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Congressional Committees

Subject: *Some Improvements Have Been Made in DOD's Annual Training Range Reporting but It Still Fails to Fully Address Congressional Requirements*

A fundamental military readiness principle is that the military must train as it intends to fight, and military training ranges provide the primary means to accomplish this principle. To successfully accomplish today's missions, U.S. forces are conducting significantly more complex operations, requiring increased joint training and interoperability between and among the military services, combatant commands, and other Department of Defense (DOD) and non-DOD organizations. For some time, senior DOD and military service officials have reported that they face increasing difficulties in carrying out realistic training at military installations due to training constraints, such as those resulting from encroachment.[1] In recent years, we have reported on these training constraints and identified the need for an integrated, readily accessible inventory of training ranges, capacities, and capabilities so that commanders across the services can schedule the best available resources to provide the required training; a comprehensive plan that includes goals, timelines, projected costs, and a clear assignment of responsibilities to address encroachment on military training ranges; and a more comprehensive approach for addressing deficiencies to ensure that ranges are adequately sustained and modernized in order to accomplish the department's transformation goals and ensure their long-term viability.

Title III, section 366 of the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003, required that the Secretary of Defense develop a comprehensive plan for the sustainment of military training ranges using existing authorities available to the Secretaries of Defense and the military departments to address training constraints caused by limitations on the use of military lands, marine areas, and airspace that are available in the United States and overseas for training.[2] (See section 366 of the Bob

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[1] DOD defines "encroachment" as the cumulative result of any and all outside influences that impede normal training and testing. DOD initially identified the following eight encroachment factors: endangered species and critical habitat, unexploded ordinance and munitions constituents, competition for frequency spectrum, protected marine resources, competition for airspace, air pollution, noise pollution, and urban growth around installations. Some emerging issues involve overseas ranges, water use, resource extraction, and civilian access.

[2] P.L. 107-314, Title III, Section 366 (Dec. 2, 2002).

Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 in encl. I.) Among other items, section 366 also required the Secretary to submit to Congress a report containing the comprehensive training range sustainment plan, the results of an assessment and evaluation of current and future training range requirements, and any recommendations that the Secretary may have for legislative or regulatory changes to address training constraints. Section 366 also directed the Secretary of Defense to develop and maintain an inventory of training ranges for each of the armed forces, which identifies all training capacities, capabilities, and constraints at each training range, and it required the Secretary of Defense to submit a report on his plans to improve the system for reporting the impact that training restraints have on readiness. DOD was to submit both the report and the training range inventory to Congress at the same time the President submitted the budget for fiscal year 2004 and to provide status reports annually for fiscal years 2005 through 2008. Instead of issuing a report along with the President's fiscal year 2004 budget submission in 2003, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) submitted to Congress its first report— *Implementation of the Department of Defense Training Range Comprehensive Plan*—and its training range inventory on February 27, 2004. OSD submitted its second annual report, along with an updated inventory, to Congress on July 14, 2005.[3]

Section 366 also required GAO to provide Congress with an evaluation of OSD's annual reports. This is our second such report. In our first report, issued in June 2004,[4] we found that OSD's initial 2004 report and inventory did not fully address several of the reporting requirements mandated by section 366. For example, we reported that OSD's 2004 report did not include a comprehensive training range plan with quantifiable goals or milestones to measure progress, and it did not identify funding requirements. In comments on a draft of our first report, DOD disagreed with our findings and with three of our four recommendations. In this second report we discuss the extent to which OSD's (1) 2005 training range inventory contains sufficient information to use as a baseline for developing the comprehensive sustainment plan mandated by section 366; and (2) 2005 training range report meets other requirements mandated by section 366 that could help guide OSD and the services in ensuring the long-term sustainability of their training ranges.[5]

To address our objectives, we relied on the work used to develop our June 2005 report on the condition of military training ranges.[6] In addition, we reviewed OSD's updated training range inventory for 2005 to assess whether the inventory identified training capabilities (e.g., types of training that can be conducted and available targets), capacities (e.g., number of personnel or weapon systems that can be accommodated), and constraints caused by limitations at each training range (e.g.,

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[3] Department of Defense, Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, *Implementation of the Department of Defense Training Range Comprehensive Plan* (Washington, D.C.: July 2005).
[4] GAO, *Military Training: DOD Report on Training Ranges Does Not Fully Address Congressional Reporting Requirements*, GAO-04-608 (Washington, D.C.: June 4, 2004).
[5] In this report, we use the term "training range" to collectively refer to air ranges, live-fire ranges, ground maneuver ranges, sea ranges, and operating areas.
[6] GAO, *Military Training: Better Planning and Funding Priority Needed to Improve the Conditions of Military Training Ranges*, GAO-05-534 (Washington, D.C.: June 10, 2005).

restrictions on live-fire training) as required by section 366. Also, we reviewed OSD's 2005 report to determine if it addressed the elements required by the act—a comprehensive training range sustainment plan; an assessment of current and future training range requirements; an evaluation of the adequacy of current DOD resources, including virtual and constructive assets, to meet current and future training range requirements; recommendations for legislative or regulatory changes to address training constraints; and plans to improve the readiness reporting system—and evaluated the quality of the information by comparing it to sound management principles for strategic planning, such as the identification of quantifiable goals, planned actions, funding requirements, milestones to measure progress, and organizations responsible for implementing the planned actions. Because OSD's 2005 report notes that it should be viewed as a supplement to the department's 2004 report, we evaluated this year's report within the context of last year's report, considering the degree to which they both met the requirements mandated by section 366. We also met with knowledgeable OSD and service officials to discuss the contents and the adequacy of OSD's 2005 inventory and training range report.

