

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Committee on
Government Reform, and Chairman,
Subcommittee on National Security,
Emerging Threats and International
Relations, House of Representatives

November 2004

RESERVE FORCES

Actions Needed to Better Prepare the National Guard for Future Overseas and Domestic Missions





Highlights of [GAO-05-21](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Government Reform, and Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the global war on terrorism have triggered the largest activation of National Guard forces since World War II. As of June 2004, over one-half of the National Guard's 457,000 personnel had been activated for overseas warfighting or domestic homeland security missions in federal and state active duty roles. In addition to increased usage, the Guard has also experienced long deployments and high demand for personnel with specific skills, such as military police. The high pace of operations and the Guard's expanded role since September 11 have raised concerns about whether the Guard is capable of successfully performing its multiple missions within existing and expected resource levels, especially given the challenges it faces in meeting future requirements.

GAO was asked to assess the extent to which the Guard is: (1) adapting to meet warfighting requirements in the post-September 11 security environment and (2) supporting immediate and emerging homeland security needs.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that the Secretary of Defense submit a plan to Congress on how DOD will improve the Army National Guard's structure and readiness for overseas operations and to clearly define the National Guard's role in homeland security. DOD generally agreed with the recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-21.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Janet St. Laurent at (202) 512-4402 or stlaurentj@gao.gov.

RESERVE FORCES

Actions Needed to Better Prepare the National Guard for Future Overseas and Domestic Missions

What GAO Found

The Army and the Air National Guard have begun adapting their forces to meet new warfighting requirements since the September 11 attacks, but some measures taken to meet short-term requirements have degraded the readiness of nondeployed units, particularly in the Army National Guard. To deploy ready units for overseas missions, the Army National Guard has had to transfer equipment and personnel from nondeploying units. Between September 11, 2001, and July 2004, the Army National Guard had performed over 74,000 personnel transfers. Similarly, as of May 2004, the Army National Guard had transferred over 35,000 equipment items to prepare deploying units, leaving nondeployed Army National Guard units short one-third of the critical equipment they need for war. The Army has developed plans, such as the Army Campaign Plan, to restructure its forces to better prepare them for future missions. However, it has not finalized detailed plans identifying equipment needs and costs for restructuring Guard units. Moreover, the Army is still structured and funded according to a resourcing plan that does not provide Guard units all the personnel and equipment they need to deploy in wartime, so the Army National Guard will be challenged to continue to provide ready units for operations expected in the next 3 to 5 years. The Air National Guard is also adapting to meet new warfighting requirements, but it has not been as negatively affected as the Army National Guard because it has not been required to sustain the same high level of operations. In addition, the Air National Guard generally maintains fully manned and equipped units.

While the Army and the Air National Guard have, thus far, also supported the nation's homeland security needs, the Guard's preparedness to perform homeland security missions that may be needed in the future is unknown because requirements and readiness standards and measures have not been defined. Without this information, policy makers are not in the best position to manage the risks to the nation's homeland security by targeting investments to the highest priority needs and ensuring that the investments are having the desired effect. Since September 11, the Guard has been performing several unanticipated homeland missions, such as flying patrols over U.S. cities and guarding critical infrastructure. However, states have concerns about the preparedness and availability of Guard forces for domestic needs and natural disasters while overseas deployments continue at a high pace. The Department of Defense (DOD) plans to publish a comprehensive strategy for homeland security missions that DOD will lead. However, DOD has not reached agreement with multiple federal and state authorities on the Guard's role in such missions. Also, the National Guard Bureau has proposed initiatives to strengthen the Guard's homeland security capabilities. However, many of these initiatives are at an early stage and will require coordination and approval from other stakeholders, such as DOD and the states. In the absence of clear homeland security requirements, the Guard's preparedness to perform missions at home cannot be measured to determine whether it needs additional assets or training.

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Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
SINCGARS	Single Channel Ground Air Radio System

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

November 10, 2004

The Honorable Tom Davis
Chairman
The Honorable Christopher Shays
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats
and International Relations
House of Representatives

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and subsequent launch of the global war on terrorism have resulted in the largest activation of National Guard forces—both Army and Air—since World War II. Within 1 month of the September 11 attacks, the number of Army National Guard members activated for federal missions more than quadrupled, from about 5,500 to about 23,000. By June 2004, over 50 percent of the National Guard’s nearly 350,000 Army and 107,000 Air National Guard members had been activated for overseas warfighting operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, or homeland missions, such as guarding active Air Force bases. These operations have resulted in a high demand for Guard members overall and especially for those trained with certain skills, such as security personnel and tanker pilots. As a result, National Guard personnel have experienced lengthy and repeated deployments since the September 11 terrorist attacks.

The National Guard holds a unique dual status in that it performs federal missions under the command of the President and state missions under the command of the state’s governor. After September 11, the Guard’s duties were expanded to include supporting new homeland missions,¹ such as flying combat air patrols over U.S. cities, securing borders, providing radar coverage for the continental United States, and protecting civilian airports, Air Force bases, and other critical infrastructure. Governors also activated the Guard to perform additional missions, such

¹ According to the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* (Office of Homeland Security, Washington, D.C.: July 2002), homeland security is a broad term that encompasses efforts to reduce America’s vulnerability to terrorism and prevent terrorist attacks as well as respond to an attack that might occur. The Department of Defense refers to its contributions to the overall homeland security effort as “homeland defense,” and support to civil authorities.

as guarding bridges and nuclear power plants. Guard involvement in state missions almost tripled in the year after the attacks, and it has remained well above pre-September 11 levels. The Guard spent about 236,000 days performing state missions in fiscal year 2001, and that number increased to about 645,000 days in fiscal year 2002. State mission involvement subsequently declined to almost 433,000 days in fiscal year 2003, more than twice the level before September 11.² This high pace of operations has raised concerns about the National Guard's ability to perform warfighting and homeland missions successfully within its existing resources and the challenges it faces in meeting these requirements in the future.

The objectives of this report are to assess the extent to which the National Guard is (1) adapting to meet current and future overseas warfighting requirements in the post-September 11 security environment and (2) supporting immediate and emerging homeland security needs.³ We testified before the Committee on Government Reform on April 29, 2004, and provided observations on high Guard usage and the challenges the Guard faces in adapting to the demands of the new security environment.⁴ This report updates information contained in our testimony and concludes our work in response to your request.

To assess the objectives, we analyzed data on National Guard utilization and readiness prior to and after September 11, 2001. We interviewed officials in the Departments of Defense (DOD), Army, and Air Force and the National Guard Bureau and supplemented this information with visits to Army and Air Force commands and Army mobilization stations. We also developed case studies of recent federal and state National Guard operations in four states—Georgia, New Jersey, Oregon, and Texas. We selected these states because they represent a mix of geographic areas, Army and Air National Guard units with different specialties, and units that had been or were expected to be activated for federal and/or state

² A National Guard official who maintains data on the extent of support to civil authorities explained to us that because some state data may not be reported, this figure might underestimate the days spent supporting state missions.

³ We are conducting a separate effort examining the roles and readiness of the Army Reserve.

⁴ GAO, *Reserve Forces: Observations on Recent National Guard Use in Overseas and Homeland Missions and Future Challenges*, [GAO-04-670T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 29, 2004).

missions. In each of these states, we visited the Adjutant General and National Guard headquarters, as well as Army and Air National Guard units that had been or will be involved in overseas or domestic missions. We also reviewed documents on planned changes to the Army Guard's force structure, such as the Army Campaign Plan and the Army Transformation Roadmap. We conducted our review in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards between April 2003 and September 2004 and determined that the data used were sufficiently reliable for our objectives. The scope and methodology used in our review are described in further detail in appendix I.

Results in Brief

The Army and the Air National Guard have been adapting their forces to meet new warfighting requirements since the September 11 terrorist attacks, but some measures taken to meet immediate needs have made providing forces for future operations more challenging for the Army National Guard. Unlike the Air National Guard, the Army National Guard is still organized according to a post-cold war military planning strategy that provides it only a portion of the resources needed to perform warfighting missions, with the assumption that its units will have sufficient time to obtain the additional personnel and equipment before deploying. However, recent operations have required that Army National Guard units be fully manned and equipped to deploy, sometimes within short time frames. To meet warfighting needs, DOD has retrained some Army National Guard soldiers and units to perform key functions and changed the missions of some units, issuing them new equipment for their new activities.⁵ For example, to respond to a continuing demand for military police, the Army has changed some field artillery units to security forces and retrained over 7,000 soldiers to perform new duties. In addition, because the Army National Guard units do not have all of the resources they need for warfighting missions, the Army National Guard has had to transfer personnel and equipment from nondeploying units to prepare deploying units. As of July 2004, the Army National Guard had performed over 74,000 personnel transfers, shifting soldiers from one unit to another, to meet warfighting needs. Similarly, as of May 2004, it had transferred over 35,000 pieces of equipment to deploying units. While the Army National Guard has provided ready units thus far, the cumulative effect of these personnel and equipment transfers is that the readiness of nondeployed

⁵ We previously reported that forces' skills are not well matched with the needs of domestic military missions. See [GAO-04-670T](#).

forces has declined, challenging the Army to continue to provide ready Guard forces for future missions. The Army has taken steps to begin to restructure its active, Guard, and Reserve forces into more versatile units to improve its ability to respond to the dynamic security environment, but it is still in the process of developing plans for restructuring Army National Guard forces. Under preliminary plans, Guard restructuring would not be completed until 2010. In addition, current plans do not address how the Guard's equipment will be modernized to make it compatible with active Army equipment or provide detailed time frames and costs for converting all Guard equipment. Until plans on how the Guard will fit into overall Army reorganization plans are finalized and shared with Congress, it is uncertain how they will transform the Guard for a new operational role. Further, the Army has not reevaluated its resourcing policy for the Army National Guard to mitigate the effects of increased usage on its nondeployed forces, and current Army funding plans call for continuing to maintain nondeployed Army National Guard forces with only a portion of the personnel and equipment required for warfighting operations. Like the Army National Guard, the Air National Guard has also had to adjust to the demands of recent operations and has provided forces to support current military operations by extending tours of duty. Although its readiness has declined as a result of the high use of personnel and equipment, the Air National Guard has not been as negatively affected as the Army National Guard because it has not been required to sustain the same high level of activations and is funded to maintain more fully manned and equipped units.

