have each developed their own theater-specific command-level lessons programs related to joint, interagency, and multinational matters and other matters involving interoperability. In addition, each organization tailors its lessons-learned programs to meet the individual command's requirements and available resources. For example, the U.S. Pacific Command's program is: managed by one civilian contractor; focuses it efforts on issues at the senior command leadership level; and hosts a web-based repository that contains approximately 145 lessons documents. In contrast, the Center for Army Lessons Learned has 179 people on staff; focuses on all levels within the Army from the individual soldier to the most senior leaders; uses a combination of active collection techniques, such as sending out teams to interview soldiers and observe operations; and has an electronic repository consisting of approximately 157,000 documents.

Our lessons-learned analysis provides insights into the types of lessons available to DOD planners and the volume of information that could be useful to improve future stability operations planning. We grouped 1,074 lessons into 14 themes that reflect the full spectrum of strategic-level issues surrounding stability operations, such as cultural sensitivity, language skills, intelligence, communications systems, and reconstruction activities. For example, the information in one theme we developed related to DOD coordination and planning with other U.S. agencies and non-U.S. government organizations highlights issues such as the need for (1) the military to work more closely with other agencies during stability

operations, (2) DOD to develop knowledge of other agencies and the capabilities they can contribute, and (3) commanders to ensure that military sectors during operations correspond with civil geopolitical boundaries. The information in another of our themes discussing civil military operations highlights issues such as steps needed to improve information operations, and how to address cultural differences during information operations to reach specific audiences. A comprehensive listing of our themes and an explanation for each can be found in appendix II.

Despite the robust lessons-learned gathering process in place, we found that DOD planners at the combatant and component commands in our review did not consistently incorporate lessons as plans were developed or revised. For example, two of the combatant commands that we visited stated that they did not routinely use lessons as plans were developed. Similarly, we found a range of how lessons learned were used in the planning process at the component commands we visited. For example, one Central Command component stated that lessons learned were part of the component command's planning process, but a Pacific Command component commented that it generally did not utilize lessons learned as it developed plans.

When we discussed the limited use of lessons learned with officials from the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, they stated that planners are generally aware of the need to check lessons learned as they develop plans. However, the officials acknowledged that there are barriers to the use of lessons learned, that the existing lessons learned systems need updating, and questions do exist on whether the information provided by the current systems is adequate. One official noted that Office of Policy is developing a new Center for Complex Operations, which is envisioned to facilitate the use of lessons by acting as a clearinghouse for stability operations information. The Center is still in the planning phase, and we were told that funding has been requested in the fiscal year 2007 supplemental budget request and in the fiscal year 2008 budget to implement the plan.

Three Factors Contribute to the Inconsistent Use of Lessons Learned in Planning

We identified three factors that contribute to this inconsistent use of lessons learned in the planning process. First, the guidance regarding lessons learned in the Joint Staff's manual for planning is outdated–the relevant section of the manual has not been updated since July 2000 and does not specifically require planners to include lessons learned in the planning process. Specifically, this guidance states that the Joint Universal

Lessons Learned System should be contacted early in the planning process and periodically thereafter to obtain specific practical lessons in all areas of planning and execution based on actual operation and exercise occurrences.[23] However, this system does not exist and has not been supported since 1997, nor does the update reference an existing system that planners can access for joint lessons learned.

The second factor contributing to limited use of lessons learned in the planning process is that accessing and searching lessons-learned databases is cumbersome. For example, to conduct our analysis of DOD lessons learned, we used five databases—four managed by each of the services, and one managed by the Joint Center for Operational Analysis. To obtain lessons-learned information from these sources, we had to: separately access each database, become familiar with each system's functionality and search engines; repeat the same searches in each site for stability operations–related terms; and review the results to find relevant lessons. However, knowing how to navigate and search each of the lessons-learned systems is not enough. We also had to familiarize ourselves with and sort through the multitude of products generated to find lessons that were applicable to our analysis. Planners we contacted also told us they considered the databases difficult and time-consuming to use. One combatant command official described the magnitude of the challenge by noting that there is so much information within the program that the biggest difficulty is turning the information into usable knowledge. Additionally, the Joint Staff has acknowledged that the current system is inefficient and of limited effectiveness in sharing lessons-learned data.

