



Highlights of [GAO-06-141](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

With continued heavy military involvement in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Department of Defense (DOD) is spending billions of dollars sustaining or replacing its inventory of key equipment items while also planning to spend billions of dollars to develop and procure new systems to transform the department's warfighting capabilities. GAO developed a red, yellow, green assessment framework to (1) assess the condition of 30 selected equipment items from across the four military services, and (2) determine the extent to which DOD has identified near- and long-term program strategies and funding plans to ensure that these items can meet defense requirements. GAO selected these items based on input from the military services, congressional committees, and our prior work. These 30 equipment items included 18 items that were first assessed in GAO's 2003 report.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD reassess and report annually on its near- and long-term programs for all key equipment items until replacements are fielded. DOD partially agreed that it needs to reassess its program strategies but did not agree that it needed to provide this information in an annual report to Congress. As a result, GAO is recommending that Congress require DOD to report this information to ensure that key equipment deficiencies are addressed in DOD's budget.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-141](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-141).

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](mailto:solisw@gao.gov).

# MILITARY READINESS

## DOD Needs to Identify and Address Gaps and Potential Risks in Program Strategies and Funding Priorities for Selected Equipment

### What GAO Found




While the fleet-wide condition of the 30 equipment items GAO selected for review varied, GAO's analysis showed that reported readiness rates declined between fiscal years 1999 and 2004 for most of these items. The decline in readiness, which occurred more markedly in fiscal years 2003 and 2004, generally resulted from (1) the continued high use of equipment to support current operations and (2) maintenance issues caused by the advancing ages and complexity of the systems. Key equipment items—such as Army and Marine Corps trucks, combat vehicles, and rotary wing aircraft—have been used well beyond normal peacetime use during deployments in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. DOD is currently performing its Quadrennial Defense Review, which will examine defense programs and policies for meeting future requirements. Until the department completes this review and ensures that condition issues for key equipment are addressed, DOD risks a continued decline in readiness trends, which could threaten its ability to continue meeting mission requirements.

The military services have not fully identified near- and long-term program strategies and funding plans to ensure that all of the 30 selected equipment items can meet defense requirements. GAO found that, in some cases, the services' near-term program strategies have gaps in that they do not address capability shortfalls, funding is not included in DOD's 2006 budget request, or there are supply and maintenance issues that may affect near-term readiness. Additionally, the long-term program strategies and funding plans are incomplete for some of the equipment items GAO reviewed in that future requirements are not identified, studies are not completed, funding for maintenance and upgrades was limited, or replacement systems were delayed or not yet identified. Title 10 U.S.C. § 2437 requires the military services to develop sustainment plans for equipment items when their replacement programs begin development, unless they will reach initial operating capability before October 2008. However, most of the systems that GAO assessed as red had issues severe enough to warrant immediate attention because of long-term strategy and funding issues, and were not covered by this law. As a result, DOD is not required to report sustainment plans for these critical items. For the next several years, funding to sustain or modernize aging equipment will have to compete with other DOD priorities, such as current operations, force structure changes, and replacement system acquisitions. Without developing complete sustainment and modernization plans and identifying funding needs for all priority equipment items, DOD may be unable to meet future requirements for defense capabilities. Furthermore, until DOD develops these plans, Congress will be unable to ensure that DOD's budget decisions address deficiencies related to key military equipment.

GAO's red, yellow, and green assessments of the condition, program strategies, and funding plans for the 30 selected military equipment items are shown on the following page.

**GAO's Assessment Summary of 30 Selected Equipment Items**

Equipment	Condition	Near-term program strategy and funding plan	Long-term program strategy and funding plan
<b>Army</b>			
Abrams Tank	Yellow	Yellow	Green
Bradley Fighting Vehicle	Yellow	Yellow	Red
M113 Armored Personnel Carrier	Green	Yellow	Red
Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
High Mobility Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicle	Green	Yellow	Yellow
Family of Medium Tactical Vehicles	Green	Yellow	Yellow
AH-64 A/D Apache Helicopter	Yellow	Green	Green
CH-47 D/F Chinook Helicopter	Red	Yellow	Green
OH-58D Kiowa Helicopter	Green	Green	Green
<b>Marine Corps</b>			
M1A1 Abrams Tank	Red	Yellow	Yellow
Light Armored Vehicle Command and Control and 25 variants	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Assault Amphibian Vehicle- Personnel, C2, and Recovery variants	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement	Green	Yellow	Green
AV-8B Harrier Jet	Yellow	Green	Yellow
AH-1W Super Cobra Helicopter	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
CH-46E Sea Knight Helicopter	Yellow	Red	Red
CH-53E Super Stallion Helicopter	Yellow	Yellow	Red
<b>Navy</b>			
DDG-51 Arleigh Burke Class Destroyer	Yellow	Green	Yellow
FFG-7 Oliver Hazard Perry Class Frigate	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
LPD-4 Amphibious Transport Dock Ship	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
F/A-18 Hornet/Super Hornet Aircraft	Green	Yellow	Yellow
EA-6B Prowler Aircraft	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
P-3 Orion Aircraft	Red	Yellow	Red
Standard Missile-2 Surface-to-Air Missile	Yellow	Green	Red
<b>Air Force</b>			
F-15 Eagle/Strike Eagle Aircraft	Green	Green	Green
F-16 Fighting Falcon Aircraft	Green	Green	Green
B-1 Lancer Bomber	Yellow	Green	Green
B-2 Spirit Bomber	Yellow	Green	Green
C-5 Galaxy Transport Aircraft	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
KC-135 Stratotanker Aircraft	Yellow	Yellow	Red

-  Red indicates a problem or issue that is prevalent and severe enough to warrant immediate attention by DOD, the military services, and/or Congress.
-  Yellow indicates the existence of a problem or issue that warrants attention by DOD, the military services, and/or Congress, and if left unattended may worsen.
-  Green indicates that we did not identify any specific problems or issues at the time of our review or that any existing problems or issues we identified are either not severe enough in nature to warrant additional action or are already being addressed by DOD, the military services, and/or Congress.

Source: GAO analysis of military service data.