

December 2007

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Systematic Assessment Is Needed to Determine Agencies' Progress toward U.S. Policy Objectives





Highlights of [GAO-08-188](#), a report to Congress

Why GAO Did This Study

In enacting the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006 (the Act), Congress established 15 U.S. policy objectives to address the DRC's humanitarian, development, economic and natural resource, governance, and security issues and mandated that GAO review actions taken by U.S. agencies to achieve these objectives. In this report, GAO identifies (1) U.S. programs and activities that support the Act's objectives, (2) major challenges hindering the accomplishment of the objectives, and (3) U.S. efforts to assess progress toward the objectives. GAO obtained and analyzed agencies' program documents and met with officials of agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGO) active in the DRC.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of State, through the Director of Foreign Assistance, work with the heads of the other U.S. agencies implementing programs in the DRC to develop a plan for systematically assessing the extent to which the U.S. government is making progress in achieving the Act's policy objectives. The Department of State endorsed our recommendation. Several U.S. agencies provided technical comments that were incorporated, as appropriate.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-188](#). For more information, contact David Gootnick at (202) 512-3149 or gootnickd@gao.gov.

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Systematic Assessment Is Needed to Determine Agencies' Progress toward U.S. Policy Objectives

What GAO Found

U.S. programs and activities support the Act's policy objectives. In fiscal years 2006 and 2007, respectively, the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Health and Human Services, State, and the Treasury and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) allocated \$217.9 million and \$181.5 million for the DRC. About 70 percent of the funds were allocated for programs that support the Act's humanitarian and social development objectives, while the remainder was allocated for programs and activities that support the Act's economic, governance, and security objectives. Although U.S. agencies have not acted on the Act's objective of bilaterally urging nations contributing peacekeeping troops to prosecute abusive peacekeepers, U.S. multilateral actions address this issue.

The DRC's unstable security situation, weak governance, mismanagement of its vast natural resources, and lack of infrastructure are major interrelated challenges that impede efforts to achieve the Act's policy objectives. For example, the unstable security situation in the eastern DRC has worsened humanitarian and social problems and forced U.S. and NGO staff to curtail some efforts. The lack of roads has prevented deliveries of needed aid. DRC's weak governance structures prevent the country from meeting the requirements for debt relief and discourage private-sector investment, thus hindering economic growth.

The U.S. government has not established a process for systematically assessing its progress toward achieving the Act's policy objectives. While some U.S. agencies collect information about their respective activities in the DRC, no mechanism exists for assessing overall progress. State and USAID are developing a joint planning and budgeting process that may eventually assess all U.S. foreign assistance. However, State's Director of Foreign Assistance has yet to complete the fiscal year 2007 DRC operations plan, which does not include a comprehensive assessment of the collective impact of State and USAID programs and does not address activities funded by other agencies. While a National Security Council-sponsored interagency group discusses DRC policies and helps coordinate some activities, it does not include several relevant agencies and, according to key officials, does not systematically assess progress in the DRC.

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Abbreviations

Act	DRC Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006
DOD	Department of Defense
DFA	Director of Foreign Assistance
DOL	Department of Labor
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NSC	National Security Council
OFDA	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
OPIC	Overseas Private Investment Corporation
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	Department of Agriculture

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

December 14, 2007

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
Chairman
The Honorable Richard G. Lugar
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate

The Honorable Tom Lantos
Chairman
The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives

Because of its large size, central location in sub-Saharan Africa, and abundant natural resources, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is important to the stability of central Africa and is of long-term interest to the United States. However, since achieving independence in 1960, the DRC—one of the world’s poorest countries—has suffered from despotic rule, underdevelopment, economic problems, and conflicts with neighboring countries that resulted in the deaths of an estimated 3.9 million Congolese within the past decade. Government and other armed forces also committed abuses against thousands of Congolese women and girls. According to the U.S. Department of State, Western nations provided the DRC with considerable aid during the Cold War era, but support for the DRC fell in the early 1990s owing to concerns about human rights abuses and the need for internal reforms.

U.S. aid to the DRC began to increase again in 2001, following the initiation of peace talks that led first to the withdrawal of foreign armies and then to the installation of a transitional DRC government in 2003. Subsequently, the U.S. President stated that the United States would work closely with the transitional government to promote “peace, prosperity and democracy” for all Congolese people. The transition process culminated in the December 6, 2006, inauguration of the DRC’s first democratically elected president in more than 40 years. Following the

DRC elections, on December 22, 2006, Congress enacted the DRC Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006 (the Act).¹ The Act established 15 policy objectives aimed at addressing a range of concerns regarding humanitarian, social development, economic and natural resource, governance, and security issues in the DRC.² Also, it stated the Secretary of State should withhold certain assistance to the DRC if the Secretary determined that the DRC was not making sufficient progress toward accomplishing these policy objectives. The Act mandated that GAO review actions taken by U.S. agencies to achieve the Act's policy objectives.

In this report, we identify (1) U.S. programs and activities that support the Act's objectives, (2) major impediments hindering accomplishment of these objectives, and (3) U.S. efforts to assess progress toward accomplishing the objectives. Because the Act directed us to review actions taken by U.S. agencies to achieve its objectives, we focused on the fiscal year in which the Act was enacted, and also considered the fiscal year before its enactment to provide context. In conducting our work, we analyzed policy, planning, budget, and programming documents describing U.S. policies and programs in the DRC provided by key U.S. agencies—the Departments of Agriculture (USDA), Defense (DOD), Labor (DOL), Health and Human Services (HHS), State, and the Treasury; the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC); and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). We identified the amount of funding each agency allocated for its DRC programs in fiscal years 2006 and 2007; we did not determine the extent to which each agency obligated or expended its allocated funds. We also met with representatives from each of these agencies, the National Security Council (NSC), nongovernmental organizations (NGO), and other organizations with expertise on DRC-related issues. To identify key challenges hindering the accomplishment of the Act's policy objectives, we analyzed relevant policy and program documents; interviewed U.S. agency officials; conducted a round-table session with a nonprobability sample of 11 NGOs with a broad range of experience and expertise implementing programs and projects in the DRC; and interviewed representatives from other organizations with experience in the DRC. To examine U.S. efforts to assess progress toward accomplishing the Act's policy objectives and to make decisions regarding

¹Pub. L. No. 109-456, 120 Stat. 3384.

²We have grouped the Act's 15 objectives in five categories—emergency humanitarian assistance, social development, economic and natural resources, governance, and security.

additional actions, we reviewed U.S. agency assessments and implementation documents. Although we did not travel to the DRC, we conducted several telephone interviews with U.S. embassy and USAID mission staff located in the DRC. We performed our work from May 2007 to December 2007 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. (See app. I for a more detailed description of our scope and methodology.)

Results in Brief

U.S. programs and activities support the Act's policy objectives. In fiscal years 2006 and 2007, respectively, U.S. agencies—USDA, DOD, HHS, DOL, State, the Treasury, and USAID—allocated a total of about \$217.9 million and \$181.5 million for the DRC. About 70 percent of the funds were allocated for programs that support the Act's humanitarian and social development objectives, while the remainder was allocated for programs and activities that support the Act's economic, governance, and security objectives. For example, USAID is providing humanitarian assistance that includes emergency supplies, food, and water and sanitation improvements to vulnerable populations. Treasury has worked to provide the DRC with interim debt relief. State is working to provide training and other assistance aimed at professionalizing members of the DRC's military. Although the agencies have not acted on the Act's policy objective of working bilaterally to urge nations contributing peacekeeping troops to prosecute abusive troops, U.S. multilateral actions address this issue.

U.S., NGO, and other officials and experts identified several major challenges that are impeding U.S. efforts to achieve the Act's policy objectives, including (1) an unstable security situation, (2) weak governance and widespread corruption, (3) mismanagement of natural resources, and (4) lack of basic infrastructure. These challenges are interrelated and can negatively impact progress in multiple areas. For example, the unstable security situation in the eastern DRC has worsened humanitarian and social problems, while forcing U.S. and NGO staff to curtail some efforts. The lack of roads has prevented deliveries of critically needed humanitarian assistance. Similarly, corruption and other governance problems have hindered efforts to provide roads and other needed infrastructure, which impedes the efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance. Moreover, the DRC's weak governance structures prevent the country from meeting the requirements for badly needed debt relief, as well as discourage private-sector investment, thus hindering economic growth.

The U.S. government has not established a process for systematically assessing its progress toward achieving the Act's policy objectives. Some of the agencies we reviewed collect information about their respective activities in the DRC; for example, two USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance program officers regularly visit project sites in the DRC and publish quarterly reports of the office's activities. However, although we identified two executive branch mechanisms for coordinating some of the agencies' activities in the DRC, no mechanism exists for assessing overall U.S. progress. State and USAID have begun to develop a joint planning and budgeting process that, according to State officials, may eventually assess all U.S. foreign assistance. However, State's Director of Foreign Assistance (DFA) has yet to finalize the DFA plan for operations in the DRC during fiscal year 2007, which ended on September 30, 2007. As of February 2007, the draft plan was incomplete, consisting of a listing of individual programs that did not include a systematic assessment of the collective impact of State and USAID efforts during fiscal year 2007. In addition, the DFA draft plan did not address activities funded by other agencies, including DOD, the Treasury, and HHS, although the DFA plan may eventually include other agencies to some degree. The NSC has established an interagency group, including State, Defense, and the Treasury, to help discuss policies and approaches to addressing the challenges in the DRC and coordinate certain agencies' activities. However, the group does not include several relevant agencies, such as DOL, HHS, or USDA, in its discussions of policies and approaches and, according to NSC and State officials, does not systematically assess U.S. progress in the DRC.

