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Subject: *Defense Critical Infrastructure: Actions Needed to Improve the Consistency, Reliability, and Usefulness of DOD's Tier 1 Task Critical Asset List*

The Department of Defense (DOD) relies on a global network of defense critical infrastructure so essential that the incapacitation, exploitation, or destruction of an asset within this network could severely affect DOD's ability to deploy, support, and sustain its forces and operations worldwide and to implement its core missions, including current missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Because of its importance to DOD operations, this defense critical infrastructure could be vulnerable to attacks by adversaries, and vulnerable to natural disasters and hazards, such as hurricanes and earthquakes. Since September 2003, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs (ASD[HD&ASA]) has been responsible for developing and ensuring implementation of critical infrastructure protection policy and program guidance. To identify and help assure the availability of this mission-critical infrastructure, in August 2005 DOD established the Defense Critical Infrastructure Program (DCIP),<sup>1</sup> assigning overall responsibility for the program to ASD(HD&ASA).<sup>2</sup> In April 2008, DOD issued an instruction that further assigned responsibilities and prescribed procedures for the implementation of DCIP, among other things.<sup>3</sup> In October 2008, DOD formalized the process for identifying and prioritizing its critical infrastructure.<sup>4</sup>

Since 2006, ASD(HD&ASA) has collaborated with the Joint Staff to compile a list of all DOD- and non-DOD-owned infrastructure essential to accomplish DOD's missions. To support this effort, the combatant commands and military services are to identify and place their critical assets into prioritized tiers,<sup>5</sup> including Tier 1 Task Critical

<sup>1</sup> DOD Directive 3020.40, *Defense Critical Infrastructure Program (DCIP)*, (Aug. 19, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Earlier programs analogous to DCIP can be traced back to 1998.

<sup>3</sup> DOD Instruction 3020.45, *Defense Critical Infrastructure Program (DCIP) Management* (Apr. 21, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> DOD Manual 3020.45-M, *Defense Critical Infrastructure Program (DCIP): DOD Mission-Based Critical Asset Identification Process (CAIP), Volume 1* (Oct. 24, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> According to DOD's critical asset identification guidance, the definitions of the tiered Task Critical Assets are: **Tier 1**—An asset the loss, incapacitation, or disruption of which could result in mission (or function) *failure* at the DOD, military department, combatant command, sub-unified command,

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Assets, which are assets of such extraordinary importance that their incapacitation or destruction would have a serious, debilitating effect on the ability of one or more military services, combatant commands, or DCIP Defense Infrastructure Sector Lead Agents to execute the mission essential tasks they support. Defense Critical Assets,<sup>6</sup> on the other hand, are the assets most critical for fulfilling overall DOD missions and are identified from the universe of Task Critical Assets. The Joint Staff worked with the combatant commands, military services, and Defense Infrastructure Sector Lead Agents to develop the current departmentwide list of Tier 1 Task Critical Assets. In October 2008, ASD(HD&ASA) formally accepted the Joint Staff's Defense Critical Asset nomination list as an initial list of Defense Critical Assets.

In its May 2008 report on H.R. 5658,<sup>7</sup> the House Committee on Armed Services addressed DOD's lack of progress in analyzing the risks of electrical power outages to critical DOD missions through DCIP and, among other things, directed that GAO continue its review of DCIP. As a result, we initiated our on-going review of the assurance of electrical power supplies to DOD's critical assets. We originally planned to select a random sample of DOD Tier 1 Task Critical Assets to survey for this review; however, based on discussions with DOD officials and our analysis, we determined that the universe of critical assets did not represent an accurate, comprehensive list of DOD Tier 1 Task Critical Assets, and that this issue in and of itself warranted further analysis.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, we are reporting separately on issues relating specifically to the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list with recommendations, so DOD can take action in a timely manner to update and improve its list of Defense Critical Assets in the fall of 2009 and prioritize funding. We plan to issue a separate, related report later this year on our on-going review of the assurance of electrical power supplies to DOD critical assets.

As discussed with the committees of jurisdiction for this report, we examined (1) the extent to which the combatant commands and military services applied consistent

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defense agency, or defense infrastructure sector level. **Tier 2**—An asset the loss, incapacitation, or disruption of which could result in severe mission (or function) *degradation* at the DOD, military department, combatant command, sub-unified command, defense agency, or defense infrastructure sector level. **Tier 3**—An asset the loss, incapacitation, or disruption of which could result in mission (or function) failure *below* the military department, combatant command, sub-unified command, defense agency, or defense infrastructure sector level. (*Emphasis added by GAO.*)

<sup>6</sup> Defense Critical Assets are of such extraordinary importance to DOD operations in peace, crisis, and war that their incapacitation or destruction would have a very serious, debilitating effect on the ability of DOD to fulfill its missions. Defense critical assets are a subset of Tier 1 Task Critical Assets. Currently, there are about 675 Tier 1 Task Critical Assets and 29 Defense Critical Assets.

<sup>7</sup> H.R. Rep. No. 110-652, pp. 523-524 (May 16, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Although we found a number of duplicate assets on the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list, combatant command officials said that duplication of Task Critical Assets is not a serious issue and is due mainly to the different naming conventions between the military services and combatant commands. Moreover, combatant command officials noted that if several combatant commands identify an asset as a Task Critical Asset, then this merely reflects its criticality to multiple mission owners.

and clear criteria in identifying and prioritizing their submissions of assets to DOD's Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list; (2) the actions ASD(HD&ASA) has taken to promote coordination among the Joint Staff, the combatant commands, and the military services to identify critical assets; and (3) the extent to which ASD(HD&ASA) developed effective program management practices related to the identification of Tier 1 Task Critical Assets, such as formal milestones, schedules, and a feedback process.

We focused the scope of our review on DOD's list of Tier 1 Task Critical Assets as of March 16, 2009, a universe of about 675 assets from which a list of Defense Critical Assets was developed.<sup>9</sup> In addition, Defense Infrastructure Sector Lead Agents also identify Tier 1 Task Critical Assets; however, we did not include them in the scope of this review because they nominated relatively few assets compared to the combatant commands and military services.

