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The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Howard P. McKeon
Chairman
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Subject: *Defense Management: Perspectives on the Involvement of the Combatant Commands in the Development of Joint Requirements*

At a time when the military is supporting ongoing operations in many places around the world, the Department of Defense (DOD) faces challenges balancing the strategic capability needs of the military services with the more immediate joint warfighting needs of the combatant commands (COCOM).¹ Given concerns that the military service–dominated system for developing capabilities was not meeting the most essential warfighter needs, in 2003 DOD created the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS) to guide the development of capabilities from a joint perspective. DOD’s Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) oversees JCIDS and participates in the development of joint requirements, which includes the identification and analysis and synthesis of capability gaps and the JROC’s subsequent validation of

¹COCOMs are DOD’s operational commanders. Of the 10 COCOMs, the following six have geographic responsibilities: U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Pacific Command, and U.S. Southern Command. The following four have functional responsibilities: U.S. Joint Forces Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, U.S. Strategic Command, and U.S. Transportation Command. In August 2010, the Secretary of Defense announced the closure of U.S. Joint Forces Command and plans are underway for responding to this announcement.

capability needs through JCIDS. Following stakeholder collaboration and deliberations, the JROC makes recommendations to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who advises the Secretary of Defense about which capabilities to invest in as part of DOD's budget process. Before making investment decisions, the services consider the validated capabilities during their planning, programming, and budgeting processes and make decisions among competing investments.

In the Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act of 2009, Congress directed the JROC to seek and consider input from the commanders of the COCOMs on proposed joint military requirements.² The act formalized steps Joint Staff leadership had taken to improve collaboration with COCOMs and echoed concerns similar to those we have previously reported. Specifically, in 2008 we reported that DOD was not taking advantage of opportunities to improve joint warfighting capabilities because it did not solicit input from each COCOM when validating requirements for major acquisitions intended for use in a joint environment.³

The Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act of 2009 also required that the Comptroller General report on the JROC's efforts to solicit and consider input from the commanders of COCOMs on proposed joint military requirements; the quality and effectiveness of efforts to estimate the level of resources needed to fulfill joint military requirements; and the extent to which the JROC considers cost, schedule, and performance trade-offs.⁴ This report provides information on (1) opportunities for COCOM input in the development of joint requirements and COCOM perspectives on these opportunities and (2) COCOM perspectives on JCIDS, as well as ongoing Joint Staff efforts to improve it. We are reporting separately on the cost estimates generated for joint military

²Pub. L. No. 111-23, § 105 (2009).

³GAO, *Defense Acquisitions: DOD's Requirements Determination Process Has Not Been Effective in Prioritizing Joint Capabilities*, [GAO-08-1060](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 25, 2008).

⁴Pub. L. No. 111-23, § 105(c).

requirements and the JROC's consideration of cost, schedule, and performance trade-offs.⁵

To address our objectives, we reviewed legislation enacted in 2009 and 2011 and related DOD guidance and reviewed documentation of the Joint Staff's internal review of JCIDS. Specifically, we reviewed the Weapon Systems Acquisitions and Reform Act of 2009 and the Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011, which provided COCOMs membership on the JROC, as well as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff guidance on the development of joint requirements and the operations and organization of the JROC, and briefings and related terms of reference documents for each of the individual review teams involved in conducting the Joint Staff's internal review—referred to as the Joint Capabilities Development Process Review. To corroborate our understanding of the documents we reviewed, we conducted interviews with Joint Staff, COCOM, and service officials about the identification of capability gaps, the analysis and synthesis of the gaps identified, and the subsequent validation of gaps and observed JROC-related meetings. To corroborate our understanding of the Joint Staff's internal review, we conducted interviews with Joint Staff officials about the purpose, timelines, and planned approaches for the review.

To characterize COCOM perspectives on opportunities to provide input into the development of joint requirements since the implementation of the Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act of 2009, we developed and distributed a survey to each of DOD's 10 COCOMs. To develop the questions, we analyzed DOD guidance and policy documents and previous reports on related issues to identify proper terminology to use and to determine characteristics relevant to this review. The survey addressed a range of topics related to the development of joint requirements, including the means for COCOMs to provide information on their capability needs and their participation in key outreach efforts. To minimize errors that might occur from respondents interpreting our questions differently from

⁵A forthcoming GAO report, [GAO-11-502](#), will provide more information on the extent to which the JROC has considered trade-offs among cost, schedule, and performance objectives within programs, the quality and effectiveness of efforts to estimate the level of resources needed to fulfill joint military requirements, and the extent to which the JROC is prioritizing requirements and capability gaps.

