



G A O

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

August 25, 2005

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

The Honorable Duncan L. Hunter
Chairman
The Honorable Ike Skelton
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Subject: Defense Management: Assessment Should Be Done to Clarify Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office Personnel and Funding Needs

In response to congressional concerns about the Department of Defense's (DOD) performance in accounting for missing personnel, DOD established the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Office in July 1993. This office is now called the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO). DPMO's original mission was to provide centralized management of prisoner of war/missing in action affairs throughout DOD, and the office initially focused on missing service personnel from the Vietnam War and, to a lesser extent, incidents during the Cold War. Since its inception, Congress and DOD have expanded DPMO's mission and responsibilities.

Concerned about the level of DPMO's resources, Congress in 2002 directed the Secretary of Defense to ensure that DPMO was provided with sufficient military and civilian personnel and funding to enable the office to fully perform its mission.¹ Specifically, Congress established minimum levels of resources for DPMO, providing that the military and civilian personnel levels, as well as funding, would be not less than requested in "the President's budget for fiscal year 2003." On the basis of this congressional direction, DOD concluded that these minimum levels were: 46 military

¹ Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003, Pub. L. No. 107-314, § 551(a) (2002).

and 69 civilian personnel and \$15.974 million in operation and maintenance (O&M) funding.² We used these minimum levels in our analysis.

The fiscal year 2005 National Defense Authorization Act³ required that we review the missions, staffing, and funding of DPMO. As we discussed with your offices, our objectives were to (1) identify changes in DPMO's mission from the inception of the office to the present; (2) compare DPMO personnel and funding requests with actual staffing and funding levels from inception through fiscal year 2004, and determine whether the actual levels for fiscal years 2003 and 2004 were consistent with the minimum levels established by law; and (3) assess the extent to which DOD has evaluated any need for adjustment in personnel and/or funding levels, given changes in DPMO's mission. In May 2005, we provided your offices with information summarizing our observations in a briefing format. This letter summarizes and updates the information in the briefing (see enclosure I).

To perform our work, we assessed DOD directives and federal laws that either assigned missions to DOD that were later delegated to DPMO, or assigned missions directly to DPMO. We conducted interviews with DPMO officials and other officials in DOD components that also have responsibility for personnel accounting, recovery, and/or budgetary issues. We analyzed staffing data and budget materials from the President's budget requests, as well as the Future Years' Defense Program and other DOD sources, and we determined that the reliability of these data was sufficient for our purposes. We performed our work from January 2005 through June 2005 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Further details about our scope and methodology are provided at the end of this report.

Results in Brief

Since its inception, DPMO's mission has expanded from initially accounting primarily for missing personnel from the Vietnam War era to accounting for missing personnel from past and current conflicts. Furthermore, in addition to performing its accounting function, DPMO has also become DOD's principal policy and oversight office for the rescue and return of live personnel to friendly control – that is, recovery. As of July 2005, DOD is revising DPMO's charter, which codifies DPMO's roles and missions.

After an initial consolidation period immediately following DPMO's inception, total personnel and current-dollar funding requests and actual levels have increased slightly. The total number of civilians in DPMO has declined, reflecting the overall DOD downsizing, with little difference between requested and actual numbers,

² With respect to the minimum level for military personnel, we found no specific number in the President's budget for fiscal year 2003. Other supporting documents included various levels of military personnel for the DPMO. For example, a budget justification document submitted to Congress by DOD included 46 military personnel for DPMO, and DOD's Future Years Defense Program submitted pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 221 indicated 19 military personnel for DPMO. The Conference Report for the Authorization Act states that the "conferees note that the budget request for fiscal year 2003 provides for 46 military personnel." H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 107-772, at 648 (2002). In an April 27, 2004 memorandum, the Deputy Secretary of Defense stated that Congress had directed that DPMO's military manpower should be at least 46 billets.

³ Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005, Pub. L. No. 108-375, §582 (2004).

whereas the number of military personnel working in DPMO has exhibited more fluctuation, with varying differences between requested and actual numbers. However, since fiscal year 2003, actual civilian and military personnel totals have not met the congressionally directed minimums. Actual civilian totals in fiscal years 2003 and 2004 were about 6 percent below the 69 minimum personnel—65 in both years. Actual military personnel totals in fiscal years 2003 and 2004 were 30 percent or more below the 46 minimum personnel—32 and 29, respectively. Between fiscal years 1996 and 2005, DPMO funding increased in both constant and current dollar terms, and a close balance was kept between requested and actual funding. Operations and Maintenance (O&M) funding (which pays civilian salaries and other expenses) was similar in both requested and actual amounts, and it offset fluctuations in military personnel funding. Since fiscal year 1994, DPMO's O&M requested and actual funding levels increased, in current dollar terms. Except for fiscal year 2003, DPMO's funding has not met the congressionally directed minimum levels. In fiscal years 2004 and 2005, DOD requested and received slightly less than the congressionally directed minimum of \$15.974 million—\$174,000 (about 1 percent) and \$10,000 (about .06 percent) respectively.

The extent to which there is any need for adjustments in personnel or funding levels, given changes in DPMO's mission, cannot be determined because DPMO has not been subjected to a formal needs assessment since 1998. Until DPMO's charter is finalized and an assessment is performed, neither Congress nor the Secretary of Defense will have sufficient information to determine what the appropriate personnel and funding levels for the office should be.

We are making recommendations to improve DOD's ability to determine what resources are needed for DPMO and how they can best be allocated.

DOD provided written comments on a draft of this report and concurred with each of our recommendations. DOD also provided technical comments on the report and we made changes where appropriate.

Background

In 1993, DOD established DPMO by combining four separate offices within DOD. The personnel and funding resources of the four offices transferred to DPMO; however, many of the people did not transfer with their positions. Since its creation in 1993, DPMO has been headed by a Director, who also serves as a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense in the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. The Assistant Secretary, in turn, reports to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

DPMO's functions are divided between accounting and recovery missions. With respect to a person in a missing status, accounting takes place when (1) the person is returned to United States control alive, (2) the remains of the person are recovered and are identified through visual or forensic means, or (3) credible evidence exists to

support another determination of the person's status.⁴ Recovery refers to actions taken to rescue or extract personnel for return to friendly control.⁵

Other DOD components and organizations also have roles in accounting and/or recovery. The military services and the office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) provide casualty and family support, handle mortuary and funeral issues, and maintain personnel casualty databases. The Joint Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Command, which is subordinate to U.S. Pacific Command, also focuses on accounting issues. Teams from this command also conduct operations to recover and identify personal remains. Finally, the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency, which is subordinate to the U.S. Joint Forces Command, advises the military on personnel recovery matters such as training, planning, intelligence, and operations; and coordinates personnel recovery issues throughout DOD and other government agencies.

