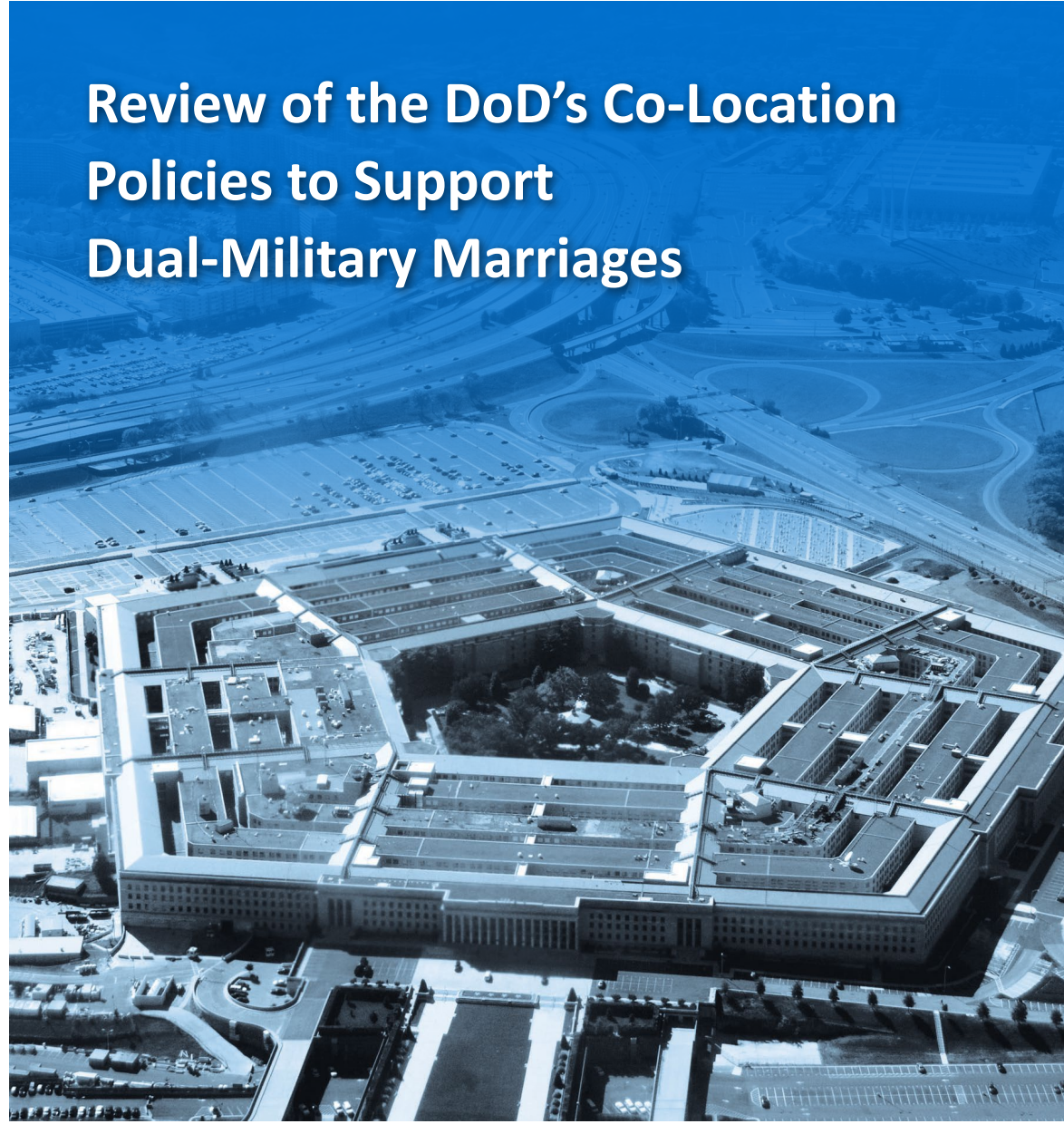




INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Defense

JUNE 8, 2023



Review of the DoD's Co-Location Policies to Support Dual-Military Marriages

INTEGRITY ★ INDEPENDENCE ★ EXCELLENCE





**INSPECTOR GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
4800 MARK CENTER DRIVE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22350-1500**

June 8, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS
AUDITOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
AUDITOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
AUDITOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

SUBJECT: Review of the DoD's Co-Location Policies to Support Dual-Military Marriages
(Report No. DODIG-2023-085)

This final report provides the results of the DoD Office of Inspector General's review. We previously provided copies of the draft report and requested written comments on the recommendations. We considered management's comments on the draft report when preparing the final report. These comments are included in the report.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness agreed to address the two recommendations in this report. Therefore, we consider the recommendations resolved and open.

As described in the Recommendations, Management Comments, and Our Response section of this report, we will close the recommendations when documentation is provided that shows that all agreed-upon actions to implement the recommendations are completed. Therefore, please provide us within 90 days your response concerning specific actions in process or completed on the recommendations. Send your response to either followup@dodig.mil if unclassified or rfunet@dodig.smil.mil if classified SECRET.