our intended purpose, we pretested the questionnaire in person or by phone with one COCOM official and three Joint Staff officials. During these pretests, we asked officials to complete the questionnaire as we observed the process. We then interviewed the respondents to help ensure that (1) the questions were clear and unambiguous, (2) the terms used were precise, (3) the questionnaire did not place an undue burden on the officials completing it, and (4) the questionnaire was objective and unbiased. We also tested the functionality of the questionnaire and submitted it for review by a GAO survey specialist and a data analyst as well as by several external reviewers. We modified the questions based on feedback, as appropriate. We then sent the survey to each COCOM, asking that they seek input from other COCOM staff familiar with the COCOM's experiences with the development of joint requirements. Following receipt of completed surveys, we reviewed all responses and interviewed representatives from each COCOM, either in person or by phone, to further discuss survey results and to obtain additional feedback on the development of joint requirements. We used a standard set of questions to interview officials to help ensure that we had consistently captured their views on various aspects of the development of joint requirements. In order to categorize and summarize these responses, we analyzed the results of these interviews and related documents to identify the main themes and develop summary findings through a systematic content analysis. One GAO analyst conducted this analysis, coding the information, entering it into a spreadsheet, and a different GAO analyst checked the information for accuracy. All initial disagreements regarding the categorizations of users' responses were discussed and reconciled. The analysts then tallied the number of responses in each category. We then met with Joint Staff officials to obtain their perspectives on the concerns raised by the COCOMs. Overall, there was a 100 percent response rate, as each of the 10 COCOMs completed a survey. Complete survey results are reproduced in enclosure I.

We conducted this performance audit from June 2010 through May 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.

Summary

Prior to the implementation of the Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act of 2009, DOD began revising its processes for developing joint requirements and provided COCOMs with opportunities to provide input about their specific capability needs during the identification, analysis and synthesis, and validation of capability gaps. COCOMs identify their respective commander's top capability gaps that could negatively affect COCOM missions. COCOMs also have opportunities to provide input to the Joint Staff as it analyzes and synthesizes identified capability gaps, combining similar items into overarching gaps and determining the most appropriate approach for filling them. During the validation of capability gaps, COCOMs participate as representatives to Functional Capabilities Boards and their related working groups. In response to our survey and follow-up interviews, the COCOMs reported that they generally took advantage of opportunities to participate throughout the development of joint requirements.

The COCOMs noted the importance of participating in the development of joint requirements, but they questioned the value of what they described as a resource-intensive and time-consuming process that is not always responsive to their more immediate capability needs. The COCOMs also questioned the value of such a process resulting in decisions that, while influential, are advisory to acquisition and budget processes driven by service investment priorities. In addition, JROC approval is only the first step toward fielding a new capability—the development and acquisition of the capability may take several more years. The Joint Staff has initiated an internal review to assess how to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of JCIDS, but it is too early to assess the extent to which this review of the JCIDS process will address COCOM concerns.

Background

Congress has raised continuing issues about the extent to which the COCOMs provide input into the requirements processes to get their needs addressed. In 2009, Congress passed the Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act, which, among other actions, required that the JROC seek and consider input from the COCOMs.⁶ More recently, in the Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for

⁶Pub. L. No. 111-23, § 105.

Fiscal Year 2011, Congress reiterated its expectation that the JROC seek COCOM input into the development of joint requirements, authorizing the JROC to direct COCOM commanders or deputy commanders to serve as JROC members for matters related to their area of responsibility or functions when directed by the JROC Chairman.⁷

The JROC, chaired by the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is charged with reviewing the needs for capabilities identified by the services and the COCOMs and making recommendations on how the needs can be met. The council includes representation from a general or admiral from each of the military services as well as COCOM commanders or deputy commanders when directed by JROC Chairman. The JROC is supported by the Joint Staff, which manages the review of proposed new capabilities and the collaboration of stakeholders, including the services and COCOMs, through review boards and working groups. Joint and Functional Capabilities Boards review and further refine joint requirements. Led by a general or an admiral or equivalent civilian rank and made up of military and civilian representatives from the military services, Joint Staff, COCOMs, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, among others, each Functional Capabilities Board assesses the needs and makes recommendations about validating capability gaps. The recommendations are passed on to Joint Capabilities Boards that review and, if appropriate, endorse documentation and recommendations prior to their submission to the JROC.⁸

The fulfillment of joint requirements results from the interplay between DOD's budgeting, acquisition, and requirements processes. The COCOMs identify capability gaps and the Joint Staff analyzes and synthesizes these gaps as part of DOD's budgeting process. Through JCIDS, the JROC decides whether to validate gaps that will require significant investment of resources to develop new capabilities. Those gaps that the JROC validates as requiring materiel solutions are then referred to DOD's acquisition process, which is largely driven by service investment priorities.

⁷Pub. L. No. 111-383, § 841 (2011).

⁸The Joint Capabilities Boards comprise general and flag officer representatives of each of the military services.

COCOMs have multiple means by which they may *identify capability gaps*. Throughout the year, they may work with the military services, either through a COCOM's service component command or directly with service headquarters. Some of the gaps the COCOMs identify in coordination with the services may advance through JROC-related processes, while others may be assigned by the Joint Staff to services or other sponsors, according to the Joint Staff. In addition, each year the COCOMs prepare Integrated Priority Lists—outlines of each COCOM's highest-priority requirements and the associated program shortfalls that could negatively affect their missions—and then submit these lists to the Joint Staff for analysis. The department uses the lists to inform the programming and budgeting process about COCOM needs. COCOMs may also identify gaps by creating and submitting documents required by the JCIDS process or by participating in the final stages of the budget development and review process.⁹

During *analysis and synthesis*—which the Joint Staff reported typically occurs annually between November and June—the Joint Staff, in coordination with the Functional Capabilities Boards, works to examine identified capability gaps, group like gaps, assess ongoing efforts to close or mitigate gaps, and recommend solutions to close or mitigate gaps. On the basis of this analysis, the Joint Staff might synthesize, or consolidate, identified gaps or reduce the number of capabilities on the lists. This consolidation can result in the original gaps or shortfalls being combined with other like gaps, potentially becoming more general and less applicable to unique needs. In addition, the Joint Staff determines the most appropriate approach for filling identified gaps, including both nonmateriel and materiel solutions, and assigns an organization to further develop the requirements. These efforts result in a list of capability gaps and recommended solutions for mitigation of the gaps. Gaps resulting in the development of capabilities requiring significant investments are passed on to the JROC for validation. The JROC also approves addressing some gaps through alternative means, such as a study, a policy change, or a program action.

