



Highlights of [GAO-07-397T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

The war in Iraq along with other overseas operations have led to significant stress on U.S. ground forces and raised questions about whether those forces are appropriately sized and structured. In 2005, the Department of Defense (DOD) agreed with GAO's recommendation that it review military personnel requirements. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) concluded in its 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) that the number of active personnel in the Army and Marine Corps should not change. However, the Secretary of Defense recently announced plans to increase these services' active end strength by 92,000 troops. Given the long-term costs associated with this increase, it is important that Congress understand how DOD determines military personnel requirements and the extent of its analysis.

GAO has issued a number of reports on DOD's force structure and the impact of ongoing operations on military personnel, equipment, training, and related funding. This statement, which draws on that prior work, focuses on (1) the processes and analyses OSD and the services use to assess force structure and military personnel levels; (2) the extent to which the services' requirements analyses reflect new demands as a result of the changed security environment; and (3) the extent of information DOD has provided to Congress to support requests for military personnel.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-397T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-397T).

To view the full product, click on the link above. For more information, contact Janet A. St. Laurent at (202) 512-4402 or [stlaurentj@gao.gov](mailto:stlaurentj@gao.gov).

## MILITARY PERSONNEL

# DOD Needs to Provide a Better Link between Its Defense Strategy and Military Personnel Requirements

## What GAO Found

Both OSD and the military services play key roles in determining force structure and military personnel requirements and rely on a number of complex and interrelated analyses. Decisions reached by OSD during the QDR and the budget process about planning scenarios, required combat forces, and military personnel levels set the parameters within which the services can determine their own requirements for units and allocate military positions. Using OSD guidance and scenarios, the Army's most recent biennial analysis, completed in 2006, indicated that the Army's total requirements and available end strength were about equal. The Marine Corps' most recent assessment led to an adjustment in the composition and mix of its units.

Both the Army and Marine Corps are coping with additional demands that may not have been fully reflected in OSD guidance, the QDR, or in recent service analyses. First, the Army's analysis did not fully consider the impact of converting from a division-based force to modular units, partly because modular units are a new concept and partly because the Army made some optimistic assumptions about its ability to achieve efficiencies and staff modular units within the QDR-directed active military personnel level of 482,400. Second, the Army's analysis assumed that the Army would be able to provide 18 to 19 brigades at any one time to support worldwide operations. However, the Army's global operational demand for forces is currently 23 brigades and Army officials believe this demand will continue for the foreseeable future. The Marine Corps' analyses reflected some new missions resulting from the new security environment. However, the Commandant initiated a new study following the 2006 QDR partly to assess the impact of requirements for a Special Operation Command.

Prior GAO work has shown that DOD has not provided a clear and transparent basis for military personnel requests that demonstrates how they are linked to the defense strategy. GAO believes it will become increasingly important to demonstrate a clear linkage as Congress confronts looming fiscal challenges facing the nation and DOD attempts to balance competing priorities for resources. In evaluating DOD's proposal to permanently increase active Army and Marine Corps personnel levels by 92,000 over the next 5 years, Congress should carefully weigh the long-term costs and benefits. To help illuminate the basis for its request, DOD will need to provide answers to the following questions: What analysis has been done to demonstrate how the proposed increases are linked to the defense strategy? How will the additional personnel be allocated to combat units, support forces, and institutional personnel, for functions such as training and acquisition? What are the initial and long-term costs to increase the size of the force and how does DOD plan to fund this increase? Do the services have detailed implementation plans to manage potential challenges such as recruiting additional personnel, providing facilities, and procuring new equipment?