If you have any questions or would like to meet to discuss the review, please contact me at [REDACTED]. We appreciate the cooperation and assistance received during the review.

FOR THE INSPECTOR GENERAL:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Theresa S. Hull", is positioned above the printed name.

Theresa S. Hull

Deputy Inspector General for Diversity and
Inclusion and Extremism in the Military

Recommendations Table

Management	Recommendations Unresolved	Recommendations Resolved	Recommendations Closed
Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness		1.a, 1.b	

Note: The following categories are used to describe agency management’s comments to individual recommendations.

- **Unresolved** – Management has not agreed to implement the recommendation or has not proposed actions that will address the recommendation.
- **Resolved** – Management agreed to implement the recommendation or has proposed actions that will address the underlying finding that generated the recommendation.
- **Closed** – DoD OIG verified that the agreed upon corrective actions were implemented.

Introduction

Objective

The objective of this review was to determine the extent to which the DoD's co-location policies support dual-military marriages. We focused this review on DoD and Military Service assignment policy exceptions, including the marital status of Service members married to each other and the co-location status of dual-military spouses. See Appendix A for the Scope and Methodology.

Background

Service Members and Families as a DoD Priority

The 2022 National Defense Strategy identifies four top-level defense priorities that the DoD must pursue to strengthen deterrence, including building a resilient Joint Force to ensure a future military advantage. The strategy states that the DoD must recruit and retain a workforce with the skills, abilities, and diversity needed to creatively solve national security challenges in a complex global environment. Additionally, in his March 2021 and March 2023 messages to the force, the Secretary of Defense identified taking care of Service members and their families as a priority, explaining that the DoD's most critical asset is its people, and that the DoD will protect the safety, health, and welfare of Service members and their families.

DoD Assignments Policy and Co-Location

Service members are subject to worldwide transfer, based on the needs of the Service. Service members receive a permanent change of station, which assigns them to a different duty station where they perform their jobs, typically every 2 to 4 years. The DoD uses assignments to maintain combat readiness and ensure professional development.

DoD Instruction 1315.18, "Procedures for Military Personnel Assignments," June 24, 2019, provides procedures for the Services to ensure an equitable system of assigning Service members to duty stations. The policy requires that the Services make assignments without regard to color, race, religious preference, ethnic background, national origin, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or gender. However, the policy identifies exceptions, including the marital status of Service members married to each other. Specifically, the Services attempt to facilitate the assignments of dual-military spouses, also referred to as co-location, to allow both Service members to establish a joint household in the same geographic area. All of the Services' policies define a joint household as one in which both military spouses are stationed within a 50- to 90-mile radius of each other.

The Instruction also provides general guidance on military assignments and exceptions, with policy exceptions including consideration of Service members' marital status. The Instruction requires the Services to track assignment exceptions to determine the effectiveness of their assignment policies. However, the Instruction does not define co-location or provide specific guidance or procedures on the co-location of dual-military spouses.

The Services' Co-Location Processes

All of the Services have processes to facilitate the co-location of dual-military spouses.¹ Those processes state that the Services will attempt to provide reasonable opportunities for dual-military spouses to be co-located, whether serving in the same or different Services.

The Services provide dual-military spouses an opportunity to enroll in Service-specific programs that offer co-location consideration. For example, the Army offers the Married Army Couples Program, while the Air Force refers to its program as the join-spouse program. All of the Services' policies on co-location state that Service readiness and mission are paramount when considering personnel for assignments. The Services will fully consider Service members' desire to be co-located with their spouse; however, the Service members must be prepared to meet military obligations regardless of assignment requests. The Services' processes state that military spouses should expect periods of separation during their careers. For instance, when a dual-military assignment is not in the best interest of the Service, the Service might not approve it.

According to Service officials, any Service member who is married to another Service member can participate in these programs. When an enrolled Service member is due for an assignment, their information in the Service's assignment and personnel system indicates a marital status of married, along with the military spouse's information. This enables the Service's assignment manager to work with the Service member and their military spouse's assignment manager to determine whether co-location is possible. According to Service officials, the assignment managers work to balance the needs and mission of the Service, the needs of the Service member's family, and the Service member's career path when processing movements and assignments.

¹ Army Regulation 614-100, "Officer Assignments," December 3, 2019. Army Regulation 614-200, "Enlisted Assignments and Utilization Management," January 25, 2019. Navy Military Personnel Manual 1300-1000, "Military Couple and Single Parent Assignment Policy," January 13, 2020. Air Force Instruction 36-2110, "Total Force Assignments," August 2, 2021. Marine Corps Order 1300.8, "Marine Corps Personnel Assignment Policy," September 18, 2014.

