United States Government Accountability Office

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

July 2010

DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

U.S. Southern Command Demonstrates Interagency Collaboration, but Its Haiti Disaster Response Revealed Challenges Conducting a Large Military Operation

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GAO-10-801

July 2010

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Highlights

Highlights of GAO-10-801, a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

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Why GAO Did This Study

U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) has been cited as having mature interagency processes and coordinating mechanisms. As evidenced by the earthquakes that shook Haiti in January 2010, the challenges that SOUTHCOM faces require coordinated efforts from U.S. government agencies, international partners, and nongovernmental and private organizations. This report (1) assesses the extent that SOUTHCOM exhibits key attributes that enhance and sustain collaboration with interagency and other stakeholders and (2) evaluates SOUTHCOM's approach for developing an organizational structure that facilitates interagency collaboration and positions the command to conduct a full range of missions. To conduct this review, GAO analyzed SOUTHCOM documents, conducted interviews with the command and a number of its partners, and visited three U.S. embassies in the Caribbean and Central and South America.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that SOUTHCOM (1) revise its Organization and Functions Manual to align structure and manpower to meet approved missions; and (2) identify personnel augmentation requirements for a range of contingency operations, develop plans to obtain personnel, and exercise and assess these plans. DOD concurred with our recommendations and stated it is addressing these issues as quickly as possible.

View GAO-10-801 or key components.
For more information, contact John Pendleton at (202) 512-3489 or pendletonj@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

SOUTHCOM demonstrates a number of key practices that enhance and sustain collaboration with interagency and other stakeholders toward achieving security and stability in the region. SOUTHCOM coordinated with interagency partners to develop mutually reinforcing strategies, including its 2009 Theater Campaign Plan and its 2020 Command Strategy. In addition, SOUTHCOM focuses on leveraging the capabilities of various partners, including interagency and international partners, and nongovernmental and private organizations. For example, at SOUTHCOM's Joint Interagency Task Force South, resources are leveraged from the Department of Defense, U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and partner nations to disrupt illicit trafficking activities. During humanitarian assistance activities, SOUTHCOM has leveraged regional knowledge and activity expertise with nongovernmental and private organizations. Further, SOUTHCOM has established several means to enhance and sustain collaboration between the command and its partners. For example, SOUTHCOM has established a Partnering Directorate that provides full-time outreach, coordination, and support to interagency and other stakeholders. Moreover, information is frequently shared with partners through databases, conferences, and the sharing of lessons learned. Underlying these key practices is sustained leadership, which has been a key enabler for enhancing and sustaining collaboration with partners.

While SOUTHCOM developed an organizational structure designed to facilitate interagency collaboration, the scale of the Haiti earthquake disaster challenged the command's ability to support the relief effort. In 2008, SOUTHCOM developed an organizational structure to facilitate collaboration with interagency and other stakeholders, which included a civilian deputy to the commander, interagency representatives embedded in key leadership positions, and a directorate focused on sustaining partnerships. However, SOUTHCOM's support to the disaster relief efforts in Haiti revealed weaknesses in this structure that initially hindered its efforts to conduct a large scale military operation. Specifically, the structure lacked a division to address planning for operations occurring over 30 days to 1 year in duration. In addition, the command's logistics function was suboptimized and had difficulty providing supply and engineering support to the relief effort. Moreover, SOUTHCOM had not identified the personnel augmentation required for a large contingency nor had it developed a plan to integrate personnel into its existing structure. To address these weaknesses, the commander returned SOUTHCOM to a traditional joint staff structure, while retaining elements from the 2008 reorganization. Combatant commands need to be organized and manned to meet their daily mission requirements and be prepared to respond to a wide range of contingencies, including large scale disaster relief operations. Ensuring better alignment of its organizational structure and manpower to its identified mission requirements, and the development of personnel augmentation plans may enhance SOUTHCOM's ability to conduct the full range of missions that may be required in the region.

Contents

Letter 1

Background 4
SOUTHCOM Demonstrates Practices That Enhance and Sustain Collaboration 6
SOUTHCOM Developed a Command Organizational Structure Designed to Facilitate Interagency Collaboration, but the Haiti Relief Effort Challenged the Command 20
Conclusions 29
Recommendations 30
Agency Comments and Our Evaluation 30

Appendix I **Joint Interagency Task Force South** 33

Appendix II **Continuing Promise** 36

Appendix III **Scope and Methodology** 41

Appendix IV **Comments from the Department of Defense** 45

Appendix V **GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments** 47

Tables

Table 1: Reported Number of Full-Time Interagency Partner Representatives Embedded at SOUTHCOM as of July 2010 16
Table 2: Continuing Promise Mission Deployment Dates, Countries Visited and Reported Patients Treated 37
Table 3: Nongovernmental Organizations Involved in the 2009 Continuing Promise Mission 40
Table 4: Agencies Interviewed During our Review 42

Figures

Figure 1: Locations of SOUTHCOM and Its Command Components 5
Figure 2: SOUTHCOM Received Inputs from Several Partners during Development of the 2009 Theater Campaign Plan 8
Figure 3: JIATF South and Interagency Participation during the Disruption of Illicit Trafficking Activities 11
Figure 4: USNS Comfort during the Continuing Promise Mission. 14
Figure 5: SOUTHCOM's Organizational Structure after 2008 Transformation 22
Figure 6: Reported Buildup of Military Forces Supporting Relief Efforts in Haiti as Part of Operation Unified Response 26
Figure 7: SOUTHCOM's Organizational Structure Adopted during Operation Unified Response 29
Figure 8: JIATF South Interdiction Targets 34
Figure 9: Locations Visited by USNS Comfort during Continuing Promise 2009 38
Figure 10: USNS Comfort Activities during Continuing Promise 2009 39

Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
SOUTHCOM	U.S. Southern Command
JIATF South	Joint Interagency Task Force South

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

July 28, 2010

The Honorable John F. Tierney
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) operates in the Americas and the Caribbean, areas primarily affected by challenges such as corruption, crime, transnational terrorism, natural disasters, and poverty that impact the security and stability of the region.[1] As evidenced by the devastating earthquakes that shook Haiti in January 2010, these threats require coordinated efforts from U.S. government agencies, international partners, and nongovernmental and private organizations, often with the U.S. military in a supporting role. In recent years, in an effort to better support security and stability in the region, SOUTHCOM has sought to evolve to become a more interagency-oriented command, recognizing that many of the challenges it faces cross role and mission lines of various U.S. government agencies. In 2008, SOUTHCOM was reorganized in part to focus on collaboration with interagency and other stakeholders and, by 2009, observers were citing the command as having mature interagency planning processes and coordinating mechanisms.[2]

SOUTHCOM's evolution reflects a growing recognition of the limits of traditional military power and the need to adjust the military's approach. Challenges to national security have expanded significantly from the state-based threats of the Cold War era to include unconventional, diffuse, and ambiguous threats from nonstate actors that arise from multiple sources. The interrelated nature of these threats makes it difficult, if not impossible, for any one agency to effectively address them alone.[3] As the

[1]SOUTHCOM is one of the six geographic combatant commands included within the Department of Defense.

[2]We use the term "other stakeholders" in this report to refer to international partners and nongovernmental and private organizations.

[3]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).

Department of Defense (DOD) further develops the military capability and capacity to address these challenges, it must develop the institutional capability and flexibility to respond alongside interdepartmental, nongovernmental and international partners, effectively leveraging existing resources in a resource constrained environment. DOD's geographic combatant commands, like SOUTHCOM, will need to play pivotal roles in this effort since they engage in the day-to-day missions of building partner nation military capabilities as well as conducting humanitarian assistance projects in various countries, and are responsible for conducting large military operations, such as peacekeeping efforts, noncombatant evacuation operations, and support to international disaster relief efforts.

To assist in Congress's continuing oversight of interagency collaboration issues, this report assesses SOUTHCOM's efforts to enhance and sustain collaboration with interagency and other stakeholders and evaluates its approach for developing an organizational structure that facilitates interagency collaboration and positions the command to conduct a full range of missions.

To conduct our work, we obtained and reviewed a wide range of DOD, SOUTHCOM, and interagency partner documents to include strategies, plans, policies, directives, after-action assessments, and other documentation detailing interagency collaboration at the geographic combatant command level. In addition, we interviewed officials at many agencies including DOD, the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Justice to gain their perspectives on SOUTHCOM's collaborative efforts. To assess SOUTHCOM's efforts to collaborate with interagency and other stakeholders, we identified best practices to enhance and sustain collaboration with interagency and other stakeholders in prior GAO reports;[4] and to determine the extent that SOUTHCOM demonstrated these practices, we interviewed DOD officials; interviewed SOUTHCOM and embedded interagency partner officials at SOUTHCOM's headquarters in Miami, Florida in June 2009; and interviewed officials from a number of SOUTHCOM's interagency partners

[4]GAO-09-904SP, GAO, *Results Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, GAO-06-15 (Washington, D.C.: October 21, 2005), and GAO, *Results-Oriented Cultures: Implementation Steps to Assist Mergers and Organizational Transformations*, GAO-03-669 (Washington, D.C. July 2, 2003).

in Washington, D.C. to gain their perspectives on SOUTHCOM's efforts. We also interviewed officials at SOUTHCOM's Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF South) in Key West, Florida in August 2009; observed a humanitarian and civic assistance mission—the 2009 Continuing Promise—in Nicaragua in July 2009; and attended mission planning sessions in Jacksonville, Florida, in October 2009 and Panama City, Panama, in December 2009, during which we interviewed U.S. government, international partner, and nongovernmental organization officials.[5] We also visited U.S. embassies in Panama, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic in December of 2009, interviewing U.S. government and international partner nation officials to obtain their views on SOUTHCOM's collaborative efforts. To evaluate SOUTHCOM's efforts to develop an organizational structure that facilitates interagency collaboration and positions the command to conduct a full range of missions, we identified DOD's guidance for the organization of a combatant command as outlined in DOD joint publications, instructions and other documents, and analyzed SOUTHCOM's strategic documents, policies, guidance, and directives outlining the command's mission, organizational structure, and staff functions. We interviewed SOUTHCOM and interagency partner officials from the command's existing organizational structure in Miami, Florida, in June 2009 and reviewed and analyzed documentation regarding SOUTHCOM's 2008 organizational structure changes. We also conducted follow-up meetings with SOUTHCOM officials in Miami, Florida in April 2010 to obtain information on the effectiveness of the command's organizational structure in supporting international disaster relief efforts following the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti. More details about our scope and methodology are included in appendix III.

We conducted this performance audit from April 2009 through July 2010 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.

[5]Humanitarian and civic assistance missions provide training to U.S. military personnel and international partner nation forces, while providing humanitarian assistance, such as medical, dental, and veterinary care and engineering projects to communities in need.

