

# Continue Unaccompanied Housing Improvements With Transparent Reporting

MOAA supports a sustained effort to ensure high-quality unaccompanied housing is available to all service-members. Congress and DoD responded quickly to a 2023 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report showcasing poor living conditions in these facilities; to ensure this momentum is maintained, Congress should require DoD to make their annual condition reports publicly available.

## THE PROBLEMS

Military unaccompanied housing (UH) accommodates hundreds of thousands of servicemembers at U.S. military installations worldwide, serving as the initial residence for all enlisted personnel as they embark on their careers. UH for military personnel has come under scrutiny due to numerous issues affecting servicemember quality of life. The lack of full funding for UH has created a **\$137 billion backlog** in deferred maintenance for DoD.

In addition to funding shortfalls, the 2023 GAO report<sup>1</sup>, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) Quality of Life Panel<sup>2</sup>, and various media outlets have highlighted several critical problems:

- **Substandard Living Conditions:** Many UH facilities do not meet DoD standards, with reports of mold infestations, broken heating and cooling systems, and inadequate sanitation facilities. Thousands of servicemembers face conditions that pose health and safety risks, including sewage overflow and inoperable fire systems.
- **Insufficient Oversight:** DoD has been criticized for its lack of reliable assessments concerning UH conditions.

There is a notable absence of comprehensive oversight, which hampers the ability to address long-standing challenges effectively. DoD does not consistently track information on UH conditions or facilitate collaboration across military services to improve living environments.

• **Funding Transparency Issues:** DoD lacks complete funding information regarding UH maintenance and improvements. For instance, while the department requested approximately \$15 billion for facility sustainment in fiscal year 2024, it could not specify how much would be allocated specifically for UH improvements. This lack of transparency complicates efforts to target necessary upgrades and maintain accountability.

## A REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE

The GAO report provides evidence of the poor conditions some servicemembers face. In discussion groups, servicemembers told GAO representatives about “issues with pests, including bedbugs, rodents, cockroaches, and wasps. At three of 10 installations, officials told us service members are generally responsible for pest control, or for removing hazardous material from UH, such as mold and sewage.”

## HOW DID WE GET HERE?

The history of unaccompanied housing within the U.S. military reflects ongoing challenges and evolving policies aimed at improving living standards for servicemembers.

There have been significant legislative efforts to enhance housing standards in recent decades. The

**Congress:** Significant steps have been made to understand the scope of unaccompanied housing challenges. MOAA is asking Congress to require DoD to make unaccompanied housing installation conditions publicly available to support lawmaker oversight and sustain momentum to fix the \$137 billion maintenance backlog.



Sewage overflow in training barracks restroom.

Cracked sewage pipes recently removed from barracks.

Water damage on barracks hallway ceiling tiles.

Pests observed in barracks room.

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<sup>1</sup> GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE (2023). MILITARY BARRACKS: POOR LIVING CONDITIONS UNDERMINE QUALITY OF LIFE AND READINESS. [HTTPS://WWW.GAO.GOV/PRODUCTS/GAO-23-105797](https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-23-105797)  
<sup>2</sup> HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE (2024). QUALITY OF LIFE REPORT. [HTTPS://WWW.MOAA.ORG/UPLOADEDFILES/2024 HOUSE ARMED SERVICES REPORT\\_V12-FINAL.PDF](https://www.moaa.org/uploadedfiles/2024_house_armed_services_report_v12-final.pdf)  
 PHOTO SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (LEFT); GAO (ALL OTHERS)

FY 2006 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) mandated that DoD establish uniform design standards for UH to ensure adequate space and privacy for servicemembers. However, despite these regulations, many facilities continue to fall short of acceptable living conditions due to insufficient funding and oversight.

DoD has increasingly turned to privatization as a potential solution for improving UH. Initiatives began in the early 2000s with pilot projects aimed at leveraging private-sector resources to enhance housing quality. However, these efforts have met with mixed results; concerns about accountability and management remain prevalent.

There is a pressing need for enhanced transparency regarding funding streams related to UH. Currently, funds appropriated for infrastructure are often reprogrammed for other urgent DoD needs, leading to deferred maintenance issues that exacerbate existing problems.

The FY 2024 and FY 2025 NDAA's required reports to address many of UH challenges, but this information must be shared publicly to ensure lawmakers can identify and help meet the needs of those who serve in their district and state.