To provide a basis for informed decisions regarding U.S. allocations for assistance in the DRC as well as any needed bilateral or multilateral actions, we are recommending that the Secretary of State, through the Director of Foreign Assistance, work with the heads of the other U.S. agencies implementing programs in the DRC to develop a plan for systematically assessing the extent to which the U.S. government as a whole is making progress in achieving the Act's policy objectives.

We requested comments on a draft of this report from the Secretaries of Agriculture, Defense, Labor, Health and Human Services, State, and the Treasury; from the Administrator of USAID; and from the Director of Congressional Relations of OPIC. We received written comments from State, which are reprinted in appendix III. State commented that it endorsed our recommendation and noted that our recommendation would likely be met as DFA's joint planning and budgeting processes are extended to include all U.S. agencies engaged in the DRC. In addition,

State provided specific comments which we have incorporated as appropriate in this report. We also received technical comments on our draft report from Defense, HHS, Labor, the Treasury, and USAID, which we have incorporated as appropriate.

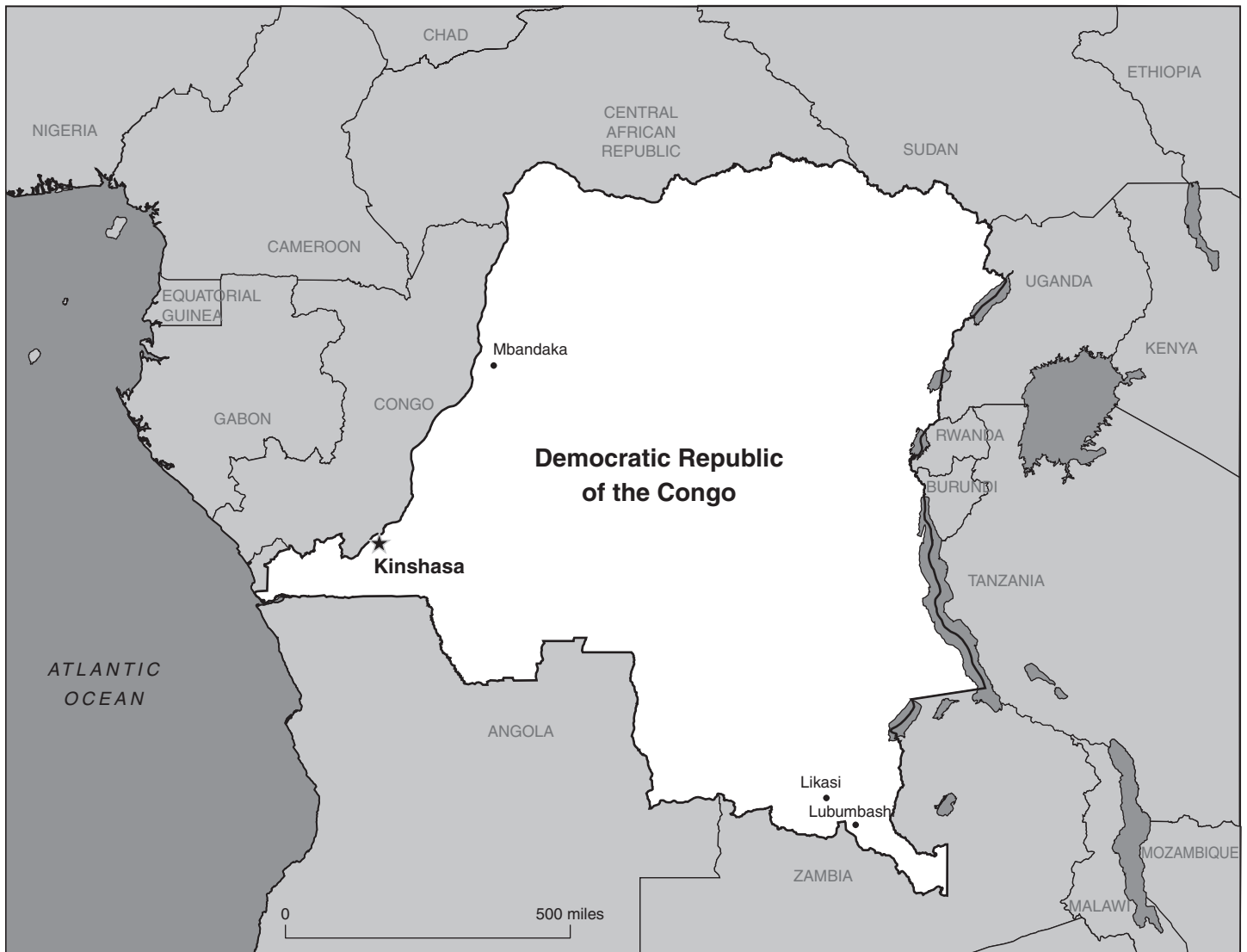
Background

The DRC's size, location, and wealth of natural resources contribute to its importance to U.S. interests in the region. With an area of more than 900,000 square miles, the DRC is roughly the size of the United States east of the Mississippi River. Located in the center of Africa, the DRC borders nine nations (see fig. 1). Its abundant natural resources, which constitute its primary export products, include 34 percent of world cobalt reserves; 10 percent of world copper reserves; 64 percent of world coltan reserves; and significant amounts of wood, oil, coffee, diamonds, gold, cassiterite, and other minerals.³ In addition, rain forests in the DRC provide 8 percent of world carbon reserves.⁴ The DRC has a population of 58 million to 65 million people, including members of more than 200 ethnic groups.

³Coltan and cassiterite are metals used in the electronics industry.

⁴According to a recent report by Greenpeace—*Carving Up the Congo* (Apr. 1, 2007)—forests play a critical role in keeping the planet's climate stable by storing carbon. Central African forests constitute the second largest area of rain forest in the world.

Figure 1: Map of the Democratic Republic of the Congo



Source: Map Resources.

The DRC has had a turbulent history. In 1965, fewer than 5 years after the nation achieved its independence from Belgium, a military regime seized control of the DRC and ruled, often brutally, for more than three decades. It was toppled in 1997 by a coalition of internal groups and neighboring countries to the east, including Rwanda and Uganda, after dissident Rwandan groups began operating in the DRC. Subsequent efforts by a new DRC government to secure the withdrawal of Rwandan and Ugandan

troops prompted a second war in 1998 that eventually drew the armies of three more African nations into the DRC. According to the International Rescue Committee, this second war resulted in an estimated 3.9 million deaths. Beginning in 1999, a United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force was deployed to the DRC. After a series of peace talks, the other nations withdrew all or most of their troops and an interim government was established. Elections held in 2006 with logistical support provided by UN peacekeepers culminated in the December 6, 2006, inauguration of the DRC's first democratically elected president in more than 40 years.

Partially as a result of this turbulent history, the DRC suffers from a wide range of problems, including acute poverty. The DRC is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. It was ranked 167th of 177 nations surveyed by the UN Development Program in terms of life expectancy, education, and standard of living, and its ranking on these measures has declined more than 10 percent over the past decade. The current life expectancy is 43 years, in part because the DRC suffers from high rates of tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and malaria. According to USAID, more than 2 of every 10 children born in the DRC die before their fifth birthday (owing in part to chronic malnutrition and low vaccination rates), and the maternal death rate is the world's highest. Congolese women also suffer from the effects of rampant sexual attacks and other forms of gender-based violence against women, particularly in the eastern regions of the country. A UN expert reported in July 2007 that widespread atrocities against women in one eastern DRC province constituted the worst crisis of sexual violence that the expert had yet encountered. An international group of donor nations recently concluded that the DRC's educational system is failing and in a state of crisis. Most rural children do not attend school at all, in part because their parents cannot afford to pay school fees. As a result of such problems, the Fund for Peace ranked the DRC second on its "failed states" scale, after Sudan.

The DRC's economic prospects are uncertain. It once derived about 75 percent of its export revenues and 25 percent of its gross domestic product from its natural resources, but wars and turmoil have reduced its economy to dependence on subsistence agriculture and informal activities. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported that as of 2001, the DRC's per capita gross domestic product had contracted to \$100 from a preindependence level of \$400, in constant dollars. Although the DRC's gross domestic product grew at an average rate of 5.5 percent from 2002

through 2005, growth has recently slowed. Also, the DRC's prospects are encumbered by an external debt load of around \$8 billion.⁵ The value of this debt—which represents more than 90 percent of the DRC's gross domestic product, 300 percent of its exports, and 700 percent of its government's revenues—is three times greater than the level of debt that the World Bank and the IMF consider sustainable. The DRC has not fully qualified for debt relief under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative.⁶

The DRC receives assistance from an array of donor nations and organizations. During 2004 and 2005, the 10 largest donors to the DRC were the World Bank's International Development Association, the European Commission, Japan, Belgium, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Germany, the IMF, and the Netherlands. The World Bank is preparing a country assistance strategy to support the DRC's 2007-2010 poverty-reduction goals. The United States and 16 other donor nations and organizations are contributing to the World Bank's effort by preparing a country assistance framework document that assesses the major challenges facing the DRC and identifies major areas for donor focus. Some donor nations and organizations have also begun an effort to coordinate assistance for reforming the DRC's troubled army, police, and judiciary.