⁹For the purposes of this report, identification and analysis and synthesis of capability gaps will focus upon those gaps identified by means of the Integrated Priority Lists.

As part of the *validation of capability gaps*, the boards and working groups that support the JROC are intended to review identified capability gaps, recommending enhancements to capabilities integration, examining joint priorities, assessing program alternatives, and minimizing duplication of effort across the department. During validation, identified gaps focus on capabilities in general rather than specific system solutions. In order to validate gaps, the JROC is supported by JCIDS, which DOD established in 2003 to identify and guide the development of new capabilities, and to identify needs from a joint perspective. Validation of capability gaps is ongoing throughout the year.

JROC-validated capability gaps are documented in memorandums that the Joint Staff reported are authoritative because they are signed by the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but ultimately serve as advisory guidance to the larger acquisition and budget processes. The services are responsible for making decisions on how to invest funds for their forces, and service officials reported that they must balance joint requirements with service-specific requirements. The JROC memorandums provide the basis for starting a major weapon system acquisition. JCIDS was designed to work in conjunction with the two other major processes that make up DOD's overall defense acquisition management framework: the resource allocation process, which governs the distribution of financial resources across DOD and the military services through DOD's Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution process; and the Defense Acquisition System, which manages the execution of product development and procurement.

The JROC continues to review proposed solutions to validated requirements. Before a weapon system program is approved to begin system development, the sponsor is required to submit a document that defines a specific solution through JCIDS for approval by the JROC. In addition, prior to the program starting production, a sponsor must submit additional documentation that addresses the production elements of an acquisition program for review through JCIDS and approval by the JROC.

COCOMs Provide Input into the Development of Joint Requirements

The Joint Staff Solicits and the COCOMs Provide Annual Lists of Top COCOM Capability Gaps

The department has established multiple means by which it may solicit and enable COCOM input into the identification of joint requirements. As part of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's strategic planning processes, the Joint Staff annually prepares an assessment in which the COCOMs and services describe their strategic environment to help identify requirements. As part of this strategic planning, the Joint Staff asks the COCOMs to provide information regarding their capability shortfalls. The COCOMs do so by submitting Integrated Priority Lists, which identify the capability shortfalls that could most affect their missions.¹⁰ For example, a COCOM might identify problems with its current access to intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, or describe deficiencies in its computer network infrastructure. When asking the COCOMs to submit their lists, the Joint Staff provides guidance on the format and submission deadlines. The Joint Staff uses these lists and the larger strategic planning process to try to influence the services to address COCOM needs, as the COCOMs rely upon the services for funding to fill their warfighting requirements. COCOMs reported that these lists serve as their primary method of identifying capability gaps. Specifically, 9 of the 10 COCOMs we surveyed reported that these lists were their primary means for identifying and submitting capability gaps in fiscal year 2010.

Analysis and Synthesis Efforts Include Input from COCOMs

After COCOMs have identified their capability gaps, the Joint Staff and the JROC Chairman continue to seek COCOM input as they analyze and synthesize the requirements. During their analysis and synthesis, the Functional Capabilities Boards combine similar items to create an overarching requirement, resulting in an overall

¹⁰Integrated Priority Lists are developed as part of DOD's budgeting processes and are not part of JCIDS. However, some requirements identified through the Integrated Priority Lists may ultimately be validated through JCIDS.

assessment of capability needs requiring JROC attention. For example, though each COCOM may desire specific attributes in an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability, the Joint Staff may consolidate all related Integrated Priority List items into a general intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance requirement. The Functional Capabilities Boards assessment is intended to better define the gaps that will require the development of new capabilities, support the development of capabilities, and assist the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as he makes budget-related recommendations to the services. For the most recently completed cycle the Joint Staff reported that it was able to synthesize 155 gaps into 76 by reviewing and synthesizing identified gaps gathered from Integrated Priority Lists and other inputs.¹¹ The Joint Staff determines the most appropriate approach for filling these gaps, which may include validation through JCIDS, or other actions such as a study or a policy change. COCOM officials reported, however, that they may not have visibility into actions taken as a result of the analysis and synthesis of all identified capability gaps. Further, even after a requirement for a capability is validated by the JROC, developing and acquiring a new system may take years.

During the analysis and synthesis of gaps, the Joint Staff reaches out to the COCOMs to obtain their input. The JROC's Charter requires the JROC to meet periodically with the COCOMs to ensure current and future warfighting deficiencies and capabilities are identified, well defined, and given emphasis in the establishment of joint capabilities and programmatic priorities.¹² In addition, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff instruction regarding the Functional Capabilities Boards calls for the JROC to conduct trips to the COCOMs.¹³ To fulfill these requirements, the Joint Staff and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—the JROC Chairman—solicit COCOM input through meetings and conferences held over the course of each year. Collectively, these outreach efforts contribute to a continuous dialogue between the Joint Staff and the COCOMs

¹¹The Joint Staff reported that a total of 100 gaps were submitted through Integrated Priority Lists. An additional 55 inputs were submitted through other sources.

