

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-468](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

DOD requires all servicemembers to complete training that provides common knowledge and skills. Common military training across the military services includes topics such as Suicide Prevention, Cybersecurity, and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response. DOD has identified a need to reduce training requirements because of concerns from the services about the amount of time it takes to complete training, and in 2012 asked the RAND Corporation to examine the services' mandatory training—which includes common military training—requirements and options for standardization. RAND recommended, among other things, that DOD consider adopting standardized, computer-based training and issue a single DOD directive that lists all requirements.

House Report 114-537 accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 included a provision for GAO to examine the military services' actions to assess mandatory military training requirements. This report describes (1) efforts that DOD and the services have made to review and validate common military training requirements; (2) steps that DOD and the services have taken to evaluate the effectiveness of these requirements; and (3) flexibilities the services offer regarding course delivery methods, steps they are taking to consolidate and reduce training time, and their perspectives on various aspects of training. GAO reviewed DOD and military service training guidance and interviewed officials at DOD headquarters and military service offices.

View [GAO-17-468](#). For more information, contact Cary B. Russell at (202) 512-5431 or [russellc@gao.gov](mailto:russellc@gao.gov).

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## DOD TRAINING

### DOD Has Taken Steps to Assess Common Military Training

## What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) and the military services have made recent efforts to review and validate common military training requirements. DOD established the Common Military Training Working Group in February 2015 to, among other things, review and validate common military training requirements. In December 2016 the Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness signed the Common Military Training Working Group Charter, which states that the working group will review common military training requirements for validity. According to an Office of the Deputy for Force Training official, the working group held its first meeting in January 2017 and a second meeting in February 2017. According to that official, the Office of the Deputy for Force Training is in the process of developing future working group meeting agendas to discuss topics such as validating training requirements. In addition, some of the military services have taken steps to review and validate common military training. For example, according to officials, the Navy and Marine Corps annually review and validate mandatory training requirements, while the Army reviews and validates mandatory training requirements biennially or as directed. According to Air Force officials, the Air Force reviewed and validated existing mandatory training requirements during its October 2016 training review.

DOD has directed the Common Military Training Working Group to evaluate the effectiveness of common military training requirements. DOD Instruction 1322.31 calls for the working group to periodically review common military training and evaluate it for effectiveness, among other things, and the working group's charter states that it will review common military training requirements for effectiveness. In addition, some DOD proponents responsible for managing a specific common military training core curriculum, as well as the military service boards, have made independent efforts to assess the effectiveness of their respective mandatory military training courses, including common military training. For example, in 2015 the Army Mandatory Training Task Force evaluated the accessibility and effectiveness of current training materials.

The military services offer varying degrees of flexibility for providing course delivery methods that allow individuals to complete mandatory training requirements, including common military training. For example, training guidance provided by the Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force indicates that the services may rely on a variety of delivery methods for training, including distance learning systems, formal courses, and one-on-one instruction. According to estimates provided by service officials, it would take an individual less than 20 hours to complete all common military training requirements. Nevertheless, the military services are taking steps to reduce training time for some mandatory training requirements by updating their guidance, combining similar training topics, and eliminating redundancies. For example, the Air Force has reviewed all of its training topics to determine which ones to streamline or consolidate. GAO interviewed servicemembers from across the services who informally presented a range of perspectives regarding various aspects of training.