In an effort to address these issues, DOD has recently initiated an effort to develop a Joint Lessons Learned Information System, which is intended to standardize the collection, management, dissemination and tracking of observations and lessons. The department is in the early stages of developing this system, and plans that the system will establish interoperable lessons databases that can be searched with an easy-to-use search engine. The Joint Lessons Learned Information System development strategy includes non-DOD agencies, and eventually non-U.S. partners. However, while Joint Staff officials recognize the need for stakeholder input to avoid continued inefficiency and limited effectiveness in sharing lessons learned, they do not plan to include non-DOD organizations until the later stages of the program's development.

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[23]Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual, CJCSM 3122.01.

The third factor affecting the use of lessons learned is that the planning review process does not evaluate the extent to which lessons learned are incorporated into specific plans. During discussions with planners at the various commands, we found no evidence of a formal mechanism to verify that lessons were considered in plan development. Furthermore we found conflicting views as to the need for a formal requirement. For example, one combatant command planner believed that, despite the lack of a formal mechanism, the command's vetting process for plans ensured that lessons would be incorporated, while at another combatant command a planner stated that mechanisms for ensuring that lessons are used in planning is broken because there is no formal requirement to utilize lessons in plan development.

DOD has invested substantial resources to develop systems that capture lessons from exercises, experiments, and operations, with the intent of using these lessons to improve efficiency. However, in the case of planning, the department has not developed mechanisms to ensure that they are taking advantage of this resource. As a result, DOD heightens its risk of either repeating past mistakes or being unable to build on the efficiencies developed during past operations as it plans for future operations.

Conclusions

The DOD has a critical role in supporting a new national policy to improve stability operations capabilities and to achieve a more unified governmentwide approach to this demanding and important mission. Recent operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, along with current operations in Afghanistan and Iraq provide daily reminders of how complex and difficult these missions are. The department has developed an approach to improve its ability to execute stability operations, but it has achieved limited progress in two key areas—identifying needed capabilities, and developing measures of effectiveness—that are critical to successfully executing this approach. Without clear guidance on how and when combatant commanders are to develop stability operations capability requirements, the capabilities needed to conduct stability operations may not be fully developed or current service efforts to enhance capabilities may not be addressing the most critical needs of the commanders. Similarly, without clear departmentwide guidance on how to develop measures of effectiveness and milestones for completing them, confusion may continue to exist within the department, and progress on this important management tool may be significantly hindered.

DOD has recognized the need to achieve greater interagency participation in the development of military plans, but it has not established an effective mechanism to accomplish this goal. A governmentwide approach to stability operations is dependent upon an integrated planning effort of all organizations involved in them. Integrated planning can help fully leverage the capabilities, contributions, and capacity of each organization, and increase the potential for successful operations. The challenge now facing the department is how to modify its planning approach to better integrate non-DOD organizations into all levels—strategic, operational, and tactical—of planning and to support State as the lead agency in stability operations planning. Without improved guidance to military commanders on the mechanisms that are needed to facilitate interagency planning, an approach to appropriately share planning information with non-DOD organizations as plans are developed, and steps for overcoming differences in planning culture and training and capacities among the affected agencies, integrated interagency planning for stability operations may continue to be stymied.

The consideration of lessons learned from past operations as new plans are developed is not only a requirement stipulated by new stability operations guidance, it is a requisite step to reducing the potential that past mistakes will be repeated in future operations. Without clear and complete guidance for planners, steps to increase the potential that information system improvements will facilitate sharing of lessons learned both within DOD and between all organizations that will participate in planning for stability operations, and a focus on lessons learned as plans are reviewed, the potential gains that can be achieved through systematic consideration of lessons learned as future plans are developed may not be realized.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To meet the goals of identifying and developing stability operations capabilities and for developing tools to evaluate progress in achieving these goals, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to take the following two actions:

- Provide comprehensive guidance, including a clear methodology and time frames for completion, to the combatant commanders and the services on how to identify and address stability operations capability gaps.
- Provide comprehensive guidance to DOD organizations on how to develop measures of effectiveness as directed by DOD Directive 3000.05, including those measures related to identifying and developing stability operations capabilities.

To achieve greater interagency participation in the development of military plans that include stability operations, and increase the potential for unity of effort as those operations are executed, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense in coordination with the Secretary of State take the following three actions:

- Provide specific implementation guidance to combatant and component commanders on the mechanisms that are needed to facilitate and encourage interagency participation in the development of military plans that include stability operations–related activities.
- Develop a process to share planning information with the interagency representatives early in the planning process.
- Develop an approach to overcome differences in planning culture, training, and capacities among the affected agencies.

