

March 2010

WARFIGHTER SUPPORT

DOD Needs to Improve Its Planning for Using Contractors to Support Future Military Operations



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Highlights of [GAO-10-472](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Contractors provide a broad range of support to U.S. forces deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq, with the number of contractors at times exceeding the number of military personnel in each country. The Department of Defense (DOD) has acknowledged shortcomings in how the role of contractors was addressed in its planning for Iraq and Afghanistan. In its report accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, the Senate Armed Services Committee directed GAO to assess DOD's development of contract support plans. This report examines (1) what progress DOD has made in developing operational contract support annexes for its operation plans, (2) the extent to which contract requirements are included in other sections of operation plans, and (3) DOD's progress in establishing a long-term capability to include operational contract support requirements in operation plans. GAO reviewed DOD policies, selected operation plans and annexes, and interviewed officials at the combatant commands, the Joint Staff, and Office of the Secretary of Defense.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making a number of recommendations aimed at improving the ability of combatant command planners to identify contract support requirements in their operation plans and ensuring the department effectively institutionalizes its organizational approach to addressing contractors in its plans. DOD agreed with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-10-472](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact William M. Solis at (202) 512-8365 or solisw@gao.gov.

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What GAO Found

Although DOD guidance has called for combatant commanders to include an operational contract support annex—Annex W—in their operation plans since February 2006, we found only four operation plans with Annex Ws have been approved and planners have drafted Annex Ws for an additional 30 plans. According to combatant command officials, most of the annexes drafted to date restated broad language from existing DOD guidance on the use of contractors to support deployed forces. Several factors help explain the difficulties planners face in identifying specific contract support requirements in Annex Ws. For example, most operation plans contained limited information on matters such as the size and capabilities of the military force involved, hindering the ability of planners to identify detailed contract support requirements. In addition, shortcomings in guidance on how and when to develop contract support annexes complicate DOD's efforts to consistently address contract requirements in operation plans and resulted in a mismatch in expectations between senior DOD leadership and combatant command planners regarding the degree to which Annex Ws will contain specific information on contract support requirements. Senior decision makers may incorrectly assume that operation plans have adequately addressed contractor requirements. As a result, they risk not fully understanding the extent to which the combatant command will be relying on contractors to support combat operations and being unprepared to provide the necessary management and oversight of deployed contractor personnel.

According to combatant command officials, detailed information on operational contract support requirements is generally not included in other sections or annexes of the operation plans. Although DOD guidance underscores the importance of addressing contractor requirements throughout an operation plan, including the base plan and other annexes as appropriate, GAO found that nonlogistics personnel tend to assume that the logistics community will address the need to incorporate operational contract support throughout operation plans. For example, combatant command officials told GAO that they were not aware of any assumptions specifically addressing the potential use or role of operational contract support in their base plans. Similarly, according to DOD planners, there is a lack of details on contract support in other parts of most base plans or in the nonlogistics (e.g., communication or intelligence) annexes of operation plans.

DOD has launched two initiatives to improve its capability to address operational contract support requirements in its operation plans, but these initiatives are being refined and their future is uncertain. DOD has placed joint operational contract support planners at each combatant command to assist with the drafting of Annex Ws. In addition, the department has created the Joint Contingency Acquisition Support Office to help ensure that contract support planning is consistent across the department. For both initiatives, a lack of institutionalization in guidance and funding and staffing uncertainties have created challenges in how they execute their responsibilities.

Contents

Letter		1
	Results in Brief	4
	Background	7
	DOD Has Made Limited Progress in Developing Operational Contract Support Annexes and Faces Challenges Identifying Detailed Contractor Requirements in These Annexes	11
	Detailed Information on Operational Contract Support Generally Not Included in Other Sections or Annexes of Operation Plans	20
	The Future of DOD's Initiatives to Improve Identification of Operational Contract Support Requirements Is Uncertain Because of Guidance and Funding Challenges	27
	Conclusions	34
	Recommendations for Executive Action	36
	Agency Comments and Our Evaluation	37
Appendix I	Scope and Methodology	41
Appendix II	Comments from the Department of Defense	44
Appendix III	GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments	48
Related GAO Products		49
Table		
	Table 1: Status of Annex W Development and Approval by Combatant Commands as of February 2010	12
Figure		
	Figure 1: Joint Operation Planning Activities, Functions, and Products	10

Abbreviations

ADUSD(PS)	Assistant Deputy Undersecretary of Defense (Program Support)
DOD	Department of Defense
JCASO	Joint Contingency Acquisition Support Office

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March 30, 2010

Congressional Committees

The Department of Defense (DOD) has long used contractors to provide supplies and services to deployed U.S. forces. However, the scale and scope of contract support the department relies on today in locations such as Iraq and Afghanistan have increased considerably from previous operations. According to DOD, in September 2009 the number of contractor personnel working for the department in Iraq and Afghanistan was about 218,000, with the number of contractors at times exceeding the number of military personnel in each country. By way of contrast, an estimated 9,200 contractor personnel supported military operations in the 1991 Gulf War. In Iraq and Afghanistan, contractors provide traditional logistical support, such as base operating support (food and housing) and maintaining weapons systems, but also nonlogistical support, such as providing intelligence analysts and interpreters who accompany military patrols. DOD expects to continue to rely heavily on contractors for future operations.

It is important to note that the increased use of contractors at deployed locations, which DOD refers to as operational contract support, is the result of thousands of individual decisions rather than comprehensive planning across the department.¹ The department has acknowledged shortcomings in how the role of contractors was addressed in its planning for Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, the Secretary of Defense has stated that the growth of contractor services in Iraq in many respects happened without a coherent strategy.²

Our previous work has highlighted long-standing problems regarding the oversight and management of contractors supporting deployed forces and has identified the need to ensure that specific information on the use and roles of contract support to deployed forces is integrated into DOD's plans

¹ DOD defines operational contract support as the process of planning for and obtaining supplies, services, and construction from commercial sources in support of joint operations along with the associated contractor management functions.

² Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee (Jan. 27, 2009).

for future contingency operations.³ We also suggested that DOD conduct a comprehensive reexamination of its use of contractors to determine the appropriate balance of contractors and military personnel and ensure that the role of contractors is incorporated into its planning efforts.⁴ Congress has expressed concerns regarding the department's use of contractors to support deployed forces and has directed DOD to develop joint policies for requirements definition, contingency program management, and contingency contracting during combat operations and postconflict operations.⁵

DOD guidance has long recognized the need to include the role of contractors in its operation plans. For example, joint guidance states that military commanders must ensure that requisite contract planning and guidance are in place for any operations where significant reliance on contractors is anticipated, and planning for contractors should be at a level of detail on par with that for military forces.⁶ To provide greater details on contract services needed to support an operation and the capabilities that contractors would bring, DOD's guidance for contingency planning was revised in February 2006 to require planners to include an operational contract support annex—known as Annex W—in the combatant commands' most detailed operation plans.⁷ In addition, joint guidance gives the combatant commanders the discretion to require Annex Ws for additional, less detailed plans.

In its report accompanying the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009,⁸ the Senate Armed Services

³ See the related GAO products list at the end of this report.

⁴ GAO, *Defense Management: Actions Needed to Overcome Long-standing Challenges with Weapon Systems Acquisition and Service Contract Management*, [GAO-09-362T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 11, 2009), and *Defense Management: DOD Needs to Reexamine Its Extensive Reliance on Contractors and Continue to Improve Management and Oversight*, [GAO-08-572T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 11, 2008).

⁵ John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007, Pub. L. No. 109-364, § 854 (2006).

⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 4-0, *Joint Logistics* (July 18, 2008).

⁷ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual 3122.03B, *Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES) Volume II Planning Formats* (Feb. 28, 2006). Superseded by Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual 3122.03C, *Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES) Volume II Planning Formats* (Aug. 17, 2007).

⁸ S. Rep. No. 110-335, at 317 (2008). See also S. Rep. No. 111-35, at 116 (2009).

Committee directed us to conduct an assessment of the implementation of DOD guidance on including contract support plans in contingency operation plans.⁹ The committee also asked us to look across DOD's plans and evaluate each plan's assumptions, comprehensiveness, feasibility, adequacy of executable detail, resources required and available, contracting-related operational risk at each phase of the plan, and any other aspect of contracting support planning. In designing and conducting our assessment, our objectives were to determine (1) what progress DOD has made in developing operational contract support annexes for its operation plans, (2) the extent to which operational contract support requirements are included in other sections of operation plans, and (3) what progress the department has made in establishing a long-term capability to ensure the inclusion of operational contract support requirements in operation plans.

To address our objectives, we met with and obtained documentation from officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff to review key guidance on how contingency operation plans are drafted and reviewed and obtain an understanding of how operational contract support is addressed in this guidance. We visited all of the geographic combatant commands as well as U.S. Special Operations Command, U.S. Joint Forces Command, and some combatant command service components to discuss their roles in drafting contingency operation plans, how operational contract support was addressed in those plans, and other related efforts to improve the preparation and planning for working with contractors in future operations. We reviewed some base plans and annexes at the combatant commands, comparing them to DOD's guidance on plan development as well as its operational contract support guidance in order to determine how well these documents incorporated contract support. Specifically, we reviewed 7 of the 34 Annex Ws drafted or approved as of February 2010, 3 base plans, 4 Annex Ds (logistics), and contractor-related excerpts of a base plan and Annex D. However, because DOD limited our access to its operation plans, we were unable to provide a comprehensive assessment of each plan's assumptions, comprehensiveness, feasibility, adequacy of executable detail, and other aspects of operational contract support as directed in the mandate. Nevertheless, we believe that the excerpts of plans and annexes DOD

⁹ Operation plan refers to any plan for the conduct of military operations prepared in response to actual and potential contingencies. It also refers to a complete and detailed joint plan with all annexes and time-phased force and deployment data. We use the term to refer to all plans developed through DOD's contingency planning process.

allowed us to see, along with in-depth conversations with planners and other officials responsible for drafting or reviewing base plans and annexes, gave us adequate information with which to assess DOD's progress in incorporating operational contract support into its plans.

We conducted this performance audit from October 2008 through February 2010 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. Further details on our scope and methodology are contained in appendix I.

