Enhanced Policy and Procedures Needed to Improve Management of Sensitive Conventional Ammunition

What GAO Found

The military services maintained accountability (i.e., accurate records) of Security Risk Category (SRC) I conventional ammunition at 11 sampled locations within the continental United States; however, GAO identified gaps in some service-level guidance and procedures for how SRC I ammunition is accounted for across locations. GAO identified instances in which the Navy and Army had taken actions to enhance the accountability of the physical inventories of SRC I ammunition, such as the Army evaluating its methodology to ensure contractors with SRC I ammunition in their custody submit documentation to verify completion of inventories. However,

- GAO identified 55 SRC I ammunition items that were in the physical custody of the Air Force—though owned by the Army or Marine Corps—but accountability was not maintained in any service’s system of record while at the Air Force location. Department of Defense (DOD) policy requires that the DOD component having physical custody of materiel maintain accountability in its records regardless of the owner, but the Air Force’s guidance requires that ammunition owned by other services be tracked only in a “non-accountable” program. If the Air Force does not revise its guidance to require that accountability be maintained regardless of ownership, the Air Force and the owning service will not have complete records of management of the ammunition and the owning service will not have full assurance that accountability was maintained.

- GAO found that Army and Marine Corps guidance does not specify a timeframe for receiving shipments of SRC I ammunition. Records showed that 12 of 21 shipments to Army depots and 5 of 30 shipments to Marine Corps locations were receipted more than 2 business days after truck arrival. Until Army and Marine Corps officials finalize and implement guidance on required timeframes for receiving SRC I ammunition, officials cannot reasonably assure accountability for all shipped SRC I ammunition.

The military services have not consistently ensured timely, complete, and accurate information to maintain full visibility of SRC I ammunition in the continental United States. For example, 93 of 1,008 shipments GAO examined were not entered in DOD’s Defense Transportation Tracking System (DTTS) at the time of departure. Also, 9 of 104 shipments GAO examined in more detail had inaccurate controlled inventory item codes and were not identified in DTTS as SRC I shipments. The Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command and the military services have not collaboratively determined the specific information required for the military services to ensure timely data entry into DTTS. Further, the military services, with the aid of the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, have not conducted analysis of the completeness and accuracy of data entered into DTTS by shippers on SRC I ammunition shipments. Until these actions are taken, the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command will not have full visibility of shipments of SRC I ammunition and the military services will not be well positioned to improve their oversight of the timeliness, completeness, and accuracy of data entered in DTTS.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD revise and finalize guidance and improve the timeliness, completeness, and accuracy of information to maintain full accountability and visibility of SRC I ammunition. DOD concurred with all six recommendations and identified specific steps it has already taken as well as plans to address them.