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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-03-621T](#), a testimony before the Committee on Environment and Public Works, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD faces growing challenges in carrying out realistic training at installations and training ranges—land, air, and sea—because of encroachment by outside factors. These include urban growth, competition for radio frequencies or airspace, air or noise pollution, unexploded ordnance and munition components, endangered species habitat, and protected marine resources. Building on work reported on in 2002, GAO assessed (1) the impact of encroachment on training ranges, (2) DOD's efforts to document the effect on readiness and cost, and (3) DOD's progress in addressing encroachment.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making any new recommendations. However, GAO did make recommendations in reports issued in April and June 2002 (GAO-02-525 and GAO-02-614). They were aimed at (1) improving the quality of readiness reporting to better reflect training constraints and (2) helping DOD develop a comprehensive plan for dealing with encroachment issues and improving the information and data available for identifying and reporting on the effects of encroachment. In addition, the Congress directed DOD to report periodically on its progress in addressing encroachment issues and requires GAO to review those reports.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-621T.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Barry W. Holman at (202) 512-8412 or holmanb@gao.gov.

MILITARY TRAINING

DOD Approach to Managing Encroachment on Training Ranges Still Evolving

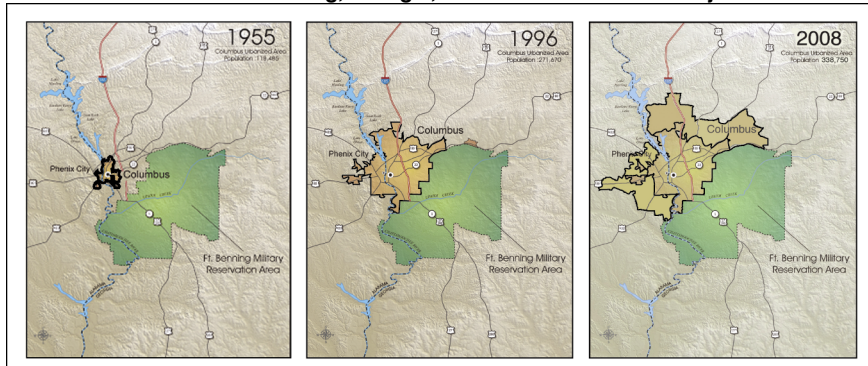
What GAO Found

Encroachment was reported as having affected some training range capabilities, requiring workarounds—or adjustments to training events—and sometimes limiting training, at all stateside installations and major commands GAO visited. GAO has identified similar effects abroad. Encroachment generally limits the time that training ranges are available and the types of training conducted. This in turn limits units' ability to train as they would fight. Most encroachment issues are caused by population growth and urban development. Because both are expected to increase, as are the speed and range of weapon systems used on training ranges, the problems are also expected to increase.

Despite DOD-voiced concerns about encroachment's effects on training, service readiness data in 2002 did not show the impact of encroachment on training readiness or costs, although DOD's most recent quarterly report to Congress on readiness did tie a training issue directly to encroachment. While individual services are making some assessment of training requirements and limitations imposed by encroachment, comprehensive assessments remain to be done. Likewise, complete inventories of training ranges are not yet available to foster sharing of ranges on an interservice or joint basis. This increases the risk of inefficiencies, lost time and opportunities, delays, and added cost. Also, although some services have reported higher costs because of encroachment-related workarounds for training, service data systems do not capture the costs comprehensively.

DOD has made some progress in addressing individual encroachment issues, such as implementing some short-term actions, proposing legislation to clarify the relationship between training and conservation statutes, and issuing a range sustainment directive. But more is required for a comprehensive plan, as recommended by GAO earlier, that clearly identifies steps to be taken, goals and milestones to track progress, and required funding.

Urban Growth near Fort Benning, Georgia, from 1955 to 1996 and Projected for 2008



Source: Department of the Army (map); GAO (emphasis).

Note: Columbus and Phenix City are shown to the upper left of Fort Benning, Georgia.