

Why GAO Did This Study

The terrorist group AQAP, one of the top threats to U.S. national security, is based in Yemen—a country facing serious economic and social challenges and undergoing a difficult political transition following civil unrest in 2011. Since 2007, State, DOD, and USAID have allocated over \$1 billion in assistance to help Yemen counter AQAP and address other challenges. The three largest U.S. assistance programs in Yemen are USAID's Food for Peace program, which has provided emergency food aid, and DOD's Section 1206 and 1207(n) programs, which have provided training and equipment to Yemeni security forces.

In response to a Senate report that directed GAO to review U.S. assistance to Yemen, and following up on GAO's [February 2012 report](#) on the types and amounts of such assistance, GAO examined (1) the extent of progress made toward U.S. strategic goals for Yemen, (2) the extent of progress made by the Food for Peace and Section 1206 and 1207(n) programs, and (3) key challenges to U.S. assistance efforts. GAO reviewed agency documents and met with U.S. and Yemeni officials and implementing partners in Washington, D.C., and Sana'a, Yemen.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that USAID improve performance reporting on Food for Peace efforts in Yemen and that DOD collect and analyze data on the effectiveness of the Section 1206 and 1207(n) programs in Yemen until security conditions permit an evaluation of these programs. USAID and DOD concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-13-310](#). For more information, contact Charles Michael Johnson, Jr., at (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov.

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U.S. ASSISTANCE TO YEMEN

Actions Needed to Improve Oversight of Emergency Food Aid and Assess Security Assistance

What GAO Found

Progress toward U.S. strategic goals for Yemen has been mixed. The Departments of State (State) and Defense (DOD) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have conducted numerous civilian and security assistance activities in support of these strategic goals (see figure below). Although some progress has been made since the civil unrest in 2011, obstacles remain to achieving each goal. For example, while there has been an orderly political transition to a new president, key milestones—such as convening a national dialogue to promote reconciliation—have been delayed. In addition, while Yemeni security forces have retaken territory seized by al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in 2011, the security situation remains unstable.

U.S. Goals for Yemen and Agencies Providing Assistance in Support



Source: GAO analysis of State, DOD, and USAID data.

USAID data indicate that the Food for Peace program exceeded most of its annual targets between fiscal years 2008 and 2011 for the number of individuals in Yemen benefiting from food donations. However, reports to Congress about the program have lacked timeliness, accuracy, clarity, and consistency. With regard to the Section 1206 and 1207(n) programs, DOD has developed an evaluation process to assess the programs' effectiveness but has not conducted an evaluation in Yemen, citing security concerns. Consequently, limited information exists for decision makers to use in conducting oversight of these assistance programs and making future funding decisions.

Security conditions and political divisions in Yemen pose key challenges to U.S. assistance efforts. First, Yemen's unstable security situation constrains U.S. training of Yemeni security forces, restricts oversight of civilian assistance projects, and endangers Yemeni nationals who work for the United States. For example, a Yemeni employee of the U.S. embassy was murdered in October 2012, and other Yemeni staff at the embassy, as well as their families, face threats. Second, because of leadership and coordination challenges within the Yemeni government, key recipients of U.S. security assistance made limited use of this assistance until recently to combat AQAP in support of the U.S. strategic goal of improving Yemen's security. However, according to DOD officials, recent actions by the Yemeni government to replace key leaders of security force units and reorganize security ministries have addressed some of these challenges.