According to the Department of State, the United States' goal for its assistance to the DRC is to strengthen the process of internal reconciliation and democratization to promote a stable, developing, and democratic DRC. The Department of State has also reported that the United States is seeking to ensure that the DRC professionalizes its security forces and is at peace; develops democratic institutions; supports private-sector economic growth and achieves macroeconomic stability; meets the basic needs of its people; and, with its international partners,

⁵We state external debt in present value terms, which take into account the sum of all future debt-service obligations (interest and principal) on existing debt, discounted at the market interest rate.

⁶The DRC did not service its external debt during the war. At the end of 2001, the DRC's arrears on publicly guaranteed debt was about \$10.6 billion. Donors cleared about \$2 billion in arrears, and the DRC qualified for debt relief in 2003 through HIPC, a joint bilateral and multilateral effort to relieve poor countries of debt to promote long-term economic growth and debt sustainability. In qualifying for HIPC, the DRC has been able to receive interim debt relief, primarily in terms of lower debt-service payments. The DRC must meet certain additional criteria before its debt is fully reduced through HIPC.

provides relief in humanitarian crises. As described by the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, U.S. policy is to support—but not lead—the efforts of the DRC to address its problems.

In October 2006, continued violence and armed conflict in the eastern DRC led the President of the United States to issue an executive order blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in the DRC.⁷ In October 2006, the President reiterated the United States’ commitment to the goal of creating a prosperous Congolese democracy. In October 2007, the President, meeting with the newly elected president of the DRC, again cited the importance of democracy and economic growth in the DRC and noted the need for progress on security and health issues.

Section 102 of the DRC Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006 includes 15 U.S. policy objectives for the DRC. Table 1 presents these objectives in five categories of assistance—emergency humanitarian, social development, economic and natural resources, governance, and security.

Table 1: Policy Objectives in the DRC Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006, by Category

Policy objective	Category
Help promote, reinvigorate, and support the political process in the DRC to press all parties in the Transitional National Government and the succeeding government to implement fully and to institutionalize mechanisms, including national and international election observers, fair and transparent voter registration procedures, and a significant civic awareness and public education campaign created for the July 30, 2006, elections and future elections in the DRC to ensure that elections are carried out in a fair and democratic manner.	Governance
Urge the DRC to recognize and act upon its responsibilities to immediately bring discipline to its security forces, hold those individuals responsible for atrocities and other human rights violations, particularly the rape of women and girls as an act of war, accountable and bring such individuals to justice.	Governance and security
Help ensure that, once a stable national government is established in the DRC, it is committed to multiparty democracy, open and transparent governance, respect for human rights and religious freedom, ending the violence throughout the country, promoting peace and stability with its neighbors, rehabilitating the national judicial system and enhancing the rule of law, combating corruption, instituting economic reforms to promote development, and creating an environment to promote private investment.	Governance and economic/natural resources
Assist the DRC as it seeks to meet the basic needs of its citizens, including security, safety, and access to health care, education, food, shelter, and clean drinking water.	Humanitarian, social development, and security

⁷Exec. Order No. 13413, 71 Fed. Reg. 64105 (Oct. 27, 2006).

Policy objective	Category
Support security sector reform by assisting the DRC to establish a viable and professional national army and police force that respects human rights and the rule of law, is under effective civilian control, and possesses a viable presence throughout the entire country, provided the DRC meets all requirements for US military assistance under existing law.	Security
Help expedite planning and implementation of programs associated with the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration, and rehabilitation process in the DRC.	Security
Support efforts of the DRC, the UN peacekeeping force, and other entities, as appropriate, to disarm, demobilize, and repatriate the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda and other illegally armed groups.	Security
Make all efforts to ensure that the DRC (a) is committed to responsible and transparent management of natural resources across the country; and (b) takes active measures to (i) promote economic development; (ii) hold accountable individuals who illegally exploit the country's natural resources; and (iii) implement the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative by enacting laws requiring disclosure and independent auditing of company payments and government receipts for natural resource extraction.	Economic/natural resources
Promote a viable civil society and enhance NGOs and institutions, including religious organizations, the media, political parties, trade unions, and trade and business associations, that can act as a stabilizing force and effective check on the government.	Governance
Help rebuild and enhance infrastructure, communications, and other mechanisms that will increase the ability of the central government to manage internal affairs, encourage economic development, and facilitate relief efforts of humanitarian organizations.	Humanitarian and social development
Help halt high prevalence of sexual abuse and violence perpetrated against women and children in the DRC and mitigate the detrimental effects from acts of this type of violence by undertaking health, education, and psychosocial support programs.	Social development
Work aggressively on a bilateral basis to urge governments of countries contributing troops to the UN peacekeeping force to enact and enforce laws on trafficking in persons and sexual abuse that meet international standards, promote codes of conduct for troops serving as part of UN peacekeeping missions, and immediately investigate and punish citizens who are responsible for abuses in the DRC.	Security
Assist the DRC as it undertakes steps to (a) protect internally displaced persons and refugees in the DRC and border regions from all forms of violence, including gender-based violence and other human rights abuses; (b) address other basic needs of vulnerable populations with the goal of allowing these conflict-affected individuals to ultimately return to their homes; and (c) assess the magnitude of the problem of orphans from conflict and HIV/AIDS in the DRC, and work to establish a program of national support.	Security, social development, and humanitarian
Engage with governments working to promote peace and security throughout the DRC and hold accountable individuals, entities, and countries working to destabilize the country.	Security
Promote appropriate use of the forests of the DRC in a manner that benefits the rural population in that country that depends on the forests for their livelihoods and protects national and environmental interests.	Economic/natural resource management

Source: GAO analysis of the DRC Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006.

The National Security Council has established an interagency working group to focus attention on issues affecting the Great Lakes region of central Africa, which encompasses the DRC. The group meets bimonthly and includes officials from DOD, State, USAID, and Treasury. Its mission is to establish a coordinated approach, policies, and actions to address issues (such as security) in the DRC and other countries in the region.

To ensure that foreign assistance, including assistance provided to the DRC, is used as effectively as possible to meet broad foreign policy objectives, the Secretary of State in 2006 appointed a Director of Foreign Assistance (DFA), who also serves as the Administrator of USAID. The DFA is charged with

- developing a coordinated U.S. government foreign assistance strategy, including multiyear country-specific assistance strategies and annual country-specific assistance operational plans;
- creating and directing consolidated policy, planning, budget, and implementation mechanisms and staff functions required to provide umbrella leadership to foreign assistance; and
- providing guidance to foreign assistance delivered through other agencies and entities of the U.S. government, including the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator.

U.S. Programs and Activities Support the Act's Policy Objectives

U.S. programs and activities provide support to the Act's policy objectives. Most recently, in fiscal years 2006 and 2007, U.S. agencies allocated the largest share of their funds for the DRC to programs that supported the Act's humanitarian and social development goals. Although the U.S. government has not acted on the Act's policy objective that it bilaterally urge nations contributing UN peacekeepers to prosecute abusive peacekeeping troops, it has taken other steps to address this objective.

U.S. Funding for the DRC

Recent U.S. funding for the DRC has focused primarily on the Act's humanitarian and development goals.⁸ Seven U.S. agencies allocated about

⁸See appendix II for further details.

\$217.9 million and \$181.5 million for aid to the DRC in fiscal years 2006 and 2007, respectively, as shown in table 2.⁹

Table 2: U.S. Agencies' Funding Allocations for the DRC by Category

Dollars in millions

Fiscal year	Humanitarian	Social development	Economic	Governance	Security	Total
2006	\$85.3	\$51.9	\$66.4 ^a	\$7.5	\$6.9	\$217.9
2007	88.4	58.2	9.6	14.5	10.8	\$181.5
Total	\$173.7	\$110.1	\$76.0	\$22.1	\$17.7	\$399.4

Source: GAO analysis of executive branch data.

