COMMUNITY RELATIONS

DOD’s Approach for Using Resources Reflects Sound Management Principles
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Why GAO Did This Study
DOD conducts community relations activities—such as aircraft flyovers, exhibitions by DOD jet and parachute demonstration teams, and performances by military bands—to expand the public’s understanding of the military’s mission and capabilities, among other goals. During sequestration in fiscal year 2013, DOD restricted its community relations activities—for example, placing travel restrictions on bands. DOD reinstated community relations activities at a reduced capacity in fiscal year 2014.

Senate Report 114-49 included a provision for GAO to examine DOD’s community relations activities. GAO (1) evaluated the extent that DOD follows sound management principles in its approach for determining which community relations activities to undertake and (2) describes what is known about the resources that DOD has used for community relations activities.

GAO assessed DOD and military service guidance and processes against management principles in federal internal control standards; identified resources (personnel, equipment, and funding) that DOD and the military services planned to use in fiscal years 2014-17 for community relations activities; and interviewed public affairs officials at DOD and the military services.

GAO is not making any recommendations in this report. GAO provided DOD with a draft of this report for comment, DOD did not provide formal comments in response.

What GAO Found
The Department of Defense’s (DOD) approach for determining which community relations activities to undertake reflects sound management principles—both for activities requested by non-DOD entities and for activities initiated by the department. DOD and military service guidance on community relations activities is consistent with management principles in federal internal control standards, such as delegating authority by assigning responsibilities and establishing mechanisms to enforce directives. In addition, DOD and the military services have processes for reviewing and approving which activities to undertake based on factors such as the level of resource commitment required, the possibility of any interference with other official duties, and the nature of the event. Since fiscal year 2014, DOD’s and the military services’ public affairs offices have coordinated to prepare an annual Outreach Planning Document to provide an overview of and direction on community relations activities they are to undertake each year. According to officials, this annual planning effort has been beneficial and this concept is included in a draft update of community relations guidance that is expected to be issued by the end of fiscal year 2017. GAO notes that by conducting this annual effort and producing this document, DOD is better able to record and communicate information on community relations activities.

DOD has leveraged resources from across the department to support community relations activities and has generally relied on the military services’ annual Operation and Maintenance appropriations to fund them. Within these appropriations, there is no single budget activity group dedicated to these activities. Almost all of the leveraged personnel and equipment also support other DOD missions. For example, DOD has used pilots and equipment to conduct flyovers for community relations purposes from widely dispersed units that are primarily dedicated to support other missions. Likewise, musicians from DOD’s 137 bands have performed other missions, including ceremonial and funeral support, in addition to performing at community relations events. In the Outreach Planning Documents for fiscal years 2014-17, DOD provided not-to-exceed amounts for community relations activities ranging from about $130 million in fiscal year 2014 to about $191 million in fiscal year 2017. According to a DOD official and DOD documents, these amounts provide a general picture of resources to be leveraged and help set a reasonable upper limit on the number of activities the services conduct annually.

Examples of Community Relations Activities

View GAO-16-794. For more information, contact Andrew Von Ah at (213) 830-1011 or vonaha@gao.gov.
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Abbreviations

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>DOD</td>
<td>Department of Defense</td>
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<tr>
<td>OATSD/PA</td>
<td>Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs</td>
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September 19, 2016

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Department of Defense (DOD) uses community relations activities to expand the public’s understanding of the department’s mission, the nation’s defense posture, and military capabilities by increasing the public’s exposure to military personnel, facilities, equipment, and programs.\(^1\) Community relations activities include, but are not limited to, aircraft flyovers, performances by DOD jet and parachute demonstration teams, musical and ceremonial unit appearances, public speaking appearances by DOD officials, and military installation open houses. However, when DOD was required to reduce its discretionary budget during sequestration in fiscal year 2013, among other things, the department restricted its community relations activities to ensure that funding was available for wartime operations and critical priority

\(^1\) Although one objective of community relations activities is to support the military services’ recruiting programs by earning public support and understanding of operations, missions, and personnel requirements of the services through well-planned community relations programs, direct recruiting activities are not community relations activities.
requirements for national security. For example, musical and ceremonial units were prohibited from traveling beyond their local area to perform, and DOD’s jet and parachute demonstration teams were restricted from participating in events such as air shows and open houses for half of the fiscal year. DOD reinstated community relations activities at a reduced capacity in fiscal year 2014.

The 2015 Senate Armed Services Committee Report accompanying S. 1376 included a provision that GAO examine DOD community relations activities. This report (1) evaluates the extent that DOD follows sound management principles in its approach for determining which community relations activities to undertake and (2) describes what is known about the resources that DOD has used for community relations activities.

Throughout this report we characterize community relations efforts as either aviation or non-aviation activities. We define “resources” as the personnel, equipment, and funding used to conduct those community relations activities. For both objectives, we reviewed applicable guidance and documentation of the processes used to review and approve community relations activities. We also interviewed officials from the Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (OATSD/PA); the community relations organizations within the headquarters public affairs function at the military services, including active and reserve components; two DOD jet demonstration teams; two parachute teams; and representatives from multiple military bands from each of the military services. We limited our focus to community relations activities conducted by the military services, occurring in the United

2 “Sequestration” is the cancellation of budgetary resources provided by appropriations or direct spending laws. Section 251A of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, Pub. L. No. 99-177 (1985), as amended, requires the Office of Management and Budget to calculate and the President to order a sequestration of non-exempt discretionary appropriation accounts when discretionary spending limits established for a particular fiscal year are exceeded. A sequestration was ordered on March 1, 2013.


4 The Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs establishes policies and implementation guidance for DOD’s public affairs programs, including community relations activities. The military services coordinate community relations activities as part of their public affairs functions.
States, rather than those conducted by the functional and geographic combatant commands.

For the first objective, we assessed DOD and military service guidance related to the processes for reviewing and approving community relations activities against pertinent management principles in GAO’s *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*. The standards call, among other things, for (1) an agency’s organizational structure to clearly define key areas of authority and responsibility and establish appropriate lines of reporting; (2) the delegation of authority and responsibility for operating activities, reporting relationships, and authorization protocols; (3) control activities, the policies, procedures, techniques, and mechanisms that enforce management’s directives and help ensure that actions are taken to address risks; and (4) control activities that include diverse activities such as approvals, authorizations, and the creation and maintenance of related records. In addition, we reviewed documentation from a department-wide planning effort for community relations activities that began in fiscal year 2014. We also interviewed DOD and military service officials responsible for community relations activities to corroborate our understanding of the guidance documents, the processes in place for authorizing community relations activities, and the department-wide planning effort.

For the second objective, we analyzed DOD and military service planning documentation for community relations activities from fiscal years 2014 through 2017. We selected this time period because DOD had initiated its department-wide planning effort in fiscal year 2014. We identified resources that DOD and the military services have planned to use for these activities during this time period, and interviewed DOD and military service officials. We analyzed the fiscal year 2015 budget execution material—the most recent full year such data were available—including in the President’s fiscal year 2017 budget request. In addition, we obtained fiscal year 2015 data—the most recent full year such data were available—from the military services on the personnel that DOD

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used for selected aviation activities and for military band performances. We focused on these two areas because all of the military services conducted these types of community relations activities. Through our discussions with DOD and military service officials, we concluded that the data are sufficiently reliable for the purpose of providing context about the order of magnitude of DOD’s planned and actual resource commitments toward specific community relations activities.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2015 to September 2016 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Community Relations Activities Conducted by DOD and the Military Services

DOD and the military services conduct aviation and non-aviation community relations activities both on and off military installations. These activities can be requested by non-federal entities (e.g., non-profit or for-profit civilian organizations) and by other federal government agencies (e.g., Congress) or can be initiated by DOD components (e.g., the military services). Figure 1 describes aviation and non-aviation community relations activities that DOD and the military services conduct.
Figure 1: Aviation and Non-Aviation Community Relations Activities That the Department of Defense and the Military Services Conduct

**Aviation community relations activities »**

- **Flyovers**
  A flyover is a straight and level flight, usually limited to one pass, by no more than four military aircraft of the same type from the same military service.

