

GAO

Testimony

Before the Committee on Government
Reform, House of Representatives

For Release on Delivery
Expected at 10:00 a.m. EDT
Thursday, April 29, 2004

RESERVE FORCES

Observations on Recent National Guard Use in Overseas and Homeland Missions and Future Challenges

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Highlights of [GAO-04-670T](#), a testimony before the Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

As a result of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and launch of the Global War on Terrorism, the National Guard has experienced the largest activation of its forces since World War II. The Guard consists of 350,000 Army Guard soldiers and 107,000 Air Guard members. With its unique dual status, it performs state missions under the governor and federal missions at home and overseas under the President. Since September 11, the Guard's missions have expanded, raising concerns about its ability to simultaneously perform all of these functions.

The Department of Defense (DOD) funds the Army Guard for partial readiness to accomplish mission requirements assuming that there will be time to supply additional personnel and equipment in an extended conflict. In contrast, the Air Guard is funded to be an operational reserve ready on short notice.

Today's testimony addresses GAO's observations on (1) the extent and purpose of the National Guard's use since September 11, (2) the effects of that use on Guard forces' readiness for future missions, and (3) the challenges that DOD, the states, and Congress face in organizing and equipping the Guard to support both overseas and homeland missions.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-670T.

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

RESERVE FORCES

Observations on Recent National Guard Use in Overseas and Homeland Missions and Future Challenges

What GAO Found

With the high pace of operations since September 11, more than 51 percent of Army Guard members and 31 percent of Air Guard members have been activated to meet new homeland and overseas demands. The Army Guard has experienced significant difficulties in responding to these extensive and ongoing requirements because much of it was funded and equipped as a later-deploying reserve force rather than an operational force designed for continued overseas deployments. Moreover, units with certain specialties—military police, transportation, and combat arms—have been in high demand, resulting in lengthy and repeated deployments. To ease critical shortages, 27 Army Guard units were retrained as military police from other specialties such as field artillery. The Air Guard, although less affected by the high pace because it is funded to deploy quickly, has also seen significant use for Iraq combat operations and homeland security missions. While the number of activated Air Guard personnel has decreased over the past year, some personnel were activated outside their normal rotational schedules and tour lengths have been extended. In addition, some units have been assigned new homeland missions such as flying combat air patrols and providing radar coverage over the United States.

While the high use of the National Guard since September 11 has led to declining war-fighting readiness of non-deployed Army and Air Guard units, the decline is most significant for the Army Guard. To meet wartime needs, the Army Guard has had to take personnel and equipment from units that had not been activated to ready others for deployment. For example, the Army Guard has initiated over 71,000 transfers to fill personnel shortages in deploying units and transferred about 22,000 pieces of equipment from non-deploying units to ready units deploying to Iraq. The Air Guard's readiness has also declined because the high pace of operations created maintenance challenges for its aging aircraft and limited training opportunities. Because DOD has not fully defined requirements, readiness standards, and readiness measures for the homeland security missions it will lead or support, the Guard's preparedness specifically for homeland security missions is unknown. However, states are concerned that continuing deployments reduce the Guard's preparedness and availability for all its homeland security and natural disaster missions.

DOD, the states, and Congress face near- and long-term challenges readying and funding National Guard units for overseas and domestic missions in the Global War on Terrorism. Enhancing the near-term readiness of Army Guard units will be difficult because the Army Guard is still operating with peacetime funding. In the long term, the Army Guard's ability to restructure its forces to meet the requirements of the new security environment will depend on whether it is given adequate resources and funding priority. Finally, DOD will need to consider how to balance Army and Air Guard forces needed for both homeland and overseas security requirements.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to be here today to discuss our observations on the challenges the National Guard faces in activating over 213,000 members, the largest activation of its forces since World War II. National Guard members are supporting military operations around the world—they are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan and maintaining the peace in the Balkans—side by side with their active duty counterparts, facing the same dangers and making the same sacrifices. As you know, the National Guard consists of the Army National Guard, with 350,000 soldiers, and the Air National Guard, with about 107,000 Air Guard personnel. With its unique dual status, the Guard performs state missions under the command of the state's governor and federal missions—at home and overseas—under command of the President. After the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the Guard's traditional role has been expanded to include new tasks, both domestically and overseas. This mission expansion has raised concerns about the Guard's ability to perform all of these missions successfully within its existing resources.

As you requested, my statement today focuses on the use of the National Guard since September 11 and on the Guard's preparedness to perform both overseas and domestic missions. We will publish a final report on these issues later this year. My remarks today are based on the work we have completed to date with respect to (1) the extent and purpose of the National Guard's use since the September 11 attacks, (2) the effects of that use on the Guard's readiness for future missions, and (3) the challenges that the Department of Defense (DOD), the states, and Congress face in organizing and equipping the Guard to be able to support both overseas and homeland security missions.

To assess these issues, we analyzed data on National Guard utilization and readiness since September 11. We interviewed officials in the Departments of Defense, the Army, the Air Force, and the National Guard Bureau and supplemented this information with visits to Army and Air Force commands and Army mobilization stations. We also developed case studies of recent federal and state National Guard operations in four states – Georgia, New Jersey, Oregon, and Texas. In each of these states, we visited the Adjutant General and the National Guard headquarters, as well as Army and Air National Guard units that had been or will be involved in domestic or overseas missions. We identified future challenges based on our analysis of the Guard's current status and discussions with National Guard officials. We conducted our review in accordance with generally

accepted government auditing standards between April 2003 and April 2004.

Summary

Since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, almost half of the 457,000 members of the National Guard have been called to fulfill new requirements for homeland security and to support military operations overseas. Cumulatively, over 51 percent of Army Guard personnel and 31 percent of Air Guard personnel have been alerted or activated for federal homeland security missions or overseas missions related to the Global War on Terrorism. The Army Guard has had difficulty in responding to these needs because it was largely structured and funded as a later deploying follow-on force rather than a ready force for rapid deployment. In recent operations, Guard units were asked to take on more missions, in some cases with little time to prepare. Certain types of units have been in especially high demand, leading to extended and repeated deployments for soldiers with specialties such as military police, transportation, and combat arms. For example, 92 percent of the Army Guard's military police units have been deployed at least once and 18 percent more than once. To relieve demands on these forces, the Army has retrained some low-demand units, such as field artillery, for high-demand capabilities like security. The Air National Guard has also been used more extensively than expected before September 11 and was tasked with new homeland missions such as flying armed air patrols over U.S. cities, known as combat air patrols, and providing radar coverage for the United States. While the number of activated Air Guard personnel has fluctuated since September 11, it has declined over the past year to the current level of about 7,500.

