



Highlights of [GAO-04-855](#), a report to congressional committees.

Why GAO Did This Study

Terrorist incidents in the United States and abroad have underscored the Department of Defense's (DOD) need to safeguard military personnel and facilities from potential terrorist attacks involving chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons and high-yield explosive devices. In the 2003 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress directed DOD to develop a comprehensive plan to help guide departmentwide efforts in improving installation preparedness against such attacks. The act also directed GAO to assess DOD's plan. DOD submitted its report to Congress in September 2003. This review addresses two questions: (1) Does DOD's report represent a comprehensive plan that can guide installation preparedness efforts? and (2) What obstacles, if any, hinder DOD's ability to develop and effectively implement a comprehensive approach to installation preparedness?

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that a single authority be designated to integrate installation preparedness efforts, and that the roles of key organizations be clearly defined. It is also recommending that the 2003 plan be updated to fully incorporate results-oriented management principles and describe what military response capabilities need to be developed. DOD agreed with all the recommendations in this report.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-855.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Janet St. Laurent at (202) 512-4402 or stlaurentj@gao.gov.

COMBATING TERRORISM

DOD Efforts to Improve Installation Preparedness Can Be Enhanced with Clarified Responsibilities and Comprehensive Planning

What GAO Found

While DOD's September 2003 report generally met the requirements of the act, it does not represent a comprehensive, results-oriented management plan that could help guide DOD's installation preparedness efforts. For example, the report described annual performance goals that were general in nature and did not have good metrics to gauge progress; it did not describe a comprehensive process and total resources needed to achieve long-term goals; and it did not define an objective and formal process for evaluating results. As a result, it is unclear how improvement goals will be achieved, what resources will be required, or when improvements are expected to be completed. In addition, it did not fully describe the national, regional, and local military response capabilities that will be developed, or how these capabilities will be integrated with local civilian capabilities. As a result, it is unclear how duplication of requirements and redundant capabilities will be avoided. DOD officials attributed the report's limitations to evolving organizational responsibilities, and a lack of resources and guidance. GAO believes that until a more results-oriented, comprehensive plan is developed that clearly articulates the military response capabilities to be developed and integrated with the civilian community, DOD's ongoing initiatives and other opportunities to improve installation preparedness may not be effectively or efficiently implemented.

Two obstacles impede DOD's ability to effectively develop a comprehensive approach to implement installation preparedness efforts. First, while a large number of organizations are engaged in efforts to improve installation preparedness, the responsibilities of two newly established organizations—the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and the U.S. Northern Command—are evolving, and the installation preparedness related responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary for Homeland Defense is not clearly defined. Second, no single entity has been given the authority and responsibility to integrate and manage departmentwide installation preparedness efforts. In discussions with officials at the department, Joint Staff, service and installation levels, there was general agreement that a lack of a single focal point having the appropriate authority and responsibility to integrate overall installation preparedness improvement efforts among the many organizations involved has adversely affected their ability to effectively plan for and manage departmentwide installation preparedness improvements. As a result, DOD has faced difficulties in developing departmentwide standards and concepts of operations and in preparing a comprehensive plan for installation preparedness. Until organization roles and responsibilities are clarified, and an integrating authority is designated, DOD will be limited in its ability to develop a comprehensive approach, promulgate departmentwide guidance, and effectively coordinate ongoing billion-dollar improvement initiatives at the installation level.