



February 2015

BUILDING PARTNER CAPACITY

DOD Should Improve
Its Reporting to
Congress on
Challenges to
Expanding Ministry of
Defense Advisors
Program

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14. ABSTRACT The Department of Defense (DOD) has expanded the Global Ministry of Defense Advisors (MODA) program more slowly than planned. It had 2 advisors in the field in Kosovo and Montenegro for most of fiscal year 2014, short of its goal of deploying 12 advisors by the end of fiscal year 2014. DOD deployed advisors to 2 additional countries just before the end of fiscal year 2014 (see figure). According to DOD officials, reasons it has taken longer than expected to expand globally include delays in the country approval process and with advisor recruitment and training. DOD has met most but not all legislative requirements for the MODA program. As required by the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2012, DOD obtained concurrence on its proposed deployments from the Department of State (State). DOD's most recent annual report to Congress included 4 of the 6 required elements, but did not include information on the cost or duration of each Global MODA deployment, which could help Congress assess the value of the program in relation to other capacity-building efforts (see figure). Additionally, DOD has not provided information on the program's performance, such as linking actual performance to goals. Although DOD is not required by law to include this information, GAO has previously reported that such information can be useful to decision makers. Finally, DOD has not updated the policy for the program as required in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2014.						
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GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-279](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2012, Congress authorized DOD to create a program to assign civilian DOD employees as advisors to foreign ministries of defense. DOD created the Global MODA program, an expansion of a program started in Afghanistan in 2010, which partners DOD civilian experts with foreign defense and security officials to build core competencies in key areas such as strategy and policy, human resources management, acquisition and logistics, and financial management. The NDAA, as amended, required that DOD (1) obtain concurrence on the program from the Secretary of State; (2) provide an annual report to Congress including 6 elements on the status of the program; and (3) update the policy for the program. Congress also required GAO to report on the effectiveness of the program.

GAO assessed (1) DOD's progress in expanding MODA globally and (2) the extent to which DOD met NDAA requirements. GAO reviewed MODA program plans, reports, and other documents and interviewed DOD and State officials in Washington, D.C., as well as in Kosovo and Montenegro—the locations to which the first 2 advisors were deployed.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD (1) include all required information in its annual reports to Congress; (2) consider providing Congress with additional information on the program's performance; and (3) develop a time frame for updating the policy for the MODA program. DOD concurred with these recommendations.

View [GAO-15-279](#). For more information, contact Charles Michael Johnson, Jr. at (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov.

February 2015

BUILDING PARTNER CAPACITY

DOD Should Improve Its Reporting to Congress on Challenges to Expanding Ministry of Defense Advisors Program

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) has expanded the Global Ministry of Defense Advisors (MODA) program more slowly than planned. It had 2 advisors in the field in Kosovo and Montenegro for most of fiscal year 2014, short of its goal of deploying 12 advisors by the end of fiscal year 2014. DOD deployed advisors to 2 additional countries just before the end of fiscal year 2014 (see figure). According to DOD officials, reasons it has taken longer than expected to expand globally include delays in the country approval process and with advisor recruitment and training.

Existing and Planned Global MODA Locations



Source: GAO from Department of Defense data; Map Resources (map). | GAO-15-279

DOD has met most but not all legislative requirements for the MODA program. As required by the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2012, DOD obtained concurrence on its proposed deployments from the Department of State (State). DOD's most recent annual report to Congress included 4 of the 6 required elements, but did not include information on the cost or duration of each Global MODA deployment, which could help Congress assess the value of the program in relation to other capacity-building efforts (see figure). Additionally, DOD has not provided information on the program's performance, such as linking actual performance to goals. Although DOD is not required by law to include this information, GAO has previously reported that such information can be useful to decision makers. Finally, DOD has not updated the policy for the program as required in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2014.

Global MODA Reporting Requirements in DOD's Fiscal Year 2013 Annual Report

Required reporting element	Assessment
List of the defense ministries to which civilian employees were assigned	✓
Number of advisors assigned to these ministries	✓
Duration of the various assignments of advisors	✗
Brief description of the activities carried out by advisors	✓
Description of the criteria used to select foreign ministries and civilian advisors for the program	✓
Statement of the cost of each assignment	✗

✓ Requirement fully met ✗ Requirement not met

Source: GAO analysis of Ministry of Defense Advisors Program Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2013. | GAO-15-279

Note: Excludes MODA Afghanistan

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Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
DSCA	Defense Security Cooperation Agency
MODA	Ministry of Defense Advisors
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
State	Department of State

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February 11, 2015

Congressional Committees

In recent years, the Department of Defense (DOD) has emphasized security cooperation approaches to build the institutional capacity of foreign partner ministries of defense and to advance the U.S. objective of international peace and cooperation. For example, strategic guidance issued by the Secretary of Defense in January 2012 highlighted the importance of enhancing the defense capacity of foreign partners in order to share the costs and responsibilities of global leadership.¹ According to DOD officials, building partner capacity is a way to reduce long-term U.S. presence while protecting the territory of other nations.

