FORCE STRUCTURE

The Army Needs a Results-Oriented Plan to Equip and Staff Modular Forces and a Thorough Assessment of Their Capabilities

Why GAO Did This Study

Amid ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army embarked in 2004 on a plan to create a modular, brigade-based force that would be equally capable as its divisional predecessor in part because it would have advanced equipment and specialized personnel. GAO has previously reported that restructuring and rebuilding the Army will require billions of dollars for equipment and take years to complete. For this report, GAO assessed the extent to which the Army has (1) developed a plan to link funding with results and (2) evaluated its modular force designs. GAO analyzed Army equipment and personnel data, key Army reports, planning documents, performance metrics, testing plans, and funding requests. GAO also visited Army Training and Doctrine Command, including selected Army proponents and schools; Army Reserve Command; and the National Guard Bureau.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Army develop and report to Congress a results-oriented plan, that includes milestones that better links funding to results; complete a plan for developing doctrine for its modular forces; and better assess the effectiveness of modular forces with authorized levels of equipment and personnel. Because DOD's comments disagreed or were not fully responsive to these recommendations, GAO elevated them to Congress for consideration.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on GAO-09-131. For more information, contact John Pendleton at (404) 679-1816 or pendletonj@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

The Army will have established over 80 percent of its modular units by the end of 2008 but does not have a results-oriented plan with clear milestones in place to guide efforts to equip and staff those new units. The Army has been focused on equipping and staffing units to support ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan; however, the equipment and personnel level of non-deployed units has been declining. The Army now anticipates that modular units will be equipped and staffed in 2019—more than a decade away—but has provided few details about what to expect in the interim. And while the Army projects that it will have enough equipment and personnel in the aggregate, its projections rely on uncertain assumptions related to restoring equipment used in current operations, as well as meeting recruiting and retention goals while simultaneously expanding the Army. Further, GAO's detailed analysis of Army data shows that the Army could face shortfalls of certain modern equipment. Such items are important because the success of the modular design rests in part on obtaining key enablers needed for modular units to function as planned, such as equipment to provide enhanced awareness of the battlefield. GAO has previously reported that the Army lacks a funding plan that includes interim measures for equipping and staffing the modular force, making it difficult to evaluate progress. Without a plan for equipment and staffing that links funding with results and provides milestones, the Army cannot assure decision makers when modular units will have the required equipment and staff in place to restore readiness. Finally, without this plan the Army risks cost growth and further timeline slippage in its efforts to transform to a more modular and capable force.

The Army uses several approaches in testing unit designs and capabilities, but these efforts have not yielded a comprehensive assessment of modular forces. Testing the force is intended to determine whether modular units are capable of performing missions across the full spectrum of conflict. The Army has focused its testing efforts on combat units conducting ongoing counterinsurgency operations. However, gaps in the Army's testing could affect its forces' ability to deliver needed capabilities. First, the Army has not fully assessed the effectiveness of its support units because the doctrine that would define how modular support units will train, be sustained, and support the fight has not been completed. This doctrine provides a benchmark to measure the effectiveness of support units. Further, the Army has not assigned a focal point the responsibility for integrating assessments across activities, such as equipping and training. Second, the Army tested the capability of modular designs primarily unconstrained by resources, not at the level of personnel and equipment that the Army plans to provide units. Lacking an analysis of the capabilities of the modular force at levels that it plans to have, the Army will not be in a position to realistically assess whether the capabilities that it is fielding can perform mission requirements.

_____ **United States Government Accountability Office**