

Why GAO Did This Study

Tactical vehicles are used to train military personnel and to achieve a variety of missions. Both the Army and Marine Corps have experienced tactical vehicle accidents that resulted in deaths of military personnel during non-combat scenarios.

GAO was asked to review issues related to the Army's and Marine Corps' use of tactical vehicles. Among other things, this report examines (1) trends from fiscal years 2010 through 2019 in reported Army and Marine Corps tactical vehicle accidents, deaths, and reported causes; and evaluates the extent to which the Army and Marine Corps have (2) taken steps to mitigate and prevent accidents during tactical vehicle operations; and (3) provided personnel with training to build the skills and experience needed to drive tactical vehicles. GAO analyzed accident data from fiscal years 2010 through 2019 (the most recent full year of data at the time of analysis); reviewed documents; and interviewed officials from a non-generalizable sample of units and training ranges selected based on factors, such as locations where accidents occurred.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making 9 recommendations to the Department of Defense, including that the Army and Marine Corps more clearly define roles and establish procedures and mechanisms to help supervisors enhance tactical vehicle safety; and develop performance criteria and measurable standards for driver training programs. The department concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-21-361](#). For more information, contact Cary Russell at (202) 512-5431 or russellc@gao.gov.

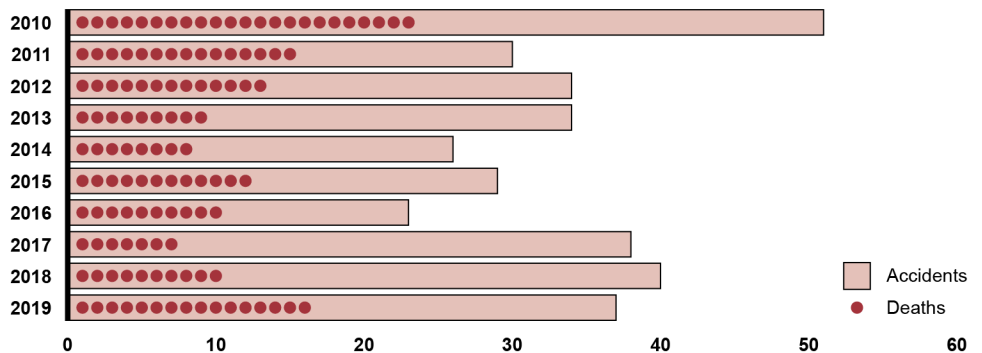
MILITARY VEHICLES

Army and Marine Corps Should Take Additional Actions to Mitigate and Prevent Training Accidents

What GAO Found

The number of serious accidents involving Army and Marine Corps tactical vehicles, such as tanks and trucks, and the number of resulting deaths, fluctuated from fiscal years 2010 through 2019 (see figure). Driver inattentiveness, lapses in supervision, and lack of training were among the most common causes of these accidents, according to GAO analysis of Army and Marine Corps data.

Number of Army and Marine Corps Class A and B Tactical Vehicle Accidents and Resulting Military Deaths, Fiscal Years 2010 through 2019
Fiscal year



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | [GAO-21-361](#)

Note: Class A and B accidents have the most serious injuries and financial costs.

The Army and Marine Corps established practices to mitigate and prevent tactical vehicle accidents, but units did not consistently implement these practices. GAO found that issues affecting vehicle commanders and unit safety officers hindered Army and Marine Corps efforts to implement risk management practices. For example, the Army and Marine Corps had not clearly defined the roles or put procedures and mechanisms in place for first-line supervisors, such as vehicle commanders, to effectively perform their role. As a result, implementation of risk management practices, such as following speed limits and using seat belts, was ad hoc among units.

The Army and Marine Corps provide training for drivers of tactical vehicles that can include formal instruction, unit licensing, and follow-on training, but their respective programs to build driver skills and experience had gaps. GAO found that factors, such as vehicle type and unit priorities, affected the amount of training that vehicle drivers received. Further, licensing classes were often condensed into shorter periods of time than planned with limited drive time, and unit training focused on other priorities rather than driving, according to the units that GAO interviewed. The Army and Marine Corps have taken steps to improve their driver training programs, but have not developed a well-defined process with performance criteria and measurable standards to train their tactical vehicle drivers from basic qualifications to proficiency in diverse driving conditions, such as driving at night or over varied terrain. Developing performance criteria and measurable standards for training would better assure that Army and Marine Corps drivers have the skills to operate tactical vehicles safely and effectively.