DPMO's Mission Has Expanded

DPMO's roles and missions have expanded since the office was established in July 1993, although there is no single, up-to-date document that enumerates and describes them. DPMO responsibilities are delineated in 10 DOD directives and instructions, not including the original charter. Mission growth has occurred incrementally, with DOD missions having been added by legislation and delegated to DPMO by the Secretary of Defense, without corresponding revisions having been made to the overall mission statement or charter directive. As of August 2005, DOD is revising DPMO's charter, which codifies DPMO's roles and missions as currently delineated. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that the charter directive should be published later this summer.

DPMO's original missions were set out in its charter directive. The office originally had several main responsibilities, including participating in negotiations with foreign governments in efforts to account for missing American servicemembers and providing representation to U.S. government forums; assembling and analyzing information, and maintaining databases on U.S. military or civilians who are or were POW/MIAs; declassifying documents in accordance with the law and communicating with affected families; and providing a statement of intelligence collection requirements to the Defense Intelligence Agency. Over time, due to a series of laws and DOD directives and instructions, DPMO's missions gradually expanded. In 1994, Congress directed DOD to establish liaisons with family members of unaccounted-for Korean War and Cold War personnel.⁶ In 1996, Congress further directed DOD to establish an office to have responsibility for DOD policy on both accounting for and recovery of missing persons.⁷ That year Congress also expanded the scope of personnel considered covered to include DOD contractors.

⁴ Department of Defense (DOD) Instruction 2310.5, Accounting for Missing Persons, section E2.1.1 (Jan. 31, 2000) (hereinafter DOD Instruction 2310.5).

⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub. 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, (May 9, 2005).

⁶ National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1995, Pub. L. 103-337, § 1031 (1994).

⁷ National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1996, Pub. L. 104-106, § 569 (1996).

During 1996, the Secretary of Defense issued two messages that directed DPMO to assume the new missions identified by Congress. An additional series of DOD Directives and Instructions that further delineated DPMO's responsibilities was issued between 1997 and 2003. By 2003, these included: setting personnel recovery,⁸ repatriation,⁹ and isolated personnel training¹⁰ policy; conducting interagency coordination on all matters concerning covered persons;¹¹ and organizing and leading the DOD response cell established to manage recovery of missing personnel.¹² One of these instructions also designated DPMO as the central point of contact in the Office of the Secretary of Defense for training and education measures necessary to support the Code of Conduct—the code outlining the expected behavior for captured military personnel.¹³ Once the DOD directives and instructions were completed, DPMO undertook an effort to update its original charter to reflect its designated missions. DPMO's original emphasis was accounting for personnel who were still missing from the Vietnam War era, which gave the staff a caseload at that time of about 2,000. In contrast, the current accounting caseload, which includes personnel missing from past and current conflicts, is about 88,000.

Two recent documents have implications for further expanding DPMO's mission. First, DPMO's strategic plan, issued in January 2005, specified a goal of implementing an organizational structure that would unify government missing personnel accounting efforts. DPMO officials have proposed that their office lead the unification efforts, but without necessarily changing the organizational structure. The second document, which was still in draft form as of August 2005, would update DPMO's charter directive. Consistent with the goal in the strategic plan, the initial version that we reviewed would have given the office control over the entire process of recovery of personnel missing as the result of hostile action, designate DPMO as the single point of contact with other parts of the U.S. and foreign governments on all accounting matters, and assign DPMO the leading role in family outreach. Reactions to early versions of the draft were mixed, with some organizations expressing concern that DPMO would assume more of an operational role than it has previously played, particularly in the areas of family outreach and live recovery. A senior DOD official told us that all DOD stakeholders need to reach a common understanding of the extent of DPMO's operational responsibilities and authorities before the document can be finalized. At the time this report was issued, the charter directive had not been finalized, but DOD noted the directive should be published later this summer. DOD also noted that the latest draft does not expand DPMO's roles beyond those it is currently performing and has been revised to show DPMO as the "primary DOD representative and point of contact" rather than the "single point of contact" on all accounting matters.

⁸ DOD Instruction 2310.6, Non-Conventional Assisted Recovery in the Department of Defense (Oct. 13, 2000).

⁹ DOD Instruction 2310.4, Repatriation of Prisoners of War (POW), Hostages, Peacetime Government Detainees, and Other Missing or Isolated Personnel (Nov 21, 2000).

¹⁰ DOD Instruction 1300.23, Isolated Personnel Training for DOD Civilian and Contractors (Aug. 20, 2003).

¹¹ DOD Instruction 2310.5.

¹² DOD Instruction 2310.3, Personnel Recovery Response Cell (PRRC) Procedures (Jun 6, 1997).

¹³ DOD Directive 1300.7, Training and Education to Support the Code of Conduct (CoC) (Dec. 8, 2000).

DOD Has Not Met Congressionally Directed Personnel and Funding Levels

After an initial consolidation period immediately following DPMO's inception, total personnel and current-dollar funding requests and actual levels have increased slightly. Civilian requested and actual personnel numbers have declined while military personnel numbers have increased. In fiscal years 2003 and 2004, civilian and military actual levels did not meet the congressionally directed minimum levels. O&M funding has slightly increased since inception, but it missed the minimum level in fiscal years 2004 and 2005 by \$174,000 (about 1 percent) and \$10,000 (about .06 percent) respectively.

