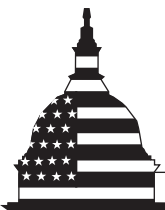


June 2011

# HOMELAND DEFENSE

## Actions Needed to Improve DOD Planning and Coordination for Maritime Operations



G A O

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## Why GAO Did This Study

Recent events, such as the seaborne terrorist attack on Mumbai in 2008 and the pirate attack on the *Quest* in February 2011, highlight maritime threats to the United States. The maritime domain presents a range of potential security threats—including naval forces of adversary nations, piracy, and the use of vessels to smuggle people, drugs, and weapons—which could harm the United States and its interests. The Department of Defense (DOD) has also identified homeland defense as one of its highest priorities. GAO was asked to determine the extent to which DOD has (1) planned to conduct maritime homeland defense operations, (2) identified and addressed capability gaps in maritime homeland defense, and (3) made progress with interagency partners, such as the U.S. Coast Guard, in addressing information sharing challenges related to maritime domain awareness. To conduct this work, GAO examined national and DOD guidance and interviewed officials from DOD, Joint Staff, combatant commands, the military services, and others.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that Fleet Forces Command develop a plan to support Northern Command and that responsible DOD organizations provide Northern Command with implementation plans for the actions identified by the Joint Requirements Oversight Council. DOD partially concurred and agreed to take actions on each recommendation.

## HOMELAND DEFENSE

### Actions Needed to Improve DOD Planning and Coordination for Maritime Operations

## What GAO Found

U.S. Northern Command, as the command responsible for homeland defense for the continental United States, has undertaken a number of homeland defense planning efforts, but it does not have a key detailed supporting plan for responding to maritime threats. Northern Command requires supporting DOD organizations to develop plans to support its homeland defense plan. The current, 2008 version of the plan requires a supporting plan from the commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command, who is designated as the joint force maritime component commander for Northern Command. Fleet Forces Command has undertaken some planning efforts, but has not developed a supporting plan. Because the Northern Command homeland defense plan is a concept plan, which are less detailed than operation plans, and because the command does not have naval forces routinely under its operational control, supporting plans provide critical details on how operations are to be conducted and allow Northern Command to assess the extent to which subordinate commands are prepared to support the maritime homeland defense mission.

DOD has identified maritime homeland defense capability gaps and determined actions necessary to address them, but it has not adequately assessed the extent to which those actions have been implemented. One way DOD identifies capability gaps that affect mission execution is through capabilities-based assessments. A 2008 assessment identified three capability gaps specific to the maritime homeland defense mission—such as engaging and defeating maritime threats—and eight other gaps that affect a number of missions, including maritime homeland defense—such as information management and sharing. The Joint Requirements Oversight Council reviewed the findings and requested relevant DOD organizations to take action to close identified gaps. However, the responsible organizations did not provide implementation plans or other documentation of actions taken or under way to address these gaps. Without documentation on progress in implementing recommended actions, Northern Command cannot be assured that it has full and accurate information about the extent to which other organizations have taken action to close these gaps.

National and DOD documents have identified challenges to the sharing of maritime domain information, such as international coordination, policy and processes, technology, legal restrictions, and cultural barriers. DOD and interagency partners, such as the Coast Guard, have efforts under way to address many of these challenges. One effort, the interagency National Maritime Domain Awareness Architecture, is intended to improve data management by establishing data standards, providing common terminology, and developing supporting technology. It is intended to leverage the interagency National Information Exchange Model, an effort currently under way to establish data standards, facilitate the accessibility of common data across the maritime community, and allow stakeholders to focus on configuring the display of information to best meet their specific missions, whether through data analysis capabilities or geographic displays.

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GAO

Accountability \* Integrity \* Reliability

United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

June 23, 2011

### Congressional Requesters

The United States faces a range of security threats in the maritime domain, including the naval forces of adversary nations, piracy, and the use of vessels to smuggle people, drugs, and weapons. Recent events, such as the seaborne terrorist attack on Mumbai in 2008 and the pirate attack on the *Quest* in February 2011, highlight the potential for maritime threats to cause harm to the United States and its interests. The Department of Defense (DOD) has identified homeland defense as one of its highest priorities. Maritime homeland defense is an essential component of DOD's broader homeland defense mission—the protection of U.S. sovereignty, territory, domestic population, and defense critical infrastructure against external threats. DOD is the lead agency for the maritime homeland defense effort in defending against traditional external threats, but this mission involves global coordination between DOD components and interagency partners, including the U.S. Coast Guard, across areas where the military is actively deployed and in the maritime approaches to and territorial waters of the United States. Maritime domain awareness—the effective understanding of anything associated with the maritime domain that could affect the security, safety, economy, or environment of the United States—has been identified as a key national security requirement and a critical enabler for DOD's maritime homeland defense mission. DOD Directive 2005.02E designated the Secretary of the Navy as the DOD Executive Agent for Maritime Domain Awareness.<sup>1</sup>

For the purposes of this report, we focused our analysis of maritime homeland defense planning on the U.S. Northern Command, because it is the primary command responsible for that mission for the continental United States.<sup>2</sup> This report supplements prior GAO work on DOD's

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<sup>1</sup>The Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Transportation have also appointed executive agents for maritime domain awareness. These three executive agents, along with the Director of the National Maritime Intelligence Center, constitute the Executive Steering Committee for interagency maritime domain awareness efforts.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Northern Command is colocated with the North American Aerospace Defense Command. Northern Command has two missions: homeland defense and civil support. Meanwhile, the North American Aerospace Defense Command, a joint U.S.-Canada command, has three missions: aerospace warning, aerospace control, and maritime warning.

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homeland defense planning and capabilities. It also supplements prior GAO work on maritime domain awareness. Some of our prior work relating to maritime domain awareness focused on the role of the Coast Guard, which uses maritime domain awareness particularly to protect U.S. ports and waterways.<sup>3</sup> In addition, we previously examined the extent to which DOD has developed a strategy to manage its maritime domain awareness efforts and the extent to which a risk-based approach was used to inform these efforts.<sup>4</sup> See related GAO products listed at the end of this report. In response to your request, this report addresses (1) the extent to which DOD has conducted maritime homeland defense planning, (2) the extent to which DOD has identified and addressed maritime homeland defense capability gaps, and (3) progress DOD has made with its interagency partners in addressing information sharing challenges related to maritime domain awareness.