When an assignment manager determines that the Service cannot accommodate a co-location request, the request is subject to higher-level review under Army, Navy, and Air Force processes. As of February 2023, Marine Corps policy did not provide for higher-level review of co-location requests that the assignment manager denies. However, Marine Corps officials stated that they plan to revise their process to incorporate higher-level review. See Table 1 for the Services’ co-location review processes.

Table 1. The Services’ Co-location Review Processes.

Service	Process
Army	A division chief must approve a waiver when the Army cannot co-locate a dual-military spouse. The division chief is typically a colonel. ¹
Navy	The Assistant Commander of the Navy Personnel Command must approve any assignment preventing co-location. The Assistant Commander is typically a rear admiral.
Air Force	The Commander of the Air Force Personnel Command must review any disapproved co-location request. The Commander is typically a major general.
Marine Corps	In February 2023, Marine Corps officials stated that they would update Marine Corps Order 1300.8 to include an approval and waiver review by the Director of the Manpower Management Division. The Director is typically a major general. According to Marine Corps officials, they plan to have the order updated by the end of calendar year 2023. ²

¹ According to Army officials, the division chief supervises personnel and management operations in the command of the respective Army organization.

² The division falls under the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. Marine Corps officials stated that the Director would review cases where the Marine Corps could not accommodate co-location.

Source: The DoD OIG.

Defense Manpower Data Center Co-Location Data

The Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) is responsible for gathering personnel, manpower, training, financial, and other data to support the DoD’s information management needs. DoD policy requires the Services to report data to the DMDC, including personnel pay and benefit data, dependent data, and location data for research, analysis, and evaluation of DoD programs and policies.² We requested a list of all dual-military spouses who were and were not co-located from FY 2020 through FY 2022. The DMDC was able to provide most of the requested data by analyzing the Service members’ spousal information in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS), a database containing personnel records for each Service member. Specifically, the DMDC used each Service member’s and their military spouse’s mailing ZIP codes in DEERS and compared the coordinates of the ZIP codes to determine whether they were within 50 miles of each other. If within 50 miles, the DMDC listed the individuals as co-located and provided the Service information for each Service member.³

² DoD Instruction DoD 1336.05, “Automated Extract of Active Duty Military Personnel Records,” July 28, 2009 (Incorporating Change 3, effective August 26, 2021).

³ The DMDC provided data only for dual-military spouses who were co-located within the continental United States.

While DMDC officials were able to provide co-location data for each of the Services, the information was incomplete. The DMDC was unable to determine whether 6,893 (9 percent) of the 77,432 total Service members in dual-military marriages were co-located because the Services or the Service members did not provide complete information in the personnel records. Specifically, the 6,893 members had a blank ZIP code in their personnel file; as a result, the DMDC was unable to determine whether these Service members were co-located with their military spouses. See Table 2 for a comparison of dual-military spouses co-located and not co-located in each Service as of September 2022.⁴

Table 2. Co-located and Not Co-located Dual-Military Spouses, by Service, as of September 2022.¹

Service	Co-located		Not Co-located		Total Dual Military Spouses ²
	Spouses	%	Spouses	%	
Army Active Duty	23,365	85	4,178	15	27,543
Navy Active Duty	11,103	87	1,610	13	12,713
Air Force Active Duty	25,364	91	2,416	9	27,780
Marine Corps Active Duty	2,066	83	437	17	2,503
Total of All Services	61,898	88	8,641	12	70,539

¹ According to Service officials, not co-locating dual-military spouses could be a result of several factors, such as some dual-military spouses choosing not to be co-located with their spouse for career growth, timing of when a member gets married compared to their assignment, or lack of Service bases in the same geographic area. The data provided did not indicate which Service members elected not to be co-located.

² The total number of dual-military spouses does not include members who have a blank ZIP code and whose co-location status was unknown. We analyzed dual-military spouses on active duty in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

Source: The DMDC.

⁴ We did not analyze the causes of the Services or Service members not providing correct ZIP code information within the personnel records because it was outside the scope of our review. Additionally, we did not compare or analyze the data between the Services because it was outside of the scope of our review. We may consider reviewing this topic in future DoD OIG oversight work.

Results

The Services Did Not Assess the Effectiveness of their Assignment Policies for Dual-Military Spouses

The Services did not determine the effectiveness of their assignment policies to ensure that they are balancing the needs of dual-military spouses with the requirements of the mission. This occurred because DoD Instruction 1315.18 does not define or indicate how to measure the effectiveness of Service assignment policies and the Services did not develop their own metrics to measure effectiveness. Without measuring the effectiveness of assignment policies, the Services might not be fully addressing the needs of dual-military spouses, which can lead to a decline in the retention of Service members. From October 2017 through January 2023, the Services consistently found in their exit and retention surveys that the impact of military service on family life is one of the top reasons for leaving the military.⁵

The Services Have Not Reviewed the Effectiveness of Their Assignment Policies

Service officials stated that they did not provide any data on assignment policy exceptions to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (OUSD[P&R]), including the marital status of Service members married to each other, nor did they perform any reviews to determine the effectiveness of their assignment policies. DoD Instruction 1315.18 requires the Services to track assignment exceptions, including the marital status of Service members married to each other, which the Services approved. The Instruction further requires the Services to use that data to determine the effectiveness of their assignment policies. According to an OUSD(P&R) official, they have not conducted any reviews of the effectiveness of the Services' assignment policies. The OUSD(P&R) is responsible for providing policy, guidance, and oversight to enhance the readiness of the DoD and optimize talent management and personnel programs. The official added that due to their unique missions, the Services would be best qualified to review whether their assignment policies were effective.

