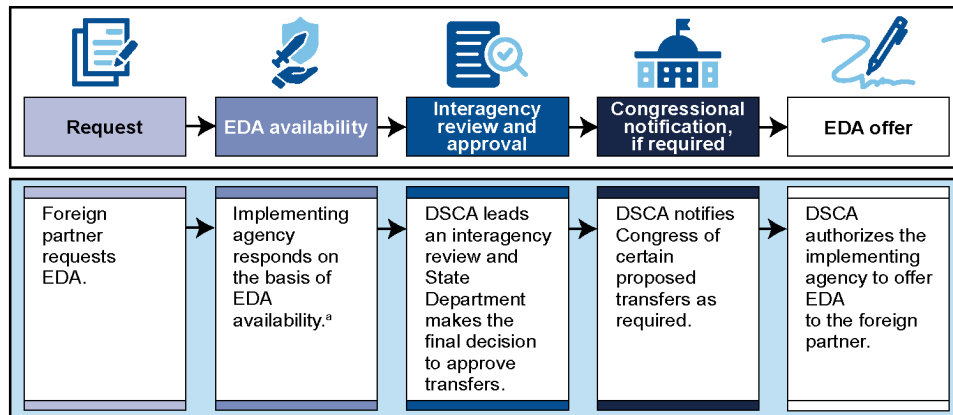A report to congressional committees.

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What GAO Found

The Excess Defense Articles (EDA) program has a phased approval process. The Department of Defense (DOD) reviews foreign partners' EDA requests and coordinates with the Departments of Commerce and State. During the process, agency officials consider the proposed transfer's effect on industry, foreign partner resources, and security cooperation priorities, among other factors.

Five General Phases of the EDA Program's Approval Process

Request	EDA availability	Interagency review and approval	Congressional notification, if required	EDA offer
Foreign partner requests EDA.	Implementing agency responds on the basis of EDA availability.[a]	DSCA leads an interagency review and State Department makes the final decision to approve transfers.	DSCA notifies Congress of certain proposed transfers as required.	DSCA authorizes the implementing agency to offer EDA to the foreign partner.

Legend: DOD = Department of Defense, DSCA = Defense Security Cooperation Agency, EDA = excess defense articles.
Source: GAO analysis of DOD documents and interviews with DOD officials (data); icons-studio/stock.adobe.com (icons). | GAO-26-107627

[a]Implementing agencies are the military departments and Defense Logistics Agency Disposition Services.

DOD monitors EDA after transfer under its end-use monitoring program. Nearly all EDA are subject to the program's routine end-use monitoring, which requires DOD officials to observe an item or group of items for each foreign partner at least quarterly. GAO found that DOD generally conducted the quarterly routine checks as required for selected foreign partners. However, DOD does not systematically track key information on EDA after transfer to foreign partners. Specifically, DOD's end-use monitoring database does not identify items as EDA or have disposition data (i.e., an item's status, such as demilitarized or expended in combat versus in active use) for routine items. Systematically tracking EDA would provide DOD better information on these items. Such information would allow DOD to make better-informed recommendations on future EDA transfers, because these are based in part on foreign partner abilities to support items.

DOD has not taken key steps to assess the EDA program's performance. It has not developed performance goals to measure progress toward strategic objectives, such as building foreign partner capabilities. DOD has also not systematically collected performance information to assess the program's results. For example, DOD officials said foreign partner feedback would be a good source of such information, but they do not routinely collect it. By taking steps to systematically assess the EDA program's performance, DOD would better determine the extent to which the program helps achieve strategic objectives.

Why GAO Did This Study

The U.S. government transfers defense articles the armed forces no longer need—EDA—to foreign partners. By providing low-cost access to U.S. military equipment, the EDA program aims to support U.S. allies and partners and further national security objectives.

The House Appropriations Committee Report 118-121 includes a provision for GAO to review the EDA program. GAO's report examines (1) how DOD administers the program, (2) the extent to which DOD monitors and tracks EDA transferred to foreign partners, and (3) the extent to which DOD assesses the program's performance.

GAO reviewed relevant DOD policy and guidance. GAO analyzed DOD data on end-use monitoring for five foreign partners selected on the basis of such criteria as the value of EDA approved in fiscal years 2020 through 2024. GAO also interviewed officials from DOD, including from the military departments, security cooperation organizations, and geographic combatant commands; State; and Commerce.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making two recommendations to DOD to (1) improve information recorded on EDA in its database and (2) develop and implement a process to manage the program's performance. DOD partially concurred with the first recommendation and concurred with the second. Regarding the partial concurrence, DOD stated that systematically identifying EDA in its database would require software modifications that are not cost-effective because EDA are tracked under end-use monitoring protocols. GAO maintains that DOD can take additional cost-effective steps to improve the information on EDA, such as by using the database's existing features to identify items as EDA.