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PROCUREMENT RESEARCH IN GAO:  
DETERMINING WHAT TO PROCURE

Remarks to the  
~~Dimensions and Modes~~  
of Procurement Research  
Panel 05  
General Session III.  
June 23, 1977

Sixth  
6th Annual DOD  
Procurement Research Symposium:

USMA, West Point, NY  
June 23-25, 1977

Hugh R. Strain  
Supervisory Management Analyst  
Mission Studies Group  
Major Acquisitions Subdivision  
Procurement and System Acquisition Division  
United States General Accounting Office

PSAD

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SLIDE 1

GAO's role in "procurement research" is an indirect one by virtue of its unique position in Government. That demands some explanation and even in this audience some background on GAO is in order.

SLIDE 2

The purpose of the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921 was to provide a national budget system and an independent audit of Government accounts. To accomplish these goals the act established a new Bureau of the Budget to compile the President's budget, and created the United States General Accounting Office, independent of the executive departments. GAO is headed by the Comptroller General of the United States who is appointed by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate, to serve for 15 years. He may be removed during his term only by impeachment for incapacitation, inefficiency, neglect of duty, malfeasance in office, commission of a felony, or conduct involving moral turpitude. Therein lies the basis for the non-political objectivity of the GAO.

SLIDE 3

Authority is broad.

SLIDE 4

From its inception the GAO has been responsible for determining the legality and accuracy of receipt, disbursement, and application of public funds SLIDE 5 with the objectives of greater economy and efficiency in public expenditures.

SLIDE 6

Subsequent practice and legislation, confirmed in the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, made the GAO responsible for reviewing the performance obtained from public expenditures - the objective in this case is increasing the effectiveness of public expenditures.

SLIDE 7

The responsibilities are carried out in many ways. The more significant are:

1. Financial and Compliance Audits
2. Management Reviews of Economy and Efficiency
3. Program Results Reviews

SLIDE 8

Any of you who have been subject to GAO audit know what these categories entail.

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Other vehicles include:

Published and Unpublished Decisions of the Comptroller General on new or novel questions of law, or out of the ordinary circumstances.

Government Contract Bid Protest Decisions.

Participation in the Joint Financial Management Improvement Program.

Participation in the Cost Accounting Standards Board.

We help the Congress in its legislative oversight function by providing its committees and members with timely information, analyses, and recommendations concerning the operations of Government.

Mr. Staats feels our greatest contribution is to provide answers to such questions as:

--It is possible to eliminate waste and inefficient use of public monies?

--Are Federal programs, whether administered directly by the Federal Government, or through other organizations such as State and local governments, achieving their objectives?

--Are there other ways of accomplishing the objectives of these programs at lower costs?

--Are funds being spent legally and is the accounting for them adequate?

He has summed up our mission as "recommending ways to make Government work better"--doing this as much as possible by making the results of our studies known before options are lost.

SLIDE 9

The farther along a major acquisition, for example, proceeds the greater the reluctance to reconsider, revise, defer, or terminate a program.

SLIDE 10

For many years the GAO had been organized along lines which provided agency coverage. Many of you may be familiar with the Defense Division which examined DOD's Research and Development, Facilities, Supply Management, Procurement, and, beginning in 1969, Major Acquisitions.

SLIDE 11

The Procurement and Systems Acquisition Division was established as part of a major realignment in the organizational structure of GAO, effective April 3, 1972. The reorganization was an outgrowth of an internal study which concluded that the accounting and auditing divisions of GAO should be organized on a function and program basis, in part to accelerate the growth of functional and program expertise among senior staff.

SLIDE 12

Back in 1967, Mr. Staats began a program to get greater diversity in the staff and this continues.

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PSAD was conceived as one the functional divisions, with responsibilities spanning the entire spectrum of the procurement function, and the science and technology policies and programs of the Federal Government.

PSAD is the focal point within the Office for general understanding, coordination, assessment, guidance, and communication on what has been done, what is being done, and what should be done relative to these two issue areas (of 29 currently) and serves as advisor to all other elements of GAO.

The Division is concerned with (1) the identification of needs and establishment of requirements, (2) the identification of technology gaps, (3) the support of research and development, and (4) the ultimate acquisition by the Federal Government of goods, services, and facilities of requisite quality, within the time needed, at the most advantageous cost, through the use of contracts, leases, and grants.

We do this through:

(1) Government-wide and multiagency functional audits of--

(a) Overall policies, practices, and programs of the Federal Government relating to procurement including the acquisition of new items.

(b) Overall policies, practices and programs of the Federal Government relating to research and development including the Federal Government's role for aiding and influencing science and technology to help meet the many complex challenges facing the nation.

(2) Management and program audits of the--

(a) National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

(b) Weapons procurement activities of the Energy Research and Development Agency.

(c) Procurement functions (exclusive of the Public Buildings Service construction) of the General Services Administration.

(d) Renegotiation Board.

(e) Functions, programs, and activities of the Department of Defense, not specifically assigned to other GAO divisions.

(f) Other activities, boards, commissions, and committees of the Federal Government:

Armed Services Procurement Regulation (ASPR) Revisions

Central DOD overhead agencies (e.g. OSD, DLA, NSA)

Committee on Purchases of Blind-Made Products

Implementation of Recommendations of the Commission on  
Government Procurement

Emergency Loan Guarantee Board

These agencies are responsible for most of the Federal Government's annual expenditure for procurement and science and technology. In addition to the direct activities of the Federal agencies, grantees, using Federal funds, procure a large but unknown amount of goods and services and contribute significantly to the advancement of science and technology.

Another of our responsibilities is monitoring compliance with OMB Circular A-76!

SLIDE 13

In FY 76 we spent about 10% of our resources on procurement as an issue area but that figure is misleading. The other divisions do work that includes procurement issue coverage but they identify the work by their own issue area.

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There's a lot of lee-way in what's appropriate to do at any point in time. We need to be sensitive to changing times and put out resources to work where we see the chance for making the biggest contribution. Today, certain recurring themes appear on the national scene which should trigger our planning. For example:

- The low level of public confidence in the integrity of Government, and particularly in contracting activities, would seem to dictate our addressing this issue--clearing the air where appropriate, exposing looseness in controls and abuses where found, and supporting reasonable safeguards, where needed.
- Spiraling defense costs during peacetime would suggest opportunities for our participation with Congress in a closer scrutiny of the

Administration's Defense strategy and spending rationale--particularly involving costly and sometimes questionable or oversold weapons systems.

Regardless of what happens to be the issue of the moment; how much we're working within the mainstream of public thought, or how well we're anticipating congressional needs, we still might not be effective. To borrow a thought from Mr. Staats:

We would rather issue concise and informative letters, getting them into appropriate hands at the right time, than be able to point to stacks of bound reports--all too late to be useful. Ideally, our best product is a timely report to the Congress containing recommendations for improvements to procurement policies and/or practices.

In highly general terms, PSAD is trying to contribute to improvements in Procurement policies and practices. We do this basically in two ways:

--By providing information and independent evaluations to Congress, its committees and members on high visibility procurement, and science and technology--including major acquisition--programs and issues, and

--By continually chipping away at significant management weaknesses.

I'm not sure I could, or would even want to attempt, to list our contributions to procurement. Perhaps you are the only ones who can do that. I find it interesting that only about 40 GAO reports are included in the procurement research guide.



SLIDE 14

One thing I think there is agreement on and that is that we contribute to more effective, efficient and economical Government because GAO exists and its presence is recognized.

I've left a variety of GAO documents in the lobby for those who are interested, and provided Bob Williams with a listing of some 300 reports we have issued from July 1974 to April 1977.

SLIDE 15

In 1969 the rising cost of major weapon systems, which continues to rise, inflation notwithstanding, led to the creation of the major acquisitions subdivision.

SLIDE 16

The initial efforts reported only on the cost, schedule, and performance of selected individual systems. We soon broadened our reviews to include functions which cut across all systems - cost estimating, program management, cost/benefit studies, test & evaluation, and program management.

An in 1973 we began reviewing major civil acquisitions.

SLIDE 17

The Budget and Impoundment Control

Act of 1974 created the Budget Committees of the Congress and the Congressional Budget Office and made a third key committee of each house to oversee the DOD budget. This congressional budget structure has the effect of further implementing the recommendations of the Procurement Commission because in January 1978 the President will present a mission oriented budget.

This has increased the trend in the authorization and appropriation committees to move toward mission area consideration of the Defense budget.

More recently we have begun reviewing groups of related systems in a mission area context.

SLIDE 18

Here are the dos and don'ts

The Comptroller General and the Commission have both stated that the biggest problem is determining what to procure and for what purpose.

The Commission noted that problems encountered during procurement are rooted in action or inaction of earlier phases--the identification of needs, establishment of requirements, or "front-end" of the acquisition process. The latest GAO report mentioned in the procurement research guide is our 1974 report on Identification of Needs and Establishment of Requirements for Major Weapon Systems.

SLIDE 19

I like to consider the familiar DOD pipeline chart as representing the major acquisition process. It covers two broad activities:

--Determining what to Procure

--Determining how to Procure it

SLIDE 20

OMB Circular A-109 implements the Commission's recommendations on "front end" planning and in DOD the formal recognition of Milestone 0 gives visibility to an as yet unnamed phase of the acquisition process.

SLIDE 21

How about Identification and Definition Phase?

SLIDE 22

Just Definition Phase? Perhaps not--too close to an earlier name.

SLIDE 23

This new phase includes:

Analyzing the agency's mission in relation to national needs.

Reconciliation of agency component roles and missions.

Intelligence -- collection, processing, and reporting.

Threat assessment at various levels by those who must face the threat and counter it, and by an analysis organization reporting to the agency head.

Technology assessment and the push of technology relative to the pull of the threat.

Assessment of existing resources and capabilities.

A need may be uncovered as a deficiency resulting from a change in mission, threat, or environment, the application of new technology, or the recognition of an omission or void in existing capabilities.

As there is almost always some limitation on resources, and competition among programs for available resources usually exists, it is necessary to assign some priority on which needs will be dealt with first, or to establish the general magnitude of resources which may be invested.

Generally, all of these things have been done in the past in preparing the Program Objectives Memorandum to support the FYDP.

Now the approved mission needs which comprise the POM will be specifically identified and approved, and the affordability determinations made by the Secretary of Defense and Services Secretaries will no longer be hidden within the overall PPBS.

SLIDE 24

Something new is added to the Conceptual phase as well. Approval of the mission need grants authority to explore alternative methods of satisfying the need with emphasis on generating innovation and conceptual competition from industry! Tomorrow we may get some insight from industry and OFPP as to how this will impact the process.

Trade-off studies of cost, schedule and performance become more complex and important.

Risk analysis of new concepts or unproven technology combines subjective judgment with quantitative methods.

Economic analysis of the alternative concepts--over the life of the concept and in relation to other political and economic goals--becomes critical.

I was happy to see the terms acquisition and procurement used interchangeably in the program and discussions.

If you are a procurement purist you may decide that procurement research only concerns itself with the letting of contracts for obtaining alternative solutions.

GAO however is responsible for the application of all public funds and we must examine the very complex and significant operation of determining what to procure.

SLIDE 25

Finally - the Budgeting and Accounting Procedures Act of 1950 established the Joint Financial Management Improvement Program - the C.G. is the leader. P.L. 91-379, Aug. 1970 established the Cost Accounting Standards Board. The C.G. is Chairman of the Board.

Congress has not seen fit to specify a Joint Procurement Improvement Program as such. OFPP, the FPI, and these symposia I suppose constitute the current effort.

Would it benefit from being identified as a program?

SLIDE 26

If so, where is the overall Management Improvement Program it supports?



