United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to the Subcommittee on Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate

August 2003

MILITARY PERSONNEL

DOD Actions Needed to Improve the Efficiency of Mobilizations for Reserve Forces

Jackson v. Tate, No. 10-35355 archived on June 21, 2011

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GAO-03-921

August 2003

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Highlights

Highlights of GAO-03-921, a report to the Subcommittee on Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate

MILITARY PERSONNEL

DOD Actions Needed to Improve the Efficiency of Mobilizations for Reserve Forces

Why GAO Did This Study

On September 14, 2001, President Bush proclaimed that a national emergency existed by reason of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Under section 12302 of title 10, United States Code, the President is allowed to call up to 1 million National Guard and Reserve members to active duty for up to 2 years. GAO was asked to review issues related to the call-up of reservists following September 11, 2001. GAO examined (1) whether the Department of Defense (DOD) followed existing operation plans when mobilizing forces, (2) the extent to which responsible officials had visibility over the mobilization process, and (3) approaches the services have taken to provide predictability to reservists. GAO also determined the extent to which the Ready Reserve forces, which make up over 98 percent of nonretired reservists, were available.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD improve mobilization planning, increase visibility over the readiness of small units, provide for the seamless transfer of reservists' data, update mobilization guidance, improve predictability for Army units, increase access to the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR), and update IRR policies. DOD generally concurred with the recommendations in this report.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-921.

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

What GAO Found

About 300,000 of the 1.2 million National Guard and Reserve personnel have been called to active duty since September 11, 2001. They fought on the front lines in Iraq; tracked terrorists throughout Asia and Africa; maintained the peace in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and now Iraq; and participated in a wide range of domestic missions. However, DOD's process to mobilize reservists after September 11 had to be modified and contained numerous inefficiencies. Existing operation plans did not fully address the mobilization requirements needed to deal with the terrorist attacks or uncertain overseas requirements. For example, no previous requirements called for the extended use of National Guard and Reserve members to fly combat air patrols over the nation's capital and major cities. Because DOD could not rely on existing operation plans to guide its mobilizations, it used a modified process that relied on additional management oversight and multiple layers of coordination, which resulted in a process that was slower and less efficient than the traditional process. Under the modified process, the Secretary of Defense signed 246 deployment orders to mobilize over 280,000 reservists compared to the less than 10 deployment orders needed to mobilize over 220,000 reservists during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

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DOD did not have visibility over the entire mobilization process primarily because it lacked adequate systems for tracking personnel and other resources. DOD's primary automated readiness reporting system could not adequately track the personnel and other resources within the small units that were frequently needed. Also, visibility was lost because some services' active and reserve systems for tracking personnel were incompatible, resulting in ad hoc coordination between active and reserve officials. Both groups often resorted to tracking mobilizations with computer spreadsheets. In addition, some reservists were deployed beyond dates specified in their orders or stayed on alert for more than a year and never mobilized because officials lost visibility.

The services have used two primary approaches—predictable operating cycles and advance notification—to provide time for units and personnel to prepare for mobilizations. All the services provide predictability to portions of their forces through some type of standard operating cycle, but only the Air Force has a standard operating cycle that brings predictability to both its active and reserve forces. The Army prioritizes its units, and lower-priority units generally need extra training and preparation time before deploying. Yet, since September 11, a number of lower-priority units have been mobilized with relatively little advance notice. Despite the large number of lower-priority units within the Army Guard and Reserve, the Army does not have a standard operating cycle to provide predictability to its reserves. Without such a concept, the Army's opportunities to provide extra training and preparation time to its reserve forces are limited.

Mobilizations were hampered because one-quarter of the Ready Reserve was not readily available for mobilization. Over 70,000 reservists could not be mobilized because they had not completed their training requirements, and the services lacked information needed to fully use the 300,000 pretrained IRR members.

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Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
GSORTS	Global Status of Resources and Training System
IRR	Individual Ready Reserve
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
RFF	Request for Forces

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United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

August 21, 2003

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
Chairman
The Honorable E. Benjamin Nelson
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

Mobilization is a complex process used to move the military from its peacetime posture to a heightened state of readiness to support national security objectives in time of war or other national emergency. It involves the activation of all or some of the 1.2 million members of the National Guard and Reserve components, as well as the assembling and organizing of supplies and materiel. The process involves many different organizations and, while reserve component officials have a role in the process, civilian leaders and active military officials within the Department of Defense (DOD) take the lead in the process. Active component officials generate and validate mobilization requirements, and civilian leaders approve requests to alert, mobilize, and deploy forces. In addition, when reservists[1] are mobilized they come under the operational control of the active forces.

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On September 14, 2001, President Bush proclaimed that a national emergency existed by reason of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. His proclamation[2] further stated that he intended to utilize section 12302 of title 10, United States Code (commonly referred to as the partial mobilization authority), which allows the President to call up to 1 million

[1] Unless specified otherwise, the terms "reserves" and "reservists" both refer to the collective forces of the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard, as well as the forces from the Army Reserve, the Naval Reserve, the Marine Corps Reserve, the Air Force Reserve, and the Coast Guard Reserve. Our review focused on DOD's reservists and its mobilization process. We also included the Coast Guard Reserve in our review because it is considered a reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces, even though it was part of the Department of Transportation when we began our review and part of the Department of Homeland Security when we completed our review.

[2] Proclamation No. 7463 of September 14, 2001.

National Guard and Reserve members to active duty for up to 2 years.

We were asked to review issues related to the call-up of reservists following September 11, 2001. As agreed with your offices, our review was focused on the efficiency of DOD's process for mobilizing reservists from among its authorized 1.2 million Ready Reserve[3] members. Specifically, we examined (1) whether DOD followed existing operation plans when mobilizing reserve forces after September 11, 2001, (2) the extent to which responsible officials had visibility over the entire mobilization process, and (3) approaches the services have taken to provide predictability to reservists who were subject to mobilizations and overseas deployments. You also asked us to determine the extent to which the Ready Reserve forces were available for mobilization.

To evaluate the efficiency of DOD's mobilization process, we reviewed mobilization statutes, regulations, instructions, and guidance. We analyzed mobilization data obtained during meetings with military and civilian officials from the offices of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the services, the reserve component headquarters, and a number of commands that used mobilized reservists. We also collected and analyzed information on the roles and responsibilities of key mobilization officials, the steps of the mobilization process, and the methods and systems used to track mobilization requirements and reservists who had been mobilized. To gain first-hand knowledge about the effects of mobilizations on individual reservists, we interviewed both unit and individual reservists at sites where they were deployed or undergoing mobilization processing[4] and training. We also observed DOD's 2-1/2 day November 2002 symposium where senior military and civilian officials came together and reviewed the mobilization process. A more thorough description of our scope and methodology is provided in appendix I.

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[3] The Ready Reserve accounts for over 98 percent of nonretired reservists and consists of units and individuals who are liable for active duty under the provisions of 10 U.S.C.§ 12301 and § 12302.

[4] This processing included attendance at medical, legal, and family support briefings; personnel record screenings and updates; medical and dental processing, including receiving inoculations; and receiving combat equipment, camouflage clothing, Geneva Convention Cards, identification tags, and the new controlled access cards that have replaced laminated identification cards.

Results in Brief

About 300,000 of the 1.2 million National Guard and Reserve personnel have been called to active duty since September 2001. They fought on the front lines in Iraq; tracked down terrorists throughout Asia and Africa; maintained the peace in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and now Iraq; and participated in a wide range of domestic missions. However, the process to mobilize reservists after September 11 had to be modified and contained numerous inefficiencies.

DOD did not follow existing operation plans after the events of September 11, 2001, because those plans did not adequately address the mobilization requirements needed to deal with terrorist attacks at home and abroad, or with uncertain overseas deployment requirements. The following examples illustrate how the existing operation plans failed to accurately identify mobilization requirements.

- No previous requirements existed for National Guard troops at the nation's civilian airports.
- No requirements called for the extended use of Guard and Reserve members to fly combat air patrols over the nation's capital and major cities.
- Overseas requirements focused on traditional operations against national military forces, rather than on tracking terrorists throughout Afghanistan and around the globe.
- Requirements in the Iraq operation plan had to be modified to address the tenuous political environment, when assumed coalition partners and planned access to bases and airspaces became uncertain.
- Requirements for individuals and small, tailored task forces were much greater than those contained in the operation plans.

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Because the existing operation plans had not adequately identified mobilization requirements, DOD began using a modified mobilization process after September 11, 2001. This modified process relied on additional management oversight and multiple layers of coordination among crisis action teams that were established to screen, clarify, and fill mobilization requirements. This additional oversight and coordination resulted in a modified mobilization process that was slower and less efficient than the traditional process of synchronized mobilizations and deployments based on existing operation plans. Coordination was much more difficult under the modified process due to the large number of deployment orders. For example, under the modified process, the Secretary of Defense signed 246 deployment orders to mobilize over 280,000 reservists between September 11, 2001, and May 21, 2003,

compared to the less than 10 deployment orders needed to mobilize over 220,000 reservists during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

DOD officials did not have visibility over the entire mobilization process primarily because DOD lacked adequate systems for tracking personnel and other resources. First, DOD's primary readiness reporting automated data system tracked only the readiness of large units and not the readiness of resources within the units that were frequently needed after September 11, 2001. DOD's readiness reporting system does capture separate information on the status of various personnel and equipment categories for the unit as a whole, but it does not capture information on the smaller units that make up the reporting unit. The Air Force had a system to report the readiness of small units, but the other services did not have similar capabilities. As a result, OSD, Joint Staff, and service headquarters officials could not view automated readiness information for the full range of units available to meet the small, tailored requirements. Instead, they had to spend considerable time to coordinate with individual units or reserve component headquarters to obtain this information.

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Second, visibility was lost because some services' active and reserve component systems for tracking personnel were incompatible. The reserve systems had visibility over one part of the mobilization process and the active systems had visibility over a different part of the process, but the systems were not able to directly transfer information and data between the systems. As a result, the tracking of reservists required extensive ad hoc coordination between active and reserve component officials, and both groups often resorted to tracking mobilizations with computer spreadsheets. Also, DOD and service officials sometimes lost visibility over the length of deployments for mobilized reservists who, in turn, were inadvertently deployed beyond the original year specified in their orders. In other cases, hundreds of Guard and Reserve members were kept on alert to mobilize for more than a year, without ever mobilizing.

In addition, visibility was sometimes lost when coordination and communication failed to take place due to outdated or conflicting guidance. For example, Air Force officials drafted a mobilization instruction to reflect changes to the roles and responsibilities of personnel and the flow of information that had occurred under the modified mobilization process. However, this instruction was never finalized and signed. Some Air Force mobilization officials followed the unsigned draft instruction, while others followed the older "official" instruction due to the officials' uncertainty of which to follow. We discovered cases where air reserve component units had been mobilized without their reserve

component headquarters being informed of the mobilizations, because the new guidance had not been followed.

The services have used two primary approaches—predictable operating cycles and formal advanced notification—to provide time for units and servicemembers to prepare for upcoming mobilizations and deployments. Key officials throughout DOD have acknowledged the importance of predictability in helping reserve forces to prepare for mobilization and deployment. Predictability helps units anticipate (1) downtime, so they can schedule lengthy education and training for personnel and lengthy maintenance for equipment and (2) the likely periods of mobilization or deployment, so they can focus on efforts to increase readiness, including last minute training and the screening of medical, dental, and personnel records. Predictability also helps individual reservists by giving them time to prepare their civilian employers and family members for their possible departures. All the services provide predictability to portions of their forces through some type of standard operating cycle, but only the Air Force has a standard operating cycle that brings predictability to both its active and reserve forces. Faced with a high and increasing pace of reserve operations, the Air Force adopted a standard operating cycle to help it manage its commitments while reducing the deployment burden on its people. Under the cycle, forces were scheduled to deploy for only 3 of every 15 months. The Army prioritizes its units, and lower-priority units generally need extra training and preparation time prior to deploying. However, a number of lower-priority units were mobilized with relatively little advance notice. For example, five transportation companies containing 976 reservists were alerted on February 9, 2003, and told to arrive at their mobilization stations by February 14, 2003. Despite the large number of lower-priority units within the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve, the Army does not have a standard operating cycle concept to provide predictability to its reserve forces. Without such a concept, the Army's opportunities to provide extra training and preparation time to its reserve forces, particularly those with lower priorities, are limited.

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Lacking a standard operating cycle to provide predictability for its reservists, the Army strives to provide its reservists with official written orders 30 days in advance of mobilizations, in accordance with an OSD policy goal. Between September 2001 and March 2003, advance notice for Army personnel fluctuated from less than 72 hours to more than 4 weeks. While advanced notice is beneficial to individual reservists, it does not provide the longer lead times made possible by predictable operating cycles. Such cycles allow reserve units, which typically drill only once every 30 days, to schedule their training and maintenance so the units'

readiness will build as the mobilization time approaches. While always important, predictability and preparation times are likely to become even more important when the pace of reserve operations is high. The Army has had more than 100,000 reservists mobilized since February 12, 2003, and the Army Manpower and Reserve Affairs office projected that mobilizations would remain high at least through the end of 2004. However, the Army does not employ standard operating cycles for its reserve forces, leaving it with limited time to prepare for the increased mobilization and deployment demands on its reserve forces.

