DOD Munitions

Planning and Leadership Needed to Address Persistent Shortages

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A report to the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

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What GAO Found

In 2025, the Department of Defense (DOD) Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Sustainment testified that DOD had a shortage of several key munitions. DOD has taken steps to improve its munitions inventory shortages by, among other things, establishing munitions working groups focused on identifying ways to increase munition production. The 2026 conflict with Iran has heightened the importance of addressing munitions stockpile and industrial base challenges.

Examples of Department of Defense Guided Missile Systems



Source: U.S. Army/Capt. F. Spatt, U.S. Marine Corps/Sgt. P. Rawlins, and Missile Defense Agency/L. Garton. | GAO-27-109420

However, DOD does not have an overarching plan that links munitions production and funding to requirements. According to DOD officials, in lieu of a plan, DOD and the services can be reactive to global events rather than driven by total requirements. For example, the Army's ramp up in production of 155 millimeter artillery shells to address shortages exacerbated by U.S. support to allies and partners was not driven by DOD's total munitions requirement. Without developing an overarching munitions plan that identifies long-term goals, strategies for achieving such goals, and metrics to gauge progress, DOD and the services are not well-positioned to address persistently low munitions inventories or risk, for example, investing in munitions that are projected to exceed the total munition requirement.

The department also has not designated an office or entity to direct and assess munition inventory improvement actions. Joint Staff and officials from the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps noted that there could be a benefit to developing an overarching plan and assigning leadership for its implementation. Service officials stated that without an office with dedicated leadership to address munitions challenges, it may be difficult to realize progress in addressing munitions shortages at any level.

DOD maintains a department-wide munitions data tool to track munitions. However, GAO found that DOD has limited oversight over this tool and does not fulfill some responsibilities. For example, DOD has not regularly conducted inventory reconciliations with the services. By establishing consistent, regular timelines for reconciling information about changes to munitions, DOD and the services can ensure senior leaders are regularly receiving high-quality data on which to base their decisions.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations including that DOD develop an overarching munitions plan to improve inventory levels and identify an office or entity and empower its leadership with the authority to implement the plan, and that DOD set regular timelines for inventory reconciliation. DOD generally concurred with the recommendations.

Why GAO Did This Study

According to DOD, to ensure readiness, the department must maintain ready, reliable, and lethal munitions, such as bombs, missiles, and torpedoes.

House Report 118-529, accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025, includes a provision for GAO to review DOD's munitions levels and requirements, including actions taken to mitigate any munitions shortfalls. This report assesses the extent to which (1) DOD and the services have taken steps to improve munitions shortages, and (2) DOD and the services track munitions inventory data.

GAO analyzed service munitions data and DOD plans, and conducted site visits to four Army ammunition facilities. GAO also interviewed relevant officials across DOD, including from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, the Joint Staff, and the military services.

This report is a public version of a classified report GAO issued September 24, 2026. GAO omitted information DOD deemed classified or sensitive, such as trends in DOD munitions inventories, persistent shortfalls, and how these shortfalls have affected DOD's support to war plans.