¹²Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 5123.01E, Charter of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (Apr. 17, 2010).

¹³CJCSI 3137.01D, The Functional Capabilities Board (May 26, 2009).

and allow the COCOMs to provide input as the Joint Staff continues its analysis and synthesis of the capability gaps.

COCOM input that begins with submission of their Integrated Priority Lists continues with participation in an annual conference to discuss identified capability gaps.¹⁴ This conference, which the Joint Staff reported that it had hosted since 2008, provides COCOM officials involved with the development of joint requirements an opportunity to meet with each other and the following stakeholders: representatives from the Joint Staff and other JROC support staff, the military services, and Office of the Secretary of Defense organizations including Acquisition, Technology & Logistics. During the conference, the COCOMs have an opportunity to brief attendees on the contents on their Integrated Priority Lists and also receive briefings from the services on general issues relating to their upcoming budgets. The conference provides the COCOMs an opportunity to influence the Joint Staff's analysis of identified capability gaps, and also provides an opportunity to discuss new ideas that can result in Joint Staff action. For example, during the 2011 conference, officials from several COCOMs raised concerns during a meeting with Functional Capabilities Board support staff that the Joint Staff's consolidation of several particular individual capability gaps into an overarching gap did not in this instance address their primary issue. Joint Staff officials noted during the meeting that they would consider revising the synthesized gap to address COCOM concerns. In addition, COCOM officials reported that their suggestions at the 2010 conference resulted in the Joint Staff eliminating the requirement to submit a draft Integrated Priority List—reducing their workload during the preparation of their Integrated Priority Lists.

To gain additional input on the Joint Staff's analysis of capability gaps identified through the COCOMs' Integrated Priority Lists, the JROC meets with COCOM officials a few months after the conclusion of the annual conference. In preparation for the meeting, the JROC sends out its proposed synthesized list and the COCOMs select items from this synthesized list they want to discuss with the Vice Chairman. The Joint Staff reported that, for 2011, it had combined multiple meetings that were previously held on different

¹⁴The Joint Staff refers to this annual conference as the Worldwide J8 Conference.

days so that the COCOMs could attend a single meeting. This change may increase collaboration among the COCOMs by allowing them to observe all related discussions and receive the same information.

The Joint Staff reported that, since 2008, the Vice Chairman has visited the COCOMs individually following the conclusion of the Joint Staff's analysis and synthesis of capability gaps. During the visit, each COCOM drives the agenda and has the opportunity to provide input into their most pressing capability gaps and possible budget-related action. For example, a COCOM may discuss items identified on its Integrated Priority List, such as the specific attributes required for an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability rather than the general description contained in the Joint Staff's synthesized intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance requirement. In addition, COCOMs may also raise other items that warrant attention, such as gaps that have emerged since the submission of the Integrated Priority List.

COCOM officials reported that they view some opportunities to participate and provide input into the analysis and synthesis of identified capability gaps as more effective than others. In their view, the Vice Chairman's visits significantly improved their ability to influence decisions about how to mitigate capability gaps. According to COCOM officials, the current Vice Chairman has spoken candidly with the COCOMs during the trips, providing feedback that COCOMs indicate helps them shape future action on their list items. In addition, as indicated in table 1 below, the JROC trips and the annual conference are seen as generally beneficial by the 10 COCOMs.

Table 1: Responses from the 10 COCOMs Regarding Their Reported Ability to Influence Decisions about the Mitigation of Capability Gaps

	Significantly improved ^a	Improved	No change	COCOM comments ^b
Vice Chairman visits	5	5	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides the opportunity to discuss the resolution of specific capability gaps and raise any concerns. The Vice Chairman is candid and provides his insight on gaps that will not be fulfilled.
JROC trips	1	8	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides the opportunity to have a discussion about capability gaps. Provides a forum to clarify needs, resolve concerns and gain insight into the larger DOD perspective.
Annual conference	0	8	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides opportunities to communicate with Joint Staff, service, and other COCOM officials.

Source: GAO.

^aResponse options for this survey question included significantly improved, improved, neither improved nor worsened, worsened, significantly worsened, not applicable, and don't know. None of the 10 COCOMs reported that these outreach efforts either "worsened" or "significantly worsened" their ability to influence decisions to mitigate capability gaps. In addition, none of the 10 COCOMs reported not applicable or don't know.

^bThese summarized comments were selected for inclusion because they were representative of the comments we received from the larger population of COCOM officials.

