



Highlights of GAO-06-274, a report to congressional committees

June 2006

DEFENSE LOGISTICS

Lack of a Synchronized Approach between the Marine Corps and Army Affected the Timely Production and Installation of Marine Corps Truck Armor

Why GAO Did This Study

The increasing threat of improvised explosive devices (IED) in Iraq has led to widespread interest by Congress and the public regarding the availability of critical force protection equipment. GAO initiated a series of engagements under the Comptroller General's authority to address these concerns. In March 2006, GAO reported on factors that affected the production and installation of armor for the Army's medium and heavy trucks. This engagement examines issues affecting the production and installation of armor for the Marine Corps' medium and heavy trucks. The objectives were to (1) determine the extent to which truck armor was produced and installed to meet identified requirements, (2) identify what factors affected the time to provide truck armor, and (3) identify what actions the Marine Corps and DOD have taken to improve the timely availability of truck armor.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that DOD (1) establish a process for sharing information on developing materiel solutions and (2) clarify the point at which the joint requirements process should be utilized. DOD concurred with the second recommendation but believes communication is sufficient to satisfy the first recommendation. GAO disagrees. DOD also provided comments related to the context and accuracy of the report, which we incorporated as appropriate.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-274.

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.

What GAO Found

The Marine Corps met its requirements for the production and installation of add-on truck armor in September 2004—8 months after the requirements were identified in January 2004. In addressing its truck armor requirements, the Marine Corps used a three-phased approach. In the first phase, the Marine Corps validated its initial requirement in January 2004 to armor 1,169 trucks for protection against IEDs and other similar threats. Due to the immediacy of the need to deploy forces to Iraq by March 2004, the Marine Corps installed interim armor that did not provide sufficient IED protection, which Marine Corps officials acknowledged, stating that their intent was to field some level of protection until a more robust armor solution became available. In the second phase, the Marine Corps increased its armor requirement to 1,438 trucks in April 2004 and fully met that requirement in September 2004 with armor that provided enhanced IED protection. In the third phase, the Marine Corps is upgrading to integrated armor for its 7-ton trucks, which provides improved protection because the armor is built into the body of the vehicle. They expect to complete installation by May 2006.

Two factors affected the timely production and installation of Marine Corps truck armor. First, a lack of a synchronized approach between the Marine Corps and the Army on addressing truck armor requirements and solutions resulted in the Marine Corps identifying its truck armor requirements and seeking armor solutions 2 months after the Army. Consequently, this delay may have limited the Marine Corps' ability to field interim armor that met IED protection requirements in the first phase, and may have contributed to the time to provide add-on truck armor to deployed Marine Corps forces in the second phase. The Marine Corps did not officially identify a requirement for truck armor and did not begin seeking out armor materials from industry until January 2004—2 months after the Army began its truck armor program in November 2003. According to Marine Corps officials, the armor-grade steel needed for sufficient IED protection was not available from suppliers in time to meet the Marine Corps' deployment timeline of March 2004. As a result, the Marine Corps fielded the interim armor with only limited IED protection. Second, mission needs restricted the rate at which the Marine Corps could replace its interim armor with add-on armor and install integrated armor.

The Marine Corps and DOD have taken actions to improve the timely availability of truck armor and other critical wartime equipment. For example, the Marine Corps increased the rate of installation for integrated armor by expanding its armor installation capacity. The Marine Corps is also taking longer-term actions, such as developing a plan to address the availability of truck armor for future operations. In addition, DOD established a joint requirements process to improve coordination and accelerate the process of fielding urgent wartime solutions. However, it is unclear whether this process applies to urgent wartime needs such as armor because it excludes the development of new technology solutions.