

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-86](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD reports that it faces challenges in carrying out realistic training because of the cumulative effect of outside influences—such as encroachment from urban growth—that GAO refers to in this report as “incompatible land use.” In addition, DOD faces similar challenges at its operating installations.

House Report 113-102 accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 included a provision for GAO to review DOD efforts to prevent and mitigate encroachment at training ranges. This report assesses (1) how DOD considers this issue when making decisions related to stationing units; (2) the extent to which DOD has policies, procedures, and approaches to identify and mitigate incompatible land use; and (3) the extent to which DOD’s guidance and actions to collaborate with external entities in this area are consistent with key considerations for implementing interagency collaborative mechanisms.

GAO reviewed DOD guidance and plans and interviewed officials to assess how incompatible land use was considered in stationing decisions and determine how DOD identifies and mitigates incompatible land use. GAO compared key DOD guidance and actions to previously-identified key considerations for implementing interagency collaborative mechanisms. GAO selected nine installations to visit based on factors such as installation size and projected population growth.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making recommendations in this report. DOD provided technical comments, which were incorporated as appropriate.

View [GAO-17-86](#). For more information, contact Brian J. Lepore at (202) 512-4523 or leporeb@gao.gov.

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DEFENSE INFRASTRUCTURE

DOD Efforts to Prevent and Mitigate Encroachment at Its Installations

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense’s (DOD) processes for stationing, or determining where to locate units and assets consider incompatible land use. Specifically, the military departments have processes to determine how to satisfy military requirements while considering incompatible land use. DOD instructions further require that installations have master plans in place to manage incompatible land use issues, based on a strategic assessment of an installation’s mission and expected use. For the nine installations visited, GAO found these plans considered all or almost all of seven types of incompatible land use that GAO identified—historic assets, archeological assets, protected species, protected habitat, climate change, urban development, and airborne noise.

DOD, the military services, and individual installations have a number of policies, procedures, and approaches to identify and mitigate incompatible land use concerns. These include broad-based efforts to identify and mitigate incompatible land use, such as the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) program, and targeted efforts to identify and manage specific types of incompatible land use, such as the DOD Siting Clearinghouse for alternative energy projects near its installations. Regardless of the policies, procedures, or approaches utilized, collaboration with external entities like state governments and local communities is generally involved (see figure).

Key Participants in Collaborative Efforts to Identify and Mitigate Incompatible Land Use



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense information. | GAO-17-86

DOD guidance and selected installation actions to collaborate with external entities to mitigate incompatible land use are generally consistent with key considerations for implementing interagency collaborative mechanisms. GAO’s prior work has found that certain key considerations, such as establishing outcomes, accountability, and clarity of roles and responsibilities, benefit efforts to implement collaborative mechanisms. GAO’s analysis of DOD’s *Joint Land Use Study Program Guidance Manual*—DOD guidance that outlines a collaborative process for evaluating incompatible land use issues around installations and developing recommendations to mitigate these issues—found that it was consistent with the eight key considerations GAO had identified. Furthermore, GAO’s analysis of completed JLUS reports from installations visited found the actions taken to complete the studies were also consistent with these key considerations.