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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-08-850](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Defense (DOD) is one of the largest landholding agencies in the federal government with more than 577,500 facilities at 5,300 sites on over 32 million acres. GAO has previously reported that the management of DOD-held real property is a high-risk area, in part because of deteriorating facilities and problems with excess and underutilized property. To address these problems, DOD has developed a multipart strategy involving base realignment and closure, housing privatization, and demolition of facilities that are no longer needed. DOD is also leasing out underutilized real property to gain resources to repair or construct facilities. The House Armed Services Committee Report on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 directed the Comptroller General to provide an analysis of DOD's use of its land use planning authorities. Specifically, GAO examined (1) how DOD has used its authorities; (2) the reasons why land, buildings, and facilities on DOD installations may appear to be underutilized or not utilized; and (3) the policies and procedures used by the services to respond to requests by other federal agencies for space at a DOD installation. GAO reviewed pertinent legislation and DOD and service policies, interviewed officials from DOD and all four services, and visited 10 installations from all four services.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-850](#). For more information, contact Brian Lepore at (202) 512-4523 or leporeb@gao.gov.

DEFENSE INFRASTRUCTURE

Services' Use of Land Use Planning Authorities

What GAO Found

Although many land use planning authorities currently exist that permit the Secretary of Defense, the secretaries of the military departments, or both to help make more efficient use of real property under their control, Section 2667 of Title 10, U.S. Code, leasing of nonexcess property of military departments, was used the most frequently—744 times from fiscal years 2005 through 2007. Under Section 2667 of Title 10, traditional short-term lease agreements are typically executed, but more financially complex, longer-term enhanced use leases are also executed. Section 2681 of Title 10, the authority to enter into contracts with commercial entities that desire to conduct commercial test and evaluation activities at a major range and test facility installation, was also used frequently, with 601 uses during fiscal years 2005 through 2007. GAO's analysis indicates that there are more than 30 authorities in the U.S. Code pertaining to DOD's utilization of real property. Service officials indicated that they have used these other authorities much less often and only for a limited number of leases or other transactions.

Land, buildings, and facilities on DOD installations may appear to be underutilized or not utilized for several reasons. For example, land that appears empty or underutilized often has a variety of restrictions and constraints placed upon its use, including setbacks for antiterrorism protection, mission requirements, safety zones, and environmental concerns. The services identified several reasons why buildings and facilities might be classified as underutilized or not utilized but still remain unavailable for other uses, including historical considerations.

Each of the military departments has similar policies and procedures in place for responding to requests for space on an installation from other federal agencies. Service officials told us that requests for space are submitted directly to the installation and should include information on facilities and land requirements, justification for selecting the proposed installation, and a statement of environmental impact. An official request for space is reviewed at the installation level, and the installation commander makes a recommendation to the approving official, although the approving official differs depending on the service and the nature of the request.

Enhanced Use Lease Site at Fort Sam Houston, Texas



Source: GAO.