We conducted our work from July through August 2005 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Results in Brief

Similar to the inventory OSD submitted to Congress last year, the 2005 training range inventory does not contain sufficient information to use as a baseline for developing a comprehensive plan to address training constraints and help ensure range sustainability because it does not identify specific capacities, capabilities, and training constraints for ranges of all the services as required by section 366. Instead, it is a consolidated list of ranges provided by the individual services that lacks critical data and is not integrated or easily accessible by potential users. Both this year's and last year's inventories list the services' training ranges and provide general data on the size and type of range. Unlike last year's inventory, OSD's 2005 inventory also identifies specific routes pilots use to transit from a base to a training range and provides information on upper and lower altitudes for shared airspace near military installations for all the services. Still, neither inventory identifies specific capacities and capabilities for individual Army, Navy, or Marine Corps ranges or lists existing training constraints caused by encroachment or other factors, such as a lack of maintenance or modernization. In addition, OSD's 2005 inventory is not integrated or readily accessible to potential users. Therefore, this year's inventory is still not a tool that commanders across the services could use to identify range availability regardless of service ownership to schedule the best available resources to provide required training. In responding to similar findings in our 2004 report, OSD commented that it was a long-term goal to have an integrated management system to support joint use of training ranges. However, OSD does not identify this as one of its goals in this year's report. Instead, OSD's 2005 report identifies different service- and range-level information and inventory systems—some of which have been in place for years. We continue to believe as we did last year that, without a complete, integrated, and continuously updated training range inventory, it is difficult for potential users to

identify the best available ranges to meet their required training and for OSD to frame a meaningful plan to address training constraints and help ensure range sustainability.

OSD's 2005 training range report—similar to the one issued to Congress last year—fails to meet other requirements mandated by section 366 that could help guide OSD and the services in ensuring the long-term sustainability of their training ranges. Nevertheless, there is one noteworthy change: OSD's 2005 report includes some elements of a plan intended to address the long-term sustainability of training ranges while last year's report did not. The plan provides general goals, actions, and milestones but does not identify funding requirements for implementing planned actions, although specifically required to by section 366, and does not assign responsibility for implementation of specific actions or provide explicit performance metrics to measure progress—critical elements for a meaningful plan. Like last year's report, OSD's 2005 report does not include an assessment of current and future training range requirements; an evaluation of the adequacy of current resources, including virtual and constructive assets, to meet current and future training range requirements; or recommendations for legislative or regulatory changes to address training constraints—although specifically required to do so by section 366. In addition, OSD's 2005 report does not include its plans to improve the department's readiness reporting system, despite a specific mandate in section 366 that it do so no later than June 30, 2003. Although other OSD components have demonstrated that the department is capable of developing reports that contain information and comprehensive strategic plans similar to those specified by section 366, OSD's 2005 report is generally descriptive in nature. Namely, a large portion of the current report describes efforts underway within the department to use information technology and individual services' efforts to address sustainable range issues, while providing background information on funding sources, encroachment issues, and overseas ranges—information that congressional decision makers most likely already understand or may not find very useful in carrying out their oversight responsibilities.

Because our prior recommendations for improving OSD's annual training range reporting remain open, valid, and not fully addressed, we are not making new recommendations in this report. (See encl. II for a list of our open recommendations from our June 2004 report[7] and other recent reports associated with the sustainment of military training ranges.) In comments on a draft of this report, DOD stated that it is fully committed to a comprehensive approach to range management and that its annual reports to Congress on this matter reflected the importance the department accords this subject. DOD also stated that successful comprehensive planning does not equate to centralized management and that it does not believe a single, continuously updated and widely accessible inventory database is currently practical, feasible, or needed. While we recognize that DOD is committed to improving its range management, we previously recommended and continue to believe that DOD needs to develop a training range inventory and a comprehensive report that better fulfill the reporting requirements mandated by section 366. We have not equated successful

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[7] GAO-04-608.

comprehensive planning to centralized management as suggested by DOD and believe that, without an integrated and continuously updated range inventory, it is difficult for potential users to identify the best available ranges and for OSD to frame a meaningful plan to address training constraints and help ensure sustainability. We address DOD's comments in greater detail later in the report. The department also provided a technical clarification, which we incorporated.

Background

As recently demonstrated in Iraq and elsewhere, U.S. forces are conducting significantly more complex operations, requiring increased joint training and interoperability between and among the military services, combatant commands, and other DOD and non-DOD organizations. Training ranges represent important national assets for the development and sustainment of U.S. military forces and better enable joint force operations. DOD requires ranges for all levels of training to include airspace for air-to-air, air-to-ground, drop zone, and electronic combat training; live-fire ranges for artillery, armor, small arms, and munitions training; ground maneuver ranges to conduct realistic force-on-force and live-fire training at various unit levels; and sea ranges to conduct surface and subsurface training maneuvers. However, the military services report they have increasingly lost training range capabilities due to encroachment and other factors, such as a lack of maintenance and modernization. According to DOD, encroachment has resulted in a slow but steady increase in problems affecting the use of their training ranges. They believe that the gradual accumulation of these limitations will increasingly threaten training readiness.

Decentralized Range Management Framework

Historically, range management has been decentralized, from OSD to the services' headquarters to major commands to installations and units. In practice, this means that OSD and DOD-wide organizations provide management oversight, develop overarching policies, and facilitate cross-service and joint activities. The military services develop training, testing, and range requirements; schedule and conduct training and testing; develop implementation policy and guidance; design and implement programs and information systems; and develop funding plans, programs, and budgets. According to DOD, this division of effort reflects the department and service responsibilities enumerated in Title 10 of the United States Code and DOD directive.[8] The directive assigns the most prominent responsibilities for range sustainment to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics; Director of Operational Test and Evaluation; the military services; and DOD agencies. In addition, DOD has created an Overarching Integrated Product Team to act as the DOD coordinating body for developing strategies to preserve the military's ability to train. The Overarching Integrated Product Team reports to the Senior Readiness Oversight Council, which reviews range sustainment policies and issues. A Working

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[8] DOD Directive, *Sustainment of Ranges and Operating Areas (OPAREAs)*, 3200.15 (Washington, D.C.: April 2003).

