



Highlights of [GAO-08-117](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Iraq's ministries were decimated following years of neglect and centralized control under the former regime. Developing competent and loyal Iraqi ministries is critical to stabilizing and rebuilding Iraq. The President received \$140 million in fiscal year 2007 funds and requested an additional \$255 million in fiscal year 2008 to develop the capacity of the Iraq's ministries.

This report assesses (1) the nature and extent of U.S. efforts to develop the capacity of the Iraqi ministries, (2) the key challenges to these efforts, and (3) the extent to which the U.S. government has an overall integrated strategy for these efforts. For this effort, GAO reviewed U.S. project contracts and reports and interviewed officials from the Departments of State (State), Defense (DOD), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Baghdad and Washington, D.C.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that State, in consultation with the Iraqi government, complete an overall strategy for U.S. efforts to develop the capacity of the Iraqi government. Congress should consider conditioning future appropriations on the completion of the strategy. State recognized the value of such a strategy but expressed concern about conditioning further capacity development investment on completion of such a strategy.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-117](#). For more information, contact Joseph A. Christoff at (202) 512-8979 or christoffj@gao.gov.

STABILIZING AND REBUILDING IRAQ

U.S. Ministry Capacity Development Efforts Need an Overall Integrated Strategy to Guide Efforts and Manage Risk

What GAO Found

Over the past 4 years, U.S. efforts to help build the capacity of the Iraqi national government have been characterized by (1) multiple U.S. agencies leading individual efforts, without overarching direction from a lead entity that integrates their efforts; and (2) shifting timeframes and priorities in response to deteriorating security and the reorganization of the U.S. mission in Iraq. First, no single agency is in charge of leading the U.S. ministry capacity development efforts, although State took steps to improve coordination in early 2007. State, DOD and USAID have led separate efforts at Iraqi ministries. About \$169 million in funds were allocated in 2005 and 2006 for these efforts. As of mid-2007, State and USAID were providing 169 capacity development advisors to 10 key civilian ministries and DOD was providing 215 to the Ministries of Defense and Interior. Second, the focus of U.S. capacity development efforts has shifted from long-term institution-building projects, such as helping the Iraqi government develop its own capacity development strategy, to an immediate effort to help Iraqi ministries overcome their inability to spend their capital budgets and deliver essential services to the Iraqi people.

U.S. ministry capacity efforts face four key challenges that pose a risk to their success and long-term sustainability. First, Iraqi ministries lack personnel with key skills, such as budgeting and procurement. Second, sectarian influence over ministry leadership and staff complicates efforts to build a professional and non-aligned civil service. Third, pervasive corruption in the Iraqi ministries impedes the effectiveness of U.S. efforts. Fourth, poor security limits U.S. advisors' access to their Iraqi counterparts, preventing ministry staff from attending planned training sessions and contributing to the exodus of skilled professionals to other countries.

The U.S. government is beginning to develop an integrated strategy for U.S. capacity development efforts in Iraq, although agencies have been implementing separate programs since 2003. GAO's previous analyses of U.S. multiagency national strategies demonstrate that such a strategy should integrate the efforts of the involved agencies with the priorities of the Iraqi government, and include a clear purpose and scope; a delineation of U.S. roles, responsibilities, and coordination with other donors, including the United Nations; desired goals and objectives; performance measures; and a description of benefits and costs. Moreover, it should attempt to address and mitigate the risks associated with the four challenges identified above. U.S. ministry capacity efforts to date have included some but not all of these components. For example, agencies are working to clarify roles and responsibilities. However, U.S. efforts lack clear ties to Iraqi-identified priorities at all ministries, clear performance measures to determine results at civilian ministries, and information on how resources will be targeted to achieve the desired end-state.