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MISSION IRAQ

State and DOD Face Challenges in Finalizing Support and Security Capabilities

Statement of Michael J. Courts, Acting Director
International Affairs and Trade



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State and DOD Face Challenges in Finalizing Support and Security Capabilities

Highlights of [GAO-12-856T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense, and Foreign Operations, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The transition from a predominantly U.S. military presence in Iraq led by DOD to a U.S. diplomatic presence led by State concluded on December 18, 2011, when the last units of U.S. Forces-Iraq left that country. State and DOD agreed that State's Mission Iraq needed to meet certain support and security criteria to be considered fully mission capable, and State planned for Mission Iraq to meet those criteria by October 1, 2011.

In this statement, GAO provides its assessment of (1) the U.S. plans for transitioning to the State-led diplomatic mission in Iraq, (2) Iraqi commitment to the U.S. presence, (3) the extent to which State and DOD have established basic infrastructure and support for Mission Iraq and (4) the extent to which State and DOD have established personnel and site security for Mission Iraq. To address these objectives, GAO analyzed past and current transition and interagency planning documents, bilateral correspondence, and security assessments, as well as past GAO reports. GAO interviewed State and DOD officials in Washington, D.C., and Iraq and conducted fieldwork in Iraq at U.S. facilities in Baghdad, Basrah, Erbil, and Kirkuk from July through December 2011.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making recommendations in this statement, which summarizes a more detailed Sensitive but Unclassified (SBU) briefing GAO provided to Congress. The briefing and related SBU draft report included a recommendation to DOD, whose official comments on the draft report are pending.

View [GAO-12-856T](#). For more information, contact Michael J. Courts at (202) 512-8980 or courtsm@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

The Departments of State (State) and Defense (DOD) planned for a civilian-led presence in Iraq consisting of more than 16,000 personnel at 14 sites in fiscal year 2012. As of May 2012, State and DOD were reassessing the Mission Iraq presence, and State had a plan to reduce the presence to 11,500 personnel at 11 sites by the end of fiscal year 2013. Even with the reductions, Mission Iraq would remain the largest U.S. diplomatic presence in the world. State and DOD allocated an estimated \$4 billion for the civilian-led presence for fiscal year 2012, 93 percent of which was for security and support costs. In addition, State requested \$1.9 billion in police and military assistance and \$471 million in other foreign assistance for fiscal year 2012. State officials said they are lowering their fiscal year 2012 and 2013 budget estimates as a result of reducing the presence.

The Government of Iraq's commitment to the U.S. presence has remained unclear. The Iraqi Foreign Minister questioned the size, location, and security requirements of U.S. sites. As of May 2012, Iraq had not signed all land-use, program, or operations agreements; State officials voiced concern about Iraq's ability to finalize these agreements. Iraq acknowledged a U.S. presence at 12 sites, but State held title or had land-use agreements or leases for only 5 sites.

Mission Iraq support functions were operational, but did not fully meet the three mission-capable support criteria by the planned target date of October 1, 2011. First, in establishing basic infrastructure and life support, Mission Iraq faced delays in housing, waste treatment, and food services. For example, State terminated one of its construction contractors for nonperformance, which led to delays. Second, though medical services were in place by October 2011, as of May 2012, Mission Iraq was still completing contingency plans for emergency evacuation from Iraq. Third, while not all communications systems were in place as planned by October 1, 2011, communication services were functional at all Mission Iraq sites as of May 2012.

Mission Iraq security capabilities were operational but did not fully meet the three mission-capable security criteria by the planned target date of October 1, 2011. First, as of May 2012, construction of site security features was not expected to be completed at all Mission Iraq sites until September 2013. State and DOD also experienced difficulty in recruiting, vetting, and training site security contractors and, as a result, had to extend existing DOD security contracts. Second and third, Mission Iraq's secure movement and emergency response capabilities were operational but not fully mission capable by the planned date of October 1, 2011. However, as of May 2012, emergency response was fully mission capable. In addition, State and DOD agreed that each department would establish secure facilities at the sites each managed and would apply their own enhanced security measures. As of May 2012, State had conducted security assessments at its sites and had taken mitigating steps to address vulnerabilities. U.S. Forces-Iraq conducted security assessments at DOD-managed sites. DOD officials reported some efforts to address the vulnerabilities identified by the assessments, but DOD did not fully document such efforts. DOD officials noted that the assessments assumed a follow-on military force and said that DOD was not obligated to address the vulnerabilities identified by U.S. Forces-Iraq. DOD has plans to conduct new vulnerability assessments of its sites by July 2012.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Tierney, and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here to discuss the transition from a predominantly U.S. military presence in Iraq led by the Department of Defense (DOD) to a U.S. diplomatic presence led by the Department of State (State). This transition concluded on December 18, 2011, when the last units of U.S. Forces-Iraq (USF-I) left the country and State assumed leadership for the U.S. presence. State's Mission Iraq, under the leadership of the U.S. ambassador, is responsible for U.S.-Iraqi political, economic, cultural, and security bilateral relations. State and DOD plans for a civilian-led presence in Iraq included multiple sites in Baghdad and several consulates and security assistance sites across the country. State and DOD agreed that Mission Iraq needed to meet certain support and security criteria to be considered fully mission capable, and State planned for Mission Iraq to meet those criteria by October 1, 2011.