The DoD Needs to Clearly Define Assignment Policy Requirements

DoD Instruction 1315.18 does not define or indicate how the Services should measure the effectiveness of their assignment policies. An official from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) (OASD[M&RA]), which falls under the OUSD(P&R), stated that they expect the Services to gather and maintain data on policy exceptions, in accordance with DoD policy, and provide data to the OASD(M&RA) when requested. The OASD(M&RA) is responsible for developing and overseeing policies

⁵ The Services provided survey results covering different periods between October 2017 and January 2023, based on readily available reports and briefings. See Appendix B for the individual survey results periods provided by each Service.

and procedures for career life cycle management of military personnel, including assignments. However, DoD Instruction 1315.18 does not clearly explain how the Services should determine effectiveness. According to Service officials, OUSD(P&R) officials have not explained or provided any guidance on how the Services should measure the effectiveness of their assignment policies and the Services did not develop their own metrics to measure effectiveness.

Retention Could Suffer if the Services Do Not Address Dual-Military Spouses' Needs

Without measuring the effectiveness of assignment policies, the Services might not address the needs of dual-military spouses, which can lead to a decline in the retention of Service members. Over the past 5 years, the Services' exit and retention survey results show that the top reasons for leaving the Service consistently included the impact of military service on family life.⁶ The Services use surveys as a tool to assess factors influencing Service members' decisions to leave military service and to receive feedback on personnel satisfaction.⁷ For example, according to the cumulative results of surveys completed in the last 3 years, 4,370 Navy survey responses (50 percent) of the 8,739 total responses identified impact on family as their top reason for leaving the Service.⁸ In addition, 3,670 Navy survey responses (42 percent) of the 8,739 total responses indicated work-life balance as another top reason for leaving. Similarly, between May 2020 and January 2023, 16,793 Army survey respondents (26 percent) of the 64,617 total responses identified the impact of military service on their family's well-being as an "extremely important" reason for separating from the Service. See Appendix B for detailed results of the Services' surveys.

The 2022 National Defense Strategy states that the DoD must recruit and retain a workforce with the skills, abilities, and diversity needed to creatively solve security challenges in a complex global environment. Additionally, the Secretary of Defense explained that the DoD's most critical asset is its people, and that the DoD will protect the safety, health, and welfare of Service members and their families. However, during a September 2022 Senate subcommittee hearing on military recruiting and retention efforts, leaders from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps expressed concerns about the strength of their recruiting operations and prospects for success in 2023.⁹

⁶ The Services administer surveys at different times and intervals, depending on the intent of the survey. See Appendix B for the survey time frames and intervals for each Service.

⁷ However, not all of the Services' survey questions had specific factors related to dual-military spouse co-location. Therefore, we reviewed survey results from all Service members and did not limit our review to dual-military spouses.

⁸ Navy officials were unable to provide specific dates for the last 3 years, such as the start and end dates. Navy officials are unable to see the actual dates when retrieving the information from the survey system.

⁹ Senate Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Personnel, "Hearing to Receive Testimony on the Status of Military Recruiting and Retention Efforts Across the Department of Defense," September 21, 2022.

In a time of recruiting and retention challenges, the DoD should require the Services to review the results of their exit and retention surveys and their co-location policies when analyzing the effectiveness of their assignment policies. Reviewing the survey results and co-location policies are actions the Services can take to verify that they are considering available data when reviewing and analyzing their assignment policies. These actions could assist the Services with determining whether they are balancing the needs of dual-military spouses with the requirements of their missions, which could help minimize family impact and improve the retention of Service members.

The DoD Lacks a Policy and Process to Facilitate the Co-Location of Inter-Service Spouses

The DoD did not establish a policy and process to require coordination for co-locating inter-Service spouses across the Services.¹⁰ In the absence of a DoD policy and process, the Services have been coordinating informally to attempt to facilitate co-location of inter-Service dual-military spouses. Without a DoD policy and process, the Services may be missing opportunities to co-locate inter-Service spouses and keep families together.

According to Service officials, the processes the Services used for inter-Service co-location were similar to the processes used for intra-Service co-location. Specifically, when Service members are up for assignment, they can request to join their spouse, if married to a member of another Service. For example, the Army requires a member to submit an Army form, while the Air Force requires a member to submit a signed letter. The request for co-location lists the military spouse's information, including the Service the spouse belongs to, and the contact information for the spouse's assignment manager. The Service member's assignment manager then coordinates with the military spouse's assignment manager to determine whether co-location is possible.