- **Aerial demonstrations**
  A demonstration is designed to show performance techniques involving a single aircraft or group of aircraft or personnel—such as helicopter flight techniques, precision aerial maneuvers flown by the jet demonstration teams, and parachute jumps.

- **Static displays**
  A static display is the ground display of military aircraft and their related equipment. The aircraft does not taxi or start its engines while spectators are in the display area. When aircraft are on static display, qualified military personnel must be available at the aircraft to answer questions on aircraft performance and missions.

**Non-aviation community relations activities »**

- **Military-hosted events**
  Military-hosted events can include military installation open houses, military air shows, Department of Navy fleet weeks and port visits, Navy Week, and Marine Week.*

- **Speaking engagements and other outreach**
  Authorized speeches and briefings by DOD military and civilian personnel on matters of interest to the public. Personnel often appear at functions coordinated by non-governmental organizations, veterans’ and military service organizations and civic or corporate leaders.

- **Service birthday and historical commemorations activities**
  Anniversary and commemorative activities include celebrating the anniversary of a service’s founding and commemorating historical military operations such as the Battle of Iwo Jima. Personnel such as musicians and senior civilian and military leaders, as well as equipment are often used as a part of the activity.

- **Bands and ceremonial units**
  Military bands, band detachments, and buglers provide public musical support. This support includes, but is not limited to, parades, concerts, choral presentations, patriotic openers or presentations, and other events. Ceremonial units generally consist of color guards, marching units, and salute batteries and can support patriotic observances and civic parades.

*Fleet weeks involve multiple Navy vessels and Navy and Marine Corps crew members docking and visiting major cities in the United States. Members of the public can tour the naval vessels, interact with military personnel, and learn about the vessels’ technologies and capabilities. The Navy Week program is intended to introduce the Navy to areas of the United States without a significant Navy presence and to bring naval resources to a city for a week-long series of events with corporate, civic,
government, education, media, veterans, community service, and diversity organizations. During Marine Week, military officials interact with the local government, businesses, community organizations, and citizens at events such as a demonstration of a Marine Air Ground Task Force or of static equipment and aircraft displays.

Roles and Responsibilities for DOD Community Relations Activities

According to DOD guidance, a principal goal of community relations activities is to increase the public’s understanding of DOD’s mission, the nation’s defense posture, and military capabilities by increasing the public’s exposure to military personnel, facilities, equipment, and programs. In addition, the guidance states that community relations activities support the following objectives:

- fostering and sustaining good relations with the public;
- supporting the department’s equal opportunity goals;
- maintaining a reputation as a good neighbor and respected public organization;
- increasing knowledge about the department’s and services’ missions, policies, and requirements;
- supporting personnel recruiting and retention programs; and
- inspiring patriotism.6

In September 2013 and December 2014 memorandums, the Secretary of Defense stated that community relations remain a crucial departmental activity that showcases superior combat power, demonstrates readiness to defend the nation, and helps to preserve the all-volunteer force.7

Community relations activities are considered to be separate from DOD’s direct recruiting; advertising; and morale, welfare, and recreation activities. Although community relations activities can support recruiting efforts and are often coordinated with recruiting efforts, a June 2015 DOD memorandum from the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs emphasized that community relations activities should not be

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7 DOD, Secretary of Defense, Memorandum, Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2015 Strategic Public Affairs Outreach Activities (Dec. 14, 2014) and DOD, Secretary of Defense, Memorandum, Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2014 Outreach Activities (Sept. 30, 2013).
confused with recruiting and advertising. Recruiting efforts include recruiters, financial and other incentives, and advertising. DOD advertises through the placement of recruiting messages intended to inform or persuade an audience through various types of media, such as television, radio, digital media, direct mail, and others. Nor are community relations considered Morale, Welfare, and Recreation programs, which benefit military and civilian personnel as compared to community relations activities which help earn public support and understanding of the military mission. Examples of Morale, Welfare, and Recreation programs include free motion pictures, parks and picnic areas on military installations, childcare and youth programs, recreation centers, and membership and non-membership clubs.

Community relations activities fall under the purview of DOD’s public affairs function. According to DOD guidance, programming funds for community relations programs are the responsibility of each DOD component and its commands, and are to be kept to the minimum necessary to accomplish DOD objectives. Further, DOD guidance on community relations assigns various responsibilities to multiple DOD components, including the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs and the Secretaries of the military departments (the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force). The Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs’ responsibilities include, among other functions, establishing policies and implementation guidance for community relations activities. The Secretaries of the military departments’ responsibilities include executing community relations activities and approving the military services’ participation in public events—which are those events not connected with the military functioning of DOD and intended primarily for non-military audiences. Table 1 identifies the headquarters-level organizations that are focused on supporting community relations activities within each military service.

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8 DOD, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, Memorandum, Department of Defense Clarifying Guidance for Community Relations Outreach and Recruiting Activities (June 9, 2015).
Table 1: Headquarters-Level Organizations Focused on Supporting Community Relations Activities within Each Military Service

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<th>Military Service</th>
<th>Headquarters-level Community Relations Organization</th>
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<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>Community Relations Division within the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, which is a field operating agency within the Headquarters Department of the Army Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>Community Outreach Directorate within the Navy’s Public Affairs Headquarters—The Navy Office of Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marine Corps</td>
<td>Community Relations Branch within the Office of United States Marine Corps Communications, which is part of the Headquarters of the U.S. Marine Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>Engagement Division within the Office of the Director of Public Affairs, which is part of the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force.</td>
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Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense information. | GAO-16-794

DOD’s Approach for Determining Which Community Relations Activities to Undertake Reflects Sound Management Principles

To manage requests and planning for community relations activities, DOD and the military services have established guidance that we found is consistent with the management principles in GAO’s Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government. DOD and the military services have also established processes for implementing this guidance, including reviewing and approving activities requested by non-DOD entities as well as those initiated within the department. Starting with fiscal year 2014, DOD introduced an annual department-wide planning process that culminates in an annual planning document that is intended to further guide the military services on what community relations activities to undertake.

DOD and Military Service Guidance for Managing Community Relations Activities Is Consistent with Federal Internal Control Standards

DOD and the military services have established guidance for managing community relations activities that reflects sound management principles articulated in GAO’s Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government. The standards provide an overall framework to help agencies achieve missions and program results, minimize operational problems, and improve accountability. The management principles in the framework include clearly defining authority and responsibility; establishing delegation of authority and authorization protocols; and outlining policies, procedures, and mechanisms to enforce directives. We

9 GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1.
reviewed DOD guidance and military service guidance governing community relations activities and found that these guidance documents reflect these management principles. Table 2 provides examples where the guidance reflects the principles. Additionally, we found that DOD and the military services have implemented this guidance by establishing processes for reviewing and approving requests for community relations activities submitted by non-DOD entities and for department-initiated activities.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>GAO principle</th>
<th>DOD and military service guidance</th>
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| Organizational structure that defines key areas of authority and responsibility and establishes appropriate lines of reporting. | The Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs’ community relations responsibilities include:  
- establishing policies and implementation guidance for community relations activities and  
- granting exceptions to the policies in the department's guidance directive to the DOD components—including the military services.  
The Secretaries of the military departments’ community relations responsibilities include:  
- executing community relations activities and approving the military services’ participation in public events and  
- supporting the use of military aircraft for specific community relations activities. |
| Delegation of authority and responsibility for operating activities, reporting relationships, and authorization protocols. | The Secretaries of the military departments may:  
- further delegate community relations responsibilities with the expectation that those executing community relations activities shall do so consistent with DOD’s public affairs community relations guidance. |


GAO principle

Policies, procedures, techniques, and mechanisms that enforce directives and address risks.