To evaluate these objectives, we conducted interviews with DCIP officials at the U.S. Army, the U.S. Navy, and the U.S. Air Force; U.S. Pacific Command; U.S. Strategic Command; Joint Staff (J-34); and ASD(HD&ASA). To determine the extent to which the combatant commands and military services applied consistent and clear criteria in identifying and prioritizing their submissions of assets to DOD's Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list, we compared information regarding specific DCIP criteria used from our interviews with the combatant command and military service officials with prior and existing DCIP guidance, including the *Defense Critical Infrastructure Program Criticality Process Guidance Document*;<sup>10</sup> the draft *Critical Asset Identification Process*,<sup>11</sup> the final DOD Manual 3020.45, *DOD Mission-Based Critical Asset Identification Process*;<sup>12</sup> DOD Directive 3020.40;<sup>13</sup> DOD Instruction 3020.45;<sup>14</sup> DCIP strategy documents;<sup>15</sup> and relevant guidance from the military services.<sup>16</sup> To

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<sup>9</sup> The actual number of Tier 1 Task Critical Assets can change frequently, since critical assets are regularly added and deleted from the list by the combatant commands, military services, defense agencies, and Defense Infrastructure Sector Lead Agents.

<sup>10</sup> Department of Defense, *Defense Critical Infrastructure Program Criticality Process Guidance Document* (Dec. 21, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Department of Defense, *Critical Asset Identification Process*, Draft, Version 2.0 (Sept. 1, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> DOD 3020.45-M Volume 1 (Oct. 24, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> DOD Directive 3020.40 (Aug. 19, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> DOD Instruction 3020.45 (Apr. 21, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> These include the Department of Defense, *Strategy for Defense Critical Infrastructure* (Washington, D.C.: March 2008) and Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: June 2008).

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, U.S. Air Force, *The Identification of Critical Assets and Infrastructures—Methodology, Version 2.0* (Apr. 7, 2006); Air Force Policy Directive 10-24, *Air Force Critical Infrastructure Program (CIP)* (Apr. 28, 2006); and U.S. Army, *Critical Infrastructure Risk Management; The Identification of Critical Assets Methodology* (Jan. 6, 2007).

determine what actions ASD(HD&ASA) has taken to promote coordination among the Joint Staff, the combatant commands, and the military services, we conducted interviews with appropriate DOD officials regarding steps taken and planned, and evaluated the actions against current DCIP guidance related to coordination. Finally, to determine the extent to which ASD(HD&ASA) has developed effective program management practices related to the identification of Tier 1 Task Critical Assets, such as formal milestones, schedules, and a feedback process, we compared DCIP program management strategies and documents with criteria cited under our previous work on internal controls in the federal government.<sup>17</sup> We also interviewed ASD(HD&ASA) and Joint Staff officials to determine what program management efforts they were developing to identify and prioritize Tier 1 Task Critical Assets. We conducted this performance audit from April 2009 to June 2009 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.

## Results in Brief

While DOD has made some progress in developing a Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list, this progress was limited by DOD's lack of consistent criteria for identifying and prioritizing Tier 1 Task Critical Assets. When selecting and submitting their most recent lists of Tier 1 Task Critical Asset submissions to the Joint Staff, the combatant commands and the military services used disparate sets of guidance, including draft and nonbinding guidance, as their criteria. Air Force officials, however, told us they developed formal critical asset identification guidance based on DOD's draft critical asset identification manual. According to military service and combatant command officials, DOD's draft and nonbinding guidance contained unclear definitions of asset tiers, Task Critical Assets, and other key terms, such as "mission essential tasks." Additionally, while DOD encouraged the combatant commands and military services to use the *Criticality Process Guidance Document* and a draft *DOD Mission-Based Critical Asset Identification Process* manual to determine their Tier 1 Task Critical Assets, it did not require them to do so because DOD's final *DOD Mission-Based Critical Asset Identification Process* manual had not yet been issued. Our prior work on DCIP management<sup>18</sup> and the *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*<sup>19</sup> both emphasize the importance of management controls to guide program implementation, which includes the development and issuance of formal guidance. The use of disparate sets of guidance, including draft and nonbinding

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<sup>17</sup> See GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1 (Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

<sup>18</sup> GAO, *Defense Infrastructure: Actions Needed to Guide DOD's Efforts to Identify, Prioritize, and Assess Its Critical Infrastructure*, GAO-07-461 (Washington, D.C.: May 24, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1.

guidance, resulted in the selection and submission of assets to the Tier 1 Task Critical Assets list based on inconsistent criteria, thus limiting the usefulness of the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list to DOD decision-makers in determining DOD's most critical assets and prioritizing funding to address identified vulnerabilities. In October 2008, DOD formally issued the current guidance on the identification of critical assets—DOD Manual 3020.45, *DOD Critical Asset Identification Process*—that all stakeholders are required to use when identifying and prioritizing Task Critical Assets. Nevertheless, officials from U.S. Pacific Command and the Air Force we spoke with said that certain definitions contained in this current guidance are still subjective. According to officials from U.S. Pacific Command, as long as the process requires a determination of tier levels after an objective analysis of missions, mission essential tasks, and criticality, there will be a subjective element to certain definitions. Based on our analysis of the guidance and discussions with various officials, elements within those definitions may need to be further clarified. For example, Air Force officials stated that determining what constitutes a mission essential task for combatant command missions is a continuing challenge. In discussions with us, ASD(HD&ASA) and Joint Staff officials acknowledged that the critical asset identification process is still subjective. In the absence of consistent and clear definitions for determining appropriate asset tiers and asset criticality, combatant commands and military services applied definitions of Tier 1 Task Critical Assets inconsistently and, going forward, may continue to do so until these definitions are further clarified.

