



DEFENSE LOGISTICS

Improving Customer Feedback Could Enhance DLA's Delivery of Services

Highlights of [GAO-02-776](#), a report to the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, and the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives.

Why GAO Did This Study

The Defense Logistics Agency supports America's military forces worldwide by supplying almost all consumable items—from food to jet fuel—that the military services need. The Floyd D. Spence Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 mandated that GAO conduct reviews of the agency, including its relationship with its military service customers. For this report, GAO determined (1) how customers perceive the quality of the agency's service, (2) how useful its approaches are for obtaining customer feedback, and (3) whether opportunities exist to enhance its initiatives for improving customer service.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Defense Logistics Agency, along with the military services, as appropriate, to

- develop a comprehensive customer-feedback plan to better determine customer needs and solutions to the needs,
- determine who its customers are and their needs, and
- clarify guidance for customer representatives to help create a "single face" for customers.

DOD generally concurred with GAO's recommendations and agreed that DLA needs to increase its focus on customer satisfaction.

What GAO Found

Military service customers at eight judgmentally selected locations GAO visited had mixed views of the Defense Logistics Agency's services—satisfied with aspects of routine service, such as the delivery time for routine parts, but dissatisfied with other areas, such as the detrimental impact that the agency's service has had on their operations. Customers cited difficulties, for example, in getting critical weapons systems parts by the needed time.

The agency's approach for obtaining systematic customer service feedback is limited. It

- lacks an integrated method to obtain adequate data on problems;
- does not effectively use surveys or local representatives to obtain feedback to identify the importance or depth of customers' issues;
- has not adequately defined or identified its customers; and
- does not provide a "single face" to its customers, thus fragmenting accountability for customer satisfaction.

Agency management acknowledged that the agency has not been customer focused and has been slow to respond to customer support concerns. The agency is acting to improve its customer relationships and provide a single face to its customers. But these initiatives do not fully address the limitations in its current approaches to obtain feedback and do not incorporate other soliciting and analytical approaches, such as those used in the private sector. Research of best practices for customer satisfaction suggests that multiple approaches and the integration of feedback data are needed to effectively listen to and understand customers' perceptions and needs and to take appropriate actions to meet those needs.

Defense Logistics Agency's Process for Providing Customers with Needed Materiel