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SLIDE 1

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REGIONAL OFFICES IN 15 MAJOR CITIES  
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SLIDE 2

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## AUDITING

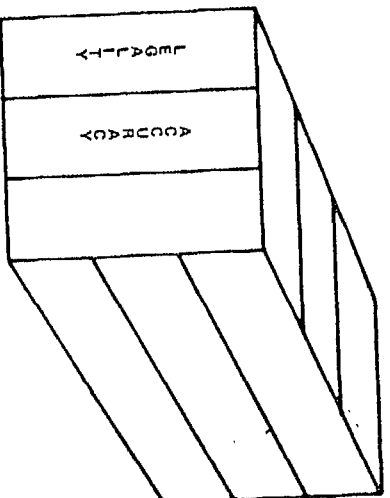
AUTHORITY IS BROAD

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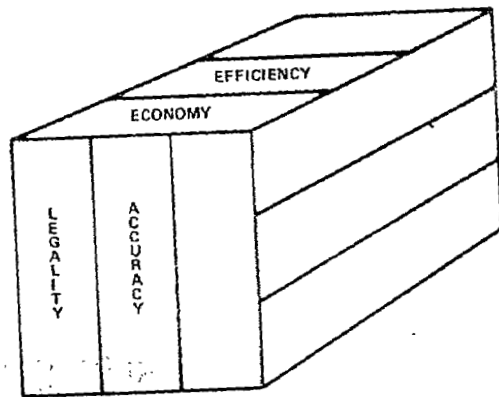
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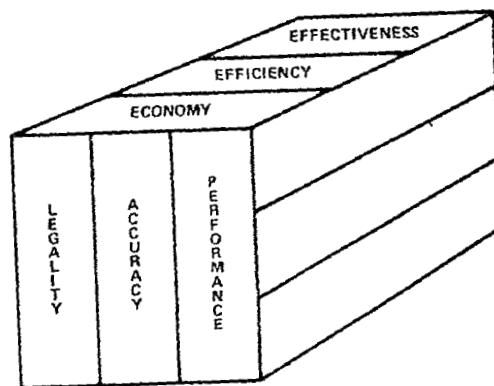


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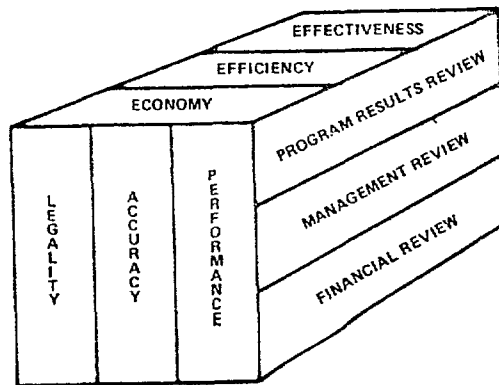
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SLIDE 5



SLIDE 6





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SLIDE 7

## CATEGORIES OF AUDIT

### ● FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

- PROPRIETY, ACCURACY, AND LEGALITY OF FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS
- SETTLEMENT OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS
- RELIABILITY OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND REPORTS
- ADEQUACY OF ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS

### ● MANAGERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

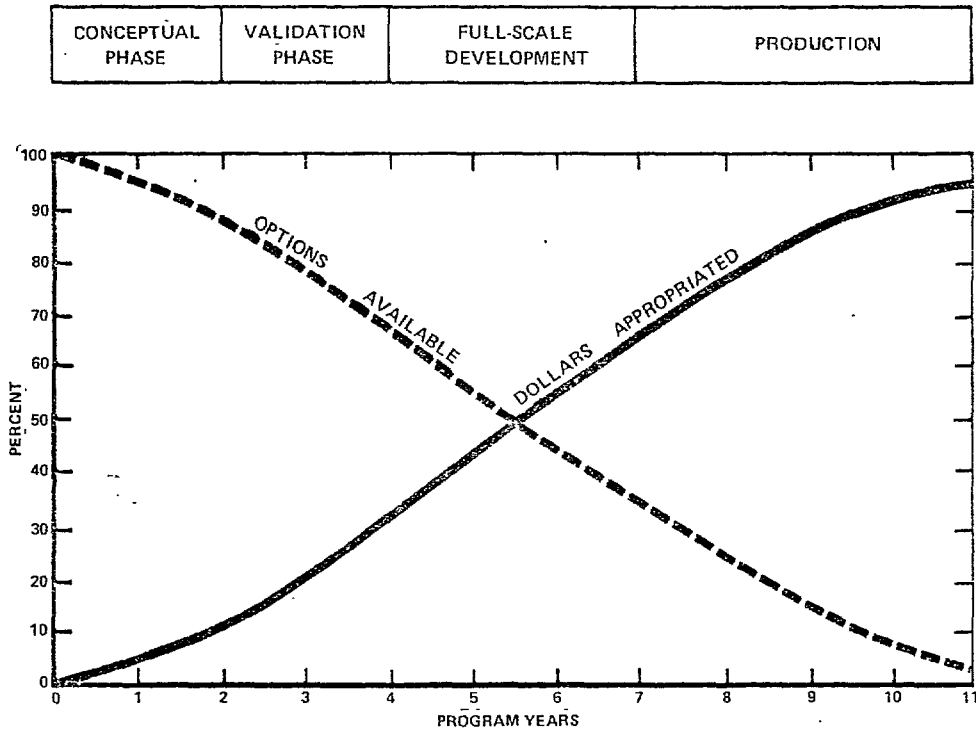
- EFFICIENCY AND ECONOMY OF OPERATIONS

### ● PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

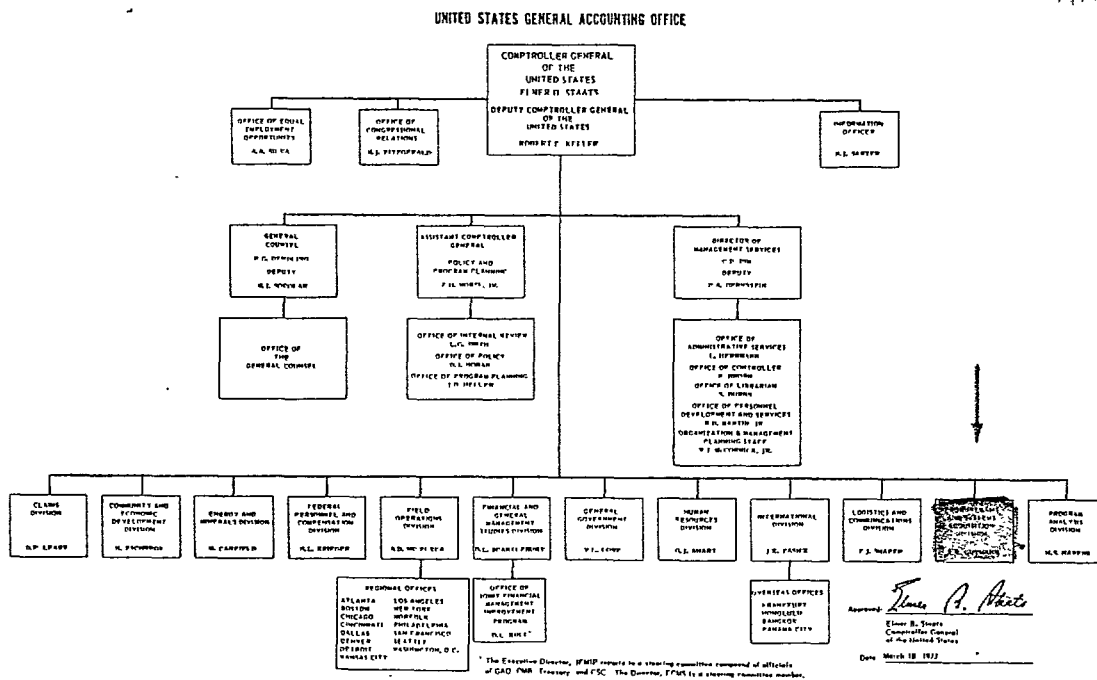
- EVALUATION OF PROGRAM BENEFITS, RESULTS, OR ACCOMPLISHMENTS
- AND ACHIEVEMENT OF INTENDED OBJECTIVES

SLIDE 8

# ACQUISITION CYCLE

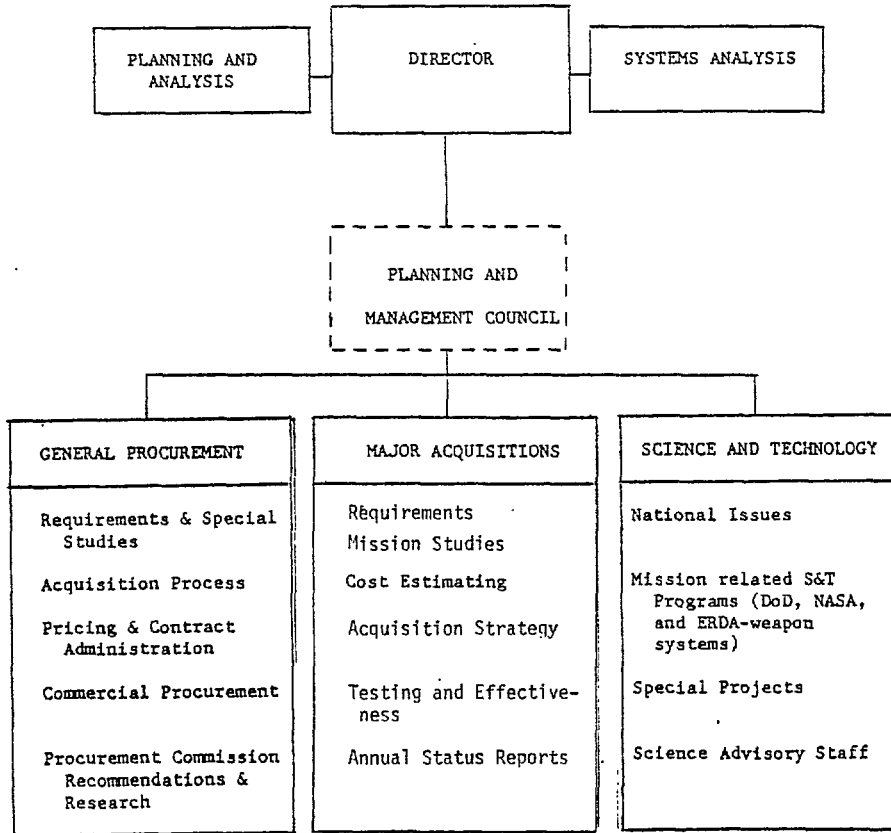


SLIDE 9



SLIDE 10

PROCUREMENT AND SYSTEMS ACQUISITION DIVISION



SLIDE 11

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## COMPOSITION GAO PROFESSIONAL STAFF

JULY 3, 1976

ACCOUNTANTS AND AUDITORS	2,643
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION/MANAGEMENT	909
ECONOMISTS AND OTHER SOCIAL SCIENTISTS	51
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ALL OTHER	110
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	4,063
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SLIDE 12

FY 76 (JULY 1, 1975 - JUNE 30, 1976)

PROFESSIONAL STAFF YEARS

PSAD (PROCUREMENT, SCIENCE, OTHER)	405
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TOTAL GAO	<u>3,039</u>

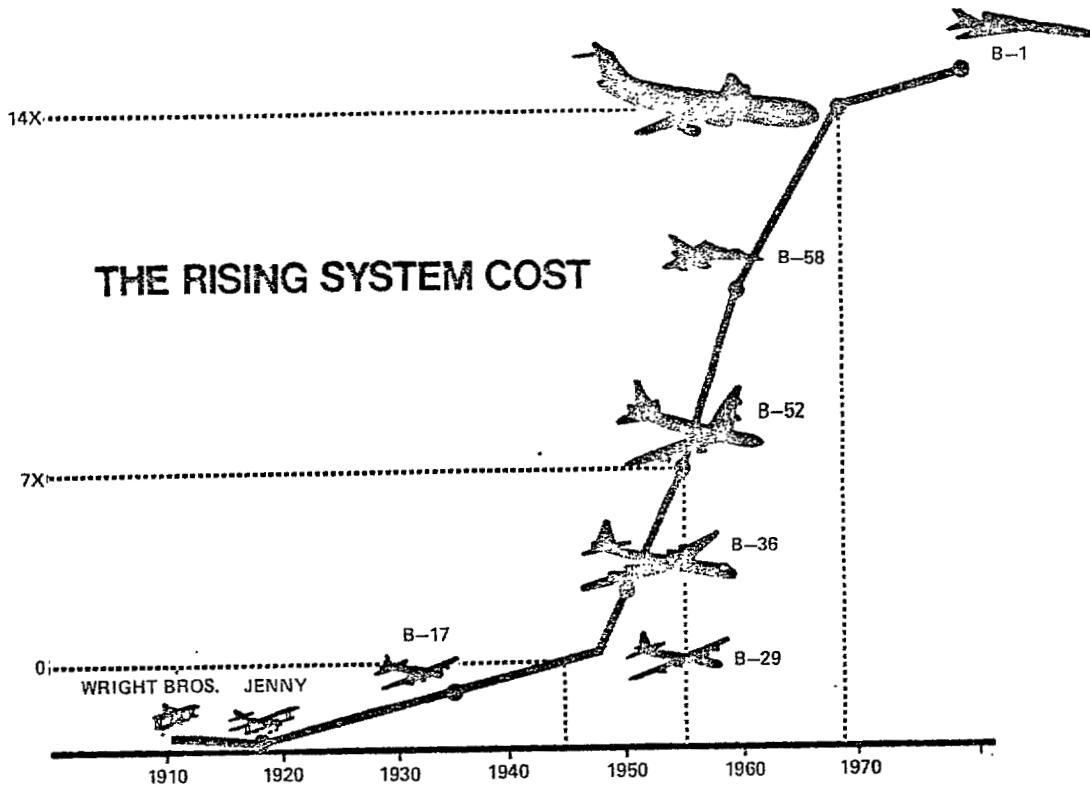
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SLIDE 13

