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IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Actions Needed to Enhance the Ability of Army Brigades to Support the Advising Mission

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Why GAO Did This Study

Developing capable Iraqi and Afghan security forces is a key component of the U.S. military effort in Iraq and Afghanistan and, in 2009, the Army began augmenting brigade combat teams (BCT) with advisor personnel to advise the host nation security forces in these countries. House Armed Services Committee report 111-491 directed GAO to report on the Army's plans to augment BCTs to perform advising missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. This report (1) identifies the key characteristics of the augmented BCT concept; (2) assesses the extent to which the Army has provided augmented BCTs, and what challenges, if any, these units have faced; and (3) assesses the extent to which requirements for augmented BCTs have impacted overall Army personnel requirements, including the Army's ability to provide advisor personnel. GAO examined augmented BCT doctrine and guidance, analyzed advisor requirements, reviewed after-action reviews and lessons learned from augmented BCTs, and interviewed Army, theater command, and augmented BCT officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that theater commands assess and refine, as appropriate, advisor requirements and define advisor support and command structures. GAO also recommends that the Army provide certain advisor personnel to brigades earlier in pre-deployment training. DOD concurred with the recommendations.

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What GAO Found

Army guidance identifies key characteristics of the augmented BCT concept, such as how advisors are to be organized, commanded, and supported. For example, BCT commanders are to organize the advisors into teams, with other necessary resources being provided to the teams by the brigade. The theater commander determines the specific numbers and types of advisors based upon the operational environment and mission requirements. BCTs are envisioned to exercise command of advisor teams and provide support such as specialized personnel, equipment, and transportation and security. However, it is recognized that BCTs may have other priorities and must balance the demand for resources between the advising mission and other missions.

The Army has deployed augmented BCTs in response to theater commanders' requests, but units have faced some challenges because commanders did not always set clear priorities between the advising mission and other missions or define specific requirements for how the BCTs should support the advising mission. For example, theater commanders did not require that advisor teams include specialized personnel, such as logisticians or intelligence officers. Because the BCTs already have high demand for these personnel, the brigades are challenged to meet the advisors' requirements for those same personnel. As a result, some advising teams told GAO that they were limited in their ability to advise in some specialty areas or that they may be advising Iraqi and Afghan security forces in functional areas where the advisors have little or no experience. Also, theater commanders' requests did not always specify command relationships. As a result, in some cases, advisors were reassigned to the control of a division or a brigade that they had not trained and deployed with, which disrupted the unity of command envisioned under the augmented BCT concept.

The use of augmented BCTs has decreased the total number of advisor personnel required for the advising mission, but increased requirements for field grade officers, already in short supply. According to Army officials, as a result of these shortages, the Army has faced challenges meeting the requirement to provide field grade advisors at least 45 days prior to the brigades' mission rehearsal exercise. In many cases, advisors did not join the brigades until after the exercise, hindering their integration into the BCTs and complicating efforts to establish support and command structures. Some officials suggested that it would be helpful if at least two or three of the highest-ranking advisors arrived significantly earlier than currently required in order to facilitate integration. Moreover, GAO found that augmented BCTs are organizing their advisors into smaller numbers of larger teams than envisioned in the theater commander requirements. As a result, augmented BCTs may not need the number and rank of advisors currently required by those requests.

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Abbreviations

BCT	Brigade Combat Team
CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
DOD	Department of Defense
FORSCOM	U.S. Army Forces Command
HRC	U.S. Army Human Resources Command

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Accountability * Integrity * Reliability

United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

August 2, 2011

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Howard McKeon
Chairman
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Key components of the U.S. military effort in Iraq and Afghanistan include developing capable host nation security forces and facilitating the transition of security responsibility to the host nations.¹ Prior to 2009, the Department of Defense (DOD) relied on hundreds of small training and transition teams (collectively known as “transition teams”) made up of personnel from all of the military services to advise and mentor Iraqi and Afghan security forces. However, filling the personnel requirements of the transition teams was difficult for the Army and the use of these teams led to command and control challenges, since they operated separately from major combat units.

To help alleviate these difficulties, in 2009, the Army shifted its approach and, in coordination with theater commanders, began replacing many of the individual transition teams with brigade combat teams (BCT) augmented by advisor personnel, referred to in this report as “augmented BCTs.” Under this concept, the Army envisioned that augmenting brigades would enable them to execute the advising mission, as well as their combat missions. Among the intended benefits of this strategy was

¹As of August 31, 2010, U.S. forces transitioned from combat and counterinsurgency activities in Iraq to a more limited focus on training and advising the Iraqi Security Forces under Operation New Dawn as the Iraqis have assumed security responsibility. The United States intends to begin transitioning security to the Afghan government by July 2011.

the intent to make it easier for the Army to fill the requirements for trainers, since the number of individually sourced advisors for the augmented brigades would be smaller than the number of individually sourced personnel needed for all of the transition teams.² In addition, it would also achieve unity of command over the advising mission, with both the mission and the advisor personnel being under the command and control of the brigades.

The House Armed Services Committee report accompanying a proposed bill for the fiscal year 2011 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 5136) directed us to report on the Army's plans to augment BCTs to perform advising missions and on the use of such augmented brigades to support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.³ To address this requirement, this report: (1) identifies the key characteristics of the Army's concept for augmenting BCTs with personnel to support advising missions; (2) assesses the extent to which the Army has provided augmented BCTs for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and what challenges, if any, these units have faced in implementing the concept; and (3) assesses the extent to which the requirements for augmented BCTs have impacted overall Army personnel requirements, including the Army's ability to provide advisor personnel to BCTs in required time frames.

To accomplish these objectives, we reviewed doctrine and guidance from the Army and theater commanders, examined the training requirements and program of instruction for the advising mission, and analyzed the manning requirements for augmented BCTs, with specific focus on the leadership augment. We also reviewed selected mission briefs, after action reviews, task organization, and lessons learned from deployed and redeployed augmented BCTs, dating back to 2009. Additionally, we examined personnel data, also dating back to 2009. Finally, we met with, among others, officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Department of the Army, U.S. Central Command, Army Human Resources Command, Army Forces Command, U.S. Forces—Iraq, U.S.

²Transition teams are not units that exist in the Army force structure, so they have to be formed from personnel identified individually by the Army Human Resources Command, and then pulled together to form these teams. Likewise, the personnel who augment Army brigades for the advising mission are identified individually by the Army Human Resources Command, since they are not part of the brigades' existing personnel. We refer to both of these groups of personnel as being "individually sourced."

³H.R. Rep. No. 111-491, at 337-338 (2010).

Forces—Afghanistan, and various redeployed and deployed augmented BCTs and division headquarters in the United States, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2010 through August 2011 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. Appendix I contains additional information about our scope and methodology.