Personnel

Overall, after an initial consolidation period immediately following DPMO's inception, total personnel levels have increased slightly from 84 in 1995 to 94 in fiscal year 2004. DPMO's requested civilian personnel total fell steadily from 1994 through 2001, consistent with overall DOD downsizing, and since then has stabilized at 69 requested personnel. Throughout these years, most of the requested positions were filled.¹⁴ In fiscal years 2003 and 2004, DPMO's actual civilian personnel level did not meet the congressionally directed minimum of 69 personnel. In both fiscal years, the actual number was 65, about 6 percent less. According to a DPMO official, the office tries to stay at the 69-person level; however, retirements, hiring actions, transfers, and other personnel issues result in fluctuations in the actual number of civilian personnel in DPMO at any one time. DPMO officials said that they plan to request an increase to 114 civilian positions after fiscal year 2006 on a basis of 4 additional positions per year. After they complete development of the strategic plan tasks and subtasks and resource estimates, they will refine their projections and submit requirements for future funding.

The number of military personnel requested, on the other hand, has fluctuated considerably over time because of confusion within the department as to whether temporary positions assigned to DPMO should be included in the number requested. Specifically, while DPMO had 19 permanent military positions after the initial consolidation period, it also had 27 additional military positions that were temporary.¹⁵ These temporary positions have been included in the number of positions officially requested in some years, but excluded in others. As a result, there is little correlation between the number requested and the actual number of military personnel positions.

Specifically, in fiscal year 2003, the year that Congress established the minimum number of military personnel for DPMO, DOD included the 19 permanent positions but did not include the 27 temporary positions in data that it sent to the Office of Management and Budget for inclusion in the President's budget request. However,

¹⁴ As of June 2005, DPMO's 69 civilian positions were graded as follows: GS-15, 14 positions; GS-14, 17 positions; GS-13, 22 positions; GS-12, 6 positions; GS-11, 6 positions; GS-9, 1 position; and GS-8, 3 positions.

¹⁵ DPMO identified the 27 temporary military positions as necessary to provide support to the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission, which was established in 1992 to account for and recover missing American servicemembers in the former Soviet Union, but, over time, these positions have evolved to support other aspects of DPMO's work.

the 19 positions were included in the more detailed budget justification materials that are submitted by DOD to Congress. As a result, the Office of the Comptroller within the Office of the Secretary of Defense initially thought the congressionally directed number was 19, while DPMO believed it to be 46.

In an April 2004 memorandum, the Deputy Secretary of Defense stated that the total number of military personnel positions in DPMO should be 46. While the number of positions requested has remained at 46 since that time, the actual total has been lower than the congressionally directed minimum of 46 in both fiscal years 2003 (32 actual, about 30 percent below) and 2004 (29 actual, about 37 percent below). The military services are responsible for providing personnel to fill these positions and have not always provided the full complement of 46 servicemembers to fill DPMO's positions. According to DOD, the positions have not always been filled because of competing priorities, such as the global war on terrorism. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that, although DPMO's military personnel positions are not currently filled at the congressionally directed minimum, DPMO continues to meet its mission successfully.

Funding

DPMO's O&M funding requests, which pay chiefly for civilian salaries, travel, and facilities, have increased slightly in current dollars since fiscal year 1994, the first year for which some data were available. The actual amounts received have closely followed the requests. It should be noted that DPMO funding requests included in the President's Budgets for fiscal years 2004 and 2005 were slightly lower than the \$15.974 million congressionally directed minimum for O&M, \$174,000 and \$10,000, respectively. DPMO officials stated they did not know why this occurred. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that, although the FY 2004 and FY 2005 funding was slightly less than the congressionally directed minimum, it completely funded the DPMO mission requirement.

DPMO has no control over military personnel funding, which is appropriated to the services; in any event, there is no legislated minimum dollar requirement for military personnel funding. We were able to obtain some aggregated data from DOD that allowed us to compare the military personnel funding that would support DPMO's number of military personnel positions. Because DOD did not have specific data, we were unable to trace military personnel funding for fiscal years prior to 1996 (when the first unified DPMO budget was presented), but we found that military personnel requests and actual amounts have fluctuated since that year. For example, the actual amounts have ranged from a low of \$1.17 million in fiscal year 1996 to a high of \$3.31 million in fiscal year 1997.

DPMO Lacks a Recent Needs Assessment

Congress has stated that government organizations should define their mission, measure performance, and use performance information to self correct.¹⁶ Without

¹⁶ Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, Pub. L. No. 103-62 (1993); GAO, *Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act*, GAO/GGD-96-118 (Washington, D.C.: June 1, 1996).

such a roadmap, agencies can find it difficult to make appropriate resource decisions, especially important in a time of overall resource decline.¹⁷ With regard to DPMO, Congress specifically required that the Secretary of Defense ensure that the office has adequate resources to accomplish its mission and established the minimum personnel and funding levels discussed above.

DPMO has not been subject to a comprehensive needs assessment since 1998. That assessment, done by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, evaluated each directorate and recommended personnel levels for each; however, while the study acknowledged the need for more resources, it recognized the constrained DOD fiscal environment and recommended that DPMO make better use of the personnel and funding that were already available. However, the study did not link its survey of DPMO's activities to a roles-and-missions baseline, such as an existing strategic plan. Other studies have analyzed aspects of DPMO's mission without providing a systematic evaluation of what staff or budgetary resources are needed to accomplish the mission. For example, a study done by the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) and published in 2004 considered only selected aspects of DPMO's activities and recommended that DPMO add personnel to work on recovery aspects of its mission without considering how this would affect other DPMO roles and responsibilities. In its written comments on our draft report, DOD noted that the IDA study linked the need for additional DPMO resources to issuance of a National Security Presidential Directive, which has not yet been issued. The Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) Office of Program Analysis and Evaluation recommended in 2003 that a comprehensive study be undertaken, but its recommendation was not approved by DOD management on the grounds that legislation had already established a floor level of personnel and funding, and therefore a study would be redundant.

While DPMO does have a new strategic plan that includes a mission statement, the office has not taken three key steps that constitute the core of output-based performance management: define all desired outcomes, establish metrics to measure performance, and use performance information to make adjustments and link resources to performance goals. For example, DPMO has not defined metrics to measure its performance, and, since there are no metrics to measure performance, DPMO has insufficient information on performance. Within DPMO, budget requests are made when division directors argue for their particular initiatives before a management panel; however, the panel does not link its resource decisions to a strategic plan.