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT GAO REPORTS

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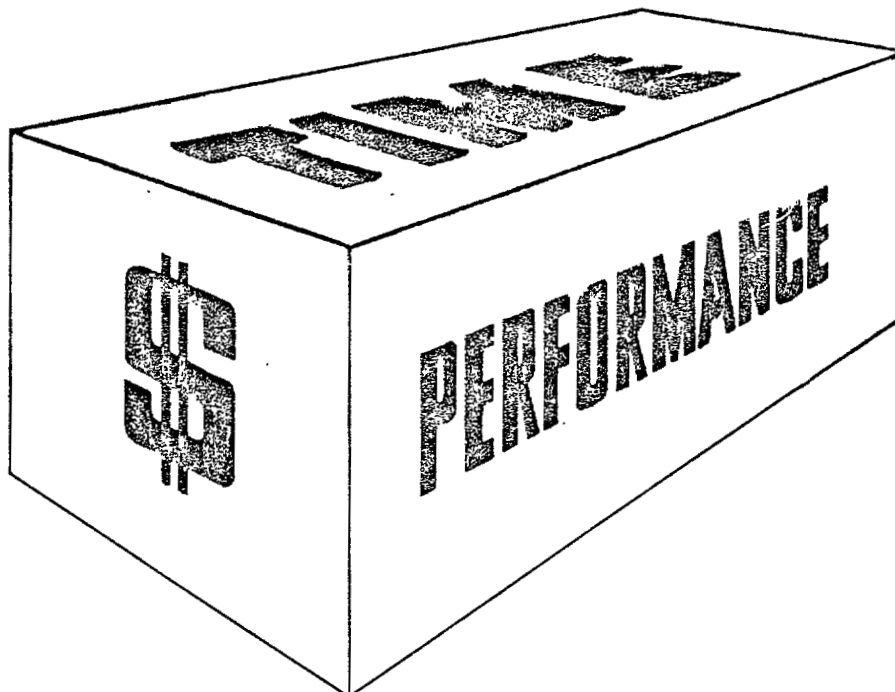
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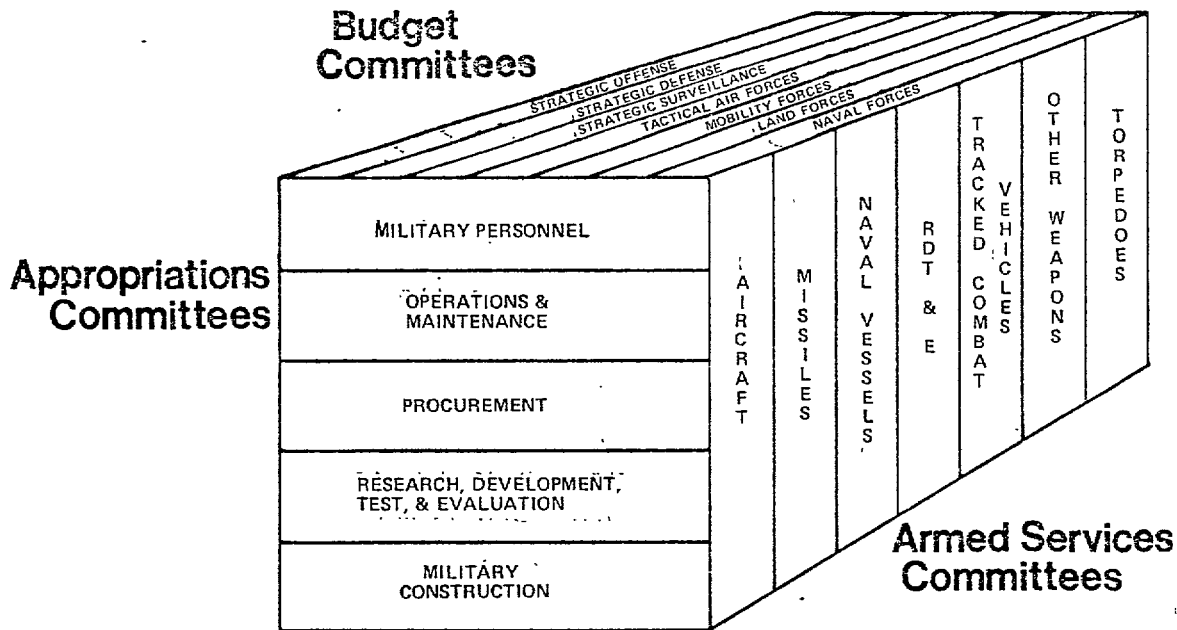
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SLIDE 16

# CONGRESS LOOKS AT DEFENSE



SLIDE 17

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## MISSION STUDIES

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### GAO does not:

- Define missions.
- Make Intelligence estimates.
- Suggest military policy, strategy, or tactics.
- Specify operations requirements for weapon systems.
- Suggest appropriate spending levels.

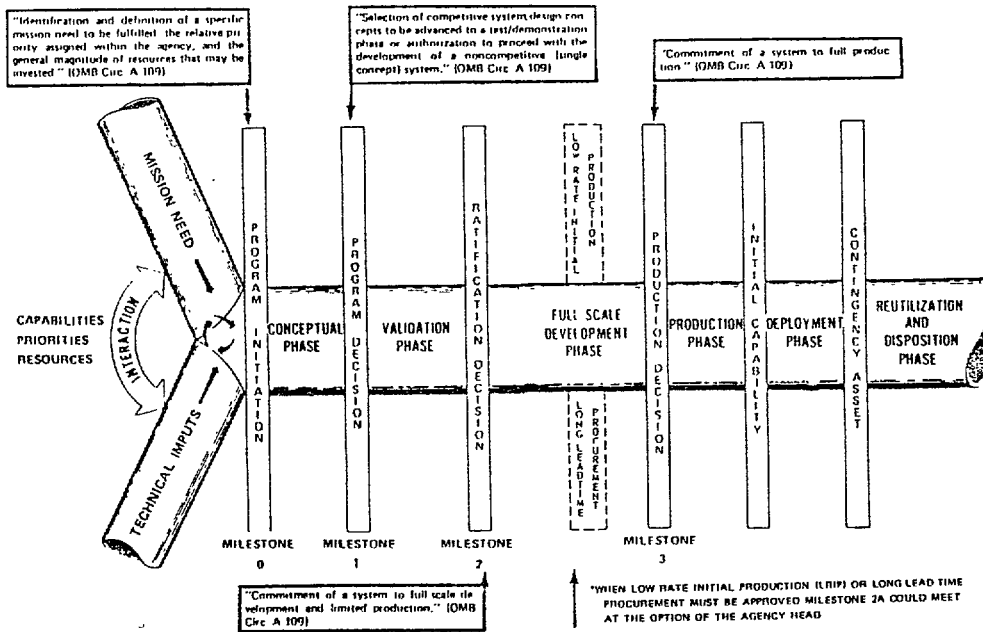
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### GAO does:

- State mission requirements as defined by OSD.
- Describe the enemy threat using DOD intelligence data and available threat assessment.
- Describe current inventory of weapon systems using available DOD performance data and costs.
- Describe current and planned R&D programs, purposes, and projected costs.

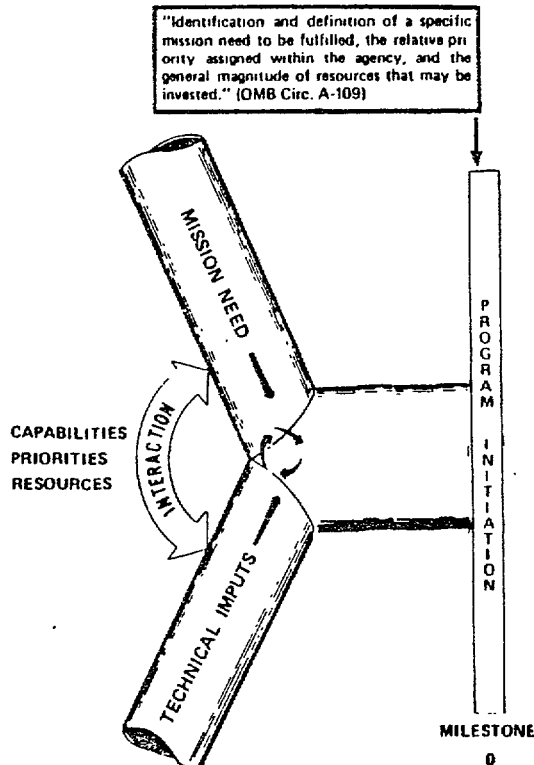
SLIDE 18

# THE LIFE CYCLE OF A MAJOR SYSTEM

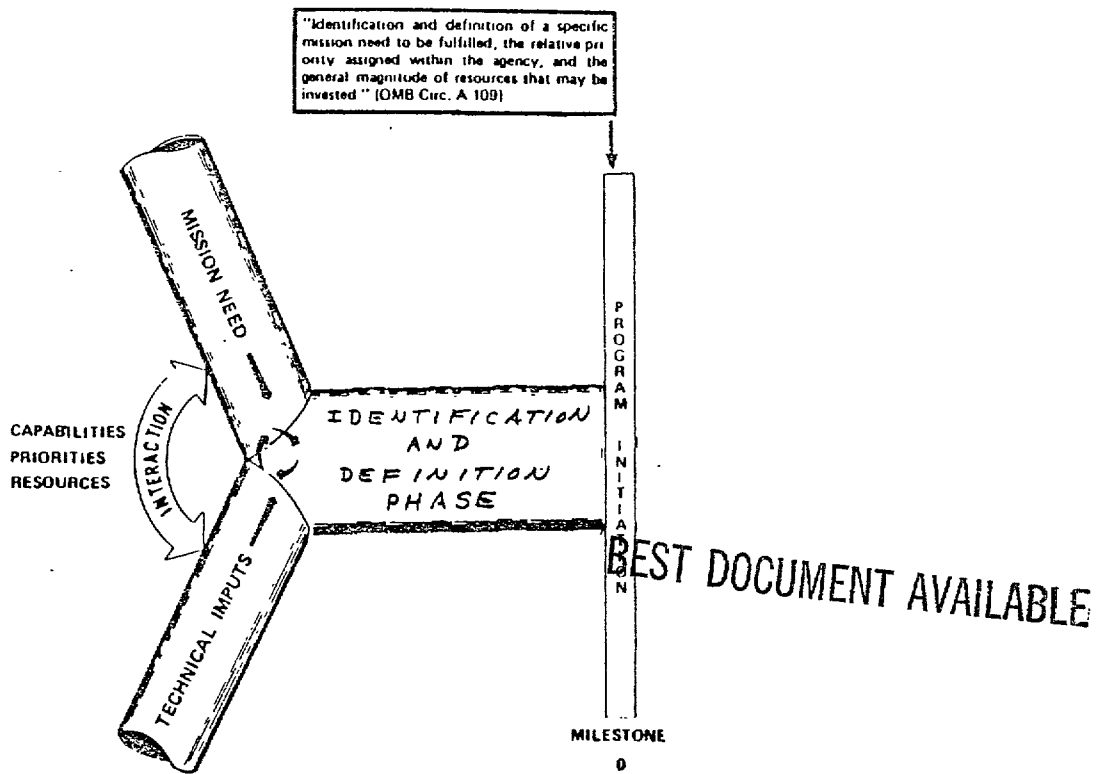


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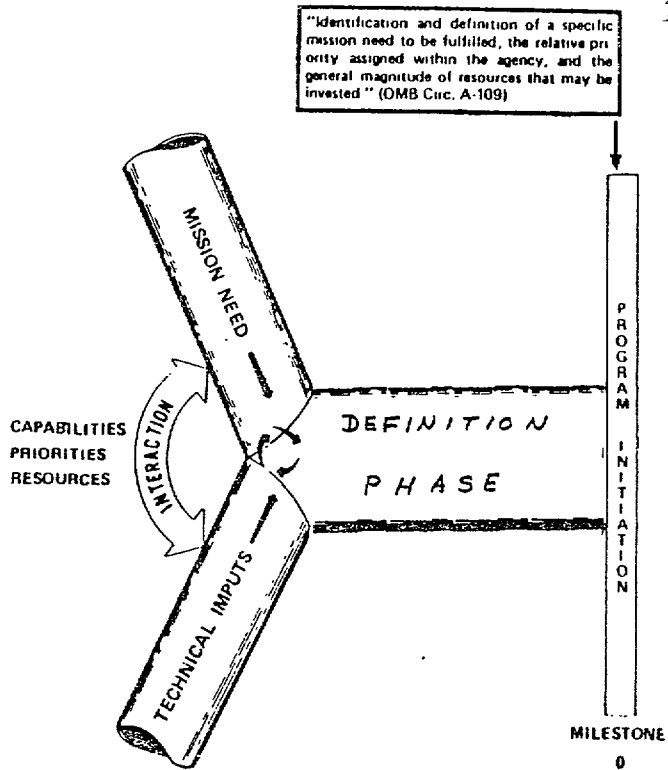
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SLIDE 20