In this testimony, I will discuss (1) U.S. plans for transitioning to the State-led diplomatic mission in Iraq, (2) Iraq government commitment to the U.S. presence, (3) the extent to which State and DOD have established basic infrastructure and support for the U.S. presence, and (4) the extent to which State and DOD have established personnel and site security for the U.S. presence. This testimony provides publicly releasable highlights of our Sensitive but Unclassified briefing and is a continuation of our efforts to review the planning and execution of the drawdown of U.S. forces and equipment from Iraq and the buildup of the U.S. civilian-led presence there.¹

To address our objectives, we analyzed past and current transition and interagency planning documents, bilateral correspondence, and security assessments, as well as our past reports concerning Iraq. We interviewed State and DOD officials in Washington, D.C., and in Iraq. We conducted fieldwork in Iraq at U.S. facilities in Baghdad, Basrah, Erbil, and Kirkuk from July through December 2011. We assessed the reliability of State-provided staffing and budget data by interviewing officials and reviewing

¹GAO, *Iraq Drawdown: Opportunities Exist to Improve Equipment Visibility, Contractor Demobilization, and Clarity of Post-2011 DOD Role*, [GAO-11-774](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 16, 2011); and *Stabilizing Iraq: Political, Security, and Cost Challenges in Implementing U.S. Government Plans to Transition to a Predominantly Civilian Presence*, GAO-10-718SU (Washington, D.C.: July 29, 2010).

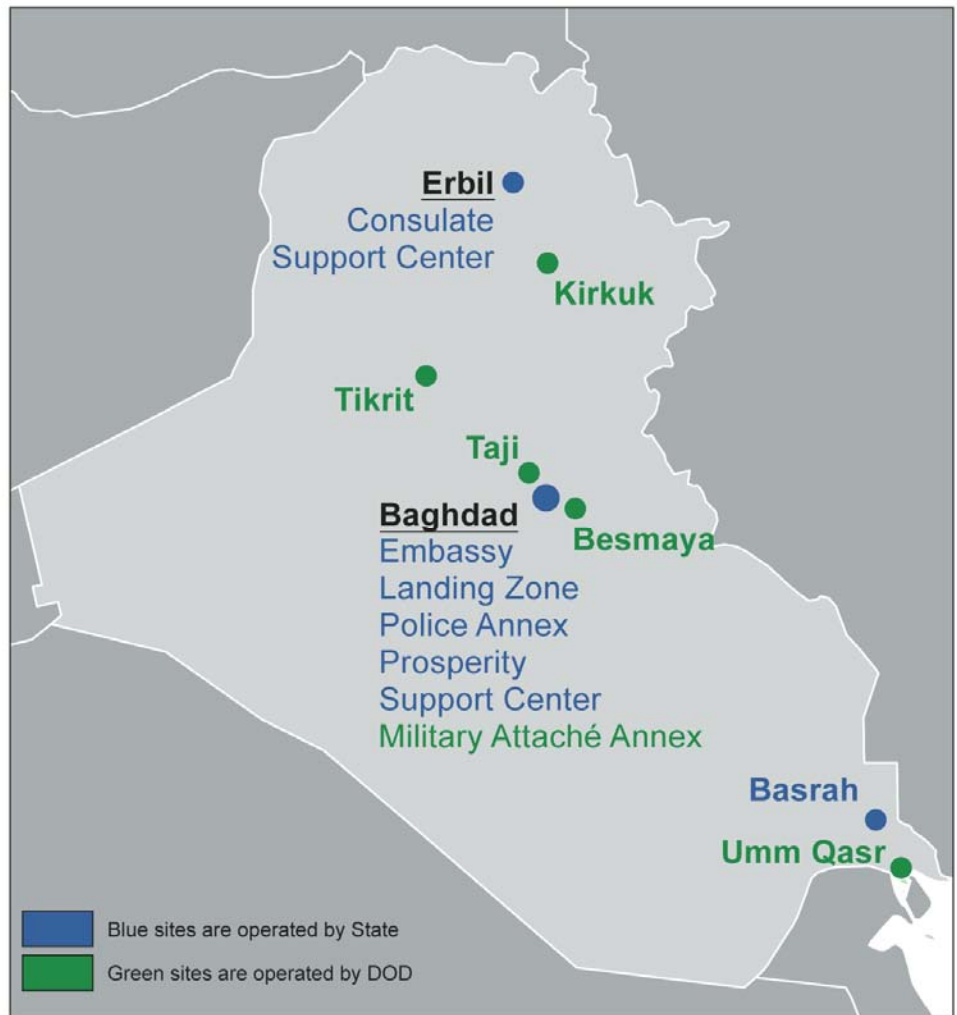
documentation. We found the data were reliable for determining overall estimated staffing levels and budget allocations. Due to broad congressional and national interest in the U.S. engagement in Iraq, we conducted this review under the authority of the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct reviews on his own initiative.