DOD and military service guidance

DOD guidance documents detail multiple guidelines for community relations activities, including that these activities should not:

- interfere with official duties and impair operational, training, or other readiness requirements;
- take place at events that provide a selective benefit or preferential treatment; support partisan political activities; have planned actual or anticipated public confrontation or staged controversy; or are restricted in terms of admission, have specific membership requirements, and restrict data about the sponsoring organization from being accessible;
- use military personnel in uniform in a demeaning or menial fashion—such as ushers, bag handlers, guards or similar capacities in public events occurring off a military installation; and
- be in competition with private enterprise, especially commercial musicians.

DOD guidance documents provide additional instruction on procedures and techniques for determining and planning community relations activities, such as:

- an evaluation checklist and request forms.

Diverse activities such as approvals, authorizations, and the creation and maintenance of related records.

DOD guidance documents detail multiple guidelines for approving, authorizing, and documenting community relations activities, such as:

- The requirement that the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs approve all DOD community relations participation in programs or events that by their nature or because of expected media coverage could be of national or international interest.
- The requirement that commanders at all levels maintain records of community relations activities that include the following information: support request forms or letters, disposition of requests, description of events and activities undertaken; type and extent of the participation by the military services; and indications of effectiveness (e.g., crowd size and media coverage).

Source: GAO analysis of DOD information and GAO’s Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government. | GAO-16-794

Processes for Reviewing and Approving Community Relations Activities Requested by Non-DOD Entities

For both aviation and non-aviation community relations activities that are requested by non-DOD entities, DOD and the military services have processes to determine which activities to undertake. The processes are to implement DOD and military service guidance that, as discussed earlier, reflects federal internal control standards. For aviation activities, according to DOD and military service officials, this process starts with the receipt of the standardized “Request for Military Aerial Support”12 form (see app. I for a copy of the form). Non-DOD entities requesting

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12 DD FORM 2535, “Request for Military Aerial Support (October 2010).” According to an OATSD/PA official, the current form is set to expire on September 30, 2016, and an updated form has been submitted to the Office of Management and Budget for review and approval.
community relations activities are to provide the following information on the form:

- whether the requested aviation community relations activity is a flyover, static display, or aerial demonstration;
- whether a specific military service, type of aircraft, or aerial demonstration team—such as the U.S. Navy Blue Angels or the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds jet demonstration team—is preferred; and
- what applicable financial and non-financial support will be made available.\(^{13}\)

Upon receipt of this form, according to DOD and military service officials, public affairs officials use the information provided to evaluate the eligibility of each request for support in terms of its appropriateness—for example, whether the event where the community relations activity were to occur would benefit a broad segment of the community as a whole, not only the financial interest of an event sponsor—and compliance with DOD policies. Within the Navy, the Marine Corps, or the Air Force, the service’s headquarters’ community relations organization decides on the eligibility of all requests for aviation community relations activities. Within the Army, its headquarters’ community relations organization decides on the eligibility of flyover requests. Army units decide on the eligibility of requests for static displays and aerial demonstrations. In addition to determining the eligibility of the requests, according to officials in the military service headquarters’ community relations organizations, the public affairs function may recommend some requests over others based on factors such as expected audience size, media coverage, reaching a demographic group that is under-represented in the armed forces, and the level of awareness about the military among event attendees.

Once activities requests are deemed eligible for support, the reviewing public affairs function forwards the requests to the internal military service stakeholders—including those with operational control over the aviation

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\(^{13}\) When the U.S. Navy Blue Angels or the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds jet demonstration teams participate in events, requesting non-DOD organizations are to pay $6,000, which is to partially defray lodging and meal expenses. The U.S. Army Golden Knights parachute demonstration team requires reimbursement for expenses such as lodging, meals, and ground transportation from the requesting organization, military or civilian.
resources—to make a final determination about whether to approve or deny the request. For example:

- In the Army, according to an Army official, the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs coordinates its review of flyover requests with the Office of General Counsel, the Office of the Judge Advocate General, and the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Army G-3/5/7 (Operations). Once this group of officials concurs, the Chief of Public Affairs sends requests with recommendations to the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army for final consideration and approval.

- In the Navy, according to Navy officials, the Navy’s Chief of Information, after review by the Aviation Outreach Working Group, makes the final decision on flyover requests. Representatives from the Navy’s headquarters community relations organization and two commands—Pacific and Atlantic Naval Air Forces and Naval Air Training—serve on the Aviation Outreach Working Group.

- In the Marine Corps, requests for demonstrations involving the AV-8B Harrier jet aircraft and MV-22 Osprey helicopter are further reviewed by the AV-8B Harrier and MV-22 Osprey Flight Demonstration Board. Members of this board have aviation, public affairs, recruiting, and legislative affairs expertise and are further supported by representatives from the Marine Air Wings and the Marine Corps Forces and Marine Corps Forces, Pacific commands. According to Marine Corps officials, this group makes recommendations from the list of eligible aerial demonstration events for the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps’ final consideration and approval.

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14 The U.S. Navy Blue Angels and the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds jet demonstration teams plan their schedule 2 years in advance. In addition, these two teams are to confer with one another when planning their respective schedules since according to DOD guidance they should not appear the same event nor perform near than 150 nautical miles of each other on the same show day. The U.S. Army Golden Knights and the U.S. Navy Leap Frogs parachute demonstration teams plan their respective schedule 1 year in advance.

15 These aviation units can be in the active Army, the Army reserves, and the Army National Guard.

16 On July 15, 2016, the Marine Corps announced that a Community Relations Outreach Board will replace the AV-8B Harrier and MV-22 Osprey Flight Demonstration Board among others.
In the Air Force, before individual aviation units can participate in a requested aviation activity, the operations organization in their respective parent major command has the final approval authority.\textsuperscript{17} In certain circumstances, OATSD/PA has approved the military services’ participation in requested aviation community relations activities. According to DOD guidance, OATSD/PA approves all community relations participation in programs or events that by their nature or because of expected media coverage could be of national or international interest. The OATSD/PA is also the designated authority for granting exceptions to established community relations policies. For example, OATSD/PA approved the National Football League’s request for a flyover for the 2016 Super Bowl in California and granted an exception to current policy regarding the number of aircraft used in a flyover, allowing the U.S. Navy Blue Angels to conduct the flyover with six rather than four aircraft.

According to DOD and military service officials, they receive more requests for military participation in aviation community relations activities than can be accommodated. Further, officials explained that there have been occasions where approved requests went unfulfilled because no aviation unit was available to participate or because of operational limitations such as training schedules, limited flying hours, or weather cancellations. For example, according to an Air Force official, in fiscal year 2015 of the 567 eligible requests 427 of them were fulfilled.

Similar to requested aviation community relations activities, DOD and the military services have a process to determine what non-aviation activities to undertake when military participation in such events is requested by non-DOD entities. According to DOD and military service officials, this process begins with the receipt of the standardized “Request for Armed Forces Participation in Public Events (Non-Aviation)” form (see app. I for a copy of the form).\textsuperscript{18} Entities requesting non-aviation community relations activities are to include on the form information such as the non-

\textsuperscript{17} These aviation units can be in the active Air Force, the Air Force reserves, and the Air National Guard.