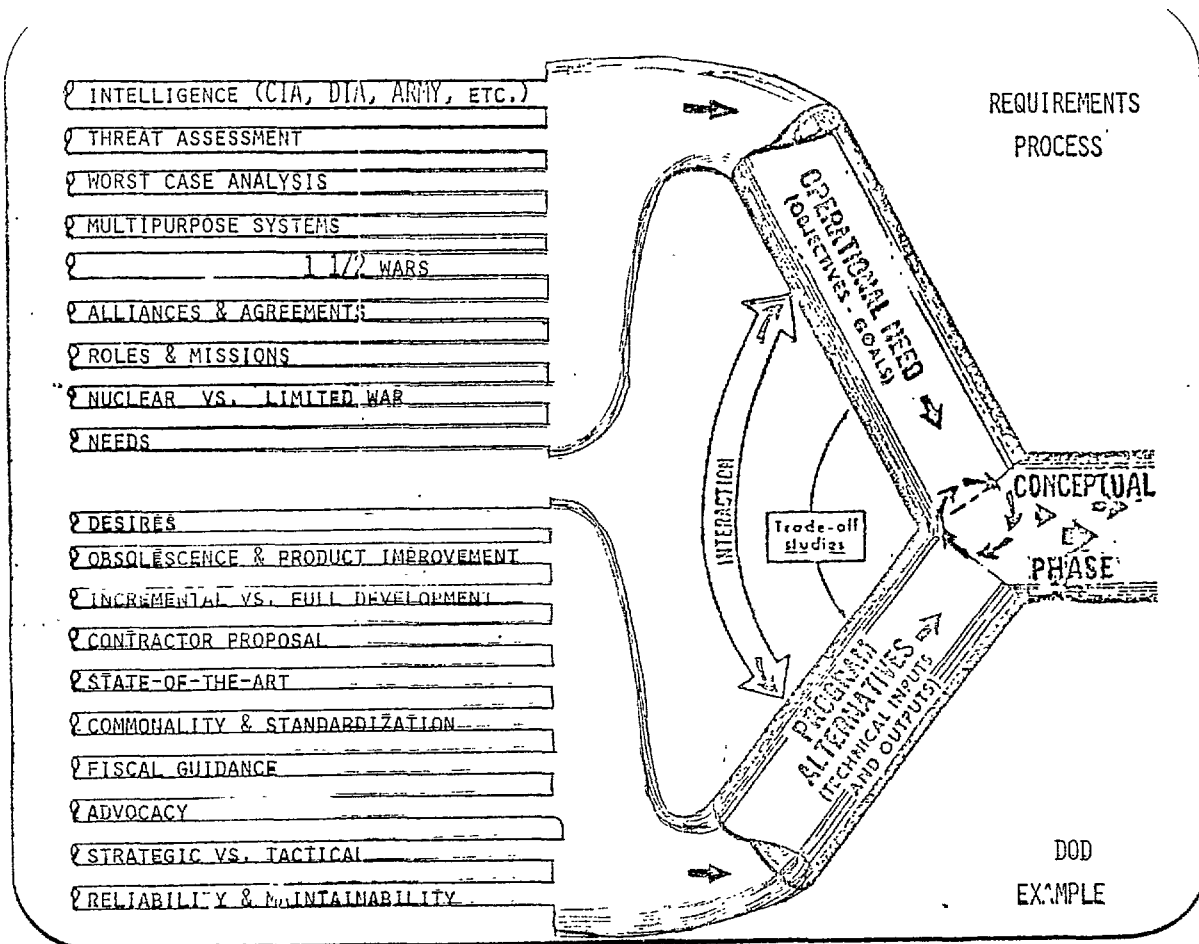


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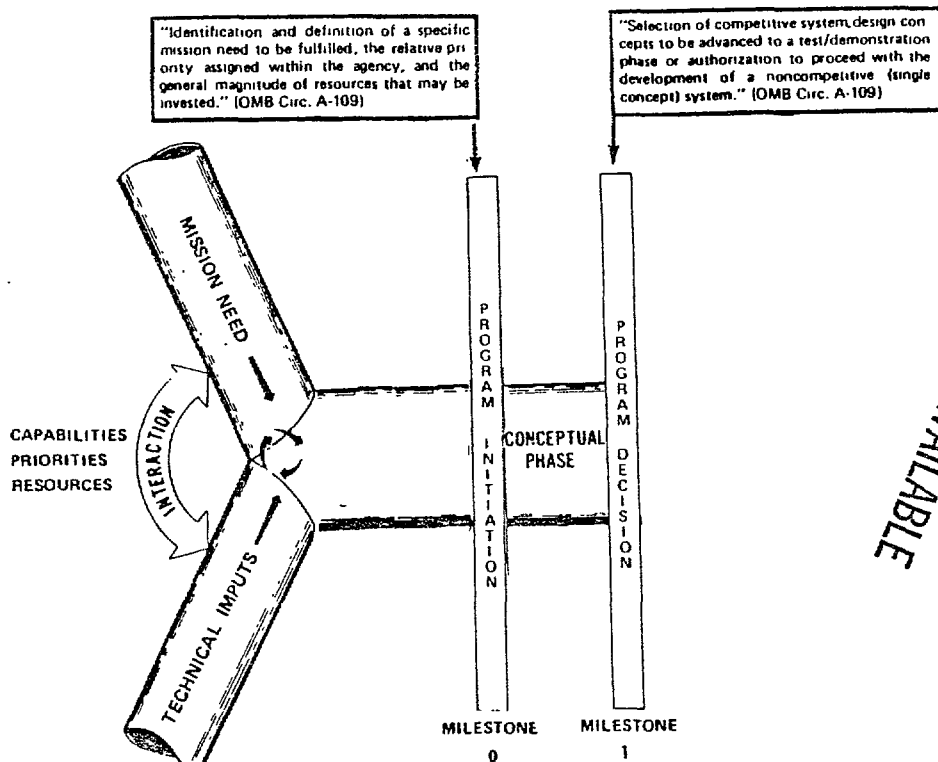


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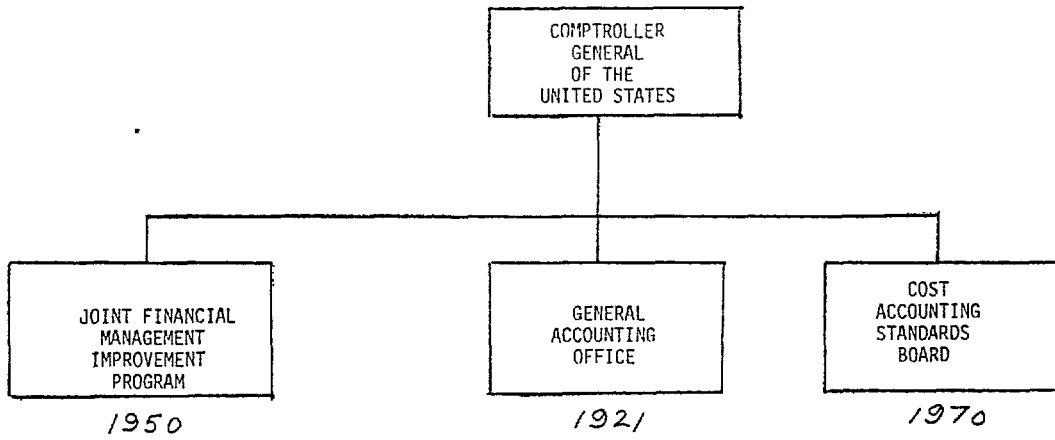


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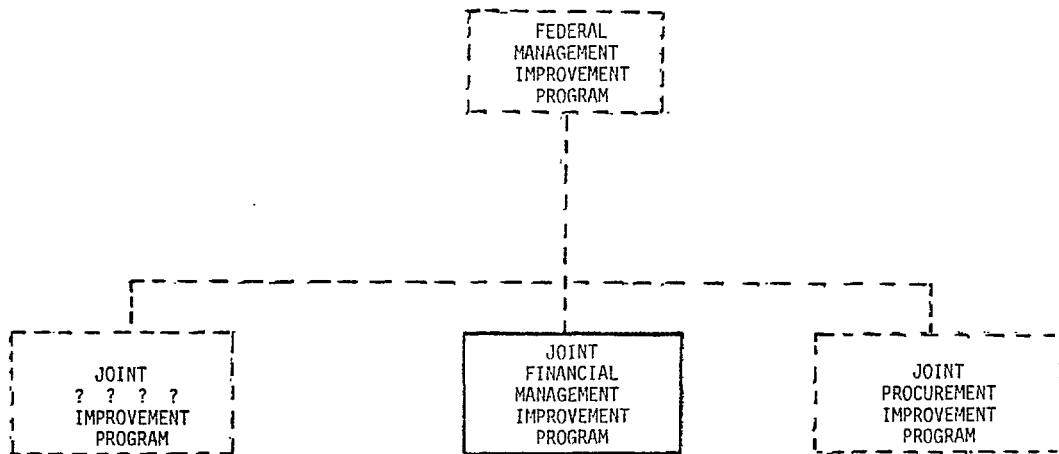
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SLIDE 24