The Ministry of Defense Advisors (MODA) program partners DOD civilian experts with foreign defense and security officials to build core competencies in key areas such as strategy and policy, human resources management, acquisition and logistics, and financial management. The program began in Afghanistan in July 2010, and Congress authorized the Secretary of Defense, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, to carry out a program to assign DOD civilian employees as advisors to the ministries of defense of foreign countries in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2012.²

The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012 mandated GAO to report on the effectiveness of the advisory services provided by civilian employees assigned under the program.³ This report addresses (1) DOD's progress in expanding MODA globally and (2) the extent to which DOD met NDAA requirements. We also have included our observations of the first two global MODA deployments in appendix II.

¹Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 5, 2012).

²Pub. L. No. 112-81, § 1081, Dec. 31, 2011, as amended by Pub. L. No. 113-66, § 1094(a)(5), Dec. 26, 2013.

³We originally initiated this audit in September 2012, in response to a mandate to report on the program by December 30, 2013, in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012, but suspended it in January 2013 because the Global MODA program had not yet deployed any advisors. Congress subsequently extended GAO's mandated reporting deadline by a year in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2014.

To determine what progress DOD has made toward expanding the MODA program globally, we examined DOD's goals for the program outside of Afghanistan, known as the Global MODA program, for fiscal years 2013 and 2014; interviewed DOD, Department of State (State), and foreign ministry officials in Montenegro and Kosovo, the two overseas locations in which Global MODA advisors were deployed for most of fiscal year 2014; and reviewed DOD documentation, including its budget estimates, program guidance, and work plans and monthly progress reports from the first two advisors in the field. To determine the extent to which DOD met NDAA requirements, we reviewed the fiscal year 2012 and 2014 NDAs, interviewed DOD and State officials, and reviewed DOD and State documentation, including DOD's annual reports to Congress.⁴

We conducted this performance audit from June 2014 to February 2015 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. (See app. I for a more complete description of our scope and methodology.)

Background

MODA in Afghanistan and Global Expansion

The MODA program started in Afghanistan in July 2010. DOD developed it as a result of operational requirements in Afghanistan and an increased U.S. government emphasis on civilian-led capacity building at the ministerial level. According to DOD, the program was created to address past concerns relating to advisory services, including that they were often carried out on an ad hoc basis, utilizing uniformed or contract personnel whose functional expertise and advisory skills were not always well-matched to the socio-cultural working environment.

⁴The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013 did not include any provisions relating to this program.

Since 2010, DOD has deployed over 200 advisors to the Afghanistan Ministries of Defense and Interior, including about 50 advisors in fiscal year 2014. DOD has typically deployed these advisors for 1- to 2-year assignments. DOD plans to deploy about 90 additional advisors to Afghanistan in fiscal year 2015.

Section 1081 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012, as amended by Section 1094 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2014, provided DOD authority to carry out a program to assign DOD civilian employees as advisors to the ministries of defense of foreign countries. Using this authority, DOD created the Global MODA program. The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2014 extended the program's authority through fiscal year 2017.

Global MODA Program Objectives

DOD's Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) administers the MODA program, with support and oversight from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

The law authorizes DOD's civilian advisors to (1) provide institutional, ministerial-level advice, and other training to personnel of the ministry to which they are assigned in support of stabilization or post-conflict activities, and (2) assist the ministry in building core institutional capacity, competencies, and capabilities to manage defense-related processes. The policy objective of the Global MODA program is to enhance the capabilities and capacity of the partner nation's defense ministry, or the security agency serving a similar defense function. According to DOD, as other DOD security cooperation efforts develop partner nation military units, the institutions required to support them with pay, benefits, and equipment must be developed as well. MODA is designed to forge long-term relationships that strengthen a partner nation's defense ministry. DOD also intends that these efforts support broader U.S. policy goals promoting positive civil-military relations, respect for human dignity and the rule of law, international humanitarian law, and professionalized partner military forces.

Funding of the Global MODA Program

Funding for the MODA program comes from DOD's Overseas Contingency Operations appropriation and annual appropriations for operations and maintenance. According to DOD officials, the Overseas Contingency Operations funding is used solely for Afghanistan and funding from the annual operations and maintenance appropriation is split between the Afghanistan and Global MODA programs.

DOD documentation indicates that the department planned to spend about \$3.8 million in fiscal year 2014 on the Global MODA program. This plan included funds for deployments to 10 countries and training and travel for the advisors.⁵ DOD provided documentation indicating that it actually obligated about \$2.9 million in fiscal year 2014, including just over \$573,000 on advisor deployment costs, a little over \$2 million on training, and around \$240,000 on program management and travel.⁶

Process for Selecting Locations and Deploying Advisors

The process of selecting locations for the Global MODA program and deploying advisors includes seven components—nominations, initial screening, requirement development, State concurrence, DOD formal approval, recruitment, and training and pre-deployment (see fig. 1). While some of these components must occur in a specific order (e.g., DOD must obtain State concurrence before it can deploy an advisor), others may take place concurrently.

⁵Although DSCA's budget estimates included a goal of deploying 12 advisors by the end of fiscal year 2014, DSCA's spending plan for the program only included estimated funding for 10 advisors.

⁶It is difficult to determine the precise amount of obligations for Global MODA due to the fact that, according to DOD officials, some costs, such as training costs, may include funding to support the overall MODA program, including the Afghanistan program.