While the Army and the Air National Guard have supported the nation's homeland security needs by providing personnel and equipment for unanticipated missions, the Guard's preparedness to perform the homeland defense and civil support missions that may be needed in the future is unknown because (1) its role in these missions is not defined and requirements have not been established and (2) preparedness standards and measures have not been developed. Since September 11, the Army National Guard has provided security for borders, airports, and other key assets, while the Air National Guard has taken on missions such as flying air patrols over U.S. cities. The Army and the Air National Guard have conducted these missions largely using existing forces and equipment that were provided for warfighting missions. However, state officials have expressed concern about the Guard's preparedness to undertake state missions, including supporting homeland security missions, given the increase in overseas deployments and the shortages of personnel and equipment among the remaining Guard units. Moreover, some homeland security missions could require training and equipment, such as

decontamination training and equipment, that differ from that provided to support warfighting missions. Because DOD, specifically the U.S. Northern Command and the Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense,⁶ has not clearly defined what the Guard's role will be or analyzed what personnel, training, and equipment may be required to support homeland missions in conjunction with the Department of Homeland Security, it is difficult to measure the Guard's preparedness for potential missions. DOD and Congress have taken some actions to strengthen the Guard's homeland capabilities, such as establishing Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams,⁷ to support civil authorities in identifying whether chemical and biological events have occurred and the type of agent used. Moreover, the National Guard Bureau is implementing pilot programs to strengthen other capabilities to respond to weapons of mass destruction events and improve critical infrastructure protection. However, these pilot programs are in the early stages of implementation and were developed by the Guard to respond to pressing needs. They are not based on a comprehensive analysis of the full spectrum of the Guard's role and requirements for homeland security missions. Without such a comprehensive analysis, DOD and congressional policy makers may not be in the best position to assess whether additional investments are needed, and Guard personnel may lack the type of training and equipment that would facilitate an effective and timely response to future homeland security threats.

We are recommending that the Secretary of Defense develop and submit a strategy to Congress for improving the Army National Guard's structure and readiness and clearly define the Guard's role in homeland defense and providing support to civilian authorities. DOD generally agreed with our recommendations and cited several actions it is taking to develop a strategy that addresses the Army National Guard's future roles and requirements.

⁶ The U.S. Northern Command is responsible for executing homeland defense activities and supporting civilian authorities when requested. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense assists the Secretary of Defense in providing policy and guidance to combatant commanders regarding air, ground, and maritime defense of U.S. territories and supporting civilian authorities.

⁷ The Guard's Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams are each comprised of 22 full-time personnel and maintained at the highest preparedness levels so as to respond rapidly to support civil authorities in an event involving a weapon of mass destruction. Their role is to assist local officials in determining the nature of the attack, provide medical and technical advice, and assist with requests for additional support.

Background

The National Guard of the United States, which performs both federal and state missions, represents about 52 percent of the armed services' selected reserve⁸ and consists of approximately 457,000 members: about 350,000 in the Army National Guard and about 107,000 in the Air National Guard. Overall, the Army National Guard makes up more than one-half of the Army's ground combat forces and one-third of its support forces (e.g., military police or transportation units) and has units in more than 3,000 armories and bases in all 50 states and 4 U.S. territories. Air National Guard personnel make up 20 percent of the total Air Force, with 88 flying units and 579 mission support units at more than 170 installations throughout the United States. The majority of Guard members are employed on a part-time basis, typically training 1 weekend per month and 2 weeks per year. The Guard also employs some full-time personnel who assist unit commanders in administrative, training, and maintenance tasks. The National Guard Bureau is the federal entity responsible for the administration of the National Guard.

National Guard personnel may be ordered to perform duty under three different authorities: Title 10 or Title 32 of the United State Code or pursuant to state law in a state active duty status. Personnel in a Title 10 status are federally funded and under federal command and control. Personnel may enter Title 10 status by being ordered to active duty in their status as federal Reserves, either voluntarily or under appropriate circumstances involuntarily (i.e., mobilization). Personnel in Title 32 status are federally funded but under state control. Title 32 is the status in which National Guard personnel typically perform training for their federal mission. Personnel performing state active duty are state-funded and under state command and control. Under state law, the governor may order National Guard soldiers to perform state active duty to respond to emergencies, disasters, civil disturbances, and for other reasons authorized by state law.

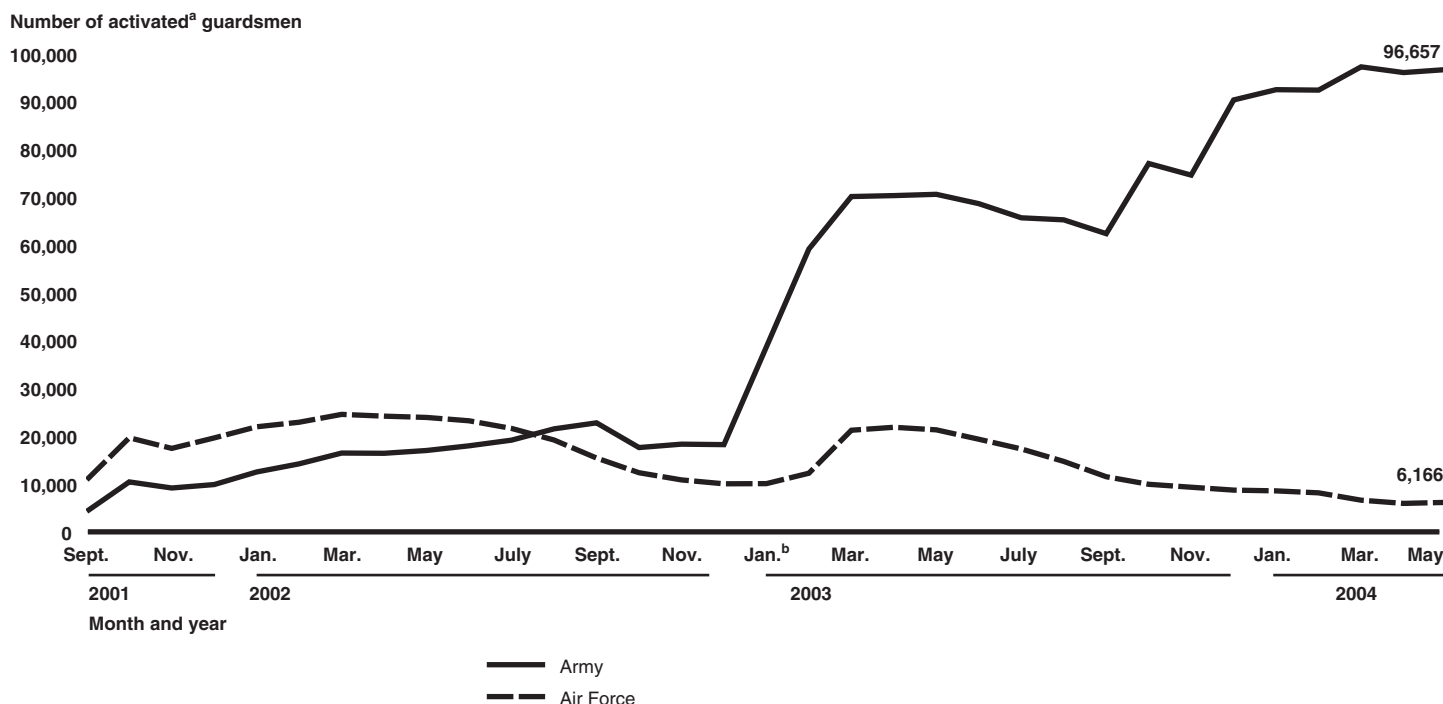
⁸ The reserve components of the U.S. Armed Forces are the Army National Guard of the United States, the Army Reserve, the Naval Reserve, the Marine Corps Reserve, the Air National Guard of the United States, the Air Force Reserve, and the Coast Guard Reserve. The selected reserve consists of military members assigned to organized reserve units and reservists who participate in at least 48 scheduled drills or training periods each year and serve on active duty for training of not less than 14 days during each year.

