



Highlights of [GAO-07-780](#), a report to the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate and the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Congress has repeatedly expressed concerns about the pace of military operations and 10 U.S.C. §487 requires that the Department of Defense (DOD) annually report on personnel tempo—the time servicemembers spend away from home. Section 345 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 directed GAO to report on a number of Army and Marine Corps issues. For this report GAO addresses the extent to which (1) changes in mobilization and deployment policies have affected reserve component availability and provided an approach to meet the requirements for the global war on terrorism; and, (2) DOD, the Army, and the Marine Corps have collected, maintained, and reported complete and accurate personnel tempo data. To address these objectives, GAO analyzed data from DOD's Personnel Tempo and Contingency Tracking System databases, and interviewed agency officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Army and Marine Corps to develop quality control procedures for validating the accuracy of service member personnel tempo data. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with the recommendation.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-780.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Sharon Pickup at (202) 512-9619 or pickups@gao.gov.

MILITARY PERSONNEL

DOD Lacks Reliable Personnel Tempo Data and Needs Quality Controls to Improve Data Accuracy

What GAO Found

On January 19, 2007, the Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum which changed mobilization and deployment policies and increased reserve component availability, making virtually all reserve component personnel available on an indefinitely recurrent basis under a long-term approach for meeting the requirements for the global war on terror. Previously, involuntary reserve component mobilizations for the global war on terrorism were limited to 24 cumulative months; there is no cumulative time limit on involuntary mobilizations under the new policy. DOD's new policies provide for an integrated approach to manage the long-term requirements for the global war on terrorism while addressing issues that had previously been addressed in a piecemeal fashion. The new policies emphasize the importance of deployment predictability and unit cohesion and they contain deployment rotation goals, which differ between the active and reserve components. In taking this long-term approach, DOD has recognized that it will not be able to immediately achieve its rotation goals and some units will be remobilized sooner than the standard. Therefore, the Secretary also directed that a program be established to compensate servicemembers who are required to mobilize or deploy early or often or extend beyond the established rotation policy goals.

DOD has reported personnel tempo data to Congress and the President since 2001, but the reports have not been complete and accurate because the Army and Marine Corps do not have quality controls in place to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the reports' underlying data. In October 2001, DOD waived two statutory personnel tempo requirements due to national security interests. As permitted by the statutes, DOD waived the high-deployment payment provision and the management of servicemember deployments which approach or exceeded certain thresholds. With the provisions waived, two mechanisms that would identify faulty personnel tempo data were no longer in place, and the services lacked any other quality control procedures to ensure the accuracy of the data they were collecting and sending to DOD. Despite DOD guidance requiring complete and accurate personnel tempo data, service reviews have found that the collection and tracking of tempo data have not been accurate. In 2005, the Army Human Resources Command reported that personnel tempo was not properly recorded for 72 percent of forward-deployed soldiers. In fiscal years 2005 and 2006, Marine Corps inspection teams found that inspected commands did not have procedures in place to ensure that personnel tempo information was accurately reported. DOD's focus on collecting deployment data for ongoing operations has shifted its attention away from personnel tempo reporting and DOD recently sent a proposal to Congress to modify the definition of deployments. If approved, the new definition would be used to revise personnel tempo thresholds and related compensation. Until DOD establishes quality control procedures, Congress and users of DOD's personnel tempo data need to use caution because they cannot be assured that the data fully and accurately reflect servicemembers' actual tempos.