



Highlights of [GAO-07-211](#), a report to the Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Defense, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

Joint seabasing is one of several evolving concepts for projecting and sustaining forces without relying on immediate access to nearby land bases and could be the source of billions of dollars of investment. In future security environments, the Department of Defense (DOD) expects to encounter situations of reduced or denied access to areas of operation. Even where forward operating bases are otherwise available, their use may be politically undesirable or operationally restricted. GAO was asked to address the extent to which (1) DOD has employed a comprehensive management approach to joint seabasing, (2) DOD has developed a joint experimentation campaign plan for joint seabasing, and (3) DOD and the services have identified the costs of joint seabasing options. For this review, GAO analyzed joint requirements documents, experimentation efforts, and service acquisition plans.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD develop a management approach that includes senior leadership involvement, a dedicated implementation team, and a communications strategy; and develop an experimentation campaign plan and total ownership cost estimates for seabasing options. DOD agreed with the recommendations, except for the need for a dedicated implementation team.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-211](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-211).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Janet St. Laurent at (202) 512-4402 or [stlaurentj@gao.gov](mailto:stlaurentj@gao.gov).

## FORCE STRUCTURE

# Joint Seabasing Would Benefit from a Comprehensive Management Approach and Rigorous Experimentation before Services Spend Billions on New Capabilities

## What GAO Found

While DOD has taken action to establish a joint seabasing capability, it has not developed a comprehensive management approach to guide and assess joint seabasing. GAO's prior work showed that sound management practices for developing capabilities include involving top leadership, dedicating an implementation team, and establishing a communications strategy. DOD is developing a joint seabasing concept and various DOD organizations are sponsoring seabasing initiatives. However, DOD has not provided sufficient leadership to guide joint seabasing development and service initiatives are outpacing DOD's analysis of joint requirements. DOD also has not established an implementation team to provide day-to-day management to ensure joint seabasing receives the focused attention needed so that efforts are effective and coordinated. Also, DOD has not fully developed a communications strategy that shares information among the organizations involved in seabasing. Without a comprehensive management approach containing these elements, DOD may be unable to coordinate activities and minimize redundancy among service initiatives.

DOD has not developed a joint experimentation campaign plan, although many seabasing experimentation activities—including war games, modeling and simulation, and live demonstrations—have taken place across the services, combatant commands, and other defense entities. No overarching joint seabasing experimentation plan exists to guide these efforts because the U.S. Joint Forces Command has not taken the lead in coordinating joint seabasing experimentation, although it has been tasked with developing a biennial joint experimentation campaign plan for future joint concepts. While the U.S. Joint Forces Command is in the process of developing the plan, it is unclear the extent to which this plan will address joint seabasing or will be able to guide joint seabasing experimentation efforts. Without a plan to direct experimentation, DOD and the services' ability to evaluate solutions, coordinate efforts, and disseminate results could be compromised.

While service development efforts tied to seabasing are approaching milestones for investment decisions, it is unclear when DOD will complete development of total ownership cost estimates for a range of joint seabasing options. Joint seabasing is going through a capabilities-based assessment process that is intended to produce preliminary cost estimates for seabasing options. However, DOD has not yet begun the specific study that will identify potential approaches, including changes to doctrine and training as well as material solutions, and produce preliminary cost estimates. DOD officials expect the study will not be complete for a year or more. Meanwhile, the services are actively pursuing a variety of seabasing initiatives, some of which are approaching milestones which will guide future program investments. Until total ownership cost estimates for joint seabasing options are developed and made transparent to DOD and Congress, decision makers will not be able to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of individual service initiatives.