

DOCUMENT RESUME

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Report to Secretary, Department of Defense; by Fred J. Shafer,  
Director, Logistics and Communications Div.

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Organization Concerned: Department of the Navy; Department of  
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Congressional Relevance: House Committee on Armed Services;  
Senate Committee on Armed Services.

Authority: Department of Defense Appropriation Authorization Act  
of 1978.

Previous GAO reviews of military readiness reporting identified the following problem areas: the interpretation of readiness reporting criteria was not uniform; the condition of equipment was not properly reported; the reporting system did not adequately reflect capability for each mission; and the reports did not always contain adequate information. Findings/Conclusions: The state-of-the-art in defining, measuring, and reporting readiness is in a state of flux. Improvements have been made, and actions are underway for further improvements. The Army is in the process of implementing major new reporting procedures, the Navy has developed a long-range plan to revamp its reporting system, and the Air Force has implemented a new system and is trying to improve it. The inability of readiness reporting to relate readiness to funding requirements was noted. Recent congressional action requires the Secretary of Defense to submit a report on the quantifiable and measurable material readiness requirements for the armed forces. Subsequent budget submissions must include data relating the proposed appropriations to these established requirements. Current objectives set forth by the Department of Defense are to: (1) improve its ability to define and measure readiness and relate changes in resources applied to changes in readiness experienced or projected; and (2) adjust the allocation of its resources to attain the desired levels of readiness. (Author/SW)



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

LOGISTICS AND COMMUNICATIONS  
DIVISION

B-146896

21 DEC 1977

The Honorable  
The Secretary of Defense

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We have recently completed a review of military readiness reporting under assignment code 947247. The objectives of this review were to (1) evaluate actions taken in response to our prior reports and (2) assess the Department of Defense's current capability to measure and report readiness.

In past years, we have issued a number of reports which have dealt with deficiencies in military readiness reporting (particularly with the Force Status and Identity Report). Examples of readiness-reporting problems identified in these reports are included as enclosure I. Some of the major reporting problems noted were that:

- The interpretation of readiness-reporting criteria was not uniform.
- The condition of equipment was not properly reported.
- The reporting system did not adequately reflect capability for each mission.
- : did not always contain accurate  
in.

During the course of our recent review, we found that the state- of readiness reporting is in a state of flux. Improvements have been made, and actions are underway for further improvements. Each service is striving to (1) improve its readiness reporting and (2) correct problems identified in our prior reports and their own internal studies as follows:

- The Army is in the process of implementing major new reporting procedures.

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--The Navy has developed a long-range plan to revamp its reporting system.

--The Air Force has implemented a new system and is trying to improve it.

Details of these actions are included in enclosure II.

During our review, we also found that the inability of readiness reporting to relate readiness to funding requirements has been highlighted in recent congressional and Defense actions. (See encl. II for details.) Most significant among these actions was the amendment to the Department of Defense Appropriation Authorization Act of 1978, which requires the Secretary of Defense to submit a report on the quantifiable and measurable material readiness requirements for the armed forces. Also, it requires that subsequent budget submissions must include data relating the proposed appropriations to these established requirements.

We also found that Defense's current planning and programing guidance, dated March 11, 1977, has recognized the above need as well as other improvements needed in measuring readiness. The objectives set forth in the guidance were that Defense (1) improve its ability to define and measure readiness, and relate changes in resources applied to changes in readiness experienced or projected and (2) adjust the allocation of its resources to attain the desired levels of readiness.

In view of (1) the congressional requirements for specific readiness data, (2) the ongoing and planned actions of the services to improve their readiness-reporting systems, and (3) your guidance that specifies the tasks to be accomplished in achieving better readiness and resource requirements relationships, we do not contemplate any further reporting on this subject and are not making any recommendations at this time. We do, however, plan to evaluate the actions taken to improve readiness reporting and to meet congressional reporting requirements at a later date.

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Copies of this letter, with enclosures, are being sent to the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force; and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "F. J. Shafer".

F. J. Shafer  
Director

Enclosures - 2

EXAMPLES OF READINESS-REPORTING PROBLEMSIDENTIFIED IN PRIOR GAO REPORTS"Impaired Readiness of the Navy's Atlantic and Six Fleets"  
(B-146964, June 30, 1970).