Results in Brief

Although DOD guidance has called for the integration of an operational contract support annex—Annex W—into combatant command operation plans since February 2006, the department has made limited progress in meeting this requirement. Planners identified 89 plans that may require an Annex W. As of February 2010, only four operation plans with Annex Ws have been approved by the Secretary of Defense or his designee, and planners have drafted Annex Ws for an additional 30 plans. According to combatant command officials, most of the draft Annex Ws developed to date restated broad language from existing DOD guidance on the use of contractors to support deployed forces but included few details on the type of contractors needed to execute a given plan, despite guidance requiring Annex Ws to list contracts likely to be used in theater. Several factors help explain the difficulties planners face in identifying specific contract support requirements in Annex Ws. For example:

- According to combatant command planners, in order to identify the details on contracted services and capabilities needed to support an operation, planners need to know the size and capabilities of the military force involved and how the plan envisions that force being employed. However, most operation plans lack this level of detail, hindering the ability of the planners to include details on contract support requirements in Annex Ws.
- Current guidance complicates DOD's efforts to consistently address contract support requirements in Annex Ws across the department. According to planning officials, the current Annex W template was created with DOD's most detailed plans in mind even though less than 10 percent of the combatant commands' operation plans are at this level of detail. Some planners told us that the template's one-size-fits-all

approach makes it harder for them to meet the current Annex W requirements. Further, while DOD's guidance requires Annex Ws for the combatant commands' most detailed plans, the guidance leaves it to the combatant commanders to determine which additional, less detailed operation plans require an Annex W. However, there is no specific guidance to guide the combatant commanders in determining which plans should include an Annex W. As a result, we found that some combatant commanders took a more expansive view than others regarding which plans require the annex.

The one-size-fits-all approach to Annex Ws and the lack of specific guidance regarding which plans require an Annex W has resulted in a mismatch in expectations between senior DOD leadership and combatant command planners regarding the degree to which Annex Ws will contain specific information on contract support requirements. Senior decision makers may therefore assume that the combatant commands have adequately addressed contractor requirements in a plan, even though many plans do not contain Annex Ws or lack the expected details on the anticipated contractor support needed to execute the mission. As a result, they risk not fully understanding the extent to which they will be relying on contractors to support combat operations and being unprepared to provide the necessary management and oversight of deployed contractor personnel.

In discussions with combatant command officials responsible for developing operation plans, we found that detailed information on operational contract support requirements is generally not included in other sections or annexes of these plans. Although the Annex W is intended to be the focal point within an operation plan for discussing operational contract support, DOD guidance underscores the importance of addressing contractor requirements throughout an operation plan, including the base plan and other annexes as appropriate. However, we found that nonlogistics personnel tend to assume that the logistics community will address the need to incorporate operational contract support throughout operation plans. We also found the following:

- Base plans generally lack information or assumptions on operational contract support, according to DOD planners. Base plans are important because most people reviewing an operation plan will look only at the base plan and, in some cases, annexes for which they are responsible. As a senior official responsible for logistics planning at one combatant command remarked, if something is not in the base plan, it might as well not be in the plan. If the base plan contains only limited information on the use and role of contractors, this will restrict the

level of information available to senior DOD leadership in assessing the potential risks associated with reliance on contractors. For example, combatant command officials told us that they were not aware of any assumptions specifically addressing the potential use or role of operational contract support in their base plans. Assumptions are used to focus attention of senior DOD leadership on factors that could present risks to mission success.

- DOD has made limited progress in incorporating operational contract support information in nonlogistics annexes of operation plans, such as the intelligence annex and the communications annex, based on our discussions with officials responsible for writing these annexes. DOD guidance for these annexes directs planners to identify the means or capabilities necessary for meeting mission requirements. Although this guidance does not specifically mention contractors, contractors provide significant support in these areas. The failure to include contract support requirements in nonlogistics annexes makes it more difficult for combatant commanders to understand their total reliance on contractors to execute a mission.

Without better integration of operational contract support throughout operation plans, it will be more difficult for combatant commanders to understand the extent to which their plans rely on contractors.

DOD has launched two initiatives in response to congressional direction to improve its capability to ensure that the operational contract support requirements are addressed in its operation plans, but these initiatives are still being refined and their future is uncertain. First, each combatant command has been allocated joint operational contract support planners to assist the combatant command in drafting Annex Ws. However, the concept of the contract support planners has not yet been institutionalized in DOD's operational contract support guidance. Additionally, funding and staffing issues remain, creating uncertainty regarding the long-term vision for the program. According to officials responsible for the contract support planners, the planners were expected to be provided by contractors through September 2009, at which time the services were to provide a mix of military and civilian personnel to serve as planners. However, DOD declined to provide funding for these positions in the fiscal year 2010 budget, believing that the combatant commands could provide the planners using existing personnel, but several combatant command officials told us that the combatant commands would be unlikely to dedicate their own resources to operational contract support planning. As a result, the planners continue to be contractors who are funded under supplemental appropriations. According to officials responsible for the contract support planners, DOD has funded the planners in the fiscal year

2011 budget. However, the budget does not provide additional resources to fund the contract support planners and they are working with the DOD Comptroller to find an alternative funding source. Second, DOD has created the Joint Contingency Acquisition Support Office (JCASO), among other things, to look across DOD's operation plans to ensure that planning for the use of contractors in future contingencies is consistent throughout the combatant commands. However, guidance for this office, including its role in reviewing plans, is still being developed. We found that the lack of specific guidance has led to confusion regarding the JCASO's role in the requirements definition process. In addition, according to JCASO officials, the JCASO concept calls for a staff of about 30 people, but as of December 2009, the JCASO consisted of only 5 individuals. As a result of these staffing challenges, the JCASO has been limited in its ability to execute its responsibilities.

We are making a number of recommendations aimed at better enabling senior DOD leadership to determine the department's reliance on contractors to execute future operations by improving the ability of combatant command planners to effectively identify contract support requirements in Annex Ws and throughout their operation plans and ensuring that the department effectively institutionalizes its organizational approach to addressing operational contract support in its plans. In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with our recommendations and identified additional actions the department believes are needed to address our recommendations. We agree that these actions are important steps toward addressing our recommendations. The full text of DOD's written comments is reprinted in appendix II.

Background

An operation plan describes how DOD will respond to a potential event that might require the use of military force. It is a foundation for an operation order, which entails the execution of an operation plan by a combatant commander. An operation plan is used to deal with a wide range of events, such as terrorism, hostile foreign nations, and natural disasters. An operation plan consists of a base plan and annexes. The base plan describes the concept of operations, major forces, sustainment concept, and anticipated timelines for completing the mission. Base plans are written following a five-paragraph structure—Situation, Mission, Execution, Administration and Logistics, and Command and Control. Plans will include assumptions that are relevant to the development or successful execution of the plan and the concept of operation that the commander plans to use to accomplish the mission, including the forces involved, the phasing of operations, and the general nature and purpose of

operations to be conducted. In addition to the base plan, operation plans include annexes that provide further details on areas such as intelligence (Annex B), operations (Annex C), logistics (Annex D), personnel (Annex E), communications (Annex K), and operational contract support (Annex W).

Operation plans are broken into four levels of detail, ranging from the least detailed, level 1, to the most detailed, level 4, as described below:

- Level 1, the commander's estimate, has the least amount of detail and is focused on developing the combatant commander's course of action to meet a mission.
- Level 2, the base plan, describes the concept of operations, major forces, concepts of support, and anticipated timelines for completing the mission.
- Level 3, the concept plan, is an operation plan in an abbreviated format that may require considerable expansion or alteration to convert it into a full operation plan or order. It includes a base plan and some annexes, such as those for intelligence (Annex B), logistics (Annex D), and communications (Annex K). It can also include time-phased force and deployment data, which describe the military forces and transportation assets required by phase of operation.
- Level 4, the fully prepared operation plan, contains the above details as well as any remaining annexes and time-phased force and deployment data. It identifies the specific forces, functional support, and resources required to execute the plan and provides closure estimates for their flow into the theater. It can be quickly converted into an operations order.

DOD has an established a joint operation planning process to develop plans in response to contingencies and crises, including the contingency planning process for developing and reviewing operation plans. The department uses contingency planning to develop its operation plans, and Joint Publication 5-0 is DOD's keystone guidance for joint operation planning.¹⁰ The Joint Operation Planning and Execution System manuals provide more detailed guidance on the format of plans, including templates for the base plan and annexes.¹¹ Contingency planning begins

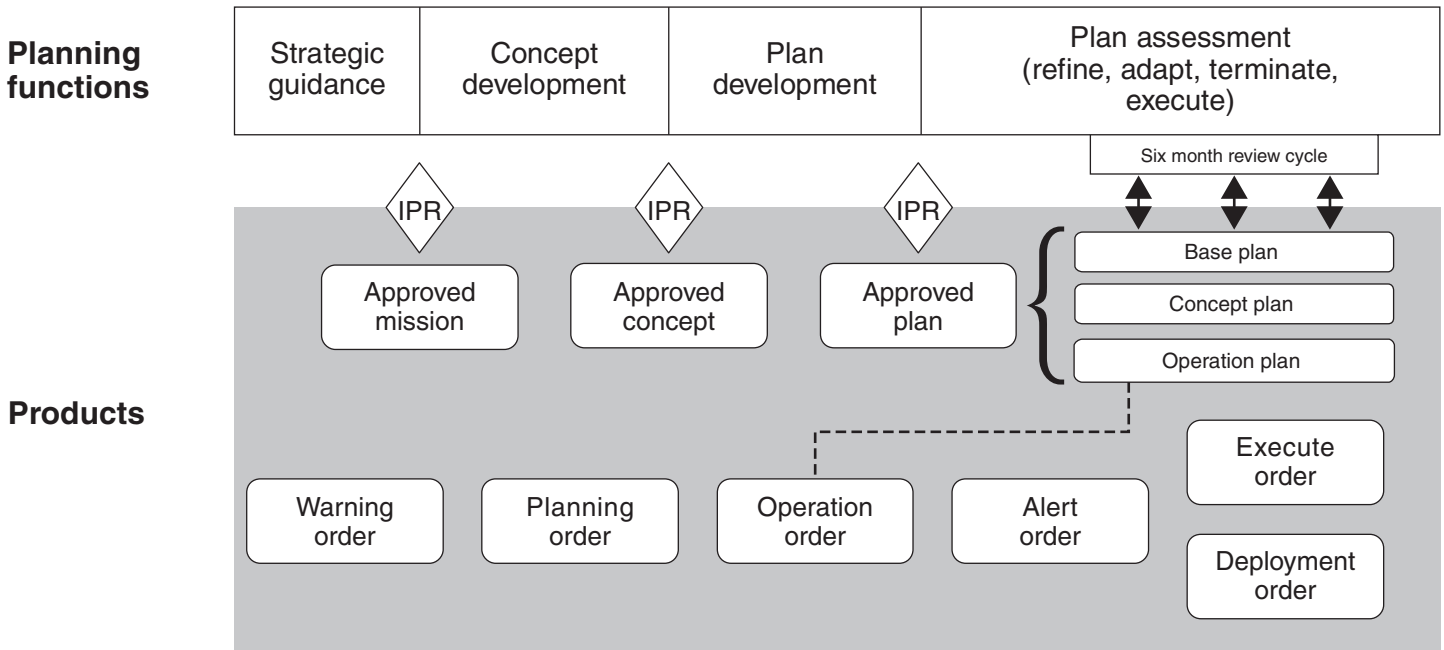
¹⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Dec. 26, 2006).