Integrated Product Team (cochaired by the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Readiness, the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and Environment, and the Office of the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation) meets regularly and works collaboratively with other DOD organizations on issues related to sustainable ranges.

Prior GAO Reports Addressing
Constraints on Training Ranges

Several of our reports in recent years have addressed constraints on the use of military training ranges, particularly those related to encroachment.[9] A common theme in these reports has been the need for more comprehensive results-oriented planning to include, for example, clearly establishing goals and milestones for tracking progress in addressing constraints on training ranges, identifying the funding needed to accomplish tasks, and assigning responsibility for managing and coordinating departmental efforts. Brief summaries of these reports follow:

- In April 2002, we reported that troops stationed outside of the continental United States face a variety of training constraints that have increased over the past decade and are likely to increase further.[10] We also reported that impacts on readiness due to these constraints were not well documented.

- In June 2002, we reported on the impact of encroachment on military training ranges inside the United States with similar findings to those of the April 2002 report and identified the need for a comprehensive plan to manage encroachment on military training ranges.[11]

- In June 2004, we reported that DOD's 2004 training range report to Congress did not fully identify available training resources, specific training capacities and capabilities, and existing training constraints; fully assess current and future training requirements; fully evaluate the adequacy of current resources to meet current and future training range requirements in the United States and overseas; or include a comprehensive plan with quantifiable goals or milestones to measure progress, or projected funding requirements needed to implement the plan.[12] Instead, OSD's report described the services' processes to develop, document, and execute current training and training range requirements and the types of ranges the services need to meet their training requirements in the United States. In addition, we reported that OSD's training range inventory provided to Congress did not contain sufficient information to

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[9] GAO-05-534 contains a comprehensive list of GAO products associated with military training ranges.
[10] GAO, *Military Training: Limitations Exist Overseas but Are Not Reflected in Readiness Reporting*, GAO-02-525 (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 30, 2002).
[11] GAO, *Military Training: DOD Lacks a Comprehensive Plan to Manage Encroachment on Training Ranges*, GAO-02-614 (Washington, D.C.: June 11, 2002).
[12] GAO-04-608.

use as a baseline for developing a comprehensive training range plan required by section 366.

- In June 2005, we reported that our visits to eight training ranges along with DOD's own assessments showed that ranges were in deteriorated conditions and lacked maintenance and modernization, which adversely affected training activities and jeopardized the safety of military personnel.[13] For example, we observed ranges with malfunctioning communication systems, impassable tank trails, overgrown areas, and outdated training areas and targets. Whenever possible, the services work around these conditions by modifying the timing, tempo, or location of training, but officials have expressed concern that workarounds are becoming increasingly difficult and costly and that they compromise the realism essential to effective training. We also noted that DOD's progress in improving training range conditions was limited and was partially attributable to a lack of a comprehensive approach to ensure that ranges provide the proper setting for effectively preparing its forces for warfare. Specifically, a comprehensive approach should include several key elements, such as the following: well-defined policies that address all factors impacting range sustainability; servicewide plans that guide the timely execution of range sustainability actions; range requirements that are geared to meet both service and joint needs; adequate management of range funding; and a commitment to the implementation of this approach.

OSD's 2005 Inventory Does Not Contain Sufficient Information for Developing a Comprehensive Sustainment Plan

OSD's 2005 training range inventory contains more information than the one submitted to Congress in 2004 but it still does not meet the requirements mandated by section 366 because it does not identify specific capacities, capabilities, and training constraints for ranges of all the services—information necessary for developing a comprehensive plan to address training constraints and help ensure range sustainability. Instead, similar to last year's inventory, the 2005 inventory lists available operational training ranges and provides data on the size and type of ranges (e.g., air to ground, land maneuver, and urbanized terrain). Unlike the inventory from last year, the 2005 inventory also identifies specific routes pilots use to travel from an installation to a training range and back, and provides upper and lower altitudes for shared airspace near installations. However, neither inventory identifies specific training capacities and capabilities available at each range of all the services as required by section 366. For example, while both inventories identify capacities and capabilities at each Air Force range in terms of the number and type of aircraft that can be accommodated simultaneously or sequentially, and in terms of the types of ordnance permitted, targets, and feedback systems, they do not identify training capacities and capabilities available at individual Army, Navy, or Marine Corps ranges. Also, although specifically required to do so by section 366, neither inventory

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[13] GAO-05-534.

lists existing training constraints caused by limitations on the use of each range due to encroachment or other factors, such as a lack of maintenance or modernization. Still, individually the services have developed some of the specified information mandated by section 366. For example, Army and Marine Corps officials told us that they had identified training capacities and capabilities of their ranges, and the Army was able to provide us with a list of identified training constraints subsequent to the issuance of OSD's 2005 inventory. Also, Air Force officials said a list of identified training constraints for their ranges was provided to OSD last year but was not incorporated into either inventory and the Navy has initiated an effort to identify capabilities and constraints for 17 of its training ranges—four of these studies are completed but are still in final draft.