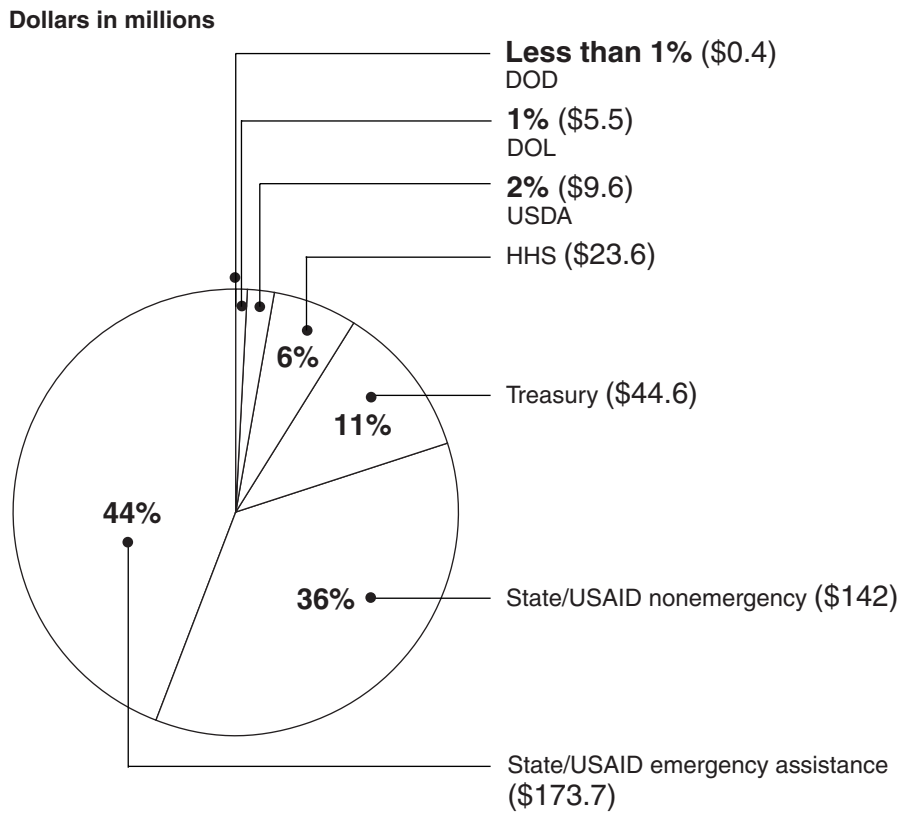
Notes: Totals may not add due to rounding.

^aIncludes \$44.6 million allocated by the Treasury to help address costs of DRC debt relief. The DRC has received interim debt relief but must meet additional criteria before its debt is fully reduced.

As shown in figure 2, most of these funds were allocated by State and USAID.

⁹We did not determine the extent to which the agencies have obligated and expended the funds they allocated. In addition to providing the funding shown, the United States also contributed funds to international organizations that conducted activities in the DRC during 2006 and 2007. For example, it contributed about \$236 million and \$300 million in fiscal years 2006 and 2007, respectively, for the support of UN peacekeeping activities in the DRC. As one of the largest donors to the DRC, the World Bank has funded a wide range of programs—including macroeconomic management, infrastructure, and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of militia fighters—that have totaled around \$366 million in fiscal year 2006 and \$180 million in fiscal year 2007. The United States provides around 14 percent of donor funds to the World Bank for such operations. It is also the largest contributor to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which is active in the DRC.

Figure 2: Allocation of U.S. Funding for the DRC by Agency, Fiscal Years 2006-2007



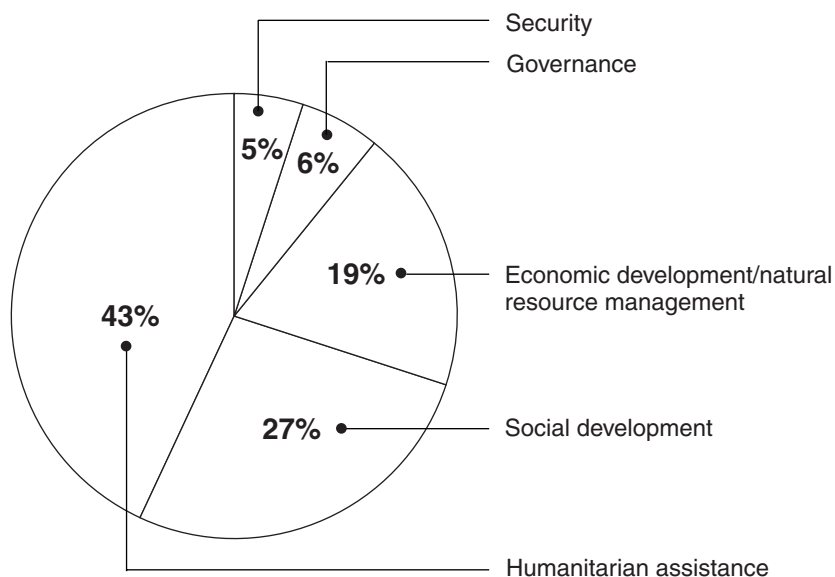
Source: GAO analysis of executive agencies' data.

The agencies allocated about 70 percent of these funds for programs that would support the Act's emergency humanitarian and social development objectives (see fig. 3).¹⁰ They allocated about 30 percent of the funds for

¹⁰According to HHS, its Centers for Disease Control and Prevention obligates funds for projects that are part of research that can be conducted in different countries, rather than allocating funds by country. Our summary figures incorporate total Centers for Disease Control and Prevention funding for the DRC for the 2 years depicted.

programs and activities that would support the Act's economic, governance, and security objectives.¹¹

Figure 3: Allocation of U.S. Funding for the DRC by Category, Fiscal Years 2006-2007



Source: GAO analysis of executive branch data.

Humanitarian Assistance

USAID and State have provided humanitarian assistance to help the DRC meet the basic needs of its citizens and vulnerable populations. The following examples illustrate these efforts.

- USAID has provided emergency food assistance to the DRC, primarily through the UN World Food Program and Food for the Hungry International. USAID-funded emergency food assistance included general distribution of food to internally displaced persons who need food aid;

¹¹For fiscal year 2008, State and USAID requested \$80.2 million for the DRC, including \$39.8 million for social development assistance, \$20.9 million for governance assistance, \$11 million for economic development assistance, and \$8.6 million for peace and security assistance. The agencies have not yet allocated 2008 funding for emergency humanitarian assistance. The Treasury requested \$178.3 million in fiscal year 2008 funds in the event that the DRC qualifies for debt relief. OPIC has approved \$400 million in financing and insurance for a U.S. company to invest in the DRC's mining sector and will seek fiscal year 2008 funding to support this project.

vulnerable groups such as people infected with, and orphans and widows affected by, HIV/AIDS; and victims of sexual abuse by soldiers. USAID emergency assistance also supported road rehabilitation and bridge reconstruction projects; schools; and the socioeconomic reintegration of ex-child soldiers, adult combatants, and their families. In addition, USAID provided emergency supplies, health care, nutrition programs, water and sanitation improvements, food, and agriculture assistance to vulnerable populations in the DRC—including malnourished children, war-affected populations, internally displaced people, and formerly displaced households—primarily through NGOs. Recent program activities have focused on road rehabilitation; primary health care and specialized care services to malnourished children in certain eastern regions; medical care, treatment, and confidential counseling to victims of sexual and gender-based violence; and access to water and sanitation at health facilities.

- State has provided humanitarian assistance to help repatriate, integrate, and resettle refugees in the DRC. It has also helped fund refugees' food needs and supported mental health assistance and market access programs in areas of high refugee return. In fiscal year 2007, State supported refugee assistance activities in the DRC, which were implemented primarily by the UN High Commissioner on Refugees, other international organizations, and NGOs. In addition, State contributed to overall Africa assistance programs implemented by the UN High Commissioner on Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which help support refugees and conflict victims in central Africa.

Social Development Assistance

USAID, HHS, and DOL allocated funds to support the Act's social development and rehabilitation objectives. The following examples illustrate these efforts.

- USAID has worked through NGOs to improve education, health care, and family planning. It has implemented activities to reduce abandonment of children; provide psychosocial support, medical assistance, and reintegration support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in the eastern DRC; train teachers; and increase access to education for vulnerable children. USAID also funds efforts to train medical staff and nurses in the management of primary health care, distribute bed nets to prevent the spread of malaria and polio, provide family planning services, and support voluntary counseling and testing centers for HIV/AIDS.
- HHS has allocated funds for immunization against, and the surveillance and control of, infectious diseases such as polio, measles, and HIV/AIDS. HHS's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has also sought to

strengthen the capacity of public health personnel, promote infrastructure development and improve the quality of clinical laboratories through grants and cooperative agreements. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have also (1) provided ongoing technical, programmatic, and funding support through the World Health Organization and the UN Children's Fund for the DRC immunization program with an emphasis on polio eradication and measles mortality reduction, and (2) assisted the World Health Organization with a recent outbreak of Ebola virus. In addition, HHS's National Institutes of Health has granted funds to U.S. academic institutions to conduct basic and clinical biomedical research, which involves collaboration with research partners in the DRC.

- DOL has allocated funds to address children's involvement in mining and related services, small-scale commerce, child soldiering, and other forms of child labor in the DRC. This effort would build on a recently completed project that assisted a small number of former child soldiers by fostering their withdrawal from militias and discouraging their reenlistment.

Economic and Natural Resource Management Assistance

The Treasury, USAID, State, and USDA have provided support for the Act's economic objectives. The following examples illustrate these efforts.