After September 11, 2001, mobilizations were hampered because about one-quarter of the Ready Reserve force was not readily available for mobilization or deployment. Over 70,000 reserve members could not be mobilized because they had not completed their training requirements. In addition, the services lacked vital information necessary to fully use an additional pool of over 300,000 pretrained individual reservists, known as the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). Many of the IRR members were not available for mobilization because the services did not have valid contact information (addresses or phone numbers) for these individuals. For example, in April 2003, the Army estimated that it had inaccurate addresses for at least 40,400 of its IRR members. When the services were able to contact their IRR members and obtain vital information necessary to use their IRR pools, exemptions and delays often limited the services' abilities to fully use these personnel. For example, in February 2003, the Army sent mobilization orders to 345 IRR members, but 164 of these reservists requested and were granted exemptions so they did not have to deploy. Another 35 were granted delays in their reporting dates.

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The services have used three primary methods to gain and maintain access to their IRR members. First, they brief the members when they leave active duty or drilling reserve positions to make them aware of their responsibilities as members of the IRR. Next, they send the members questionnaires to verify basic information, such as current addresses. Finally, the services conduct a limited number of 1-day screenings where certain IRR members are ordered to military facilities to physically verify their fitness for mobilization and deployment. However, service officials considered response rates for the questionnaires and participation rates for the screenings low, and the services have not developed results-oriented goals and related performance metrics to collect and maintain updated IRR member information. In addition, some mobilized Marine Corps IRR members told us that their IRR responsibilities had not been clearly explained during exit briefings when they left active duty.

DOD's reluctance to use the IRR has resulted in additional situations where the Ready Reserve force was not readily available for mobilization or deployment. For example, DOD and service policies have discouraged the use of the IRR because IRR members do not participate in any regularly scheduled training and are consequently not paid regularly. The policies call for the mobilization of reservists who have been participating in regular paid training, no matter the type of mobilization requirement that is being filled. This reluctance to use the IRR contributes to situations where individual mobilization requirements are filled with personnel from reserve units, thus creating personnel shortages within the units that had supplied the reservists and affecting the units' readiness to mobilize and deploy. As the Army mobilized forces for the war in Iraq, it moved unit reservists from one unit to another to fill vacancies within the units, which were first to mobilize and deploy. When units that had supplied reservists were later mobilized, reservists from other units had to be transferred into these later deploying units. If IRR members had filled the initial requirements, many of the subsequent transfers would not have been necessary. Further, the reluctance of one service to use the IRR can affect other services. For example, the Air Force's reluctance to access any of its more than 44,000 IRR members has left the responsibility for guarding Air Force bases to over 9,000 Army National Guard unit personnel.

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We are making several recommendations to enhance the efficiency of DOD's reserve mobilizations. These recommendations are directed at improving mobilization planning, increasing visibility over the readiness of small units, providing for the seamless transfer of reservist information regardless of whether the reservists are in an active or reserve status, updating mobilization guidance, improving predictability for Army reserve units, increasing access to the IRR, and updating IRR policies.

In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD fully concurred with six of our seven recommendations and partially concurred with our recommendation concerning the need for the Army and the Navy to capture additional readiness information. DOD stated that the Army and the Navy fully support capturing relevant information in the DOD readiness reporting system but that combatant commanders will need to establish resource requirements to include tailored mission requirements. We agree that improvements in readiness reporting should be closely linked to efforts to more clearly define requirements.

Background

Mobilization is the process of assembling and organizing personnel and equipment, activating or federalizing the reserve component, and bringing

the armed forces to a state of readiness for war or other national emergency. It is a complex undertaking that requires constant and precise coordination among a number of commands and officials. Mobilization usually begins with the President invoking a mobilization authority and ends with the mobilization of an individual Reserve or National Guard member.

Reserve Components and Categories

There are seven reserve components: the Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, Naval Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, and Coast Guard Reserve. Reserve forces can be divided into three major categories: the Ready Reserve, the Standby Reserve, and the Retired Reserve. The Ready Reserve had approximately 1.2 million Guard and Reserve members at the end of fiscal year 2002, and its members were the only reservists who were subject to mobilization under the partial mobilization declared by President Bush on September 14, 2001.

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Within the Ready Reserve, there are three subcategories: the Selected Reserve, the IRR, and the Inactive National Guard. Members of all three subcategories are subject to mobilization under a partial mobilization.

- In fiscal year 2002, the Selected Reserve had 882,142 members. Members of the Selected Reserve are all the personnel who are active members of the National Guard or Reserve units who participate in regularly scheduled training. As a result, they draw regular pay for their reserve service. It also includes individual mobilization augmentees—individuals who train regularly, for pay with active component units.
- In fiscal year 2002, the IRR had 314,037 members. During a partial mobilization these individuals, who were previously trained during periods of active duty service, can be mobilized to fill requirements. Each year, the services transfer thousands of personnel who have completed the active duty or Selected Reserve portions of their military contracts, but who have not reached the end of their minimum service obligations, to the IRR.[5]

[5] While enlistment contracts can vary, a typical enlistee would incur an 8-year minimum service obligation, which could consist of a 4-year active duty obligation followed by a 4-year IRR obligation.

However, IRR members do not participate in any regularly scheduled training, and they are not paid for their membership in the IRR.[6]

- In fiscal year 2002, the Inactive National Guard had 3,142 Army National Guard members. This subcategory contains individuals who are temporarily unable to participate in regular training but who wish to remain attached to their National Guard units. These individuals were not subject to mobilization prior to the declaration of a partial mobilization on September 14, 2001.

Mobilization Authorities

Most reservists who were recalled to active duty for other than normal training after September 11, 2001, were mobilized under one of the three authorities listed in table 1.

Table 1: Authorities Used to Mobilize Reservists after September 11, 2001

U.S.C. Title 10 Section	Type of mobilization	Number of Ready Reservists that can be mobilized	Length of mobilizations
12304	Involuntary	200,000[a]	270 days
12302	Involuntary	1,000,000	2 years
12301 (d)	Voluntary	Unlimited	Unlimited

Source: GAO.

[a] Under this authority, the services can mobilize the Selected Reserve and up to 30,000 IRR members who count against the 200,000-person cap.

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DOD had the authority to use section 12304, the Presidential Reserve Call-Up authority, to mobilize reservists in support of contingency operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Southwest Asia prior to September 11, 2001. It continued to use this authority to mobilize reservists for ongoing operations in these areas even after the partial mobilization authority (section 12302) was invoked on September 14, 2001.

The partial mobilization authority has been used to support both domestic and overseas missions related to the global war on terrorism, including the

[6] IRR members can request to participate in annual training or other operations, but most do not. Those who are activated are paid for their service. There are also small groups of IRR members who participate in unpaid training. The members of this last group are often in the IRR only for short periods while they are waiting to transfer to paid positions in the Selected Reserve. IRR members can receive retirement credit if they meet basic eligibility criteria through voluntary training or mobilizations.

operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After invoking section 12302 on September 14, 2001, the President delegated his mobilization authority to the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Transportation. The Secretary of Defense further delegated this authority to the service secretaries and allowed them to delegate the authority to any civilian official who was appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.[7] When the Secretary of Defense delegated his authority, he set limits on the numbers of personnel that the services could mobilize. On September 14, 2001, the Secretary of Defense assigned the Army a mobilization cap of 10,000 personnel; the Navy a cap of 3,000; the Marine Corps a cap of 7,500; and the Air Force a cap of 13,000, for a total cap of 33,500. The caps were raised several times, but in aggregate they have remained below 300,000 since they were first established.

Since September 11, 2001, the services have also made extensive use of their section 12301(d) authority. This authority can involve complicated administrative processing because reservists must volunteer to be activated, and individuals who are brought on to active duty under this authority have varying starting and ending dates. However, this authority provides flexibility that is advantageous to both individual reservists members and the services. The reservists can schedule their active duty periods around family and work responsibilities, and the services are not constrained by the numerical caps and time limitations of other mobilization authorities.

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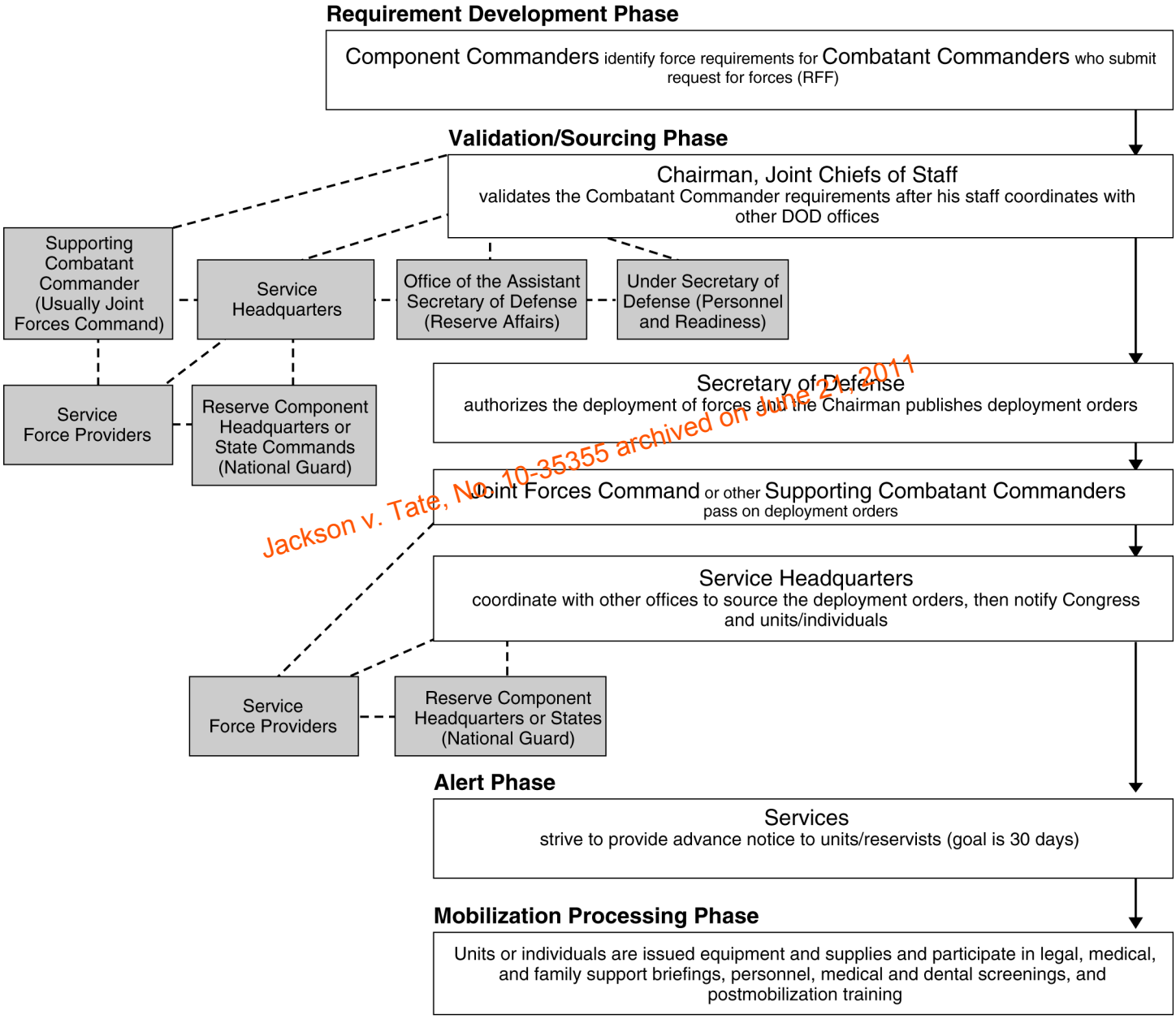
Mobilization Process

As figure 1 indicates, mobilization is a decentralized process that requires the collaboration of many organizations throughout DOD.

[7] Within each of the military departments, this authority was delegated to the offices with primary responsibility for reserve issues—the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), and the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Manpower and Reserve Affairs).

Figure 1: Flowchart of the Mobilization Process



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Source: GAO.

Note: Shaded blocks emphasize the extra coordination that was required under the modified process.

The mobilization process typically begins with the component commanders, who are responsible for commanding their services' active and reserve forces within a combatant commander's area of responsibility.[8] The component commanders identify requirements for wars or contingency operations within their areas of responsibility and submit the requirements to the combatant commanders. The combatant commanders, who have responsibility and operational control over forces from two or more services, consolidate the requirements from their component commanders and develop "requests for forces" (RFF). Each RFF generally identifies the mission, along with the equipment, personnel, units, types of units, or general capabilities that are necessary to carry out the mission. RFFs may be very detailed or very general, depending on the nature of the mission. Furthermore, RFFs typically contain requirements that must be filled by more than one service.

The combatant commanders send RFFs to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who is the principal military advisor to the President and the Secretary of Defense on mobilization matters. The Joint Staff validates and prioritizes requirements from the combatant commanders and then sends draft deployment orders via E-mail to the supporting commanders, who will supply forces or equipment. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff considers (1) the assessments of the service headquarters, reserve component commanders, and supporting combatant commanders; (2) input from his own staff; and (3) the technical advice, legal opinions, and policies provided by OSD. The Chairman then makes a recommendation to the Secretary of Defense concerning the timing of mobilizations and the units or individuals to be mobilized.

