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BUILDING PARTNER CAPACITY

Key Practices to Effectively Manage Department of Defense Efforts to Promote Security Cooperation

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G A O

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Highlights of [GAO-13-335T](#), a testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD has increasingly focused on security cooperation activities designed to build the defense capacity of foreign partners and allies, furthering the U.S. objective of securing international peace and cooperation. Both the *2011 National Military Strategy of the United States of America* and the *2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism* identify building partner capacity as a worldwide priority. As DOD continues to emphasize building partner capacity, the need for efficient and effective coordination with foreign partners and within the U.S. government has become more important, in part due to fiscal challenges, which can be exacerbated by overlapping or ineffective efforts.

This testimony highlights opportunities to strengthen DOD's management of its building partner capacity efforts by focusing on three key practices: (1) setting clear goals and defining terminology, (2) coordinating activities and sharing information, and (3) sustaining efforts and evaluating progress. It is based on GAO's body of work on building partner capacity from April 2010 through November 2012.

What GAO Recommends

GAO has made numerous recommendations to align goals with broader strategies and to clarify terminology; develop mechanisms to better coordinate activities and share information; and develop and implement plans and metrics to sustain and evaluate progress. DOD has generally concurred with GAO's recommendations and has taken some actions, but work remains to fully implement GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-13-335T](#). For more information, contact Janet A. St. Laurent at (202) 512-4300 or stlaurentj@gao.gov.

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BUILDING PARTNER CAPACITY

Key Practices to Effectively Manage Department of Defense Efforts to Promote Security Cooperation

What GAO Found

GAO's recent work has identified key practices that would enhance the Department of Defense's (DOD) management of building partner capacity efforts. Such efforts include a range of security cooperation activities such as military exercises with partner nations and counternarcotics activities. In GAO's reviews of these activities, GAO found that DOD has demonstrated some of these key practices, but opportunities for improvement remain.

- *Setting clear goals and defining terminology.* Setting clear goals and defining terminology can help stakeholders understand what partnership capacity programs seek to accomplish and how they fit in with broad national security interests. GAO has reported that DOD activities to build the capacity of foreign military forces through the Global Train and Equip program have generally been in alignment with U.S. counterterrorism priorities while also addressing partner countries' security interests. However, in a 2012 review of security force assistance, GAO found that the lack of a common understanding of this term within DOD resulted in different interpretations of what types of activities are included and presented challenges in planning activities and forecasting needs for force capabilities. GAO recommended DOD take steps to clarify its intent and then determine what additional actions are required to plan for and conduct security force assistance.
- *Coordinating activities and sharing information.* Coordination mechanisms that facilitate communication within DOD and across agencies are needed to achieve integrated approaches to building partner capacity efforts. In 2012, GAO found that stakeholders had difficulties in obtaining status information on security assistance acquisitions and deliveries because information systems are difficult to access and contain limited information. The department is developing a new information system to address this gap but it will not be fully implemented until 2020. Further, GAO's review of the National Guard State Partnership Program in 2012 found that data systems used by the combatant commands and the National Guard Bureau were not interoperable and users applied varying methods and definitions to track the program's activities and funding. As a result, the data on types and frequency of activities were incomplete and inconsistent. GAO recommended that DOD develop guidance including agreed-upon definitions for data fields.
- *Sustaining efforts and evaluating progress.* Developing plans to sustain projects and establishing mechanisms to evaluate them can help ensure that programs have long-term impact. In 2010, GAO reported that the long-term impact of some projects to train and equip foreign militaries could be limited because U.S. agencies have not fully addressed their sustainment. Specifically, only 26 percent of the 135 proposals for fiscal years 2007-2009 projects explicitly addressed the recipient country's ability or willingness to bear sustainment costs. In a review on counternarcotics efforts in 2012, GAO found that DOD is working to improve its counternarcotics performance measurement system, but the department has been unable to attest to the reliability of the performance data for several countries from 2007 through 2011. GAO recommended that DOD submit its performance summary report with the reliability attestation to the National Drug Control Policy office.

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to be here today to discuss the Department of Defense's (DOD) efforts at building partner capacity and share with you a few key practices that can lead to effective management of these efforts. DOD has become increasingly focused on a broad range of security cooperation activities designed to build the defense capacity of foreign partners and allies and further the U.S. objective of securing international peace and cooperation. These activities include training, equipping, advising, and assisting host countries' security forces in becoming more proficient at providing security to their populations and protecting their resources and territories. The 2011 *National Military Strategy of the United States of America*¹ and the 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*² identify building partner capacity as a worldwide priority. These documents stress that the global security environment presents an increasingly complex set of challenges and opportunities to which all elements of the United States' national power must be applied. They also emphasize the need to strengthen and expand the United States' network of international partnerships to enhance security and, according to the *National Military Strategy*, the joint force, combatant commands, and service chiefs shall partner with other U.S. government agencies to pursue theater security cooperation. Further, the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review* report cites building the security capacity of partner nations as a key mission area and emphasizes security force assistance as an increasingly critical element of this mission. It also identifies several initiatives to enhance its ability to build partner nation security capacity, such as strengthening and institutionalizing the capabilities of general purpose forces to conduct security force assistance, enhancing linguistic, regional and cultural abilities, and strengthening the department's capacities for ministerial-level training.