Background

Security force assistance—the effort to develop capable host nation security forces—is a key component of the U.S. efforts to create sustainable security in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The goal of this mission is to build partner capability and improve the security situation such that, over time, U.S. forces and partnered foreign security forces can collectively set the conditions to defeat common threats and ultimately achieve strategic success. The Army’s field manual on security force assistance recognizes that this is not a new mission but also states that in the current operational environment, security force assistance is no longer an additional duty but is now a core competency of the Army. It is part of the full spectrum of military operations, meaning it can be conducted across the spectrum of conflict, from stable peace to general war. The field manual also notes that security force assistance can include both advising and partnering to develop competent and capable foreign security forces.⁴

- Advising. Advising is the primary type of security force assistance and is the use of influence to teach, coach, and advise while working by, with, and through the foreign security force. Advising helps foreign security forces conduct independent decision making and operations, and advisors may also provide foreign security forces with direct access to joint and multinational capabilities, such as air support, artillery, medical evacuation, and intelligence.

⁴Department of the Army, Army Field Manual 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance* (May 1, 2009).

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- Partnering. In partnering, the U.S. attaches units to host nation units at various levels in order to leverage the strengths of both U.S. and foreign security forces. Partnered units should establish combined cells for intelligence, operations, planning, and sustainment. While effective coordination is always required and initial efforts may require completely fused efforts, foreign security forces should eventually build the capability and capacity to conduct all efforts autonomously.

Advising and partnering, while complementary, are distinct activities that can be performed simultaneously, sequentially, or in combination. U.S. units, such as Army BCTs, are partnering with the Iraqi and Afghan security forces. Examples include U.S. battalions conducting combined route clearance missions or manning combined checkpoints with host nation military units in their area of operations. The Army's field manual notes that as a foreign security force's capabilities mature, the echelon and degree of partnering decrease. For example, a U.S. Army battalion may initially partner with a foreign security force battalion, but as the foreign security force matures, a U.S. Army battalion may partner at a higher echelon such as with a foreign security force division while the U.S. battalion's subordinate companies may partner with the foreign security force battalions.

Like partnering, advising also can occur at various echelons of the foreign security force with the echelon of focus changing as foreign security forces mature. However, brigades have only recently assumed the advising mission in Iraq and Afghanistan. Specifically, prior to 2009 and 2010, respectively, the advising mission was conducted primarily with transition teams. These transition teams did not exist as units in any of the services' force structures and were instead comprised of company- and field-grade officers and senior non-commissioned officers who were centrally identified and individually selected based on rank and specialty.⁵ For the Army alone, the number of individually sourced advisors—individually sourced advisors are those identified by Army Human Resources Command and assigned to transition teams—required to fill the transition teams in Iraq and Afghanistan at any one time totaled about 8,000 personnel. As we have previously reported, the demand for these

⁵Army company grade officers are those in the pay grades of O-1 to O-3 or 2nd Lieutenants, 1st Lieutenants, and Captains. Army field grade officers are those in pay grades O-4 to O-6, or Majors, Lieutenant Colonels, and Colonels. Army senior non-commissioned officers are those in the pay grades of E7 to E9, or Sergeant 1st Class, Master Sergeant and First Sergeant, and Sergeant Major.

leaders created challenges for the services because the leaders were generally pulled from other units or commands, which then were left to perform their missions while undermanned.⁶ In addition, the transition teams operated externally to the major combat units in their area of operations and reported to a different command structure, which led to a lack of unity of command that complicated coordination and communication between the transition teams and the combat units.

The Army developed the concept of augmenting BCTs with specialized personnel to execute the advising mission, in part, as a means of alleviating these challenges. The replacement of transition teams with augmented BCTs was intended to mitigate strain on the Army by reducing the number of personnel who would have to be individually sourced by the Army Human Resources Command for the security force assistance advising mission, since the advisors would be able to leverage the capabilities of the existing BCTs for support functions, thus requiring fewer specially sourced individuals for the mission. Augmented BCTs also were intended to improve command and control over the mission by placing both the mission and personnel assigned to the mission under a single brigade commander.

The Army Has Identified the Key Characteristics of the Augmented BCT Concept

In May 2009, the Army issued its Field Manual, *Security Force Assistance*, which, among other things, identifies the key characteristics of the augmented BCT concept and offers guidance on the roles and responsibilities of augmented BCTs performing security force assistance advising missions. In June 2009, the Army also issued *The Modular Brigade Augmented for Security Force Assistance Handbook*⁷ which, among other things, is intended to provide a useful summary of the Army's current security force assistance doctrine and give commanders a snapshot of the key elements of this mission. Taken as a whole, this guidance reinforces key characteristics of the augmented BCT advising mission, such as how advisors are to be task organized, the importance of clear command and control relationships, the types of personnel

⁶GAO, *Iraq and Afghanistan: Availability of Forces, Equipment, and Infrastructure Should Be Considered in Developing U.S. Strategy and Plans*, [GAO-09-380T](#) (Washington, D.C.: February 12, 2009).

⁷U.S. Army Infantry School, *The Modular Brigade Augmented for Security Force Assistance Handbook* (Jun. 1, 2009).

capabilities that should be considered when defining augment requirements, and the need to support advisor personnel with resources from the BCT.

- **Task organization:** The BCT commander organizes the advisor augment personnel into advisor teams based on advising mission requirements in his area of operations. These advisor teams may be formed from organic resources from the brigade, external augmentation, or a combination of these.
- **Command and control:** The BCT commander has command and control authority over the advisor personnel and advisor teams. The Army handbook notes the advantage of the advisor teams being under the command of the augmented BCT commander, with this unity of command resulting in a unity of effort and purpose.
- **Augmentation requirements:** The field manual provides a basic conceptual design for augmentation, which can include personnel capabilities such as combat advisors, military police, or legal personnel. According to the field manual, the theater commander is to determine the precise mix of forces and augment capabilities—including the specific numbers and types of advisors—required for augmented BCTs in his area of operations, based upon the operational environment and mission requirements. As advising tasks change in response to the evolving needs of the host nation security force, the theater commander can re-tailor the augmentation (i.e., the specific numbers and types of advisors) provided to successive BCTs, accordingly.
- **BCT support of advisors:** The field manual notes that the advisor teams may need resources from the brigade for support functions, such as specialized personnel, equipment, transportation, and security. This would allow the advisor teams to stay focused on advising. The handbook acknowledges, though, that the brigades may have other mission priorities in addition to security force assistance. Although the augmented BCTs are specially resourced with advisor personnel to advise, assist, and mentor the Iraqi and Afghan security forces, the brigades still must balance the security force assistance advising mission with other brigade missions.