¹¹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual 3122.01A, *Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES) Volume I, Planning Policies and Procedures* (Sept. 29, 2006) and CJCSM 3122.03C.

with broad strategic guidance provided by the President of the United States, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This strategic guidance includes DOD documents, such as the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan and the Guidance for the Employment of the Force, which tell combatant commanders what to plan for within their areas of responsibility. Combatant commanders can also initiate contingency planning by preparing plans not specifically assigned but considered necessary to discharge command responsibilities. Based on the strategic guidance, combatant command planners write an operation plan. During this stage, a combatant commander can also task and provide guidance to the component commands to develop supporting plans for an operation plan. As a plan is developed, DOD guidance calls for frequent dialogue between planners and senior DOD leadership to ensure that results are sufficient and feasible to meet mission objectives. DOD guidance also identifies three distinct areas for in-progress reviews with the Secretary of Defense or other senior DOD leadership during plan development: (1) the commander's mission analysis of strategic guidance, (2) the commander's concept of operations for the mission, and (3) the combatant command's operation plan.¹² The Joint Planning and Execution Community, which is made up of a broad range of military leadership and DOD agencies, reviews all level 3 and level 4 plans prior to the final in-progress reviews and when requested to do so by a combatant commander. The Joint Chiefs of Staff Directorate for Operational Plans and Joint Force Development, the J-7, works with the combatant command to determine when an in-progress review of a plan will take place. Based on a plan's priority, the Secretary of Defense may delegate plan approval authority to other DOD senior leadership. Plans that do not require in-progress reviews can be approved by the combatant commanders. After a plan is approved, it is supposed to go through periodic reviews that are initiated by the Joint Staff J-7, which maintains the department's plan review schedule. For top-priority plans, guidance calls for reviews every 9 months; other plans are to be reviewed every 12 months. When DOD decides to execute a plan, the combatant commander issues an operation order that has been sent to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for approval by the Secretary of Defense or the President. The joint operation planning activities, functions, and products are illustrated in figure 1.

¹² A fourth in-progress review is held within a year of a plan's review and approval. At this time, the plan will be refined, adapted, terminated, or executed.

Figure 1: Joint Operation Planning Activities, Functions, and Products



Source: Joint Publication 5-0.
 Legend: IPR = in-progress review.

DOD Has Made Limited Progress in Developing Operational Contract Support Annexes and Faces Challenges Identifying Detailed Contractor Requirements in These Annexes

Few Approved Operation Plans Include an Operational Contract Support Annex

Although the requirement for the Annex W—the operational contract support annex—has been in DOD’s guidance since early 2006, we found that few of the operation plans approved by the Secretary of Defense or his designee as of February 2010 included an Annex W. Starting in September 2007, each of the six geographic combatant commands has been allocated joint operational contract support planners (hereafter referred to as contract support planners) to assist them in drafting these annexes. These contract support planners have been reviewing existing operation plans to determine the extent to which they address operational contract support. Based on their review, the planners have identified 89 plans—varying from level 1 to level 4 plans—that may require an Annex W. Specifically, the contract support planners found

- two level 4 operation plans that require Annex Ws in accordance with joint guidance;
- in some cases, combatant command officials determined that certain level 2 and 3 operation plans should also have Annex Ws;
- in other cases, combatant command officials determined that operational contract support issues should be addressed in the logistics annexes (Annex D) of less-detailed plans rather than developing stand-alone Annex Ws; and
- two Annex Ws were developed and approved prior to the arrival of the contract support planners, but were later determined insufficient to meet the requirements for the Annex W.

According to combatant command planners, four operation plans with Annex Ws have been approved by the Secretary of Defense or his

designee, although the contract support planners determined two of these annexes were insufficient. In addition, the contract support planners have drafted Annex Ws for 30 of these plans to date. Planning officials at the combatant commands told us that several plans with draft Annex Ws are currently in the plan review process and are expected to be approved over the next year. Table 1 summarizes the development of Annex Ws by combatant commands as of February 2010.

Table 1: Status of Annex W Development and Approval by Combatant Commands as of February 2010

Combatant command	Number of Annex Ws drafted by contract support planners	Number of Annex Ws currently in the plan review process	Number of Annex Ws in plans approved by the Secretary of Defense or his designee
U.S. Africa Command	6	5	0
U.S. Central Command	6	1	2 ^a
U.S. European Command	8	5	2
U.S. Northern Command	4	2	0
U.S. Pacific Command	2	1	0
U.S. Southern Command	4	1	0

Source: GAO analysis of information from geographic combatant commands.

^aContract support planners at U.S. Central Command told us that two Annex Ws had been completed prior to their arrival, but they subsequently determined that these annexes were not sufficient. The officials told us that these annexes will be revised when the plans are updated in fiscal year 2010.

Most Annex Ws Developed to Date Lack Specific Information on Contract Support Requirements

Although contract support planners have been working to develop Annex Ws, we found that those annexes provide little insight into the extent to which DOD will need to rely on contractors to support contingency operations. According to combatant command planning officials, most of the draft Annex Ws restate broad language from existing operational contract support guidance. Similarly, we reviewed two draft Annex Ws at U.S. European Command and U.S. Pacific Command and found that they consisted largely of language drawn from DOD’s high-level guidance on operational contract support: Joint Publication 4-10, DOD’s doctrine for planning, conducting, and assessing operational contract support in joint operations, and DOD Instruction 3020.41, the source of DOD’s policy and procedures concerning operational contract support.¹³

¹³ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 4-10, *Operational Contract Support* (Oct. 17, 2008), and DOD Instruction 3020.41, *Contractor Personnel Authorized to Accompany the U.S. Armed Forces* (Oct. 3, 2005).

Although this reference to guidance is an improvement over how contractors were previously addressed in the contingency planning process, DOD's planning guidance includes an Annex W template that requires the annex to include a list of contracts likely to be used in theater and the capabilities they would provide. Moreover, Joint Publication 4-10 states that in developing Annex Ws, planners should identify military capability shortfalls that require contract solutions and ensure that combatant commanders are aware of the general scope and scale of contracted support to be utilized for an operation. We reviewed seven draft Annex Ws at various combatant commands and found that the annexes contained general information on what should be done in contingency operations, such as considering the use of external support contracts for logistics and selected nonlogistics support. However, those Annex Ws did not generally identify specific steps to be taken to determine when to use such contracts or who is responsible for making those determinations. We found that six of the seven Annex Ws we reviewed lacked details on contract support requirements, such as the number and type of contractors that would be needed to execute any given plan. For example:

- One combatant command had a level 3 plan that provided details on the military forces expected to be used to support various aspects of the operation. However, the draft Annex W for this plan consisted largely of information from other DOD guidance and did not clearly spell out expected contract support for the operation or define specific contractor-related responsibilities.
- The draft Annex W for a level 4 plan with time-phased force and deployment data at another combatant command also consisted largely of references to existing guidance and lacked specific information on contract support needed to execute the mission.¹⁴ Planners acknowledged that while the plan provides details regarding military forces, they have not developed the same level of detail regarding contractors.

With regard to the broader set of draft Annex Ws, including but not limited to the annexes we were able to review, several planners told us that there is not much variance across the annexes they have developed or reviewed to date. Moreover, several combatant command officials stated that for almost all of their plans, the level of detail on operational contract support

¹⁴ The time-phased force and deployment data describes force requirements, how and when those forces are to be deployed, and the transportation assets needed to deploy them.

contained in an Annex W would not enable a combatant commander to identify for senior DOD leadership the extent to which an operation relied on contractors. As our previous work has shown, DOD's lack of understanding of its reliance on contractors can hinder its ability to effectively manage and oversee contractors, raising the risks of fraud, waste, and abuse and potentially resulting in negative impacts on military operations and unit morale.¹⁵

In contrast, a few draft Annex Ws contain a detailed discussion of contract support. For example, we reviewed a detailed Annex W that U.S. Southern Command had developed for one operation plan that lays out expected contractor support by phase of operation and identifies several existing contracts that could be used to support the operation. According to officials at U.S. Southern Command, this detailed Annex W is useful to them because it helps them identify existing capabilities and shortfalls and to consider where contracts should be augmented or added. In addition, U.S. Central Command officials told us that they were identifying more detailed contract support requirements in the draft Annex W of one of their operation plans.

**Limited Information
Hinders DOD's Ability to
Include Details on
Contract Support
Requirements in Annex Ws**

Combatant command planners told us that they are unable to identify specific contract support requirements as called for in Annex W guidance because of the limited amount of information contained in most operation plans. In order to identify the details on contracted services and capabilities needed to support an operation, planners need to know the size and capabilities of the military force involved and how the plan envisions that force being employed. For example, in order to make reasonable judgments on the contractor support required for base operating support (e.g., food and housing), planners told us that they would need to know the number of personnel to be supported and the base operating support capabilities the military force would provide. Engineers at U.S. Southern Command told us that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has developed standards for housing, latrines, dining facilities,

¹⁵ GAO, *Military Operations: Implementation of Existing Guidance and Other Actions Needed to Improve DOD's Oversight and Management of Contractors in Future Operations*, [GAO-08-436T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 24, 2008); *Military Operations: High-Level DOD Action Needed to Address Long-standing Problems with Management and Oversight of Contractors Supporting Deployed Forces*, [GAO-07-145](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 18, 2006); and *Military Operations: Contractors Provide Vital Services to Deployed Forces but Are Not Adequately Addressed in DOD Plans*, [GAO-03-695](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 24, 2003).

and other structures used to construct a base camp, and they look at the force structure and units coming in to build the support structure. Similarly, planning officials at U.S. European Command told us that if a plan has force packages in it, they would identify what will be provided by the military and what will be provided by contractors for things such as housing, food services, and other support.

