



Highlights of [GAO-09-235](#), a report to Congressional Requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

Having the right number of civilian personnel with the right skills is critical to achieving the Department of Defense's (DOD) mission. With more than 50 percent of its civilian workforce (about 700,000 civilians) eligible to retire in the next few years, DOD may be faced with deciding how to fill numerous mission-critical positions—some involving senior leadership. The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 requires DOD to develop a strategic human capital plan, update it annually through 2010, and address eight requirements. GAO previously found that DOD's 2007 plan did not meet most requirements. The 2007 NDAA added nine requirements to the annual update to shape DOD's senior leader workforce. GAO was asked to assess the extent to which DOD's 2008 update addressed (1) the 2006 human capital planning requirements, (2) the 2007 senior leader requirements, and (3) key factors that may affect civilian workforce planning. GAO analyzed the update, compared it with the requirements, and reviewed factors identified in the update and prior GAO work.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD (1) develop performance plans for the new management offices that monitor its human capital updates and senior leader workforce and (2) include, in its next update, strategies to address factors that may affect its workforce plan. DOD partially concurred with GAO's recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-09-235](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell, (202) 512-3604, [farrellb@gao.gov](mailto:farrellb@gao.gov).

## HUMAN CAPITAL

### Opportunities Exist to Build on Recent Progress to Strengthen DOD's Civilian Human Capital Strategic Plan

#### What GAO Found

While DOD's 2008 update to its strategic human capital plan, when compared with the first plan, shows progress in addressing the FY 2006 NDAA requirements, the update only partially addresses each of the act's requirements. For example, DOD identified 25 critical skills and competencies—referred to as enterprisewide mission-critical occupations, which included logistics management and medical occupations. The update, however, does not contain assessments for over half of the 25 occupations, and the completed assessments of future enterprisewide mission-critical occupations do not cover the required 10-year period. Also, DOD's update included analyses of “gaps,” or differences between the existing and future workforce for about half of the 25 occupations. Finally, DOD's update partially addressed the act's requirements for a plan of action for closing the gaps in DOD's civilian workforce. Although DOD recently established a program management office whose responsibility is to monitor DOD's updates to the strategic human capital plan, the office does not have and does not plan to have a performance plan—a road map—that articulates how the NDAA requirements will be met. Until such a plan is developed, DOD may not be able to design the best strategies to address the legislative requirements and meet its civilian workforce needs.

DOD's 2008 update and related documentation address four of the nine requirements in the FY 2007 NDAA for DOD's senior leader workforce and partially address the remaining five. For example, the update identifies a plan of action to address, among other things, changes in the number of authorized senior leaders. However, the update noted that DOD had conducted only initial leadership assessments as a first step in identifying some of its needs, capabilities, and gaps in the existing or projected senior leader workforce and stated that the final assessments would not be completed until the summer of 2009. Although DOD recently established an executive management office to manage the career life cycle of DOD senior leaders, as well as the FY 2007 NDAA requirements, this office has not and does not plan to develop a performance plan to address the NDAA-related requirements.

While DOD's 2008 update identified some key factors that could affect civilian workforce plans, such as base closures and legislation requiring the use of government employees for certain functions, it does not include strategies for addressing these factors. For example, the update noted that DOD may consider using government employees to perform, among other things, an activity performed by a contractor when an economic analysis shows DOD civilian employees are the low-cost providers, but DOD does not provide a strategy for doing so. Further, GAO's body of work has noted a similar factor not discussed in DOD's update—DOD's extensive reliance on contractors and its long-standing challenges in developing a civilian workforce strategy to address the use of contractors and the appropriate mix of contractors and civilians. Without strategies that address key factors like the use of contractors, DOD may not have the right number of people, in the right place, at the right time, and at a reasonable cost to achieve its mission in the future.