

# GAO@100 Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-21-276](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

DOD operates hundreds of installations in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii, which support the daily operations of military units. The support services provided to servicemembers and their dependents at these installations include morale, welfare, and recreation services; medical care; housing; and education.

Senate Report 116-48, accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, included a provision for GAO to review support services at remote or isolated installations. This report assesses the extent to which DOD (1) designated installations in the United States since 2011 as remote or isolated for the provision of support services, and (2) established objectives for support services at installations and assessed whether current support services are meeting the needs of servicemembers and their dependents.

GAO reviewed relevant policies and guidance, conducted interviews with four selected installations and conducted a non-generalizable web-based survey of 756 active-duty servicemembers.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making two recommendations to DOD to develop policy for designating installations in the United States as remote or isolated that includes a process for considering support services in addition to MWR, and to assess the risks of not providing support services and subsequently develop strategies to meet identified needs. As discussed in the report, DOD concurred with the recommendations and described some related actions.

View [GAO-21-276](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-3604 or [farrellb@gao.gov](mailto:farrellb@gao.gov).

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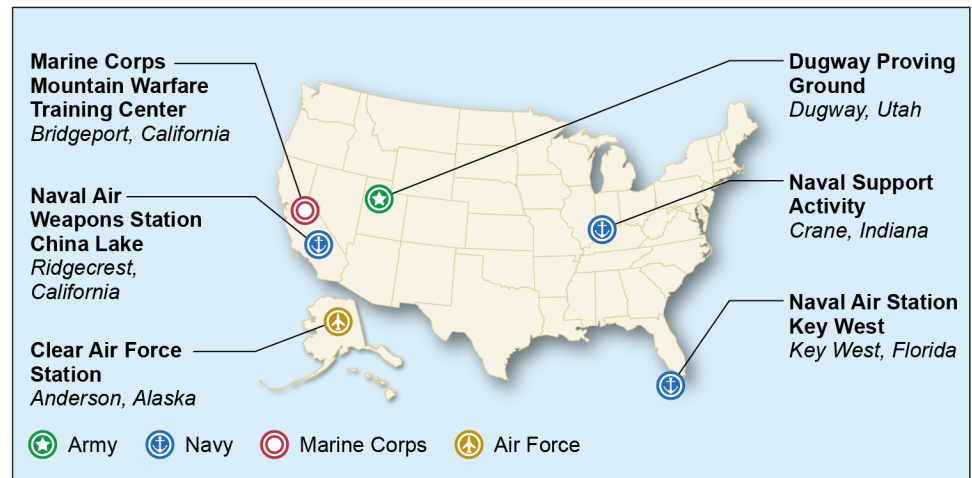
## MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

### DOD Should Consider Various Support Services when Designating Sites as Remote or Isolated

## What GAO Found

Between 2011 and 2020, the Department of Defense (DOD) designated three installations as remote or isolated in the United States for morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) services (e.g., fitness centers and child care centers). Those designations bring the current total to 43 installations as established by either the House of Representatives or DOD since 1989. However, DOD's current process does not consider other support services. This is because it has not developed policy that addresses this designation for support services other than MWR, such as housing and medical care. Military installations that are far from key support services often have fewer services, such as more limited access to health care and housing options. See figure. DOD officials responsible for a variety of support services told GAO that servicemembers and dependents would benefit from an overarching policy that included a process for designating installations as remote or isolated that considers all support services. This would better position DOD to increase awareness of the unique needs of servicemembers and dependents at these locations and help target needed resources like funding for improvements to housing and better access to specialty medical care.

GAO-Selected Examples of Remote or Isolated Military Installations within the United States



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense data; Map Resources (map). | GAO-21-276

DOD has set broad program objectives for providing support services such as ensuring that eligible personnel have access to affordable, quality housing. Servicemembers and officials at the installations included in GAO's review identified concerns related to meeting these needs. For example, GAO found that servicemembers at three remote or isolated installations faced commutes of an hour or more to reach health care providers within DOD's TRICARE network. While DOD and the services use a variety of methods to assess whether support services meet the needs of servicemembers and dependents, DOD has not systematically assessed the associated risks to recruiting, retention, and quality of life that these concerns pose and developed strategies to mitigate these risks. Assessing risk and taking action based on that assessment would better position DOD to address the needs of servicemembers in remote or isolated areas.