However, most operation plans address broad missions but do not contain details on specific courses of action or identify the specific military forces required to meet the mission. For example, combatant commands have plans to evacuate U.S. citizens or provide humanitarian assistance, but these plans do not provide details on the size of the mission, such as the number of people to be evacuated or assisted. Additionally, operation plans lay out key tasks for accomplishing the mission, but these tasks may also lack specific details needed to identify potential contract support requirements. For example, a key task in one operation plan could be to provide precision strike capability within 72 hours. Combatant command officials noted that this is a description of a capability rather than a specific description of the number or type of units required. Therefore, a response to this task could involve 2 aircraft or 100 aircraft. Planners told us that the lack of information on military forces and the capabilities they bring makes it difficult for them to identify specific contract support requirements as called for in Annex W guidance.

There are a few operation plans that contained sufficient details on the scale of effort involved and the size and capabilities of the military force to enable contract support planners to develop more detailed Annex Ws that identify capabilities that could reasonably be expected to be provided by contractors. For example, we reviewed one operation plan at U.S. Southern Command that contains significant details regarding the size of the military operation and the capabilities needed to execute the plan. As a result, as discussed earlier, planners were able to develop a more detailed Annex W that describes expected contractor support by phase of operation and identifies existing contracts that could be used to support the operation. The annex also outlines the staffing for a Joint Theater Support Contracting Command to support theater contracting efforts. However, this is a plan for a highly defined operation of limited scope, which enabled planners to more readily develop a detailed Annex W that identifies specific contract support requirements. Similarly, U.S. Central Command officials told us that they were making progress in identifying contractor support in one of the command's operation plans. Contract support planners said that the plan identifies the military forces coming in to execute the operation, which helps them identify gaps in needed

capabilities that contractors could potentially fill. However, we found other cases where combatant commands had developed detailed operation plans, including time-phased force and deployment data, but lacked specific contract support information in their draft Annex Ws. For example, the draft Annex W we reviewed for one combatant command's level 4 plan with time-phased force and deployment data lacked details on the expected contractor support requirements needed to execute the mission. Similarly, we found that one combatant command has developed an operation plan for an ongoing operation. However, while considerable information is known about the mission, time frames, and force structure, the plan's Annex W focuses on contracting policies and lacks specific information on contract support requirements needed to facilitate the operation.

In addition, several combatant command planning officials told us that they expected to draw on contract support requirements identified in the component commands' supporting plans to develop Annex Ws.¹⁶ Disagreements exist regarding the level of detail on contract support that should be included at the combatant command versus the component command level. For example, U.S. Pacific Command planners told us that they view the Annex W as providing a broad discussion of contract support and that detailed information on contract support requirements would be found at the component level. Conversely, senior DOD officials told us to expect to see specific information on contractor support requirements in the combatant command Annex Ws. Joint Publication 4-10 states that the service components must ensure that operational contract support requirements are identified and incorporated into operation plans. However, we found that few service components had developed supporting plans that provide detailed information on contract support requirements. We identified several factors that hinder the ability of service components to identify contract support requirements in the Annex Ws of their supporting plans. For example:

- Combatant commands were still developing their Annex Ws for most operation plans and had not yet shared them with their components. In some cases, service components were in the process of developing inputs that could be used to identify contractor support requirements in their supporting plans.

¹⁶ According to Joint Publication 5-0, service components prepare supporting plans for operation plans when tasked to do so by the combatant commander.

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- Annex W guidance does not identify how information at the service component level should be integrated into the Annex W or how to balance the levels of detail between a combatant command's and a service component's plans.

Several combatant command planners told us that as a result of limited information from the component commands, they were unable to provide details in their combatant command plans on the specific roles of contractors.

Shortcomings in Guidance Complicate DOD's Efforts to Consistently Address Contract Support Requirements in Annex Ws across the Department

Shortcomings in guidance on how and when to develop Annex Ws have also complicated the ability of contract support planners to consistently address contract support requirements across DOD. According to planning officials, the current Annex W template was created with DOD's most detailed plans in mind—level 4 plans or level 3 plans with time-phased force and deployment data. However, less than 10 percent of the combatant commands' operation plans are at this level of detail. We found that the one-size-fits-all approach of the Annex W template makes it difficult for contract support planners to meet the current Annex W requirements for operation plans that are less detailed. This one-size-fits-all approach also contributes to a mismatch in expectations between senior DOD leadership and combatant command planners regarding the degree to which the Annex W should contain specific information on contract support requirements. We found that several senior DOD officials have the expectation that most combatant command plans should at least identify the capabilities that contractors may provide, regardless of the level of plan. For example:

- Office of the Assistant Deputy Undersecretary of Defense (Program Support) (ADUSD(PS)) officials told us that the Annex W should provide details on the numbers and roles of contractors required to support an operation.
- Other senior DOD officials involved in reviewing plans for contract support requirements told us that they expected that planners could figure out the major force elements needed under a plan and then determine the contractor support required.

However, the contract support planners and other officials responsible for developing the Annex Ws disagreed, stating that given the limited amount of information on military forces in most operation plans, the expected level of detail was difficult if not impossible to achieve. Senior DOD officials acknowledged these challenges but continue to believe that regardless of the level of detail of a plan, there should be some level of

discussion on what capabilities contractors might reasonably be expected to provide during an operation. Moreover, DOD has acknowledged that the department is highly likely to continue to rely on contractors to provide base operating support, maintenance for certain pieces of equipment, and communications support, underscoring the importance of a more detailed discussion of contract support in all of the department's plans.

ADUSD(PS) and Joint Staff J4 (Logistics) officials told us that as part of the ongoing revision of the Annex W template, they are considering including additional information in the guidance to determine the amount of information required based on the level of detail of the plan. In addition, Joint Staff J4 (Logistics) has created a task force to examine ways to improve operational contract support planning. According to officials responsible for this effort, the Annex W template is a good start, but additional tools and guidance are needed to ensure that contract support planners have the information they need to meet the requirements established in the template. For example, officials noted that planning factors might be developed to assist planners with estimating the number of contractor personnel needed to provide base support in a contingency. Until such actions are taken, senior DOD officials may continue to assume that contractor requirements are adequately addressed in a plan even though most Annex Ws lack this level of detail.

Further, DOD's planning guidance leaves it to the combatant commanders to determine if certain annexes are required for their operation plans, including the Annex W.¹⁷ However, there is no specific guidance to guide the combatant commanders in determining which plans should include an Annex W. As a result, we found that some combatant commanders took a more expansive view than others regarding which plans require the annex. For example:

- U.S. European Command officials decided to develop Annex Ws for as many plans as they could.
- U.S. Pacific Command officials are developing Annex Ws only for their level 4 operation plans.
- U.S. Central Command officials are developing Annex Ws for their operation plans on a case-by-case basis for their levels 2 and 3 plans.

¹⁷ As discussed in the Background section, the most detailed operation plans, level 4 plans, are required to have all annexes, including the Annex W. For all other plans, DOD's planning guidance leaves it to the combatant commander to determine if a plan should include an Annex W.

In addition, DOD's guidance on Annex Ws and operational contract support continues to evolve, resulting in inconsistencies in how contract support requirements are addressed in Annex Ws, depending on when an annex was written. Officials from ADUSD(PS) and the Joint Staff J4 (Logistics) have been working with the contract support planners over the past 2 years to develop a more detailed Annex W template that provides more specific guidance for planners developing these annexes. The current Annex W template requires planners to detail the contracted services and capabilities desired in theater, including a list of contracts likely to be used in theater, but it provides no additional guidance on how this information should be captured in the annex. The draft guidance, on the other hand, requires planners, among other things, to outline how contracting will support the operation, address how various contracts are integrated into each phase of the operation, and address the contract management command and control structure. However, DOD leadership has not yet finalized the revisions, which are expected to be completed sometime in fiscal year 2010, and therefore the current template remains in effect. Contract support planners told us that they are using both the existing template as well as different versions of the revised template based on when an Annex W was being written. As a result, we found that combatant command plans vary in how they present information on the potential use of contractors in executing those plans. For example, in describing two Annex Ws that they had prepared, planning officials at U.S. Pacific Command told us that many changes were made to the template after they drafted their first annex. As a result, their second Annex W was substantially different from the first and increased from about 7 to about 26 pages. In addition, contract support planners at U.S. Central Command told us that they considered the Annex Ws that were developed prior to their arrival to be insufficient in providing information on operational contract support. In DOD's July 2009 Strategic Management Plan, the Deputy Secretary of Defense identified developing adequate Annex W guidance as a key initiative to ensure effective logistics support for current major contingency operations.¹⁸ Until the department finalizes the Annex W template, these varying formats for developing Annex Ws will continue to complicate efforts to ensure that operational contract support is being addressed consistently across the combatant commands. This will make it difficult for senior DOD leadership to acquire an overall view of the extent to which successful execution of DOD's plans rely on contractors, which

¹⁸ Deputy Secretary of Defense, *Department of Defense Strategic Management Plan* (July 31, 2009).

could also limit the department's ability to provide congressional decision makers with information on DOD's reliance on contractors to support future operations.

As with the one-size-fits-all approach to Annex Ws discussed above, a lack of specific guidance regarding which plans require an Annex W has resulted in a mismatch in expectations between senior DOD leadership and combatant command planners regarding the level of detail the Annex W will contain. In most cases, we found that Annex Ws did not contain the level of detail expected by senior DOD leadership and envisioned in current guidance, limiting the utility of the Annex W as a planning tool to assess and address contract support requirements. Senior decision makers may assume that the combatant commands have adequately addressed contractor requirements in a plan, even though many plans do not contain Annex Ws or lack the expected details on the anticipated contractor support needed to execute the mission. As a result, they risk not fully understanding the extent to which they will be relying on contractors to support combat operations and being unprepared to provide the necessary management and oversight of deployed contractor personnel.