The security force assistance field manual also addresses the training that should be received by soldiers assigned to security force assistance missions. The Army has tasked the 162nd Infantry Training Brigade to provide advisor augment personnel with specialized advisor training on topics such as language and culture, host nation government and security forces, cross-cultural communication, and rapport building as part of their pre-deployment training. The program also includes leadership

engagement scenarios where advisor team leaders engage with role players in simulated exchanges and opportunities for the advisors and brigade and battalion leadership to conduct combined planning exercises with simulated host nation security force leadership. The final stage of pre-deployment training for the augmented BCT is the mission rehearsal exercise, through which the advisor personnel and the BCT are expected to exercise the augmented BCT concept as an integrated unit.⁸ In addition to participating in combat and advising mission exercises, the scenario is intended to enable the BCT and its advisors the opportunity to create advisor teams and establish the key command and control and support structures necessary for executing the mission in theater.

Army Is Deploying Augmented BCTs to Iraq and Afghanistan, but Some Challenges Exist

The Army has deployed augmented BCTs in response to theater commanders' requests; however, these units have faced challenges because theater commanders' guidance did not always clearly define how these units were to perform key aspects of the augmented BCT concept and theater commanders' requests did not include some requirements needed to support the advising mission, given the brigades' resource limitations. As a result, brigade commanders have faced challenges determining how to prioritize their resources when supporting multiple missions in addition to the advising mission and providing specialized personnel, equipment, transportation, and security for the advisors. In addition, augmented BCTs and their assigned advisor personnel have sometimes lacked the unity of command envisioned under the Army's augmented BCT concept.

The Army Has Deployed Augmented BCTs to Iraq and Afghanistan Based on Theater Commanders' Requests

In 2009 and 2010, U.S. Central Command, on behalf of theater commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan, submitted requests for augmented BCTs for ongoing operations. In May 2009, the theater commander for Iraq requested forces for the augmentation of Iraq-bound BCTs with 48 field grade officers specially trained as advisors to execute the security force assistance advising mission. Likewise, in March 2010, the theater commander for Afghanistan submitted a request for forces for augmented BCTs that would each be augmented with a package of 48 advisor personnel—24 field grade officers and 24 non-commissioned officers.

⁸Mission rehearsal exercises are the final collective training event that units conduct prior to deployment.

Both requests envisioned that the 48 advisor personnel would be organized into 24 two-man advisor teams and that the teams would receive all necessary support—including additional specialized personnel, equipment, and transportation and security support—from the brigades.

The Army has been able to deploy augmented brigades to Iraq and Afghanistan since August 2009 and June 2010, respectively, in accordance with theater commanders' requests. As of June 2011, there were six augmented BCTs operating in Iraq and nine in Afghanistan. The Army intends for all future BCTs deploying to Afghanistan to be augmented BCTs.

Augmented BCTs Have Faced Challenges Allocating Resources across Multiple Missions and Supporting Advisor Teams

Augmented BCTs have faced challenges allocating resources across missions and providing support to enable the advising mission because theater commanders did not always set clear priorities, ultimately leading to challenges for these units. Specifically, augmented BCTs have sometimes had difficulty allocating resources between the advising mission and other missions, such as counterinsurgency operations; advisor teams have sometimes lacked the appropriate specialized personnel and equipment to conduct the advising mission; and advisor teams have not always received consistent transportation and security support from augmented BCTs to enable the advising mission. Each of these challenges is discussed below.

Augmented BCTs Were Not Always Given Clear Priorities for Allocating Resources between Advising and Other Missions

Army guidance for security force assistance recognizes that augmented BCT commanders consider the extent of threats, combined with resource limitations, in order to set priorities, which would include determining the degree to which BCT resources can be allocated to support the advising mission. For example, augmented BCTs in Iraq and Afghanistan must balance their requirements to support the advising mission with other operational requirements, such as counterinsurgency operations, partnering with host nation security forces, or performing missions such as conducting checkpoints. Army officials told us that, in the absence of other guidance from theater commanders, in kinetic combat environments, such as Afghanistan, augmented BCT commanders naturally prioritize the combat mission and direct their resources that way. According to Army officials, the augmented BCT concept was initially intended to be introduced to an operating environment after major combat operations were concluded. This would make more of the resources of the augmented BCTs available to support the advising mission. When augmented BCTs first deployed to Iraq in 2009, the Iraqi Security Forces were assuming greater responsibility for combat operations and Iraqi

forces have had the primary responsibility for security since 2010. Iraq theater command officials told us that advising the Iraqi Security Forces is the primary effort of U.S. military forces in Iraq, including augmented BCTs. In contrast, U.S. military forces in Afghanistan are still conducting counterinsurgency operations in a combat environment and the theater commander in Afghanistan has not specified the priority of the advising mission for the augmented BCTs, relative to counterinsurgency operations. The Afghanistan theater commander's request for augmented BCTs noted that these BCTs would be responsible for both advising and counterinsurgency operations, but provided no guidance as to how the brigades should balance resources and make trade-offs between the two different mission sets. Augmented BCTs in both theaters, though, had challenges balancing resources between the advising mission and other missions.

The theater commanders' requests for both Iraq and Afghanistan envisioned the BCTs executing the advising mission by organizing their advisors into 24 two-man teams drawing additional support from the BCT. According to officials from several of these augmented BCTs, though, the brigades do not have enough organic resources to support 24 dispersed teams while still preserving enough of their resources to conduct other missions. For instance, officials from one augmented Stryker brigade—Stryker brigades are significantly larger than other brigades—told us that the brigade could only organize into a maximum of 12 to 15 dispersed advisor teams using a company as the basis for support while still addressing other mission requirements. Given their resource limitations and the need to carry out other missions, augmented BCT officials told us that they organized their advisors into a smaller number of teams often consisting of more than two advisors. For example,

- In Iraq, one augmented BCT that deployed with 43 advisors organized them into five different advisor teams, while another augmented BCT organized its 46 advisors into eight teams.
- In Afghanistan, one augmented BCT organized the 44 advisors that it deployed with into 15 teams, while another augmented BCT organized its 48 advisors into nine advisor teams.

According to some of these officials, organizing the advisors in this manner was intended to enable the brigade to better support the advising mission while still retaining the capacity to meet other mission requirements. However, we found that some of the augmented BCTs that we visited faced challenges supporting their advisor teams, regardless of the number of teams they had.

