

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-379](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Coast Guard has been charged with expanded missions. Further, constrained budgets in recent years have underscored the importance of strategically allocating its assets and personnel to meet these missions.

GAO was asked to review the Coast Guard's resource allocation process. This report addresses the extent to which the Coast Guard: (1) employs an effective process to strategically allocate assets to meet its missions, and (2) has determined workforce requirements and addressed identified personnel needs.

GAO reviewed Coast Guard planning and workforce requirements documents and asset performance data for fiscal years 2010 through 2015. GAO also discussed the planning process and personnel needs with Coast Guard officials at headquarters; as well as at the two Area and nine District Commands.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations to the Coast Guard, including to incorporate field unit input to inform its allocation decisions and to develop a systematic process that prioritizes the most critical manpower requirements analyses to complete. DHS concurred with the recommendations and stated it is taking actions, such as including field unit input into its planning process and prioritizing manpower requirements analyses of unstudied units, as resources permit.

View [GAO-16-379](#). For more information, contact Jennifer A. Grover at (202) 512-7141 or groverj@gao.gov.

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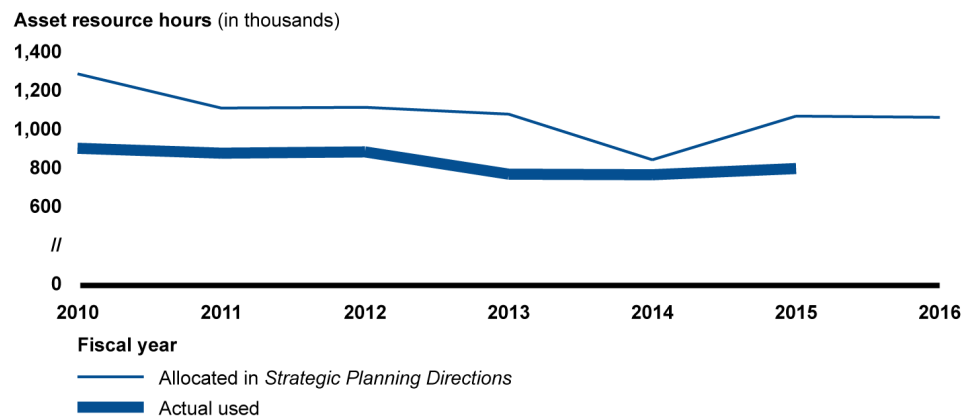
COAST GUARD

Actions Needed to Improve Strategic Allocation of Assets and Determine Workforce Requirements

What GAO Found

The Coast Guard developed and uses the Standard Operational Planning Process to annually allocate asset (aircraft and vessels) resource hours to field units for meeting missions, but the headquarters' *Strategic Planning Directions* used in this process do not provide field units with strategic, realistic goals. Rather, headquarters' *Strategic Planning Directions* allocate maximum resource hour capacities for each asset—such as 700 hours per Jayhawk helicopter per year. As shown below, these asset allocations have consistently exceeded actual asset resource hours used by field units. By better incorporating data on assets' actual use that field units provide to Coast Guard headquarters—such as *Operational Performance Assessment Reports*—to inform asset allocation goals in its *Strategic Planning Directions*, the Coast Guard would better ensure that it effectively communicates strategic intent to its field units and makes more informed asset allocation decisions that are aligned with its strategic goals.

Comparison of Total Asset Resource Hours Allocated in *Strategic Planning Directions* to the Actual Asset Resource Hours Used, Fiscal Years 2010 – 2015



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Coast Guard data. | GAO-16-379

Note: In fiscal year 2014, lower resource hour use was planned because of anticipated budget reductions as a result of sequestration. Hours for assets used exclusively for training were excluded.

The Coast Guard has developed management tools, such as manpower requirements analyses, to help it determine workforce requirements and help align its personnel with its missions. However, a Coast Guard official responsible for these analyses stated that the Coast Guard cannot meet the demand for these analyses because it does not have sufficient staff and a system to help analyze and prioritize the manpower requirements analyses that need to be completed. Without a systematic process for prioritizing the most important manpower requirements analyses to complete, consistent with leading program management practices, the Coast Guard does not have reasonable assurance that the highest priority missions are fully supported with the appropriate number of staff possessing the requisite mix of skills and abilities.