

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-25-107092](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Space is essential to national security, providing the military with global command and control, monitoring of adversary activities, and warnings of threats and attacks. In August 2019, the Department of Defense (DOD) established U.S. Space Command at the direction of the President to defend U.S. vital interests. The Command has operated out of Colorado Springs, Colorado since January 2020.

In January 2021, the Air Force announced Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama as the preferred location for the permanent Command headquarters. In [June 2022](#), GAO reported the Air Force's headquarters selection process had shortcomings because it did not fully or substantially meet most GAO AOA best practices.

GAO was asked to review DOD's efforts to determine the permanent U.S. Space Command headquarters location since the completion of GAO's prior work. This report addresses (1) steps the Air Force and other decision-makers took between May 2022 and July 2023 to identify the permanent headquarters location, (2) the extent to which the Air Force basing reevaluation process incorporated relevant AOA best practices, and (3) the status of U.S. Space Command headquarters as of fall 2024.

GAO visited U.S. Space Command headquarters, reviewed documentation, interviewed officials, and assessed information against relevant GAO best practices for a high-quality AOA process.

View [GAO-25-107092](#). For more information, contact Alissa H. Czyz at CzyzA@gao.gov.

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U.S. SPACE COMMAND





Air Force's Reevaluation of Headquarters Location and Status of Operations

What GAO Found

From May 2022 through June 2023, the Air Force employed an evolving three-phased process to reevaluate its preferred location for U.S. Space Command headquarters in response to GAO and DOD Office of Inspector General report recommendations and requests from senior DOD officials. During its reevaluation, the Air Force reviewed basing requirements, selection criteria, and senior officials' advice; analyzed costs; and evaluated implications of the Command's declaration of full operational capability, among other things. At the culmination of this process in June 2023, the Air Force revalidated Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama as its preferred headquarters location. However, the then Secretary of the Air Force did not announce a final decision, and in July 2023, DOD announced the then President had selected Colorado Springs, Colorado as the permanent location for U.S. Space Command headquarters.

The Air Force's reevaluation process incorporated some elements of 11 selected Analysis of Alternatives (AOA) best practices to revalidate its preferred location for U.S. Space Command headquarters. Air Force officials told GAO the reevaluation intended to address the seven best practices GAO found to be not met or minimally met in its 2022 report. GAO also determined the Air Force incorporated elements of four other best practices that GAO previously found were partially or substantially met. Although GAO found that shortfalls persisted in these best practices, in March 2024, the Air Force strengthened its future strategic basing process by addressing GAO's June 2022 recommendation to develop related guidance that is consistent with GAO's AOA best practices.

Summary Examples of GAO Analysis of the Air Force's Reevaluation Process for U.S. Space Command Against Selected GAO Analysis of Alternatives (AOA) Best Practices

	Define functional requirements	The Air Force did not change U.S. Space Command's functional requirements during the reevaluation, but did evaluate how a higher number of personnel would affect parking and square footage requirements.
	Identify significant risks and mitigation strategies	The Air Force examined colocation and full operational capability risks it had not previously analyzed, but did not identify or connect mitigations with other risks, obtain input from U.S. Space Command on the feasibility of the risk mitigations, or include the costs of the mitigations in its cost estimate.
	Perform sensitivity analysis	The Air Force contracted a private firm to perform a sensitivity analysis, which varied some cost drivers. However, this analysis did not include inputs most likely to change cost estimates.
	Weight selection criteria	The Air Force took steps to evaluate a new selection criterion, <i>disruption to operational capability</i> , but it did not weight this criterion in relation to its original 21 selection criteria to account for the new addition.

Source: GAO analysis of Air Force and U.S. Space Command information; GAO (icons). | GAO-25-107092

U.S. Space Command has rapidly increased its personnel and operational capabilities to meet mission objectives, reaching full operational capability in December 2023, nearly two years earlier than initially projected. The Command is fully operational, but U.S. Space Command officials told GAO that they faced ongoing personnel, facilities, and communications challenges. Officials also cited benefits in being colocated with operational space missions and centers. As a result of identified challenges, officials stated the Command's posture is not sustainable long term and new military construction would be needed to support the headquarters' operations in Colorado Springs, Colorado.