



Highlights of [GAO-04-562T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Readiness, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Since the Cold War, the Department of Defense (DOD) has increased its reliance on prepositioned stocks of military equipment and supplies, primarily because it can no longer plan on having a large forward troop presence. Prepositioned stocks are stored on ships and on land in the Persian Gulf and other regions around the world. Prepositioning allows the military to respond rapidly to conflicts. Ideally, units need only to bring troops and a small amount of materiel to the conflict area. Once there, troops can draw on prepositioned equipment and supplies, and then move quickly into combat.

Today's testimony describes (1) the performance and availability of Army and Marine Corps prepositioned equipment and supplies to support Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF); (2) current status of the stocks and plans to reconstitute them; and (3) key issues facing the military as it reshapes these programs to support DOD's force transformation efforts.

GAO's observations are based on ongoing work as well as previous reports on equipment accountability, supply distribution, and other logistics issues during OIF, plus other past work on spare parts shortages and on the readiness of prepositioning programs.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-562T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact William M. Solis at (202) 512-8365 or solisw@gao.gov.

MILITARY PREPOSITIONING

Observations on Army and Marine Corps Programs During Operation Iraqi Freedom and Beyond

What GAO Found

The importance of prepositioned stocks was dramatically illustrated during OIF. While they faced some challenges, the Army and Marine Corps relied heavily on prepositioned combat equipment and supplies to decisively defeat the Iraqi military. They both reported that prepositioned stocks were a key factor in the success of OIF. Prepositioned stocks provided most of the combat equipment used and, for the most part, this equipment was in good condition and maintained high readiness rates. However, the Army's prepositioned equipment included some older models of equipment and shortfalls in support equipment such as trucks, spare parts, and other supplies. Moreover, the warfighter did not always know what prepositioned stocks were available in theater, apparently worsening an already overwhelmed supply-and-distribution system. The units were able to overcome these challenges; fortunately, the long time available to build up forces allowed units to fill many of the shortages and adjust to unfamiliar equipment.

Much of the prepositioned equipment is still being used to support continuing operations in Iraq. It will be several years—depending on how long Iraqi Freedom operations continue—before these stocks will be available to return to prepositioning programs. And, even after they become available, much of the equipment will likely require substantial maintenance, or may be worn out beyond repair. The Army has estimated that it has an unfunded requirement of over \$1 billion for reconstituting the prepositioned equipment used in OIF. However, since most prepositioned equipment is still in Southwest Asia and has not been turned back to the Army Materiel Command for reconstitution, most of the funding is not required at this time. When the prepositioned equipment is no longer needed in theater, decisions will have to be made about what equipment can be repaired by combat units, what equipment must go to depot, and what equipment must be replaced with existing or new equipment to enable the Army to reconstitute the prepositioned sets that were downloaded for OIF.

DOD faces many issues as it rebuilds its prepositioning program and makes plans for how such stocks fit into its future. In the near term, the Army and Marines must necessarily focus on supporting ongoing OIF operations. While waiting to reconstitute its program, the Army also has an opportunity to address shortfalls and modernize remaining stocks. For the longer term, DOD may need to (1) determine the role of prepositioning in light of efforts to transform the military; (2) establish sound prepositioning requirements that support joint expeditionary forces; and (3) ensure that the program is resourced commensurate with its priority and is affordable even as the force is transformed. Congress will play a key role in reviewing DOD's assessment of the cost effectiveness of various options to support its overall mission, including prepositioning and other alternatives for projecting forces quickly.