- Improvements are needed in the criteria used for measuring and reporting combat readiness in order to increase the usefulness of readiness reports through a more accurate estimate of ship and squadron capabilities.
- Present criteria do not permit uniform application of readiness standards and do not result, therefore, in comparable readiness of similar units.
- There is a need for increased surveillance over the readiness-reporting system.

"Readiness of Navy Air and Surface Units for Antisubmarine Warfare"  
(B-160877, Mar. 11, 1975).

- The criteria used to measure overall combat capabilities were poorly defined, subject to varied interpretations, and inconsistently applied.
- The Navy has not established objective criteria for determining the status of units' combat readiness in specific mission areas, such as antisubmarine warfare.

"Needs for Improvements in Readiness of Strategic Army Forces"  
(B-146896, May 8, 1972).

- Readiness reports did not always contain accurate information which would permit the command official at division levels, and at the higher echelons, to adequately evaluate the readiness of the division.
- Revisions need to be made in the criteria used in preparing readiness reports to facilitate their uniform interpretation and to encourage more accurate reporting.

"Another Look at the Readiness of Strategic Army Forces"  
(B-146896, June 9, 1977).

- Equipment readiness-reporting criterion needs to be revised by (1) rescinding the practice of repairing equipment on paper without actually doing the job and (2) simplifying the equipment serviceability system.
- Personnel readiness-reporting criterion needs to include complete military occupational specialties (MOSs) in computing personnel qualifications.
- Training readiness-reporting criterion needs to require, at least periodically, a realistic evaluation of the resources and time needed to reach a ready-training condition.

"Readiness of First Line U.S. Combat Armored Units in Europe"  
(B-146896, July 23, 1976).

- Units are not required to report on the readiness condition of their ammunition.
- The Army's reporting system provides for combining key combat personnel and equipment with other less critical, more numerous, and more ready unit resources and for applying judgmental factors by various levels of command. As a result, readiness ratings are not always a reliable indicator of combat readiness.

"Readiness of the Air Force in Europe" (B-146896, Apr. 25, 1973).

- The readiness status of certain aircraft units was lower than reported because the criteria used to measure the units' readiness did not consider all pertinent factors and because some measurable areas, such as manpower and equipment, were not always properly reported.

ONGOING ACTIONS TO IMPROVEREADINESS REPORTINGDEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

All previous GAO reports on Army force readiness--including active and reserve component units--have concluded that readiness reports were not being prepared accurately; therefore, the reports do not provide higher echelons adequate information to assess readiness. Particularly, these reviews have disclosed that

- the interpretation of readiness-reporting criteria was not uniform,
- the actual condition of equipment was not being reported, and
- the number of personnel being reported as qualified for their positions was overstated.

Summary of Army study

The Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S Army War College completed an evaluation of the Army's readiness-reporting system and its functions in June 1976. The Army directed the study in order to (1) assess the system's validity and reliability and (2) identify ways to improve the system, the manner in which it functions, and its general reputation. The study results indicated that the readiness-reporting system is held in disrepute by Army personnel most familiar with it and that most personnel believed the readiness report did not reflect a unit's true combat condition. Therefore, the study made several recommendations to improve the present system.

Major changes to the Army's  
readiness-reporting system

In response to prior GAO reports and the Strategic Studies Institute report, the Army has rewritten and reorganized its readiness-reporting criteria. The proposed criteria are currently being field tested and are expected to be implemented in late 1978. The major changes to the current criteria include the following.

Internal reorganization and  
rewrite of the regulation

Army In order to improve comprehension at the unit level, the

- deleted what was deemed to be unnecessary material from the readiness-reporting regulation,
- consolidated instructions for reporting unit readiness in simple "by-the-numbers" language,
- oriented the instructions toward the unit level as opposed to higher levels in the reporting chain, and
- separated reporting instructions from automatic data processing (ADP) terms and instructions.

The current regulation requires a unit commander to read practically the entire regulation, sift through ADP instructions, and consolidate isolated and disjointed instructions in order to prepare the report.