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SLIDE 25



SLIDE 26



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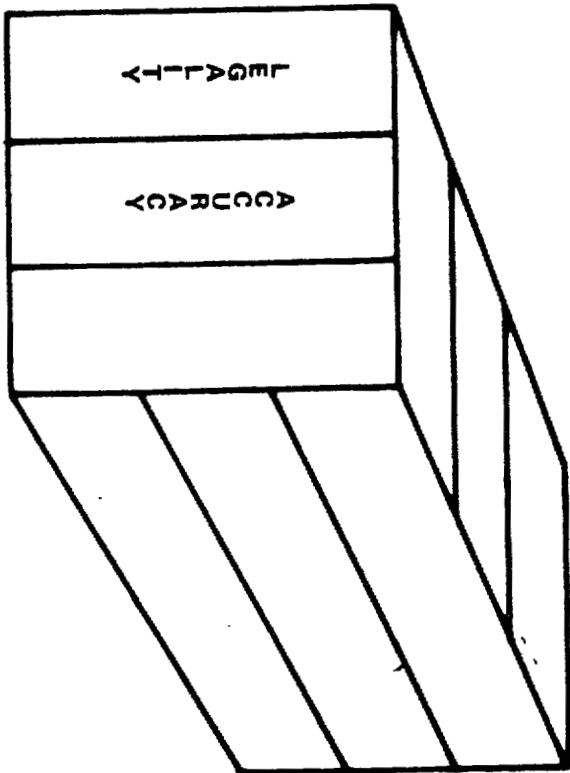
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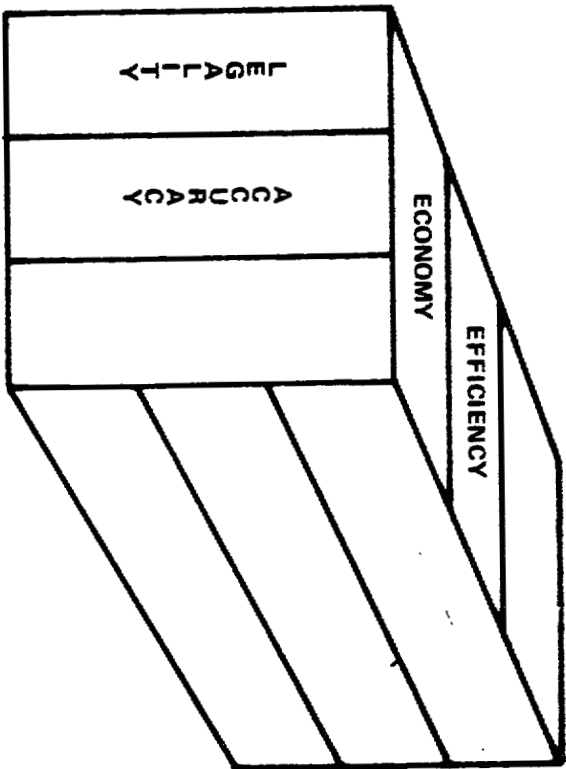
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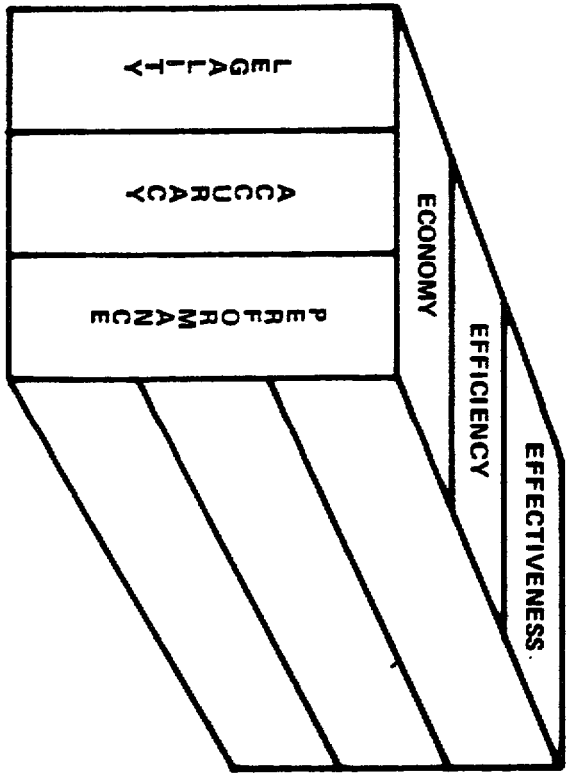
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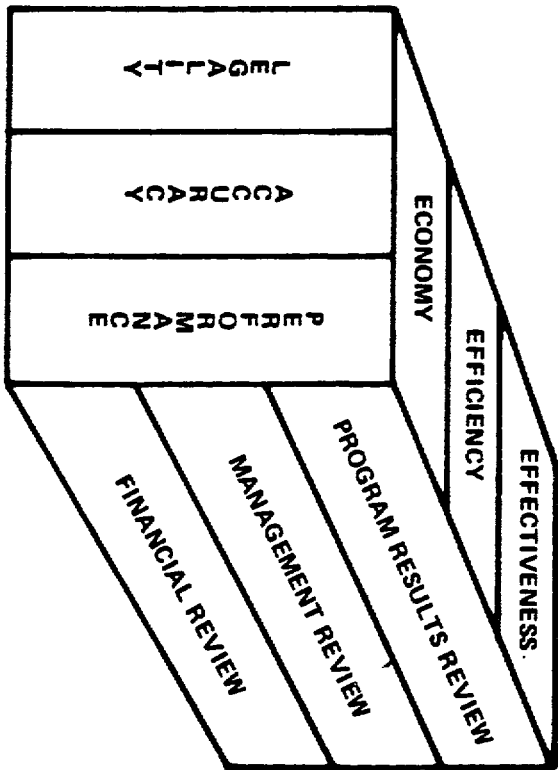


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## **CATEGORIES OF AUDIT**

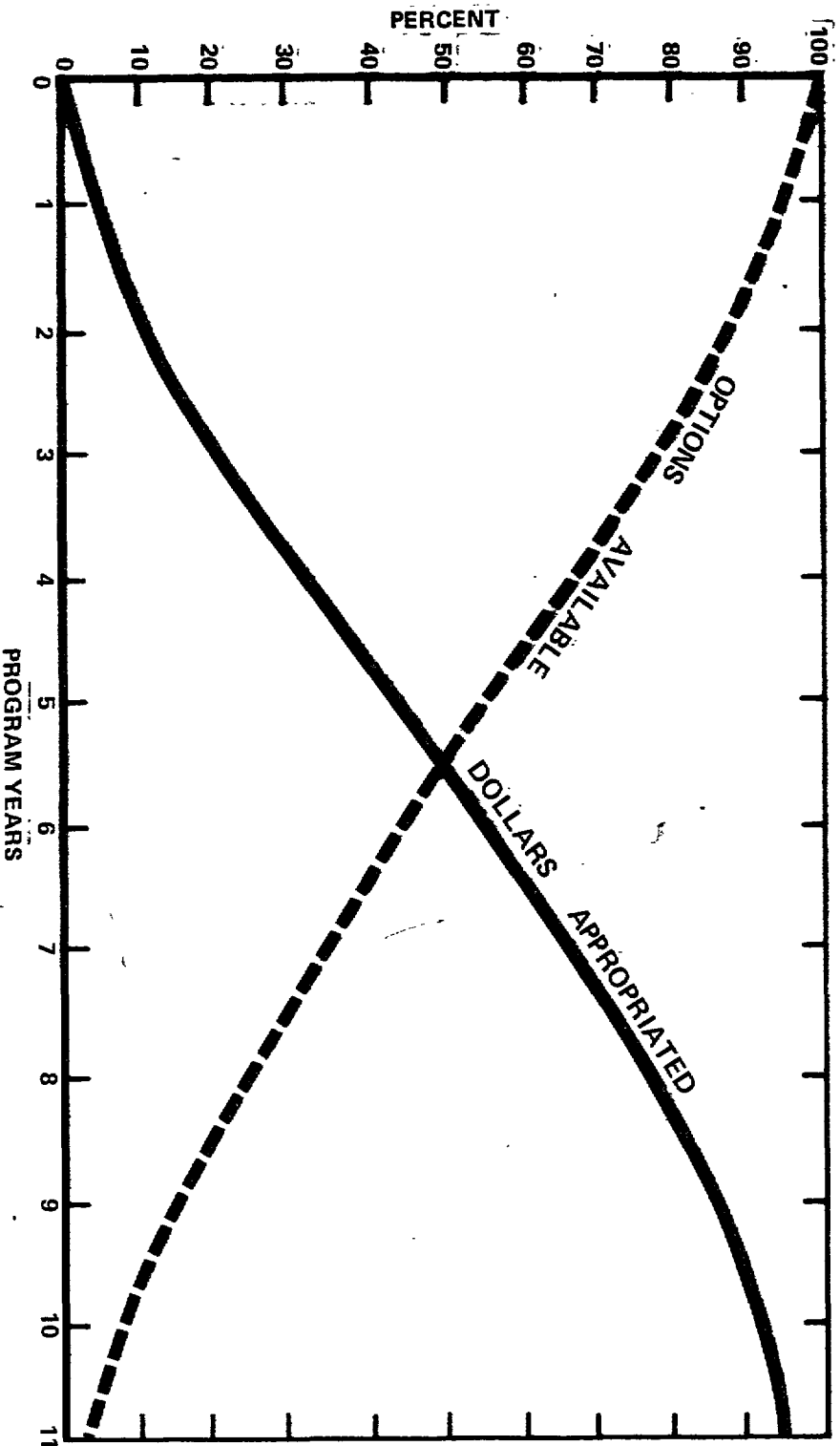
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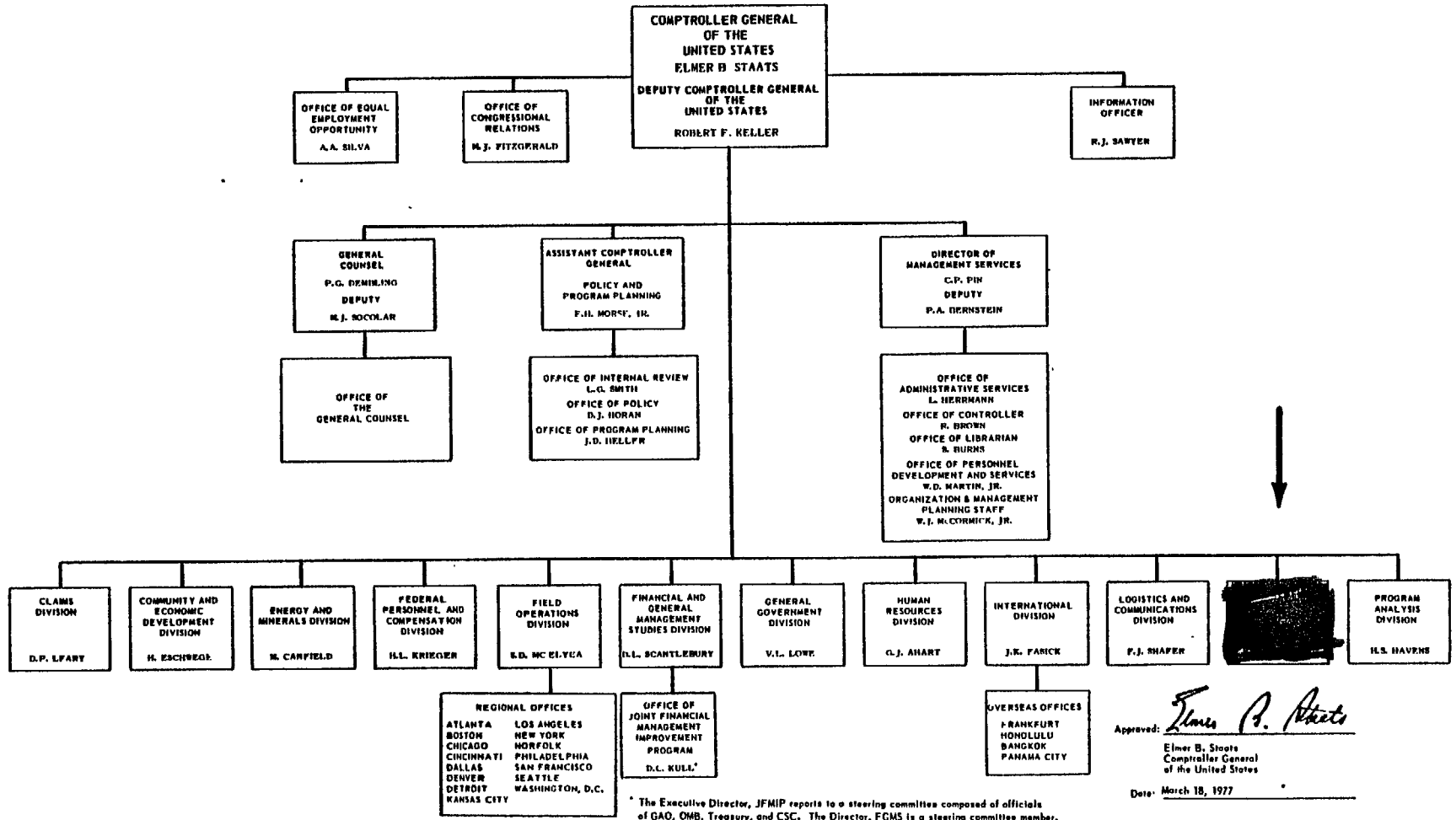
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# ACQUISITION CYCLE

