



Highlights of [GAO-03-13](#), a report to Senate Committee on Armed Services

Why GAO Did This Study

Congress mandated that every 4 years the Department of Defense (DOD) conduct a review to examine the national defense strategy and its implications for force structure, modernization, infrastructure and the budget. Because the 2001 review, which was issued on September 30, 2001, will have a significant impact on the department's planning and budget, GAO was asked to assess (1) the strengths and weaknesses of DOD's conduct and reporting of the review, and (2) whether changes in the QDR legislation could improve the usefulness of future reviews.

What GAO Recommends

To enhance the usefulness of future reviews, GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense clearly assign responsibility for addressing all QDR legislative requirements and provide Congress with more complete information on DOD's force structure analyses and other key conclusions. GAO is also suggesting that Congress consider (1) extending the QDR deadline, (2) revising the scope of the issues for DOD to address in the QDR, and (3) establishing an advisory panel prior to the next review to identify critical issues and programs for QDR analysis. DOD partially agreed with our first recommendation but did not take a position on our second recommendation. DOD supported our suggestion to change the review's timing and scope.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-13.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Henry L. Hinton at (202) 512-4300 or hintonh@gao.gov.

QUADRENNIAL DEFENSE REVIEW

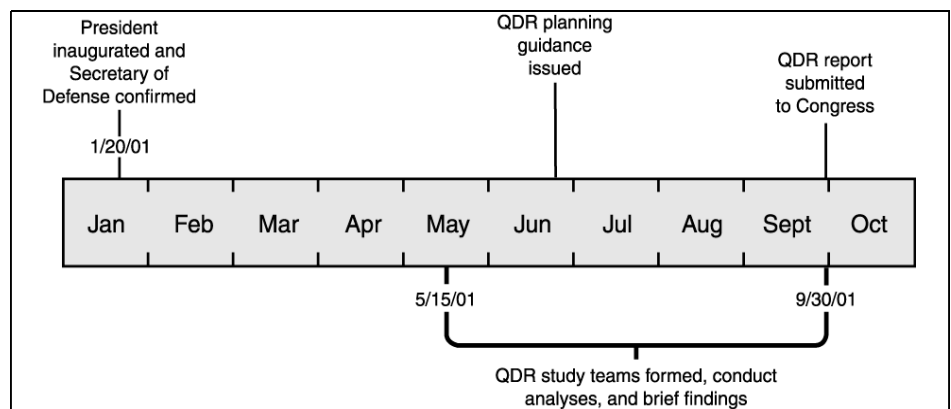
Future Reviews Can Benefit from Better Analysis and Changes in Timing and Scope

What GAO Found

DOD's 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) was marked by both strengths and weaknesses. On the positive side, the review was enhanced by the sustained involvement of the Secretary of Defense and other senior department leaders. It also led to the development of a new defense strategy that underscores the need to transform the forces to better meet the changing threats of a new security environment. On the other hand, DOD's decision to delay the start of the review until late spring 2001 constricted an already tight timetable; there was not always a clear link between the study team assignments and the legislatively required issues; the thoroughness of the analysis on these required issues varied considerably; and the assessment of force structure needs had some significant limitations. As a result, Congress did not receive comprehensive information on all required issues, and DOD lacks assurances that it has optimized its force structure and investment priorities to balance short-term and long-term risks.

Options exist for changing the timing and refocusing the scope of the QDR to make it more useful to Congress and DOD. To address concerns that a new administration cannot study all the issues by the September 30 deadline, especially when there is a major change in the defense strategy, Congress could (1) delay the report by 4 months until the second February of a President's term, (2) delay the due date for 12 to 16 months, allowing significantly more time for analysis, or (3) require the report in two phases, the first to discuss the defense strategy, and the second—due during the second year of a 4-year term—to address force structure and other issues. Each option would also better support DOD's planning and budget cycle. In terms of the QDR's scope, Congress could eliminate issues that are less relevant in the new security environment or that are included in other routine DOD analyses. Congress could also reinstitute an advisory panel to help set the QDR's agenda.

2001 QDR Conducted under Tight Time Frame



Source: DOD.