As DOD continues to emphasize building partner capacity, the need for efficient and effective coordination with foreign partners and within the U.S. government has become more important, in part due to fiscal challenges, which can be exacerbated by overlapping or ineffective efforts. Strategic

¹Department of Defense, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America: Redefining America's Military Leadership*, Feb. 8, 2011.

²The White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, June 28, 2011.

guidance issued by the Secretary of Defense in January 2012 emphasized that building partner capacity elsewhere in the world is important for sharing the costs and the responsibilities of global leadership and that the department would develop innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches to achieving the United States' security objectives.³

Since 2010, we have issued numerous reports and testimonies and made recommendations to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of DOD's management of its building partner capacity efforts. My testimony today is based on our prior work and will discuss three key practices that we believe could provide opportunities for DOD to more effectively manage its building partner capacity efforts. The key practices are: (1) setting clear goals and defining terminology, (2) coordinating activities and sharing information, and (3) sustaining efforts and evaluating progress. The examples I will draw on today are based on our past work and include partner capacity building efforts that are primarily funded by DOD. Detailed information on our scope and methodology can be found in the reports and testimonies we cite throughout this statement. For the purposes of this testimony, we also updated information on the status of our recommendations. We conducted the work supporting our prior reports, which were issued from April 2010 through November 2012, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audits 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.

Background

DOD's efforts to build partner capacity include a broad range of security cooperation activities designed to build the defense capacity of foreign partners and allies. These security cooperation activities include military-to-military training, military exercises in cooperation with partner nations, knowledge sharing from subject matter experts, visits between senior military leaders, providing military equipment and supplies, and counternarcotics activities. Table 1 below describes selected partner capacity activities that DOD implements. The table illustrates the broad

³Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, Jan. 5, 2012.

range of activities DOD engages in to build partner capacity and is not a comprehensive list.

Table 1: Descriptions of Select DOD Activities that May Be Used to Build Partner Capacity

Program	Description
Counterdrug Programs	DOD counterdrug programs may provide support to foreign security forces to stop the flow of illegal drugs. It provides support for counterdrug activities of federal, state, local, and foreign government law enforcement agencies. DOD requested approximately \$1 billion for its counterdrug programs in its fiscal year 2013 budget request.
National Guard State Partnership Program	A DOD security cooperation program that pairs state National Guards with foreign countries to promote national objectives, stability, partner capacity, and a better understanding and trust between the United States and foreign countries. As of May 2012, there were 63 active partnerships. This program began in 1993. For fiscal year 2013, the department requested \$10 million for the program. ^a
Peacetime Humanitarian Assistance Programs	DOD's two key programs are the Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid-funded humanitarian assistance program and the Humanitarian and Civic Assistance program. Activities, which are typically performed outside of war or disaster environments, include renovating schools and hospitals, drilling wells, providing basic health care, and providing training to prepare for natural disasters. DOD requested approximately \$109 million for the Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid program in its fiscal year 2013 budget request.
Global Train and Equip Program (also known as Section 1206 Program)	Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 created this program, which is used to build the capacity of foreign military forces through provision of training, equipment, and small-scale military construction activities. It is to be used to build foreign military capacity to conduct counterterrorist operations or participate in, or support, military and stabilization operations in which U.S. forces are participating. Section 1206, as amended, authorizes the Secretary of Defense to use up to \$350 million each year, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, through fiscal year 2014. DOD requested \$365 million for the Section 1206 program in its fiscal year 2013 budget request.
Global Security Contingency Fund	Section 1207 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012, enacted in December 2011, established the Global Security Contingency Fund. This fund provides resources for emergent challenges such as training and other support to enhance the capabilities of foreign military and security forces to conduct security and counterterrorism operations and participate in or support military, stability, or peace support operations consistent with United States foreign policy and national security interests. It also provides resources to assist with rule of law programs and stabilization efforts in certain cases. The fund is jointly administered and funded by the State Department and DOD, with the State Department in the lead. The legislation also included transitional authorities for DOD-led assistance to Africa and Yemen. The fiscal year 2012 consolidated appropriations act does not appropriate new monies to the fund, but permits DOD and the State Department to transfer up to \$250 million to the fund from other accounts.

Source: GAO analysis of prior GAO reports, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006, and the National Defense Authorization Acts for Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013.

Note: There are several other authorities that have to do with Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan that are not included in the table.

^aSection 1204 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013, Pub. L. No. 112-239 (Jan. 2, 2013), states that no activities under the State Partnership Program may be carried out after February 28, 2013, until (1) the Secretary of Defense submits to the appropriate congressional committees the final regulations required by subsection (a) of section 1210 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Pub. L. No. 111-84) regarding the use of DOD funds to pay costs incurred by the National Guard in conducting activities under the State Partnership Program and (2) the Secretary of Defense certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that appropriate modifications have been made, and appropriate controls have been instituted, to ensure the compliance of the program with the Antideficiency Act in the future. As of February 5, 2013, the Secretary had not submitted such regulations or made such certification. However, a DOD official told us that the department's response to Section 1204 is under review, and the department expects to meet the deadline.

