

Why GAO Did This Study

Congress appropriated approximately \$18.8 billion in fiscal year 2012 for various security cooperation and assistance programs that supply military equipment and training to more than 100 partner countries. Amid concerns that traditional security assistance programs were too slow, Congress established several new programs in recent years. DSCA oversees the security assistance process, with key functions in agreement development, acquisition, and equipment delivery performed by U.S. military departments. DOD has undertaken a variety of management reforms since 2010 to improve the security assistance process. GAO assessed the extent to which (1) DOD reforms address implementation challenges faced by security cooperation officials and (2) DSCA performance measures indicate improvement in the timeliness of security assistance. GAO analyzed DOD data and performance measures, conducted focus groups and interviews with security cooperation officials at all six geographic combatant commands, and interviewed SCO staff for 17 countries.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense (1) establish procedures to ensure that DOD agencies enter needed acquisition and delivery status data into security assistance information systems and (2) establish performance measures to assess timeliness for additional phases of the security assistance process. DOD concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-13-84](#). For more information, contact Charles Michael Johnson, Jr. at (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov.

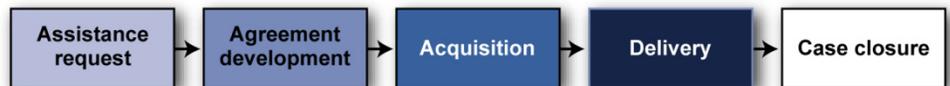
SECURITY ASSISTANCE

DOD's Ongoing Reforms Address Some Challenges, but Additional Information Is Needed to Further Enhance Program Management

What GAO Found

Security cooperation officials report three major types of challenges—training and workforce structure, defining partner country requirements, and obtaining acquisition and delivery status information—in conducting assistance programs. Ongoing Department of Defense (DOD) reforms address challenges that DOD security cooperation officials reported in meeting staff training needs and achieving the optimum workforce structure. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) has also initiated efforts to respond to challenges in developing assistance requests resulting from the limited expertise of partner countries and U.S. Security Cooperation Organization (SCO) staff in identifying country assistance requirements and the equipment that can meet them. However, according to DOD security cooperation officials, information gaps in the acquisition and delivery phases of the security assistance process continue to hinder the effectiveness of U.S. assistance. Nearly all of GAO's focus groups and interviews reported persistent difficulties obtaining information on the status of security assistance acquisitions and deliveries because information systems are difficult to access and contain limited information. DOD's existing delivery tracking system provides only limited data on the status of equipment deliveries because partner country agents and DOD agencies are not entering the needed data into the system. Without advance notice of deliveries, SCO staff have been unable to ensure that addresses were correct and that partner countries were ready to receive and process deliveries, resulting in delays or increased costs. DOD is developing a new information system to address information gaps, but it is not expected to be fully implemented until 2020.

DSCA's Security Assistance Process



Source: GAO analysis of DSCA documents.

DSCA data indicate that DOD has improved timeliness in the initial phases of the security assistance process, but these data provide limited information on other phases. The average number of days spent developing a security assistance agreement has improved from an average of 124 days in fiscal year 2007 to 109 days in fiscal year 2011. However, assessing the timeliness of the whole security assistance process is difficult because DSCA has limited timeliness measures for later phases, which often comprise the most time-consuming activities. For example, DSCA has not established a performance measure to assess the timeliness of acquisition, which can take years. In addition, DSCA does not consistently measure delivery performance against estimated delivery dates. Without such performance measures, DSCA cannot assess historical trends or the extent to which reforms impact the timeliness of the security assistance process.