

Why GAO Did This Study

A DOD-contracted study reported the cost impact of corrosion to DOD was \$20.6 billion in fiscal year 2016. Corrosion can affect military readiness by taking critical weapon systems out of action and creating safety hazards. Corrosion can also lead facilities to experience structural failures and loss of capital investments.

Senate Armed Services Committee Report 115-125, accompanying a bill for the Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, included a provision for GAO to review aspects of DOD's corrosion prevention and mitigation efforts. In this report, among other things, GAO assesses the extent to which DOD has (1) consistently reported the funding levels needed to perform the Corrosion Executives' duties and (2) provided oversight of corrosion planning for major weapon system programs. GAO analyzed DOD guidance, funding (fiscal years 2010-2017) and corrosion planning information, and interviewed officials charged with overseeing DOD's corrosion efforts.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making five recommendations to DOD, including (1) issuing guidance for identifying and reviewing funding levels for performing Corrosion Executive duties, (2) ensuring that the Corrosion Office develops a process to maintain documentation of its reviews of corrosion planning, and (3) ensuring that Corrosion Executives establish guidance on reviewing the adequacy of corrosion planning. DOD concurred with all of GAO's recommendations.

DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

DOD Should Take Additional Actions to Enhance Corrosion Prevention and Mitigation Efforts

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense's (DOD) Office of Corrosion Policy and Oversight (Corrosion Office) provides information, including the needed funding levels for the military departments' Corrosion Control and Prevention Executives (Corrosion Executives), in its Corrosion Office Annual Reports to Congress. Corrosion Executives are responsible for overseeing efforts to prevent and mitigate corrosion of weapon system programs and infrastructure. GAO reviewed these reports for fiscal years 2010 through 2017 and found inconsistencies in the reported funding levels. Specifically, the military departments:

- *Used different methods to identify funding levels:* In fiscal year 2017, the Army and Navy used direct costs, such as salary and training costs, to identify their funding levels, but the Army also included other associated costs. The Air Force used the prior year's funding level and adjusted it for inflation. The use of differing methods may not yield consistent and quality information for decision-making purposes.
- *Did not consistently have supporting documentation:* The Army data GAO received did not reconcile with data presented in the Corrosion Office Annual Reports to Congress for 5 of 8 fiscal years. The Navy data did not reconcile for 2 of 8 fiscal years, and there was no supporting documentation identifying how these figures were calculated. Air Force officials did not provide any figures or supporting documentation for 4 fiscal years, stating that these figures were not available. Without maintaining supporting documentation, DOD may not be able to ensure the accuracy of the reported information.

DOD's Corrosion Office has not issued guidance for identifying funding levels and maintaining documentation. Without such guidance, Congress will not receive quality information needed to effectively conduct its oversight activities.

DOD has taken several actions to maintain oversight of corrosion planning, such as developing sustainment and engineering documents that take corrosion considerations into account, for major weapon system programs. However, DOD lacks documentation of some of its oversight efforts. DOD Corrosion Office officials told GAO that since October 2016, they have reviewed corrosion planning documents during the earliest phases of the acquisition process for 11 major weapon system programs. However, DOD Corrosion Office officials could not provide supporting documentation of all their reviews or the actions taken by program offices to address the Corrosion Office's comments.

For example, Army and Air Force Corrosion Executives described some actions taken to oversee corrosion planning, such as providing comments on key sustainment and engineering documents. However, Army and Air Force Corrosion Executive Office officials had limited documentation of the oversight provided. In addition, guidance cited by Army and Air Force officials does not specifically describe how the Corrosion Executives will ensure that the processes for overseeing the adequacy of corrosion planning are being accomplished. Without the DOD Corrosion Office and the Army and Air Force Corrosion Executives taking steps to address these issues, DOD's actions to oversee its corrosion prevention and mitigation efforts may not be consistent or effectively addressing DOD requirements.