Figure 1: Process for Selecting a Location for and Deploying a Global Ministry of Defense Advisor



Source: GAO from Department of Defense and State Department data. | GAO-15-279

Other Related DOD Defense Institution Building Programs

DSCA operates a number of related defense institution building programs intended to build partner capacity and support institution building, including the Defense Institution Reform Initiative and the Warsaw Initiative Fund. Like the MODA program, the Defense Institution Reform Initiative provides subject-matter experts to work with partner nations to assess organizational weaknesses and share best practices for addressing those shortfalls; according to DOD officials, this may lead to further exchanges on improving institutional processes and management.

Teams of subject-matter experts visit a country periodically to carry out long-term projects, such as conducting a strategic review of the defense sector. The Defense Institution Reform Initiative also focuses on ministry-to-ministry engagement; however, it uses a mix of contractor and civilian personnel and provides short-term, periodic interaction, while the MODA program uses only civilians and is intended to provide long-term, daily interaction. Officials noted that the Warsaw Initiative Fund's Defense Institution Building Management Team works with former Soviet bloc partner nations to provide short-term technical support in countries that do not have a Defense Institution Reform Initiative presence. According to DOD officials, the MODA program is intended to complement ongoing work by the Defense Institution Reform Initiative and the Defense Institution Building Management Team in nominated countries, and MODA advisors are expected to work closely with Defense Institution Reform Initiative and Defense Institution Building Management Team counterparts.

Global MODA Expanding More Slowly than Projected

DOD's actual Global MODA deployments at the end of fiscal year 2014 were significantly less than the goal presented in DOD's most recent budget estimates. In its March 2014 budget estimates, DOD stated that it intended to deploy 12 advisors to countries distributed across the globe (12 countries) by the end of fiscal year 2014. In its previous budget estimates, published in April 2013, DOD planned to have 30 advisors in the field by the end of fiscal year 2014. For most of fiscal year 2014, however, DOD had only 2 advisors abroad in Kosovo and Montenegro for 1-year assignments. By the end of the fiscal year, DOD had deployed 5 advisors for 1-year assignments to 4 European countries—Kosovo, Montenegro, Georgia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (see table 1).⁷ For more information on DOD's first 2 Global MODA deployments, see app. II.

⁷There were 5 advisors because as of the end of the fiscal year, DOD had deployed a second advisor to replace the first one in Montenegro.

Table 1: DOD Goals for Fiscal Year 2013 and 2014 Global Ministry of Defense Advisors Deployments, Compared with Actual Deployments

	Number of Advisors	
	Fiscal Year 2013	Fiscal Year 2014
Goal as of April 2013	14	30
Goal as of March 2014	--	12
Actual Deployments by End of Fiscal Year	2	5 ^a

Source: GAO analysis of DOD data. | GAO-15-279

^aThe count of 5 deployments by the end of fiscal year 2014 includes the 2 deployments made in fiscal year 2013 because the advisors were in the field for most of fiscal year 2014.

Note: Table does not include short-term deployments, such as to Mongolia through the Defense Education Enhancement Program.

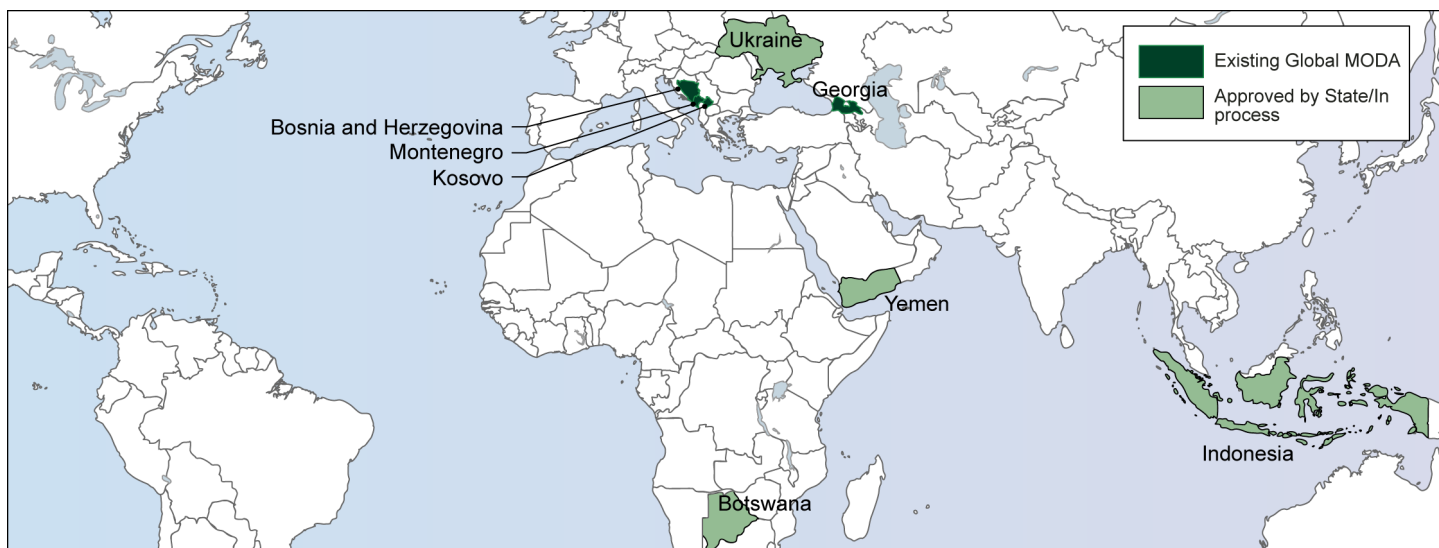
In late 2014, DOD began a process to prioritize and allocate resources for defense institution building activities globally, including potential MODA program deployments. As a result of this process and new authority in the fiscal year 2015 NDAA to assign MODA advisors to regional organizations with security missions, DOD has not finalized plans for the locations of future deployments.⁸ However, DOD has obtained State concurrence for 4 more countries—Botswana, Indonesia, Ukraine, and Yemen (see fig. 2).

