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Equipment Status of Deployed Forces Within the U.S. Central Command

Executive Summary

Who Should Read This Report and Why? DoD personnel responsible for equipping U.S. forces to perform missions within the U.S. Central Command should read this report. The report identifies equipment shortages that Service members who performed missions in Iraq and Afghanistan experienced because standard processes to establish equipment requirements did not exist, force-protection equipment was not always available, and policy that assigned Service responsibility for equipping units to perform nontraditional missions in the U.S. Central Command did not exist.

Results. We performed this audit to determine whether units deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan were equipped in accordance with mission requirements. Based on responses from approximately 1,100 Service members, they experienced shortages of force-protection equipment, such as up-armored vehicles, electronic countermeasure devices, crew-served weapons, and communications equipment. As a result, Service members were not always equipped to effectively complete their missions. We recommend that the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, Headquarters, Department of the Army continue to implement the Mission Essential Equipment List process and develop and implement a tracking system for the four steps within the process for all units conducting missions in and deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan, and periodically review the process to determine whether Mission Essential Equipment Lists updated by unit commanders reflect the current warfighting environment and specific missions as they evolve. We also recommend that the Commander, U.S. Central Command enforce policy requiring units rotating into theater to conduct a review of current theater requirements for up-armored vehicles, individual body armor, and electronic countermeasure devices within 60 days of arrival in their area of responsibility; obtain those updated requirements in a timely manner; confirm the validity of current theater requirements for sourcing; and provide the updated requirements to the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, Headquarters, Department of the Army so that the validated theater requirements can be satisfied (finding A).

The Request for Forces process did not always ensure that Service members who performed missions that they do not traditionally perform -- such as training, provincial reconstruction, detainee operations, and explosive ordnance disposal -- received the equipment necessary to perform their wartime mission. As a result, Service members performed missions without the proper equipment, used informal procedures to obtain equipment and sustainment support, and canceled or postponed missions while waiting to receive equipment. We recommend that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness develop and implement policy that addresses inter-Service responsibilities for funding, equipping, and sustaining forces performing nontraditional missions. We also recommend that the Commander, U.S. Central Command enforce existing policies

that require Requests for Forces to include detailed equipment requirements for missions to be performed by In Lieu Of forces (finding B).

The U.S. Central Command's and the Army's internal controls were not adequate. We identified material internal control weaknesses in the administration of the equipment requirements processes. See the Findings section of the report for detailed recommendations.

Scope Limitations. The Multi-National Corps-Iraq and the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan command staff limited the locations we visited, the units we reviewed, and the number of Service members who participated in sensing sessions because of scheduled operational missions, safety concerns, and availability of transportation. As a result, we interviewed available Service members. For example, our limited access into Iraq occurred when we requested to enter the country to conduct fieldwork during April 2006 and Multi-National Corps-Iraq officials denied the request because of operational requirements. Multi-National Corps-Iraq subsequently approved a visit for June 2006, but the 20-day requested visit was limited to 10 days.

Finally, Service members stated that, when possible, they used informal procedures to obtain the force-protection equipment they needed to perform missions off base in Iraq and Afghanistan, including borrowing equipment from and trading equipment with other Service members. As a result, information in this report reflects testimonial evidence of those Service members that we interviewed because we were not able to validate testimonial evidence against documentation that either did not exist or was incomplete. See Appendix A for additional information on the scope, methodology, and limitations.

Other Audit Coverage. The DoD IG issued an audit report, "The Army Small Arms Program That Relates to Availability, Maintainability, and Reliability of Small Arms to Support the Warfighter," Report No. D-2007-010 on November 2, 2006. That report states that the Army equipped its deployed forces in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom with the small arms necessary to meet Combatant commanders' requirements, and this report identifies shortages of crew-served weapons for U.S. forces in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Management Comments. We issued the draft report on October 30, 2006. The Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Program Support), responding for DoD,* and the Inspector General, U.S. Central Command, responding on behalf of the Commander, U.S. Central Command, concurred with the recommendations. The Director for Capabilities Integration, Prioritization, and Analysis, responding on behalf of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, Headquarters, Department of the Army, nonconcurred with the recommendations. Specifically, the Director stated that continued implementation of the Mission Essential Equipment Lists will not correct or prevent the equipment shortages, and that the Army will continue to use a combination of the Mission Essential Equipment Lists and the Unit Deploy List formula for determining unit equipment requirements. The Director also stated that it is impossible for any element outside the warfighting chain of command to determine if the equipment list accurately reflects the unit's assigned mission and operational environment, and that validation of the Mission Essential Equipment List serves only as a configuration management function in support of resource allocation decisions. See the Findings

*DoD includes the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

section of the report for a discussion of the management comments and the Management Comments section of the report for the complete text of comments.

Audit Response. We consider the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Program Support) and U.S. Central Command's comments to be partially responsive, and request additional comments on the final report identifying specific actions they will take to implement their respective recommendations. Additionally, we consider the Director for Capabilities Integration, Prioritization, and Analysis's comments to be nonresponsive. The Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army for Operations and Plans agreed with the June 28, 2006, Army Audit Agency report recommendation to continue to develop, implement, and review the Mission Essential Equipment List process to reflect the true equipment requirements of the Combatant command, but subsequently reverted to using the Unit Deploy List formula in combination with Mission Essential Equipment Lists to identify equipment requirements. The Army did not explain how using the Unit Deploy List formula in combination with the Mission Essential Equipment List process will provide unit commanders with authorized and validated equipment requirements in a baseline equipping document. We request that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, Headquarters, Department of the Army; and the Commander, U.S. Central Command submit additional comments on the final report by February 25, 2007.