



Highlights of [GAO-04-410](#), a report to Senate and House Committees on Armed Services

Why GAO Did This Study

In the 1962-74 time period, the Department of Defense (DOD) conducted a classified chemical and biological warfare test program—Project 112—that might have exposed service members and civilian personnel to chemical or biological agents. In 2000 the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) began obtaining information from DOD about the program. Concerned that veterans and others might have health problems from exposure during Project 112 and similar DOD tests, Congress required DOD in the 2003 Defense Authorization Act to identify Project 112 tests and personnel potentially exposed—service members and the number of civilian personnel—and other chemical and biological tests that might have exposed service members. GAO was required by the act and subsequent guidance from the congressional requesters to evaluate (1) DOD's process to identify the Project 112 tests and the service members and the number of civilian personnel potentially exposed, (2) DOD's progress in identifying similar tests outside Project 112, and (3) VA's progress in notifying DOD-identified veterans.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations to enhance DOD's responsiveness to the legislative requirement. DOD concurred with all of our recommendations and agreed to implement them.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-410.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Raymond J. Decker at deckerrj@gao.gov or (202) 512-6020.

CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL DEFENSE

DOD Needs to Continue to Collect and Provide Information on Tests and Potentially Exposed Personnel

What GAO Found

DOD appears to have accurately identified all major chemical and biological tests associated with Project 112. DOD identified 134 planned tests of which 50 were conducted. Of the 50 tests, 19 were ship-based and 31 were land-based. GAO found no evidence of any other Project 112 tests. DOD performed a reasonable investigation of service members potentially exposed to agents in the tests. However, GAO believes that there likely are service members and civilian personnel potentially exposed to agents who have not been identified for various reasons. First, DOD was unable to identify any service members for 21 land-based tests because it was unable to find the needed records. Second, although DOD addressed the basic mandate requirement regarding civilian personnel by estimating that 350 had been potentially exposed, it did not specifically search for individual civilian personnel exposures or foreign national exposures. DOD limited its investigation of specific exposures to identifying military veterans who might be eligible for medical services from VA. Third, DOD did not pursue all possible sources of information during its investigation, and additional identifications continue. DOD recently identified 51, and VA, 172 more military personnel. GAO identified 167 additional service members and civilian personnel who might have been exposed, plus additional sources of information. DOD has not determined the feasibility of continuing its efforts to identify additional potentially exposed service members or civilian personnel.

In February 2004, following GAO inquiries, another DOD office began preparing a plan to identify tests outside Project 112 that might have exposed service members. Since World War II, DOD has conducted hundreds of classified tests within the 48 contiguous states. Although not required by the act, DOD also plans to identify service members and civilian personnel who were potentially exposed by these tests. However, that office has not yet completed its plan for doing this.

As of March 2004, VA had notified 3,397, or 58 percent, of the 5,842 service members DOD reported in June 2003, including 751 VA determined to be deceased. VA is still processing over 2,400 cases but is having difficulty making these notifications due to the absence of key needed information such as military service numbers. VA is developing a plan to resolve these more difficult cases and expects to complete its notification process by September 1, 2005. To date, VA has granted 10 of 316 benefit claims related to Project 112. Recent changes to VA's eligibility requirements could increase the number of Project 112-related medical visits.

DOD has not designated an office to act as a single point of contact for collecting and providing information regarding the results of its investigations of DOD chemical and biological tests conducted inside or outside of Project 112.