

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD operates depots nationwide to maintain complex weapon systems and equipment through overhauls, upgrades, and rebuilding. These depots are crucial to sustaining military readiness by ensuring that the military services can regularly maintain critical weapon systems and return them to the warfighter for use in training and operations. For fiscal year 2018, DOD reported \$19 billion in total maintenance expenditures and about 84,000 personnel performing depot-level maintenance.

In June 2018, the Senate Armed Services Committee, in a report accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, included a provision for GAO to review DOD's sharing and implementation of best practices and lessons learned among the depots.

GAO evaluated the extent to which DOD experiences benefits and has challenges with (1) sharing and (2) implementing best practices and lessons learned among the depots. GAO reviewed agency guidance; surveyed 17 depots; conducted site visits at five depots; and interviewed DOD, military service, and depot officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making two recommendations to improve the depots' ability to share best practices and lessons learned by creating a comprehensive list of sharing venues, including points of contact, and re-establishing and maintaining materiel lessons learned organizations. DOD concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-20-116](#). For more information, contact Diana Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov

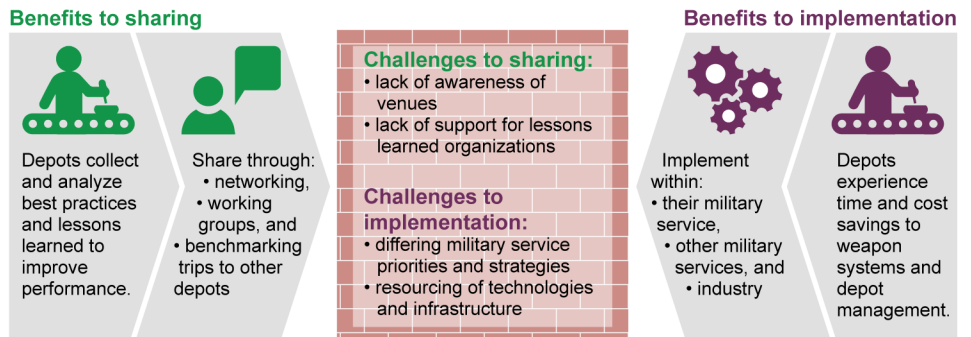
MILITARY DEPOTS

DOD Can Benefit from Further Sharing of Best Practices and Lessons Learned

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) experiences benefits from sharing best practices and lessons learned among its depots, but communication and organization challenges exist. Best practices and lessons learned are shared among the depots through a variety of venues, including networking, working groups, and benchmarking trips to other depots. However, DOD has communication challenges, such as the lack of awareness of venues for sharing information. While Office of the Secretary of Defense officials reported posting a list of working groups, the list only contains three of the more than 60 working groups GAO identified. Without a centralized list of sharing venues and points of contact, it is unclear what groups exist and who to contact to participate, which may impede sharing of best practices and lessons learned. Further, while the Army stated it established lessons learned organizations for sharing maintenance best practices and lessons learned, it did not maintain them due to organizational restructuring and resource constraints. Establishing and maintaining effective organizations dedicated to sharing materiel best practices and lessons learned would encourage knowledge sharing among the Army depots.

Department of Defense's Benefits and Challenges with Sharing and Implementing Best Practices and Lessons Learned among the 17 Military Depots



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense information. | GAO-20-116

DOD is experiencing benefits and taking steps to mitigate challenges with implementing best practices and lessons learned among the depots. Depots reported that implementing some best practices and lessons learned has led to benefits, including time and cost savings. For example, Navy Fleet Readiness Center Southwest, California, implemented an intermittent fault detection system from Ogden Air Logistics Complex, Utah, on its F/A-18 aircraft generators. According to officials, the depot reduced repair time from 90 days to 30 days and quadrupled the generators' time between failures. Depots reported a variety of challenges to implementing lessons learned and best practices, including a lack of resources, lengthy approval processes, and acquisition and technology restrictions. DOD is taking steps to mitigate challenges to implementation, such as creating a new technology tool for viewing metrics on weapon systems' cost and availability which will allow senior leaders to steer resources to needed programs.