A training range inventory that could be continuously updated and easily accessible to potential users would make these data more useful to address training constraints caused by encroachment and to identify the best available resources to fulfill training requirements. Instead, similar to last year's inventory, OSD's 2005 inventory is a list of the individual services' inventories merged into one document that is not integrated or readily accessible by commanders across all the services. In response to a similar finding in a draft of our 2004 report, OSD stated that it is a long-term goal to have an integrated management system to support joint use of training ranges. However, the training range sustainment plan presented in OSD's 2005 report does not identify this as one of the department's goals. Instead, the report discusses various service- and range-level information and inventory systems. Collectively, these information and inventory systems are important to provide more complete data concerning training resources, but they are not integrated in a way that makes training ranges, their capacities and capabilities, and their limitations readily accessible to all commanders. For example, in 2001 DOD's Business Initiative Council recognized that range users, managers, and schedulers need information about multiple ranges, facilities, and associated resources in terms of scheduling and availability. Consequently, DOD has developed a common range scheduling tool that interfaces with 12 Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force ranges and simulation sites, providing near-real time display of scheduling and resource information. Also, as described in OSD's 2005 report, the Marine Corps has developed an active, centralized training range Web site that provides both general and detailed information about each of its ranges, allows commanders from any service to schedule their training events remotely, and provides photos and video footage of some ranges to assist potential users in scheduling and designing their training events. At the same time, the Army and Marine Corps have recognized the benefits of working together while jointly developing several information systems and decision tools that support cross-service utilization of both Marine Corps and Army training ranges. While the Navy and Air Force do not have similar Web-based inventories, they have worked together on the development and application of an aviation range safety software application, which is described in OSD's 2005 report. Additionally, the Navy's Southern California Offshore Range has developed an information management system that allows its users to complete a number of tasks, such as tracking the causes of modified or cancelled training and reporting range deficiencies.

**OSD's 2005 Report Still Does Not Meet
Other Requirements that Could Help
Guide the Sustainability of Ranges**

Similar to OSD's training range report issued to Congress last year, the 2005 report does not meet other requirements mandated by section 366 that could help guide OSD and the services in ensuring the long-term sustainability of their training ranges. One noteworthy change since last year is that OSD's current report provides some elements of a plan intended to address the long-term sustainability of training ranges while last year's report did not. However, the plan presented does not identify funding requirements for implementing planned actions although specified by section 366, and does not assign responsibility for implementation of actions or provide performance metrics to measure progress, although both are critical elements of a meaningful plan. Also, neither annual report includes OSD's assessment of current and future training range requirements; its evaluation of the adequacy of current resources, including virtual and constructive assets, to meet these requirements; its recommendations for legislative or regulatory changes; or its plans to improve the reporting of the readiness impact that training constraints have on specific units of the services—although specifically required to do so by section 366. While other OSD components have demonstrated that the department is capable of developing reports that contain information and comprehensive strategic plans similar to those specified by section 366, OSD's 2005 report is still generally descriptive and fails to fully address congressional requirements.

OSD's Plan Does Not Identify Funding
Requirements, Assign Responsibilities, or
Provide Explicit Performance Metrics

OSD's current plan provides a general framework for goals, actions, and milestones, but it does not provide information on the amount and sources of funding required for implementing the planned actions, or when these types of funds are needed. However, OSD describes the efforts of the Sustainable Range Working Integrated Product Team to develop a more consistent and accurate system to capture and report funding associated with ranges and to develop investment strategies. It further describes different types of funding available for ranges (e.g., procurement, operation and maintenance, and military construction funds) and the current and proposed funding framework for ranges, without specifically identifying its funding requirements. In our June 2005 report, we found that the services lack the capability to accurately and easily capture overall training range funding information and were unable to easily and precisely identify their funding requirements, funding levels, and trends in expenditures for training ranges on an annual basis. In comments on a draft of that report, DOD responded that a standing subgroup, under the direction of the Sustainable Ranges Integrated Product Team, is developing a framework that provides increased visibility into year-to-year funding. During this review, responsible DOD officials noted that additional time is needed to complete this effort and could not provide any definitive estimate for completion.

OSD's plan also lacks complete information on which organizations will be assigned responsibility for implementing which planned action. Instead, OSD discusses in general terms organizational roles and responsibilities for the sustainment of test and training ranges and operating areas. Individually, the military services have undertaken a number of planning actions to address the sustainability of their ranges. For example, the Navy and Marine Corps have started to develop local management plans for their training ranges that, among other things, provide a strategic vision for range operations and identify capability shortfalls. In addition, the Army recently started developing standardized local range plans; the Air Force is creating a management system, scheduled to be operational in 2007, to develop plans for its ranges; and several local range offices have started to develop plans to address the sustainability of their training ranges. In comments on our June 2005 report, OSD stated that more fully articulating the roles and responsibilities of primary OSD offices, the services, and the combatant commands will better address the full range of management functions required to sustain training ranges. OSD further noted that it intended to undertake a review of the department's policies to ensure the roles and responsibilities for addressing such sustainable range issues are integrated and clearly articulated. More recently, DOD officials could not provide an estimated completion date for this endeavor.

In addition, OSD's plan does not provide explicit performance metrics to measure progress in addressing training constraints and ensuring the sustainability of ranges. Instead, DOD organizes its general goals, actions, and milestones under four main categories: modernization and investment, operations and maintenance, environmental, and encroachment. For each category, DOD identifies actions to be completed in fiscal year 2005 and actions to be completed during fiscal years 2006 and beyond. However, the plan lacks explicit metrics to indicate what level of performance toward the achievement of these goals would be acceptable or unacceptable. For example, while the plan states that one of the actions that should be taken to achieve modernized ranges is to develop, complete, and periodically update training range complex plans, it does not provide the services any metrics to indicate how many or percentage of complex plans should be developed or within what time frame they should be completed (e.g., 10 percent in fiscal year 2005, 40 percent in fiscal year 2006, or 70 percent in fiscal year 2007). Without established, sound metrics DOD will be unable to accurately measure the progress made in implementing the plan, as required in section 366.