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When the Secretary of Defense completes his review of the validated RFF and is satisfied with the mobilization justification, he authorizes the deployment of forces, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff issues a deployment order. The services then review the approved requirements on the deployment order and coordinate with applicable force providers and reserve component headquarters to check the readiness of the units that had been projected to fill the requirements. If necessary, units or individuals may be identified to substitute for, or augment, the units and individuals that were originally projected. When the units or individuals

[8]The number of combatant commanders is not fixed by law or regulation and may vary over time. While most of the combatant commands are organized on a geographical basis, some are organized on a functional basis.

are firmly identified for mobilization, the assistant secretaries of the military departments who have responsibilities for manpower and reserve affairs issues approve the mobilization packages.[9]

Finally, the services issue mobilization orders to units and individuals. These orders state where and when to report for duty, as well as the length of duty. In September 2001, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), which is responsible for developing the policies, plans, and programs to manage the readiness of both active and reserve forces, issued a memorandum containing specific mobilization guidance. This guidance instructed the military departments to write mobilization orders for 1 year[10] but allowed the service secretaries the option of extending mobilizations for a second year.

In subsequent mobilization guidance, issued in January, March, and July 2002, the Under Secretary instructed the services to use volunteers to the maximum extent possible, so that involuntary mobilizations would be minimized. In conjunction with the services, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, which has overall responsibility for reserve policies and procedures within DOD, set a goal to provide reservists with 30 days notice prior to mobilization, when operationally feasible. The services took different approaches when alerting their reservists prior to mobilization. The Army took the most formal approach and attempted to provide its reservists with official orders 30 days prior to their mobilization dates. The other services took less formal approaches and tried to notify reservists of impending mobilizations and deployments when requirements were identified or validated, or at some other key point in the mobilization process.[11]

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According to DOD officials, the mobilization process—from the time a requirement is generated until the time that a reservist reports to a

[9] In September 2001, this final approval authority was delegated from the Office of the Secretary of Defense to the military departments. However, during the final buildup for Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) acted as the final mobilization authority.

[10] These orders did not prevent the services from demobilizing personnel prior to the end of the year.

[11] Some high-priority reserve units are required to be available for deployment within 72 or even 24 hours of notification so it is well-recognized that formal notification will not always be available 30 days prior to mobilization. Even informal notification may be short for quickly emerging requirements.

mobilization site to fill that requirement—can take anywhere from 1 day to several months, but it normally takes several weeks. Based on our observations at mobilization processing sites and discussions with mobilization officials, we found that most reservists were able to complete their required briefings, screenings, and administrative functions within 24 to 96 hours after reaching their mobilization sites. However, some reservists required lengthy postmobilization training before they were able to deploy.

Reserve Tempo

Unreliable and inconsistent data make it difficult to quantify the exact change in the tempo of reserve operations since September 11, 2001.[12] Officials from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs have characterized mobilization data from the early days and weeks following September 11 as questionable. In addition, because reservists can perform a wide variety of sometimes-overlapping training and operational missions, in a variety of voluntary or involuntary duty statuses, mobilization data have been captured differently over time. For example, because the state governors mobilized large numbers of National Guard troops to provide security at their civilian airports, DOD's mobilization figures for most of 2002 included state active duty figures as well as figures for federal mobilizations. However, state active duty was dropped from DOD's mobilization figures after the National Guard moved out of the last civilian airport in September 2002. It is also difficult to fully capture increases in reserve tempos because mobilization figures that are based strictly on section 12302 partial mobilization orders ignore the major contributions of reserve volunteers, some of whom are serving lengthy tours under section 12301(d) orders. Despite the identified data challenges, figure 2 uses consistently reported data to demonstrate that reserve mobilizations have not dipped below 50,000 during any week since January 2002. Figure 2 also shows the dramatic increase in mobilizations that began in January 2003 to support operations in Iraq.

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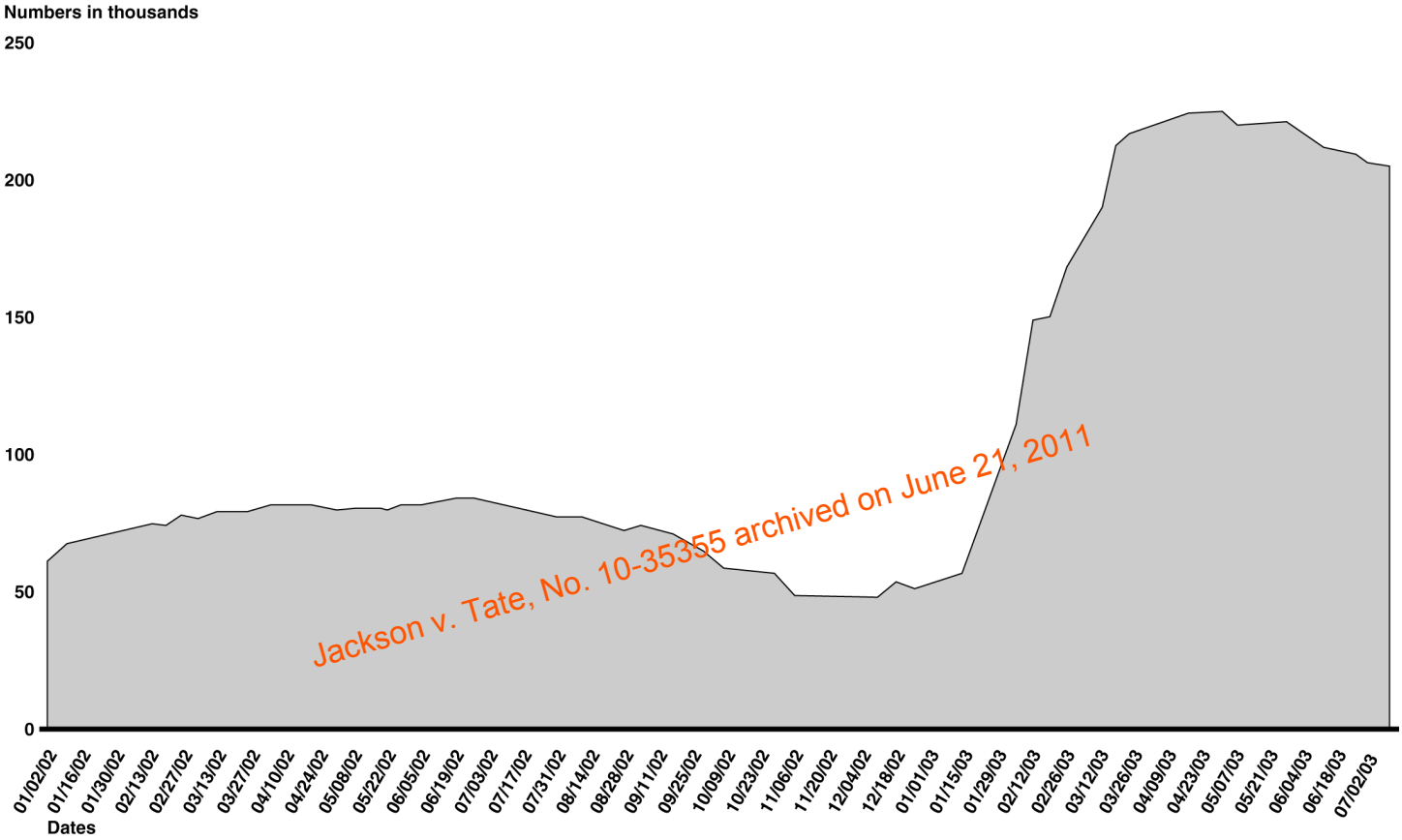
[12] Tempo refers to the total days reservists spend participating in normal drills, training, and exercises, as well as domestic and overseas operational missions.

Figure 2: Guard and Reserve Members on Active Duty (January 2002-July 2003)



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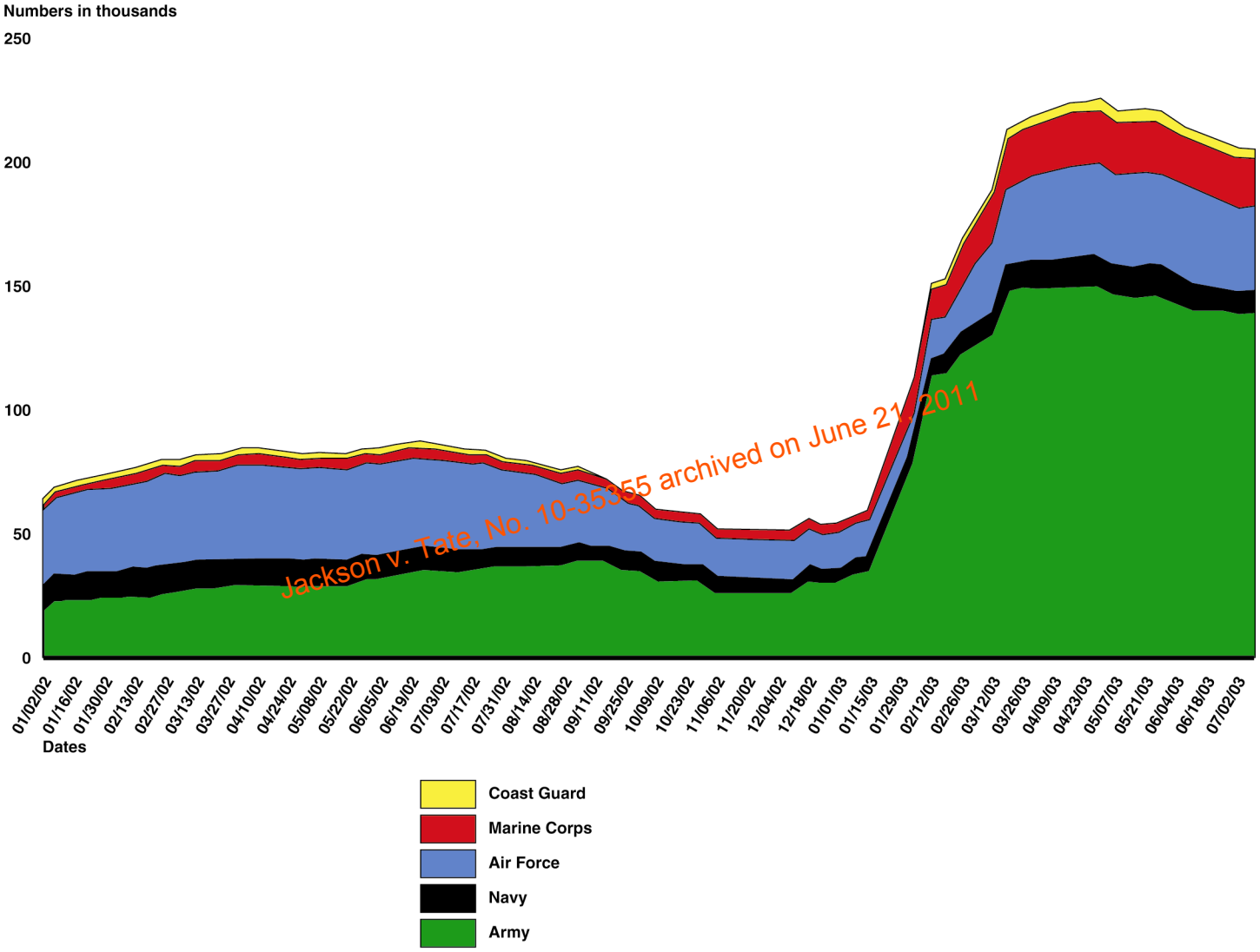
Sources: DOD (data), GAO (presentation).

Note: Data from the early days and weeks following September 11, 2001, are not reliable. Further, the services captured mobilization data differently over time, making it difficult to aggregate the data. To present the data consistently, our figures display data beginning with January 2002.

Figures 3 and 4 show the mobilizations of each of the services between January 2002 and July 2003.

