DEFESE INFRASTRUCTURE

Opportunity to Improve the Timeliness of Future Overseas Planning Reports and Factors Affecting the Master Planning Effort for the Military Buildup on Guam

Why GAO Did This Study
The Department of Defense (DOD) continues its efforts to reduce the number of troops permanently stationed overseas and consolidate overseas bases. The Senate and conference reports accompanying the fiscal year 2004 military construction appropriation bill directed DOD to develop and GAO to monitor DOD's overseas master plans and to provide annual assessments. The Senate report accompanying the fiscal year 2007 military construction appropriation bill directed GAO to review DOD's master planning effort for Guam as part of these annual reviews. This report examines (1) the changes and challenges described in the fiscal year 2009 master plans, the extent the plans address GAO's prior recommendations, and the plans' timeliness and (2) the status of DOD's master planning efforts for the proposed buildup of military forces and infrastructure on Guam. GAO reviewed the plans and other relevant documents, and visited three overseas combatant commands, various installations, and Guam organizations.

What GAO Found
While the fiscal year 2009 master plans generally reflect recent changes in U.S. overseas basing strategies and the challenges DOD faces as well as address GAO's prior recommendations, DOD provided Congress the plans in May 2008, well after the February budget submission when the Senate and conference reports require DOD to issue the plans. This year's plans contain information on current overseas basing strategies and infrastructure requirements and the challenges that DOD faces implementing the plans. The plans also generally address GAO's recommendations except that the U.S. Pacific Command plan does not provide an update of the Air Force's training challenges in South Korea, despite GAO's prior recommendation that it should describe the challenges and their potential effects on infrastructure and funding requirements. DOD officials said that since last year the South Korean government and the U.S. Air Force have taken several steps to address these training challenges. According to DOD officials, efforts to incorporate last-minute changes in basing plans and projects and the lengthy review and approval process have contributed to the fiscal year 2009 plans' lateness.

What GAO Recommends
GAO recommends that DOD (1) develop the global defense posture reports earlier each year to coincide with the budget submissions and (2) provide Congress annual updates of the Guam working-level plan until a comprehensive master plan is finalized and provided to Congress. DOD agreed with the second recommendation and partially agreed with the first, which was clarified in response to comments.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on GAO-08-1005. For more information, contact Brian J. Lepore at (202) 512-4523 or leporeb@gao.gov.