<u>OSD's Report Does Not Assess</u>
<u>Current and Future Requirements</u>

Similar to last year's report, OSD's 2005 report does not include an assessment of current and future training range requirements of the military services. Instead, the 2005 report describes the services' ranges in the United States and overseas and their processes to develop, document, and execute current training and training range requirements. On the other hand, the data to meet the mandated requirement to assess current training range requirements already exist in selected instances. For example, we recently reported that the Army had conducted a detailed capacity

analysis during the 2005 base closures and realignments process that identified the types of training lands and facilities required to support various units (e.g., light and heavy maneuver brigades).[14] In addition, as we reported in our June 2005 report, the Navy and Marine Corps had identified specific requirements for their ranges in 2004 and the Air Force had assessed its range requirements in 2003. However, none of these studies provided assessments of their future training range requirements. Without the specified assessments mandated by section 366, OSD continues to lack the basis for determining whether current and future resources are adequate.

<u>OSD's Report Does Not Evaluate the</u>
<u>Adequacy of Current Resources to</u>
<u>Meet Current and Future Requirements</u>

Similar to last year's report, OSD's 2005 report does not include an evaluation of the adequacy of current DOD resources, including virtual and constructive training assets as well as military lands, marine areas, and airspace available in the United States and overseas, to meet current and future training range requirements. Neither report compares current or future training range requirements to existing resources—a primary method to evaluate the adequacy of current resources. While the Army has not evaluated the adequacy of its resources, the other services have used the results of their range assessments discussed previously to evaluate the adequacy of their training ranges. However, the results of these evaluations were not included in OSD's 2005 report and none of the services have completed an evaluation of the adequacy of current resources to meet future training range requirements. In comments on a draft of our report last year, DOD stated that it was inappropriate and impractical to include this detail in an OSD-level report and that Congress is better served if the department describes, summarizes, and analyzes range requirements. However, these statements are contradictory to section 366, which specifically requires OSD to report its evaluation of the adequacy of current DOD resources to meet current and future training range requirements, and do not adequately consider concerns that training ranges already face environmental and encroachment issues that constrained their ability to meet unit training requirements.

We recently reported that concerns over the ability of existing Army training ranges to meet training requirements were exacerbated by uncertainties over the final number and composition of additional modular brigades[15] that will require training as well as the potential impact of additional forces returning from bases overseas to U.S. bases.[16] As part of DOD's Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy,[17] the Army

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[14] GAO, *Military Bases: Analysis of DOD's 2005 Section Process and Recommendations for Base Closures and Realignments*, GAO-05-785 (Washington, D.C.: July 1, 2005).

[15] The Army's current modular force restructuring plan calls for the creation of 10 modular brigades within the United States by 2006, with the possibility of an additional 5 modular brigades beyond then.

[16] GAO-05-785.

[17] On September 17, 2004, DOD issued a report entitled *Strengthening U.S. Global Defense Posture*, also referred to as the integrated global presence and basing strategy. This strategy—the culmination of various DOD studies including the overseas basing and requirements study, the overseas presence

plans to restation up to 47,000 soldiers from U.S. bases in Germany, South Korea, and other overseas locations to the United States over the next 10 years. We have also reported on the challenges DOD faces in implementing its Training Transformation Program aimed at enhancing joint training among the services.[18] Consequently, we continue to believe that information regarding the adequacy of current resources to meet current and future requirements is vital to establishing a baseline for measuring losses or shortfalls in training capabilities, and it is likely to grow in importance for congressional decision makers in carrying out their oversight responsibilities when DOD seeks their approval for acquiring additional lands to meet current and future training requirements—as OSD suggested several times in its 2005 training range report.

OSD's Report Does Not Identify Recommendations for Legislative or Regulatory Changes

Similar to last year's report, OSD's 2005 report makes no recommendations for legislative or regulatory changes to address encroachment or other training constraints even though such changes existed. While OSD's current report ends with a section on observations, it does not provide any recommendations for legislative or regulatory action for Congress to consider. Instead, DOD submitted proposed legislation in a separate document to Congress on April 6, 2004, which was intended to clarify the intent of the Clean Air Act; Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980; and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. According to a senior OSD official, it is difficult to synchronize the process of obtaining the approval required from both DOD and the Office of Management and Budget for any legislative or regulatory proposal, while also issuing an OSD-level report, such as the mandated training range sustainment report. Still, without including its recommendations in this year's report, we believe that OSD missed an opportunity provided by section 366 to present Congress with additional information that may be useful to carry out its oversight responsibilities and further address training constraints.

OSD Has Not Reported Its Plans for Improving the Readiness Reporting System

OSD has not reported to Congress its plans to improve the department's readiness reporting system, regardless of a specific mandate in section 366 that it do so no later than June 30, 2003. Instead, OSD concluded last year that it is inappropriate to modify the Global Status of Resources and Training System (GSORTS) identified by the mandate to address long-term encroachment impacts and reported that it planned to incorporate encroachment impacts on readiness into its Defense Readiness Reporting

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study, and the U.S. global posture study—calls for restationing of U.S. military forces overseas to bases located in the United States and is intended to enhance flexibility and achieve efficiencies.
[18] GAO, *Military Training: Actions Needed to Enhance DOD's Program to Transform Joint Training*, GAO-05-548 (Washington, D.C.: June 21, 2005).

System, which is currently under development. However, OSD has not explained how or when it intends to do this or provided any additional details on how it plans to improve its readiness reporting in either this or last year's report. More significantly, as we reported in June 2005, none of the services regularly assesses either the conditions of their ranges or whether the ranges are able to meet the specific training requirements of the service and combatant commanders. While the Army and Marine Corps annually assess the physical condition of their training ranges, the services do not assess the capabilities of the ranges or any impacts to training. The Navy and Air Force do not routinely conduct annual assessments of their training ranges. While we appreciate that OSD does not believe GSORTS is the system to capture encroachment impacts, its failure to explain this and include in the 2005 report its plans to improve its readiness reporting does not address the concerns raised by Congress, GAO, and others that its readiness reporting system does not accurately reflect the impacts due to limitations on the use of training ranges.

