



Highlights of [GAO-06-604T](#), testimony before the Subcommittee on Readiness and Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The United States is engaged in an unconventional war, not a war against military forces of one country, but an irregular war against terrorist cells with global networks. Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom are sustained military operations, which are taking a toll on the condition and readiness of military equipment that, in some cases, is more than 20 years old. The Army and Marine Corps will likely incur large expenditures in the future to reset (repair or replace) a significant amount of equipment when hostilities cease. The Army has requested about \$13 billion in its fiscal year 2006 supplemental budget request for equipment reset.

Today's testimony addresses (1) the environment, pace of operations, and operational requirements in Southwest Asia, and their affects on the Army's and Marine Corps's equipping and maintenance strategies; (2) equipment maintenance consequences created by these equipping and maintenance strategies; and (3) challenges affecting the timing and cost of Army and Marine Corps equipment reset.

GAO's observations are based on equipment-related GAO reports issued in fiscal years 2004 through 2006, as well as ongoing related work.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-604T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact William M. Solis at (202) 512-8365 or solisw@gao.gov.

DEFENSE LOGISTICS

Preliminary Observations on Equipment Reset Challenges and Issues for the Army and Marine Corps

What GAO Found

In response to the harsh operating environments in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the unanticipated and prolonged length and pace of sustained operations, the Army and Marine Corps have developed and implemented several initiatives to equip its forces and maintain the extensive amounts of equipment in theater. Environmental factors such as heat, sand, and dust have taken their toll on sensitive components. In addition, operating equipment at a pace well in excess of peacetime operations is generating a large operational maintenance and replacement requirement that must be addressed when units return to their home stations. To meet ongoing operational requirements, the Army and Marine Corps have developed pools of equipment in theater to expedite the replacement of equipment damaged during operations and directed that equipment necessary for OIF and OEF operations remain in theater. In response, the Army and Marine Corps have developed several initiatives to increase the maintenance capacity in theater to be able to provide near-depot level repair capabilities.

Although the Army and Marine Corps are reporting high rates of equipment readiness and have developed and implemented plans to increase the maintenance capabilities in theater, these actions have a wide range of consequences. Many of the equipment items used in Southwest Asia are not receiving depot-level repair because equipment items are being retained in theater or at home units and the Army has scaled back on the scope of work performed at the depots. As a result, the condition of equipment items in theater will likely continue to worsen and the equipment items will likely require more extensive repair or replacement when they eventually return to home stations.

The Army and Marine Corps will face a number of ongoing and long-term challenges that will affect the timing and cost of equipment reset, such as Army and Marine Corps transformation initiatives, reset of prepositioned equipment, efforts to replace equipment left overseas from the active, National Guard, and Reserve units, as well as the potential transfer of U.S. military equipment and the potential for continuing logistical support to Iraqi Security Forces. Also, both the Marine Corps and Army will have to better align their funding requests with the related program strategies to sustain, modernize, or replace existing legacy equipment systems. Finally, both services will have to make difficult choices and trade-offs when it comes to their many competing equipment programs. While the services are working to refine overall requirements, the total requirements and costs are unclear and raise a number of questions as to how the services will afford them. Until the services are able to firm up these requirements and cost estimates, neither the Secretary of Defense nor the Congress will be in a sound position to weigh the trade offs and risks.