Conclusions

DOD has not clarified the precise scope of DPMO's roles and missions. Moreover, the recently issued strategic plan lacks key elements, such as performance metrics and linkages between resources and performance goals. As a result, neither the Secretary of Defense nor the Congress have sufficient knowledge about how DPMO intends to accomplish its current missions or, if it is assigned new missions, how the office intends to apportion its resources. Until a formal needs assessment for DPMO's workload is conducted, Congress and DOD cannot make informed decisions

¹⁷ GAO, *21st Century Challenges: Reexamining the Base of the Federal Government*, GAO-05-325SP (Washington, D.C.: February 2005).

about what level of resources to assign to DPMO or encourage it to assume additional responsibilities, nor can the Secretary of Defense fulfill his statutory responsibility to ensure that DPMO has adequate resources.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We are recommending that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to (1) determine the scope of DPMO's missions and responsibilities, and revise DPMO's charter accordingly; (2) based on the results of this determination, undertake a formal needs assessment of DPMO's workload to determine both what resources are needed and how they can best be allocated among the various mission areas, taking into account how DPMO fits within the overall spectrum of DOD organizations that have accounting or recovery missions; and (3) incorporate that information into a revised strategic plan that links goals and objectives to performance metrics and resource needs.

Scope and Methodology

To identify changes in DPMO's mission from the inception of the office to the present, we interviewed DPMO officials; service representatives in the offices of headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C.; The Army Adjutant General, Alexandria, Virginia; and officials from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Washington, D.C.; the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; and the Joint Staff (J-5), Washington, D.C. We also conducted telephone interviews with the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, Honolulu, Hawaii; Air Force Personnel Center, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas; and Navy Personnel Command, Millington, Tennessee.

To compare DPMO personnel and funding requests with actual personnel and funding levels since DPMO's inception, we interviewed officials in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), Program Analysis and Evaluation and Program and Financial Control; Washington Headquarters Services; and the Directorate for Administration and Management. We also reviewed personnel and budget data from the Defense Manpower Data Center, Future Years' Defense Program (FYDP), Defense Manpower Requirements reports, and DOD Program Budget Decisions and Program Decision Memoranda; annual President's budget requests; and Congressional Budget Presentation justification materials. For purposes of assessing actual personnel levels, we used end-strength data – that is, the number of personnel who were on board as of September 30 of each year, which is the last day of the fiscal year. We encountered discrepancies in the data when comparing different sources' information for both civilian and military actual (on-board) personnel, and so although our chart is correct to the extent possible using official DOD sources, we cannot be sure that each data point represents the exact end-strength for each year. However, any errors are modest, given the low total numbers involved. To assess funding levels for military personnel, we used FYDP data. This database provides information that is calculated according to the number of personnel and whether they are officers or enlisted, rather than by adding up the compensation of each individual who occupied a particular position for all or part of the year. We determined that the reliability of these data was sufficient for our purposes.

To assess the extent to which DOD has evaluated any need for adjustment in staffing or funding levels given changes in DPMO's mission, we interviewed officials at DPMO, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), Program Analysis and Evaluation, and the Research and Studies Office within the office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. We obtained and analyzed reports on DPMO's structure, staffing, and resource needs. We reviewed reports that were prepared within DOD, such as the Directorate for Administration and Management's 1998 staffing study and Army Manpower Analysis Agency's 1999 study, and external reports, such as the Institute for Defense Analyses' 2004 report on creating a personnel recovery architecture.

We performed our work from January 2005 through June 2005 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

DOD provided written comments on a draft of this report and concurred with each of our recommendations.

With regard to our first recommendation that DOD determine the scope of DPMO's mission and responsibilities and revise DPMO's charter accordingly, DOD stated that a revised charter directive reflecting DPMO's responsibilities and functions should be published later this summer.

With regard to our second recommendation that DOD undertake a formal needs assessment of DPMO's workload to determine what resources are needed and how they should be allocated, DOD stated that DPMO has contracted with the Institute for Defense Analyses to develop an overall organizational plan for the personnel accounting mission that unifies DOD's personnel accounting efforts. DOD also stated that this study would not be completed until September 30, 2006 and any changes "would not be implemented until after it is reviewed, changes proposed and decisions implemented, a time-consuming process. Consequently, DOD will weigh the costs and benefits of conducting a needs assessment now versus waiting until after the community is reorganized." We believe that, given DOD's statement that the directive outlining DPMO's responsibilities and functions should be published later this summer, DOD has sufficient basis for conducting a needs assessment in the near term. We note that DPMO has not been subject to a comprehensive assessment of its workload and resources in its 12 years of existence. Should the ongoing study result in changes affecting DPMO, DOD could then reexamine DPMO's needs and make adjustments accordingly.

With regard to our third recommendation that, after a formal needs assessment is done, DOD revise DPMO's strategic plan to link goals and objectives to performance metrics and resource needs, DOD stated that DPMO is currently developing an implementation plan that would link the strategic plan's goals and objectives to performance metrics and resource expenditures. We continue to believe that a formal needs assessment must be done to determine DPMO's resource requirements, based on DPMO's stated mission and responsibilities in the charter directive being finalized, before this information can be linked in any meaningful way to the goals and objectives in a strategic plan.

DOD also provided technical comments on the report and we made changes where appropriate. We have reprinted DOD's comments in enclosure II.

Should you or your staff have any further questions, please contact me at (202) 512-9619. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report were Ann Borseth, Jonathan Clark, Sally Newman, Paul Newton, Maria-Alaina Rambus, Cheryl Weissman, John Van Schaik, and R.K. Wild.



Sharon L. Pickup
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Capabilities and Management

Enclosures



Observations: Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO)

**Briefing to
Senate and House Armed Services
Committees**



Mandate and GAO Objectives

PL 108-375, Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005, requires GAO to assess DPMO's mission, personnel, and funding.

