



Highlights of [GAO-10-1015](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) established the Partnership for Peace (PfP) to increase cooperation with former Warsaw Pact members and provide many of these countries with a path to NATO membership. As NATO confronts new security challenges, including the war in Afghanistan, its relationships with partner countries have grown in scope and importance. Additionally, NATO is developing a new Strategic Concept to clarify its mission and activities, including its relationship with PfP countries and other partners. The Department of Defense (DOD)-funded Warsaw Initiative Fund (WIF) supports the goals of the PfP program. GAO was asked to review (1) how the PfP program has evolved since GAO last reported on it in 2001; (2) options NATO is considering for the future of the PfP and other partnership programs; and (3) support to PfP countries through the U.S. WIF program. GAO analyzed NATO, DOD, and State Department (State) documents; and WIF funding data. GAO also interviewed DOD, State, NATO, and selected country officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that, following the establishment of NATO's new Strategic Concept, which could result in changes to NATO's PfP program, the Secretary of Defense conduct an evaluation of the U.S. WIF program to ensure that it effectively supports the goals of NATO's PfP program. DOD concurred with the recommendation.

View [GAO-10-1015](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Joseph Christoff at (202) 512-8979 or christoffj@gao.gov.

NATO PARTNERSHIPS

DOD Needs to Assess U.S. Assistance in Response to Changes to the Partnership for Peace Program

What GAO Found

The PfP program has evolved in four key ways since July 2001, when GAO last reported on it. First, several former PfP countries from Central and Eastern Europe have become NATO members, resulting in both a decline in the number of countries participating in the PfP and in the number of PfP countries seeking NATO membership. Second, NATO has developed additional mechanisms for engaging with PfP countries, allowing partners additional opportunities to tailor their participation in the PfP based upon their individual objectives and capacities. Third, the growing size and significance of the NATO operation in Afghanistan has increased NATO's emphasis on developing PfP countries' capabilities for participating in NATO military operations and the strategic importance of the Caucasus and Central Asian PfP countries. Fourth, as NATO has taken steps to wind down its peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans, it has increasingly used the PfP to build cooperative relationships with countries in the region, marking a shift in its role in stabilizing that part of Europe.

NATO's new Strategic Concept is expected to highlight the importance of the PfP and other NATO partnerships, and discuss ways to strengthen them further. First, NATO is debating how to strengthen its partnerships with a growing number of countries outside of the PfP. Some NATO members disagree about the extent to which NATO should pursue a more global partnership agenda. Second, NATO is considering options to enhance its routine and crisis consultations with PfP countries on security issues. Third, NATO is evaluating how to more effectively engage with PfP countries, such as those in Central Asia, that are not seeking NATO membership. Fourth, NATO is debating how to best balance PfP countries' aspirations for membership with Russian concerns about NATO expansion.

The changing composition of countries participating in the PfP program has affected the budget and focus of the WIF program, which supports the participation of PfP countries in military exercises and military contact programs. The decline in the number of countries in the PfP program contributed to a drop in average annual WIF funding from about \$43 million in fiscal years 1996 through 2005 to about \$29 million in fiscal years 2006 through 2010, according to a DOD official. Moreover, WIF funding is no longer concentrated on PfP countries aspiring to join NATO, as it was in the initial years of the program. In 2006, DOD established the Defense Institution Building program as a key focus of the WIF program to help PfP countries develop more professional and transparent defense establishments. Planned activities included assisting with strategic defense reviews; and developing defense planning, budgeting, and resource management systems, among others. DOD has encountered challenges implementing this program, including potential duplication with other U.S. assistance in some countries and limited interest from other countries, which have contributed to frequent cancellations of planned activities. DOD has not formally evaluated the WIF program since 2001, although there have been changes since then in the composition of participating countries and the focus of the WIF program.