Although the program has typically deployed advisors on long-term assignments of a year or more, DOD also sent an advisor to Mongolia in fiscal year 2014 on a 2-week assignment using MODA authority and officials stated they plan to send additional short-term advisors in fiscal year 2015.⁹

⁸Pub. L. No. 113-291, § 1047, Dec. 19, 2014.

⁹DOD deployed the advisor to Mongolia as part of the Defense Education Enhancement Program, which, according to DOD officials, supports foreign professional military education institutions. DOD officials stated that the additional short-term advising positions for fiscal year 2015 would also be under this program. Short-term assignments will undergo the same selection and deployment process as long-term advisors, with the exception of attending the advisor training program.

Figure 2: Existing and Planned Global Ministry of Defense Advisors Placements, as of December 2014



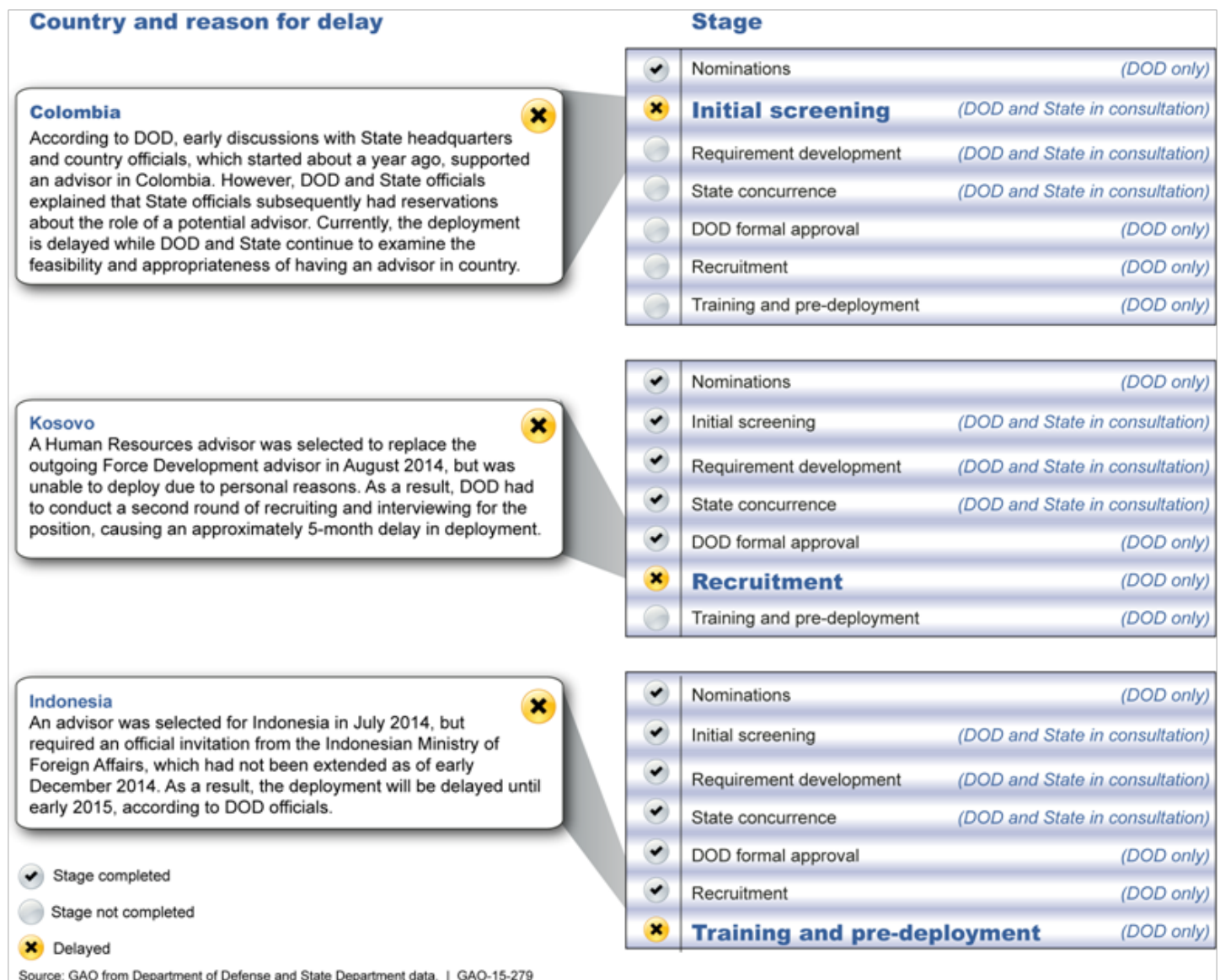
Source: GAO from Department of Defense data; Map Resources (map). | GAO-15-279

Note: Figure does not include short-term deployments, such as to Mongolia through the Defense Education Enhancement Program.