Background

To perform its military missions around the world, DOD operates geographic combatant commands that conduct activities within assigned areas of responsibility.[6] SOUTHCOM, based in Miami, Florida, has an area of responsibility encompassing the land mass of Latin America south of Mexico, including 31 countries and 10 territories, and the waters adjacent to Central and South America, the Caribbean Sea, and portions of both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.[7] SOUTHCOM headquarters is comprised of about 800 military and civilian personnel representing the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and several DOD agencies. The military services provide SOUTHCOM with component commands which, along with its special operations component, three joint task forces,[8] three forward operating locations,[9] and 24 security cooperation offices[10] perform SOUTHCOM missions and security cooperation activities throughout its area of responsibility. Figure 1 shows the locations of SOUTHCOM and its command components.

[6]Geographic combatant commands are responsible for a conducting a variety of missions to include support to stability, security, transition and reconstruction operations; disaster relief; and humanitarian assistance, as directed.

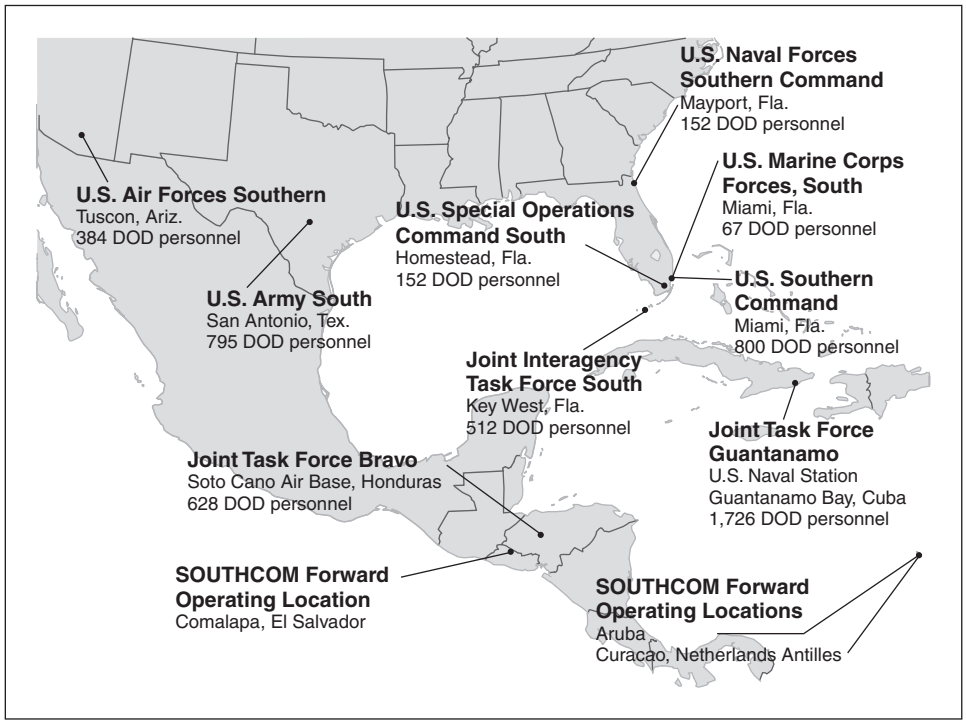
[7]U.S. commonwealths, territories, and possessions within the Caribbean are the responsibility of U.S. Northern Command (i.e., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands).

[8]SOUTHCOM operates three joint task forces. JIATF South, located in Key West, Florida, serves as the catalyst for integrated and synchronized interagency counter-drug operations and is responsible for the detection and monitoring of suspect air and maritime drug activity in the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and the eastern Pacific. Joint Task Force Bravo, located at Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras, operates a forward, all-weather day and night airbase. The task force organizes multilateral exercises and supports, in cooperation with partner nations, humanitarian and civic assistance, counter-drug, contingency and disaster relief operations in Central America. Joint Task Force Guantanamo, located at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, conducts detention and interrogation operations in support of the war on terrorism, coordinates and implements detainee screening operations, and supports law enforcement and war crimes investigations as well as the military commissions for detained enemy combatants. The task force is also prepared to support mass migration operations.

[9]SOUTHCOM's three forward operating locations in Comalapa, El Salvador, Aruba, and Curacao, Netherlands Antilles, allow U.S. and partner nation aircraft to use existing airfields in support of the region's multinational counter-drug effort. According to SOUTHCOM, these locations are the result of cooperative, long-term agreements between the U.S. and the host nations.

[10]SOUTHCOM maintains security assistance offices in Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Suriname, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Figure 1: Locations of SOUTHCOM and Its Command Components



Source: SOUTHCOM, Map Resouces (map).

Primarily as a result of the commander's assessment of the regional security environment—which indicated growing challenges such as narco-trafficking and other illicit trafficking activities, organized crime, and gangs, exacerbated by conditions of poverty, income inequality, and social exclusion—in October 2006, at the direction of SOUTHCOM's combatant commander, plans were drafted for reorganization of the command into a more interagency-oriented organization. These challenges were viewed by SOUTHCOM as transnational and crossing roles and mission lines of various U.S. government departments and agencies. A new organizational structure was designed that, according to SOUTHCOM, would allow the command to collaborate proactively with U.S. government agencies and partner nations in the region, and improve collective responses to regional and transnational security challenges. In September 2007, the Secretary of

Defense authorized[11] SOUTHCOM's reorganization to a more interagency-oriented organization and in October 2007, the reorganization was added to the list of DOD's top 25 transformation priorities.[12] SOUTHCOM's new organizational structure was provisionally adopted in May 2008 and fully implemented in October 2008. U.S. Africa Command, which became fully operational in 2008, is another geographical combatant command that is working toward a more interagency-oriented focus.[13]

SOUTHCOM Demonstrates Practices That Enhance and Sustain Collaboration

SOUTHCOM demonstrates a number of key practices that enhance and sustain collaboration with interagency and other stakeholders toward achieving security and stability in the region. These practices include: establishing mutually reinforcing strategies with partners, leveraging capabilities, and establishing means to operate across multiple agencies and organizations. For example, the command has defined and established a directorate to develop compatible policies and procedures that facilitate collaboration across agencies and organizations, and put in place mechanisms to share information with interagency and other stakeholders regularly and frequently. Underlying these practices has been leadership, which has been a key enabler for enhancing and sustaining collaboration with partners.

SOUTHCOM Has Worked with Interagency Partners to Develop Mutually Reinforcing Strategies

SOUTHCOM coordinated with interagency partners to develop mutually reinforcing strategies including its 2009 Theater Campaign Plan and its 2020 Command Strategy, and provided inputs to State Department's regional strategic plans. Based on our prior work, developing mutually reinforcing strategies helps align activities, core processes, and resources to achieve common outcomes. SOUTHCOM's efforts to develop mutually reinforcing strategies have helped to align resources and activities of SOUTHCOM and federal agencies to achieve broad U.S. objectives and helped to ensure there was no duplication of efforts.

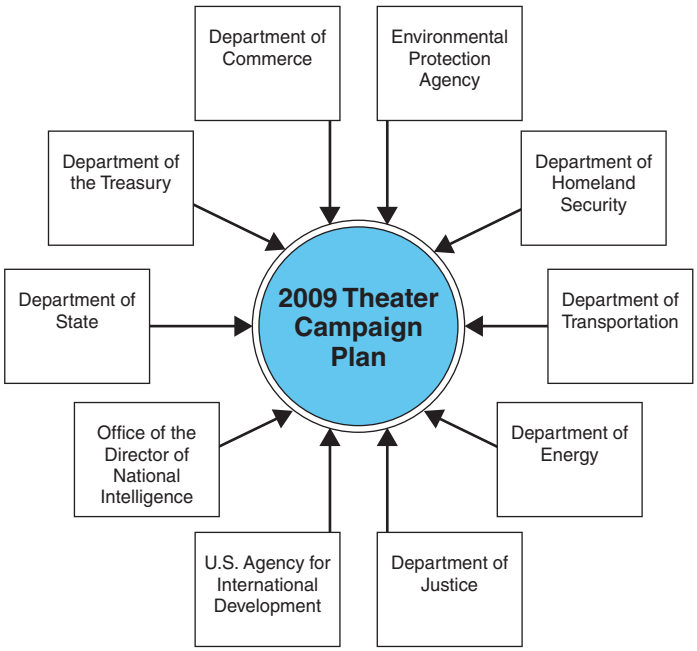
[11]Information on SOUTHCOM's reorganization can be found in the command's written response to a House Armed Services Committee report, H.R. Rep. No. 110-652, at 409-410 (2008).

[12]Memorandum from the Deputy Secretary of Defense, *DOD Transformation Priorities* (Oct. 24, 2007).

[13]See GAO, *Defense Management: Improved Planning, Training, and Interagency Collaboration Could Strengthen DOD's Efforts in Africa*, GAO-10-794 (Washington, D.C.: July 28, 2010).

SOUTHCOM coordinated the development of its 2009 Theater Campaign Plan, which lays out the command's theater priorities and guides its resource allocations, with over 10 U.S. government departments, agencies, and offices, to include the Departments of State, Homeland Security, Justice, the Treasury, Commerce, and Transportation, and the Office of Director of National Intelligence. Figure 2 provides the complete list of departments, agencies, and offices involved in developing the 2009 Theater Campaign Plan. DOD's 2008 *Guidance for Employment of the Force* required both SOUTHCOM and U.S. Africa Command, as prototype test cases, to seek broader involvement from other departments in drafting their theater campaign and contingency plans. To meet this requirement, SOUTHCOM held a series of meetings with interagency officials that focused on involving and gathering inputs from interagency partners for its Theater Campaign Plan. According to both SOUTHCOM and interagency partners, this coordination has helped SOUTHCOM understand the diverse missions of its interagency partners and better align activities and resources in the region. During these meetings, SOUTHCOM was able to identify resources to leverage by identifying which partners were best positioned to have the greatest effect on a specific objective and by identifying specific programs, activities, and operations that other interagency partners engage in that include similar objectives. As a result of this effort, SOUTHCOM's 2009 Theater Campaign Plan includes 30 theater objectives, of which 22 are led by interagency partners with SOUTHCOM in a support role.

Figure 2: SOUTHCOM Received Inputs from Several Partners during Development of the 2009 Theater Campaign Plan



Source: Joint Operational War Plans Division, Joint Staff.