Augmented BCTs Sometimes Faced Challenges Providing Specialized Personnel and Equipment for the Advising Mission

The Army's augmented BCT concept and the theater commanders' augmented BCT requests assumed that any specialty personnel required by the advisor teams—such as logisticians and intelligence personnel—would be pulled from the brigade. The theater commanders' requests for advisors therefore do not include requirements for the advisors to have any specialized capabilities, despite the fact that advisors are frequently advising Iraqi and Afghan security forces in specialized areas. In contrast, the transition teams were often comprised of personnel with specialist capabilities in areas such as intelligence, logistics, or communications. According to the security force assistance field manual, the composition of the advisor teams is subject to objectives (e.g., the type of training to be provided) and conditions (e.g., the security environment), and BCT commanders tailor advisor teams to match those objectives and conditions. For example, the BCT commander, in coordination with the advisor personnel, could identify specialized personnel from the BCT who would be assigned to support the advisors. Because such personnel are also in high demand within the brigade, though, the brigade is expected to make trade-offs and prioritize its missions, including the advising mission. However, in the absence of advisor teams receiving specialized personnel from the brigade or the advisors themselves being specialists, some advising teams lacked specialized capabilities. For example, some advising teams told us that they were limited in their ability to advise in certain specialty areas and that advisor personnel may be advising Iraqi and Afghan leadership in functional areas where they have little or no experience. In one case, a field grade officer advisor in Iraq who had no prior intelligence experience was tasked with helping the Iraqis set up an intelligence fusion center.

Since advisor teams are not regularly receiving specialized personnel from the brigades, Army and augmented BCT officials told us that including advisors with specialty capabilities as part of the augmented BCT advisor requirements would be very beneficial for the advising mission. The Army has gathered feedback from nine augmented BCT commanders and the 162nd Infantry Training Brigade, among others, that identified the need for logisticians to be a part of the advisor packages. The Army's feedback also identified the need for military police, military intelligence, and other specialties in augmentation packages. In order to mitigate the challenges that the augmented BCTs face with shortages of specialist personnel, the Army currently has an effort underway to examine the advisor requirements and determine the need to tailor them to include more specialized capabilities. The results of this effort have not been finalized, though, so its impact cannot yet be determined.

The theater commanders' requests for the augmented BCTs assumed that the advisors would get all of their equipment from the BCTs. As was the case with specialized personnel, the theater commanders' requests did not establish specific advisor equipment requirements for the Army to fill, with the exception of some individual weapons and other small items. As a result, some augmented BCTs experienced challenges providing personal and operational equipment to the advisors both prior to and after deploying to theater since all advisor equipment had to come from the brigades' existing stocks. For example, augmented BCT and advisor officials told us that, prior to deploying, the advisors joining the brigades expected to have equipment such as personal computers with both unclassified and classified capabilities as well as office space to work from, but that some of the brigades had difficulties providing these things without limiting the access of others in the brigade.

Theater command and augmented BCT officials told us that, once in theater, advisors sometimes lacked personal equipment, such as navigation equipment, personnel locators, and cell phones. Additionally, augmented BCTs sometimes lacked the operational equipment necessary to support advisor teams at dispersed locations. Iraq theater command officials told us that some augmented BCTs had submitted requests for additional communications equipment to support advisor teams at dispersed locations because the brigades did not deploy with the number of communications systems necessary to support all of the advisor teams that needed to operate separately from the brigade. In instances where additional operational equipment for advisors was not available, equipment shortages for advisors could impact the way that brigades organized for the advising mission. For example, officials from one augmented BCT in Iraq told us that the brigade only had seven command and control communications nodes, which limited the number of dispersed locations where the brigade could operate. While the brigade mitigated that limitation as much as possible by co-locating units and advisor teams, the shortage of key communications equipment, in part, limited the brigade's ability to support a larger number of advisor teams.

Augmented BCTs Sometimes Faced Challenges Providing Transportation and Security Support for the Advising Mission

The theater commanders' requests for the augmented BCTs envisioned that the advisor teams would get their required support from the brigades to which they were attached, but did not define the minimum level of support that the brigades were to provide to the advisor teams. Augmented BCT officials and advisors told us that the augmented BCTs are responsible for making determinations regarding the allocation of support to the advisor teams, balancing those needs against the needs of other missions. According to augmented BCT officials, advisor teams

often operate away from larger combat units or established bases and could therefore require up to a platoon or company of soldiers for support. In the absence of guidance on the level of support that the augmented BCTs were to provide, the level of support that the augmented BCTs we visited provided to their advisor teams varied, depending on the operating environment and the priorities of the BCT commander. For example,

- Officials from an augmented BCT that had redeployed from Iraq told us that, once in theater, the BCT received a requirement to secure a number of joint checkpoints with the Iraqi Security Forces, which limited its ability to provide transportation and security assets to the number of advisor teams that it had initially planned to support.
- Advisors from an augmented BCT in Afghanistan told us that the advising mission was a low priority for the brigade and that the brigade and its battalions had too many other requirements to provide support to the advisor teams. Instead, the advisor teams relied on nondedicated support from a separate military police company operating in the area.
- Advisors from an augmented BCT in Afghanistan told us that there was no official allocation of support resources within the brigade and, in some cases, the support was haphazard and came from other units outside the brigade.

Transportation and security support is considered to be critical for the augmented BCT advisors' ability to execute the advising mission. Some advisors told us that the level of dedicated transportation and security support they received from the brigade directly impacted their ability to meet with host nation security forces in order to build relationships and advise the host nation security forces.

Augmented BCTs and Advisors Have Sometimes Lacked Unity of Command

Augmented BCTs and their advisor personnel sometimes lacked the unity of command envisioned under the Army's augmented BCT concept because theater commanders did not always provide clear guidance on command and control structures for the advisors. As a result, in some cases, advisors were reassigned to be under the control of a division or a brigade other than the one that they trained and deployed with. According to Army guidance on security force assistance, advisor teams require a clearly defined and structured chain of command under which to operate, which alleviates confusion regarding who tasks or monitors the teams' progress and ensures that advisor teams are supported. The Army augmented BCT concept envisions the advisor teams being under the command of the augmented BCT commander, with this unity of command facilitating the integration of all aspects of the augmented BCT mission.

This was intended to address a challenge with the prior transition teams, which operated independently from major combat units and were overseen by higher headquarters at the division or theater level. Iraq theater command, Army, and augmented BCT officials told us that the unity of command is one of the primary benefits of the augmented BCT concept.

The theater commander's request for augmented BCTs for Iraq included direction on the intended command and control structure of the advisors, but the request for augmented BCTs for Afghanistan did not address this topic. Although the operational commander on the ground may tailor the force as deemed necessary to meet mission requirements—including changing command and control structures—the successful implementation of the augmented BCT concept hinges significantly on leveraging the resources of the BCT to support the advisors and synchronizing the advise and assist mission as part of the overall mission of the BCT. In addition, augmented BCTs we met with in both Iraq and Afghanistan had planned and trained for their advising mission consistent with the intention that advisors will act as a synchronized force with established support and command and control relationships and with the advisor teams being a part of the BCT. For example, advisors and officials at the 162nd Infantry Training Brigade told us that augmented BCT and advisor training focuses on the advisor role as being part of the BCT. Augmented BCT officials also told us that their final mission rehearsal exercises typically included scenarios that allowed the BCT, including advisors, to exercise their support and command and control relationships.