To more fully incorporate lessons learned in the planning process, we recommend the Secretary of Defense direct the Chairman of the Joint Chief's of Staff working with Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to take the following actions:

- Update the current planning guidance to
  - direct military planners to include lessons learned as they develop plans, and
  - require that the plan review process include a step to verify that lessons learned have been considered and adopted as appropriate.
- Include non-DOD stakeholders in the development of the Joint Lessons Learned Information System at an earlier point than currently planned.

Matter for Congressional Consideration

Because it is unclear what specific steps, if any, DOD plans to take to implement our recommendations, the Congress should consider requiring the Secretary of Defense to develop an action plan and report annually to the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the House Committee on Armed Services on the specific steps being taken and current status of its efforts to (1) identify and prioritize needed stability operations capabilities, (2) develop measures of effectiveness to evaluate progress in achieving these capabilities, (3) achieve greater interagency participation in the development of military plans, and (4) fully incorporate lessons learned in the planning process. The Secretary's report should also identify challenges to achieving an integrated, interagency approach to stability operations, and potential solutions for mitigating those challenges.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD partially agreed with our eight recommendations but did not discuss what specific steps, if any, it plans to take to implement our recommendations. (DOD's comments appear in their entirety in app. III.) State was also afforded an opportunity to comment on this report, but declined to do so. In its written comments, DOD highlighted traditional DOD methodologies and approaches to developing capabilities, measures of effectiveness, coordinating with other agencies and incorporating lessons learned that it believes are adequate to address our recommendations. Although DOD is making progress in achieving a greater focus on stability operations through its new directive, our report notes it has made limited progress in certain areas, such as establishing measures of effectiveness, due to the limited guidance provided to DOD components. As a result, we continue to believe our recommendations are warranted and that DOD should take specific steps to address them. Because it is unclear what specific steps, if any, DOD plans to take to implement our recommendations, we have added a matter for congressional consideration suggesting that the Congress require the Secretary of Defense to develop an action plan and report annually on the specific steps being taken to address our recommendations and the current status of its efforts. The report should also identify challenges to achieving an integrated interagency approach to stability operations, and potential solutions for mitigating those challenges.

DOD provided three overall comments to the report. First, DOD commented that GAO began the field work for this report in October 2005, one month prior to the issuance of DOD Directive 3000.05, and observed that much of our field work was therefore conducted prior to activities DOD undertook to implement the directive. The department is mistaken in this observation. In October, 2005, we held our entrance conference with DOD officials, but conducted the majority of our field work from January 2006 through March 2007. We believe the timing of our field work enabled us to focus on the approach DOD was taking to implement the directive, observe how key organizations began implementing this approach over a 1-year period, and highlight impediments that may impair DOD's ability to achieve the results intended by the directive—improved stability operations capabilities. Therefore, we believe our work and related recommendations are particularly relevant and important because they address systemic issues associated with DOD's approach and could assist DOD organizations tasked with implementing the new directive.

Second, DOD commented that our report is directed exclusively at DOD; that stability, security, transition, and reconstruction activities are inherently interagency in nature; and that DOD can only implement

recommendations under its purview. While we agree that stability operations are inherently interagency in nature, we disagree that our work is focused exclusively on DOD. Specifically, our audit work included discussions with State and USAID officials in Washington, D.C., and at each of the combatant commands included in our review to gain their views and perspectives. We have also included recommendations to improve interagency participation in the development of military plans that are directed to the Secretary of Defense because the military planning process is conducted under the purview of the Secretary of Defense. However, acknowledging that interagency participation in DOD planning cannot be forced, we are recommending the Secretary of Defense coordinate with the Secretary of State to implement these recommendations. Furthermore, as we discussed with DOD officials during the course of our review and stated in this report, we have other work underway to evaluate State's efforts to lead and coordinate stabilization operations in conjunction with other U.S. agencies, and plan to report on those issues separately.

