



April 2016

# SECURITY ASSISTANCE

## Better Records Management and More Reporting Needed on Presidential Drawdowns

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-291](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

The President has special legal authorities that allow him to direct the drawdown of defense articles, such as vehicles, food, or medical equipment, and services, such as airlift support, as well as military education and training, to provide assistance in response to an international crisis. Since 2011, there have been 13 drawdowns. The President may authorize up to \$325 million each year in drawdowns.

A House Armed Services Committee report accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 included a provision for GAO to conduct a review of drawdown authority. This report examines, since 2011, (1) the U.S. government's process for planning and executing drawdowns, (2) State efforts to manage records on decisions to use drawdown authorities, and (3) the status of drawdowns and DOD efforts to report to Congress on defense articles and services delivered through drawdowns to recipient countries or international organizations. GAO analyzed documents relevant to drawdowns and interviewed State and DOD officials.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that (1) State should assign responsibility or establish a mechanism to maintain key drawdowns documents and (2) DOD report more frequently on defense articles and services provided through drawdowns. State did not concur with GAO's recommendation to establish a mechanism to maintain documents, but GAO stands by its recommendation, as discussed in the report. DOD agreed that it should report more frequently on drawdowns.

View [GAO-16-291](#). For more information, contact Charles Michael Johnson, Jr., at (202) 512-7331 or [johnsoncm@gao.gov](mailto:johnsoncm@gao.gov), or Zina Merritt, at (202) 512-5257 or [merrittz@gao.gov](mailto:merrittz@gao.gov).

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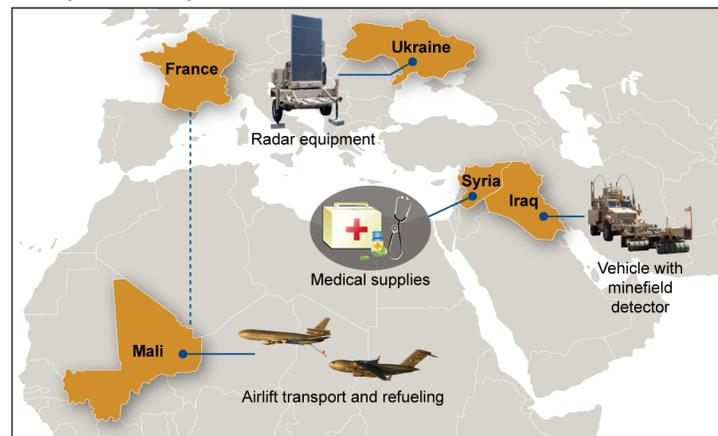
## SECURITY ASSISTANCE

### Better Records Management and More Reporting Needed on Presidential Drawdowns

## What GAO Found

Drawdown proposals to provide U.S. assistance for an international crisis are typically developed through an interagency process led by the Departments of State (State) and Defense (DOD), and involving the National Security Council and the Executive Office of the President. State and DOD work with other agencies to determine whether to use a drawdown authority and identify the assistance to be provided. Based on the estimated value and availability of the articles and services, the agencies agree on the parameters of the drawdown. State prepares a justification package, and the President signs a Presidential Determination to authorize the drawdown. DOD then executes the drawdown by working with the military services to provide the articles and services.

#### Examples of Recipients of Defense Articles and Services from Drawdowns, 2013–2015



Source: GAO analysis of Departments of State and Defense data. | GAO-16-291

State policy specifies that the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs leads State and interagency processes for presidential drawdowns. Key documents for this process include a memorandum of justification containing background information about the drawdown. However, inconsistent with federal internal control standards, State lacked readily available documents related to drawdowns, and there is no central office or official responsible for maintaining key drawdown documents. As a result, it took several months for State to fully respond to our request for drawdown documents. For example, State officials initially did not provide documentation for the 2011 drawdown to Libya, but provided the documents over 4 months later. Without a mechanism to ensure that key documents relating to the use of drawdown authorities are readily available, State is unable to produce documents in a timely manner.

DOD provided some reports to Congress on the execution of drawdowns in 2011 and 2013. However, DOD has not submitted certain reports to Congress since 2011 despite a legal requirement to keep Congress fully and currently informed regarding assistance provided through drawdowns under one specific authority. DOD officials said that they have not submitted these reports because they have not closed any of the 13 drawdowns since 2011— articles and services are still to be delivered. Nevertheless, without periodic reports to indicate the status of drawdowns, Congress may not have detailed information about the extent of the President's use of drawdown authority.