- The Treasury has worked with the World Bank and the IMF to relieve the DRC of some of its foreign debt. The United States provided the DRC with interim debt relief (primarily through reduced interest payments) in fiscal years 2005 through 2007, following the DRC's admittance into the HIPC debt relief program. Once the DRC qualifies for the completion of its HIPC debt relief, Treasury plans to pay the budgetary costs of full U.S. bilateral debt relief to the DRC (\$1.3 billion) with \$44.6 million allocated in fiscal year 2006, about \$80 million in previously appropriated funds, and about \$178 million in fiscal year 2008 funds.¹²
- USAID has allocated funds to support sustainable natural resource management, forest protection, and biodiversity in the DRC through the Central African Regional Program for the Environment. The program is a

¹²When the DRC reaches its HIPC completion point, debt relief from all donors is expected to lower current levels of DRC external debt by about \$6.3 billion. The Treasury estimates that the budgetary cost of reducing the \$1.3 billion of DRC bilateral debt owed to the United States is about \$300 million, based on the Office of Management and Budget's Circular Number A-11. This estimate includes factors such as the likelihood of default, the interest rate, and the maturity period. An interagency country risk assessment is used to calculate the DRC's probability of loan default.

20-year regional initiative that aims to reduce deforestation and loss of biological diversity in the DRC and its eastern neighbors. A component of the U.S.-sponsored Congo Basin Forest Partnership, the program also promotes forest-based livelihoods in the DRC. USAID has also allocated funds to encourage productivity in the agricultural, private, and small enterprise sectors and to support agriculture development. In addition, USAID's Global Development Alliance program works with private companies to promote transparent mining practices and reinvestment into DRC mining communities.

- State has supported efforts to promote transparency in the natural resource sector by serving as the U.S. representative to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme which deals with rough diamond trade,¹³ and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).¹⁴
- USDA has allocated funds to improve agricultural productivity, increase rural market development, provide credit for agribusiness and rural infrastructure, and increase access to potable water and water for irrigation in the DRC.

Governance Assistance

USAID and State have allocated funds for programs that support the Act's governance objectives. The following examples illustrate such assistance.

- USAID has allocated funds to organize itinerant court sessions in relatively inaccessible parts of the DRC. These sessions are intended to bring justice institutions closer to citizens, facilitate greater access to justice for vulnerable people, and provide quality legal assistance to the population. It has also supported an NGO's establishment of democracy resource centers to assist political party leaders, civic activists, elected local and national officials, and government institutions in consolidating good governance and democracy. To promote judicial independence, USAID has supported an NGO's efforts to (1) foster the adoption and implementation of priority improvements to the DRC's legal framework, including laws on sexual violence and the rights of women, and (2)

¹³The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme aims to control the international rough diamond trade and assure customers that diamonds purchased have not helped to finance violent conflicts.

¹⁴Under EITI, countries publish and verify payments and government revenues in the natural resource sector.

provide legal assistance activities for victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

- State allocated funds for more than 30 programs by the National Endowment for Democracy during 2006. Several of these programs were aimed at informing women of their rights, addressing issues of abuse and corruption, and promoting political participation. For example, the endowment used State funds to support the political role of women in one eastern province before and after the elections, to call attention to the continued victimization of women in eastern Congo, and to visit detention centers throughout the DRC to facilitate release of illegally detained men and women.

Security Assistance

State, USAID, and DOD programs and activities have provided support for most of the Act's security-related policy objectives. The following examples illustrate these efforts.

- State has facilitated a multinational forum, the Tripartite Plus Commission, to encourage other nations to play a constructive role in the DRC's security affairs. The commission provides a forum for the DRC and the nations on its troubled eastern border—Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi—to discuss regional security issues, including militias operating illegally in the eastern DRC. State has also supported a center where these nations can share intelligence regarding militias.
- USAID has launched programs to promote the reintegration of some former fighters into Congolese society. The programs are intended to provide the former fighters incentives to remain in civilian society.
- State is refurbishing the DRC's military officer training school and training multiple levels of the military, including brigade- and battalion-staff level officers, on military justice reform, civil-military relations, and other issues of concern. According to State officials, State funds will be used for an initial DOD assessment of the military justice sector to identify needs to be addressed with future funds. State may also use these funds to help train DRC personnel to combat armed fighters in the eastern regions of the DRC.
- Key State senior-level and program officials informed us that they were unaware of any U.S. efforts to bilaterally urge nations contributing UN peacekeeping troops to take steps to help those nations prosecute any of

their peacekeeping troops who may commit abuses in the DRC.¹⁵ State officials informed us that the United States has encouraged the UN to take actions to guard against further abuses of DRC citizens by UN peacekeepers. The United States also supports the Global Peace Operations Initiative, a 5-year program to train and, as appropriate, equip at least 75,000 peacekeepers worldwide with a focus on African nations.

Major Challenges in the DRC Impede Efforts to Achieve the Act's Policy Objectives

U.S., NGO, and other officials and experts identified several major challenges that impede U.S. efforts to achieve the Act's policy objectives. These challenges include (1) the unstable security situation, (2) weak governance and widespread corruption, (3) mismanagement of natural resources, and (4) lack of basic infrastructure.¹⁶ Because these challenges are interrelated, they negatively impact progress in multiple areas.

Unstable Security Situation

The DRC's weak and abusive security forces have been unable to quell continuing militia activities in the DRC's eastern regions, where security grew worse during 2007. During 2006 and 2007, reports by several organizations described the security challenge in the DRC.

- According to a report by the International Crisis Group,¹⁷ militias control large portions of the eastern regions of the DRC. The report concludes that the DRC's security forces are poorly disciplined, ill equipped, and the worst abusers of human rights in the DRC.

¹⁵Section 102(12) of the Act states that U.S. policy is to work aggressively on a bilateral basis to urge governments of countries contributing troops to the United Nations peacekeeping force in the DRC to enact and enforce laws on trafficking in persons and sexual abuse that meet international standards, promote codes of conduct for troops serving as part of UN peacekeeping missions, and immediately investigate and punish citizens responsible for abuses in the DRC.

¹⁶In addition to the challenges in the DRC described in this section of our report, the NGO round table also identified challenges outside of the DRC relating to the level of U.S. engagement and commitment in the DRC, as well as the prioritization of U.S. resources and the lack of demonstrated results.

¹⁷International Crisis Group, *Congo: Consolidating the Peace*, Africa Report 128 (Kinshasa and Brussels, July 5, 2007).

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- According to a UN report,¹⁸ the DRC army is responsible for 40 percent of recently reported human rights violations—including rapes, mass killings of civilians, and summary executions—and DRC police and other security forces have killed and tortured civilians with total impunity. The report states that the DRC has generally promoted, rather than investigated and prosecuted, army officers suspected of such abuses.
 - According to a report by Amnesty International,¹⁹ women have been raped in large numbers by government and other armed forces throughout the DRC.
 - According to State, government and other armed forces in the DRC have committed a wide range of human rights abuses, including forcing children into the security forces.²⁰

The DRC's unstable security situation has worsened the DRC's humanitarian and social problems and impeded efforts to address these problems, according to NGO representatives, agency officials, and other sources.

- The renewed conflict has prompted increased NGO and UN assistance programs, including those aimed at addressing basic needs and psychosocial, legal, and socioeconomic support for victims of sexual and gender-based violence. NGOs have noted that active combatants typically commit crimes of sexual violence against women, with 4,500 sexual violence cases reported in the first 6 months of 2007 alone.²¹
- The lack of security in the DRC has impeded efforts to address humanitarian needs as well as efforts aimed at promoting social development. U.S. agency officials informed us that the conflict has forced them to curtail some emergency assistance programs, and NGOs

¹⁸Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, MONUC Human Rights Division, *The Human Rights Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) during the period of July to December 2006* (Feb. 8, 2007).

¹⁹Amnesty International, *Report 2007—The State of The World's Human Rights* (see <http://thereport.amnesty.org/eng/download-the-report>).

²⁰State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* (Washington, D.C., March 6, 2007).

²¹One UN representative noted that the real number of sexual violence cases is many times higher, as most victims live in inaccessible areas, are afraid to report the attacks, or did not survive them.

implementing development and humanitarian assistance activities in the DRC have reported that the lack of security has resulted in attacks on their staff or led them to suspend site visits and cancel and reschedule work. The UN has also stated that although access to displaced populations has improved somewhat in a few areas, in general it remains difficult because of the lack of security.

- The DRC's unstable security situation has negatively affected the country's economic potential by discouraging investment, which in turn could worsen security through renewed conflict. DRC donors and the IMF agree that improved security in the DRC is necessary to strengthen the economy. Research on the security of property rights confirms this view. World Bank research has also found that a lack of economic growth increases a postconflict nation's likelihood of falling back into conflict.²² Other researchers have estimated that a democratic nation is roughly 10 times more likely to be overthrown if its economy experiences negative growth 2 years in a row.²³

Weak Governance and Corruption

By many accounts, corruption in the DRC is widespread, civil liberties are limited, and the DRC's governance institutions have been severely damaged.

- State has described corruption in the DRC as "pervasive." In 2007, an international donor study concluded that corruption in the DRC "remains widespread and is taking a heavy toll on public service capacity to deliver key services." Transparency International's 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index identifies the DRC as one of the 10th most corrupt countries in the world.²⁴

²²The DRC country assistance framework document notes that an additional 2 percent of economic growth sustained over 10 years could reduce the risk of renewed civil war by about one-third. See also Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers*, vol. 56 (2004).

