



July 2018

IMPROVISED THREATS

Warfighter Support
Maintained, but
Clearer
Responsibilities and
Improved Information
Sharing Needed

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-509](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

IEDs are one of the most lethal weapons available to terrorists and enemy combatants. DOD reported that between January 2007 and February 2018, approximately 9,000 IED incidents were targeted against U.S. and allied military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan resulting in about 23,000 casualties.

The House Armed Services Committee included a provision in a committee report for GAO to assess JIDO's transition under DTRA. This report: (1) assesses the status of JIDO's transition under DTRA; (2) describes how, if at all, the transition has affected JIDO's warfighter support; and (3) identifies what, if any, challenges could affect JIDO's continued efficiency and effectiveness. GAO examined DOD documentation including directives and plans, and met with DOD officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations including that DOD clarify the categories of threats JIDO is responsible for countering and JIDO's corresponding authorities, as well as establish processes for obtaining permission to share research project information and submitting it to DOD's information sharing repository. DOD concurred with all of the recommendations and cited actions it plans to take to address them.

View [GAO-18-509](#). For more information, contact Jason Bair at (202) 512-6881 or bairj@gao.gov.

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Warfighter Support Maintained, but Clearer Responsibilities and Improved Information Sharing Needed

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) established the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization in 2006 to lead and coordinate the department's counter-improvised explosive device (IED) efforts. In response to a congressional mandate, DOD renamed this entity the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) and placed it under the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) in 2016. Since that point, JIDO has transferred personnel and pay systems, funding, and staff functions to DTRA, and identified additional, longer-term transition activities that will take several years to complete, such as workforce colocation. Plans for these transition activities reflect all nine key practices GAO identified for implementing mergers and organizational transformations, such as setting goals and timelines. JIDO also identified efficiencies achieved through the transition in areas such as research and training.

JIDO maintained warfighter support during its transition under DTRA. Officials from across DOD stated that they were satisfied with JIDO's level of support during the transition and that JIDO continued to provide a range of warfighter support such as personnel and rapidly fielded materiel.

Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization Developed Capabilities



The photographs above depict a warfighter using a handheld device to detect improvised explosive devices (IED) (left) and vehicle enhancements to detect and disable IEDs (right).

Source: Defense Threat Reduction Agency. | GAO-18-509

However, GAO identified two challenges to JIDO's efficiency and effectiveness:

- **Unclear responsibilities.** DOD has not clarified which categories of threats JIDO is responsible for countering and what authorities JIDO has for countering them. According to DTRA and JIDO officials, clarifying these issues would help JIDO plan, program, and coordinate its responsibilities.
- **Incomplete information sharing.** JIDO lacks processes to ensure it routinely obtains permission to share research project information and submits it to DOD's designated information sharing repository, as required. As a result, information on less than one-third of JIDO's research projects is included, according to DOD. This limits the ability of other research organizations to leverage JIDO's expertise and increases the risk of redundant or fragmented research.

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Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
DTIC	Defense Technical Information Center
DTRA	Defense Threat Reduction Agency
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
JIDA	Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Agency
JIDO	Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization
JIEDDO	Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization

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July 24, 2018

Congressional Committees

As we previously reported, improvised explosive devices (IED) are one of the most accessible and lethal weapons available to terrorists and enemy combatants and have been used extensively against U.S. and allied military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹ Between January 2007 and February 2018, approximately 9,000 IED incidents were targeted against U.S. and allied military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan resulting in about 23,000 casualties, according to the Department of Defense (DOD).² To address this persistent and evolving threat, DOD established the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) to lead and coordinate the department's counter-IED efforts.

In 2015, DOD established JIEDDO as an independent combat support agency to preserve its counter-IED capabilities and support counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, and other related operational areas. However, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 directed DOD to transition the organization under the authority, direction, and control of an existing military department or defense agency.³ In 2016, DOD renamed this entity the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) and placed it under the authority, direction, and control of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA).⁴

¹GAO, *Countering Improvised Explosive Devices: Improved Planning Could Enhance Federal Coordination Efforts*, GAO-16-581SU (Washington, D.C.: July 14, 2016). DOD defines an improvised explosive device as a weapon that is fabricated or emplaced in an unconventional manner incorporating destructive, lethal, noxious, pyrotechnic, or incendiary chemicals designed to kill, destroy, incapacitate, harass, deny mobility, or distract.

²In this report, annual dates are calendar years unless otherwise specified.

³Pub. L. No. 114-92 (2015).

⁴In this report, unless the distinction is relevant, we refer to the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Agency (JIDA), and the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) as JIDO.

House Report 115-200, accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018, included a provision for us to assess JIDO's transition under DTRA.⁵ This report:

- (1) assesses the status of JIDO's transition under DTRA, whether transition plans reflect key practices on mergers and organizational transformations, and what, if any, efficiencies have been identified;
- (2) describes how, if at all, the transition has affected JIDO's warfighter support, and what types of warfighter support JIDO provided during the transition; and
- (3) identifies what, if any, challenges could affect JIDO's continued efficiency and effectiveness.

To assess the status of JIDO's transition under DTRA, we analyzed JIDO transition planning documents and met with DTRA and JIDO officials to discuss the status of the transition and identify achieved efficiencies.⁶ We compared JIDO transition plans to key practices we identified in prior work on mergers and organizational transformations to determine if the key practices were reflected.⁷ GAO's prior work found that implementing large-scale organizational change requires the concentrated efforts of both leadership and employees, and that it can take several years to complete. Therefore, we included both initial and longer-term transition activities within the scope of our review.

To describe how, if at all, the transition affected JIDO's warfighter support, and what types of warfighter support JIDO provided during the transition, we reviewed relevant DOD plans and strategies and obtained the perspectives of combatant command and military service planning, operations, intelligence, training, and logistics officials. We also

⁵H.R. Rep. No. 115-200 (2017).

⁶For the purposes of this report, we define "efficiencies" as maintaining federal government services or outcomes using fewer resources (such as time and money), or improving or increasing the quality or quantity of services or outcomes while maintaining (or reducing) resources. See GAO, *Streamlining Government: Key Practices from Select Efficiency Initiatives Should Be Shared Governmentwide*, [GAO-11-908](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 30, 2011).