GAO's objectives are to:

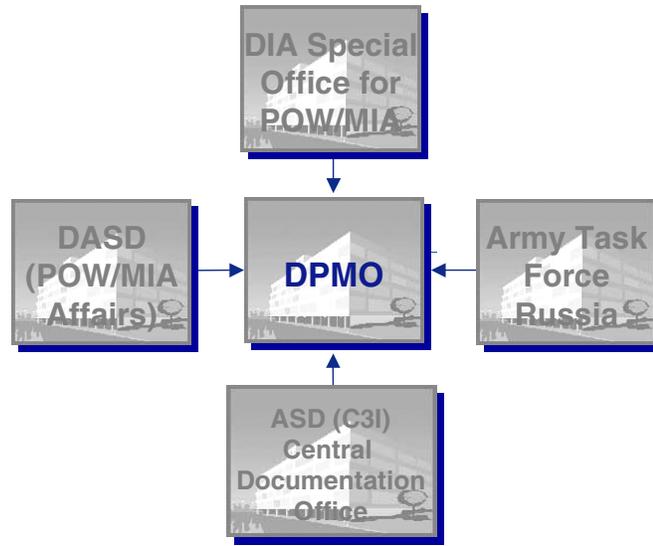
- Identify changes in DPMO's mission from the inception of the office in 1993 to the present;
- Compare DPMO personnel and funding requests with actual personnel and funding levels since inception, and whether actual levels met congressional minimum levels; and
- Assess the extent to which DOD has evaluated any need for adjustment in personnel and/or funding levels given changes in DPMO's mission.

Observations

- DPMO was originally established to account for missing personnel from Vietnam and, to a lesser extent, the Cold War. However, the mission has expanded to include accounting for missing personnel from past conflicts as well as becoming DOD's principal policy and oversight office for personnel recovery.
- Total personnel and current-dollar funding requests and actual levels have increased slightly since DPMO's inception.
 - DOD did not meet P.L. 107-314 requirement to sustain actual personnel at the FY 2003 President's Budget level (69 civilian/46 military) in FY 2003 and FY 2004, and missed the funding target (\$15,974,000) in FY 2004 and FY 2005.
- DPMO has not been subject to a formal needs assessment since 1998. DPMO's recent strategic plan set goals and objectives, but did not quantify personnel needs. New draft directive codifies scope of DPMO's responsibilities, but DPMO has not quantified how many staff will be needed.

Background: Origin of DPMO

- Established on July 16, 1993, by DOD directive.
- Four existing offices combined to create DPMO. These offices worked to resolve cases from Russia and Southeast Asia.
- Personnel and funding transferred from component offices to DPMO.



Background: DOD Components Sharing Recovery and/or Accounting Mission

Mission	DPMO	Military Community & Family Policy (Personnel and Readiness)	Service Casualty Offices	Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (Pacific Command)	Joint Personnel Recovery Agency (Joint Forces Command)
Casualty support		X	X		
Mortuary Affairs		X	X		
Missing Personnel policy (past and current)	X			X	X
Family Support	X	X	X		
Personnel Recovery Policy	X				X
Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape Policy	X				X
Recovery operations				X	X

Source: GAO Analysis of DOD Data.

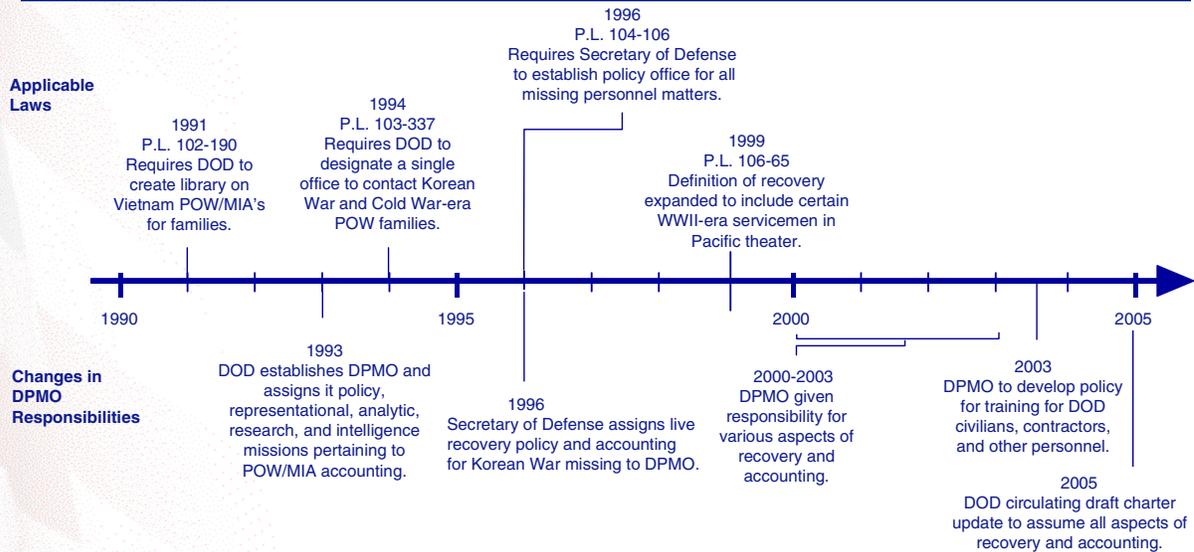


Background: Total Personnel Unaccounted For (as of July 2005)

• World War II	about 78,000
• Korea/Cold War	more than 8,300
• Vietnam War	more than 1,800
• Gulf War	3
• Current Conflicts (to include Colombia, OIF/OEF)	12

Source: DPMO

DPMO Mission Requirements



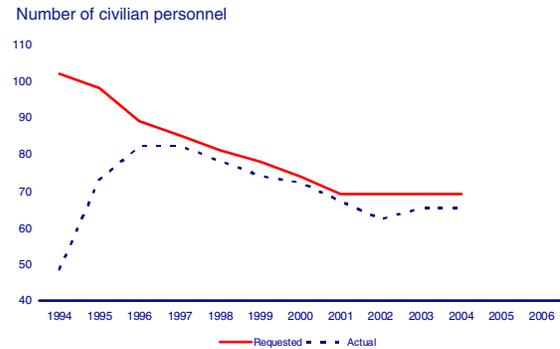
Source: GAO analysis of public laws and DOD directives/instructions.

Total Personnel

- After the initial consolidation of offices into DPMO
 - Personnel numbers requested have fluctuated over time due to civilian downsizing and uncertainty of military positions.
 - Actual total personnel numbers have increased slightly.
- P.L. 107-314 established minimum requirements for personnel for DPMO at the level of the FY03 President's Budget request, which were set at 69 civilians and 46 military.