Third, DOD commented that the identification and development of stability, security, transition, and reconstruction operations capabilities are not so different from other DOD capabilities that they require a new or separate methodology to identify and develop military capabilities and plans. We disagree. As we discuss in this report, DOD has made limited progress in identifying and prioritizing needed capabilities, the identification of stability operations requirements was occurring in a fragmented manner, and each service is using a different approach to improve stability operations capabilities. To date, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy has not identified and prioritized needed stability operations capabilities and military plans do not fully reflect an integrated, interagency approach to stability operations. Therefore, we continue to believe that our recommendations in these areas are still warranted, as discussed below.

Regarding our recommendation that DOD provide comprehensive guidance, including a clear methodology and time frames for completion, to combatant commanders and the services on how to identify and address stability operations capability gaps, DOD stated that existing, mandated capability assessment methodologies already effectively address stability, security, transition, and reconstruction operations capability needs at the combatant commands and the services. It also stated that under this process, the combatant commands assess and communicate to DOD the capabilities required to conduct these missions just as they do for other assigned missions. However, as discussed in this report, we found

that the combatant commands included in our review had made limited progress in identifying stability operations requirements because DOD had not issued guidance or set specific time frames to complete this task, and there was confusion over how to define stability operations. During the course of our work, DOD refined the definition of stability operations, which was a positive step, but has not clarified the guidance or set specific time frames for identifying stability operations requirements. Because combatant command officials indicated to us that the absence of guidance and timeframes was a significant contributor to the lack of progress in developing requirements, we believe our recommendation would assist the department in accomplishing this task.

In response to our recommendation that DOD provide comprehensive guidance to DOD organizations on how to develop measures of effectiveness, the department stated that it already develops measures of effectiveness in general, and a special process is not needed for stability operations. We believe this response is not consistent with DOD Directive 3000.05, which requires each organization tasked under the directive to develop measures of effectiveness that evaluate progress in meeting their respective goals listed in the directive. In addition, as discussed in this report, and as acknowledged by officials from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Policy) in a progress report to the Secretary of Defense, the department has made limited progress in developing measures of effectiveness related to stability operations. We found this limited progress was caused by significant confusion over how this task should be accomplished, and because minimal guidance was provided by the office of Policy. The department recognizes this confusion exits, and as discussed in this report plans to establish workshops to assist organizations in these efforts. We believe this is a positive step that should be complemented with improved guidance that would be available to all organizations tasked with this responsibility, and therefore continue to believe our recommendation is appropriate and necessary.

In response to our recommendations that DOD coordinate with State and provide specific implementation guidance to the combatant and component commanders on the mechanisms needed to facilitate and encourage interagency participation in the development of military plans, and that the two departments develop a process to share planning information, DOD provided the same response to both recommendations. The department believes that National Security Presidential Directive 44 should, by itself, provide sufficient direction on the structures needed and a process to share planning information. The department also stated it would continue to include other agencies in planning and exercising for

stability operations. We believe the department's response is inadequate because NSPD-44 is a high-level directive that sets forth goals for improved interagency participation in stability operations, but does not contain details on mechanisms to achieve those goals. During the course of our review we received consistent comments from DOD and State officials that it is clear interagency participation in DOD planning is needed, but it is very unclear to as to how to accomplish this goal. Therefore, as detailed in this report, we found that interagency participation in the development of military plans at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels was very limited in every command included in our review in part because DOD's guidance did not provide details on how to engage relevant agencies in planning or on the specific mechanisms that would facilitate interagency planning, and because DOD practices inhibit the appropriate sharing of planning information. Combatant command officials cited significant limitations in current coordinating groups, and various ad hoc methods were in place to gain interagency perspectives on DOD planning efforts. State officials were concerned that DOD practices limit the appropriate sharing of DOD planning information as plans are developed, and it therefore had minimal impact as plans are being constructed. These fundamental and systemic issues will not be resolved with the guidance provided by NSPD-44. We continue to believe that systemic solutions are needed and can be achieved with improved guidance and more effective processes to appropriately share planning information with interagency representatives.

In response to our recommendation that DOD, in coordination with State, develop an approach to overcome differences in planning culture, training, and capacities among the affected agencies, DOD stated that it will continue to work to understand and accommodate differences in these areas, offer non-DOD organizations opportunities to participate in DOD training courses, and detail DOD personnel to other agencies. We believe these are positive steps and agree DOD should continue to pursue them. However, our work indicates that these measures are not adequate to fully address the magnitude of differences in the planning culture and capacity between DOD and other agencies. As discussed in this report, State officials believe that new and innovative practices need to be identified and pursued, such as "virtual" collaborative planning between DOD and State. Therefore, we continue to believe that our recommendation for DOD and State to work together to develop more comprehensive and innovative solutions to overcome these differences is an important and necessary step to take.