⁷GAO, *Results-Oriented Cultures: Implementation Steps to Assist Mergers and Organizational Transformations*, [GAO-03-669](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 2, 2003). GAO convened a forum in September 2002 to identify useful practices and lessons learned from major private and public sector mergers, acquisitions, and organizational transformations. This was done to help federal agencies implement successful transformations of their cultures.

administered a questionnaire and analyzed responses from the 6 geographic combatant commands and Special Operations Command.⁸

To identify any challenges affecting JIDO's continued efficiency and effectiveness, we analyzed DOD doctrine and guidance on JIDO's mission and authorities, and met with DTRA, JIDO, Joint Staff, military service, and combatant command officials. We then compared information on potential challenges we identified to relevant joint doctrine and DOD directives and instructions to determine their relevance. More detailed information on our objectives, scope, and methodology can be found in appendix I of this report.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2017 to July 2018 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

JIDO's Counter-IED Roles and Responsibilities

DOD created the Army IED Task Force in 2003—which DOD elevated into the Joint IED Defeat Task Force in 2005—in response to the increased IED threat to U.S. forces operating in Iraq. The accomplishments of the Army task force led to a recommendation that a larger organization be created. In 2006, JIEDDO was established to provide timelier, integrated counter-IED solutions and was placed under the authority, direction, and control of the Deputy Secretary of Defense.⁹ JIEDDO's mission was to focus (lead, advocate, coordinate) all DOD actions to defeat IEDs.

In September 2013, as a result of the drawdown of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Deputy Secretary of Defense issued guidance directing

⁸DOD operates 6 geographic combatant commands to manage the department's military operations: Africa Command, Central Command, European Command, Northern Command, Pacific Command, and Southern Command.

⁹DOD Directive 2000.19E, *Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO)* (Feb. 14, 2006) (Rescinded 2016).

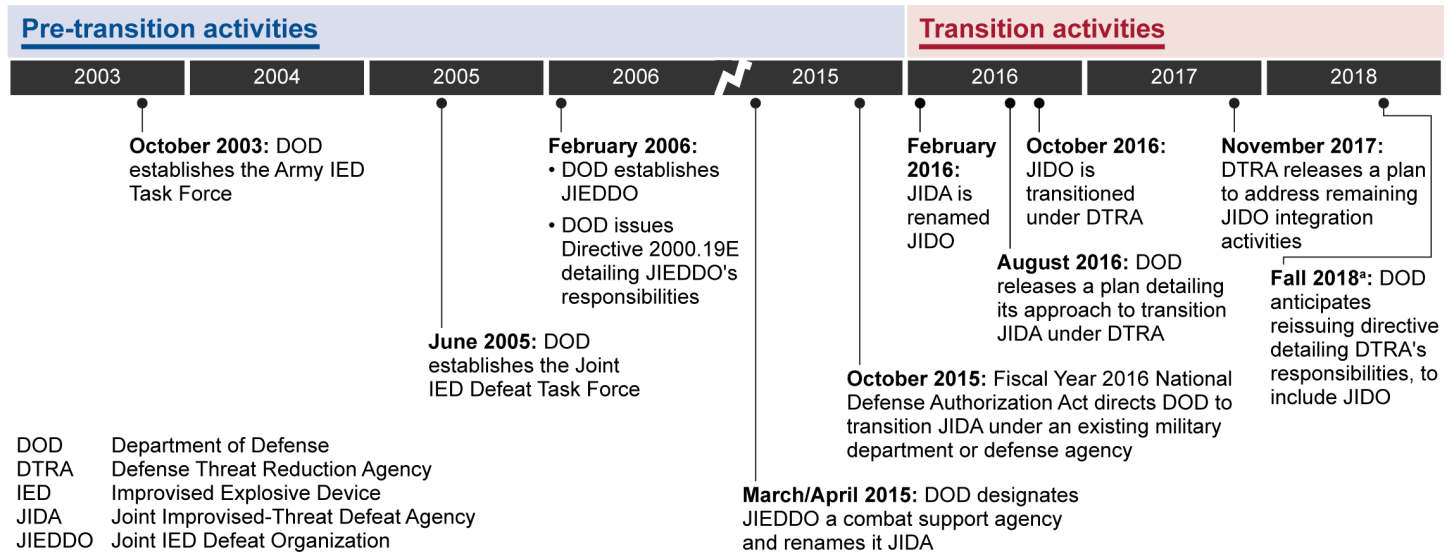
JIEDDO to continue its counter-IED mission and maintain essential capabilities commensurate with the reduction of supported U.S. military forces. Two months later, in November 2013, the Deputy Secretary of Defense directed JIEDDO to develop a concept of operations plan to articulate its enduring mission. In March 2015, after considering a range of options, the Deputy Secretary of Defense designated JIEDDO a combat support agency focused on counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, and other related operational areas, including counter-IED. In April 2015, JIEDDO's name was changed to JIDA to reflect this expanded mission.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 directed DOD to provide a plan and timeline for the full and complete transition of the activities, functions, and resources of JIDA to an office under the authority, direction, and control of an existing military department or defense agency.¹⁰ In February 2016 DOD renamed JIDA to JIDO and placed it under the authority of the Director, DTRA, effective October 1, 2016. In accordance with the National Defense Authorization Act, in August 2016, the department submitted a plan to Congress for transitioning JIDO under DTRA.¹¹ Figure 1 shows significant events in JIDO's organizational history.

¹⁰Pub. L. No. 114-92 (2015).

¹¹DOD, *Report to Congress Plan for Full and Complete Transition of the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Agency Under the Authority, Direction, and Control of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency* (August 2016).

Figure 1: Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) Timeline of Significant Events



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense information. | GAO-18-509

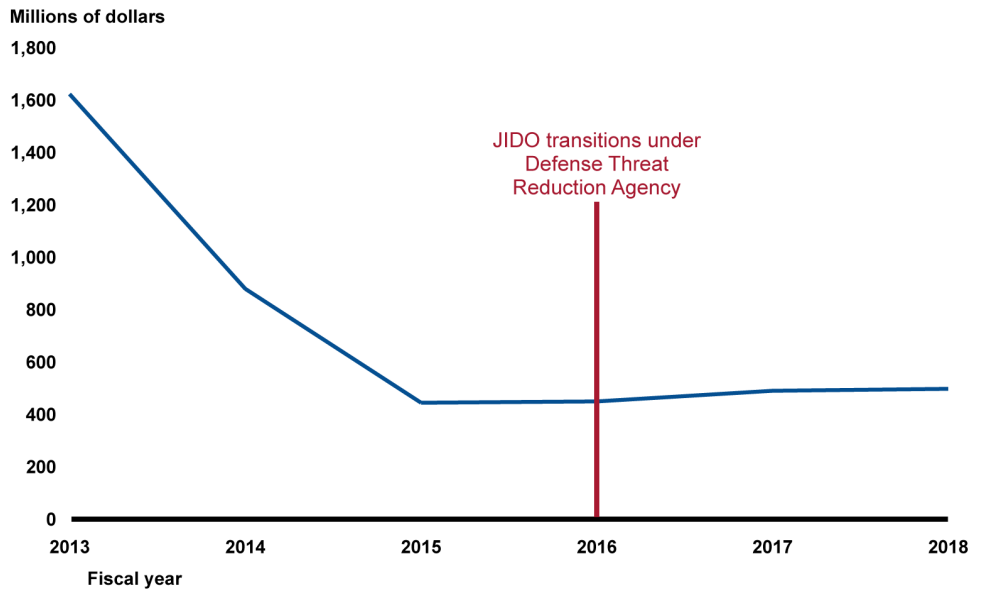
^aEstimate as of May 2018, according to DTRA officials.