To determine the extent to which DOD has conducted maritime homeland defense planning, we documented the status of DOD's relevant planning efforts and compared this information to DOD strategy and guidance—such as DOD's *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support*—as well as joint doctrine on contingency planning, operational exercises, and the execution of maritime homeland defense operations. We focused on the extent to which required planning documents had been developed by Northern Command and other DOD organizations. We also interviewed or received written responses to questions from Joint Staff officials and officials from combatant commands whose areas of responsibility include United States territorial waters—primarily Northern Command and U.S. Pacific Command—and relevant supporting commands. Further, we discussed maritime homeland defense preparedness with representatives of the Coast Guard. To assess the extent to which DOD has identified and addressed maritime homeland defense capability gaps, we reviewed DOD studies of maritime homeland defense capabilities and actions necessary

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<sup>3</sup>For example, see GAO, *Maritime Security: Vessel Tracking Systems Provide Key Information, but the Need for Duplicate Data Should Be Reviewed*, [GAO-09-337](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 17, 2009); *Maritime Security: New Structures Have Improved Information Sharing, but Security Clearance Processing Requires Further Attention*, [GAO-05-394](#) (Apr. 15, 2005); and *Maritime Security: Partnering Could Reduce Federal Costs and Facilitate Implementation of Automatic Vessel Identification System*, [GAO-04-868](#) (July 23, 2004).

<sup>4</sup>GAO, *Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance: DOD Needs a Strategic, Risk-Based Approach to Enhance Its Maritime Domain Awareness*, [GAO-11-621](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 20, 2011).

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for closing any identified capability gaps. We discussed the results of those studies with DOD staff involved in undertaking them as well as representatives responsible for addressing the identified capability gaps. To evaluate DOD's progress in addressing information sharing challenges related to maritime domain awareness with its interagency partners, we examined national guidance such as National Security Presidential Directive 41 and the *National Strategy for Maritime Security*. We also interviewed officials from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, the DOD Executive Agent for Maritime Domain Awareness, the Joint Staff, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Networks and Information Integration / DOD Chief Information Officer, the Department of the Navy, U.S. Strategic Command, and the National Maritime Domain Awareness Coordination Office.<sup>5</sup> Given our previous work on DOD's management of maritime domain awareness, we relied on, and updated where available, information on identified capability gaps in DOD's information sharing and situational awareness efforts. We also discussed these capability gaps with offices responsible for addressing them. Appendix I contains additional details regarding the scope and methodology of this report.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2010 through June 2011, 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.

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## Background

DOD strategic guidance and joint doctrine documents state that homeland defense is the department's highest priority.<sup>6</sup> Joint doctrine identifies defense of the maritime domain as an essential component of the broader homeland defense mission. In furtherance of this mission, DOD employs a layered defense approach in which it attempts to mitigate threats across

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<sup>5</sup>On April 24, 2011, the Office of the DOD Executive Agent for Maritime Domain Awareness was relocated and merged with the Navy Maritime Domain Awareness Office. We met with both entities separately during most of our audit work.

<sup>6</sup>For example, see Department of Defense, *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support* (Washington, D.C.: June 2005).

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three areas, or layers, where maritime operations may be conducted.<sup>7</sup> The first layer, referred to as the “forward regions,” includes foreign land areas and sovereign waters outside the homeland. In this layer, the objective is to mitigate or prevent those threats from reaching the homeland. The second layer, referred to as the approaches, includes the waters extending from the limits of the homeland to the forward regions. The third layer, the homeland itself, includes the United States, its territories and possessions, and the surrounding territorial waters. Joint doctrine on homeland defense operations notes that DOD components maintain a high state of readiness and the flexible capabilities necessary for responding to threats of varying scale in the maritime approaches and the maritime homeland domain. In addition, DOD components must coordinate with interagency partners—such as the Coast Guard and U.S. Customs and Border Protection—who also have responsibility for ensuring the protection of the homeland from threats in the maritime domain. The principal means by which the U.S. government facilitates interagency coordination in determining primary and supporting agency responsibilities for maritime operations, including maritime homeland defense, is contained in the Maritime Operational Threat Response plan. The Maritime Operational Threat Response process is generally required to be used as maritime threats arise and provides a forum in which agency stakeholders can share information and coordinate an effective response that reflects the desired national outcome.

Northern Command is the unified military command responsible for planning, organizing, and executing DOD’s homeland defense mission within the continental United States, Alaska, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and U.S. territorial waters. Pacific Command has similar responsibilities in the Hawaiian Islands and U.S. territories in the Pacific. Both combatant commands receive support from a variety of commands and organizations in their direct chain of command and throughout DOD. Given that the area of responsibility of Northern Command includes the continental United States and many of its maritime approaches, this command plays a key role in defending the homeland by conducting operations to deter, prevent, and defeat threats and aggression aimed at the United States. Northern Command does not have an assigned Navy service component or naval forces routinely under its operational control, but the commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command is a supporting commander and is designated as the joint force maritime component

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<sup>7</sup>Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-27, *Homeland Defense* (July 12, 2007).



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commander for Northern Command.<sup>8</sup> Further, Northern Command must coordinate response operations with a number of other DOD and interagency stakeholders—such as Pacific Command and the Coast Guard.

DOD identifies and develops capabilities needed by combatant commanders through the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System process. This system was established to provide the department with an integrated, collaborative process to identify and guide development of new capabilities that address the current and emerging security environment.<sup>9</sup> One method by which this process starts is with the development of a capabilities-based assessment. Such an assessment identifies the capabilities required to successfully execute missions such as the homeland defense mission, the shortfalls in existing systems to deliver those capabilities, and the possible solutions for the capability shortfalls. Next, the Joint Requirements Oversight Council—the body responsible for overseeing the military requirements system—may validate the findings from such assessments and direct relevant DOD organizations to undertake actions to close any capability gaps that are identified. After the validation of the findings from a capabilities-based assessment, the council may determine that (1) an identified gap presents an acceptable level of risk to operations and no further action is needed to address it, (2) the risk presented by a capability gap requires the development of a nonmateriel solution, such as changes to DOD doctrine; or (3) the risk presented by a capability gap requires a materiel solution—such as a new acquisition program.<sup>10</sup>

Maritime domain awareness is a critical enabler for maritime homeland defense. It assists in the identification and analysis of threats and provides ongoing information during maritime operations. In December 2004, the White House issued maritime security policy in National Security Presidential Directive 41/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 13,

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<sup>8</sup>Hereinafter, we use the term Fleet Forces Command in reference to the commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command.

<sup>9</sup>The primary objective of this process is to ensure the capabilities required by the joint warfighter are identified with their associated operational performance criteria in order to successfully execute assigned missions.

<sup>10</sup>If materiel solutions are to be pursued, an initial capabilities document is produced. If only nonmateriel solutions are recommended or a nonmateriel solution can be implemented independent of proposed materiel needs, a joint doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, or facilities Change Recommendation is produced.