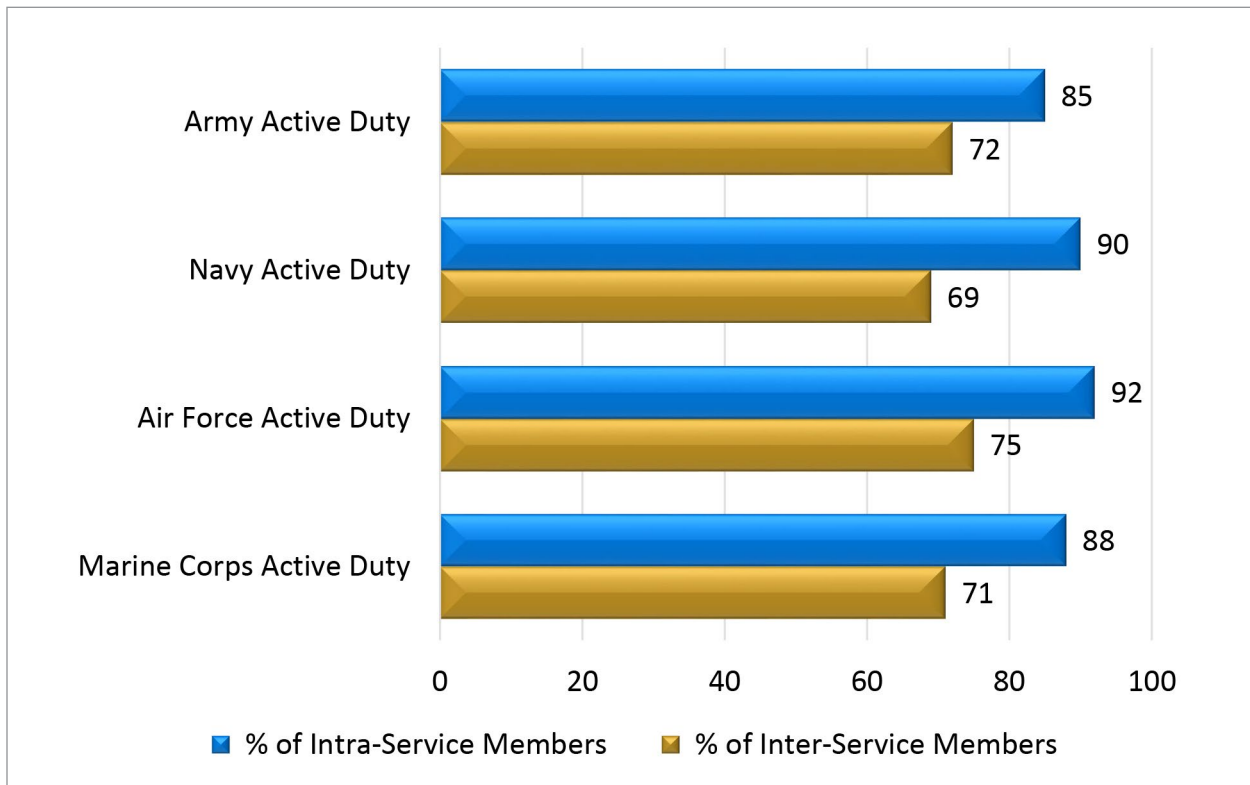
Service officials explained that the personnel responsible for assignments work to balance the needs and mission of the Services, the needs of the family, and the career path of the Service members when processing movements and assignments. According to Navy and Air Force officials, one circumstance that can complicate inter-Service coordination is the proximity of one Service's installation to that of another Service. For example, when one Service member is in the Air Force and their spouse is in the Navy, there may not always be an Air Force base located near a Navy base.

¹⁰ Intra-Service co-location refers to a dual-military marriage between individuals from the same Service; for example, both spouses serve in the Navy. Inter-Service co-location refers to a dual-military marriage between individuals from different Services, for example, an Army Service member whose spouse serves in the Air Force.

Similar to the processes for intra-Service co-location, some of the Services' processes contain additional oversight from a higher-level authority when a Service determines that co-location is not possible for inter-Service spouses. Specifically, the Army, Navy, and Air Force processes require the same review authority for inter-Service co-location requests as they do for intra-Service co-location requests. However, according to Marine Corps officials, the update to Marine Corps Order 1300.8 will not include additional oversight from a higher-level authority when the assignment manager determines that co-location of inter-Service spouses is not possible.¹¹

From the dual-military information collected and analyzed by the DMDC, we identified that all four Services had a higher percentage of co-location for dual-military spouses in the same Service than for spouses in different Services. For example, 89 percent of the 65,547 intra-Service spouses were co-located, compared with 72 percent of the 4,992 spouses in inter-Service dual-military marriages. See Figure 1 for the percentages comparing intra- and inter-Service dual-military spouses who were co-located as of September 2022.¹²

Figure 1. Percentages of Intra-Service and Inter-Service Dual-Military Spouses Who Were Co-Located, as of September 2022.