DOD has taken some actions toward promoting coordination among the combatant commands, military services, and Joint Staff in compiling DOD's Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list. For example, in August 2005, DOD issued DOD Directive 3020.40, which calls for coordination among the Joint Staff, combatant commands, military services, and other defense agencies for the purpose of identifying and assessing critical assets needed to implement DOD missions. Additionally, in October 2008, DOD issued DOD Manual 3020.45, which defines the combatant command, military service, and Joint Staff roles in the critical asset identification process. However, DOD has not yet developed formal coordination responsibilities and an effective coordination mechanism within DCIP, including a forum for coordination between the military services and combatant commands when identifying critical assets. Combatant command and military service officials told us that, in considering which assets to submit to DOD's Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list, they coordinate only minimally with each other when determining which assets are critical to combatant command missions. Based on our analysis of the October 2008 manual and discussions with DCIP officials, we found that the Joint Staff, combatant commands, military services, and other DOD agencies still lack clearly defined coordination responsibilities and a mechanism for effective coordination within DCIP. As a result, the communication and coordination efforts among these key DCIP stakeholders when considering assets to nominate as Tier 1 Task Critical Assets have been insufficient and inconsistent. For example, Army officials stated they were unaware that an Army-related critical asset was submitted as a Defense Critical Asset during the previous data call and did not know who submitted it. Army officials think this will continue to be a problem under the new asset identification process. This is important because

the asset owner—the Army in this case—typically uses this information to help develop strategies to mitigate risks and provide funding to address the asset’s identified vulnerabilities. Officials we spoke with from all three military services stated that lack of coordination with the combatant commands to identify task critical assets may continue. Joint Staff officials also acknowledged that coordination needs to be strengthened between the military services and combatant commands. Without effective coordination, the Joint Staff, combatant commands, and military services cannot agree on an accurate identification and prioritization of assets most critical to fulfilling combatant commands’ missions or reach agreement on how to prioritize funding to help develop effective actions to protect and mitigate against possible attacks on DOD’s critical infrastructure.

While DOD has developed a strategy and comprehensive management plan for DCIP, it has not fully developed some DCIP program management elements for identifying Tier 1 Task Critical Assets, which could enhance the effectiveness of the program. DOD Directive 3020.40 requires ASD(HD&ASA)—the lead office for DCIP—to develop and ensure the implementation of DCIP policy and program guidance for the identification, prioritization, and protection of defense critical infrastructure. This directive also requires the Joint Staff to assist ASD(HD&ASA) in the development and maintenance of DCIP standards. DOD’s formal critical asset identification process manual issued in 2008 lacks some key elements necessary for sound program management, including clearly defined schedules and milestones for meeting performance goals and a formal feedback process. According to our work on sound management practices, comprehensive program schedules and formal communication strategies assist agencies in effectively implementing programs by providing relevant stakeholders with timelines to follow, performance milestones to meet, and shared expectations to guide their efforts. Because DOD lacks a formal process for submitting critical assets, including milestones and formal feedback from ASD(HD&ASA) or the Joint Staff on meeting program goals, the combatant commands and military services are limited in their ability to effectively select, compile, and validate their final nominations to DOD’s Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list. For example, according to the combatant command and military service officials we spoke with, the Joint Staff asked them to submit their final nominations for DOD’s Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list in 2008 with relatively little prior notice. As a result, these officials expressed concern that they did not receive adequate time to develop their submissions thoroughly or accurately, and that they did not receive any formal feedback from the Joint Staff once their lists were submitted. Recognizing this problem, ASD(HD&ASA) officials told us that they are planning to develop a formal schedule for the combatant commands and military services to follow in developing their Tier 1 Task Critical Asset submissions. However, until ASD(HD&ASA) finalizes and formally issues this schedule, there may continue to be discrepancies in the expectations among the combatant commands, military services, and the Joint Staff regarding the timeframes for submitting assets. As a result, DOD’s Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list may continue to include assets that should not be on the list, or exclude assets that should be on the list if the services and combatant commands are not allowed sufficient notice or time for completing their asset submissions. In addition, without formal feedback from the Joint Staff on how DCIP stakeholders are adhering

to program guidelines, the combatant commands and military services may not be aware that some of their asset submissions to the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list do not conform to DCIP criteria.

We are recommending that ASD(HD&ASA) clarify key elements within the DCIP definitions of a Task Critical Assets, formalize coordination responsibilities and mechanisms within DCIP, and develop processes for compiling the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list, including the development of a formal schedule with timelines and milestones and a formal feedback process for key DCIP stakeholders when identifying and prioritizing critical assets for submission to the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list.

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD partially concurred with all three of our recommendations. For each recommendation, DOD described relevant guidance in place or in draft and additional actions it would take in response. Our responses to these comments are presented in the Agency Comments and Our Evaluation section of this report, and DOD's comments are reprinted in enclosure I. We also received technical comments from U.S. Pacific Command, and we incorporated these as appropriate.

## **Background**

In response to the guidance contained in *Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7*,<sup>20</sup> DOD formalized its critical infrastructure efforts in August 2005 by issuing DOD Directive 3020.40, *Defense Critical Infrastructure Program (DCIP)*, which established the program and assigned overall responsibility to ASD(HD&ASA). DOD Directive 3020.40 requires, among other things, that ASD(HD&ASA) develop and ensure implementation of DCIP policy and program guidance for the identification, prioritization, and protection of defense critical infrastructure.

Under DCIP, ASD(HD&ASA) and the Joint Staff have tasked the combatant commands, military services, and Defense Infrastructure Sector Lead Agents with nominating infrastructure necessary to accomplish the goals specified in the *National Defense Strategy*.<sup>21</sup> The combatant commands, in collaboration with the Joint Staff, identify and prioritize DOD missions that are the basis for determining infrastructure criticality, while the military services, as the principal owners of DOD infrastructure, identify and link infrastructure to the specific mission requirements of the combatant commands in coordination with defense infrastructure lead agents. Based on these efforts, the combatant commands and military services then nominate

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<sup>20</sup> *Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7*, issued in December 2003, requires, among other things, that all federal departments and agencies identify, prioritize, and coordinate the protection of critical infrastructure and key resources from terrorist attacks. DCIP encompasses the full spectrum of threats—ranging from terrorist attacks to natural disasters and catastrophic accidents—that can adversely affect critical defense infrastructure.

