



Highlights of [GAO-05-21](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Government Reform, and Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the global war on terrorism have triggered the largest activation of National Guard forces since World War II. As of June 2004, over one-half of the National Guard's 457,000 personnel had been activated for overseas warfighting or domestic homeland security missions in federal and state active duty roles. In addition to increased usage, the Guard has also experienced long deployments and high demand for personnel with specific skills, such as military police. The high pace of operations and the Guard's expanded role since September 11 have raised concerns about whether the Guard is capable of successfully performing its multiple missions within existing and expected resource levels, especially given the challenges it faces in meeting future requirements.

GAO was asked to assess the extent to which the Guard is: (1) adapting to meet warfighting requirements in the post-September 11 security environment and (2) supporting immediate and emerging homeland security needs.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that the Secretary of Defense submit a plan to Congress on how DOD will improve the Army National Guard's structure and readiness for overseas operations and to clearly define the National Guard's role in homeland security. DOD generally agreed with the recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-21.

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

Actions Needed to Better Prepare the National Guard for Future Overseas and Domestic Missions

What GAO Found

The Army and the Air National Guard have begun adapting their forces to meet new warfighting requirements since the September 11 attacks, but some measures taken to meet short-term requirements have degraded the readiness of nondeployed units, particularly in the Army National Guard. To deploy ready units for overseas missions, the Army National Guard has had to transfer equipment and personnel from nondeploying units. Between September 11, 2001, and July 2004, the Army National Guard had performed over 74,000 personnel transfers. Similarly, as of May 2004, the Army National Guard had transferred over 35,000 equipment items to prepare deploying units, leaving nondeployed Army National Guard units short one-third of the critical equipment they need for war. The Army has developed plans, such as the Army Campaign Plan, to restructure its forces to better prepare them for future missions. However, it has not finalized detailed plans identifying equipment needs and costs for restructuring Guard units. Moreover, the Army is still structured and funded according to a resourcing plan that does not provide Guard units all the personnel and equipment they need to deploy in wartime, so the Army National Guard will be challenged to continue to provide ready units for operations expected in the next 3 to 5 years. The Air National Guard is also adapting to meet new warfighting requirements, but it has not been as negatively affected as the Army National Guard because it has not been required to sustain the same high level of operations. In addition, the Air National Guard generally maintains fully manned and equipped units.

While the Army and the Air National Guard have, thus far, also supported the nation's homeland security needs, the Guard's preparedness to perform homeland security missions that may be needed in the future is unknown because requirements and readiness standards and measures have not been defined. Without this information, policy makers are not in the best position to manage the risks to the nation's homeland security by targeting investments to the highest priority needs and ensuring that the investments are having the desired effect. Since September 11, the Guard has been performing several unanticipated homeland missions, such as flying patrols over U.S. cities and guarding critical infrastructure. However, states have concerns about the preparedness and availability of Guard forces for domestic needs and natural disasters while overseas deployments continue at a high pace. The Department of Defense (DOD) plans to publish a comprehensive strategy for homeland security missions that DOD will lead. However, DOD has not reached agreement with multiple federal and state authorities on the Guard's role in such missions. Also, the National Guard Bureau has proposed initiatives to strengthen the Guard's homeland security capabilities. However, many of these initiatives are at an early stage and will require coordination and approval from other stakeholders, such as DOD and the states. In the absence of clear homeland security requirements, the Guard's preparedness to perform missions at home cannot be measured to determine whether it needs additional assets or training.