To perform its military missions around the world, DOD operates six unified military geographic combatant commands, which are responsible for a variety of functions including planning for and conducting missions that range from humanitarian assistance to combat operations.⁴ As part of their planning responsibilities, geographic combatant commands develop theater campaign plans, which are multiyear plans that reflect the command's strategy to achieve certain end states within their areas of responsibility. These plans are the primary vehicle for designing, organizing, integrating, and executing security cooperation activities. A hierarchy of national and strategic guidance—including the *National Security Strategy*, the *National Defense Strategy*, the *National Military Strategy*, and the *Guidance for Employment of the Force*—informs the development of the combatant commands' theater campaign plans.

In addition to theater campaign planning, DOD uses different implementation processes to formulate and decide whether to approve specific building partner capacity activities and projects. For example, for Section 1206 program projects, each geographic combatant command reviews proposals from the U.S. embassy in its area of responsibility and endorses for final submission those proposed projects that address its highest priorities. The U.S. Special Operations Command also reviews all Section 1206 project proposals to ensure that each aligns with U.S. military strategy and ranks each proposal across the geographic combatant commands in accordance with counterterrorism priorities.⁵ As a different example, for the National Guard State Partnership Program, any nation requesting a state partnership sends its official request to its respective U.S. ambassador. Once the partnership is endorsed, the request is forwarded to the appropriate combatant command. If the command finds that the partnership meets strategic objectives and priorities, the command sends the request to the National Guard Bureau. If the Chief of the National Guard Bureau accepts the request, he or she

⁴The six geographic combatant commands are: U.S. European Command, U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Southern Command, and U.S. Central Command.

⁵The U.S. Special Operations Command is responsible for preparing special operations forces to carry out assigned missions and to plan and conduct special operations. Its mission is (1) to provide fully capable special operations forces to defend the United States and its interests and (2) to synchronize global operations against terrorist networks, including receiving, reviewing, coordinating, and prioritizing all DOD plans that support the global campaign against terror.

notifies the combatant command and solicits proposals from the adjutants general of the state Guards. These proposals go through three levels of review within DOD, and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau forwards a recommended nominee to the combatant command and the partner country's U.S. embassy for final approval.

I would like to now discuss the key practices we have identified that can aid DOD in more effectively managing its building partner capacity activities.

Setting Clear Goals and Defining Terminology

Setting clear goals and defining terminology can help stakeholders understand what partnership capacity programs seek to accomplish and how they fit in with broad national security interests. In our reviews, we found that DOD's efforts to align goals with broader strategies and clarify terminology have varied. More specifically, in some reviews, we found that programs have aligned with broader strategies but DOD officials have experienced challenges in agreeing upon key terms.

A positive example of strategic alignment involves our work on the Section 1206 program.⁶ In 2010, we reported that the Section 1206 activities have generally been in alignment with U.S. counterterrorism priorities while also addressing the partner countries' security interests.⁷ For example, in 2010, we found that DOD and the State Department (State) have used Section 1206 funds in Kazakhstan to address its priority of enhancing the country's counterterrorism capacity in the Caspian Sea, according to a U.S. embassy official. Additionally, in Pakistan, U.S. officials used Section 1206 funds to increase special operations capacity to support counterterrorism operations on its western border. Overall, from fiscal year 2006 to 2009, DOD and State allotted \$932 million, or 95 percent, of all Section 1206 funding for counterterrorism-related equipment and training for partner countries and

⁶The Section 1206 program authorizes DOD to build the capacity of a foreign country's military forces in order for that country to conduct counterterrorism operations or to support or participate in military and stability operations in which the United States Armed Forces are participating. The section also authorizes DOD to build the capacity of a foreign country's maritime security forces to conduct counterterrorism operations.

⁷GAO, *International Security: DOD and State Need to Improve Sustainment Planning and Monitoring and Evaluation for Section 1206 and 1207 Assistance Programs*, [GAO-10-431](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 15, 2010).

the remaining \$47 million, or 5 percent, to build the capacity of five partner nations to participate in stability operations with the United States, such as providing spare parts for a country's ground vehicles. We also found that most Section 1206 counterterrorism resources had been directed to countries that the U.S. intelligence community has identified as priority countries for the counterterrorism effort.⁸

In another case we found that DOD is taking steps to address challenges faced by department officials in identifying and defining partner country assistance requirements. In a November 2012 report on the Defense Security Cooperation Agency's oversight of security cooperation and assistance programs, we found that since 2009, DOD has initiated reforms to improve the process of developing assistance requests that are intended to reduce implementation delays and improve the effectiveness of assistance to partner countries.⁹ First, DOD developed new training courses and provided in-country advisors to help country officials identify short- and long-term requirements and strategies to meet those requirements. Second, DOD is reforming its own processes for defining requirements to improve long-term effectiveness of security cooperation programs and provide short-term solutions for meeting requirements using assistance requests. Third, DOD created a strategic planning support group to assist combatant commands with early identification and resolution of issues related to capability requirements and certain types of assistance requests. Fourth, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency established expeditionary teams whose purpose is to help the combatant commands, partner countries, and security cooperation officers identify and refine a partner country's requirements.

