



Highlights of [GAO-10-526](#), a report to the Subcommittee on Readiness, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Air Force's maintenance depots provide critical support to ongoing operations around the world. Previously, the Department of Defense's (DOD) increased reliance on the private sector for depot maintenance support, coupled with downsizing, led to a general deterioration in the capabilities, reliability, and cost-effectiveness of the military services' depots. In March 2007, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics (OUSD (AT&L)) directed each service to submit a depot maintenance strategic plan and provided direction for the content of those plans. The Air Force issued two documents in response to this direction—a Strategy and a Master Plan. GAO used qualitative content analyses to determine the extent to which the Air Force's collective plan addresses (1) key elements of a results-oriented management framework and (2) OUSD's (AT&L) direction for the plan's content.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that the Air Force revise its plan to fully and explicitly address all elements of a results-oriented management framework, show clear linkages between the two components of the plan, and fully and explicitly address OUSD (AT&L) direction; and both OUSD (AT&L) and the Air Force develop and implement oversight procedures to review revisions of the plan. DOD concurred with our recommendations.

View [GAO-10-526](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Jack Edwards at (202) 512-8246 or edwardsj@gao.gov.

DEPOT MAINTENANCE

Improved Strategic Planning Needed to Ensure That Air Force Depots Can Meet Future Maintenance Requirements

What GAO Found

While the Air Force plan focuses efforts on weapon system and equipment operational availability, it does not fully address the elements of a results-oriented management framework, nor does it clearly link information between the plan's two component documents. GAO's prior work has shown that seven elements of a results-oriented management framework are critical for comprehensive strategic planning. The plan fully addresses one of these elements by including a mission statement that summarizes the Air Force depots' major functions and operations, but it partially addresses or does not address the remaining six elements. For example, while the plan describes goals for the depots' mission-related functions, it does not provide time frames to achieve them. Additionally, the plan does not discuss any factors beyond the Air Force's control that could affect its ability to achieve the plan's goals nor does it identify how the Air Force will evaluate its programs and use the results of such evaluations to adjust the plan's long-term goals and strategies to achieve desired levels of performance. Moreover, the content of the plan's two component documents are not clearly linked to one another. For example, the goals listed in the Strategy are not clearly repeated in the Master Plan, and the Master Plan includes goals that are unrelated to depot maintenance. Nor does the Master Plan clearly align its content to the five long-term goals described in the Strategy. The plan does not fully address the elements of a results-oriented management framework and the plan's two documents are not clearly linked to one another in part because of weaknesses in oversight. Specifically, although OUSD (AT&L) established an oversight body, which included senior representatives from OUSD (AT&L) and the services, to review the services' plans, this body did not review the plan. Also, the Air Force did not establish an oversight mechanism to review its plan. The plan's weaknesses may limit the Air Force's ability to use its plan as a tool to meet future challenges.

In addition, the Air Force plan is not fully responsive to OUSD's (AT&L) direction to the services that was designed to provide the services with a framework to meet future challenges. OUSD (AT&L) directed the services to address 10 specific issues in four general areas: logistics transformation, core logistics capability assurance, workforce revitalization, and capital investment. The plan partially addresses 8 of these issues and does not address the remaining two. For example, while the plan notes that the Air Force is partnering with local universities and technical schools to provide training to reengineer existing employees' skills, the plan does not address Air Force actions to identify new and emerging skill requirements, as directed. Furthermore, the plan does not discuss any benchmarks to evaluate the adequacy of investment funding, as directed. As discussed for the elements of a results-oriented management framework, the plan does not fully respond to OUSD (AT&L)'s direction for the plan's content in part because of weaknesses in oversight in both OUSD (AT&L) and the Air Force. The plan's shortcomings may limit the Air Force's assurance that its depots are postured and resourced to meet future maintenance challenges.