Other DOD Components Have Developed
Comprehensive Strategic Plans and Reports

Other OSD components have demonstrated that the department is capable of developing comprehensive strategic plans and reports with data similar to those mandated by section 366. Still, unlike these strategic planning efforts and in contradiction to the reporting requirements specified in section 366, OSD's 2005 training range report continues to be generally descriptive in nature, with large sections dedicated to providing background information on funding sources, encroachment issues, and overseas ranges and describing current efforts to use information technology and individual services' efforts to address sustainable range issues. In contrast to OSD's annual training range report, the Office of Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict released a DOD-wide strategic plan on antiterrorism in June 2004 with five goals, 35 specific performance objectives, and annual milestones and metrics through 2011 to measure progress.[19] The strategic goals and performance objectives describe how DOD components are to achieve the desired end state and the annual milestones and metrics detail the level of performance expected by fiscal year. Within the first year, the services and several combatant commands had developed plans to implement the DOD-wide strategic plan. The OSD office plans to annually review these organizations' progress to ensure that the actions outlined in the plans are being achieved in the stated time frames. Other examples are OSD's training transformation strategic plan and its annual implementation plans that include specific goals, planned actions, performance metrics, and milestones for transforming DOD's training.[20] As part of its approach to managing training transformation, OSD has taken action to establish accountability and authority early in the program, and performance metrics are being continuously

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[19] Department of Defense, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, *Department of Defense Antiterrorism Strategic Plan*, O-2000.12-P (Washington, D.C.: June 15, 2004).

[20] Department of Defense, Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, *Strategic Plan for Transforming DOD Training* (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 1, 2002); and *Department of Defense Training Transformation Implementation Plan* (Washington, D.C.: June 10, 2003, and June 9, 2004).

developed and revised in an attempt to better measure training transformation's impact on joint force readiness and guide investments in training transformation.

Concluding Observations

Although we agree with DOD that assuring the sustainment of its training ranges requires a long-term commitment that will take several years to execute, we also believe the development of a comprehensive strategic plan and report can be accomplished in a more timely manner. Noting that section 366 allots 5 years to produce, update, and improve the mandated report, we believe that sufficient time has elapsed for the department to have developed both a training range inventory and a comprehensive report that fulfill requirements mandated by section 366. By now, nearly 3 years after the mandate was established, OSD should be reporting on its progress implementing the training range sustainment plan. Without the information mandated by section 366, congressional and DOD decision makers will continue to rely on incomplete data to address training constraints and to support funding requests. Further, these types of information will likely grow in importance as Congress realizes the need to evaluate and approve the department's proposals to purchase additional training lands and areas in the future as predicted in OSD's current report. Since OSD and the services have individually or jointly initiated a number of range inventory and sustainment activities, any further delay in developing a comprehensive training range sustainment plan that identifies funding requirements as mandated by section 366, assigns lead responsibility for implementation of specific actions, and provides explicit performance metrics to measure progress puts the department at risk of lacking a strategy that fully addresses training limitations and ensures the long-term sustainability of military training ranges. This is especially important in light of the need to address emerging training requirements due to the relocation of forces from bases overseas to the United States, implementation of new joint training initiatives, and creation of modular brigades in the Army. Because our prior recommendations for improving OSD's annual training range reporting remain open, valid, and not fully addressed, we are not making new recommendations in this report.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In comments on a draft of this report, the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Readiness stated that DOD is fully committed to a comprehensive approach to range management and that its annual reports to Congress on this matter reflected the importance DOD accords this subject. The Deputy Under Secretary of Defense also stated that successful comprehensive planning does not equate to centralized management and that DOD does not believe a single, continuously updated and widely accessible inventory database that doubles as a Web-based scheduling tool is currently practical or feasible.

While we recognize that DOD is committed to improving the management of its ranges, we previously recommended and continue to believe that DOD needs to

develop a training range inventory and a comprehensive report that better fulfill the reporting requirements mandated by section 366. Implementation of our prior recommendations on this matter would provide DOD with a framework to better address training range sustainability issues and provide for a more comprehensive approach for ensuring that ranges are adequately sustained and modernized in order to ensure their long-term viability. As in this report and our prior reports on sustainability of ranges, we have not equated successful comprehensive planning to centralized management as suggested by DOD, but instead we have recognized fully the importance of the military services' role and the steps they have taken in addressing the sustainability of their ranges. We also disagree with DOD's contention that a single, continuously updated and widely accessible inventory database is not currently practical or feasible, and would not meet the needs of the services or OSD. As illustrated in this and our prior reports, all of the services and several individual commands have recognized the need for information and inventory systems that could be continuously updated and easily accessible to potential users for addressing sustainment issues and for identifying the best available resources to fulfill training requirements. Both the Army and Marine Corps have implemented inventory systems to meet the requirements of their commanders. The Air Force and several individual commands are in the process of developing systems that could meet their needs, and the Navy's Southern California Offshore range has its own management system that is used for scheduling training and tracking sustainment issues and resolutions. Clearly, these individual information and inventory systems demonstrate that the development of a departmentwide inventory is practical and feasible. Also, we continue to believe that without such an inventory it will be difficult for OSD and the services to develop a meaningful comprehensive plan and to track their progress in addressing training constraints and ensuring range sustainability.

The Deputy Under Secretary of Defense's comments are included in enclosure III. DOD also provided a technical clarification, which we incorporated.

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We are sending copies of this report to interested congressional committees and members; the Secretary of Defense; and the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The report is also available at no charge on GAO's Web Site at http://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staff have any questions on the matters discussed in this report, please contact me at (202) 512-5581 or holmanb@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this

report. Tommy Baril, Steve Boyles, Susan Ditto, and Mark Little were major contributors to this report.

