

## Why GAO Did This Study

The drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq and the transition from a U.S. military to a civilian-led presence after December 2011 continue amid an uncertain security and political environment. This report is one in a series of reviews regarding the planning and execution of the drawdown. Specifically, this report assesses the extent to which DOD has planned for, begun to execute, and mitigated risk associated with (1) transferring and removing personnel and equipment from remaining bases in Iraq; (2) curtailing unneeded contract services, transitioning expiring contracts, and providing adequate contract oversight; and (3) facilitating and supporting the transition to a civilian-led presence in Iraq. GAO examined relevant DOD planning documents, attended drawdown-related conferences, interviewed State officials and DOD officials throughout the chain of command in the United States, Kuwait, and Iraq, and visited several locations in Kuwait and Iraq to observe drawdown operations.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD take further action to (1) acquire and maintain real-time visibility over contractor-managed government-owned equipment; (2) collect data on unaccounted-for equipment found during base transitions; (3) work with contractors to gather and distribute information needed to demobilize their workforces; and (4) officially clarify the scope of DOD's role in post-2011 Iraq, to include the privileges and immunities to be afforded all DOD government personnel. DOD concurred with all of GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-11-774](#) or key components. For more information, contact William M. Solis at (202) 512-8365 or [solisw@gao.gov](mailto:solisw@gao.gov).

## IRAQ DRAWDOWN

### Opportunities Exist to Improve Equipment Visibility, Contractor Demobilization, and Clarity of Post-2011 DOD Role

## What GAO Found

DOD has robust plans and processes for determining the sequence of actions and associated resources necessary to achieve the drawdown from Iraq, which is well underway with a significant amount of equipment removed from Iraq and bases transitioned, among other things. However, several factors contribute to making this phase more challenging than the previous drawdown phase. First, DOD will have less operational flexibility in this phase of the drawdown, yet will need to move a greater amount of equipment than in prior drawdown phases. Second, DOD is closing the largest bases with fewer available resources left on site, which creates a set of challenges and risks greater than what DOD faced during the prior drawdown phase. Although DOD's plans and processes create flexibility and mitigate risk, it has limited visibility over some equipment remaining in Iraq and does not track equipment found on transitioning bases that is not listed on any property accountability record. Without addressing these issues, DOD may miss opportunities to make the drawdown more efficient.

DOD has taken action to improve its management of contracts in Iraq, such as enhancing contract oversight and assigning Contracting Officer's Representative responsibilities as a primary duty, although concerns, such as lack of experience among contract oversight personnel, remain. As the drawdown progresses, DOD may face further challenges in ensuring that major contracts transition without gaps in key services. To ensure the continuity of key services while continuing to reduce these services, some units are exploring the option of using local contractors to provide certain services since local contractors do not require extensive support, such as housing, and will not have to be repatriated to their country of origin at the end of the contract, although GAO has previously reported on challenges associated with hiring such firms resulting in the need for greater oversight. Some units also intend to replace contractor personnel with servicemembers to ensure continuity of certain services, such as guard security and generator maintenance. Despite various steps to ease contractor demobilization, DOD faces challenges in demobilizing its contractors, including operational security-driven limits on exchanging information such as base closure dates and ensuring accurate contractor planning. Without taking additional steps to address these challenges, DOD may be unable to effectively implement its demobilization guidance and ensure the effective reduction of contract services to appropriate levels and ultimate demobilization of all its contractors.

As the U.S. presence in Iraq transitions to a civilian-led presence, although DOD and State interagency coordination for the transition began late, both agencies have now coordinated extensively and begun to execute the transfer or loan to State of a wide range of DOD equipment, while DOD has taken steps to minimize any impact on unit readiness of such transfers. DOD also has agreed to potentially provide State with extensive contracted services, including base and life support, food and fuel, and maintenance, but State may not have the capacity to fund and oversee these services. Further, DOD plans a robust post-2011 presence as part of an Office of Security Cooperation operating under Chief of Mission authority. However, the scope of DOD's activities in post-2011 Iraq and associated issues, including privileges and immunities to be afforded DOD personnel, may not be well understood by various DOD officials and organizations, thereby risking an uncoordinated approach.