\textsuperscript{18} DD Form 2536, “Request for Armed Forces Participation in Public Events (Non-Aviation) (October 2010).” According to an OATSD/PA official, the current form is set to expire on September 30, 2016, and an updated form has been submitted to the Office of Management and Budget for review and approval.
aviation resource being requested, details about the event and requesting organization, and the financial support to be provided. Generally, according to officials in the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force military services’ headquarters community relations organizations, the review and approval processes are decentralized to the greatest extent possible. The officials stated that this approach for delegating authority is appropriate given the level of resources committed. The headquarters community relations organizations serve as a resource for questions, but generally do not review these requests. For example, a request for a color guard or band from a specific military service could be reviewed and potentially approved and fulfilled by the military installation nearest the event. According to Marine Corps officials in the community relations organization, since the fiscal year 2013 sequestration, the Marine Corps’ headquarters community relations organization has been reviewing all requests for non-aviation and non-band community relations activities for eligibility, appropriateness, and compliance with DOD policies. However, according to a Marine Corps official in the community relations organization, this organization is planning to delegate responsibility for these reviews by the end of fiscal year 2016.

An exception to the above process involves requests for band and ceremonial units within the National Capital Region.19 The Military District of Washington has acted, on behalf of OATSD/PA, as the coordinator for approval of musical and ceremonial support requested within this region.20 According to Military District of Washington public affairs officials, the community relations staff reviews these requests for appropriateness, eligibility, and compliance with DOD policies and then

19 According to DOD Directive 5410.18 (Nov. 20, 2001) (certified current as of May 30, 2007), the National Capital Region is the geographic area located within the boundaries of the District of Columbia; Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties in the State of Maryland; Arlington, Fairfax, Loudon, and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria in the Commonwealth of Virginia; and all cities and other units of government within the geographic areas of such District, Counties, and City.

20 The Military District of Washington is a direct reporting unit to the Chief of Staff of the Army. According to DOD guidance, the Military District of Washington is responsible for coordinating all support requests for official federal government events and acts as the DOD coordinator for approval of musical and ceremonial support within the National Capital Region except for requests from Members of Congress and requests for exceptions that are approved by the OATSD/PA.
forwards eligible requests on to the operations staff in the appropriate military service that can further approve and fulfill the request.

Similar to requested aviation community relations activities, OATSD/PA has approved the military services’ participation in requested non-aviation community relations activities where they could be of national or international interest or require an exception waiver because they go beyond established activities. For example, according to OATSD/PA officials, they have approved requests for a ceremonial unit or touring band based in the United States to perform at an international community relations activity—such as at the Edinburgh International Military Tattoo or at Argentina’s independence centennial celebration—when an internationally based unit was not available.

For community relations activities initiated by the military services, DOD has established a process to determine which activities to undertake. This process is to implement DOD and military service guidance that, as discussed earlier, reflects federal internal control standards. This process involves varying levels of authority depending on the type of community relations activity and the required level of resource commitment. For example, according to DOD officials, local commanders at military installations can approve the use of resources under their operational control for events such as tours of a military command or installation for members of the public including civic leaders; however, per guidance, if a proposed community relations activity is worthy of support, but exceeds local support capability or authority, it shall be referred through command channels to the applicable higher level.\textsuperscript{21} According to military service officials, the military services’ headquarters community relations organization or public affairs functions have responsibilities to plan or coordinate community relations activities such as those that may require a higher resource commitment, such as multiple personnel, types of equipment, or time and travel obligations. For example:

- The Army’s public affairs function oversees a touring program with living Medal of Honor recipients.

\textsuperscript{21} Local commanders at military installations may request support from aviation assets not under their operational control by using the DD FORM 2535, “Request for Military Aerial Support” (Oct. 2010).
The Navy’s community relations organization has planned, coordinated, and implemented multiple annual Navy Week events.

The Marine Corps’ community relations organization has planned, coordinated, and implemented an annual Marine Week event.

The Air Force’s community relations organization has planned and implemented the National Security Scholars Conference in different locations in the United States. This annual conference is an off-the-record exchange among a select group of scholars and senior leaders such as the Secretary of the Air Force.

All of the military services’ community relations organizations support the Joint Civilian Orientation Conference. This annual conference is geared toward a small number of civilian guests of the Secretary of Defense who interact with senior military and civilian officials and gain experiences by visiting installations throughout the United States to observe activities and operations of each military service.

According to DOD guidance, the touring bands of the military services—the U.S. Army Field Band, the U.S. Navy Band, the U.S. Marine Band, and the U.S. Air Force Band—generally are assigned a national performance touring area in addition to their responsibility to conduct community relations activities in their local area. OATSD/PA has assigned areas within the continental United States where these bands can tour on a rotational basis over the next 5 years starting in fiscal year 2014.22

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22 DOD, Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs; Memorandum Assignment of Band and Large-Scale Service Production Tour Areas, 2014-2018 (May 28, 2014), as amended. This guidance also applies to the military service’s large-scaled productions such as the Army’s Spirit of America 2-hour show that is performed by the soldiers from the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment and the U.S. Army Band, among others, in which they present the history and development of the Army.
DOD Introduced an Annual Department-wide Planning Process to Further Guide What Community Relations Activities to Undertake

In response to restrictions on community relations activities during sequestration in fiscal year 2013, OATSD/PA instituted an annual department-wide community relations planning process that resulted in an Outreach Planning Document. The planning document was first issued in fiscal year 2014 and has been updated annually. The military services, among others, participate in this process and contribute sections to the planning document. The planning document articulates, for the upcoming fiscal year, (1) the military services' priorities for community relations activities, (2) key resources available for use, and (3) summary details about known and anticipated activities. In addition, the Outreach Planning Document includes certain cost information for the identified activities that DOD officials refer to as “not-to-exceed” amounts. This cost information is discussed in the next section of this report. According to an OATSD/PA official, the Outreach Planning Document provides an opportunity for top management to consider the number and types of activities being undertaken and an approximate level of resources being committed to these efforts.

This annual planning process has evolved over time. For example, for fiscal year 2014, in the wake of the suspension of many community relations activities due to sequestration in fiscal year 2013, DOD and the military services considered several courses of action that ranged from an across-the-board reduction to all community relations activities to eliminating the jet demonstration teams. The fiscal year 2014 Outreach Planning Document showed courses of action and recommended conducting a reduced number of activities listed. The Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Deputy’s Management Action Group reviewed and endorsed this approach and

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23 In a September 30, 2013, memorandum accompanying DOD’s Fiscal Year 2014 Outreach Proposal, the Secretary of Defense stated that these restrictions caused the department to withdraw from more than 2,800 events throughout the United States. Secretary of Defense, Memorandum, Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2014 Outreach Activities (Sept. 30, 2013).

24 As initially developed, the planning document was entitled the “Department of Defense FY14 Outreach Proposal.” When updated the following year, the title became the “Department of Defense FY15 Strategic Public Affairs Outreach Plan.” Currently, the annual plan is entitled the “Department of Defense FY 16 – FY 17 Public Affairs Outreach Guidance.” Throughout our report we use the term “Outreach Planning Document.”
In subsequent fiscal years, the Outreach Planning Document no longer presented courses of action but continued to include an overview of the broad categories of community relations activities, the numbers of known and anticipated community relations activities, and their “not-to-exceed” amounts.

According to OATSD/PA officials, prior to sequestration, the military services managed their own community relations activities and did not consistently follow established DOD guidance about when reporting to OATSD/PA was required. Following sequestration, OATSD/PA officials developed this planning process to better articulate costs and the value of community relations activities. OATSD/PA collaborated with the military services to obtain their agreement with the planning process and to make implementation decisions—including how to categorize community relations activities and what common cost calculations could be consistently used. For example, the military services agreed upon a standard formula for estimating the cost of a flyover. The military services’ headquarters-level community relations organizations have been responsible for coordinating this planning process and the contributions in the final planning documents. Specifically, each service’s responsible officials stated that they have consolidated historical or current information on hand, gathered information from multiple locations and stakeholders within the service, and made estimates as needed. According to OATSD/PA officials, they intended for this planning process to coordinate the activities of the individual military services in a unified and strategic manner.