The Joint Staff Invites COCOMs to Participate in the Validation of Capability Gaps through Various JROC-Related Boards and Groups

DOD has given COCOMs opportunities to provide input during the validation of capability gaps, and the COCOMs reported that they actively take advantage of these opportunities to participate. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff instruction regarding Functional Capabilities Boards, updated in 2009, designates COCOMs as members in these boards and their related working groups.¹⁵ In accordance with this instruction, the JROC has provided opportunities for COCOMs to attend and participate in the groups and boards that support the validation of capability gaps. Most of the work on capability documents during validation is performed at the Functional Capabilities Board levels, according to board support staffs, and COCOMs participate in the validation of capability gaps primarily by providing representatives to these boards and their related working groups. All COCOMs may participate in all Functional Capabilities Board and related working group meetings,

¹⁵CJCSI 3137.01D. There are currently seven Functional Capabilities Boards: Battlespace Awareness, Building Partnerships, Command and Control and Net Centric, Force Application, Force Support, Logistics, and Protection.

no matter how closely the particular board's mission corresponds with a COCOM's mission. Each COCOM reported that it provides representation to these boards or working groups. The Functional Capabilities Board support staffs, most of which are Joint Staff representatives, actively engage the COCOMs to ensure that COCOMs are aware of upcoming meetings and agenda items, especially if the support staff believes that a COCOM will have particular interest or equity in an agenda item. For example, if the support staff believes a COCOM should participate in a particular meeting, it reports that it will reach out to that COCOM to encourage attendance. COCOMs can participate remotely through video-teleconferences and a computer-based networking program. COCOMs have also assumed greater leadership roles within these boards and groups, as well as the higher-level boards called Joint Capabilities Boards.¹⁶ In 2008 the JROC delegated authority for the Command and Control Joint and Functional Capabilities Boards to U.S. Joint Forces Command¹⁷ and, in 2009, the JROC delegated authority for the Logistics Joint Capabilities Board to U.S. Transportation Command.¹⁸ Additionally, in 2009 the JROC delegated authority for the management and approval of most special operations-specific capability documents to the U.S. Special Operations Command.

COCOM officials noted that their participation in the Functional Capabilities Board meetings depends on the relevance of the issues being discussed, and that representatives do not usually attend every meeting. As illustrated in table 2, most of the 10 COCOMs reported providing representation only in relevant Functional Capabilities Board and related working group meetings.

¹⁶There are currently two Joint Capabilities Boards: one chaired by the Joint Staff Director of Force Structure, Resources, and Assessment (J-8) and one chaired by U.S. Transportation Command. The boards comprise general and flag officer representatives of each of the military services.

¹⁷As part of the closure of U.S. Joint Forces Command, the responsibilities of the Command and Control Joint Capabilities Board reverted back to the Joint Staff Director of Force Structure, Resources, and Assessment (J-8), while the Command and Control Functional Capabilities Board was combined with the Net Centric Functional Capabilities Board.

¹⁸The Joint Staff retained authority for the Logistics Functional Capabilities Board.

Table 2: Level of Participation in Meetings Associated with the Development of Joint Requirements by Each of the 10 COCOMs

	Every meeting ^a	Every relevant meeting	Some relevant meetings	No meetings
Functional Capabilities Board Working Group	1	7	2	0
Functional Capabilities Board	0	8	1	1
Joint Capabilities Board	0	7	2	1
Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC)	0	2	6	2

Source: GAO.

^aResponse options for this survey question included “every meeting,” “every relevant meeting,” “some relevant meetings,” “no meetings,” and “don’t know.” None of the 10 COCOMs reported “don’t know” as a response option.

A Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff instruction also directs that COCOMs have an opportunity to review and comment on capabilities that will be validated by the JROC.¹⁹ By providing COCOMs the opportunity to review and comment on the documents, the Joint Staff is ensuring that the JROC is aware of any COCOM issues prior to making a decision to validate the requirement. These review and commenting opportunities are conducted by means of a computer database that all COCOMs can access. After the COCOMs have provided their comments through the computer database, the Functional Capabilities Boards and related working groups consider those comments during their discussions regarding the documents. Once the Functional Capabilities Boards are confident that the required documents are complete and have addressed COCOM concerns to the greatest extent possible, they then forward the requirements documents to the appropriate Joint Capabilities Board.

After the JROC considers a joint capabilities document, it decides whether to validate the requirement or accept risk and take no further action. The JROC Charter issues the COCOMs a standing invitation to attend JROC meetings in an advisory role on joint issues related to warfighting capabilities.²⁰ In addition, in January 2011 Congress authorized the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to direct the commander of a COCOM to serve as a voting

¹⁹CJCSI 3170.01G, Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (Mar. 1, 2009).

²⁰CJCSI 5123.01E.

member of the JROC when an issue is directly related to that COCOM's area of responsibility or function.²¹ According to Joint Staff officials, the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as Chairman of the JROC, has implemented this authority by directing the Joint Staff to invite COCOM commanders or deputy commanders to be voting members of the JROC for relevant issues. Since the change was implemented, one COCOM deputy commander has participated as a voting member of the JROC, and COCOMs have participated as members of a Joint Capabilities Board on two occasions.²²

COCOMs reported that participation at JROC and, to a lesser extent, Joint Capabilities Board meetings is less frequent than participation in Functional Capabilities Board meetings. Specifically, only 2 of the 10 COCOMs reported that they attend every relevant JROC meeting, while 6 reported that they only attend some relevant meetings. The remaining 2 reported that they did not attend any JROC meetings during fiscal year 2010, due to there not being any issues of contention that would require the COCOM's attendance. Officials from several of the COCOMs reported that they do not provide regular representation at JROC and Joint Capabilities Board meetings unless there are issues of contention to discuss because the JROC and the Joint Capabilities Board meetings require representation by the command's general or flag officers.

²¹Pub. L. No. 111-383, § 841.

²²The Joint Staff reported that in February 2011, the Deputy Commander of U.S. Joint Forces Command served as a voting member of the JROC regarding the Joint Unmanned Aircraft Systems Center of Excellence. In March 2011, officials from U.S. Central Command, U.S. Joint Forces Command, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. Strategic Command, and U.S. Transportation Command participated in Joint Capabilities Board meetings.