JIDO Funding and Staffing

Congress has appropriated overseas contingency operations funds for JIDO operations.¹² JIDO can use these funds across multiple appropriations accounts to investigate, develop, and provide counter-improvised threat equipment, supplies, services, training, facilities, and personnel. Figure 2 shows JIDO's enacted funding levels for fiscal years 2013 to 2018.

¹²Since fiscal year 2010, DOD has requested, and Congress has authorized and appropriated, separate amounts for both operation and maintenance base requirements and operation and maintenance overseas contingency operation requirements as part of the annual budget cycle. DOD defines "contingency operations" as small, medium, or large-scale military operations, including peacekeeping operations, major humanitarian assisted efforts, noncombatant evacuation operations, and international disaster relief efforts. Base requirements are those costs that would be incurred whether or not a contingency operation took place. Operation and maintenance base requirements encompass continuing annual costs of DOD's routine operations, including operating support for installations, training and education, civilian personnel, maintenance, contracted services, and defense health.

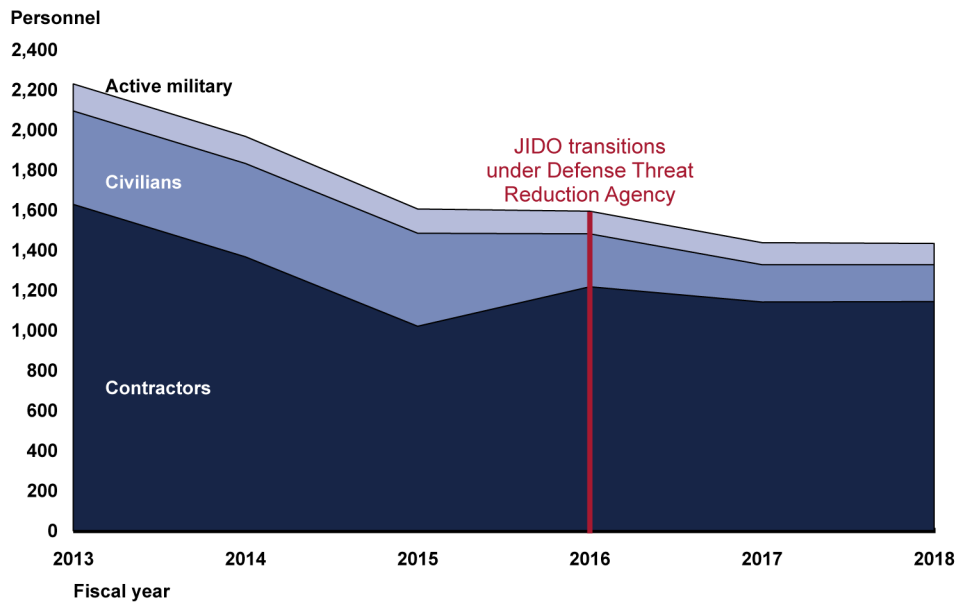
Figure 2: Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) Enacted Funding Levels



Source: GAO analysis of Defense Threat Reduction Agency data. | GAO-18-509

When JIDO was established in 2006, it was led by a retired four-star general, and each subsequent director has been a three-star general. Figure 3 shows JIDO’s staffing levels including for military, civilian, and contractor personnel for fiscal years 2013 to 2018.

Figure 3: Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) Staffing Levels



Source: GAO analysis of Defense Threat Reduction Agency data. | GAO-18-509

JIDO Completed Initial Transition Activities, Developed Longer-Term Transition Plans That Reflect Key Practices, and Identified Efficiencies

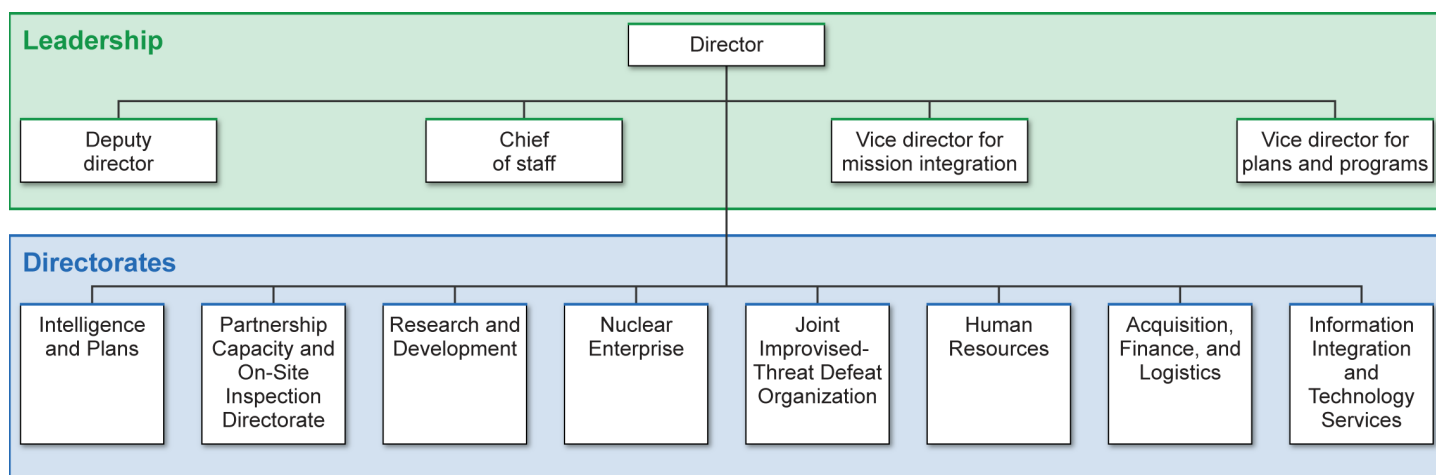
JIDO Completed Initial Transition Activities and Developed Longer-Term Transition Plans

JIDO completed initial transition activities in key areas such as organizational alignment, personnel and pay systems, and mission funding, according to DOD documents and officials. Consistent with our prior work on mergers and organizational transformations, DTRA and

JIDO officials stated that it will take several years to fully transition JIDO under DTRA.¹³ Completed transition activities include:

- Organizational alignment: As shown in figure 4, DTRA aligned JIDO as a directorate-level organization.

