



Highlights of [GAO-04-188](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The Army continues to transform units, known as Stryker brigades, into lighter, rapidly deployable, and more capable forces. Because Stryker brigades are an entirely new design, the fiscal year 2002 National Defense Authorization Act required the Army to conduct an evaluation of the design, to include deployment of the brigade and execution of combat missions across the full spectrum of potential threats. The act also required the Secretary of Defense to certify that the evaluation results indicate the design is both operationally effective and suitable.

As one in a series of reviews of Army transformation, GAO monitored the evaluation to assess (1) whether the Army and the Secretary of Defense met legislative requirements, (2) how the Army evaluated both the operational effectiveness and suitability of the brigade's design, (3) what the brigade's performance was during the evaluation, and (4) how the Army plans to mitigate issues identified during the evaluation.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that OSD direct the Army to complete all mitigation efforts and apply, as applicable, adjustments made to the brigade design to future Stryker brigades. In commenting on a draft of this report, OSD concurred with the recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-188.

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

MILITARY TRANSFORMATION

The Army and OSD Met Legislative Requirements for First Stryker Brigade Design Evaluation, but Issues Remain for Future Brigades

What GAO Found

The Army and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) met the legislative requirements of the fiscal year 2002 National Defense Authorization Act. The Army developed a plan for conducting an operational evaluation of the first Stryker brigade; obtained the plan's approval from the Department of Defense Director of Operational Test and Evaluation; and from April through May 2003, the brigade deployed to the evaluation sites and conducted combat missions across the full spectrum of potential threats—from major theater of war to security and stability operations. In September 2003, OSD certified to Congress that the brigade design is both operationally effective and suitable. The Army has deployed the first Stryker brigade to Iraq.

The Army developed an evaluation plan and established a control cell that used independent evaluators to monitor and collect data on the brigade's performance. The cell compiled and analyzed the data and submitted a report to the I Corps commander, who declared the design as operationally effective and operationally suitable. The commander noted that performance difficulties were due to an accelerated fielding schedule and inadequate training time. The U.S. Forces Command endorsed the report.

GAO determined, based on its observations and analyses, that the brigade's performance showed strengths and weaknesses. The brigade could perform as designed but did not consistently demonstrate its capabilities. The brigade's strengths were its ability to conduct combat missions, including deployment using different transportation modes and the ability to use the Stryker vehicle's speed and agility. The weaknesses related to staff planning, digital system usage, sustainment, and executing company-level combat missions. Contractors were also used ineffectively. GAO concluded that the primary cause of the weaknesses was insufficient training proficiency.

The Army is implementing a plan to mitigate most operational evaluation issues. The Army concluded that the issues were largely training related, although some were related to design or equipment. The brigade, in preparation for deployment to Iraq, conducted additional training to address the issues the Army and GAO identified. The brigade's training performance indicates that these issues are being mitigated. The Army is addressing the training and equipment issues for the first Stryker brigade; however, it has deferred some critical issues that have implications for future brigades.