In addition to the Theater Campaign Plan, SOUTHCOM is coordinating with interagency partners on its command strategy and provides inputs to Department of State's strategic plans. For SOUTHCOM's 2020 Command Strategy, which is currently in development, the command conducted a 3-day conference to gather inputs from interagency partners. During this conference, SOUTHCOM provided an overview of the strategy, and gathered perspectives on SOUTHCOM's assessment of challenges in the region and the command's strategic objectives. SOUTHCOM also provides inputs to Department of State's Mission Strategic and Resource Plans through its security cooperation offices located in U.S. embassies within its area of responsibility.[14] For example, the security cooperation office in

[14]Department of State's Mission Strategic and Resource Plans, formerly the Mission Strategic Plan, is a strategic document created by each U.S. embassy and consulate detailing (1) the mission's highest foreign policy and management priorities; (2) the goals it wants to achieve; (3) resources required to achieve those goals; and (4) how it plans to measure progress and results.

Colombia represents SOUTHCOM's interests during the drafting of the Department of State's Mission Strategic and Resource Plan for Colombia. According to both SOUTHCOM and interagency partners we spoke with, this coordination has helped ensure that SOUTHCOM and interagency partner strategic goals were mutually reinforcing and has helped align activities and resources in achieving broad U.S. objectives. Specifically, SOUTHCOM's goals to provide tactical, operational, and strategic support to Colombia's counter-narcotics efforts align with the Department of State's goals to provide counter narcotics training and technical assistance, ensuring unity of effort.

SOUTHCOM Leverages the Capabilities of Various Partners to Address Needs

SOUTHCOM focuses on leveraging the capabilities of various partners, including interagency partners, international partners, and nongovernmental and private organizations to address challenges in the region. Our prior work has shown that organizations can obtain additional benefits by identifying and addressing needs by leveraging the resources and capacities of collaborating organizations that would not be available if the organizations were working separately. Specifically for SOUTHCOM, the command engages with partners to leverage capabilities such as personnel and assets, differing legal authorities, differing jurisdictions, and regional and activity expertise from partners to achieve missions.

SOUTHCOM's JIATF South Leverages Personnel, Assets, Intelligence, and Authorities to Support the Disruption of Illicit Trafficking

JIATF South, a national task force under the command and control of SOUTHCOM, has the primary mission of detection, monitoring, and interdiction support to disrupt illicit trafficking[15] and narco-terrorist activities that threaten the United States and international partner nations within its operating area. To achieve its goals, JIATF South leverages the resources and capabilities of U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and international partner nations, to include personnel, assets, authorities, and intelligence. JIATF South recognizes that the disruption of illicit trafficking activities could not be successful without the involvement of interagency and other stakeholders, and every target that the national task force pursues requires a high level of interagency collaboration. According to JIATF South officials, it has taken the national task force over 20 years to achieve the level of interagency integration and synchronization that now exists to conduct international drug disruption

[15]Illicit trafficking includes narcotics trafficking, weapons trafficking, human trafficking, and money laundering.

operations.[16] The disruption of illicit trafficking activities (shown in figure 3) requires different capabilities possessed by individual partners to accomplish the mission. These include: (1) sharing of intelligence information among U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and international partner nations to cue illicit trafficking events; (2) detection and sorting of the traffickers using DOD, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and international partner nation assets; (3) monitoring of the event and achieving localized domain awareness through a combination of intelligence and maritime and aerial assets; (4) assignment of operational capabilities from DOD, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Drug Enforcement Administration, and international partner nations to intercept the traffickers; and (5) support to interdiction and jurisdiction by leveraging law enforcement authorities, capabilities, and international agreements. While DOD has the responsibility for detection and monitoring of air and sea illegal drug activity into the United States, it must rely on interagency and international partners to provide the authority and jurisdiction to interdict illicit trafficking activities, unless otherwise authorized or permitted by law. See appendix I for a further description of JIATF South.

[16]JIATF South was originally established in 1989 as Joint Task Force-4 when DOD was identified as the single lead agency of the federal government for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the United States. See National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991, Pub. L. No. 101-189, § 1202(a)(1) (codified as amended at 10 U.S.C. § 124). In 1994, the National Interdiction Command and Control Plan created a national task force, JIATF South, which fully integrated the military, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies.

Figure 3: JIATF South and Interagency Participation during the Disruption of Illicit Trafficking Activities

Intelligence

Information is received at JIATF South about an illicit trafficking event.

Detection

At JIATF South the information is verified and the target is prioritized based on the accuracy of information received, the level of confidence of the location of the target, and the proximity of assets to intercept the target.

Monitoring

JIATF South continues to monitor the target through intelligence, and maritime and aerial assets.

Interception

Maritime and aerial assets from agencies such as U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Coast Guard, and DOD vessels with U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachments on board or international partner nation assets are assigned to intercept the target.

Interdiction

The interdictions–boarding, search and seizures, and arrests–are led and conducted by U.S. law enforcement agencies, U.S. Coast Guard, or U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachments onboard DOD vessels, or international partner nation assets, with the appropriate authority and jurisdiction.

Source: GAO analysis of JIATF South information.

The collaboration at JIATF South between DOD, interagency partners, and international partners provides benefits that complement each other. JIATF South identifies needs for capabilities, authorities, and jurisdiction, and which agencies with complementary missions can provide the necessary assistance. For example, while JIATF South's mission is to detect and monitor illicit trafficking, the U.S. Coast Guard's mission includes conducting maritime law enforcement, and each agency's unique authority, jurisdiction, and expertise can compliment each other in achieving a shared mission, such as countering illicit trafficking. However, JIATF South still faces challenges to leveraging resources because JIATF South, interagency partners, and international partners have differing missions, priorities, and cultures. For example, while one of the primary objectives of the Drug Enforcement Administration is the disruption and dismantling of drug trafficking organizations, it may have cases where the agency would prefer to allow a target suspected of carrying illegal drugs to be unhindered but monitored in transit, in order to gain more information about a drug organization as a whole, while JIATF South would have a higher priority in removing the flow of drugs toward the United States.

JIATF South has been able to overcome collaboration challenges because it emphasizes mutual benefits by leveraging of resources—every participating organization gains in the process. Moreover, the national task force has a focused mission that requires interagency collaboration to be

successful. According to a Drug Enforcement Administration official, JIATF South provides significant support to its organization in conducting its mission and it is valuable to have an agent at the task force to coordinate efforts. JIATF South officials, including interagency partners, told us that being part of JIATF South provides mutual benefits. For example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation provides JIATF South with information from its sources and in return, the bureau receives information to support its cases and access to tracking capabilities. In addition, according to embedded interagency officials at JIATF South, the use of formal memoranda of understanding at the national task force is unnecessary because the benefits derived from the collaboration provides a strong incentive to maintain continued participation and the lack of memoranda of understanding provides flexibility within operations, which is preferred by most embedded interagency officials.

SOUTHCOM Leverages Regional Knowledge and Activity Expertise with Interagency and Other Stakeholders during Humanitarian Assistance Activities

By working side-by-side with interagency partners, nongovernmental organizations, private organizations, and international partners during humanitarian assistance activities, SOUTHCOM is able to learn from these partners given their knowledge of the regions and expertise on activities that may be beneficial to address challenges in the region. These organizations share common interests with SOUTHCOM in humanitarian assistance and can expand the command's capacity to enhance security and stability in the region. For example, interagency partners and nongovernmental organizations can provide resources to sustain projects that SOUTHCOM initiates or provide follow-up care after health-related humanitarian assistance missions. In one case, SOUTHCOM built a school in Nicaragua, thus accomplishing its training mission, and an international nongovernmental organization provided books and desks in order to make the school sustainable, furthering the overall mission. In addition, the nongovernmental and private organizations' missions and goals can be furthered by coordination with the command, making the interactions mutually beneficial. For example, Project Hope, an international nongovernmental organization, furthers its goal to provide humanitarian assistance and health-related education by having a role in SOUTHCOM's humanitarian and civic assistance missions.

SOUTHCOM integrates interagency and other stakeholders with compatible goals and complementary capabilities into its humanitarian assistance activities, allowing all participants to achieve their goals. A primary example of this integration is the Continuing Promise mission, a humanitarian and civic assistance operation to train U.S. military and international partner forces' medical personnel and civil construction

engineers, while providing services to communities in the region. Figure 4 displays the USNS Comfort during the 2009 Continuing Promise mission.

- During the 2009 mission, interagency partners, nongovernmental organizations, and international partners provided donations of goods for the mission, volunteered during the mission deployment, and filled vital medical capacities for the mission. U.S. Public Health Service officers filled 49 critical medical, engineering and environmental health positions, while nongovernmental organizations filled 97 vital medical positions that could not be filled by the military for the 2009 mission. According to SOUTHCOM, with the addition of nongovernmental medical personnel, the command increased its ability to provide medical services by a reported 25 percent more primary care patient treatments, 50 percent more surgical procedures, 33 percent more optometry and eyeglasses services, and 25 percent more outpatient care.

- For the 2010 Continuing Promise mission, interagency and other stakeholders provided expertise during planning conferences on various aspects of the mission. For example, during the first planning conference for the 2010 Continuing Promise mission, when DOD officials expressed difficulties in finding adequate translators during deployment site visits, one nongovernmental organization offered to organize translators with local language capabilities at each site, filling an essential gap. In addition, SOUTHCOM and its components met with international partner nations to coordinate access to potential sites for on-ground clinics and gather their feedback on the public health needs of the potential site areas. See appendix II for more details on the Continuing Promise mission.

Figure 4: USNS Comfort during the Continuing Promise Mission.

Source: SOUTHCOM.

SOUTHCOM Has Established Several Means to Collaborate with Diverse Agencies and Organizations

SOUTHCOM has established several means—including developing a directorate to facilitate collaboration with partners and sharing information frequently with partners through databases, conferences, and sharing lessons learned—to enhance collaboration between the command and its partners. Our prior work has shown that the means to operate across multiple agencies and organizations—such as compatible policies and procedures that facilitate collaboration across agencies and mechanisms to share information frequently—enhances and sustains collaboration among federal agencies.[17]

Partnering Directorate Provides Outreach, Coordination, and Support to Interagency and Other Stakeholders

SOUTHCOM has established a Partnering Directorate within the command, with 16 authorized staff, that provides full-time outreach, coordination, and support to its interagency partners, international partners, nongovernmental organizations, and private organizations. This directorate provides the means for partners to interface with the command and its components, and is responsible for integrating partners into

[17] GAO-06-15.

exercises and operations. For example, an agency or nongovernmental organization interacts with the Partnering Directorate to become a part of the Continuing Promise mission. According to SOUTHCOM officials, the Partnering Directorate focuses on developing relationships that are mutually beneficial to the command and the interagency and other stakeholders, determines the extent of existing coordination, and possible areas of enhanced collaboration.

