



Highlights of [GAO-05-833](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Defense (DOD) employs space to support critical military capabilities and funding for space is about 5.4 percent of DOD's budget. In 2001, the Space Commission noted that DOD needs a force composed of educated, motivated, and competent personnel, but DOD was not yet on course to develop the space cadre the nation needs. DOD has a defensewide space human capital strategy and implementation plan and an Executive Agent for Space responsible for space planning, programming, and acquisitions.

Congress required two GAO reports assessing DOD's strategy and the military services' efforts to develop their space personnel. GAO's first report was issued in August 2004. In its second report, GAO (1) determined DOD's progress in implementing defensewide space cadre actions, (2) assessed if DOD's space cadre management approach is consistent with a results-oriented management approach, and (3) determined the progress the services have made in planning and completing space cadre initiatives.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making recommendations designed to institutionalize DOD space cadre authorities, responsibilities, and structure and to help DOD measure and evaluate its space cadre actions. In its comments, DOD agreed with these recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-833.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Davi D'Agostino at (202) 512-5431 or dagostinod@gao.gov.

DEFENSE SPACE ACTIVITIES

Management Guidance and Performance Measures Needed to Develop Personnel

What GAO Found

Since a January 2001 Space Commission report highlighted the need to develop and maintain a space cadre, DOD has made limited progress on defensewide space cadre actions. DOD has fallen behind its implementation schedule for its February 2004 space human capital strategy. DOD's strategy implementation plan identified tasks on space personnel management, education and training, and critical positions. As of June 2005, DOD had completed three of the nine tasks scheduled for completion by March 2005 and one other task. Space cadre leadership has not always been proactive because the Executive Agent gave the space cadre a low priority due to competing demands and then made it a higher priority in 2004. The Executive Agent's departure in March 2005 also delayed some of the tasks. In addition, delays were caused by the need to build consensus among the services on space cadre actions and to make changes in a large organization.

DOD's management approach for the departmentwide space cadre is inconsistent with a results-oriented management approach in two areas. First, DOD has not issued detailed guidance to provide accountability by institutionalizing space cadre authorities and responsibilities. The strategy provides general space cadre responsibilities for the Executive Agent and the services. DOD has not determined specific defensewide space cadre responsibilities that should continue because DOD has not completed its strategy implementation. Without defensewide guidance, progress may not continue and DOD may not develop enough space-qualified professionals. Second, DOD does not have performance measures and an evaluation plan to assess progress. The services provided space cadre information to DOD, but not performance measures linked to goals, such as education levels and promotion rates. Without performance measures and a plan to evaluate progress, the Executive Agent, the Secretary of Defense, and Congress may not be able to monitor the services' progress in meeting their goals.

In the absence of continuous proactive defensewide space cadre leadership, the military services' progress in planning and completing space cadre initiatives has varied since GAO's August 2004 report. The services are pursuing separate initiatives to address the unique needs of their particular service and these are in various stages of completion. Without proactive DOD leadership, the Secretary of Defense and Congress will not have assurance that the services are obtaining and developing the space cadre the nation needs. The Air Force, which is DOD's largest acquirer and operator of space systems and has the largest space cadre, has continued to implement its space professional strategy and has a permanent organizational focal point. The Navy published its space cadre strategy and established a permanent organizational focal point. The Army is conducting an analysis to determine its future space cadre actions, which could lead to a space cadre strategy and a permanent organizational focal point. The Marine Corps, which has a space cadre strategy and a permanent organizational focal point, continues to implement the initiatives contained in its strategy.