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## Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
DSCA	Defense Security Cooperation Agency
State	Department of State

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April 12, 2016

Congressional Committees

Since 1961, the President has had special statutory authority to order the drawdown of defense articles and services from the stocks of the Department of Defense (DOD) when it is vital to the security of the United States.<sup>1</sup> Drawdowns of defense articles may include items such as vehicles, spare parts, clothing, food, and medical equipment. Defense services may include a range of efforts, such as airlift support, and drawdowns may also provide for military education and training.<sup>2</sup> Drawdowns give the President the ability to respond to U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives, such as unforeseen military and nonmilitary emergencies, by providing assistance without first seeking additional legislative authority or appropriations from Congress. Congress has expressed interest in receiving reports on the President's use of drawdown authority.

A House Armed Services Committee report accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 included a provision for GAO to conduct a review of drawdown authority.<sup>3</sup> This report examines, since 2011, (1) the U.S. government's process for planning and executing drawdowns; (2) Department of State (State) efforts to manage records related to decisions to use drawdown authorities; and (3) the status of drawdowns and DOD efforts to report to Congress on defense articles, defense services, and military education and training delivered through drawdowns to recipient countries or international organizations.

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<sup>1</sup>Section 506 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, Pub. L. No. 87-195 (Sept. 4, 1961), as amended (codified at 22 U.S.C. § 2318) grants the President this special authority. There were also additional drawdown authorities in recent years, such as Section 202 of the Afghanistan Freedom Support Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-327 (Dec. 4, 2002) and Section 4 of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, Pub. L. No. 105-338 (Oct. 31, 1998).

<sup>2</sup>For the purposes of this report, references to defense articles and services include military education and training, unless specified otherwise.

<sup>3</sup>H.R. Rep. No. 114-102 (May 5, 2015).

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To address these objectives, we reviewed relevant documentation, such as DOD and State guidance. We also interviewed DOD and State officials about the process for planning and executing drawdowns, and their efforts to maintain information on drawdowns and provide reports to Congress on the status of drawdowns. Our scope and methodology are discussed in more detail in appendix I.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2015 to April 2016 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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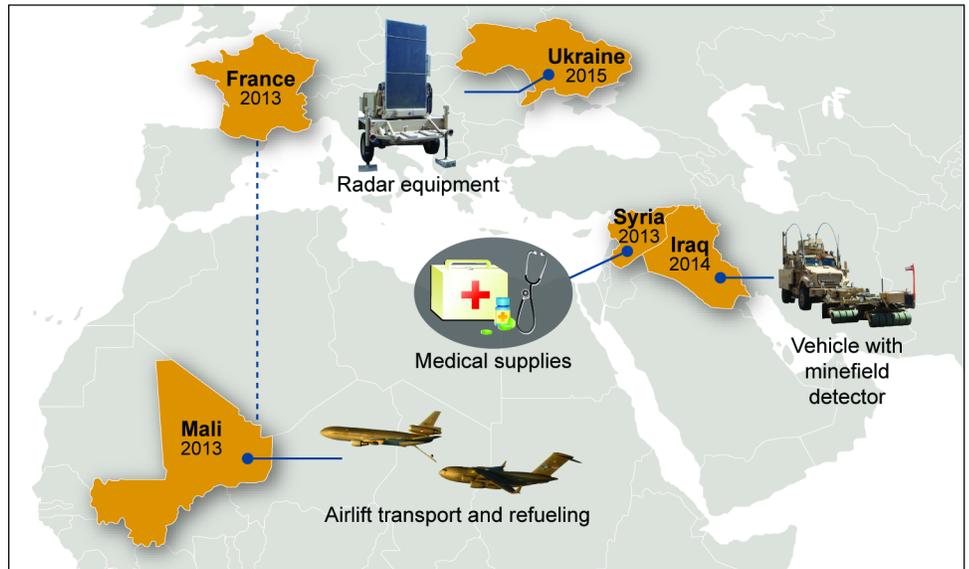
## Background

There are certain statutory authorities under which the President may draw down articles and services from the inventory and resources of U.S. government agencies. Section 506(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, allows for drawdowns of defense articles from the stocks of DOD and defense services of DOD and for military education and training to foreign countries or international organizations in emergency situations. Before exercising this authority, the President must determine and report to Congress that an unforeseen emergency exists, requiring immediate military assistance that cannot be met under any other law. This special authority was more recently used in 2013 to provide airlift and refueling support for counterterrorism efforts in Mali; in 2014 to provide defense articles and services, as well as military education and training to assist the government of Iraq in combating the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria; and in 2015 to provide military assistance to Ukraine.<sup>4</sup> (See fig. 1.) The maximum aggregate value of drawdowns under Section 506(a)(1) cannot exceed \$100 million in any fiscal year.