The Partnering Directorate provides the means to work between SOUTHCOM and interagency partners through its Integration Division and between SOUTHCOM and nongovernmental and private organizations through its Private-Public Cooperation Division. The Integration Division incorporates interagency partners into SOUTHCOM's planning, operations, and exercises, and has the role of embedding interagency representatives into the command. SOUTHCOM officials and interagency officials told us that there are several benefits to embedding interagency representatives such as increased communication and a better understanding of each agency's missions, roles, and responsibilities. As of July 2010, SOUTHCOM reported having 20 embedded interagency officials as shown in table 1. Decisions to embed interagency representatives are done on a case-by-case basis, with most agencies sending a short term representative to SOUTHCOM to discuss needs, roles, and responsibilities and to assess whether a full-time detail would be mutually beneficial. Agencies that we spoke with, including U.S. Agency for International Development and the Department of State, told us that having embedded representatives at SOUTHCOM increases the communication between the agencies and helps inform the agencies of each others' plans and activities. For some interagency partners, embedding a representative at SOUTHCOM may not always be the best option for facilitating collaboration since many agencies have limited personnel and resources. SOUTHCOM and interagency partners may create other means to collaborate effectively based on these agencies' individual requirements and resources. For example, while a Department of the Treasury official decided not to embed a full-time official at the command after a short term detail, the agency and SOUTHCOM decided that providing a local representative with access to the command and establishing a memorandum of understanding would improve communication and coordination.

Table 1: Reported Number of Full-Time Interagency Partner Representatives Embedded at SOUTHCOM Headquarters as of July 2010

Interagency partners with SOUTHCOM-embedded representatives	Number representatives embedded
Department of State	5
U.S. Agency for International Development	3
Department of Homeland Security	5
Department of Justice	4
Office of the Director of National Intelligence	3
Total	**20**

Source: SOUTHCOM.

The Partnering Directorate's Public-Private Cooperation Division provides a way for SOUTHCOM to engage with the public and private sectors. For example, according to SOUTHCOM, Food for the Poor, the largest nongovernmental organization working in Latin America, reached out to SOUTHCOM to collaborate on humanitarian assistance activities. The Public-Private Cooperation Division serves as a coordinating unit between nongovernmental and private organizations, with the Division providing information to organizations on activities and conferences, and connecting the organizations with SOUTHCOM's components for activities. Since the establishment of the Public-Private Cooperation Division in the Partnering Directorate, nongovernmental and private organization participation has increased in some activities. For example, in the 2007 Continuing Promise mission there were three nongovernmental organizations participating, but the 2009 mission had over twenty nongovernmental organizations participating. Private organizations also share their expertise and perspectives through the Public-Private Cooperation Division. For example, the Business Executives for National Security, a nonpartisan organization through which senior business executives aim to enhance the region's security, shared their perspectives in March 2009 on how SOUTHCOM could better plan for activities that address security challenges in the region.

While SOUTHCOM has created the means to interact with nongovernmental and private organizations and these interactions have increased, the command also recognizes that barriers exist to working with these organizations. These barriers can be at the strategic level, where nongovernmental and private organizations may have differing perspectives on why and how assistance should be provided in the region. These differences can range from the varying terminology used to describe missions to the concern that nongovernmental and private organizations

are not understood or fully appreciated. In addition, DOD's lack of fully developed policy and procedure for partnering with these organizations can increase these differences. For example, unclear understandings of nongovernmental and private organization roles when working with DOD may exist during the execution of the different types of missions. Having identified this as a potential issue, SOUTHCOM is in the process of developing two handbooks that will guide these interactions and provide guidance on how SOUTHCOM can better interact with nongovernmental and private organizations. One handbook, which is currently in draft and expected to be completed by September 2010, will be provided to SOUTHCOM's components and the other handbook, which is also in draft and expected to be completed by September 2010, will be provided to nongovernmental and private organizations that participate in SOUTHCOM activities.

Information Is Frequently Shared with Partners through Databases, Conferences, and Sharing Lessons Learned

SOUTHCOM also provides mechanisms for stakeholders to access and share information. Based on our prior work, the frequent sharing of information among partners enhances and sustains collaborative efforts, and is a crucial tool for maintaining national security. Specifically, the use of compatible databases to provide information among partners is a means that facilitates working across agency boundaries. SOUTHCOM utilizes the Theater Security Cooperation Management Information System, which is an internet-based program that provides an integrated map of activities that are occurring across the region, providing a mechanism to coordinate activities. SOUTHCOM has given access to the system to interagency partners, including Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, and Department of Justice, to encourage them to input their own activities and to increase their awareness of SOUTHCOM activities. For example, during our review of the system, we observed that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had entered its own activities into the system. In addition, SOUTHCOM created an automated tool in 2008 to use during exercises and operations, such as humanitarian assistance and civic assistance missions, to vet classified and unclassified information within short periods of time to be able to share the information with nongovernmental organizations and international partners.[18] This tool increases the command's ability to share intelligence information properly and quickly with partners, improving the collaboration to achieve shared goals.

[18]The Foreign Disclosure Tool allows information to be shared properly and quickly among stakeholders.

By sharing information routinely with its interagency partners, international partners, and nongovernmental organizations, SOUTHCOM is building and maintaining relationships that are important in accomplishing shared missions. According to interagency officials embedded in SOUTHCOM, SOUTHCOM's constant sharing of information builds a culture of trust and transparency and helps the command and partners understand and overcome cultural differences in their agencies. For example, SOUTHCOM incorporates embedded interagency partner representatives into regular meetings at the command, and provides the agency representatives an opportunity to discuss what their agencies are doing in the region. More specifically, during weekly senior management meetings, intelligence agency and law enforcement representatives may share information on cases that are being conducted in the region and discuss potential areas for collaboration.

While interagency partner representatives embedded in the command and those on temporary assignment to the command maintain routine communication with SOUTHCOM, the command also maintains communication with other federal government agencies in close proximity to SOUTHCOM by granting them access to its facilities, allowing other government officials to gain some of the benefits of having a presence at the command without committing staff on a full-time basis. For example, the local Miami Border Patrol is provided identification badges which allow access into SOUTHCOM's headquarters building, although these personnel are located at another site. The command also embeds international liaisons from eight countries within the command, which facilitates the sharing of information to integrate planning efforts and coordinate exercises in the region.[19]

Another mechanism SOUTHCOM uses to share information with interagency partners, international partners, and nongovernmental organizations, is hosting conferences with partners in which perspectives from many agencies, international partners, and nongovernmental organizations are discussed and incorporated appropriately. For example, in 2009 SOUTHCOM coordinated with the Department of State to host a conference on migrant camps, and invited relevant nongovernmental organizations to the conference. SOUTHCOM's components also host conferences to share information. For example, SOUTHCOM's JIATF

[19]The international liaisons at SOUTHCOM include representatives from eight countries—Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay.

South sponsors a semiannual counter narcoterrorism conference and invites interagency partners, such as the Drug Enforcement Administration and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and U.S. embassy officials from the Americas and Caribbean.

Finally, SOUTHCOM shares information by consistently collecting and sharing lessons learned at the command level and for the activities conducted. SOUTHCOM solicits and collects lessons learned from DOD and from interagency partners, international partners, and nongovernmental and private organizations involved in activities. For example, during the Continuing Promise mission, lessons learned were collected from DOD participants, interagency and international partners, and nongovernmental organization participants. The lessons learned that are collected are shared at SOUTHCOM, including its components, and with its partners and then used to implement changes in future missions. For example, lessons learned from the prior Continuing Promise missions were shared with participants and appropriate changes were considered during the planning phase for the 2010 mission. Specifically, participants in the 2009 Continuing Promise mission identified, as a lesson learned, that early host nation participation was critical in the initial planning of the deployment. This lesson learned was incorporated into the 2010 planning of the Continuing Promise mission when U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command decided to hold planning meetings with countries involved in the 2010 mission prior to site selection.

Leadership and Strategic Communication Essential in Furthering Key Practices

Underlying these key practices is sustained leadership, which has been a key enabler for enhancing and sustaining collaboration with partners. Our prior work has shown that committed and sustained leadership by those involved in collaborative efforts from all levels of the organization is needed to overcome the many barriers to working across agency boundaries.[20] SOUTHCOM's leadership has focused on building relationships of trust, open dialogue, and transparency with partners. According to interagency partners we spoke with, leadership at SOUTHCOM has been important in building relationships among agencies. While SOUTHCOM has encountered some resistance to its collaboration efforts, it has overcome much of this resistance by building relationships,

[20]GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, GAO-06-15 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2005).

providing information on the command's activities, and discussing the overall benefits of the interactions for the region.

SOUTHCOM's leadership also focuses on strategic communication to emphasize its role in supporting interagency, international, and nongovernmental and private organization partners in the region. Leadership at SOUTHCOM has set the tone for a culture that is more collaborative in nature, and has communicated this throughout the command and to key interagency and other stakeholders. This strategic communication includes a mission and vision that incorporate interagency collaboration, and strategic goals that emphasize unity of mission with other partners. Furthermore, SOUTHCOM has focused on strategic communication to emphasize that its main role is defense and that it has a supporting role in diplomacy and development in the region. The command has also utilized various social media to communicate its actions including a Facebook page, YouTube page, and Twitter feed. Moreover, SOUTHCOM often communicates that relationships must be mutually beneficial and interagency participation in SOUTHCOM-led activities must be relevant for other stakeholders involved. Underscoring all of this is the command's continued focus on maintaining relationships with partners to address challenges in the region.

SOUTHCOM Developed a Command Organizational Structure Designed to Facilitate Interagency Collaboration, but the Haiti Relief Effort Challenged the Command

While SOUTHCOM developed a command organizational structure designed to facilitate interagency collaboration, the scale of the Haiti earthquake disaster challenged the command's ability to support the relief effort. Combatant commands need to be organized and manned to meet their daily mission requirements[21] and be prepared to respond to a wide range of contingencies, including large-scale disaster relief operations. However, SOUTHCOM's nontraditional combatant command structure created difficulties in responding to the crisis and in augmenting military personnel during its initial response.

[21]For purposes of this report, we use the term daily mission requirements to refer to the average workload expected to occur on day-to-day basis for the next 3 years.

