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May 2014

# MILITARY TRAINING

## DOD Met Annual Reporting Requirements for Its 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report

# Report Documentation Page

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## Why GAO Did This Study

DOD relies on access to military land, airspace, sea space, and frequency spectrum to provide its forces a realistic training environment and ranges that will prepare them to face combat or complex missions around the globe. Section 366 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 (as amended) required DOD to submit a comprehensive plan to address training constraints caused by limitations on the use of military lands, marine areas, and airspace available in the United States and overseas for training, and provide annual progress reports on these efforts through 2018. The act also mandated that GAO submit annual evaluations of DOD's reports to Congress within 90 days of receiving them from DOD. In this report, GAO determined the extent to which DOD's 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report met the legislative requirements.

GAO is not making any recommendations in this report. DOD agreed with GAO's report.

View [GAO-14-517](#). For more information, contact Brian Lepore at (202) 512-4523 or [leporeb@gao.gov](mailto:leporeb@gao.gov).

## MILITARY TRAINING

### DOD Met Annual Reporting Requirements for Its 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report

## What GAO Found

The 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report of the Department of Defense (DOD) met the annual statutory reporting requirements for the department to describe its progress in implementing its plan to sustain training ranges and to describe any additional actions taken or planned for addressing training constraints caused by limitations on the use of military lands, marine areas, or airspace. DOD's 2014 report provides updates to several elements of the plan required by the act, including (1) proposals to enhance training range capabilities and to address any shortfalls; (2) goals and milestones for tracking progress in the implementation of DOD's sustainment plan; and (3) projected funding requirements for each of the military services to implement their planned actions. The report also identified emerging challenges to training range sustainability and reported actions taken to mitigate them. Together these elements describe DOD's progress in implementing its comprehensive plan and in addressing training constraints at its ranges, thus meeting the annual reporting requirements of the act.

#### Military Training Exercise



Marines conduct a simulated humanitarian assistance operation at Camp Blanding, Florida.

Source: Defense Video and Imagery Distribution System.

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## Abbreviation

DOD            Department of Defense

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May 9, 2014

Congressional Committees

The Department of Defense (DOD) relies on access to military land, airspace, sea space, and frequency spectrum to provide its forces a realistic training environment and ranges that will prepare them to face combat or complex missions around the globe. Ongoing encroachment challenges to its training ranges in the United States and overseas include incompatible development, the reallocation of electromagnetic spectrum, and offshore security concerns, among others. Additionally, the ongoing implementation of the Budget Control Act of 2011<sup>1</sup> is expected to reduce readiness accounts, to delay range modernization plans, and to negatively affect range capacity, such as a smaller range operations workforce. To respond to these challenges and increase the long-term sustainability of its military range resources, DOD has launched a number of efforts aimed both at preserving its training ranges and at addressing the effects of its training activities on the environment and on local communities through the issuance of policy, the establishment of programs, and proactive partnering at the federal, state, and local levels.

Section 366 of the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 (as amended) required DOD to submit a comprehensive plan for using existing authorities available to the department to address training constraints caused by limitations on the use of military lands, marine areas, and airspace in the United States and overseas to Congress at the same time as the President submitted his budget for fiscal year 2004.<sup>2</sup> Further, section 366 required the Secretary of Defense to submit an annual progress report to Congress through fiscal year 2018 at the same time as the submission of the President's budget. Since

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<sup>1</sup>The Budget Control Act of 2011 required DOD and the military services to reduce their discretionary spending budget.

<sup>2</sup>Pub. L. No. 107-314 (2002). Section 366 originally required reports for fiscal years 2005 through 2008. However, this requirement was extended through 2013 by section 348 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007, Pub. L. No. 109-364 (2006), and extended through 2018 by section 311 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013, Pub. L. No. 112-239. Additionally, section 1063(c)(2) of Pub. L. No. 110-181 (2008) and section 1075(g)(2) of Pub. L. No. 111-383 (2011) made clerical amendments to section 348 of Pub. L. No. 109-364.

