

# GAO@100 Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-21-344](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

DOD has relied on contingency contracting to conduct a wide range of activities worldwide. DOD projects that factors, such as the use of high-tech equipment and military force structure reductions, will require contract support in most future operations.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 includes a provision for GAO to review the use of contractors in contingency operations, exercises, and other activities since 2009. This report evaluates the extent to which DOD 1) documented its actions to implement the recommendations made by the Commission on Wartime Contracting, and 2) tracked and reported on contracts and contractor personnel supporting contingencies.

GAO performed a content analysis of DOD actions to address the Commission's recommendations, reviewed laws and DOD guidance, and analyzed contract and personnel data reported from calendar years 2009 through 2020.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations to ensure that DOD fully documents progress on the Commission's recommendations, and improves data related to applicable contingency operations described in department guidance. DOD partially concurred with two recommendations and did not concur with two recommendations. GAO continues to believe that all of its recommendations are still warranted.

View [GAO-21-344](#). For more information, contact Tina Won Sherman at (202) 512-8461 or [shermant@gao.gov](mailto:shermant@gao.gov).

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## CONTINGENCY CONTRACTING

### DOD Has Taken Steps to Address Commission Recommendations, but Should Better Document Progress and Improve Contract Data

## What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) has taken steps to implement the 16 of 30 recommendations it agreed to address and that were made by the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan (Commission). The Commission was established by law to develop recommendations to improve various aspects of contingency contracting, which is the process of obtaining goods, services, and construction and comprises contractor personnel who provide support to operations that may include combat and other activities that are considered contingency operations. However, DOD's documentation on the status of half of the 16 recommendations as part of an action plan it issued in 2013 was inconsistent or incomplete. By fully documenting the progress of the department's efforts to implement the recommendations, DOD could help achieve the Commission's vision for improving the oversight and management of contingency contracting operations.

DOD's information system—Synchronized Predeployment and Operational Tracker-Enterprise Suite (SPOT-ES)—tracks and reports information about contracts and contractor personnel supporting applicable contingency operations. However, GAO found that SPOT-ES is not able to track and report information by the type of applicable contingency operations that DOD contracts and contractors have supported. DOD officials told GAO that there is no definitive list of such contingencies from one authoritative source. In addition, DOD has not designated a single office responsible for monitoring and reporting which operations, exercises, and other activities are associated with an applicable contingency operation in SPOT-ES. Without the ability to identify data on operations, exercises, and other activities that are considered applicable contingency operations within SPOT-ES, DOD planners may find it more difficult to identify and make decisions on contractor personnel or capabilities to support them. Additionally, an office that is designated with the responsibility could provide additional oversight to DOD by better monitoring and reporting on the department's contractor personnel.

GAO also found that information on the status of thousands of quarterly deployment records on contractor personnel supporting applicable contingency operations was missing in SPOT-ES at the time of our review. DOD guidance requires various SPOT-ES users to enter or review information related to contracts and contractor personnel supporting applicable contingency operations. However, it does not clearly specify who is responsible for resolving missing information. Without clarifying the responsibility for resolving missing or inaccurate data in SPOT-ES within DOD guidance, communicating such information to contracting organizations, and taking steps to improve data completeness and accuracy, the reliability of data in SPOT-ES is at risk. Further, DOD's ability will be hindered when there is a need to locate the whereabouts of contractor personnel during an emergency or when contractors exit at a contingency location.