

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-19-335](#), a report to congressional addressees

Why GAO Did This Study

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires each federal agency to establish a preservation program that ensures properties are identified and evaluated for historic significance, as well as managed and maintained in a way that considers their preservation.

Senate Report 115-130 accompanying a bill for the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2018, included a provision that GAO assess DOD's management of historic properties in use on U.S. installations. This report examines the extent to which DOD (1) identifies and evaluates properties for historic significance, including those that have been privatized, and (2) assesses the condition of its historic properties and has guidance on the training of installation personnel maintaining and those working in historic properties. GAO reviewed DOD fiscal year 2017 real property data and policies and procedures; visited a non-generalizable sample of 10 installations, selecting them based factors such as military service representation and concentration of historic properties; and interviewed DOD officials, privatized housing developers, and installation personnel.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making seven recommendations, including that DOD take steps to verify that privatized military homes are identified and evaluated for historic significance; clarify the inventory requirement for historic properties; and develop guidance related to historic preservation training. DOD concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-19-335](#). For more information, contact Elizabeth Field, 202-512-2775, field1@gao.gov

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DEFENSE INFRASTRUCTURE

Additional Actions Could Enhance DOD's Efforts to Identify, Evaluate, and Preserve Historic Properties

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) reported that it has identified and evaluated about 60,000 of its approximately 375,000 properties on installations as historic as of October 2017. DOD's practice is to identify and evaluate property for historic significance as installations have an identified need for or a project planned for the property, according to DOD officials. However, GAO identified opportunities for DOD to enhance its efforts in several areas.

- **DOD lacks complete and consistent data on historic properties.** Specifically, GAO identified data gaps and discrepancies between the data reported at the installation and department levels for fiscal year 2017. For example, for one installation, GAO found that 150 more historic properties were listed in its installation data than were listed in department-level data for that installation. In November 2018, GAO reported on issues concerning DOD's data and made recommendations to improve the data quality. DOD concurred and reported actions it plans to take to improve data quality. Doing so would help DOD to ensure it has complete information on properties of historic significance and prevent further data discrepancies.
- **DOD has limited visibility of privatized homes that could be historic.** When the military departments transferred military homes to private developers, DOD officials said they also transferred the responsibility to identify and evaluate homes for historic significance to the private developers. However, the military departments do not verify that private developers are doing so. Private developers at seven of the nine installations with privatized housing that GAO visited said they do not identify or evaluate homes for historic significance. Taking steps to verify that private developers carry out this responsibility could help DOD ensure that renovations or repairs are not made to privatized properties that could compromise their historic nature.

Additionally, DOD does not routinely assess the condition of its historic properties and a lack of guidance on training could hamper maintenance and preservation efforts. First, inventories of historic properties, including physical inspections, required every 3 years, are not being conducted at six of the 10 installations GAO visited. Officials at these six installations said that the inventory was not conducted because they were unaware of or misunderstood the requirement. Second, while each installation GAO visited had an established process for approving maintenance work orders, DOD officials reported problems with the maintenance of historic properties at these installations, ranging from maintenance personnel not addressing issues, to maintenance being conducted improperly. At nine of the 10 installations GAO visited, individuals who work in historic buildings said that they believed maintenance personnel did not know what maintenance could or could not be done to the historic buildings, and installation officials expressed concerns about a lack of training related to historic preservation. By clarifying the requirement to conduct a physical inventory and developing guidance on training, DOD would be better positioned to preserve the historic properties under its purview.