

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-25-107238](#), a report to congressional committees.

Why GAO Did This Study

To conduct its missions, the Coast Guard assigns service members to numerous locations within and outside the continental U.S., including aboard ships.

A committee report accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 includes a provision for GAO to review the Coast Guard rotations process and how DOD supports that process. This report addresses the extent to which the Coast Guard identified challenges with rotations and has taken action to address them, among other things.

GAO analyzed Coast Guard and DOD policies and guidance on rotations. GAO also interviewed DOD and Coast Guard officials, including geographically dispersed field unit officials from all nine Coast Guard districts. The information GAO obtained from these interviews is not generalizable, but provided insights and context concerning how the Coast Guard monitors and addresses rotation challenges experienced by service members.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making two recommendations, including that the Coast Guard establish a process to routinely collect and analyze service-wide feedback on rotations. The Coast Guard agreed with the recommendation. DOD partially agreed with GAO's other recommendation. GAO maintains that the recommendation is warranted, as discussed in the report.

View [GAO-25-107238](#). For more information, contact Heather MacLeod at (202) 512-8777 or MacLeodH@gao.gov.

November 2024

COAST GUARD

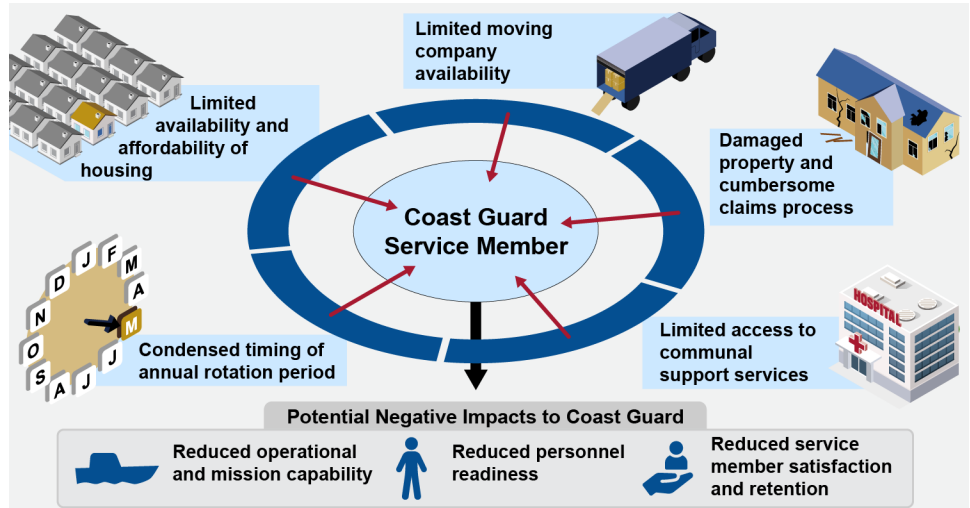
Better Feedback Collection and Monitoring Could Improve Support for Duty Station Rotations

What GAO Found

The Coast Guard annually rotates over 40 percent of its 40,000 active-duty military personnel to new duty stations. Around 41 percent of Coast Guard units are in remote areas or high vacation rental areas (such as Cape Cod, Massachusetts), or both. U.S. Transportation Command, within the Department of Defense (DOD) administers the shipment and storage of service members' household goods, including for Coast Guard personnel, through the Defense Personal Property Program.

Officials from the nine Coast Guard districts told GAO that service members can experience key challenges when rotating to new duty stations. These challenges included limited moving company availability and access to specialized health care (see figure below). Officials told GAO that these challenges can have potential negative impacts on Coast Guard operations, personnel readiness, and retention. For example, delays in arrivals of newly assigned members to replace rotated members can increase workloads for those stationed at some units. Additionally, some newly assigned members may not be able to fully participate in mission-related duties before taking care of personal issues like obtaining dependent care. The Coast Guard has taken some actions to address these challenges, such as helping with researching available places to rent.

Duty Station Rotation Challenges and Potential Negative Impacts Identified by Coast Guard Field Unit Officials



Source: GAO analysis of interviews with U.S. Coast Guard officials; GAO icons; AlexZel/adobe.stock.com (hospital). | GAO-25-107238

While the Coast Guard has mechanisms that may collect information on challenges experienced by service members, they are not specifically intended to do so. For example, members may communicate feedback on rotations when preferencing new assignments. However, the Coast Guard does not have a process for collecting service-wide feedback about duty station rotations. Establishing a process to routinely collect and analyze such feedback would position the Coast Guard to better understand rotation challenges and their impact on operations, readiness, and retention, as well as meet service member needs.