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<sup>4</sup> The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, Daesh, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

**Figure 1: Examples of Recipients of Defense Articles and Services from Presidential Drawdowns, 2013–2015**



Source: GAO analysis of Departments of State and Defense data. | GAO-16-291

Section 506(a)(2) of the Foreign Assistance Act, as amended, authorizes the President to draw down articles and services from the inventory and resources of any U.S. government agency and military education and training from DOD and use them to assist foreign countries or international organizations in a number of nonemergency situations. Before exercising this authority, the President must first determine and report to Congress that any such drawdown is in the national interest of the United States. The maximum aggregate value of drawdowns under Section 506(a)(2) is \$200 million in any fiscal year, with no more than \$75 million provided from DOD inventory and resources.

Section 552(c)(2) of the Foreign Assistance Act, as amended, authorizes the President to direct the drawdown of commodities and services from the inventory and resources of any U.S. government agency. In order to exercise this authority, the President must determine that an unforeseen emergency exists, that providing assistance in amounts in excess of funds otherwise available is important to the national interests of the United States, and that the unforeseen emergency requires the immediate provision of such assistance. The maximum aggregate value of drawdowns under Section 552(c)(2) in any fiscal year is \$25 million.

Since 2011, there have been 13 drawdowns of defense articles and services pursuant to the three authorities cited above (see table 1). None of these drawdowns used the Section 506(a)(2) authority.

**Table 1: Drawdowns of Defense Articles and Services, Fiscal Years 2011–2015**

Fiscal year	Countries involved	Authority used <sup>a</sup>	Amount authorized by the President <sup>b</sup>	Amount of authorization unused <sup>c</sup>
2011	Libya	552(c)(2)	\$25,000,000	\$7,813
2013	Chad and France for Mali	506(a)(1)	\$50,000,000	\$0
2013	Syria	552(c)(2)	\$10,000,000	\$3,919,787
2013	Syria	552(c)(2)	\$15,000,000	—
2014	Countries supporting the African Union-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic	506(a)(1)	\$60,000,000	\$22,179,131
2014	France for Mali, Niger, and Chad	506(a)(1)	\$10,000,000	\$0
2014	Iraq	506(a)(1)	\$25,000,000	\$13,214,890
2014	Ukraine	506(a)(1)	\$5,000,000	\$68,197
2014	Ukraine	552(c)(2)	\$20,000,000	\$12,039,897
2015	France for Mali, Niger, and Chad	506(a)(1)	\$35,000,000	\$13,675,429
2015	Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria	506(a)(1)	\$45,000,000	\$44,990,000
2015	Ukraine	506(a)(1)	\$20,000,000	\$0
2015	Ukraine	552(c)(2)	\$1,500,000	\$790,000

Legend: — Data not provided by Departments of Defense and State

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense documents and Federal Register notices. | GAO-16-291

<sup>a</sup>The President may draw down articles and services under three authorities: Section 506(a)(1), Section 506(a)(2), and Section 552(c)(2) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. There were no drawdowns pursuant to Section 506(a)(2) from fiscal years 2011 through 2015.

<sup>b</sup>The President may authorize up to \$325 million each fiscal year under the drawdown authorities.

<sup>c</sup>Value of assistance provided as of March 2016.

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## Interagency Process for Drawdowns Involves State, DOD, National Security Council, and Executive Office of the President

State and DOD are the government agencies primarily charged with planning and executing uses of drawdown authority. State officials said they typically begin the process by developing drawdown proposals under the above authorities when an international crisis arises. Since 2011, officials said they have used drawdowns in conflict situations, such as in Ukraine and Syria. State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs along with DOD's Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), the National Security Council, the Executive Office of the President, and in some cases other executive branch agencies participate in an interagency process to develop a recommendation for articles and services that the U.S. government should provide under the drawdown authorities (see fig. 2). Based on the estimated value and availability of the articles and services, the agencies agree on the parameters of the drawdown to recommend to the President, and State prepares a justification package that includes the Presidential Determination for the President's signature, which is published in the *Federal Register*. The President may also delegate authority to make the determination to the Secretary of State, and documents this delegation in a memorandum that is published in the *Federal Register*. State notifies Congress of the President's intent to exercise his authority before the President signs the determination and then notifies Congress once the determination has been made. According to State, the steps described above can be completed in about 2 weeks but usually require about 2 months before the implementation of a drawdown can begin.

