

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-13-790](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD prepositions stocks such as combat vehicles and repair parts worth billions of dollars at strategic locations around the world. These assets are used to prepare forces quickly for conflicts when needed. Over the years, GAO has made recommendations for DOD to develop overarching strategic guidance and improve joint oversight of the military services' prepositioning programs. Section 2229a of Title 10 requires DOD to report annually on the status of its prepositioned stocks and for DOD's report to include 12 specific elements—for example, the material condition of the equipment. The law also mandates that GAO review DOD's report and provide any additional information to Congress that would be informative on issues relating to the status of prepositioned stocks. This is GAO's sixth report, and it assessed the extent to which (1) DOD's fiscal year 2012 prepositioning report addressed the 12 statutory reporting elements and (2) DOD has made progress in addressing GAO's prior recommendations on department-wide strategic guidance and a coordinated joint-military service approach for managing prepositioning. To conduct this work, GAO analyzed DOD's prepositioning report, reviewed DOD's guidance, and interviewed officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD develop guidance to ensure that it reports consistent information across the services and strengthens quality assurance procedures for its report. GAO also suggests that Congress require DOD to develop strategic guidance, including joint oversight, for its prepositioning programs. DOD concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-13-790](#). For more information, contact Cary Russell at (202) 512-5431 or russellc@gao.gov.

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PREPOSITIONED STOCKS

Inconsistencies in DOD's Annual Report Underscore the Need for Overarching Strategic Guidance and Joint Oversight

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) provided information on all 12 required reporting elements in its fiscal year 2012 prepositioning report; however, 3 of these elements were only partially addressed. For example, DOD provided a list of non-standard items slated for inclusion in its prepositioned stocks but did not include a specific plan for funding those items as required by the law. Federal internal control standards state that decision makers need complete and relevant information to manage risks and achieve efficiency and effectiveness goals. However, GAO found that DOD's report contained some inconsistencies in information across the services as well as several inaccuracies and omissions. For example, DOD's report included funding information for 6 or 7 fiscal years for most of the services but only 2 fiscal years for the Navy's stocks. Service information was also presented in different formats in the report, which makes it difficult to compare data. Because the Joint Staff did not provide specific guidance to the services to ensure consistency when requesting data, the services adopted separate approaches to reporting information to the Joint Staff for compilation in the report. In addition, although an agency should monitor the quality of information provided to Congress, GAO found several inaccuracies in the report, such as incorrect calculations and information that had been inadvertently omitted. While officials from the Joint Staff and each of the services stated that they have their own review processes, the errors found in the report indicate weaknesses in DOD's quality assurance procedures. Until DOD addresses these issues and provides complete, consistent, and accurate information on its prepositioned stocks, its report will be of limited use to Congress in making informed decisions about DOD's prepositioning programs.

DOD has not made progress in addressing GAO's prior recommendations to develop department-wide strategic guidance and implement a coordinated joint-service approach for managing its prepositioning programs, nor has it set a timeline for doing so. As far back as 2005, GAO has reported that each of the military services was planning the future of its prepositioning programs without the benefit of an overall plan or joint doctrine to coordinate their efforts, which made it difficult to determine how the services' different programs would fit together to meet the evolving defense strategy. Recently, DOD issued a strategy for materiel response to support the full range of military activities and an implementation plan for directing, coordinating, and prioritizing DOD-wide development plans, initiatives, and activities for the period 2013-2020 to achieve the strategy. However, neither provides guidance for DOD's prepositioning programs, and the plan specifically excludes prepositioning. Hence, the services' individual prepositioning programs are still not linked to overarching strategic guidance. DOD has also not improved joint oversight of its prepositioning programs because a working group that was expected to provide such oversight has not been functioning as intended, and other joint activities do not specifically address prepositioned stocks. An increased emphasis on joint oversight would help unify DOD's prepositioning efforts in support of defense priorities, reduce potential unnecessary duplication, and achieve cost savings and efficiencies. Congress is currently considering legislation that would direct DOD to develop an overarching strategy for its prepositioning programs and establish joint oversight.