²³Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

²⁴The DRC, with three other countries, has a score of 1.9 on the corruption index's 10-point scale, in which a score of zero would be given for a highly corrupt state and 10 would be given for a "clean" state. The index includes 179 nations (see http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2007).

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- Freedom House in 2007 continued to rate the DRC as “Not Free” and scored it near the bottom of its scales for civil liberties and political freedom.²⁵ USAID has pointed to limited opportunities for Congolese women to participate in the DRC’s governance.
 - The World Bank has reported that the DRC’s judicial system is one of the world’s six weakest in terms of enforcing commercial contracts.
 - The State Department has described significant failures in the criminal justice system, as well as “harsh and life-threatening” prison conditions.

Historically weak governance and corruption in the DRC have hindered efforts to reform the security sector and hold human rights violators accountable.

- According to U.S. officials, the lack of a DRC government office with clear authority on security issues has impeded efforts to promote security sector reform. The officials informed us that the absence of clear authority over security sector issues has hindered efforts to determine both the DRC government’s priorities for security sector reform and the most effective role for international donors in promoting security sector reform.
- According to the country assistance framework, the DRC has not established a clear and functioning payroll system for its armed forces. One NGO reported that much of the \$8 million the DRC paid in 2005 for its soldiers’ salaries was “diverted” and the remainder rarely reached soldiers in a timely manner. NGOs and media sources have reported that soldiers have committed human rights abuses as a result. The country assistance framework states that the DRC Ministry of Defense controls only a small number of budget items and is not accountable for the defense budget’s use.
- According to one NGO report,²⁶ efforts to reform the command structure, size, and control of the security forces have been frustrated by political manipulation, pervasive corruption, and a failure to hold officials accountable. A U.S. State Department official told us that efforts to reform the DRC’s police may be impeded by lack of support from DRC institutions that suffer from corruption and have no interest in reform.

²⁵This index may be viewed at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=365&year=2007>.

²⁶International Crisis Group, *Congo: Consolidating the Peace*, Africa Report 128 (Kinshasa and Brussels, July 5, 2007).

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- According to NGO representatives, the lack of an effective judiciary impedes efforts to hold human rights violators accountable for their actions, which in turn promotes a “culture of impunity.” One NGO reported that a severe shortage of DRC judicial personnel—particularly in the eastern portion of the nation—prevents courts from hearing cases, public prosecutor offices from conducting investigations, and prisons from operating. Another NGO stated that the judiciary is subject to corruption and manipulation by both official and unofficial actors. As a result, courts have recently failed to hold individuals accountable for human rights violations, including a massacre of more than 70 people and the reported rape by police of 37 women and girls in a village in a western province. A representative of one NGO told us that local government officials had tortured his organization’s grantees in an effort to stop their democracy and governance training programs.

Governance problems have also hindered efforts to implement economic reforms required for debt relief and promote economic growth.

- According to Treasury officials and IMF documents, the government’s lack of commitment to meet certain requirements has jeopardized the DRC’s ability to receive some interim debt relief, qualify for full debt relief, and improve the country’s overall economic prospects. To receive the estimated \$6.3 billion in debt relief for which it may qualify under HIPC, the DRC must meet various conditions that include satisfactory macroeconomic performance under an IMF-supported program, improved public sector management, and implementation of structural reforms. Although donors had expected the DRC to qualify for full debt relief in 2006, the government instead has fallen back into arrears and has failed to implement needed policies; as a result, IMF has suspended its program assistance to the DRC.²⁷ Although IMF has determined that the DRC cannot sustain its current debt levels, donors do not expect the DRC to qualify for full debt relief until mid-2008.
- The judiciary’s ineffective enforcement of commercial contracts in the DRC has likely discouraged private sector investment and hence economic growth. The enforcement of contracts, typically a responsibility of the

²⁷For example, IMF reports that the DRC made little progress in reforming the mining sector, public enterprises, the civil service, and the central bank. The government incurred large budgetary overruns that were monetized and resulted in a depreciation of the currency. In 2006, the DRC’s currency depreciated 15 percent against the U.S. dollar and inflation rose above 18 percent.

judicial system, is important to establishing incentives for economic activity. According to the World Bank, the DRC's enforcement of contracts is among the weakest in the world, such that a company might need to expend roughly 150 percent of a typical contract's value to ensure enforcement through court proceedings.

Mismanagement of Natural Resources

International donors, NGOs, and the DRC government have focused on improving natural resource management through increased transparency and international instruments of enforcement. However, owing in part to governance and capacity challenges, these efforts have made only limited progress.

- Until recently, the DRC had not met EITI implementation requirements or followed EITI guidelines, according to U.S. officials. These officials informed us that the DRC had excluded civil society representatives and replaced EITI's Permanent Secretary with a new representative. As a result, EITI was reviewing the DRC's signatory status, and key donors were withdrawing technical assistance. U.S. officials informed us that in September 2007, EITI granted the DRC additional time to meet threshold criteria to continue participation in the initiative and that the DRC subsequently made progress in meeting those criteria.
- The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme has criticized the DRC for weak internal controls, customs capacity, and ability to track diamonds extracted by large number of self-employed miners.²⁸ State and USAID officials reported that the DRC's certification process is failing to capture as much as 50 percent of diamonds mined in the DRC.
- U.S. and NGO officials have expressed concern that the DRC is not enforcing a moratorium on forestry concessions instituted in May 2002. An NGO reported that after the moratorium took effect, the DRC signed 107 of 156 forestry contracts now under review and that a third of the contracts involve areas identified for conservation. Although the DRC government is reviewing mining and forestry concessions signed during

²⁸These challenges are common to many developing country members. For further discussion of such challenges, see GAO, *International Trade: Critical Issues Remain in Deterring Conflict Diamond Trade*, [GAO-02-678](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 14, 2002).

the war,²⁹ U.S. officials told us that the DRC is conducting the mining contract review with limited transparency. U.S. and NGO officials expressed concern that the DRC has not published its terms of reference or all of the contracts or clearly defined the role of representatives of civil society.

Mismanagement of the DRC's natural resources has fueled continued conflict and corruption, according to U.S. officials, the UN, international donors, and NGOs.

- The DRC's abundant natural resources are serving as an incentive for conflict between neighboring countries' militias and armed domestic factions. These groups seek to control specific mining sites and illegal trade networks to finance operations and buy arms. For example, the UN has reported that profits from Congolese coltan have financed a large part of Rwanda's military budget and that gold smuggled into Uganda continues to finance militias. Such reports are consistent with World Bank research, which commonly finds that countries with valuable natural resources have more conflict than countries without such resources.³⁰
- In addition to fueling conflict, the DRC's abundance of natural resources continues to foster corruption as government officials use bribery to share in resource profits. For example, NGOs have reported that through extensive bribery and corruption in the mining sector, exports of large quantities of DRC copper and cobalt have been undeclared and that 60 to 80 percent of the DRC's 2005-2006 customs revenue was embezzled. USAID has also reported on the postconflict proliferation of natural resource contracts based on joint ventures between the DRC government and private partners, who are receiving a disproportionate share of profits.

²⁹During wartime, the DRC and rebels alike sold advance mineral extraction rights and forestry concessions to raise money. In June 2005, a parliamentary commission investigating economic and financial contracts signed during the war reported to the National Assembly that many mining contracts signed between 1996 and 2003 were illegal or of limited value to the DRC's development. Although the commission recommended that some contracts be rescinded or renegotiated, the DRC government has not fully acted on this recommendation, and U.S. officials we spoke with were uncertain about the recommendation's likely impact on reviews of current contracts.

³⁰The World Bank's Development Research Group identified the percentage of a country's gross domestic product that is derived from natural resource exports as the single most important structural factor associated with conflict. Specifically, a country's risk of conflict increases to about 22 percent from about 1 percent if natural resource exports constitute as much as 33 percent of its gross domestic product. See Collier and Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance" (2004).

Lack of Basic Infrastructure

The DRC lacks many key elements of basic infrastructure, such as buildings, equipment, and transportation.

- The transportation sector is “broken,” according to one recent international assessment. The DRC has fewer than 1,740 miles of paved roads to connect 58 million to 65 million people distributed over more than 900,000 square miles.³¹ According to a recent study prepared by 17 donor nations, no roads link 9 of the DRC’s 10 provincial capitals to the national capital, and no roads link the DRC’s northern and southern regions or its eastern and western regions.
- About 90 percent of DRC airfields lack paved runways. More air crashes have occurred in the DRC since 1945 than in any other African state.
- International observers have reported that the DRC’s educational and penal infrastructures are dilapidated.
- An international group of donor nations recently identified major deficiencies in electrification, communications, supplies of clean water, and credit.

The DRC’s lack of basic infrastructure has hindered progress in humanitarian, developmental, and governance programs.

- U.S. officials told us that the lack of an adequate in-country transportation system increases the time required to get supplies to those in need. Such problems limit access to vulnerable groups and cause delays in providing humanitarian assistance such as food aid.³² NGO and U.S. officials implementing emergency food aid and nonemergency food security programs in the DRC have reported that excessive delays in delivering assistance are common because of the lack of roads linking the DRC’s regions and several of its major cities and ports. One NGO has reported that it must compete with commercial contracts for the limited space on the DRC’s troubled rail system and that its commodities and equipment are often given lower priority.