**Figure 2: U.S. Government Process for Presidential Drawdown of Defense Articles and Services**



**DSCA** Defense Security Cooperation Agency  
**DOD** Department of Defense  
**State** Department of State

Source: GAO analysis of DOD and State data. | GAO-16-291

DSCA officials said they execute drawdowns after the President signs the determination by working with the military services and other DOD entities to determine what specific assistance the military services will provide and which of the services will provide it. A DSCA country program director creates an execution order with a maximum number of the articles or services to be provided through the drawdown, which may be updated over time. The country program directors work directly with the military services to track the execution of the drawdown, and the military services are responsible for providing execution data to update an automated database. The military services provide the defense articles and services they have available in their existing inventories. The military services cover the costs of the drawdown from their existing funds and without new appropriations. State officials said that the authority for a drawdown does not expire, and that the drawdown can be used until the maximum authorized dollar amount established for it in the Presidential Determination is reached, or until the crisis has been dealt with or the foreign policy goal has been met.

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## State Lacked Readily Available Documents Related to Presidential Use of Drawdown Authority

State did not have a means to readily access justification package documents related to presidential use of drawdown authority because it had not assigned responsibility or established a process for centrally managing these documents. Although State policy specifies that the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Office of Regional Security and Arms Transfers, leads State and interagency processes for presidential drawdowns, the bureau does not manage all of the key documents associated with the use of drawdown authority, nor is there a mechanism to centrally manage such documents.<sup>5</sup> *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* also indicates that all documentation and records should be properly managed and maintained, and that documentation should be readily available for examination.<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, it took several months for State to fully respond to our request for key documentation on drawdowns, which includes memorandums to the Secretary of State and Office of the President, and a memorandum of justification containing background information about the crisis a drawdown is intended to address. State officials had to contact individual bureaus that worked on the drawdowns in fiscal years 2011 to 2015 to recover the justification packages that contained background information and context for why the drawdowns were authorized. In addition, State officials initially were not able to readily provide documentation for several drawdowns, such as the 2011 drawdown to Libya, for which State produced documents over 4 months later. State produced documents for a drawdown to Iraq 8 months after our original request. State officials also confirmed that they do not maintain drawdown documents in one centralized place, but that individuals in each of State's six regional bureaus may maintain documents on drawdowns affecting countries within their purview. We found that there was no single point of contact responsible for consolidating all the drawdown documentation and no mechanism established to maintain key documents related to the President's drawdown. Without a mechanism to ensure that key documents relating to the use of drawdown authorities are readily available, State is unable to

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<sup>5</sup>Department of State, *Foreign Affairs Manual*, Chapter 1, Subchapter 416.1, "Office of Regional Security and Arms Transfers (PM/RSAT)."

<sup>6</sup>GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#) (Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

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produce documentation on drawdowns in a timely manner, consistent with federal internal control standards.

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## DOD Has Not Closed Any Presidential Drawdowns and Submitted Few Reports on Defense Articles and Services Provided

DOD has not closed and has not provided certain reports to Congress on the execution of drawdowns since 2011 despite congressional interest in receiving information regarding assistance provided through drawdowns. In particular, Section 506(b)(2) of the Foreign Assistance Act, as amended, requires that the President keep Congress fully and currently informed of all defense articles, defense services, and military education and training provided under Section 506, including providing a report to Congress detailing what was delivered.<sup>7</sup> The requirement to provide a report does not specify a date by which the reports must be submitted, but instead states that these reports shall be provided upon delivery of such articles, or upon completion of the services or education and training. DOD has provided no Section 506 reports for the eight presidential drawdowns undertaken pursuant to this authority in fiscal years 2013 through 2015. From 2010 until the end of calendar year 2013, DOD was also responsible for providing an annual report to Congress on drawdowns under Section 1247 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010. DOD provided reports to Congress in response to this requirement.

Under DOD guidance, DSCA is primarily responsible for preparing Section 506 reports. DSCA practice has been that this reporting requirement arises when all articles, services, or both have been delivered, according to DSCA officials. DSCA officials noted that all of the drawdowns since 2011 are still being executed, meaning that there are still articles and services to be delivered. DSCA officials also noted that they work with State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs to determine the best time to close a drawdown as completed, and noted that State has not determined to close out any drawdowns since 2011. State officials said that they do not have an active role in DSCA's reporting to Congress but that they would expect to review Section 506 reports before DOD submits them to Congress.