Figure 3: Reserve Force Mobilizations by Service (January 2002–July 2003)



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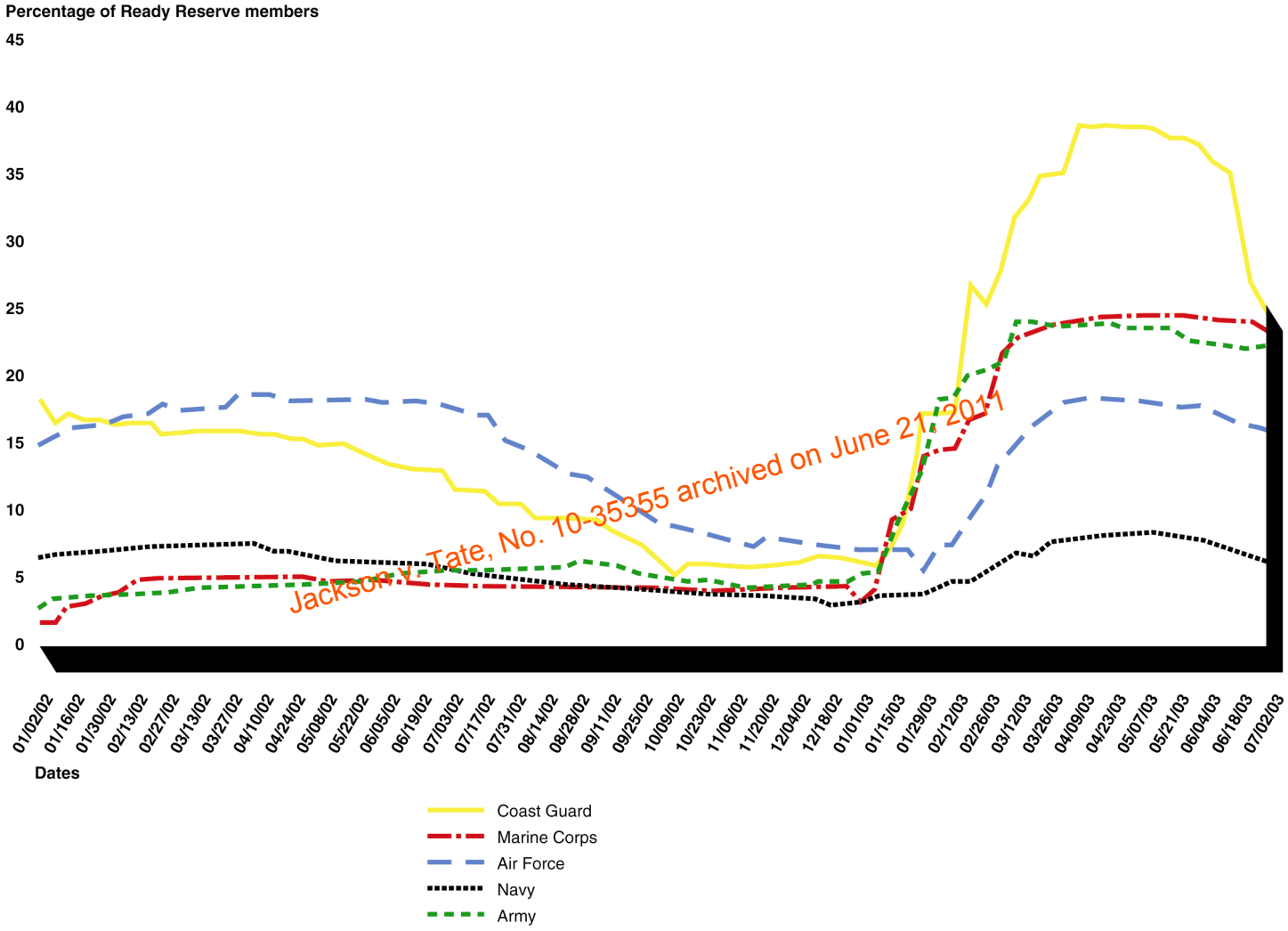
Sources: DOD (data), GAO (presentation).

Note: Data from the early days and weeks following September 11, 2001, are not reliable. Further, the services captured mobilization data differently over time, making it difficult to aggregate the data. To present the data consistently, our figures display data beginning with January 2002.

Figure 3 shows that between January 2003 and July 2003, the Army had more reservists mobilized than did all the other services combined. However, figure 4 shows that the mobilizations were most wide reaching within the Coast Guard, which had more than one-third of its Ready Reserve forces mobilized during April 2003.

Figure 4: Reserve Force Mobilizations as Percentages of Service Ready Reserve Strengths (January 2002–July 2003)



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Sources: DOD (data), GAO (presentation).

Note: Data from the early days and weeks following September 11, 2001, are not reliable. Further, the services captured mobilization data differently over time, making it difficult to aggregate the data. To present the data consistently, our figures display data beginning with January 2002.

Relevant GAO Products

Previously, we reported on several issues surrounding the increased use of reserve forces. Our June 2002 report noted that maintaining employers' continued support for their reservist employees will be critical if DOD is to retain experienced reservists in these times of longer and more frequent

deployments.[13] We assessed the relations between reservists and their civilian employers, focusing specifically on DOD's outreach efforts designed to improve these important relationships. We found that many employers we surveyed were not receiving adequate advance notice prior to their reservist employees' departure for military duty. We reported that in spite of repeated memoranda from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, advance notification continued to be a problem and that the services had not consistently met the 30-day advance notification goal. We recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the services to determine how many orders are not being issued 30 days in advance of deployments and why, and then take the necessary corrective actions toward fuller compliance with the goal. DOD agreed with the merit to studying why the reserve components miss the 30-day goal.

Citing the increased use of the reserves to support military operations, House Report 107-436 accompanying the Fiscal Year 2003 National Defense Authorization Act directed us to review compensation and benefit programs for reservists serving on active duty. In response, we are reviewing (1) income protection for reservists called to active duty, (2) family support programs, and (3) health care access. In March 2003, we testified before the Subcommittee on Total Force, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, on our preliminary observations related to this work.[14]

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During the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War, health problems prevented the deployment of a significant number of Army reservists. To help correct this problem the Congress passed legislation that required reservists to undergo periodic physical and dental examinations. The National Defense Authorization Act for 2002 directed us to review the value and advisability of providing examinations.[15] We also examined whether the Army is

[13] U.S. General Accounting Office, *Reserve Forces: DOD Actions Needed to Better Manage Relations between Reservists and Their Employers*, GAO-02-608 (Washington, D.C.: June 13, 2002).

[14] U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Personnel: Preliminary Observations Related to Income, Benefits, and Employer Support for Reservists During Mobilization*, GAO-03-549T (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 19, 2003). We also provided a statement for the record to the Subcommittee on Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, titled *Military Personnel: Preliminary Observations Related to Income, Benefits, and Employer Support for Reservists During Mobilization*, GAO-03-573T (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 19, 2003).

[15] Pub. L. No. 107-107, section 724.

collecting and maintaining information on reservists' health. In April 2003, we reported that without adequate examinations, the Army may train, support, and mobilize reservists who are unfit for duty.[16] Further, the Army had not consistently carried out the statutory requirements for monitoring the health and dental status of Army early deploying reservists. At the early deploying units we visited, approximately 66 percent of the medical records were available for review. We found that about 68 percent of the required physical examinations for those over age 40 had not been performed and that none of the annual medical certificates required of reservists had been completed by reservists and reviewed by the units. We recommended that the Secretary of Defense ensure that for early deploying reservists the required physical examinations, annual medical certificates, and annual dental examinations be completed. DOD concurred with our recommendations.

DOD's Mobilizations after September 11, 2001, Were Not Based on Existing Operation Plans

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DOD did not follow its existing operation plans after the events of September 11, 2001, to mobilize nearly 300,000 reservists. DOD's traditional mobilization process relies on requirements from operation plans that have been coordinated with key mobilization officials prior to the start of the mobilization process. The operation plans in existence on September 11, 2001, did not include all the requirements that were needed to respond to the domestic terrorist threat. Overseas operation plans did not focus on terrorist threats or the uncertain political environment in southwest Asia. Nor did operation plans adequately address the increasing requirements for individuals and small, tailored task forces. Because DOD could not rely on existing operation plans to guide its mobilizations, it used a modified mobilization process that was slower than the traditional mobilization process.

About 300,000 Reservists Called to Active Duty

DOD has called about 300,000 of the 1.2 million National Guard and Reserve personnel to active duty since September 2001. These reservists fought on the front lines in Iraq; tracked down Taliban and al Qaeda members throughout Asia and Africa; maintained the peace in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and now Iraq; and participated in domestic missions ranging from providing security at airports and at the Salt Lake City Olympics to fighting drug trafficking and providing disaster relief. With many of these

[16] U.S. General Accounting Office, *Defense Health Care: Army Needs to Assess the Health Status of All Early Deploying Reservists*, GAO-03-437 (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 15, 2003).

missions—including those associated with the global war on terrorism—expected to continue, reserve force mobilizations are likely to persist for the foreseeable future. DOD recognized before September 11, 2001, that no significant operation could be conducted without reserve involvement.

Sound Operation Plans Can Help the Efficiency of DOD's Mobilization Process

DOD's mobilization process was designed to mobilize reservists based on the execution of combatant commander operation plans and a preplanned flow of forces. As a result, the mobilization process operates most efficiently when operation plans accurately and completely capture mobilization requirements. However, since DOD develops its operation plans using a deliberate planning process that involves input and coordination from OSD, the Joint Staff, and the services, the process can take years, and operation plans have not been quick to respond to changes in the threat environment.

Prior to the events of September 11, 2001, we issued a number of reports highlighting the need for effective U.S. efforts to combat terrorism domestically and abroad.[17] For example, we recommended that the federal government conduct multidisciplinary and analytically sound threat and risk assessments to define and prioritize requirements and properly focus programs and investments in combating terrorism.[18] Threat and risk assessments are decision-making support tools that are used to establish requirements and prioritize program investments. DOD uses a variation of this approach. We also reported on DOD's use of a risk-assessment model to evaluate force protection security requirements for mass casualty terrorists' incidents at DOD military bases.[19]

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While DOD's goal is to conduct mobilizations based on operation plans developed through a deliberate planning process, the department recognizes that during the initial stages of an emergency it may have to resort to a crisis action response rather than adhering to its operation plans. This is particularly true if the emergency had not been anticipated.

[17] See www.gao.gov for a complete listing of our reports on homeland security, terrorism, and airport security from 1980 to present.

[18] U.S. General Accounting Office, *Combating Terrorism: Selected Challenges and Related Recommendations*, GAO-01-822 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 20, 2001).

[19] U.S. General Accounting Office, *Combating Terrorism: Status of DOD Efforts to Protect Its Forces Overseas*, GAO-NSIAD-97-207 (Washington, D.C.: July 21, 1997) and *Combating Terrorism: Efforts to Protect U.S. Forces in Turkey and the Middle East*, GAO/T-NSIAD-98-44 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 28, 1997).

During such crisis response periods, DOD can use a variety of authorities to position its forces where they are needed. For example, following the events of September 11, 2001, DOD used voluntary orders and other available means to get and keep reservists on active duty. As of November 8, 2001, almost 40,000 reservists had been mobilized under the partial mobilization authority for the global war on terrorism, but almost 19,000 reservists were on active duty and positioned where they were needed under other federal authorities. By comparison, more than 53,000 reservists were mobilized under the partial mobilization authority for the global war on terrorism on December 3, 2002, but the reservists on active duty under other federal authorities had dropped to less than 5,000.[20]

Operation Plans Did Not Include Requirements to Address the Domestic Terrorist Threat

When DOD moved beyond its crisis action response to the events of September 11, 2001, it was not able to rely on operation plans to guide its mobilizations because operation plans did not contain requirements to address the domestic response to the terrorist threat. According to senior DOD officials, when terrorists crashed planes into the Pentagon, the World Trade Center, and a field in Pennsylvania on September 11, 2001, none of DOD's operation plans contained requirements for National Guard troops to deploy to the nation's civilian airports. In September 2001, we reported that some threats are difficult, if not impossible, to predict.[21] Therefore, an effective antiterrorism program that can reduce vulnerabilities to such attacks is an important aspect of military operations. We also reported that the effectiveness of the DOD antiterrorism program was becoming an important aspect of military operations. However, the effectiveness of the program had been limited because DOD had not (1) assessed vulnerabilities at all installations, (2) systematically prioritized resource requirements, and (3) developed a complete assessment of potential threats. DOD has been taking steps to improve the program.

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Despite the lack of airport security requirements in operation plans, between November 2001 and April 2002, an average of approximately 7,500 National Guard members were mobilized at the nation's civilian airports.[22] During the same period, an average of almost 1,900 National Guard members were on state active duty, many to provide security at

[20] Reservists were also serving on active duty under state authorities on these dates.

[21] U.S. General Accounting Office, *Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Improve DOD Antiterrorism Program Implementation and Management*, GAO-01-909 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 19, 2001).

[22] These reservists were under the control of their state governors.

other key infrastructure sites such as tunnels, bridges, and nuclear power plants. According to senior Air Force officials, none of the operation plans that existed on September 11, 2001, contained requirements for the extended use of Guard and Reserve members to fly combat air patrols over the nation's capital and major cities. Yet, reservists were performing that mission on September 11, 2001, and they continue to support the combat air patrol mission, particularly when the national threat level is raised.

According to DOD officials, preexisting service mobilization plans called for Guard and Reserve forces to move to active duty bases and provide security at those bases after the active forces had departed from the bases. However, after September 11, many Guard and Reserve members were on active duty (voluntarily and involuntarily) at active and reserve bases and were filling security requirements that were not in any operation plan. For example, even while active forces remained, two selected Marine Corps battalions were mobilized for approximately 12 months—one at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and one at Camp Pendleton, California—to quickly respond to any additional terrorist attacks within the United States. In addition, the Air Force had to unexpectedly bring reservists on active duty to provide security for their reserve bases after September 11. In particular, Air National Guard security forces were needed to provide security at bases from which the Guard was flying combat air patrol missions.