Civilian Personnel: Comparison of Requested and Actual Personnel Levels

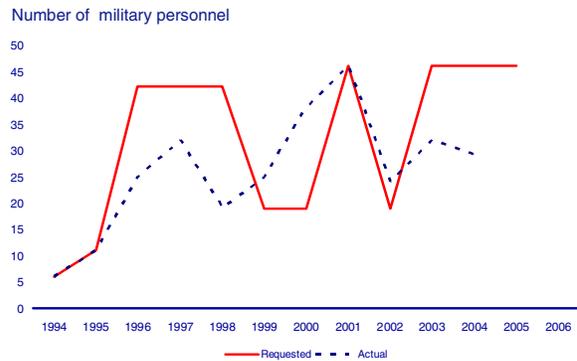
- DPMO started with 122 positions (some vacant) in August 1993, but many staff remained with original agencies.
- Personnel levels decreased over time due to overall DOD downsizing.
- P.L. 107-314 established personnel level of 69 civilians as a minimum. Actual levels were about 6 percent less--65 civilians in FY2003 and FY 2004.
- Civilian totals exclude 29 information technology support contractors on-board since 2000 and small numbers of intermittent contractors.



Sources: President's Budget Requests and justification books, Program Budget Decisions, Defense Manpower Data Center SR-113 pay records.

Military Personnel: Comparison of Requested and Actual Personnel Levels

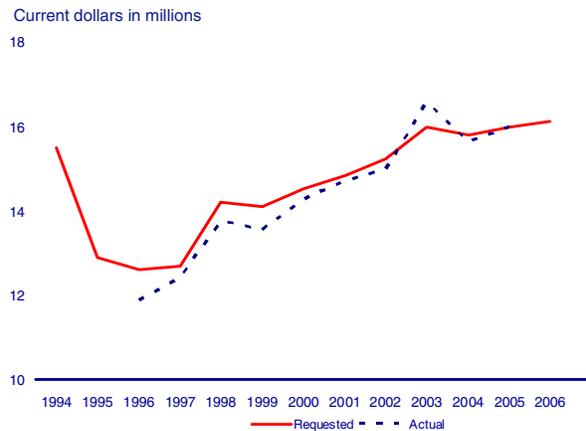
- At inception, DPMO had few permanent military positions.
- Requests for military positions fluctuated due to uncertainty of authorization of 27 temporary military positions.
- P.L. 107-314 established minimum requirement for military positions. DOD confirmed congressional direction that requirement is 46.
- In fiscal years 2003 and 2004, actual levels (32 and 29 respectively) did not meet minimum. Actual levels depend on availability of military personnel.



Sources: President's Budget requests and justification books, Future Years Defense Program (FYDP).

O&M Funding: Comparison of Requested and Actual Levels

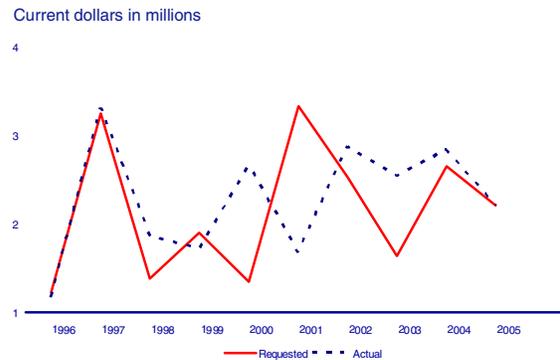
- DPMO's overall Operation and Maintenance (O&M) funding request initially decreased, but then steadily increased, in current dollars, from about \$15.5 million in FY 1994 to almost \$16 million in FY 2005.
- P.L. 107-314 requires DOD to maintain DPMO funding at least at level of FY 2003 President's Budget (\$15.974 million).
- DOD met target in FY03, but requested and received slightly less funding in FY04 and FY05.



Sources: President's Budget Request, Future Years Defense Program. Actual data for FY94-95 not available.

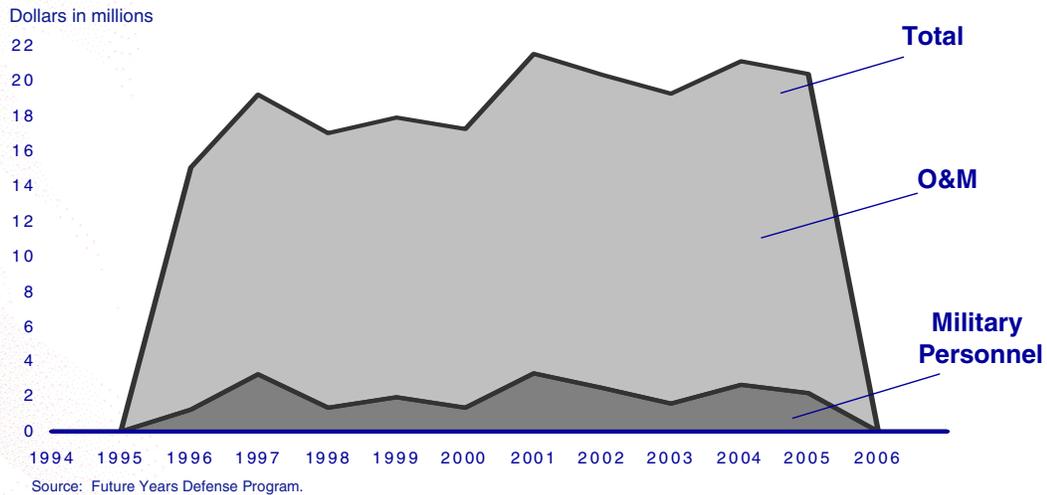
Military Personnel Funding: Comparison of Requested and Actual Levels

- DPMO gets no military personnel funding; services pay those costs.
- Requested military personnel funding has fluctuated because of the uncertainty of authorization of 27 temporary military positions.
- Actual military personnel costs have fluctuated due in large part to the number of authorized positions filled.
- At times, actual is greater than requested because the 27 temporary positions were reauthorized too late to be reflected in a request.



Source: GAO analysis of President's Budget Request and Future Years Defense Program. Data for 1994-1995 are unavailable.