³¹In contrast, neighboring Uganda, with less than 1/11th of the DRC’s land area and about half of its population, has nearly six times as many miles of paved roads.

³²See GAO, *Foreign Assistance: Various Challenges Impede the Efficiency and Effectiveness of U.S. Food Aid*, GAO-07-560 (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 13, 2007).

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- U.S. and NGO officials also pointed out that the lack of roads in the DRC has increased the expense or difficulty associated with their programs, in part because they must increase their reliance on air transport.³³ The dearth of accessible roads in the DRC has prompted USAID’s emergency assistance programs to use some of their funds for road rehabilitation programs, to ensure safe and reliable routes to reach those in need. The lack of roads and other adequate infrastructure also affects private companies trying to import and export goods. According to the World Bank’s Cost of Doing Business survey, DRC’s average export costs in 2006, at more than \$3,100 per container, were the world’s third highest.
 - State officials told us that the DRC government needs “everything from bricks to paper.” A USAID official told us that any effort to establish new provincial legislatures would be hindered by the lack of buildings to house the legislators or “even chairs for them to sit in.”
 - An NGO has reported that the DRC judicial system is being undermined by destroyed infrastructure, equipment shortages, lack of reference texts, and the dearth of roads, which makes some areas inaccessible to legal authorities.
 - A 2007 UN report noted that at least 429 detainees (including some convicted of human rights violations) had escaped from dilapidated prisons over the last 6 months of 2006.³⁴
 - International donor nations and organizations concluded in their assistance framework document that the lack of infrastructure has made economic development almost impossible in many areas and may stifle the potential for economic growth and private sector activity in most DRC provinces.

³³We reported in 2007 that expenditures for food aid transportation—including in-country delivery and administration—have been rising throughout the world, in part because of the expensive nature of logistics in emergency situations. See [GAO-07-560](#).

³⁴See Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, MONUC Human Rights Division, *The Human Rights Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) during the period of July to December 2006* (Feb. 8, 2007).

U.S. Government Has Not Assessed Its Overall Progress toward Achieving the Act's Policy Objectives

The U.S. government has not established a process to assess agencies' overall progress toward achieving the Act's policy objectives in the DRC. Although State and the National Security Council (NSC) have developed mechanisms to coordinate some of the agencies' activities in the DRC, neither mechanism systematically assesses overall progress.

Some of the key agencies involved in the DRC monitor their respective programs. For example, USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has two program officers in the DRC who regularly visit project sites and publish quarterly reports on OFDA activities. Their partner organizations, or implementers, also provide reports and updates on their projects.³⁵ Similarly, USAID officials told us that USAID's Central African Regional Program for the Environment program has an extensive and standard set of monitoring and evaluation tools built into all cooperative agreements with implementers, such as use of satellite imagery and remote sensing to analyze change in forest cover, one of the principal "high-level" indicators. DOL informed us that it relies on midterm and final evaluations, financial and programmatic audits, and biannual technical and financial reports to monitor its programs.³⁶ USDA officials informed us that USDA requires its partner organizations to conduct assessments of their projects.

However, the executive branch has not established a governmentwide process to use such information for an assessment of overall U.S. progress in the DRC. Although State and NSC have developed mechanisms aimed at providing some degree of coordination among executive branch agencies active in the DRC, neither mechanism currently provides for the systematic assessment of overall U.S. progress toward its goals.

- A new State-USAID joint planning process is not yet fully operational and does not include other agencies active in the DRC. State's newly established Director of Foreign Assistance (DFA), who also serves as USAID's administrator, has been charged with ensuring that foreign assistance is being used as effectively as possible to meet broad U.S. foreign policy objectives. Under DFA's guidance, State and USAID have

³⁵For example, in one report, OFDA noted that work conditions are extremely difficult because many health centers are accessible only by foot and that the local population is often too fearful of attacks by armed groups operating in the area to make full use of the centers.

³⁶One recent report noted that continuing or worsening security problems were hampering the efficiency of a DOL project in the DRC.

begun to develop a joint planning and budgeting process that, according to State officials, may eventually assess all U.S. foreign assistance. However, the Office of the DFA has yet to complete its plan for operations in the DRC during fiscal year 2007, which ended on September 30, 2007. As of February 2007, the draft country operations plan was incomplete and consisted of a listing of individual programs that did not include a systematic assessment of the collective impact of State and USAID efforts during fiscal year 2007. In addition, the DFA draft plan did not address activities funded by other agencies, including DOD, HHS, and the Treasury, although the DFA joint planning process may eventually include other agencies to some degree. Under the DFA process, the U.S. mission to the DRC has prepared a mission strategic plan. However, the mission strategic plan pertains only to currently projected fiscal year 2009 activities and is therefore subject to change before submission of the fiscal year 2009 budget request in 2008.³⁷

- The NSC interagency group, intended to help coordinate certain agencies' activities, does not systematically assess these activities and does not include several relevant agencies. The NSC group assembles agencies such as the Departments of State, Defense, and the Treasury to discuss policies and approaches to addressing the challenges in the DRC. For example, according to State and NSC officials, these discussions often focus on the eastern DRC's unstable security. However, NSC and State officials told us that the NSC group has not developed systematic tools for assessing the impact of all U.S. agencies' efforts to achieve the objectives of the Act. Also, the NSC effort has not included key agencies involved in the DRC, such as DOL, HHS, or USDA, in its discussions of policies and approaches.

Conclusions

The DRC appears to be at a crucial point in its turbulent history. After decades of dictatorship and devastating wars with its neighbors and internal groups, it has inaugurated its first democratically elected government in more than 40 years. However, U.S. and NGO officials agree that several interrelated challenges continue to pose major impediments to achievement of the Act's policy objectives in the DRC. Failure to make near-term progress in addressing the DRC's unstable security, rampant corruption, economic mismanagement, and lack of needed infrastructure

³⁷ A DFA official informed us in early December 2007 that the draft fiscal year 2007 operations plan had yet to be finalized. DFA staff provided us with summary fiscal year 2007 funding data in September 2007 for the purposes of this report.

could result in further war and instability in a region of importance to U.S. national interests.

U.S. agencies have initiated a wide range of efforts to help the DRC establish and maintain peace and stability. However, because the U.S. government has not established a process to systematically assess its overall progress in the DRC, it cannot be fully assured that it has allocated these resources in the most effective manner. For example, a systematic process for assessing governmentwide progress would allow the United States to determine whether its allocations, which currently emphasize humanitarian aid, should focus more on the DRC's unstable security, which worsens the country's other problems and impedes the delivery of U.S. assistance. Similarly, such a process could give the U.S. government greater assurance that it has identified additional bilateral or multilateral measures that may be needed to achieve the Act's objectives. Given the DRC's significance to the stability of Africa, the scope, complexity, and interrelated nature of its urgent problems warrant an effective governmentwide response.

Recommendation for Executive Action

To provide a basis for informed decisions regarding U.S. allocations for assistance in the DRC as well as any needed bilateral or multilateral actions, we recommend that the Secretary of State, through the Director of Foreign Assistance, work with the heads of the other U.S. agencies implementing programs in the DRC to develop a plan for systematically assessing the U.S. government's overall progress toward achieving the Act's objectives.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We requested comments on a draft of this report from the Secretaries of Agriculture, Defense, Labor, Health and Human Services, State, and the Treasury. We also requested comments from the Administrator of USAID and from the Director of Congressional Relations of OPIC.

We received written comments from State, which are reprinted in appendix III. In its comments, State endorsed our recommendation. It further noted that it believed that the recommendation would be met as DFA's joint planning and budgeting processes are extended to include all U.S. agencies engaged in the DRC. State also provided several other comments, for example, expressing concerns regarding the span of years addressed in our report and what it characterized as a lack of historical context. We addressed State's comments as appropriate in this report.

We also received technical comments on our draft report from DOD, HHS, DOL, the Treasury, and USAID. We have incorporated these comments into our report, as appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to interested congressional committees, the Secretary of State, and other interested parties. We will also make copies available to others on request. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3149 or gootnickd@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors are listed in appendix IV.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Gootnick". The signature is stylized with a large initial "D" and a cursive "Gootnick".

David Gootnick
Director, International Affairs and Trade

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Our objectives were to identify (1) U.S. programs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), (2) major impediments hindering accomplishment of the policy objectives of the DRC Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006 (the Act), and (3) U.S. government efforts to assess progress toward accomplishing the Act's policy objectives. Because the Act directed us to review actions taken by U.S. agencies to achieve its objectives, we focused on the fiscal year in which the Act was enacted, and also considered the fiscal year before its enactment to provide context.

To identify U.S. programs in the DRC, we interviewed officials from key U.S. agencies who have programs in the DRC. These agencies included the Departments of Agriculture (USDA), Defense (DOD), Labor (DOL), Health and Human Services (HHS), State, and the Treasury (Treasury); the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC); and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). We also reviewed program documents, budget data, and policy statements. We identified the amount of funding each agency had allocated for its DRC programs in fiscal years 2006 and 2007 by analyzing official agency submissions to Congress and related documents. We did not attempt to determine the extent to which each agency had obligated or expended the funds it had allocated.