We conducted this performance audit from May 2011 to June 2012 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.

Mission Iraq Planned for a Robust Presence, but Is in the Process of Downsizing

State and DOD planned for a robust presence in Iraq. For fiscal year 2012, Mission Iraq planned to have more than 16,000 personnel at 14 sites (see fig. 1), making it the largest diplomatic presence in the world. Of the 16,000, about 14,000 were to be contractors primarily responsible for security and logistical support. As of May 2012, State and DOD shared responsibility for managing U.S. personnel and sites in Iraq: State managed 8 sites and DOD, under Chief of Mission authority, managed 6 sites. Mission Iraq also planned to have the largest State-led police and military security assistance programs in the world—the Police Development Program and the DOD-administered Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I). According to DOD officials, U.S. Forces-Iraq planning for OSC-I assumed that a follow-on U.S. military force would be approved by both governments and provide OSC-I with additional support functions. The bilateral decision not to have a follow-on force led to a reassessment of U.S. military-to-military engagement planning, resulting in an increase in the OSC-I presence.

Figure 1: State- and DOD-Managed Sites in Iraq



Source: GAO analysis of Department of State and Defense data.

As of May 2012, State and DOD were reassessing the Mission Iraq presence and had a plan to reduce the Mission to 11 sites and to 11,500 personnel by the end of fiscal year 2013. For example, the number of advisors expected for the Police Development Program has decreased from a planned 350 in early 2010 to well under 100 planned today. State and the Government of Iraq are further refining the program to be smaller and more narrowly focused. Furthermore, State also intends to turn over the primary Police Development Program and OSC-I sites to Iraqi control by the end of fiscal years 2012 and 2013, respectively.

State and DOD allocated about \$4.5 billion to establish the civilian-led presence from fiscal years 2010 through 2011, and they allocated an estimated \$4 billion for fiscal year 2012. Security and support costs accounted for 93 percent of State and DOD's fiscal year 2012 estimated allocations. In addition, State requested \$887 million for police assistance and \$1 billion for military assistance for fiscal year 2012, as well as an additional \$471 million in other foreign assistance.² State officials said they lowered their fiscal year 2012 estimates and may see additional savings from the fiscal year 2013 request as a result of reducing the Mission Iraq presence.

Iraqi Commitment to the Evolving U.S. Presence Is Unclear

Throughout the planning and implementation of U.S. efforts to establish Mission Iraq, the Government of Iraq's commitment to State's planned U.S. presence has remained unclear. Iraqi officials have raised a number of questions about the planned U.S. presence. For example, the Iraqi Foreign Minister questioned the size, location, and security requirements of U.S. sites. Furthermore, U.S. security contractors were unable to obtain Iraqi visas from January through April 2012. As of May 2012, Iraq was issuing visas to U.S. security contractors.

The United States and Iraq have not finalized certain agreements regarding the U.S. presence and are no longer pursuing others. As of May 2012, Iraq had not signed all land-use, program, or operations agreements, and State officials expressed concern about Iraq's ability to finalize these agreements. For example, State legal officials noted that Iraq had acknowledged a U.S. presence for 12 of the 14 sites at which Mission Iraq currently operates. However, State held title or had signed land-use agreements or leases for only 5 of the 14 sites. According to State officials, Mission Iraq also was unable to secure a written program agreement for the Police Development Program, has decided to stop pursuing a formal agreement, and, as mentioned previously, plans to dramatically reduce the size and scope of the program. In addition, while Mission Iraq and the Iraqi government exchanged diplomatic notes concerning OSC-I, according to DOD officials, Mission Iraq has been

²State did not provide us with a detailed breakdown for its fiscal year 2012 foreign assistance accounts requests, including police and military assistance, or its fiscal year 2013 Diplomatic and Consular Programs account and foreign assistance accounts requests.

unable to secure an explicit agreement that would allow OSC-I to conduct its full range of security cooperation activities.