National Guard Federal Missions

The Guard is organized, trained, and equipped for its federal missions, which take priority over state missions. As we reported in our April 2004 testimony, the National Guard's involvement in federal operations has increased substantially since the September 11 terrorist attacks. Three days after the attacks, the President, under Title 10, authorized reservists to be activated for up to 2 years.⁹ This authority was subsequently used to activate reservists for overseas warfighting and stabilization missions in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan as well as for domestic missions, such as flying patrols and supporting federal civilian agencies in guarding the nation's borders. As figure 1 illustrates, as of May 2004, about 102,800 Army and Air National Guard members—the vast majority of whom were Army National Guard members—were on active duty. Although both Army and Air National Guard activations increased in the aftermath of September 11, the Air National Guard activations had declined to pre-September 11 levels by October 2003, while Army National Guard activations continued to rise.

⁹ 10 U.S.C. § 12302.

Figure 1: Post-September 11 National Guard Federal Activity under Title 10



Source: GAO analysis of Army and Air National Guard data.

^aArmy National Guard data represent the number of soldiers mobilized. Air National Guard data represent the number of Air National Guard personnel who are mobilized, including those who volunteered for duty.

^bBecause Army National Guard data for January 2003 were not available, chart data point was estimated based on trend.

When activated under Title 10, the National Guard is subject to the Posse Comitatus Act,¹⁰ which prohibits the military from law enforcement activities unless expressly authorized by the Constitution or law.

The Army and the Air Force have different strategies for structuring and providing resources for their Guard components that reflect each service's planned use and available resources. While the Army National Guard's structure requires 375,000 personnel to be fully manned, in fiscal year 2004, the Army National Guard was authorized 350,000 soldiers resulting in many units being manned below wartime requirements. Using DOD

¹⁰ 18 U.S.C. § 1385.

planning guidance, Army National Guard units are provided varying levels of resources according to the priority assigned to their warfighting missions. Because much of the Army National Guard was expected to be used as a follow-on force in the event of an extended conflict, many of its units were structured with fewer personnel and lesser amounts of equipment than they would need to deploy, with the assumption that there would be time to supply additional personnel, equipment, and training before these units would be needed. For example, Army National Guard divisions, which include over 117,000 soldiers and provide the majority of the combat capability in the Army National Guard, are supplied with 65 to 74 percent of their required personnel and 65 to 79 percent of their required equipment, and are less ready for their missions. This approach to managing limited resources is referred to as “tiered readiness.” In contrast, the Air National Guard was integrated into the Air Force’s operational force and maintained at readiness levels comparable to its active component counterparts. This approach enables the Air National Guard to be ready to deploy on short notice.

National Guard State Missions

Since September 11, Guard members have also been activated for missions under the authority of state governors in both Title 32 and state active duty statuses. Title 32 status is generally used to train National Guard units and personnel to perform their federal mission. National Guard personnel also may perform operational (nontraining) missions in Title 32 status when authorized by federal statute.¹¹ According to DOD, after September 11, the Guard performed other operational (nontraining) duties such as providing airport security in Title 32 status in response to presidential direction. National Guard personnel in Title 32 status have also provided support for events such as the G-8 Summit and the Democratic and Republican National Conventions. Also, National Guard personnel have served in a state active duty status in response to natural disasters.

Additionally, the National Guard performs state missions under the command and control of the governor, with costs for these missions borne by the state. Guard missions typically performed in this status include providing assistance in response to natural disasters such as fires and storms that have not been declared federal disasters.

¹¹ Examples include counterdrug support (32 U.S.C. § 112) and Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams (10 U.S.C. § 12310(c)).

Since September 11, governors have increasingly used this authority to activate Guard members to protect key assets in the states.

National Guard Has Been Adapting to Meet Current Warfighting Requirements, but Readiness Challenges Remain for Future Operations

Both at home and overseas, the Army and the Air National Guard have been adapting in several ways to meet the demands of current warfighting requirements, but some of the measures taken may challenge the Army National Guard's efforts to provide ready forces for future operations. While the Army National Guard has met new warfighting requirements by retraining some units to acquire in-demand skills, tailoring others to provide particular capabilities, changing unit missions in some cases, and transferring personnel and equipment to meet combatant commander needs, these adaptations have reduced the readiness¹² of its nondeployed units, in turn challenging the Army National Guard to prepare for future operations. The Army recognizes the need to restructure its active, Reserve, and Guard forces to respond more effectively to the new global security environment and is in the process of developing plans to make its forces more modular. However, its plans for restructuring Army National Guard forces are not finalized and do not provide detailed information on time frames for restructuring all the Guard's units, whether the Guard's equipment will be compatible with that of active units, or the costs of implementing these plans. The Air National Guard has also adapted to meet new warfighting requirements, but its readiness has not been as negatively affected because it has not experienced continued high usage as the Army National Guard has and because its units are more fully equipped and manned for war.

Army National Guard Adaptation to Warfighting Requirements Reduced Readiness of Nondeployed Units

The Army National Guard has been adapting to the demands of current warfighting requirements but faces future challenges in providing ready forces for future operations. The recent increased and expanded use of the National Guard illustrates the shift from the post-cold war military planning strategy, in which much of the Guard represented a force to follow the active military in the event of extended conflict, to an operational force similar to the Air National Guard. Using this strategy, the Army has generally maintained most Army National Guard units at lower

¹² Readiness is generally defined as a measure of DOD's ability to provide the capabilities needed to execute the mission specified in the National Military Strategy. At the unit level, readiness refers to the ability of units, such as Army divisions and Air Force wings, to provide capabilities required by the combatant commands. Details of DOD readiness data are classified.

Army Has Retrained Some Guard Units and Made Other Adjustments

readiness levels under the assumption that additional personnel and equipment would be provided prior to deployment. While the Army National Guard's adaptations since September 11 were intended to make deploying units more useful for current operations, these adaptations have caused the overall readiness of nondeployed Guard units to decline, which may hamper the Guard's ability to meet the requirements of future warfighting operations overseas, particularly in Iraq.

To meet the high demand for Army National Guard personnel for recent operations, the Army has alerted or mobilized over one-half of the Army National Guard's personnel since September 11. In June 2004, Army National Guard activations peaked with almost 81,000 Army National Guard members—more than one-quarter of the Army National Guard's force—activated for overseas military operations such as in Afghanistan and Iraq. Personnel with certain skills have been in particularly high demand. For example, as of June 2004, 95 percent of military police units had deployed, with 23 percent having deployed more than once, and at least 50 percent of units with specialties such as transportation, aviation, medical, and special operations had been activated.

To alleviate the stress on these forces, the Army has retrained personnel in units with less needed skills, such as field artillery, to provide skills in higher demand. For example, the Army recently changed the mission of 27 artillery units and retrained over 7,000 personnel to meet the need for additional military police and security forces. Some of these soldiers have already deployed to Iraq to perform missions such as convoy security.

The Army has also adapted Guard units to meet the specific requirements of current overseas missions by tailoring units for particular purposes. In some cases, the Army took personnel with key capabilities from existing units and created new, smaller units whose personnel had skills specifically tailored to provide the capabilities required by the combatant commander. For example, the Army extracted 55 soldiers with military police skills from an armored battalion of about 600 soldiers to perform a security mission at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. More than 35,000 Army National Guard soldiers—almost one-fifth of all soldiers utilized—deployed in these newly created, tailored units to support recent military operations. Over one-half of these tailored units (about 57 percent) were small, containing 10 or fewer soldiers. In addition to extracting key capabilities, tailored units have also been used to address personnel shortages in deploying units.

Personnel Transfers into
Deploying Units Have
Degraded Personnel Readiness
for Future Operations

The Army has also changed the mission, organization, and tactics of some deploying units, issuing them new or different equipment and adding personnel to meet combatant commander requirements. For example, the 30th Infantry (Mechanized), an enhanced separate brigade¹³ that deployed to Iraq in the spring of 2004, was directed to deploy as a motorized brigade combat team with humvees instead of with all of its assigned heavy-tracked equipment such as Bradley fighting vehicles and tanks. To accomplish this change, the unit required an infusion of personnel because “light” units require more personnel than “heavy” units. In addition, the unit underwent additional training on operating and maintaining the newly issued equipment. This unit was operating in Iraq in its new, lighter configuration at the time of this report.

To ready deploying units, the Army National Guard had to transfer personnel from nondeploying units, but in doing so, it has degraded their readiness. This, in turn, challenges the Guard’s efforts to provide ready forces for future operations. To be ready to deploy, units need to have a sufficient number of soldiers who are qualified to deploy. According to the tiered-readiness policy, many National Guard units do not have all the qualified soldiers they need to be ready for their missions. However, in recent operations, the Army’s deployment goal for Guard combat units has been to be fully manned and for unit personnel to be fully qualified for their positions. To meet the requirements for units fully manned with qualified personnel, the Guard transferred qualified soldiers from nondeployed units. By July 2004, the National Guard had initiated over 74,000 personnel transfers to meet the combatant commander’s needs.

There are a number of reasons that Army National Guard units may not have all of the personnel they need to deploy for their warfighting missions. First, the Army National Guard is not funded to fully man all its units to deployment standards. Second, some soldiers assigned to a unit may not have completed required training.¹⁴ As of May 2004, over

¹³ Enhanced separate brigades have between 3,000 and 5,000 soldiers and are the Army National Guard’s highest priority combat units. These 15 brigades receive specialized training and higher priority than other National Guard units for personnel and resources during peacetime. Once called to active duty, they are expected to be ready to deploy overseas within 90 days.

