

Better Information on Risks and Challenges Needed to Improve Oversight of DOD Facility Conditions

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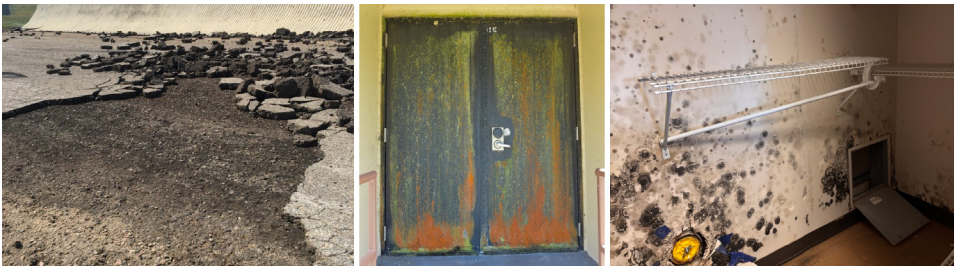
A report to congressional committees

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What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) does not request full funding of identified needs for installation maintenance or major improvement projects for facilities. This shortage has led to an estimated \$285 billion of maintenance backlogs in fiscal year 2025. Due to competing budget priorities, DOD set a goal to fund 90 percent of its maintenance needs, but GAO found that the military services continue to fall short of this goal by funding about 80 percent of these needs. DOD has not fully determined the risks to its mission and to the quality of life of its personnel as a result of not meeting its funding goal. Fully determining and communicating these risks would provide better information to DOD and Congress to weigh budget priorities.

Examples of Facility Deterioration at Selected Military Installations due to Deferred Maintenance, Resulting in Damage, Corrosion, and Suspected Mold



Sources: U.S. Air Force (left), U.S. Navy (center), and GAO (right). | GAO-26-107255

DOD also faces challenges in hiring and retaining key maintenance workers, which are critical for maintaining facilities. According to officials, challenges include hiring in remote and isolated locations; employment competition with the private sector; and federal hiring, pay, and work eligibility practices, which have been exacerbated by recent workforce reductions and the subsequent hiring freeze. However, GAO found that the military departments have not fully identified the extent of maintenance workforce shortages or developed strategies to address these challenges. Doing so would better position department and service leadership to ensure that they have the skilled workforce to address maintenance needs.

Reliable information is important for DOD to effectively prioritize needed maintenance and improvement projects in light of insufficient funding and workforce challenges. However, GAO found that standards for maintenance vary across the services, limiting effective department-wide decision-making. Additionally, installations rely on maintenance work order data systems to respond to identified maintenance needs. However, GAO found that tracking is limited and that the data within those systems are generally unreliable for determining the overall effectiveness of maintenance performed across installations and the services. With improved maintenance information, DOD would be better positioned to take steps to strengthen oversight to improve the department's vast portfolio of infrastructure and ensure that risks to mission and quality of life are reduced.

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD had over 736,000 facilities worldwide, with an estimated value of \$2.6 trillion as of fiscal year 2025. Managing real property has been on GAO's High-Risk List since 2003. GAO has reported that better management of the federal government's real property portfolio is needed to collect reliable real property information and improve the condition of federal facilities, including DOD facilities, and could save billions of dollars.

Senate Report 118-58 and House Report 118-125 contained provisions for GAO to assess DOD's installation maintenance practices. Specifically, this report examines the extent to which DOD has (1) fully funded its facility maintenance and improvement needs; (2) determined the sufficiency of its maintenance workforce; and (3) developed the needed standards, reliable information, and oversight to manage installation maintenance.

GAO analyzed DOD policies, budgets, maintenance data, and other documentation; interviewed DOD officials, including installation officials and maintenance customers from a non-generalizable sample of eight installations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making 13 recommendations to DOD, including that DOD determine risks associated with funding maintenance below recommended levels; identify and address maintenance workforce shortages; improve the reliability of maintenance data; and strengthen departmental oversight. DOD concurred with 7 recommendations, partially concurred with 5, and non-concurred with 1, in some cases noting ongoing actions that would address them. GAO maintains that DOD should fully implement all of these recommendations.