In contrast, we recommended in 2010 that DOD re-evaluate the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa located in Djibouti to ensure it is appropriately aligned to support U.S. Africa Command's mission of sustained security engagement.¹⁰ While U.S. Africa Command stated that

⁸The list of priority countries is classified, which limits the precision of the analytical information we can report.

⁹GAO, *Security Assistance: DOD's Ongoing Reforms Address Some Challenges, but Additional Information Is Needed to Further Enhance Program Management*, [GAO-13-84](#) (Washington, D.C.: November 16, 2012).

¹⁰GAO, *Defense Management: DOD Needs to Determine the Future of Its Horn of Africa Task Force*, [GAO-10-504](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 15, 2010).

the Task Force's original mission of countering violent extremism and its location at Camp Lemonnier remain important, particularly given terrorist threats in the region, we found some activities that may not be aligned with the command's mission. For example, at a training exercise for incoming Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa officials, discussion was raised concerning Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa's discovery of a dilapidated school in Kenya with a placard stating "donated by Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa"; current staff had been unaware of the school's existence. While the activity may have promoted temporary benefits for the participants at the time it was built, its dilapidated state could have potentially promoted unfavorable views of the U.S. military within the partner nation and heightened concerns about how such activities fit into a framework of sustained security engagement. In another example, other embassy officials stated that the experiences of African navy and coast guard participants of Task Force maritime training sessions were dampened because participants had anticipated a permanent training program; instead, they received sporadic and short-term training, which may not promote U.S. Africa Command's mission of sustained or long-term security engagement. As a result, we recommended that U.S. Africa Command complete its evaluation of Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa to determine whether the Task Force should be retained, and if so, whether changes are needed to its mission, structure, and resources to best support the command's mission. In a 2012 follow up on our recommendation, U.S. Africa Command stated that it had issued a plan to alter the Task Force's mission in accordance with the command's assessment of the current security environment. However, DOD has not identified how the Task Force is changing its structure and resources to support the new mission.

Another review in 2012 found that DOD's lack of clarity surrounding the term "security force assistance" has created challenges for the combatant commands and military services in their efforts to plan for security force assistance as a distinct activity and enhance force capabilities.¹¹ DOD intends to focus more on security force assistance activities and has directed the combatant commands to incorporate them into their long range plans and forecast requirements. In its instruction, DOD defined security force assistance as "DOD activities that contribute to unified

¹¹GAO, *Security Force Assistance: Additional Actions Needed to Guide Geographic Combatant Command and Service Efforts*, [GAO-12-556](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 10, 2012).

action by the U.S. government to support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions.”¹² Seeking to clarify this definition, DOD has further stated that security force assistance encompasses all DOD activities conducted under various programs to “organize, train, equip, rebuild/build and advise foreign security forces and their supporting institutions from the tactical to ministerial levels.”¹³ Notwithstanding DOD’s efforts to clarify its terminology, we found that the commands continue to lack a common understanding of the term and therefore some were unclear as to what additional actions were needed to meet DOD’s intent. Officials we interviewed generally viewed security force assistance as a recharacterization of some of their existing security cooperation activities but had different interpretations of what types of activities should be considered as security force assistance. For example, within one command, officials considered nearly every activity with partner nations to be security force assistance. Another command considered only individual efforts to train partner nations as security force assistance and excluded other activities. Also, some command officials were not clear as to the intent of DOD’s increased focus on security force assistance and whether any related adjustments should be made in their plans and scope or level of activities. As a result, they do not currently distinguish security force assistance from other security cooperation activities in their plans. The services are taking steps and investing resources to organize and train general purpose forces capable of conducting security force assistance based on current requirements. Without greater clarity in regard to future needs, the services are uncertain whether their current efforts are sufficient or whether additional capabilities will be required. Therefore, we recommended that DOD take steps to clarify its intent, including the level of effort that combatant commands should devote to security force assistance, and what additional actions are required by the commands to plan for and conduct security force assistance beyond their existing security cooperation efforts. These steps would also help inform the services’ efforts to ensure that the capabilities that they are developing and thus the resources that they are investing are appropriate and adequate to meet future requirements. DOD generally agreed with our recommendations.

¹²Department of Defense Instruction 5000.68, *Security Force Assistance* (Oct. 27, 2010).

¹³Department of Defense, *Security Force Assistance Lexicon Framework* (Nov. 1, 2011).