According to DOD and military service officials, the annual planning process and the resulting annual Outreach Planning Document have been beneficial and this concept has been included in a draft version of the department’s community relations guidance that is currently being updated. Officials told us that the process has helped to (1) inform senior

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25 The Deputy’s Management Action Group is the primary civilian-military management forum that supports the Secretary of Defense and addresses top departmental issues that have resource, management, and broad strategic and/or policy implications. Its primary mission is to produce advice for the Deputy Secretary of Defense in a collaborative environment. The group is co-chaired by the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the Secretaries of the military departments, the Chiefs of the military services, and DOD’s Principal Staff Assistants holding standing invitations.
leaders about known or anticipated community relations activities, (2) proactively prioritize their activities, and (3) establish not-to-exceed amounts for these activities. For example, the Outreach Planning Document for fiscal years 2014 and 2015 were reviewed and endorsed by senior DOD leaders including the Secretary of Defense. Collectively the fiscal years 2015 and 2016-17 Outreach Planning Documents listed the following benefits for maintaining the planning document: (1) maximizing visibility at the national level; (2) maximizing national collaboration opportunities; (3) increasing the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Comptroller’s confidence in fiscal responsibility; and (4) building on proven best practices. OATSD/PA officials provided further examples of how these benefits have been realized, including reinforcing DOD guidance for the military services, especially at the installation level, and disseminating best practices.

OATSD/PA officials stated that the department is in the midst of updating department-wide guidance on community relations and has incorporated direction related to the annual planning process and the Outreach Planning Document throughout the draft guidance. According to an OATSD/PA official, the guidance is under review and is expected to be issued by the end of fiscal year 2017. Although direction related to the annual planning process and associated details about it in the draft guidance are subject to change during the review process, we believe—consistent with federal internal control standards on information and communication—that, by conducting this annual planning process and producing the Outreach Planning Document, DOD is better able to record and communicate information on community relations activities to those within the department who need it to carry out their responsibilities.26

26 See GAO, Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government, GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1 (Washington, D.C.: November 1999). These standards were in effect prior to fiscal year 2016 and cover the time period of most of the DOD guidance regarding community relations. The standards were subsequently updated. The updated standards went into effect on October 1, 2015, and, consistent with the previous version of the standards, emphasize the need for relevant, reliable, and timely information and communication of that information throughout an agency in order to achieve all of its objectives. See GAO, Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government, GAO-14-704G (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 10, 2014).
DOD has leveraged resources that primarily support other missions from across the department to support community relations activities. DOD’s Outreach Planning Document outlines a general picture of these resources—such as jet and parachute demonstration teams, military bands, and other non-aviation assets. Also, in the Outreach Planning Documents for fiscal years 2014 through 2017, DOD and the military services have provided dollar amounts for known and anticipated community relations activities that they describe as “not to exceed” amounts. DOD has generally relied on the military services’ annual Operation and Maintenance appropriations to fund its community relations activities. The funding is spread across multiple budget activity and subactivity groups that DOD uses to divide its Operation and Maintenance appropriations.27

DOD’s Outreach Planning Documents for fiscal years 2014 through 2017 outline a general picture of the resources that are to be leveraged from across the department to support community relations activities. In these planning documents, DOD provided planned not-to-exceed amounts for the military services’ community relations activities that ranged from a total of about $130 million in fiscal year 2014 to a total of about $191 million in fiscal year 2017. According to an OATSD/PA official, these not-to-exceed amounts are used to help assess the value of community relations activities and are based on notional formulas and cost estimates intended to serve as a consistent method used across the military services to set a reasonable upper limit on the amount of community relations that the department conducts each year. In addition, according to an OATSD/PA official, these estimates do not represent actual, executed cost information but rather are “not-to-exceed” amounts that the

27 DOD divides the military services’ Operation and Maintenance budget requests into four budget activities: (1) operating forces, (2) mobilization, (3) training and recruiting, and (4) administration and servicewide activities. DOD further divides these budget activities into various activity groups, then again into subactivity groups. The number and names of the activity and subactivity groups differ with each military service.
department is using to prioritize and manage its resources. Overall, our analysis shows that the not-to-exceed amounts for community relations activities account for a relatively small amount of DOD’s overall budget. For example, in fiscal year 2015, the total amount that DOD planned for the military services’ community relations activities not to exceed was $181.2 million, which would have been about one tenth of 1 percent of the total Operations and Maintenance expenditures relative to the $175.5 billion in Operations and Maintenance funds executed for all the services in fiscal year 2015.

In carrying out its community relations activities, DOD and the military services have leveraged resources from widely dispersed units that are used primarily to support missions outside of community relations. According to OATSD/PA officials, due to the decentralized execution of community relations activities, the department does not comprehensively identify the total resources used for these activities. Further, officials told us that they do not centrally track all community relations activities to confirm the number of activities and not-to-exceed amounts outlined in the annual Outreach Planning Document because they found that a previous tracking effort outweighed the value of the information collected and limited the flexibility needed by each military service to effectively execute their community relations programs within the agreed-upon guidance. According to military service officials, the services in general track some community relations activities for their management and

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28 According to military service officials, these amounts are self-reported by the units or major commands providing the community relations activities, and do not include all costs. Costs such as training flying hours, travel expenses, fuel, and venue rentals related to community relations activities are included in these amounts. Personnel and procurement costs such as for military service members and aircraft are not included because costs associated with these resources would be incurred with or without a community relations mission. Also, the officials told us that these amounts are offset by benefits to the department, such as free publicity through television media, social media discussions, and free space for recruiters at events.

29 We identified discrepancies between DOD’s summary amounts by military service in the Outreach Planning Documents for fiscal years 2014 through 2016 and the amounts we aggregated based on information in the documents for the discrete community relations activity categories for each military service. For each fiscal year, DOD’s summary amounts were higher than ours by a range of $47,000 to $2.2 million dollars. A DOD official acknowledged these discrepancies but attributed them to mathematical-related miscalculations and stated the information in the Outreach Planning Documents was intended as an internal working product.
oversight purposes. For example, Army officials stated the Army’s headquarters community relations organization launched a Public Affairs Community Engagement Database in February 2015 and requested that public affairs officials throughout the Army use the system to, among other things, plan and track community relations activities. In addition, Army officials told us they use the database to help inform their contribution to the Outreach Planning Document. Navy officials told us that they track throughout the fiscal year the community relations activities listed in the Navy’s section of the Outreach Planning Document, regularly highlighting when different activities—such as Fleet Weeks, Port Visits, Navy Week events, and jet and parachute demonstration team performances—will take place, for purposes of informing senior leadership and the rest of the Navy. According to Marine Corps community relations organization officials, the execution and costs of the annual Marine Week is tracked. The Air Force’s headquarters community relations organization approves and tracks open house events occurring at Air Force installations in a spreadsheet to have a record of activities provided, the cost of events, and the total attendance numbers. In the following subsections we discuss available information on the resources used to support various types of aviation and non-aviation community relations activities.