State and DOD Have Not Finalized Support Capabilities

Mission Iraq support functions were operational, but did not fully meet mission-capable support criteria by the planned target date of October 1, 2011. State and DOD identified three support criteria for Mission Iraq:

- completion of basic infrastructure and life support,
- access to medical facilities and evacuation capability, and
- provision of communication services.

Mission Iraq faced delays in establishing basic infrastructure and life support, such as housing, waste treatment, and food services. For example, State terminated one of its construction contractors for nonperformance, which led to delays at that site. Also, according to State officials, State received excess DOD-furnished generators but was given equipment with different specifications than expected. This led to delays because State had to reconfigure its already-constructed facilities to accommodate the equipment received. Medical services were in place by October 2011. However, as of May 2012, Mission Iraq was still completing contingency plans for the emergency evacuation that had to be revised to reflect the absence of in-country U.S. combat forces. While communication services were functional at all Mission Iraq sites as of May 2012, not all communications systems were in place as planned. In addition, Mission Iraq had not finalized or was no longer pursuing certain agreements with Iraq concerning postal service, telecommunications, and radio frequency management.

We also have ongoing work addressing State's reliance on DOD for contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, including State's use of DOD's primary support contract, the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program, or LOGCAP, contract.

State and DOD Have Not Finalized Security Capabilities in a Dangerous Environment

Iraq is a “critical threat” post with additional special conditions, State’s most dangerous designation, and Mission Iraq personnel and facilities face numerous threats, including routine rocket and mortar attacks, car and roadside bombs, small arms fire, and kidnapping. This environment requires extraordinary funding to provide additional security and support capabilities, primarily provided by contractors.

Mission Iraq security capabilities were operational but did not fully meet mission-capable security criteria by the planned target date of October 1, 2011. State and DOD identified three security criteria for Mission Iraq to be considered fully mission capable:

- completion of secure and protected facilities,
- provision of secure ground and air movement, and
- provision of emergency response capability.

State and DOD security capabilities are not finalized. Construction of security features was not expected to be completed at State-managed sites until February 2013 and at DOD-managed sites until September 2013, in part due to contractor performance. To mitigate resulting vulnerabilities, Mission Iraq frequently employs “field expedient” measures.³ State and DOD also experienced difficulty in recruiting, vetting, and training their 7,000 contractors to provide security support for Mission Iraq and, as a result, had to extend existing DOD security contracts. Mission Iraq’s secure movement capability was operational but not fully mission capable by the planned date of October 1, 2011. For example, in October 2011, vehicle communication issues in Basrah prevented State from carrying out some secure movements. Based on our review of State and DOD documentation, emergency response capability was operational but was not fully mission capable by the planned date. However, as of May 2012, emergency response was fully mission capable.

³According to State officials, additional information on these measures is sensitive but unclassified and cannot be released publicly.

State and DOD agreed that each department would take responsibility for establishing secure facilities at the sites it managed.⁴ Both departments also decided to apply their own enhanced security measures at the sites each managed. As of May 2012, State had conducted security assessments at the sites it managed and had taken mitigating steps to address vulnerabilities. Prior to its withdrawal from Iraq, USF-I conducted security assessments at DOD-managed sites. DOD officials reported some efforts to address the vulnerabilities identified by the USF-I assessments, but DOD did not fully document such efforts. DOD officials noted that because USF-I assessments assumed a follow-on military force, DOD was not obligated to address the vulnerabilities identified by USF-I. DOD has informed us of plans to conduct new vulnerability assessments of its sites by July 2012.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Tierney, and Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

Contacts and Acknowledgements

For further information on this statement, please contact Michael J. Courts at (202) 512-8980 or courtsm@gao.gov. In addition, contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this statement.

Individuals who made key contributions to this testimony include Judy McCloskey, Assistant Director; Tara Copp; Thomas Costa; David Dayton; Brandon Hunt; Mary Moutsos; Shakira O'Neil; and Michael Rohrbach. In addition, Martin de Alteriis, Johana Ayers, Katy Crosby, Lisa McMillan, Valérie Nowak, Jeremy Sebest, and Gwyneth Woolwine provided technical assistance and additional support for this testimony.

⁴While DOD-managed sites fall under Chief of Mission authority, DOD's U.S. Central Command signed a memorandum with Mission Iraq taking on security responsibility for certain personnel and locations, including the sites it manages.

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