

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-20-390](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Three Air Force and three Navy aviation depots maintain critical fixed-wing aviation platforms, such as the KC-135 aerial refuelers and F/A-18 fighters. The ability of these depots to complete maintenance on time directly affects military readiness because delays reduce the time aircraft are available for operations and training.

Senate Report 115-262, accompanying a bill for the Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act, contained provisions that GAO examine the Department of Defense's (DOD) aviation depots. GAO's report evaluates the extent to which 1) the Air Force and Navy aviation depots completed selected fixed-wing aircraft maintenance on time from fiscal year 2014 through 2019, and 2) the Air Force and Navy accurately planned for depot maintenance requirements from fiscal year 2014 through 2019 and addressed any associated challenges.

GAO selected a non-generalizable sample of 18 Air Force and 18 Navy fixed-wing aircraft types; analyzed maintenance and planning data for fiscal year 2014 through 2019; and interviewed service officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations to the Navy: to use historical data to set turnaround time targets for depot maintenance; provide planners information on maintenance performed outside the depots; and establish processes for communication between depot stakeholders. DOD concurred with all three recommendations.

View [GAO-20-390](#). For more information, contact Diana Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov or Asif A. Khan at (202) 512-9869 or khana@gao.gov.

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MILITARY DEPOTS

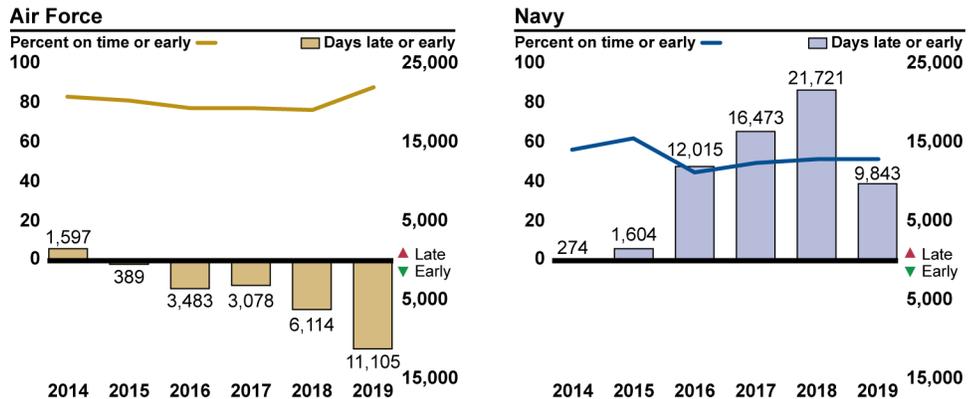
The Navy Needs Improved Planning to Address Persistent Aircraft Maintenance Delays While Air Force Maintenance Has Generally Been Timely

What GAO Found

The Air Force and Navy varied in the extent that they completed depot maintenance on time for selected fixed-wing aircraft in fiscal years 2014 through 2019. Specifically, GAO's analysis of aggregate maintenance data found that:

- Air Force depots completed aircraft maintenance on time or early in 5 of 6 years, with percentages for on-time or early-completion maintenance ranging from 78 to 90 percent.
- Navy depots completed aircraft maintenance late for each of the 6 years, with percentages for on-time or early-completion maintenance ranging from 45 to 63 percent. Navy fixed-wing aircraft have spent over 62,000 more days in maintenance than expected since fiscal year 2014.

Aircraft Maintenance Completed On Time or Early by Service, Fiscal Years 2014 through 2019



The Air Force generally has accurately planned for depot maintenance requirements for selected fixed-wing aircraft during fiscal year 2014 through 2019, but the Navy has not. Both services have initiatives underway to improve planning for aviation depot maintenance; however, GAO identified planning challenges that the Navy has not fully addressed:

- The Navy has not effectively used historical data to analyze turnaround time—total days planned for depot maintenance periods—and established accurate planning targets for aircraft maintenance packages.
- Navy depot planners do not have visibility into aircraft maintenance that is performed outside the depots by an operational unit or other maintenance facility—information critical to planning for the condition and depot maintenance needs of individual aircraft.
- The Navy does not yet have formal processes and related guidance for communication and coordination between depot stakeholders to inform maintenance requirements planning.

Without addressing these challenges, the Navy cannot appropriately plan for depot maintenance workload and will likely continue to experience maintenance delays that reduce the time aircraft are available for operations and training.