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Overseas Operation Plans Did Not Focus on the Terrorist Threat or the Uncertain Political Environment in Southwest Asia

According to DOD officials, requirements in overseas operation plans focused on traditional operations against national military forces, rather than on tracking terrorists throughout Afghanistan and around the globe. For several years, defense planning guidance had been formulated around the concept that the military had to be ready to fight and win two major theater wars, generally viewed as one in southwest Asia and one on the Korean peninsula. According to DOD officials, operation plans for these areas focused on the threats posed by rogue countries. Moreover, even after defense planning guidance had begun to indicate a need for the military to be capability based rather than threat based, operation plans continued to focus on conventional adversaries.

According to DOD officials, some of the mobilizations that took place in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom followed the order and timing established in the relevant operation plan and its associated time-phased force deployment and data file. However, the order and timing of other mobilizations changed due to the tenuous political environment and uncertainties concerning coalition partnerships and access to airspaces, as

well as access to bases in Turkey, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. Access-to-base issues had also arisen during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Operation Plans Did Not Adequately Address Increasing Requirements for Individuals and Small, Tailored Task Forces

According to DOD officials, the combatant commanders' requests for small, tailored task forces and individuals have been increasing since September 11, 2001, but the requirements for these small groups and individuals have not been fully addressed in the combatant commanders' existing operation plans. Mobilization statistics demonstrate the large numbers of small groups and individuals that have been mobilized recently. For example, a DOD report showed that on March 5, 2003, the services had thousands of reservists mobilized as parts of small units or as individuals. The Navy had 266 one-person and 152 two-person units mobilized, and the Army also had hundreds of one-and two-person units mobilized. The Marine Corps strives to keeps its units intact, and Marine Corps policy states that detachments must consist of at least two people, but the Marine Corps had 24 two-person and 22 three-person units mobilized. The Air Force had just 6 units with less than 20 people mobilized on that date. However, the services also had 12,682 individual augmentees mobilized on March 5, 2003—1,438 of them from the Air Force's two reserve components.

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The Modified Mobilization Process Was Slower and Less Efficient Than the Traditional Process

After September 11, 2001, DOD used a modified mobilization process because existing operation plans had not adequately addressed mobilization requirements and changing priorities. The modified process was able to respond to changing priorities and new requirements. However, because key mobilization officials did not have a lengthy deliberate planning period to discuss these new requirements and changing priorities, coordination had to take place during the mobilization process, thus lengthening the process. Under the modified process, close to two dozen approvals are needed to mobilize one unit or individual. A contractor study conducted for the Army Operations Office looked at how long it took from the time the U.S. Central Command issued a RFF until the time a deployment order was issued. Preliminary results showed that the monthly averages from February through June 2002 ranged from 18 to 19 days for this portion of the mobilization process.[23]

Coordination was much more difficult under the modified process due to the large number of deployment orders. For example, under the modified

[23] The minimum time was 1 day and the maximum time was 45 days.

process, the Secretary of Defense signed 246 deployment orders to mobilize over 280,000 reservists between September 11, 2001, and May 21, 2003, compared to the less than 10 deployment orders needed to mobilize over 220,000 reservists during the 1991 Gulf War. The longer modified mobilization process is less efficient than the traditional process primarily because it relies on additional management oversight and multiple layers of coordination between the services, OSD, and the Joint Staff during the validating, approving, and filling of mobilization requirements. Many of these factors are detailed in the sections below.

DOD Officials Had Limited Visibility Over the Mobilization Process

DOD officials did not have visibility over the entire mobilization process primarily because DOD lacked adequate systems for tracking personnel and other resources. First, DOD's primary automated readiness reporting system could not adequately track the personnel and other resources within the small units that were frequently needed by combatant commanders. Second, some systems used by the active and reserve components to track personnel were incompatible. In addition, outdated mobilization guidance led to communication and coordination problems amongst the components.

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Data Systems Unable to Track Readiness of Resources Within Units

DOD officials had limited visibility over the readiness of the entire force because DOD's primary readiness reporting data system tracked the readiness only of large units and not the readiness of resources within the small units that made up the larger reporting units. These smaller units were often sufficient to meet the combatant commanders' requirements for the small, tailored units that were frequently requested after September 11, 2001. [24] Because DOD officials did not have quick access to readiness information of these small units, they had to coordinate with reserve headquarters officials and, in some cases, the individual units themselves to obtain the readiness information needed to determine which unit would be best able to fill the combatant commanders' requirements.

The Global Status of Resources and Training System (GSORTS) is DOD's single automated system for reporting the readiness of all operational units within the U.S. armed forces. It does not function as a detailed

[24] For example, an Army battalion would report its overall readiness as well as its overall personnel and equipment readiness, but it would not report the readiness of individual platoons within its companies.

management information system, but it does provide broad information on selected readiness indicators[25] and include a commander's assessment of the unit's ability to undertake the missions for which the unit was organized or designed. Units provide readiness reports to a central site where the data are processed and stored and then distributed to decision makers. The information in the system is supposed to support crisis response planning as well as deliberate planning. However, the services are only required to register forces that are included in operation plans or other war-planning documents. Generally, all large units report their readiness in the system. However, resources within the units are not necessarily reported. For example, GSORTS could show that a specific unit is not ready to perform its mission, but fail to capture information that would indicate that some of the personnel and equipment within the unit are capable of performing their mission. Such information would benefit the services in their efforts to assemble the forces needed to meet joint organizational requirements.

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Because the Air Force combined various capabilities into nontraditional force groups in support of its Aerospace Expeditionary Force, it recognized the need to report readiness for small "building block" units that could be combined to provide the needed capabilities. As a result, the Air Force developed its own readiness reporting system that reported the readiness of more than 67,000 units in January 2003.

The Army and the Navy do not report readiness at this small unit level. Consequently, when the combatant commanders submit RFFs that do not coincide with the forces that are reported in GSORTS, the decision makers within the services must coordinate with active and reserve component commanders to determine the readiness of the forces that would be available to fill the requested requirements.

Some Active and Reserve Personnel Tracking Systems Were Incompatible

DOD officials also lost visibility over the mobilization of reservists because some active and reserve component personnel tracking systems were not compatible. Some components within the respective services maintain personnel data in their own data systems for different purposes. In those cases, both the active and reserve components require data that are provided only in the other's data systems. Yet, in some cases, active and reserve component systems were not always compatible with each other,

[25] Specifically, units report personnel levels, equipment and supply levels, condition of equipment, and training levels.

resulting in cumbersome workarounds or extensive ad hoc coordination between active and reserve officials, and, according to DOD officials, the sometimes outright loss of visibility over the length of reservists' mobilization or deployment status.

The reserve and active components within some of the respective services maintain personnel data for different purposes. The individual reserve components maintain the mobilization data in their respective systems in order to track and maintain visibility over reservists' physical location and mobilization status. The reserve systems also maintain information on reservists' mobilization dates. Active components' systems maintain personnel data for forces that are under their control. Using a variety of data systems, the active components track such information as the number of personnel, the units to which the personnel are attached, and the location of the unit. However, the active components cannot always discern between the regular active and mobilized reserve servicemembers in their data systems.

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The services' active and reserve components have developed their respective computerized systems to track their personnel data, but they are often unable to directly transfer information and data between their systems. Often, these systems do not report information in a standardized format and are not integrated with each other. For example, while most of the services provide DOD with unclassified mobilization data, some services provide classified mobilization data. DOD must then aggregate selected unclassified information on a separate computer file that can be used to produce a single consolidated mobilization report.

The incompatibilities between some active and reserve component data systems required mobilization officials to develop workarounds to acquire the information needed. Air Force officials cited the lack of a central automated system to manage and track mobilized reservists as a major problem that required extensive coordination between active and reserve components. Some components, like the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve, developed their own mobilization reporting systems to track the location and status of their reservists using computer spreadsheets.

The use of local, nonintegrated data systems also affects the validity of some mobilization data. For example, we requested mobilization data from the Army Reserve on several occasions during our review, but Army Reserve officials cautioned us concerning the use of figures from their computerized database. They stated that the figures were unreliable and

conflicted with the overall number of personnel they thought had been mobilized. Without an automated means for quickly and reliably capturing mobilization data, the Army has had to rely on a slow mobilization process that requires constant coordination between active and reserve component officials.

The coordination between active and reserve component officials within the Army and the Navy often takes the form of relatively inefficient methods to determine the status of mobilized reservists. For example, in the initial months following September 11, 2001, the Navy had no automated means to track reservists from their home stations to their gaining commands. The entire mobilization process was based on paper, telephone calls, faxes, and e-mail messages.

The lack of compatibility between automated data systems, and the sometimes cumbersome workarounds undertaken by the services to obtain reservists' information, has at times led to the outright loss of DOD visibility over the length of reservists' mobilization or deployment status and resulted in cases where reservists were inadvertently deployed beyond the original year specified in their orders. Additionally, Air Force officials told us that their major commands have had trouble filling new requirements because they cannot consistently determine who has volunteered and who is already serving on active duty. Because of limited visibility, some Navy processing personnel did not know in advance which reservists had been ordered to their mobilization processing sites or when the reservists were expected to report.

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Air Force officials said that they either totally lost or had diminished visibility over their reservists once they were mobilized and assigned to active commands. Reserve component officials from the Air Force said that a tracking system does not exist to effectively monitor reservists from the time they are mobilized and assigned to an active command to the time they are demobilized and return to their normal reserve status. As a result, reservists were deployed beyond their scheduled return dates and were not able to take the leave to which they were entitled prior to the expiration of their orders. Reserve officials said that this happened because replacement personnel had not arrived in time to relieve the reservists and the active commands were not willing to send the deployed reservists home until replacements had arrived. In many cases, Air Force reserve component headquarters said they did not have visibility over the replacement personnel because these personnel were coming from active component units.

The Army experienced situations where the lack of visibility contributed to the breaking of service policies. During the current partial mobilization, the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) issued a verbal policy that stated that units were not to be placed on alert for more than 90 days. The Army's force providers were to review the list of units on alert each month and determine whether the units needed to remain on alert. If the force providers needed to keep any units on alert beyond 90 days, they could request an extension from the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs).[26] Table 2 shows that on March 28, 2003, 204 units had been on alert for more than 90 days and that 12 units—representing hundreds of Guard and Reserve members—had been on alert for more than a year. The Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) told us that he was not aware that the 12 units had been on alert for more than a year. He worked to resolve this matter as soon as we brought it to his attention.

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Table 2: Numbers of Army National Guard or Army Reserve Units That Were on Alert in Excess of 90 Days (March 28, 2003)

Days on alert	Number of units on alert[a]
> 365	12
181 to 365	20
91 to 180	172

Sources: U.S. Army (data); GAO (analysis).

[a] The Army's "Units On Alert" report does not identify the actual numbers of reservists on alert, but it does include authorized strength information for some units. Authorized strength figures were available for 8 of the 12 units that had been on alert for more than a year and totaled 1,939.

Some service components developed their own systems to gain visibility over their mobilized reservists. For example, the Navy adapted a system from the Marine Corps in February 2003 that provides all Navy mobilization officials with the capability to track reservists throughout the mobilization process. Commands now have visibility over the entire mobilization process and can monitor the status of reservists en route to their commands, including the reservists' current locations. Since implementing this system, the Navy has processed more than 8,000 mobilization orders and 6,000 demobilization orders.

[26] Officials provided several reasons why units might remain on alert for more than 90 days including: changing mission requirements or unit readiness and rotational requirements.

The Marine Corps implemented its system in 1994 to provide visibility over its reserve forces. This local area network-based system supports the continuous processing and tracking of newly mobilized Marines. However, this system is not integrated with the Navy's system, and data cannot be exchanged between the two systems. As a result, the Navy is not automatically made aware of requirements for Navy medical, religious, or other support personnel who are embedded in Marine Corps units, when the associated Marine Corps units are mobilized.

Outdated Mobilization Guidance Led to Communication and Coordination Problems

Finally, key DOD and service guidance—including mobilization instructions and publications—had not been updated in all instances to reflect the modified mobilization process, leading to failures in communication and coordination between components and further reducing officials' visibility over the mobilization process. In some instances where DOD and the services did draft updated guidance to reflect the modified mobilization process, it was not clear to all mobilization officials which guidance to follow. The lack of updated guidance and the appearance of conflicting guidance resulted in situations where the components were not effectively coordinating and communicating their mobilization efforts with each other.

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OSD and the Joint Staff provide guidance and instructions on the mobilization policy, roles and responsibilities of mobilization officials, and mobilization planning and execution. Similar guidance and instructions are provided by the respective services for planning and executing mobilization within their respective commands. However, some of DOD's guidance failed to clearly identify the steps of the modified mobilization process, the roles and responsibilities of mobilization officials, and the flow of information. While the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) has issued several mobilization guidance memorandums since September 11, 2001, many of DOD's key mobilization instructions, directives, and publications have not been updated to reflect current changes to the mobilization process. For example,

- DOD's "Wartime Manpower Mobilization Planning Policies and Procedures" instruction has not been updated since 1986;
- DOD's "Activation, Mobilization, and Demobilization of the Ready Reserve" directive was last updated in 1995; and
- DOD's "Management of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and the Inactive National Guard (ING)" directive was last updated in 1997.

In addition, the Joint Staff had not updated its key mobilization guidance. The "Joint Doctrine for Mobilization Planning" publication was under revision when we completed our review, but the update to the 1995 publication had not yet been released.