SOUTHCOM's Command Structure Reorganized in 2008 to Facilitate Collaboration

As part of the 2008 reorganization, SOUTHCOM developed a directorate organizational structure to facilitate collaboration with interagency and other stakeholders, which included a civilian deputy to the commander, interagency representatives embedded directly into key senior leadership positions, and a directorate, the Partnering Directorate, focused on improving and sustaining partnerships. According to a DOD directive and Joint Staff publications, combatant commanders are given the authority and latitude to establish the staff organization they deem necessary to carry out assigned missions, duties and responsibilities.[22] Once the command has defined its missions, tasks and functions, as assigned by higher authority, it then develops an Organization and Functions Manual, which documents the organizational structure and serves as the basis for determining the manpower requirements necessary to carry out these missions. According to a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff instruction, the requirements are to be stated in terms of the minimum manning required to accomplish approved missions, and should be based on the average workload of the command expected for at least the next 3 years. Temporary changes in workload and short duration missions should be supported through solutions such as personnel augmentation.[23] According to DOD's Unified Command Plan, SOUTHCOM is responsible for planning and conducting a wide range of missions and contingency operations, such as disaster relief operations as directed.[24]

SOUTHCOM's reorganization was focused on addressing its daily mission requirements, which included addressing challenges that impacted the security and stability in the region and required interagency solutions. In order to support interagency solutions, SOUTHCOM developed an organizational structure that transitioned the command out of the traditional joint staff organizational structure[25] to a staff structure with three mission directorates and three functional directorates. The three

[22]Department of Defense Directive 5100.1, *Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components* (Nov. 21, 2003); Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub. 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Mar. 20, 2009); and Joint Forces Staff College Publication 1, *Joint Staff Officers Guide 2000*.

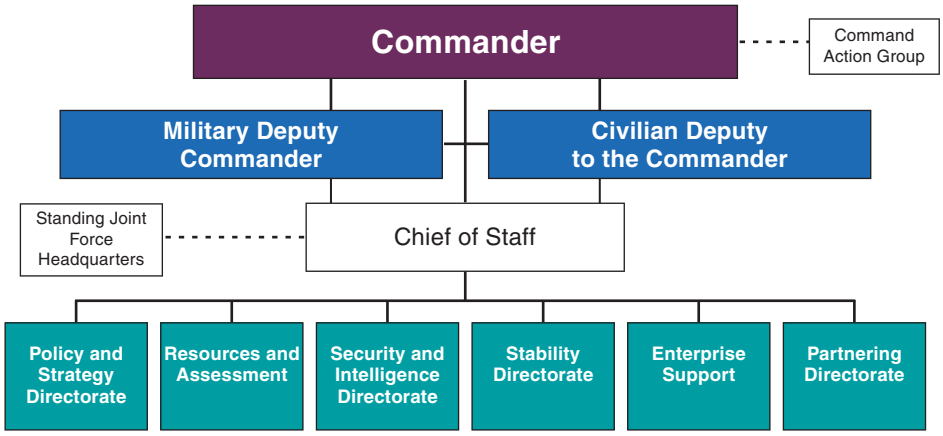
[23]Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 1001.01, *Joint Manpower and Personnel Program* (Dec. 28, 2004).

[24]Department of Defense, Unified Command Plan (Dec. 17, 2008).

[25] The traditional joint staff headquarters organization generally includes directorates for manpower and personnel (J1), intelligence (J2), operations (J3), logistics (J4), plans (J5), communications system (J6), as well as additional directorates as deemed necessary.

mission directorates—Security and Intelligence, Stability, and Partnering—each focused on achieving one of the hemispheric goals included within SOUTHCOM's Command Strategy 2016.[26] Three enabling or functional directorates were also created: Policy and Strategy, Resources and Assessments, and Enterprise Support (see figure 5). Under this organizational structure, SOUTHCOM split and merged various aspects of the traditional joint staff organizational structure to fit into the six directorates. For example, intelligence and operations, traditionally separate directorates, were combined and incorporated under the new Security and Intelligence Directorate. Moreover, the new Stability Directorate combined several aspects from the traditional joint staff organizational structure to be under one directorate, to include parts of intelligence, operations, planning, as well as training and readiness. According to SOUTHCOM, the creation of this directorate organization structure improved their ability to work with interagency and other stakeholders to address challenges in the region.

Figure 5: SOUTHCOM's Organizational Structure after 2008 Transformation



Source: SOUTHCOM.

[26]The command strategy, formally updated every two years, provides overarching guidance for SOUTHCOM. The hemispheric goals of SOUTHCOM's Command Strategy 2016 were to ensure security, enhance stability, and enable prosperity. It also had one governmental goal—to transform the enterprise. These objectives were subsequently modified in SOUTHCOM's 2018 Command Strategy to ensure security, enhance stability, enable partnerships, and evolve the enterprise.

In addition, SOUTHCOM added elements to its organizational structure that furthered the command's ability to collaborate with interagency and other stakeholders. The organizational structure SOUTHCOM developed included two deputies to the commander—a military deputy commander as well as a civilian deputy to the commander. The military deputy commander is able to exercise military command authorities when required, with duties to include serving as acting commander whenever necessary, overseeing the development of contingency plans, and engaging the Joint Staff, the Departments of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the U.S. Coast Guard, as required. The civilian deputy to the commander—a senior foreign service officer with the rank of Minister Counselor from Department of State—advises the Commander on a range of foreign policy issues and also serves as primary liaison with the Department of State and all U.S. Chiefs of Mission and embassy personnel in the region.[27] The civilian deputy to the commander's duties include overseeing the development of the command's regional strategy and furthering interagency and public-private sector engagement. Several interagency partner representatives were also embedded directly into key senior leadership positions within the organizational structure, serving dual roles—one for SOUTHCOM and one for their parent agency. For example, the Partnering Directorate included two senior interagency partner representatives—a Department of State Senior Foreign Service Officer and a U.S. Agency for International Development Senior Development Advisor—serving in command leadership positions. The Department of State Senior Foreign Service Officer serves as a midlevel foreign policy advisor, while filling the dual role as deputy of the Partnering Directorate.[28] The U.S. Agency for International Development Senior Development Advisor, who advises the command during interactions with the U.S. Agency for International Development and ensures SOUTHCOM's activities are consistent with the U.S. Agency for International Development's developmental goals, also serves as Director of Regional

[27]U.S. Chiefs of Mission are the principal officers in charge of U.S. diplomatic missions and U.S. offices abroad.

[28]Foreign Policy Advisors are senior Department of State officers within the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Office of the Coordinator for Foreign Policy Advisors, detailed as personal advisors to U.S. military commanders to provide policy support regarding the diplomatic and political aspects of the commanders' military responsibilities.

Issues division in the Partnering Directorate.[29] In this role, he examines the regional issues that may undermine stability and security, such as rule of law, environment and energy, finance and trade, infrastructure and social issues. He manages a staff of both civilian and military personnel.

Further, as described earlier, SOUTHCOM also created a Partnering Directorate focused on improving partnership opportunities with other U.S. government agencies, non-governmental and private organizations, and international partners in an effort to foster "whole of government" solutions to challenges in the region. According to SOUTHCOM officials, the concept for the Partnering Directorate was modeled on the Joint Interagency Coordination Group, first formed in 2002 to enhance interagency coordination and unity of effort in the war on terrorism.[30] In 2006, the existing combatant commander expanded on the Joint Interagency Coordination Group, creating specific divisions for interagency coordination and public-private partnership. These two divisions were combined, along with the command elements handling development, into the Partnering Directorate as part of the 2008 reorganization of SOUTHCOM.

Several other combatant commands have also developed organizational models designed to improve interagency collaboration. For example, U.S. Northern Command uses a traditional joint staff organizational structure on a day-to-day basis that includes an interagency coordination directorate the command established to facilitate and focus on building effective, durable, and lasting relationships between the command and federal (DOD and non-DOD), state, local, tribal, nongovernmental, commercial and private sector, and international governments, departments, organizations, and agencies. U.S. Africa Command, DOD's newest geographic combatant command, is organized in a directorate structure similar to SOUTHCOM,

[29]According to U.S. Agency for International Development, Senior Development Advisors operate under memoranda of understanding with six of DOD's combatant commands—U.S. Special Operations Command, SOUTHCOM, U.S. European Command, U.S. Central Command, U.S. Pacific Command, and U.S. Africa Command—serving as advisors to the combatant commanders. DOD has provided corresponding military representatives to the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Military Affairs to improve day-to-day coordination and promote synchronization of efforts.

[30]Joint Interagency Coordination Group is a full-time, multifunctional advisory element of the combatant commander's staff that facilitates information sharing throughout the interagency community. It comprises mostly civilian personnel with strong interagency experience who formulate, articulate, advocate, and implement the combatant commander's policies, priorities, programs, and procedures for interagency engagement.

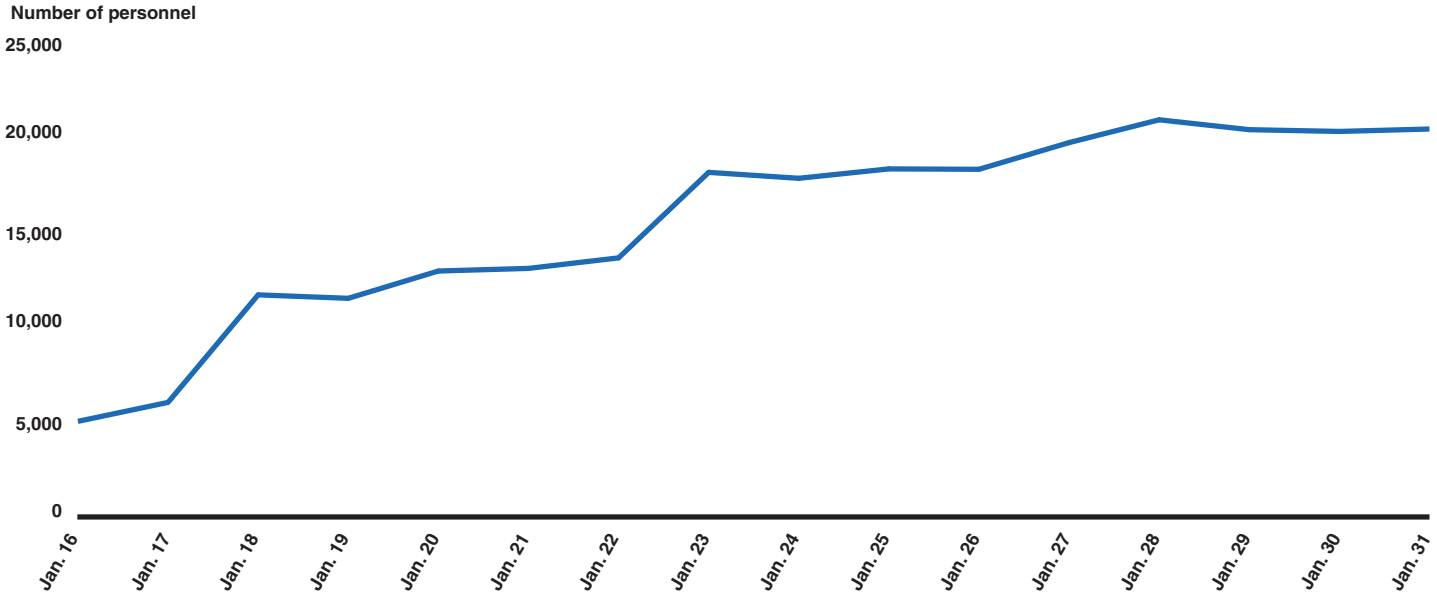
with seven directorates that combine complementary functions of a traditional staff organization, with structural modifications to accommodate interagency partners. U.S. Africa Command's seven directorates include: Resources; Operations and Logistics; Joint Force Development and Readiness; Strategy, Plans and Programs; Intelligence and Knowledge Development; Outreach; and Command, Control, Communications, and Computer Systems.