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2004, DOD has submitted an annual sustainable ranges report to address these requirements. Additionally, the act mandated GAO to submit annual evaluations of DOD's reports to Congress within 90 days of receiving these reports from DOD.<sup>3</sup> In response to this act, we conducted this review of DOD's 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report, our 11th annual report. In this review, we determined the extent to which DOD's 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report met the legislative requirements.

To determine the extent to which DOD's 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report met the reporting requirements specified in section 366(a) of the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 (as amended), we reviewed DOD's current report and compared it with the requirements in the act. We also compared the 2014 and 2013 reports to determine what changes, if any, DOD had made for its 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report. In addition, we met with officials of the Office of the Secretary of Defense to discuss whether the 2014 report met the mandated requirements and whether there were changes to the services' submissions for 2014 as compared with the 2013 submissions. The intent of our review was not to comprehensively evaluate the data presented in the 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report but rather to determine the extent to which the report met the mandated requirements.

We conducted this performance audit from February 2014 through May 2014 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

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## Background

DOD has been reporting to Congress since fiscal year 2004 on several items related to its training ranges in the United States and overseas in response to section 366(a) of the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003. The act as subsequently amended requires annual progress reports to be submitted at the same time as the President submits the administration's annual budget for fiscal years 2005

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<sup>3</sup>Section 366 originally required GAO to submit its report to Congress within 60 days of receiving the original report from DOD, but this was extended to 90 days by section 348 of Pub. L. No. 109-364 (2006).

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through 2018. Also, the act requires that GAO evaluate DOD's submitted plans—pursuant to the act's subsections 366(a) and (b)—within 90 days of receiving the report from DOD.

In our prior reviews of DOD's Sustainable Ranges Reports, we noted that DOD had not addressed certain required elements when it initially submitted its comprehensive plan in 2004.<sup>4</sup> Further, we noted that it took DOD some time to develop a plan consistent with the basic requirements of section 366. Over time, we found that as DOD reported annually on its progress in implementing its comprehensive plan, it continued to improve its Sustainable Ranges Reports, and it has reported on the actions taken in response to prior GAO recommendations. For example, GAO recommended that DOD include funding information on the services' range sustainment efforts, as well as assess current and future training range requirements, among others. In response to GAO's recommendations, DOD has included a section for each service on military service updates to provide additional information on areas affecting training capabilities, a funding requirements section, and a section on individual range assessments. Further, the department has progressed from using four common goals and milestones to using seven shared goals for which the services have developed their own actions and milestones that are tailored to their missions. We have reported that these new goals and milestones are more quantifiable and now are associated with identified time frames.

As part of the preparation of its annual plan, the Secretary of Defense conducts an assessment of current and future training range requirements and an evaluation of the adequacy of DOD's current range resources to meet those requirements. In July 2013, we found that the 2013 Sustainable Ranges Report met the annual statutory reporting requirements for DOD to describe its progress in implementing its sustainable ranges plan and to describe any actions taken or to be taken in addressing training constraints caused by limitations on the use of military lands, marine areas, or airspace. In its 2013 report, DOD provided updates to several elements of the plan required by the act to be included in DOD's original report in 2004. These elements included (1) proposals to enhance training range capabilities and address any shortfalls in resources, (2) goals and milestones for tracking planned actions and

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<sup>4</sup>See Related GAO Products page at the end of this report.

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measuring progress, and (3) projected funding requirements for implementing planned actions.

In our review of DOD's 2013 Sustainable Ranges Report, we also found that DOD had implemented all of the 13 recommendations made by GAO since 2004 for expanding and improving its reporting on sustainable ranges. DOD addressed the last two recommendations by developing and launching a range assessment module within the Defense Readiness Reporting System.<sup>5</sup>

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## DOD Met the Annual Reporting Requirements in Its 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report

The 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report met the annual statutory reporting requirements for DOD to describe its progress in implementing its sustainable ranges plan and to describe any actions taken or to be taken in addressing training constraints caused by limitations on the use of military lands, marine areas, or airspace. In its 2014 report, DOD provided updates to several elements of the plan required by the act. These elements include (1) proposals to enhance training range capabilities and address any shortfalls, (2) goals and milestones for tracking progress implementing DOD's sustainment plan, and (3) projected funding requirements for implementing planned actions.