According to DOD officials, the reasons DOD did not meet its goal of 12 advisors in place by the end of fiscal year 2014 are unique to each of the countries and advisors selected. These officials noted there can be delays in the country approval process, or with the recruitment or training of the advisor. While DOD stated that the process of selecting a country and deploying an advisor should take about 6 months, the process for the first 2 advisors—from the scoping visit to deployment—took over a year.¹⁰ Delays in deployments have occurred at various stages in the process of selecting countries and advisors. See Figure 3 for examples of reasons for delays.

¹⁰The scoping visit occurs during the requirement development stage of the process. The scoping visit involves meeting with ministry officials and key stakeholders from the U.S. embassy country team to brief them on the MODA program and obtain their support for establishing a presence with the partner nation ministry.

Figure 3: Examples of Reasons for Delays in Global Ministry of Defense Advisors Deployments



DOD Has Not Met All Legislative Requirements for the MODA Program

The fiscal year 2012 and 2014 NDAA's established requirements for the Global MODA program, including that DOD (1) obtain concurrence from the Secretary of State in assigning advisors to foreign ministries of defense; (2) report annually on activities under the program during the preceding fiscal year and include 6 elements on the status of the program in its reports; and (3) update the policy guidance for the MODA program.¹¹ DOD met some, but not all, of these requirements. Specifically, DOD obtained concurrence on deployments from the Secretary of State, but its most recent annual report to Congress only included 4 of the 6 required elements for the Global MODA program, and it has not developed a policy for the program.

DOD Obtained State Concurrence on Deployments

As required in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012, DOD officials worked with State to obtain concurrence on MODA deployments. According to State officials, DOD provides State with a concurrence package that typically includes an internal DOD action memo seeking final concurrence. The memo may include an opinion from U.S. officials in the nominated country and may note which approvals have been obtained within DOD, such as from the relevant geographic Combatant Command or from the Joint Staff. The program manager in State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs then adds an action memo for State reviewers and routes the package to relevant parties within State.

State's internal goal is to vet a package within 10 working days, assuming there is policy agreement. However, if questions or policy disagreements arise, the vetting process can take longer. When State concurs, officials will typically send a message to DOD noting this concurrence and explaining whether its concurrence is conditional on any additional requirements or revisions to the package.

State officials noted that they are reviewing the concurrence process to determine where problems may arise and incorporate changes to streamline the process. For example, they are considering whether DOD could provide any additional information to facilitate State's concurrence process. Additionally, State officials noted that it will be important to share feedback about existing or completed deployments so that lessons

¹¹Pub. L. No. 112-81, § 1081, Dec. 31, 2011, as amended by Pub. L. No. 113-66, § 1094, Dec. 26, 2013

learned can be incorporated into the concurrence process going forward. If, for example, State officials in country raise concerns, it would be important for that feedback to be provided to both DOD and State officials in headquarters. State and DOD officials noted that they have discussed some of these potential changes.

DOD Met Most but Not All NDAA Reporting Requirements and Could Provide More Information on the Status of the Program

In the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012, Congress required that DOD's annual reports on the status of the MODA program include 6 elements: (1) a list of the defense ministries to which civilian employees were assigned; (2) the number of advisors assigned to these ministries; (3) the duration of the advisors' assignments; (4) a brief description of the activities carried out by advisors; (5) a description of the criteria used to select the foreign defense ministries and civilian advisors for the program; (6) the cost of each assignment.¹²

DOD's most recent annual report to Congress on the MODA program—covering fiscal year 2013—contained 4 of the 6 required elements for the Global MODA program.¹³ The report contained two main sections—one on the MODA program in Afghanistan and one on the Global MODA program. The section on Afghanistan contained all 6 elements, but the Global MODA section did not include required information on the cost or assignment duration for the 2 advisors deployed in late fiscal year 2013 (see fig. 4). According to DOD officials, this information was not provided because DOD had not collected it at the time the report was drafted.

¹²A seventh element—to provide recommendations, if any, about changes to the program's authority including an assessment of whether expanding the program authority to include assignments to bilateral, regional, or multilateral international security organizations would advance the national security interests of the United States—is only required if DOD has any such recommendations. DOD did not include any recommendations about the program's authority in the 2013 annual report.

¹³Department of Defense, *Ministry of Defense Advisors Program Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2013*.

