



Highlights of [GAO-07-807](#), a report to the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Army and the Marine Corps experienced problems with the delivery of supplies to the warfighter. Such problems highlight long-standing weaknesses in the Department of Defense's (DOD) supply chain management. DOD has identified joint theater logistics as a key effort aimed at improving distribution and supply support. GAO was asked to examine DOD's efforts to develop and implement joint theater logistics. GAO assessed (1) the extent to which DOD's approach to managing joint theater logistics departmentwide encompasses sound management principles and (2) the progress DOD has made in implementing joint theater logistics initiatives. GAO reviewed DOD documents and interviewed officials from the Joint Staff, services, agencies, and geographic combatant commands.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends DOD develop and implement a coordinated and comprehensive management approach to guide and oversee efforts across the department to improve distribution and supply support to U.S. forces in a joint theater. GAO also recommends that DLA assess opportunities to consolidate storage and shipping activities within all geographic combatant commands. DOD concurred with GAO's recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-807.

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

Efforts to Improve Distribution and Supply Support for Joint Military Operations Could Benefit from a Coordinated Management Approach

What GAO Found

DOD has not developed a coordinated and comprehensive management approach to guide and oversee implementation of joint theater logistics across the department. Efforts to develop and implement joint theater logistics initiatives have been fragmented among various DOD components due largely to a lack of specific goals and strategies, accountability for achieving results, and outcome-oriented performance measures—key principles of sound management. Further complicating DOD's ability to adopt a coordinated and comprehensive management approach to joint theater logistics are the diffused organization of DOD's logistics operations, including separate funding and management of resources and systems, and changes in DOD's overall logistics transformation strategy. DOD is currently testing a new approach to managing joint capabilities and is considering a realignment of capabilities in its long-term logistics strategy, which could affect the future of joint theater logistics. Without a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to managing joint theater logistics, DOD lacks assurance that it is on the right path toward achieving this capability and that individual initiatives will collectively address gaps in logistics capabilities. Further, DOD will have difficulty achieving improvements in theater distribution and asset visibility associated with joint theater logistics.

DOD components have made progress developing and implementing joint theater logistics initiatives in the areas of distribution and supply support, but the department faces challenges that hinder its ability to realize the full benefits of these efforts. For example,

- While Joint Deployment Distribution Operations Centers have been established in each geographic combatant command to help manage supplies moving across the distribution system, senior commanders in Kuwait said achieving asset visibility has been difficult because of a lack of interoperability among information technology systems.
- Initiatives being developed to improve the coordination of surface transportation assets theaterwide also face challenges with issues of command and control, the availability of information technology tools, and potential duplication of responsibilities with other organizations.

Unless DOD successfully addresses these and other challenges GAO identified, the initiatives are not likely to significantly improve the ability of a joint force commander to effectively and efficiently direct logistics functions, including distribution and supply support activities, across the theater of operations to accomplish an assigned mission. Moreover, without addressing such challenges, DOD is likely to continue to experience some of the same types of distribution and asset visibility problems that have occurred during Operation Iraqi Freedom.