The readiness of non-deployed Army and Air National Guard units for wartime missions has declined because of the high pace of operations since September 11. However, readiness for homeland security missions is unknown because DOD has not fully defined requirements for homeland security missions or established readiness standards and measures for them. Declining readiness is a more serious problem for the Army Guard because it is not funded to field the numbers and types of deployment-ready units that recent operations have demanded. Army Guard units are only funded to meet a portion of their personnel, equipment, and training requirements, even though theater commanders require the Guard to provide fully manned and equipped units when they deploy to actual military operations. For example, some units had only about three quarters of the personnel they needed when they were alerted. As a result, the Army National Guard has taken personnel and equipment from units

that were not activated but might be needed in the future to prepare deploying units. Since September 11, the Army Guard has initiated over 71,000 transfers to provide specific skills or fill shortages of qualified personnel and transferred at least 22,000 pieces of equipment to units deploying to Iraq from non-deploying units. As of March 2004, the remaining non-deployed Army National Guard units lacked over one-third of the critical equipment they need to be ready to execute their federal missions. Although the Air Guard is maintained at a higher level of readiness overall than the Army Guard, its readiness has also declined since September 2001. Some Air Guard units—such as those that conduct combat air patrols over U.S. cities, provide airlift capability, or conduct tanker refueling operations—have reported that high operational demands made it difficult to meet their training requirements. Some state officials we spoke with were concerned about the Guard’s preparedness for homeland security missions as well as for state requirements such as natural disaster response because of the large numbers of personnel and equipment that have been alerted or deployed for federal missions.

Our work thus far has shown that DOD, the states, and Congress face three major challenges with regard to balancing the Guard’s future role in overseas and domestic missions. These challenges include (1) the eroding readiness of Army Guard units that may be mobilized for overseas operations within the next few years; (2) the need to determine how the Army National Guard should be structured and funded to support federal missions in the longer term; and (3) how to balance homeland and overseas requirements. The Army and National Guard have a number of initiatives in most of these areas, such as reorganizing the Army Guard into modular units as part of the Army’s reorganization and adjusting how forces are distributed among states to provide units with the skills needed for state and homeland security missions. However, funding and force adjustments needed to implement these changes for the Guard have not been identified and will require close coordination between the National Guard, DOD, the states, and Congress. In addition, the Army plans to reorganize its active and Guard combat units to make them more modular and responsive, but it has not identified funding to implement these changes for the Guard.

Background

The National Guard, comprised of the Army and Air National Guard, has a unique dual mission that consists of both federal and state roles. In their federal status, the Army and Air National Guard are part of the Army and Air Force’s reserve components, along with the Army Reserve and the Air Force Reserve, respectively. In their federal status, Guard units are

deployed to Bosnia and Kosovo for stabilization operations and to Afghanistan and Iraq in the war on terrorism. The National Guard can be activated under a variety of legal authorities that differ in terms of duration, mission types, command structure, and funding source. The National Guard may be activated under state law to provide critical infrastructure protection or respond to state emergencies under control of the governor and paid for with state funds. The Guard can also be involuntarily activated under federal law for federal domestic or overseas missions. Title 10 of the United States Code, which is the section that prescribes the use of the Armed Services while in federal service, gives the President authority to activate reservists for various periods of time. Following the terrorist attacks, the President declared a national emergency on September 14, 2001, whereby reservists can be activated for up to 2 years. Title 10 provisions also enable Guard members to volunteer for service. In addition, the Guard can be activated under Title 32 U.S.C. by which Guard forces remain under the control of the state governor but receive federal funding.

The National Guard is composed primarily of Guard members who serve on a part-time basis, usually 1 weekend a month and 2 weeks a year for annual training. In addition, both the Army and Air National Guard have some full-time personnel who enhance readiness by assisting unit commanders in administrative, training, and maintenance tasks. Overall, the Army National Guard has about 350,000 members and makes up more than one-half of the total Army's ground combat forces and one-third of its support forces, such as military police and transportation units. The Army National Guard has units in more than 3,000 armories and bases in all 50 states and 4 U.S. territories. As a part of the Army, much of the Army National Guard has been organized, trained, and resourced as a strategic reserve that would receive personnel, training, and equipment as a follow-on force to augment active Army units in an extended conflict. The Air National Guard has about 107,000 Air Guard personnel that make up 20 percent of the total Air Force with 88 flying units and 579 mission support units located at more than 170 installations nationwide. The Air National Guard has been integrated with the Air Force's active and reserve component and resourced as a part of its operational force.

After September 11, 2001, the Guard's homeland missions were expanded to include activities that it had not previously undertaken, such as guarding airports and critical infrastructure, that are known as homeland

security missions. Homeland security is a broad term that encompasses efforts to reduce America’s vulnerability to terrorism and prevent terrorist attacks as well as respond to an attack that might occur.¹ The Guard can be tasked with homeland security missions under the state governors or, when activated, by DOD under command of the president. DOD refers to its contributions to the overall homeland security effort as “homeland defense.” Homeland defense activities include military missions conducted within the United States that DOD conducts under extraordinary circumstances with support, as needed, by other agencies. Flying combat air patrols over U.S. cities and guarding military installations are examples of these activities. DOD will also support civilian authorities to provide quick response or capabilities that other agencies do not have. The U.S. Northern Command provides command and control for DOD’s homeland defense missions and coordinates DOD’s support to civil authorities for homeland security missions. U.S. Northern Command would take a leading role in homeland defense missions including land, air, aerospace, and maritime defense operations.