Figure 4: Assessment of Global Ministry of Defense Advisors Reporting Requirements in DOD’s Fiscal Year 2013 Annual Report

Required reporting element	Assessment
List of the defense ministries to which civilian employees were assigned	✓
Number of advisors assigned to these ministries	✓
Duration of the various assignments of advisors.	✗
Brief description of the activities carried out by advisors.	✓
Description of the criteria used to select foreign ministries and civilian advisors for the program	✓
Statement of the cost of each assignment	✗

 Requirement fully met
  Requirement not met

Source: GAO analysis of Ministry of Defense Advisors Program Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2013. | GAO-15-279

In its reporting to Congress, DOD has provided limited performance information beyond the required elements in the law. For example, the 2013 annual report listed the number of advisors assigned through the program, but did not include information on how advisor assignments compare with overall program deployment goals or provide reasons why the program has expanded more slowly than anticipated. Additionally, it did not provide information on the extent to which actual costs compared with planned funding allocations. While DOD is not required by law to report on this information, Congress has required DOD to report on the number, duration, and cost of advisors assigned, and additional information in these areas beyond what is required could be useful to Congress. We have previously reported that agencies should consider the differing information needs of various users to ensure that performance information will be both useful and used in decision making.¹⁴ We have also reported that information on a program’s progress in meeting its objectives, as well as program-level linkages

¹⁴GAO, *Managing for Results: Enhancing Agency Use of Performance Information for Management Decision Making*, [GAO-05-927](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 9, 2005).

between resources, strategies, and goals, can be useful to Congress.¹⁵ Such information could assist Congress as it makes future decisions about the program.

DOD Has Not Developed a Policy for the MODA Program

According to DOD officials, DOD does not currently have a policy for the MODA program. The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2014 required DOD to update its policy for the MODA program.¹⁶ DOD officials stated that DOD plans to meet the requirement by providing a broader directive and instruction on defense institution building, which would include the MODA program. Officials stated that DOD is in the process of staffing this effort.

In October 2012, the DOD Inspector General reported that MODA program officials cited the absence of a formal policy on building ministerial capacity as a factor that impeded their ability to establish a performance management framework for the MODA program in Afghanistan.¹⁷ Additionally, in a November 2012 report on the Defense Institution Reform Initiative, the DOD Inspector General stated that the absence of a defense institution building policy created programmatic challenges, including allowing overlapping missions in DOD's defense institution building-related efforts.¹⁸

In June 2012, DOD officials told the Inspector General that they were drafting a policy for developing and maintaining DOD capabilities to assess, support, develop, and advise partner nations.¹⁹ More than 2 years

¹⁵GAO, *Managing for Results: Views on Ensuring the Usefulness of Agency Performance Information to Congress*, [GAO/GGD-00-35](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 26, 2000).

¹⁶Pub. L. No. 113-66, § 1094(a)(2), Dec. 26, 2013. The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2015 required that the policy include any advisors assigned to regional organizations. Pub. L. No. 113-291, § 1047, Dec. 19, 2014.

¹⁷Department of Defense Inspector General, *Performance Framework and Better Management of Resources Needed for the Ministry of Defense Advisors Program*, DODIG-2013-005 (Alexandria, VA: Oct. 23, 2012). Following the Inspector General's report, MODA program officials created a performance management framework for the program, but do not currently use it to evaluate the Global MODA program. DOD officials stated that they are working to develop standard operating procedures for evaluating the program.

¹⁸Department of Defense Inspector General, *Defense Institution Reform Initiative Program Elements Need to Be Defined*, DODIG-2013-019 (Alexandria, VA: Nov. 9, 2012).

¹⁹DODIG-2013-005.

later, the policy still has not been completed. The law did not mandate a date by which DOD should update the policy. However, standard practices in program management include, among other things, developing a plan to execute projects within a specific time frame.²⁰

Conclusions

DOD has increasingly focused on security cooperation activities such as the Global MODA program to build the defense capacity of foreign partners and allies. It has met most of its legislative requirements for reporting to Congress about the program, except the requirements to include information on the cost and duration of each deployment in its annual reports. Such information could help ensure that Congress can more fully assess the program's efforts and status. Additionally, given that the program's current authority expires at the end of fiscal year 2017, providing a direct linkage between projected and actual advisor assignments and program expansion goals, as well as between projected and actual costs—either in its annual reports or in another form—could increase the transparency of some of the reasons behind the program's slower-than-anticipated start. Such linkage could also ensure that Congress has complete performance information on the status of the program. Finally, as DOD expands the MODA program to new countries, it will be important for the program to be guided by a clearly-defined policy. Given DOD's stated intent to develop such a policy over 2 years ago, clarifying the time frame in which it plans to complete it could help to ensure that it is available for future deployments.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To help improve implementation and oversight of the MODA program, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense take the following three actions:

- Take steps to ensure that DOD includes all required elements, including information on the cost and duration of each Global MODA advisor assignment, in its future annual reports to Congress.
- Consider providing additional performance information to Congress on the extent to which DOD is achieving its advisor assignments and program expansion relative to its goals.

²⁰The Project Management Institute, *The Standard for Program Management* (2013).

