

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-568](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

In support of the Department of Defense's (DOD) increasing emphasis on strengthening partner nations' security forces, the Army is aligning its forces with geographic combatant commands to provide tailored, trained, and responsive forces to meet the commands' requirements. In 2013, AFRICOM became the first combatant command to be allocated an Army regionally aligned brigade combat team—the first of three to date—which was tasked to the command primarily to support security cooperation.

The House Report accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 included a provision that GAO assess DOD's efforts to plan for and employ these brigades in Africa. This report assesses, among other things, the extent to which (1) AFRICOM has clearly identified and synchronized security cooperation activities for the brigades in Africa and (2) the brigades have been prepared to meet mission requirements in Africa. The term 'synchronize' refers to coordination efforts by AFRICOM and its components to achieve unity of effort across the command. GAO reviewed documents and data and interviewed DOD and Department of State officials.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD develop a coordination mechanism to improve planning for activities, assess mission-specific training for aligned forces, identify and provide mission-specific equipment for the brigades, and that DOD and the Department of State coordinate on providing passports to the brigades. Both concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-15-568](#). For more information, contact Cary Russell at (202) 512-5431 or [russellc@gao.gov](mailto:russellc@gao.gov).

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## REGIONALLY ALIGNED FORCES

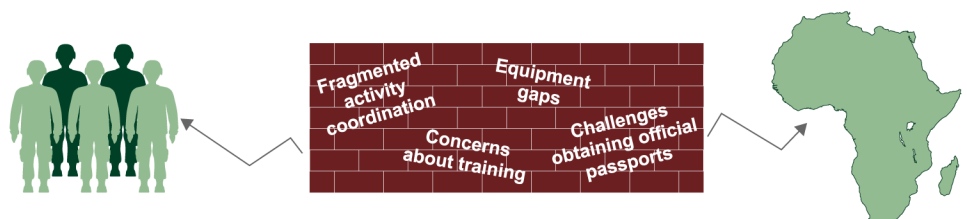
### DOD Could Enhance Army Brigades' Efforts in Africa by Improving Activity Coordination and Mission-Specific Preparation

## What GAO Found

U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) identifies and synchronizes security cooperation activities through various planning processes, but the brigades allocated to AFRICOM sometimes lack key information about these activities. The brigades have conducted hundreds of security cooperation activities, such as exercises with partner nations, throughout Africa. As part of AFRICOM's planning processes, the Offices of Security Cooperation—located in U.S. embassies in Africa—work with U.S. Army Africa (USARAF) to identify and develop security cooperation activities based on the needs of the host nation and AFRICOM's objectives. The brigades are tasked to conduct many of these activities, but they sometimes lack timely and complete information about the activities, such as activity objectives, which can compromise their effectiveness. While personnel from USARAF and the Offices of Security Cooperation coordinate informally, they do not always have a shared understanding of the activity objectives or involve the brigades in planning. Furthermore, USARAF does not have a formal mechanism that includes both the Offices of Security Cooperation and the brigades to shape activities and address information gaps. As a result, the brigades' ability to conduct activities may be challenged, and the resources invested may not have the anticipated effect.

The brigades have been trained and equipped for their core missions, which has generally prepared them to meet requirements in Africa, but opportunities exist to enhance their mission-specific preparation. The brigades' core training is estimated to cover 90 to 95 percent of the skills needed to support activities in Africa. The brigades have developed regionally-focused, mission-specific training programs to cover the remaining skills. Some Army officials identified concerns about how this training is being supported, but the Army may not have the information it needs to address these concerns, because it has not completed an Army-directed assessment of training for regionally aligned forces. In addition, the brigades have experienced some equipment gaps, particularly in communications systems, because the Army has not fully identified mission-specific equipment requirements or established, or applied, a mechanism to ensure that brigades have the necessary equipment. Furthermore, the Army and the Department of State have not agreed on a process for providing official passports to brigade personnel before their employment period. As a result, the brigades have faced challenges in obtaining passports that have limited their ability to deploy the appropriate personnel to Africa. Without action on these issues, the brigades' ability to fully support the mission in Africa may be affected.

### Brigades Face Coordination Challenges and Gaps in Mission-Specific Preparation



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) information. | GAO-15-568