Army and Air National Guard Have Participated in Multiple Missions and Experienced High Activations for Overseas and Homeland Security Operations

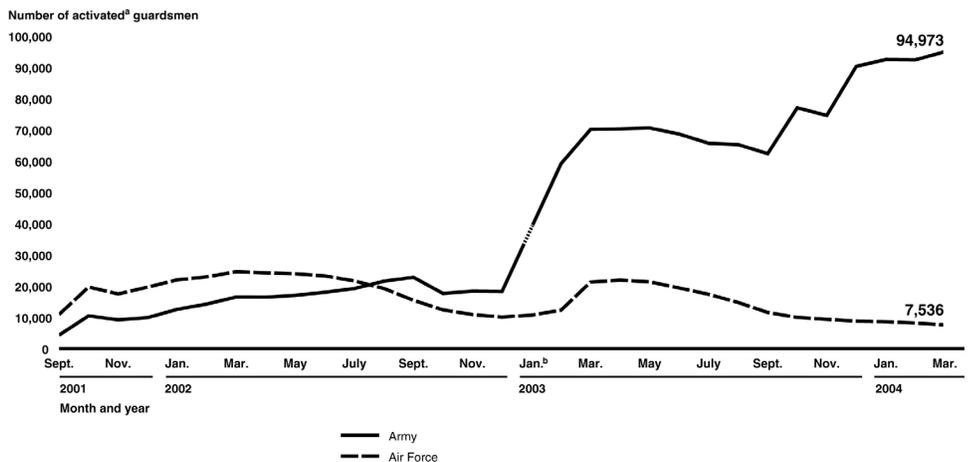
Since the September 11 terrorist attacks, nearly half of the National Guard’s members have been alerted² or activated to meet the multiple federal requirements at home and abroad arising out of the Global War on Terrorism. Specifically, over 51 percent of Army Guard personnel and 31 percent of Air Guard personnel have been alerted or activated for homeland security or overseas missions. Although largely programmed and funded as a later deploying strategic reserve, the Army Guard has taken on extensive and ongoing overseas missions. Moreover, Army Guard units with high-demand specialties have faced extended and repeated deployments. To compensate, the Army Guard is retraining units to fill high-demand capabilities. The Army Guard has also taken on expanded homeland missions, such as providing security for critical infrastructure, Air Force installations, and U.S. borders. In addition, the Air Guard has taken on new homeland defense missions, notably combat air patrols over U.S. cities, and about one-third of its members were activated between September 2001 and March 2004. As figure 1 shows, about 102,500 Army and Air National Guard members—the vast majority of whom are Army

¹ *The National Strategy for Homeland Security* (Office of Homeland Security, Washington, D.C.: July 2002).

² DOD has established in policy a goal to provide reservists a minimum of 30 days written notification, referred to as “alert,” before they are mobilized for active duty.

Guard members—were on active duty as of March 2004 to support the National Guard’s ongoing participation in operations under federal authority.

Figure 1: Post-September 11 National Guard Federal Activity Under Title 10



Source: GAO analysis of Army and Air National Guard data.

^aArmy National Guard data represent the number of soldiers alerted and mobilized. Air National Guard data represent the number of airmen who are mobilized.

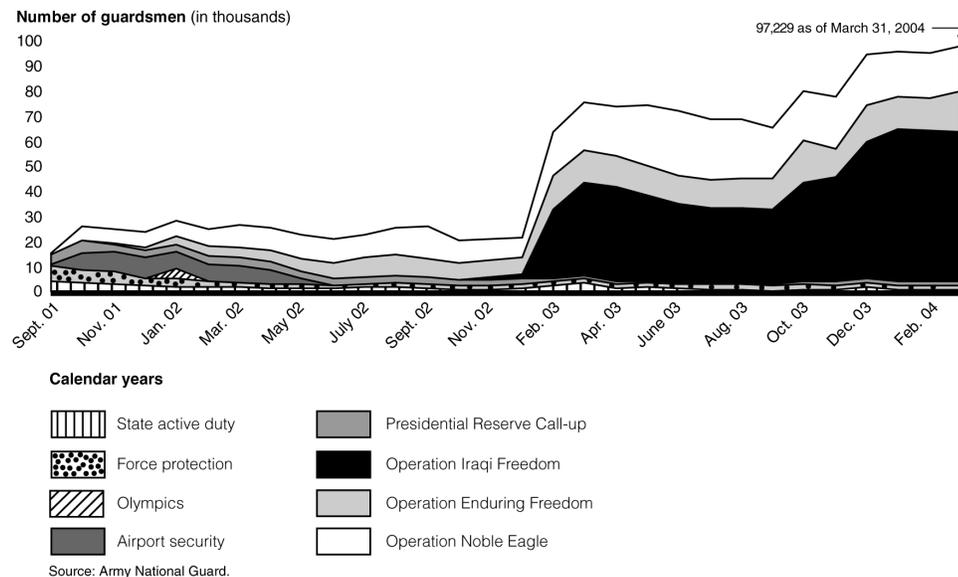
^bBecause Army National Guard data for January 2003 are not available, chart data point was estimated based on trend.

High Use and Expanded Missions of Army Guard Signify Change from Strategic Reserve Force to Operational Force

The high level of Army Guard forces needed for federal missions for the foreseeable future represents a fundamental change from the Guard’s planned role as a strategic reserve force that would have additional time to train following the onset of war to an operational force that has had to respond quickly. The number of Army Guard members activated for federal missions more than quadrupled from about 5,500 in the days before the September 11 attacks to about 23,000 in the first month after the attacks because Army Guard forces were called on to perform an array of new federal homeland security missions. As figure 2 shows, by the end of March 2004, about 97,000 Army Guard members were activated for overseas warfighting operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, or federally funded homeland defense missions such as guarding Air Force bases. This equates to more than one quarter of the Army Guard’s force. In addition, Army Guard members have experienced lengthy deployments. For example, as of February 2004, over 57,000 soldiers (about 16 percent of the Army Guard) had been away from home for more than 220 days in the past year. DOD reports that the steady

state for the next 3 to 5 years will require a total of about 100,000 to 150,000 reserve personnel to support on-going operations, and that many of these personnel will come from the Army Guard and Reserve. DOD also expects that mobilizations of up to 1 year or more will be the norm for reserve component members during the next 3 to 5 years.³

Figure 2: Post-September 11 Army National Guard Activities under Federal and State Authorities