The Army’s, the Navy’s, and the Air Force’s jet and parachute demonstration teams routinely carry out community relations activities that also help them maintain their proficiency for national security missions and support recruiting and retention objectives. In fiscal year 2015, the U.S. Navy Blue Angels and the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds, for example, demonstrated aerial maneuvers at civilian and military air shows throughout the United States, and the U.S. Army Golden Knights and the U.S. Navy Leap Frogs conducted parachute jumps at air shows and other events throughout the United States. According to military service officials, the members of these demonstration teams provide support to other missions such as recruiting and technical parachuting expertise for deployed individuals. Table 3 shows the fiscal year 2015 military and civilian personnel authorizations associated with the jet and parachute demonstration teams that were reported to us by military service officials associated with each of these teams.
Table 3: Military and Civilian Personnel Authorizations for Department of Defense Jet and Parachute Demonstration Teams (Fiscal Year 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Military and civilian personnel authorizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Army Golden Knights (parachute team)</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Navy Blue Angels (jet team)</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Navy Leapfrogs (parachute team)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds (jet team)</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DOD data provided by Army, Navy, and Air Force officials associated with each team. | GAO-16-794

Furthermore, pilots and aircraft from other military units within the active, reserve, and National Guard components that are not part of the U.S. Navy Blue Angels or the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds also support aviation community relations activities—including flyovers. In fiscal year 2015, these military units conducted 482 flyovers (see table 4).

Table 4: Aircraft Flyovers for Community Relations Activities Conducted by Military Service Components (Fiscal Year 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military service</th>
<th>Number of community relations flyovers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Corps</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Military service data compiled by the military services’ respective headquarters-level public affairs officials. | GAO-16-794

According to military service officials, time spent by pilots on community relations activities—including the jet demonstration teams—has training value and is counted against each service’s allotment of flying hours. These hours will be flown whether the flyover occurs or not. For example, an Air Force official told us that a 30-second flyover at a public event may occur as part of a multi-hour training session. Further, DOD and military service officials told us that the portion of flying hours associated with community relations activities represents a small percentage of each military service’s total allotment of flying hours. According to the Outreach
Planning Document, we calculated that DOD’s planned not-to-exceed amounts for aviation community relations activities—which include flyovers, aerial demonstrations, and static displays—ranged from about $82 million in fiscal year 2014 to about $118 million in fiscal year 2016.\(^{30}\) Officials told us that aviation community relations activities in particular provide additional value in raising the public profile of DOD and support the recruiting efforts of the military services.

The military services have 137 bands, including 64 in the active-duty component, 17 in the reserves, and 56 in the National Guard. Table 5 shows the number of bands in fiscal year 2015 within each military service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military service</th>
<th>Active duty</th>
<th>Reserve</th>
<th>National Guard</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Corps</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>56</strong></td>
<td><strong>137</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GAO analysis of data and information from military service officials. | GAO-16-794

In fiscal year 2015, according to data from the military services, DOD authorized a total of 6,862 military personnel for these bands, of which 3,917 were in the active-duty component. Specifically, according to data from the military services, in fiscal year 2015 the:

- Army authorized 4,647 military band personnel;
- Navy authorized 644 military band personnel;
- Marine Corps authorized 766 military band personnel; and
- Air Force authorized 805 military band personnel.

\(^{30}\)For fiscal year 2017, the military services have provided a total not-to-exceed amount for their community relations activities but the services have not yet specified amounts by the discrete community relations activity categories.
Each military service’s regional/field bands are located throughout the United States and worldwide and routinely participate in community relations activities, but also perform a variety of non-community relations missions, such as funeral support and performances for military service members. Some of the military services’ regional/field bands engage in more community relations activities relative to all of their missions, compared with other military service bands. For example, according to military service officials and data, in fiscal year 2015 the:

- Army regional bands performed at 15,221 events of which approximately 20 percent were categorized as community relations activities,
- Navy regional bands performed at 4,084 events of which approximately 45 percent were categorized as community relations activities,
- Marine Corps field bands performed at 3,094 events of which approximately 20 percent were categorized as community relations activities, and
- Air Force regional bands performed at 3,082 events of which approximately 51 percent were categorized as community relations activities.

Also included in table 5 are each military service’s premier and specialty bands, which are predominately located in the National Capital Region and which have a ceremonial mission but also engage in community relations activities. For example, these bands perform at, among other functions, ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery and events where high-level officials such as the President and the military service Secretary and Chief of Staff are in attendance. The community relations activities these bands engage in vary. Specifically, according to military service officials, in fiscal year 2015 the:

31 The military services’ premier and specialty bands include the U.S. Army Band – “Pershing’s Own,” the U.S. Army Field Band, the U.S. Military Academy Band, the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps, the U.S. Navy Band, the U.S. Naval Academy Band, the U.S. Marine Band – “The President’s Own,” the U.S. Marine Drum and Bugle Corps – “The Commandant’s Own,” and the U.S. Air Force Band.
• Army’s premier and specialty bands performed at 8,407 events of which approximately 18 percent were categorized as community relations activities,

• U.S. Navy Band performed at 1,510 events of which approximately 22 percent were categorized as community relations activities,

• U.S. Marine Band performed at 972 events of which 35 percent were categorized as community relations activities, and

• U.S. Air Force Band performed at 1,584 events of which approximately 29 percent were categorized as community relations activities.

Based on DOD’s Outreach Planning Document, we calculated that the planned not-to-exceed amounts listed for bands and ceremonial units ranged from about $17 million in fiscal year 2014 to about $27 million in fiscal year 2016.

Other Non-Aviation Resources

DOD uses other resources, in addition to military bands, within the military services to support non-aviation-related community relations activities such as hosting open houses at military installations. Based on DOD’s Outreach Planning Documents, we calculated that the planned not-to-exceed amounts for these types of community relations activities ranged from about $30 million in fiscal year 2014 to about $44 million in fiscal year 2016. Like aviation community relations activities, some of these resources routinely carry out community relations activities, while other resources, such as senior military leaders and ground equipment, are used on a more episodic basis. For example, the Navy has flag officers and senior civilian leaders engage with government officials and other community leaders in executive outreach visits including to locations where there is little to no naval presence. Similarly, the Army, the Marine Corps, and the Air Force engage their senior leadership with community officials and provide speakers for leadership forums or other speaking events. Additionally, multiple military installations in all of the military services host open houses for the public and all rely on multiple resources to engage and inform the public.
DOD Funds Its Community Relations Activities through the Military Services’ Annual Operation and Maintenance Appropriations

DOD generally relies on the military services’ annual Operation and Maintenance appropriations to fund community relation activities. DOD’s guidance states that funding for community relations activities is the responsibility of the military services and their subordinate commands and is an integral part of the military services’ Operation and Maintenance accounts. DOD and the military services do not have a single Operation and Maintenance account dedicated to all community relations activities that would be reported in the President’s annual budget submission to Congress. Instead, as demonstrated by the President’s annual budget submission for fiscal year 2017, the funding sources for different community relations activities are spread across multiple and distinct Operation and Maintenance appropriation accounts and the budget activity and subactivity groups into which DOD divides its appropriations. These subactivity groups also support non-community relations activities. For example:

- The Army uses its Other Personnel Support Subactivity Group to fund its regional bands. Also, the Army uses its Other Service Support Subactivity Group to fund unspecified community relations activities, among other public affairs tasks.

- The Navy also uses its Other Personnel Support Subactivity Group to fund its band and music program which, among other things, funds national tours, public concerts, and travel costs incurred by some Navy bands. The Navy also uses its External Relations Subactivity Group to fund contract services and equipment for the Navy Week events and for other unspecified community relations activities. Finally, the Navy uses its Recruiting and Advertising Subactivity Group to fund its jet and parachute demonstration teams that conduct community relations activities, and also for recruiting and advertising activities.

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32 Operation and Maintenance appropriations fund necessary expenses not otherwise provided for such as civilian pay, readiness and training, food, fuel, and utilities, among other expenses.

33 As part of its budget justification materials, DOD divides the military services’ Operation and Maintenance budget requests into four budget activities: (1) operating forces, (2) mobilization, (3) training and recruiting, and (4) administration and servicewide activities. DOD further divides these budget activities into various activity groups, then again into subactivity groups. The number and names of the activity and subactivity groups differ with each military service. There are 258 unclassified subactivity groups in total across all military services.
The Marine Corps uses its Administration Subactivity Group to fund a community outreach program intended to "foster a positive and proactive military and civilian relationship and boost the public's awareness of the Marine Corps through direct interaction of military personnel in the community," among other things.

