

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD is one of the largest organizations in the world, with its budget representing over half of the U.S. federal government's discretionary spending. According to DOD, the global security environment presents an increasingly complex set of challenges. Congress requires DOD to assess and report on its roles and missions every 4 years. In July 2012, DOD submitted its most recent Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review report.

In June 2013, GAO was mandated to review DOD's process for conducting the latest Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review. GAO evaluated the extent to which DOD developed a sufficiently detailed report and conducted a comprehensive process for assessing roles and missions. GAO compared DOD's July 2012 report with the statutory requirements for the assessment, and compared DOD's assessment process with key principles derived from a broad selection of principles GAO and other federal agencies have identified.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that, in conducting future assessments of roles and missions, DOD develop a comprehensive process that includes a planned approach, involvement of key internal and external stakeholder involvement, and time frames. DOD partially concurred, stating that it had leveraged other processes. GAO maintains that the roles and missions report was insufficiently detailed and continues to believe the recommendation is valid, as discussed in the report.

View [GAO-14-668](#). For more information, contact John H. Pendleton at (202) 512-3489 or pendletonj@gao.gov.

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DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

DOD Needs to Improve Future Assessments of Roles and Missions

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense's (DOD) July 2012 submission to Congress following its most recent Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review did not provide sufficiently detailed information about most of the statutorily required elements of the assessment. Specifically, DOD's July 2012 submission included the results of a 2011 review that led to the January 2012 release of a new strategic guidance document (hereinafter referred to as the Defense Strategic Guidance) as well as the *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review* report. Although DOD is not statutorily required to report on all elements of the assessment, the submission that it provided to Congress was lacking key information. A key principle for information quality indicates that information presented to Congress should be clear and sufficiently detailed; however, neither the Defense Strategic Guidance nor the *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review* included sufficiently detailed information about certain key elements of the roles and missions assessment. For example, while the submitted documents identify the core missions of the armed services and provide some information on capabilities associated with these missions, neither document provides other information required by the roles and missions assessment—including identifying the DOD components responsible for providing the identified core competencies and capabilities and identifying plans for addressing any unnecessary duplication or capability gaps.

DOD's process for assessing roles and missions missed key principles associated with effective and comprehensive assessments. Specifically, DOD limited its process to leveraging the prior review that resulted in the Defense Strategic Guidance; by doing so its process did not include the following:

- *A planned approach*: DOD did not develop or document a planned approach that included the principles or assumptions used to inform the assessment.
- *Internal stakeholder involvement*: DOD included limited internal stakeholder involvement. For example, DOD gave the armed services a limited opportunity to review the draft prior to its release.
- *Identification and involvement of external stakeholders*: DOD obtained limited input from relevant external stakeholders, such as Congress, on the specific guidance and direction they expected of the roles and missions assessment.
- *Time frames*: DOD did not develop a schedule to gauge progress for conducting the assessment and completing the report, which may have contributed to the report being provided to Congress over 5 months late.

DOD officials stated that the primary reason that they did not perform a separate roles and missions review is that the statutory requirements were duplicative of other reviews and processes, such as the Defense Strategic Guidance. However, by not conducting a comprehensive assessment, DOD missed an opportunity to conduct a department-wide examination of roles and missions. Instead, by relying on processes established for other purposes, DOD has limited assurance that it has fully identified all possible cost savings that can be achieved through the elimination of unnecessary duplication and that it has positioned itself to report clear and sufficient information about the statutorily required assessment to Congress.