

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105797](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD houses hundreds of thousands of service members in military barracks. Reports of poor conditions have raised questions about DOD's management of barracks.

The Joint Explanatory Statement and Senate Report 117-39, accompanying bills for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, included provisions for GAO to review DOD's efforts to maintain and improve military barracks. This report examines, among other things, the extent to which DOD has (1) reliably assessed barracks conditions, (2) made informed decisions on barracks funding, and (3) conducted oversight to improve barracks.

GAO analyzed DOD policies, budgets, and other documentation; interviewed DOD housing officials; toured barracks at a non-generalizable sample of 10 installations; and met with installation officials and barracks residents.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making 31 recommendations for DOD, including the military departments, to, among other things, provide guidance on barracks condition assessments, obtain complete funding information, and increase oversight of barracks programs. DOD concurred with 23 of the recommendations and partially concurred with 8, in some cases noting ongoing actions that would address them. GAO continues to believe DOD should fully implement all of these recommendations.

View [GAO-23-105797](#). For more information, contact Elizabeth A. Field at (202) 512-2775 or FieldE1@gao.gov.

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MILITARY BARRACKS

Poor Living Conditions Undermine Quality of Life and Readiness

What GAO Found

Service members reported to GAO that the conditions of barracks affect their quality of life and readiness. However, GAO found weaknesses in the Department of Defense's (DOD) efforts to maintain and improve their conditions. For example,

- **DOD does not reliably assess conditions, and some barracks are substandard.** DOD assessments of conditions are unreliable. GAO observed barracks that pose potentially serious health and safety risks—such as broken windows and inoperable fire systems—and that do not meet minimum DOD standards for privacy and configuration. Thousands of service members live in barracks below standards, according to officials.

Examples of Poor Barracks Conditions at Military Installations GAO Visited



Source: Department of Defense (left and right); GAO (middle). | GAO-23-105797

- **DOD does not have complete funding information to make informed decisions.** For example, DOD requested about \$15 billion for overall facility sustainment for fiscal year 2024 but could not identify how much of this total would be spent toward barracks. In addition, DOD did not know how much it spent on housing allowances for service members who would normally be required to live in barracks, but did not because of insufficient space or poor living conditions. Complete funding information would help DOD target improvements and provide the department with more visibility into full costs.
- **DOD conducts insufficient oversight.** For example, DOD does not track information on the condition of barracks or facilitate collaboration on initiatives to improve barracks. Insufficient oversight hampers DOD's ability to identify and address long-standing challenges in barracks conditions across the department.

By developing or clarifying guidance related to these weaknesses, DOD could better prioritize investments in barracks to improve living conditions for service members and help ensure that barracks housing programs across military services are consistently implemented and support quality of life and readiness.