

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-257](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The United States faces current and emerging chemical and biological threats, and defenses against these threats enable DOD to protect the force, preclude strategic gains by adversaries, and reduce risk to U.S. interests.

GAO was asked to review DOD efforts to manage its chemical and biological defense infrastructure capabilities. This report examines the extent to which the CBDP Enterprise has: (1) achieved its goal to identify required infrastructure capabilities to address current and emerging chemical and biological threats; (2) identified, addressed, and managed potential fragmentation, overlap, and duplication in its chemical and biological defense infrastructure; and (3) used and plans to use threat data and the results of risk assessments to support its investment planning for chemical and biological defense. GAO analyzed CBDP infrastructure policies, plans, and studies from organizations across the CBDP Enterprise from fiscal years 2008 through 2014.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends, among other things, that DOD (1) designate an entity to lead the effort to identify required infrastructure; (2) identify, request, and consider any information from chemical and biological infrastructure studies of other federal agencies to avoid potential duplication; and (3) update the CBDP Enterprise's guidance and planning process to fully institutionalize the use of risk assessments. DOD concurred with all five of GAO's recommendations and discussed actions it plans to take.

View [GAO-15-257](#). For more information, contact Joseph Kirschbaum at (202) 512-9971 or kirschbaumj@gao.gov.

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CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL DEFENSE

Designated Entity Needed to Identify, Align, and Manage DOD's Infrastructure

What GAO Found

A key component of the 26 Department of Defense (DOD) organizations that constitute the Chemical and Biological Defense Program (CBDP) Enterprise is the chemical and biological defense research and development and test and evaluation infrastructure. After nearly 7 years, the CBDP Enterprise has not fully achieved its goal to identify required infrastructure capabilities. The Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Defense Program Analysis and Integration Office (PAIO), CBDP's analytical arm, recommended in 2008 that the CBDP Enterprise identify required infrastructure capabilities, such as laboratories to research chemical and biological agents, to ensure alignment of the infrastructure to its mission. CBDP Enterprise officials recognize the importance, validity, and necessity of addressing the 2008 recommendation. The CBDP Enterprise has made limited progress in achieving this infrastructure goal because CBDP Enterprise officials told GAO that they were focused on higher priorities and had no CBDP Enterprise-wide impetus to address the infrastructure recommendations. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs previously identified the need for an entity that has the responsibility and authority needed to ensure achievement of this goal, but DOD has not designated such an entity. By identifying and designating an entity with the responsibility and authority to lead infrastructure transformation, the CBDP Enterprise would be better positioned to achieve this goal.

The CBDP Enterprise has taken some actions at its laboratories to identify duplication in its chemical and biological defense infrastructure. DOD directives outline goals, such as to avoid duplication by using existing DOD and other federal agencies' facilities. As part of an ongoing study to identify required infrastructure, in July 2015 PAIO plans to inventory and analyze CBDP Enterprise infrastructure for potential duplication. However, study officials stated that they do not plan to identify, request, or consider information about infrastructure capabilities from existing studies of other federal agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security, because their office does not have the authority or resources to require such information. By considering existing information, which would not necessarily require new authority, PAIO will have more information about existing infrastructure inventory across the federal government, such as its capability and potential availability for use.

The CBDP Enterprise used threat data and plans to use threat data and the results from risk assessments piloted in 2014 to support its future portfolio planning process to prioritize research and development investment. However, the CBDP Enterprise has not updated its guidance and planning process to fully institutionalize the use of risk assessments. Federal standards for internal control state that agencies should have written procedures to better ensure leadership directives are implemented. According to CBDP Enterprise officials, while updating the guidance would be beneficial, they had not committed to updating such guidance or established a time frame for doing so. By updating its guidance to fully institutionalize the use of risk assessments, the CBDP Enterprise would be better positioned to prioritize future research and development investments.