According to DSCA's guidance, a termination date of not more than 18 months after the initial execution order will be stated in the execution

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<sup>7</sup>The reporting provision does not apply to drawdowns under Section 552.

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order, unless otherwise directed by the country program director. DSCA officials stated that the termination date and the closure date that would trigger the reporting requirement are not the same. They also stated that if a particular drawdown reached its termination date with authority left (for example, only \$10 million of the \$25 million authorized has been used), DSCA would not terminate the drawdown if a crisis is still ongoing. For example, in December 2013 the President authorized \$60 million in assistance to support African Union-led operations in the Central African Republic, and as of 2015, over \$26 million remained undelivered, and the drawdown remains active more than 2 years later. In addition, DSCA officials stated that they may choose not to close a drawdown, even if all the available authority has been used, if a subsequent related drawdown is still active. For example, in 2013, the President authorized \$50 million under Section 506(a)(1) to provide airlift support to Chad and France to assist in their operations in Mali. According to DSCA officials and documents, this drawdown has reached its authorization level but has not been closed because DSCA is waiting on subsequent drawdowns of the same nature to be completed before it reports to Congress.

Although DOD has not submitted Section 506 reports, it submitted Section 1247 reports until this reporting requirement terminated at the end of calendar year 2013. The Section 1247 reports contain information about all the articles or services delivered, as well as the military service that is implementing the drawdown, the quantity of items delivered, and the value. They addressed elements related to those required under Section 506(b)(2) and included drawdowns that DOD still considers to be in an active status. As noted earlier, State also notifies Congress of the President's intent to exercise his authority before the President signs the determination and then notifies Congress once the determination has been made. These notifications, however, do not address the information required in Section 506 reports. Table 2 shows the status of notifications of and reports to Congress on presidential drawdowns of defense articles and services since 2011.

**Table 2: Status of Presidential Drawdowns of Defense Articles and Services and Agency Efforts to Notify and Report to Congress, Fiscal Years 2011–2015**

Fiscal year	Countries involved	Authority used	Status	Congressional notification of drawdown <sup>a</sup>	Section 1247 report <sup>b</sup>	Section 506 report <sup>c</sup>
2011	Libya	552(c)(2)	Active	✓	✓	N/A
2013	Chad and France for Mali	506(a)(1)	Active	✓	✓	X
2013	Syria	552(c)(2)	Active	✓	✓	N/A
2013	Syria	552(c)(2)	Active	✓	X	N/A
2014	Countries supporting the African Union-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic	506(a)(1)	Active	✓	N/A	X
2014	France for Mali, Niger, and Chad	506(a)(1)	Active	✓	N/A	X
2014	Iraq	506(a)(1)	Active	✓	N/A	X
2014	Ukraine	506(a)(1)	Active	✓	N/A	X
2014	Ukraine	552(c)(2)	Active	✓	N/A	N/A
2015	France for Mali, Niger, and Chad	506(a)(1)	Active	✓	N/A	X
2015	Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria	506(a)(1)	Active	✓	N/A	X
2015	Ukraine	506(a)(1)	Active	✓	N/A	X
2015	Ukraine	552(c)(2)	Active	✓	N/A	N/A

Legend: ✓ = notification or report provided; X= no report provided to Congress; N/A = report not required.

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) documents and Federal Register notices. | GAO-16-291

<sup>a</sup>Department of State officials said they notify Congress of the Presidential Determination in advance of the authority being used, as well as when a drawdown is authorized. The justification packages that State provided contained only draft notification letters.

<sup>b</sup>Section 1247 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 required DOD to report annually to Congress on the impact of the use of presidential drawdowns on DOD. This requirement terminated at the end of calendar year 2013.

<sup>c</sup>Section 506(b)(2) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, requires the President to keep Congress fully and currently informed of all defense articles, services, and military education and training provided under Section 506 drawdown authority.

Although State has consistently notified Congress of each drawdown in advance of the authority being used, without receiving Section 506 reports on the assistance delivered during the course of the drawdown, Congress is not receiving comprehensive and current information about the extent of the President’s use of drawdown authority.