Rewording of objectives

The effectiveness of the reporting system is totally dependent upon readiness ratings reflecting actual conditions and providing units reasonable responsibilities in achieving readiness. The current unit objective, however, is to achieve a readiness condition which equals its authorized level of organization. The Army War College study found that this objective inhibits reporting actual conditions. The concept that a unit's readiness condition should at least equal its authorized level of organization tends to become unachievable in practice since most of the resources necessary to achieve this objective are beyond the unit's ability to control. In addition, achieving this objective in areas, such as training and equipment status, is also a function of both the unit's relative priority and availability of resources.

The revised criteria are designed to release unit commanders from an obligation to achieve a readiness condition which equals their authorized level of organization. Instead, unit commanders are to maintain the highest possible training proficiency and equipment serviceability, assure that ratings reflect actual conditions, and correct problems within available resources, if feasible. The ability to



compare a unit's readiness rating to its authorized level of organization, however, will still be available to higher level managers.

#### Description of readiness indicators

According to the Army's force structure doctrine, a unit rated at levels 1, 2, or 3 has sufficient resources to initiate combat operations, but with a reduction in sustainability at levels 2 and 3. Therefore, even though a unit is described as "marginal" at level 3, it could be used in combat. The revised criteria eliminate the descriptive ratings of fully, substantially, and marginally ready. A unit will be rated "ready" or "not ready" with the ready category stratified into the three levels. In addition, readiness management at higher levels is to consider the overall and training ratings as primary indicators of unit capability, while the equipment and personnel ratings are to indicate resources being provided to the unit, but not precise measurements of capability.

#### Senior enlisted grade percentage

Current personnel qualification-rating procedures are based on the first 3 digits of MOS. This procedure, however, overlooks personnel grade and experience--the fourth and fifth MOS digits--which some commanders believe is a significant part of readiness. In order to disclose this important factor, the revised criteria provides for a third personnel indicator--senior grade percentage, which includes officers, and noncommissioned officers in grades E5 to E9.

#### Change in basis for equipment status ratings

The current equipment status indicator depicts the unit's logistics readiness considering both the availability and condition of specified items, and quantities of major equipment being reported. These major items are also required to be listed in the unit's reports feeding the Material Readiness Report. The equipment is rated based on its applicable Equipment Serviceability Criteria. The revised system, however, uses a simplified, combat maintenance inspection system to replace the Equipment Serviceability Criteria and uses information from the Material Readiness Report to feed unit readiness ratings under the Force Status and Identity Report. This allows a unit to use a single instead of a

dual system for evaluating, recording, and reporting equipment. In addition, the rating reflects an average equipment status over a given time period rather than a snapshot, as of the 20th of each month.

Addition of a "pacing list" of  
major equipment systems

Army field visits and previous GAO investigations of equipment readiness have confirmed that significant problems exist due to loop-holes in the current criteria. For example, a unit may be rated "fully combat ready" even though significant numbers of major equipment items are missing or nonoperational. The Army has not developed lists of reportable equipment to allow ratings to be based on 100 percent of equipment lines because it believed that measuring equipment availability against such lists would cause misleading low ratings.

The revised criteria provide for a "pacing" list of major equipment items. This list contains those items which are most important to a unit's ability to fight and, therefore, require close and continuing monitoring at all levels. The pacing items must meet the specified criteria for the readiness level reported by the unit. The equipment readiness rating is not to be influenced by the higher rating of nonpacing items. In other words, the reported readiness condition of equipment cannot be higher than the actual condition of the pacing items.

Revised guidance for evaluated training

Current readiness-reporting procedures instruct unit commanders to

- assume that personnel and equipment necessary to completely fill the unit will be provided and then
- estimate the time required to become fully trained.

These assumptions are open to varied interpretations at all levels and, for the most part, are unrealistic. The revised criteria is designed to eliminate this assumption.

In addition to the above training criteria changes, the Forces Command recently implemented supplemental training readiness guidelines designed to

- establish standard procedures for evaluating training readiness;
- provide guidance to commanders by identifying mission-related, training readiness indicators and specifying the minimum frequency with which these will be accomplished;
- assist commanders in achieving a more objective and realistic evaluation of unit-training readiness; and
- provide a vehicle that could highlight to higher headquarters those areas where additional resources are needed.