The Air Force's subactivity groups do not identify specific community relations resources or activities; rather, multiple subactivity groups refer to the public affairs function. For example, according to Air Force officials, the Air Force's jet demonstration team is funded through subactivity groups that support the mission of the Air Combat Command, the team's parent organization.

The military services have some flexibility in how they allot and expend their appropriated Operation and Maintenance funds. DOD and military service officials told us that many community relations activities are considered collateral duties and the services would expend their Operation and Maintenance funds whether these activities took place or not. For example, among other efforts, the military services expend these funds on flying hours to support pilot training. According to military service officials, flyover community relations activities are part of larger missions and count toward required pilot training. In addition, DOD's guidance states that except for those Operation and Maintenance funds with a community relations purpose, these activities shall not involve any additional cost to the government and event sponsors are expected to reimburse the government for incidental costs—such as, travel, meals, and lodging—related to specific activities.

We are not making any recommendations in this report. DOD did not provide formal comments in response to this report. We incorporated DOD's technical comments in response to a draft of this report as appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of Defense; the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs; and the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at http://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (213) 830-1011 or vonaha@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last
page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix II.

Andrew Von Ah
Acting Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
Appendix I: Request Forms for Military Services’ Support in Aviation and Non-Aviation Community Relations Activities

Event sponsors requesting aviation and non-aviation community relations activities from the military services are to submit the following “Request for Military Aerial Support” or “Request for Armed Forces Participation in Public Events (Non-Aviation)” forms.

Figure 2: Form to Request Aviation Community Relations Activities from the Military Services

![Request Form Image]
### Appendix I: Request Forms for Military Services' Support in Aviation and Non-Aviation Community Relations Activities

#### SECTION III - SPONSOR INFORMATION (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Title</th>
<th>Event Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Is event officially supported by local government? (Y/N)  
12. Will you provide post-event report on request? (Y/N)  
13. Does sponsoring organization permit membership without regard to race, religion, sex or color? (Y/N)  
14. Will all aspects of this event be available to all persons without regard to race, religion, sex or color? (Y/N)  
15. Will the event be open to the general public? (Y/N)

#### SECTION IV - FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION COORDINATION (Airspace Coordination)

For this event to be considered for U.S. military support, the sponsor must have this section completed by the flight standards district office responsible for controlling the aerial activities at the event site.

For events where the airspace falls under the purview of the United States Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) coordination is required for all U.S. military aviation activities described in Section I (except aircraft static displays). The sponsor will forward this document, along with Sections I through III and Sections V through VII completed, to the flight standards district office (FSDO) having jurisdiction over the site. After completion of Section IV by the FSDO, form will be returned to the sponsor for submission to DoD. Sponsors will allow a minimum of 45 days for FAA review and completion.

16. Flight Standards District Office Review

I have reviewed the requested activity in Section I and determined that: (Y/N and complete as applicable)

- a. FAA/other governmental waiver is not required.
- b. Waiver is required for the following event(s) listed in Section I: [Specify]
- c. Coordination has been accomplished with controlling air traffic control facility.
- d. Air traffic coordination is not required.
- e. Demonstration site feasibility study is required and site plan was submitted by the sponsor. (Must meet show line, crowd line, airspace parameters and show congested areas, dwellings, thoroughfares, and obstructions within 0.5NM of show center.)
- f. Demonstration site feasibility study is not required.
- g. No major noise concerns in the requested airspace.

17. Feasibility Determination

Based upon my review of this site, I find the site to be: (Y/N)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Conditional Satisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(See Notes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: If the show site is marked "Conditional Satisfactory", explain the conditions which must be met by the show sponsor to provide a "Satisfactory" site in the Additional Comments section. If the show site is marked "Unsatisfactory," the request for the applicable activity cannot be accepted by the Department of Defense.

18. Additional Comments (Mandatory if FAA is waived)

19. Coordinating Official

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Flight Standards District Office</th>
<th>Telephone No. (Include area code)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DD FORM 2535, OCT 2010  
Source: Department of Defense | GAO-16-794  
Part 2 of 4
## Appendix I: Request Forms for Military Services' Support in Aviation and Non-Aviation Community Relations Activities

### SECTION V - PROGRAM

### 21. PROGRAM THEME AND OBJECTIVE

(Please explain how aviation support is an integral part of the event.)

### 22. CHARGES AND FEES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. ADMISSION</th>
<th>b. PARKING</th>
<th>c. SEATING</th>
<th>d. OTHER (Specify)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES (Complete $ and %)</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. FUNDS WILL BE USED FOR:</th>
<th>2. CHARITIES</th>
<th>3. EXPENSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES (Complete $ and %)</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE OF FUNDS (Complete. Charity or Organization to benefit)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### 23. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. LIST ALL YEARS THE EVENT HAS BEEN HELD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. LAST AERIAL DEMONSTRATION AND YEAR OF PERFORMANCE (e.g., Blue Angels, Thunderbirds, Golden Knights)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. LIST MILITARY AND MILITARY AIRCRAFT AT LAST YEAR'S EVENT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SECTION VI - SUPPORT

(All Requests other than Flying)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>24. THE SPONSOR AGREES TO:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Initial each item signifying acceptance. Lack of initials renders the event ineligible for all support other than flying.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INITIALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| a. OBTAIN THE AIR SHOW WAIVER FROM THE FAA MONITOR PRIOR TO THE EVENT FOR EACH ACTIVITY REQUIRING A WAIVER (THIS IS A 60-DAY DEADLINE). FAILURE TO OBTAIN A WAIVER WILL RESULT IN DEMONSTRATION CANCELLATION AT THE EXPENSE OF THE SPONSOR. |
| b. PAY TEAM COSTS AS OUTLINED ON PAGE 4, PARAGRAPHS 5 OR 6 OF INSTRUCTIONS, AS APPLICABLE. (Applies only for Blue Angels, Thunderbirds, or Golden Knights requests.) |
| c. PROVIDE OR REIMBURSE TRANSPORTATION, MEALS, AND QUARTERS COSTS (including pre-event visits) FOR ARMED FORCES PARTICIPANTS, AS REQUIRED. (Reimbursement for demonstration teams covered in paragraphs 5 or 8 of instructions.) |
| d. PROVIDE SUITABLE AIRCRAFT FUEL AT MILITARY CONTRACT PRICES. (Sponsor must pay all costs over military contract price, including any transportation and handling charges. If fuel is not available at such prices.) |
| e. PROVIDE SECURITY FOR AIRCRAFT AT EVENT SITE DURING ENTIRE STAY. (Certain assets i.e., B-2 and F-117) will require substantial security.) |
| f. PROVIDE MOBILE FIREFIGHTING, CRASH, AND GROUND-TO-AIR COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT AT THE SHOW SITE FOR FLIGHT AND PARACHUTE DEMONSTRATIONS AND STATIC DISPLAY AIRCRAFT. |
| g. PROVIDE AMBULANCE AND MEDICAL PERSONNEL ON SITE DURING FLIGHT AND PARACHUTE DEMONSTRATIONS AND CERTAIN OTHER TYPES OF AERIAL ACTIVITIES AS DETERMINED, IN ADVANCE, BY THE MILITARY SERVICES. |
| h. PROVIDE TELEPHONE FACILITIES FOR NECESSARY OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS AT THE EVENT SITE. |
| i. PROVIDE AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH AND AIRFIELD DIAGRAM UPON REQUEST. |
| j. PROVIDE LOCAL MILITARY RECRUITERS, AT NO CHARGE, PRIME SPACE AT THE EVENT SITE FOR RECRUITING ACTIVITIES. |