Detailed Information on Operational Contract Support Generally Not Included in Other Sections or Annexes of Operation Plans

Nonlogistics Personnel Tend to Assume That Operational Contract Support Planning Will Be Addressed by the Logistics Community

We found that nonlogistics personnel tend to assume that the logistics community will address the need to incorporate operational contract support throughout operation plans. Although the Annex W is intended to be the focal point within an operation plan for discussion of operational contract support, DOD guidance underscores the importance of addressing contractor requirements throughout an operation plan, including the base plan and other annexes as appropriate. The department's primary guidance for joint operation planning, Joint Publication 5-0, states that for any operation in which significant reliance

on contract support is anticipated, commanders must ensure that requisite planning is completed. This includes complying with other DOD operational contract support guidance, such as requirements to ensure continuation of essential contractor services and to identify specific contractor policies and requirements in the operation plan, such as contractor-related deployment and accountability reporting, force protection, and medical support. In addition, Joint Publication 5-0 includes specific references to contract support. For example, in determining personnel requirements for supporting a mission, planners are expected to identify and address known or anticipated factors that may influence potential courses of action, including the anticipated use of civilian, contract support, or host nation personnel. The guidance also states that the administration and logistics section of the base plan should address contract support. Other DOD guidance also addresses the importance of incorporating operational contract support throughout the combatant commands' operation plans. For example, Joint Publication 4-10 states that planning for contractor personnel integration should be addressed in either a contractor management plan appendix or in appropriate sections of operation plans. Similarly, Joint Publication 3-33 identifies contractor-related considerations, such as medical, legal, and personnel considerations, for personnel outside of the logistics community.¹⁹ Although the guidance above discusses the importance of incorporating contract support throughout an operation plan, it is generally at a high level and does not provide direction on how to incorporate contractors into specific segments of plans.

In our discussions with planning officials outside of the logistics community within the Joint Staff and at the combatant commands, we found a tendency to assume that contractor-related matters will be managed by logistics personnel. For example, officials responsible for the overall plan writing process at one combatant command did not see much value in placing contractor-related information in operation plans because they believed contractor issues would be addressed by the logistics community once a plan is being executed. However, DOD has acknowledged that inadequate planning for contractors for Iraq contributed to the significant challenges the department has encountered there. In addition, our review of the operation order for the drawdown of

¹⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-33, *Joint Task Force Headquarters* (Feb. 16, 2007).

U.S. forces in Iraq found that planners failed to identify the contract support required to facilitate drawdown.

According to ADUSD(PS) and Joint Staff J4 (Logistics) officials, the Annex W contains the overarching operational contract support plan, but contract support requirements should be discussed throughout the plan. As Joint Publication 4-10 states, planners often develop a mind-set that contracting is inherently a combat service support function. However, contract support for military operations not only includes logistics, but also may include combat support functions such as engineering, intelligence, and signal/communications. Similarly, several combatant command logistics officials voiced the opinion that given the department's extensive reliance on contractors to provide a broad range of both logistics and nonlogistics services, it is important that operational contract support considerations be discussed both within and outside of the logistics community. ADUSD(PS) officials stated that taking the discussion of operational contract support beyond the logistics community will require a fundamental cultural change for DOD. They added that the department's ongoing efforts to reform how it approaches operational contract support are, for the logistics community, as complex as the Goldwater-Nichols reforms were for training and other areas.²⁰ As we have previously testified, many of the long-standing problems we have identified regarding the oversight and management of contractor support to deployed forces stem from DOD's reluctance to plan for contractors as an integral part of the total force.²¹

Base Plans Generally Lack Information on Operational Contract Support

In discussions with combatant command officials responsible for developing operation plans, we found that base plans generally lack information on operational contract support, limiting DOD's ability to identify contract support requirements for future operations. The base plan establishes the combatant commander's concept for how an operation will be executed and includes essential tasks to be accomplished, assumptions, major forces, and a discussion of the operation by phase. The base plan also serves as the foundation for

²⁰ The Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act of 1986 was, in part, to reorganize DOD into a more unified military structure. Within that act, Congress included several provisions that specifically address the education of officers in joint matters, their assignment to joint organizations, and the promotion of officers serving in joint positions.

²¹ [GAO-08-436T](#).

developing the annexes of an operation plan. According to several combatant command planning officials, base plans are important because most people reviewing an operation plan will look only at the base plan and, in some cases, annexes for which they are responsible. If the discussion of operational contract support is limited to the Annex W, awareness of contractor-related issues will be limited to those individuals who develop or review the annex. As a result, officials responsible for operational contract support planning told us that it is important that the base plan address the use and role of contractors. As a senior official responsible for logistics planning at one combatant command remarked, if something is not in the base plan, it might as well not be in the plan.

According to officials responsible for developing operation plans at the combatant commands, the base plans for their operation plans lack assumptions regarding the potential use or role of contractors. Joint Publication 5-0 states that plans are derived from the best available information and rely heavily on assumptions regarding the circumstances that will exist when a crisis arises. Assumptions are intrinsically important factors upon which the conduct of the operation is based. They provide suppositions about the current situation or future course of events, assumed to be true in the absence of facts, and are necessary to enable the commander to complete an estimate of the situation and select the course of action. Base plan assumptions are important because they are signed off on by the combatant commander and are reviewed by the Secretary of Defense. As a result, assumptions are used to focus attention of senior DOD leadership on factors that could present risks to mission success.

DOD acknowledges that contractors will likely play a significant role in support of future operations and has long recognized the risks inherent in its use of and reliance on contractors. However, combatant command officials responsible for writing operation plans told us that they were not aware of any assumptions specifically addressing the potential use or role of operational contract support in their base plans. Moreover, of the three base plans we were able to review, we found that there were base plan assumptions regarding critical factors such as sustainment and support of military forces. For example, one plan assumed sufficient strategic lift assets would be available to execute the mission. Another base plan contained assumptions regarding the availability of host nation or interagency support. However, none of the base plans we reviewed addressed contractor support requirements in their assumptions. Some combatant command officials noted that DOD's planning guidance for base plans does not specify the need to develop assumptions on the potential need for contract support. According to these officials, modifying

this guidance to address the need to include such assumptions would be helpful in developing contractor-related assumptions in base plans. Despite this lack of guidance, planning officials at some combatant commands acknowledged the value in having such assumptions and told us that they were considering adding contractor-related assumptions to some of their base plans. For example:

- A senior official at U.S. Southern Command endorsed the idea of including contractor-related assumptions in base plans and stated that the command would take steps to do this.
- Planning officials at U.S. Pacific Command told us that they were considering adding a contractor-related assumption to the base plan of one of their level 4 plans.
- U.S. Central Command contract support planners saw value in including operational contract support assumptions in their base plans. Moreover, the command included a contractor-related assumption in its Iraq drawdown plan.

In discussions with combatant command planning officials, we also found there is a lack of details on operational contract support in other parts of most base plans, although a few plans did contain such details. For example, planners at one combatant command told us that base plan references to operational contract support were mostly limited to designating component command responsibilities for command and control of contracting efforts. Similarly, officials at another combatant command told us that the extent to which operational contract support is discussed in base plans sometimes does not go beyond the word “contracting” in the section describing logistics and administration responsibilities. In addition, we found a similar lack of contractor-related details in the base plan section that describes the friendly forces that the commander anticipates relying on to execute the operation. DOD has long considered contractors part of the total force and recognized the importance of planning for contractors to the same level of detail it plans for military forces. However, the friendly forces sections of the three base plans we were able to review did not mention contractors, even though some of these plans did include other non-U.S. military sources of support, such as nongovernmental organizations.

As discussed above, the base plan establishes the combatant commander’s concept for how an operation will be executed and serves as the foundation for developing the rest of the operation plan. As a result, if the base plan contains only limited information on the use and role of contractors, this will restrict the level of information available to senior DOD leadership in assessing the potential risks associated with reliance on

contractors. Senior DOD officials, including the Secretary of Defense, have acknowledged that the department has not thought holistically or coherently about its use of contractors in combat areas such as Iraq and that the failure to anticipate or plan for the heavy reliance on contractors has led to oversight and management challenges. Officials at some combatant commands recognized the potential value in having more information on contractors in their base plans. For example, U.S. Southern Command officials told us that they have included a discussion of contractor support in the concept of operations sections of three of their base plans, and we found that contract support information had been integrated throughout one of the base plans we reviewed. Planning officials at several other combatant commands were also open to expanding the discussion of operational contract support in their base plans.

Limited or No Discussion of Operational Contract Support in Nonlogistics Annexes

We found that DOD has made limited progress in incorporating operational contract support into annexes that cover nonlogistics areas, based on our discussions with officials responsible for writing these annexes. Our previous work has described how DOD's reliance on contractors has moved beyond traditional logistics areas.²² Similarly, DOD reported that as of September 2009, over 30 percent of contractor personnel in Iraq were performing nonlogistics functions, such as linguist support and security. This broader use of contractors is reflected in DOD guidance, such as Joint Publication 4-10, which highlights key contract management planning considerations, noting that these considerations cross all lines of responsibility of combatant command directorates. For example:

- The J-1 (Manpower and Personnel) and J-3 (Operations) directorates are responsible for publishing operation-specific security screening and badge issuance policies and procedures.
- The J-2 (Intelligence) directorate is responsible for assisting other directorates in areas such as vetting and badging procedures and force protection and security plans.
- The J-3 (Operations) directorate is responsible for ensuring that contractor personnel who require access to military facilities are incorporated into force protection and security plans.

²² [GAO-09-362T](#).

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- The J-5 (Plans) directorate is responsible for taking steps to mitigate the risks associated with contractor support.
 - The J-6 (Command, Control, Communications, and Computer Systems) directorate is responsible for assisting the J-3 (Operations) directorate in developing workable and reliable information-sharing and communication mechanisms.

In addition, although DOD's planning guidance establishes Annex W as the focal point for operational contract support within an operation plan, this guidance requires other directorates to identify in their annexes the capabilities required to perform the mission described in the plan. For example, guidance for preparing the intelligence and communications annexes directs planners to identify the means or capabilities necessary for meeting mission requirements. Although this guidance does not specifically mention contractors, contractors provide significant capabilities in these areas in current operations. However, several planning officials responsible for the intelligence and communications annexes told us that they did not identify contract support requirements in their annexes. For example:

- Officials responsible for the intelligence annexes at several combatant commands told us that they assume contractors will be used but do not identify them in the annex. At one combatant command, intelligence planning officials noted they had not received any training to direct them to include contractor-related issues or requirements in their annexes, adding they thought such training would be useful.
- One official responsible for writing communications annexes told us that because he already knew which contractors would be needed for the early phases of the operation, he did not include them in the annex. He acknowledged that additional operational contract support may be required in later phases of an operation, but that this was also not included in the annex. Similarly, officials responsible for developing the communications annexes at another combatant command told us that they did not include contract support requirements in their annexes and were not aware of any guidance requiring them to identify the use and role of operational contract support in their annexes.

