HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

DOD Needs to Provide More Information on Risks to Improve Its Program Management

Why GAO Did This Study

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 directed the Department of Defense (DOD) to submit a report to congressional defense committees on improvements to the governance and execution of its health information management and information technology (IT) programs to support medical care within the military health system. DOD submitted its report to the appropriate House and Senate committees in June 2010. The act also directed GAO to assess the report and DOD's plan of action to achieve its goals and mitigate risks in the management and execution of health information management and IT programs. Specifically, GAO's objective was to determine whether DOD addressed the reporting requirements specified in the defense authorization act. To do this, GAO reviewed the report submitted by DOD, and analyzed it against the reporting requirements, prior GAO work examining DOD's health IT issues, DOD guidance, and industry best practices.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that DOD report additional details to address shortcomings in 4 requirements, including risk identification and assessment, risk mitigation planning, and corrective action planning. In comments on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with GAO's recommendation and described actions it is taking to address it.

View GAO-11-148 or key components. For more information, contact Valerie C. Melvin at (202) 512-6304 or melvinv@gao.gov

What GAO Found

DOD addressed 6 of the 10 reporting requirements included in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (see table). For example, it reported on its capability to meet the requirements for joint interoperability—the ability to exchange electronic patient health data—with the Department of Veterans Affairs. The department also reported on its capability to carry out necessary governance, management, and development functions of health information management and IT systems.

The department partially addressed the remaining 4 requirements, which pertained to identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks, as well as reporting on estimated resources required to optimally support health care IT and planning corrective actions to remedy shortfalls that DOD identified. For example, the department had identified and assessed risks, but the report did not fully disclose these risks or the meaning of the department's assessment. Also, the report did not fully identify the staff and funds needed, nor did it fully identify the organizations responsible and accountable for accomplishing risk mitigation activities. If not corrected, incomplete reporting to address these requirements could impede congressional oversight of the department's planned improvements.

GAO Assessment of DOD Compliance with Reporting Requirements

Requirement	GAO assessment
Assess the capability of the department's enterprise architecture to achieve optimal clinical practices and health care outcomes.	Addressed
Identify and assess risks associated with achieving timelines and goals of each health information management and technology program.	Partially addressed
Provide a plan of action to mitigate identified risks.	Partially addressed
Assess the appropriateness of the health information management and IT technical architecture and whether it leverages industry best practices.	Addressed
Determine DOD's capability for meeting requirements for joint interoperability with the Department of Veterans Affairs and progress made on establishing a joint virtual lifetime electronic record for members of the armed forces.	Addressed
Develop a corrective action plan to remedy shortfalls identified as a result of assessments.	Partially addressed
Estimate resources required in future years to achieve optimal IT support for health care clinical practices and compliance with applicable requirements.	Partially addressed
Analyze methods for procuring health information management and IT goods and services and the appropriateness of the application of legal and acquisition authorities.	Addressed
Analyze the department's capabilities for carrying out necessary governance, management, and development functions of health information management and IT systems.	Addressed
Recommend whether DOD health information and IT systems should be subject to requirements of defense business systems.	Addressed

Source: GAO analysis of DOD data.

_____ **United States Government Accountability Office**