

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-106275](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD uses security cooperation programs, including those authorized by Section 333 of title 10 of the U.S. Code, to build the capacity and capability of partner nations to address various global threats. DOD is required to report to Congress on the status of its Section 333 projects and to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of its security cooperation programs.

The FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act includes a provision for GAO to review Section 333 assistance. This report examines (1) DOD's allocation of funding for Section 333 assistance in FYs 2018 through 2022, (2) the extent to which DOD delivered Section 333 assistance to partner nations as scheduled, and (3) the findings of DOD evaluations of Section 333 projects as well as the extent to which the evaluations met criteria for evaluation quality.

GAO analyzed DOD data for Section 333 projects, reviewed DOD evaluation policies and other relevant documents, and compared six Section 333 project evaluations to criteria for quality. GAO also interviewed DOD officials and contractors.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations to DOD to improve the timeliness of its Section 333 project deliveries and the quality of its project evaluations. DOD agreed with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-23-106275](#). For more information, contact Chelsa Kenney at (202) 512-2964 or kenneyc@gao.gov

August 2023

BUILDING PARTNER CAPACITY

DOD Should Assess Delivery Delays in Train and Equip Projects and Improve Evaluations

What GAO Found

In fiscal years (FY) 2018 through 2022, the Department of Defense (DOD) allocated nearly \$5.6 billion through Section 333—one of its largest security cooperation programs—to build the capacity of partner nations' national security forces to conduct certain operations. This funding supported projects intended to provide equipment, training, services, and construction activities to the security forces of at least 90 partner nations to address threats such as terrorism and narcotics trafficking. DOD allocated nearly 16 percent of this funding to projects in Lebanon and Jordan. In FYs 2019 through 2022, 77 percent of allocations supported projects related to maritime and border security operations and counterterrorism operations.

Examples of Assistance DOD Has Provided to Partner Nations through Section 333



Sources: U.S. Army Security Assistance Command (left), U.S. Embassy Dushanbe (center), U.S. Embassy Dili (right). | GAO-23-106275

DOD delivered most Section 333 project activities after the estimated dates but does not monitor aggregate timeliness and has not analyzed the causes of delays. GAO's analysis of DOD data found that as of the end of FY 2022, 75 percent of deliveries were delayed relative to DOD's estimated dates. DOD monitors individual deliveries' timeliness but has not established a performance measure, such as a targeted percentage, that would let it regularly assess aggregate timeliness. Also, DOD has not systematically identified and analyzed factors contributing to delivery delays. Setting a performance measure for aggregate timeliness and systematically analyzing factors causing delays would help DOD ensure effective corrective measures.

DOD's evaluations of six Section 333 projects it completed in FYs 2017 through 2022 showed mixed results, but these evaluations were not high quality. DOD evaluations showed that four of the six projects improved the capabilities of partner nations' security forces and two projects did not because of unsuitable or unreliable equipment. However, GAO's analysis of the extent to which the evaluations met criteria for quality found weaknesses in their design, implementation, and conclusions. For example, the basis of the evaluations' conclusions was generally unclear, because the evaluations did not explain how evidence had been collected or summarized. Improving the quality of Section 333 project evaluations would help DOD to understand whether its projects were effective and to apply lessons learned from the evaluations to the development of new projects.