



Highlights of [GAO-03-456](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Readiness, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Defense's (DOD) readiness assessment system was designed to assess the ability of units and joint forces to fight and meet the demands of the national security strategy. In 1998, GAO concluded that the readiness reports provided to Congress were vague and ineffective as oversight tools. Since that time, Congress added reporting requirements to enhance its oversight of military readiness. Therefore, the Chairman asked GAO to examine (1) the progress DOD made in resolving issues raised in the 1998 GAO report on both the unit-level readiness reporting system and the lack of specificity in DOD's *Quarterly Readiness Reports to the Congress*, (2) the extent to which DOD has complied with legislative reporting requirements enacted since 1997, and (3) DOD's plans to improve readiness reporting.

What GAO Recommends

GAO made recommendations to improve readiness reporting and to develop an implementation plan to allow DOD and the Congress to gauge progress in developing DOD's new readiness reporting system. DOD did not agree with our recommendations. After reviewing its comments, we modified one recommendation but retained the others as originally stated.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-456.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Neal P. Curtin at (757) 552-8100 or curtinn@gao.gov.

MILITARY READINESS

New Reporting System is Intended to Address Long-Standing Problems, but Better Planning is Needed

What GAO Found

Since 1998, DOD has made some progress in improving readiness reporting—particularly at the unit level—but some issues remain. For example, DOD uses readiness measures that vary 10 percentage points or more to determine readiness ratings and often does not report the precise measurements outside DOD. DOD included more information in its *Quarterly Readiness Reports to the Congress*. But quality issues remain—in that the reports do not specifically describe readiness problems, their effects on readiness, or remedial actions to correct problems. Nor do the reports contain information about funding programmed to address specific remedial actions. Although current law does not specifically require this information, Congress could use it for its oversight role.

DOD complied with most, though not all, of the legislative readiness reporting requirements enacted by Congress in the National Defense Authorization Acts for Fiscal Years 1998-2002. For example, DOD

- is now listing the individual units that have reported low readiness and reporting on the readiness of prepositioned equipment, as required by the fiscal year 1998 Act;
- is reporting on 11 of 19 readiness indicators that commanders identified as important and that Congress required to be added to the quarterly reports in the fiscal year 1998 Act, but is not reporting on the other 8 readiness indicators; and
- has not yet implemented a new comprehensive readiness reporting system as required in the fiscal year 1999 Act.

As a result, Congress is not receiving all the information mandated by law.

DOD issued a directive in June 2002 to establish a new comprehensive readiness reporting system that DOD officials said they plan to use to comply with the reporting requirements specified by Congress. The new system is intended to implement many of the recommendations included in a congressionally directed independent study for establishing such a system. However, the extent to which the new system will actually address the current system's shortcomings is unknown, because the new system is currently only a concept, and full capability is not scheduled until 2007.

As of January 2003, DOD had not developed an implementation plan containing measurable performance goals, identification of resources, performance indicators, and an evaluation plan to assess progress in developing the new reporting system. Without such a plan, neither DOD nor the Congress will be able to fully assess whether the new system's development is on schedule and achieving desired results.