

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Defense (DOD) uses military bands to enhance the morale of the troops, provide music for ceremonies, and promote public awareness. Bands across the military services support a range of activities, including funerals for military service members, events attended by high-level officials, and community-relations activities such as parades. In fiscal year 2013, DOD restricted its community-relations activities, including placing travel restrictions on bands, as a result of the sequestration ordered in March 2013. DOD reinstated community-relations activities at a reduced capacity in fiscal year 2014.

House Report 114-537 included a provision for GAO to review DOD's requirement for military bands. This report (1) describes the trends in personnel and costs for bands from fiscal year 2012 through 2016, and (2) assesses the extent to which the military services have evaluated how the bands are addressing their missions, among other objectives.

GAO analyzed data from the military services on military band personnel and reported operating costs of bands. GAO also reviewed the military services' guidance and approaches to evaluating their bands and interviewed band program officials at the military services.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force each develop and implement measurable objectives and performance measures for their bands. DOD concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-17-657](#). For more information, contact Andrew Von Ah at (213) 830-1011 or [vonaha@gao.gov](mailto:vonaha@gao.gov).

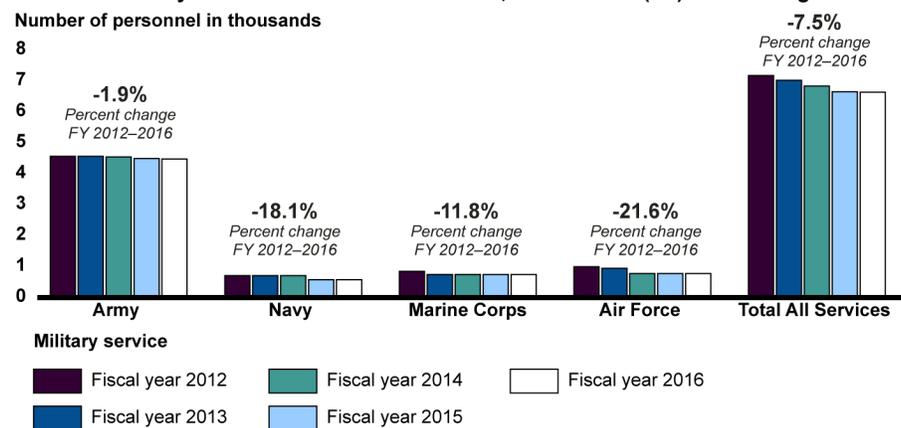
## MILITARY BANDS

# Military Services Should Enhance Efforts to Measure Performance

## What GAO Found

All of the military services reported reducing the number of military band personnel from fiscal year 2012 through 2016, but trends in total reported operating costs for the bands, such as travel and equipment expenses, varied across the services. Total military personnel dedicated to bands decreased from 7,196 in fiscal year 2012 to 6,656 in fiscal year 2016, or 7.5 percent (see figure). The Navy and Air Force reported that their total operating costs for bands over this period increased by \$4.1 million and \$1.6 million, respectively, and the Marine Corps reported that its costs declined by about \$800,000. The Army did not have complete cost data for its reserve bands, but reported that the operating costs of its active-duty and National Guard bands declined by \$3.6 million and about \$500,000, respectively, from fiscal year 2012 through 2016.

**Trends in Military Personnel Dedicated to Bands, Fiscal Years (FY) 2012 through 2016**



Source: GAO analysis of military-service information. | GAO-17-657

The military services have not developed objectives and measures to assess how their bands are addressing the bands' missions, such as inspiring patriotism and enhancing the morale of troops. All four military services have tracked information, such as the number and type of band events. Further, military-service officials cited the demand for band performances, anecdotal examples, and support from senior leadership, as ways to demonstrate the bands are addressing their missions. However, the military services' approaches do not include measurable objectives or performance measures that have several important attributes, such as linkage to mission, a baseline, and measurable targets, that GAO has found are key to successfully measuring a program's performance. Military band officials cited the difficulty and resources required to quantify how the bands are addressing their missions, but the military services are taking steps to improve how they track information on band events to measure the bands' effectiveness. GAO believes these key steps could inform and guide the services' efforts to develop and implement measurable objectives and performance measures. Doing so could provide decision makers with the information they need to assess the value of the military bands relative to resource demands for other priorities.