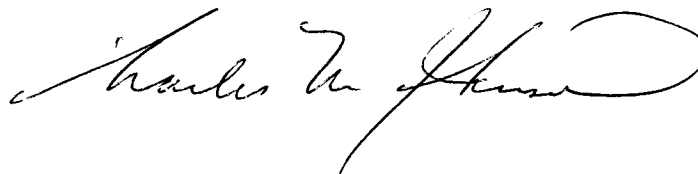
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- Establish a time frame for updating the required policy for the MODA program.
-

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this product to the Departments of Defense and State for comment. DOD provided written comments, which are reprinted in appendix III. DOD concurred with our recommendations and stated it will take steps to implement them. DOD also provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate. State had no comments.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, and other interested parties. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff members have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@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 appendix IV.



Charles Michael Johnson, Jr.
Director, International Affairs and Trade

List of Committees

The Honorable John McCain
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The Honorable Jack Reed
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Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

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Chairman
The Honorable Robert Menendez
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Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
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The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Honorable Edward R. Royce
Chairman
The Honorable Eliot L. Engel
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2012, as amended by the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2014, mandated GAO to report on the effectiveness of the advisory services provided by civilian employees under the Department of Defense's (DOD) Ministry of Defense Advisors (MODA) program.¹ This report addresses (1) DOD's progress in expanding the MODA program globally and (2) the extent to which DOD met NDAA requirements. We have also included our observations of the first two global MODA deployments in appendix II.

To determine what progress DOD has made toward expanding the MODA program globally, we identified DOD's goals for the Global MODA program—the program outside of Afghanistan—for fiscal years 2013 and 2014, as laid out in DOD's budget estimates, and compared those goals with program results for those 2 years. We interviewed DOD, Department of State (State), and foreign ministry officials in Montenegro and Kosovo, the two overseas locations in which Global MODA advisors were deployed for most of fiscal year 2014; and reviewed DOD documentation including its budget estimates, program guidance, and work plans and monthly progress reports from the first two advisors in the field. We identified the steps DOD took to select a location and deploy an advisor by interviewing DOD and State officials and reviewing DOD and State documentation, including documentation on DOD's nomination and selection process and on State's concurrence process. Based on this information, we outlined the process DOD has used for selecting a location and deploying a Global MODA advisor through its initial deployments. We reviewed DOD information on its planned spending for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 and on actual obligations for fiscal year 2014. With respect to the obligations information, DOD officials noted that it is difficult to determine the precise amount of obligations for Global MODA due to the fact that some costs, such as training costs, may include funding to support the overall MODA program, including the Afghanistan program. Given the difficulty of obtaining complete and accurate information on obligations for Global MODA, we present DOD's identified obligations in background for context and background purposes only.

¹We originally initiated this audit in September 2012, in response to a mandate to report on the program by December 30, 2013, in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012, but suspended it in January 2013 because the Global MODA program had not yet deployed any advisors. Congress subsequently extended GAO's mandated reporting deadline by a year in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2014.

To determine the extent to which DOD met NDAA requirements, we reviewed the fiscal year 2012 and 2014 NDAAAs to identify requirements, interviewed DOD and State officials, and reviewed DOD and State documentation, including DOD's annual reports to Congress. To determine whether DOD met the reporting requirements included in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012, we reviewed the Global MODA section of DOD's 2013 annual report to Congress.² We determined that a requirement was "met" if it was fully addressed in the annual report; we determined a requirement was "partially met" if it was addressed but did not include all elements of a requirement; and we determined a requirement was "not met" if it was not included in the annual report.

We conducted this performance audit from June 2014 to February 2015 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.

²The report was divided into two main sections—one on the MODA program in Afghanistan and one on the Global MODA program. Because our report focused on the global expansion of the program, we only assessed the inclusion of requirements in the Global MODA section of the report.

Appendix II: Observations of the First Two Completed Global MODA Deployments

As of the end of fiscal year 2014, two Global Ministry of Defense Advisors (MODA) assignments—in Kosovo and Montenegro—were completed.

The first Global MODA program advisor went to Kosovo in August 2013 for a 1-year deployment to assist the Ministry for the Kosovo Security Force in the area of force development. The goals of the assistance, as described in the Terms of Reference, included supporting the implementation of recommendations from Kosovo's Strategic Security Sector Review, including restructuring, manning, training, and equipping the Kosovo Security Force.¹ To work toward this goal, the advisor reported various activities, such as developing management databases and formulating force structures for the Kosovo Security Force.

In September 2013, Global MODA deployed an advisor to Montenegro to help address capacity gaps in the area of logistics and maintenance that had been identified by a delegation from the Defense Institution Building Management Team. The delegation assisted in a strategic defense review that identified several missing pieces in Montenegro's military command structure, including the absence of a logistics command. The MODA Terms of Reference included assisting the Ministry in developing a national-level maintenance policy and developing a logistics cost forecasting methodology. To assist the Ministry in building logistics capacity, the advisor participated in the formation of a logistics battalion and helped the Ministry to outline an organizational structure for a logistics command.

We traveled to both locations and interviewed the advisors, Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of State (State) officials in the U.S. embassy, and the advisor's counterparts at the foreign ministries in Kosovo and Montenegro. We made the following observations of these first two advisor deployments:

U.S. and Foreign Ministry Officials Were Generally Satisfied with the First Two Global MODA Advisors: The foreign ministry officials with whom we spoke in Kosovo and Montenegro expressed satisfaction with the advising services and welcomed new advisors to continue the program. Additionally, DOD and State officials in both countries stated

¹The Strategic Security Sector Review was conducted by the Ministry with support from the Defense Institution Reform Initiative.

that the advisors had a positive impact on the host ministry and that the MODA program complemented other U.S. activities in the country.