The supplemental instructions prescribe by unit type--e.g., armor, infantry, and artillery--those training requirements necessary to be fully combat ready.

#### DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

Previous GAO reports involving readiness issues identified and suggested several ways to improve the Navy's readiness-reporting system. Followup on some of these suggestions showed that the Navy has taken action to implement various improvements.

For example, several GAO reports showed that some unit commanders reported a higher readiness status than was justified by the available criteria. Although inaccuracies still exist in the system, our current review showed that the Navy has strongly emphasized accurate readiness reporting to eliminate the "report card" image often associated with readiness reports. One recent Navy headquarters message to all commanders stated:

"It is emphasized that the NAVFORSTAT report is not a report card and should not be interpreted as such at any level of command. The Navy 'can do' spirit which is matter of pride must not be allowed to influence the timeliness, accuracy, and objectivity of reports. \* \* \* 'Tell it like it is and tell us when it happens.'"

At all levels visited, personnel responsible for readiness reports appeared to emphasize honest and accurate readiness reporting.

In June 1975, Chief of Naval Operations Objective Number 10 (CNO 10) was established for "Readiness Reporting and Analysis." CNO 10 recognized that the existing readiness-reporting system (1) did not adequately provide resource and mission degradation data on which to base management decisions, (2) provided insufficient objectivity in reporting, and (3) did not provide feedback to the fleet.

In response to CNO 10, a Navy Readiness Reporting and Analysis System Improvement Program (NRRAS) was instituted. The program was to be accomplished in several phases beginning in September 1975 and ending in October 1977. NRRAS should provide the following:

- Specific reasons for readiness degradation.
- Better correlation of dollars spent to reported readiness of fleet missions.
- Assistance to Navy managers in budget formulation and substantiation from a fleet readiness viewpoint.

Some actions accomplished under CNO 10 and NRRAS to date include:

- A worksheet that provides for more stringent reporting criteria.
- Increasing the readiness degradation codes from 75 to 1500.
- Establishment of a Management Information Systems Office to provide instantaneous automated readiness data to the Navy staff.
- Planning for establishment of a Composite Operations Reporting System (COORS) for the purpose of consolidating four types of readiness reports into one-- expected in mid-1980.

#### DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

Unlike the other services, the Air Force has a Unit Capability Measurement System (UCMS) that measures percentages of planned output for each assigned unit mission. This percentage capability is computed by comparing the quantities of personnel and equipment required for each

mission to the quantities which are available and mission qualified. The outputs of each unit have been quantified in terms usable by commanders--i.e., aircraft or missile sorties.

Regular Air Force, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard combat and combat support units having major equipment (e.g., missiles and aircraft) authorizations are required to report their capabilities under this system. UCMS, which became fully operational in February 1976, provides all command echelons a standard operational management system to assess each unit's capability to perform its missions.

Units are authorized the quantities of resources necessary to accomplish mission tasks. UCMS provides the command echelons with an inventory of each unit's available resources through the measurement of four major resource categories: (1) major equipment, (2) missile or aircraft crews, (3) total personnel (less crews and civilians), and (4) total essential skill equivalents. The units compute the percentage capability in these resource categories by dividing the authorized quantities into the quantities which are available and meet mission requirements. Mission requirements, such as the number of aircraft and sorties, are determined by the designed operational capability (explained below). The unit's overall capability is based on its capability in the measured resource categories. The system also provides that unit commanders can include an estimate of a unit's overall capability if the above measurements do not reflect the true capability of the unit because of the influence of nonmeasured factors. These factors could include supply levels, limitations in support facilities, morale, and shortages in single essential skills.

#### Designed operational capability

Air Force commands, with the review and concurrence of Air Force headquarters, provide their units with a description of each assigned mission and the resource categories to be measured for each mission. This information is shown in each designed operational capability (DOC) statement. The DOC statement identifies the mission tasks in quantifiable terms, such as the (1) number of aircraft or missiles the unit must launch, (2) time allowed to launch the aircraft or missiles, (3) number of aircraft sorties which must be provided over a specified period of time, and (4) flight hour duration of each sortie. Each statement also shows the percentage capability the unit is expected to maintain for each mission and whether it is a primary or secondary mission.