Figure 4: Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) Organizational Structure as of May 2018



Source: GAO analysis of Defense Threat Reduction Agency information. | GAO-18-509

Note: This figure excludes some offices such as General Counsel and Inspector General.

- **Personnel and pay:** JIDO transitioned 263 civilian and 110 military authorized positions to DTRA. JIDO also transferred personnel pay systems from the Army to DTRA to ensure its workforce was paid without disruption.
- **Funds:** DTRA coordinated the transfer of previously appropriated JIDO funds from Army to DTRA accounts to ensure mission continuity.
- **Budget request:** Prior to its transition under DTRA, JIDO relied exclusively on overseas contingency operations funding and did not receive base funding through DOD's annual budgeting process. Following the transition, DTRA requested funds through DOD's base budget to cover a portion of JIDO's enduring and predictable functions (e.g., information technology support, personnel salaries, and infrastructure costs).

¹³ [GAO-03-669](#).

-
- **Staff integration:** JIDO integrated several of its support functions into existing and complementary DTRA functions, including legal, financial management, human resources, equal opportunity and diversity, inspector general, and security.

In November 2017, DTRA released a plan that assigned responsibilities and milestones for the remaining longer-term transition activities such as consolidating information technology and acquisition management functions, and workforce colocation.¹⁴ DTRA officials noted the importance of pursuing military construction options to co-locate JIDO and DTRA personnel at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, to enhance mission effectiveness and collaborative planning, increase force protection, and reduce leased space costs. Further, DTRA continues to evaluate the size and composition of JIDO's workforce, including its leadership, military, civilian, and contractor positions, according to DTRA officials.

Transition Plans Reflect Key Practices for Mergers and Organizational Transformations

JIDO transition plans reflect key practices we identified for implementing mergers and organizational transformations.¹⁵ Our prior work indicates that the likelihood of an efficient and effective transition is increased by following these key practices. According to our analysis, JIDO transition plans and supporting documentation include language reflecting all nine key practices, as shown in table 1.

¹⁴Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) Integration Plan (Nov. 15, 2017).

¹⁵[GAO-03-669](#).

Table 1: Key Practices for Mergers and Organizational Transformations Reflected in Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) Transition Plans

Key practices	Reflected in transition plans?	Examples from transition plans
Ensure top leadership drives the transformation	Yes	Transition overseen by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) Executive Director and the JIDO Vice Director
Establish a coherent mission and integrated strategic goals to guide the transformation	Yes	Transition planning focused on seeking efficiencies without adversely affecting DTRA and JIDO missions
Focus on a key set of principles and priorities at the outset of the transformation	Yes	Improve focus on combat support mission, and leverage and expand collaboration with interagency and international partners
Set implementation goals and a timeline to build momentum and show progress from day one	Yes	Discrete implementation goals with associated timelines set, such as the transfer of employee benefits to DTRA by August 2016
Dedicate an implementation team to manage the transformation	Yes	A senior steering group and 8 working groups in functional areas such as human resources, operations, and comptroller, were established to manage the transition
Use the performance management system to define responsibility and assure accountability for change	Yes	DTRA leadership has transition-related responsibilities included in annual performance expectations
Establish a communication strategy to create shared expectations and report progress	Yes	Communication plan developed that describes how and when employees and stakeholders will be kept informed of transition activities and assigns responsibility for delivering these communications
Involve employees to obtain their ideas and gain their ownership	Yes	Quarterly meetings held to keep employees informed of transition activities and to solicit their input
Build a world-class organization	Yes	Longer-term planning processes, such as acquisition and human resource functions, will integrate best practices

Source: GAO analysis of DOD information. | GAO-18-509

DOD Identified Transition Efficiencies

Several efficiencies resulted or are anticipated from JIDO’s transition under DTRA, according to DOD documentation and officials. These efficiencies are summarized thematically in table 2.

Table 2: Actual or Anticipated Efficiencies from the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) Transition, According to the Department of Defense

Functional area	Efficiency example
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing testing facilities and expertise in key areas such as modeling and simulation, tunnel capabilities, and sensor development to increase collaboration and reduce testing costs
Training and Exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminated redundant explosive ordnance disposal training Collaborating on exercise planning
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminated independent strategic planning activities JIDO incorporated into Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) regional planning working groups JIDO included in DTRA governance bodies Integrated continuity of operations planning and exercising
Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidated cybersecurity services, computer networks, and software license agreements
Acquisition, Finance, and Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidated contracting, financial management and reporting, and property accountability functions
Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated manpower, personnel, and performance management systems Consolidated staff functions to include general counsel, legislative and public affairs, inspector general, and equal employment opportunity Reducing DTRA overhead and management costs that is expected to result in a civilian staff reduction of 74 (by fiscal year 2020)
Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing future infrastructure consolidation opportunities Transferred JIDO's property to DTRA's accountable property system of record
International Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinated and, in some instances, combined international information exchanges

Source: GAO analysis of DTRA information. | GAO-18-509

JIDO Maintained Warfighter Support during the Transition

According to officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, each of the military services, geographic combatant commands, and Special Operations Command, JIDO maintained its warfighter support during its transition under DTRA. For example, the geographic combatant commands and Special Operations Command—the primary recipients of JIDO's warfighter support—stated in response to our questionnaire that JIDO's support to their command was not negatively affected by the transition. Further, in their questionnaire responses, all of the commands indicated they were either fully or mostly satisfied with JIDO's level of support during the transition period. In interviews with officials from Central Command and Special Operations Command, officials reiterated this point noting that JIDO provided a consistent level of support to multiple directorates within their commands during the transition period. In addition, they noted that without JIDO intelligence-related, personnel, and training support, among others, their commands' capability to support the warfighter may have been negatively affected. Table 3 identifies the types of warfighter support that the geographic combatant commands and

Special Operations Command reported receiving from JIDO before and during the transition.

Table 3: Warfighter Support the Combatant Commands Reported Receiving from the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) Before and During the Transition

Combatant command	Type of warfighter support					
	Rapidly fielded materiel capabilities	Intelligence-related	Tactics, techniques, and procedures	Personnel	Training	Other ^a
Africa Command	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Central Command	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Command	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Command	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-
Pacific Command	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Southern Command	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Special Operations Command	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓

Source: GAO analysis of combatant command responses to GAO questionnaire. | GAO-18-509

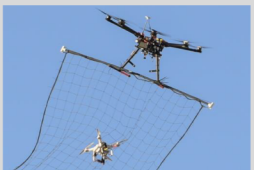




Note: A check mark (✓) indicates that the combatant command reported that JIDO provided that type of warfighter support within the combatant command's area of responsibility. A dash (-) indicates that the combatant command reported that JIDO did not provide that type of warfighter support within the combatant command's areas of responsibility.

