



Highlights of [GAO-08-930](#), a report to congressional committees.

Why GAO Did This Study

The redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq, a process the Department of Defense (DOD) refers to as “reposturing,” will be a massive and expensive effort. As of March 2008, for example, there were about 173,000 pieces of equipment in Iraq, worth about \$16.5 billion, that will need to be returned to the United States. The redeployment process following Operation Desert Storm in 1991, a much shorter war, lasted at least 14 months. DOD guidance emphasizes the importance of early planning for this redeployment process.

GAO performed this work under the Comptroller General’s Authority. GAO examined the (1) status of logistical planning for reposturing U.S. forces from Iraq and associated assumptions and (2) extent to which DOD established roles and responsibilities for managing and executing retrograde from Iraq. GAO also identified issues that DOD will need to consider in its reposture planning. GAO reviewed documents and interviewed officials from over 20 DOD organizations in the United States and Kuwait.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense take steps to clarify the chain of command over logistical operations for retrograde of equipment and materiel. Also, Congress may wish to consider directing DOD to report specific details on the status of reposturing plans and how it intends to mitigate issues such as those we identify. DOD generally concurred with our recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-930](#). For more information, contact William M. Solis at 202-512-8365 or solisw@gao.gov

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

Actions Needed to Enhance DOD Planning for Reposturing of U.S. Forces from Iraq

What GAO Found

While the pace and overall extent of reposturing in Iraq is yet to be determined, various defense commands began planning for reposturing in fall 2007, and DOD began coordinating these individual planning efforts in May 2008 to develop a logistical framework based on three key assumptions. The result of this planning was an order published by Multi-National Forces-Iraq (MNF-I) that contained the process for reposturing units, materiel, and equipment and established working groups to continue the planning and seek solutions to emerging challenges. DOD’s three key assumptions are: (1) any reposturing initiative will be based on MNF-I and Department of State assessments of conditions on the ground; (2) there will be sufficient lead time to refine reposture plans once an order with a specific timetable and force posture in Iraq is issued; and (3) the reposturing of forces will be deliberate and gradual, predicated on a 180-day process for units leaving Iraq and a sustained flow of no more than 2.5 brigades’ worth of equipment and materiel out of Iraq each month.

While efforts have been made to synchronize planning for reposturing, DOD, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), and the military services have not yet clearly established all of the roles and responsibilities for managing and executing the retrograde of materiel and equipment from Iraq. Although CENTCOM has designated U.S. Army Central (ARCENT) as executive agent for synchronizing retrograde of materiel and equipment from the Iraqi theater of operations, no unified or coordinated structure exists to account for the roles of the variety of teams and units engaged in retrograde operations. Until recently ARCENT did not have operational control over the two units responsible for retrograding the bulk of equipment in Iraq.

We identified the following nine issues that DOD should consider as it develops a comprehensive plan for reposturing U.S. forces from Iraq: (1) agreed-upon guidance for environmental cleanup and the disposition of property, which could affect the time and cost of closing bases in Iraq; (2) guidance and plans for the reposturing of contractors from Iraq; (3) accountability and disposition of contractor-managed government-owned property; (4) the possibility of restrictive conditions on the use of facilities in Kuwait and other neighboring countries; (5) availability of power-washing equipment and stands, called wash racks, and the number of customs inspectors in Kuwait; (6) capacity of military transports and convoy security assets, including limits on the main supply route; (7) increased demand for access to mental health care providers; (8) infrastructure requirements of returning units; and (9) requirements for training and equipment reset to restore readiness. DOD has begun to address these issues.

While the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2008 directs DOD to brief the congressional defense committees on certain issues related to reposturing, DOD is not required to provide the specific information identified in our report. We believe that without more specific reporting from DOD, Congress may not be able to effectively exercise its oversight responsibilities.