
Peacekeeping: A Report on the Global Peace Operations Initiative

[The following are excerpts from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report, GAO-08-754 June 26, 2008.]

Summary

In 2004, in response to the Group of Eight (G8) Sea Island Summit, the United States established the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), a 5-year program to build peacekeeping capabilities worldwide, with a focus on Africa. Since 2005, the Department of State (State) has allocated \$374 million and selected 52 countries to participate in the program. Congress mandated that the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) assess and report on the initiative. This report assesses (1) progress made in meeting GPOI goals, (2) whether State is consistently assessing the quality and effectiveness of the training, and (3) the extent to which countries meet program criteria and whether trainees are adequately screened for human rights abuses. GAO assessed State and Department of Defense (DoD) data and program documents, interviewed U.S. and host country officials, and conducted field work in eight countries.

State and DoD have made some progress in achieving GPOI objectives in three principal areas: training and equipping peacekeepers, providing equipment and transportation for peacekeeping missions, and building peacekeeping skills and infrastructure, but challenges remain in meeting these goals. First, nearly 40,000 military peacekeepers have been trained and some training equipment has been provided. However, State is unlikely to meet the goal of training 75,000 military peacekeepers by 2010 and has encountered problems in accounting for the delivery of training equipment to countries. Second, State supports an equipment depot in Africa and has supplied equipment for missions in Haiti, Lebanon, Somalia, and Sudan, but has been delayed in providing some equipment in support of these missions. Third, State and DoD have trained 2,700 military peacekeeping instructors, conducted several multinational peacekeeping exercises, and refurbished some training centers. However, State has targeted a smaller share of resources to build peacekeeping skills and infrastructure than for training and equipping peacekeepers in Africa in comparison to other regions, in part due to needs and capabilities of the region and a focus on training African peacekeepers for current missions. Of the \$98 million State has spent in Africa, 12 percent was spent on building skills and infrastructure needed for long-term peacekeeping capabilities, compared to 20 percent to 51 percent in other regions. While 56 percent of trained military peacekeepers, primarily from Africa, have deployed to peacekeeping missions, State faces challenges in assessing the proficiency of trained peacekeepers against standard skills taught in training and accounting for the activities of trained instructors. Although GPOI training standards follow U.S. military doctrine and United Nations requirements, State does not have a program-wide standard to assess the proficiency of military peacekeepers in skills taught. Further, State is unable to fully account for the training activities of the trained instructors. Collectively, these program limitations result in State's inability to assess the overall outcomes of its program in providing high-quality, effective training. State, in consultation with DoD, has selected 52 partner countries that generally meet program criteria, but in some cases State did not screen trainees for human rights abuses. For 24 countries, State's human rights reporting identified documented human rights violations by security forces in 2007, and GAO found that peacekeepers were not always screened or were not properly screened for human rights abuses. For example, we found that 81 individuals from one country received military training but were not screened for human rights violations.

Recommendations

Our recommendations from this work are listed below. Status will change from “In process” to “Implemented” or “Not implemented” based on our follow up work. For more information contact: Director, Government Accountability Office: International Affairs and Trade (202) 512-8979.

Recommendations for Executive Action

Recommendation: To enhance GPOI’s effectiveness, better identify program outcomes, and ensure proper screening for human rights violations, the Secretary of State should work in consultation with DOD to assist Italy in staffing the key unfilled positions at the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units (COESPU) to better evaluate progress made and monitor results.

Agency Affected: Department of State

Status: In process

Comments: When we confirm what actions the agency has taken in response to this recommendation, we will provide updated information.

Recommendation: To enhance GPOI’s effectiveness, better identify program outcomes, and ensure proper screening for human rights violations, the Secretary of State should monitor implementation of new procedures to account for delivery and transfer of nonlethal training equipment to partner countries on an ongoing basis.

Agency Affected: Department of State

Status: In process

Comments: When we confirm what actions the agency has taken in response to this recommendation, we will provide updated information.

Recommendation: To enhance GPOI’s effectiveness, better identify program outcomes, and ensure proper screening for human rights violations, the Secretary of State should provide additional guidance to U.S. missions to help the United States and Italy collect data on the training and deployment activities of COESPU graduates in their home countries.

Agency Affected: Department of State

Status: In process

Comments: When we confirm what actions the agency has taken in response to this recommendation, we will provide updated information.

Recommendation: To enhance GPOI's effectiveness, better identify program outcomes, and ensure proper screening for human rights violations, the Secretary of State should develop and implement, in consultation with DoD and in accordance with the GPOI strategy, the use of standard military task lists and related training standards to enable program managers to evaluate the quality of training and measure the proficiency of trainees program-wide.

Agency Affected: Department of State

Status: In process

Comments: When we confirm what actions the agency has taken in response to this recommendation, we will provide updated information.

Recommendation: To enhance GPOI's effectiveness, better identify program outcomes, and ensure proper screening for human rights violations, the Secretary of State should ensure that the evaluations of contractor performance of training in Africa are properly recorded into the contractor performance system as required by agency regulations.

Agency Affected: Department of State

Status: In process

Comments: When we confirm what actions the agency has taken in response to this recommendation, we will provide updated information.

Recommendation: To enhance GPOI's effectiveness, better identify program outcomes, and ensure proper screening for human rights violations, the Secretary of State should develop a system for monitoring the vetting activities for all GPOI training and ensure that all individuals in composite units are vetted for human rights violations, as required by State policy.

Agency Affected: Department of State

Status: In process

Comments: When we confirm what actions the agency has taken in response to this recommendation, we will provide updated information.

Recommendation: To ensure that GPOI activities enhance the capabilities of countries to maintain peacekeeping operations on their own, the Secretary of State, in consultation with DoD, should assess estimated resources and time frames needed to complete peacekeeping skills and infrastructure activities in Africa by 2010.

Agency Affected: Department of State

Status: In process

Comments: When we confirm what actions the agency has taken in response to this recommendation, we will provide updated information.

Recommendation: To ensure that GPOI activities enhance the capabilities of countries to maintain peacekeeping operations on their own, the Secretary of State, in consultation with DoD, should ensure that any plans for extending GPOI activities beyond 2010 identify sufficient resources for developing long-term peacekeeping skills and infrastructure in Africa.

Agency Affected: Department of State

Status: In process

Comments: When we confirm what actions the agency has taken in response to this recommendation, we will provide updated information.