

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-13-293](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

To perform its missions around the world, DOD operates geographic combatant commands each with thousands of personnel. In response to direction from the congressional committees to review the resources of the combatant commands, GAO (1) identified the trends in the resources devoted to DOD's geographic combatant commands and their service component commands, and (2) assessed the extent that DOD has processes in place to manage and oversee the resources of the combatant commands. For this review, GAO obtained and analyzed data on resources, to include authorized positions and mission and headquarters-support costs, for five regional combatant commands' and their service component commands, excluding U.S. Central Command. GAO also interviewed officials regarding commands' manpower and personnel policies and procedures for reporting resources.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends DOD: require a periodic evaluation of the combatant commands' size and structure; use existing systems to manage and track all assigned personnel; develop a process to gather information on authorized manpower and assigned personnel at the service component commands; and require information in the budget on authorized positions, full-time equivalents, and funding for each combatant command. DOD non-concurred with GAO's first recommendation, but GAO believes it is still needed to add rigor to the manpower requirements process. DOD concurred with GAO's three other recommendations.

View [GAO-13-293](#). For more information, contact John H. Pendleton at (202) 512-3489 or pendletonj@gao.gov.

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DEFENSE HEADQUARTERS

DOD Needs to Periodically Review and Improve Visibility Of Combatant Commands' Resources

What GAO Found

GAO's analysis of resources devoted to the Department of Defense's (DOD) geographic combatant commands shows that authorized military and civilian positions and mission and headquarters-support costs have grown considerably over the last decade due to the addition of two new commands and increases in authorized positions at theater special operations commands. Data provided by the commands shows that authorized military and civilian positions increased by about 50 percent from fiscal years 2001 through 2012, to about 10,100 authorized positions. In addition, mission and headquarters support-costs at the combatant commands more than doubled from fiscal years 2007 through 2012, to about \$1.1 billion. Both authorized military and civilian positions and mission and headquarters-support costs at the service component commands supporting the combatant commands also increased. Data on the number of personnel performing contract services across the combatant commands and service component commands varied or was unavailable, and thus trends could not be identified.

DOD has taken some steps to manage combatant commands' resources, but its processes to review size and oversee the commands have four primary weaknesses that challenge the department's ability to make informed decisions.

- DOD considers the combatant commands' requests for additional positions, but it does not periodically evaluate the commands' authorized positions to ensure they are still needed to meet the commands' assigned missions.
- DOD tracks some assigned personnel; however, all personnel supporting the commands are not included in DOD's personnel management system and reviews of assigned personnel vary by command.
- The service component commands support both service and combatant command missions. However, the Joint Staff and combatant commands lack visibility and oversight over the authorized manpower and personnel at the service component commands to determine whether functions at the combatant commands can be fulfilled by service component command personnel.
- Each military department submits annual budget documents for operation and maintenance to inform Congress of total authorized positions, full-time equivalents, and mission and headquarters-support funding for all combatant commands that they support. However, these documents do not provide transparency into the resources directed to each combatant command.

GAO's work on strategic human capital management found that high-performing organizations periodically reevaluate their human capital practices and use complete and reliable data to help achieve their missions and ensure resources are properly matched to the needs of today's environment. Until DOD effectively manages the resources of the combatant commands, it may be difficult to ensure that the commands are properly sized to meet their assigned missions, or to identify opportunities to carry out those missions efficiently.