April 2021
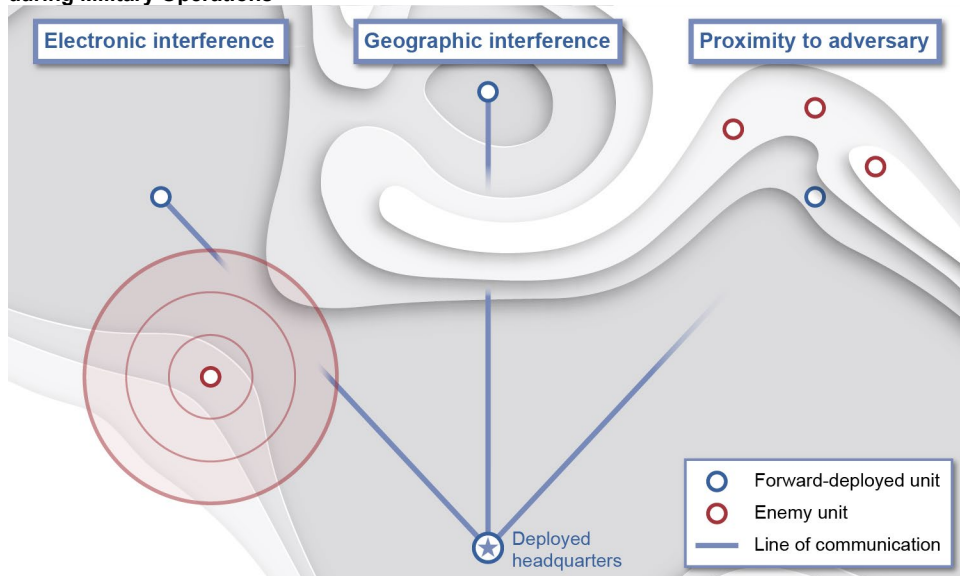
DEFENSE LOGISTICS

Army Should Ensure New System Operates in All Situations and Soldiers Complete Training

Why GAO Did This Study

GCSS–Army is a single, web-based system that, once fully implemented, is expected to be used to manage $216 billion in assets annually. This logistics information management system replaces several older systems. The Army estimates it will save $12 billion through fiscal year 2027 by making logistics management more efficient. Department of Defense officials also expect GCSS–Army will help the Army to ensure that its financial statements are validated as audit ready.

House Report 116-120, accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, included a provision for GAO to review GCSS–Army. This report examines, among other things, the extent to which (1) GCSS–Army addresses the needs of soldiers and leaders conducting military operations, and (2) the Army equipped and trained personnel to operate GCSS–Army during military operations. GAO reviewed Army documents and regulations; interviewed officials; observed a system demonstration; and interviewed soldiers who had recent experience using GCSS-Army in operational situations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Army (1) dedicate appropriate resources to meet the Army's plan to develop and to field a capability for GCSS–Army to operate when disconnected from the Army's network, and (2) establish a mechanism to track that soldiers are completing necessary training and gaining proficiency in how to use GCSS–Army. DOD concurred with both recommendations and provided suggestions on which offices in the Army should address them, which GAO incorporated as appropriate.

View GAO-21-313. For more information, contact Diana Maurer, (202) 512-9627, MaurerD@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

The Global Combat Support System–Army (GCSS–Army)—a web-based information and logistics system—has improved the Army's ability to meet logistics needs during military operations through improved visibility, accountability, and reporting of its assets, such as replacement parts and equipment. However, GCSS–Army does not function in situations where network connectivity is an issue, which could affect combat units' performance during military operations (see figure).

Factors That May Prevent Units from Connecting to the Global Combat Support System–Army during Military Operations

Source: GAO analysis of interviews with Army officials; Ron Dale/stock.adobe.com. | GAO-21-313

Soldiers GAO interviewed told GAO that during military operations, they may be in a remote location close to an adversary where they may or may not have internet or satellite access; cyberattacks are possible; and mountains could obstruct connectivity. The Army plans to develop and to field a disconnected operations capability by 2023, but whether it will dedicate the appropriate resources remains uncertain. Without a capability to operate GCSS–Army when disconnected from the Army's network, Army forces could lose the timely, accurate, and secure information needed to sustain operations.

The Army generally equipped personnel to operate GCSS–Army, but soldiers may not be taking training necessary to effectively use the system. Soldiers stated that better career-specific training is needed and that they rely on alternative ways of learning how to operate the system, such as social media groups. Army officials acknowledge that GCSS–Army's complexity makes it difficult to use and that soldiers need to devote a lot of time to training and working in the system. However, the Army could not confirm whether soldiers were taking the GCSS–Army training that is needed to be proficient in their specific responsibilities. Without a mechanism to track that soldiers are completing the more advanced, career-specific online training, the Army cannot be sure it is reaping the full benefits of the system.

_____ **United States Government Accountability Office**