Within the Air Force, the lack of clear and consolidated guidance hindered the mobilization process. The service's mobilization guidance was issued in 1994, and although several draft revisions to this guidance have been circulated since September 11, 2001, the guidance has yet to be officially updated. Officials in both the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve told us that they did not know whether they were supposed to follow the old "official" instruction or the revised (but unsigned) instructions. The lack of clear guidance led to situations where Air National Guard units had been mobilized without the knowledge of the Air National Guard headquarters' crisis action teams, consisting of officials responsible for matching requirements with available units and personnel. For example, on February 22, 2003, the Air Mobility Command mobilized the 163rd Air Refueling Wing at the March Air Reserve Base. When we contacted the Air National Guard crisis action team 3 days later, the team was unaware that the 163rd had been mobilized. According to a senior level Air National Guard official, the Air Mobility Command had bypassed the Guard's crisis action team and directly notified the unit of the mobilization. According to this official, the Guard's crisis action team had been bypassed on mobilizations directed by both the Air Mobility Command and the Air Combat Command.

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The lack of clear guidance for mobilizing reservists also slowed down the Army's mobilization process. On October 24, 2001, the Army issued guidance on the mobilization process. However, according to senior Army policy officials, the Army's initial personnel replacement policy was unclear. This led to cases where the Army Reserve would send a request for a requirement to fill an empty position through the entire mobilization process rather than simply attempt to fill the position with another qualified individual. Between September 2001 and June 2002, the Army Reserve submitted 567 requests for just one individual because the initial person selected could not fill the position. These requests slowed down the mobilization process as each request was reviewed. The Army recently drafted a policy to clarify its replacement procedures.

The Navy's failure to update its guidance on the delegation of mobilization authority led to a redundancy of efforts. In June 2002, the Secretary of Defense, under the President's partial mobilization authority, delegated mobilization authority to the service secretaries and permitted further

delegation only to civilian officials who were appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. However, the Navy had not updated its mobilization authority guidance, and consequently the Secretary of the Navy continued delegating mobilization authority to the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, who in turn continued to approve mobilizations until 2003. When the Assistant Secretary of the Navy became aware that mobilization authority had been improperly delegated to military leaders within the Department of the Navy, he rescinded the delegated authority and reviewed and revalidated previously approved mobilizations, in addition to all new mobilization requests.

In some cases, the failure of mobilization guidance to define the roles and responsibilities of officials participating in the mobilization process also resulted in delays. For example, the Air Force found that the roles and responsibilities of its crisis action teams had not been adequately defined and that there was insufficient coordination between these crisis action teams during the planning and execution stages of the mobilization process. This led to different interpretations of the policies concerning the use of volunteers. Moreover, a lack of an established coordinated process resulted in delays getting policy, guidance, and tasks to the field. For example, whereas the requirement is to mobilize within 72 hours, there were instances where the mobilization process took 9 days.

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The Services Have Two Approaches to Provide Preparation Time for Mobilizations and Deployments

The services have used two primary approaches—predictable operating cycles and formal advanced notification—to provide time for units and servicemembers to prepare for upcoming mobilizations and deployments. All the services provide predictability to portions of their active forces through some type of standard operating cycle, but only the Air Force has a standard operating cycle that brings predictability to both its active and reserve forces. The Army assigns priority categories to its units, and lower-priority units generally need extra training and preparation time prior to deploying. Advanced mobilization notice, while important, does not provide the long lead times made possible by predictable operating cycles. The increased use of the Army's reserve forces heightens the need for predictability so these units and individuals can prepare for upcoming mobilizations and deployments.

Air Force Standard Operating Cycle Provides Predictability to Active and Reserve Forces

The Air Force is the only service that uses a standard operating cycle—providing deployments of a predictable length that are preceded and followed by standard maintenance and training periods—to bring predictability to both its active and reserve forces. The Navy and the Marine Corps have used a variety of operating cycles to bring such predictability to portions of their forces. Likewise, the Army has used an operating cycle concept to bring predictability to a portion of its active force, under its Division Ready Brigade program.[27]

Key officials throughout DOD have acknowledged the importance of predictability in helping reserve forces to prepare for mobilization and deployment. Predictability helps units anticipate (1) downtime, so they can schedule lengthy education and training for personnel and lengthy maintenance for equipment and (2) the likely periods of mobilization or deployment, so they can focus on efforts to increase readiness, including last minute training[28] and the screening of medical, dental, and personnel records. Predictability helps individual reservists by giving them time to prepare their civilian employers and family members for their possible departures.

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In the years following the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard forces, which already had the highest tempos of any of DOD's reserve component forces, faced increasing tempos. [29] In August 1998, the Air Force adopted the Expeditionary Aerospace Force concept to help it manage its commitments while reducing the deployment burden on its people. This concept established a standard 15-month operating cycle and divided the Air Force into 10 groups, each containing a mix of active, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve forces. Two groups were scheduled to deploy during each of the five, 3-month increments within the standard 15-month operating cycle. However,

[27] Within the Army's active divisions, brigades are rotated into an alert status for 1-month periods.

[28] Because some skills (1) are very perishable (certifications may last for 1 year or less), (2) require long training times, and (3) may not be needed prior to deployment, units may be reluctant to send their personnel to the required schools if the units do not know when they are going to deploy. Predictability helps units to efficiently and effectively schedule personnel for certification schools. Army officials cited combat lifesaver and hazardous materiel coordinators as two of these certified skills.

[29] Between fiscal year 1992 and 1999, tempos in the Air Force's reserve components had risen from 55 to 65 days of active duty per year, while the tempos in the other reserve components had remained much lower—between 33 and 47 days per year.

because two groups contained more forces than were generally needed to cover worldwide contingency operations, and because the predictable cycles provided reservists with months of advance notice, the Air Force Reserve and the Air National Guard were able to rely on volunteers to meet significant portions of their requirements, thus avoiding large-scale involuntary mobilizations.

While the predictability offered by the Air Force's standard operating cycle has proved beneficial during "steady state" operations, the Expeditionary Aerospace Force concept is not yet able to deal with large and rapid surges in requirements. When the concept was first implemented, Air Force officials stated that the expeditionary concept would not be used to deploy forces to a major war prior to 2007. In the months immediately following the September 11th attacks and during the buildup for—and execution of—the 2003 war in Iraq, the Expeditionary Aerospace Force operating cycles broke down. For example, personnel with certain high-demand skills were involuntarily mobilized for longer than the intended 3 months—up to 2 full years, in some cases. However, for much of 2002, the Air Force used its operating cycles, and it has a plan to return to normal 15-month operating cycles by March of 2004.

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Preparation Time Is Especially Important to the Army's Lower-Priority Units

The Army prioritizes its units, and lower-priority units generally need extra training and preparation time prior to deploying. The Army allocates human capital and other resources using a tiered resourcing system that is based on the placement of units in existing operation plans. Units that are identified as the first to mobilize and deploy are resourced at the highest level. Units identified for later deployment are placed in subsequently lower resourcing tiers, based on their planned deployment dates. A unit's resource tier affects its priority with respect to (1) recruiting and filling vacancies, (2) full-time staffing, (3) filling equipment needs, (4) maintaining equipment, (5) obtaining access to schools and training seats, and (6) funding for extra drills. Consequently, lower-priority units need more time to prepare for mobilization and deployment.

The Army's resourcing strategy is a cost-effective means for maintaining the Army's reserve forces when reserve forces will have long lead times to mobilize. However, a large number of reserve forces were quickly mobilized—from less than 30,000 on January 1, 2003, to over 150,000 on March 26, 2003—to respond to the rapid surge in requirements for operations related to Operation Iraqi Freedom and the global war on terrorism. Because existing operation plans had not accurately identified all mobilization requirements, a number of lower-priority units were

mobilized with relatively little advance notice. For example, 5 transportation companies containing 976 reservists were alerted on February 9, 2003, and told to arrive at their mobilization stations by February 14, 2003. On January 20, 2003, four other lower-priority Army National Guard companies, with over 1,000 reservists, were alerted and told to report to their mobilization stations by January 27, 2003. If these units had been able to plan for their mobilizations and deployments based on a standard operating cycle, they may have been able to complete some of their mobilization requirements during normally scheduled training periods prior to their mobilizations.

Despite the large number of lower-priority units within the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve, the Army does not have a standard operating cycle concept to provide predictability to its reserve forces.[30] Without such a concept, the Army's opportunities to provide extra training and preparation time to its reserve forces, particularly those with low priorities, are limited.

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Advanced Notice Is Not As Beneficial As Predictable Operating Cycles

OSD established a goal of providing reservists with at least 30 days notice prior to mobilization when operationally feasible, but such advanced notice does not provide the longer lead times made possible by predictable operating cycles. Nonetheless, OSD's advanced notice policy was written in recognition of the benefits of such notice to individual reservists.

The Army, lacking a standard operating cycle to provide predictability for its reservists, strives to provide its reservists with official written orders 30 days in advance of mobilizations in accordance with DOD's policy. However, in the early days following September 11, 2001, this level of advanced notice was often not possible because reservists were required immediately. In the weeks and months that followed, advanced notice increased. Army data covering the mobilizations of over 6,400 personnel between June and August of 2002 showed that 83 percent of the personnel had 4 or more weeks advanced notice. However, advanced notice dropped again in the weeks leading up to Operation Iraqi Freedom. During the first 15 days of March 2003, 95 percent of the Army units that were mobilized received less than 30 days advanced notice,[31] and 8 percent of the units

[30] While the Army scheduled some of its reserve forces for deployments to the Balkans several years in advance of the deployments, the deployments were not part of an operating cycle and the deployed forces did not know when they might be deployed again.

[31] Within these units, 21,908 personnel were mobilized.

received less than 72 hours advanced notice. Much of this short notice is attributable to the extra time that was required to validate and approve requirements under the modified mobilization process.

While 30 days advanced notice is clearly beneficial to individual reservists, it does not provide the longer lead times made possible by predictable operating cycles. As discussed earlier, such cycles allow reserve units, which typically drill only once every 30 days, to schedule their training and maintenance so the units' readiness will build as the mobilization time approaches.

Increased Reliance on the Army's Reserve Forces Heightens the Need for Predictability

While always important, predictability and preparation times are likely to become even more important when the pace of reserve operations is high. Figure 3, on page 16, shows the shift that occurred in July 2002 when the number of Army reservists on active duty exceeded the number of Air Force reservists on active duty. The figure also shows the dramatic increase in Army mobilizations in 2003. During calendar year 2002, the Army had an average of about 30,000 reserve component members mobilized each week. By February 12, 2003, the Army had more than 110,000 reservists mobilized, and mobilizations peaked in March 2003, when more than 150,000 of the 216,811 reservists mobilized were members of the Army National Guard or the Army Reserve. On June 18, 2003, over 139,000 Army reservists were still mobilized, and the Army Manpower and Reserve Affairs office projected that mobilizations would remain high at least through the end of 2004.[32] Given its ongoing commitments in Iraq, the Balkans, Afghanistan, and at home, many of the Army's reserve component forces will likely face the same types of high operational tempos that Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve forces faced in the 1990s.

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As described above, the Air Force has effectively used predictable operating cycles to help prepare its reserve units and individuals for mobilization and deployment and to mitigate the negative factors[33] associated with high operational tempos. However, the Army does not employ such operating cycles for its reserve forces, thus leaving those

[32] An estimate placed the mobilization number at 90,000 through the end of 2004.

[33] Senior DOD officials have repeatedly expressed concerns that repeated mobilizations of the reserves could eventually lead to recruiting and retention problems.

forces with limited time to prepare for the increased mobilization and deployment demands facing them.

DOD Has Limited Access to Portions of the Ready Reserve

After September 11, 2001, mobilizations were hampered because about one-quarter of the Ready Reserve was not readily accessible. Some Selected Reserve members could not be mobilized due to the lack of training. Furthermore, the services lack information that is needed to make full use of the IRR. Finally, OSD and service policies reflect a reluctance to use the IRR, resulting in situations where Ready Reserve forces were not readily available for mobilization or deployment.

Many Selected Reserve Members Could Not Be Mobilized Due to the Lack of Training

In fiscal year 2002, most of the military's approximately 880,000 Selected Reserve members were available for mobilization and deployment, but over 70,000 Selected Reserve members had not completed the individual training that is required prior to deploying.[34] By law, members of the armed forces are not permitted to deploy outside the United States and its territories until they have completed the basic training requirements of the applicable military services.[35] The law further stipulates that in time of a national emergency (such as the one in effect since September 11, 2001) the basic training period may not be less than 12 weeks, except for certain medical personnel.[36] The over 70,000 Selected Reserve members who were not deployable in fiscal year 2002 included personnel who had entered the service and were awaiting their initial active duty training,[37] personnel who were awaiting the second part of a split initial active duty training program, and reservists who were still participating in initial active duty training programs. Each year between fiscal year 1997 and 2002, 7 to 10 percent of Selected Reserve members were not deployable because they had not completed their required initial training.

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[34] In fiscal year 2002, the Selected Reserve made up 74 percent of the Ready Reserve.

[35] 10 U.S.C. § 671.

[36] 10 U.S.C. § 671(c).