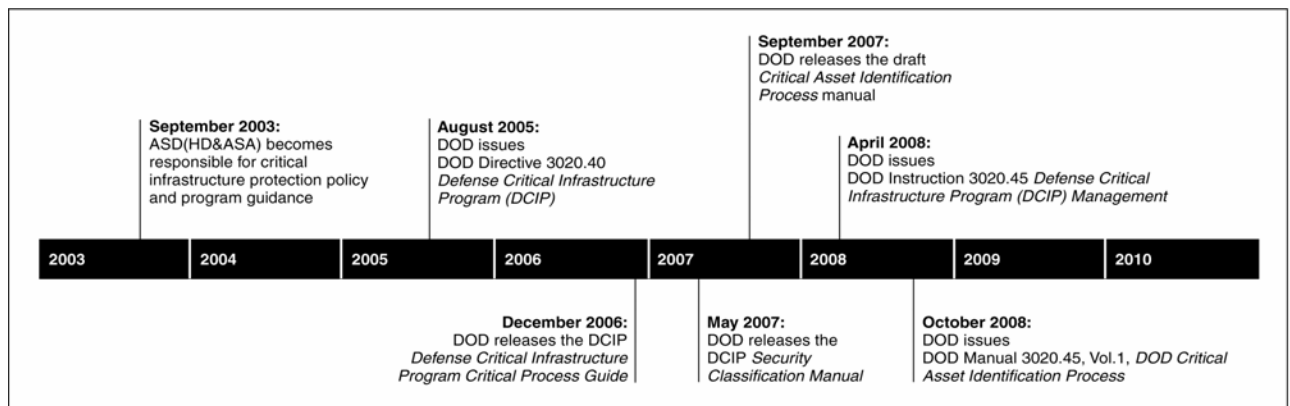
<sup>21</sup> Department of Defense, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: June 2008).

assets to DOD’s consolidated draft critical asset list, which ASD(HD&ASA) uses as the basis for developing a final Task Critical Asset list and the Defense Critical Asset list.

According to DCIP guidance for identifying defense critical infrastructure, the process used by DCIP stakeholders provides a consistent, repeatable, mission-focused analysis process to identify Task Critical Assets and an effects-based analysis to identify Defense Critical Assets from the list of Tier 1 Task Critical Assets. A Task Critical Asset is an asset of such extraordinary importance that its incapacitation or destruction would have a very serious debilitating effect on the ability of DOD, a military department, combatant command, sub-unified command, defense agency, or Defense Infrastructure Sector Lead Agent to execute the task that the asset supports. In October 2008, DOD issued DOD Manual 3020.45 that outlined a process for the combatant commands, the military services, the Defense Infrastructure Sector Lead Agents, and other DOD organizations to follow when identifying assets for submission as DOD Task Critical Assets. This process results in a DOD-wide list of Task Critical Assets that are tiered into three groups (Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3) based on the criticality of their supported missions. The manual then tasks the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to recommend a list of DOD Defense Critical Assets—selected from the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list—to ASD(HD&ASA) for review and approval.

ASD(HD&ASA) has issued numerous documents with guidance related to DCIP, including DOD directives, manuals, and instructions. Figure 1 illustrates the timeline of issuance of key pieces of DCIP guidance related to the identification of Task Critical Assets and Defense Critical Assets.

**Figure 1: Timeline of Issuance of Key DCIP Guidance**



Source: GAO analysis of DOD documents.

**DOD Lacks Consistent Criteria for Identifying and Prioritizing Critical Assets to Develop Its Tier 1 Task Critical Asset List**

While DOD has made some progress in developing an evolving Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list, this progress has been limited by DOD’s lack of consistent criteria,

including unclear definitions, for identifying and prioritizing Tier 1 Task Critical Asset nominations. The Joint Staff formally requested submissions of task critical assets from the military services, combatant commands, and other DCIP stakeholders in January 2007, and early in 2008, the Joint Staff asked that the military services and combatant commands update their list of their Tier I Task Critical Assets. However, the combatant commands and military services used different sets of guidance, including draft and non-binding guidance, as criteria during their identification and prioritization processes for their Tier 1 Task Critical Asset submissions. For example, DCIP officials at U.S. Pacific Command, the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy told us they had used internally developed guidance to identify and prioritize their Tier 1 Task Critical Asset nominations, while U.S. Strategic Command officials said that they had used the draft version of the *DOD Critical Asset Identification Process* manual that was available during the 2007 data call to develop their submissions. Air Force officials also told us they developed formal critical asset identification guidance based on DOD's draft critical asset identification manual. Based on our review of the various forms of guidance, the definitions were varied for Tier 1 and Task Critical Assets and some versions of the guidance did not contain definitions for Tier 1. Similarly, for their nominations to the most recent Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list compiled in 2008, the combatant commands and military services continued to use different sets of draft and non-binding guidance as criteria for selection and submission of assets to the Joint Staff, since ASD(HD&ASA) had not yet finalized the *DOD Critical Asset Identification Process* Manual.

