



Highlights of [GAO-07-145](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

Prior GAO reports have identified problems with the Department of Defense's (DOD) management and oversight of contractors supporting deployed forces. GAO issued its first comprehensive report examining these problems in June 2003. Because of the broad congressional interest in U.S. military operations in Iraq and DOD's increasing use of contractors to support U.S. forces in Iraq, GAO initiated this follow-on review under the Comptroller General's statutory authority. Specifically, GAO's objective was to determine the extent to which DOD has improved its management and oversight of contractors supporting deployed forces since our 2003 report. GAO reviewed DOD policies and interviewed military and contractor officials both at deployed locations and in the United States.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that the Secretary of Defense appoint a focal point within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, at a sufficiently senior level and with the appropriate resources, dedicated to leading DOD efforts to improve the management and oversight of contractors supporting deployed forces. DOD agreed with our recommendation.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-145](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-145).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact William M. Solis at (202) 512-8365 or [solisw@gao.gov](mailto:solisw@gao.gov).

## MILITARY OPERATIONS

# High-Level DOD Action Needed to Address Long-standing Problems with Management and Oversight of Contractors Supporting Deployed Forces

## What GAO Found

DOD continues to face long-standing problems that hinder its management and oversight of contractors at deployed locations. DOD has taken some steps to improve its guidance on the use of contractors to support deployed forces, addressing some of the problems GAO has raised since the mid-1990s. However, while the Office of the Secretary of Defense is responsible for monitoring and managing the implementation of this guidance, it has not allocated the organizational resources and accountability to focus on issues regarding contractor support to deployed forces. Also, while DOD's new guidance is a noteworthy step, a number of problems we have previously reported on continue to pose difficulties for military personnel in deployed locations. For example:

- DOD continues to have limited visibility over contractors because information on the number of contractors at deployed locations or the services they provide is not aggregated by any organization within DOD or its components. As a result, senior leaders and military commanders cannot develop a complete picture of the extent to which they rely on contractors to support their operations. For example, when Multi-National Force-Iraq began to develop a base consolidation plan, officials were unable to determine how many contractors were deployed to bases in Iraq. They therefore ran the risk of over-building or under-building the capacity of the consolidated bases.
- DOD continues to not have adequate contractor oversight personnel at deployed locations, precluding its ability to obtain reasonable assurance that contractors are meeting contract requirements efficiently and effectively at each location where work is being performed. While a lack of adequate contract oversight personnel is a DOD-wide problem, lacking adequate personnel in more demanding contracting environments in deployed locations presents unique difficulties.
- Despite facing many of the same difficulties managing and overseeing contractors in Iraq that it faced in previous military operations, we found no organization within DOD or its components responsible for developing procedures to systematically collect and share its institutional knowledge using contractors to support deployed forces. As a result, as new units deploy to Iraq, they run the risk of repeating past mistakes and being unable to build on the efficiencies others have developed during past operations that involved contractor support.
- Military personnel continue to receive limited or no training on the use of contractors as part of their pre-deployment training or professional military education. The lack of training hinders the ability of military commanders to adequately plan for the use of contractor support and inhibits the ability of contract oversight personnel to manage and oversee contractors in deployed locations. Despite DOD's concurrence with our previous recommendations to improve such training, we found no standard to ensure information about contractor support is incorporated in pre-deployment training.