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which directed the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security to jointly lead an interagency effort to prepare a *National Strategy for Maritime Security*. In 2005 the *National Strategy for Maritime Security* provided broad strategic objectives and identified strategic actions to be taken to enhance maritime domain awareness efforts. The strategy required DOD and the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, and State to lead U.S. efforts to integrate and align all U.S. maritime security programs into a comprehensive, cohesive national effort that includes the appropriate state and local agencies, the private sector, and other nations. The Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, and Transportation each appointed an executive agent for maritime domain awareness to assist in coordinating efforts and informing maritime policy within and among federal agencies in order to enhance national maritime domain awareness efforts.

Building on national guidance, DOD policy has established broad roles and responsibilities for maritime domain awareness efforts within the department but recognizes, as does national guidance, that enhancing maritime domain awareness must be a combined effort. DOD established some roles and responsibilities for departmental maritime domain awareness efforts in DOD Directive 2005.02E. This directive designates the Secretary of the Navy as the DOD Executive Agent for Maritime Domain Awareness and designates the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to oversee the activities of the DOD Executive Agent for Maritime Domain Awareness. The directive also establishes several management functions for the Executive Agent for Maritime Domain Awareness to conduct in coordination with relevant partners, such as the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence. Required management functions outlined in the directive include overseeing the execution of DOD maritime domain awareness initiatives; developing and distributing goals, objectives, and desired effects for maritime domain awareness; identifying and updating maritime domain awareness requirements and resources; and recommending DOD-wide maritime domain awareness planning and programming guidance. An additional DOD instruction on maritime domain awareness from the Secretary of the Navy, in 2009, assigned the Chief of Naval Operations responsibility for achieving maritime domain awareness within the Navy. This responsibility includes aligning Navy guidance with DOD policy guidance and coordinating with the Joint Staff to ensure that combatant

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commands have the necessary Navy resources to support their respective maritime domain awareness requirements.<sup>11</sup>

DOD has made efforts to enhance maritime domain awareness within the department, but recognizes that no single department, agency, or entity holds all of the authorities and capabilities necessary to fully achieve effective maritime domain awareness. For example the process of allocating sufficient resources to maritime domain awareness efforts is complicated because the cost associated with maritime domain awareness efforts is spread across multiple agencies; this also makes the total cost of maritime domain awareness efforts difficult to determine. Resources and funding for maritime capabilities can come from a number of sources, including national intelligence funding, military intelligence funding, military service funding, and funding from other interagency partners such as the Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, and the Maritime Administration. Coordination challenges such as resource allocation among agencies are common for interagency efforts like maritime domain awareness.

DOD faces challenges unique to the maritime domain as well as challenges common to interagency coordination efforts in general. Challenges unique to the maritime domain include the need for international cooperation to ensure improved transparency in the registration of vessels and identification of ownership, cargoes, and crew of the world's multinational, multiflag merchant marine. Environmental factors unique to the maritime domain also contribute to maritime domain awareness challenges, such as the vastness of the oceans, the great length of shorelines, and the size of port areas that can provide concealment and numerous access points to the land. Additionally, the fluid nature of crewing and operational activities of most vessels offers additional opportunities for concealment and challenges for those attempting to maintain maritime security. In addition to challenges unique to the maritime domain are the challenges DOD faces that are common to other interagency coordination efforts. In 2009 we reported on common interagency coordination challenges for efforts such as achieving maritime domain awareness that included agencies not always sharing relevant information and challenges inherent in managing and integrating information drawn from multiple sources. As we previously reported,

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<sup>11</sup>Secretary of the Navy Instruction 3052.1, *Maritime Domain Awareness in the Department of the Navy* (Jan. 30, 2009).

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agencies may not always share information because of concerns about another agency's ability to protect shared information or to use the information properly; cultural factors or political concerns; a lack of clear guidelines, policies, or agreements with other agencies; or security clearance issues. Challenges posed by managing and integrating information drawn from multiple sources include managing redundancies in the information after it is integrated; unclear roles and responsibilities; and data not being comparable across agencies. We have previously recommended that agencies involved in interagency collaboration efforts need to enhance efforts to develop and implement overarching strategies, create collaborative organizations, develop a well-trained workforce, and share and integrate national security information across agencies.<sup>12</sup> Agencies generally agreed with our recommendations and, in some cases, identified planned actions or actions that were under way to address the recommendations.

In a recent report, we reviewed DOD efforts to enhance maritime domain awareness and determined that DOD did not have a departmentwide strategy for maritime domain awareness.<sup>13</sup> We concluded that in the absence of such a comprehensive strategy, DOD may not be effectively managing its maritime domain awareness efforts. In order to improve DOD's ability to manage implementation of maritime domain awareness across DOD, we recommended that DOD develop and implement a departmentwide strategy for maritime domain awareness that identifies DOD objectives and roles and responsibilities within DOD for achieving maritime domain awareness and aligns efforts and objectives with DOD's corporate process for determining requirements and allocating resources. Additionally, we recommended that the strategy identify responsibilities for resourcing capability areas and include performance measures for assessing the progress of the overall strategy that will assist in the implementation of maritime domain awareness efforts. An overarching maritime domain awareness strategy would also enhance interagency collaboration efforts. DOD concurred with our recommendation for an overarching maritime domain awareness strategy and has notified us that it is working on producing such a strategy.

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<sup>12</sup>GAO, *Interagency Collaboration: Key Issues for Congressional Oversight of National Security Strategies, Organizations, Workforce, and Information Sharing*, [GAO-09-904SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 25, 2009).

<sup>13</sup>[GAO-11-621](#).

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## Northern Command Has Undertaken Maritime Homeland Defense Planning but Faces Increased Uncertainty about Mission Execution

Northern Command, as the command responsible for homeland defense for the continental United States, has undertaken a number of homeland defense planning efforts, but it does not have a key detailed supporting plan for responding to maritime threats. Northern Command routinely conducts planning and exercises to prepare for execution of its maritime homeland defense mission. As part of its planning efforts, Northern Command requires supporting DOD organizations and subordinate commands to develop supporting plans to its homeland defense plan. The current, 2008 version of the Northern Command homeland defense plan requires such a supporting plan from a number of supporting commands, including the commander of Fleet Forces Command, who is Northern Command's supporting commander and also Northern Command's joint force maritime component commander. Fleet Forces Command has developed an execute order that contains some elements that would be addressed in a supporting plan. This execute order also provides general details about types and numbers of forces that would be made available to Northern Command to execute the maritime homeland defense mission. Nonetheless, without a complete supporting plan, Northern Command faces increased uncertainty about its ability to execute its maritime homeland defense responsibilities.

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## Northern Command Conducts Maritime Homeland Defense Planning

DOD provides guidance for developing contingency plans and establishing objectives, and identifying capabilities needed to achieve the objectives in a given environment.<sup>14</sup> The planning process is meant to ensure mission success and to reduce the risks inherent in military operations. Contingency plans receive extensive DOD review<sup>15</sup> and can take several forms, from very detailed operation plans to broad and less detailed concept plans. For example, operation plans are developed for possible contingencies across the range of military operations. Such plans may be developed for military operations dictated by a specific foreign threat or scenario, such as a scenario in which it is necessary to oppose a landward invasion of the territory of a U.S. ally by a hostile nation, while concept

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<sup>14</sup>A number of DOD doctrine publications and other guidance govern the conduct of joint operational planning. For example, see Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operation Planning*, Joint Pub. 5-0 (Dec. 26, 2006).

