Why GAO Did This Study

Commercial remote sensing satellites have transformed the way the U.S. approaches critical national security issues. With the commercial space industry expected to grow significantly in the coming years, the IC and DOD have emphasized that they must team with commercial GEOINT providers.

The House committee report accompanying a bill for the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence requested GAO to assess IC and DOD plans for commercial satellite imagery capabilities. This report assesses, among other things, the extent to which the IC and DOD have (1) established roles and responsibilities for the acquisition of commercial satellite imagery, (2) incorporated emerging satellite capabilities, and (3) developed performance goals and measures to enhance the use of commercial satellite imagery.

GAO reviewed and assessed IC and DOD plans and interviewed officials from NRO and NGA, services, combatant commands, and select commercial vendors.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations for DOD and ODNI, including clarifying roles for commercial satellite imagery, assessing approaches to emerging capabilities, and developing performance goals and measures. DOD concurred with the recommendations. ODNI did not state whether it concurred with the recommendations addressed to it.

View GAO-22-106106. For more information, contact Brian M. Mazanec at (202) 512-5130 or mazanecb@gao.gov.