

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-582](#), a report to congressional addressees

Why GAO Did This Study

OSA missions support the movement of a limited number of high-priority passengers and cargo with time, place, or mission-sensitive requirements. DOD's OSA aircraft are variants of commercial aircraft. OSA aircraft are categorized as either executive (used to transport DOD, congressional, and cabinet officials) or non-executive (used to fulfill wartime or contingency needs). As of May 2017, DOD had 287 OSA aircraft—44 executive and 243 non-executive—about 6 percent of DOD's airlift/cargo/utility aircraft.

House Report 114-537 and Senate Report 114-255 included provisions for GAO to review the use and size of the OSA fleet. This report examines the extent to which DOD (1) used OSA executive aircraft in 2014 and 2015, and if this usage complied with guidance; and (2) has a process to validate its OSA fleet size. GAO reviewed DOD guidance for approving the use of OSA aircraft, analyzed the most current executive aircraft flight data available—calendar years 2014 and 2015—and compared the approval documentation from a sample of those flights to DOD's guidance. GAO also reviewed documentation and interviewed officials to assess DOD's OSA validation process and results.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making any recommendations in this report. DOD provided technical comments on a draft of this report, which GAO incorporated as appropriate.

View [GAO-17-582](#). For more information, contact Zina D. Merritt at (202) 512-5257 or merrittz@gao.gov.

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OPERATIONAL SUPPORT AIRLIFT

Fleet Sufficiency is Assessed Annually

What GAO Found

In calendar years 2014 and 2015, government officials took thousands of flights on Operational Support Airlift (OSA) executive aircraft, and our review of a nongeneralizable sample of 53 flight packages found that those trips generally followed Department of Defense (DOD) guidance for requesting the use of government aircraft. DOD requires its officials in certain positions to fly on military aircraft, including OSA executive aircraft. It also authorizes, but does not require, officials in other government positions to fly on OSA executive aircraft. We analyzed the use of OSA executive aircraft during 2014 and 2015—the latest years for which data were available—and found that of the 19,752 executive flights conducted, 31 percent supported required users and 69 percent supported other authorized users. The Vice President, the First Lady, and other cabinet-level officials on White House support mission trips accounted for about 12 percent of the flights, and members of congress and congressional employees accounted for about 5 percent of the flights. DOD guidance requires documentation for each flight request including the rank or position of the traveler, itinerary, and in some cases, cost data. While not generalizable beyond these flights, our review of 53 flight request packages found that the packages generally contained most required documentation. Although some packages were missing items, we discussed those items with DOD officials, and we did not find evidence to suggest the requested flight should have been disapproved.

Figure: C-20 Operational Support Airlift



Source: Defense Video Imagery Distribution System. | GAO-17-582

In recent years, DOD has implemented a consistent process to validate the size of its OSA fleet and to have a risk assessment of the fleet's ability to meet requirements all 365 days per year. In 2016, for example, the executive fleet's risk-to-mission accomplishment was assessed as moderate, and the non-executive fleet's risk-to-mission was assessed as low. The services do not generally use the validation process determinations as a basis for OSA aircraft procurement and divestment decisions. According to service officials, those decisions are based on separate, independent evaluations of their force structure needs, which evaluate the age and maintenance conditions of their aircraft, and the need to balance OSA aircraft requirements against other service priorities.