Absent guidance from theater commanders on advisor command and control, we found several instances, particularly in Afghanistan, where advisor personnel were diverted away from the augmented BCT with which they had deployed. In such instances, division commanders assumed control of the advisor teams and managed them as a division resource, similar to how the prior transition teams were managed. Those advisor teams were sometimes tasked for other advising missions not linked to the augmented BCT to which they were initially attached, or for other assignments, such as serving on division headquarters staff. For example, in the operating area of one division in Afghanistan,

- The division commander assumed control of all 48 advisors from a National Guard augmented BCT and created three division level teams, each focused on different areas of the security force assistance mission. That National Guard BCT was then assigned

advisor teams from another augmented BCT and the National Guard also provided additional field grade officers to allow the BCT to meet advising requirements in its area of operations, since it had lost its original advisor personnel.

- The division commander tasked a five-man advisor team from one of the augmented BCTs to mentor the brigade of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization partner and some individual advisor personnel to serve as liaisons to the division.

Changes to the established command relationships between the brigades and advisors after the units deploy can cause a range of challenges for augmented BCTs and advisors. These include questions about how or if the advisors' mission continues to fit with their parent augmented BCT; how or if the advisors will continue to be supported by their parent augmented BCT, particularly if the advisors and the BCT are operating in different areas; and what the chain of command is for the advisors.

Use of Augmented BCTs Has Alleviated Some Personnel Strains while Increasing Requirements for Field Grade Officers

Advisor requirements for augmented BCTs have decreased the total number of individually sourced advisor personnel required for the advising mission, but have increased Army personnel requirements for field grade officers, already in short supply. According to Army officials, as a result of field grade officer shortages, the Army has faced challenges meeting the requirement to provide field grade advisors to the augmented BCTs at least 45 days prior to the brigades' mission rehearsal exercise. Since augmented BCTs have been forming fewer advisor teams than initially intended by theater commanders' requests, augmented BCTs may not need to be sourced with as many total advisor personnel or such large numbers of field grade advisors.

Shift to Augmented BCTs Has Decreased the Total Number of Advisors and Alleviated Personnel Strain on Some Ranks, but Increased the Demand for Field Grade Officers

Moving from transition teams to augmented BCTs to advise the Iraqi and Afghan security forces, driven, in part, by the need to address some of the challenges the Army faced in filling requirements for transition teams, has decreased the total number of advisors required for the advising mission and alleviated the strain on certain ranks, but increased the strain on others. Specifically, the shift to augmented BCTs has:

- Decreased the total number of advisors required for the advising mission because, rather than relying completely on transition teams comprised of individually sourced personnel to man the advisor teams, the augmented BCT concept envisions advisor teams led by advisor augments (who are individually sourced) and further manned by pulling additional personnel from the brigade, as needed;

-
- Alleviated the strain on the Army's pool of company grade officers (e.g., Captains) and non-commissioned officers (e.g., Sergeants 1st class) because these ranks were required in greater numbers on the transition teams than the augmented BCTs; and
 - Increased requirements for field grade officer advisors, since the ranks of the advisors required for augmented BCTs are generally higher than the ranks of transition team personnel—particularly in Iraq, where all advisors are field grade officers. For example, according to Army Human Resources Command data, augmented BCT advisor requirements increased demand for deployable field grade officers by 463 in fiscal year 2010 and by 398 in the first two quarters of fiscal year 2011.

Deployable field grade officers were already in short supply prior to the introduction of the augmented BCT requirements. For example, taking into account requirements for augmented BCT advisor personnel, Army Human Resources Command data showed that the Army had shortages of 2,469 majors and 1,297 lieutenant colonels as of June 2011. To manage these shortages, the Army has prioritized the units and commands for sourcing personnel such that filling advisor requirements for augmented BCTs is among the highest sourcing priorities. As a result, Army Human Resources Command data showed that, as of October 2010, 97 percent of all advisor requirements for augmented BCTs were ultimately filled. However, the high priority for the augmented BCT advisor requirements, combined with the field grade officer shortages, has, at times, resulted in the understaffing of field grade ranks in other commands and units, such as U.S. Army Europe, Army Training and Doctrine Command, and units in South Korea, among many others.

Army Has Been Challenged in Providing Advisors to the Augmented BCTs within Specified Time Frames

While the Army has been able to fill most requirements for augmented BCT advisor personnel, it has not always been able to provide advisors to the units within specified time frames. Army officials have told us that Army execution orders for augmented BCTs require that advisors join the augmented BCTs at least 45 days prior to the units' mission rehearsal exercise. Army and augmented BCT officials have told us that early advisor arrival is critical to integrating the advisors into the unit, building advisor teams, and establishing key support and command and control relationships between the advisor teams and the BCT. Similarly, according to Army guidance, building the advisor teams as early as possible facilitates cohesion and trust. Given the shift in how the advising mission is being handled—from stand-alone transition teams operating independently to advisors who are integrated with and reliant on a BCT—

these exercises help the augmented BCTs become comfortable with their structure and facilitate their missions once they are in theater.

However, Army Human Resources Command has had difficulty providing the field grade officer advisors to the units being augmented in accordance with the 45-day time line because they were challenged by shortages of deployable field grade officers and changes in unit theater arrival and mission rehearsal exercise dates for operational reasons, which may shorten the time that Army Human Resources Command has to identify personnel who meet the requirements. Many of the augmented BCTs we met with did not receive the total number of advisor personnel that they would deploy with until after the mission rehearsal exercise. For example, one augmented BCT that we visited in Afghanistan told us that, prior to its exercise, it had received only six of its 24 non-commissioned officer advisors and none of its 24 field grade officer advisors, while another augmented BCT we visited in Afghanistan had received only one of its 22 field grade officer advisors that it ultimately deployed with prior to the exercise. In both instances, the units were limited in their ability to organize for and exercise the advising mission because they lacked the field grade officers necessary to lead the advisor teams. While recent Iraq-bound units have not received all of their advisors by the specified report date, the deployed augmented BCTs that we visited in Iraq had received most of their advisors—40 of 43 in one instance and 42 of 46 in the other—prior to their mission rehearsal exercises.