According to Joint Publication 4-10, a key contract management area of concern is whether the combatant commanders and their staffs are aware of the general scope and scale of contracted support to be utilized for the operation. Although J4 (Logistics) is the lead directorate responsible for assembling this information, the other directorates are required to assist it. In our discussions with combatant command logistics planners, they stressed that this information should be in all appropriate annexes, not just the Annex W. As a result, the lack of information on contract support

requirements in nonlogistics annexes could hinder the ability of combatant commanders to understand the extent to which their plans rely on contractors.

The Future of DOD's Initiatives to Improve Identification of Operational Contract Support Requirements Is Uncertain Because of Guidance and Funding Challenges

DOD Has Launched Two Initiatives to Address Contract Support Requirements in Its Operation Plans

In response to congressional direction, DOD has launched two initiatives to improve its capability to ensure that operational contract support requirements are addressed in its operation plans, but these initiatives are still being refined and funding and guidance challenges remain. In 2006, Congress mandated that DOD, among other things, develop joint policies to provide for an organizational approach to operational contract support requirements definition and coordination during combat operations, postconflict operations, and contingency operations.²³ Congress defined requirements definition as the process of translating policy objectives and mission needs into specific requirements, the description of which will be the basis for awarding acquisition contracts for projects to be accomplished, work to be performed, or products to be delivered.

As we reported in 2008, DOD's organizational approach to requirements definition and coordination is a two-step approach to identify contract

²³ Pub. L. No. 109-364, § 854.

support requirements and integrate them into the combatant commands' operation plans.²⁴

- First, DOD has allocated joint operational contract support planners to each geographic combatant command as well as U.S. Special Operations Command and U.S. Joint Forces Command. These contract support planners are tasked with assisting the combatant command with identifying military capability shortfalls and the contract capabilities necessary to meet these shortfalls and defining these requirements in the combatant commander's operation plans.
- Second, DOD has established the JCASO, which will be responsible for, among other things, performing an independent review of the combatant commanders' operation plans to ensure early identification and inclusion of contract requirements. This office will also lead the integration and synchronization of contract support in operation plans across combatant commands and U.S. government agencies.

Joint Operational Contract Support Planners Face Challenges in Executing Their Responsibilities and Their Future Is Uncertain

DOD has deployed contract support planners to the combatant commands, but a lack of institutionalization has created challenges in how the planners execute their responsibilities. As discussed above, there have been long-standing requirements to integrate contractor support into operation plans, including the development of Annex Ws. In determining how to meet these requirements, ADUSD(PS) and senior leadership at the combatant commands recognized that there was a significant shortfall in the combatant command planning processes regarding the contractor-related portions of operation plans. As a result, ADUSD(PS) agreed to initially fund contract support planners to supplement the staffs of the combatant commands and give the commands the ability to ensure that operational contract support considerations are adequately factored into their plans.

In an October 2007 memo, ADUSD(PS) defined the broad responsibilities of the planners to include

- developing the contracting support plans and contractor integration plans that constitute the Annex W;
- standardizing contract management business practices;

²⁴ GAO, *Contract Management: DOD Developed Draft Guidance for Operational Contract Support but Has Not Met All Legislative Requirements*, [GAO-09-114R](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 20, 2008).

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- ensuring that contracting requirement and capabilities are synchronized;
 - ensuring contracted unity of effort; and
 - avoiding contracting duplication and competition for limited resources.

In addition to this memo, ADUSD(PS) has signed memorandums of understanding with the combatant commands to define the general roles and mission of the contract support planners. For example, the contract support planners (except for the planner at U.S. Joint Forces Command, who is primarily supporting training and exercises) are assigned responsibility for developing Annex Ws and assisting combatant commanders in identifying the requirements for contractor services. We found that the contract support planners' roles had not yet been institutionalized in DOD's higher-level operational contract support guidance. We reported in November 2008 that the contract support planners, as part of DOD's organizational approach to requirements definition, had not been institutionalized in DOD joint policies.²⁵ We also reported that DOD, the Joint Staff, and some combatant commands were unclear on who should be identifying and defining requirements for contractor support and what level of detail should be included in the combatant commanders' plans. The department is in the process of revising joint policies to provide some additional direction on planning operational contract support. For example, the department is revising DOD Instruction 3020.41—DOD's comprehensive policy document on the management of contractors supporting deployed U.S. forces—to include a requirement that military planners develop orchestrated, synchronized, detailed, and fully developed contractor support and contractor integration plans as components of feasible operation plans and operation orders. However, the roles and responsibilities of the contract support planners are not identified or described in the draft instruction. Similarly, the roles and responsibilities of the contract support planners are not discussed in Joint Publication 4-10. Several officials voiced concerns that until the contract support planners' roles and responsibilities are institutionalized in DOD guidance, their ability to influence those outside of the logistics community will be limited, hindering their ability to effectively integrate operational contract support across operation plans.

We found uncertainty in how the contract support planners program will be institutionalized with regard to funding and staffing. As stated above, the contract support planners were allocated to the combatant commands

²⁵ [GAO-09-114R](#).

to address a significant shortfall in the commands' ability to incorporate operational contract support into their planning processes. According to ADUSD(PS) officials, when the contract support planner concept was developed, the services were to provide a combination of military and civilian personnel to serve as the planners. It was anticipated that the services would be able to provide these individuals by 2010. In order to jump-start the process and get the planners in place earlier, ADUSD(PD) agreed to provide the combatant commands with contractors to provide an immediate planning capability. The planners came on contract in September 2007 and were originally expected to stay through September 2009, at which time the services were expected to institutionalize the program by providing one military and one civilian billet to each combatant command to become part of the command's staff.

DOD's April 2008 report to Congress stated that DOD's budget guidance included the permanent resourcing of the contract support planners with the goal of filling these positions by military personnel as soon as possible.²⁶ ADUSD(PS) officials told us that they requested funding for one military and one civilian planner at each combatant command in the fiscal year 2010 budget submission. However, senior DOD leadership declined to provide this funding during the budget review process within DOD. According to ADUSD(PS) officials, DOD leadership believed that the combatant commands could meet this requirement without additional resources. As a result, the expected transition from contractors to a mix of military and civilian personnel has been delayed. In the meantime, the contract support planners currently at the combatant commands continue to be contractors who are funded out of appropriations provided for overseas contingency operations. We have previously reported the risks in relying on supplemental appropriations to fund long-term capabilities.²⁷ According to ADUSD(PS) officials, DOD has funded the contract support planners in the fiscal year 2011 budget. However, the budget does not provide additional resources to fund the contract support planners but requires the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics to pay for the program using existing funds.

²⁶ Department of Defense, *Report to the Congress of the United States, Department of Defense Program for Planning, Managing, and Accounting for Contractor Services and Contractor Personnel during Contingency Operations* (April 2008). This report was issued by DOD in response to the congressional mandate in section 854(c) of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007, Pub. L. No. 109-364.

²⁷ GAO, *Supplemental Appropriations: Opportunities Exist to Increase Transparency and Provide Additional Controls*, [GAO-08-314](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 31, 2008).

According to the officials, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics lacks the funds to pay for this program, and the officials are working with the DOD Comptroller to find an alternative funding source. In addition, these funding uncertainties have also complicated the ability of the contract support planners to carry out their responsibilities. For example, although the contract support planner memorandums of understanding call for ADUSD(PS) to fund travel to the semiannual operational contract support conferences, a lack of funding led to delaying the second 2009 conference to 2010.

Furthermore, we found concerns that changing who funds the contract support planners in the future may erode the department's ability to retain a long-term organizational approach for requirements development. Currently, ADUSD(PS) provides the planners to the combatant commands to supplement their staffs. As described above, the expectation has been that the planners would become part of combatant command staff. However, several combatant command planners and officials responsible for the contract support planners told us that the combatant commands would be unlikely to dedicate their own resources to carry out the tasks currently being executed by these planners. For example, J4 (Logistics) officials from U.S. Pacific Command were concerned that if the funding for contract support planners was forced to come out of the combatant command budget, there was a danger that the planners would be redirected from the operational contract support focus to deal with other issues because of the manpower shortages the command faces. The officials added that unless the combatant command staff is expanded to add the planners, it is important that the planners retain their independent funding source so they can remain focused on contractor-related issues. The officials hoped ADUSD(PS) would continue to fund the planners through 2012. Nevertheless, officials at several combatant commands stated that the contract support planners provided valuable support and indicated that losing this planning capability would reduce the commands' ability to ensure that operational contract support requirements are sufficiently incorporated into operation plans. According to ADUSD(PS) officials, the current plan is for the contract support planners to transition to military and civilian billets and become part of the JCASO while continuing to be under the operational control of the combatant commands as supplements to the commands' staffs. This will enable the planners to retain their focus on operational contract support.

Uncertainty regarding the Roles and Responsibilities of the Joint Contingency Acquisition Support Office

Uncertainty also exists regarding the roles and responsibilities of the JCASO—the second element of DOD’s organizational approach to requirements definition. The JCASO was established by the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Materiel Readiness in a July 2008 memo, among other things, to review the combatant commanders’ operation plans continually to ensure early identification of and inclusion of contractor requirements. The JCASO will also lead the integration and synchronization of contract support in operation plans across the combatant commands. JCASO officials told us the JCASO is expected to maintain situational awareness of all combatant command operation plans, work closely with the contract support planners as they conduct operational contract support planning, and collect lessons learned from contingency operations to identify improvements. The JCASO is also expected to play a role in exercises and ensuring that operational contract support-related issues are incorporated in those exercises.

However the department has made little progress in finalizing JCASO guidance since we first reported on the JCASO’s planning roles in November 2008.²⁸ Guidance for this office is still being developed, and existing guidance contains few details on the JCASO’s planning roles. For example:

- The July 2008 memo establishing the JCASO did not discuss the organization’s planning responsibilities.
- The JCASO is only briefly identified as a future organizational option in Joint Publication 4-10, which establishes DOD’s doctrine for planning, conducting, and assessing operational contract support integration and contract management functions in support of joint operations.
- The JCASO is not mentioned at all in DOD Instruction 3020.41, the source of DOD’s policy and procedures concerning operational contract support.
- The planning responsibilities of the JCASO are only briefly mentioned in the draft concept of operations for operational contract support, one of the documents intended to explain how the department plans to implement the policies it is developing to meet congressional intent for an organization approach to requirements development.

