



Highlights of [GAO-10-794](#), a report to the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

When the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) became fully operational in 2008, it inherited well over 100 activities, missions, programs, and exercises from other Department of Defense (DOD) organizations. AFRICOM initially conducted these inherited activities with little change. However, as AFRICOM has matured, it has begun planning and prioritizing activities with its four military service components, special operations command, and task force. Some activities represent a shift from traditional warfighting, requiring collaboration with the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, and other interagency partners.

GAO's prior work has identified critical steps and practices that help agencies to achieve success. For this report, GAO was asked to assess AFRICOM in five areas with respect to activity planning and implementation. To do so, GAO analyzed DOD and AFRICOM guidance; observed portions of AFRICOM activities; interviewed officials in Europe and Africa; and obtained perspectives from interagency officials, including those at 22 U.S. embassies in Africa.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that AFRICOM complete its strategic plans, conduct long-term activity assessments, fully integrate interagency personnel into activity planning, and develop training to build staff expertise. DOD agreed with the recommendations.

[View GAO-10-794 or key components.](#)
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DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

Improved Planning, Training, and Interagency Collaboration Could Strengthen DOD's Efforts in Africa

What GAO Found

AFRICOM has made progress in developing strategies and engaging interagency partners, and could advance DOD's effort to strengthen the capacity of partner nations in Africa. However, AFRICOM still faces challenges in five areas related to activity planning and implementation. Overcoming these challenges would help AFRICOM with future planning, foster stability and security through improved relationships with African nations, and maximize its effect on the continent.

- **Strategic Planning.** AFRICOM has created overarching strategies and led planning meetings, but many specific plans to guide activities have not yet been finalized. For example, AFRICOM has developed a theater strategy and campaign plan but has not completed detailed plans to support its objectives. Also, some priorities of its military service components, special operations command, and task force overlap or differ from each other and from AFRICOM's priorities. Completing plans will help AFRICOM determine whether priorities are aligned across the command and ensure that efforts are appropriate, complementary, and comprehensive.
- **Measuring Effects.** AFRICOM is generally not measuring long-term effects of activities. While some capacity-building activities appear to support its mission, federal officials expressed concern that others—such as sponsoring a news Web site in an African region sensitive to the military's presence—may have unintended effects. Without assessing activities, AFRICOM lacks information to evaluate their effectiveness, make informed future planning decisions, and allocate resources.
- **Applying Funds.** Some AFRICOM staff have difficulty applying funding sources to activities. DOD has stated that security assistance efforts are constrained by a patchwork of authorities. Limited understanding of various funding sources for activities has resulted in some delayed activities, funds potentially not being used effectively, and African participants being excluded from some activities.
- **Interagency Collaboration.** AFRICOM has been coordinating with partners from other federal agencies. As of June 2010, AFRICOM had embedded 27 interagency officials in its headquarters and had 17 offices at U.S. embassies in Africa. However, the command has not fully integrated interagency perspectives early in activity planning or leveraged some embedded interagency staff for their expertise.
- **Building Expertise.** AFRICOM staff have made some cultural missteps because they do not fully understand local African customs and may unintentionally burden embassies that must respond to AFRICOM's requests for assistance with activities. Without greater knowledge of these issues, AFRICOM may continue to face difficulties maximizing resources with embassy personnel and building relations with African nations.