

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-537](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD relies on its training ranges within the United States and overseas to help prepare its forces for combat or complex missions around the globe.

Section 366 of the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 (as amended) ("the Act") required DOD to submit a comprehensive plan on its efforts to address training constraints caused by limitations on the use of military lands, airspace, and marine areas available in the United States and overseas for training, and requires DOD to provide annual reports on its efforts to implement the plan and address training constraints. The Act also includes a provision for GAO to submit evaluations of DOD's reports to Congress within 90 days of receiving them from DOD.

This is GAO's 12th report evaluating DOD's annual report. GAO assessed the extent to which DOD's 2015 Sustainable Ranges Report met the statutory reporting requirements in that it described its progress in implementing its sustainable ranges plan and described any actions taken or to be taken in addressing training constraints caused by limitations on the use of military lands, marine areas, or airspace. To conduct this work, GAO compared DOD's 2015 report to statutory reporting requirements and interviewed cognizant DOD officials.

GAO is not making recommendations in this report. DOD agreed with GAO's report.

View [GAO-15-537](#). For more information, contact Brian Lepore at (202) 512-4523 or leporeb@gao.gov.

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MILITARY TRAINING

DOD's Annual Sustainable Ranges Report Addressed Statutory Reporting Requirements

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense's (DOD) 2015 Sustainable Ranges Report met the statutory reporting requirements in that it described its progress in implementing its sustainable ranges plan and described any actions taken or to be taken in addressing training constraints caused by limitations on the use of military lands, marine areas, or airspace. DOD's 2015 report provides updates to several elements of the plan required by the Act, including: (1) proposals to enhance training range capabilities and address any shortfalls in current resources; (2) goals and milestones for tracking planned actions and measuring progress in the implementation of DOD's training range sustainment plan; and (3) projected funding requirements for implementing its planned actions.

First, DOD's report included proposals to enhance training range capabilities and to address shortfalls in current resources. DOD developed these proposals by evaluating current and future training range requirements and the ability of current DOD resources to meet these requirements. For example, in the report, the Marine Corps identified several training shortfalls that it is working to remedy, such as the capability to fully exercise a large Marine Air-Ground Task Force in a realistic training scenario. The area currently being used is not large enough to accommodate a full-scale, live-fire Marine Expeditionary Brigade exercise. To address this shortfall, DOD was authorized to expand this training area by approximately 103,000 acres exclusively for military use and an additional 50,000 acres for joint military and recreational use. Efforts are under way to acquire this land. DOD also included in its report the results of a capability and encroachment assessment of its training ranges that evaluated the services' ability to support assigned training missions. In that section, the services described any planned or ongoing actions to remedy shortfalls identified during the assessment.

Second, DOD's report identified goals and milestones for tracking planned actions and measuring progress in the implementation of DOD's training range sustainment plan. DOD's report identified seven shared goals in support of its plan: (1) mitigate encroachment pressures on training activities from competing operating space; (2) mitigate frequency spectrum competition; (3) meet military airspace challenges; (4) manage increasing military demand for range space; (5) address effects from new energy infrastructure and renewable energy effects; (6) anticipate climate change effects; and (7) sustain excellence in environmental stewardship. Also, the report included discussion of each military service's milestones and needed actions for reaching those milestones, using these goals as a common framework.

Third, DOD's report identified projected funding requirements for each of the military services to implement their planned actions. DOD's report delineated four funding categories to be used by the services to project their range sustainment requirements: (1) modernization and investment, (2) operations and maintenance, (3) environmental, and (4) encroachment. DOD identified a total of approximately \$1.68 billion in funding requirements across the services for fiscal year 2015 for these categories.