

Clearer Guidance Is Needed to Improve Visibility into Resourcing of Pacific Deterrence Efforts

GAO-26-107698

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Highlights of [GAO-26-107698](#), a report to congressional committees.

Why This Matters

To counter China's growing military reach, the U.S. military has been strengthening its forces in the Indo-Pacific. In 2021, Congress required annual budget reporting on Department of Defense funding for the region. However, there are concerns that the reporting does not provide the intended visibility into deterrence efforts and funding priorities in the region.

GAO Key Takeaways

The Department of Defense's (DOD) annual Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) budget exhibits for fiscal years 2023 through 2025 do not consistently reflect department-wide priorities or requirements and present an inconsistent mix of programs and funding. Because guidance is not clear about how programs should be selected, we found inconsistencies in the types of programs included in the PDI budget exhibits. For example:

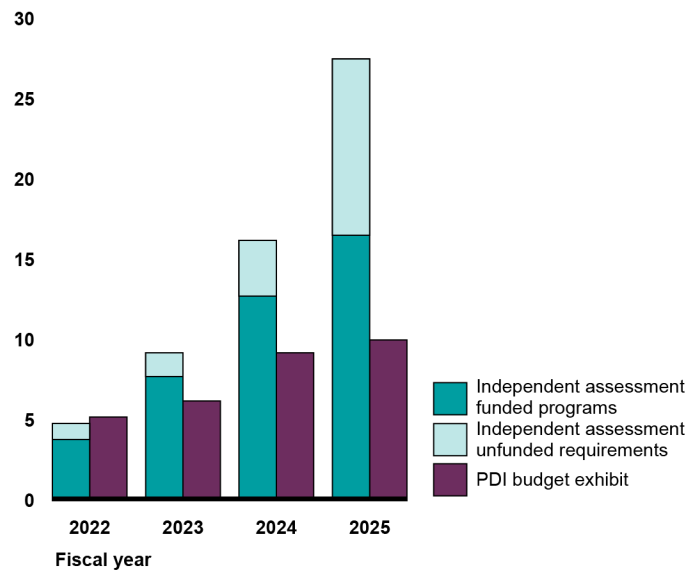
- The Air Force and Marine Corps selected facilities sustainment programs, while the Army and Navy did not.
- Some military services included efforts east of the International Date Line, although the guidance focuses on efforts primarily west of it.
- Some DOD organizations included development programs unlikely to be effective within 5 years—despite the guidance's near-term focus.

Additionally, the programs and funding presented in the annual budget exhibit are different from those included in the Indo-Pacific Command's (INDOPACOM) independent assessment, which is based on its strategy and assumes unlimited resources. While some of the differences can be attributed to that assumption, there are also differences in the types of funded programs prioritized. This raises questions about the extent of DOD's resourcing needs for the Indo-Pacific region.

These inconsistencies make it difficult for Congress to assess whether DOD's resources are aligned with strategic goals and increase uncertainty about which priorities DOD considers most critical for the region.

Comparison of the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) Budget Exhibits and the Indo-Pacific Command Independent Assessment, Fiscal Years 2022–2025

Billions of dollars



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-26-107698

How GAO Did This Study

We reviewed DOD's PDI budget exhibits from fiscal years 2023 through 2025 and conducted quantitative analysis of over 500 budget line items. We also conducted site visits to INDOPACOM and its supporting commands.

What GAO Recommends

We are making two recommendations to DOD: (1) that it revise its guidance to clarify how programs are selected for inclusion in the PDI budget exhibit and (2) that the PDI budget exhibit considers funded priorities identified by INDOPACOM. DOD concurred with our recommendations.

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