

Why GAO Did This Study

The United States has authorized billions of dollars in arms sales and exports to six Persian Gulf countries—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). However, regional tensions and civil conflicts have raised concerns about the security and use of arms sold or exported to these countries. The Departments of Defense (DOD) and State (State) established end-use monitoring programs to ensure that these arms are used as intended. This report assesses the extent to which DOD and State (1) safeguard U.S. military technologies sold or exported to the Gulf countries, (2) provide similar or differing levels of protection for the same military technologies, and (3) vet recipients of U.S.-funded military training and equipment for potential human rights violations. To address these objectives, GAO reviewed laws and regulations, analyzed data and documentation, and interviewed officials in Washington, D.C., and the Gulf countries.

What GAO Recommends

DOD and State should harmonize their end-use monitoring for NVDs and strengthen procedures to verify compliance with security and accountability requirements, among other things. Also, State should implement individual- and unit-level human rights vetting for recipients of equipment. DOD agreed with all of the recommendations. State agreed with two of the recommendations, but disagreed that it should develop guidance on the use and timing of site visits and closure of Blue Lantern cases. GAO believes the recommendations remain valid on the need for policies, procedures, and guidance.

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PERSIAN GULF

Implementation Gaps Limit the Effectiveness of End-Use Monitoring and Human Rights Vetting for U.S. Military Equipment

What GAO Found

Gaps in implementation limit the effectiveness of U.S. efforts to safeguard military equipment sold or exported to the Persian Gulf. Under the Golden Sentry program, DOD did not document its efforts to verify host country security and accountability procedures for sensitive military equipment, and DOD personnel in five of six Gulf countries did not document their activities to monitor less sensitive items. Under its Blue Lantern program, State officials conducted postshipment checks without visiting end-users of U.S. military equipment in 10 of 13 cases GAO reviewed, and delays in requesting and conducting checks have prevented State from verifying receipt of some items. In addition, State closed post-shipment checks without receiving confirmation of receipt in 2 of 13 cases GAO reviewed.

Examples of Military Equipment Subject to End-Use Monitoring in the Persian Gulf



Source: DOD.

AIM-120 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles



Night vision device



Javelin missile

DOD and State both treat night vision devices (NVD) as a sensitive technology, but their end-use monitoring for these items varies markedly, leaving them prone to diversion. Man-portable NVDs sold through Foreign Military Sales (FMS) must be tracked by serial number, inventoried following delivery, and inventoried periodically thereafter. In contrast, State does not track NVDs by serial number or conduct regular inventories for NVDs exported through direct commercial sales (DCS). As a result, less advanced NVDs purchased through FMS have received more rigorous monitoring than more advanced NVDs purchased through DCS. In Saudi Arabia, DOD officials inventoried thousands of second-generation NVDs that were purchased through FMS in the early 1990s. Meanwhile, State approved licenses for the sale of thousands of advanced, third-generation NVDs to Saudi Arabia since 2005, which are subject to less rigorous end-use monitoring.

State has conducted human rights vetting for hundreds of individuals and units that were nominated for U.S.-funded training in the Gulf countries, but has not conducted comparable vetting for anticipated recipients of about \$188 million in U.S.-funded equipment for Bahrain and Oman. Such vetting is especially critical given Bahrain's use of its security forces to quell public demonstrations since Spring 2011. In November 2010, State established a new system for human rights vetting in the Gulf countries and has since vetted almost 800 individuals and units nominated for U.S.-funded training. However, recipients of equipment are not screened through this system. According to State, it does not vet recipients of equipment at the individual or unit level because the recipients are not generally known at the time that the assistance is approved, and State does not have procedures in place to conduct vetting later in the acquisition process.