DOD Adjusted Advisor Reporting Requirements Based on Materials Submitted by First Two Advisors: DOD has adjusted its advisors' reporting requirements based on materials submitted by the first two advisors. Once in country, advisors are required to develop and provide a work plan to MODA program management. These work plans turn broad goals established in the Terms of Reference with the host ministry into specific tasks and objectives. Advisors are also required to report monthly to MODA program management on their progress toward achieving these tasks and objectives. The first two advisors' work plans and monthly reports differed greatly in terms of length and detail regarding objectives and activities completed, making it difficult to measure or assess their performance. To standardize the work plans and reports, DOD has developed and issued guidance that specifies what the documents submitted by each advisor should contain. In addition, DOD officials have said they plan to have subject matter experts from the Defense Institution Reform Initiative or the Defense Institution Building Management Team assist the advisors in developing the work plans, and assess the work plans and reports to ensure that the plans and activities are appropriate to achieve the established goals.

It Is Important to Maintain Clear Communication Between Advisors and the U.S. Embassy: Both of the initial advisors were embedded at the foreign ministry, and DOD and State officials noted that maintaining regular communications with the embassy is important to ensure that the advisor's efforts are consistent with U.S. goals in the country. Officials in both countries stated that it took some time to determine how the advisor would work with the U.S. country team. Officials stated that it is important to have clear expectations about how the advisor will be integrated into the country team.

Advisors May Be Able to Leverage Other U.S. Security Cooperation Resources: U.S. and foreign officials in Montenegro were complimentary of efforts taken by the advisor to leverage DOD's State Partnership Program. Through that program, Montenegro had an existing relationship with the Maine National Guard. The advisor leveraged that program to organize a logistics training exercise that helped to advance the goal of forming a logistics battalion. The advisor noted that it took some time to understand what resources were available to him and having additional information about other U.S. security cooperation resources upfront could be helpful to future advisors.

Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Defense

Note: GAO received comments from the Department of Defense on January 26, 2015.



STRATEGY, PLANS
AND CAPABILITIES

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

2400 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2400

Mr. Charles Johnson, Jr.
Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington DC 20548

Dear Mr. Johnson:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO Draft Report GAO-15-279, "Building Partner Capacity: DoD Should Improve Its Reporting to Congress on Challenges to Expanding the Ministry of Defense Advisors Program," dated December 18, 2014 (GAO Code 320944).

The Department is providing official written comments for inclusion in the report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Ross".

Thomas W. Ross, Jr.
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
Security Cooperation

Attachment

GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED DECEMBER 18, 2014
GAO-15-279 (GAO CODE 320944)

**"BUILDING PARTNER CAPACITY: DOD SHOULD IMPROVE ITS REPORTING TO
CONGRESS ON CHALLENGES TO EXPANDING MINISTRY OF DEFENSE
ADVISORS PROGRAM"**

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
TO THE GAO RECOMMENDATION**

OVERVIEW

The Ministry of Defense Advisors (MoDA) Program provides the Department of Defense (DoD) with a critical tool to help partner nations build defense institutions that can manage and sustain capabilities that support DoD strategic objectives effectively and in accordance with the rule of law. Although the program is still relatively nascent, DoD is already working diligently to expand its reach, enhance its strategic value, and address the recommendations provided in this report.

After the GAO had already concluded its DoD interviews, DoD undertook a process to validate requirements for, prioritize, and allocate resources for Defense Institution Building (DIB) activities globally, including potential MoDA Program deployments. The process was still underway at the time of receipt of the draft report. Moreover, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2015 provided DoD the authority to deploy MoDA Program advisors to "regional organizations with security missions." As a result of the prioritization process and the receipt of the new additional authority, much of the information provided during the GAO interviews regarding future MoDA plans, including planned locations, is subject to change.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Take steps to ensure that DoD includes all required elements, including information on the cost and duration of each Global MoDA advisor assignment, in its future annual reports to Congress.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. DoD will provide all the required elements in future Ministry of Defense Advisors (MoDA) Program reports to Congress.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Consider providing additional performance information to Congress on the extent to which DoD is achieving its advisor assignments and program expansion relative to its goals.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. DoD will provide additional performance information in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 MoDA Program annual report to Congress. DoD drafted and is currently staffing the FY 2014 report in accordance with the requirements established in Section 1081 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2012, as amended by Section 1094 of the NDAA for FY 2014.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Establish a time frame for updating the required policy for the MoDA program.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. DoD is drafting a Directive and Instruction on Defense Institution Building, which will update the policy for the MoDA Program. DoD plans to complete both documents by the end of FY 2015.

Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Charles Michael Johnson, Jr., Director, (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Hynek Kalkus (Assistant Director), Kara Marshall (Analyst-in-Charge), Julia Jebo Grant, Ashley Alley, Martin De Alteriis, Karen Deans, Jon Fremont, and Emily Gupta made key contributions to this report.

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