<sup>15</sup>Once a plan is drafted, it is reviewed several times by a number of DOD stakeholders, primarily from the Joint Planning and Execution Community, which consists of a broad range of military stakeholders, from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the military services, the combatant commands, and the major DOD agencies. These stakeholders provide input into all phases of planning, from mission analysis to the final detailed plan.

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plans are prepared for less specific threat scenarios, such as disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, or peace operations. Operation plans identify the specific forces, functional support, and resources required to execute the plan. Some concept plans may similarly provide detailed lists of military forces that would provide required capabilities; however, not all concept plans must include such information.

DOD guidance requires Northern Command to develop a homeland defense plan that prepares it to employ military force in response to unforeseen events, such as terrorist threats. The specific contingencies for which Northern Command should plan are directed by the President and the Secretary of Defense. Northern Command follows several sets of strategies and guidance when developing homeland defense plans—such as the *National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, the *Unified Command Plan*, and *Contingency Planning Guidance*. Given that the potential threats to the homeland are broad, the Northern Command homeland defense plan is a general concept plan—as opposed to a detailed operation plan developed based on a specific threat or scenario. The current version of Northern Command’s homeland defense plan, which was approved by DOD in 2008, contains a discussion of the maritime homeland defense mission area.<sup>16</sup> The current version of the homeland defense concept plan does not contain detailed lists of military forces that would provide required capabilities in order to execute the plan.

The Northern Command homeland defense plan requires supporting DOD organizations and subordinate commands to develop supporting plans to assist Northern Command in responding to homeland defense events. These organizations include Northern Command’s subordinate commands, such as Joint Task Force Alaska and Joint Force Headquarters National Capitol Region; component commands, such as Army Forces North, Air Forces North, and Marine Forces North; supporting commands, such as Fleet Forces Command and U.S. Transportation Command; and DOD agencies, such as the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency. The homeland defense plan provides its subordinate, component, and supporting commands and agencies with planning guidance, including types of incidents to prepare for and what kinds of

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<sup>16</sup>The homeland defense plan is currently undergoing another periodic review. According to Northern Command officials, the draft of this revised version includes additional information on the maritime homeland defense mission.

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plans to prepare to support Northern Command's homeland defense plan. Because the Northern Command homeland defense plan is a concept plan, which are by definition less detailed than operation plans, and because the command does not have naval forces routinely under its operational control, these supporting plans provide critical details on how operations are to be conducted and allow Northern Command to assess the extent to which these organizations and subordinate commands are prepared to support the homeland defense mission. For example, the supporting plan allows the supported commander to assess the extent to which the supporting command is prepared to address all appropriate areas of the broader plan. Supporting plans must adhere to the same joint doctrine standards as the base plans and should contain objectives, assumptions and constraints, and sections on such areas as command and control, task organization, intelligence, and logistics. Further, supporting plans can help guide subsequent specific actions that can enhance preparedness—such as the development of execute orders and training and readiness measures. Collectively, these supporting plans should help to facilitate preparedness for and adequate response to an incident in the homeland.

Additional means by which Northern Command and DOD plan for executing maritime homeland defense operations include the use of standing execute orders and exercises to test the maritime component of the Northern Command homeland defense plan. DOD has developed standing execute orders in the homeland defense area to identify the general types and numbers of forces necessary to execute missions, including maritime homeland defense. According to DOD officials, these execute orders provide the authority for Northern Command to request allocation of additional forces needed to conduct maritime homeland defense missions.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, Fleet Forces Command tracks and provides information to Northern Command on the ability of naval forces to satisfy requirements identified in the specific execute order.

Exercises play an instrumental role in preparing for maritime homeland defense operations by providing opportunities to test plans, improve proficiency, assess capabilities and readiness, and clarify roles and responsibilities. Short of performance in actual operations, exercises provide the best means to assess the effectiveness of organizations in achieving mission preparedness. Exercises also provide an ideal

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<sup>17</sup>Joint Forces Command is currently designated as the joint force provider, integrator, and trainer for homeland defense.

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opportunity to enhance preparedness by collecting, developing, implementing, and disseminating lessons learned and verifying corrective actions that have been taken to resolve previously identified issues. Northern Command established a maritime exercise branch in 2009, which focuses on exercising maritime homeland defense, maritime security, and maritime events related to defense support to civil authorities. Northern Command conducts maritime exercises in conjunction with other, larger-scale exercises.

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### Fleet Forces Command Has Not Developed a Supporting Plan

The 2008 Northern Command homeland defense plan requires a number of supporting entities—including the commander of Fleet Forces Command in his role as the joint force maritime component commander—to develop supporting plans within 60 days of the completion of Northern Command’s 2008 plan. Fleet Forces Command did not provide such a supporting plan. The command developed a maritime homeland defense execute order, which in the view of Fleet Forces officials outlines a robust command and control structure for maritime operations and enables the execution of the maritime homeland defense mission in Northern Command’s area of responsibility.<sup>18</sup> The execute order addresses some elements that would be included in a supporting plan, such as reflecting the command relationships and concept of operations in Northern Command’s homeland defense concept plan. The execute order also identifies the types of naval units that would respond to a maritime homeland defense threat and provides the authorities for these forces to be transferred to Northern Command control when needed. A revision to the Northern Command concept plan for homeland defense is currently under review and, according to Northern Command officials, a similar requirement for a supporting plan from Fleet Forces Command is expected to be included. A complete supporting plan would provide additional details that are not generally present in execute orders. For example, according to DOD planning guidance, execute orders focus specifically on allocating forces and directing the initiation of military operations—whereas supporting plans contain information on objectives; assumptions and constraints;

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<sup>18</sup>An execute order is a directive to implement an approved military course of action. Only the President and the Secretary of Defense have the authority to approve and direct the initiation of military operations. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, by the authority of and at the direction of the President or Secretary of Defense, may issue an execute order to initiate military operations. Supported and supporting commanders and subordinate joint force commanders use an execute order to implement the approved concept of operations.



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sections on such areas as command and control, task organization, intelligence, and logistics; and other details requested and required by the combatant commander. By completing a supporting plan, Fleet Forces Command would expand on the operations planning already done for the maritime homeland defense execute order and help Northern Command further mitigate planning, operations, and command and control challenges to the maritime homeland defense mission.

