

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-24-106525](#), a report to the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Navy must have combat-ready ships to keep the U.S. safe and ensure the seas are open to trade. Sailors perform basic maintenance and repairs that are essential for preserving a ship's operational capabilities.

House Report 117-397, accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, includes a provision for GAO to assess the extent to which the Navy supported sailor-led maintenance and repairs aboard ships. This report evaluates, among other things, the extent to which the Navy provides (1) personnel and training, and (2) management processes and systems for sailor-led maintenance.

GAO analyzed guidance, policy, and data; conducted a survey of executive officers aboard 232 ships of the active battle fleet (91 percent response) and interviewed relevant officials; and met with more than 140 leadership personnel and 200 sailors on 25 ships of the active battle fleet.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making seven recommendations to the Navy to, among other things, improve the quality of information on the number of ship's crew available for duty; ensure that maintenance guidelines reflect personnel numbers and skill levels specific to ships or ship classes; and better communicate with stakeholders on logistics IT improvement efforts. The Navy concurred with each recommendation.

View [GAO-24-106525](#). For more information, contact Diana Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or MaurerD@gao.gov.

September 2024

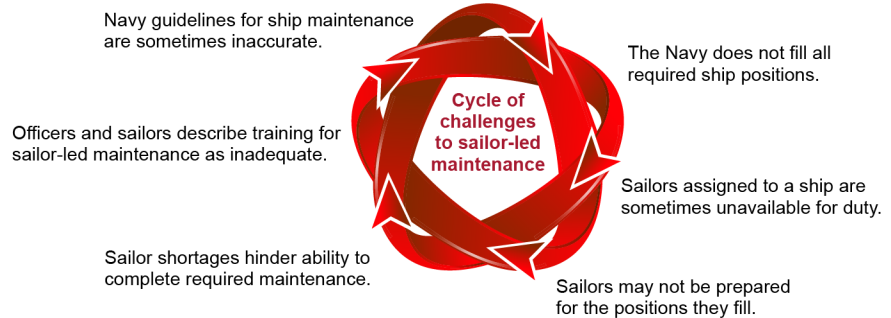
NAVY READINESS:

Actions Needed to Improve Support for Sailor-Led Maintenance

What GAO Found

The Navy faces several interrelated personnel and training challenges that inhibit sailors' ability to complete required ship maintenance. GAO found that the Navy does not fill all required ship positions, and that sailors assigned to a ship are sometimes unavailable for duty (for example, temporarily assigned to another ship) or may have inadequate training or preparation for their positions.

Interrelated Personnel and Training Challenges Inhibit Sailor-Led Maintenance



Source: GAO analysis of Navy information (text); ryno/stock.adobe.com (cycle). | GAO-24-106525

Sailor shortages hinder sailors' ability to complete required maintenance, according to survey respondents, sailors from GAO's 25 ship visits, and GAO's review of Navy data. For example, 63 percent of executive officers completing GAO's survey said it was moderately to extremely difficult to complete repairs while underway with the number of sailors assigned to their ships. In addition, the Navy does not track and report data on the number of sailors assigned to a ship, but not available for duty, according to officials. The Navy could improve the quality of information reported to Congress by updating policy to report data on whether sailors assigned to a ship were available and reported for duty.

Navy executive officers and sailors told GAO there were widespread concerns about sailor training. When relying on available formal (classroom) training, 64 percent of executive officers responding to GAO's survey said it is moderately to extremely difficult to conduct sailor-led maintenance, and 75 percent found it moderately to extremely difficult for sailors to complete repairs. In addition, the Navy's guidelines for performing ship maintenance are sometimes inaccurate with respect to the time and personnel needed and are not written appropriately for sailors' maintenance skills and supervisor's experience levels. Ensuring the Navy's guidelines better reflect the actual number and skill level of maintenance personnel will enhance sailors' ability to maintain ships.

The Navy is working to replace old and fragmented logistics information technology (IT) systems it currently uses to manage sailor-led maintenance. But it did not effectively share its vision for logistics IT improvements to meet stakeholder needs. Establishing a process to inform stakeholders—such as shipboard personnel—will improve the Navy's ability to implement a new system that better harmonizes maintenance information and meets user needs.