



Highlights of [GAO-04-640](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

Each year, the Department of Defense (DOD) spends an estimated \$20 billion to repair the damage to military equipment and infrastructure caused by corrosion. Furthermore, corrosion profoundly impacts military readiness as well as the safety of military personnel.

In the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003, Congress directed that DOD develop a long-term corrosion strategy, including specific requirements, and that GAO assess it. DOD submitted its strategy in December 2003. This report assesses the potential of the corrosion strategy (in terms of three elements—resources, performance metrics, and policy guidance) to effectively prevent and mitigate corrosion and its effects on military equipment and infrastructure.

## What GAO Recommends

To provide better assurances that the long-term corrosion strategy is implemented as envisioned by Congress, GAO is recommending that the Secretary of Defense address certain shortcomings in funding, performance measures, and policy.

In written comments, DOD agreed with all of these recommendations. However, GAO emphasized the need to complete the baseline study well before 2011, institutionalize corrosion project funding, and extend the review of corrosion prevention plans.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-640](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-640).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact William M. Solis at (202) 512-8365 or [solisw@gao.gov](mailto:solisw@gao.gov).

## DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

# Opportunities Exist to Improve Implementation of DOD's Long-Term Corrosion Strategy

## What GAO Found

While DOD's new long-term corrosion strategy generally addresses the requirements in the congressional mandate, it falls short of representing a comprehensive plan needed to implement successfully the strategy and manage DOD's extensive corrosion problems in the future. An effective, results-oriented strategy identifies resources required to achieve its goals and outcome-based performance metrics that can measure progress toward achieving those goals. Without addressing certain key elements, the strategy is unlikely to serve as an effective tool in preventing and mitigating corrosion and its effects on military equipment and infrastructure. These shortcomings could lead to the loss of billions of dollars in avoidable maintenance costs and the degradation of safety and readiness. GAO's review of three key elements showed the following:

- Funding and personnel resources**—The strategy does not identify the level of funding and personnel resources needed to implement the corrosion reduction plan in the near- or long-term. Officials in DOD's corrosion office said that resource needs are still being determined and firm estimates should be available in December 2004. However, preliminary projections made by the corrosion task force indicated that the DOD-wide corrosion reduction program would require about \$1.9 billion for fiscal years 2004 through 2009. DOD and the services, however, have not included any funds for fiscal year 2004 and less than 10 percent of the task force's fiscal year 2005 estimates. While the strategy calls for a mechanism that ensures sustained, long-term funding, DOD has been using a year-by-year funding approach.
- Performance measures and milestones**—While the strategy includes some performance measures and milestones, they are not the results-oriented metrics needed to successfully monitor the program's progress. In addition, DOD does not plan to complete a critically needed, corrosion cost baseline study until 2011 because of limited funding. Without results-oriented metrics and a baseline, DOD will not be in a sound position to establish cost-effective resource priorities or monitor progress toward corrosion reduction.
- Policy guidance**—While the strategy strengthens DOD's policy guidance on corrosion prevention and mitigation, improvements can be made. The new guidance establishes a review process for corrosion prevention plans for major weapon systems programs, such as the Joint Strike Fighter. However, the guidance does not extend the review to non-major weapons systems and infrastructure programs, which are under the purview of the military services. The guidance also does not require the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff's Focused Logistics Functional Capabilities Review to consider corrosion prevention planning when it reviews project requirements.