



Highlights of [GAO-08-311](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

The high use of National Guard (Guard) forces for overseas missions has raised questions about its ability to support civil authorities in the event of a catastrophic incident. GAO was asked to assess two alternatives for providing funding and authority specifically for the Guard's civil support missions. Congress subsequently enacted a new approach for the Guard's civil support needs, which GAO also included in this assessment. GAO determined: (1) the extent to which planning to identify the Guard's civil support requirements has been undertaken, (2) the current funding approach for the Guard's civil support capabilities and how three approaches—modeled after the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM), the Coast Guard, and that in the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act—could be applied to the Guard; (3) guiding principles to consider when developing and implementing funding alternatives, and (4) the extent to which the existing and alternative approaches are consistent with these principles. GAO synthesized guiding principles for military and civil support effectiveness from the literature and discussed alternatives with defense and homeland security analysts.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD report to Congress on the steps taken to include the guiding principles in its implementation of the 2008 NDAA. DOD generally agreed with GAO's recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-311](#). For more information, contact Janet A. St. Laurent at (202) 512-4402 or [stlaurentj@gao.gov](mailto:stlaurentj@gao.gov).

## HOMELAND SECURITY

### Enhanced National Guard Readiness for Civil Support Missions May Depend on DOD's Implementation of the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act

#### What GAO Found

Comprehensive planning has not been undertaken, by the states or federal agencies, to identify the Guard's requirements for responding to large-scale, multistate civil support missions, such as Hurricane Katrina, because responsibilities for conducting this planning have been unclear. While such events are likely to be state-led, federal funds are likely to be used to fund the Guard's response. The efficiency and effectiveness of response efforts can be facilitated by planning that assigns responsibilities, develops requirements, identifies gaps, and prioritizes investments. The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act addresses planning responsibilities to some extent by directing the Department of Defense (DOD) to (1) plan for the Guard's response to natural disasters and acts of terrorism and (2) plan for and fund the unique capabilities DOD needs to provide during civil support missions.

Most of the Guard's capabilities have been funded through DOD appropriations to equip, staff, and train for its warfighting missions. The states rely on these capabilities for civil support missions when available. However, alternative funding approaches could provide specific funding for the Guard's civil support role. Under a SOCOM-like approach, the National Guard Bureau could be given funding and authority to provide Guard forces with unique civil support capabilities not already funded by DOD. Under a Coast Guard-like approach, DOD would fund the Guard's warfighting needs, but the Department of Homeland Security could identify needs for and fund the Guard's civil support-unique capabilities. The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act directed DOD to develop a funding request for certain capabilities DOD needs to provide civil support.

GAO identified seven guiding principles that can be used in assessing the extent to which funding alternatives would support the Guard's dual roles. These include (1) maintain warfighting capability; (2) maintain civilian control; (3) involve key stakeholders; (4) promote interagency planning; (5) promote economy and efficiency; (6) support coherent budget formulation; and (7) provide accountability and transparency.

The current approach and two of the alternatives address some of the principles, but none incorporates all of them. For example, the current approach maintains warfighting integration; but it does not provide specific funding for civil support needs or encourage integration of Guard forces with stakeholders outside DOD. The SOCOM and Coast Guard-like models would provide processes for identifying and funding civil support requirements, but neither would promote interagency planning and collaboration. The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act addresses all of the principles, at least in part, but it is unclear the extent to which DOD's implementation will yield results that are fully consistent with the guiding principles until implemented. For example, it is unclear the extent to which DOD will consider the input of the external stakeholders or fund civil support capabilities the Guard needs for state-led but federally funded missions.