


GAO
 Accountability-Integrity-Reliability
Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-03-677T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The way in which the federal government views the defense of the United States has dramatically changed since September 11, 2001. Consequently, the Department of Defense (DOD) is adjusting its Cold War strategic focus (of defending against massed combat forces) to better encompass defense against the asymmetric threats that small terrorist cells represent to U.S. territory.

GAO was asked to review DOD's participation in domestic missions. This testimony represents our preliminary work in response to the request. It addresses (1) the primary differences in military and nonmilitary missions; (2) how DOD evaluates nonmilitary mission requests; (3) how the 1878 Posse Comitatus Act impacts on DOD's nonmilitary missions; (4) whether current management organizations, plans, and forces are adequate to support DOD's domestic missions; and (5) the impact of overseas and domestic missions on military personnel tempo.

GAO is making no recommendations in this testimony.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-677T.

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

HOMELAND DEFENSE

Preliminary Observations on How Overseas and Domestic Missions Impact DOD Forces

What GAO Found

DOD's military and nonmilitary missions differ in terms of roles, duration, discretion to accept or reject, and capabilities normally employed.

DOD evaluates nonmilitary mission requests on the basis of legality, lethality, risk to DOD forces, the cost, the appropriateness of the mission, and the impact on military readiness.

The 1878 Posse Comitatus Act prohibits the direct use of federal military troops in domestic civilian law enforcement, except where authorized by the Constitution or Acts of Congress. Congress has expressly authorized the use of the military in certain situations such as to assist with drug interdiction or assist with terrorist incidents involving weapons of mass destruction.

It is too early to assess the adequacy of DOD's new management organizations or plans but some forces may not be tailored for their domestic missions. DOD established an Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and U.S. Northern Command to plan and execute domestic missions. U.S. Northern Command's plan for domestic military missions was developed before DOD officials had agreed on the nature of the threat. Forces are not adequately tailored for some domestic missions and readiness could erode because of it. For example, Air Force fighter units deployed since September 11, 2001 to perform combat air patrols are unable to also perform required combat training.

Overseas and domestic missions are stressing U.S. forces as measured in personnel tempo data. In September 2001, about 1,600 Air Force personnel had spent 220 to 365 days away from their homes over the previous year, but by December 2002 almost 22,100 Air Force personnel had been away that long. The Army reported similar increases. To prevent erosion in combat capabilities, DOD issued orders, known as stop loss, to involuntarily retain critical personnel.

F16 Fighter Aircraft Conduct a Combat Air Patrol Over Washington, D.C.



Source: U.S. Air Force.