

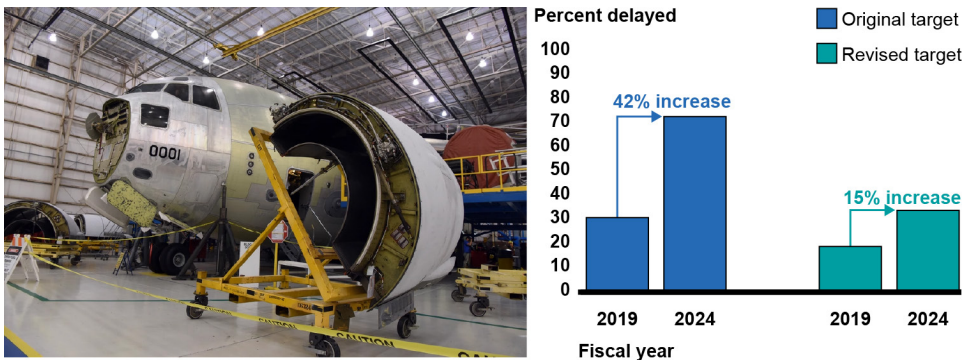
A report to congressional committees

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What GAO Found

The Air Force has three maintenance depots that maintain the readiness of aircraft required for military operations. Depot maintenance delays have increased considerably since fiscal year 2019, whether measured by the original target completion date set before aircraft arrive at the depot or the revised target completion date that accounts for unplanned work found during maintenance.

Percentage of Air Force Aircraft Delayed During Depot Maintenance, Fiscal Years 2019–2024



Sources: GAO analysis of Air Force data; U.S. Air Force/Tommie Horton (photo). | GAO-26-107890

The Air Force tracks depot maintenance timeliness for both original and revised target completion dates but primarily uses the revised target for reporting on its performance. GAO found several limitations associated with the Air Force’s reporting on depot timeliness. For example:

- Reporting on the revised target masks the full extent of delays because it does not reflect unplanned work. Depots frequently revised targets after they completed maintenance to match the actual number of days it took to complete maintenance.
- Depots and aircraft program offices inconsistently apply the target completion date revision process.

As a result, the Air Force is not reporting the full extent of depot maintenance challenges and may not be able to make accurate comparisons across the fleet.

While all three depots have filled 90 percent or more positions since 2020, they have experienced shortages in specific occupations. According to depot officials, pay competition with the private sector is the primary challenge in recruiting and retaining personnel in occupations such as engineers and mechanics. The depots have taken some steps to mitigate this challenge by selectively using incentives and emphasizing the nonfinancial benefits of a federal career. However, the Air Force has not fully addressed pay competition with the private sector because DOD has not conducted a comprehensive assessment of pay gaps for occupations affected by private sector competition. Such an assessment would enable the depots to make informed decisions to address competition with the private sector for occupations critical to aircraft readiness.

Why GAO Did This Study

More than 2 decades of conflict has degraded the Air Force’s readiness, with wide-ranging effects on aircraft from continuous deployments. The Air Force is working to rebuild its readiness, in part by modernizing its maintenance depots to sustain an increasingly aging fleet. The Air Force’s three maintenance depots, also known as Air Logistics Complexes (ALC) are: Ogden ALC, Oklahoma City ALC, and Warner Robins ALC.

Senate Report 118-188 accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 includes a provision for GAO to assess maintenance and staffing at the three ALCs. This report assesses, among other things, the extent to which the Air Force has completed aircraft depot maintenance on time and addressed any staffing challenges at the depots.

GAO analyzed Air Force maintenance and staffing data; interviewed Department of Defense and Air Force officials; and conducted site visits to all three ALCs.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making 10 recommendations to DOD, including that it uses the original target completion date as a primary metric to report on maintenance timeliness, ensures consistent implementation of the target completion date revision process, and conducts a comprehensive assessment of any pay gaps for occupations affected by competition with the private sector. DOD concurred with 8 recommendations and partially concurred with 2 related to assessing root causes of delays. The Air Force agreed to capture this information and would identify where to store it. GAO maintains the existing Air Force system would be an effective way to capture these data.