SOUTHCOM's Disaster Relief Efforts in Haiti Revealed Weaknesses in Its Organizational Structure and the Lack of Augmentation Planning

While SOUTHCOM and its interagency partners told us that this organizational structure improved the command's ability to work with partners in the region, SOUTHCOM's support to the disaster relief efforts in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti, named Operation Unified Response, revealed weaknesses in the command's organizational structure and a lack of augmentation planning that initially hindered its efforts.[31] Operation Unified Response, according to SOUTHCOM officials, was the largest disaster relief effort DOD has ever conducted, far larger than was anticipated or planned for by SOUTHCOM, requiring 24-hour, 7-days-per-week operations. Figure 6 shows the buildup of military forces supporting international disaster relief efforts in Haiti as part of Operation Unified Response, which SOUTHCOM reported peaked at more than 20,000 personnel.

[31]SOUTHCOM's mission to support the federal government's disaster relief efforts in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti, named Operation Unified Response, is in support of the U.S. Agency for International Development, which provides foreign disaster assistance and coordinates the U.S. government response to disasters abroad.

Figure 6: Reported Buildup of Military Forces Supporting Relief Efforts in Haiti as Part of Operation Unified Response



Source: SOUTHCOM.

When the earthquake struck Haiti, SOUTHCOM's directorate organizational structure had been untested in a major crisis and the command was not fully prepared to carry out a large scale military operation, such as Operation Unified Response. SOUTHCOM was organized and manned to meet its day-to-day missions, such as building partner nation military capabilities and conducting humanitarian assistance projects to address challenges in the region. While a combatant command should be organized and manned to meet its daily mission requirements, it must also be prepared to respond to a wide range of contingencies identified in DOD's Unified Command Plan, including disaster relief operations, when directed by higher authority. However, SOUTHCOM's directorate organizational structure had weaknesses that hindered its initial response to the Haiti earthquake. Specifically, the command structure lacked a division to address planning for future operations, which, according to SOUTHCOM officials, is necessary to establish proper planning cycles and divisions of labor, and to develop the necessary guiding documents for operations occurring over 30 days to one

year in duration.[32] Moreover, SOUTHCOM had suboptimized some core functions that were necessary to respond to large scale contingencies. For example, SOUTHCOM's logistics function was suboptimized because it was placed under Enterprise Support in the organizational structure rather than being its own core function. As a result, the command had difficulty planning for the magnitude of logistics support required during the Haiti relief effort including supply, maintenance, deployment distribution, health support, engineering, logistics services, and contract support. Further, the command had difficulty communicating with its components, joint task forces, and security cooperation offices in theater because the command's organizational structure was organized into mission and functional directorates, while its components, such as Joint Task Force Haiti, were organized in traditional joint staff directorate structures.[33]

In addition, SOUTHCOM had not developed an augmentation plan for military personnel for a large contingency such as Operation Unified Response. To support short duration missions and contingencies, a combatant command is responsible for identifying and validating the personnel augmentation required and submitting these requirements to its military service component commands to fill.[34] Further, we believe the command should exercise and assess these types of augmentation plans in order to be fully prepared to meet their assigned missions. Given the extent of the earthquake disaster, the command did not have the military personnel to support the relief effort. According to SOUTHCOM officials, the command was staffed at about 85 percent of its authorized staffing level of 960 military and civilian personnel, and did not have the necessary personnel depth to support a large scale military operation. While augmentation was required, the command had not identified the military personnel augmentation requirements necessary for a large contingency and had not developed a plan to integrate military augmentee personnel into the existing directorate structure. In addition, the augmenting military

[32]According to Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operation Planning (Dec. 26, 2006), as an operation progresses planning generally occurs in three distinct but overlapping timeframes: future plans, or long term planning; future operations or near term planning; and current operations or current operations planning.

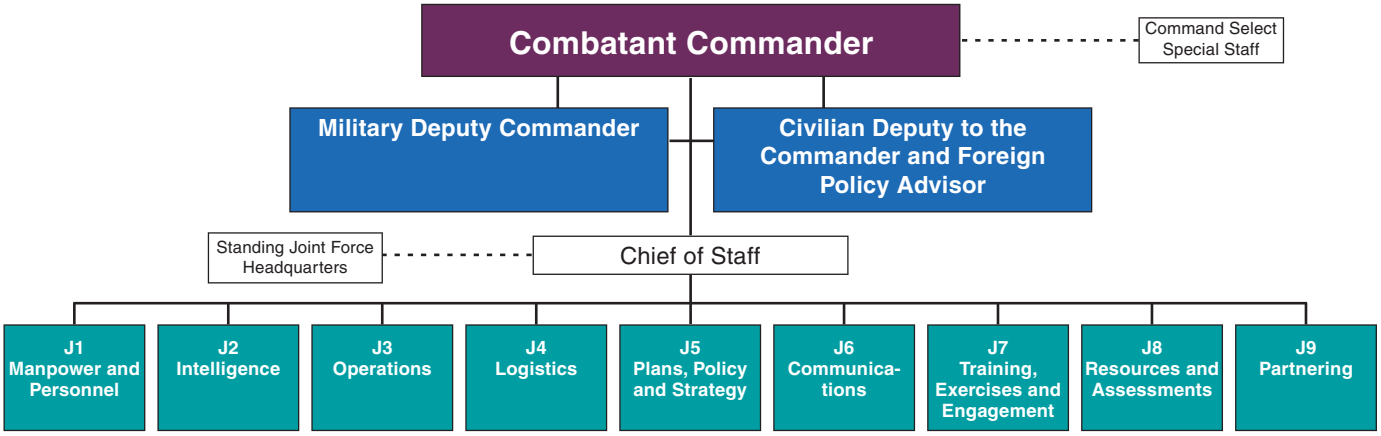
[33]Joint Task Force-Haiti was established to support Operation Unified Response.

[34]Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub. 1-0, *Personnel Support to Joint Operations* (Oct. 16, 2006) provides doctrine for planning, coordinating, and providing personnel support to joint operations, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 1301.01C, *Individual Augmentation Procedures* (Jan, 1, 2004), provides guidance for assigning individual augmentation to meet the combatant commanders' temporary duty requirements.

personnel were not familiar with SOUTHCOM's directorate structure and did not initially understand where they could best be utilized because many of the traditional joint staff functions were divided among SOUTHCOM's directorates. Ultimately, SOUTHCOM received over 500 augmentees to provide additional capability to its existing command staff of approximately 800 personnel, including an entire staff office from U.S. Northern Command, filling vital gaps in SOUTHCOM's ability to support operations in Haiti. However, according to SOUTHCOM officials, the command was able to integrate interagency and international partners into the relief efforts without difficulty because the Partnering Directorate had already established relationships with the partners. Specifically, 40 augmentees from seven agencies and four international organizations were integrated into the planning and operations of the command.

As a result of these challenges, SOUTHCOM's combatant commander made a decision within the first week of the Haiti disaster to return the command to a traditional joint staff organizational structure to address the weaknesses. SOUTHCOM's revised organizational structure is shown in figure 7. This organizational structure provided the command with the capabilities to better conduct Operation Unified Response by establishing the future operations division, elevating various functions such as logistics, and improving communications between the command and its DOD stakeholders. However, the command has retained some elements from the 2008 reorganization that enhance interagency collaboration. For example, the Partnering Directorate, the position of civilian deputy to the commander, and the interagency partner representatives serving dual roles have been retained. According to SOUTHCOM officials, the command plans to remain in this traditional joint staff structure for the foreseeable future and has received approval from the Secretary of Defense. However, some SOUTHCOM officials expressed concerns the command was directing its manpower resources toward a contingency-based organizational structure, the skill sets of which would only be utilized every 4 to 5 years when responding to a major crisis such as Operation Unified Response. Officials further stated that large disaster relief efforts requiring DOD support, such as those required during the Haiti response, rarely occur and are not the focus of the work in SOUTHCOM's area of responsibility the majority of the time.

Figure 7: SOUTHCOM's Organizational Structure Adopted during Operation Unified Response



Source: SOUTHCOM.

Moreover, according to SOUTHCOM officials, the command is working to revise its Organization and Functions Manual to align manpower resources to its identified mission requirements and is creating personnel augmentation plans to respond to small, medium, and large contingencies. The last time SOUTHCOM updated its Organization and Functions Manual was January 2009, and it has not been updated to reflect SOUTHCOM's current joint staff organizational structure, as well as its revised mission and strategic objectives. The manual serves as the basis for determining manpower requirements necessary to perform assigned missions and is to be updated and submitted annually to the Joint Staff. Ensuring better alignment of SOUTHCOM's organizational structure and manpower to its identified mission requirements; and the development of augmentation plans for a range of contingencies, such as those as large as Operation Unified Response, may enhance the command's ability to conduct the full range of missions that may be required in the region.

Conclusions

Modern national security challenges require collaborative efforts among U.S. government agencies, international partners, and nongovernmental and private organizations. The Americas and the Caribbean are areas that face these types of challenges and ultimately require partnerships with various interagency and other stakeholders to ensure security and stability throughout the region. SOUTHCOM has taken significant steps in building these partnerships through its key practices that enhance and sustain collaboration. However, the command faces challenges preparing for divergent needs of its potential missions, which range from conducting

military-focused operations to supporting efforts to enhance regional security and cooperation. The command must have an organizational structure that is not only prepared for military contingencies, but can also be effective in supporting interagency and other stakeholders in meeting challenges such as corruption, crime, and poverty. While the command has made recent changes to its organizational structure to better enable it to conduct military contingency operations, it will be unable to determine the most effective organizational structure until it aligns its structure and manpower resources in its Organization and Functions Manual to its identified mission requirements, and develops personnel augmentation plans necessary to respond to a wide range of contingency operations, including disaster relief operations, when directed by higher authority. As SOUTHCOM continues to further its interagency missions and partnership capacities, it is vital that as a geographic combatant command, it continues to maintain its capability to meet its military operational demands as they arise.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To improve SOUTHCOM's ability to conduct the full range of military missions that may be required in the region, while balancing its efforts to support interagency and other stakeholders in enhancing regional security and cooperation, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Commander, U.S. Southern Command to take the following two actions:

1. Revise SOUTHCOM's Organization and Functions Manual to align organizational structure and manpower resources to meet approved missions, to include both daily mission and contingency operation requirements; and
2. Identify personnel augmentation requirements for a range of contingency operations, develop plans to obtain these personnel when needed, and exercise and assess these augmentation plans.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In its written comments on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with our recommendations that DOD direct SOUTHCOM to revise its Organization and Functions Manual to meet approved missions and identify personnel augmentation requirements for a range of contingency operations. In its response, DOD also stated it is addressing these issues as quickly as possible to ensure readiness for future contingencies. DOD's written comments are reprinted in appendix IV. Technical comments were provided separately and incorporated as appropriate. The Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Justice, and Department of Homeland Security did not provide written comments on our draft report.

