

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-25-106387](#), a report to the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Army's watercraft fleet provides critical logistical capabilities such as intratheater transportation of personnel and equipment in support of amphibious operations. Army watercraft also provide access to waterways in austere environments where ports and roads are unavailable. As such, this fleet is a key enabler of the joint force, particularly in the Indo-Pacific area of operations.

House Report 117-397, accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, included a provision for GAO to review Army watercraft. This report assesses the extent to which (1) the Army's watercraft fleet is able to meet current and future mission requirements, and (2) the Army has taken steps to address or mitigate maintenance challenges to its watercraft fleet.

GAO analyzed relevant Army policies, requirements, handbooks, and watercraft information; toured vessels; and interviewed Army and other cognizant officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations to the Army, including that it develops a mitigation plan to meet current and near-term requirements, and ensures the Watercraft Board develops a framework that reflects leading practices for effective governance. The Army concurred with all four of GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-25-106387](#). For more information, contact Diana Maurer, (202) 512-9627, MaurerD@GAO.GOV

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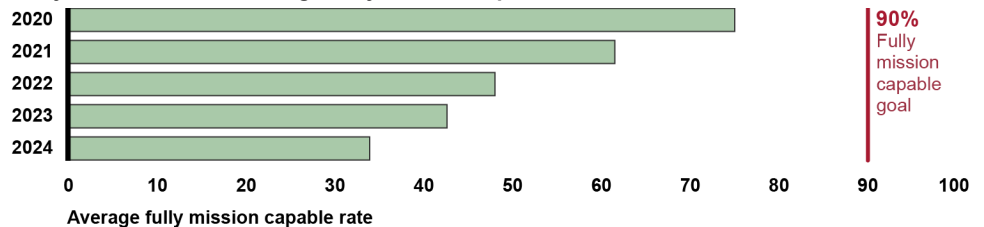
ARMY WATERCRAFT

Actions Needed to Optimize Small but Critical Fleet

What GAO Found

The U.S. Army's watercraft fleet is responsible for moving supplies, equipment, and personnel in deep ocean water, shallow coastal waters, inland waterways, and rivers. However, the Army's ability to meet its mission requirements with its fleet of 70 watercraft is limited. Army policy establishes a fully mission capable goal of 90 percent for ground equipment, including watercraft. Fully mission capable means that watercraft are ready and available to perform their missions. However, the fully mission capable rate for watercraft has steadily declined, from 75 percent in 2020 to less than 40 percent thus far in 2024.

Army Watercraft Fleet Average Fully Mission Capable Rate, Fiscal Years 2020-2024



Source: GAO analysis of Army data. | GAO-25-106387

Low mission capable rates hinder the

- ability to meet mission requirements and operational readiness;
- availability of vessels in the fleet, as shown in the figure; and
- ability to conduct training for watercraft personnel.

The Army is drafting a revised watercraft modernization strategy to outline future end states for Army watercraft by 2030 and 2040. However, until the strategy is finalized, it remains unclear whether it will include any mitigation plans to address the current challenges, risks, and gaps affecting the watercraft fleet. Developing a mitigation plan to address challenges will enhance the Army's ability to meet current and near-term mission requirements. In addition, by assessing the costs and benefits of potential options to improve the Army's ability to meet mission requirements, the Army will be able to make better decisions on what actions to implement.

Moreover, the Army has struggled to address a series of longstanding maintenance challenges with its watercraft fleet. Using handwritten systems to manage maintenance has adversely affected the fleet's readiness. For example, as of May 2024, one vessel had been out of service for over 5 years. Army officials reported several factors contributing to significant delays, including maintenance work.

In February 2024, the Army established the Army Watercraft Enterprise Executive Board. The Board has taken steps to provide oversight and coordination of Army-wide watercraft activities. By developing and issuing a governance framework that reflects all leading practices of effective governance, the Army will be better positioned to develop integrated strategies to respond to persistent maintenance challenges.