



Highlights of [GAO-06-84](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The Navy has been transforming itself to better meet 21st century needs. Since 2000, the Congress has appropriated about \$50 billion annually for the Navy to operate and maintain its forces and support around 376,000 military personnel. In recognizing that the Navy faces affordability issues in sustaining readiness within its historical share of the defense budget, the Chief of Naval Operations announced a concept called the Fleet Response Plan to enhance its deployment readiness status. The Fleet Response Plan is designed to more rapidly prepare and sustain readiness in ships and squadrons.

GAO evaluated the extent to which the Navy has (1) employed a sound management approach in implementing the Fleet Response Plan and (2) tested and evaluated the effectiveness of the plan and shared results to improve implementation.

What GAO Recommends

To facilitate implementation of the Fleet Response Plan, GAO recommends that the Navy develop a comprehensive management plan with goals and performance measures. GAO also recommends that the Navy develop a comprehensive testing and evaluation plan to help determine whether the plan has been successful. The Department of Defense generally agreed with GAO's recommendations and described efforts to address them.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-84.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Janet St. Laurent at (202) 512-4402 or stlaurentj@gao.gov.

MILITARY READINESS

Navy's Fleet Response Plan Would Benefit from a Comprehensive Management Approach and Rigorous Testing

What GAO Found

In establishing the Fleet Response Plan, the Navy has embraced a major change in the way it manages its forces. However, the Navy's management approach in implementing the Fleet Response Plan has not fully incorporated sound management practices needed to guide and assess implementation. These practices include (1) establishing a coherent mission and strategic goals, including resource commitments; (2) setting implementation goals and a timeline; and (3) establishing a communication strategy. While the Navy has taken a number of positive actions to implement the plan, it has not provided readiness goals for units other than carrier strike groups; resource and maintenance goals; performance measures and timelines; or a communications strategy. Sound management practices were not fully developed because senior leaders wanted to quickly implement the plan in response to changes in the security environment. However, without an overall management plan containing all of these elements, it may be difficult for the Navy to determine whether its efforts to improve the fleet's readiness are achieving the desired results, adequately measuring overall progress, or identifying what resources are needed to implement the Fleet Response Plan.

The Navy has not fully tested and evaluated the Fleet Response Plan or developed lessons learned to identify the effectiveness of its implementation and success over time. Systematic testing and evaluation of new concepts is an established practice to gain insight into how systems and capabilities will perform in actual operations. However, instead of methodically conducting realistic tests to evaluate the Fleet Response Plan, the Navy has tried to demonstrate the viability of the plan by relying on loosely linked events that were not part of an overall test and evaluation strategy. This approach could impair the Navy's ability to validate the plan and evaluate its success over time. In addition, the Navy has not used its lessons learned system to share the results of its Fleet Response Plan events or as an analytical tool to evaluate the progress of the plan and improve implementation, which limits the Navy's ability to identify and correct weaknesses across the fleet.

The U.S.S. *George Washington* Carrier Strike Group Sailing to Participate in an Exercise



Source: U.S. Navy.