In addition, according to various combatant command and military service officials, the draft and non-binding guidance also contained unclear definitions for Task Critical Assets and for Tier 1 Task Critical Assets. In our discussions with officials from the U.S. Pacific Command, the military services, and the Joint Staff, these officials explained that the definitions for a Task Critical Asset and for a Tier 1 Task Critical Asset contained in the draft and non-binding guidance were subjective and could be interpreted differently by combatant commands or military services based on their respective missions. For example, officials from one military service stated that they were not sure why certain assets they owned were nominated by a combatant command. Combatant command officials also acknowledged this and added the value of an asset to a combatant command mission may not be readily apparent to asset owners at DOD installations. DCIP officials from the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy told us that clearer descriptions of the combatant commands' mission essential tasks—which are used to identify Task Critical Assets—would improve the critical asset identification process for DCIP. The military services use information about tasks essential to completing combatant command missions to help them identify their potential submissions to the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list by providing specific information about combatant command missions that they use to identify assets needed for those missions. For example, Air Force officials said they have a lot of knowledge regarding tasks needed to complete their Air Force-specific missions, but do not always have similar knowledge of combatant command missions. According to these officials, the military services typically obtain combatant command mission task information from the Defense Readiness Reporting

System,<sup>22</sup> as the combatant commands do not provide this detailed information directly to the military services. However, Air Force and Navy officials stated that this information is often inconsistent. Better developed information about tasks essential to completing combatant command missions, including standards and conditions to determine what constitutes a mission failure or mission degradation,<sup>23</sup> would provide additional clarity in identifying and prioritizing Task Critical Assets.

In the absence of formal DCIP guidance on the critical asset identification process, ASD(HD&ASA) encouraged, but did not require, the combatant commands and military services to use their draft and non-binding guidance to identify and prioritize their Tier 1 Task Critical Asset submissions in 2007 and 2008. This guidance included the *Criticality Process Guidance Document*, issued in December 2006, and the draft version of the *DOD Critical Asset Identification Process* manual, issued in September 2007.

Our prior work on DCIP management<sup>24</sup> and the *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*<sup>25</sup> both emphasize the importance of management controls to guide program implementation, which includes the development and issuance of formal guidance. Based on discussions with combatant command and military service officials, the lack of consistent criteria, including varying definitions of key terms, in the selection of Tier 1 Task Critical Asset submissions and the absence of binding guidance from ASD(HD&ASA) have resulted in a Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list of limited usefulness to decision-makers in determining DOD's most critical assets. Specifically, the list may continue to include assets that should not be on the list. Also, as noted in our prior work, the absence of formal DCIP guidance and policies has led DOD components, such as the combatant commands and military services, to pursue varying approaches to identify and ensure the availability of their critical assets. ASD(HD&ASA) and Joint Staff officials acknowledged that the current version of the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list is problematic and that they expect the current list of Tier 1 Task Critical Assets to change significantly over the next year because the military services and combatant commands are now required to use formal critical asset identification criteria to submit an update to their Tier 1 Task Critical Asset lists. ASD(HD&ASA) officials believe the use of this new guidance will improve the quality of the list.

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<sup>22</sup> The Defense Readiness Reporting System is a real-time information system that measures and reports on the readiness of military forces and the supporting infrastructure to meet missions and goals assigned by the Secretary of Defense.

<sup>23</sup> According to the *DOD Critical Asset Identification Process* manual, a Tier 1 Task Critical Asset is defined by mission failure if the asset is lost, incapacitated, or disrupted. However, a Tier 2 Task Critical Asset is defined by severe mission (or function) degradation if the asset is lost, incapacitated, or disrupted.

<sup>24</sup> GAO-07-461.

<sup>25</sup> GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1.

DOD issued the final version of the *DOD Critical Asset Identification Process* manual in October 2008. However, officials from the Air Force and U.S. Pacific Command we spoke with said that certain definitions contained in this current guidance are still subjective and elements within those definitions still need to be clarified. For example, Air Force officials stated that determining what constitutes a mission essential task for combatant command missions is a continuing challenge. In addition, U.S. Pacific Command officials explained that tiering critical assets is an inherently subjective process with asset and mission owners relying on their own individual perspectives and interpretations of the definitions to determine the appropriate tier of an asset. For example, military services typically have different mission-essential tasks and, in some cases, the military services will assign the same asset to different tier levels. In discussions with us, ASD(HD&ASA) and Joint Staff officials acknowledged that the critical asset identification process is still subjective and further clarification may be needed. Though DOD has issued the final version of the *DOD Critical Asset Identification Process* manual, based on our analysis of this manual and discussions with military service and combatant command officials, further clarification of the tier definitions and certain elements within those definitions may be warranted to prevent future inconsistencies in the combatant commands' and the military services' submissions of assets to DOD's Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list.

### **DOD Has Taken Steps to Promote Coordination among Key DCIP Stakeholders but Still Lacks an Effective Coordination Mechanism for Identifying and Nominating Critical Assets**

DOD has taken some actions toward promoting coordination among the combatant commands, military services, and the Joint Staff in developing DOD's Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list, such as issuing the October 2008 DCIP critical asset identification guidance. However, it has not yet developed formal coordination responsibilities and an effective coordination mechanism within DCIP, including a forum for coordination between the military services and combatant commands when identifying critical assets. According to combatant command and military service officials, they conduct minimal coordination when determining which assets are critical to combatant command missions—a key step in identifying assets to nominate to DOD's Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list. In addition, Navy and Army officials stated they only coordinate minimally with the Joint Staff once they submit their assets for the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list. Combatant commands are charged in the DCIP guidance with conducting analyses of command mission and mission essential tasks with their associated conditions and standards and providing the results of these analyses to the appropriate DCIP stakeholders to support Task Critical Asset identification. In contrast, the military services own most of the assets and, in some cases, are responsible for providing resources, such as funding, to protect those assets, thereby assuring the capabilities needed to implement missions. Consequently, the combatant commands and military services each have a role in identifying and prioritizing critical assets through DCIP.

In August 2005, DOD issued DOD Directive 3020.40, which calls for coordination among the combatant commands, military services, the Joint Staff, and other DOD agencies for the purpose of identifying and assessing critical assets needed to implement combatant command missions. Additionally, in October 2008, DOD issued DOD Manual 3020.45, which further defines combatant command, military service, and Joint Staff roles in the critical asset identification process. However, based on our analysis of the October 2008 manual and discussions with DCIP officials, DCIP continues to lack clearly defined coordination responsibilities and a mechanism for effective coordination within the program among the combatant commands and military services. As a result, the communication and coordination efforts among these key DCIP stakeholders are insufficient and inconsistent, which hinders the ability of the military services to identify critical assets needed to fulfill combatant command missions.