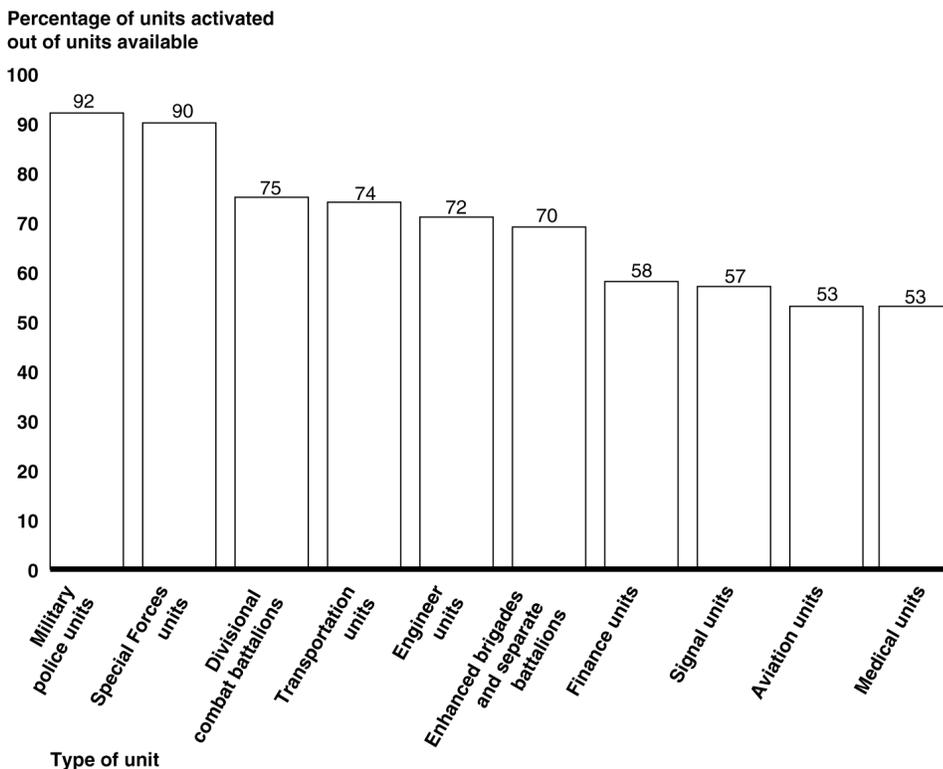
In addition to its overall high use, particular specialties within the Army National Guard have been used extensively and at rates that DOD reports⁴ cannot be sustained for long durations. DOD has reported that using more than 17 percent of the personnel in a career field annually indicates an unsustainably high pace of operations in the career field and we believe could indicate a need for additional capability. However, as figure 3 shows, usage rates for personnel in some Army Guard career fields exceeded 50 percent in the last 2-1/2 years. Capabilities key to both overseas and homeland missions such as military police, transportation, and combat units are among those experiencing a high pace of operations.

³ *Rebalancing Forces: Easing the Stress on the Guard and Reserve*, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (Readiness, Training, and Mobilization), 15 January 2004.

⁴ *Rebalancing Forces: Easing the Stress on the Guard and Reserve*.

In particular, 92 percent of military police units have deployed during this time period, with 18 percent deployed more than once. Army Guard forces that are frequently called on by state governors to respond to state needs such as natural disasters have also been affected by current operational demands—about 70 percent of the enhanced brigades⁵ and separate battalions and 75 percent of the Guard’s divisional combat battalions have been deployed at some point since September 11 and, when deployed, were not available for state needs.

Figure 3: Types of Army National Guard Units with Highest Post-September 11 Use



Source: GAO analysis of Army National Guard data.
 Note: Data through March 31, 2004.

⁵ Enhanced brigades are the Army National Guard’s highest priority combat units. These 15 brigades receive specialized training and higher priority than other National Guard units for personnel and resources during peacetime. Once called to active duty, they are expected to be ready to deploy overseas within 90 days.

The Army National Guard is being adapted for expanded missions both at home and overseas and has been used in different configurations than DOD war planners had anticipated. In all four of our case study states, Guard officials reported that their units were adapted and personnel were trained for previously unanticipated homeland tasks, such as guarding airports and Air Force bases in the United States. As of March 31, 2004, about 5,500 Army Guard soldiers were still guarding Air Force bases in the United States. In our case study states, Army Guard units reported responding to specific needs in support of governors and federal authorities. For example:

- The New Jersey Army Guard provided security for bridges, tunnels, and nuclear power plants for the state governor during 2003 and continues to provide security at two nuclear power plants.
- The Oregon Army Guard provided security at federal installations, such as the Umatilla Chemical Depot and Ft. Lewis, Washington, during 2002 and 2003.
- The Texas Army Guard performed border security assisting U.S. Customs agents from October 2001 to November 2002 and provided security at Air Force installations and state nuclear power plants from October 2001 to October 2002.
- In Georgia, Army Guard personnel provided airport security almost immediately after September 11 and were still guarding Army bases and Air Force facilities at the time of our visit in December 2003.

Army National Guard units were also adapted for overseas missions to increase the supply of high-demand specialties, meet new operational requirements, and fill personnel shortages in deploying units. For example, to avoid critical shortages of military police units, 27 Army National Guard units, containing over 7,000 personnel, were converted from other specialties such as field artillery to military police units, some of which have already deployed to Iraq to perform missions such as convoy security. In total, more than 34,000 soldiers deployed with new units that were tailored to provide specific capabilities needed as a result of the new security environment.

Significant Use of Air Guard Occurred for Iraq Combat Operations and Homeland Defense Missions, but Number of Activated Personnel Has Decreased

The Air National Guard has also faced expanded roles and high utilization since September 11, 2001. As figure 1 shows, Air Guard activations increased in the fall of 2001 to support both homeland security activities and operations in Afghanistan and declined in 2002. Air Guard activations increased again in the spring of 2003 at the beginning of operations in Iraq but have since declined to about 7,500 as of March 2004. The effects of the increased operations have not been as severe on the Air National Guard as on the Army Guard because the Air Guard is structured and funded to be a ready operational force. The Air Force, using an Air and Space Expeditionary Force concept, divides its forces into 10 groups, each containing a mix of active, Guard, and reserve forces, and operates on a standard 15-month rotational cycle. The Air Guard often uses volunteers to fill rotational requirements, rather than activating large units, for missions. Because the Air National Guard is structured to deploy in small units and is funded to achieve readiness levels comparable to the active Air Force, these small units can deploy within 72 hours after being alerted.

Since the terrorist attacks on the homeland, the Air National Guard has been called on to perform new missions such as flying combat air patrols and providing radar coverage for the continental United States. Units in the states we visited played key roles in homeland defense missions. For example:

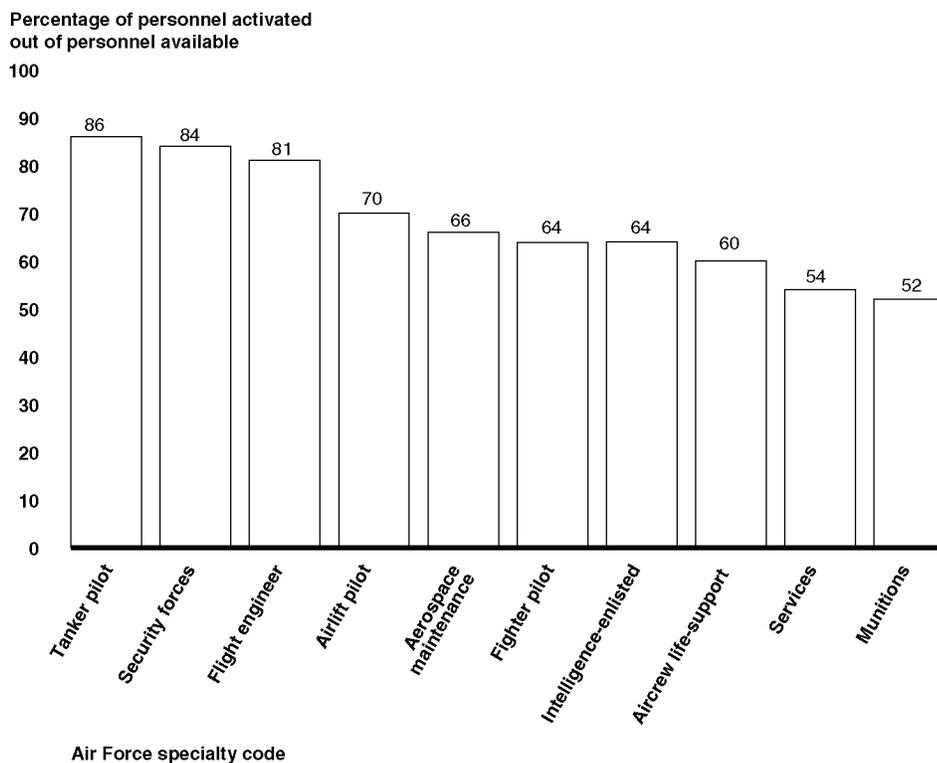
- The 177th Fighter Wing in New Jersey, which is strategically located near major cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C., took on the additional mission of flying combat air patrols over these cities. Through early November 2003, the 177th had flown 1,458 combat air patrol missions.
- The 147th Fighter Wing in Texas flew a total of 284 combat air patrol missions over New York City and Washington, D.C., between December 2001 and March 2002. Since September 11, the unit has also flown combat air patrols over Houston, the Gulf Coast, and in support of special events such as the Super Bowl and the Winter Olympics.

Like the Army Guard, the Air Guard is also experiencing a higher demand for particular specialties with some specialties used at rates DOD reports cannot be sustained over time.⁶ As figure 4 shows, among career fields with more than 500 personnel, 86 percent of tanker pilots, 84 percent of

⁶ *Rebalancing Forces: Easing the Stress on the Guard and Reserve.*

security personnel, and 81 percent of flight engineers have deployed at least once since September 2001. Further, about 10,000 Air Guard members have been deployed for more than 220 days in the past year and about 6,400 of those have been deployed for more than 401 days in the last 2 years.

Figure 4: Types of Air National Guard Specialties with Highest Post-September 11 Use



Source: Air National Guard analysis.

Note 1: Data through March 8, 2004.

Note 2: Chart contains career fields with more than 500 personnel and are more than 50 percent utilized.

To meet the requirements of both its domestic and overseas missions, Air Guard officials said they added personnel to planned rotation cycles by activating some units earlier than planned and extending their duty tours. And, except for some high-demand specialties, the Air Guard returned to its usual rotation schedule in March 2004.

Readiness of Non-deployed National Guard Units Has Declined, but Decline Is Most Significant for the Army Guard

Since September 11, 2001, the extensive use of both the Army and Air National Guard in recent operations has resulted in a steady decline in the warfighting readiness of non-deployed units. The greatest negative impact has been on the Army National Guard because it is not structured or funded to meet the demands of recent operations. The extensive transfers of personnel and equipment needed to prepare lower resourced Army Guard units to meet wartime deployment standards have eroded the readiness levels of the remaining Army Guard force. Certain Air Guard personnel specialties and equipment are also facing continued stress due to the ongoing pace of operations and aging aircraft. The effect of this readiness decline on the Guard's ability to perform homeland security missions is unknown because DOD has not completed its efforts to define requirements and readiness standards and measures for the homeland defense missions it would lead or the civil missions it would support. Some state officials we spoke with voiced concern about the preparedness of their Guard units for recurring state emergencies or new homeland security missions given the level of the Guard's ongoing support to overseas operations.

Extensive Personnel and Equipment Transfers to Deploying Units Erode Preparedness of Remaining Army Guard Units

Preparation of deploying Army Guard units to meet the theater commanders' requirements for recent overseas operations has resulted in extensive transfers of both personnel and equipment that degraded the readiness of remaining units. For the Army Guard, DOD provides units with varying levels of personnel, training, equipment, and full-time support based on how quickly they are expected to be used. For example, DOD aims to provide certain types of Guard units, such as early deploying support and Special Forces units, all the personnel and equipment they require to undertake their wartime missions. Other forces, such as most combat brigades and divisions which are expected to deploy later, are authorized fewer personnel and less equipment than they need to meet their wartime missions.

The Army's goal is to provide the Guard's enhanced brigades, the most ready of its combat forces, about 85 percent of the personnel and 90 percent of the equipment they need to deploy. However, we found that the two enhanced separate brigades activated in support of operations in Iraq needed 2,100 additional soldiers, about one-fourth of their required personnel, to meet deployment requirements. Combat divisions are authorized only 65 percent of the personnel and equipment they need, and it could take months before they are ready to deploy. Moreover, soldiers must be qualified in their military specialties by attending required training and meeting training standards to be ready to deploy, but as of March

2004, only 68 percent of the Guard's required personnel were qualified in their specialty. Guard members may not be qualified because they have not been able to attend training when it is scheduled. Since September 11, 2001, the Army National Guard has initiated over 71,000 transfers of personnel from one unit to another to enhance the readiness of deploying units.

In addition to personnel shortfalls, most Army Guard units are not provided all the equipment they need for their wartime requirements. Moreover, the equipment they have is often older than that of the active Army and in many cases does not meet the warfighting commander's requirements because it is not compatible with the active Army's newer equipment. For example, many Army Guard units have radios that cannot communicate with new communications systems and old trucks for which the active Army does not stock spare parts. Units deploying in support of operations in Iraq in 2003 and 2004 needed about 22,000 pieces of equipment—including night vision goggles, machine guns, trucks, decontamination apparel, and radios—to meet deployment requirements. The Army National Guard filled these shortages by transferring equipment from other units. In fact, between December 2002 and March 2004, Army Guard units in every state and territory supplied equipment to three deploying enhanced brigades. Initially the Guard managed transfers so that many units shared the burden of losing equipment and could remain at their planned readiness levels. For example, the enhanced separate brigade we visited in Georgia transferred machine guns, night vision goggles, and global positioning systems to deploying units, but officials said that the unit maintained its readiness rating because the equipment was not deemed critical or taken in quantities that degraded the unit's overall readiness level. However, in November 2003, the Director of the Army National Guard directed that personnel and equipment be transferred to deploying units, even if that meant degrading the readiness of remaining units, a strategy that may not be sustainable over the long term. By 2004, deployments and existing shortages left the remaining Army Guard units without about 33 percent of the critical equipment they need. In New Jersey, officials told us that some units had less than 65 percent of their wartime equipment requirements and reported critical shortages of spare parts, utility trucks, night vision goggles, and pistols.