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## DOD Reported Proposals to Enhance Range Capabilities and Address Shortfalls

In our review of DOD's 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report, we found that DOD again reported on its proposals to enhance training range capabilities and to address any shortfalls in resources. DOD developed these proposals by evaluating current and future training range requirements and the ability of current DOD resources to meet these requirements. In its 2014 report, DOD revalidated the 2012 range assessments and provided military service updates, which also revalidated the 2012 assessments.<sup>6</sup> For example, the Marine Corps

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<sup>5</sup>GAO, *Military Training: DOD Met Annual Reporting Requirements and Continued to Improve Its Sustainable Ranges Report*, [GAO-13-648](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 9, 2013).

<sup>6</sup>Beginning with its 2013 report, DOD began conducting full range capability and encroachment assessments every 3 years rather than annually, and to validate those assessments in the years between evaluations. DOD's analysis of range capability and encroachment data over the preceding 10 years had found that there were not significant changes in the data from year to year, and the military services had confirmed this finding. The next planned full range capability and encroachment assessment is to be included in DOD's 2015 Sustainable Ranges Report.

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stated that its 2012 range capability assessments are valid and current for the 2014 report, and provided updated issues as needed. The Marine Corps identified several training shortfalls that it is working to remedy, such as the capability to fully exercise a large Marine Air-Ground Task Force in a realistic and appropriate training scenario. The area currently used to provide this training is not large enough to accommodate a full-scale, live-fire Marine Expeditionary Brigade exercise. In order to address this shortfall, DOD proposed the addition of approximately 132,000 acres of land for military use to this training area, and Congress has authorized the addition of this land so that the Marine Corps can pursue establishing the additional airspace it needs. In its 2014 report, DOD also reported on four emerging challenges to training and to its training ranges. These four challenges are: budget reductions affecting range capability, renewable energy, threatened and endangered species, and demand for electromagnetic spectrum. For example, the report stated that competition for land, airspace, and sea space for renewable energy infrastructure leads to a growing concern about DOD's capability to train. To demonstrate how it is addressing this challenge, DOD cited a document that it issued in 2013 on renewable energy considerations for projects on government lands, which provides information and procedures that address compatibility with military training and test requirements. Additionally, DOD is participating with the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and coastal states in a task force looking at renewable energy offshore.

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### DOD Used Goals and Milestones to Describe Its Progress in Implementing Its Comprehensive Training Range Sustainment Plan

In its 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report, DOD continued to use goals and milestones to help address the statutory requirement to describe its progress in implementing its comprehensive training range sustainment plan. DOD has developed seven goals in support of this plan. These goals are: to mitigate encroachment pressures on training activities from competing operating space; to mitigate frequency spectrum competition; to meet military airspace challenges; to manage increasing military demand for range space; to address effects from new energy infrastructure and from renewable energy; to anticipate climate change effects; and to sustain excellence in environmental stewardship. Each military service has developed its own milestones and the actions needed for reaching those milestones, and used the seven goals as a common framework. In the 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report, each service provided updates to its milestones and actions. For example, in meeting its milestone to expand training opportunities, the Navy provided its special forces with a 24-hour training range in support of their final training exercises. Additionally, the Navy's Desert Training Facility is on

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track to be completed by fiscal year 2016. In another example, the Marine Corps is meeting its milestone of including analysis of mitigating encroachment pressures in its regional management plans for training ranges by adding U.S. installations near or adjoining the Pacific Ocean. The purpose of this analysis is to assess encroachment quantitatively and qualitatively at the installations, and at regional and service levels. As part of its milestones update, the Marine Corps's eastern installation encroachment analysis is ongoing, while the analysis for the western installations was completed in fiscal year 2012. The Air Force completed its action to incorporate airspace as a key quantifiable factor in the Air Force basing decision-making process in fiscal year 2013. DOD also reported on initiatives that have not started, as well as those that are on hold. For example, the Army, citing resource reductions, has not started an effort to coordinate with the Federal Aviation Administration to conduct an environmental impact statement at Fort Campbell to adjust airspace on one side of the installation. Also, the Army has been delayed in completing the environmental impact statement to study proposed areas for training at Fort Benning, Georgia, due to pending Army force structure decisions. DOD officials stated that these goals and milestones will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure that DOD continues to address future training requirements and constraints.