The development and implementation of UCMS represents a significant improvement in the Air Force readiness-reporting system. In a 1973 report entitled "Readiness of the Air Force in Europe" (B-146896, Apr. 25, 1973), GAO identified three deficiencies in system design or readiness criteria. The deficiencies involved the Combat Readiness Rating System, which UCMS has replaced. The following is a discussion of these deficiencies and how UCMS has corrected them.

- The reporting system did not adequately reflect capability for each mission. Units with multiple missions prepared only one readiness report showing overall unit capability. The readiness of the units varied by mission. For example, a unit may have been rated "C-1" in its air-to-air mission and "C-4" in its reconnaissance mission. Under UCMS, the commands provide units with a separate DOC statement for each assigned mission. Units compute and report capability separately for each mission.
- Reporting criteria specified that units were to compute capability based on a comparison of assigned versus authorized personnel and equipment. Units were including in computations assigned personnel, including crews, who were on leave, sick, or otherwise unavailable for duty. UCMS criteria specifies that only those assigned personnel who can be present for duty within mission response times may be considered in computing capability.
- Personnel readiness criteria did not include a precise definition of critical skills. Units were inconsistent in identifying and reporting on availability of critical skills. Under UCMS, the commands are to designate on each DOC statement the Air Force Specialty Codes for those skills considered as critical for mission support.

The Air Force has stated that measuring combat readiness is a difficult problem. It believes that UCMS, although more precise than the former system, is not the final answer. The Air Force is presently studying readiness reporting to determine how to refine UCMS into a more responsive, usable system. Studies are being conducted by an Air Force headquarters

Improved Readiness Information Measurement System Working Team and by the Rand Corporation. A question raised by Rand for discussion purposes is whether "\*\*\* a recitation of resources available and their condition \*\*\*" is sufficient to measure readiness.

The Air Force acknowledges that one of the most basic problems in determining the readiness of its combat and combat support forces is the lack of centralized and available information. The following is an excerpt from a recent Air Force report discussing this problem:

"Though it is impossible to deal exhaustively with the subject of force readiness in a single manageable document, the need remains for a document which at least identifies the readiness status of our forces and identifies and responds to significant problems which affect that status."

The Air Force has begun preparing biannual readiness reports in which readiness data from various sources, including UCMS, is brought together. Rand is studying methods to improve these biannual reports.

#### OVERALL EFFORTS TO IMPROVE READINESS REPORTING

Readiness reporting has received considerable attention in the past few years--particularly by the Congress. One of the major concerns has been the lack of ability to identify critical restraints to successful mission accomplishment along with the action and funds needed to eliminate them. The need and concern for attaining this ability can be best expressed by recent Department of Defense and congressional actions.

#### Department of Defense study

As a result of an expression of interest by the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff tasked the Weapons System Evaluation Group (WESG) to perform a study with the overall objective of showing how, and to what extent, the readiness of U.S. Forces, including major types of combat units, is related to the resources allocated to maintain readiness.

WESG's review and assessment of the primary Defense systems for measuring and reporting combat readiness showed that, among other things, they are supposed to indicate the

impact of resource deficiencies on the readiness of units, but they are not designed to provide information on the cost of resources that affect readiness. The WESG study identified potential means for obtaining better measures of weapon system and personnel readiness, and also showed how the costs of resources that affect these measures could be estimated.

### Congressional interest and action

For the past several years, Defense funding for readiness has been subjected to increasing scrutiny by the Congress. Operation and maintenance costs are considered to be an area where some flexibility and a potential for cost reduction exists. Thus, there have been greater demands from the Congress for justification of operation and maintenance budget requests for activities affecting readiness. A completely satisfactory justification has been difficult because of the absence of tangible outputs resulting from the application of resources allocated to maintain readiness.