¹⁴ GAO, *Military Personnel: DOD Actions Needed to Improve the Efficiency of Mobilizations for Reserve Forces*, [GAO-03-921](#) (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 21, 2003) and *Military Personnel: DOD Needs To Address Long-Term Reserve Force Availability and Related Mobilization and Demobilization Issues*, [GAO-04-1031](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 15, 2004).

71,000 Army National Guard soldiers were not fully trained for their positions. Finally, soldiers may be unable to deploy overseas for personal reasons, such as medical or dental problems, family issues, or legal difficulties. As of June 2004, there were over 9,000 soldiers in the Army National Guard who were identified as nondeployable. When two of the Army National Guard's enhanced separate brigades, some of its most ready units, were activated for rotation to Iraq in 2003, only 74 percent of their required personnel were qualified for their assigned positions and deployable, leaving a shortfall of over 2,100 soldiers that had to be filled from other units.

To minimize transfers of qualified soldiers from other units, the Army Guard ordered 700 untrained soldiers between April and June 2004 to report for training so they could become fully qualified in their positions before their units were activated for overseas operations. However, the Guard has not been able to address all of its shortfalls in this manner. For example, the Army National Guard is preparing a combat division headquarters and a number of its support units for deployment to Iraq in 2005. When the 42nd Infantry Division was alerted,¹⁵ it lacked 783 qualified personnel—about 18 percent of the total personnel required—to meet deployment requirements. As of June 2004, the National Guard was only able to fill 415 of these positions through transfers of personnel from other units, leaving 368 positions unfilled. Army National Guard officials expect that the active Army will have to find personnel to address these shortfalls. According to National Guard officials, additional soldiers with medical, dental, legal, or family issues may be identified as nondeployable after they are mobilized, so the number of personnel needed may rise.

As overseas operations continue, it is becoming increasingly challenging for the Army National Guard to ready units because the number of soldiers who have not been deployed and are available for future deployments has decreased and the practice of transferring qualified personnel to deploying units has degraded readiness of nondeployed units. Our analysis of the decline in Army National Guard readiness between September 2001 and April 2004 showed that the most frequently cited reasons for the decline in personnel readiness of nondeployed units were that personnel were already deployed or not available for deployment. Of the almost 162,000 soldiers who are available for future deployments, almost 36,000

¹⁵ DOD has established in policy a goal to provide reservists a minimum of 30 days written notification, referred to as "alert," before they are mobilized for active duty.

Equipment Transfers to
Deploying Units Have
Degraded Equipment
Readiness for Future
Operations

are in nondeployable units that provide maintenance, medical, and legal support to the Army National Guard. Approximately 9,000 additional soldiers have medical or other conditions that prevent deployment, and about 28,000 soldiers will need required training before they will be available for deployment. This leaves approximately 89,000 soldiers who are currently available to deploy for overseas operations. Because DOD expects the high pace of operations to continue for the next 3 to 5 years and estimates that operations will require 100,000 to 150,000 National Guard and reserve personnel each year, the Army National Guard will likely have to alert and mobilize personnel who have been previously deployed.

Because the combatant commander has required Army National Guard units to have modern, capable, and compatible equipment for recent operations, the Army National Guard adapted its units and transferred equipment to deploying units from nondeploying units. However, this adaptation has made equipping units for future operations more challenging. The Army equips units according to when it expects them to be needed in combat; thus, the “first to fight” units are given the priority for modern equipment. Based on post-cold war plans, it was assumed that most Army National Guard units would follow active units and that there would be sufficient time to provide them with the equipment they need for their missions before they deployed. However, when National Guard units were alerted for recent operations, they generally did not have sufficient amounts of equipment or equipment that was modern enough to be compatible with active units and to meet combatant commander requirements.

For recent operations, the Army National Guard has had to fill the shortages of equipment among deploying units by transferring equipment from nondeploying units. National Guard data showed that in order to ready units deploying to support operations in Iraq between September 2002 and May 2004, the National Guard transferred over 18,000 night vision goggles, 1,700 chemical monitors, 900 wheeled vehicles, 700 radios, and 500 machine guns, among other items, from nondeploying units. As a result, by June 2004, the Army National Guard had transferred more than 35,000 pieces of equipment and had critical shortages¹⁶ of about 480 different types of items, including machine guns and heavy trucks. In total,

¹⁶ A critical shortage is defined as having five or less of an item in the total Army National Guard inventory.

the Army National Guard's nondeployed force lacks 33 percent of its essential items¹⁷ and, as of June 2004, its stocks had been depleted to the point where it had to request that the Army provide about 13,000 pieces of equipment for its deploying units.

Equipment shortages were worsened when the combatant commander and the National Guard Bureau barred Army National Guard units from deploying with items that were incompatible with active Army equipment or that could not be supported with spare parts in the area of operations. For example, Army National Guard units equipped with 20 to 30-year-old radios were barred from taking them to the Iraqi area of operations because they cannot communicate with the Single Channel Ground Air Radio System (SINGARS) used by other Army units. Likewise, some of the older rifles the Guard uses for training have been barred because they use different ammunition than those of the active Army units. Moreover, Guard units alerted for the earlier deployments were not equipped with the most modern body armor and night vision goggles that the combatant commander subsequently required for deploying units. After units were identified for mobilization and deployment, the Army took some steps to augment existing Guard equipment using supplemental wartime funding.

Our analysis of DOD data showed that the equipment readiness of nondeployed units has continued to decline and, as overseas operations continue, it has become increasingly challenging for the National Guard to ready deploying units to meet warfighting requirements. As reported by the National Guard,¹⁸ 87 percent of the 1,527 reporting units in fiscal year 2001 met their peacetime equipment readiness goals, which are often lower than wartime requirements. By fiscal year 2002, only 71 percent of the nondeployed reporting units met their peacetime equipment goals. The report attributed this decrease in readiness posture to equipment shortages and transfers among nondeployed units to fill shortages in other units.

¹⁷ Essential items are defined as a unit's principal weapon/mission systems and equipment that are critical to accomplishment of primary mission tasks and critical mission support items.

¹⁸ Department of Defense, *National Guard and Reserve Equipment Report for Fiscal Year 2003* (Washington, D.C.: February 2002) and *National Guard and Reserve Equipment Report for Fiscal Year 2004* (Washington, D.C.: February 2003).

Initially, the Guard managed these transfers so that nondeploying units shared the burden of providing resources to deploying units and could remain at their planned readiness levels. However, this became increasingly difficult as the number of activations mounted, and, in November 2003, the Director of the Army National Guard issued a memorandum to the states directing them to transfer equipment to deploying units regardless of the impact on the readiness of remaining units.

Plans to Restructure Army National Guard Are Not Fully Developed or Funded and May Not Address Future Readiness Challenges

The Army and the National Guard have recognized that the post-September 11 security environment requires changes to the Guard's structure and an improvement in its readiness posture. However, in the near term, the Army National Guard will have difficulty improving its readiness for projected operations over the next 3 to 5 years under current plans, which assume the Guard will be funded at peacetime readiness levels. Over the longer term, DOD, the Army, and the National Guard have initiated, but not completed, several restructuring efforts, including moving some positions with high-demand skills out of the Guard and into the active force, creating new standardized modular units that are flexible to respond to combatant commander needs, and establishing predictable deployments for units. To improve readiness, the Army National Guard seeks to increase the amount of full-time support and qualified personnel in its units. However, these measures will require additional funding. At this time, it is not clear whether these planned actions will fully address the difficulties the Army National Guard has experienced in supplying the numbers and types of fully ready forces needed for the global war on terrorism.

The Guard may be challenged in the near term to deploy units and sustain the high pace of operations required by the global war on terrorism with its current resources. While the costs of activated Army National Guard units in wartime are borne by the active Army with funds provided through supplemental appropriations, for recent operations the Guard has had to ready its forces for mobilization using its existing resources. The Army National Guard received \$175 million in supplemental funding in fiscal year 2003, for personnel and operation and maintenance, but it did not receive additional fiscal year 2004 funding to ready nondeployed units so they can train and gain proficiency before they are mobilized. In fiscal year 2004, \$111 million was reprogrammed from Army National Guard personnel to Army National Guard operation and maintenance appropriation accounts to support requirements for units before they were mobilized. These funds were available because mobilized Army National

Guard personnel are paid by the active Army military personnel appropriation. The 2005 President's budget submission and long-term funding plan are still based on the tiered-readiness approach. Because the Army is in the process of developing a new budget and long-term funding plan, it is not clear at this time whether future budget submissions will include funding to support increased readiness levels.

For the long term, DOD and the Army are changing some units' missions to increase the availability of certain high-demand Army National Guard units, such as military police and transportation units. They have also taken steps to rebalance skills among the active and reserve forces to decrease the burden of repeated deployments on reserve personnel who have skills that are in great demand. To make more efficient use of its forces, DOD is also planning to move military personnel out of positions involving duties that can be performed by civilians or contractors and into high-demand specialties, as well as taking advantage of technological advances to reduce personnel needs. However, these initiatives are in the early stages of implementation and the extent to which they will alleviate the strain on Army National Guard forces due to the continuing high pace of operations is uncertain.