Some officials suggested that, given the challenge of providing all the advisors to the augmented BCTs within specified time frames, it would be helpful if at least two or three of the highest-ranking advisors arrived significantly earlier than currently required to help integrate the advisors into the BCT's mission and structure. For example, officials from some augmented BCTs as well as the 162nd Infantry Training Brigade suggested that the ideal would be for the highest-ranking advisors to arrive at the unit by the time that key brigade leadership planning events begin, such as the brigade's Leader Training Program.⁹ These events typically occur as early as 90 days prior to the final mission rehearsal exercise. That would enable those leaders to represent the advising

⁹The Leader Training Program focuses on battle command and the staff planning, coordinating, integrating, synchronizing and execution of combat power. The program's goal is to refine the warfighting skills of brigade and battalion task force commanders and their battle staffs.

mission during brigade mission planning and to help mitigate some of the challenges related to integrating advisors, particularly late-arriving advisors, into the brigade. We met with an augmented BCT that received one of its highest-ranking advisors well before the 45-day window and in time for the brigade's major leadership events. As a result, this advisor was able to integrate into the brigade's leadership and provide inputs on the advising mission into the brigade's mission planning. The advisor was also able to set up a structure for the other advisor personnel to integrate into when they arrived, develop the advisor teams, and facilitate the provision of equipment to advisors.

The Number and Size of Advisor Teams May Impact the Number and Rank of Advisors Needed for the Advising Mission

Theater requests for the augmented BCTs assumed that (1) each BCT's 48 advisors would form the base of 24 advising teams, and (2) all of the field grade officer advisors would be team leaders or deputy team leaders. However, as discussed above, augmented BCTs are sometimes operating with a smaller number of advisor teams that are comprised of a larger number of advisors. This could affect the necessary numbers and rank structure of advisor personnel since, with a smaller number of advisor teams being formed, the augmented BCTs may not need to be sourced with as many advisors. Further, since not as many advisors are serving as team chiefs or deputy team chiefs, BCTs may not need such large numbers of field grade officers. Army and augmented BCT officials have told us that rank is an important factor for advisors in establishing credibility with the Afghan and Iraqi officers that they are advising. However, with larger advising teams, the higher rank structure may be of less importance as all advisors may not have the leadership roles within the advisor teams that were envisioned when the rank structure requirements were initially established. Further, several augmented BCT officials told us that capable company grade officers, particularly when they are introduced by and lent the weight of the brigade and battalion leadership, can establish the necessary credibility with host nation leaders. Moreover, the augmented BCTs in Afghanistan are executing the advising mission with half as many field grade officers as augmented BCTs in Iraq—the request for augmented BCTs in Iraq required 48 field grade officers, versus 24 field grade officers in the request for augmented BCTs in Afghanistan.¹⁰ Given the identified field grade officer shortages

¹⁰For augmented BCTs in Afghanistan, the requests called for 48 advisors—24 field grade officers and 24 senior non-commissioned officers.

that the Army is facing, re-assessing current requirements for field grade officer advisors is important to ensure that the Army is not being strained unnecessarily.

Conclusions

Developing capable Iraqi and Afghan security forces is a key component of the U.S. military effort in Iraq and Afghanistan. Shifting from the use of individual transition teams comprised of advisors that operated somewhat independently to augmenting BCTs with advisor personnel that are an integral part of the BCT is a significant change in the way Army units perform the advising mission. As the Army continues to deploy augmented BCTs and theater commanders gain operational experience with these types of units, some challenges are emerging that suggest further refinements are needed to achieve greater unity of command and other benefits envisioned by the Army in moving to the augmented BCT concept. By reassessing needs and clarifying key requirements such as the appropriate number, rank, and capabilities of advisor personnel; the level of resources and support that the BCT should provide; and how the BCT should prioritize and balance demands associated with the advising mission with the demands of other BCT missions, the Army and theater commanders will enhance the ability of the BCTs to more effectively command and support the advisors. In addition, assessing and validating the appropriate composition of the advisor augment will ensure that the Army is providing the right mix of personnel needed for the advising mission. Lastly, integrating advisor personnel into the BCT is an important element of the augmented BCT concept and requires advisor and other BCT personnel to train together. Arranging for key leaders from the advisor augment to arrive in sufficient time to participate in leadership planning events would facilitate integration of the advisors and enable the units to maximize the benefits of the time spent in training.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To enhance the ability of the augmented BCTs to support the advising mission and to facilitate the integration of advisor personnel into pre-deployment training, GAO is making the following three recommendations.

We recommend that the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with Secretary of the Army and U.S. Central Command, direct that theater commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan:

- Assess their needs for how advisor teams should be structured and supported and, based on this assessment, ensure that any future

requests for augmented BCTs clearly define related requirements, including the number of advisors, ranks of advisors, capabilities of advisors, and equipment for advisors.

- Clearly define, in guidance to divisions and augmented BCTs, the relative priority of the advising mission; the minimum level of transportation and security support to be provided to the advisors; and command and control relationships for augmented BCTs and their advisors, including the level of command that has tasking authority over and support responsibilities for the advisors.

We recommend that the Secretary of the Army revise existing guidance to require that the highest-ranking field grade officer advisors join the augmented BCTs in time to be present for major brigade leadership planning events, such as the Leader Training Program.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with our three recommendations. Overall, DOD stated that it believes that the information being sought in GAO's first two recommendations related to more clearly defining requirements for advisors and the advising mission is being provided through established processes. The full text of DOD's written comments is reprinted in appendix II.

DOD concurred with our recommendation that the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with Secretary of the Army and U.S. Central Command, direct that theater commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan assess their needs for how advisor teams should be structured and supported and, based on this assessment, ensure that any future requests for augmented BCTs clearly define related requirements, including the number of advisors, ranks of advisors, capabilities of advisors, and equipment for advisors. In its comments, DOD stated that combatant commanders have provided and will continue to provide detailed requests for the advising mission. DOD stated that the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army has directed that commanders provide assessment of their needs regarding advisor team structure and support. DOD, therefore, stated that it saw no need for the Secretary of Defense to direct these actions. In our report, we acknowledge that the Army currently has an effort underway to examine the advisor requirements. As theater commanders revise their requirements to reflect the Army's effort, we would expect that future requests for advising capabilities would more clearly define specific requirements, such as specialized advisor capabilities that are needed.

DOD also concurred with our recommendation that the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with Secretary of the Army and U.S. Central Command, direct that theater commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan clearly define the relative priority of the advising mission, the minimum level of transportation and security support to be provided to the advisors, and command and control relationships for augmented BCTs and their advisors. In its comments, DOD stated that, as presented, our recommendation may be too prescriptive and, in of itself, impractical to implement. Specifically, DOD stated that our recommendation suggests that the priority of the vast number of mission requirements under the commander's responsibility are static and can be determined void of any external factors. DOD stated that the recommendation's intent is captured within existing departmental practices. DOD noted that the Department's approach to determining mission priorities is based upon a thorough understanding of its strategic objectives within the area of operations. Based upon this understanding, DOD stated the commander gives his guidance through mission objectives and subsequent creation of operational plans. It noted that the commander's ability to employ these plans, and thus identify mission priorities and allocation of resources, remains situation specific and environmentally dependent. DOD further stated that, for similar reasons, the command and control relationships within the BCT are situation dependent and are tailored based upon the commander's requirements.