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## Northern Command Has Assessed Its Maritime Homeland Defense Capabilities, but Identified Gaps May Persist Due to Insufficient DOD Oversight

DOD identifies and develops capabilities needed by combatant commanders through the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System process. One method by which this process starts is the development of a systematic study—referred to as a capabilities-based assessment—that identifies the capabilities required to successfully execute a mission, capability gaps and associated operational risks, and possible solutions for the capability shortfalls. The Joint Requirements Oversight Council—the body responsible for overseeing the military requirements process—may validate the findings from such assessments and direct relevant DOD organizations to undertake actions to close any capability gaps that are identified. At the direction of the Deputy Secretary of Defense and in response to a request from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas’ Security Affairs, Northern Command agreed to lead a departmentwide, capabilities-based assessment for DOD’s homeland defense and civil support missions. The strategic goals of the effort were to enable improvement in DOD homeland defense and civil support policy, evaluate existing DOD capabilities and identify DOD capability gaps, improve DOD’s integration with interagency mission partners, and recommend further action to promote future capability development for the homeland defense and civil support missions. The Deputy Secretary of Defense identified this capabilities-based assessment as one of DOD’s top 25 transformational priorities to be completed or advanced to a major milestone by December 2008 and an important effort for determining future resource allocation.

DOD conducted the capabilities-based assessment between September 2007 and October 2008, in accordance with DOD processes. DOD agencies, the combatant commands, the military services, the National Guard Bureau, the Department of Homeland Security, and other key federal interagency partners participated in the assessment, which identified 31 capability gaps for DOD’s homeland defense and civil support missions. According to our analysis, the assessment identified three gaps specific to the maritime homeland defense mission area—such as engaging and defeating maritime threats—and eight gaps—such as information

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management and sharing—in capabilities that enable a number of missions, including maritime homeland defense. The three maritime homeland defense capability gaps may affect DOD’s ability to coordinate maritime operations with relevant interagency stakeholders and respond to the full range of potential threats in the Northern Command maritime area of responsibility. For example, the assessment noted that the command lacked a robust understanding of the roles and responsibilities of its interagency partners, thus limiting the extent to which it could effectively coordinate interagency operations in response to maritime threats. Further, the assessment noted that the command’s ability to respond to certain threats without timely warning might be inadequate.

In 2009, the Joint Requirements Oversight Council reviewed the capabilities-based assessment and requested relevant DOD organizations—including the Navy; the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics; DOD’s Biometrics Task Force; and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency—to undertake specific actions to address the identified capability gaps. Thirteen recommendations were directed at addressing the three capability gaps in the maritime homeland defense mission area. For example, Northern Command, with the support of Joint Forces Command, the U.S. Navy, and Joint Staff, was to review the reorganization of forces to assign a permanent naval component to Northern Command. In addition, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, with the support of Strategic Command and the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office, was to integrate some nuclear detection efforts. The council requested that each organization responsible for undertaking recommended actions provide an implementation plan to Northern Command—thus facilitating the efforts of Northern Command and the council to track organizations’ progress in implementing recommendations.

However, the responsible organizations did not provide Northern Command with implementation plans or other forms of documentation regarding actions taken or under way. Northern Command officials informed us that they requested information from these organizations to assess their progress and stated that Northern Command does not have the authority to compel those organizations to provide implementation plans. They noted that in the absence of implementation plans they relied on self-reported progress updates to document—where possible—the extent to which responsible organizations had taken the recommended actions. A Northern Command document used to track progress in implementing the recommended actions noted that of the 13

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recommendations focused on maritime homeland defense, 2 had been implemented, 6 were in the process of being implemented, 4 had not yet been addressed, and there was no information available on the progress of the remaining recommendation. For example, one of the recommendations that had not yet been addressed related to assessing Navy and Coast Guard roles and responsibilities to ensure DOD's ability to respond to the full spectrum of homeland defense threats in the maritime domain. Without implementation plans or other forms of documentation on progress in implementing recommended actions, Northern Command cannot be assured that it has full and accurate information about the extent to which the responsible organizations have implemented actions to address maritime homeland defense capability gaps. Without such documentation, DOD's efforts to effectively identify and direct necessary resources to meet maritime homeland defense needs may be further complicated.

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## DOD Has Made Progress with Interagency Partners in Addressing Information Sharing Challenges to Enhance Maritime Domain Awareness, but Challenges Remain

Because of its dedicated resources and presence in the maritime domain, DOD plays a key role in leading efforts to enhance maritime domain awareness and has identified challenges and initiated efforts to address these challenges in the domain. The 2005 *National Plan to Achieve Maritime Domain Awareness*, a national strategy document, states in its guiding principles that maritime domain awareness depends on extensive information sharing among government agencies, international partners (such as foreign governments and the International Maritime Organization), and private-sector stakeholders (such as the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism). Improved information sharing would enable DOD and its interagency partners, such as the Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, and the Maritime Administration, to better leverage existing data that have already been collected within the federal government, promote a shared awareness of potential threats, and facilitate a coordinated response to any identified national security threat. To improve information sharing, DOD has identified the need to adopt shared data standards that can translate legacy maritime data sources into a common information pool, making currently inaccessible data available. One effort, the National Maritime Domain Awareness Architecture, is focusing on creating a common pool of data and establishing data standards.

The National Maritime Domain Awareness Architecture, an effort led by the DOD Executive Agent for Maritime Domain Awareness, is intended to improve data management and integration through establishing data standards, providing a common maritime language, and developing

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supporting technology. This effort is expected to leverage the existing National Information Exchange Model—an effort under way at DOD and the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice to establish data standards including some applicable to the maritime domain—and provide supporting standards and guidance at a more detailed level. The National Information Exchange Model has defined terms. For example, it defines “length,” as a numeric determination of measure that is recorded as six digits. The National Maritime Domain Awareness Architecture is intended to go beyond the National Information Exchange Model effort by determining which partners will have access to what information and defining how to query for automated responses—for example, by naming a port of interest, vessel type, and estimated time of arrival to attain specific information on what vessels are arriving at a particular port. Interagency participation in this effort is robust; the coordination office for Maritime Operational Threat Response has already agreed to adopt the standards. DOD officials told us that a number of countries—including France, England, and Canada—and organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization already are considering adopting the standards once they are developed. The first version of the standards has been published and is expected to be tested through summer exercises. As a result of this effort, access to information is expected to improve, and the amount of information available to inform analysts and operational commanders is expected to increase as information becomes easier to develop and share. One DOD official equated the anticipated expansion of available, displayable data with that of smart phone applications: once the infrastructure is in place, smart phone applications become easy to create and subscribe to. In this analogy, the infrastructure could potentially be provided through the National Maritime Domain Awareness Architecture effort. Rather than focusing on the development of one national common operational picture—presenting a single, unified display of maritime information—the National Maritime Domain Awareness Architecture may facilitate the accessibility of common data across the maritime community and allow stakeholders to focus on configuring the display of information to best meet their specific missions, whether through data analysis capabilities or geographic displays. DOD officials involved in the National Maritime Domain Awareness Architecture believe that if the effort is successful, maritime domain awareness for the nation and our partners would be enhanced.

