

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105082](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

As of 2021, DOD held 1,131 incarcerated persons in 36 MCFs located across the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. DOD's MCFs are administered by the military services, each of which is responsible for operating its correctional facilities to maintain good order, discipline, safety, and security.

Senate Report 116-236 accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2021 included a provision for GAO to review matters related to health and safety at MCFs. This report assesses, among other things, the extent to which (1) OSD and the military departments have developed health and safety standards for MCFs and assessed adherence to these standards and (2) selected MCFs have adhered to health and safety standards and the services have addressed any identified deficiencies.

To conduct this assessment, GAO analyzed guidance and reviewed the results of inspections and audits at eight selected MCFs, among other things. GAO selected two MCFs from each service to capture a range of facility levels and locations.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making five recommendations, including that the Air Force ensure all MCFs are routinely assessed for adherence to health and safety standards, and the Marine Corps develop a plan to address staffing shortages at MCFs. DOD generally concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-23-105082](#). For more information, contact Elizabeth Field at (202) 512-2775 or [FieldE1@gao.gov](mailto:FieldE1@gao.gov).

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## MILITARY CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

### Consistent Application of Standards and Improved Oversight Could Enhance Health and Safety

## What GAO Found

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the military departments have developed health and safety standards for military correctional facilities (MCFs). However, GAO found that the Air Force does not routinely assess its MCFs for adherence to these standards. Specifically, it is the only service that has not

- required the routine assessment of adherence to a uniform set of MCF-specific health and safety standards, and
- assessed all of its MCFs to determine adherence with these standards.

By routinely assessing all of its MCFs, the Air Force could better ensure that its MCFs are meeting health and safety standards, and identify and respond to any potential risks to the health and safety of MCF staff and incarcerated persons.

#### Marine Corps Installations—West, Camp Pendleton Base Brig, Camp Pendleton, CA



Source: Marine Corps/Chief Warrant Officer-3 J.D. DeLaRosa. | GAO-23-105082

Adherence to health and safety standards varied and some identified deficiencies have not been addressed at Air Force and Marine Corps MCFs across a sample of eight MCFs. Specifically,

- Selected Army and Navy MCFs generally adhered to health and safety standards and addressed identified deficiencies, according to inspection reports.
- Inspections from 2017 to 2019 at an Air Force base identified structural and procedural deficiencies at the Air Force MCF. In 2020, an investigation prompted by a December 2019 suicide at the MCF resulted in an almost year-long closure of the MCF to address deficiencies identified. The Air Force has plans to address the remaining facility deficiencies identified in the earlier inspections; that work is expected to begin in fiscal year 2023.
- Inspections and audits have identified staffing shortages at Marine Corps MCFs, including those GAO selected. Additionally, officials have identified security personnel shortages at Marine Corps MCFs that result in 24-hour work shifts, posing a safety risk. Officials stated that they are in the process of reviewing personnel allocations at MCFs. However, if additional positions are approved, whether local commanders will use their discretion to fill them is unclear. Until the Marine Corps develops a plan to approve and fill positions at MCFs, incarcerated persons and MCF staff are at greater risk for health and safety incidents.