In April 2004, the Army published The Army Campaign Plan that sets out some specific objectives and assigns responsibilities for actions to be taken to plan and execute ongoing operations and transform forces for the future. A key element of the Army's plan to transform its forces, including National Guard units, is to restructure into "modular" units that can be tailored to the specific needs of combatant commanders in future operations. After restructuring, the Army National Guard expects to have 34 smaller, lighter brigades instead of its current 38 brigades.¹⁹ Current plans call for converting Army National Guard units as they return from overseas operations into brigades that share a common basic organization with their active counterparts by 2010. Further, the Army has a goal of restructuring its forces so that units will be authorized the qualified personnel they require. However, the Army's current plans do not completely address how the Guard's equipment will be modernized to make it compatible with active Army equipment or include a detailed schedule and funding needs for restructuring all Guard units, including support units.

¹⁹ This includes the Army National Guard's 15 enhanced separate brigades, 2 separate brigades, and 21 brigades in its 8 divisions.

In addition, one of the Army National Guard's initiatives to improve readiness by increasing the amount of full-time support personnel within its units is still based on its tiered-readiness model, which resources some Guard units well below requirements. With this initiative, the Army National Guard plans to increase the percentage of full-time personnel gradually to about 71 percent of the personnel it needs by 2012. Full-time Guard members enhance unit readiness by performing tasks such as monitoring soldiers' readiness, recruiting and training personnel, and maintaining aircraft, supplies, and equipment. However, for fiscal year 2003, the Army National Guard was only funded for 59 percent of the full-time personnel it needs to be fully manned, as compared to the Air National Guard, which is staffed at 100 percent of its required full-time support personnel. Without sufficient full-time personnel, these tasks, which are critical to unit readiness, suffer.

The Army National Guard also has plans to increase the number of qualified personnel in each unit by spreading its soldiers over fewer, in some cases smaller, units. According to Army National Guard officials, using this strategy could increase the number of qualified personnel to an estimated 85 percent of unit requirements. However, Army deployment goals for combat units are for 100 percent of deploying soldiers to be qualified in their positions. Therefore, the Guard will likely still need to transfer personnel when units are called to deploy.

To avoid overtaxing the force and improve deployment predictability, the Army has developed a proposal to establish a rotational deployment cycle for its Army National Guard units that would meet the Secretary of Defense's goal of no more than one deployment every 6 years. In conjunction with this proposal, preliminary Army plans propose equipping Guard units that are 4 to 5 years away from an expected deployment well below wartime readiness standards. However, this model may be difficult to achieve while the high pace of operations continues.

Air National Guard Efforts to Adapt to New Warfighting Requirements Facilitated by Its Structure and Funding at High-Readiness Levels

The Air National Guard, like the Army National Guard, has also adapted to meet new warfighting requirements since September 11. It made several adjustments to accommodate the higher pace of operations, including extending tours of duty for some Guard personnel, calling up others earlier than expected, and recently extending its rotational cycle to lengthen the amount of time personnel are available for deployment. However, the demands of ongoing operations have not been as detrimental to the Air National Guard for two reasons. First, along with the Air Force Reserve, the Air National Guard is funded to maintain readiness levels

similar to that of the active Air Force and is expected to be able to deploy within 72 hours. Second, the Air National Guard has not been required to sustain the same high level of activations as the Army National Guard. Air National Guard activations declined to pre-September 11 levels of about 10,000 by October 2003, and have since declined to about 6,000, while the Army National Guard's activations have continued to rise. Between 2001 and 2003, the Air National Guard unit readiness declined as a result of its high utilization of personnel and equipment, but Congress provided additional funding to stabilize Air National Guard readiness.

To meet increased personnel requirements during the initial phases of current operations, Air National Guard officials activated and deployed personnel earlier than planned under their standard rotational deployment cycle.²⁰ In January 2003, Air Force officials said that over 320 personnel, including some Air National Guard members, deployed about 45 days earlier than usual. In addition, the Air Force also disrupted the normal rotation cycle by extending tour lengths to meet increased requirements. Air Force officials extended the duty tours of selected Air National Guard personnel from the usual 90 days up to 179 days. For example, during the preparation phase for Operation Iraqi Freedom the Air Force extended the tours of almost 2,400 personnel, including some Air National Guard personnel. To accommodate ongoing operational requirements, in June 2004, the Air Force announced that most Air National Guard personnel scheduled to deploy in future cycles would spend 120 days in the deployment phase of their cycle. To accommodate the increased tour lengths, the new rotational cycle will be 20 months in length, and Guard personnel will train for 16 months and be eligible for deployment for 4 months.

Overall, Air National Guard unit readiness has declined since September 2001 due to the increased demands for people and usage of equipment. Our analysis of DOD data showed that commanders attributed this decline in readiness primarily to personnel and equipment shortages, damaged or inoperative equipment, and incomplete training. In addition, Air National Guard officials in states we visited told us that meeting current operational demands has resulted in fewer aircraft available to be used for training at home and increased maintenance requirements on

²⁰ The Air Force divides its forces into 10 groups, each containing a mix of active, Guard, and reserve forces, and until June 2004, operated on a 15-month rotational cycle. The 15-month cycle included a 90-day period when a unit was eligible for deployment.

aircraft being used in current operations. However, Air National Guard officials told us that equipment readiness rates have remained steady during fiscal year 2004, and they attributed this stabilization to supplemental funding of \$20 million in fiscal 2003 and \$214 million in fiscal year 2004 for operation and maintenance activities.

National Guard Has Supported Homeland Security Needs, but Its Readiness for Future Homeland Missions Is Not Measured

While Army and Air National Guard forces have, thus far, supported the nation's homeland security needs, the Guard's preparedness to perform homeland defense and civil support missions that may be needed in the future cannot be measured because its role in these missions is not defined, requirements have not been identified, and standards have not been developed against which to measure preparedness. Since September 11, the Guard has performed a number of missions, including flying patrols over U.S. cities and guarding critical infrastructure. However, state and National Guard officials voiced concerns about preparedness and availability of Guard forces as overseas deployments continue at a high pace. Even though plans and requirements for the homeland missions the Guard will support are not fully developed, DOD and the National Guard Bureau have taken some actions to address potential needs.

Guard Forces Have Supported Homeland Security Missions, but States Have Concerns about Readiness for Future Missions

Since September 11, Army and Air National Guard forces have supported a range of homeland security missions, primarily with the equipment DOD has provided for their federal missions. For example, Army National Guard units helped guard the nation's borders and airports in the aftermath of September 11, and they continue to guard key assets such as nuclear power plants. Also, the Army National Guard is currently providing security at U.S. military installations, including about 5,500 Army National Guard soldiers guarding Air Force bases in the United States as of June 2004. Similarly, Air National Guard units continue to fly patrol missions over the United States.

We performed case studies in four states to examine how the Guard has supported new homeland security missions. In all four states we visited (New Jersey, Oregon, Georgia, and Texas), Guard officials reported that their units supported homeland tasks for both state governors and federal authorities. The following are examples of how the Army National Guard has supported homeland missions since September 11:

- The New Jersey Army National Guard provided security for bridges, tunnels, and nuclear power plants for the state governor during 2003 and continues to provide security at two nuclear power plants.

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- The Oregon Army National Guard provided security at federal installations, such as the Umatilla Chemical Depot and Fort Lewis, Washington, in 2002 and 2003.
 - The Texas Army National Guard performed border security, assisting U.S. Customs agents from October 2001 to November 2002, and provided security at Air Force installations and state nuclear power plants from October 2001 to October 2002.
 - The Georgia Army National Guard provided airport security almost immediately after September 11 and was still guarding Army bases and Air Force facilities at the time of our visit in December 2003.