^aExamples cited by the combatant commands include: analysis of lessons learned, analysis of workflow processes, subject matter expertise, support for counter-improvised threat initiatives, and website capability data integration.

Based on our observations of a JIDO capabilities demonstration, interviews with combatant command officials, and questionnaire results, we found that JIDO provided the following types of warfighter support during the transition:

- **Rapidly fielded materiel capabilities:** JIDO continued to research, develop, and rapidly field materiel solutions to support U.S. and allied forces. JIDO's materiel support concentrated on defeating IEDs and small unmanned aircraft systems. Figure 5 shows examples of materiel capabilities JIDO researched during the transition.

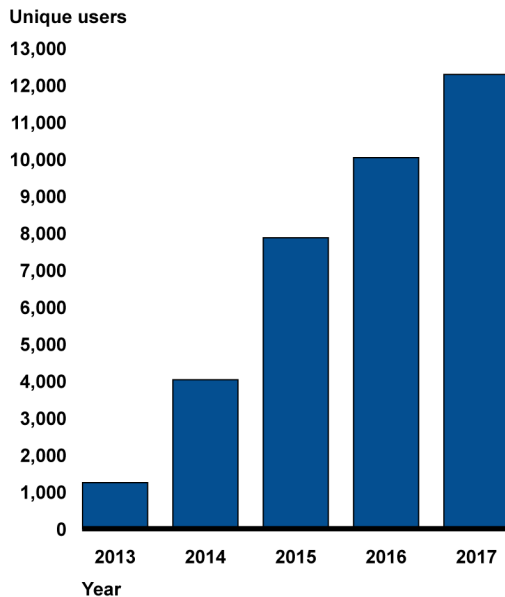
Figure 5: Examples of Materiel Capabilities the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) Undertook during the Transition

Example	Description
	<p>Small unmanned aircraft systems that are deployed to defeat enemy small unmanned aircraft systems</p>
	<p>Electronic equipment that detects improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in or affixed to vehicles or carried by individuals from a greater distance than previously possible</p>
	<p>Electronically operated robots that disarm and dispose of IEDs</p>
	<p>Modifications to non-tactical vehicles to prevent vehicle-borne IEDs from being utilized by the enemy</p>
	<p>Chemical compounds, that when added to IEDs, render the explosive material inert</p>

Source: GAO analysis of Defense Threat Reduction Agency information, Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization Capability Demonstration, and Defense Visual Information Distribution System. | GAO-18-509

- Intelligence-related:** JIDO provided analytical tools and products to support global military operations. For example, JIDO maintained an information technology capability called Voltron that allows U.S. forces to analyze and apply improvised-threat information. This platform is being increasingly used by organizations across DOD and the federal government. As figure 6 shows, DTRA reported the number of unique Voltron users grew nearly tenfold from 2013 to 2017.

Figure 6: Number of Unique Users Utilizing Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization's (JIDO's) Voltron Improvised-threat Intelligence-related Capability



Source: GAO analysis of Defense Threat Reduction Agency data. | GAO-18-509

Note: Voltron is an information technology capability that allows U.S. forces to analyze and apply improvised-threat information.

- **Tactics, techniques, and procedures:** JIDO assisted combatant commands and allies by providing a variety of tactics, techniques, and procedures to counter improvised threats. According to combatant command officials, JIDO conducted threat assessments and provided exercise support, participated in subject matter expert exchanges with allied nations, and developed security work plans. For example, Africa Command reported that JIDO personnel conducted a vehicle-borne IED threat assessment of a city and a small unmanned aircraft systems threat assessment of a U.S. installation in Africa.
- **Personnel:** JIDO assigned personnel to each of the geographic combatant commands and Special Operations Command to support counter-IED planning, training, intelligence, and operations activities. For example, Central Command reported that JIDO has over 180 personnel primarily located in forward operating positions to provide a range of warfighter support, such as analyzing counter-threat networks. Central Command and Special Operations Command officials noted that embedded JIDO personnel continue to play a critical role in supporting command and forward operating warfighter functions.

- **Training:** JIDO continued to provide counter-improvised threat training during the transition. For example, JIDO participated in combatant command-sponsored operational- and tactical-level exercises, curriculum development, and partner nation train and equip missions.
- **Other:** According to combatant command questionnaire responses, JIDO also provided warfighter support outside of the categories previously identified. For example, Pacific Command and Special Operations Command reported that JIDO provided funding, subject matter expertise, and lessons learned for counter-small unmanned aircraft system initiatives.

Unclear Responsibilities and Incomplete Information Sharing Challenge JIDO's Continued Efficiency and Effectiveness

We identified two challenges that could affect JIDO's continued efficiency and effectiveness. First, JIDO's improvised threat responsibilities—specifically, the categories of improvised threats that JIDO is responsible for countering and JIDO's authorities for countering them—are unclear. Second, information on most of JIDO's research projects is not available through the department's designated information sharing repository.

JIDO's Responsibilities Are Unclear

JIDO's responsibilities for countering improvised threats are unclear, which has the potential for limiting JIDO's continued efficiency and effectiveness. According to DOD joint doctrine, the Secretary of Defense should provide direction to combat support agency directors (such as the DTRA Director) to include clearly defined and achievable national strategic objectives and timely strategic direction.¹⁶ From 2006 to 2016, JIDO's responsibilities for countering IEDs were articulated in a DOD directive.¹⁷ As part of JIDO's transition under DTRA in 2016, the Deputy Secretary of Defense cancelled this directive and indicated that JIDO should continue its mission under the authorities of DTRA.¹⁸ However, as

¹⁶Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Mar. 25, 2013) (incorporating change 1, July 12, 2017).

¹⁷DOD Directive 2000.19E (Rescinded 2016).

¹⁸Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *Organizational Realignment of the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Agency* (Nov. 2, 2016).

of May 2018, DTRA's DOD directive (DOD Directive 5105.62) has not been updated to include JIDO. DTRA officials said that they expect the next update to DTRA's DOD directive to include JIDO and its responsibilities and anticipate it being issued in the fall of 2018. Due to the cancelling of JIDO's former directive and a lack of clarity in DTRA's forthcoming draft directive, JIDO's responsibilities are unclear to officials from across DOD. For example, officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the military services, and some combatant commands stated that they are unclear what categories of threats JIDO is responsible for countering and what authorities JIDO has for countering improvised threats, as described below.