CONCEPTUAL PHASE	VALIDATION PHASE	FULL-SCALE DEVELOPMENT	PRODUCTION
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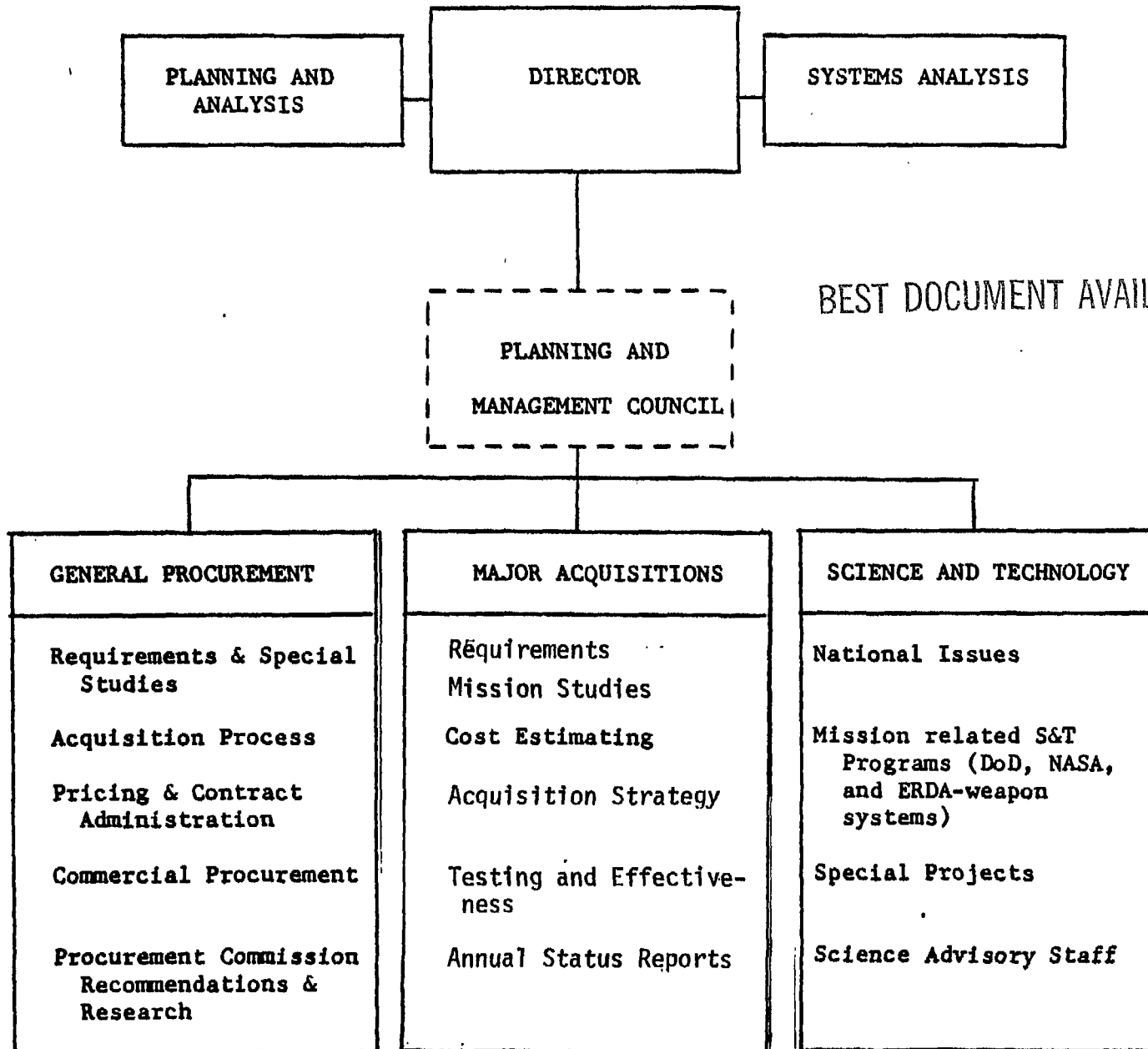
UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE



Approved: *Elmer B. Staats*  
 Elmer B. Staats  
 Comptroller General  
 of the United States  
 Date: March 18, 1977

\* The Executive Director, JFIP reports to a steering committee composed of officials of GAO, OMB, Treasury, and CSC. The Director, FGMS is a steering committee member.

PROCUREMENT AND SYSTEMS ACQUISITION DIVISION



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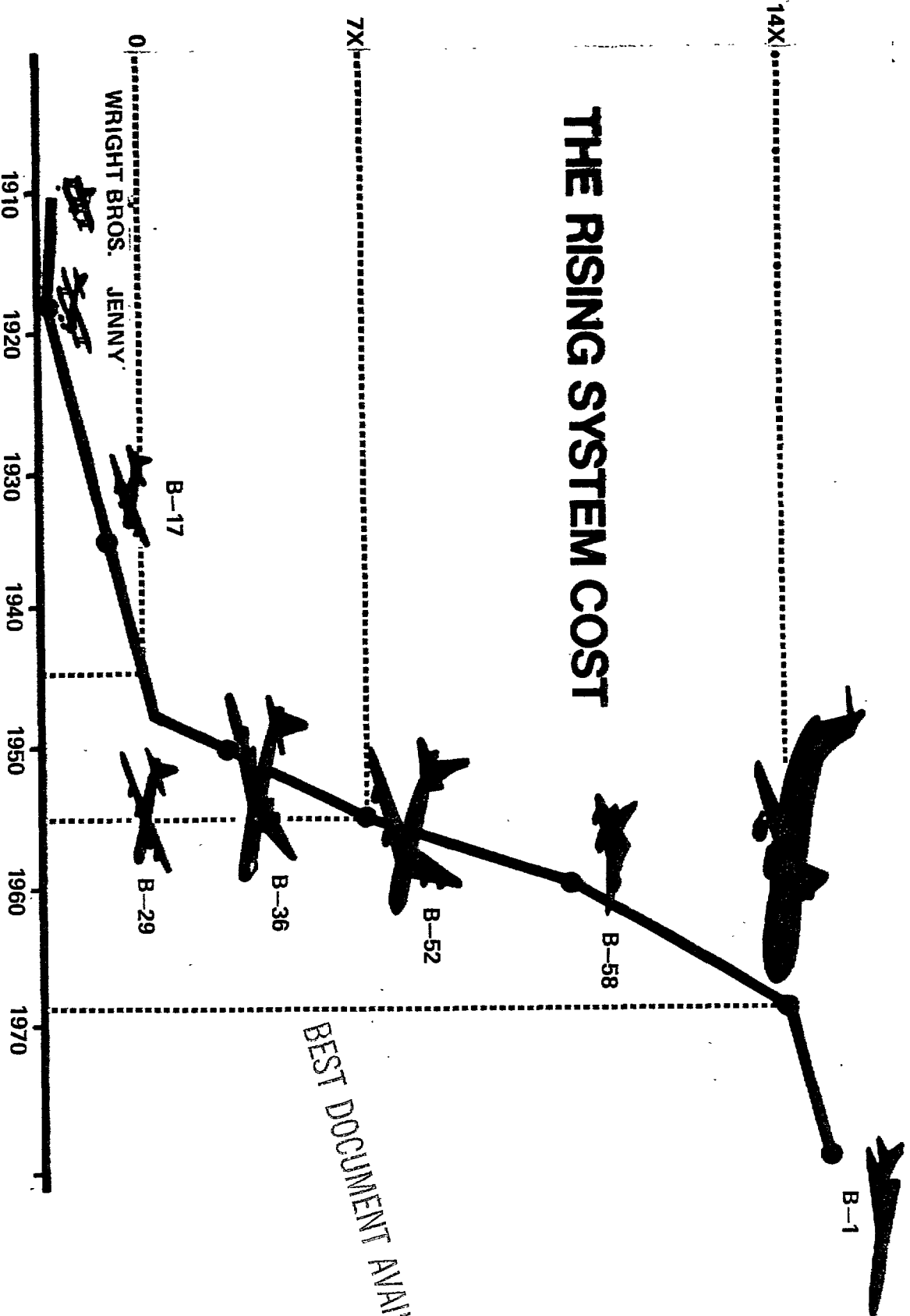
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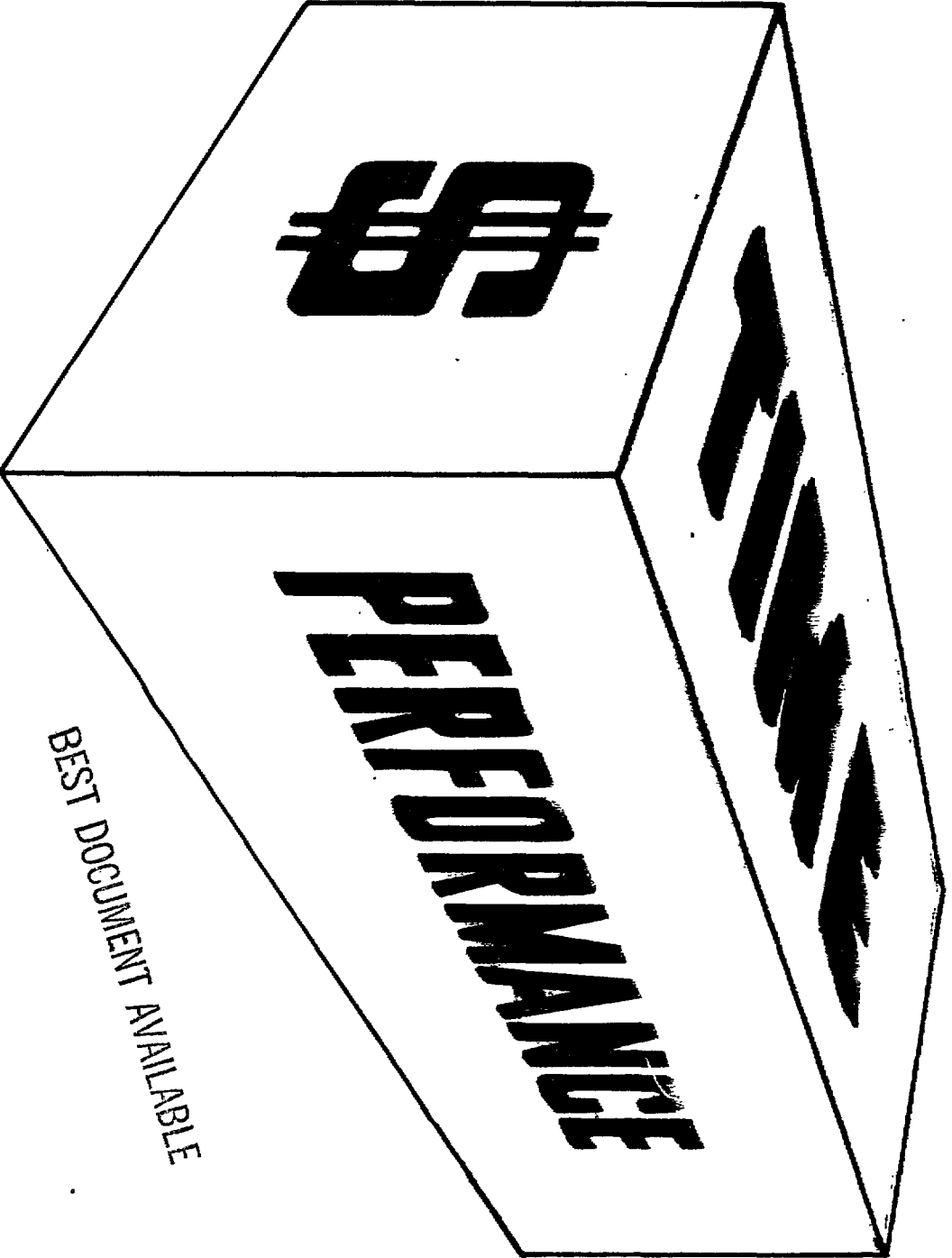
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# THE RISING SYSTEM COST



