GAO Highlights

Highlights of GAO-21-46, a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate

December 2020

CLIMATE RESILIENCE

DOD Coordinates with Communities, but Needs to Assess the Performance of Related Grant Programs

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD manages a domestic real-estate portfolio with an estimated replacement value of nearly $930 billion. DOD has acknowledged climate change and extreme weather as threats to its installations, operations, and readiness; and has noted the importance of coordinating with state and local governments to improve climate change preparedness and resilience.

GAO was asked to review DOD's efforts to coordinate with communities surrounding its installations to limit the exposure to climate change and extreme weather. This report assesses the extent to which DOD (1) reports using the physical infrastructure and support services of communities surrounding domestic installations, and the vulnerabilities to such infrastructure and services from climate change and extreme weather, and (2) coordinates with such communities to limit installation exposure to the effects of climate change and extreme weather, and is able to determine the effectiveness of related community coordination grants. GAO surveyed 65 domestic military installations, reviewed documents related to climate resilience, and interviewed DOD and community officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations related to developing performance measures for DOD's community grant programs. DOD concurred with all three recommendations.

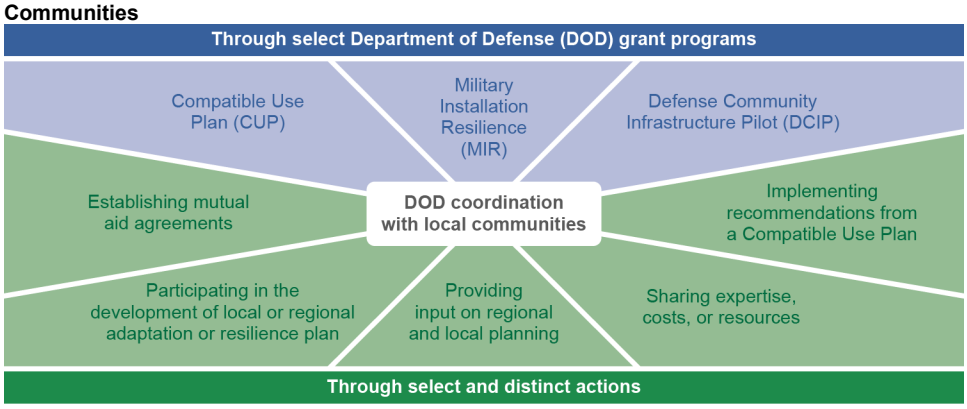
View GAO-21-46. For more information, contact Elizabeth A. Field at (202) 512-2775 or FieldE1@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

Department of Defense (DOD) domestic installations report extensive and varied use of community infrastructure and support services—such as roads, bridges, electricity, water, and medical facilities—that are vulnerable to disruptions from climate change and extreme weather. For example, 62 of the 63 installations (98 percent) that responded to GAO's survey report relying on communities for electricity, access roads or bridges, and telecommunications.

DOD installations also report taking a range of actions to coordinate with organizations—including public utilities, county governments, and state agencies—to limit installation exposure to the effects of climate change and extreme weather.

Department of Defense's Climate Change and Extreme Weather Coordination Efforts with Communities



Source: GAO analysis of GAO survey of 65 Department of Defense installations. | GAO-21-46

Note: CUP studies result in recommendations that address threats to installation readiness; MIR studies identify risks to infrastructure outside an installation; and DCIP provides construction funds to communities to address, among other things, deficiencies in community infrastructure that support military installation resilience.

DOD administers three grant programs that support community coordination with local installations on climate change and extreme weather—the longstanding Compatible Use Plan (CUP), and the Military Installation Resilience (MIR) and Defense Community Infrastructure Pilot (DCIP) programs established in fiscal year 2020. DOD and community officials emphasized the value of these grant programs as a means of facilitating and funding coordination with surrounding communities, including through joint land use studies and community infrastructure development. In fiscal year 2020, about $67 million was awarded under the three grant programs.

While DOD monitors the status of individual CUP grant expenditures and deliverables—and plans to similarly monitor its MIR and DCIP grants—it is unable to determine the effectiveness of the grant programs. Specifically, DOD has not developed performance measures to benchmark and to track overall program performance. Without establishing performance measures for these grant programs, DOD and Congress are limited in determining whether desired outcomes are being achieved and whether current and future investments in the grant programs are delivering their intended value.