



Highlights of [GAO-03-548T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Total Force, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

### Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Defense (DOD) has increasingly engaged in multiservice and multinational operations. Congress enacted the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, in part, so that DOD's military leaders would be better prepared to plan, support, and conduct joint operations. GAO assessed DOD actions to implement provisions in the law that address the development of officers in joint matters and evaluated impediments affecting DOD's ability to fully respond to the provisions in the act.

### What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making new recommendations in this testimony. However, GAO did recommend, in a report that it issued in December 2002 ([GAO-03-238](#)), that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness develop a strategic plan that links joint officer development to DOD's overall mission and goals. DOD concurred with the recommendation.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-548T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-548T).

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Derek B. Stewart at (202) 512-5140 or [stewartd@gao.gov](mailto:stewartd@gao.gov).

## MILITARY PERSONNEL

# A Strategic Approach Is Needed to Improve Joint Officer Development

### What GAO Found

DOD has not taken a strategic approach to develop officers in joint matters. It has not identified how many joint specialty officers it needs, and it has not yet, within a total force concept, fully addressed how it will provide joint officer development to reserve officers who are serving in joint organizations – despite the fact that no significant operation can be conducted without reserve involvement.

As of fiscal year 2001, DOD has promoted more officers with previous joint experience to the general and flag officer pay grades that it did in fiscal year 1995. However, in fiscal year 2001, DOD still relied on allowable waivers in lieu of joint experience to promote one in four officers to these senior pay grades. (See figure below.) Furthermore, DOD is still not fully meeting provisions to promote mid-grade officers who are serving or who have served in joint positions at rates not less than the promotion rates of their peers who have not served in joint positions. Between fiscal years 1995 and 2001, DOD met more than 90 percent of its promotion goals for officers who served on the Joint Staff, almost 75 percent of its promotion goals for joint specialty officers, and just over 70 percent of its promotion goals for all other officers who served in joint positions.

DOD has met provisions in the act that require it to develop officers in joint matters through education by establishing a two-phased joint professional military education program. The act, however, did not establish specific numerical requirements, and DOD has also not determined the number of officers who should complete the joint education. In fiscal year 2001, only one-third of the officers who were serving in joint organizations had completed both phases of the education. DOD has also increasingly relied on allowable waivers and has not filled all of its critical joint duty positions with officers who hold a joint specialty designation. This number reached an all-time high in fiscal year 2001 when DOD did not fill 311, or more than one-third, of its 808 critical joint duty positions with joint specialty officers.

Percentage of Officers Promoted to General or Flag Rank with Joint Experience between Fiscal Years 1995 and 2001



Source: DOD.