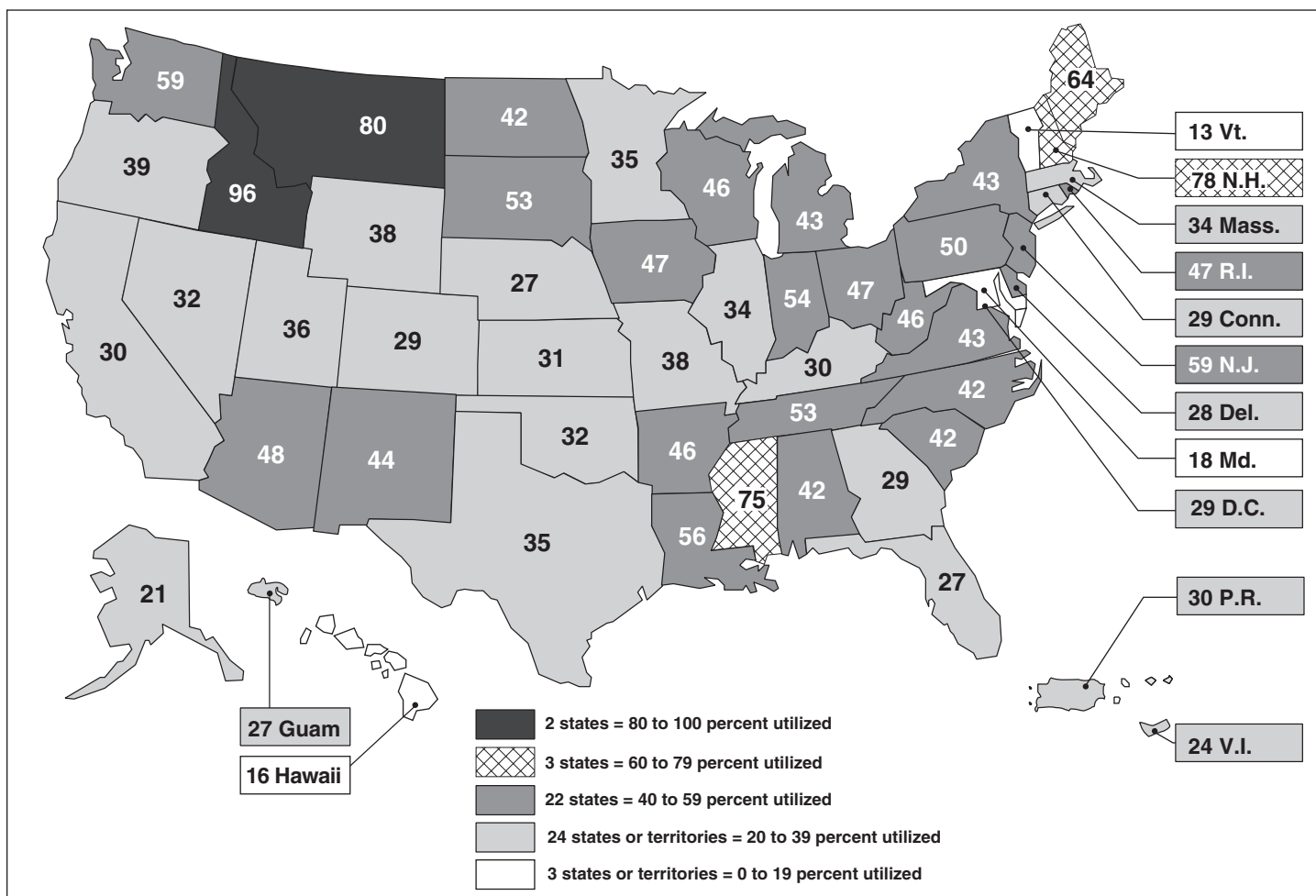
The Air National Guard has also been called on to perform new missions, such as air patrols and providing radar coverage for the continental United States. Air National Guard units in the states we visited played key roles in homeland defense missions. For example:

- The 177th Fighter Wing in New Jersey, which is strategically located near major cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C., took on the additional mission of flying patrols over these cities. Through early November 2003, the 177th had flown 1,458 air patrol missions.
- The 147th Fighter Wing in Texas flew a total of 284 patrol missions over New York City and Washington, D.C., between December 2001 and March 2002. Since September 11, the unit has also flown patrols over Houston, the Gulf Coast, and in support of special events such as the Super Bowl and the Winter Olympics.

Despite the Guard's response to homeland needs, officials in all of the states we visited expressed concerns about their Guards' preparedness for homeland security missions, especially given the high level of National Guard deployments to operations outside of the United States. As figure 2 illustrates, at the beginning of June 2004, one-half of the 50 states and 4 territories had more than 40 percent of their Army National Guard forces alerted, mobilized, or deployed for federal missions. Montana and Idaho both had high numbers of soldiers alerted, mobilized, or deployed with 80 percent and 96 percent, respectively.²¹

²¹ Since the data in figure 2 were reported, forces in several other states, including Hawaii, Nevada, and South Carolina, have been alerted or mobilized. Deployed forces from other states have also returned home.

Figure 2: Percent of Army National Guard Soldiers Alerted, Mobilized, or Deployed for Federal Missions as of June 2, 2004



Source: GAO analysis of Army National Guard data.

Figure 3: Percent of Air National Guard Soldiers Mobilized or Deployed for Federal Missions as of May 31, 2004



Some Guard officials also expressed concerns that their states' Guards had not received additional federal funding to support homeland security missions, even as homeland security missions are continuing and as the homeland security advisory system threat level has risen. While the states have funded some homeland security activities, such as guarding critical infrastructure, and purchased some equipment, such as decontamination equipment, officials said that homeland security requirements must compete with other needs in limited state budgets. Furthermore, state officials said that the Guard is not generally eligible for funding from the Department of Homeland Security because its grants are limited to "first responders," such as police or firefighters. Officials in all four states we visited raised concerns about their Guards' readiness for homeland security and other state missions. For example:

- New Jersey Guard units that responded to a terrorist threat alert in December 2003 reported that they lacked some essential equipment, such as humvees, night vision equipment, cold weather gear, chemical protective suits, and nerve agent antidote. The state paid for some essential equipment for its Guard forces during this time on an emergency basis. At the time of our visit, New Jersey was preparing to deploy large numbers of its state Guard personnel overseas and was determining how it would respond to another terrorist threat with almost 60 percent of its forces unavailable.
- Georgia officials told us that hosting the 2004 International Economic Summit of Eight Industrialized Nations, known as the G-8 Summit, in June 2004, increased Georgia's security missions such as aerial reconnaissance and surveillance, at a time when its Army National Guard aviation units were deployed overseas. National Guard units from 12 other states participated. The state also received federal funds for the G-8 Summit, which reimbursed the state for costs of activating Guard personnel. In addition, recognizing the Guard's unique role in homeland security, active component forces were commanded by a National Guard general for this operation—a new arrangement designed to provide unity of command for homeland missions that defense officials stated might serve as a model for the future.²²
- In 2002, the state of Oregon called up more than 1,400 Army National Guard soldiers to respond to one of the worst forest fire seasons in a

²² The 2004 National Defense Authorization Act authorized National Guard officers in Title 32 status to retain that status if called to active duty under Title 10. This arrangement requires agreement between the President and the governor to be in effect and allows a National Guard officer to command federal as well as National Guard troops in state status.

century. Oregon officials said that because many of the state's Guard forces and equipment were deployed and the state had only limited engineering capability left, it would not be able to provide the same level of support to civilian authorities if similar circumstances were to occur.

- All of the Texas Guard's aviation assets that would be needed to fight fires and all of the state's military police were deployed at the time of our visit. However, Texas officials said that the state had been able to meet their homeland security needs, even at the height of its Guard's overseas deployments, because its largest Army National Guard unit had not been fully deployed and, as a large state, it had ample state emergency response capability.

States are developing plans and examining resources currently available to them to address homeland security needs. For example, each state is developing a plan for protecting its infrastructure sites. Additionally, most states have entered into mutual assistance agreements that may provide them access to another state's National Guard forces in times of need.

These agreements, known as Emergency Management Assistance Compacts, are typically used to facilitate access to additional forces for natural disaster response. However, it is not clear whether these arrangements will always meet the states' needs for forces or capabilities for homeland security because, under Emergency Management Assistance Compacts, states can withhold their forces if they are needed in their home state. This situation occurred in one of our case study states.

According to state officials, New Jersey has faced an elevated terrorist threat due to specific threats against the state as well as its proximity to New York City. The officials said they requested access to another state's Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team on three occasions prior to 2004. On two occasions, the request was not granted because officials in the team's home state determined that it was needed at home. When New Jersey made a third request, in response to a specific and credible terrorist threat, access was approved.

DOD Lacks Plans and Requirements to Measure Preparedness for Homeland Missions but Is Taking Some Actions to Prepare

DOD's Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and the Northern Command are charged with leading DOD's efforts in homeland defense, and while they have taken some actions, they have not completed developing requirements or preparedness standards and measures for the homeland missions in which the National Guard is expected to participate. DOD plans to publish a comprehensive strategy for the homeland defense.²³ Until the strategy is finalized, the Northern Command will not be able to complete its planning to identify the full range of forces and resources needed for the homeland missions it may lead or civil support missions in which active or reserve forces should be prepared to assist federal or state civilian authorities. Without this information, policy makers are not in the best position to manage risks to the nation's homeland security by targeting investments to the highest priority needs and ensuring that the investments are having the desired effect.

While the Guard has traditionally undertaken a wide variety of missions for states, it is organized, trained, and equipped to perform a warfighting mission. DOD measures the readiness of its forces for combat missions by identifying the personnel and equipment required to successfully undertake the mission and assessing the extent to which units have the resources they need. Typically, Guard forces are expected to perform civil support missions with either the resources supplied for their warfighting missions or the equipment supplied by the state. Guard officials said that units have supported state missions with capabilities such as aviation, military police, medical, and others, as needs have arisen.