Barry W. Holman, Director
Defense Capabilities and Management

List of Congressional Committees

The Honorable John Warner
Chairman
The Honorable Carl Levin
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Chairman
The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
United States Senate

The Honorable Duncan L. Hunter
Chairman
The Honorable Ike Skelton
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Honorable C. W. Bill Young
Chairman
The Honorable John P. Murtha
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
House of Representatives

Section 366 of the Bob Stump National
Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003

SEC. 366. Training Range Sustainment Plan, Global Status of Resources and Training System, and Training Range Inventory

(a) PLAN REQUIRED--(1) The Secretary of Defense shall develop a comprehensive plan for using existing authorities available to the Secretary of Defense and the Secretaries of the military departments to address training constraints caused by limitations on the use of military lands, marine areas, and airspace that are available in the United States and overseas for training of the Armed Forces.

(2) As part of the preparation of the plan, the Secretary of Defense shall conduct the following:

　　(A) An assessment of current and future training range requirements of the Armed Forces.

　　(B) An evaluation of the adequacy of current Department of Defense resources (including virtual and constructive training assets as well as military lands, marine areas, and airspace available in the United States and overseas) to meet those current and future training range requirements.

(3) The plan shall include the following:

　　(A) Proposals to enhance training range capabilities and address any shortfalls in current Department of Defense resources identified pursuant to the assessment and evaluation conducted under paragraph (2).

　　(B) Goals and milestones for tracking planned actions and measuring progress.

　　(C) Projected funding requirements for implementing planned actions.

　　(D) Designation of an office in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and in each of the military departments that will have lead responsibility for overseeing implementation of the plan.

(4) At the same time as the President submits to Congress the budget for fiscal year 2004, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a report describing the progress made in implementing this subsection, including—

　　(A) the plan developed under paragraph (1);

　　(B) the results of the assessment and evaluation conducted under paragraph (2); and

(C) any recommendations that the Secretary may have for legislative or regulatory changes to address training constraints identified pursuant to this section.

(5) At the same time as the President submits to Congress the budget for each of fiscal years 2005 through 2008, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report describing the progress made in implementing the plan and any additional actions taken, or to be taken, to address training constraints caused by limitations on the use of military lands, marine areas, and airspace.

(b) READINESS REPORTING IMPROVEMENT--Not later than June 30, 2003, the Secretary of Defense, using existing measures within the authority of the Secretary, shall submit to Congress a report on the plans of the Department of Defense to improve the Global Status of Resources and Training System to reflect the readiness impact that training constraints caused by limitations on the use of military lands, marine areas, and airspace have on specific units of the Armed Forces.

(c) TRAINING RANGE INVENTORY--(1) The Secretary of Defense shall develop and maintain a training range inventory for each of the Armed Forces—

(A) to identify all available operational training ranges;

(B) to identify all training capacities and capabilities available at each training range; and

(C) to identify training constraints caused by limitations on the use of military lands, marine areas, and airspace at each training range.

(2) The Secretary of Defense shall submit an initial inventory to Congress at the same time as the President submits the budget for fiscal year 2004 and shall submit an updated inventory to Congress at the same time as the President submits the budget for fiscal years 2005 through 2008.

(d) GAO EVALUATION--The Secretary of Defense shall transmit copies of each report required by subsections (a) and (b) to the Comptroller General. Within 60 days after receiving a report, the Comptroller General shall submit to Congress an evaluation of the report.

(e) ARMED FORCES DEFINED--In this section, the term 'Armed Forces' means the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

GAO Prior Recommendations

Figure 1 lists our prior recommendations designed to help ensure the long-term viability of military training ranges and enhance the Department of Defense's (DOD) responsiveness to the legislative requirements specified in section 366 of the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003. Individually, they have not been fully implemented and we continue to consider them open and continuing recommendations from our prior reports.

Figure 1: Prior Recommendations Associated with the Sustainment of Military Training Ranges

Report	Recommendation	Status
Military Training: Limitations Exist Overseas but Are Not Reflected in Readiness Reporting, GAO-02-525 (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 30, 2002)		
	We recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the chiefs of the military services in conjunction with the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness, to develop a report that will accurately capture training shortfalls for senior DOD leadership. This document should objectively report a unit's ability to achieve its training requirements and include	DOD agreed—no action taken
	• all instances in which training cannot occur as scheduled due to constraints imposed by entities outside DOD as well as all instances when training substitutes are not sufficient to meet training requirements,	
	• a discussion of how training constraints affect the ability of units to meet training requirements and how the inability to meet those requirements is affecting readiness, and	
	• a description of efforts to capture training shortfalls in existing as well as developmental readiness reporting systems.	
	We recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct that the war fighting commands, in concert with their service component commands, develop an overarching strategy that will detail the initiatives the command and each service plan to pursue to improve training, such as access to additional host government facilities, participation in bilateral and multilateral exercises, and acquisition of new technology.	DOD agreed—no action taken
Military Training: DOD Lacks a Comprehensive Plan to Manage Encroachment on Training Ranges, GAO-02-614 (Washington, D.C.: June 11, 2002)		
	We recommended that the Secretary of Defense	
	• require the services to develop and maintain inventories of their training ranges, capacities, and capabilities, and fully quantify their training requirements considering complementary approaches to training;	DOD agreed—some limited action taken by the services
	• create a DOD data base that identifies all ranges available to the department and what they offer, regardless of service ownership, so that commanders can schedule the best available resources to provide required training;	DOD agreed—some limited action taken by the services
	• finalize a comprehensive plan for administrative actions that includes goals, timelines, projected costs, and a clear assignment of responsibilities for managing and coordinating the department's efforts to address encroachment issues on military training ranges; and	DOD agreed—some limited action taken

• develop a reporting system for range sustainability issues that will allow for the elevation of critical training problems and progress in addressing them to the Senior Readiness Oversight Council for inclusion in Quarterly Readiness Reports to Congress as appropriate.	DOD partially agreed—no action taken

