



Highlights of [GAO-09-181](#), a report to Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In February 2007, the President directed the Department of Defense (DOD) to establish the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) to help strengthen U.S. security cooperation with African nations and bring peace and stability to the continent. For this review, GAO assessed DOD's (1) efforts to establish the command and communicate its mission, (2) progress in integrating personnel from other U.S. government agencies into AFRICOM, and (3) plans and costs for establishing a permanent headquarters and supporting offices in Africa. In assessing DOD's efforts to establish AFRICOM, GAO analyzed relevant documentation and obtained perspectives from the combatant commands, military services, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Department of State (State), U. S. Agency for International Development, and nongovernmental organizations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that AFRICOM include three key elements in its communications strategy, seek formal commitments for interagency personnel, and develop a comprehensive assessment of the possible locations of its permanent command headquarters and offices in Africa. In responding to a draft of this report, DOD partially agreed with GAO's recommendations and noted that in some cases it was already taking action.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, [click on GAO-09-181](#). For more information, contact John H. Pendleton at (202) 512-3489 or pendletonj@gao.gov.

DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

Actions Needed to Address Stakeholder Concerns, Improve Interagency Collaboration, and Determine Full Costs Associated with the U.S. Africa Command

What GAO Found

DOD declared AFRICOM fully operational on September 30, 2008, and had more than 950 military and civilian personnel assigned to the command; however, concerns about its planned mission and activities persist. DOD created AFRICOM to bring a more cohesive and strategic focus to its efforts in Africa. However, initial statements made about its mission and the scope of its activity raised concerns among U.S. and African stakeholders that AFRICOM could militarize diplomacy and development. Since the initial announcement, DOD has taken some steps to clarify its mission and in May 2008 published an approved mission statement. But concerns persist and DOD has not yet finalized a strategy for future communication with the wide range of stakeholders. It will take time for concerns generated by the initial announcement to subside and will largely depend on AFRICOM's actions. Unresolved concerns about AFRICOM's intentions could limit support from key stakeholders like State and potential African partners. GAO's prior work shows that a communications strategy can help address stakeholder concerns and clarify expectations.

AFRICOM has begun integrating personnel from other U.S. government agencies into the command but it has not yet determined the ultimate extent of desired interagency representation. DOD officials said that integrating personnel will help AFRICOM develop plans that are more compatible with U.S. agencies. DOD set some initial personnel goals, but continues to revise them. Initially, DOD conceived of a command in which about a quarter of the staff (about 125 people) would be from other agencies. DOD later reduced the goal to 52 positions, but this number is under review and expected to change. These goals did not fully consider the perspective of contributing civilian agencies, which is important because some face personnel shortages. AFRICOM is now taking steps to involve agencies in determining personnel goals, but this process does not guarantee commitments from agencies to provide personnel. Without agreed-upon interagency personnel commitments, AFRICOM could continue to develop unrealistic targets and ultimately risk losing the knowledge and expertise of interagency personnel.

DOD cannot reliably estimate AFRICOM's total future costs because decisions on the locations of a permanent headquarters and supporting offices in Africa have not been made. DOD is re-examining its initial concept for AFRICOM's command presence because of concerns over its initial headquarters concept, authorities under which it would operate, and sensitivities about a U.S. military presence. In the meantime, AFRICOM is increasing its representation in some U.S. embassies in Africa and spending about \$140 million to renovate facilities in Stuttgart, Germany, for its interim headquarters. Current cost projections exceed \$4 billion through 2015, but these estimates do not include an operations center or component commands, which could increase costs. DOD plans to make decisions in fiscal year 2012 on command locations. GAO's prior work shows that an assessment of tangible and intangible benefits and costs can help organizations decide between alternatives.