



Highlights of [GAO-08-436T](#), a report to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittees, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Defense (DOD) relies extensively on contractors to support deployed forces for services that range from food and housing services to intelligence analysis. Since 1997, GAO has reported on DOD's shortcomings in managing and overseeing its use of contractor support. Part of the difficulty attributed to these shortcomings is that no one person or entity that made the decision to send 129,000 contractors to Iraq. Rather, numerous DOD activities were involved, thus adding to the complexity of the problems which GAO identified in its past work on this topic. This testimony focuses on (1) the problems that DOD has faced in managing and overseeing its contractor support to deployed forces and (2) future challenges that DOD will need to address to improve its oversight and management of contractors at deployed locations. In addition, as you requested, we have developed several actions Congress may wish to consider requiring DOD to take.

This testimony is based on previously issued GAO reports and testimonies on DOD's management and oversight of contractor support to deployed forces that focused primarily on U.S. efforts in Southwest Asia. This work was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-436T](#). For more information, contact William M. Solis at (202) 512-8365 or solisw@gao.gov.

MILITARY OPERATIONS:

Implementation of Existing Guidance and Other Actions Needed to Improve DOD's Oversight and Management of Contractors in Future Operations

What GAO Found

DOD leadership needs to ensure implementation of and compliance with existing guidance to improve the department's oversight and management of contractors supporting deployed forces. While DOD issued a comprehensive guidance on contractor support to deployed forces in 2005, we found little evidence that DOD components were implementing this and other guidance. As a result, several long-standing problems have hindered DOD's management and oversight of contractors at deployed locations, even in cases where DOD and its components have developed guidance related to these problems. These problems include failure to follow planning guidance, an inadequate number of contract oversight and management personnel, failure to systematically collect and distribute lessons learned, and lack of comprehensive training for contract oversight personnel and military commanders. Our previous work in this area has identified several instances where poor oversight and management of contractors led to negative monetary and operational impacts.

Based on our past work, several challenges will need to be addressed by DOD to improve the oversight and management of contractors supporting deployed forces in future operations and ensure warfighters are receiving the support they rely on in an effective and efficient manner. Those challenges include: (1) incorporating contractors as part of the total force, (2) determining the proper balance of contractors and military personnel in future contingencies and operations, (3) clarifying how DOD will work with other government agencies in future contingencies and operations, and (4) addressing the use and role of contractors into its plans to expand and transform the Army and the Marine Corps.