

A report to congressional committees

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### What GAO Found

To strengthen the United States' and its foreign partners' security, the U.S. government sells or provides defense articles and services to more than 100 foreign governments and international organizations that request them. The Department of Defense (DOD), with other agencies, uses technology release and foreign disclosure policies and procedures—the TRFD processes—to determine whether to share sensitive military technology and intelligence with foreign partners. Generally, the TRFD processes start when a foreign partner submits a request to DOD. Designated officials manage the request to obtain approval from the relevant military departments and interagency stakeholders.

#### Example of Items Procured Through Technology Release and Foreign Disclosure Processes



Source: U.S. Army, C. Kauffman (left); U.S. Air National Guard, Technical Sergeant B. Hoover (right). | GAO-26-108435

DOD officials identified operational challenges affecting the execution of the TRFD processes and described steps DOD is taking to mitigate them. According to officials, weighing the national security implications of releasing sensitive technology is inherently time consuming and specialized. Moreover, decision-making is distributed among multiple stakeholders, with different authorities, which may complicate coordination among these processes. To facilitate coordination, DOD is taking some mitigating steps and considering establishing a knowledge repository system to track TRFD policies and decisions.

DOD has taken steps to enact reforms of the TRFD processes. In November 2025, according to officials, DOD began implementing TRFD reforms that, according to officials, it intended to complete within a year. Officials also said that DOD was tracking progress on the reforms and, as of May 2026, had completed 26 of 33 reform action items. While DOD will likely undertake additional TRFD reforms in the future, it is on track to complete the current efforts by November 2026 because of support from senior DOD leadership and effective prioritization of the reforms, according to officials.

### Why GAO Did This Study

In recent years, Congress and others have raised questions about the transparency and accountability of the TRFD processes. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 required DOD to submit a report to Congress assessing various aspects of the TRFD processes. In December 2024, DOD submitted the report. In addition, in April 2025, Executive Order 14268 directed DOD to implement TRFD reforms as part of an effort to facilitate foreign military sales.

The joint explanatory statement accompanying the 2025 NDAA included a provision for GAO to conduct an independent assessment of DOD's TRFD reform initiative. This report describes (1) DOD's TRFD processes, (2) challenges related to the TRFD processes and steps DOD is taking to mitigate them, and (3) DOD's progress in implementing organizational reforms proposed in its December 2024 report and directed in Executive Order 14268.

GAO reviewed documents from DOD, including DOD's *Security Assistance Management Manual*. In addition, GAO met with DOD officials and attended a course for foreign disclosure officers.