[37] The Fiscal Year 2003 National Defense Authorization Act (section 533 (a) P.L. 107-314, Dec. 2, 2002) increased the maximum time that reservists may delay commencement of their initial active duty training from 270 days (10 U.S.C. § 12103) to 1 year after their enlistments.

While most members of the Selected Reserve had met the initial active duty training requirements in fiscal year 2002 and were therefore available for mobilization, a portion of these personnel belonged to units that would have required lengthy periods of unit training before they would have been deployable. In particular, the reserve forces from the Army's bottom two resourcing categories generally require lengthy postmobilization training periods before they are deployable. Because both the Presidential Reserve Call-up[38] and partial mobilization[39] authorities prevented the services from mobilizing reservists specifically for training, the Army could not use many of its tier three and four Guard and Reserve units to meet requirements that had to be filled immediately. On April 10, 2003, DOD proposed that Congress change portions of the United States Code to allow the military departments to order reservists to active duty for up to 90 days of training in order to meet deployment standards.[40]

Services Lack Vital Information That Is Necessary to Make Full Use of the IRR

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The services lack the vital information necessary to fully use their IRR pools of over 300,000 preframed individual reservists.[41] Many of the IRR members were inaccessible because the services did not have valid contact information (addresses or phone numbers) for these individuals. Moreover, the services' use of three primary access methods—exit briefings, questionnaires, and screenings—did not obtain the results necessary to gain and maintain access to their IRR members. Finally, the services have not developed results-oriented goals and performance measures to improve the use of their primary methods to access IRR members.

Services Lacked Valid Contact Information for IRR Members

The services could not access many IRR members because they did not have valid addresses or phone numbers for the members. For example, in April 2003, the Army estimated that it had inaccurate addresses for more than 40,400 of its IRR members. When the services were able to contact their IRR members and obtain the vital information necessary to use its IRR pool, exemptions and delays often limited the services' abilities to

[38] 10 U.S.C. § 12304.

[39] 10 U.S.C. § 12302.

[40] "The Defense Transformation for the 21st Century Act" had not been signed into law as of the date of publication of our report.

[41] In fiscal year 2002, the IRR and the Inactive National Guard made up 26 percent of the Ready Reserve.

fully use these personnel. For example, in February 2003, the Army sent mobilization orders to 345 IRR members, but 164 of these reservists requested and were granted exemptions for specific reasons, such as medical issues, so they did not have to deploy, and another 35 were granted delays in their reporting dates.

Services Did Not Obtain the Results Necessary to Fully Access Their IRR Members

The services' use of their three primary IRR access methods did not obtain the results necessary to gain and maintain full access to their IRR members. These methods include (1) briefings provided to members when they leave active duty or a drilling reserve position; (2) questionnaires to verify basic member information, such as contact information; and (3) 1-day screenings to verify member fitness for mobilization.

First, the services brief the members when they leave active duty or a Selected Reserve position. These briefings are designed to make the individuals aware of their responsibilities as members of the IRR. However, mobilized reservists that we spoke with said that IRR responsibilities had not been clearly explained during exit briefings when they left active duty. For example, Marine Corps reservists stated that the separation briefings did not provide the detail necessary for them to fully understand their commitment and responsibilities when entering the IRR. They stated individuals conducting these briefings should emphasize that reservists entering the IRR must keep their reserve component informed of specific changes, including their home address, marital status, number of dependents, civilian employment, and physical condition. They added that reservists assigned to the IRR need to know that they may volunteer for active duty assignments to refresh or enhance their military skills.

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Next, the services send the members questionnaires to verify basic information—such as current addresses, marital status, and physical condition—to ascertain whether the reservists are available immediately for active duty during a mobilization. However, response rates to the questionnaires have been considered low, as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Fiscal Year 2002 Questionnaire Response Rates

Army	Navy	Air Force	Coast Guard[a]
40.41%	51.47%	28.97%	25.00%

Source: GAO analysis of service data.

Note: The Marine Corps did not conduct a survey during fiscal year 2002 and could not provide survey specific information for prior years.

[a] Coast Guard responses include questionnaires returned by members of the Selected Reserve and the IRR.

The services attributed the low response rate, in part, to incorrect mailing addresses as indicated by the questionnaires returned as undeliverable. During fiscal year 2002, for example, the Air Force stated that 12 percent of the questionnaires mailed out were returned as undeliverable. The Air Force is the only service that specifically tracks undeliverable rates, but the Navy estimated a 30 to 40 percent undeliverable rate and the Army estimated that approximately 30 percent of its questionnaires were returned as undeliverable. The Coast Guard has not measured the number of questionnaires returned as undeliverable. Although the Marine Corps did not send out questionnaires in fiscal year 2002 and could not provide documented response rates for prior years, a Marine Corps official indicated that the Corps had experienced about a 10 percent undeliverable rate in previous years; but he was unable to provide any data to support the claim. According to this official, most of the returned questionnaires were mailed to junior enlisted personnel, including lance corporals, corporals, and sergeants who appeared to change residences more frequently than senior enlisted personnel or officers.

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The services have taken some specific steps to correct bad addresses and improve servicemember reporting of required mobilization-related information. Specifically, the Army, the Navy, and the Marine Corps use commercial contractors to try to update inaccurate address information. For the last 4 years, a contractor has been regularly matching the Army's entire personnel database of bad addresses with a credit bureau's address database. For over 10 years, the Army has used another contractor to update a small number of addresses, one at a time. Despite these efforts, the Army still had over 40,000 bad addresses in its database as of April 2003, and it recently contracted with its second contractor to do batch updates rather than one-at-a-time updates. The Marine Corps just started using its contractor. Finally, the Army and the Coast Guard have implemented Web-based systems that encourage IRR members to update critical contact information on the Internet.[42] According to an official representing the Naval Reserve Personnel Center, the Navy has also started to create a Web-based screening questionnaire to better track IRR members. However, these efforts are not linked to a results-oriented management framework that establishes specific goals to improve access

[42] The Coast Guard's Web-based system had only been in place for part of fiscal year 2002, when the 25 percent response rate was reported. Response rates, which reached 48 percent after the Web-based system had been deployed for a full year, are being reported monthly.

to accurate addresses and identifies the resources and performance measures necessary to ensure success.

Finally, the services order a small number of their IRR members to participate in a 1-day screening event at a specific site to verify they are fit and available for mobilization.[43] The screening events focus on a specific number of IRR members to verify their physical existence, condition, and personal contact data. Even though the total number of IRR members ordered to report for screening during a fiscal year is relatively small, the services have met with limited success as the screening event participation rates in table 4 indicate.

Table 4: IRR Screening Event Participation Rates

	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Army
Last available fiscal year that screening occurred	2002	2002	2001	2000
Total IRR population for applicable fiscal year	71,140	58,039	47,940	161,622
Total number of orders mailed to reservists	3,990	4,100	4,656	2,714
Percentage of personnel that attended screening event	35.9	56.4	51.3	25.8

Source: GAO's analysis of service data.

Note: The Coast Guard does not require members of the IRR to participate in screening events.

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As indicated in table 4, the Army and the Air Force have not conducted screenings since 2000 and 2001, respectively. An Army Personnel Command After Action Report concluded that screenings should not be conducted until clear objectives are established and realistic cost and benefit assessments are completed. The Air Force also decided not to conduct screening events. Thus, these two services are not using one of their three primary methods to gain and maintain access to their IRR members.

Furthermore, table 3 shows that the participation rates are relatively low. The services indicated that the low screening event participation rates were based on the services' inability to contact members of the IRR

[43] The services call these screenings musters.

because of incorrect addresses; IRR members who were excused because of stated conflicts involving work, vacation plans, religious issues, or physical disabilities among others; and members who ignored orders and avoided participation in the screening events.

The Services Lack Results-Oriented Goals and Performance Measures to Improve Use of IRR Access

The services do not have results-oriented goals and performance measures to improve their reliance on the three primary methods to access IRR members. Specifically, the services have concentrated their efforts on exit briefings, questionnaires to update critical information, and periodic screening events. However, they have not focused on the results of those activities, as evidenced by persistent low response rates to questionnaires and low screening event participation rates. By focusing on the execution of these activities rather than their results, the services have not

- established objective, quantifiable, and measurable performance goals to improve the results of their three primary efforts to access;
- established a basis for comparing actual program results with the goals in order to develop performance indicators to track their progress in attaining results-oriented goals; and
- described the resources and means required to verify and validate measured values.

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OSD and Service Policies Have Discouraged the Use of the IRR

OSD and service policies have discouraged the use of the IRR because IRR members do not participate in any regularly scheduled training and thus are not regularly paid. The policies are also intended to avoid the negative effects on individual IRR members. For example, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness provided guidance dated July 19, 2002, to the services that emphasized the use of volunteers before involuntarily mobilizing reservists to minimize the effects of mobilization on the lives of the reservists, their families, and their employers.

Policies intended to avoid the negative effects on individual reservists may be disruptive to all reservists as well as to entire units, because they contribute to situations where individual mobilization requirements are filled with personnel from reserve units, thus creating personnel shortages within the units that had supplied the reservists and affecting the units' readiness to mobilize and deploy. For example, in its reluctance to use the IRR, the Army filled many of its individual mobilization requirements with personnel from reserve units. In doing so, the Army created personnel shortages within the units that had supplied the reservists. In some cases, the Army had to later locate and transfer replacement personnel into these units when the units were mobilized, thus transferring several unit

personnel as a result of a single individual requirement. Specifically, the Army mobilized a combat support hospital unit that was 142 individuals short, including the commanding officer, of its authorized strength of 509 personnel. To increase the hospital unit's strength to an acceptable level for mobilization, the Army took a commanding officer and other needed personnel from four reserve units. By taking this course of action, the Army immediately degraded the mission capability and readiness of the four affected units. The Army compounded this negative effect when it later mobilized the already significantly degraded unit that gave up its commanding officer to the hospital unit.

Further, the reluctance of one service to use the IRR can affect other services. For example, the Air Force's reluctance to access any of its more than 44,000 IRR members has left the responsibility for guarding Air Force bases to over 9,000 Army National Guard unit personnel. According to a senior Air Force official, the Air Force did not even consider using its own IRR pool. Because the Army National Guard volunteered for the mission, the Air Force did not consider mobilizing any of its 3,900 IRR members who held security force specialty codes.

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Conclusions

About 300,000 of the 1.2 million National Guard and Reserve personnel have been called to active duty since September 11, 2001. They fought on the front lines in Iraq; tracked down terrorists throughout Asia and Africa; maintained the peace in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and now Iraq; and participated in a wide range of domestic missions. However, the process to mobilize reservists had to be modified and contained numerous inefficiencies. Existing operation plans did not adequately address the mobilization requirements needed to deal with terrorist attacks and overseas requirements. We recognize that some threats are impossible to predict but until the combatant commanders identify all of the mobilization requirements that have evolved since September 11, 2001—and create or update their operation plans as necessary to account for these requirements—DOD risks the continued need for additional management oversight and coordination between officials to fill mobilization requirements, thus slowing the mobilization effort and making it less efficient.

DOD officials also did not have visibility over the entire mobilization process. Specifically, without the ability to capture the readiness of personnel and other resources within the small units that were frequently needed by combatant commanders, the Army and the Navy will continue to face difficulties in their efforts to assemble the forces needed to meet

joint organizational requirements. Furthermore, until all of the services develop fully integrated automated systems that provide for the seamless transfer of reservists' information between reserve and active components, the components will continue to face cumbersome workarounds to obtain the data to track the length of reservists' mobilization or their deployment status. In addition, until the services update key mobilization instructions, notices, and publications to reflect the modified mobilization process, DOD and the services risk continued mobilization slowdowns and duplication of efforts.

All of the services provide predictability to portions of their active forces through some type of standard operating cycle, but only the Air Force has a standard operating cycle that brings predictability to both its active and reserve forces. Moreover, the Army's reserve forces face increasing use to meet operational requirements. However, without a standard operating concept to help increase predictability for its units, the Army risks mobilizing units and individuals that are unprepared for deployment.

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Finally, the services have limited access to portions of the Ready Reserve and are thus forced to spread requirements across the remaining reserve force, leading to longer or more frequent deployments. Specifically, the services' use of their primary IRR access methods—exit briefings, questionnaires, and screenings—did not obtain the results necessary to gain and maintain access to their members. Until the services develop results-oriented goals and performance measures to improve the use of their primary methods to access IRR members, the services will be unable to systematically identify opportunities to better access their IRR members for mobilization. Moreover, OSD and service policies have discouraged the use of the IRR in order to avoid the negative effects on individual IRR members. However, until the services review and update their IRR policies to take into account the nature of the mobilization requirements and the types of reservists who are available to fill the requirements, the services will risk the continued disruption to units that provide individual personnel rather than mobilizing IRR members.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We are making several recommendations to enhance the overall efficiency of the reserve mobilization process. Specifically, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct

- the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to identify all of the mobilization requirements that have evolved since September 11, 2001, and create or update operation plans as necessary, to account for these requirements;

- the Secretaries of the Army and the Navy to capture readiness information on the resources within all the units that are available to meet the tailored requirements of combatant commanders so that these resources will be visible to key mobilization officials within DOD, the Joint Staff, and the service headquarters;
- the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in conjunction with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, to develop a single automated system or fully integrated automated systems that will provide for the seamless transfer of reservists information, regardless of whether the reservists are in an active or reserve status;
- the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs to update their applicable mobilization instructions, notices, and publications;
- the Secretary of the Army to develop a standard operating cycle concept to help increase predictability for Army reserve units;
- the service secretaries to develop and use results-oriented performance metrics to guide service efforts to gain and maintain improved information on IRR members; and
- the service secretaries to review and update their IRR policies to take into account the nature of the mobilization requirements as well as the types of reservists who are available to fill the requirements.