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## Conclusions

Drawdowns give the President the flexibility to provide defense articles and services, and military education and training, to foreign countries and international organizations in a time of crisis without first seeking specific appropriations from Congress. Federal internal control standards note that documents should be readily available for examination. However, while State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs leads State and interagency processes for presidential drawdowns, the bureau does not manage all of the key documents associated with the use of drawdown authority, nor is there a mechanism to centrally manage such documents. State's lack of a single point of contact or centralized mechanism for maintaining drawdown documents weakens its ability to make key documents associated with the justification for drawdowns readily available. Furthermore, in making the accommodation in the Foreign Assistance Act that allows drawdowns to occur without first seeking specific appropriation from Congress, Congress required in Section 506(b)(2) that the President keep it fully and currently informed on the use of Section 506 authority. While Congress prescribed no specific frequency for providing Section 506 reports, DSCA has not submitted any Section 506 reports since 2011 to Congress on drawdowns because, according to DSCA, the drawdowns have not yet been closed as completed. Without periodic reports to indicate the status of the drawdowns under this authority, Congress does not have detailed information on the extent of the President's use of drawdown authority.

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## Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making the following two recommendations:

- To help ensure that key State documents and records on the presidential use of drawdowns are readily available, the Secretary of State should assign responsibility or develop a mechanism for maintaining State's justification package documents.
- To help ensure that Congress has the information it needs on the President's use of drawdown authority, the Secretary of Defense should direct DSCA to report more frequently to Congress on information outlined in Section 506(b)(2) of the Foreign Assistance Act, as amended, even if delivery of all the articles and services authorized has not been completed, or if the crisis is still ongoing.

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## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to DOD and State for comment. DOD agreed with our recommendation, but State did not. DOD's and State's written comments are reprinted in appendices II and III, respectively.

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In its written comments, DOD concurred with our recommendation that it report more frequently to Congress on the information outlined in Section 506(b)(2) of the Foreign Assistance Act, as amended. DOD also provided us with technical comments, which we incorporated into the report as appropriate.

In its written comments, State did not concur with our recommendation that the Secretary of State should assign responsibility or develop a mechanism for maintaining State's justification package documents. State noted that there are officials responsible for maintaining key drawdown documents. State also noted that the Office of Regional Security and Arms Transfers is the lead office for security related drawdowns and maintains the key drawdown documents. In our report, we do note that State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Office of Regional Security and Arms Transfers, leads State and interagency processes for presidential drawdowns. However, we found that the bureau was unable to readily produce a complete list of uses of presidential drawdown authorities. We further noted that the bureau does not manage all the key documents within the office associated with the use of drawdown authority, nor is there a mechanism to centrally manage such documents. We based this information on multiple interviews with State officials, including those who confirmed on December 4, 2015, that they do not maintain a central drawdown repository or office dedicated to drawdowns. For example, an Office of Regional Security and Arms Transfers official said that she had knowledge of and documentation for only the specific drawdowns that she worked on. Other Bureau of Political-Military Affairs officials concurred with her statement. As such, there has been no one point of contact within the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs or State to consolidate all of the information and documentation regarding drawdowns. The State officials also said that State had to contact individuals who worked on the documents to make them available.

State's written comments further state that it is more useful to have a single Regional Security and Arms Transfers officer responsible for leading the entirety of the response to an emergency, including any drawdowns and the documents related to them, rather than having a single officer responsible for all drawdowns. We believe it would be beneficial for State to ensure that key documentation for presidential drawdowns is centrally maintained. According to federal internal control standards, documentation provides a means to retain organizational knowledge and mitigate the risk of having that knowledge limited to a few personnel, as well as a means to communicate that knowledge as

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needed to external parties, such as external auditors. By not implementing this standard and relying on individual officials to maintain drawdown documentation, State could not readily identify and provide us with documentation for drawdowns if those officials responsible for specific drawdowns were no longer with the bureau. The lack of a central office or official responsible for maintaining documents relevant to drawdowns apparently accounted, at least in part, for State's not providing us with a list of all drawdowns since 2002, or with documentation for drawdowns prior to 2011.

State also disagreed with the amount of time it took to provide documents. However, we stand by our finding that it took State several months to fully respond for our request for key documents. Specifically, on July 29, 2015, we requested a list of all the uses of presidential drawdown authorities and associated documents. We followed up with another written request for these same documents on August 4, 2015. On September 8, 2015, State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs provided documents for seven drawdowns, noted it had some additional classified documents related to the original seven drawdowns, and said that it had no additional documentation. At that time State still had not provided a complete list of its uses of drawdown authorities. We subsequently identified five other uses of drawdown authorities by examining *Federal Register* notices and sent requests for the documentation for these drawdowns. In one case (Libya) that we highlighted in the report, in November 2015 we again requested that State provide key documents related to this drawdown. State did not provide the key documents until January 2016—over 4 months after the original document request. Overall, it took State 8 months, from August 4, 2015—the date of our written request—until March 17, 2016, to provide the documents related to all 13 uses of drawdown authority since 2011.

