

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Departments of Defense (DOD) and State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have relied extensively on contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements for a wide range of services in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, as GAO previously reported, the agencies have faced challenges in obtaining sufficient information to manage these contracts and assistance instruments.

As part of our third review under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year (FY) 2008, as amended, GAO assessed the implementation of the Synchronized Predeployment and Operational Tracker (SPOT) and data reported by the three agencies for Afghanistan and Iraq for FY 2009 and the first half of FY 2010 on the (1) number of contractor and assistance personnel, including those providing security; (2) number of personnel killed or wounded; and (3) number and value of contracts and assistance instruments and extent of competition for new awards. GAO compared agency data to other available sources to assess reliability.

## What GAO Recommends

In response to GAO's 2009 report, DOD, State, and USAID did not agree with the recommendation to develop a plan for implementing SPOT because they felt ongoing coordination efforts were sufficient. GAO continues to believe a plan is needed to correct SPOT's shortcomings and is not making any new recommendations.

[View GAO-11-1](#) or [key components](#).

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## IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

### DOD, State, and USAID Face Continued Challenges in Tracking Contracts, Assistance Instruments, and Associated Personnel

#### What GAO Found

While the three agencies designated SPOT as their system for tracking statutorily required information in July 2008, SPOT still cannot reliably track information on contracts, assistance instruments, and associated personnel in Iraq or Afghanistan. As a result, the agencies relied on sources of data other than SPOT to respond to our requests for information. The agencies' implementation of SPOT has been affected by some practical and technical issues, but their efforts also were undermined by a lack of agreement on how to proceed, particularly on how to track local nationals working under contracts or assistance instruments. The lack of agreement was due in part to agencies not having assessed their respective information needs and how SPOT can be designed to address those needs and statutory requirements. In 2009, GAO reported on many of these issues and recommended that the agencies jointly develop a plan to improve SPOT's implementation.

The three agencies reported to GAO that as of March 2010 there were 262,681 contractor and assistance personnel working in Iraq and Afghanistan, 18 percent of whom performed security functions. Due to limitations with agency-reported data, caution should be used in identifying trends or drawing conclusions about the number of personnel in either country. Data limitations are attributable to agency difficulty in determining the number of local nationals, low response rates to agency requests for data, and limited ability to verify the accuracy of reported data. For example, a State office noted that none of its Afghan grant recipients provided requested personnel data. While agency officials acknowledged not all personnel were being counted, they still considered the reported data to be more accurate than SPOT data.

Only State and USAID tracked information on the number of contractor and assistance personnel killed or wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan during the review period. State reported 9 contractor and assistance personnel were killed and 68 wounded, while USAID reported 116 killed and 121 wounded. Both agencies noted that some casualties resulted from nonhostile actions. DOD still lacked a system to track similar information and referred GAO to Department of Labor data on cases filed under the Defense Base Act for killed or injured contractors. As GAO previously reported, Labor's data provide insights but are not a good proxy for the number of contractor casualties.

DOD, State, and USAID obligated \$37.5 billion on 133,951 contracts and assistance instruments with performance in Iraq and Afghanistan during FY2009 and the first half of FY2010. DOD had the vast majority of contract obligations. Most of the contracts were awarded during the review period and used competitive procedures. State and USAID relied heavily on grants and cooperative agreements and reported that most were competitively awarded.

While DOD and State did not comment on the draft report, USAID commented on the challenges of implementing SPOT and provided revised personnel data that GAO reviewed and included in the report.