- **The categories of threats that JIDO is responsible for countering are unclear.** DOD has not clearly defined what constitutes an improvised threat. In 2015, the Deputy Secretary of Defense expanded JIDO's mission from solely countering IEDs to countering improvised threats at large. However, the term "improvised threat" does not appear in DOD's authoritative dictionary of military and associated terms.¹⁹ Further, in discussions and in responses to our questionnaire, officials from across the department provided different interpretations of what constitutes an improvised threat, from any commercial-off-the-shelf technology that has been modified to have desired battlefield effects to any improvised device that has an explosive component. To address this issue, DTRA developed the following improvised threat definition in its draft directive that is awaiting DOD approval:

<p>Improvised Threat – Threat tactics, techniques, procedures, and devices designed, fielded, or employed in any modality of conflict that adversely affects U.S. Joint Force protection or maneuverability. The emphasis is on non-state actors, but not on those exclusively as determined by the combatant commanders.</p>
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Source: Defense Threat Reduction Agency. | GAO-18-509

JIDO and DTRA officials explained that this definition gives them the flexibility they believe is necessary to address emerging improvised threats. In contrast, officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, and the military services told us that the definition in the DTRA draft directive is too broad for understanding what categories of threats JIDO is responsible for countering. For

¹⁹DOD, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (June 2018).

example, under this definition, space, cyber, and radiological threats could be included. DOD's improvised-threat definition could be interpreted to include all improvised, conventional, and strategic threats. DOD officials noted that JIDO's prior directive, which was rescinded in 2016, included a precise definition of an IED. These officials cautioned that if the improvised threat definition remains vague, it increases the risk that JIDO will be tasked with addressing too many categories of threats, which will spread JIDO's funding and staffing resources thin, diminish JIDO's counter-IED expertise, and potentially fragment departmental counter-improvised threat efforts.

- **JIDO's authorities for countering improvised threats are unclear.** Officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the military services, and some combatant commands said they are unclear about JIDO's authorities for countering improvised threats. According to DOD officials, JIDO's prior directive clearly articulated JIDO's authorities to coordinate departmental counter-IED efforts in key areas such as research and rapid fielding. In particular, the prior directive stated that JIDO "shall focus (lead, advocate, and coordinate) all DOD efforts to defeat IEDs."²⁰ In contrast, DTRA's draft directive does not specify JIDO's authorities for leading, advocating, and coordinating departmental counter-improvised threat efforts in key areas such as research and rapid fielding. Until the department clarifies JIDO's improvised threat authorities, it remains unclear what, if any, authorities JIDO has with respect to leading, advocating, and coordinating the department's response to counter-improvised threats.

DTRA and JIDO officials stated that clarifying the categories of improvised threats that JIDO is responsible for countering, as well as JIDO's authorities for countering them, would be beneficial. However, DTRA and JIDO officials cautioned against being overly prescriptive in bounding the categories of improvised threats and corresponding authorities because doing so could hinder JIDO's flexibility to address future urgent, unanticipated threats. Rather, these officials suggested clarifying broad categories of improvised threats that JIDO would be responsible for addressing, such as improvised threats involving explosives and their related delivery systems. Clarifying both the categories of threats JIDO is responsible for and JIDO's authorities would help JIDO more efficiently and effectively plan, program, and coordinate its assigned improvised threat responsibilities, according to the same

²⁰DOD Directive 2000.19E (Rescinded 2016).

officials. In addition, clarifying JIDO's improvised threat responsibilities could inform departmental decisions about JIDO's organizational structure—including the size and composition of its leadership, permanent, and contractor workforce, and funding levels.

JIDO Does Not Routinely Share Research Project Information

JIDO does not routinely provide information on its research projects to the department's designated information sharing repository. Research project information includes thousands of technical, operational, capability and limitation, and vendor test reports that JIDO developed on behalf of DOD. DOD Instruction 3200.12 requires defense organizations such as JIDO to document and send information on their research projects to the Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC).²¹ DTIC manages the department's primary repository for preserving and sharing research information across the department.²² In response to concerns regarding the availability of information on JIDO research, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics oversaw an effort to determine the extent to which JIDO had submitted information on its research projects to DTIC.²³ In 2017, this effort concluded and found that JIDO had submitted less than one third of the required documents on its research projects to DTIC.

Sharing information on JIDO research involves two separate processes: (1) obtaining the permission of other DOD organizations associated with a research project and (2) submitting information at the conclusion of research. DOD reporting and interviews with DOD officials identified two separate challenges that affected JIDO's ability to routinely share information on its research projects:

- **Obtaining permission at the onset of research.** The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics was unable to submit research project information to DTIC in

²¹DOD Instruction 3200.12, *DoD Scientific and Technical Information Program (STIP)* (Aug. 22, 2013) (incorporating change 1, Oct. 10, 2017).

²²DTIC's information sharing repository contains approximately 4.1 million records. Information from DTIC's repository was downloaded more than 45.5 million times in fiscal year 2017.

²³DOD's Acquisition, Technology and Logistics organization was restructured on Feb. 1, 2018, into two organizations: Acquisition and Sustainment, and Research and Engineering, each with an under secretary, per the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (Public Law 114-328).

coordination with JIDO because, while required to, JIDO had not obtained permission from DOD organizations associated with the research projects to release the information. According to DOD officials, such permission typically is obtained at the onset of a research project from the organizations associated with the project. However, JIDO had not obtained permission for most of the projects.

- **Submitting information at the conclusion of research.** According to DOD officials, JIDO focused almost exclusively on addressing urgent warfighter needs, and did not develop a process to ensure its research project information—such as technical, operational, and test reports—was submitted to DTIC after projects ended.

Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, and military service officials noted the importance of ensuring that JIDO's research project information is readily available so that, for example, other research organizations can leverage JIDO's experience and expertise before funding and conducting similar or related research. In May 2018, DTRA officials told us that in response to information we presented, they began coordinating with DTIC to discuss information sharing. Further, the officials stated they were receptive to developing processes, including obtaining permission from DOD organizations associated with the research projects, and to submit information on JIDO research projects to DTIC. Establishing such processes to ensure information on JIDO's research projects is included in DTIC's repository would help reduce the likelihood of fragmented and unintentionally duplicative counter-improvised threat research projects.