However, challenges would remain. National and DOD documents identify challenges affecting the sharing of maritime domain information, such as international coordination, policy and processes, technology, legal

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restrictions, and cultural barriers. DOD and interagency partners have efforts under way to address many of these challenges.

**International coordination:** A DOD and interagency working group has noted that the sharing of passenger, crew, and cargo information is inhibited by a lack of international policy agreements. The existing information sharing environment, made up of a collection of networks, limits situational awareness and collaboration among maritime partners. To address these challenges, DOD is working with other international partners such as Singapore to improve vessel-tracking procedures and Micronesia, Malaysia, and Indonesia to improve sharing of relevant vessel tracking data; DOD is also supporting the Maritime Safety and Security Information System—a ship-tracking information sharing capability with over 60 participating nations.

**Policies and processes:** DOD recognizes that multiple agencies and organizations have been collecting and storing identical information—either because agencies have been unaware of others’ efforts or because agencies have been unable to share relevant information with other organizations in the absence of information sharing standards, agreements, policies, or processes to facilitate such sharing. Challenges such as these may be addressed through efforts like the Joint Integration of Maritime Domain Awareness, a 3-year joint test at Northern Command. This effort will identify policy and procedural improvements that could enhance information sharing between Northern Command and its supporting operational commands and is expected to be expandable to all combatant commands.

**Technology:** DOD has identified uncoordinated data and incompatible technology systems as technological challenges to efforts to enhance maritime domain awareness. Without data standards, data such as the date an event occurred can be difficult to communicate, because this information can be recorded in several different ways depending on agency and personal preferences. The National Information Exchange Model is one effort under way to address data standardization. Another effort, the National Maritime Domain Awareness Architecture, is to establish a technology architecture that will allow currently incompatible technology systems to communicate and access common data.

**Legal restrictions:** The *National Concept of Operations for Maritime Domain Awareness* notes that there are legal restrictions on the sharing of public-private information, classified material, protected critical infrastructure information, and sensitive industry or government data.

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There are also privacy concerns that arise regarding the sharing of information, such as the sharing of certain information from passenger lists.

**Cultural barriers:** DOD recognizes that the culture of overprotecting information impedes the transfer and sharing of information in a lawful manner. For example, some data providers are reluctant to share detailed information due to concerns that the information will not be appropriately protected. Building relationships—such as the collocation of defense, law enforcement, and international partners at Joint Interagency Task Force-South—and direct, real-time communication help to alleviate this cultural challenge. The Maritime Operational Threat Response process is another good example of overcoming cultural barriers; it provides a venue for direct, real-time communication among key decision makers during specific maritime threat events in order to quickly coordinate a national response to a maritime threat.

While efforts under way may enhance national maritime domain awareness, DOD recognizes that opportunities for improvement remain. For example, the Office of the DOD Executive Agent for Maritime Domain Awareness noted that DOD lacks the ability to assess progress and investments in maritime domain awareness as a whole, align maritime domain awareness initiatives and advancements across DOD components and with other interagency efforts, and make informed planning and programming recommendations to align resources to requirements and priorities. We recommended in a prior report, and DOD agreed, that DOD should develop and implement a strategy for maritime domain awareness that establishes objectives, roles, and responsibilities for maritime domain awareness and includes performance measures. Such a strategy would enhance interagency coordination and assist in leveraging and aligning existing and ongoing information sharing and dissemination efforts in the maritime domain.

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## Conclusions

DOD has recognized defense of the homeland as one of its key responsibilities. In meeting this responsibility with regard to the maritime domain—which presents a range of threats—DOD must work with interagency partners to both improve the awareness of these threats and effectively coordinate an appropriate response. Northern Command has a unique role in preparing for and conducting homeland defense missions and the command has worked to improve its coordination with its interagency, state, local, and international partners. As Northern Command's command and control relationships may rely on increased

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coordination with these partners and other DOD supporting components, efforts to improve its preparedness through planning and exercising with these other organizations and working together to address identified capability gaps are important to ensure that the command can effectively deal with maritime threats as they occur. DOD uses its planning and exercising processes to increase the level of assuredness that threats can be neutralized should they arise. These processes allow the department to assess its preparedness to address various contingencies. Northern Command and its partners inside and outside of DOD continue to improve planning and preparedness for maritime homeland defense. With the completion of the joint force maritime component commander's supporting plan, Northern Command and its partners can further capitalize on these efforts and better inform each other and decision makers about their preparedness for this mission. As DOD and the rest of government face increasing demand and competition for resources, policymakers will confront difficult decisions on funding priorities. Planning undertaken by Northern Command and its supporting commands also informs the department's resourcing and investment decisions by identifying the types and numbers of forces, as well as other capabilities, necessary to meet a variety of threats. DOD's identification of capability gaps affecting its homeland defense mission, as well as subsequent actions to address these gaps, helps the department understand its preparedness to conduct this mission. However, without completed implementation plans, the department does not have a means of verifying that these actions have been taken and these gaps have been addressed. The completion of these implementation plans would provide Northern Command and the Joint Requirements Oversight Council with the ability to monitor progress made in addressing these gaps and would serve as an additional source of information to inform resourcing and investment decisions and assist DOD in making the best use of resources in a fiscally constrained environment.

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## Recommendations for Executive Action

To improve DOD's preparedness to conduct maritime homeland defense missions, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense take the following two actions:

- To ensure that Northern Command is sufficiently prepared to conduct maritime homeland defense operations, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the commander of Fleet Forces Command to develop a complete supporting plan for the Northern Command homeland defense plan, currently under review, once it is approved.

- 
- To enable Northern Command to monitor progress toward addressing maritime homeland defense capability gaps—including the three specific to maritime homeland defense as well as the others that affect the mission—identified in the Northern Command homeland defense and civil support capabilities-based assessment, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct responsible DOD organizations to provide Northern Command with implementation plans for undertaking the actions identified by the Joint Requirements Oversight Council.

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## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD partially concurred with our recommendations and discussed actions it is taking—or plans to take—related to the issues raised by our recommendations. Regarding our recommendation that the Secretary of Defense direct the commander of Fleet Forces Command to develop a complete supporting plan to the revised Northern Command homeland defense plan as soon as the revision is approved, DOD indicated that in addition to participating in the development of the current draft of Northern Command’s homeland defense concept plan, Fleet Forces Command will prepare a supporting plan in accordance with the requirement. DOD stated that further direction from the Secretary of Defense to a service subordinate command was neither appropriate nor required. In this report we cite the importance of complete supporting plans to DOD’s joint operation planning process. The completion of a supporting plan from the joint force maritime component commander, as was requested in the 2008 homeland defense plan and is expected to be requested again in the new version of the plan, will further aid Northern Command and DOD in capitalizing on other important prior and ongoing efforts by Fleet Forces Command and others. If Fleet Forces Command—as the joint force maritime component commander for Northern Command—develops a complete homeland defense supporting plan, this will satisfy the recommendation and we believe this will improve the department’s overall preparedness to conduct maritime homeland defense.