In response to our recommendations that DOD update its current planning guidance to direct military planners to include lessons learned as they develop plans, and to update current planning guidance to require that the plan review process include a step to verify that lessons learned have been considered and adopted as appropriate, DOD stated that the current planning methodology takes into account lessons learned when constructing or modifying a plan. As discussed in our report, this is not always the case. In the course of our field work, we found sporadic use of lessons learned in the planning process and a lack of formal guidance directing consideration of lessons learned in both constructing and in reviewing plans. According to DOD, taking lessons learned into account during planning is at the heart of all effective military (or nonmilitary) planning. However, the Joint Staff's manual on the Joint Operation Planning and Execution System encourages, but does not direct planners to review lessons learned as they develop plans. We agree that lessons learned are being used by planners, but inconsistently. As a result we believe that our recommendations should be implemented in order to increase the potential that lessons are actually incorporated into plans as appropriate.
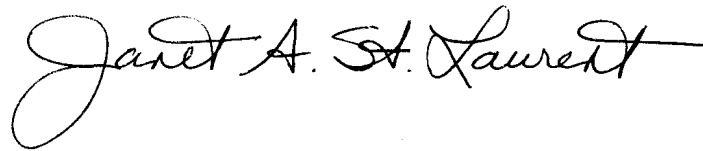
In response to our recommendation that DOD include non-DOD stakeholders in the development of the Joint Lessons Learned Information System at an earlier point than currently planned, DOD agreed to invite stakeholders to participate in the system at an earlier stage, but expressed concerns that these stakeholders face shortfalls in capacity and resources and therefore cannot ensure their interactive participation. We believe this is a positive step and responsive to our recommendation.

We are sending copies of this report to the Chairmen and Ranking Minority Members, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. We are also sending a copy to the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and officials in the U.S. European Command, U.S. Central Command, and U.S. Pacific Command. We will also make copies available to other interested parties upon request. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at http://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staff have questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-4402 or by e-mail at stlaurentj@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 IV.

Sincerely yours,

Janet A. St. Laurent
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

To evaluate the Department of Defense's approach to improving stability operations and DOD's identification of stability operations capabilities and development of performance measures we obtained and analyzed DOD Directive 3000.05, National Security Presidential Directive 44, the Quadrennial Defense Review, the Building Partnership Capacity Roadmap, the Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operation Joint Operating Concept, and the Defense Science Board studies on Institutionalizing Stability Operations within DOD. We interviewed current and former officials at the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, the Joint Staff and Services, three Regional Combatant Commands (European Command, Pacific Command, and Central Command), and U.S. Joint Forces Command. In these interviews we reviewed relevant information and discussed implementing guidance for completing responsibilities outlined in the Directive, the interviewees' understanding of their roles and responsibilities in completing assigned tasks, progress in implementing the Directive, challenges that have been encountered, and input provided for the first report to the Secretary of Defense on implementing the Directive. Finally, we reviewed the first report to the Secretary of Defense and discussed the report's findings with officials within the Office of the Under Secretary for Policy.

To identify the extent to which DOD is planning for stability operations and whether the department's planning mechanisms encourage and facilitate consideration of non-DOD capabilities, we reviewed and analyzed NSPD-44, DOD Directive 3000.05, joint planning guidance and manuals, the Quadrennial Defense Review, the Building Partnership Capacity Roadmap, and combatant command processes. We interviewed officials at the Department of State's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, the Bureau of Political Military Affairs, and the United States Agency for International Development to obtain other agencies' perspectives regarding DOD's planning process and the inclusion of non-DOD perspectives in contingency plans. To understand DOD's planning process, mechanisms for interagency involvement in planning, and impediments to interagency coordination, we met with representatives from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy as well as planners from three regional combatant commands, which included the Pacific, European, and Central commands, members of each combatant command's Joint Interagency Coordination Group, and fourteen combatant command component commands responsible for contingency operation planning. We also reviewed examples of interagency coordination contingency planning documents to gain an understanding of the level of detail to which the commands planned

coordination efforts. We did not, however, assess the extent to which these roles and responsibilities, including those of DOD, are appropriate. Our review did not include the planning for ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. DOD's contingency plans are classified documents and a complete review of the contingency plans was beyond the scope of this audit, and as a result we did not develop a comprehensive list of documents to draw a representative sample of contingency planning documents related to interagency coordination. However, we worked with combatant command officials to identify examples of planning documents related to interagency coordination and the level of detail to which the commands planned coordination with other agencies. We did not include in our review any current or planned coordination between DOD and non-U.S.-government organizations, foreign governments, or international organizations.