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We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and other interested parties. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

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If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-7331 or [johnsoncm@gao.gov](mailto:johnsoncm@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff members who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix IV.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles M. Johnson, Jr.", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Charles Michael Johnson, Jr.  
Director, International Affairs and Trade

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*List of Committees*

The Honorable John McCain  
Chairman  
The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate

The Honorable Bob Corker  
Chairman  
The Honorable Ben Cardin  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Foreign Relations  
United States Senate

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Chairman  
The Honorable Richard Durbin  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Chairman  
The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Edward R. Royce  
Chairman  
The Honorable Eliot L. Engel  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
House of Representatives

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The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
The Honorable Pete Visclosky  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
House of Representatives

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# Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

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This report examines, since 2011, (1) the U.S. government's process for planning and executing drawdowns; (2) Department of State (State) efforts to manage records related to decisions to use drawdown authorities; and (3) the status of drawdowns and Department of Defense (DOD) efforts to report to Congress on defense articles, defense services, and military education and training delivered through drawdowns to recipient countries or international organizations.

To assess the U.S. government's process for planning and executing drawdowns, we interviewed officials from State and DOD, two agencies charged with planning and executing uses of drawdown authority, particularly with respect to defense drawdowns. We contacted the National Security Council to determine whether it had a listing of the uses of drawdown authority during the current administration, but the official who replied indicated that the agency did not have any such information. We reviewed the White House website on Presidential Actions and Presidential Memorandums for drawdowns and Delegation of Authority memorandums. We reviewed the *Federal Register* notices on drawdowns from fiscal years 2002 to 2015 as the source of publically available information on drawdowns. We chose 2002 because that was the date of publication of our prior report on drawdowns,<sup>1</sup> but we found that there was a period from fiscal year 2007 to fiscal year 2010 when there were no uses of drawdown authority, so we focused this report on drawdowns in fiscal years 2011 to 2015. To assess the reliability of the data, we interviewed cognizant officials at State and DOD, and compared the data in the *Federal Register* to documents we obtained from DOD, and determined that they were sufficiently reliable for showing the drawdowns in fiscal years 2011 through 2015.

To assess State efforts to manage records related to decisions to use drawdown authorities, we interviewed State officials and reviewed their available documentation on drawdowns. We also reviewed *Federal Register* notices on drawdowns to determine whether the documents State provided on drawdowns represented all drawdowns from 2011 through 2015. We also reviewed State's *Foreign Affairs Manual* and *Foreign Affairs Handbook* to determine who within State is responsible for

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<sup>1</sup>GAO, *Foreign Assistance: Reporting of Defense Articles and Services Provided through Drawdowns Needs to Be Improved*, [GAO-02-1027](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 20, 2002).

presidential drawdowns and to review State's policies on records management.

To assess the status of drawdowns and DOD efforts to report to Congress on defense articles, defense services, and military education and training delivered through drawdowns to recipient countries or international organizations, we requested copies of all Section 506 reports submitted to Congress, of which there were none, and of any other reports or information from 2011 through 2015. This included a review of DOD's Section 1247 reports to see which were submitted and what reporting elements they contained. We also interviewed DOD officials about how they collect and maintain data on drawdowns under presidential authorities and their rationale for not submitting any Section 506 reports. We reviewed DOD data on drawdowns from 2011 to 2015 to determine the status of drawdowns, including the termination date and the amount of authorization left on the drawdowns. To assess the reliability of these data, we interviewed cognizant DOD officials about how they collect and maintain data on drawdowns, and determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for reporting on the status of drawdowns. We reviewed a sample Section 506 report in the Defense Security Cooperation Agency's (DSCA) *Handbook for Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) Drawdown of Defense Articles and Services* to see what reporting elements it would contain if one were submitted. The handbook also provided information about DSCA's process for executing drawdowns, such as setting a termination date for drawdown execution orders and congressional reporting requirements.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2015 to April 2016 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

# Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense



DEFENSE SECURITY COOPERATION AGENCY  
201 12TH STREET SOUTH, STE 203  
ARLINGTON, VA 22202-5408

MAR 22 2016

Mr. Charles Johnson Jr.  
Director, Defense Capabilities Management  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington DC 20548

Dear Mr. Johnson,

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO Draft Report GAO-16-291, "SECURITY ASSISTANCE: Better Records Management and More Reporting Needed on Presidential Drawdowns," dated March 7, 2016 (GAO Code 100118).

The Department is providing official written comments for inclusion in the report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Worm".