In its response, DOD stated that SOUTHCOM has sought to become a center of excellence in interagency partnering and has actively shared its experience and contacts with other geographic combatant commands. In our report, we acknowledge that SOUTHCOM has taken significant steps in building partnerships with interagency and other stakeholders and agree that the command demonstrates a number of key practices that enhance and sustain collaboration with these partners. Given the challenges of corruption, crime, illicit trafficking, and poverty facing the Americas and Caribbean, we believe collaboration will continue to be critical to ensuring security and stability throughout the region. As SOUTHCOM continues its efforts, we encourage the command to continue to share its experiences and lessons learned with DOD and its interagency partners, as we noted in our report, in an effort to continue to improve whole of government efforts in addressing challenges in the region.

DOD further stated that SOUTHCOM has already begun addressing the organizational issues identified during the Haiti disaster response effort, modifying its staff structure and comprehensively reviewing its allocation of personnel to meet mission requirements. While DOD did indicate it was addressing these issues as quickly as possible, it did not provide specific timelines for when SOUTHCOM would have a revised Organization and Functions Manual aligning manpower resources to the command's identified mission requirements and have personnel augmentation plans to respond to small, medium, and large contingencies. Since both the Organizations and Functions Manual as well as the personnel augmentation plans are important to ensuring the command's ability to conduct the full range of missions that may be required in the region, we believe DOD and SOUTHCOM should establish specific timelines for implementing our recommendations.

We are sending copies of this report to other appropriate congressional committees and the Secretary of Defense. This report also is available at no charge on the GAO Web site at http://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staff have questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3489 or at 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 key contributions to this report are listed in appendix V.

Sincerely yours,

John H. Pendleton
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management

Appendix I: Joint Interagency Task Force South

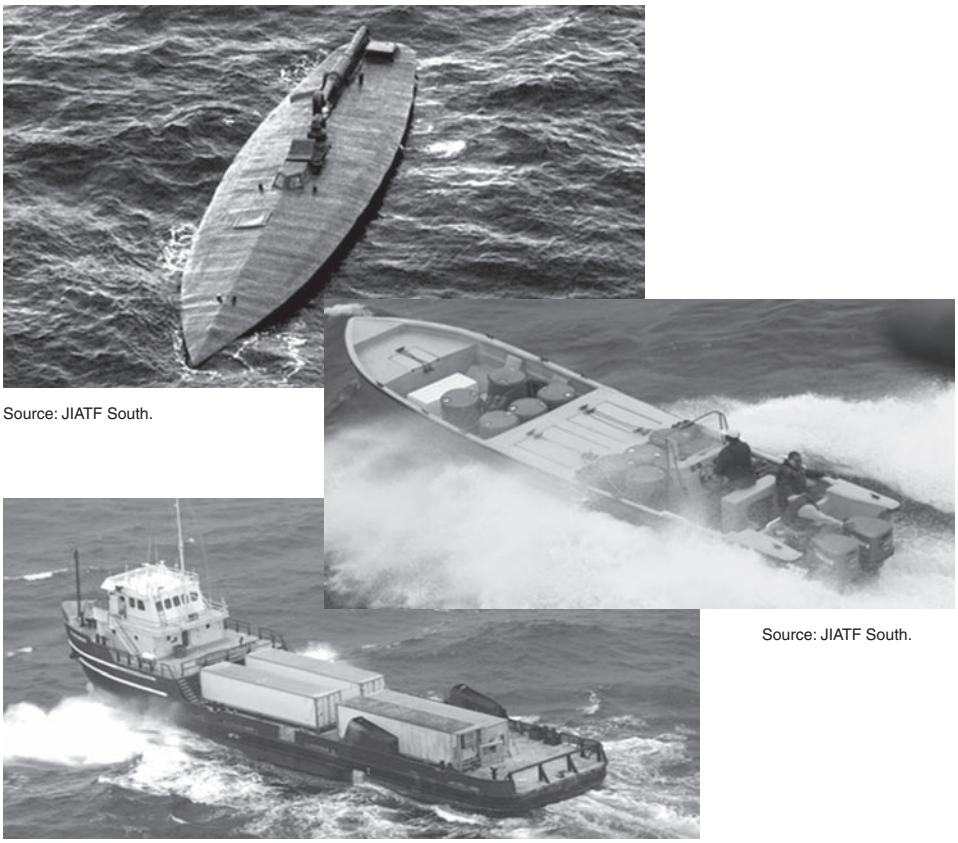
Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF South) is a national task force under the command and control of U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), which according to JIATF South officials, was established by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, as part of the National Interdiction Command and Control Plan. The national task force has the primary mission of detection, monitoring, and interdiction support to disrupt illicit trafficking, to include narcotics trafficking, in the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and the eastern Pacific. JIATF South's joint operating area consists of 42 million square miles, crossing 5 combatant commanders' boundaries, 3 U.S. Coast Guard districts, 15 interagency partners' areas of operations, and 30 independent nations and 11 territories.[1] The national task force detects, monitors, and provides interdiction support to a range of suspect modes of transport such as small civil aircraft, business-type aircraft, fishing vessels, go-fast boats,[2] cargo vessels, and self-propelled semi-submersibles.[3] Figure 8 displays examples of JIATF South's interdiction targets. According to JIATF South officials, in 2009, the task force contributed to the removal of 234 metric tons of cocaine worth a reported $4.5 billion, and is the lead cocaine interdiction supporting agency in the world.

[1]JIATF South's joint operating area covers the boundaries of SOUTHCOM, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. European Command.

[2]A go-fast boat is designed with a long narrow platform and a planing hull to enable it to reach high speeds and avoid interception.

[3]A self-propelled semi-submersible is a vessel similar to a submarine that rides low in the water to avoid detection.

Figure 8: JIATF South Interdiction Targets



Source: JIATF South.

Source: JIATF South.

Source: JIATF South.

Examples of the types of vessels that are suspected of trafficking drugs.

While the national task force has the responsibility for the detection and monitoring of suspect air and maritime drug activity in its joint operating area, it also serves to integrate and synchronize interagency counter drug operations. JIATF South embeds non-Department of Defense (DOD) personnel throughout its organization to better integrate DOD, U.S. law enforcement, intelligence agencies, and international partners into these operations. For example, the national task force's Director is a rear admiral from the U.S. Coast Guard, while the Vice Director is from U.S. Customs and Border Protection. According to JIATF South officials, most of the non-DOD embedded personnel do not operate under memoranda of understanding, which permits greater flexibility in defining embedded

personnel roles and responsibilities, thereby allowing more mutually beneficial relationships.[4] JIATF South officials further stated that it is a continued mutually beneficial relationship which determines the length of stay for embedded personnel. Key elements within JIATF South are its Tactical Analysis Teams and intelligence liaisons, which support the flow of information between the U.S. law enforcement agencies and international partners in the joint operating area and the task force. The Tactical Analysis Teams and intelligence liaisons are placed in key locations in North, Central, and South America, Western Europe, and West Africa. These Tactical Analysis Teams and intelligence liaisons consist of one to two members co-located within the U.S. embassies or missions, are proficient in the local language, and serve between 2 and 5 years in country. They are often co-located with officials from the Drug Enforcement Administration at the U.S. embassy to further enhance information sharing between law enforcement assets in country and interdiction assets in the field.

[4]The Department of State Political Advisor assigned to JIATF South stated that his position operates under a memorandum of understanding.

Appendix II: Continuing Promise

The Continuing Promise mission is an annual humanitarian and civic assistance operation in the Caribbean, Central and South America led by U.S. Southern Command's (SOUTHCOM) Navy component, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command. The mission provides training to U.S. military personnel and international partner nation forces while providing free medical care to communities with limited access to medical treatment, construction and engineering services, and donations and support to selected nations. It is executed in collaboration with other interagency partners, such as the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, as well as nongovernmental organizations and other international partners. Specifically:

- Training. The mission provides U.S. military personnel and international partner nation forces with training on using medical capabilities and conducting construction and engineering services and projects. The mission also provides training on how to plan and coordinate a broad spectrum of humanitarian assistance and disaster response missions.
- Medical care. The mission includes general surgeries, basic medical evaluation and treatment, preventive medicine treatment, dental screenings and treatment, optometry screenings, eyewear distribution, veterinary services, and public health training. Follow-up treatments are arranged with local medical professionals.
- Construction and engineering services. The mission includes civic action programs designed to assist each participating nation in providing local communities with a range of construction capabilities, such as building repairs and improvements, new small construction projects, utility system repairs and construction/technical assistance, pier repair, drainage projects, and trenching.
- Donations and support. The mission delivers donated food and medical supplies to selected countries.

As of June 2010, SOUTHCOM had conducted or scheduled four Continuing Promise missions. Table 2 identifies prior and future Continuing Promise mission ships, deployment dates, countries visited, and reported numbers of patients treated for those missions completed.

Table 2: Continuing Promise Mission Deployment Dates, Countries Visited and Reported Patients Treated

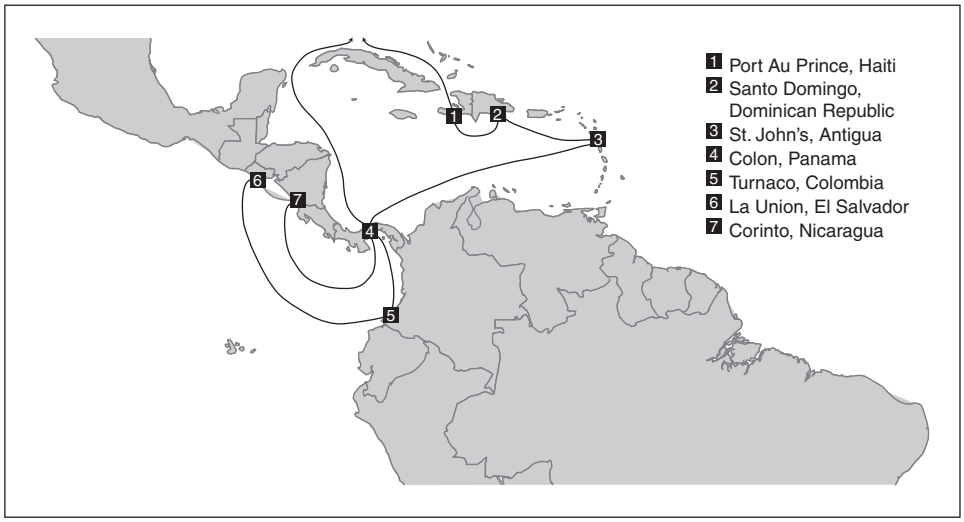
Ship	Deployment dates	Countries visited	Patients treated
USNS Comfort	June to October 2007	Belize, Guatemala, Panama, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Suriname	98,658
USS Boxer and USS Kearsarge	April to November 2008	El Salvador, Haiti, Guatemala, Peru, Nicaragua, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana	71,000
USNS Comfort	April to July 2009	Haiti, Domincan Republic, Antigua, Panama, Colombia, El Salvador, and Nicaragua	100,049
USS Iwo Jima	July to November 2010	Haiti, Colombia, Panama, Suriname, Guyana, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Costa Rica	To be determined upon completion of the mission

Source: SOUTHCOM

Note: Patients treated include the number of basic medical evaluations and treatments provided during the deployment. It does not include general surgeries, preventive medicine treatment, dental screenings and treatment, optometry screenings, eyewear distribution, veterinary services, and public health training.

