

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-71](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD has sought to reduce costs by assessing headquarters and overhead functions. Both the Army and Air Force have two reserve components—a National Guard and Reserve—that have at least 75 headquarters located throughout the United States, its territories, and overseas that manage subordinate units or perform overhead functions. These headquarters have a mix of full-time and part-time personnel. GAO was asked to review issues related to reserve-component headquarters. This report (1) discusses trends in funded positions at reserve-component headquarters and (2) evaluates the extent to which DOD has established and implemented processes to efficiently size its reserve-component headquarters. To do so, GAO reviewed statutes and DOD guidance, analyzed personnel data and headquarters assessments, and interviewed DOD and state officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD externally validate the National Guard Bureau's personnel requirements and include the bureau in its annual report to Congress; reassess requirements for the 54 state Joint Force headquarters; and develop schedules for reassessing headquarters overseen by the Army and Air Force. DOD concurred with recommendations to report data to Congress and establish schedules for reassessing headquarters and partially concurred with recommendations to externally validate the bureau's personnel requirements and assess requirements for the state Joint Force headquarters. GAO continues to believe these recommendations are valid as discussed in the report.

View [GAO-14-71](#). For more information, contact John H. Pendleton at (202) 512-3489 or pendletonj@gao.gov.

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DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

Actions Needed to Ensure National Guard and Reserve Headquarters Are Sized to Be Efficient

What GAO Found

Between fiscal years 2009 and 2013, the total number of funded positions—both full-time support and part-time—at the Department of Defense's (DOD) 75 Army Reserve and Air Force Reserve (Reserves) component headquarters grew from about 30,200 to 31,900 positions (about 6 percent overall). Some organizations grew more markedly, among them the National Guard Bureau (17 percent); Army National Guard Directorate (44 percent); Air National Guard Readiness Center (21 percent); and the Office of the Chief of the Army Reserve (45 percent). DOD officials attribute growth to the conversion of contractor workload into civilian positions and increased missions assigned at certain headquarters. Over the same period, staff levels at the National Guard's 54 state Joint Force headquarters remained flat and the Air Force Reserve shrank by 4 percent.

DOD has processes in place that are intended to ensure that the number of funded positions at its reserve-component headquarters are set at the minimum level needed to accomplish their mission, but it has not consistently followed those processes at 68 of the 75 headquarters that GAO reviewed. As a result, DOD is unable to determine whether National Guard and Reserve headquarters are sized to be efficient. The National Guard has begun evaluating some personnel requirements, but its efforts do not fully address the management issues GAO identified:

- The National Guard Bureau, which may continue to grow to accommodate its Chief's placement on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is determining its own requirements without external validation. This is inconsistent with Joint Staff, Army, and Air Force processes, which generally involve an external review. In addition, Congress's ability to oversee the bureau's size is limited because DOD's annual report on its Major DOD Headquarters Activities does not include data on the bureau and its more than 600 staff.
- The National Guard has not fully assessed its 54 state headquarters—which contain nearly 21,900 funded positions—since the 1980s. GAO's prior work shows that agencies can reduce costs by consolidating and centralizing functions and eliminating unneeded duplication. The National Guard Bureau, Army National Guard Directorate, and Air National Guard Readiness Center each assess a portion of the state headquarters, but there is no process to assess the headquarters' personnel requirements in their entirety and ongoing efforts do not provide a holistic review.
- The Army and Air Force have not fully reassessed 13 of the 20 reserve component headquarters for which they are responsible. The Army has a reassessment backlog, and the Air Force does not require periodic reassessments and reassesses its headquarters on an ad hoc basis. Some headquarters with significant growth are among those that have not been reassessed, including the Office of the Chief of the Army Reserve and the Air National Guard Readiness Center. In contrast, 5 of the 7 reassessed organizations subsequently reduced their staff levels such as the Air Force Reserve's three numbered air forces, which have shrunk by more than a third since 2009. The Army and Air Force agree their headquarters should be reassessed, but they have not scheduled reassessments across their reserve components.