**WHAT IS BEING DONE?**

Following the GAO report, the House and Senate Armed Services committees adopted many of the recommendations into the FY 2024 and FY 2025 NDAA's:

**FY 2024 NDAA Requirements**

- Created standards for UH privacy, space, and quality.
- Modified the process for waivers when UH standards are not met.
- Increased oversight by creating dedicated positions to monitor UH.
- Required annual reports on UH conditions.

**FY 2025 NDAA Requirements**

- Requires DoD to detail Facilities Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization projects for UH.
- Expands housing complaint database to include UH.
- Creates a digital facilities management system for DoD to track facility conditions.

Transparency is essential to solving this problem. MOAA is asking Congress to require DoD to make installation unaccompanied housing conditions publicly available (FY 2024 NDAA, Sec. 2839). These steps will support lawmaker oversight and sustain momentum to fix the \$137 billion maintenance backlog.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK DOD ABOUT YOUR INSTALLATION'S UNACCOMPANIED HOUSING**

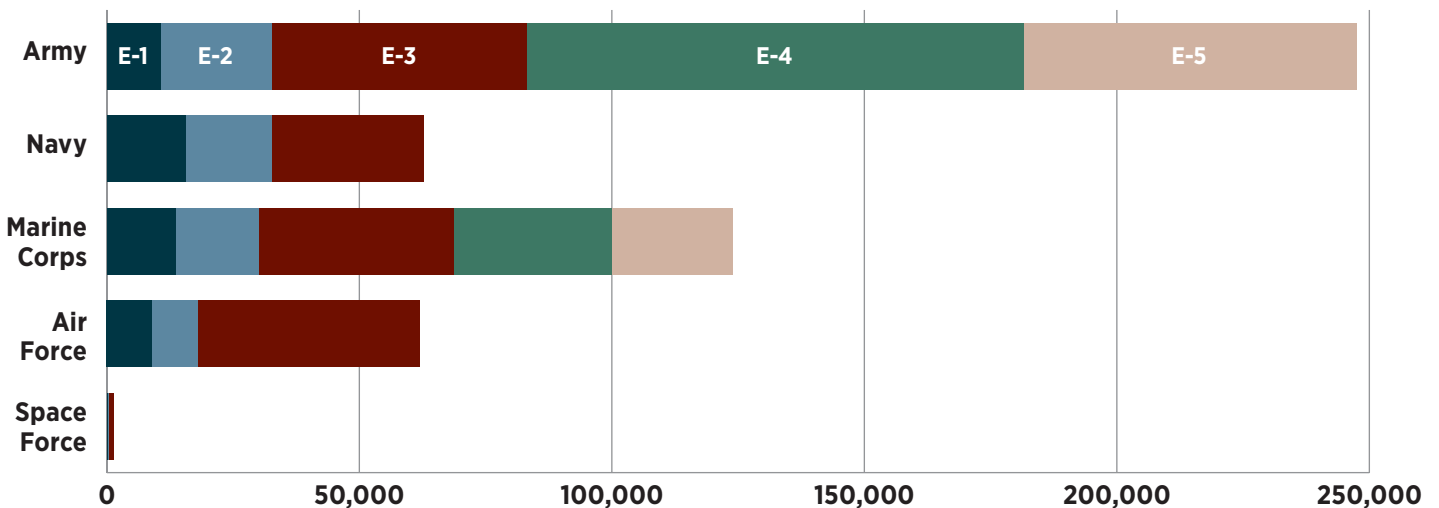


- How many unaccompanied housing (UH) facilities are at the installation? What are the condition ratings for each of the facilities?
- What is the get-well plan and timing for each UH facility?
- How many UH rooms at your installation meet the required UH standards? How many are not in compliance?
- How many servicemembers have received certificates of nonavailability due to inadequate UH?



**BY THE NUMBERS: UNACCOMPANIED HOUSING**

Nearly 500,000 enlisted servicemembers meet requirements to live in unaccompanied housing. Over 70% of active duty junior enlisted servicemembers (E-1 to E-4) report being single with no children.



Note: DoD personnel data as of September 2024; marriage/children status via DoD's 2023 Demographics Profile. The services generally require enlisted members in certain ranks who are without dependents to live in unaccompanied housing. Requirements vary by service. Army and Marine Corps: E-1 to E-5. Navy: E-1 to E-3, E-4 with fewer than four years of service. Air Force and Space Force: E-1 to E-3, E-4 with fewer than three years of service.