



Highlights of [GAO-06-847](#), a report to the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2002, the President and Secretary of Defense called for the creation of the United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) to anticipate and counter global threats. Currently, USSTRATCOM has responsibility for seven mission areas including nuclear deterrence and integrated missile defense. GAO was asked to determine the extent to which USSTRATCOM has made progress in (1) implementing its new missions and assessing mission results and (2) defining organizational responsibilities and establishing relationships with other Department of Defense (DOD) commands and organizations. To assess progress, GAO compared USSTRATCOM's efforts with lessons learned in implementing successful organizational transformations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that USSTRATCOM take actions to provide more guidance to its mission and service component organizations, improve communications, and evaluate mission performance. DOD agreed with some recommendations but disagreed with others, including that it develop a results-oriented management process. Therefore, GAO included a matter for congressional consideration that would require DOD to develop such a process given the importance of the role assigned to USSTRATCOM.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-847.

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.

MILITARY TRANSFORMATION

Additional Actions Needed by U.S. Strategic Command to Strengthen Implementation of Its Many Missions and New Organization

What GAO Found

Since its establishment in 2002, USSTRATCOM has made progress in implementing its new missions by taking a wide range of actions such as developing concepts of operations for its new missions, establishing processes and procedures, and identifying and obtaining personnel and resources needed to begin operations. However, further steps are needed to build on this progress in order to achieve the broad goals envisioned by the President and Secretary of Defense in creating the command. While the command's leadership recognizes the need to build on progress to date and has some additional actions underway to expand and enhance capabilities in its seven mission areas, GAO identified several areas in which more specific actions are needed to help the command achieve its vision. Specifically, the command has taken initial steps to include its new missions in its exercise program but has not yet fully developed a robust exercise program that integrates exercise support available from the U.S. Joint Forces Command, which can provide USSTRATCOM with several planning, training, and evaluation tools. In addition, most of USSTRATCOM's new mission organizations have not established clear criteria for determining when they will reach full operating capability. Furthermore, USSTRATCOM has not developed performance measures and criteria for assessing results across the command and in each of its mission areas. GAO's prior work examining organizational change and defense transformation shows that each of these tools is important for transforming organizations to increase their likelihood of success, particularly when multiple organizations are involved in mission execution. Developing plans in each of these areas should help the command demonstrate it can provide added value to the combatant commanders and give the President an expanded set of military options for responding to future threats—two key DOD goals.

USSTRATCOM has also made progress in establishing an overall organizational framework and identifying subordinate mission organizations that have responsibility for the daily management of operations. However, it has not fully clarified roles and expectations of its service component organizations and had not developed a commandwide approach for enhancing outreach to other DOD organizations. While USSTRATCOM has provided some guidance to its service component organizations, because this guidance has not been specific or well documented, the Army, Navy, and Air Force do not fully understand their expectations in providing support to the command. In addition, while USSTRATCOM conducts some outreach with other combatant commands and organizations, it lacks a commandwide approach to effectively manage outreach activities. GAO has previously found that it is essential for organizations to develop a comprehensive communication strategy that seeks to engage customers and stakeholders. Providing additional guidance and developing a communications strategy should help USSTRATCOM's service component organizations to better understand their roles and enable the command to build effective relationships with other commands.