



Highlights of [GAO-08-228T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The United States has become increasingly involved in stabilization and reconstruction operations as evidenced in the Balkans, Haiti, Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In December 2005, the President issued National Security Presidential Directive 44, establishing governmentwide policy for coordinating, planning, and implementing U.S. stabilization and reconstruction assistance to affected foreign entities. This testimony addresses stabilization and reconstruction issues related to (1) State Department (State) efforts to improve interagency planning and coordination, (2) Department of Defense (DOD) efforts to enhance its capabilities and planning, and (3) State efforts to develop civilian capabilities. GAO's statement is based on its May 2007 report on DOD stability operations and preliminary observations related to State's interagency planning framework and civilian response capabilities.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommended that DOD take several actions to improve its capabilities and interagency planning. DOD partially agreed but did not specify actions it would take to address them. Therefore GAO suggests Congress require DOD to do so. GAO has prepared a draft report with recommendations to State to address the issues cited in this testimony and is reviewing State's comments on the draft.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-228T](#). For more information, contact Janet St. Laurent, (202) 512-4402 or stlaurentj@gao.gov, and Joseph Christoff, (202) 512-4128 or christoffj@gao.gov.

STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Actions Needed to Improve Governmentwide Planning and Capabilities for Future Operations

What GAO Found

State and DOD have begun to take steps to better coordinate stabilization and reconstruction activities, but several significant challenges may hinder their ability to integrate planning for potential operations and strengthen military and civilian capabilities to conduct them. State's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization is developing a framework for U.S. agencies to use when planning stabilization and reconstruction operations, but the framework has yet to be fully applied to any operation. The National Security Council has not approved the entire framework, guidance related to the framework is unclear, and some interagency partners have not accepted it. For example, some interagency partners stated that the framework's planning process is cumbersome and too time consuming for the results it produces. While steps have been taken to address concerns and strengthen the framework's effectiveness, differences in planning capacities and procedures among U.S. government agencies may pose obstacles to effective coordination.

DOD has taken several positive steps to improve its ability to conduct stability operations but faces challenges in developing capabilities and measures of effectiveness, integrating the contributions of non-DOD agencies into military contingency plans, and incorporating lessons learned from past operations into future plans. These challenges, if not addressed, may hinder DOD's ability to fully coordinate and integrate stabilization and reconstruction activities with other agencies or to develop the full range of capabilities those operations may require. Among its many efforts, DOD has developed a new policy, planning construct and joint operating concept with a greater focus on stability operations, and each service is pursuing efforts to improve capabilities. However, inadequate guidance, practices that inhibit sharing of planning information with non-DOD organizations, and differences in the planning capabilities and capacities of DOD and non-DOD organizations hinder the effectiveness of these improvement efforts.

Since 2005, State has been developing three civilian corps to deploy rapidly to international crises, but significant challenges must be addressed before they will be fully capable. State and other agencies face challenges in establishing two of these units—the Active Response Corps and Standby Response Corps—because of staffing and resource constraints and concerns that stabilization and reconstruction operations are not core missions for each parent organization. Congress has not yet enacted legislation necessary for State to obligate funds for the third unit, the Civilian Reserve Corps, staffed solely with non-federal volunteers. Further, State has not fully defined the types of missions these personnel would be deployed to support.