Conclusions

Enemy combatants and terrorists continue to use improvised weapons, particularly IEDs, against U.S. military forces. DOD's ability to counter improvised threats depends on organizations such as JIDO to develop and implement training, tactics, equipment, and other capabilities that address urgent warfighter needs, such as countering weaponized small unmanned aircraft systems. JIDO has completed initial transition activities to DTRA, such as transferring personnel and pay, and officials stated they expect to achieve long-term efficiencies. Further, JIDO's warfighter support was maintained during the organization's transition under DTRA. However, JIDO faces some challenges that, if unresolved, could diminish its continued efficiency and effectiveness. Specifically, if the department does not clarify the categories of threats JIDO is responsible for countering and JIDO's authorities for countering those threats, JIDO's ability to plan, program, prioritize, and coordinate an effective and timely response could be hindered. Further, clarifying JIDO's improvised threat

responsibilities could inform departmental decisions about JIDO's organizational structure—including the size and composition of its leadership, permanent, and contractor workforce, and funding levels. Lastly, JIDO's counter-IED experience and expertise is recognized by officials from across DOD; however, JIDO does not routinely submit information on its research projects to DTIC, as required. Not submitting information to DOD's designated information sharing repository increases the risk of other DOD entities unknowingly expending funds on researching improvised threats that JIDO has already researched. This may result in fragmented or duplicative efforts because outcomes of relevant research undertaken by JIDO were not considered. Addressing these challenges will help sustain JIDO's progress in efficiently and effectively countering improvised threats.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making the following four recommendations to the Secretary of Defense:

The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment clarifies the categories of threats within JIDO's counter-improvised threat mission. (Recommendation 1)

The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment clarifies JIDO's authorities for countering improvised threats, including the degree to which JIDO is to focus (lead, advocate, and coordinate) departmental efforts in key areas such as research and rapid fielding. (Recommendation 2)

The Secretary of Defense should ensure the DTRA Director establishes a process to routinely obtain permission to release applicable information from organizations connected to JIDO research projects so that JIDO can send the information to DTIC. (Recommendation 3)

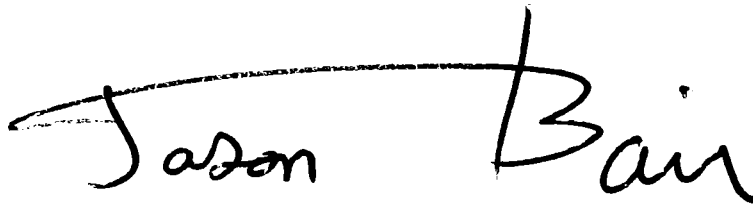
The Secretary of Defense should ensure the DTRA Director establishes a process to submit information on JIDO's research projects to DTIC. (Recommendation 4)

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

DOD reviewed a draft of this report and concurred with all of our recommendations. DOD also cited actions it plans to take to address them. We believe that if DOD completes the actions it outlines in its response, this will address the intent of our recommendations. DOD's written comments are reprinted in their entirety in appendix II.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees; the Secretary of Defense; the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment; the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretaries of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; the Commandant of the Marine Corps; and the Director of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency. In addition, the report is available at no charge on our website at <http://www.gao.gov>

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-6881 or at bairj@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix III.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason Bair". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke over the first part of the name.

Jason Bair
Acting Director, Defense Capabilities and Management

List of Congressional Committees

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
The Honorable Dick Durbin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
The Honorable Pete Visclosky
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

In this report we (1) assess the status of the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization's (JIDO) transition under the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), whether transition plans reflect key practices on mergers and organizational transformations, and what, if any, efficiencies have been identified; (2) describe how, if at all, the transition has affected JIDO's warfighter support, and what types of warfighter support JIDO provided during the transition; and (3) identify what, if any, challenges could affect JIDO's continued efficiency and effectiveness.

To assess the status of JIDO's transition under DTRA, whether transition plans reflect key practices on mergers and organizational transformations, and what if any, efficiencies have been identified, we analyzed DTRA and JIDO documentation describing completed JIDO transition activities in areas such as organizational structure, staffing, funding, authorities, and planning. We compared JIDO's transition plans to key practices for mergers and organizational transformations that we identified in prior work to determine whether these key practices were reflected.¹ To conduct this comparison, two analysts independently assessed JIDO transition plans to determine whether the key practices were reflected by indicating "yes" or "no," and documented examples of yes cases. For the purposes of this review, by "reflect" we mean that the general intent of a key practice was identified. Further, a "yes" assessment meant that elements of the key practice were reflected, and a "no" assessment meant that no part of the key practice was reflected. The two analysts' independent assessments were similar; therefore, a third analyst was not required to mediate resolution. In addition, we assessed evidence from relevant documentation—such as JIDO transition plans—that detailed JIDO and DTRA activities and functions to determine if efficiency gains had been identified and achieved. Finally, we interviewed officials from the Offices of the Under Secretaries of Defense for Policy; Acquisition, Technology and Logistics; and Intelligence; each of the military services; Joint Staff; DTRA; and JIDO to discuss JIDO's transition plans, status, efficiency gains, and related challenges.

¹For the purposes of this report, JIDO transition plans refers primarily to the following three documents: (1) *DOD's Report to Congress Plan for Full and Complete Transition of the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Agency Under the Authority, Direction, and Control of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency* (August 2016), (2) *Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization Concept of Operations* (June 2016), and (3) *Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) Joint Improvised Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) Integration Plan* (November 2017). GAO, *Results-Oriented Cultures: Implementation Steps to Assist Mergers and Organizational Transformations*, [GAO-03-669](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 2, 2003).

To describe how, if at all, the transition has affected JIDO's warfighter support, we reviewed relevant DOD plans and strategies such as JIDO's concept of operations to determine the scale and scope of JIDO's operational support responsibilities.² We held discussions with officials from the Offices of the Under Secretaries of Defense for Policy; Acquisition, Technology and Logistics; and Intelligence; each of the military services; Joint Staff; Central Command and Special Operations Command; DTRA; and JIDO to discuss JIDO's warfighter support during the transition period. We also administered a questionnaire through the Joint Staff to each of the 6 geographic combatant commands and Special Operations Command—the primary recipients of JIDO's warfighter support—to determine how, if at all, warfighter support was affected by the transition and the types of support the combatant commands received from JIDO, among other things. As part of the questionnaire's development, Joint Staff officials familiar with JIDO's mission reviewed the draft questionnaire for substantive issues, and a GAO questionnaire specialist reviewed the questionnaire for technical issues. We modified the questionnaire based on the feedback received from these reviewers, as appropriate. To administer the questionnaire, we sent a copy of the questionnaire to the Joint Staff on February 6, 2018, which the Joint Staff transmitted to the 6 geographic commands and Special Operations Command. We closed the questionnaire on March 5, 2018. The Joint Staff provided the questionnaire responses by email. To ensure the independence of the responses, prior to submitting the questionnaire, we discussed with the Joint Staff the planned process for disseminating the questionnaire and receiving the responses. The Joint Staff agreed not to change the formatting or content of the commands' responses. We compared relevant questionnaire responses from Central Command and Special Operations Command—the two primary recipients of JIDO warfighter support—to information obtained from interviews with these commands to ensure consistency. Further, the commands included individual contact information in their responses to allow us to follow up if necessary and confirm the validity of the commands' responses. Finally, we provided a statement of facts to the department, which included our analysis of the commands' responses to our questionnaire. No inaccuracies were identified. We had a response rate of 100 percent. Data from the questionnaires were entered manually by a GAO analyst in Microsoft Excel. A quantitative data analysis was conducted by a GAO analyst using Microsoft Excel, and a second GAO analyst independently

²*Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization Concept of Operations* (June 2016).

verified the accuracy of the analyses. The questionnaire contained questions covering the transition period, as well as time periods before the transition, to more fully understand the effects of JIDO's transition on the combatant commands. After analyzing the questionnaire results, we discussed our overarching observations with DTRA and JIDO officials to better understand their relevance and significance.