In another instance, we found that DOD, State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development used different terminology to describe similar efforts during our review of DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts.¹⁴ For example, according to DOD officials, DOD uses the term "humanitarian assistance" to describe its strategically planned assistance. In contrast, the U.S. Agency for International Development and State refer to immediate, life-saving relief as "humanitarian assistance" but other capacity-building efforts as "development assistance." DOD officials explained that the terminology they use is derived from their legislative authority to perform humanitarian assistance, and DOD and U.S. Agency for International Development officials said that DOD uses "humanitarian assistance" rather than "development assistance" to ensure that the department is not perceived as performing development efforts that are outside of its legislatively-prescribed areas of responsibility. Further, DOD officials who are engaged in implementing some of DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts told us that differences in terminology can create challenges among agencies in understanding the scope and nature of each others' efforts. State officials said that differing terminology creates challenges to setting goals or objectives when planning with other agencies. As a result, we recommended and they agreed that DOD, State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development collaborate to develop guidance that provides a common understanding of the terminology used for their humanitarian and development assistance efforts. In a 2013 follow-up on our recommendation, DOD officials stated that they have continued to regularly engage officials at State and the U.S. Agency for International Development through working groups and briefings to minimize confusion over terminology, but did not identify any actions taken to develop guidance on the differences in the agencies' terminology.

Coordinating Activities and Sharing Information

National strategies have emphasized the importance of building partner capacity using an interagency and whole of government approach, but mechanisms for coordinating activities and sharing information within DOD and across agencies have not been consistently implemented. Our work shows that DOD has taken steps to work with other agencies on activities, such as embedding representatives from their agencies at its

¹⁴GAO, *Humanitarian and Development Assistance: Project Evaluations and Better Information Sharing Needed to Manage the Military's Efforts*, [GAO-12-359](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 8, 2012).

combatant commands, but challenges remain. Agencies have different organizational structures, planning processes, and funding sources to plan for and conduct their building partner capacity efforts, which can hinder interagency collaboration. Given these organizational differences, coordination mechanisms that can facilitate interagency collaboration are needed to achieve integrated approaches to building partner capacity efforts.

Our work has found that DOD has led or participated in coordinating activities and taken steps to share and integrate information for building partner capacity activities through some of the programs at its geographic combatant commands. For instance, U.S. Southern Command is a geographic combatant command that operates in the Americas and the Caribbean, areas primarily affected by challenges such as corruption, crime, transnational terrorism, natural disasters, and poverty that impact the security and stability of the region. In recent years, in an effort to better support security and stability in the region, U.S. Southern Command has sought to become a more interagency-oriented command, recognizing that many of the challenges it faces cross role and mission lines of various U.S. government agencies. In 2010, our review of U.S. Southern Command found that the command coordinated with interagency partners to develop mutually reinforcing strategies, including its 2009 Theater Campaign Plan and its 2020 Command Strategy.¹⁵ U.S. Southern Command coordinated the development of its 2009 Theater Campaign Plan, which lays out the command's theater priorities and guides its resource allocations, with over 10 U.S. government departments, agencies, and offices. In addition, for U.S. Southern Command's 2020 Command Strategy, which was in development in 2010, the command conducted a 3-day conference to gather perspectives from interagency partners on the command's assessment of challenges in the region and the command's strategic objectives.

However, challenges with coordinating and information sharing with other agencies remain. In 2012, we reported that DOD, State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development recognize the need to improve information sharing for humanitarian assistance efforts and they have

¹⁵GAO, *Defense Management: U.S. Southern Command Demonstrates Interagency Collaboration, but Its Haiti Disaster Response Revealed Challenges Conducting a Large Military Operation*, [GAO-10-801](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 28, 2010).

begun to take steps to address the challenge.¹⁶ DOD's humanitarian assistance efforts include constructing schools, digging water wells, preparing communities for natural disasters, and helping local populations obtain medical care. Despite DOD's various collaborative efforts, challenges remain, particularly in project coordination and data management for information sharing. For example, officials said that the frequent rotation of personnel can lead to continuity challenges. Many officials also stated that coordination tends to be personality driven; when staff is replaced, relationships have to be rebuilt and progress can be lost. Further, while officials from DOD, State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development said that interagency personnel at the commands have helped improve coordination with DOD, the roles of these personnel may be limited. Some State and U.S. Agency for International Development officials explained that the role of their advisors assigned to DOD's combatant commands is limited. Specifically, they are able to report on what is happening in their respective areas of responsibility but cannot make decisions or speak on behalf of their home agencies. Moreover, DOD, State, and U.S. Agency for International Development do not have full visibility over each others' assistance efforts, which could result in a fragmented approach to U.S. assistance. There are several initiatives under way to improve information sharing; however, no framework, such as a common database, currently exists for the agencies to readily access information on each others' efforts. Therefore, we recommended that the State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development, and DOD develop a framework for sharing information to be used by all agencies in their assistance efforts, and indicated that this framework could involve selecting an existing initiative, such as the Foreign Assistance Dashboard. They agreed with our recommendation, and in 2012 DOD officials stated they submitted foreign assistance data on their peacetime humanitarian assistance programs and 12 other security programs to State for inclusion into the Foreign Assistance Dashboard. Further, State officials said they expect to have DOD's foreign assistance data available on the Dashboard by the end of fiscal year 2013.