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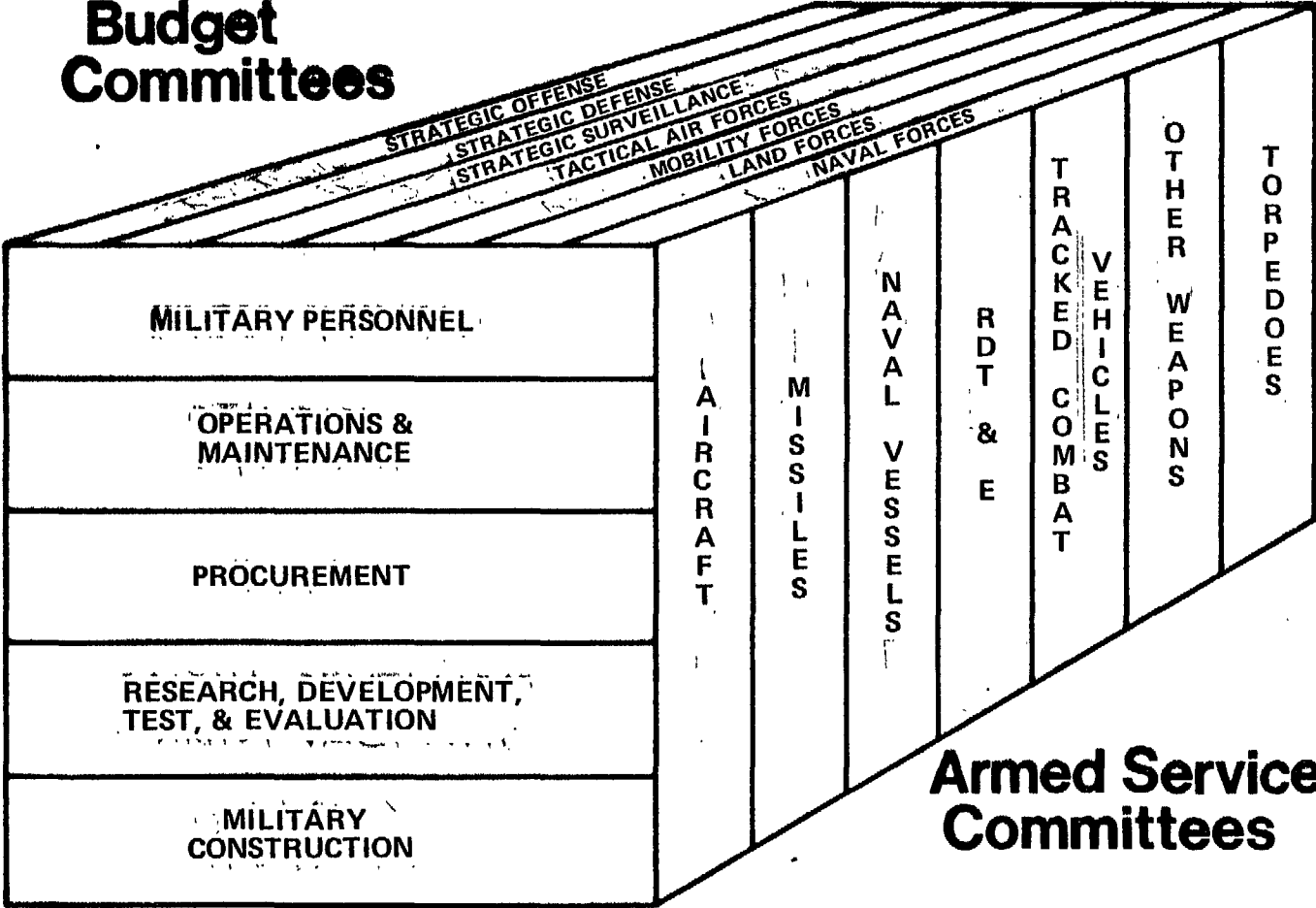


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# CONGRESS LOOKS AT DEFENSE

**Budget  
Committees**

**Appropriations  
Committees**



**Armed Services  
Committees**

# MISSION STUDIES

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## GAO does not:

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**Define missions.**

**Make Intelligence estimates.**

**Suggest military policy, strategy, or tactics.**

**Specify operations requirements for weapon systems.**

**Suggest appropriate spending levels.**

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## GAO does:

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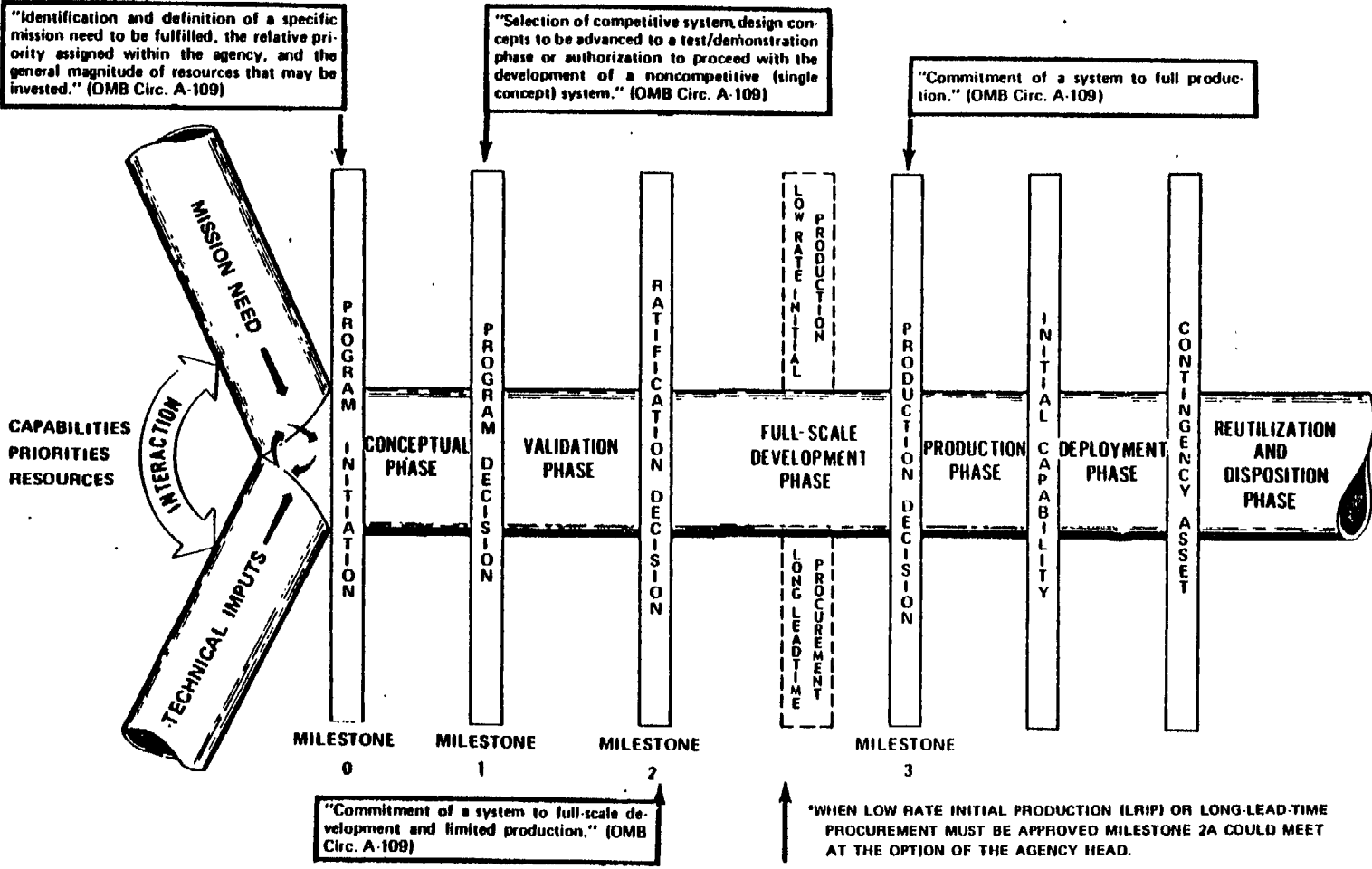
**State mission requirements as defined by OSD.**

**Describe the enemy threat using DOD intelligence data and available threat assessment.**

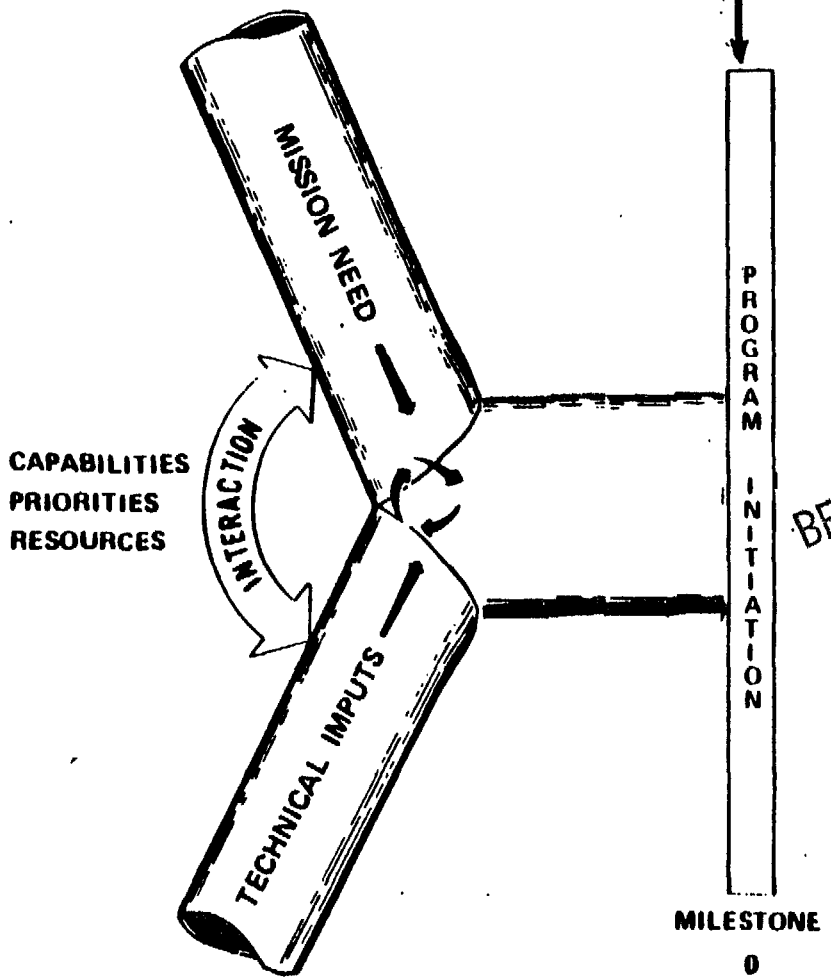
**Describe current inventory of weapon systems using available DOD performance data and costs.**

**Describe current and planned R&D programs, purposes, and projected costs.**

# THE LIFE CYCLE OF A MAJOR SYSTEM

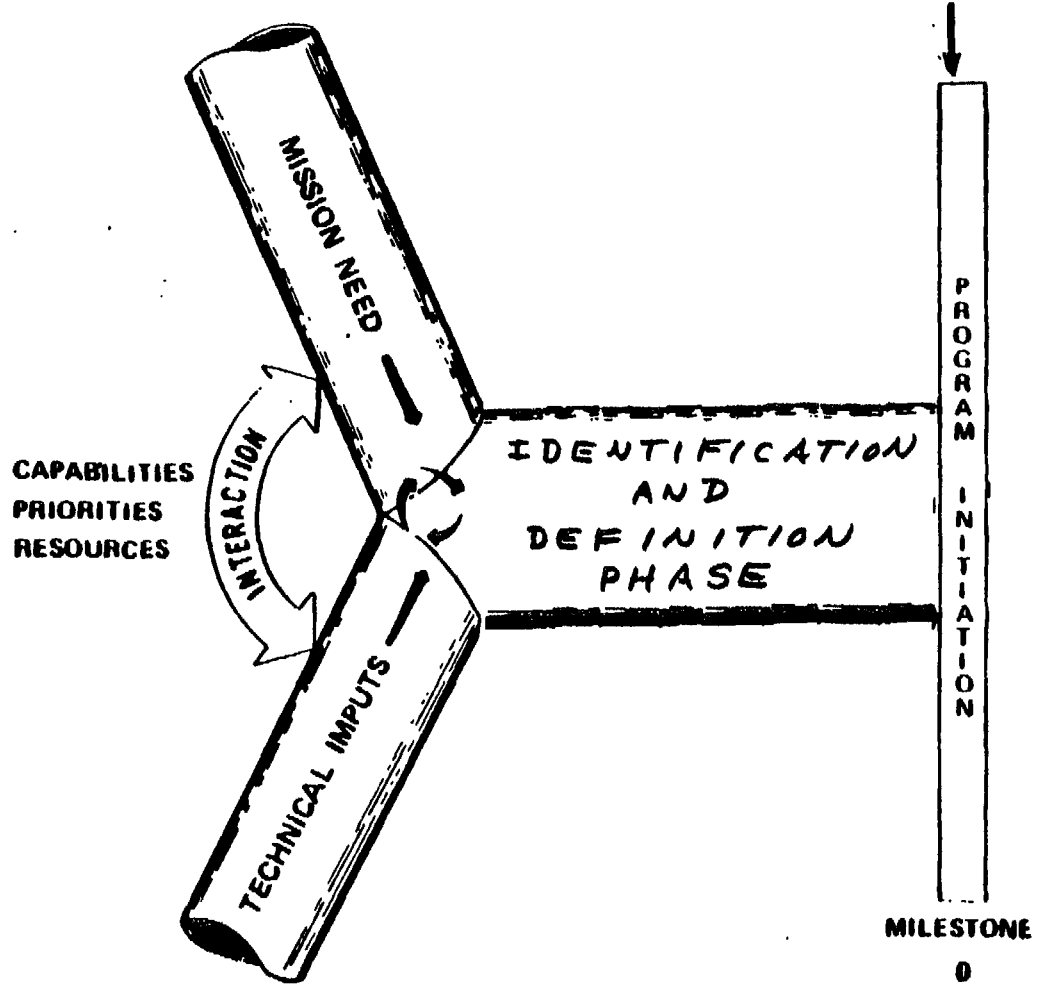


"Identification and definition of a specific mission need to be fulfilled, the relative priority assigned within the agency, and the general magnitude of resources that may be invested." (OMB Circ. A-109)