To identify what, if at any, challenges could affect JIDO's continued efficiency and effectiveness, we analyzed relevant joint doctrine, directives, guidance, and planning documents that involved JIDO's mission and authorities. We also spoke with officials from the Offices of the Under Secretaries of Defense for Policy; Acquisition, Technology and Logistics; and Intelligence; Joint Staff; each of the military services; the Defense Technical Information Center; DTRA; JIDO; and Central Command and Special Operations Command to obtain their perspectives on potential challenges. We then compared information on potential challenges to relevant joint doctrine and DOD directives and an instruction to determine their relevance.

To address our three reporting objectives, we worked with officials from the DOD organizations listed in table 4.

Table 4: Department of Defense (DOD) Organizations Contacted by GAO

Office of the Secretary of Defense
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering
Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict
Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office
Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Humanitarian Mine Action Office

Joint Chiefs of Staff
Manpower and Personnel Directorate (J1)
Strategic Plans and Policies Directorate (J5)
Force Structure, Resources, and Assessment Directorate (J8)

U.S. Army
Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Plans and Training (G3/5/7)
Adaptive Counter Improvised Explosive Device and Explosive Ordnance Disposal Solutions (G38)
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology
Program Executive Office, Missiles and Space, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and Environment
Unexploded Ordnance Center of Excellence

U.S. Navy
Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Warfare Systems (N9)
Navy, Joint, and Urgent Needs (N9IJ)
Surface Warfare (N96)
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition

U.S. Marine Corps
Marine Corps Combat Development Command

U.S. Air Force
Deputy Chief of Staff Logistics, Engineering and Force Protection (A4)
Directorate of Civil Engineers
Headquarters Air Force Electronic Warfare Division (A5RE)

U.S. Africa Command
Operations and Cyber Directorate (J3)

U.S. Central Command
Intelligence Directorate (CCJ2)
Operations Directorate (CCJ3)
Strategy, Plans and Policy Directorate (CCJ5)
Force Development Directorate (CCJ7)
Structure, Resources, and Assessment Directorate (CCJ8)

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

U.S. European Command
Operations Directorate (J3)

U.S. Northern Command
Operations Directorate (J3)

U.S. Pacific Command
Asia-Pacific Counter-IED Fusion Center
Operations Directorate (J3)

U.S. Southern Command
Operations Directorate (J3)

U.S. Special Operations Command
Intelligence Directorate (J2)
Operations Directorate (J3)
Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate (J5)
Force Structure, Resources and Assessment Directorate (J8)

Defense Technical Information Center

Defense Threat Reduction Agency
Mission Integration Office
Acquisition, Finance, and Logistics Directorate
Human Resources Directorate
Intelligence and Plans Directorate
Information Integration and Technology Services Directorate
Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization
 Mission Integration Division (Intelligence) (J2)
 Operations Directorate (J3)
 Strategy, Plans, and Policy Directorate (J5)
 Information, Technology, Communications Directorate (J6)
 Training, Support, Plex Directorate (J7)
 Requirements Acquisition Directorate (J8)
 Operations and Research Directorate (J9)

Source: GAO | GAO-18-509.

Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense



NUCLEAR, CHEMICAL, AND
BIOLOGICAL DEFENSE PROGRAMS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
3050 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3050

JUN 29 2018

Mr. Jason Bair
Acting Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Bair:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report, GAO-18-509, "IMPROVISED THREATS: Warfighter Support Maintained, but Clearer Responsibilities and Improved Information Sharing Needed" dated May 30, 2018 (GAO Code 102267). Detailed comments on the report recommendations are enclosed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Guy B. Roberts", is written above the printed name.

Guy B. Roberts

Enclosure:
As stated

GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED MAY 30, 2018
GAO-18-509 (GAO CODE 102267)

**“IMPROVISED THREATS: WARFIGHTER SUPPORT MAINTAINED, BUT CLEARER
RESPONSIBILITIES AND IMPROVED INFORMATION SHARING NEEDED”**

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
TO THE GAO RECOMMENDATION**

RECOMMENDATION 1: GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment clarifies the categories of threats within JIDO's counter-improvised threat mission.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The Department of Defense (DoD) agrees that the scope of DTRA's counter-improvised threat mission should be clarified to inform stakeholder responsibilities and guide resourcing, but not hinder DTRA's flexibility to prepare for and address future urgent and emerging threats. The Department will use the Joint requirements process as it pertains to Joint Urgent/Emerging Operational Needs, and the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment's Warfighter Senior Integration Group to assign, clarify, and communicate Component responsibilities and taskings within this mission set.

RECOMMENDATION 2: GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment clarifies JIDO's authorities for countering improvised threats, including the degree to which JIDO is to focus (lead, advocate, and coordinate) departmental efforts in key areas such as research and rapid fielding.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The DoD will ensure that appropriate authorities for countering improvised threats are included in DTRA's overarching charter (DoDD 5105.62) and integrated with the full scope of responsibilities the Agency has for threat reduction. The Department, however, expects DTRA to utilize the entirety of the Agency's capabilities and authorities to address improvised threats involving explosives and their related delivery systems, but will not dictate how it assigns missions among its subordinate organizations, including JIDO.

RECOMMENDATION 3: GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense should ensure the DTRA Director establishes a process to routinely obtain permission to release applicable information from organizations connected to JIDO research projects so that JIDO can send the information to DTIC.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The Department will ensure DTRA develops a process to include a mechanism for permission to release applicable information for submission to DTIC or that the organization is appropriately submitting.

RECOMMENDATION 4: GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense should ensure the DTRA Director establishes a process to submit information on JIDO's research projects to DTIC.

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The Department will ensure that DTRA and DTIC conduct a review among stakeholders to develop a process to submit the data required by DTIC given current resources and the existing DTIC submission process.

Appendix III: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Jason Bair, (202) 512-6881 or bairj@gao.gov.

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact above, Marc Schwartz (Assistant Director), David Adams (Analyst in Charge), Vincent Buquicchio, Clarice Ransom, Michael Silver, Sarah Veale, and Melissa Wohlgemuth made key contributions to this report.

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