The lack of specific guidance regarding the JCASO’s roles and responsibilities has led to confusion regarding the JCASO’s role in requirements definition. We found significant confusion among the

²⁸ [GAO-09-114R](#).

combatant command planners regarding what the JCASO was intended to do. For example:

- U.S. European Command planning officials stated that it was not clear what the JCASO's role would be, how it would fit into the broader plan development and review process, or how the contract support planners would interact with the JCASO.
- U.S. Central Command logistics planners stated they do not have a good understanding of what the JCASO concept is. They were familiar with the draft concept of operations but remained unsure as to how the JCASO would work with or for the combatant command and were waiting to see how the concept evolves.
- U.S. Northern Command planning officials were unclear as to what the JCASO's roles would be and how the JCASO would support their efforts. The officials believed additional information was needed in the JCASO concept of operations to define how the JCASO would fit into the combatant command's efforts.
- U.S. Southern Command planners saw the JCASO more as a body to coordinate contract support-related policy and doctrinal changes, noting that the JCASO was still being developed and that more coordination with the planners would be helpful in defining the JCASO's role in plan development and review.
- U.S. Special Operations Command planners thought the JCASO could deploy in support of the geographic combatant commands but were unsure what support, if any, the JCASO could provide to U.S. Special Operations Command.

JCASO officials acknowledged that they were still building processes to validate the JCASO concept. According to these officials, the contract support planners are their entrée to raise these questions in the planning process. Further, the draft concept of operations states that the JCASO and the contract support planners are key contributors to integrating operational contract support in exercises and plans. Although the draft concept of operations does not describe how the two should work together, it does indicate that the contract support planners are to become part of the JCASO. According to ADUSD(PS) and JCASO officials, aligning the contract support planners within the JCASO will enable contingency response and contract planning functions to be under one operational management staff and to share lessons learned. We found one case where the lack of management of the contract support planner program led to the failure to share best practices. Planners at U.S. Southern Command developed a detailed checklist for reviewing plans to track progress and ensure that each plan was reviewed in a consistent manner, but did not

share this checklist with contract support planners at the other combatant commands.

In addition to challenges arising from the lack of detailed guidance, the JCASO has not been fully staffed, further limiting its ability to execute its responsibilities. The JCASO concept calls for a staff of about 30 people drawn from disciplines such as finance, law, and engineering as well as a liaison from the Defense Contract Management Agency. According to the memo establishing the JCASO, the office was to achieve an initial operational capability by fiscal year 2009. However, as of December 2009, the JCASO consisted of only 5 individuals, primarily contractors. According to ADUSD(PS) officials, DOD included funding for a 28-person JCASO as part of DOD's fiscal year 2010 budget that was submitted to Congress. DOD now has the funds in its approved budget, but the JCASO is not expected to be fully staffed until late 2010.

As a result of these staffing challenges, the JCASO has been limited in its ability to carry out the broad responsibilities described above. We found that the JCASO's interactions with the combatant commands thus far have not dealt with the JCASO's role in reviewing and assessing the discussion of operational contract support in operation plans. Rather, the focus of the JCASO has been on integrating itself into combatant command exercises in order to demonstrate and refine the JCASO concept. According to ADUSD(PS), a U.S. European Command exercise in 2008 was used to conduct a pilot implementation of the JCASO concept, with additional JCASO participation in U.S. European Command and U.S. Pacific Command exercises in 2009. Similarly, JCASO officials stated that these exercises have been helpful in developing a better concept for the JCASO's potential role in providing or supporting contingency contract management during an operation. However, JCASO and ADUSD(PS) officials acknowledged that the JCASO has not yet reviewed any operation plans.

Conclusions

While DOD has recognized its reliance on contractors to support operations both now and in the future, the department continues to face challenges in integrating the potential use and role of contractors into its operation plans. The introduction of the Annex W requirement and the deployment of contract support planners to the combatant commands has raised awareness of the importance of operational contract support and led to some improvement in planning for contract support. Despite these actions, the combatant commands have not fully identified for senior DOD leadership the extent to which their plans rely on contractors. As

operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have made clear, failure to adequately plan for the use and role of contractors can impede the department's ability to identify and mitigate the risks associated with relying on contractors. In addition, as our previous work has shown, DOD's lack of understanding of its reliance on contractors can hinder the effective management and oversight of contractors, potentially resulting in negative impacts on military operations and unit morale. Further, the failure to fully identify contract support requirements in operation plans limits DOD's ability to provide congressional decision makers with information on the department's reliance on contractors to support future operations.

DOD's challenges to integrating the potential use and role of contractors into its operation plans are exacerbated by shortcomings in guidance and a lack of institutionalization of the department's organizational approach to requirements definition for contractors and developing and funding personnel with clear roles and appropriate expertise. A one-size-fits-all approach to defining Annex W requirements has contributed to an expectations mismatch between senior DOD leadership and combatant command planners regarding the level of information the annexes should contain. Similarly, a lack of specific guidance has enabled combatant commands to choose varying approaches with regard to what plans require Annex Ws. As a result, DOD senior leadership is unable to look across the combatant command plans and assess or address the department's overall reliance on contractors to execute future operations. Similarly, the limited discussion of operational contract support in other sections of operations plans, including the base plan, limits the ability of combatant commanders and senior DOD leadership to evaluate and react to the potential risks of reliance on contractors. With contractor personnel equaling or at times outnumbering military personnel in current operations, the failure to include the likely use of contractors among base plan assumptions or the lack of discussion of the role contractors may play in the various phases of an operation could create significant risks in executing plans. In addition, with over 30 percent of contractor personnel in Iraq performing nonlogistics functions, the department must take steps to ensure that contract support considerations are addressed across the combatant command directorates. Furthermore, if the department fails to institutionalize and fund its initiatives to address contract support requirements in its operation plans, it will fail to meet the congressional mandate to develop an organization approach to requirements definition. Until such actions are taken, DOD will continue to struggle to recognize the centrality of operational contract support to the effective execution of its missions and will therefore be at risk of repeating the contractor-related problems it has faced in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To better enable senior DOD leadership to assess the department's reliance on contractors to execute future operations and to improve the ability of combatant commanders to effectively identify contract support requirements in their operation plans, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to take the following two actions:

- As part of the ongoing revision of the Annex W template, clarify and specify the appropriate level of detail that should be included in an Annex W based on the degree to which the plan provides details on the size and capabilities of military forces and how the plan envisions those forces being used. The revised template should be completed consistent with the transition of the funding of the contract support planners from appropriations provided for overseas contingency operations to the defense budget.
- Update DOD's guidance for contingency planning to clarify and specify the level of plans that require an Annex W or similarly detailed discussion of operational contract support requirements.

To improve the integration of operational contract support requirements throughout combatant command operation plans, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to take the following two actions:

- Require all base plans to include an assumption on the potential use and role of contractors.
- Require the base plans and nonlogistics annexes of operation plans to address the potential need for contractor support where appropriate (e.g., intelligence and communications annexes).

To ensure that the department effectively institutionalizes the required organizational approach to addressing operational contract support in its operation plans, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics and the Joint Staff Director for Logistics to take the following three actions:

- Clarify the roles and missions of the joint operational contract support planners and the JCASO and the relationship between both functions.
- Take steps to ensure that both functions are adequately staffed and funded to meet their missions.
- Incorporate both of these initiatives in DOD's operational contract support guidance.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with all of our recommendations. In agreeing with our recommendations, DOD identified additional actions the department believes are needed to address our recommendations. We agree these actions are important steps toward addressing our recommendations. DOD's comments are reprinted in appendix II. DOD also provided several technical comments, which we considered and incorporated where appropriate.

With regard to the Annex W, DOD agreed with our recommendation to clarify and specify the appropriate level of detail that should be included in an Annex W based on the degree to which the plan provides details on the size and capabilities of military forces and how the plan envisions those forces being used. In its comments, DOD described the progress the department has made in developing an Annex W template, but acknowledged that the level of operational contract support detail should be tailored to match the degree to which the plan provides details on the anticipated size of capabilities of military forces to be used. DOD added that the operational contract support community of interest is designing a contract support estimator tool that will help planners determine operational contract support requirements, particularly the contractor footprint anticipated for an operation. We agree that such a tool will facilitate the commander's ability to integrate operational contract support in the overall operation. DOD also agreed with our recommendation to update DOD's guidance for contingency planning to clarify and specify the level of plans that require an Annex W or similarly detailed discussion of operational contract support requirements. In its comments, DOD stated that the Annex W is as important as the logistics annex (Annex D) and that whenever an Annex D is required by joint planning guidance, the Annex W should also be required. The department added that joint planning guidance should dictate that operational contract support be included in the base plan. We agree that both of these actions would clarify the requirement for where and how to include operational contract support requirements in operation plans.

With regard to the need to improve the integration of operational contract support requirements throughout combatant command operation plans, DOD agreed with our recommendations to require all base plans to include an assumption on the potential use and role of contractors and to require the base plans and nonlogistics annexes of operation plans to address the potential need for contractor support where appropriate (e.g., intelligence and communications annexes). In its comments, DOD stated that the base plan at the operational or component level should also address the requisite assumptions and roles of contractors and the use of contractor

support in the appropriate annexes where the plan determines a valid requirement for support. The department added that major operational contract support functions that will have a significant impact upon a mission should be included in the base plan concept of operations. We agree with DOD's comments as well as the department's observation that joint planning guidance should be modified to incorporate these requirements.

Lastly, with regard to effectively institutionalizing the required organizational approach to addressing operational contract support in operation plans, DOD agreed with our recommendations to clarify the roles and missions of the joint operational contract support planners and the JCASO and the relationship between both functions, take steps to ensure that both functions are adequately staffed and funded to meet their missions, and incorporate both of these initiatives in DOD's operational contract support guidance. In its comments, DOD further stated that funding for these positions be centralized rather than placed with each combatant command. As noted in the report, there are concerns that funding the contract support planners out of the combatant command budgets could cause the planners to be redirected to focus on issues other than operational contract support. We agree that it is important that the planners retain their operational contract support focus and that their role needs to be institutionalized in operational contract support guidance. We also agree with DOD's comment that the department should consider contract support planners at the service component and combat support agency levels.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees and the Secretary of Defense. The report also is available at no charge on GAO's Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-8365 or solisw@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributions to this report are listed in appendix III.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Solis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

William M. Solis
Director
Defense Capabilities and Management

List of Committees

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman
The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Ike Skelton
Chairman
The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks
Chairman
The Honorable C.W. "Bill" Young
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

In designing and conducting our assessment, our objectives were to determine (1) what progress the Department of Defense (DOD) has made in developing operational contract support annexes for its operation plans, (2) the extent to which operational contract support requirements are included in other sections of operation plans, and (3) what progress the department has made in establishing a long-term capability to ensure the inclusion of operational contract support requirements in operation plans. To address our objectives, we met with and obtained documentation from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff to review key guidance on how contingency operation plans are drafted and reviewed and to obtain an understanding of how operational contract support is addressed in this guidance. We visited all of the geographic combatant commands as well as U.S. Special Operations Command, U.S. Joint Forces Command, and some combatant command service components to discuss their roles in drafting contingency operation plans, how operational contract support was addressed in those plans, and other related efforts to improve the preparation and planning for working with contractors in future operations. We reviewed some base plans and annexes at the combatant commands, comparing them to DOD's guidance on plan development as well as its operational contract support guidance in order to determine how well these documents incorporated contract support. Specifically, we reviewed

- 7 of the 34 Annex Ws drafted or approved as of February 2010,
- 3 base plans (1 base plan for a level 4 plan and 2 base plans for level 3 plans),
- 4 Annex Ds (logistics), and
- contractor-related excerpts of a base plan and an Annex D (logistics).