### SECTION VII - CERTIFICATION BY SPONSOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>25. PRESIDENT/CHAIRMAN OF SPONSORING ORGANIZATION/BASE OR WING COMMANDER (Military sponsored)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I certify that the information provided above is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that representatives from the military services will contact us to discuss arrangements and additional costs involved prior to final commitments. Any changes to the information on this form may invalidate eligibility for military participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. SIGNATURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b. DATE SIGNED (DD/MM/YY)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>c. PRINT NAME AND TITLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix I: Request Forms for Military Services’ Support in Aviation and Non-Aviation Community Relations Activities

INSTRUCTIONS

1. The attached form is used to request U.S. Armed Forces aircraft participation at public events (at least 3 days in advance of the event) or in support of community relations programs, and for requesting an aerial demonstration team. (U.S. Army Golden Knights, U.S. Navy Blue Angels, and U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds) to perform or off a military installation, worldwide. This form is used by all military services to determine eligibility of an event for military assistance. Once an event has been approved as eligible, it is the sponsor’s responsibility to contact units and coordinate any possible military unit participation. The event sponsor is required to inform all the other required military services once acceptance of any military activities participation has been confirmed.

2. The event sponsor is responsible for gaining the completion of Section IV, FAA Coordination, prior to submission of this form to the appropriate Military Service. The local Flight Standards District Office that has jurisdiction over the event site will complete all appropriate boxes in Section IV. Requests for static displays only do not require FAA coordination. Complete Sections I, II, and III-VIII, and forward the form to the nearest Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) for completion of Section IV. To locate nearest FSDO, visit FAA’s website at http://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/od/oas/.

3. The local sponsoring organization is responsible for the accurate completion of the form and conducting the event. The information on this form must be typed or printed in ink, and is used to evaluate the event for compliance with public law and Department of Defense policies, and to determine its eligibility for Armed Forces participation. In all cases, military participation must not interfere with military operations and training programs, and must not be additional cost to the U.S. Government. Sponsors will consult with local military recruiters and provide, at no cost, prime space at the event site for recruiting activities. Department of Defense is unable to support events for which sponsoring is intended to make a profit. Events which have an admission charge, or other extraneous charges, do not necessarily preclude military participation. Military commands cannot participate in events which charge admission unless the military participation is incidental to the event; and the primary attraction is a non-form, or forms submitted later, cannot be considered and will be returned to the sponsor’s representative.

4. Requests for Blue Angels will be considered only for aviation-related events (i.e., air shows, airshow anniversaries or dedication events), or for patriotic observances (one day only) held in conjunction with Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, POW/MIA Recognition Day, or Veterans Day. Events must be within seven days of the actual holiday to qualify for the demonstration. However, if an event exceeds four days, the sponsor must make arrangements for the event within 45 days of the event to qualify. If the event is scheduled to exceed four days, the sponsor must then notify the AVTAC community relations office in writing within 45 days of the event and the AVTAC community relations office will coordinate with the sponsor to verify eligibility.

5. Requests for Thunderbirds must be received for processing at least 90 days prior to the event. Requests received closer than 90 days will be considered. However, if an event exceeds four days, the sponsor must make arrangements for the event within 45 days of the event to qualify. If the event is scheduled to exceed four days, the sponsor must then notify the AVTAC community relations office in writing within 45 days of the event and the AVTAC community relations office will coordinate with the sponsor to verify eligibility.

6. Requests for aircraft static display only will be considered for air shows, airport events, expositions and fairs, and public events which contribute to the public knowledge of Armed Forces equipment and capabilities (including recruiting and ROTC programs). Complete Sections I, II, III, and VIII. Section IV is not applicable when requesting static display only. Requests may be sent from the sponsoring organization to each Service branch’s public affairs office listed in paragraph 9 of these instructions. The sponsor must verify all relevant and operational requirements for the requested aircraft. Requests received closer than 90 days will be considered for static display participation. The sponsor must then notify the AVTAC community relations office in writing within 45 days of the event to verify eligibility.

7. Civician-sponsored events for the U.S. Army Reserve (i.e., Fort Bliss, Fort Riley, etc.) will be considered for events as described in paragraph 6 through 10 above. Army and Air Force single aircraft displays must be received for processing at least 60 days prior to the event. Navy demonstration requests must be received by January 31 each year. U.S. Marine Corps static display requests must be received by October 15 each year. The Harrier dynamic display is not allowed to be performed over a grass field or open area. Static displays require 60 days advance notice and 50 gallons of gasoline (or an equivalent amount of fuel). Both aircraft and static displays must be certified to fly in the U.S. (i.e., FAA-issued certificate).

8. The event sponsor is required to inform all the other required military services once acceptance of any military activities participation has been confirmed.

9. Civician-sponsored requests for the U.S. Army Reserve (i.e., Fort Bliss, Fort Riley, etc.) will be considered for events as described in paragraph 6 through 10 above. Army and Air Force single aircraft displays must be received for processing at least 60 days prior to the event. Navy demonstration requests must be received by January 31 each year. U.S. Marine Corps static display requests must be received by October 15 each year. The Harrier dynamic display is not allowed to be performed over a grass field or open area. Static displays require 60 days advance notice and 50 gallons of gasoline (or an equivalent amount of fuel). Both aircraft and static displays must be certified to fly in the U.S. (i.e., FAA-issued certificate).

SPONSOR: PLEASE RETAIN A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.

DD FORM 2559, OCT 2010

Source: Defense Department | GAO-15-784
Part 4 of 4

*According to an Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs official, the current form is set to expire on September 30, 2016, and an updated form has been submitted to the Office of Management and Budget for review and approval.
### Appendix I: Request Forms for Military Services’ Support in Aviation and Non-Aviation Community Relations Activities

**Figure 3: Form to Request Non-Aviation Community Relations Activities from the Military Services**

**Request for Armed Forces Participation in Public Events (Non-Aviation)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Event Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific Requirement</strong></td>
<td>(e.g., Band, Marching Unit, Color Guard, Fair, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date of Event</strong></td>
<td>(YYYYMMDD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time of Event</strong></td>
<td>(a.m./p.m.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section II: Sponsoring Organization Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name of Sponsoring Organization</strong></td>
<td>(Appropriate box for each item)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is the Sponsoring Organization a Civic Organization?</strong></td>
<td>YES NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does the Sponsoring Organization exclude any person from its membership or practice any form of discrimination in its functions based on race, color, sex, or national origin?</strong></td>
<td>YES NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section III: Sponsoring Organization Support Data**

- Event sponsors must agree to fund certain military expenses which are not local to the geographic area of the event. See paragraph 3 of the instructions on the back of this form. (Appropriate box for each item)

**Section IV: Certification**

- I am acting on behalf of the sponsoring organization and certify that the information provided above is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that representatives from the military services will contact me to discuss arrangements and costs incurred prior to that event will be charged to the sponsoring organization. I also understand that operational commitments may be priority and cannot preclude a scheduled appearance at an approved public activity.

**DD Form 2636, Oct 2010**

Source: Department of Defense  | GAO-16-794

**Part 1 of 2**
According to an Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs official, the current form is set to expire on September 30, 2016, and an updated form has been submitted to the Office of Management and Budget for review and approval.
Appendix II: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Andrew Von Ah, (213) 830-1011 or vonaha@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the individual named above, key contributors to this report were Margaret A. Best (Assistant Director), Darreisha M. Bates, Daniel J. Glickstein, Cynthia L. Grant, Mae Frances Jones, Shvetal Khanna, Felicia M. Lopez, Carol D. Petersen, Ophelia Robinson, Amie M. Lesser, and Callie Weir.
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