To determine the major impediments hindering accomplishment of the Act's policy objectives, we reviewed a range of documents, plans, and assessments provided to us by U.S. agencies with programs in the DRC. We also interviewed officials from each of these agencies. We reviewed economic literature and recent reports, program assessments, studies, and papers written by nongovernmental organizations, international organizations, multilateral banks, and think tanks. To discuss key challenges to addressing the Act's policy objectives, we conducted a round-table session with a nonprobability sample of 11 nongovernmental organizations that offer a broad range of experience and expertise implementing programs and projects in the DRC. For example, we included panelists from organizations that focus on humanitarian, democracy, and economic development issues. Additionally, we interviewed representatives from other organizations with experience in the DRC. Based on all of these responses, we compared and contrasted the challenges identified to determine common themes and focused on challenges that were internal to the DRC. We considered all of these views as we finalized our analysis of these challenges. We defined challenges as factors that are internal to the DRC—that is, they represent impediments to the United States and other donors that are providing assistance intended to improve the situation in that country.

To examine U.S. efforts to assess progress toward accomplishing the Act's policy objectives, we identified U.S. interagency assessments, reports, and plans pertaining to programs in the DRC. We also interviewed U.S. agency officials and a cognizant official of the National Security Council. Although we did not travel to the DRC, we conducted several telephone interviews with U.S. embassy and USAID mission staff located in the DRC.

We conducted our work from May 2007 to December 2007 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Appendix II: Examples of Programs by Policy Objective Category

Policy objective category	Examples of agencies active in each category	Examples of programs pertaining to each category	Total category funding, fiscal years 2006-2007 (millions of dollars)
Humanitarian	USAID, State	Provision of the following to vulnerable populations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency supplies • health care • nutrition programs • water and sanitation improvements • food and agriculture assistance 	\$173.7
Social development	USAID, HHS, DOL, DOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychosocial support, medical assistance, and reintegration support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence • Immunization against infectious diseases (e.g., polio and measles) • Address children’s involvement in mining and related services, small-scale commerce, child soldiering, and other forms of child labor 	\$110.1
Governance	State, USAID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of democracy resource centers • Legal assistance • Support for promoting political participation 	\$22.1
Economic /natural resource management	Treasury, USAID, USDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debt relief • Support for the Central African Regional Program for the Environment • Agricultural development assistance 	\$76
Security	State, DOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refurbishment of a military officer training school • Training brigade- and battalion-staff level officers on military justice reform, civil-military relations, and other issues. • Support for Tripartite Plus Commission 	\$17.7

Source: GAO analysis of the Act and executive branch data.

Appendix III: Comments from the Department of State



United States Department of State

*Assistant Secretary for Resource Management
and Chief Financial Officer*

Washington, D.C. 20520

DEC 03 2007

Ms. Jacquelyn Williams-Bridgers
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Ms. Williams-Bridgers:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: Systematic Assessment Needed to Determine Progress toward U.S. Policy Objectives," GAO Job Code 320490.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Madeline Seidenstricker, Democratic Republic of Congo Desk Officer, Bureau of African Affairs, at (202) 647-2216.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bradford R. Higgins".

Bradford R. Higgins

cc: GAO – Zina Merritt
AF – Jendayi Frazer
State/OIG – Mark Duda

Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report

**THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: Systematic Assessment
Needed to Determine Progress toward U.S. Policy Objectives**
(GAO-08-188, Job Code 320490)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your draft report entitled "*THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC): Systematic Assessment Needed to Determine Progress toward U.S. Policy Objectives.*" The Department of State has long played a leading role in assisting the Congolese people to build a stable, democratic and prosperous nation. The Department of State was instrumental in ending a regional conflict waged on the territory of the DRC involving multiple national armies and numerous domestic groups armed by regional actors. The State Department actively supported the Lusaka Peace Process, culminating in the Global and Inclusive Agreement signed in Sun City in 2002. The Department of State was instrumental in the establishment of the United Nations Organization Mission to the DRC (MONUC), whose facilitation made possible DRC's historic national elections in 2006, the first democratic election since 1960. MONUC continues to be the principal security provider in the DRC.

The State Department has long supported the DRC's stabilization and successful transition to democracy as the cornerstone of lasting stability for the African Great Lakes region. The State Department welcomes the GAO report on the DRC as an important indicator of Congressional interest. However, we continue to believe that by beginning its assessment in 2003, the GAO did not sufficiently take into account the State Department's role in ending the war in the DRC. Without that important contextual information, the present report provides a somewhat incomplete snapshot of U.S. engagement with the DRC before the adoption of the Act. While the report does provide a useful snapshot of where the State Department currently stands in implementing the provisions of the 2006 DRC Relief, Security and Democracy Promotion Act, it presents an arbitrarily limited perspective on the State Department's role in ending the regional war that left the DRC devastated.

The fifteen policy objectives established in the Act are consistent with State Department policies already in the process of implementation. The Department of State endorses the GAO recommendation that the U.S. Government systematically assess progress toward achieving that Act's policy objectives. We believe this recommendation will be met as the joint planning and budgeting processes

underway at the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development are extended to include all U.S. agencies engaged in the DRC under the Director of Foreign Assistance ("F").

The GAO report notes that Western aid fell in the early 1990s owing to concerns about human rights and the need for internal reforms and then moves immediately to note the beginning of increasing U.S. aid in 2001 without taking note of the horrific regional wars that took place between the drop in assistance levels and its resumption. Given that the Act suggests that the Secretary of State should withhold U.S. assistance to the DRC if the DRC does not make sufficient progress on the various policy objectives, the State Department submits that the GAO and Congress should take note of what took place in the country during the period when funding was withheld in the 1990s. The DRC's governance capacity was decimated by previous government corruption, the intense conflict, and the long absence of donor-support, making progress today on most policy objectives critical but also extremely challenging.

The Department of State suggests that the GAO clearly state under "Results in Brief" that the GAO team was unable to travel to the DRC and therefore did not consult with international donor governments and UN agencies operating in the Congo.

Finally, the Department of State is concerned by the lack of historical context in the report. Outside of the conclusion, the report devotes a mere paragraph to the history of the DRC, summarizing the collapse and subsequent reemergence of a nation as follows: "The DRC has had a turbulent history." This lack of explanation of the historical factors that explain why the DRC ranks second to Sudan on the Fund for Peace scale of failed states does not appear to be in keeping with the spirit of the Act. The turbulent history is important in understanding the reason for the insecurity in the east of the country and the severe underdevelopment in a country rich in natural resources.

Specific Notes

- The GAO report states that the DRC's gross domestic product grew at an average of 5.5 percent from 2002 to 2006 but has recently slowed. Our understanding is that growth is expected to continue to grow at the same rate in 2007.

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- One additional challenge to the accomplishment of USG objectives involves coordination among donor countries, including China, which has been reticent to coordinate its activities in Congo with U.S. and European donors. Coordination between the UN peacekeeping mission in the Congo (MONUC) and international and local NGOs, which is essential for the protection of civilians, particularly in eastern Congo, is also particularly challenging. There are mechanisms that foster donor coordination, including the Contact Group that the United States has actively supported, as well as mechanisms to foster UN-NGO coordination in the DRC. However, there remains room for improvement. Although effectively addressing these important coordination challenges depends in part on non-U.S. entities, the USG is working with our international partners to pursue ways to address them more effectively.
- On page 10 of the GAO report, under #13, the term “Humanitarian Assistance” should be added to the categories listed.
- On Page 15, the paragraph on State humanitarian assistance should read as follows: State has provided humanitarian assistance to repatriate and reintegrate refugees returning to the DRC as well as to refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the DRC. It has provided funding for refugee returnee food needs as well as basic health and nutrition, water and sanitation, livelihood creation and market access, prevention and response to Gender Based Violence and mental health assistance programs in areas of high refugee return. In fiscal year 2007, State supported refugee return and reintegration activities in the DRC, which were implemented primarily by the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, other international organizations and NGOs. Contributions to UNHCR also addressed the needs of refugees hosted by the DRC and persons displaced within the country. In addition, State contributed to overall Africa assistance programs implemented by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross, of which a portion supports refugees and conflict victims in Central Africa.
- Please note that proposed FY08 security assistance funding for the DRC totals \$8.35 million (\$5.5 million PKO, \$500,000 in IMET, \$600,000 in FMF, and \$1.75 in INCLE). It is worth noting that this

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amount represents a decrease from the \$10.8 million in security anticipated for FY07. The FY08 decrease occurs at a time when violence in the eastern DRC is on the rise.

- On pages 17 and 18, under the examples of the USG's Governance Assistance programs, it might be worthwhile to include mention of DRL's \$3.4 million governance and human rights programs. These five programs, which address anti-corruption, legal and other forms of assistance for victims of gender-based violence, judicial strengthening, civil society strengthening, and press freedom/media development, were funded with FY06 money and the implementation of these programs will continue through FY09.

Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

David Gootnick, (202) 512-3149 or gootnickd@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Zina Merritt (Assistant Director), Pierre Toureille, Kristy Kennedy, Kendall Schaefer, Martin De Alteriis, Michael Hoffman, Reid Lowe, and Farhanaz Kermalli made key contributions to this report. Grace Lui provided technical assistance.

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