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### DOD Reported Its Projected Funding Requirements for Implementing Planned Actions

In the 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report, DOD met the statutory requirement to track its progress in implementing the comprehensive plan by identifying the funding requirements needed to accomplish its goals. DOD has delineated four funding categories to be used by the services to project their range sustainment efforts: modernization and investment, operations and maintenance, environmental, and encroachment. Also, this section of the report includes descriptions and specific examples for each category, as well as an estimate of the range sustainment funding levels for each military service in each category for fiscal year 2013 and the next 5 fiscal years. For example, DOD described the environmental category as funding dedicated to environmental management of ranges, including range assessments, response actions, and natural and cultural resource management planning and implementation. Examples of the planned use of environmental funding include conducting range assessments and environmental mitigation associated with range modernization and range construction efforts. In this section, DOD also provides an explanation of significant fluctuations occurring over the 6-year funding period covered in the report. For example, the Army's modernization and investment funding is expected to decrease from \$247.0 million in fiscal year 2013 to a projected \$116.7 million in fiscal

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year 2014 as range modernization plans are updated and slowed down due to planned force structure reductions. According to DOD's 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report, DOD-projected funding data submitted with the report for fiscal years 2014-2018 could vary from actual funded levels.

The elements of DOD's 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report describe the department's progress in implementing its comprehensive plan and addressing training constraints at its ranges, thus meeting the annual reporting requirements of the act.

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## Agency Comments

We are not making any recommendations in this report. We provided a draft of this report to DOD for comment. In its written response to a draft of this report, DOD agreed with our report. DOD's written response is reprinted in its entirety in appendix II.

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We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees; the Secretary of Defense; the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force and Commandant of the Marine Corps; and the Director, Office of Management and Budget. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have questions concerning this report, please contact me at (202) 512-4523 or [leporeb@gao.gov](mailto:leporeb@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.



Brian J. Lepore  
Director  
Defense Capabilities and Management

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*List of Committees*

The Honorable Carl Levin  
Chairman  
The Honorable James M. Inhofe  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate

The Honorable Richard Durbin  
Chairman  
The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense  
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United States Senate

The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon  
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The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
The Honorable Pete Visclosky  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
House of Representatives

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# Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

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To determine the extent to which the Department of Defense's (DOD) 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report met the reporting requirements specified in section 366(a) of the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 (as amended), we reviewed the report and compared it with those requirements. We also compared the 2014 and 2013 reports to determine what changes, if any, DOD had made to its Sustainable Ranges Report. In our comparison, we identified some changes in the types of information contained in the two reports. We also reviewed the memorandums that the Office of the Secretary of Defense sent to the military services to request data for the Sustainable Ranges Report to discuss what differences, if any, there were in the types of information that were requested for the report. In addition, we met with officials of the Office of the Secretary of Defense to determine whether the 2014 report met the mandated requirements, and whether there were changes to the services' submission for 2014. The intent of our review was not to comprehensively evaluate the data presented in the 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report but rather to determine the extent to which the report met the mandated requirements.

We conducted this performance audit from February 2014 through May 2014 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

# Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense



READINESS AND FORCE  
MANAGEMENT

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

APR 29 2014

Mr. Brian J. Lepore  
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Lepore:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the Government Accountability Office Draft Report GAO-14-517, "Military Training: DoD Met Annual Reporting Requirements for Its 2014 Sustainable Ranges Report," dated April 25, 2014 (GAO Code 351913). The DoD appreciates the opportunity to work with the GAO to continually improve reporting on the ability of our training ranges to meet the needs of the warfighter. The Department agrees with the report and has no specific comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Laura J. Junor".