However, in the post-September 11 environment, Guard forces may be expected to perform missions that differ greatly from their warfighting or traditional state missions and may require different equipment, training, and specialized capabilities than they currently possess. Homeland missions, such as providing large-scale critical infrastructure protection or responding to weapons of mass destruction events in the United States, could differ substantially from conditions expected on the battlefield or from more traditional state missions, such as responding to natural disasters or civil disturbances. For example, New Jersey units that responded to a terrorist threat alert in December 2003 reported that they

²³ We previously reported on the Northern Command's activities in a classified report. GAO, *Homeland Defense: Progress Made in Organizing to Achieve Northern Command's Mission but Challenges Remain*, GAO-04-622C (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 8, 2004).

lacked some essential equipment such as humvees, night vision equipment, cold weather gear, chemical protective suits, and nerve agent antidote. In addition, state officials said that other items, such as pepper spray, which are not routinely supplied to all types of units for their warfighting mission, might be useful for potential homeland missions involving crowd control. New Jersey subsequently paid for some essential equipment for its forces during this time on an emergency basis. Until the requirements for personnel and equipment are better defined, DOD cannot measure how prepared Guard forces are for the missions they may be called to undertake. To finalize its plans, the Northern Command will have to coordinate with federal agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security, and state emergency management offices to ascertain their needs for Guard support. Furthermore, it will have to balance the needs for National Guard forces at home and overseas.

Since 1999, DOD has maintained full-time Guard forces in Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams that are dedicated to homeland security missions. These teams are comprised of 22 full-time personnel and are maintained at the highest readiness levels and can respond rapidly to support civil authorities in an event involving a weapon of mass destruction. Their role is to assist local officials in determining the nature of the attack, provide medical and technical advice, and help to identify follow-on federal and state assets that might be needed. Congress has authorized at least one team for each state and territory. Currently, 32 teams are fully operational, with the remaining 23 estimated to be operational by 2007. These teams are federally funded and trained but perform their mission under the command and control of the state governor.

The National Guard Bureau has proposed some additional initiatives that are in varied stages of implementation, which are intended to further prepare states for meeting homeland security needs. For example, the National Guard Bureau has:

- Set up a pilot program in April 2004 in 6 states (California, Colorado, Georgia, Minnesota, New York, and West Virginia) to jointly assess with state officials critical infrastructure protection policy, tactics, procedures, and implementation.
- Established a regional task force to provide the capability for 12 states to respond to a weapon of mass destruction event. These Guard forces are designed to locate and extract victims from a contaminated environment, perform mass casualty/patient decontamination, and provide medical triage and treatment in response to one of these events.

The 12 participating states are New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Illinois, Missouri, Florida, Texas, Colorado, California, Washington, and Hawaii.

- Proposed an initiative to distribute Guard personnel with key capabilities, including aviation, military police, engineering, transportation, medical, chemical, and ordnance, to each state and territory. When stationing personnel with these capabilities in a state or territory is not possible, the National Guard Bureau will try to maintain all capabilities within the geographical region.
- Developed a proposal for rotational deployment of Guard forces that would enable each state to retain 50 percent of its Guard in the state to respond to homeland security missions and to support civil authorities, while 25 percent of the state's forces deploy, and 25 percent prepare for future deployments.

While these initiatives would provide enhanced capability for homeland security in the National Guard, they will require coordination with the Army and the Air Force as well as with the states, and they might face implementation challenges. For example, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau has developed a proposal to station a mix of forces with skills useful for state missions within each state and presented the proposal to state governors. However, the Army, the Air Force, Congress, and others are also involved in making such decisions. Similarly, implementing the National Guard's proposal to retain 50 percent of a state's Guard at home for homeland security and civil support missions has not been implemented and could be difficult to achieve during periods of high-military operations. Officials from the U.S. Army Forces Command, the Army command that selects Army Guard personnel for federal activation, said that while they try to minimize the impact of federal mobilizations on the states, this becomes more and more difficult as the level of federal activations increases.

Conclusions

The September 11 terrorist attacks and the global war on terrorism have placed new demands for ready forces on the National Guard—especially the Army National Guard—for overseas, homeland security, and homeland defense operations. At the same time, it is apparent that the Army National Guard's structure as a follow-on force to the active Army is not consistent with its current use as an operational force. The current demands for large numbers of fully manned and equipped forces to support overseas operations have forced the Guard to transfer personnel and equipment from nondeploying units to deploying units, degrading the readiness of the nondeployed units. This continued decline in readiness of nondeployed

units hinders the Army National Guard's ability to continue to provide the ready forces in the short term that DOD estimates will be needed to meet operational needs over the next 3 to 5 years. However, DOD's current budget continues to fund the Guard at peacetime levels, and it is not clear whether future budgets will include funding to improve readiness. In the longer term, while DOD is reevaluating its strategy for the new security environment, it is important for it to decide what the role of the National Guard will be in the 21st century. This decision is important because it will determine the missions for which the Guard will have to prepare, the number and types of units it will need, and how much personnel, equipment, and training it should be provided. Furthermore, until DOD establishes the Guard's role in the post-September 11 environment and develops a strategy to prepare its forces to meet new demands, it cannot be sure that it is best managing risks by investing its resources to target the highest priority needs and Congress, in turn, will not have detailed information on which to base funding and policy decisions. Continuing to structure and fund the Guard under current policy will result in continued personnel transfers and readiness declines for its units that may hamper its ability to sustain much needed Guard involvement in the global war on terrorism over the long term.

At the same time that the Guard's overseas missions have increased—reducing the personnel and equipment available for state missions—homeland security needs have also increased. However, DOD has not fully defined what role the National Guard will have in the homeland missions DOD will lead or support and how it will balance this role with its increased participation in overseas operations. Absent a clearly defined role for all its homeland missions, the Guard cannot identify requirements for successfully executing this role and the standards and measures it will use to assess preparedness for all its homeland missions. Until it has these standards and measures, DOD does not have the means to determine whether the Guard is prepared to meet homeland security needs with its current structure and assets. As such, policy makers are not in the best position to manage the risks to the nation's homeland security by targeting investments to the highest priority needs and ensuring that they are having the desired effect.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Army to develop and submit to Congress a strategy that addresses the Army National Guard's needs for the global war on terrorism, including the Army National Guard's anticipated role, missions, and requirements for personnel and equipment in both the near and long term. The near-term portion of the strategy should address the current decline in readiness for overseas missions and the Army National Guard's plans to provide the ready forces needed for the global war on terrorism over the next 3 to 5 years. Specifically it should include

- an analysis of how support for current operations will affect the readiness of nondeployed Army National Guard forces for future overseas and domestic missions and
- a plan to manage the risk associated with the declining readiness of nondeployed Army National Guard forces, including identifying funding for any personnel and equipment required to mitigate unacceptable levels of risk.

The long-term portion of the strategy should detail how the Army plans to restructure and provide the Guard resources—personnel, equipment, and training—consistent with its 21st century role, including

- how the Army National Guard will be restructured to support future missions and ensure operational compatibility with active forces and
- the time frames for implementing restructuring actions, the resources needed to achieve compatibility with active forces and the appropriate level of readiness for their missions.

As DOD completes its homeland defense strategy and the Northern Command refines its concept and operational plans for homeland defense and support to civil authorities and defines requirements, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Under Secretaries of Defense for Policy and for Personnel and Readiness, in consultation with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Commander of the U.S. Northern Command, Commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, the Chiefs of the Army and the Air Force, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and appropriate officials in the Department of Homeland Security, to take the following four actions:

- Establish the full range of the National Guard's homeland missions, including those led by DOD and those conducted in support of civilian authorities.

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- Identify the National Guard's capabilities to perform these missions and any shortfalls in personnel, equipment, and training needed to perform these missions successfully.
 - Develop a plan that addresses any shortfalls of personnel, equipment, and training, assigns responsibility for actions, establishes time frames for implementing the plan, and identifies required funding.
 - Establish readiness standards and measures for the Guard's homeland security missions so that the readiness for these missions can be systematically measured and accurately reported.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs provided written comments on a draft of this report. The department generally agreed with our recommendations and cited actions it is taking to implement them. DOD's comments are reprinted in their entirety in appendix II.

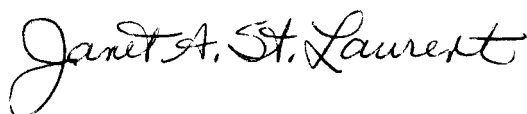
DOD partially agreed with our recommendation that DOD develop and submit to Congress a strategy that addresses the Army National Guard's short- and long-term needs for the global war on terrorism, including the Army National Guard's role, missions, and requirements for personnel and equipment, and its plans to manage the risk associated with the declining readiness of nondeployed Army National Guard forces. In its comments, DOD said that the Army has conducted the recommended analysis, developed a plan as outlined in the Army Campaign Plan, and communicated its plan to numerous members of Congress. We agree that the Army Campaign Plan is a significant step in planning to address National Guard readiness problems because it identifies goals and objectives and assigns responsibilities for actions to plan for transforming its forces. However, we believe the Army Campaign Plan does not fully meet the intent of our recommendation because it lacks specificity about how the Army will address the readiness of nondeployed Army National Guard forces in the near term, how all Guard units will be converted to the modular design, or how the Guard's equipment will be modernized to make it compatible with active Army equipment. Furthermore, DOD has not identified the funding needed for restructuring all Guard units, including support units. Therefore, we believe the Army should develop more detailed plans to fully implement our recommendation. In its comments, DOD said that the Army agrees that it should continue its analysis to identify and minimize readiness impacts to the current force.