To determine the extent to which DOD planners are applying lessons learned from past operations and exercises we reviewed relevant DOD guidance, and discussed with DOD officials their consideration of lessons learned during planning. In order to understand the requirements for utilizing lessons learned in the planning process and the purpose and scope of the Joint Lessons Learned Program, we analyzed DOD's planning guidance and manuals, lessons learned instructions for the Joint Lessons Learned Program, and the services' lessons learned guidance.

To assess the type and extent of strategic stability operations lessons learned available, we identified organizations that produced studies or reports that included lessons learned relevant to stability operations, both within and outside DOD. To identify strategic level lessons within DOD's Joint Lessons Learned Program, we obtained access to the four armed services lessons learned databases (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force), the Joint Center for Operational Analysis, and obtained stability operations studies from the Defense Science Board. In order to identify relevant non-DOD organizations conducting lessons-learned research, we contacted individuals identified as subject matter experts in stability operations and asked them to identify non-DOD agencies that published reports and studies regarding stability operations that they recognized as being leaders in the field. In this manner, several non-DOD organizations were identified, including the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the United States Institute of Peace. After obtaining search results from the DOD lessons-learned databases and non-DOD organizations, we reviewed the materials and selected analytical products for further examination based upon whether the report or study included original data collection and analysis related to the conduct of stability and

reconstruction in Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, or the operations of the Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa. We also excluded reports and analysis focused primarily on combat operations, including tactics, techniques, and procedures, after action-reports, and handbooks. We reviewed over 200 reports or studies, and found 38 documents that met these criteria. We entered all of the individual lessons and observations from the 38 reports into a database resulting in over 3,500 individual lessons and observations. Two GAO analysts independently reviewed the individual lessons and observations using the following criteria for inclusion.

Inclusive Criteria

We included lessons related to: U.S. forces performing or supporting local governance functions in areas such as health care, utilities, infrastructure, and law enforcement; and U.S. forces interacting with local civil authorities to enhance the viability of these authorities and strengthen their capacity to provide basic services to the local population.

Exclusive/Restrictive Criteria

We excluded lessons related to: tactics, techniques, and procedures for combat operations (e.g., marksmanship and weapons maintenance; house takedown; cordon and search); general purpose logistical support and systems sustainment; combat operations that are primarily offensive in nature. (Note: This does not include operations or use of force in direct support of the noncombat activities described above. For example, we would select lessons regarding the depth and composition of forces required to provide security for Provincial Reconstruction Teams.)

Following the independent review, the team compared their individual results and, when agreement between the independent reviewers could not be reached, a third independent reviewer decided upon the inclusion or exclusion of the lesson. This analysis resulted in 1,074 individual lessons that met GAO's criteria, which we reviewed for commonalities from which we developed our 14 major themes. After developing the themes, we categorized each lesson or observation, by consensus, into one or more categories based upon the content of the lesson. We used these themes and our knowledge of the lessons-learned systems and guidance as a basis for discussions with combatant command and component command planners regarding the use of lessons learned in the planning process. We recognize that this analysis is not based upon an exhaustive review of all reports and studies on the subject of stability operations.

We conducted our review from October 2005 through March 2007 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Appendix II: Major Lessons-Learned Themes and Descriptions

Listed below are the 14 major themes that we developed after reviewing and categorizing 1,074 lessons learned. We used our analysis to provide insight into the types of stability operations lessons available to planners and to facilitate our discussions with Department of Defense. Our coding methodology often resulted in a lesson falling into one or more categories based upon the content of the lesson. Furthermore, several categories, such as Civil Military Operations and Provisional Reconstruction Teams, were considered to be functional categories, or topical areas, and the lessons were often included in another theme. The first column lists the theme GAO developed. The second column provides a general description of the types of lessons included within the theme. The third column lists the total number of lessons coded into each theme. Our analytical methodology was developed to support an insight as to the types of lessons available and does not does imply a ranking of themes in terms of importance or critical needs. A detailed discussion of our methodology is included in appendix I.

