



Highlights of [GAO-10-615T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Defense (DOD) and other executive agencies increasingly deploy civilians in support of contingency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Prior GAO reports show that the use of deployed civilians has raised questions about the potential for differences in policies on compensation and medical benefits. When these civilians are deployed and serve side by side, differences in compensation or medical benefits may become more apparent and could adversely impact morale.

This statement is based on GAO's 2009 congressionally requested report, which compared agency policies and identified any issues in policy or implementation regarding (1) compensation, (2) medical benefits, and (3) identification and tracking of deployed civilians. GAO reviewed laws, policies, and guidance; interviewed responsible officials at the Office of Personnel Management (OPM); and conducted a survey of civilians deployed from the six agencies between January 1, 2006 and April 30, 2008. GAO made ten recommendations for agencies to take actions such as reviewing compensation laws and policies, establishing medical screening requirements, and creating mechanisms to assist and track deployed civilians. Seven of the agencies—including DOD—generally agreed with these recommendations; U.S. Agency for International Development did not. This testimony also updates the actions the agencies have taken to address GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-10-615T](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Janet A. St. Laurent at (202) 512-4300 or stlaurentj@gao.gov.

HUMAN CAPITAL

Status of Actions Needed to Improve the Timely and Accurate Delivery of Compensation and Medical Benefits to Deployed Civilians

What GAO Found

While policies concerning compensation for deployed civilians are generally comparable, GAO found some issues that can lead to differences in the amount of compensation and the accuracy, timeliness, and completeness of this compensation. For example, two comparable supervisors who deploy under different pay systems may receive different rates of overtime pay because this rate is set by the employee's pay system and grade/band. While a congressional subcommittee asked OPM to develop a benefits package for civilians deployed to war zones and recommend enabling legislation, at the time of GAO's 2009 review, OPM had not yet done so. Also, implementation of some policies may not always be accurate or timely. For example, GAO estimates that about 40 percent of the deployed civilians in its survey reported experiencing problems with compensation, including danger pay. In June 2009, GAO recommended, among other things, that OPM oversee an executive agency working group on compensation to address differences and, if necessary, make legislative recommendations. OPM generally concurred with this recommendation and recently informed GAO that an interagency group is in the process of developing proposals for needed legislation.

Although agency policies on medical benefits are similar, GAO found some issues with medical care following deployment and post deployment medical screenings. Specifically, while DOD allows its treatment facilities to care for non-DOD civilians after deployment in some cases, the circumstances are not clearly defined and some agencies were unaware of DOD's policy. Further, while DOD requires medical screening of civilians before and following deployment, State requires screenings only before deployment. Prior GAO work found that documenting the medical condition of deployed personnel before and following deployment was critical to identifying conditions that may have resulted from deployment. GAO recommended, among other things, that State establish post-deployment screening requirements and that DOD establish procedures to ensure its post-deployment screening requirements are completed. While DOD and State agreed, DOD has developed guidance establishing procedures for post-deployment screenings; but, as of April 2010, State had not provided documentation that it established such requirements.

Each agency provided GAO with a list of deployed civilians, but none had fully implemented policies to identify and track these civilians. DOD had procedures to identify and track civilians but concluded that its guidance was not consistently implemented. Some agencies had to manually search their systems. Thus, agencies may lack critical information on the location and movement of personnel, which may hamper their ability to intervene promptly to address emerging health issues. GAO recommended that DOD enforce its tracking requirements and the other five agencies establish tracking procedures. While DOD and four agencies concurred with the recommendations and are now in various stages of implementation, U.S. Agency for International Development disagreed stating that its current system is adequate. GAO continues to disagree with this agency's position.