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Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD generally concurred with our recommendations. The department specifically concurred with our recommendations to (1) create or update operation plans as necessary, to account for mobilization requirements that have evolved since September 11, 2001, (2) develop an automated system to provide for the seamless transfer of reservists' information, (3) update mobilization notices and publications, (4) develop a standard operating cycle to increase predictability for Army Reserve and National Guard units, (5) develop and use results-oriented performance metrics to gain and maintain information on IRR members, and (6) update IRR policies to take into account the nature of mobilization requirements and the types of reservists who are available to fill the requirements.

DOD partially concurred with our recommendation that the Army and the Navy capture readiness information on the resources within all units that are available to meet the tailored requirements of combatant commanders so that these resources will be visible to key officials within DOD. DOD stated that the Army and the Navy fully support capturing relevant information in the DOD readiness reporting system but that combatant

commanders will need to establish resource requirements to include tailored mission requirements. We agree that improvements in readiness reporting should be closely linked to efforts to more clearly define requirements. DOD also stated that the Army is currently developing and implementing a system to provide visibility on readiness issues in support of the combatant commanders. We did not evaluate this system because it was not fully implemented during our review.

DOD also provided technical comments from the Joint Staff, and we received technical comments from the Coast Guard. These technical comments were incorporated in the final draft as appropriate. DOD's comments are reprinted in appendix II.

We performed our work between September 2002 and June 2003 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

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We are sending copies of this report to the Secretaries of Defense, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Secretary of Transportation; and the Commandant of the Coast Guard. We will also make copies available to others upon request. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at http://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staffs have any questions concerning this report, please contact me at (202) 512-5559 or stewartd@gao.gov or Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov. Others making major contributions to this report are included in appendix III.

Derek B. Stewart
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

To evaluate whether the Department of Defense (DOD) and the services followed their existing operation plans when mobilizing reserve forces after September 11, 2001, we reviewed and analyzed a small group of requests for forces from the combatant commanders and discussed differences between planned and actual requirements with the mobilization officials responsible for validating and approving mobilization requirements. To find out how the services screen and fill requirements, as well as their procedures for turning generic "capability" type requirements into actual unit and personnel requirements, we met with, and collected and analyzed data from, a variety of active and reserve component offices within each of the services. Specifically, we met with officials from the following offices or commands:

- National Guard Bureau; [1]

- Department of the Army, Army Operations Center;
- Office of the Chief, Army Reserve;
- Army National Guard, Headquarters;
- U.S. Army Forces Command, Fort McPherson, Georgia;
- U.S. Army Reserve Command, Fort McPherson, Georgia;

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- Department of the Air Force, Headquarters;
- Air National Guard, Headquarters;
- Air National Guard Readiness Center;
- Air Mobility Command, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois;
- Air Force Reserve Command, Robins Air Force Base, Georgia;
- Air and Space Expeditionary Force Center, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia;

- Navy Personnel Command, Millington, Tennessee;
- Commander Naval Forces Command, New Orleans, Louisiana;

- U.S. Marine Corps Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Headquarters, Quantico, Virginia;
- Marine Forces Reserve, Headquarters, New Orleans, Louisiana;

- U.S. Coast Guard, Headquarters; and
- U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area Maintenance Logistic Command, Norfolk, Virginia.

[1] Unless otherwise noted, the officials listed in this appendix have their offices in the Pentagon or at other locations in the Washington D.C., metropolitan area.

We reviewed our prior work on risk management and issues related to combating terrorism. We met with RAND Corporation officials to discuss and coordinate ongoing work related to the requests for forces. We also met with the Assistant Secretaries of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force who are responsible for approving mobilization orders.

To determine the extent to which responsible officials had visibility over the entire mobilization process, we reviewed sections of the United States Code, Executive Orders, Secretary of Defense memoranda, Joint Staff publications, and service instructions related to mobilization. We also met with senior and key mobilization officials involved with the various phases of the mobilization process to document their roles and responsibilities and collect data about the process. We observed a 2-1/2 day DOD symposium in November 2002, where senior military and civilian officials came together to review the entire mobilization process. We reviewed relevant GAO reports and reports from other audit and inspection agencies. We also met with Army Audit Agency and Air Force Audit Agency officials. We reviewed the services' detailed flowcharts, which documented the mobilization process from different service perspectives. We also discussed and observed the operation of the classified and unclassified automated systems that are being used to track mobilized units and individuals, as well as mobilization requirements. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs served as our primary source for aggregate personnel and mobilization data. However, data from the early days and weeks following September 11, 2001, are not reliable. Further, the services captured mobilization data differently over time, making it difficult to aggregate the data. To present the data consistently, our figures display data beginning with January 2002.

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To evaluate the services' approaches to provide predictability to reservists subject to mobilization and deployment, we met with officials from the Air Force offices that were responsible for the development and implementation of the rotational Air Expeditionary Force concept and analyzed data that documented the successes and challenges that the program had experienced since September 11, 2001. We discussed the 30-day advance notice goal with service officials and officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) office, which had issued the goal. We also discussed efforts to increase advanced warning or predictability with officials from the Army, the Navy, and the Marine Corps and, where data were available, compared alert dates to mobilization dates. To gain

first-hand knowledge about the effects of mobilizations on individual reservists, we visited a number of sites where reservists were deployed or were undergoing mobilization processing and training.[2] At these sites, we collected mobilization data, obtained copies of mobilization processing checklists, and observed the preparations for deployment that take place after reservists have been mobilized. Specifically, we met with officials from the offices or commands listed below:

- Army Headquarters, I Corps, Fort Lewis, Washington;
- 4th Brigade, 91st Division (Training Support), Fort Lewis, Washington;
- 2122nd Garrison Training Support Brigade, Fort Lewis, Washington;
- 2122nd Garrison Support Unit, North Fort Lewis, Washington;
- Soldier Readiness Processing Site, Fort Lewis, Washington;
- Soldier Readiness Processing Site, Fort McPherson, Georgia;
- Central Issue Facility, Fort Lewis, Washington;
- Navy Mobilization Processing Site, Millington, Tennessee;
- Navy Mobilization Processing Site, San Diego, California;
- Marine Corps Mobilization Processing Center, Mobilization Support Battalion, Camp Pendleton, California;
- 452nd Air Mobility Wing, March Air Reserve Base, California; and
- Coast Guard Integrated Support Command, Portsmouth, Virginia.

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While at these sites, we interviewed individual and unit reservists who had been mobilized, as well as the active duty, reserve, and civilian officials who were conducting the mobilization processing and training. At the mobilization processing stations, we observed reservists getting medical, legal, and family support briefings; having their personnel, medical, and dental records screened and updated; and receiving inoculations, combat equipment, camouflage clothing, Geneva Convention Cards, identification tags, and the controlled access cards that have replaced laminated identification cards. We also observed weapons qualification training.

To determine the extent to which Ready Reserve forces were available for mobilization, we reviewed sections of the United States Code and OSD and service policies on the use of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). We

[2] A small number of personnel were undergoing demobilization processing during some of our site visits.

collected and analyzed longitudinal data on the sizes of different segments of the Ready Reserve. We examined the data for trends, specifically focusing on the IRR and the portion of the Selected Reserve that was still in the training pipeline. We also collected and analyzed data from the commands that are responsible for managing the IRR, specifically

- the U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Command, St. Louis, Missouri;
- the Naval Reserve Personnel Center, New Orleans, Louisiana;
- the Air Reserve Personnel Center, Denver, Colorado;
- the Marine Corps Reserve Support Command, Kansas City, Missouri; and
- the Coast Guard Personnel Command, Washington, D.C.

Officials from these commands also provided data on IRR members that we analyzed to determine (1) response rates to questionnaires to verify basic member information and (2) participation rates at 1-day screening events to verify member fitness for mobilization.

We conducted our review from September 2002 through June 2003 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

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Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense

RESERVE AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1500 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1500

28 JUL 2003

Mr. Derek B. Stewart
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Stewart:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO draft report, "MILITARY PERSONNEL: DoD Actions Needed to Improve the Efficiency of Mobilizations for Reserve Forces," dated June 30, 2003 (Code 350247/GAO-03-921). DoD responses to GAO's seven recommendations for executive action are enclosed.

The point of contact for this office is Colonel Michael Cornell, OASD/RA (RT&M), at (703) 693-8637 or via e-mail at michael.cornell@osd.mil.

Sincerely,

for T. F. Hall

Enclosure as stated

Jackson v. Tate, No. 40-339955 archived on June 23, 2017

GAO DRAFT REPORT – DATED JUNE 30, 2003
GAO CODE 350247/GAO-03-921

"MILITARY PERSONNEL: DoD Actions Needed to Improve the Efficiency of Mobilizations for Reserve Forces"

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Now on p. 43.

RECOMMENDATION 1: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Chairman of the Joint Staff to identify all of the mobilization requirements that have evolved since September 11, 2001, and create or update operation plans as necessary, to account for these requirements. (Page 45/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: DoD concurs with the recommendation to identify all of the mobilization requirements that have evolved since September 11, 2001, and create or update operation plans as necessary, to account for these requirements.

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Now on p. 44.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretaries of the Army and the Navy to capture readiness information on the resources within all units that are available to meet the tailored requirements of combatant commanders so that these resources will be visible to key officials within DoD, the Joint Staff and Service headquarters. (Pages 45-46/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Partially Concur. The Army and Navy fully support capturing relevant information and integrating that information into the DOD Readiness Reporting System. However, the Army, as a provider of forces and capabilities to the combatant commanders, has sufficient visibility of this information to make informed sourcing decisions for tailored requirements. If additional readiness information is required to meet the needs of the Department of Defense, then the tailored requirement would need to be identified, the appropriate mission essential task list identified, additional data collected and a DoD-wide standard be identified for reporting. The combatant commanders will need to establish resource requirements to include tailored mission requirements. The Army is currently developing and implementing an enterprise-wide Strategic Readiness System to provide visibility on readiness issues in support of combatant commanders.

Now on p. 44.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in conjunction with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, to develop a single system or fully automated systems that will provide for the seamless transfer of reservists information, regardless of whether the reservists are in an active or reserve status. (Page 46/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. DOD needs one integrated automation system for both the active and reserve components that will provide management of human resources and unit mobilizations and allow for seamless transfer of data among the services. The system under development that might approach filling this need is the Defense Integrated Military Human

Resource System (DIMHRS). It is a personnel and pay system. Manpower and training will be included at a later date. DIMHRS will furnish key personnel information to the Global Command & Control System (GCCS) and the Global Combat Support System (GCSS) Family of Systems (FoS) at the strategic and service department level. It will support decision support systems that are predictive in nature, require computer based personnel accounting and strength management, and enable timely coordination within weapon system crew requirements for deployment, sustainment, and replacement operations. Identifying the required personnel (i.e., military service member, civilian, or contractor), their status, and organization comprise the minimum basic information requirement.

Now on p. 44.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower an Reserve Affairs to update their applicable mobilizations, notices and publications. (Page 46/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. DoD concurs with the recommendation.

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RECOMMENDATION 5: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Army to develop a standard operating cycle concept to help increase predictability for its reserve units. (Page 46/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. Standard operating cycles that allow Reserve Component (RC) commanders to allocate training and maintenance time for mobilization preparation is desirable. The goal for deployments is to structure forces in order to limit involuntary mobilization to not more than one year every six years. Prior to the War on Terrorism, the Army was meeting this goal, particularly in mature operations such as SFOR and KFOR. As the operational tempo shifted (increased) and the RC was asked to assume these missions, while also being called upon to meet new requirements, there was an unavoidable loss of predictability. Immature and dynamic operations will not lend themselves to predictability until the operation duration and force structure is stabilized. The Army continues to refine the rotation plan and study the AC-RC mix to ensure predictability in employing RC forces.

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RECOMMENDATION 6: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Service secretaries to develop and use results-oriented performance metrics to guide Service efforts to gain and maintain improved information on IRR members. (Page 46/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The development and use of results-oriented performance metrics should provide direction and guidance to improve the available information on the IRR force. OASD/RA, acting for the USD(P&R), will coordinate with the Military Services, the Reserve Components, and the Reserve Personnel Centers to facilitate the development and use of performance measures. This will be considered as a topic for the next Reserve Personnel Center Commanders/Individual Ready Reserve conference to be held in July 2004.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Service secretaries to review and update their IRR policies to take into account the nature of the

Now on p. 44.

mobilization requirements as well as the types of reservists who are available to fill the requirements. (Page46/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. OASD/RA will also review its polices for governing the management, use, and mobilization of the IRR.

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Appendix III: Staff Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments

James R. Bancroft, Larry J. Bridges, Michael J. Ferren, Chelsa L. Kenney, Irene A. Robertson, and Robert K. Wild also made significant contributions to the report.

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