GAO Themes	Theme Definitions	Total Number of Lessons
Cultural Sensitivity, Awareness, and Engagement	Cultural sensitivity, awareness as it pertains to U.S.-to-host nation and host nation-to-U.S. engagement before and during deployments.	177
Language	Training of U.S. forces and the use of interpreters.	55
Civil Military Operations	Functional category related to lessons concerning psychological operations, civil affairs, public affairs, and information operations, which were viewed as included within civil military operations. (Lessons in this category are often included with one of the other themes that talk to a more specific issue.)	301
Intelligence	Processes and products, including: intelligence preparation of the battlespace; operational security; counterintelligence; human intelligence.	133
DOD Coordination with non-DOD Organizations	Planning and coordination related to nonmilitary activities with other U.S. agencies, non-U.S.-government organizations, and host nation governments.	212
Force Composition and Restructuring of Forces	While deployed, temporary changes in the primary role of U.S. forces to meet immediate or unanticipated operational needs. For example, transition and reconstruction activities.	12
Welfare and Force Protection.	Includes providing for the care, feeding, and security of military and U.S. government or coalition civilian forces.	39
Unity and/or Exercise of Command.	Addresses the question of who is in charge and how is the authority of command being used.	21
Transition and Reconstruction	Examples include Corps of Engineers and contracted construction. Transfers of authority/responsibility of activities to host nation; election support.	138
Automation, Communication, and Systems	Capability, capacity, and compatibility of U.S. military communication and information systems in the theater of operation.	64

GAO Themes	Theme Definitions	Total Number of Lessons
Military to Military Coordination	U.S., coalition, and host nation military coordination, planning, and capacity. Instances showing how units are working together. This category addresses military-to-military.	167
Human Capital—Skills, Capabilities, and Capacity	Military personnel authorization issues. Are units staffed with enough personnel in the right grade with the right skills and military specialties all the time, temporarily, or not at all?	236
Preparation for Operations	What is being done to prepare before a unit needs to deploy. Includes: issues of doctrine, training, and logistics; and lessons learned that will result in changes to training and logistics to prepare for future operations.	149
Provisional Reconstruction Teams	Functional category related to lessons concerning Provisional Reconstruction Teams. (Lessons in this category are often included with one of the other themes that talk to a more specific issue.)	31

Source: GAO.

Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Defense

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2500

MAY 0 9 2007

SPECIAL OPERATIONS/
LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

Ms. Janet A. St. Laurent
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
US Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW, Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. St. Laurent:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO draft report, GAO-07-549, "MILITARY OPERATIONS: Actions Needed to Improve DoD's Stability Operations Approach and Enhance Interagency Planning," dated April 10, 2007 (GAO Code 350743).

DoD appreciates having the opportunity to respond to the draft report. There are three important circumstances that influence our response:

- First, the field work for this report began in October 2005. DoD Directive 3000.05 "Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations" (DoDD 3000.05) was issued on November 28, 2005. Much of the field work therefore occurred prior to activities DoD has undertaken to improve its ability to conduct these operations.

- Second, stability, security, transition and reconstruction operations are inherently interagency in nature, but the report is directed exclusively to DoD. DoD will work to implement those recommendations under its purview, but cannot adopt recommendations on behalf of other relevant Government agencies.

- Third, DoDD 3000.05 was issued within an existing, well-developed system for the identification and development of military capabilities and plans. Stability, security, transition and reconstruction operations capabilities are not so different from other DoD capabilities that they require a new or separate methodology.

DoD's detailed response to the report's recommendations is attached.

Sincerely,

Joseph J. McMenamin
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
Stability Operations Capabilities

Attachment
As stated

**DOD RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF GAO DRAFT REPORT
"MILITARY OPERATIONS: Actions Needed to Improve DoD's Stability Operations
Approach and Enhance Interagency Planning"
(GAO CODE 350743/GAO-07-549, dated April 10, 2007)**

RECOMMENDATION 1: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the
Under Secretary of Defense (Policy) to provide comprehensive guidance, including a clear
methodology and timeframes for completion, to the combatant commanders and the Services on
how to identify and address stability operations capability gaps.

