

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-405](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

In January 2014, the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force (commission) issued its report, which included 42 recommendations for improving how the Air Force manages its total force. The report also discussed the feasibility of shifting 36,600 personnel from the active to the reserve component and estimated that doing so could save \$2 billion annually.

Senate Report 114-49 included a provision for GAO to review matters related to the Air Force's efforts to implement the commission's recommendations. This report (1) evaluates the extent to which the Air Force has made progress in implementing the commission's recommendations and (2) describes how the Air Force has assessed the potential for increasing the proportion of reserve to active component forces. GAO reviewed documentation of the Air Force's efforts and compared Air Force implementation plans with leading practices for program management derived from the public and private sectors and GAO's prior work. GAO also reviewed documentation and interviewed officials in order to describe the Air Force's process for assessing its active and reserve component mix.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that, for the 36 remaining open commission recommendations, the Air Force develop complete implementation plans that include performance measures. The Air Force agreed with GAO's recommendation.

View [GAO-16-405](#). For more information, contact John Pendleton at (202) 512-3489 or [pendletonj@gao.gov](mailto:pendletonj@gao.gov).

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## FORCE STRUCTURE

### Performance Measures Needed to Better Implement the Recommendations of the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force

#### What GAO Found

As of February 2016, the Air Force had made limited progress in implementing the commission's recommendations—it had closed 6 recommendations and had taken action to revise its approach for managing implementation of the remaining 36 open recommendations. Air Force officials encountered challenges as they began implementing the commission's recommendations which the revised approach may address. For example, the Air Force had difficulty coordinating across components and offices and coordinating among teams working on inter-related recommendations. Under the revised approach, the Air Force has grouped related recommendations together and placed responsibility for each group under senior officials to improve coordination. According to Air Force officials, the revised approach requires development of milestones and tasks for each recommendation but does not require development of performance measures. Federal internal control standards, leading program management practices, and GAO's prior work have shown that performance measures which contain key attributes—such as baseline and trend data—can help managers monitor progress toward achieving program goals and identify areas for corrective actions. Since the revised approach was not fully in place as of January 2016, the Air Force had not developed complete implementation plans with milestones, tasks, and performance measures to monitor and oversee progress on the remaining 36 open recommendations. Under its original management approach, the Air Force had developed implementation plans for 3 recommendations. These plans generally contained milestones and tasks but were incomplete, since they did not consistently include performance measures that were clear, measurable, or contained a baseline from which implementation progress could be measured. While the Air Force's revised approach includes some positive steps, it is new, its effectiveness is unknown, and it does not require performance measures to gauge progress. Without complete implementation plans that include performance measures which reflect the key attributes, the Air Force will continue to lack important information to monitor progress and assess whether performance is meeting expectations for the 36 recommendations that are still open.

Several of the commission's recommendations related to the feasibility of shifting a portion of the active to the reserve component forces. The Air Force has assessed potential changes to its force mix using a process it developed for this purpose. The process combines quantitative and qualitative analysis with stakeholder input and judgment to identify options for changing the mix of active and reserve component forces. These options are then presented to senior Air Force leaders for their consideration, and the leaders' decisions inform the planning phase of the budget development process. To support its process, the Air Force has developed customized, classified data analyses for 44 aircraft types and mission areas. The Air Force finished these analyses in December 2015, and officials said the results informed planning for the fiscal year 2018 budget. However, since the budget development and execution cycle spans up to four years, it is not clear at this time how many of the proposed force mix options may ultimately be implemented.