

MILITARY PERSONNEL

Personnel and Cost Data Associated with Implementing DOD's Homosexual Conduct Policy

Why GAO Did This Study

From fiscal years 1994 through 2009, the Department of Defense (DOD) separated over 13,000 active military servicemembers under its homosexual conduct policy. These separations represent about 0.37 percent of the 3.6 million members separated for all reasons, including expiration of terms of service and retirement. In 2005, GAO reported on the number of separated servicemembers under DOD's homosexual conduct policy who held critical skills and the costs associated with administering the policy from fiscal years 1994 through 2003. GAO was asked to examine data from fiscal years 2004 through 2009 to determine (1) the extent to which the policy has resulted in the separation of servicemembers with skills in critical occupations and important foreign languages and (2) the services' costs for certain activities associated with administering the policy. GAO obtained and analyzed DOD personnel and cost data; examined DOD regulations and policy documents; and conducted interviews with officials from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Defense Manpower Data Center, and each of the military services.

GAO provided a draft of this report to DOD for review and comment. DOD did not have any comments on the report.

View [GAO-11-170](#) or key components. For more information, contact Zina Merritt at (202) 512-5257 or merrittz@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

According to GAO's analysis of Defense Manpower Data Center data, 3,664 servicemembers were separated under DOD's homosexual conduct policy from fiscal years 2004 through 2009. Of the 3,664 separations, 1,458 of these separated servicemembers held a critical occupation or an important foreign language skill as determined by GAO and the services. More specifically, 1,442 (39 percent) of the servicemembers separated under the policy held critical occupations, such as infantryman and security forces, while 23 (less than 1 percent) of the servicemembers held skills in an important foreign language, such as Arabic or Spanish. Seven separated servicemembers held both a critical occupation and an important foreign language skill. However, the number of separated servicemembers with critical occupations could be an underestimation because of a number of factors. For example, the Air Force provided the occupations eligible for enlistment bonuses from fiscal years 2006 through 2009, but could not provide this information for fiscal years 2004 and 2005 because the Air Force's data were incomplete.

Using available DOD cost data, GAO calculated that it cost DOD about \$193.3 million (\$52,800 per separation) in constant fiscal year 2009 dollars to separate and replace the 3,664 servicemembers separated under the homosexual conduct policy. This \$193.3 million comprises \$185.6 million in replacement costs and \$7.7 million in administrative costs. The cost to recruit and train replacements amounted to about \$185.6 million. In calculating these costs, GAO included variable costs, such as recruiting bonuses, and excluded fixed costs, such as salaries and buildings, to the extent possible because according to service officials there would likely be no significant increase in fixed costs when recruiting and training a relatively small number of replacement personnel. Each of the services tracks and maintains data in different ways, which in some cases affected their ability to provide GAO with only variable costs. For example, while the Army and Air Force could disaggregate variable and fixed recruiting and training costs, the Navy could not disaggregate variable and fixed recruiting and training costs, and the Marine Corps could not disaggregate variable and fixed training costs. To the extent that recruiting and training cost data provided by the services contain fixed costs, this is an overestimation of replacement costs. Administrative costs amounted to about \$7.7 million and include costs associated with certain legal activities, such as board hearings, and nonlegal activities, such as processing separation paperwork. The Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps provided GAO with administrative cost estimates; however, Navy officials explained that changes in separation processes from fiscal years 2004 through 2009 prevented them from providing an accurate administrative cost estimate in time for the data to be included in GAO's analyses. Because the Navy did not provide these data, GAO's calculation is an underestimation of DOD's likely total administrative costs. Because of data limitations, GAO was unable to determine the extent of the overestimation of the replacement costs, the underestimation of the administrative costs, or the resulting net impact on GAO's total calculations.