



Highlights of [GAO-06-1068](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

GAO has previously reported on the Department of Defense's (DOD) ability to track reservists deployed to the theater of operations and made recommendations. Reliable mobilization and deployment data are critical for making decisions about reserve force availability and medical surveillance. Because of broad congressional interest, GAO initiated a review under the Comptroller General's authority to conduct evaluations on his own initiative to determine (1) what DOD data indicate are the number of reservists mobilized and deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and the selected demographic and deployment characteristics of those deployed and (2) whether DOD's reserve deployment and mobilization data and analyses are reliable. GAO analyzed data and data analyses from DOD's Contingency Tracking System (CTS) and interviewed agency officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that DOD standardize the use of key terms; provide required data, such as location; and document its internal procedures, processes, and assumptions for analyzing and verifying data analyses. DOD generally concurred except for the need for DMDC to document its assumptions. GAO believes that basic key assumptions should be documented.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-1068.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Derek Stewart at (202) 512-5559 or stewartd@gao.gov.

MILITARY PERSONNEL

DOD and the Services Need to Take Additional Steps to Improve Mobilization Data for the Reserve Components

What GAO Found

GAO's analysis of DOD data indicates that more than 531,000 reservists have been mobilized in support of GWOT as of June 30, 2006, and more than 378,000 reservists, or 71 percent of the number mobilized, have been deployed. The number of reservists deployed increased through fiscal year 2003 and remained stable through fiscal year 2005. The majority of reservists have been deployed once. GAO's analysis further indicates that of the more than 378,000 reservists who have deployed in support of GWOT, 81 percent have spent a year or less deployed and 17 percent of reservists have spent more than 1 year but less than 2 years deployed. Of those who deployed, almost 98 percent were U.S. citizens. Since GWOT began, about 78 percent of reservists who were deployed were White, about 14 percent were Black or African American, and almost 90 percent identified themselves as non-Hispanic and 8 percent as Hispanic. Of those who were deployed, 89 percent were male and 11 percent were female. There were three variables—volunteer status, location deployed, and unit deployed—required by DOD policy for which the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) could not provide data because the data either did not exist or were not reliable enough for the purposes of GAO's report.

GAO found the deployment and mobilization data used to be reliable for providing descriptive information. However, the mobilization data, some deployment data fields, and DMDC's processes for data analyses need improvement. DMDC and the services have recently taken steps to improve the reliability of mobilization data; however, additional steps are needed to make mobilization data more reliable. DMDC and the services have undertaken a large-scale, challenging effort to replace all previous service-provided mobilization data in DMDC's CTS database with new data from the services, referred to as "rebaselining." To date, the Air Force has certified that it has rebaselined its data and Navy officials say they have validated their personnel files and established a common baseline of data with DMDC. The Army, which has mobilized the largest number of reservists, has not completed its rebaselining effort and has not set a deadline for completion. Also, DOD has not fully addressed other data issues that could affect the accuracy and completeness of the data, such as standardizing the use of key terms and ensuring that the services address data issues identified by DMDC as well as provide data for all required data fields, such as location, to DMDC. Also, because the data analyses DMDC provided had numerous errors, GAO questions the effectiveness of its verification procedures and other supporting procedures, all of which DMDC has not documented. Until DOD addresses data issues and DMDC documents the internal control procedures it uses to analyze data and verify its analyses of the data, the information provided to decision makers within Congress and DOD may be unreliable and decision makers will not be in the best position to make informed decisions about reserve force availability and reservists' exposure to health hazards.