



Highlights of [GAO-09-720](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Army's strategy for training its reserve component calls for units to conduct training on the primary missions for which they were organized and designed as well as the missions units are assigned in support of ongoing operations. The training is to be conducted over a 5-year cycle with a focus on primary missions during the early years and assigned missions during the later years. In response to mandates, GAO assessed the extent to which (1) the Army is able to execute its strategy for training reserve component forces for their primary and assigned missions; (2) mobilization and deployment laws, regulations, goals, and policies impact the Army's ability to train and employ these forces; and (3) access to military schools and skill training facilities and ranges affects the preparation of reserve component forces. To address these objectives, GAO analyzed relevant training strategies and policies, laws, and data and surveyed 22 Army reserve component units returning from deployments in the past 12 months.

## What GAO Recommends

To help assure that the Army maximizes the efficiency and effectiveness of its training, GAO recommends that DOD and the Army evaluate and adjust its training strategy and mobilization policy, and determine the range of resources and support necessary to fully implement the training strategy. DOD generally concurred with GAO's recommendations.

[View GAO-09-720 or key components.](#)  
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## RESERVE FORCES

### Army Needs to Reevaluate Its Approach to Training and Mobilizing Reserve Component Forces

#### What GAO Found

The Army is able to execute the portion of its reserve component training strategy that calls for units to effectively train for their assigned missions in support of ongoing operations, but faces challenges in executing the portion of the strategy that calls for units to effectively train on primary missions. Unit training for assigned missions, which is conducted in the later years of the 5-year training cycle, is generally effective because the Army prioritizes its available resources to support units that are preparing to deploy for ongoing operations—units receive increased training time; mission requirements and personnel levels are stabilized; and personnel and equipment shortages are addressed while support is increased. Conversely, units training for their primary missions in the early years of the cycle receive less time to train and experience equipment and personnel shortages, which adversely affect teamwork and unit cohesion. Also, support for their training is limited. These challenges limit the effectiveness of primary mission training and could impact their ability to conduct their primary missions within the current strategy's time frames.

While DOD's current 12-month mobilization policy has not hindered the Army's overall ability to train its reserve component forces and has reduced the length of deployments, it has not fully achieved its intended purpose of reducing stress on the force by providing predictability to soldiers. Because units must spend part of their mobilization periods in training, they are actually deploying for about 10 months under this 12-month mobilization policy, whereas they typically deployed for periods of 12 to 15 months under the previous policy. Under the current policy, the Army's reserve component forces are deploying more frequently and spending more time away from home in training when they are not mobilized. Moreover, unit leaders and personnel GAO interviewed said that the 12-month mobilization policy has decreased predictability and increased stress for individuals. GAO noted alternate approaches that can improve predictability. For example, the Air Force recently developed a deployment model categorizing five grouped occupational specialties based on operational requirements and length of time home between deployments. The model is intended to increase predictability for its forces and thus reduce their stress.

Reserve component forces are generally receiving access to training facilities necessary to prepare them for their assigned missions, but the Army lacks capacity to prepare all of its forces for the full range of training requirements. In addressing capacity shortages, the Army has given priority to deploying units and personnel. As a result, active and reserve component forces without assigned missions often experience delays in accessing training for their primary missions. Although the Army is reviewing some aspects of its training capacity, it has not fully identified its training requirements and capacity and therefore will not have a sound basis for prioritizing available resources and cannot be assured that the initiatives it has under way will fully address gaps in its training capacity.