

Why GAO Did This Study

To meet operational demands, the Navy has doubled the number of ships based overseas since 2006. Navy ships based abroad represent about 14 percent of the total fleet and are there to provide presence, deter threats, quickly respond to crises, and build partnerships. Effective and timely maintenance is essential to meet strategic objectives, fulfill operational requirements, and ensure ships reach their expected service lives.

House Report 115-676 included a provision that GAO assess maintenance for ships based overseas. This report: (1) describes existing maintenance capacity and approaches the Navy uses for surface ships based overseas, (2) assesses the extent to which the Navy completed maintenance periods as scheduled in fiscal years 2014 through 2018 and analyzes factors contributing to any delays, and (3) evaluates the extent to which the Navy has assessed any challenges facing future overseas maintenance efforts. To address these objectives, GAO analyzed Navy policies and maintenance data from fiscal years 2012 through 2018, and interviewed officials, including from Naval Sea Systems Command and overseas fleets and maintenance centers.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making five recommendations, including that the Navy comprehensively analyze and address maintenance delays, and assess the risks and analyze requirements of future overseas maintenance efforts. The Navy concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-20-86](#). For more information, contact Diana Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov.

NAVY SHIP MAINTENANCE

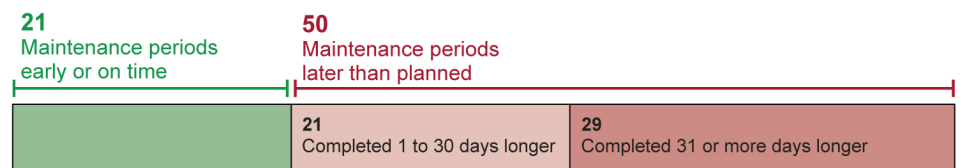
Actions Needed to Address Maintenance Delays for Surface Ships Based Overseas

What GAO Found

The Navy maintains the 38 surface ships based in Japan, Spain, and Bahrain through a mix of Navy-operated facilities and private contractors. The Navy uses different maintenance approaches at each location depending on the number and type of ships based there and the Navy and private contractor industrial base available to provide maintenance support. For example, to support the 12 surface ships based in Yokosuka, Japan, the Navy uses both private contractors and its Ship Repair Facility and Japan Regional Maintenance Center, which is subsidized by the government of Japan. In Rota, Spain, the Navy relies on one Spanish contractor to maintain the four ships based at that location.

Maintenance on surface ships based overseas took longer than planned for 50 of the 71 maintenance periods—or about 70 percent—started during fiscal years 2014 through 2018. More than half of these maintenance delays lasted a month or longer, which reduced the ships' availability for training and operations. Various factors contribute to delays, such as discovery that unanticipated additional repairs are needed, missed planning milestones, or shortages of key staff. However, the Navy's efforts to understand delays often solely focus on individual maintenance periods and result in steps to improve specific issues related to maintenance timeliness. The Navy has not conducted a comprehensive analysis of maintenance delays to systematically identify and address their root causes. Without such an analysis, the Navy cannot effectively target corrective actions, and risks continuing to underestimate maintenance needs and the time and resources required to address them.

The Navy Completed the Majority of the 71 Maintenance Periods Started during Fiscal Years 2014 through 2018 Later than Planned



Source: GAO analysis of Navy data. | GAO-20-86

The Navy has developed a new maintenance approach for ships in Japan, but has not assessed the risks associated with this approach or analyzed the overseas maintenance requirements for a growing fleet. The new maintenance approach calls for ships to obtain all required maintenance in the United States before and after going overseas, among other things. The Navy decided to implement this approach in Japan based on use of the approach in Spain—where ships have experienced few maintenance delays. However, the Navy has not assessed the risks posed by differences between the operating environments in Spain and Japan, or by shortfalls in maintenance capacity at U.S. facilities. The Navy also plans to replace aging ships in Bahrain as it grows the fleet to 355 ships, but it did not analyze or include overseas maintenance requirements in its long-range plan. Without assessing the risks challenges may pose to the success of its new maintenance approach in Japan or analyzing the requirements of a growing fleet, the Navy could be hindered in its ability to ensure these ships are ready and available for operations.