We have found that when agencies share information, managing and integrating information from multiple sources present challenges regarding data comparability. For instance, we found that the multiple

¹⁶[GAO-12-359](#).

data systems used to track National Guard State Partnership Program activities and funding are not interoperable and users apply varying methods and definitions to guide data inputs.¹⁷ In 2012, we reported that we could not provide complete information on the types and frequency of State Partnership Program activities because activity data are incomplete as well as inconsistent. According to National Guard Bureau officials, DOD's *Guidance for Employment of the Force* mandates that all security cooperation activities be tracked, including State Partnership Program activities, in management information system databases.¹⁸ However, the National Guard Bureau and the combatant commands maintain separate databases for tracking events and each entity independently tracks its activities in databases that are not interoperable. Further, the terminology used to identify activity types varied both across the combatant commands and between the combatant commands and the National Guard Bureau. As a result, we found it difficult to identify whether the data in different databases were describing the same activity or two separate activities. Therefore, we recommended and the department agreed that DOD, in coordination with the National Guard Bureau, the combatant commands, and the embassy country teams, develop guidance for all stakeholders that includes agreed-upon definitions for data fields and rules for maintaining data until the program's global data system is fully implemented. In December 2012, DOD issued an instruction requiring combatant commanders to submit annual records of State Partnership Program activities and defining specific data that must be included in these reports. While this instruction does not directly identify data field definitions, it could provide a basis for improving the department's efforts to track State Partnership Program activities and funding.

¹⁷GAO, *State Partnership Program: Improved Oversight, Guidance, and Training Needed for National Guard's Efforts with Foreign Partners*, [GAO-12-548](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 15, 2012).

¹⁸As stated in the note to Table 1, Section 1204 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 established certain requirements for DOD regarding the State Partnership Program, including the submission of regulations to Congress. As of February 5, 2013, the department had not met these requirements. However, a DOD official told us the department expected to meet them by the statutory deadline of February 28, 2013. On December 14, 2012, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy issued Department of Defense Instruction 5111.20, which stated that it, among other things, provides instructions for the use of funds appropriated to DOD to pay the costs of authorized State Partnership Program activities conducted in accordance with section 1210 of Public Law 111-84.

In 2012, we found that DOD efforts to provide timely security assistance were affected by communication and coordination issues within DOD that in some cases delayed assistance and increased costs.¹⁹ DOD's Security Cooperation Organizations in foreign countries reported persistent difficulties obtaining information from the Defense Security Cooperation Agency and the implementing agencies of the military departments—the Army, Navy, and Air Force—on the status of security assistance equipment acquisitions and deliveries because information systems are difficult for them to access and contain limited information. DOD's existing delivery tracking system provides only limited data on the status of equipment deliveries because partner country agents and DOD agencies are not entering the needed data into the system. Without advance notice of deliveries, Security Cooperation Organization staff have been unable to ensure that addresses were correct and that partner countries were ready to receive and process deliveries, resulting in delays or increased costs. For example, security cooperation officers we met with reported instances where:

- equipment was held by the partner country's customs agency because the delivery lacked proper documentation or proper address labels, and additional customs fees were incurred while the security cooperation officers found the missing information;
- shipments were warehoused in a customs office for 2 years because they had no addresses or were improperly addressed;
- the Security Cooperation Organization discovered equipment at ports and airports that had arrived without advance notice.

To improve the ability of combatant commands and Security Cooperation Organization officials to obtain information on the acquisition and delivery status of assistance agreements, we recommended that DOD establish procedures to help ensure that DOD agencies populate security assistance information systems with complete data. In response, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency stated that it would work with the military departments to ensure that information systems are populated with acquisition and delivery status data. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency is also developing a new electronic system, the Security Cooperation Enterprise Solution, to improve visibility and aggregate data from the separate computer management systems used

¹⁹GAO-13-84.

by DOD's implementing agencies, but it is not expected to be fully implemented until 2020.

Sustaining Efforts and Evaluating Progress

Developing plans to sustain DOD's building partner capacity activities and establishing mechanisms to monitor programs and evaluate results can help ensure that these programs have long-term impact. Our work has shown that some building partner capacity activities may not endure because planning for sustainment has been a systemic challenge. In a 2009 memo to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the Secretary of Defense stated that sustaining the results of capacity-building has proven difficult because the lack of multi-year planning and funding authorities at the outset of security assistance efforts makes it difficult for the U.S. government and its partners to build or maintain effective collaborative relationships.²⁰ Further, our work has also shown that DOD had not consistently defined performance measures, and reporting on progress and effectiveness of some building partner capacity activities has been limited to anecdotal information.

One example of sustainment planning challenges came from our review of the Section 1206 program. In 2010, we reported that the long-term impact of some Section 1206 projects could be limited because U.S. agencies have not fully addressed how to sustain these projects.²¹ For example, we found that most participating countries have relatively low incomes and may be unwilling or unable to provide the necessary resources to sustain projects. According to project proposal instructions applicable at the time of our report, proposals must explain how projects will be sustained in future years. However, we found that only 26 percent of the 135 proposals we reviewed for fiscal years 2007-2009 projects explicitly addressed the recipient country's ability or willingness to bear sustainment costs. Moreover, only 1 of the 15 Security Assistance Officers we interviewed indicated that he believed his partner nation had the ability to sustain its Section 1206 projects independently. For example, the Security Assistance Officer in Mali noted that sustainment of the Section 1206 project to train and equip that country's light infantry units would be problematic if the country had to find its own funding. Our

²⁰Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *DOD Review of Building the Security Capacity of Partner Nations* (June 18, 2009).