COCOMs Reported Some Concerns with What They Described as the Resource-Intensive and Time-Consuming Nature of JCIDS

COCOM officials generally did not report concerns with their ability to participate in the development of joint requirements, but continue to raise concerns with the responsiveness of JCIDS. The COCOMs reported mixed satisfaction with JCIDS. Specifically, four of the COCOMs we surveyed reported that they were “moderately satisfied” with JCIDS, four COCOMs reported that they were “slightly satisfied,” and one COCOM reported that it was “not at all satisfied.” COCOM officials, while noting the importance of their participation in the development of joint requirements, question the value of what they describe as a resource-intensive and time-consuming process that does not assure their capability gaps will be filled in a timely manner. Further, the COCOMs reported that the JROC, which oversees JCIDS, produces decisions that, while influential, are advisory to acquisition and budget processes driven by service investment priorities. In addition, JCIDS is only the first step toward fielding a new capability—the development and acquisition of the capability may take several more years. COCOM officials elaborated on some of their concerns during discussions and in survey responses, as follows:

- Officials representing more than half of the COCOMs reported that requirements to attend multiple meetings and repeatedly review and comment on capabilities documents placed heavy demands on staff time and resources. COCOM officials also noted that efforts to respond to capability documents require extensive preparation and dedicated staff time in addition to time spent participating in the identification and analysis and synthesis of capability gaps. To minimize the burden on command experts, officials representing two COCOMs noted that they reviewed all capability documents, but generally focused on those of particular interest to the command. For example, one official told us that in a 1-year period, the command reviewed more than 1,000 JCIDS documents, but commented on 60 that were of interest to the command.
- During our discussions, COCOM officials raised concerns that JCIDS focuses more on long-term service-centric gaps than COCOMs’ more immediate and largely joint gaps. The responsiveness of the JCIDS process has been a long-standing concern. In 2008, we noted that the JCIDS process may lack the efficiency and agility needed to respond to warfighter needs—especially those that are near-term—because the review and validation of capability proposals can take a significant amount

of time. For example, we reported that 2 years or more can elapse from the time a capability need is identified by a sponsor to the time the capability is validated by the JROC.²³ Joint Staff officials pointed out that the JCIDS process was designed as a deliberative process to meet longer-term joint needs, and that to address urgent needs, DOD established the joint urgent operational needs process in 2005. The joint urgent operational needs process is intended to respond to urgent needs associated with combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and the War on Terror—specifically, short-term (2 years or less) needs to prevent mission failure or loss of life. However, not all COCOM capability gaps meet the criteria of an urgent need—and those that are not classified as urgent must go through the JCIDS process.

Recognizing these and other concerns and in an effort to improve JCIDS and its responsiveness to the JROC, to the COCOMs, and to the services, among others, the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff initiated a broad-based review of the process in July 2010.²⁴ According to Joint Staff officials, the review is intended to, among other things, streamline the joint capabilities development process to improve its efficiency and responsiveness to users' needs. For example, review participants were tasked with examining ways to make the overall process more efficient, such as examining how to refine and potentially shorten documentation requirements. In addition, according to Joint Staff officials, the review will likely address how to respond to capability gaps that do not meet the criteria for being addressed as urgent needs, that is, gaps that can be addressed within 2 years and are intended to prevent mission failure or loss of life, but may need to be addressed more quickly than the usual pace of the JCIDS validation process. This may address some of the COCOM concerns regarding JCIDS's ability to address their more immediate joint capability gaps. It is too early to assess the extent to which the results of the review will address COCOM concerns. The JROC is expected to assess the results of the review and approve recommendations in June 2011.

²³[GAO-08-1060](#).

²⁴The Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 requires that we conduct a comprehensive review of JCIDS to evaluate, among other issues, the effectiveness of JCIDS in delivering capabilities to the warfighter and the efficient use of the investment of DOD's resources.

Agency Comments

DOD reviewed a draft of this report, but had no formal written comments. DOD did, however, provide technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees. We are also sending copies to the Secretary of Defense; the Secretaries of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. This report also is available at no charge on our Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3489 or pendletonj@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 major contributions to this report are listed in enclosure II.



John H. Pendleton, Director
Defense Capabilities and Management

Enclosures

Enclosure I: Summary of Survey Results

Survey Question 1: During fiscal year (FY) 2010, has your COCOM used each of the methods below to submit a capability gap?¹

	Number "Yes"	Number "No"
Submitting through the Integrated Priority List (IPL) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff	10	0
Submitting an Initial Capabilities Document directly into JCIDS	6	4
Submitting directly through a service headquarters	6	4
Submitting through a service component command	6	4
Submitting through issue papers as part of the Program Budget Review process	9	1
Submitting directly to the Secretary of Defense	5	5
Submitting through the Joint Urgent Operational Needs (JUON) process	4	6
Submitting a doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) Change Recommendation (DCR)	5	5
Submitting through other process(es).	8	2

Survey Question 2: During FY 2010, which of the following methods has your COCOM used most often to submit capability gaps?^a

	Number "Yes"
Submitting through the Integrated Priority List (IPL) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff	9
Submitting an Initial Capabilities Document directly into JCIDS	0
Submitting directly through a service headquarters	0
Submitting through a service component command	0
Submitting through issue papers as part of the Program Budget Review process	3
Submitting directly to the Secretary of Defense	0
Submitting through the Joint Urgent Operational Needs (JUON) process	1
Submitting a doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) Change Recommendation (DCR)	0
Submitting through other process(es).	1

^aNumbers do not add to 10 because some COCOMs reported multiple methods as the method the command used most often to submit capability gaps.