Military Training: DOD Report on Training Ranges Does Not Fully Address Congressional Reporting Requirements, GAO-04-608 (Washington, D.C.: June 4, 2004)

We recommended that OSD provide a more complete report to Congress to fully address the requirements specified in the section 366 mandate by	
• developing a comprehensive plan that includes quantifiable goals and milestones for tracking planned actions and measuring progress, and projected funding requirements to more fully address identified training constraints;	DOD agreed—some limited action taken
• assessing current and future training range requirements and evaluating the adequacy of current resources to meet these requirements; and	DOD disagreed—no action taken
• developing a readiness reporting system to reflect the impact on readiness caused by training constraints due to limitations on the use of training ranges.	DOD disagreed—no action taken
We recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and the secretaries of the military services to jointly develop an integrated training range database that identifies available training resources, specific capacities and capabilities, and training constraints caused by limitations on the use of training ranges, which could be continuously updated and shared among the services at all command levels, regardless of service ownership.	DOD disagreed—some limited action taken by the services

Military Training: Better Planning and Funding Priority Needed to Improve the Conditions of Military Training Ranges, GAO-05-534 (Washington, D.C.: June 10, 2005)[a]

We recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to	
• update DOD Directive 3200.15 to broaden the focus of the policy to clearly address all issues that affect the long-term viability of military training ranges; and clearly define the maintenance and modernization roles and responsibilities of all relevant DOD components, including the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and Environment, Joint Forces Command, and Special Operations Command;	DOD agreed—no action taken
• broaden the charter of the DOD-wide working group, the Sustainable Range Integrated Product Team, to address all issues that could affect the long-term viability of military training ranges, and include all DOD components that are impacted by range limitations; and	DOD agreed—no action taken
• update DOD's training transformation plan to address all factors that could impact the sustainability of military training ranges and not just external encroachment issues.	DOD agreed—no action taken
We recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the secretaries of the military services to implement a comprehensive approach to managing their training ranges, to include	
• a servicewide sustainable range policy that implements the updated DOD Directive 3200.15 and clearly defines the maintenance and modernization roles and responsibilities of relevant service officials at all levels;	DOD agreed—no action taken
• a servicewide sustainable range implementation plan that includes goals, specific actions to be taken, milestones, funding sources, and	DOD agreed—no action taken

an investment strategy for managing their ranges;	
• defined training range requirements and a systematic process to annually assess the conditions of training ranges and their consequent impact on training, including whether the ranges are able to meet the specific training requirements of the service and combatant commanders;	DOD agreed—no action taken
• a Web-based range information management system that allows training range officials at all levels to share information, such as range conditions and their impact on training, funding sources, requirements and expenditures, and local range initiatives; and	DOD agreed—no action taken
• regularly developed strategies to address the factors contributing to funding shortages for ranges, including the reassessment of funding priorities for maintaining and modernizing ranges relative to other needs.	DOD agreed—no action taken

Source: DOD and GAO.

[a] While DOD agreed with the recommendations in this report, more time is needed for the department and military services to implement them.

Comments from the Department of Defense

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

PERSONNEL AND
READINESS   OCT 1 4 2005

Mr. Barry W. Holman
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Holman:

   This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the Government Accountability
Office Draft Report GAO-06-29R, "MILITARY TRAINING: Some Improvements Have
Been Made in DoD's Annual Training Range Reporting But It Still Fails to Fully Address
Congressional Requirements," September 12th, 2005.

   The Department of Defense truly appreciates the GAO's past and present work in
assessing the challenges facing our nation's military training and testing ranges. Over the
past few years, DoD has made major strides in mitigating range encroachment and in
assuring future readiness through long-term range sustainment. As part of this process, DoD
has embraced many of the GAO's recommendations, and is fully committed to a
comprehensive approach to range management that recognizes the critical role these assets
play in our nation's military capabilities. We believe our recent Reports to Congress on this
matter, including the July 2005 submission that is the subject of this GAO assessment, reflect
the importance DoD accords this subject.
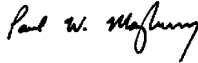
   While we concur wholeheartedly with GAO's emphasis on comprehensive planning,
DoD remains strongly committed to a decentralized sustainable ranges management
solution. Successful comprehensive planning does not equate to centralized management.
DoD and the Services are in full agreement that the Service's Title 10 responsibilities place
them in the forefront of range planning and implementation. OSD is providing planning
support, oversight and policy guidance to ensure all DoD ranges support service, cross-
service and joint needs and goals. Furthermore, DoD does not believe that a single,
continuously updated and widely accessible inventory database that doubles as a web-based
scheduling tool, as envisioned in the GAO report, is currently practical or feasible. Nor
would such a system meet the needs of the individual services or of OSD. But we are
committed to maximizing system integration and sharing of range data to better leverage all
range assets for the full benefit of our military's readiness.

   OSD and the Services are working together to develop and execute a comprehensive
range sustainment plan that will counter encroachment and ensure appropriate modernization
and maintenance of these invaluable assets. We have a strong, evolving DoD-wide initiative
to achieve range sustainability that has been documented in our first two reports to Congress

and will be expanded upon in subsequent reports. In line with this Initiative, each of the Services is making outstanding progress in integrated range policy, planning and management. Consistent with past GAO recommendations, DoD will pursue continuous improvement in identifying and achieving measurable goals and milestones, and in identifying and documenting future range requirements, encroachment impacts, and programmatic needs. Such reporting will be easier now that BRAC and Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy decisions are largely resolved.

The GAO made no new recommendations in their subject report. DoD stands by its previously-stated positions on other prior GAO recommendations on this subject. One technical comment on the report is enclosed. We look forward to continuing to work with Congress and the GAO to maintain a ready and sustainable military testing and training infrastructure.

Sincerely,

Paul W. Mayberry
Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
(Readiness)

Enclosure:
As stated

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