However, because DOD limited our access to its operation plans, we were unable to provide a comprehensive assessment of each plan's assumptions, comprehensiveness, feasibility, adequacy of executable detail, and other aspects of operational contract support as directed in the mandate. Nevertheless, we believe that the excerpts of plans and annexes DOD allowed us to see, along with in-depth conversations with planners and other officials responsible for drafting or reviewing base plans and annexes, gave us adequate information with which to assess DOD's progress in incorporating operational contract support into its plans.

Following our site visits to the combatant commands, we requested updated information on each command's number of plans, by plan level, to determine the total number of plans for which they were including operational contract support in an Annex W or D or in other sections of

their plans. We also requested from the Joint Staff J-7 an updated list of DOD plans required under the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan. We compared these two groups of information to ensure consistency in the number of high-level plans that require the Annex W. We also visited select DOD components with some responsibilities for contract management, such as the Defense Contract Management Agency and the Defense Logistics Agency, to discuss their roles in contingency operations planning and efforts to improve the inclusion of operational contract support in plans.

We visited or contacted the following organizations during our review:

Department of Defense

- Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Washington, D.C.
- Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Washington, D.C.
- Office of the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Program Support), Washington, D.C.
- Defense Contract Management Agency, Springfield, Virginia
- Defense Logistics Agency, Fort Belvoir, Virginia
- Joint Contingency Acquisition Support Office, McLean, Virginia
- U.S. Africa Command, Stuttgart, Germany
- U.S. Central Command, Tampa, Florida
- U.S. European Command, Stuttgart, Germany, and its following service components:
 - Special Operations Command Europe
 - U.S. Air Forces in Europe
 - U.S. Army Europe
 - U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Europe
 - U.S. Naval Forces Europe
- U.S. Joint Forces Command, Suffolk, Virginia
- U.S. Northern Command, Colorado Springs, Colorado
- U.S. Pacific Command, Honolulu, Hawaii, and its following service components:
 - Pacific Air Forces
 - Special Operations Command, Pacific
 - U.S. Army Pacific
 - U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific
 - U.S. Pacific Fleet
- U.S. Southern Command, Miami, Florida
- U.S. Special Operations Command, Tampa, Florida

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

- Joint Staff J4 (Logistics) Directorate, Washington, D.C.
- Joint Staff J7 (Operational Plans and Joint Force Development) Directorate, Washington, D.C.

Department of the Army

- Program Office, Logistics Civil Augmentation Program, Fort Belvoir, Virginia

We conducted this performance audit from October 2008 through February 2010 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense



ACQUISITION
TECHNOLOGY
AND LOGISTICS

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
3000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3000

MAR 19 2010

Mr. William M. Solis
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Solis:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO Draft Report, GAO-10-472, "WARFIGHTER SUPPORT: DoD Needs to Improve Its Planning for Using Contractors to Support Future Military Operations," dated February 25, 2010, (GAO Code 351275). Detailed comments are enclosed.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to respond to your draft report and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Gary J. Motsek
Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
(Program Support)

Enclosure:
As stated

GAO DRAFT REPORT – DATED FEBRUARY 25, 2010
GAO CODE 351275/GAO-10-472

"WARFIGHTER SUPPORT: DoD Needs to Improve Its Planning for Using
Contractors to Support Future Military Operations"

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, as part of the ongoing revision of the Annex W template, to clarify and specify the appropriate level of detail that should be included in an Annex W based on the degree to which the plan provides details on the size and capabilities of military forces and how the plan envisions those forces being used. The revised template should be completed consistent with the transition of the funding of the contract support planners from appropriations provided for overseas contingency operations to the defense budget.

DoD RESPONSE: DoD concurs with this recommendation. DoD agrees that the level of operational contract support (OCS) details contained within a plan should be scoped to the anticipated size and capabilities of military forces to be used. Two years ago no Annex W (Contract Support Integration Plan (CSIP)) template existed within DoD. Since the inception of the Joint Operational Contract Support Planner (JOCSP) initiative, the planners have made significant strides in developing a template and integrating the Annex into plans, despite the lack of institutionalization of the Annex W in the joint planning process (e.g. JOPES). As GAO points out, this template is not a "one size fits all" tool. Military plans vary greatly in scope. Whereas some plans may afford greater fidelity of details, such as the inclusion of a Time-Phased Force Deployment Data (TPFDD) and known operating locations/bases, other plans are very general due to unknowns. The level of OCS details should be tailored accordingly. The OCS community of interest is designing a contract support estimator tool that will facilitate planners in determining OCS support, particularly the contractor footprint anticipated for an operation. Such data will greatly facilitate a commander's ability to integrate OCS into the overall operation as it will allow them to anticipate additional life support requirements for contractors authorized to accompany the force (CAAF). DoD further concurs that the JOCSP program is critical and should be institutionalized.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff to update DoD's guidance for contingency planning to clarify and specify the level of plans that require an Annex W or similarly detailed discussion of operational contract support requirements.

DoD RESPONSE: DoD concurs with this recommendation. The Annex W is on the same level of importance as the Annex D (Logistics). Whenever an Annex D is required in accordance with Joint Operational Planning and Execution System (JOPES), so should the Annex W. If an Annex W is not included in plans, JOPES should dictate that Operational Contract Support must be included in base plan, most likely in paragraph 4. Clarification of the level of plans and minimum requirements for operational contract support requirements will assist with Command emphasis to the component commands to enforce planning at the appropriate level and inclusion of component command planning directives.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff to:

- Require all base plans to include an assumption on the potential use and role of contractors.
- Require the base plans and non-logistics annexes of operation plans to address the potential need for contractor support where appropriate (e.g., intelligence and communications annexes).

DoD RESPONSE: DoD concurs with this recommendation. However, the base plan at the operational or component level should also address the requisite assumptions and roles of contractors and the use of contractor support in the appropriate annexes where the plan determines a valid requirement for support. DoD agrees that all plans, regardless of level, should include key Operational Contract Support (OCS) assumptions in the base plan. Additionally, major OCS functions that will have a significant impact upon a mission should be included in base plan concept of operations (paragraph 3). The inclusion of OCS language in the base plan does not negate the necessity for an Annex W. DoD concurs that other functional annexes (e.g. intelligence, communications, operations, etc.) in a plan should include OCS factors. This should be enforced in the Joint Operational Planning and Execution System and annex templates should be modified to include OCS in the assumptions and concept of operations of each functional annex at a minimum, which is currently being staffed and updated by the J-7. As GAO described, this must be institutionalized and trained before it “eventually migrates into the mindset of planners.”

RECOMMENDATION 4: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics (USD(AT&L)) and the Joint Staff Director for Logistics to:

- Clarify the roles and missions of the Joint Operational Contract Support Planners (JOCSP) and the Joint Contingency Acquisition Support Office (JCASO) and the relationship between both functions.
- Take steps to ensure that both functions are adequately staffed and funded to meet their missions.

- Incorporate both of these initiatives in DoD's operational contract support guidance.

DoD RESPONSE: DoD concurs and adds reference comment. Clarification of the JCASO relationship with the lead service for logistics and contracting (LCLC) may assist planners in support functions and planning considerations provided by the two entities. DoD concurs that the JOCSP program be fully staffed and resourced. DoD further recommends that funding of these positions be centralized, under the JCASO, vice with each combatant command. If each combatant command is required to fund these positions, substantial risk will be assumed. For instance, a combatant command may not fund the program due to other higher priority requirements, or, available command funding may not be sufficient to retain/obtain the planner expertise level required. In order to maintain the vitality of both the JCASO and JOCSP program it must be institutionalized and centrally funded. DoD concurs that both programs are an important development and must be incorporated in Operational Contract Support guidance. Furthermore, DOD should consider Operational Contract Support planners at the Service Component and Combat Support Agency levels.

Appendix III: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

William M. Solis, (202) 512-8365 or solisw@gao.gov

Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, the following individuals made contributions to this report: Carole Coffey, Assistant Director; Karyn Angulo; Noah Bleicher; Gabrielle Carrington; Laura Czohara; Susan Ditto; James Leonard; and James A. Reynolds.

Related GAO Products

Contract Management: DOD Developed Draft Guidance for Operational Contract Support but Has Not Met All Legislative Requirements. [GAO-09-114R](#). Washington, D.C.: November 20, 2008.

Contingency Contracting: DOD, State, and USAID Contracts and Contractor Personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan. [GAO-09-19](#). Washington, D.C.: October 1, 2008.

Military Operations: DOD Needs to Address Contract Oversight and Quality Assurance Issues for Contracts Used to Support Contingency Operations. [GAO-08-1087](#). Washington, D.C.: September 26, 2008.

Rebuilding Iraq: DOD and State Department Have Improved Oversight and Coordination of Private Security Contractors in Iraq, but Further Actions Are Needed to Sustain Improvements. [GAO-08-966](#). Washington, D.C.: July 31, 2008.

Defense Management: DOD Needs to Reexamine Its Extensive Reliance on Contractors and Continue to Improve Management and Oversight. [GAO-08-572T](#). Washington, D.C.: March 11, 2008.

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Military Operations: DOD's Extensive Use of Logistics Support Contracts Requires Strengthened Oversight. [GAO-04-854](#). Washington, D.C.: July 19, 2004.

Military Operations: Contractors Provide Vital Services to Deployed Forces but Are not Adequately Addressed in DOD Plans. [GAO-03-695](#). Washington, D.C.: June 24, 2003.

Contingency Operations: Army Should Do More to Control Contract Cost in the Balkans. [GAO/NSIAD-00-225](#). Washington, D.C.: September 29, 2000.

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