The problem is further compounded by the apparent inability, in some instances, of the readiness measurement systems of the services to reflect the impact on readiness of resource deficiencies. An example is the Navy's fiscal year 1976 budget request to support flying hours for peacetime training. The Navy had attributed degradation in the readiness of its aviation units to an inadequate level of training, and therefore, requested an increase in flying hours. An analysis by the Senate Committee on Appropriations showed that the cause of the degraded readiness was concentrated in areas other than training, and therefore, the Navy's request for an increase in flying hours was denied.

Recent congressional actions on Defense's fiscal year 1978 appropriation request emphasize the need for Defense to be able to more closely relate resources and the cost thereof. The House and Senate Appropriation Committees agreed to appropriate funds to Defense to meet inflation but stipulated that these funds would be used, to the maximum extent possible, to sustain and enhance military readiness and would not be diverted to other purposes. In addition, a Secretary of Defense Readiness Fund was established to also enhance military readiness through transfers to the operation and maintenance appropriations. These funds can be used by the Secretary of Defense for high priority items directly associated with maintaining or



improving military readiness. The Congress also stipulated that it be informed of all transfers made pursuant to this authority. The current readiness-reporting system alone, however, does not provide sufficient information to justify such transfers.

In a separate action, the Senate and House Armed Services Committees placed the following requirement in the Department of Defense Appropriation Authorization Act, 1978.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Sec. 812. The Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives, not later than February 15, 1978, a report setting forth quantifiable and measurable materiel readiness requirements for the Armed Forces, including the Reserve components thereof, the monthly readiness status of the Armed Forces, including the reserve components thereof, during fiscal year 1977, and any changes in such requirements and status projected for fiscal years 1978 and 1979 and in the five-year defense program. The Secretary of Defense shall also inform such committees of any subsequent changes in the aforementioned materiel readiness requirements and the reasons for such changes. The budget for the Department of Defense submitted to the Congress for fiscal year 1979 and subsequent fiscal years shall include data projecting the effect of the appropriations requested for materiel readiness requirements."

\* \* \* \* \*

Prior to the passage of the above act, the Secretary of Defense made the following comments regarding the readiness reporting requirement.

"Sec. 801 [subsequently codified as Sec. 812]--This provision would require a detailed report on the materiel readiness of the Armed Forces that is beyond the capability of our current readiness reporting, measurement, and analytical tools to produce. The type of information which section 801 would require, though now unobtainable, is clearly desirable. I am not satisfied with the Department's current

ability to define and measure readiness, and to relate applied resources to resulting readiness. I have already tasked the Military Departments to develop the necessary measurement, analysis, and resource programming capability. I recommend Section 801 be revised to recognize the current state-of-the-art in readiness measurement and analysis with the understanding that I will report to the Committees periodically on our progress toward acquiring the information we all desire."

The above tasking referred to is Defense's Planning and Programming Guidance, dated March 11, 1977, which was as follows:

"a. Readiness and Resource Requirements Relationships

(1) The Defense Guidance requires that our combat forces be maintained in a high state of combat readiness. Our ability to reach that goal is severely limited by the lack of meaningful definitions of readiness that are consistent among Services and our current readiness. It is essential that the Department: improve its ability to define and measure readiness, and relate changes in resources applied to changes in readiness experienced or projected; and adjust the allocation of Defense resources to attain the desired levels of readiness.

(2) Acquiring this capability will be a major undertaking that will not be completed quickly or cheaply. It would seem to involve at least these major tasks:

(a) Define meaningful and measurable readiness indicators for the different combat unit types that are valid indicators of the units' ability to accomplish their combat missions.

(b) Define the hardware availability, reliability, and maintainability that must be attained in the field for each weapon system/equipment to meet acceptable levels of materiel readiness (normally, such standards should be consistent with the specifications/goals approved through the DSARC process).

(c) Develop the capability to monitor actual hardware performance relative to these availability, reliability, and maintainability standards.

(d) Identify the logistics support resources, by function, which influence each of these parameters of hardware performance.

(e) Develop the capability to track and display these readiness-impacting resources by logistics function and weapon system.

(f) Develop the capability to relate changes in such resources to experienced/projected changes in materiel readiness."