JAMES A. WORM  
Principal Director  
Business Operations



**GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED MARCH 7, 2016  
GAO-16-291 (GAO CODE 100118)**

**“SECURITY ASSISTANCE: BETTER RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND MORE  
REPORTING NEEDED ON PRESIDENTIAL DRAWDOWNS”**

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS  
TO THE GAO RECOMMENDATION**

**RECOMMENDATION:** To help ensure that Congress has the information it needs on the President’s use of drawdown authority, the GAO recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct DSCA to report more frequently to Congress on information outlined in Section 506(b)(2) of the Foreign Assistance Act, as amended, even if delivery of all the articles and services authorized has not been completed.

**DoD RESPONSE:** DSCA concurs with GAO recommendation that we report more frequently to Congress on information outlined in Section 506(b)(2) of the Foreign Assistance Act.

# Appendix III: Comments from the Department of State



United States Department of State  
Comptroller

Washington, DC 20520

MAR 2 8 2016

Dr. Loren Yager  
Managing Director  
International Affairs and Trade  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Dr. Yager:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "SECURITY ASSISTANCE: Better Records Management and More Reporting Needed on Presidential Drawdowns," GAO Job Code 100118.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Josh Paul, Director, Office of Congressional and Public Affairs, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs at (202) 647-7878.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher H. Flagg".

Christopher H. Flagg

Enclosure:  
As stated.

cc: GAO – Charles M. Johnson  
PM – Tina Kaidanow, Acting  
State/OIG - Norman Brown

**Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report**

**SECURITY ASSISTANCE: Better Records Management and More  
Reporting Needed on Presidential Drawdowns**  
**(GAO-16-291, GAO Code 100118)**

The Department of State appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft report *Better Records Management and More Reporting Needed on Presidential Drawdowns*.

State does not concur with the GAO's finding that "there is no central office or official responsible for maintaining key drawdown documents" and does not concur with their related recommendation. Contrary to the GAO's draft finding, the Office of Regional Security and Arms Transfers (PM/RSAT) is the lead office for security related drawdowns; tracks use of the authority each fiscal year; prepares 506(a)(1) and 552(c)(2) authority requests; informs the interagency about the authority through which PM/RSAT documents are developed and distributed—many of which were shared with GAO; participates in interagency discussions on the potential use or oversight of actual use of drawdowns; and maintains the key drawdown documents.

Drawdowns are presidential authorities utilized to address certain emergency situations, but they are typically only one of many tools used to address such international emergencies, often including diplomacy and providing tangible assistance through other authorities. It is therefore more useful to have a single RSAT officer responsible for leading the entirety of the response to the emergency, including any drawdowns (and the documents related to them), rather than having a single officer responsible for all drawdowns. In this way, this foreign policy tool is aligned with, and de-conflicted from, other efforts in order to achieve best results.

We also disagree that State lacked readily available documents related to drawdowns. State provided 13 drawdown packets with a median time of 26 days after the request (with a mean time of 35). The one drawdown packet cited as requiring four months was, in fact, provided within 2½ months. Releasing the document took that amount of time because it contained classified information that required senior approval prior to release, not because it was not readily available to the RSAT officers responsible. PM/RSAT provided all documents; the regional bureaus did not provide, or primarily hold, documents, as GAO's report suggests.

-2-

We would finally note we have briefed Congress on the implementation of relevant drawdowns whenever they have expressed interest, and discussion of drawdowns is included whenever Congress is briefed on a contingency that includes the use of these authorities.

The Department of State thanks GAO for the opportunity to respond to the report draft and for the courtesies extended by GAO staff in the conduct of this review.

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# Appendix IV: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

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## GAO Contacts

Charles Michael Johnson, Jr., (202) 512-7331 or [johnsoncm@gao.gov](mailto:johnsoncm@gao.gov)  
Zina Merritt, (202) 512-5257 or [merrittz@gao.gov](mailto:merrittz@gao.gov)

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## Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contacts named above, Jeff Phillips (Assistant Director), Tom Gosling (Assistant Director), Leah DeWolf (analyst in charge), David Dayton, Martin de Alteriis, Susannah Hawthorne, Jeff Isaacs, Amie Lesser, Eddie Uyekawa, and Alex Welsh made key contributions to this report.

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Katherine Siggerud, Managing Director, [siggerudk@gao.gov](mailto:siggerudk@gao.gov), (202) 512-4400, U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7125, Washington, DC 20548

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Chuck Young, Managing Director, [youngc1@gao.gov](mailto:youngc1@gao.gov), (202) 512-4800, U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7149, Washington, DC 20548



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