



Highlights of [GAO-04-670T](#), a testimony before the Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

As a result of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and launch of the Global War on Terrorism, the National Guard has experienced the largest activation of its forces since World War II. The Guard consists of 350,000 Army Guard soldiers and 107,000 Air Guard members. With its unique dual status, it performs state missions under the governor and federal missions at home and overseas under the President. Since September 11, the Guard's missions have expanded, raising concerns about its ability to simultaneously perform all of these functions.

The Department of Defense (DOD) funds the Army Guard for partial readiness to accomplish mission requirements assuming that there will be time to supply additional personnel and equipment in an extended conflict. In contrast, the Air Guard is funded to be an operational reserve ready on short notice.

Today's testimony addresses GAO's observations on (1) the extent and purpose of the National Guard's use since September 11, (2) the effects of that use on Guard forces' readiness for future missions, and (3) the challenges that DOD, the states, and Congress face in organizing and equipping the Guard to support both overseas and homeland missions.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-670T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Janet St. Laurent at (202) 512-4402 or stlaurentj@gao.gov.

RESERVE FORCES

Observations on Recent National Guard Use in Overseas and Homeland Missions and Future Challenges

What GAO Found

With the high pace of operations since September 11, more than 51 percent of Army Guard members and 31 percent of Air Guard members have been activated to meet new homeland and overseas demands. The Army Guard has experienced significant difficulties in responding to these extensive and ongoing requirements because much of it was funded and equipped as a later-deploying reserve force rather than an operational force designed for continued overseas deployments. Moreover, units with certain specialties—military police, transportation, and combat arms—have been in high demand, resulting in lengthy and repeated deployments. To ease critical shortages, 27 Army Guard units were retrained as military police from other specialties such as field artillery. The Air Guard, although less affected by the high pace because it is funded to deploy quickly, has also seen significant use for Iraq combat operations and homeland security missions. While the number of activated Air Guard personnel has decreased over the past year, some personnel were activated outside their normal rotational schedules and tour lengths have been extended. In addition, some units have been assigned new homeland missions such as flying combat air patrols and providing radar coverage over the United States.

While the high use of the National Guard since September 11 has led to declining war-fighting readiness of non-deployed Army and Air Guard units, the decline is most significant for the Army Guard. To meet wartime needs, the Army Guard has had to take personnel and equipment from units that had not been activated to ready others for deployment. For example, the Army Guard has initiated over 71,000 transfers to fill personnel shortages in deploying units and transferred about 22,000 pieces of equipment from non-deploying units to ready units deploying to Iraq. The Air Guard's readiness has also declined because the high pace of operations created maintenance challenges for its aging aircraft and limited training opportunities. Because DOD has not fully defined requirements, readiness standards, and readiness measures for the homeland security missions it will lead or support, the Guard's preparedness specifically for homeland security missions is unknown. However, states are concerned that continuing deployments reduce the Guard's preparedness and availability for all its homeland security and natural disaster missions.

DOD, the states, and Congress face near- and long-term challenges readying and funding National Guard units for overseas and domestic missions in the Global War on Terrorism. Enhancing the near-term readiness of Army Guard units will be difficult because the Army Guard is still operating with peacetime funding. In the long term, the Army Guard's ability to restructure its forces to meet the requirements of the new security environment will depend on whether it is given adequate resources and funding priority. Finally, DOD will need to consider how to balance Army and Air Guard forces needed for both homeland and overseas security requirements.