In July 2009, we observed the Continuing Promise mission while it was deployed in Nicaragua. During this visit, we observed the mission onboard the USNS Comfort and in two mission medical sites in Chinandega and Somotillo, Nicaragua. Deployed with the mission, in addition to DOD personnel, were U.S. Public Health Service medical, engineering, and environmental health officers, volunteers from various nongovernmental organizations and international partner nation medical professionals from Antigua and Barbuda, Brazil, Canada, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, France, Haiti, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, and Panama. Figure 9 lists the locations visited by USNS Comfort during Continuing Promise 2009, while figure 10 displays USNS Comfort activities during the mission.

Figure 9: Locations Visited by USNS Comfort during Continuing Promise 2009



Source: SOUTHCOM, Map Resouces (map).

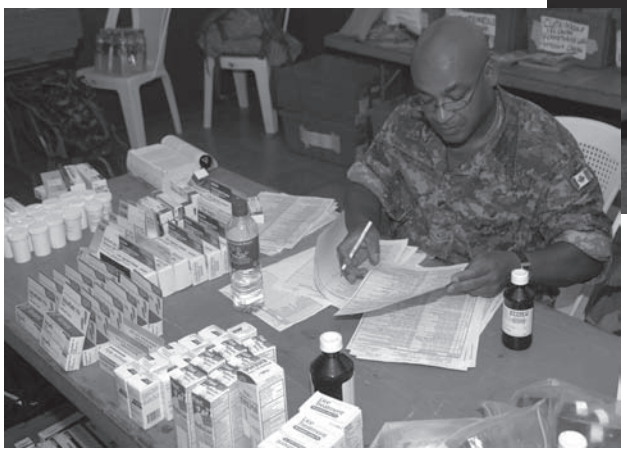
Figure 10: USNS Comfort Activities during Continuing Promise 2009

Source: SOUTHCOM.

Surgeries are performed onboard the Continuing Promise during the 2009 mission.

Source: SOUTHCOM.

Dentists work on a patient during the Continuing Promise mission.



Source: SOUTHCOM.

Canadian military personnel are involved in the Continuing Promise mission.

In October 2009, we observed the initial planning conference for the 2010 Continuing Promise mission. Table 3 lists the nongovernmental organizations involved in the 2009 Continuing Promise mission.

Table 3: Nongovernmental Organizations Involved in the 2009 Continuing Promise Mission

2009 Continuing Promise Mission Nongovernmental Participants
Agua Viva
Alliance for Rabies Control
FACE
Food for the Poor
Haiti Resource Development Foundation
Hugs Across America
International Aid
Kazoobie Kazoos
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
Lions Club
Nour International Relief Aid Foundation
Operation Smile
Project Handclasp
Project HOPE
Rochester Medical Missions
Rotary International
The Wheelchair Foundation
University of California, San Diego Pre-Dental Society
Islamic Relief, USA

Source: SOUTHCOM.

Appendix III: Scope and Methodology

To conduct our work, we obtained and reviewed a wide range of Department of Defense (DOD), U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and interagency partner documents, to include strategies, plans, polices, directives, after-action assessments and other documentation detailing interagency collaboration at the geographic combatant command level. In addition, we interviewed officials at many agencies including DOD, the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Justice to gain their perspectives on SOUTHCOM's collaborative efforts (see table 4). We selected these agencies to interview because they were identified by either SOUTHCOM documents or officials as playing key collaborative roles in SOUTHCOM's area of responsibility. To complement our broader view of collaboration effort at the command level, we identified two areas of collaboration to observe in further detail: illicit trafficking interdiction efforts and humanitarian assistance efforts. We chose these two areas based on our review of SOUTHCOM strategic objectives and based on the large involvement of U.S. government agencies, international partners, and nongovernmental and private organizations in these efforts and the timeliness of some of these efforts to our review. We supplemented our review with additional information regarding collaboration highlighted by SOUTHCOM, SOUTHCOM's components, DOD, Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Homeland Security, and Department of Justice officials.

Table 4: Agencies Interviewed During our Review

Name of agency	Office visited during our review
Department of Defense	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
	Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations
	Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics and Global Threats
	Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Western Hemisphere Affairs
	Defense Security Cooperation Agency
	U.S. Navy
	Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
	Center for Naval Analyses
	Joint Staff
	Directorate of Operational Plans and Joint Force Development
	Directorate of Strategic Plans and Policy
	U.S. Southern Command, Headquarters
	Joint Interagency Task Force South
Department of State	Bureau of Political-Military Affairs
	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
U.S. Agency for International Development	Office of Military Affairs
	Office of Regional Sustainable Development, Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
Department of Homeland Security	U.S. Coast Guard
	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Department of Justice	Federal Bureau of Investigation
	Drug Enforcement Administration

Source: GAO.

To assess SOUTHCOM's efforts to enhance and sustain collaboration with interagency and other stakeholders, we identified best practices in prior GAO reports, and to determine the extent that SOUTHCOM demonstrated these practices, we interviewed DOD and interagency partner officials and

reviewed related documents.[1] Specifically, we interviewed SOUTHCOM officials and embedded interagency staff from the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development at SOUTHCOM's headquarters in Miami, Florida, in June 2009 to obtain their views on SOUTHCOM's collaborative efforts. In addition, we interviewed and gathered documentation from a number of SOUTHCOM's interagency partners in Washington, D.C., including officials from DOD, the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Justice to gain their perspectives on SOUTHCOM's collaborative efforts. We interviewed officials at Joint Interagency Task Force South in Key West, Florida in August 2009 and reviewed documentation including guidance, plans, and interdiction reports detailing the task forces' efforts. We also observed a humanitarian and civic assistance mission-the 2009 Continuing Promise-in Nicaragua in July 2009, and attended mission planning sessions in Jacksonville, Florida, in October 2009 and Panama City, Panama, in December 2009, during which we interviewed U.S. government, international partner, and nongovernmental organization officials involved in planning and executing the mission. Nongovernmental organizations we spoke with included Rotary International, Project HOPE, University of California, San Diego Pre-Dental Society, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and Inter Action. We also visited the U.S. embassies in Panama, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic in December of 2009, interviewing U.S. government and international partner nation officials to obtain their views on SOUTHCOM's collaborative efforts. Each country we visited had been visited during the 2009 Continuing Promise mission, supported SOUTHCOM's illicit trafficking interdiction efforts, and represented a different region within SOUTHCOM's area of responsibility: Panama in Central America; Colombia in South America; and Dominican Republic in the Caribbean.

To evaluate SOUTHCOM's efforts to develop an organizational structure that facilitates interagency collaboration and positions the command to conduct a full range of military missions, we identified DOD's guidance for the organization of a combatant command as outlined in DOD joint publications, instructions and other documents, and analyzed

[1]GAO-09-904SP; GAO, *Results Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, GAO-06-15 (Washington, D.C.: October 21, 2005); and GAO, *Results-Oriented Cultures: Implementation Steps to Assist Mergers and Organizational Transformations*, GAO-03-669 (Washington, D.C. July 2, 2003).

SOUTHCOM's strategic documents, policies, guidance and directives outlining the command's mission, organizational structure, and staff functions. We interviewed SOUTHCOM and interagency partner officials from each directorate within the organizational structure in Miami, Florida, in June 2009 and reviewed and analyzed documentation regarding SOUTHCOM's 2008 organizational structure changes. We also conducted follow-up meetings with SOUTHCOM officials in Miami, Florida in April 2010 to obtain information on the effectiveness of the command's organizational structure in supporting international disaster relief efforts following the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

We conducted our review from April 2009 through July 2010 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 IV: Comments from the Department of Defense

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER
3511 N.W. 91st Avenue
Doral, Florida 33172

16 July 2010

Commander

Mr. John H. Pendleton
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G. Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Pendleton,

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report GAO-10-801, "U.S. Southern Command Demonstrates Interagency Collaboration, but Its Haiti Response Revealed Challenges Conducting a Large Military Operation," dated July 2010 (GAO Code 351338).

The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft report and commends the thorough and balanced professionalism of the GAO Team throughout the more than year-long assessment period.

The Department concurs with the GAO's two recommendations and is addressing these issues as quickly as possible to ensure readiness for future contingencies. The scale of the Haiti disaster would have challenged the response capabilities of any organization; U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), with assistance from DoD and interagency partners, adapted quickly to the task and helped avert even greater suffering and loss of life in Haiti.

USSOUTHCOM has aggressively tackled organizational issues identified during the Haiti disaster response effort, modifying its staff structure and comprehensively reviewing its allocation of personnel to meet mission requirements.

USSOUTHCOM's ability to respond to the crisis quickly was in part a byproduct of close, collaborative relationships developed with a range of U.S. Government interagency partners over many years. USSOUTHCOM has striven to become a center of excellence in interagency partnering and has actively shared its experience and contacts with the other geographic combatant commands.

Thank you again for the opportunity to demonstrate USSOUTHCOM's interagency capabilities and the constructive recommendations that will help the Command remain responsive to national security needs in its area of responsibility. Our point of contact for this matter is Mr. Todd Harvey, Director, J9 (Partnering) at 305-437-3660 or thomas.harvey@hq.southcom.mil.

Sincerely,

Douglas M. Fraser
General, USAF
Combatant Commander

Appendix V: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

John H. Pendleton, (202) 512-3489 or pendletonj@gao.gov

Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Marie Mak, Assistant Director; Richard Geiger; Mae Jones; Arthur Lord; Jennifer Neer; Steven Putansu; Michael Shaughnessy; and Amie Steele made major contributions to this report.

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