



Highlights of [GAO-09-865](#), a report to the Subcommittee on Readiness, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Army and Marine Corps maintenance depots provide critical support to ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and are heavily involved in efforts to reset the force. The Department of Defense (DOD) has an interest in ensuring that the depots remain operationally effective, efficient, and capable of meeting future maintenance requirements. In 2008, in response to direction by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Army and the Marine Corps each submitted a depot maintenance strategic plan. Our objective was to evaluate the extent to which these plans provide comprehensive strategies for meeting future depot maintenance requirements. GAO determined whether the plans were consistent with the criteria for developing a results-oriented management framework and fully addressed OSD's criteria.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that DOD direct the Army and Marine Corps to update their plans to ensure that they provide a comprehensive results-oriented management framework, fully address the criteria established by OSD, and mitigate and reduce uncertainties in future workload. In its written comments on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-09-865](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact William M. Solis at (202) 512-8365 or [solisw@gao.gov](mailto:solisw@gao.gov).

## DEPOT MAINTENANCE

### Improved Strategic Planning Needed to Ensure That Army and Marine Corps Depots Can Meet Future Maintenance Requirements

#### What GAO Found

The depot maintenance strategic plans developed by the Army and Marine Corps identify key issues affecting the depots, but do not provide assurance that the depots will be postured and resourced to meet future maintenance requirements because they do not fully address all of the elements required for a comprehensive, results-oriented management framework. Nor are they fully responsive to OSD's direction for developing the plans. While the services' strategic plans contain mission statements, along with long-term goals and objectives, they do not fully address all the elements needed for sound strategic planning, such as external factors that may affect how goals and objectives will be accomplished, performance indicators or metrics that measure outcomes and gauge progress, and resources required to meet the goals and objectives. Also, the plans partially address four issues that OSD directed the services, at a minimum, to include in their plans, such as logistics transformation, core logistics capability assurance, workforce revitalization, and capital investment. Army and Marine Corps officials involved with the development of the service strategic plans acknowledged that their plans do not fully address the OSD criteria, but they stated that the plans nevertheless address issues they believe are critical to maintaining effective, long-term depot maintenance capabilities.

The Army's and Marine Corps' plans also are not comprehensive because they do not provide strategies for mitigating and reducing uncertainties in future workloads that affect the depots' ability to plan for meeting future maintenance requirements. Such uncertainties stem primarily from a lack of information on (1) workload that will replace current work on existing systems, which is expected to decline, and (2) workload associated with new systems that are in the acquisition pipeline. According to depot officials, to effectively plan for future maintenance requirements, the depots need timely and reliable information from their major commands on both the amounts and types of workloads they should expect to receive in future years. Depot officials told us that the information they receive from their major commands on their future workloads are uncertain beyond the current fiscal year. Officials cited various factors that contribute to these uncertainties, such as volatility in workload requirements, changing wartime environment, budget instability, and unanticipated changes in customer orders.

In addition, depot officials said that they are not involved in the sustainment portion of the life cycle management planning process for new and modified systems. No clear process exists that would enable them to have input into weapon system program managers' decisions on how and where new and modified systems will be supported and maintained in the future. Unless they are integrated in this planning process, these officials said, the depots will continue to have uncertainties about what capabilities they will need to plan for future workloads and what other resources they will need to support new and modified weapon systems.