



Highlights of [GAO-08-665](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Due to several simultaneous Department of Defense (DOD) force structure and basing initiatives, 20 installations are expecting a combined net growth of over 173,000 military and civilian personnel, not including family members and all contractors, over fiscal years 2006-2012. Although communities surrounding these installations can expect to realize economic benefits in the long term, DOD has identified these 20 to be substantially and seriously impacted in terms of being able to provide infrastructure to accommodate the growth.

In response to the House report to the fiscal year 2007 defense appropriations bill, GAO (1) examined the extent to which communities affected by DOD's actions have identified their infrastructure needs, and (2) assessed DOD's efforts and those of other agencies to assist affected communities. GAO reviewed applicable directives and executive orders, surveyed the 20 growth communities, and met with community and agency officials to discuss growth issues.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making recommendations to improve the military personnel relocation data provided to affected communities and to facilitate more effective interagency and intergovernmental coordination and assistance efforts. DOD agreed with our recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-665](#). For more information, contact Brian J. Lepore at (202) 512-4523 or leporeb@gao.gov.

DEFENSE INFRASTRUCTURE

High-Level Leadership Needed to Help Communities Address Challenges Caused by DOD-Related Growth

What GAO Found

Communities surrounding DOD growth installations have begun to identify infrastructure needs to help support expected personnel growth in general terms, but planning efforts have been hampered by a lack of consistent and detailed information about anticipated DOD personnel movements. When asked to identify their top infrastructure challenges, 16 of the 20 communities identified by DOD as substantially and seriously impacted cited transportation, 11 named school capacity, and 6 said affordable housing. However, communities lack the detailed planning information, such as the growth population demographics, necessary to effectively plan and obtain financing for infrastructure projects. A DOD directive requires the military services to develop guidance for providing planning information to installations, communities, and DOD's Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), but GAO found that none had done so. While the consistency of the personnel relocation data DOD provides has improved, over half of the communities we surveyed expressed concerns about the completeness of the personnel data they receive and the lack of detailed demographic data, such as the number and ages of dependent children expected to accompany incoming service members and attend school. Until the military departments begin to disseminate consistent and more detailed information about planned defense personnel moves, it will be difficult for community, state, and federal officials to effectively plan for and provide necessary infrastructure to accommodate DOD personnel and their families relocating to growth-impacted communities.

OEA, other DOD agencies, and some state, local, and federal agencies have provided grants and technical assistance to DOD growth communities, but the Office of the Secretary of Defense has not provided the high-level leadership critical to achieving effective interagency and intergovernmental coordination. To ensure that DOD-impacted communities receive assistance, the 22-agency Economic Adjustment Committee (EAC) was created by executive order over 30 years ago and amended as recently as 2005. The Secretary of Defense, or his designee, chairs the committee that is required to lead efforts to assist communities most affected by its activities and serve as a clearinghouse for sharing information about expected DOD impacts on the communities surrounding military growth installations, as well as information regarding possible government resources that could mitigate some of those impacts. As chair of the EAC, DOD could regularly convene full committee meetings and exercise the high-level leadership needed to help ensure that federal agencies are affording certain priority considerations to defense-affected communities. However, the full committee has not met since November 2006. Instead, DOD has left the workings of the EAC to OEA, which has been proactive in assisting impacted communities but can not guide interagency operations at a high enough level to promote effective interagency cooperation. Consequently, in the absence of high-level DOD leadership, the committee has not developed a clearinghouse for information sharing which could more effectively match government resources with the needs of DOD-impacted communities.