¹COCOM = combatant command.
JCIDS = Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System.

Enclosure I: Summary of Survey Results

Survey Question 3: How has each of the following initiatives affected your COCOM's ability to influence decisions about how your COCOM's capability gaps may be mitigated?²

	Number "Significantly Improved"	Number "Improved"	Number "Neither improved nor worsened"	Number "Worsened"	Number "Significantly worsened"	Number "Not applicable"	Number "Don't know"
Delegation of the command and control JCB chairmanship to JFCOM	1	1	7	1	0	0	0
Delegation of the logistics JCB chairmanship to TRANSCOM	1	1	5	2	0	0	1
Senior Warfighter Forum (SWarF)	1	5	4	0	0	0	0
Worldwide J-8 Conference	0	8	2	0	0	0	0
JROC Hub Trip	1	8	1	0	0	0	0
Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Return Trips	5	5	0	0	0	0	0
Service outreach to the COCOM, including during IPL development, POM briefings, and other efforts	0	4	5	1	0	0	0
Other(s) (please specify) ^a	3	0	1	0	0	0	0

^aNumbers do not add to 10 for "Other(s)" because 6 COCOMs left the response blank.

²JCB = Joint Capabilities Board.
 JFCOM = U.S. Joint Forces Command.
 TRANSCOM = U.S. Transportation Command.
 JROC = Joint Requirements Oversight Council.
 POM = Program Objective Memorandum.

Survey Question 4: During FY 2010, for each type of meeting listed below, has your COCOM attended every meeting, every meeting with issues relevant to your COCOM, some relevant meetings, or no meetings, either in person or remotely (e.g., telephone, video conference, Defense Connect Online [DCO])?

	Number "Every Meeting"	Number "Every relevant meeting"	Number "Some relevant meetings"	Number "No meetings"	Number "Don't Know"
Functional Capability Board (FCB) working group meetings	1	7	2	0	0
FCB meetings	0	8	1	1	0
Joint Capability Board (JCB) meetings, including the Command and Control (C2) JCB and Logistics JCB	0	7	2	1	0
Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) meetings	0	2	6	2	0
Other Meeting(s) (please specify) ^a	2	2	1	1	1

^aNumbers do not add to 10 for "Other Meetings" because 3 COCOMs left the response blank.

Survey Question 5: If your COCOM did not attend at least one FCB or FCB working group meeting during FY 2010, either in person or remotely, was each of the following a reason that your COCOM did not attend?

	Number "Yes"	Number "No"	Number "Not applicable"	Number "Don't know"
COCOM's perception that its input is not valued	1	5	4	0
COCOM lacked information on meeting time or location	0	6	4	0
COCOM lacked information on the content of the meeting	0	6	4	0
Inconvenient time of scheduled meetings	2	4	4	0
COCOM had insufficient resources (expertise, money, staff, etc.) to attend	4	3	3	0
Specific issues were not relevant to COCOM interests	6	1	3	0
Other reason(s) (please specify) ^a	3	3	3	0

^aNumbers do not add to 10 for "Other reason(s)" because 1 COCOM left the response blank.

Survey Question 6: If your COCOM did not attend at least one JCB or JROC meeting during FY 2010, either in person or remotely, was each of the following a reason that your COCOM did not attend?

	Number "Yes"	Number "No"	Number "Not applicable"	Number "Don't know"
COCOM's perception that its input is not valued	0	6	4	0
COCOM lacked information on meeting time or location	0	6	4	0
COCOM lacked information on the content of the meeting	0	6	4	0
Inconvenient time of scheduled meetings	1	5	4	0
COCOM had insufficient resources (expertise, money, staff, etc.) to attend	3	4	3	0
Specific issues were not relevant to COCOM interests	6	1	3	0
Other reason(s) (please specify) ^a	4	1	3	0

^aNumbers do not add to 10 for "Other reason(s)" because 2 COCOMs left the response blank.

Survey Question 7: Does your COCOM have sufficient opportunity to provide input into each of the following?

	Number "Yes"	Number "No"	Number "Not applicable"	Number "Don't know"
Capabilities Based Assessment (CBA)	10	0	0	0
Initial Capabilities Document (ICD)	10	0	0	0
Analysis of Alternatives (AoA)	7	0	3	0
Capability Development Document (CDD)	8	1	1	0
Capabilities Production Document (CPD)	8	1	1	0
JROC tripwire briefs	5	1	3	1
Nunn-McCurdy reviews	6	1	2	1

Survey Question 8: Has the Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act (WSARA) of 2009 improved, worsened, or had no effect on your COCOM's ability to provide input into the development of the following documents?

	Number "Significantly Improved"	Number "Improved"	Number "Had no effect"	Number "Worsened"	Number "Significantly worsened"	Number "Not applicable"	Number "Don't know"
Initial Capabilities Document (ICD)	0	1	9	0	0	0	0
Capability Development Document (CDD)	0	1	8	0	0	1	0
Capabilities Production Document (CPD)	0	1	8	0	0	1	0

Survey Question 9: During FY 2010, how successful, if at all, has your COCOM been at influencing trade-offs among a program's cost, schedule, and performance in each of the following documents?