Officials we spoke with from all three military services stated that, while the new guidance outlines a critical asset identification process, lack of coordination with the combatant commands may continue. Military service officials rely on the combatant commands to provide detailed information about their missions to help the military services identify critical assets. For example, Air Force officials told us that they rely on combatant commands to provide them with combatant command-related mission essential task information, but that this information is not always accurately and consistently provided by the combatant commands. Similarly, Army officials stated they were unaware of the submission of a particular Army-owned critical asset by a combatant command to the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list—and its subsequent selection as a Defense Critical Asset—during the previous Joint Staff data call for Task Critical Asset submissions until the Army officials viewed the final Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list. According to these Army officials, their lack of awareness of this asset's status as a Defense Critical Asset hindered their ability to develop and share effective risk mitigation strategies for this asset with senior Army leaders. Air Force and Army officials stated that the new guidance will not specifically address these coordination issues.

ASD(HD&ASA) and Joint staff officials acknowledge that DCIP-related coordination between the combatant commands and military services could be strengthened. Officials at U.S. Strategic Command stated they are in the process of developing an electronic information sharing field within the critical asset database used to track DOD's Task Critical Assets for DCIP. U.S. Strategic Command manages the database used to track DOD's critical assets. These officials also told us that this information sharing mechanism may help the combatant commands, military services, and the Joint Staff improve their coordination efforts, but that this mechanism has not yet been finalized and is still being tested within the DCIP community. Until ASD(HD&ASA) formalizes coordination responsibilities among key DCIP stakeholders and develops an effective coordination mechanism, coordination among the combatant commands, military services, and the Joint Staff for DCIP will continue to be limited. Without effective coordination, the Joint Staff, combatant commands, and military services cannot agree on an accurate identification and prioritization of assets most critical to fulfilling combatant commands' missions or

reach agreement on how to prioritize funding to help develop effective actions to protect and mitigate against possible attacks on DOD's critical infrastructure.

### **DCIP Lacks Some Key Program Elements Needed to Facilitate the Critical Asset Identification and Prioritization Process**

While DOD has developed a strategy and a comprehensive management plan for managing DCIP and issued a new *DOD Mission-Based Critical Asset Identification Process* manual,<sup>26</sup> DCIP still lacks certain key elements for nominating Tier 1 Task Critical Assets, which could enhance the effectiveness of the program, including development of clearly defined schedules for meeting performance goals and a formal feedback process. According to our work on sound management practices,<sup>27</sup> comprehensive program schedules and formal communication strategies assist agencies in effectively implementing programs by providing relevant stakeholders with timelines to follow, performance milestones to meet, and shared expectations to guide their efforts. To date, the Joint Staff has not requested Tier 1 Task Critical Asset submissions from the combatant commands and military services using a routine and consistent timeline with milestones. Instead, the Joint Staff has requested asset submissions from the combatant commands and military services primarily on an ad-hoc basis, without providing a formal schedule or deadlines for the responsible organizations to follow. Subsequently, the military services expressed concern that they were not allowed adequate time to generate thorough and accurate nominations for DOD's Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list prior to the required 2008 deadline for submission to the Joint Staff. For example, according to the combatant command and military service officials with whom we spoke, the Joint Staff asked them to submit their final nominations for DOD's Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list in 2008 with relatively little prior notice. As a result, these officials expressed concern that they did not receive adequate time to develop their submissions thoroughly or accurately. Furthermore, Air Force and U.S. Pacific Command officials expect their future processes for generating more accurate Tier 1 Task Critical Asset submissions to take, on average, a total of 18 months and 3 years, respectively. However, ASD(HD&ASA) and Joint Staff officials indicated they hope to revise the current Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list using the new DCIP critical asset identification process in approximately 4 months, or by October 2009. However, until ASD(HD&ASA) clarifies a timeline and milestones for submitting critical assets to the combatant commands and military services, there may continue to be discrepancies in the expectations among the combatant commands, military services, and the Joint Staff regarding the expected timeframes for submitting assets. As a result, DOD's Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list may continue to include assets that should not be on the list, or exclude assets that should be on the list if the services and combatant commands are not allowed sufficient notice or time for completing asset submissions.

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<sup>26</sup> DOD 3020.45-M Volume 1 (Oct. 24, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1.

DCIP guidance does not contain a process for providing formal feedback to the combatant commands and military services regarding their selection of assets for the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list. Based on discussions with combatant command, military, and Joint Staff officials, only minimal informal feedback has occurred to date. Our prior work, including *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*,<sup>28</sup> emphasizes the need for formal feedback as a management control. The lack of formal feedback from the Joint Staff may result in a Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list that includes inappropriate assets that do not meet DOD criteria. For example, Army, Navy, and Air Force officials we spoke with stated they would find formal feedback useful when submitting future nominations for the DOD Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list to the Joint Staff. Without any formal feedback, the combatant commands and military services may continue to either submit assets for the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset lists that should not be on the list or may exclude assets that should be on the list from their submissions. As a result, DOD's Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list maintained by the Joint Staff may continue to include assets that are not appropriate. Without fully developed timelines for data submissions and a formal feedback process regarding those submissions within DCIP, combatant commands and military services might not accurately identify the assets most critical to their missions and make fully informed budgetary and resource allocation decisions necessary to protect those assets from possible threats or hazards.