DPMO Actual Funding by Account, in Constant FY2005 Dollars



DOD Evaluation of Personnel and Funding Needs

- OSD's Directorate for Administration and Management study done in 1998 acknowledged DPMO's need for more resources, but recommended that DPMO make maximum use of existing resources.
- DPMO-sponsored studies concluded that DPMO needed more resources, but did not conduct formal needs assessments.
 - Army Manpower Analysis Agency, 1999
 - Study to determine combined personnel needs if DPMO were to absorb Army Central Identification Laboratory and Joint Task Force Full Accounting.
 - DPMO has not absorbed these organizations.
 - Interagency National Personnel Recovery Architecture, 2004
 - Study was funded by Congress and conducted by Institute for Defense Analyses.
 - Recommended increasing personnel subject to issuance of new National Security Presidential Directive.
- OSD's Office of Program Analysis and Evaluation sought unsuccessfully in 2003 to initiate comprehensive needs assessment.

DOD Evaluation of Personnel and Funding Needs (cont.)

- DPMO issued Strategic Plan in January 2005 that set forth goals and objectives, but not metrics for personnel needs.
- DOD is currently reviewing a draft update to the DPMO directive that codifies its roles and missions, to include:
 - Central management, policy control, and oversight of the entire process for investigation and recovery related to personnel missing as a result of hostile action.
 - includes: repatriation/reintegration; non-conventional assisted recovery; combat search and rescue; survival, evasion, resistance, and escape (SERE); operational POW/missing personnel matters; isolated personnel training and training on related matters such as Code of Conduct; and DOD support to civil search and rescue.
- DPMO has not quantified how many staff will be needed nor determined how to allocate resources to meet these responsibilities.

Comments from the Department of Defense



INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
2400 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2400

August 11, 2005

Ms. Sharon L. Pickup
Director
Defense Capabilities and Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Ms. Pickup:

Attached is the DoD response to the GAO Draft Report, GAO Code 350632/GAO-05-756R, "Defense Management: Assessment Should be Done to Clarify Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office Personnel and Funding Needs."

The attached consists of the DoD general concurrence in the overall recommendations, with comments on each recommendation, and comments on the factual information in the report. These comments at Tab A are an integral part of the DoD response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Beth Long".

Mary Beth Long
Principal Deputy



DoD Comments on Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to determine the scope of the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) mission and responsibilities, and revise DPMO's charter accordingly.

DoD RESPONSE:

DoD concurs in this recommendation.

A revised draft of the DPMO charter directive has been in coordination since January 2005. It has the concurrence of the DoD components and the OSD Staff, only waiting for DoD General Counsel coordination. There is broad agreement within DoD on the responsibilities and functions reflected in the revised directive so no significant changes are expected from the remaining coordination. The draft directive does not expand DPMO's responsibilities beyond those it is currently performing. It should be published later this summer.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to, based on the results of the determination in Recommendation 1, undertake a formal needs assessment of DPMO's workload to determine both what resources are needed and how they can best be allocated among the various mission areas, taking into account how DPMO fits within the overall spectrum of DoD organizations that have accounting and/or recovery missions.

DOD RESPONSE:

DoD concurs in this recommendation.

In June 2005, DPMO contracted with the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) to develop an overall organizational plan for the personnel accounting mission that unifies DoD's personnel accounting efforts. This study includes examining the structure of the entire accounting community; i.e. DPMO, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, the Air Force Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory, the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, and certain personnel accounting-related functions of the DoD Intelligence Community and Service Casualty Offices.

The study will not be completed until 30 September 2006 when IDA submits its findings. Any changes from the study would not be implemented until after it is reviewed, changes proposed and decisions implemented, a time-consuming process. Consequently, DoD will weigh the costs and benefits of conducting a needs assessment now versus waiting until after the community is reorganized.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to incorporate that information into a revised strategic plan that links goals and objectives to performance metrics and resource needs.

DOD RESPONSE:

DoD concurs in this recommendation.

As reported, DPMO published its first strategic plan in January 2005. Since then, it has developed more specific objectives and enabling tasks to reach its goals. DPMO is currently developing an implementation plan that links the strategic plan's goals and objectives to performance metrics and resource expenditures. This revised strategic plan will be submitted to Policy for review and approval.

3. Substantive factual comments include:

- DoD leadership recognizes the importance of DPMO's mission. As noted in the report, in April 2004, Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz directed the DPMO military manning would be 46, making permanent the 27 temporary billets. This will give those billets the same fill rate priority as the other permanent billets, and an improvement in military manning is expected.
- Since 1999, DPMO has managed its own manpower and budget resources, maintaining its civilian work force and submitting its own budget requests.
- In FY2003, the funding level for DPMO exceeded the congressional minimum by \$642,000, or 4% (\$16.616M). The total amount funded below congressional minimums in FY2004 and FY2005 was \$184,000.
- Although the FY 2004 and FY 2005 funding was slightly less than the congressionally directed minimum, it completely funded the DPMO mission requirement.
- For the FY2006 budget, DPMO has requested funding above the congressional minimum.

5. Please contact me, or the primary action office, OASD/ISA, Captain Michael Fierro, 703-697-2788, if you have further questions.

Attachments: As stated.

TAB A

DoD Comments on Factual Information in Report,
GAO Code 350632/GAO-05-756R

Comment on Objectives of the Report: The GAO objectives stated in the report differ from the language contained in the Congressional legislation (Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Act for Fiscal Year 200, Pub. L. No. 108-375, Sect 582) and the objectives stated in the originating GAO Notification statement. The legislation states the report shall include:

(1) a description of changes, over the period from inception of the office to the time of the submission of the report, in the missions and mission requirements of the office, together with a comparison of personnel and funding requirements of the office over that period with actual manning and funding levels over that period; and

(2) the Comptroller General's assessment of the adequacy of current manning and funding levels for that office in light of current mission requirements.

- The Objectives/Key Questions listed in the originating GAO notification document mirror the legislation but the GAO report adds the statement: "to determine whether the actual levels for fiscal years 2003 and 2004 were consistent with the minimum levels established by law."
- The legislation asks about mission, personnel and funding "requirements" while the report uses the term "requests."

Comments with respect to the DPMO Mission, Manning and Funding: The following comments amplify the report more completely:

- DoD leadership recognizes the importance of DPMO's mission. As noted in the report, in April 2004, Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz directed the DPMO military manning would be 46, making permanent the 27 temporary billets. This will give those billets the same fill rate priority as the other permanent billets, and a dramatic improvement in military manning is expected.
- Since 1999, DPMO has managed its own manpower and budget resources, maintaining its civilian work force and submitting its own budget requests. DoD has never limited DPMO's civilian authorization at a level below that mandated by Congress level.
- In FY2003, the funding level for DPMO exceeded the congressional minimum by \$642,000, or 4% (\$16.616M). The total amount funded below congressional minimums in FY2004 and FY2005 was \$184,000.