High Usage and Aging Equipment Eroding Air National Guard Readiness

Air National Guard units have also experienced difficulty in maintaining their warfighting readiness while conducting overseas and homeland defense missions and reported overall declines in readiness. The Air Force

and Air Guard attribute these readiness declines to the high pace of operations and problems associated with aging aircraft.

Many Air Guard units use aging aircraft, and the high pace of operations has been a training and maintenance challenge. For example,

- An airlift wing we visited in Georgia operates aging C-130 transport planes. Although officials said that in peacetime the wing planned for 2,900 flying hours annually for training, it had flown over 13,000 hours for operations and training in 2003. This high pace of operations made it difficult for the unit to continue to perform its warfighting training requirements for tasks, such as tactical formation flying, thus lowering its readiness ratings. In addition, officials said that in recent deployments to Iraq, the unit's aging aircraft and the harsh operating environment presented a maintenance challenge, as evidenced by the need to replace 11 turbine engines and 20 propellers to keep the 8 aircraft operational.
- Since September 11, 2001, fighter wings that we visited in New Jersey, Texas, and Oregon have been directed to dedicate some aircraft to domestic combat air patrol missions. This has reduced the number of aircraft available for air crews to use for other warfighting mission training. To meet training requirements, the units have had to fly the remaining aircraft more hours than planned, which has created scheduling and maintenance problems. Officials were concerned about the long-term effects of the continued high pace of operations on their ability to support both missions.

DOD Has Not Fully Defined Mission Requirements or Readiness Standards and Measures for All Its Homeland Security Missions, and Some States Have Concerns about Preparedness and Availability of Guard Units

It is difficult to assess the Guard's preparedness for the full range of homeland security missions because requirements for these missions are not yet well defined. Moreover, DOD has not yet established readiness standards and measures for homeland defense or civil support missions. DOD generally organizes, trains, and equips the National Guard for only the federal missions it leads. DOD's U.S. Northern Command, which is charged with planning, organizing, and executing DOD-led homeland defense and with supporting homeland security missions led by civilian authorities, has not yet finalized its plans that would identify forces and resources for the homeland missions it may lead or support. In some cases, Northern Command is awaiting further guidance from the Office of the Secretary of Defense. As a result, National Guard forces that may have to take on homeland security missions are not organized, trained, or equipped specifically for these missions. Without specific requirements

and plans that clarify the types of skills and equipment needed for these missions, it is not possible to measure the readiness of forces specifically for these missions.

To address some potential homeland security needs, DOD began establishing weapons of mass destruction civil support teams as authorized by Presidential Directive and Congress in fiscal year 1999. These teams, which are comprised of 22 full-time personnel, are maintained at the highest readiness levels and can rapidly respond to support civil authorities in an event involving a weapon of mass destruction. Their role is to assist local officials in determining the nature of the attack, provide medical and technical advice, and help to identify follow-on federal and state assets that might be needed. Congress has now authorized at least one team for each state and territory. Currently, 32 teams are fully operational with the remaining 23 estimated to be operational by 2007.⁷ These teams are unique because they are federally funded and trained but perform their mission under the command and control of the state governor.

Individual state Guards have also begun to develop plans and organize their Guard forces for some homeland security tasks that might be conducted under the authority of the governor. However, these efforts vary from state to state. For example, in our case study states,

- Georgia officials told us they were in the process of identifying critical infrastructure sites in the state and assigning quick reaction forces to protect them.
- New Jersey has assigned ready-reaction forces to protect key sites in each of 3 geographic regions.
- Oregon has identified some of the critical infrastructure that must be protected and annually identifies those National Guard units that will be assigned to perform rapid response force tasks.

Historically, Guard forces could perform state missions using the skills and equipment they were provided for their federal missions. However, mobilized and deployed personnel and their equipment are not available

⁷ Congressional Budget Office Cost Estimate, Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams, Implementation Act of 2003, April 10, 2003.

for states to use for either new homeland security missions, such as responding to increased terrorist threats, or recurring natural disasters, such as floods or forest fires. As figure 5 shows, 15 states currently have 40 percent or more of their Army Guard soldiers mobilized or deployed. While Air Guard units are not used as extensively for state missions as those of the Army Guard, as figure 6 shows, as many as one-third of Air Guard units were alerted or deployed from some states as of March 2004. None of the four states we visited had developed a state system for measuring the preparedness of its forces for homeland security missions, and officials in all four states we visited raised varying concerns about homeland security preparedness. For example:

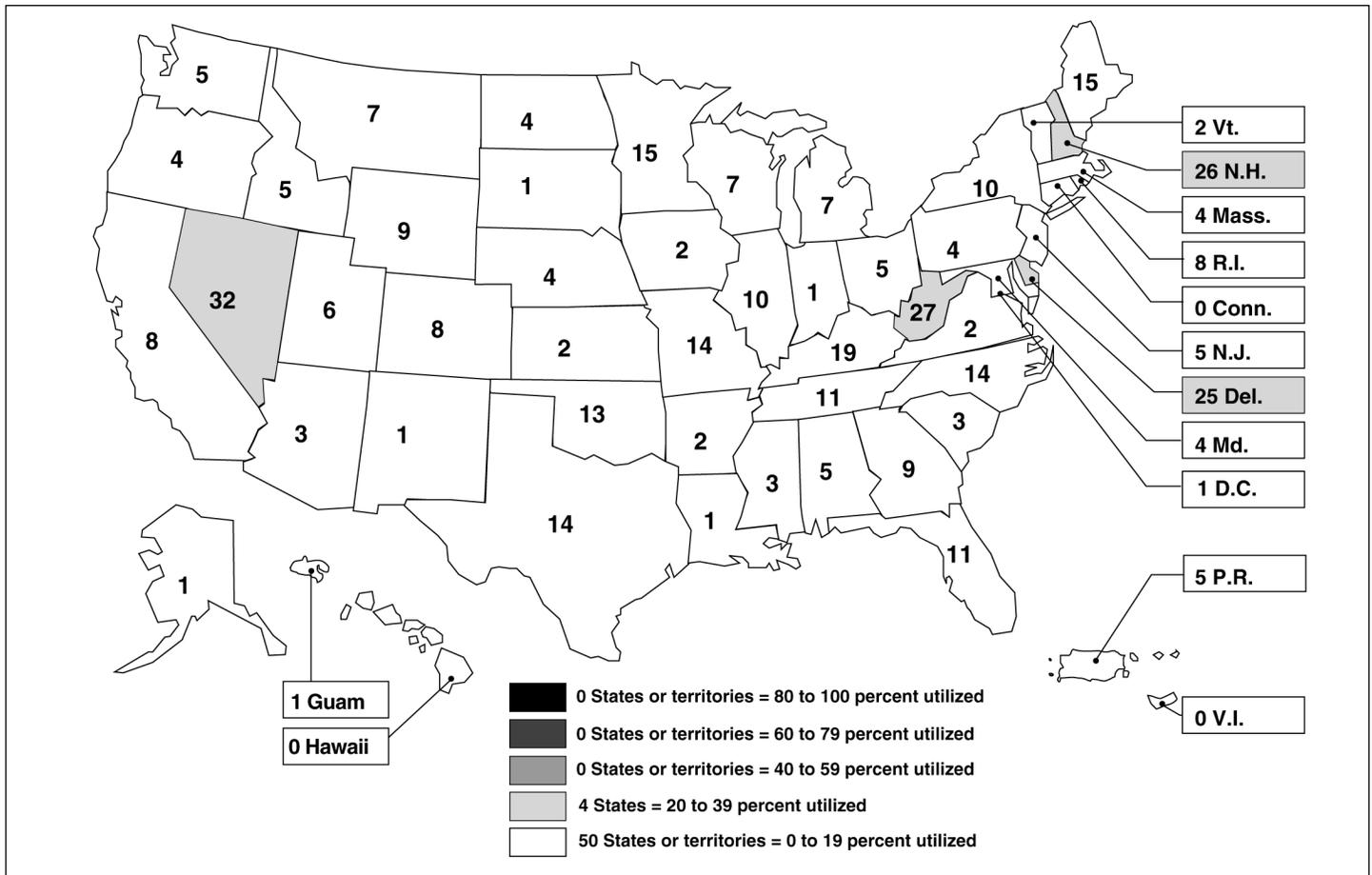
- New Jersey units that responded to a terrorist threat alert in December 2003 reported that they lacked some essential equipment such as humvees, night vision equipment, cold weather gear, chemical protective suits, and nerve agent antidote. The state paid for some essential equipment for its forces during this time on an emergency basis. In addition, at the time of our visit, New Jersey was preparing to deploy large numbers of its state Guard personnel overseas and was determining how it would respond to another such terrorist threat after almost 60 percent of its forces are deployed.
- Georgia officials told us that hosting the 2004 International Economic Summit of Eight Industrialized Nations in June 2004 will increase Georgia's requirements for security missions such as aerial reconnaissance and surveillance at a time when its Army Guard aviation units may be deployed overseas.
- In 2002 the state of Oregon called up more than 1,400 Army Guard soldiers to respond to one of the worst forest fire seasons in a century. Oregon officials stated that because many of its forces and equipment are currently deployed and the state has only limited engineering capability left, it would not be able to provide the same level of support as it did in the 2002 season.
- All of the aviation assets Texas would need to fight fires and all of its military police were deployed at the time of our visit. However, Texas officials said that they were able to meet their homeland security needs, even at the height of its Guard's overseas deployments, because its largest Army Guard unit had not been fully deployed and, as a large state, it had ample state emergency response capability.

Figure 5: Percent of Army National Guard Soldiers Alerted, Mobilized, and Deployed for Title 10 as of March 31, 2004



Source: GAO analysis of Army National Guard data.

Figure 6: Percent of Air National Guardsmen Mobilized and Deployed for Title 10 as of March 8, 2004



Source: GAO analysis of Air National Guard data.

Some Guard officials noted that their states' Guards had not received additional federal funding to take on homeland security missions, even as personnel and equipment that could be needed for these missions are being deployed overseas. Guard officials also said that the states have limited budgets and that homeland security requirements compete with other needs, although the states have funded some homeland security activities, such as guarding critical infrastructure, and purchased some equipment. Further, state officials said the Guard is not generally eligible for funding from the Department of Homeland Security because its grants are limited to "first responders" such as police or firefighters.

Most states have entered into mutual assistance agreements that may provide access to another state's National Guard forces in times of need. These agreements are typically used to access additional forces for natural disaster response. However, states may withhold their forces if the forces are needed in their home state. For example, according to New Jersey officials, their state faces an elevated terrorist threat due to its proximity to New York City. However, they do not have a fully operational weapons of mass destruction civil support team in New Jersey. The officials said they requested access to another state's team on three occasions. On two occasions, the request was not granted because officials in the team's home state determined that it was needed at home. When New Jersey made a third request, in response to a specific and credible terrorist threat, access was approved.

Readying and Resourcing National Guard Units for Overseas and Domestic Missions Presents Significant Near- and Long-Term Challenges

Our work has shown that DOD, the states, and Congress face significant near- and long-term challenges to readying and resourcing National Guard units for overseas and domestic missions in the Global War on Terrorism. These challenges include first, enhancing the near-term preparedness of Army Guard units that may be mobilized for overseas operations within the next few years. These improvements may be difficult to realize because the Army National Guard is still operating at peacetime funding levels despite declining readiness. Second, in the longer term, the Guard's ability to successfully organize for its missions in the new strategic environment will depend on whether adequate resources are identified for these efforts and whether DOD's readiness and funding policies are consistent with the Army Guard's expected high utilization for the foreseeable future. However, the National Guard does not have complete control of all the restructuring and resourcing decisions that will affect its mission preparedness. Finally, in addition to restructuring and funding to be ready for the Guard's federal mission, DOD must consider how to balance homeland and overseas requirements.

The Guard Will Be Challenged in the Near-Term to Enhance the Readiness of Army Guard Units for Future Overseas Rotations

The high pace of recent operations has left Army National Guard units less prepared for future overseas operations and in need of additional trained personnel and essential equipment. In the near term, the National Guard must continue to provide units capable of performing challenging overseas missions. For example, the Army Guard has alerted 33,000 troops for deployment in support of operations in Iraq in 2005. Moreover, while future deployment figures for operations in Afghanistan had not been announced as of March 2004, 16,500 Army Guard soldiers are currently deployed to support these operations.