²¹[GAO-10-431](#).

2010 report also showed that DOD and State had conducted little monitoring and evaluation of the Section 1206 security assistance program. Specifically, DOD and State's reporting has generally consisted of anecdotal information and DOD officials told us that they had not consistently monitored these security assistance projects. Our review of 149 approved proposals for Section 1206 projects for fiscal years 2006 through 2009 showed that only 32 percent (48 proposals) defined measures of effectiveness or anticipated outcomes. In addition, only 25 percent (34) of 135 approved fiscal year 2007 through 2009 proposals we reviewed documented an intention to monitor results. We recommended that DOD and State develop and implement specific plans to monitor, evaluate, and report routinely on the results of such monitoring and evaluation for Section 1206 projects. DOD agreed with our recommendation and, in response, completed its first systematic assessments of Section 1206 projects implemented in 5 countries in 2012.²² As part of that effort, DOD also created the *Section 1206 Assessment Handbook* to be used for the future, annual assessment efforts. Officials we spoke to stated that these pilot assessments validated the assessment methodology, which will be used to evaluate all future potential recipients' capabilities prior to receipt of Section 1206 equipment, as well as to conduct evaluations of selected Section 1206 efforts following the implementation.

In a separate review of U.S. Africa Command in 2010, we found that it is unclear whether all of the activities that U.S. Africa Command inherited or is planning fully align with its mission of sustained security engagement in Africa because the command was generally not measuring the long-term effects of its activities.²³ For example, U.S. Africa Command officials we met with while observing a command activity in Uganda told us that the command planned to produce an "after action" report after the activity, but they acknowledged that U.S. Africa Command needs to develop a method to perform longer-term assessments of activities. Command officials also stated they did not know whether projects such as reconstructing a school would have a sustainable effect on the community and State officials added that the command's efforts to support U.S.

²²DOD considers information about the results of the assessments to be sensitive.

²³GAO, *Defense Management: Improved Planning, Training, and Interagency Collaboration Could Strengthen DOD's Efforts in Africa*, [GAO-10-794](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 28, 2010).

embassies by augmenting or broadening existing public-diplomacy efforts were not being assessed. While long-term evaluation can be difficult to achieve, particularly the ability to link an action to a desired effect, we noted it nonetheless remains important for the command to have some performance measures. Therefore, we recommended that U.S. Africa Command conduct long-term assessments of the full range of its activities to determine whether the activities are having their intended effects and supporting the Command's mission. In a 2012 follow up to our recommendation, the command stated that it has conducted nationwide polling and stakeholder interviews across several African countries to develop a baseline against which progress can be measured. For example, the command asked how participants viewed their nation's military and how they felt toward international cooperation in military training and peacekeeping in Africa. However, U.S. Africa Command still needs to take steps to develop metrics and indicators in order to conduct more thorough assessments. Until the long-term assessments of its activities are completed, U.S. Africa Command may have difficulty making successful future planning decisions and allocating resources to maximize its effect in Africa.

More recently, in 2012, we found that because the National Guard's State Partnership Program did not have agreed-upon goals or metrics, it could not assess progress.²⁴ National Guard Bureau officials acknowledged that once they update program goals and objectives, they will need to develop metrics to measure results of the program. The officials are working with experts from other organizations and have begun to develop metrics for the program. However, they indicated that due to the relationship-building nature of the program, it is difficult to establish appropriate metrics that capture the effects of the program. We recommended that the department complete and implement the program's comprehensive oversight framework by using the goals, objectives, and metrics currently being developed. In the December 2012 DOD instruction, the department directed the alignment of State Partnership Program activities with combatant commanders' theater security cooperation program objectives, as well as with the objectives of the U.S. embassies and national security objectives of the partner nations. This is a positive step; however, goals, objectives, or metrics specific to the State Partnership Program still need to be completed. Such goals, objectives, and metrics would form the

²⁴[GAO-12-548](#).

foundation for a comprehensive oversight framework and, until they are put into place, DOD cannot fully assess whether the program is an effective and efficient use of resources.