DOD concurred with our recommendation to establish the full range of the National Guard's homeland missions, to identify the capabilities needed to perform those missions and develop a plan to address any shortfalls, and

to establish readiness standards and measures for the Guard's homeland security missions. However, in its comments, DOD said it would take a different approach to accomplishing the tasks than we recommended. Rather than having the Assistant Secretary for Homeland Defense take the lead in all four areas as we recommended, DOD said that the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, working in close coordination, should take the lead in implementing the actions we recommended. We believe the approach DOD proposes meets the intent of our recommendation, and we have modified the wording of our recommendation to reflect the proposed change in organizational responsibilities.

As we agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution of it until 7 days from the date of this letter. We will then send copies to the Secretary of Defense; the Secretaries of the Army and the Air Force; the Chief, National Guard Bureau; and the Director, Office of Management and Budget. We will also make copies available to others upon request. In addition, this report will be available at no charge on the GAO Website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-4402. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.



Janet A. St. Laurent
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

We interviewed officials in the Army National Guard, the Air National Guard, the National Guard Bureau, and the Department of the Army and Department of the Air Force headquarters. We supplemented this information with visits to several Department of Defense (DOD) offices, including the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs; the Office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Joint Force Headquarters, Homeland Security. We also developed case studies of recent federal and state National Guard operations in four states—Georgia, New Jersey, Oregon, and Texas. The states were chosen to represent a mix of geographic areas, Air and Army National Guard units with different specialties, and units that had been or expected to be activated for state or federal missions. In each state we visited the Adjutant General and offices within the Joint National Guard headquarters. We also interviewed leaders from a field artillery battalion, an armor battalion, two enhanced brigades, an air control wing, an airlift wing, an air-refueling wing, and three fighter wings.

To examine the National Guard's warfighting requirements in this post-September 11, 2001 security environment, we obtained and analyzed data on state and federal activations of the Army and the Air National Guard before and after September 11, 2001. We supplemented this with interviews, briefings, and documentation from officials from the four case study states and from the National Guard Bureau, the U.S. Army Forces Command, First Air Force, and the U.S. Air Force Air Combat Command and Air and Space Expeditionary Force Center. To examine the ways in which the National Guard has adapted for its new missions, we interviewed officials in the four case study states and officials at Army mobilization stations at Fort Hood, Texas, Fort Benning, Georgia, and Fort Dix, New Jersey, and at the First and Fifth Continental United States Armies. To identify Guard usage trends and stressed capabilities, we analyzed DOD's personnel tempo database, Army National Guard and Air National Guard data on the types of units mobilized, and information from the Army National Guard on the transformation of field artillery and other support units into military police and security force units. We obtained information on personnel and equipment transfers from the National Guard Bureau and information on equipment shortages from DOD publications and reports. We reviewed equipment data, interviewed data sources, and obtained information on data collection methods and internal control measures applied to the data. We determined the equipment data were sufficiently reliable for our objectives. We also reviewed documents on planned changes to the Army Guard's force structure, such as the Army Campaign Plan and the Army Transformation Roadmap. We also discussed

personnel, training, and equipment issues with unit, state, Guard Bureau, and mobilization station officials and force providers.

To assess the National Guard's emerging homeland security needs, in each of the four case study states we interviewed Guard homeland security officials and leaders from Army and Air National Guard units with recent homeland security experience. We also met with officials from the National Guard Bureau (Homeland Defense), the Department of the Army, three Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams, the Air Combat Command and Air and Space Expeditionary Force Center, the Army Forces Command, the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (Military Assistance to Civilian Authorities) (now part of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Homeland Defense)), the Joint Director of Military Support, and the Joint Task Force, Civil Support. We also obtained information from the U.S. Joint Forces Command and reviewed unclassified, publicly available documents from the U.S. Northern Command. In addition, we reviewed the National Guard's role in rotation plans for future operations. We identified the challenges facing DOD, the states, and Congress in organizing and equipping the Guard for both overseas and homeland security missions based upon our analysis of the Guard's current status and discussions with National Guard officials.

We conducted our review between April 2003 and September 2004 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and determined that the data were sufficiently reliable to answer our objectives. For example, we interviewed data sources about how they ensured their own data accuracy and reviewed their data collection methods, standard operating procedures, and other internal control measures. We reviewed available data for inconsistencies, and, when applicable, performed computer testing to assess data validity and reliability.

Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense



RESERVE AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1500

Ms. Janet A. St. Laurent
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

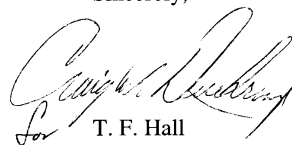
Dear Ms. St. Laurent:

This is the Department of Defense response to the GAO draft report, "RESERVE FORCES: Actions Needed to Better Prepare the National Guard for Future Overseas and Domestic Missions," dated September 16, 2004 (Code 350546/GAO-05-21). The Department partially concurs with recommendation 1 and 2 and concurs with recommendation 3. Detailed comments on the GAO recommendations and report are enclosed.

The point of contact for this office is Colonel Cora Jackson-Chandler, OASD/RA (RT&M), at (703) 695-4126.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft report.

Sincerely,



T. F. Hall

Enclosure:
As stated



GAO-05-21/GAO CODE 350546

**“RESERVE FORCES: ACTIONS NEEDED TO BETTER
PREPARE THE NATIONAL GUARD FOR FUTURE
OVERSEAS AND DOMESTIC MISSIONS”**

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

RECOMMENDATION 1: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Army to develop and submit to Congress a strategy that addresses the Army National Guard’s needs for the global war on terrorism, including the Army National Guard’s anticipated role, missions, and requirements for personnel and equipment in both the near- and the long-term. The near-term portion of the strategy should address the current decline in readiness for overseas missions and the Army National Guard’s plans to provide the ready forces needed for the global war on terrorism over the next 3 to 5 years. Specifically it should include

- an analysis of how support for current operations will affect the readiness of nondeployed Army National Guard forces for future overseas and domestic missions, and
- a plan to manage the risk associated with the declining readiness of nondeployed Army National Guard forces, including identifying funding for any personnel and equipment required to mitigate unacceptable levels of risk. (Page 28/Draft Report)

DoD RESPONSE: Partially concur. The Army has conducted this analysis, developed a plan (the Army Campaign Plan) and briefed the results to numerous members of Congress. The Army is taking steps to posture the Army National Guard for prolonged operations. A cyclical construct has been developed to ensure that reserve component units of the Army returning from operations Outside the Continental United States reset and/or reorganize into modular formations and are placed on a ramp to combat readiness over a five-year period. The Army agrees that this analysis should continue to identify readiness impacts to the current force, both deployed and non-deployed. The Army also agrees that measures should be identified to minimize those impacts in the near-term for non-deployed force.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Army to develop and submit to Congress a strategy that addresses the Army National Guard’s needs for the global war on terrorism, including the Army National Guard’s anticipated role, missions, and requirements for personnel and equipment in both the near- and long-term. The long-term portion of the strategy should detail how the Army plans to restructure and provide the Guard resources-personnel, equipment, and training-consistent with its 21st century role, including

Note: Page numbers in the draft report may differ from those in this report.

- how the Army National guard will be restructured to support future missions and ensure operational compatibility with active forces, and
- the time frames for implementing restructuring actions, the resources needed to achieve compatibility with active forces, and the appropriate level of readiness for their missions. (Page 28/Draft Report)

DoD RESPONSE: Partially concur. The Army has included a strategy for Army National Guard modularity and restructuring in the Army Campaign Plan. Included in this plan are the timelines and funding priority necessary to achieve a modular Army National Guard. The report focuses on the Army National Guard's structure and readiness for overseas operations and the need for clear definition of the National Guard's role in homeland security. Similarly, the Air Force must embrace innovative organizational constructs to respond to a decrease in platforms due to modernization and reduced infrastructure. To this end, the Future Total Force office was created in October 2003 at the direction of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force for the purpose of leveraging the collective expertise of the Total Force

RECOMMENDATION 3: As DoD completes its homeland defense strategy and the Northern Command refines its concept and operational plans for homeland defense and support to civil authorities and defines requirements, the GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense, in consultation with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Commander of the U.S. Northern Command, the Chiefs of the Army and the Air Force, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and appropriate officials in the Department of Homeland Security, to take the following four actions:

- Establish the full range of the National Guard's homeland missions including those led by DoD and those conducted in support of civilian authorities.
- Identify the National Guard's capabilities to perform these missions and any shortfalls in personnel, equipment, and training needed to perform these missions successfully.
- Develop a plan that addresses any shortfalls of personnel, equipment, and training, assigns responsibility for actions, establishes time frames for implementing the plan, and identifies required funding.
- Establish readiness standards and measures for the Guard's homeland security missions so that the readiness for these missions can be systemically measured and accurately reported. (Page 29/Draft Report)

DoD RESPONSE: Concur. The Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness and the Under Secretary for Policy to take the lead for specific actions directed by Recommendation 3. The two OSD organizations responsible for the four actions will work in close coordination with all of the organizations listed in Recommendation 3.

Appendix III: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contacts

Janet St. Laurent (202) 512-4402
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Acknowledgments

In addition to the persons named above Suzanne Wren, Barbara Gannon, James Lewis, Tina Morgan, Jacquelyn Randolph, V. Malvern Saavedra, Alissa Czyz, Kenneth Patton, Jennifer Popovic, and Jay Smale also made major contributions to this report.

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