The National Guard has attempted, where possible, to activate units that have not been recently deployed to minimize the hardship on personnel. However, some of these units have supplied personnel and equipment to previously deploying units, exacerbating existing shortfalls and interfering with the units' ability to maintain their previous level of readiness. In addition, the continuing need for some skills may require the Guard to re-activate units that have only recently returned from deployment. Furthermore, the readiness of the equipment belonging to returning units is presently unknown. However, past experience with prolonged desert operations has shown that equipment may need extensive maintenance and not be available for training purposes. In addition, some redeployed units left equipment behind for other deploying units and will need replacement equipment. Because so many personnel and so much equipment have been taken from those units not yet deployed, improving their readiness may become increasingly difficult. In the long term, DOD's approach of transferring people and equipment does not appear to be sustainable.

The early alert of some units required for overseas operations may help identify readiness problems earlier and enable the Guard to take actions to improve unit readiness. For example, Guard officials indicated that certain actions, such as sending higher numbers of personnel to school to become qualified in their specialties, could improve readiness. However, complicating the Army Guard's efforts to improve the preparedness of its units is the fact that the Army has not provided the Guard additional funding for equipment and training to support its new operational missions. The Army Guard has not received any wartime supplemental funding in fiscal year 2004 to address the equipment shortfalls caused by the stress of recent operations in units that might be needed in future operations.

Long-Term Initiatives to Restructure Army National Guard Face Implementation Challenges

DOD has a number of efforts to restructure the National Guard to improve its ability to perform federal missions in the new strategic environment, although these are long-term efforts that have not been fully funded in DOD's budget and detailed implementation plans have not yet been developed. For example, DOD plans to alleviate the high pace of operations of reserve units by increasing the availability of certain high-demand units and rebalancing the skills in the active and reserve forces. Other DOD-wide initiatives to use its forces more efficiently include moving military personnel out of activities that can be performed by civilians or contractors and into high-demand specialties and taking advantage of technological advances to reduce personnel needs.

The Army plans to restructure its forces, including National Guard units, into modular units that can be tailored for specific needs. After restructuring, the Army Guard would have 34 fully manned brigades, instead of its current 15 enhanced brigades, 2 separate brigades, and 21 brigades in 8 divisions that are not fully manned. The Army plans to begin restructuring active units immediately, but, according to National Guard officials, it has not established the time frame and funding for the conversion of Army Guard units.

As the Army Guard is being restructured over the long-term, the Army's current resourcing policy, which provides most Guard units with fewer personnel and less equipment than they need for their wartime missions, may need to be reevaluated given the Army Guard's operational role at home and overseas in the Global War on Terrorism.

For example, one Army Guard initiative would address its long-standing problem of having insufficient full-time personnel to support its units. Full-time Guard members enhance unit readiness by performing tasks such as monitoring member readiness; recruiting and training personnel; and maintaining supplies, equipment, and aircraft. Without sufficient full-time personnel, these tasks, which are critical to unit readiness, suffer. The Army Guard was authorized only 59 percent of its full-time manning requirement in fiscal year 2003, as compared to the Air Guard's full-time manning of 100 percent of its requirement. The Army Guard plans to increase full-time manning gradually to an average of about 71 percent by 2012, if funding is provided. However, there are no plans to increase full-time manning to 100 percent of the Guard's requirements.

Restructuring Efforts Should Consider Balance between Overseas and Domestic Requirements

Efforts to restructure the National Guard are focused on its primary federal mission and do not address the individual state Guard's critical role in homeland security. As noted earlier, DOD planning and resourcing for National Guard units has assumed that homeland security tasks can be accomplished with the personnel and equipment supplied for the wartime mission. However, in the new security environment, the assumption that Guard units can perform their domestic missions with personnel and equipment trained for overseas missions needs is questionable. The U.S. Northern Command, which is responsible for DOD-led efforts to defend the homeland, has not completed its efforts to identify all the forces and capabilities needed for homeland defense or homeland security.

In the future, the National Guard would like to adopt a rotational deployment model that would maintain at least 50 percent of a state's

Guard force available for the use of state officials to perform domestic missions. In addition to assuring the ready availability of personnel, the Guard would like to be able to provide each state with capabilities that could be used for homeland security such as transportation, medical, aviation, engineering, and military police, among others. Although providing the variety of assets for state use has been a Guard goal, not every state has all these capabilities at this time. Further, DOD's plans to rebalance the active and reserve forces are based on the general goal of deploying individuals no more than 1 year over a 6-year period. However, overseas commitments may challenge the Guard's ability to meet these goals. Moreover, the Guard will have to work with state officials to balance the mix of capabilities among the state Guards.

As homeland security requirements are identified, DOD, the states, and Congress may also need to evaluate the need for some specialties or additional equipment or capabilities. The National Guard is providing some training and specialized equipment, such as decontamination equipment, for homeland security missions. At a total cost of about \$9 million for equipment, the National Guard is creating 12 enhanced response forces to augment its civil support teams who are tasked and trained to respond if weapons of mass destruction are used. Each Guard team will have responsibility for 1 of 12 geographic regions in the United States. When fully implemented, these enhanced response forces will have the medical, decontamination, engineering, and security forces required to respond to a mass destruction event. However, these units will retain overseas missions and could be deployed overseas.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, while the high pace of operations has caused some difficulties for the Air Guard and the Army Guard, the Army Guard's efforts to ready units to deploy by taking trained personnel and critical equipment from other units has created urgent personnel and equipment shortages in units that have not yet been deployed. Unless replacement equipment and personnel are identified, the Army Guard will have to continue to take personnel and equipment from one unit to ready another, which means that the units called in the future will likely be even less ready. The extensive use of Guard forces and eroding readiness of the non-deployed units suggest a comprehensive reassessment of the Army Guard's current structure and resourcing assumptions may be needed. Furthermore, while homeland security requirements have not been defined, equipment and personnel may not be available to the states when they are needed because they have been deployed overseas. Moreover, the Guard may have difficulty ensuring that each state has access to units with

key specialized capabilities—such as engineering or medical assets—needed for homeland security and other domestic missions. The National Guard has a number of initiatives to address the mismatch between the Army Guard’s tasks and the priority it has received for personnel, training, and equipment. Most initiatives are long-term in nature, such as reorganizing units, and face implementation challenges, including the need for funding. However, unless DOD, Congress, and the states work closely to address these challenges, Guard units may continue to experience a high pace of operations and declining readiness that could affect their ability to meet future requirements both at home and overseas.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you or other Members of the Committee may have.

GAO Contacts and Acknowledgments

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