



Highlights of [GAO-05-275](#), a report to congressional committees

DEFENSE LOGISTICS

Actions Needed to Improve the Availability of Critical Items during Current and Future Operations

Why GAO Did This Study

GAO has identified spare parts supply as a long-standing Department of Defense (DOD) management problem. In December 2003, GAO reported on problems with Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) logistics support including shortages of spare parts and supplies in Iraq. This report expands on that effort by assessing (1) what supply shortages were experienced by U.S. forces in Iraq between October 2002 and September 2004 and what impact the shortages had on their operations, (2) what primary deficiencies in the supply system contributed to any identified supply shortages, and (3) what actions DOD has taken to improve the timely availability of supplies for current and future operations.

To address these objectives, GAO judgmentally selected nine items based on lessons learned and after-action reports that represented possible shortages with operational impacts.

What GAO Recommends

This report contains several recommendations to the Secretary of Defense directing that actions, such as ensuring the accuracy of Army war reserve requirements and developing and exercising deployable distribution capabilities, be taken to improve DOD's system for supplying items to U.S. forces. DOD concurred with the intent of the recommendations and cited actions it has taken or will be taking.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-275.

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

What GAO Found

U.S. troops experienced shortages of seven of the nine items GAO reviewed. According to the 2004 National Military Strategy, U.S. forces expect to have sufficient quantities of the right items at the right time. However, demand for the seven items exceeded availability sometime between October 2002 and September 2004. The documented impact of these shortages varied between combat units. For example, while units in the 3rd Infantry Division reported that tire shortages reduced their operational capability, forcing them to abandon equipment, the 4th Infantry Division reported no similar effect.

GAO identified five systemic deficiencies that contributed to shortages of the reviewed items, including inaccurate Army war reserve spare parts requirements and ineffective distribution. Annual updates of Army war reserve parts requirements have not been conducted since 1999. As a result, the war reserves did not contain enough track shoes, batteries, and tires to support U.S. forces during initial operations. Effective distribution relies on a seamless process to promptly move supplies from the United States to a customer. GAO found that conflicting doctrinal responsibilities for distribution management, improperly packed shipments, insufficient transportation personnel and equipment, and inadequate information systems prevented the timely availability of four of the items.

Systemic Deficiencies Contributing to Shortages of Seven GAO-Selected Items

Item	Inaccurate Army war reserve requirements	Inaccurate supply forecasts	Insufficient and delayed funding	Delayed acquisition	Ineffective distribution
Batteries	X	X	X	X	
Tires	X	X	X		X
Vehicle track shoes	X	X	X		
Body armor				X	X
Meals Ready-to-Eat		X			X
Up-armored HMMWVs and kits				X	
Vehicle generators ^a					X
Chem-bio suits	No shortage identified				
Rotor blades ^a	No shortage identified				

Source: GAO analysis.

^aThese are Marine-Corps-only items.

While U.S. troops developed short-term solutions to manage item shortages during OIF, DOD and the services have begun to undertake systemic, long-term changes to fix some supply problems identified. While GAO did not evaluate their potential for success, the majority of the changes are focused on distribution, and not on the full gamut of systemic deficiencies GAO identified.