We agree that DOD has an approach for developing operational plans and that commanders establish mission priorities and allocate resources based on specific situations and operating environments. We also agree that command and control relationships are situation dependent and need to reflect commanders' requirements. As we state in our report, the Army has worked with theater commanders to define the key characteristics of augmented BCTs while leaving commanders the discretion to tailor the force as needed, and has provided guidance, accordingly. We do not agree, though, that our recommendation is too prescriptive or impractical to implement. Specifically, during our review, we found that in some cases, theater commanders did more clearly define some aspects of the advising mission, while in other cases they did not. In those latter cases, the lack of clarity led to some challenges, including with establishing priorities and command and control relationships. For example, as we state in our report, Iraq theater command officials made it clear that advising the Iraqi Security Forces was the primary mission of U.S. forces there, but the Afghanistan theater command has not established the relative priority for the advising mission. Likewise, we found that the theater commander's request for augmented BCTs for Iraq included

direction on the intended command and control structure of the advisors, but that the request for augmented BCTs for Afghanistan did not address this topic. Clarifying key requirements for augmented BCTs, including how the BCTs should prioritize and balance demands of the advising mission with the demands of the other BCT missions, will enhance the ability of the BCTs to more effectively command and support the advisors.

DOD concurred with our recommendation that the Secretary of the Army revise existing guidance to require that the highest-ranking field grade officer advisors join the augmented BCTs in time to be present for major brigade leadership planning events. DOD stated that the Department of the Army agrees that maximum benefit is achieved when the entire augment of advisors is available and prepared to participate in both pre-deployment planning and training events. However, due to the nature of advisor force requirements, DOD's comments noted that there will be instances where the entire augment is not available to participate. DOD stated that the Army will maximize coordination, prioritization, and integration of highest-ranking advisors to ensure participation in deployment planning and training events.

We are sending copies of this report to appropriate congressional committees, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of the Army. This report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site, <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-9619 or by e-mail at pickups@gao.gov. Contact information for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who have made major contributions to this report are listed in appendix III.



Sharon Pickup
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

To determine the extent to which the Army has developed its concept for augmenting brigade combat teams (BCT) with additional personnel to support security force assistance missions we reviewed Army guidance, such as the Army field manual for security force assistance and the Modular Brigade Augmented for Security Force Assistance Handbook. We also reviewed advisor and augmented BCT training materials from the 162nd Infantry Training Brigade. Further, we analyzed the 2009 and 2010 requests for forces for augmented BCTs that were submitted by U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) for ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to document advisor personnel requirements for augmented BCTs. We interviewed officials at the Office of the Secretary of Defense, CENTCOM, U.S. Special Operations Command, Joint Staff, Headquarters Department of the Army, U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM), U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC), and the Army Capabilities Development Integration Directorate Maneuver Center of Excellence regarding the development of the augmented BCT concept, including how the BCTs were to be augmented, how command and control structures were intended to function, and what advantages, if any, the concept afforded the Army and theater commanders. We interviewed officials at the 162nd Infantry Training Brigade, as well as advisor augments with redeployed and currently deployed augmented BCTs in Iraq and Afghanistan in order to discuss the structure and content of the advisor training program for advisor augments. We interviewed officials at the Joint Readiness Training Center, as well as officials with redeployed and currently deployed augmented BCTs, in order to discuss the mission rehearsal exercise and its functionality for the augmented BCT.

To determine the extent to which the Army has provided augmented BCTs for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and what challenges, if any, these units have faced in implementing the concept, we reviewed Army unit deployment schedules, after action reviews and lessons learned from redeployed augmented BCTs, and mission briefings from deployed augmented BCTs and division commanders, dating back to 2009. We also analyzed the above-mentioned requests for forces submitted by CENTCOM for augmented BCTs to document advisor personnel and equipment requirements for augmented BCTs and guidance provided by theater commanders on augmented BCT and advisor task organization, advisor support, advisor command and control, and augmented BCTs roles, missions, and priorities. Additionally, we reviewed key documents related to the advising mission and priorities from theater commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan. Furthermore, we conducted interviews with a range of deployed and redeployed BCTs that had served or were serving as augmented BCTs in Iraq and Afghanistan. We interviewed augmented

BCT officials and advisor personnel regarding augmented BCT task organization, advisor team formation, the integration of advisors into the brigade, the suitability of advisor personnel capabilities, the ability of the brigade to support advisor teams, the equipping requirements for advisor augments, and the guidance received by the brigade on the augmented BCTs' roles and missions. In addition, we met with theater command- and division-level officials in Iraq and Afghanistan to discuss the execution of the augmented BCT mission in their respective theaters and areas of operation, and management of and guidance provided to augmented BCTs on the advising mission. We also interviewed officials at Headquarters Department of the Army, CENTCOM, FORSCOM, and 162nd Infantry Training Brigade for their perspectives on how the augmented BCT concept is being executed in theater and any related challenges.

To determine the extent to which requirements for augmented BCTs have impacted overall Army personnel requirements, including the Army's ability to provide advisor personnel to BCTs in required time frames, we examined data provided to us by HRC regarding Army shortfalls faced in certain officer ranks currently and in coming years. We also discussed with HRC officials how this data was calculated, including the details of how they determined the fill rate for advisor requirements, overall Army field grade officer shortages, and extent to which requirements for augmented BCTs increased overall Army requirements for field grade officers. We found this data to be reliable for the purpose of determining the impact of advisor requirements on overall Army personnel requirements. To gain an understanding of the extent to which BCTs are experiencing late arrival of advisor augment personnel, we conducted analysis of advisor fill rate and arrival time data provided by HRC, FORSCOM and augmented BCTs, dating back to 2009, and comparing such data against the arrival timelines laid out in the requests for forces for each theater. We also met with officials from Headquarters Department of the Army, HRC, FORSCOM, Joint Forces Command, Office of the Secretary of Defense Personnel and Readiness, 162nd Infantry Training Brigade, and redeployed and currently deployed augmented BCTs to discuss the impact of advisor personnel requirements on overall Army personnel requirements, the Army's ability to provide authorized numbers of augment personnel within the specified arrival time frames, and any challenges faced as a result of the late arrival of advisor augments to the BCTs to which they have been assigned.