Laura J. Junor  
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense  
Readiness

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# Appendix III: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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## GAO Contact

Brian J. Lepore, (202) 512-4523 or [leporeb@gao.gov](mailto:leporeb@gao.gov)

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## Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Harold Reich (Assistant Director), Clarine Allen, Robert Breitbeil, Carol Petersen, Richard Powelson, Amie Steele, and Sabrina Streagle made key contributions to this report.

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# Related GAO Products

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*Military Training: DOD Met Annual Reporting Requirements and Continued to Improve Its Sustainable Ranges Report.* [GAO-13-648](#). Washington, D.C.: July 9, 2013.

*Military Training: DOD Met Annual Reporting Requirements and Improved Its Sustainable Ranges Report.* [GAO-12-879R](#). Washington, D.C.: September 12, 2012.

*Military Training: DOD's Report on the Sustainability of Training Ranges Meets Annual Reporting Requirements but Could Be Improved.* [GAO-12-13R](#). Washington, D.C.: October 19, 2011.

*Military Training: DOD Continues to Improve Its Report on the Sustainability of Training Ranges.* [GAO-10-977R](#). Washington, D.C.: September 14, 2010.

*Military Training: DOD's Report on the Sustainability of Training Ranges Addresses Most of the Congressional Reporting Requirements and Continues to Improve with Each Annual Update.* [GAO-10-103R](#). Washington, D.C.: October 27, 2009.

*Improvement Continues in DOD's Reporting on Sustainable Ranges, but Opportunities Exist to Improve Its Range Assessments and Comprehensive Plan.* [GAO-09-128R](#). Washington, D.C.: December 15, 2008.

*Military Training: Compliance with Environmental Laws Affects Some Training Activities, but DOD Has Not Made a Sound Business Case for Additional Environmental Exemptions.* [GAO-08-407](#). Washington, D.C.: March 7, 2008.

*Improvement Continues in DOD's Reporting on Sustainable Ranges, but Opportunities Exist to Improve Its Range Assessments and Comprehensive Plan.* [GAO-08-10R](#). Washington, D.C.: October 11, 2007.

*Improvement Continues in DOD's Reporting on Sustainable Ranges but Additional Time Is Needed to Fully Implement Key Initiatives.* [GAO-06-725R](#). Washington, D.C.: June 20, 2006.

*Military Training: Funding Requests for Joint Urban Operations Training and Facilities Should Be Based on Sound Strategy and Requirements.* [GAO-06-193](#). Washington, D.C.: December 8, 2005.

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*Some Improvements Have Been Made in DOD's Annual Training Range Reporting but It Still Fails to Fully Address Congressional Requirements.* [GAO-06-29R](#). Washington, D.C.: October 25, 2005.

*Military Training: Actions Needed to Enhance DOD's Program to Transform Joint Training.* [GAO-05-548](#). Washington, D.C.: June 21, 2005.

*Military Training: Better Planning and Funding Priority Needed to Improve Conditions of Military Training Ranges.* [GAO-05-534](#). Washington, D.C.: June 10, 2005.

*Military Training: DOD Report on Training Ranges Does Not Fully Address Congressional Reporting Requirements.* [GAO-04-608](#). Washington, D.C.: June 4, 2004.

*Military Training: Implementation Strategy Needed to Increase Interagency Management for Endangered Species Affecting Training Ranges.* [GAO-03-976](#). Washington, D.C.: September 29, 2003.

*Military Training: DOD Approach to Managing Encroachment on Training Ranges Still Evolving.* [GAO-03-621T](#). Washington, D.C.: April 2, 2003.

*Military Training: DOD Lacks a Comprehensive Plan to Manage Encroachment on Training Ranges.* [GAO-02-614](#). Washington, D.C.: June 11, 2002.

*Military Training: DOD Needs a Comprehensive Plan to Manage Encroachment on Training Ranges.* [GAO-02-727T](#). Washington, D.C.: May 16, 2002.

*Military Training: Limitations Exist Overseas but Are Not Reflected in Readiness Reporting.* [GAO-02-525](#). Washington, D.C.: April 30, 2002.

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