## Conclusions

DOD's recent issuance of DOD Manual 3020.45 Volume 1, *DOD Critical Asset Identification Process*, is a positive step toward developing a consistent and reliable Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list; however, further action is needed. Having a complete and reliable list of prioritized and assessed critical assets will enable DOD to target resources to its most mission-critical assets at highest risk. Subjectivity and a lack of clarity regarding the appropriate guidance to clarify key definitions may continue to result in inappropriate assets being nominated by the combatant commands and military services, and prevent DOD from having a complete and accurate list of critical assets. DOD officials acknowledged that the current definitions of Task 1 and Task Critical Asset are subjective. Also, until coordination within the program is formalized and strengthened, the military services, combatant commands, and the Joint Staff may not be in a position to coordinate effectively with each other to determine which assets are most critical to DOD and levels of funding to address identified vulnerabilities. Finally, while DOD has made progress in issuing a strategy for critical infrastructure, DOD's lack of effective program management practices may continue to limit the program's effectiveness in identifying and prioritizing critical assets.

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<sup>28</sup> GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1.

## Recommendations for Executive Action

We are recommending that the Secretary of Defense take the following three actions:

- To improve the consistency and reliability of the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list, direct the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs and the Joint Staff to further clarify the definitions of a Tier 1 Task Critical Asset contained in DOD Manual 3020.45 Volume I, *Critical Asset Identification Process*, along with definitions of key elements, such as "mission essential tasks." Potential approaches could include establishing and issuing a set of test questions to apply to a proposed critical asset or providing a set of hypothetical examples to use in identifying critical assets.
- To facilitate effective coordination among the combatant commands, military services, and the Joint Staff in compiling the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list, direct the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs and the Joint Staff to develop specific coordination responsibilities and a coordination mechanism within DCIP for each of those stakeholders to use when compiling the list.
- To improve the overall effectiveness of DOD's process to develop a list of Tier 1 Task Critical Assets, direct the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs and the Joint Staff to formalize processes for compiling the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list, including the development of a formal schedule with timelines and milestones for submitting Tier 1 Task Critical Asset data and a formal process for the Joint Staff to provide feedback to the combatant commands and military services regarding the assets they propose to include on the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list.

## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of this report, which included three draft recommendations, DOD partially concurred with all three of our recommendations. For each recommendation, DOD described relevant guidance in place or in draft and additional actions it would take in response. Also, U.S. Pacific Command provided technical comments, which we incorporated in the report where appropriate. DOD's comments are reprinted in enclosure I.

DOD partially concurred with our first recommendation, which called for clarification of definitions of a Tier 1 and a Task Critical Asset, and elements within those definitions. In its written comments, DOD stated that Manual 3020.45 Volume 1, *Mission-Based Critical Asset Identification Process* provides comprehensive procedures for identifying critical assets through a mission-focused process. They added that when considering the impact to the mission, the concept of "mission (or function) failure" depends on the organizational level, nature, scope, conditions, and standards associated with the mission and that each mission is different. While we recognize the validity of this observation, we continue to believe that the

identification of a set of Tier 1 Task Critical Assets with similar levels of mission criticality would be facilitated by the use of consistent definitions. Based on our interviews with military service officials, these different determinations of mission failure make it difficult for the services to determine which assets are critical for combatant command missions. Further, while DOD stated in its written comments that guidance already exists on mission essential tasks, such as the *Joint Mission Essential Task List Development Handbook*, this guidance is not referenced in DCIP directives and instructions. Finally, DOD stated that ASD(HD&ASA) will work with the Joint Staff to provide additional clarification in their critical asset guidance, an action we believe is responsive to our recommendation.

DOD partially concurred with our second recommendation, calling for the development of coordination responsibilities and a coordination mechanism within DCIP for stakeholders to use when compiling the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list. DOD stated that its current guidance establishes coordination responsibilities within DCIP; DOD Directive 3020.40, DOD Instruction 3020.45, and DOD Manual 3020.45 Volume 1 outline coordination responsibilities among key DCIP stakeholders. We acknowledge this DOD guidance in our report. However, based on our discussions with military service and combatant command officials, we continue to believe that these coordination responsibilities need to be specifically identified. DOD stated that the Joint Staff uses a formal Joint Staff Action Process, which provides ample opportunity for military service and combatant command feedback and a means for seeking clarification of guidance. However, we were told by a Joint Staff official that a formal Joint Staff Action Process was not issued for the March 2009 Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list, and we have not found evidence of the issuance of one since January 2007. In addition, DOD also stated in its written comments that coordination mechanisms exist within DCIP, such as the Operational Advisory Board and the Defense Critical Infrastructure Integration Staff. According to DOD, both of these forums meet quarterly and are specifically designed to facilitate information sharing. However, military service and combatant command officials told us that the coordination promoted by these existing mechanisms does not address asset identification, prioritization, and mission impact assessment. Finally, DOD stated it will work with the Joint Staff to determine what further coordination guidance is needed and why existing coordination mechanisms are not being used to identify and prioritize assets. We agree that this is a necessary action for DOD in order to improve coordination within DCIP and, if pursued, could be responsive to our recommendation.

DOD partially concurred with our third recommendation, calling for the development of a formal schedule, milestones, and feedback process for critical asset identification. According to DOD's written comments, ASD(HD&ASA) has developed a draft DOD Manual 3020.45 Volume 6 *Defense Critical Infrastructure Program (DCIP) Execution Timeline*. DOD intends for this manual to provide uniform procedures for the execution of DCIP activities and timelines for DCIP stakeholders to use in coordinating the execution of DCIP activities outlined in current DCIP guidance and ensure that feedback is provided to the components. With regard to the DCIP Critical Asset Identification Process Collaboration Tool that DOD intends to

use as a way to establish a standard timeline and milestones, we note that this tool could potentially improve the critical asset identification process once it is implemented if the military services and combatant use the tool. We continue to believe that the military services and combatant commands could benefit from a more formal data call with deadlines, milestones, and an opportunity to receive feedback from the Joint Staff.

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As agreed with your offices, we are sending copies of this report to the Chairmen and Ranking Member of the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Defense and on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies; Senate and House Committees on Armed Services; and other interested congressional parties. We also are sending copies to the Secretary of Defense; the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Secretaries of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; the Commandant of the Marine Corps; and the Director, Office of Management and Budget. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions concerning this report, please contact me at (202) 512-5431 or by e-mail at [dagostinod@gao.gov](mailto:dagostinod@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in enclosure II.