Source: The DMDC.

¹¹ Marine Corps Order 1300.8, "Marine Corps Personnel Assignment Policy," September 18, 2014.

¹² We did not compare the data between Services because it was outside the scope of our review. We may consider reviewing this topic in future DoD OIG oversight work.

The DoD and Services would benefit from better oversight and policy related to the co-location of inter-Service dual-military spouses. During a September 2022 Senate subcommittee hearing on military recruiting and retention efforts, the subcommittee challenged the Services to think creatively to address their recruiting and retention problems.¹³ The DoD should institute changes to standardize policy and processes across all Services to ensure that inter-Service spouses who want to be co-located are co-located whenever possible. This could increase retention at a time when the Services face recruiting and retention difficulties.

Recommendations, Management Comments, and Our Response

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness develop and implement policy and processes to:

- a. Define how the Services should measure the effectiveness of their assignment policies. At a minimum, the policy and processes should require the Services to review and analyze the results of their exit and retention surveys and re-examine their co-location policies, on a specified recurring basis, to determine whether their assignment policies are balancing their respective missions with the needs of the Service members and their families.**

Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Comments

The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness agreed with the recommendation. The Under Secretary stated that DoD Instruction 1315.18 will be updated in FY 2024 and will include policy that the Services review and analyze their co-location statistics, review the results of their exit and retention surveys, and use the information gathered to adjust their co-location policies as required.

Our Response

Comments from the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness addressed the specifics of the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is resolved but open. We will close the recommendation when we verify that the DoD Instruction has been updated to include guidance on how the Services should measure the effectiveness of their assignment policies.

¹³ “U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Personnel Committee on Armed Services Hearing to Receive Testimony on the Status of Military Recruiting and Retention Efforts Across the Department of Defense,” September 21, 2022.

- b. Require coordination across all of the Services for the co-location of inter-Service dual military spouses. The policy and processes should also require additional oversight from higher-level authorities in both Services, should the Services be unable to accommodate inter-Service co-location, similar to the Service-specific processes for intra-Service co-location.**

Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Comments

The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness agreed with the recommendation. The Under Secretary stated that DoD Instruction 1315.18 will be updated in FY 2024 and will specify the level of oversight required when the Services are unable to accommodate inter-Service co-location, consistent with the levels of oversight the Services have for intra-Service co-location. The Under Secretary explained that having a higher level of oversight above the individual Service career monitor and managers will ensure that a thorough review has been done before placing inter-Service dual-military couples in different locations.

Our Response

Comments from the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness addressed the specifics of the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is resolved but open. We will close the recommendation when we verify that the DoD Instruction has been updated to include guidance on the co-location of inter-Service dual military spouses, including additional oversight from higher-level authorities in both Services, should the Services be unable to accommodate inter-Service co-location.

Appendix A

Scope and Methodology

We reviewed the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps active duty enlisted and officer co-locations within the United States. Our scope did not include the National Guard, Reserve, or Space Force.

To assess the co-location of dual-military members, we reviewed data collected and provided by the DMDC based on a request for Service members who were co-located and not co-located with their military spouse from FY 2020 through FY 2022.¹⁴ Specifically, the DMDC provided a list that included the member's Service, the spouse's Service, gender, race, and pay grade.¹⁵ While DMDC officials were able to provide co-location data for each of the Services, the information was incomplete. The DMDC was unable to determine whether 6,893 of the 77,432 total members in dual-military marriages were co-located due to the Services or Service member not completing information within the personnel records. Specifically, the 6,893 members had a blank ZIP code in their personnel file; as a result, the DMDC was unable to determine whether members were co-located with their spouses. We did not analyze the causes of the Services or Service member not providing correct ZIP code information within the personnel records because it was outside the scope of our review. We may consider reviewing the incomplete DMDC data in future DoD OIG oversight work.

To assess the reasons Service members leave active duty and possible connections to co-location factors, and to identify trends and top concerns for members leaving the Service, we reviewed readily available survey results collected by the Services from October 2017 through January 2023.¹⁶ Specifically, the Services provided the following.

- Army: All Service members completing a survey from May 2020 through January 2023.
- Navy: All Service members identified as leaving within the last 3 years.¹⁷
- Air Force: All Service members identified as leaving the Air Force between September 2021 and December 2021.
- Marine Corps: All Service members identified as leaving the Marine Corps from October 2017 through September 2021.

¹⁴ The Services generally provided a current snapshot of Service members with a military spouse and assignment history; however, not all Services analyzed the personnel data to determine co-location of Service members. Based on the DMDC's ability to pull personnel data and perform consistent analysis across all Services, we requested the co-location information directly from the DMDC.

¹⁵ The DMDC defined a Service member and co-located military spouse as having mailing address ZIP codes within 50 miles of each other.

