

Why GAO Did This Study

GAO has designated DOD support infrastructure as an area of high risk and included one key related category—installation support—as an area for potential savings. In 2005, DOD recommended to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission combining 26 installations into 12 joint bases to generate efficiencies and cost savings and, in 2010, completed this consolidation. GAO assessed the extent to which (1) DOD developed and implemented a plan to achieve cost savings and efficiencies at the joint bases, (2) joint base common standards provide a common framework to manage and plan for installation support services, and (3) DOD has a process to consistently identify and address any implementation challenges. GAO reviewed DOD policies and guidance on joint basing, visited 3 joint bases and obtained answers to written questions from the other 9, interviewed OSD and military service officials, and analyzed performance data on joint base support services.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD take six actions, such as developing a plan to achieve cost savings, prioritizing review and revision of unclear common standards, and developing a strategy to share solutions to common challenges. DOD partially agreed with five recommendations and did not concur with the recommendation to develop a plan to achieve cost savings, because it stated that such goals are not appropriate at this time. GAO continues to believe that the recommendations are valid as discussed further in the report.

View [GAO-13-134](#). For more information, contact Brian J. Lepore at (202) 512-4523 or leporeb@gao.gov.

DOD JOINT BASES

Management Improvements Needed to Achieve Greater Efficiencies

What GAO Found

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) has not developed or implemented a plan to guide joint bases in achieving cost savings and efficiencies. The Department of Defense (DOD) originally estimated saving \$2.3 billion from joint basing over 20 years, but in the absence of a plan to drive savings, that estimate has fallen by almost 90 percent. OSD also does not yet have a fully developed method for accurately collecting information on costs, savings, and efficiencies achieved specifically from joint basing. GAO previously reported that organizational transformations such as merging components and transforming organizational cultures should be driven by top leadership, have implementation goals and a timeline to show progress, and include a communication strategy. Although the joint bases anecdotally reported achieving some savings and efficiencies, without an implementation plan to drive savings and a means to collect reliable information on the specific costs, estimated savings, and efficiencies from joint basing, DOD will not be able to facilitate achievement of the goals of cost savings and efficiencies, track the extent to which these goals have been achieved, or evaluate the continuation or expansion of joint basing.

The joint bases implemented common standards for installation support services developed by OSD, and in fiscal years 2010 and 2011 reported meeting the standards more than 70 percent of the time. However, three factors limited the usefulness of the reported standards as a common tool for managing installation support services: the lack of clarity in some standards, unclear standards that were not reviewed and changed in a timely manner, and data collection and reporting on the standards that in some cases adhered to individual service standards rather than the common standard. DOD guidance states that the purpose of the joint base common standards framework was to provide a common language to serve as a basis for planning and management across the joint bases, and GAO previously reported that performance measures should be clear and follow standard procedures. Without a consistent interpretation and reported use of the standards, OSD and the joint bases will not have reliable or comparable data with which to assess their service support levels.

OSD and the joint bases have various mechanisms in place to address challenges in achieving joint basing goals, such as a joint management oversight structure and annual OSD-joint base review meetings, but none of these routinely facilitates communication among the joint bases to identify solutions to common challenges. The reported challenges cover a wide range of issues, from different expectations among military services as to how base support services should be provided to incompatible information technology networks. However, the absence of a formal method to routinely share information on common challenges and possible solutions, or guidance on developing and providing training for new personnel on how joint bases provide installation support, means DOD is likely to miss opportunities to develop common solutions to common challenges. Federal internal control standards state that for an entity to control its operations, it must have relevant and timely communications, and information is needed throughout the agency to achieve objectives. In addition, without processes to identify common challenges and share information across the joint bases, DOD may miss opportunities for greater efficiencies and be unable to provide uniform policies across the joint bases.