



Highlights of [GAO-10-384](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Defense (DOD) established the military munitions response program (MMRP) in 2001 to clean up sites known to be or suspected of being contaminated with military munitions and related hazardous substances. Cleanup of sites on active and base realignment and closure installations is the responsibility of the military service—Air Force, Army, Navy, or Marine Corps—that currently controls the land, and the Army has delegated execution of cleanup of formerly used defense sites (FUDS) to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). GAO was mandated to assess the (1) MMRP staffing and funding levels; (2) progress DOD has made in cleaning up munitions response sites; (3) extent to which DOD has established MMRP performance goals; and (4) extent to which DOD collects data on factors influencing project duration, as well as the accuracy of its cleanup cost estimates. GAO analyzed MMRP data and DOD documents and interviewed officials from DOD, the military services, and the Corps.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that Congress consider requiring DOD to report separately on sites where response is complete because they needed no cleanup, and that DOD issue guidance on how factors other than relative risk should be considered in munitions response site sequencing decisions, and set FUDS performance goals as required by law. DOD partially agreed with the recommendations but not with the matter for congressional consideration.

View [GAO-10-384](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Anu Mittal at (202) 512-3841 or mittala@gao.gov.

MILITARY MUNITIONS RESPONSE PROGRAM

Opportunities Exist to Improve Program Management

What GAO Found

The military services and the Corps do not track the time that staff work on MMRP activities separately from the time they spend on another environmental restoration program—the Installation Restoration Program (IRP). Consequently, it is not possible to determine the staffing levels for the MMRP. In addition, obligated funds for the MMRP increased from \$95 million in fiscal year 2002 to approximately \$284 million in fiscal year 2008, and the military services and the Corps directed 11 percent of their total MMRP and IRP environmental restoration funds to the MMRP during the period—a total of about \$1.2 billion to the MMRP compared with \$9.7 billion to the IRP.

DOD reported to Congress that it had completed its cleanup response for 1,318 of its 3,674 sites by the end of fiscal year 2008; however, for 1,234 of these sites, DOD's response was an investigation that determined cleanup was not necessary. The remaining 84 sites were cleaned up because of such factors as imminent danger to public safety and pressing military mission and land reuse needs. In addition, the military services and the Corps are still in the process of gathering information necessary to prioritize most sites in the MMRP inventory for cleanup. When this process is complete, the military services and the Corps will consider this information along with other factors, such as land reuse plans, to determine which sites to clean up first. However, DOD has not issued guidance on how factors other than risk should be considered when making decisions about which sites to sequence first for cleanup, and the Air Force, the Army, and the Corps have begun to independently develop their own approaches. Using varying approaches could lead to inconsistent sequencing decisions.

DOD has not yet established a performance goal for implementing the cleanup remedy (referred to as “remedy in place”) or achieving the cleanup objective (referred to as “response complete”) at munitions response sites located on FUDS, as required by the fiscal year 2007 National Defense Authorization Act. The act also directs DOD to report on interim goals it determines feasible for achieving the performance goals, but DOD has not yet done so. Performance goals are important because they are used to track progress toward cleaning up munitions response sites. By establishing goals, DOD would have better information with which to measure MMRP progress.

DOD gathers data on two of the factors—site size and type of hazard—that can influence project duration at military munitions response sites. As would be expected, these data indicate that the larger the munitions response site and the more complex the type of hazard, the longer it takes to clean up the site. In addition, because data on funds obligated to complete specific phases of the cleanup process are not included in DOD's database for many munitions response sites, it is not possible to assess the accuracy of the military services' and the Corps' cost estimates for the MMRP.