GAO National Security snapshot

U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Accessible Version

SEPTEMBER 2022

THE BIG PICTURE

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 sparked the largest European war since World War II. The response of the United States and its partners in providing military and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and its neighboring countries has been swift and continuing. The Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2022 (Division N of Public Law 117-103) and the Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2022 (Public Law 117-128) were enacted in March and May of 2022, respectively. They provided billions of dollars in emergency supplemental appropriations in response to the war in Ukraine. Russia has invested heavily in efforts to check U.S. strengths and impede the United States' ability to defend its interests and allies around the world, according to the March 2021 *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*.

Figure 1: Map of Europe, October 2021–July 2022

Source: GAO analysis of Departments of Defense and State, Congressional Research Service, and NATO information; Map Resources (map). | GAO-22-106079

KEY GAO FINDINGS

GAO has a large body of work assessing areas relevant to the war in Ukraine. This includes the U.S. military posture in Europe, development assistance, the information environment, military readiness, and intelligence issues. Among other things, we found that:

- The Department of Defense (DOD) could better plan and prioritize European posture and deterrence through the European Deterrence Initiative, including estimating long-term costs to sustain prepositioned equipment and other infrastructure projects. GAO-18-128
- The State Department has not effectively shared information on democracy assistance projects in Ukraine as well as in other countries. GAO-20-173
- DOD could improve leadership and integration of information operations across the department. GAO-21-525T
- DOD does not have effective metrics to measure readiness in each of the five warfighting domains. GAO-21-279
- DOD's open source intelligence mission area could benefit from metrics, standardized terminology, and clarification of roles and responsibilities. GAO-21-295

NATIONAL SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS AND KEY GAO RECOMMENDATIONS

The war in Ukraine underscores the importance of five national security considerations and key relevant GAO recommendations, as listed below.

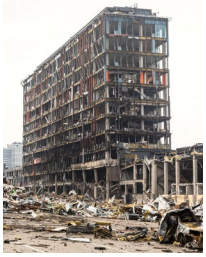
Figure 2: Selected National Security Considerations and Relevant GAO Recommendations, September 2022

SECURITY ASSISTANCE, EUROPEAN POSTURE, AND DETERRENCE

Department of Defense (DOD) efforts over several years sought to deter Russian aggression in Europe through the presence and engagement of U.S. forces with NATO and partner nations. To achieve its goals, DOD should

- develop cost estimates for sustaining posture initiatives under the European Deterrence Initiative in the long term; and
- develop guidance for preparing impact assessments associated with the effect of providing defense articles and services.

HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE



The humanitarian crisis in Ukraine has highlighted the need for effective humanitarian and development assistance, including support for refugees and democracy-building assistance. The Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have made progress in these areas, but improvements can be made by the

- State Department actively sharing information on its democracy assistance projects internally; and
- State Department and USAID monitoring refugee programs in countries where security conditions limit in-person visits.

INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

Cyber attacks and disinformation campaigns by the Russian government underscore the need for DOD to continue strengthening its plans and training in the information environment. DOD can address operations against near-peer competitors and further strengthen its efforts by

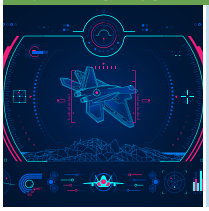
- identifying steps needed to provide for defense-wide strategy, planning, and budgeting for electromagnetic spectrum operations.

TRAINING AND READINESS

The war in Ukraine prompted deployments of U.S. military forces to Europe to bolster allied defenses in the region. Success of these deployments depends on the training and readiness of forces in each of the five warfighting domains—ground, sea, air, space, and cyber. Success also depends on

- DOD establishing metrics for assessing readiness to conduct missions in contested environments in all five domains; and
- the Army dedicating resources that enable its logistics system to operate when disconnected from the Army's network.

INTELLIGENCE



The war in Ukraine has emphasized the need for DOD and the intelligence community to take action to improve advance-warning capabilities. Efforts can be strengthened by

- the Defense Intelligence Agency developing a plan to involve stakeholders in the development of a foundational military intelligence system; and
- DOD developing and using tools that enhance accountability for specific mission areas, including open source intelligence.

Source: GAO (information). | GAO-22-106079

IMPLICATIONS

The war in Ukraine continues to pose long-term challenges to the United States and its interests that extend beyond the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Successful assistance to Ukraine and deterrence of Russia from further aggression will depend on continued efforts by DOD to enhance the department's ability to provide military assistance and to deploy trained and ready forces using timely and accurate intelligence. It will also depend on the ability of the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development to effectively provide humanitarian, including refugee, assistance to Ukraine and its neighboring countries.

U.S. federal agencies must act in a timely manner going forward, and congressional oversight of ongoing efforts will be vital to help ensure accountability. There are nine key relevant GAO recommendations for the reports listed in figure 2. Agencies concurred with seven of those recommendations and partially concurred with two. Seven recommendations remain open.

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U.S. Army/ Sgt. A. Jones; misu/stock.adobe.com; pinkeyes/stock.adobe.com; U.S. Air Force/Staff Sgt. E. Nuñez; Jackie Niam/stock.adobe.com (figure 2 photos, top to bottom).

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