

Why GAO Did This Study

To obtain visibility of the capabilities of its military forces, the Department of Defense (DOD) has developed an enterprise of interconnected readiness reporting systems. In 2010, to better meet the information needs of their leaders, the Army and Marine Corps implemented new reporting requirements. House and Senate Reports, which accompanied proposed bills for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011, directed GAO to review recent readiness reporting changes. GAO assessed the extent that 1) current readiness reporting policies have affected the content of readiness information provided to decision makers, 2) the services have consistently implemented their new policies, and 3) changes to the Army, Marine Corps, and Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) systems have affected the Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS) enterprise. GAO analyzed DOD, Army, and Marine Corps policies, readiness data, service readiness reporting systems, and spoke to headquarters officials and reporting units.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Army develop an alternative means to show which units recently returned from deployment and that both services improve internal controls to enhance readiness reporting. DOD did not concur, citing the availability of other readiness data and actions taken on internal controls. GAO disagrees that the data DOD cites provides sufficient visibility; therefore, additional actions are needed.

View [GAO-11-526](#) or key components. For more information, contact Sharon Pickup at (202) 512-9619 or pickups@gao.gov.

MILITARY READINESS

Army and Marine Corps Reporting Provides Additional Data, but Actions Needed to Improve Consistency

What GAO Found

Current Army and Marine Corps guidance has generally improved the quantity and objectivity of readiness information available to decision makers. As in the past, Army Regulation 220-1 and Marine Corps Order 3000.13 direct units to report on two types of missions—the core missions for which units were designed as well as any other missions they may be assigned, but recent changes to the guidance also added new requirements. Units must now provide objective, personnel and equipment data to supplement commanders' assessments of their units' assigned mission capabilities. The updated service guidance also provides additional criteria, which are intended to help unit commanders consistently assess their units' mission capabilities. The new data and additional mission assessment criteria improve the objectivity and consistency of readiness information provided to decision makers. However, to clearly identify units that recently returned from deployment, the Army regulation now requires units to uniformly report a specific service directed readiness level rather than assess and report the unit's actual readiness level. As a result, decision makers lack a complete picture of the readiness of some units that could be called upon to respond to contingencies.

While the Army and Marine Corps have taken steps to implement the revised readiness reporting guidance, units are inconsistently reporting readiness in some areas. GAO site visits to 33 Army and 20 Marine Corps units revealed that units were using inconsistent reporting time frames, and GAO data analysis showed that 49 percent of Marine Corps reports submitted between May 2010 and January 2011 were late. Furthermore, units are reporting equipment and personnel numbers differently, and some units are not linking their two types of mission assessments, in accordance with current guidance. The federal standards for internal control state management must continually assess and evaluate its internal controls to assure that the control activities being used are effective and updated when necessary. However, Marine Corps and Army quality assurance reviews have not identified all the inconsistencies and system mechanisms are not preventing the submission of inconsistent data. Until internal controls improve, decision makers will continue to rely on readiness information that is based on inconsistent reporting.

While the DRRS Concept of Operations calls for a family of systems to exchange information seamlessly under an enterprise framework, DOD and the services have focused their efforts on the needs of different users and have not reached agreement on key steps to achieve interoperability. Consequently progress has been incremental. In 2009, GAO issued a report highlighting the challenges facing DRRS and recommended that DOD use GAO's report and an independent program risk assessment to redirect the program's approach, structure, and oversight. As of April 2011, the risk assessment had not been done and it is now scheduled to begin in the fall of this year. Until this assessment is complete, OSD will continue to lack the information it needs to reach consensus with the services and make any adjustments needed to achieve interoperability.