In addition, our work on counternarcotics efforts has found challenges with the reliability of performance data. For example, our 2012 review of the Andean countries²⁵ found that although DOD is working to improve its counternarcotics performance measurement system, the department's Inspector General has been unable to attest to the reliability of the performance data from 2007 through 2011, as required by the Office of National Drug Control Policy.²⁶ We previously reported that DOD had established performance measures for its counternarcotics activities, such as percentage of tasked counternarcotics missions flown, the number of partner nation law enforcement agencies engaged, and the number of military working dog teams trained.²⁷ However, during our 2012 review, we found that the DOD Inspector General cited a number of reasons for not attesting to the reliability of DOD's performance data. One example was that DOD's 2008 performance report did not include 4 consecutive years of data required for tracking improvements. Lacking these attestations from DOD, the Office of National Drug Control Policy has minimal assurance of the reliability of DOD's reporting on its estimated \$956 million in counternarcotics assistance for those years. Without reliable information, the Office of National Drug Control Policy may be limited in its ability to carry out its responsibility for coordinating and overseeing implementation of the policies, goals, objectives, and priorities established by the national drug control program and to report to Congress on counternarcotics assistance provided by agencies under its purview. As a result, we recommended that the department submit its performance summary report along with the Inspector General's attestations of the reliability of the information reported to the National

²⁵The Andean region consists of five countries: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela.

²⁶GAO, *Counternarcotics Assistance: U.S. Agencies Have Allotted Billions in Andean Countries, but DOD Should Improve Its Reporting of Results*, [GAO-12-824](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 10, 2012). See also Office of National Drug Control Policy Circular, *Drug Control Accounting* (May 1, 2007) for data reliability requirements.

²⁷GAO, *Drug Control: DOD Needs to Improve Its Performance Measurement System to Better Manage and Oversee Its Counternarcotics Activities*, [GAO-10-835](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 21, 2010).

Drug Control Policy office. DOD agreed with our recommendation but did not detail how it would address this recommendation.

In conclusion, DOD's building partner capacity efforts encompass a broad range of security cooperation activities that focus on emphasizing existing alliances and expanding cooperation with emerging partners to ensure collective capability and capacity for securing common interests, as well as sharing the costs and responsibilities of global leadership.²⁸ Given the recent emphasis on these efforts, it is vital to manage them effectively and efficiently. By setting clear goals and defining terminology, coordinating activities and sharing information, and sustaining efforts and evaluating progress, DOD can avoid confusion about the activities and help to assess their long-term impact. Effective management of current and future building partner capacity efforts will help DOD steward its resources to achieve its strategic priorities and provide Congress with the information it needs as it evaluates current programs and considers future funding levels. Moreover, effective management of these efforts will likely better position the U.S. government to respond to changing conditions and future uncertainties around the world.

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, this concludes my prepared remarks. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

For future information regarding this statement, please contact Janet A. St. Laurent at (202) 512-4300 or at stlaurentj@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs can be found on the last page of this statement. Key contributors to this statement are listed in appendix II.

²⁸*Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense.*

Appendix I: Related GAO Products

Security Assistance: DOD's Ongoing Reforms Address Some Challenges, but Additional Information Is Needed to Further Enhance Program Management. [GAO-13-84](#). Washington, D.C.: November 16, 2012.

Counternarcotics Assistance: U.S. Agencies Have Allotted Billions in Andean Countries, but DOD Should Improve Its Reporting of Results. [GAO-12-824](#). Washington, D.C.: July 10, 2012.

State Partnership Program: Improved Oversight, Guidance, and Training Needed for National Guard's Efforts with Foreign Partners. [GAO-12-548](#). Washington, D.C.: May 15, 2012.

Security Force Assistance: Additional Actions Needed to Guide Geographic Combatant Command and Service Efforts. [GAO-12-556](#). Washington, D.C.: May 10, 2012.

Humanitarian and Development Assistance: Project Evaluations and Better Information Sharing Needed to Manage the Military's Efforts. [GAO-12-359](#). Washington, D.C.: February 8, 2012.

Defense Management: U.S. Southern Command Demonstrates Interagency Collaboration, but Its Haiti Disaster Response Revealed Challenges Conducting a Large Military Operation. [GAO-10-801](#). Washington, D.C.: July 28, 2010.

Defense Management: Improved Planning, Training, and Interagency Collaboration Could Strengthen DOD's Efforts in Africa. [GAO-10-794](#). Washington, D.C.: July 28, 2010.

Drug Control: DOD Needs to Improve Its Performance Measurement System to Better Manage and Oversee Its Counternarcotics Activities. [GAO-10-835](#). Washington, D.C.: July 21, 2010.

Defense Management: DOD Needs to Determine the Future of Its Horn of Africa Task Force. [GAO-10-504](#). Washington, D.C.: April 15, 2010.

International Security: DOD and State Need to Improve Sustainment Planning and Monitoring and Evaluation for Section 1206 and 1207 Assistance Programs. [GAO-10-431](#). Washington, D.C.: April 15, 2010.

Interagency Collaboration: Key Issues for Congressional Oversight of National Security Strategies, Organizations, Workforce, and Information Sharing. [GAO-09-904SP](#). Washington, D.C.: September 25, 2009.

Appendix II: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact name above, Charles Michael Johnson Jr., Director; John Pendleton, Director; Sharon Pickup, Director; Marie Mak, Assistant Director; James Michels, Assistant Director; Jennifer Andreone, Kathryn Bolduc, Katherine Forsyth, Simon Hirschfeld, Meghan Perez, Erika Prochaska, Steven Putansu, Jodie Sandel, Michael Simon, John Van Schaik, Erik Wilkins-McKee, and Nicole Willems made key contributions to this testimony.

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