



Highlights of GAO-06-111, a report to the Chairman, Committee on Government Reform, and Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Recent military operations have required that the Army rely extensively on Army National Guard forces, which currently comprise over 30 percent of the ground forces in Iraq. Heavy deployments of Army National Guard forces and their equipment, much of which has been left overseas for follow-on forces, have raised questions about whether the Army National Guard has the types and quantities of equipment it will need to continue supporting ongoing operations and future missions.

GAO was asked to assess the extent to which (1) the Army National Guard has the equipment needed to support ongoing operations and (2) the Army can account for Army National Guard equipment left overseas. GAO also assessed the Army's plans, cost estimates, and funding strategy for equipping Guard units under its modular and rotational force initiatives.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Army to develop and submit to Congress plans and funding strategies to address the Army National Guard's equipment shortfalls, accurately track and replace equipment its forces left overseas, and complete planning to integrate the Army National Guard into its modular and rotational force initiatives. DOD agreed with the recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-111.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Janet St. Laurent, 202-512-4402, stlaurentj@gao.gov.

October 2005

RESERVE FORCES

Plans Needed to Improve Army National Guard Equipment Readiness and Better Integrate Guard into Army Force Transformation Initiatives

What GAO Found

While deploying Army National Guard units have had priority for getting the equipment they needed, readying these forces has degraded the equipment inventory of the Guard's nondeployed units and threatens the Guard's ability to prepare forces for future missions at home and overseas. Nondeployed Guard units now face significant equipment shortfalls because (1) they have been equipped at less than war-time levels with the assumption that they could obtain additional resources prior to deployment and (2) current operations have created an unanticipated high demand for certain items, such as armored vehicles. To fully equip its deploying units, as of July 2005, the Army National Guard had transferred more than 101,000 pieces of equipment from its nondeployed units. As of May 2005, such transfers had exhausted the Guard's inventory of more than 220 high demand equipment items, such as night vision equipment, trucks, and radios. Further, as equipment requirements for overseas operations continue to evolve, the Army has been unable to identify and communicate what items deploying units need until close to their scheduled deployments, which challenges the Guard to transfer needed equipment quickly.

To meet the demand for certain types of equipment for continuing operations, the Army has required Army National Guard units to leave behind many items for use by follow-on forces, but the Army can account for only about 45 percent of these items and has not developed a plan to replace them, as DOD policy requires. DOD has directed the Army to track equipment Guard units left overseas and develop replacement plans, but they have not yet been completed. The Army Guard estimates that since 2003 it has left more than 64,000 items, valued at more than \$1.2 billion, overseas to support operations. Without a completed and implemented plan to replace all Guard equipment left overseas, Army Guard units will likely face growing equipment shortages and challenges in regaining readiness for future missions. Thus, DOD and Congress will not have assurance that the Army has an effective strategy for addressing the Guard's equipping needs.

Although Army National Guard units are scheduled to convert to new designs within the Army's modular force by 2008, they are not expected to be equipped for these designs until at least 2011. The Army has not developed detailed equipping plans that specify the Guard's equipment requirements to transform to a modular force while supporting ongoing operations. As of June 2005, the Army estimated that it would cost about \$15.6 billion to convert most of the Guard's units, but this estimate did not include all expected costs and the Army was unable to provide detailed information to support the estimate. In the short term, units nearing deployment will continue to receive priority for equipment, which may affect the availability of equipment needed for modular conversions. Until the Army fully identifies the Guard's equipment requirements and costs for both the near and long term, DOD and Congress will not be in a sound position to weigh the affordability and effectiveness of the Army's plans.