



Highlights of [GAO-09-1015T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

GAO has identified Afghanistan and Pakistan as two of the most urgent issues facing this Administration and this Congress. In March, the President announced a strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, with a broad strategic goal of disrupting, dismantling, and defeating Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan; destroying its allies and safe havens in Pakistan; and preventing their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan. With additional U.S. resources and attention focusing on Afghanistan and Pakistan, there will be additional oversight to ensure the accountability of U.S. efforts.

This testimony addresses (1) GAO's oversight of U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan; (2) how GAO coordinates its efforts with its colleagues in the accountability community; and (3) some of the challenges GAO faces carrying out oversight.

This testimony is based on past GAO reports and testimonies examining U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. These reports and testimonies contain analysis of documents and information from Afghan and Pakistani officials; U.S. officials in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Washington, D.C.; and representatives of coalition military forces and command, including the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, and international organizations, including the United Nations.

GAO has made recommendations in prior reports, but makes no new ones in this statement.

View [GAO-09-1015T](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Jacquelyn Williams-Bridgers (202) 512-3101 or williamsbridgersj@gao.gov.

AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

Oversight of U.S. Interagency Efforts

What GAO Found

Since 2003, GAO has issued more than 30 reports and testimonies on U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This work has addressed issues such as the costs of the war, the need for better planning, reform of the Afghan National Army and Police, accountability over billions of U.S. assistance to Afghanistan and Pakistan, efforts to improve the government's management and oversight of contractors, Afghan road construction, counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan, and the security of Pakistan's border region. GAO also has several ongoing reviews concerning Afghanistan and Pakistan addressing a wide range of issues, such as building the Afghan army and development programs in both countries. GAO's past work has identified needed improvements as well as many obstacles that affect success and should be considered in program planning and implementation. GAO found most U.S. initiatives we reviewed needed improved planning. GAO also concluded that several existing conditions in Afghanistan and Pakistan, such as worsening security, poor infrastructure, and the limited institutional capacity of the Afghan government, continue to create challenges to U.S. efforts to assist with securing, stabilizing, and rebuilding Afghanistan and destroying terrorists and their safe havens in Pakistan. To address these concerns, GAO made recommendations in prior reports on issues such as the need for better planning, improved coordination of interagency efforts, and increased oversight, which led to several actions taken by agencies to improve planning and enhance accountability procedures.

While GAO's activities to support the Congress are unique, it consults with key members of the accountability community, including the inspectors general, the chief financial officers, and the executives of other nations' audit agencies. GAO also participates in formal and informal coordination mechanisms pertaining specifically to Afghanistan and Pakistan oversight. For example, GAO is a member of the Southwest Asia Joint Planning Group, which was created in June 2008. Through the Afghanistan-Pakistan Subgroup of this planning group, which was created earlier this year and formalized its charter this past July, GAO meets at least quarterly with major oversight organizations responsible for ensuring accountability and transparency of U.S. programs in Afghanistan and Pakistan. GAO also meets with individuals in the accountability community concerning Afghanistan and Pakistan oversight to ensure its work is coordinated and minimizes overlap.

GAO has faced some challenges to conducting oversight of U.S. government efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan due to the unstable security environment and limited housing available to temporary duty travelers. For example, while in Pakistan earlier this year, a GAO team was unable to travel to Peshawar or Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas due to the security situation there. However, GAO takes steps to mitigate these limitations, such as by setting up teleconferences and videoconferences along with other measures, and is still able to perform assessments of the programs.