



Highlights of [GAO-09-336](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

The 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission recommended that the Department of Defense (DOD) establish 12 joint bases by consolidating the management and support of 26 separate installations, potentially saving \$2.3 billion over 20 years. In response to a direction from the House Armed Services Committee report accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, GAO evaluated DOD's (1) efforts and expected costs to deliver installation support at joint bases and (2) funding for facility sustainment, which includes the maintenance and repair activities necessary to keep facilities in good working order, at all installations. GAO compared new support standards with the current support levels, visited nine installations that will become four joint bases, and compared facility sustainment funding levels with requirements and goals.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD (1) periodically review the newly established installation support standards and joint base administrative costs to help ensure economies and efficiencies and (2) report to Congress on the estimated installation support costs at the joint bases and on facility sustainment funds used for other purposes. DOD partially agreed with the recommendations but did not indicate that it would take steps to fully implement them. GAO believes that DOD needs to take additional actions to fully implement the recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, [click on GAO-09-336](#). For more information, contact Brian J. Lepore at (202) 512-4523 or [leporeb@gao.gov](mailto:leporeb@gao.gov).

## DEFENSE INFRASTRUCTURE

### DOD Needs to Periodically Review Support Standards and Costs at Joint Bases and Better Inform Congress of Facility Sustainment Funding Uses

#### What GAO Found

DOD has made a comprehensive effort to ensure consistent delivery of installation support at the planned joint bases, but the cost of installation support is expected to increase rather than decrease as forecasted by the 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission. In January 2008, DOD began issuing joint base implementation guidance that for the first time established a set of common definitions and standards for installation support. The guidance defined 47 installation support areas (e.g., airfield operations, grounds maintenance, custodial services, and child and youth programs) and provided 267 standards to define the expected level of service in each area. DOD officials stated that the standards represented the service levels needed to meet mission and personnel requirements in view of DOD policies and guidance, commercial standards, other federal agency guidance, or in some cases, military judgment. However, contrary to the expectations of the commission, for two primary reasons installation support costs at the joint bases are expected to increase above the cost of support provided by the separate installations before consolidation. First, DOD has required the joint bases to deliver installation support in accordance with the new standards even though the military services have not previously funded installation support in the amounts needed to meet each of the standards. GAO's comparison of 40 selected standards to the service levels currently provided at the nine installations it visited showed that on average service levels would have to increase to meet the standards in about 27 percent of the areas compared. Second, in some instances the services' approach to implementing joint basing will result in additional administrative costs and the loss of some existing installation support efficiencies. Although DOD officials stated that the increased support costs at the joint bases might be at least partially offset over time as experience is gained and new efficiencies are identified and adopted, it is unclear whether joint basing will result in actual savings.

The military services have not budgeted and spent sufficient funds to meet their facility sustainment requirements and goals and prevent facility deterioration at the installation level. Citing other budget priorities as the reason, the military services did not budget funds to meet about \$2.3 billion (9 percent) of their total facility sustainment requirements during fiscal years 2005 through 2008 and, according to DOD, needed sustainment work that is not performed may eventually result in damaged facilities, shortened facility service lives, and increased future costs for facility restoration. The services have further exacerbated the sustainment funding issue by using some budgeted sustainment funds for other purposes. During fiscal years 2006 through 2008, the military services used about \$2.6 billion (14 percent) of the funds budgeted for sustainment for other purposes, primarily to pay for unfunded facility restoration and modernization projects. Although service officials stated that these projects were needed, the consequence was that sustainment requirements were not met. During visits to nine installations, GAO found backlogs of deferred sustainment needs and some facilities that were not in good condition because funds were not available to pay for all needed sustainment work.