DOD also partially concurred with our recommendation that the responsible department organizations provide Northern Command with implementation plans for undertaking the actions identified by the Joint Requirements Oversight Council. In its comments, DOD stated that Northern Command will identify actions yet to be completed, ascertain the utility in completing those actions, and close out recommendations that may no longer be required. The department also stated that Northern Command had diligently tracked the implementation of the identified actions, although implementation plans were not received from the myriad



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organizations responsible for these actions. According to DOD, Northern Command suspended its follow-up on these recommended actions when a substantial portion of the total recommended actions had been completed, were on track for completion, or where the remaining actions were unlikely to result in further progress. The department indicated that Northern Command would now assess the utility of completing outstanding actions. In our report, we discuss the fact that Northern Command did not have implementation plans or other documentation to assess the extent to which the responsible organizations have implemented the recommended actions. Given that (1) these actions were recommended to address identified gaps in the department's ability to conduct civil support and homeland defense missions and (2) not taking actions to close these gaps may present significant operational risks to DOD, we continue to believe assessing whether the recommended actions related to maritime homeland defense capability gaps have been fully implemented would be an important step in minimizing risk to such operations. If—as indicated by DOD's response—Northern Command assesses the utility of completing actions identified by the Joint Requirements Oversight Council and fully assesses progress toward those actions, that would satisfy our recommendation.

DOD's written comments are reprinted in their entirety in appendix II. The Department of Homeland Security also provided written comments on the draft in which the department highlighted some of its continuing efforts to improve the awareness and response to maritime-related threats in coordination with DOD and other interagency partners. These comments are reprinted in their entirety in appendix III. DOD and the Department of Homeland Security also provided separate technical comments, which we have incorporated into the report where appropriate.

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We are sending copies to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and other interested parties. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

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If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-5431 or [dagostinod@gao.gov](mailto:dagostinod@gao.gov). Contact information for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix IV.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Davi M. D'Agostino". The signature is written in a cursive style with large, flowing loops.

Davi M. D'Agostino  
Director, Defense Capabilities  
and Management

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*List of Requesters*

The Honorable Susan M. Collins  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate

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

The Honorable William McClellan “Mac” Thornberry  
Chairman

The Honorable James R. Langevin  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities  
Committee on Armed Services  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Loretta Sanchez  
House of Representatives

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# Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

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To determine the extent to which the Department of Defense (DOD) has conducted maritime homeland defense planning, we examined DOD's *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support* as well as joint doctrine on contingency planning, operational exercises, and the execution of maritime homeland defense operations. We also interviewed officials of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, the Joint Staff, U.S. Joint Forces Command, North American Aerospace Defense Command/U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, and the U.S. Coast Guard. Further, we received written responses from U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. Pacific Fleet related to maritime homeland defense planning efforts in the Pacific Command area of responsibility. For the purposes of this report, we focused on the extent to which required maritime homeland defense planning documents had been developed by Northern Command and other DOD organizations. We compared these planning documents to joint doctrine and other DOD planning guidance.

To assess the extent to which DOD has identified and addressed maritime homeland defense capability gaps, we analyzed maritime homeland defense-related gaps identified in DOD's *Homeland Defense and Civil Support Capabilities-Based Assessment* and a 2009 DOD *Joint Requirements Oversight Council Memorandum* on the assessment. We also interviewed officials in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, the Joint Staff, and Northern Command to discuss the maritime homeland defense-related components of the study and the status of actions taken to address relevant capability gaps.

To evaluate progress DOD has made with its interagency partners in addressing information sharing challenges related to maritime domain awareness, we obtained and analyzed relevant national, interagency, and DOD-level documentation—such as National Security Presidential Directive-41/Homeland Security Presidential Directive-13, *Maritime Security Policy*, *National Strategy for Maritime Security*, *National Plan to Achieve Maritime Domain Awareness*, *Maritime Domain Awareness Interagency Solutions Analysis Current State Report*, and the 2010 assessment of maritime domain awareness plans conducted by the DOD Executive Agent for Maritime Domain Awareness. Given our previous work on DOD's management of maritime domain awareness, we relied on, and updated where available, information on identified capability gaps in DOD's information sharing and situational awareness efforts. In addition, we interviewed officials from the following DOD components and interagency partners to discuss these capability gaps as well as other issues related to maritime domain awareness information sharing:

- Office of the DOD Executive Agent for Maritime Domain Awareness,
- Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Networks and Information Integration / DOD Chief Information Officer,
- Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy,
- Joint Staff,
- Combatant Commands,
  - North American Aerospace Defense Command /U.S. Northern Command,
  - U.S. Pacific Command, and
  - U.S. Strategic Command,
- U.S. Department of the Navy,
  - Office of the Chief of Naval Operations,
  - Office of the Chief Information Officer,
  - U.S. Pacific Fleet, and
  - U.S. Fleet Forces Command,
- U.S. Coast Guard,
  - Global Maritime Operational Threat Response Coordination Center, and
- National Maritime Domain Awareness Coordination Office.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2010 through June 2011, 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.

# Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense

These written comments were received from DOD on June 13, 2011.



HOMELAND DEFENSE  
& AMERICA'S SECURITY AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
2600 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2600

Ms. Davi M. D'Agostino  
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. D'Agostino:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO Draft Report, GAO-11-661, "HOMELAND DEFENSE: Actions Needed to Improve DoD Planning and Coordination for Maritime Operations," dated May 12, 2011 (GAO Code 351538). DoD acknowledges receipt of the DRAFT report and partially concurs with the recommendations contained therein. My response to the recommendations is attached.

Sincerely,

Paul N. Stockton

Enclosure:  
As stated

**GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED MAY 12, 2011  
GAO-11-661 (GAO CODE 351538)**

**“HOMELAND DEFENSE: ACTIONS NEEDED TO IMPROVE DOD  
PLANNING AND COORDINATION FOR MARITIME OPERATIONS”**

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

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command (USFFC) to develop a complete supporting plan for the Northern Command homeland defense plan, currently under review, once it is approved.

**DoD RESPONSE:** Partially concur. USFFC has initiated development of a supporting plan to complement U.S. Northern Command’s homeland defense planning efforts. Direction from the Secretary of Defense to a Service subordinate command is neither appropriate nor required.