Davi M. D'Agostino  
Director  
Defense Capabilities and Management

Enclosures - 2

*List of Committees*

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

The Honorable Daniel Inouye  
Chairman  
The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
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The Honorable Tim Johnson  
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The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison  
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Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
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The Honorable Chet Edwards  
Chair  
The Honorable Zach Wamp  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Military Construction,  
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
House of Representatives

Comments from the Department of Defense



HOMELAND DEFENSE  
AMERICAS' SECURITY AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
2600 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2600

JUL 15 2009

Ms. Davi M. D'Agostino  
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. D'Agostino:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO draft report, GAO-09-740R, "Defense Critical Infrastructure: Actions Needed to Improve the Consistency, Reliability, and Usefulness of DoD's Tier 1 Task Critical Asset List," dated June 22, 2009 (GAO Code 351341). DoD partially concurs with all three recommendations. Our response to the recommendations is enclosed.

Our point of contact for this action is Mr. Antwane Johnson, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs (OASD (HD&ASA)), (703) 602-5730, Extension 143 or [Antwane.Johnson@osd.mil](mailto:Antwane.Johnson@osd.mil).

Sincerely,

Chkistine E. Wormuth  
Principal Deputy

Enclosure:  
As stated



**GAO DRAFT REPORT – DATED JUNE 22, 2009  
GAO CODE 351341 /GAO-09-740R**

***"Defense Critical Infrastructure: Actions Needed to Improve the Consistency, Reliability, and Usefulness of DoD's Tier 1 Task Critical Asset List"***

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS  
TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs and the Joint Staff to further clarify the definitions of a Tier 1 Task Critical Asset contained in DoD Manual 3020.45 Volume I, *Critical Asset Identification Process*, along with definitions of key elements, such as "mission essential tasks." Potential approaches could include establishing and issuing a set of test questions to apply to a proposed critical asset or providing a set of hypothetical examples to use in identifying critical assets.

**DOD RESPONSE:** Partially concur. DoD Manual 3020.45 Volume I, *Critical Asset Identification Process*, provides comprehensive procedures for identifying critical assets through the use of a mission-focused process. The process begins with an analysis of assigned missions and decomposes them to a level that can be directly tied to an asset. The loss of the asset is then analyzed to determine the impact on the mission. If the impact is mission failure, it is considered a Tier 1 task critical asset. As each mission is different, the analysis must consider the organizational level, nature, scope, conditions, and standards associated with the mission. Mission-essential tasks represent a commander's priority of warfighting requirements based on assigned missions. The Joint Mission Essential Task List (JMETL) Development Handbook provides guidance to help commanders define their mission-essential tasks along with associated conditions and measurable standards. The DCIP Office will work with the Joint Staff to provide additional clarification of this guidance.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs and the Joint Staff to develop specific coordination responsibilities and a coordination mechanism within the Defense Critical Infrastructure Program (DCIP) for each of those stakeholders to use when compiling the list.

**DOD RESPONSE:** Partially concur. Existing guidance (DoD Directive 3020.40, DoD Instruction 3020.45, and DoD Manual 3020.45, Volume 1) provides specific coordination responsibilities for each of the components during the critical asset identification process. In addition, the Joint Staff, when issuing a data call for TCA submissions, uses a formal Joint Staff Action Process which provides ample opportunity for Combatant Command and Service feedback and a means for seeking clarification of guidance. OASD (HD&ASA) has established forums, such as the Joint Staff-chaired Operational Advisory Board (OAB) and the DCIP Office-chaired Defense Critical Infrastructure Integration Staff (DCIIS). Both of these forums meet

quarterly and are specifically designed to provide for the identification, clarification, and resolution of CIP issues among stakeholders and to facilitate information sharing

The DCIP Office will work with the Joint Staff to determine what, if any, further guidance is required regarding specific coordination responsibilities, and why stakeholders failed to employ existing coordination mechanisms when compiling their TCA lists.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs and the Joint Staff to formalize processes for compiling the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list, including the development of a formal schedule with timelines and milestones for submitting Tier 1 Task Critical Asset data and a formal process for the Joint Staff to provide feedback to the Combatant Commands and military services regarding the assets they propose to include on the Tier 1 Task Critical Asset list.

**DOD RESPONSE:** Partially concur. OASD (HD&ASA) is formalizing the process for compiling Tier 1 Task Critical Task Asset list in a draft manual, DoDM 3020.45 Volume 6, *Defense Critical Infrastructure Program (DCIP) Execution Timeline*. The manual will provide uniform procedures for the execution of DCIP activities, a standard timeline, and exact milestones that OASD (HD&ASA), the Joint Staff, Military Departments, Combatant Commands, Defense Agencies, and the Defense Infrastructure Sector Lead Agencies will use to coordinate the execution of activities and responsibilities assigned in DoDD 3020.40, Defense Critical Infrastructure Program, DoDI 3020.45, Defense Critical Infrastructure Program Management, and DoD Manual 3020.45, Defense Critical Infrastructure Program: DoD Mission-Based Critical Asset Identification Process, Volumes 1, 5, and 7. The execution timeline will ensure the development of the Tier 1 TCA List and provide feedback to the components. The DCIP Office is also developing a collaboration tool which, in conjunction the publication of DoDM 3020.45 , will improve stakeholder situational awareness of each step in the process of identifying TCAs.

GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Davi M. D'Agostino, (202) 512-5431 or [dagostinod@gao.gov](mailto:dagostinod@gao.gov)

Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Mark A. Pross, Assistant Director; David G. Artadi; James D. Ashley; Yecenia C. Camarillo; Gina M. Flacco; Brian K. Howell; Katherine S. Lenane; Michael S. Pose; Terry L. Richardson; and Cheryl A. Weissman made key contributions to this report.

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