	Number "Very successful"	Number "Moderately successful"	Number "Slightly successful"	Number "Not at all successful"	Number "Not applicable"	Number "Don't Know"
Capability Development Document (CDD)	0	2	2	2	4	0
Capability Production Document (CPD)	0	2	3	1	4	0
JROC tripwire briefs	0	1	1	1	6	1
Nunn-McCurdy reviews	0	1	2	1	5	1

Survey Question 10: How effective, if at all, has the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) been in seeking input from your COCOM about each of the following during FY 2010?

	Number "Very effective"	Number "Moderately effective"	Number "Slightly effective"	Number "Not at all effective"	Number "Not applicable"	Number "Don't Know"
Seeking input on current or projected missions or threats in your theater of operations that would inform the assessment of a new joint military requirement	2	4	2	0	2	0
Seeking input on the necessity of proposed joint military requirements in terms of current or projected missions or threats	4	3	2	0	1	0
Seeking input on the sufficiency of proposed joint military requirements in terms of current or projected missions or threats	3	4	2	0	1	0
Seeking input on the relative priority of a proposed joint military requirement compared to other joint military requirements within your COCOM's theater of operations	2	4	1	0	3	0
Seeking input on the ability of partner nations in your COCOM's theater of operations to assist in meeting proposed joint military requirements	0	2	1	1	6	0
Seeking input on the benefit, if any, of a partner nation assisting in the development or use of technologies developed to meet joint military requirements	0	3	2	1	3	1

Survey Question 11: Did the JROC seek input from your COCOM during FY 2010 about any topic other than those above?

	Number
Yes	3
No	4
Don't Know	3

Survey Question 11a: About what other topic(s) did the JROC seek your COCOM's input during FY 2010?

Responses included:

- The VCJCS personally visited the Command and asked to discuss any capability needs we may have.³
- 2011 Air & Missile Defense Priorities Capabilities List—Jan 2010; Capability Gap Assessment Actions for FY 2012—JROCM 096-10; Draft Non-Lethal Weapons Capabilities Roadmap.
- JROC directed USSTRATCOM to participate in a review of service-led air and missile defense programs.⁴

Survey Question 12: How, if at all, did the enactment of WSARA in May 2009 affect your COCOM's ability to influence decisions about how your COCOM's capability gaps may be mitigated?

	Number
Significantly improved	0
Improved	1
Neither improved nor worsened	8
Worsened	0
Significantly worsened	0
Don't know	1

³VCJCS = Vice Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff.

⁴USSTRATCOM = U.S. Strategic Command.

Survey Question 13: How, if at all, did the enactment of WSARA in May 2009 affect your COCOM's ability to influence the capabilities requirements process, regardless of the outcome your COCOM received?

	Number
Significantly improved	0
Improved	1
Neither improved nor worsened	8
Worsened	0
Significantly worsened	0
Don't know	1

Survey Question 14: Currently, is your COCOM staff trained to provide the appropriate expertise to adequately perform the following activities?

	Number "Yes"	Number "No"	Number "Don't know"
Develop the COCOM's annual Integrated Priority List	10	0	0
Conduct a capabilities-based assessment	8	2	0
Develop Initial Capabilities Documents	7	3	0
Represent the COCOM at the Functional Capabilities Board working group meetings	10	0	0
Represent the COCOM at the Functional Capabilities Board meetings	10	0	0
Represent the COCOM at the Joint Capabilities Board meetings	10	0	0
Represent the COCOM at the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC)	9	1	0
Work identified COCOM capability gaps through the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS)	10	0	0

Survey Question 15: During FY 2010, what is the maximum number of COCOM headquarters staff members assigned to identifying capability gaps and developing joint capability requirements?

Reported numbers range from 8 to 345.

Note: The range of answers is provided above, but a single summary number is not provided because each COCOM used its own methodology to determine an answer.

Survey Question 16: During FY 2010, of the maximum number of COCOM headquarters staff members assigned to identifying gaps and developing requirements, how many were doing so as their PRIMARY job responsibility?

Reported numbers range from 3 to 242.

Note: The range of answers is provided above, but a single summary number is not provided because each COCOM used its own methodology to determine an answer.

Survey Question 17: During FY 2010, of the maximum number of COCOM headquarters staff members assigned to identifying gaps and developing requirements, how many were doing so as a COLLATERAL job responsibility?

Reported numbers range from 3 to 155.

Note: The range of answers is provided above, but a single summary number is not provided because each COCOM used its own methodology to determine an answer.

Survey Question 18: We are interested in your COCOM's satisfaction with the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS) process, regardless of the outcomes your COCOM received. During FY 2010, for those capability gaps that your COCOM identified that resulted in JCIDS documentation, how satisfied, if at all, is your COCOM with the JCIDS process?

	Number
Very satisfied	0
Moderately satisfied	4
Slightly satisfied	4
Not at all satisfied	1
Not applicable	1
Don't know	0

Enclosure II: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

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Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Margaret Morgan, Assistant Director; Noah Bleicher; Mae Jones; Michael Silver; Jennifer Spence; and Kristy Williams made significant contributions to the report.

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