U.S. Northern Command (“USNORTHCOM”) has expended significant planning effort in preparation to execute its maritime homeland defense mission, as reflected in the effective version of its homeland defense concept plan, CONPLAN 3400-08 Revision 01. USFFC currently supports the execution of USNORTHCOM’s homeland defense concept plan through two standing execute orders (“EXORDS”)<sup>1</sup> including one which details how USFFC, as Joint Forces Maritime Component Commander-North (JFMCC-N), will execute maritime homeland defense operations in support of USNORTHCOM. A second EXORD directs how Commander, USFFC will execute U.S. Joint Forces Command’s responsibility to support USNORTHCOM maritime homeland defense requirements. USNORTHCOM has indicated a willingness to accept these EXORDs in lieu of the supporting plan on an interim basis pending completion of USFFC’s supporting plan.

USNORTHCOM recently revised CONPLAN 3400-08 Revision 01 and has developed a more detailed concept of operations for the maritime homeland defense mission. This revision is currently under review. Commander, USFFC participated actively and coordinated closely with USNORTHCOM in developing this more detailed concept plan. The revision will require the development of a maritime homeland defense supporting plan. In anticipation, USFFC initiated a parallel planning effort to develop a JFMCC-N supporting plan.

<sup>1</sup> Joint Publication 1-02 (May 15, 2011) defines an “execute order,” or “EXORD,” as either an order issued by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the direction of the Secretary of Defense, to implement a decision by the President to initiate military operations, or an order to initiate military operations as directed. In the context in which the term is used above, it refers to an order to initiate military operations.

The USNORTHCOM CONPLAN will direct supporting commands to provide their supporting plans within 60 days of the issuance of the revised USNORTHCOM CONPLAN. USFFC has acknowledged this requirement and is prepared to meet it.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct responsible DoD organizations to provide USNORTHCOM with implementation plans for undertaking the actions identified by the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC).

**DoD RESPONSE:** Partially concur. USNORTHCOM, as the designated lead for the Homeland Defense/Civil Support Capabilities Based Assessment (HD/CS CBA) will identify actions not yet completed, ascertain the current utility in completing those actions, and close out those actions it determines are no longer required.

The HD/CS CBA was a fourteen month analytical effort that examined DoD homeland defense (HD) and civil support (CS) missions primarily focused on the 2014-2016 timeframe. The goals of this effort were to identify required DoD HD and CS capabilities, determine capability gaps, and develop recommendations for gap closure actions. At the direction of the Deputy Secretary of Defense to conduct a CBA on HD and CS and in response to a request from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs, the Commander, USNORTHCOM agreed to lead this CBA.

The HD/CS CBA findings and recommendations, endorsed by the JROC, identified 30 capability gaps and made 118 recommendations for corrective actions. The JROC, in a memo dated February 9, 2009, directed USNORTHCOM to track the implementation of these actions and further directed identified Offices of Primary Responsibility (OPR) to provide their implementation plans to USNORTHCOM.

USNORTHCOM diligently tracked the implementation of the recommended actions, albeit without having received implementation plans from each of the myriad designated OPRs. USNORTHCOM suspended follow-up action when records indicated that approximately 70% of the recommended actions were either completed, close to completion, or on track for completion and that the remaining actions were unlikely to make further progress. However, the passage of time, along with the completion of the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review may well have affected these recommendations and may well account for their not having been completed. As the lead organization for tracking implementation, USNORTHCOM will assess the utility of completing the remaining actions from the JROC memo of February 9, 2009.



# Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528



**Homeland  
Security**

June 15, 2011

Davi M. D'Agostino  
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW,  
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Draft Report GAO-11-611 "HOMELAND DEFENSE: Actions Needed to Improve DOD Planning and Coordination for Maritime Operations"

Dear Ms. D'Agostino:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report. The Department is pleased to note the report recognizes U.S. Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection responsibilities for ensuring the protection of the homeland from threats in the maritime domain.

Although the report does not contain any recommendations specifically directed at DHS, the Department remains committed to continuing its work with its interagency partners, such as the Department of Defense, and relevant stakeholders to both improve the awareness of maritime-related threats and effectively coordinate responses, as appropriate. For example, one of the principal ways by which DHS assists in coordinating the determination of determining primary and supporting agency responsibilities for maritime operations is via the Global Maritime Operational Threat Response (MOTR) Coordination Center. The Center, directed by a Coast Guard Senior Executive, executes the Maritime Operational Threat Response process which provides a forum for stakeholders to share information and coordinate appropriate responses to ensure protection of the homeland from threats in the maritime domain.

Also of note, the Commandant of the Coast Guard is designated the DHS Executive Agent for Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), and a Senior Coast Guard civilian employee serves as the Chair of the National MDA Coordination Office (NMCO), which facilitate the creation of a collaborative global, maritime, information sharing environment through unity of effort across various entities with maritime interests.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. We look forward to working with you on future Homeland Security issues.

Sincerely,



Jim H. Crumacker

Director

Departmental GAO/OIG Liaison Office

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# Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Acknowledgments

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## GAO Contact

Davi M. D'Agostino, (202) 512-5431 or dagostinod@gao.gov

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## Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Joseph Kirschbaum (Assistant Director), Alisa Beyninson, Christy Bilardo, John Dell'Osso, Gina Flacco, Brent Helt, Joanne Landesman, Katherine Lenane, Gregory Marchand, and Kendal Robinson made key contributions to this report.

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# Related GAO Products

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*Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance: DOD Needs a Strategic, Risk-Based Approach to Enhance Its Maritime Domain Awareness.* [GAO-11-621](#). Washington, D.C.: June 20, 2011.

*Homeland Defense: DOD Needs to Take Actions to Enhance Interagency Coordination for Its Homeland Defense and Civil Support Missions.* [GAO-10-364](#). Washington, D.C.: March 30, 2010.

*Homeland Defense: U.S. Northern Command Has a Strong Exercise Program, but Involvement of Interagency Partners and States Can Be Improved.* [GAO-09-849](#). Washington, D.C.: September 9, 2009.

*Maritime Security: Vessel Tracking Systems Provide Key Information, but the Need for Duplicate Data Should Be Reviewed.* [GAO-09-337](#). Washington, D.C.: March 17, 2009.

*Maritime Security: National Strategy and Supporting Plans Were Generally Well- Developed and Are Being Implemented.* [GAO-08-672](#). Washington, D.C.: June 20, 2008.

*Homeland Defense: U.S. Northern Command Has Made Progress but Needs to Address Force Allocation, Readiness Tracking Gaps, and Other Issues.* [GAO-08-251](#). Washington, D.C.: April 16, 2008.

*Homeland Defense: DOD Needs to Assess the Structure of U.S. Forces for Domestic Military Missions.* [GAO-03-670](#). Washington, D.C.: July 11, 2003.

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