- Although the FY 2004 and FY 2005 funding was slightly less than the congressionally directed minimum, it completely funded the DPMO mission requirement.
- For the FY2006 budget, DPMO has requested funding above the congressional minimum.
- At the time DPMO was established, its primary focus was accounting for missing service personnel from the Vietnam War. Task Force Russia, which was charged with supporting the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POWs and MIAs, was dissolved to form the Defense POW/MIA Office. The US-Russia Joint Commission accounted for losses from World War II, the Korean War, and a number of shoot-down incidents of reconnaissance aircraft, collectively referred to as Cold War losses. A responsibility subsumed into the DPMO mission.
- To clarify DPMO's World War II case load and responsibility for accounting for World War II missing personnel, the legislation (National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2000 PL 106-65, Sec. 576. Recovery and Identification of Remains of Certain World War II Servicemen Lost in Pacific Theater of Operations) only requires DPMO to make every reasonable effort to search for, recover, and identify the remains of United States servicemen lost in the Pacific theater of operations during World War II (including in New Guinea) while engaged in flight operations. Although the World War II accounting case load required by legislation, is substantially smaller than the 78,000 cases referenced in the report, fairness to families of any unaccounted for servicemember compels DPMO to handle other World War II cases as requested. This makes the potential case load 78,000.
- To support the US-Russia Joint Commission, in late-1994, DPMO formed the Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSO). To man the JCSO, DPMO planners identified 27 military billets as the manpower necessary to support the Commission's work with the former Soviet Union. Military billets were chosen to capitalize on unique language skills (i.e., Russian) readily available in the Services. Because it was expected that the Commission's work would only span three years, the billets were authorized as temporary billets. The US-Russia Joint Commission's work continued under Presidential endorsement, requiring JCSO's support beyond the initial three-year manpower request. This unanticipated manpower requirement was resolved by extending the billets another three years. Extending the billets continued every three years until it was obvious that the mission was enduring and a permanent manpower solution was needed.
- The principal problem with the temporary nature of the billets is that temporary billets and permanent billets do not enjoy the same fill rate priority and the lower priority for temporary billets caused disruptions in DPMO's manning. Also, they were frequently authorized too late in the budget cycle for the Services to program them into their

authorization requests. Consequently, though the billets were eventually included in the budget, the Services did not always program personnel to fill them.

- As slide number 11 indicates, improving military manning was on track until 2001 when the onset of the war on terrorism created more urgent national priorities that challenged the filling of routine, non-combat related billets. In support of war-related priorities, the Personnel Recovery Office in DPMO is fully manned. While the importance of DPMO's mission is undiminished, the manpower requirements to fight two wars compounds already difficult resource decisions for all DoD organizations. DPMO continues to meet its mission successfully despite the current situation.
- The DPMO Strategic Plan is an internally-generated DPMO document that was not sent to the Policy leadership for review and approval. The revision will be reviewed and approved by Policy.
- Updating of charter directives has been a DoD priority and DPMO's charter directive is one of many being revised. The Director of Administration and Management (DA&M) in OSD is responsible for preparing charter directives for DoD, including DPMO. DA&M performs this in conjunction with the organization being chartered and is responsible for DoD-wide coordination.
- A revised draft of the DPMO charter directive has been in coordination since January 2005. It has the concurrence of the DoD components and the OSD Staff, only waiting for the DoD General Counsel coordination. There is broad agreement withing DoD on the responsibilities and functions reflected in the revised directive so no significant changes are expected from the remaining coordination. The draft directive does not expand DPMO's responsibilities beyond those it is currently performing. It should be published later this summer.
- The report says DPMO's charter directive will designate them DoD's "single point of contact with other parts of the US and foreign governments on all accounting matters." Subsequently, the draft charter directive has been revised from "single point of contact" to "primary DoD representative and point of contact" which is more accurate.
- Because DPMO's military manpower consisted of both permanent and temporary billets, some personnel at various levels of the organizations responsible for programming the military billets were confused over the number of military personnel to be authorized. At the supervisory level, it was understood by 2001 to be 46 - what budget authorizations for military billets had as a target.
- To clarify the point about the comment that the USD(C) Office of Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E) recommended a comprehensive study and DoD management

denied approval, the recommendation not to undertake the study came from the same PA&E personnel who originally recommended the study. As stated in the report, since Congress mandated the manpower levels for DPMO, PA&E did not consider spending money and resources on a study to be sound.

- Both the report and slide 15 state that results of two previous studies of DPMO mission and manpower requirements (Army Manpower Analysis Agency and IDA) concluded that DPMO needed more resources. The Army Manpower Analysis Agency studied whether or not DPMO would need more manpower if it were to absorb the duties of Joint Task Force Full Accounting and the Army Central Identification Laboratory. Those organizations joined to form the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) avoiding the need for DPMO to add billets. IDA recommended that DPMO add two billets contingent upon implementation of a National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD). The NSPD is still being developed.
- Comments on the briefing slides are:
 - Slide 3: See above discussion on the difference between the language of the legislation and the objectives.
 - Slide 4: See above discussion about WWII case load. DPMO accounting activities for other conflicts has been on an exceptional basis. The first bullet should read "personnel" recovery instead of "live" recovery. As the report states, the draft directive may "change" the scope of responsibilities but as the draft charter directive firms up, that does not appear to be the case.
 - Slide 7: See discussion above concerning the figure for World War II missing. As of July 14, the figure for those missing from current conflicts figure is 12.
 - Slide 9: See discussion above concerning military billets.
 - Slide 11: See discussion above concerning fluctuations in filling military billets.
 - Slide 12: DoD exceeded the FY03 funding target by \$642,000. Comments above discuss the adequacy of the funding provided and the absence of mission impact by the slight shortage in meeting the target.
 - Slide 15: See discussion above regarding these studies.

The IDA study recommendation to add two personnel to DPMO was contingent on the implementation of an NSPD that is still under development.
 - Slide 16: The second bullet presumes that the updated charter directive will expand DPMO's roles and missions. That does not appear to be the case.

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