¹⁶ We reviewed different date ranges of survey results for each of the Services, because we requested the Services' previously published reports and presentations containing survey results, instead of the supporting data within specific time frames.

¹⁷ Navy officials were unable to provide specific dates for the last 3 years, such as the start and end dates. Navy officials were unable to see the actual dates when retrieving the information from the survey system.

Additionally, we reviewed criteria and guidance from the DoD and the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps related to assignment policy and the co-location of dual-military spouses. Although we noted the variances between the Services' policies, we did not make any comparisons among the Services and instead compared the policies to DoD requirements noted in the report. We interviewed personnel from the following offices and commands:

- OUSD(P&R)
- DMDC
- Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, G-1 (Personnel)
- Army Human Resources Command
- Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Military Personnel)
- Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
- Navy Personnel Command
- Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Force Management Integration)
- Air Force Personnel Center
- Headquarters Marine Corps, Manpower and Reserve Affairs

We conducted this review with integrity, objectivity, and independence, as required by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency "Quality Standards for Federal Offices of Inspector General," August 2012.

Appendix B

Overview of the Services' Survey Process

The Services use surveys to assess factors influencing members' decisions to leave military service and to receive feedback on personnel satisfaction. Generally, the Services use exit surveys for Service members who leave active duty. The Services give other engagement and retention surveys to all active Service members to assess their overall satisfaction and reasons for staying. The Services administer surveys at different times and intervals, depending on the intent of the survey. For example, Air Force members receive an exit survey when they have a date of separation, while the Army conducts surveys annually to all members during their birth month. Additionally, although we noted the differences between the Services' use and frequency of surveys, we did not make any comparisons of or conduct further inquiry or analysis regarding this data because this was outside the scope of our review.

Army Survey Results

The Army uses a survey to assess the retention intentions and sentiments of all Army Service members. The Army administers the survey to both enlisted members and officers every year, during their birth month. Between May 2020 and January 2023, 64,617 Army Service members answered the annual survey regarding the top reasons to leave the Army.¹⁸ Notably, the top concerns for both men and women Soldiers primarily centered on family. Specifically, the top reasons included effects of deployments on family, impact of Army life on significant other's career plans and goals, and impact on their family's well-being. See Table 3 for the top five "Extremely Important" reasons for leaving the Army listed by Service members between May 2020 and January 2023.

Table 3. Top 5 Reasons for Leaving the Army.

Rank	Reason	Members	Percent*
1	Effects of deployments on family or personal relationships.	18,254	28
2	Impact of Army life on significant other's career plans and goals.	17,202	27
3	Impact of military service on my family's well-being.	16,793	26
4	The degree of stability or predictability of Army life.	16,669	26
5	Impact of Army life on family plans for children.	16,347	25

* A total of 64,617 Army Service members responded to the survey. A member could select more than one reason for leaving the Army. We calculated the percentages based on the number of participants out of the 64,617 respondents selecting that reason for leaving.

Source: The Army.

¹⁸ For purposes of this review, the responses were limited to Service members who consented to have their survey results used for research purposes. Historically, approximately 80 percent of all respondents have consented.

Navy Survey Results

According to Navy officials, on a monthly basis the Navy identifies members leaving the Service and provides them an exit survey. In addition, the Navy uses an annual retention survey with the same questions as the exit survey.

According to the results of surveys completed in the last 3 years, Navy Service members stated that the impact on family and work-life balance are among the strongest influences to leave the Navy.¹⁹ Specifically, of the 8,739 members responding to the surveys, 50 percent identified the impact on family and 42 percent identified work-life balance as one of their top factors in leaving the Navy.²⁰ Some examples of impacts on families included the impact of permanent change of station moves on children and on the spouse's career, separation from family and friends, and the impact of geographic locations on the spouse's career. See Table 4 for the top five reasons for leaving the Navy listed by Service members.

Table 4. Top 5 Reasons for Leaving the Navy.

Rank	Reason	Members	Percent*
1	Impact on family	4,370	50
2	Civilian job opportunities	3,845	44
3	Work-life balance	3,670	42
4	Career assignment	3,321	38
5	Leadership	3,233	37

* A total of 8,739 Navy Service members responded to the survey. For each reason, members give a rating on how strong that factor influences their decision to stay or leave. We calculated the percentages based on the number of participants out of the 8,739 respondents selecting that reason as a strong factor.

Source: The Navy.

Air Force Survey Results

The Air Force provides an exit survey to Service members with a confirmed date of separation from the Service. The Air Force assesses factors influencing a Service member's decision to leave the Air Force and links those factors to policies and programs. The Air Force administers the exit survey every other year, and received responses from 3,867 members in the most recent survey, in 2021. Of the members who separated between September 2021

¹⁹ Navy officials were unable to provide specific dates for the last 3 years, such as the start and end dates. Navy officials are unable to see the actual dates when retrieving the information from the survey system.

