



Highlights of [GAO-06-1109T](#), a testimony before the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves

Why GAO Did This Study

Ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have required the deployment of large numbers of Army National Guard and Army Reserve personnel. The Department of Defense (DOD) faces the unprecedented challenge of sustaining large-scale, long-duration operations with an all-volunteer military force. In addition, DOD's homeland defense missions have taken on higher priority, and National Guard forces have state responsibilities for homeland security activities as well as their traditional roles in responding to natural disasters. Over the past few years, GAO has examined the effects of ongoing military operations and domestic missions on the Army National Guard and Army Reserve.

This statement, which draws on prior GAO work, focuses on (1) challenges in sustaining Army reserve component equipment and personnel readiness while supporting ongoing operations and (2) the extent to which the Army's planned transformation initiatives will alleviate equipment and personnel shortages and enhance readiness.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-1109T.

To view the full product, click on the link above. For more information, contact Janet A. St. Laurent at (202) 512-4402 or stlaurentj@gao.gov.

RESERVE FORCES

Army National Guard and Army Reserve Readiness for 21st Century Challenges

What GAO Found

The Army National Guard and Army Reserve have made significant contributions to ongoing military operations, but equipment shortages and personnel challenges have increased and, if left unattended, may hamper the reserves' preparedness for future overseas and domestic missions. To provide deployable units, the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve have transferred large quantities of personnel and equipment to deploying units, an approach that has resulted in growing shortages in nondeployed units. Also, reserve units have left significant quantities of equipment overseas and DOD has not yet developed plans to replace it. The Army National Guard reports that its units have less than one-third of their required equipment, and the Army Reserve reports that its units have about half of the modern equipment they need to deploy. These shortages could also adversely affect reserve units' ability to perform homeland defense missions and provide support to civil authorities in the event of natural disasters or terrorist attacks. The Army also faces shortages of personnel trained in some high-demand skills. These readiness challenges have occurred because the Army reserve components' role has shifted from a strategic reserve force to an operational force that is being used on an ongoing basis. However, DOD has not fully reassessed its equipment, personnel, and training needs and developed a new model for the reserves appropriate to the new strategic environment. GAO has made recommendations that DOD conduct a comprehensive reassessment of equipment, personnel, training, and funding requirements given the reserve components' shift to an operational role, but DOD's progress to date in addressing them has been limited. Without a comprehensive reassessment of equipment and personnel policies, the Army's reserve components may not be well prepared to deal with future events at home or abroad.

The Army has begun two transformational initiatives intended to enhance reserve units' ability to conduct 21st century operations and plans to spend over \$24 billion for equipment over the next 5 years. These initiatives are significant, but the extent to which they will alleviate equipment and personnel challenges is unclear. The Army faces challenges in managing both initiatives' costs and achieving intended capabilities. First, although the Army is making progress in transforming its forces to more flexible modular units, it has not provided detailed information on the capabilities, costs, and risks of its plans, and reserve units are likely to lack some key equipment items well into the future. Second, the Army is implementing a force generation model through which reserve units' readiness will be increased as units move closer to eligibility for deployment. However, the Army has not fully determined the equipment, personnel, and training that units will require at each stage of the cycle or fully identified the resources to implement its plans. Without detailed implementation plans, decision makers will not have sufficient information with which to assess both DOD's progress and performance in transforming the Army reserve components and whether investment decisions are being targeted to the highest priority areas.