DOD RESPONSE: DoD partially concurs. The requirement to identify and address stability,
security, transition and reconstruction operations capability needs at the combatant commands
and Services is effectively addressed by existing, mandated capability assessment
methodologies. Under the terms and spirit of Goldwater-Nichols, force capability analysis is
generated by addressing the missions assigned to the combatant commands. DoDD 3000.05 is,
in itself, the direct "policy guidance" enhancing the stability, security, transition and
reconstruction mission in relation to major combat operations. DoDD 3000.05 identified
stability, security, transition and reconstruction operations as a core US military mission and
directed that they be given priority comparable to combat operations. The combatant commands
assess and communicate to DoD the capabilities required to conduct these missions just as they
do for all other assigned military missions.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the
Under Secretary of Defense (Policy) to provide comprehensive guidance to DoD organizations
on how to develop measures of effectiveness as directed by DoD Directive 3000.05, including
those measures related to identifying and developing stability operations capabilities.

DOD RESPONSE: DoD partially concurs. DoD is developing measures of effectiveness in
general, no more or less so in the area of stability, security, transition and reconstruction
operations than for any other mission. Under existing DoD policy, all military activities are
required to be measured against established measures of effectiveness. While establishing
measures of effectiveness for stability, security, transition and reconstruction operations might
prove especially challenging, DoD can still address this issue through its existing process for
establishing measures of effectiveness. A new, unique methodology is unnecessary.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense, in
coordination with the Secretary of State, provide specific implementation guidance to combatant
and component commanders on the mechanisms that are needed to facilitate and encourage
interagency participation in the development of military plans that include stability operations-
related activities.

DOD RESPONSE: DoD partially concurs. Subject to existing structures put in place by the
President through National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 44, the directive should, by
itself, provide sufficient direction. We will continue to work with other agencies of the
Government to include them in planning and exercising for stability, security, transition and
reconstruction-related activities.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of State, develop a process to share planning information with the interagency representatives early in the planning process.

DOD RESPONSE: DoD partially concurs. See the response to Recommendation 3.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of State, develop an approach to overcome differences in planning culture, training and capacities among the affected agencies.

DOD RESPONSE: DoD partially concurs. DoD has worked, and will continue to work, to understand and accommodate differences in planning, training and capabilities development. DoD has provided, and will continue to provide, all possible assistance by opening its training courses to non-DoD Government agencies, detailing DoD personnel to other Government agencies, and actively participating in all interagency processes relating to this subject.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, working with the Under Secretary of Defense (Policy), to update the current planning guidance to direct military planners to include lessons learned as they develop plans.

DOD RESPONSE: DoD partially concurs. Current DoD policy and military planning methodology takes into account "lessons learned" when constructing or modifying a plan. This is at the heart of all effective military (or non-military) planning. This is already being done for stability, security, transition and reconstruction operations.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, working with the Under Secretary of Defense (Policy), to update the current planning guidance to require that the plan review process include a step to ensure that lessons learned have been considered and adopted as appropriate.

DOD RESPONSE: DoD partially concurs. See the response to Recommendation 6.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, working with the Under Secretary of Defense (Policy), to include non-DoD stakeholders in the development of the Joint Lessons Learned Information System at an earlier point than currently planned.

DOD RESPONSE: DoD partially concurs, to the extent it means that the relevant non-DoD stakeholders are invited to participate in the System at an earlier stage. These stakeholders face shortfalls in the capacity and resources; DoD can invite them to access the lessons-learned system, but cannot ensure their interactive participation in it.

Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

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Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Robert L. Repasky, Assistant Director; T. Burke; Stephen Faherty; Susan Ditto; Ron La Due Lake; Kate Lenane; Jonathan Carver; Maria-Alaina Rambus; and Christopher Banks made key contributions to this report.

Related GAO Reports

Operation Iraqi Freedom: DOD Should Apply Lessons Learned Concerning the Need for Security over Conventional Munitions Storage Sites to Future Operations Planning. GAO-07-639T. Washington, D.C.: March 22, 2007.

Operation Iraqi Freedom: DOD Should Apply Lessons Learned Concerning the Need for Security over Conventional Munitions Storage Sites to Future Operations Planning. GAO-07-444. Washington, D.C.: March 22, 2007.

Rebuilding Iraq: Reconstruction Progress Hindered by Contracting, Security, and Capacity Challenges. GAO-07-426T. Washington, D.C.: February 15, 2007.

Securing, Stabilizing, and Rebuilding Iraq. GAO-07-308SP. Washington, D.C.: January 9, 2007.

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