²⁰ The survey questions included 14 factors for Navy Service members to indicate how strong that factor influences their decision to stay or leave the Navy. As such, each member could select multiple factors as a strong influence to leave the Navy.

and December 2021, the top reasons they left included family considerations. Specifically, the reasons included difficulty maintaining a work-life balance and meeting family commitments. See Table 5 for the top five reasons for leaving the Air Force listed by Service members.

Table 5. Top 5 Reasons for Leaving the Air Force.

Rank	Reason	Members	Percent*
1	Leadership	1,227	15
2	Job stress	977	12
3	Overall job satisfaction	901	11
4	Difficulty maintaining work-life balance and meeting family commitments	823	10
5	Opportunity to do something other than military work	758	9

* A total of 8,375 responses were received from the total 3,867 Air Force Service members who took the survey. A member would rank the factors in order of influence. Therefore, a member could select more than one reason for leaving the Air Force. We calculated the percentages based on the total number of responses for a reason to leave out of the total 8,375 responses.

Source: The Air Force.

Marine Corps Survey Results

The Marine Corps administers surveys at specific career points, including entering into service, reenlistment, and when separating from service. The survey program provides Marine Corps officials feedback and information to better understand personnel satisfaction regarding career opportunities, leadership, performance management, diversity, and work-life programs. The Marine Corps asked survey participants to rank their top three reasons for leaving the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps received 4,702 total responses to the exit survey question regarding the top reasons for leaving the Marine Corps from FY 2018 through FY 2021. The results showed family considerations as one of the top reasons. See Table 6 for the top five reasons for leaving the Marine Corps listed by Service members.

Table 6. Top 5 Reasons for Leaving the Marine Corps.

Rank	Reason	Members	Percent*
1	Dissatisfaction with command climate	586	12
2	Family	582	12
3	Accept/find job other than active duty military	515	11
4	Dissatisfaction with social changes (Marine Corps leadership)	473	10
5	Other (positive experience)	412	9

* A total of 4,702 Marine Corps members responded to the survey question. A member would select their top three reasons for leaving the Marine Corps and, as a result, could select more than one reason. We calculated the number of members using the percentage of respondents selecting that reason for leaving and the total number of responses.

Source: The Marine Corps.

Management Comments

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness)



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MAY 22 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Response to Department of Defense Office of Inspector General Draft Report,
"Review of the DoD's Co-Location Policies to Support Dual-Military Marriages"
(Project No. D2023-D0DIEM-0025.000)

This memorandum responds to the DoD Office of Inspector General draft report,
"Review of the DoD's Co-Location Policies to Support Dual-Military Marriages" (Project No.
D2023-D0DIEM-0025.000).

I concur with recommendations 1a and b, which will be implemented in the upcoming
reissuance of DoD Instruction 1315.18, "Procedures for Military Personnel Assignments." Work
on the reissuance will begin in a few months and publication is expected in Fiscal Year 2024.
More detail on the implementation of this recommendation is at the attachment.

My point of contact for this matter is [REDACTED]

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.

Attachment:
As stated

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) (cont'd)

**Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (OUSD(P&R))
Response to Department of Defense Office of Inspector General Draft Report, "Review of
the DoD's Co-Location Policies to Support Dual-Military Marriages" (Project No. D2023-
D0DIEM-0025.000)**

RECOMMENDATION 1: That the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness develop and implement policy and processes to:

- a. Define how the Services should measure the effectiveness of their assignment policies. At a minimum, the policy and processes should require the Services to review and analyze the results of their exit and retention surveys and re-examine their co-location policies, on a specified recurring basis, to determine whether their assignment policies are balancing their respective missions with the needs of the Service members and their families.
- b. Require coordination across all of the Services for the co-location of inter-Service dual military spouses. The policy and processes should also require additional oversight from higher-level authorities in both Services, should the Services be unable to accommodate inter-Service co-location, similar to the Service-specific processes for intra-Service co-location.

OUSD(P&R) RESPONSE:

Recommendation 1a: Concur. The reissuance of Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1315.18, "Procedures for Military Personnel Assignments," will include in policy that the Services review and analyze their co-location statistics, review the results of their exit and retention surveys, and utilize the information gathered to adjust their co-location policies as required. This policy update will be coordinated with the Military Services and other key stakeholders during the upcoming reissuance process. We expect that the reissuance will be published in Fiscal Year 2024.

Recommendation 1b: Concur. Consistent with the current levels of oversight the Services have for assignment of intra-Service dual-military couples, the reissuance of DoDI 1315.18 will specify the level of oversight required when the Services are unable to accommodate inter-Service co-location. Having a higher level of oversight above the individual Service career monitor/managers will ensure that a thorough review has been done prior to placing inter-Service dual-military couples in different locations. The appropriate level of oversight will be coordinated with the Military Services and other key stakeholders during the upcoming DoDI 1315.18 reissuance process.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

OASD(M&RA)	Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs)
DEERS	Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System
DMDC	Defense Manpower Data Center
OUSD(P&R)	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
USD(P&R)	Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

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