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COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S  
REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

PLANS AND PROPOSALS FOR AVOIDING  
UNNECESSARY DUPLICATION IN DEVELOPING  
NEW MILITARY EQUIPMENT  
Department of Defense B-133313

D I G E S T



79-0362

WHY THE REVIEW WAS MADE

GAO reviewed policies and practices of the Department of Defense (DOD) and the military services designed to avoid unnecessary duplication in the development of equipment.

The Defense Standardization Program encourages the broadest possible use of equipment among the military services so that a minimum of similar items will be developed and produced.

GAO selected laser applications, laser-protective goggles, and scatterable mines for detailed review because the services have spent large amounts of funds in both areas and because laser technology is relatively new.

examine this problem concluded that as much as \$7 million of research and development funds and up to \$50 million of procurement funds could be saved if duplication were eliminated. In January 1973 the services began action to eliminate the duplication; however, this may not be resolved until the close of fiscal year 1974. (See p. 9.)

Laser-protective eye goggles

The Army and the Air Force have each contracted for development of laser-protective eye goggles to provide similar protection. A potential eye hazard exists when laser devices of certain wavelengths are used near persons. The Army and the Air Force spent over \$660,000 in these development efforts through fiscal year 1973, and the two services have budgeted a total of \$280,000 for continuation of their development efforts in fiscal year 1974. (See p. 14.)

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The military services are conducting duplicative development programs in laser-guided missiles, laser-protective eye goggles, and air-scatterable land mines.

Air-scatterable land mines

Between April and June 1971, all three services approved separate requirements for similar air-scatterable land mines. The Army and Air Force development efforts will require \$28.5 million to complete. A DOD committee established to look into duplication of air munitions subsequently terminated the Navy's program after it

Laser-guided missiles

At the time of GAO's review, all three services were developing duplicative laser-guided missiles. An ad hoc group established by DOD to

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had spent about \$6.5 million and estimated an additional \$16 million would be needed to complete the project.

In total, the services spent nearly \$51 million in this area to meet their own service requirements.

In October 1972 the services signed a joint requirement and a joint development plan was prepared. Ultimately, the Air Force was appointed the "lead" service for this weapon. (See p. 15.)

Service coordination procedures not effective

In order to reduce development of unnecessary duplicative equipment, the services must communicate with each other about their proposed programs. Each service has implemented a system to coordinate with the others.

GAO found, however, that the services had undertaken development of duplicate types of equipment because they had not coordinated effectively. Duplication occurred because

- key documents were not made available by one service to the others,
- key documents were not written clearly enough to allow the other services to make intelligent comparisons with their own requirements,
- the services did not respond to requests for comments from each other, and

--no effective action was taken to eliminate duplication even when recognized. (See p. 9.)

Committees established to eliminate duplicative development in special areas

The Director of Defense Research and Engineering is responsible for resolving differences between the services when potential duplication in development is pinpointed.

Because the Director was not satisfied with the services' progress in eliminating duplicative developments in air munitions and laser-guided weapons, two committees were established to correct the problem in these two areas. (See pp. 6 and 7.) These committees have made progress in getting the services to jointly undertake development programs.

Systematic review required to avoid duplication

Duplicative development can occur in programs not under the cognizance of a review committee. The Director of Defense Research and Engineering does not review service requirement documents and service comments obtained during the coordination process. Thus, service differences are not resolved and unnecessary duplication results.

A systematic review of service requirement documents and the other services' comments could prevent unnecessary duplication. (See p. 21.)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Secretary of Defense should:

- Act to insure that the services establish effective coordination procedures.
- Require services to obtain comments from the other services on all requirement documents before approval at a service's headquarters.
- Require the cognizant audit groups, DOD, and the services to schedule audits to determine the effectiveness of the procedures authorized under the Defense Standardization Program to avoid unnecessary duplication. (See p. 26.)

GAO also is recommending that the Director of Defense Research and Engineering:

- Establish procedures that will require the services to demonstrate to the Director that the equipment requirement can only be satisfied through new development and that the other services agree that the new development will encompass their equivalent needs. (See p. 26.)
- Review the Army and Air Force development of goggles for eye protection from laser rays and determine whether the services' requirements can be satisfied

by one item. (See p. 15.)

- Review current and proposed scatterable mine programs of the Army and Air Force and determine that all duplicative development has been eliminated by the joint development plan submitted by the services. (See p. 20.)

## AGENCY ACTIONS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES

The Director of Defense Research and Engineering did not agree with GAO's recommendations to require inter-service coordination but stated that other management systems existed that provided opportunity for the services to prevent unnecessary duplication. GAO recognized that these systems may indicate potential duplication, but they were not designed to specifically identify duplicate development. Duplicate development did occur in the items reviewed by GAO, even though the management systems mentioned by the Director existed. Therefore, GAO believes that additional actions are needed to avoid unnecessary duplication among the services. (See p. 22.)

## MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE CONGRESS

This report is being sent to the Congress because it has expressed interest in identifying and minimizing unnecessary duplication in the development of equipment.