

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-643](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

NGA, a defense agency and element of the Intelligence Community, provides geospatial intelligence to military and intelligence operations to support national security priorities. It currently operates out of two primary facilities—its headquarters in Springfield, Virginia, and its NGA West campus in St. Louis, Missouri. In 2012, NGA determined that a new location for its NGA West facilities was necessary to meet security standards and better support its national security mission. NGA estimates that the construction of the new campus will cost about \$945 million.

GAO was asked to evaluate the AOA process that NGA used to select the site for its new campus. This report (1) describes the process NGA used, including the key factors it considered and (2) evaluates the extent to which the AOA process met best practices for such analyses.

GAO visited the existing NGA West campus and the final four alternative sites that were considered, analyzed and assessed reports and information that document NGA's AOA process for selecting the site, and interviewed relevant officials about the process. GAO evaluated NGA's process against best practices identified by GAO as characteristics of a high-quality, reliable AOA process.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making recommendations to NGA. In commenting on a draft of this report, NGA expressed concerns about GAO's assessment of NGA's estimates of cost risks and sensitivities. GAO continues to believe its assessment accurately reflects NGA's process.

View [GAO-17-643](#). For more information, contact Brian Lepore at (202) 512-4523 or leporeb@gao.gov.

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INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

Analysis of Alternatives Approach for a New Site Reflects Most Characteristics of a High-Quality Process

What GAO Found

In 2012, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) began an analysis of alternatives (AOA) process to evaluate potential sites for its new NGA Campus West (NGA West) using key evaluation factors related to mission, security, development and sustainability, schedule, cost, and environment. NGA's process included levels of analysis and considerations to select the agency-preferred alternative from an original list of 186 potential sites, subsequently narrowed to the final four alternative sites (see figure). The process culminated in the June 2016 selection of the agency-preferred alternative, the St. Louis City site.

Map of Alternatives for National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) West Sites



◆ Agency preferred alternative ★ NGA alternative site locations — Missouri/Illinois state line
■ Missouri/Illinois counties

Source: NGA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers data. | GAO-17-643

NGA's process for selecting a site for the new NGA West campus substantially met three of the four characteristics of a high-quality, reliable AOA process. Specifically, NGA's process substantially met the characteristics that demonstrate a well-documented, comprehensive, and unbiased AOA process. It partially met the credibility characteristic, in part because it did not fully include information on the risks and sensitivities to cost estimates. NGA officials stated that there was no comprehensive DOD guidance to inform its AOA process, and although NGA's AOA process is complete, NGA plans to develop full cost estimates as part of construction, planning, and design. In September 2016, GAO recommended that DOD develop guidance for the use of AOA best practices for certain types of military construction decisions. While DOD did not concur and the recommendation remains open, GAO continues to believe such guidance would help ensure that future AOA processes are reliable and would result in decisions that best meet mission needs.