Table 1 below identifies the organizations, offices, commands, and units that we contacted during our review, including the units and commands we met with in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Table 1: Command Organizations and Offices Contacted During Our Review

Command organization or office	Location
Office of the Secretary of Defense	
Office of Personnel and Readiness	Arlington, Virginia
Office of Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict	Arlington, Virginia
Office of Policy—Force Development	Arlington, Virginia
Unified Commands	
United States Joint Forces Command	Norfolk, Virginia
United States Central Command	MacDill Air Force Base, Florida
United States Special Operations Command	MacDill Air Force Base, Florida
Joint Staff	
	Arlington, Virginia
United States Army	
Department of the Army Headquarters	Arlington, Virginia
United States Army Forces Command	Fort McPherson, Georgia
United States Army Central Command	Fort McPherson, Georgia
Army Maneuver Center of Excellence	Fort Benning, Georgia
United States Army Human Resources Command	Fort Knox, Kentucky
United States Army Combined Arms Center	Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
Center for Army Lessons Learned	Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
162nd Infantry Training Brigade	Fort Polk, Louisiana
Redeployed Augmented BCTs^a	
4th Brigade, 1st Armored Division	Fort Bliss, Texas
2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division	Fort Stewart, Georgia
1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division	Fort Bragg, North Carolina
4th Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division	Fort Bragg, North Carolina
Commands and Units Deployed in Iraq	
Commands	BCTs
United States Forces - Iraq	2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division

Command organization or office	Location
25th Infantry Division, United States Division – Central	4th Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division
4th Infantry Division, United States Division – North	
Commands and Units Deployed in Afghanistan	
Commands	BCTs
United States Forces - Afghanistan	3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division
101st Airborne Division, Regional Command – East	1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division
10th Mountain Division, Regional Command – South	4th Brigade, 10th Mountain Division
International Security Assistance Force Joint Command	2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment
	2nd Brigade, 34th Infantry Division
Other Joint Organizations	
Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance	Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
Joint Readiness Training Center	Fort Polk, Louisiana

Source: GAO.

^aWe also met with officials formerly with the 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division and 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division at their new assignments to discuss their operational experiences as part of an augmented BCT.

To perform its review, we reviewed an illustrative, non-generalizable sample of redeployed and deployed augmented BCTs. We met with three of the four augmented BCTs that had returned from Iraq and the only augmented BCT that had returned from deployment in Afghanistan at the time that we selected our sites for visits. We also met with deployed augmented BCTs in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as theater commands and deployed division commands. We selected deployed BCTs for visits based on where they were in their deployments (we aimed for BCTs that were at the midpoints of their deployments so that they had been in theater long enough to be familiar with their missions, but not yet at the point where they were preparing to redeploy). We worked with theater commands in Iraq and Afghanistan to arrange visits or meetings with deployed BCTs that fit our criteria, making adjustments as needed because of security, transportation, or weather issues. Ultimately, we met with personnel from two augmented BCTs and two divisions in Iraq and personnel from five augmented BCTs and two divisions in Afghanistan.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2010 through August 2011 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense

DOD's comments were provided July 27, 2011.



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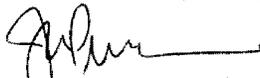
Ms. Sharon L. Pickup
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.,
Washington, DC 20548

Ms. Pickup,

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO draft report, GAO-11-760, "IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN: Actions Needed to Enhance the Ability of Brigades to Support the Advising Mission," dated June 23, 2011 (GAO Code 351514).

The Department's position is that the information sought through the first two of the three recommendations being made by GAO is being provided through established processes. For the third recommendation, the Department agrees that, in lieu of the entire augment, the highest-ranking advisors should join the Augmented Brigade Combat Teams prior to any major leadership planning event. The complete Department of Defense response to the recommendations accompanies this letter. Additionally, the Office of Security Review has completed its review of the draft report. No classified or sensitive defense-related information that could result in harm to national security was found and there is no Department of Defense objection to the report's public release.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on this draft report. Please direct any questions or comments you may have to CAPTAIN George Parisi, at (703) 693-6263 and george.parisi@osd.mil.


Jeffrey Lemmons, RADM, USN
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Readiness)

Enclosure:
As Stated

GAO DRAFT REPORT – DATED JUNE 23, 2011

GAO-11-760 (GAO CODE 351514)

**"IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN: ACTIONS NEEDED TO ENHANCE THE ABILITY OF BRIGADES TO SUPPORT
THE ADVISING MISSION"**

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of the Army and U.S. Central Command, direct that theater commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan assess their needs for how advisor teams should be structured and supported and, based upon this assessment, ensure that any future requests for augmented brigade combat teams (BCTs) clearly define related requirements, including the number of advisors, ranks of advisors, capabilities of advisors, and equipment for advisors.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur with comment. Combatant Commanders have and will continue to provide detailed requests for the advising mission. Furthermore, the Vice Chief of the Army has directed that Commanders provide assessment of their needs regarding advisor team structure and support. Therefore, there is no need for the Secretary of Defense to direct these actions.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of the Army and U.S. Central Command, direct that theater commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan clearly define, in guidance to divisions and augmented BCTs, the relative priority of the advising mission; the minimum level of transportation and security support to be provided to the advisors; and command and control relationships for augmented BCTs and their advisors, including the level of command that has tasking authority over and support responsibilities for the advisors.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur with comment. As presented, this recommendation maybe too prescriptive and, in of itself, impractical to implement. It suggests that the priority of the vast number of mission requirements under the commander's responsibility are static and can be determined void of any external factors. However, the recommendation's intent is captured within existing departmental practices. The Department's approach to determining mission priorities is based upon a thorough understanding of our strategic objectives within the area of operations. Based upon this understanding, the Commander gives his guidance through mission objectives and subsequent creation of operational plans. The Commander's ability to employ these plans, and thus identifying mission priorities and allocation of resources, remains situation specific and environmentally dependent. For similar reasons, the Command and Control relationships within the BCT are situation dependent and are tailored based upon the Commander's requirements.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of the Army revise existing guidance to require that the highest-ranking field grade officer advisors join the augmented BCTs in time to be present for major brigade leadership planning events, such as the Leader Training Program.

Enclosure

Appendix II: Comments from the Department
of Defense

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The Department of the Army agrees that maximum benefit is achieved when the entire augment of advisors is available and prepared to participate in both pre-deployment planning and training events. However, due to the nature of advisor force requirements, there will be instances where the entire augment is not available to participate. The Army will maximize coordination, prioritization, and integration of highest ranking advisors to ensure participation in deployment planning and training events.

Enclosure

Appendix III: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Sharon L. Pickup, (202) 512-9619 or pickups@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, key contributors to this report were James Reynolds (Assistant Director), Grace Coleman, Kasea Hamar, Jonathan Mulcare, and Maria Storts.

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