



Highlights of [GAO-08-325](#), a report to Congressional Requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

To increase the range of options available to the President, the Department of Defense (DOD) is taking steps to develop a portfolio of capabilities, referred to as global strike, to rapidly plan and deliver limited duration and extended range precision strikes against highly valued assets. GAO was asked to assess (1) whether DOD has clearly defined and instilled a common understanding and approach for global strike throughout the department, (2) the extent to which DOD has developed capabilities needed for global strike, and (3) the extent to which DOD has identified the funding requirements and developed an investment strategy for acquiring new global strike capabilities. GAO reviewed and analyzed plans and studies within DOD, the services, and several commands on global strike implementation and capabilities development.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends several actions to strengthen DOD implementation of its global strike concept by improving communications and mutual understanding among stakeholders; providing a complete assessment of supporting capabilities needed to conduct global strike; assessing the full breadth of global-strike-related capabilities and technologies; and ensuring that the results of related studies are integrated into a prioritized investment strategy for global strike. DOD agreed with the report and with GAO's eight recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-325](#). For more information, contact Janet St. Laurent, 202-512-4402, stlaurentj@gao.gov.

MILITARY TRANSFORMATION

DOD Needs to Strengthen Implementation of Its Global Strike Concept and Provide a Comprehensive Investment Approach for Acquiring Needed Capabilities

What GAO Found

DOD has taken a number of steps to implement its global strike concept and has generally assigned responsibilities for the planning, execution, and support of global strike operations. However, key stakeholders, particularly the geographic combatant commanders, have different interpretations of the concept, scope, range, and potential use of capabilities needed to implement global strike. Several factors affect the understanding and communication of DOD's global strike concept among key stakeholders, including the extent to which DOD has (1) defined global strike, (2) incorporated global strike into joint doctrine, (3) conducted outreach and communication activities with key stakeholders, and (4) involved stakeholders in joint exercises and other training involving global strike. GAO's prior work examining successful organizational transformations shows the necessity to communicate to stakeholders often and early with clear and specific objectives on what is to be achieved and what roles are assigned. Without a complete and clearly articulated concept that is well communicated and practiced with key stakeholders, DOD could encounter difficulties in fully implementing its concept and building the necessary relationships for carrying out global strike operations.

DOD has underway or completed several global strike assessments to identify potential conventional offensive strike weapons systems, particularly those for prompt global strike, which would provide capabilities sometime after 2018. However, DOD has not fully assessed the requirements or coordinated improvements for related enabling capabilities that are critical to the planning and execution of successful global strike operations. These critical enabling capabilities include intelligence collection and dissemination, surveillance and reconnaissance, and command and control, communications, and battlefield damage assessment. Furthermore, DOD has not coordinated its efforts to improve these capabilities with potential offensive systems it intends to develop. Without fully assessing the enabling capabilities required or coordinating with other DOD studies, DOD might not make the best decision of which enabling capability to pursue in meeting global strike requirements.

DOD has not yet established a prioritized investment strategy that integrates its efforts to assess global strike options and makes choices among alternatives given the department's long-term fiscal challenges. GAO's prior work has shown that a long-term and comprehensive investment approach is an important tool in an organization's decision-making process to define direction, establish priorities, assist with current and future budgets, and plan the actions needed to achieve goals. While DOD studies and officials recognize a need for a broad, holistic view of global strike development, DOD has not identified and assessed all global-strike-related capabilities and technologies and has not explained how its plans to link long-term studies to identify potential weapons systems will result in a comprehensive prioritized investment strategy for global strike.