

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-26](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The President has special legal authorities that allow him to direct the “drawdown” of defense articles and services to provide assistance in response to an international crisis. Examples of this aid include deliveries of vehicles, food, and medical equipment, and the use of military airlift, among other articles and services. The President may authorize up to \$325 million each year in drawdowns under three authorities in the Foreign Assistance Act.

A House Armed Services Committee report accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016 included a provision for GAO to review drawdown authorities. This report (1) describes the use of drawdown authorities to provide security assistance and build partner capacity and (2) evaluates the extent to which State and DOD followed their stated processes for planning and implementing drawdowns. GAO reviewed guidance and documents relevant to drawdowns, analyzed drawdown data from fiscal years 2011 through 2015, and interviewed State and DOD officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that (1) the Secretaries of the military departments develop guidance that assigns responsibility for the preparation of impact assessments, and (2) the Director, DSCA, develop an internal control mechanism to determine whether the military departments have completed the required impact assessments before moving forward with drawdown planning and execution. DOD concurred with each of GAO’s recommendations.

View [GAO-17-26](#). For more information, contact Charles Michael Johnson, Jr., at (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov or Zina Merritt at (202) 512-5257 or merrittz@gao.gov.

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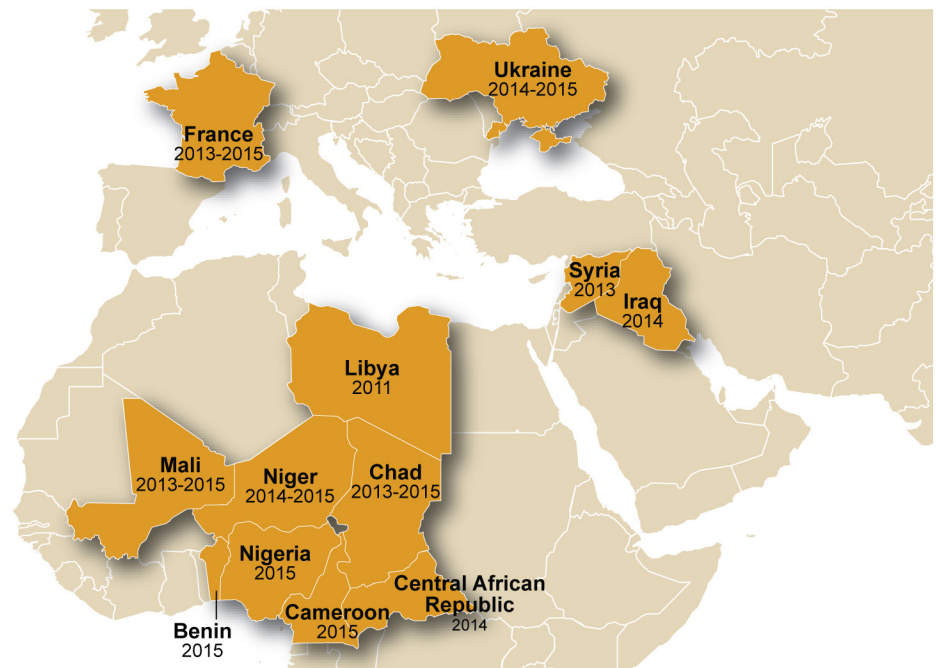
SECURITY ASSISTANCE

Guidance Needed for Completing Required Impact Assessments Prior to Presidential Drawdowns

What GAO Found

In fiscal years 2011 through 2015, the President authorized 13 drawdowns to provide security assistance and build foreign partner capacity to France, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Ukraine, and countries in West and Central Africa (see fig.). According to Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of State (State) data, the total value of articles and services authorized for these drawdowns was \$321.5 million.

Authorized Recipients of Presidential Drawdowns, Fiscal Years 2011-2015



Source: GAO analysis of Departments of State and Defense data, MapArt (map). | GAO-17-26

State and DOD implemented some, but not all, steps in their stated processes for planning and implementing drawdowns, but the military departments did not conduct required impact assessments. State implemented three steps in the process for which it was responsible, such as preparing justification packages for planned drawdowns. DOD implemented some parts of its stated process. For example, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), which is the lead DOD entity for drawdowns, worked with the military departments to identify resources for the drawdowns from fiscal years 2011 through 2015. However, the Army and Air Force—which together delivered about 96 percent of the dollar amount of drawdown aid during that time—did not conduct required impact assessments. Specifically, the two military departments had not assessed the potential impact of drawdowns on military readiness and budgets during drawdown planning, as required by DOD guidance. Neither of the military departments has assigned responsibility for conducting the assessments, and DSCA did not determine whether the assessments had been completed. Without these assessments, DOD is not in a position to identify and, if needed, mitigate potential negative impacts of a drawdown on military readiness.