



Highlights of [GAO-03-379](#), a report to Congressional Committees

Why GAO Did This Study

In January 2001, the congressionally chartered Commission to Assess United States National Security Space Management and Organization—known as the Space Commission—reported that the Department of Defense (DOD) lacked the senior-level focus and accountability to provide guidance and oversight for national security space operations. Congress mandated that GAO provide an assessment of DOD's actions to implement the Space Commission's recommendations. Thus, GAO (1) updated its June 2002 assessment of DOD's actions to address the Space Commission's recommendations, (2) ascertained progress in addressing other long-term management concerns, and (3) assessed the extent to which DOD has developed a results-oriented management framework for space activities.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD develop a national security space strategic plan tied to overall department goals and performance measures; establish a strategic approach for space human capital; and designate a department-level entity to provide space program oversight and assess progress.

DOD agreed with these recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-379.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Raymond J. Decker at (202) 512-6020 or deckerrj@gao.gov.

DEFENSE SPACE ACTIVITIES

Organizational Changes Initiated, but Further Management Actions Needed

What GAO Found

Since June 2002 when we reported that DOD intended to implement 10 of the Space Commission's 13 recommendations to improve the management and organization of space activities and had completed implementation of 6, DOD has completed action on 3 more recommendations. The only action intended but not completed at the conclusion of our work is designation of the Air Force as the executive agent for DOD space programs. Most of the changes represent organizational actions to improve DOD's ability to manage space. For example, DOD has:

- created a focal point for integrating DOD space activities by appointing the Under Secretary of the Air Force also as Director, National Reconnaissance Office;
- realigned Air Force space activities under one command; and
- created a separate position of Commander, Air Force Space Command, to provide increased attention to the organization, training, and equipping for space operations.

It is too early to assess the effects of these organizational changes because new institutional roles, processes, and procedures are still evolving.

DOD still faces challenges in addressing long-term management problems, such as increasing its investment in innovative space technologies, improving the timeliness and quality of acquisitions, and developing a cadre of space professionals. DOD has initiated some actions to address these concerns, such as increasing resources for research on space technology and developing a new acquisition process, and the services have begun some plans for developing space professionals. However, most planned actions are not fully developed or implemented. Further, DOD has not developed an overarching human capital strategy for space that would guide service plans to ensure all requirements for space professionals are met.

DOD does not have a comprehensive, results-oriented management framework for space activities. The Air Force is developing some policies and guidance that could be part of a management framework for space activities. However, we did not have access to the draft documents to determine whether they will contain results-oriented elements—such as a strategy, performance goals and measures, and timelines—that will enable DOD to better focus its efforts and assess its progress in attaining its space goals. Further, no single department-level entity has been charged with providing oversight of the Air Force's management of its executive agent for space responsibilities to assess its progress in achieving space goals while ensuring that all services' requirements for space capabilities are fairly considered.