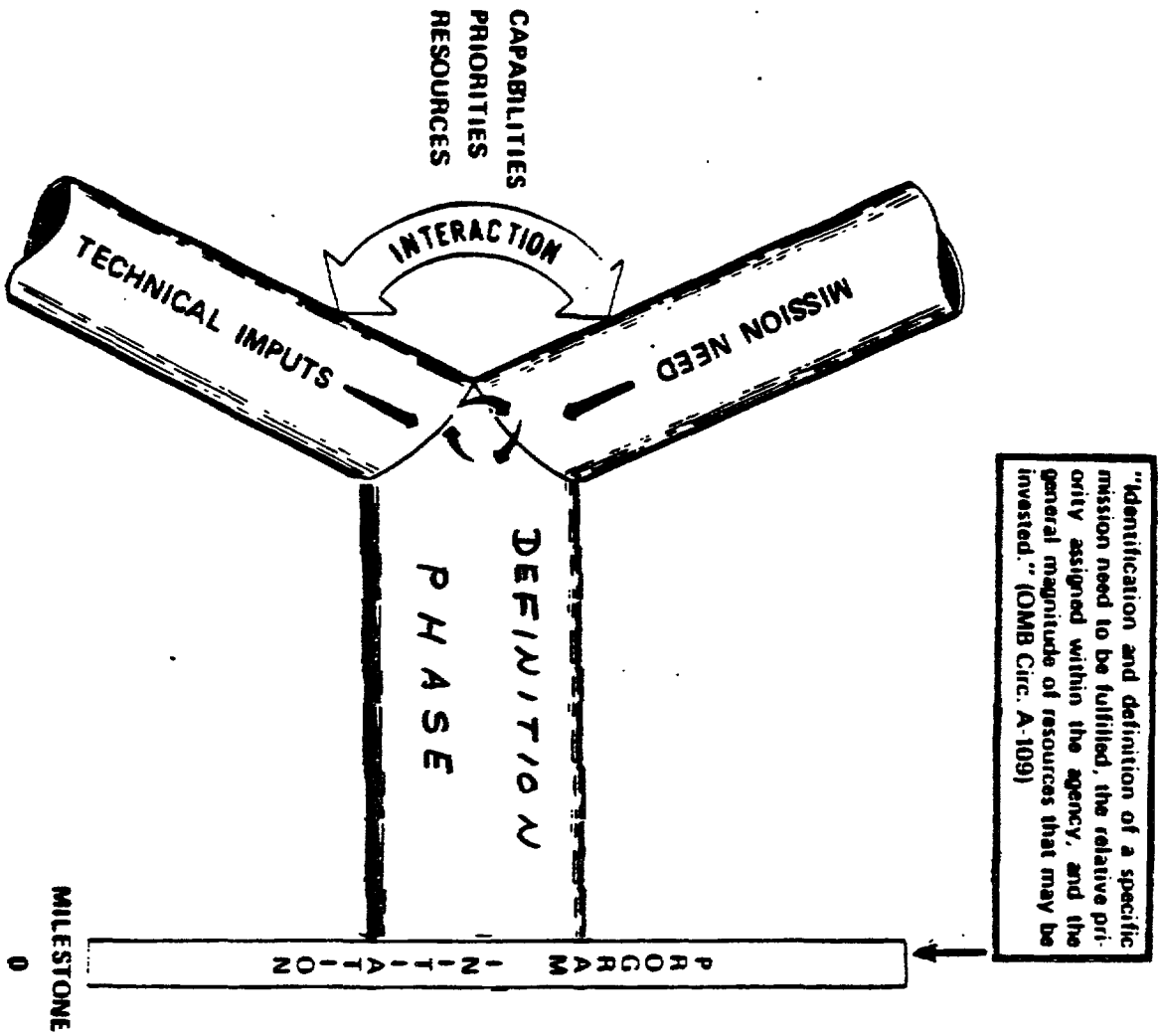
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INTELLIGENCE (CIA, DIA, ARMY, ETC.)

THREAT ASSESSMENT

WORST CASE ANALYSIS

MULTIPURPOSE SYSTEMS

1 1/2 WARS

ALLIANCES & AGREEMENTS

ROLES & MISSIONS

NUCLEAR VS. LIMITED WAR

NEEDS

DESIRES

OBSOLESCENCE & PRODUCT IMPROVEMENT

INCREMENTAL VS. FULL DEVELOPMENT

CONTRACTOR PROPOSAL

STATE-OF-THE-ART

COMMONALITY & STANDARDIZATION

FISCAL GUIDANCE

ADVOCACY

STRATEGIC VS. TACTICAL

RELIABILITY & MAINTAINABILITY

REQUIREMENTS  
PROCESS

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INTERACTION

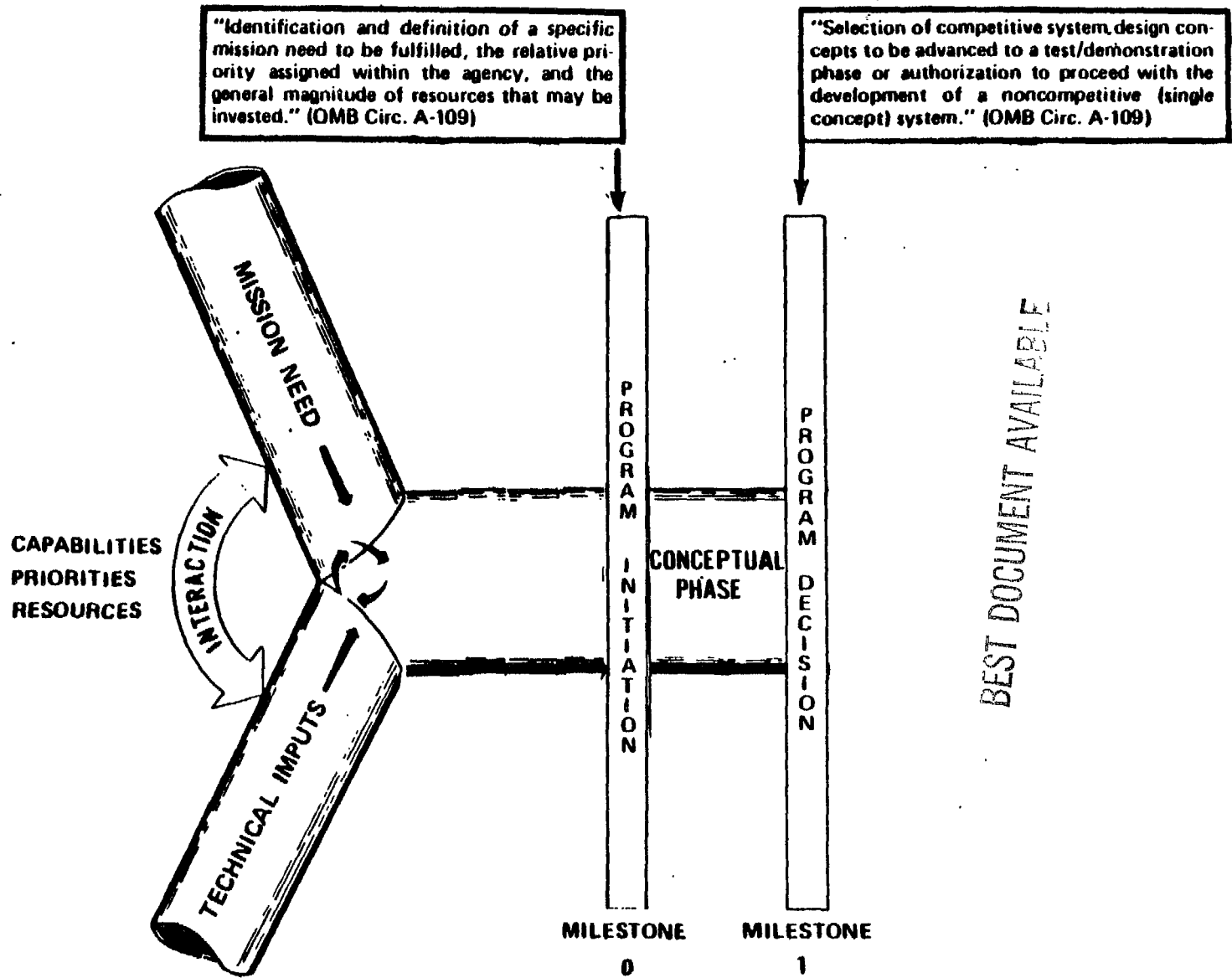
Trade-off  
studies

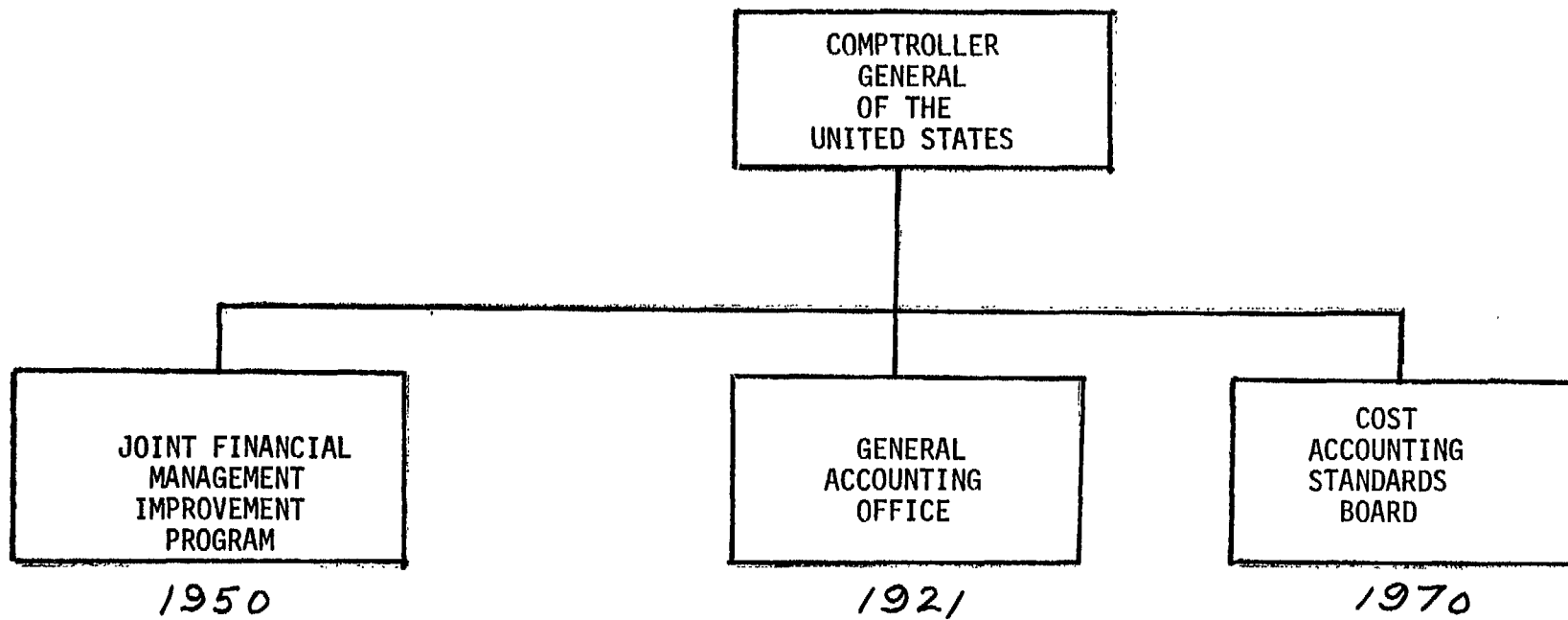
PROGRAM  
ALTERNATIVES  
(TECHNICAL INPUTS  
AND OUTPUTS)

OPERATIONAL NEED  
OBJECTIVES, GOALS

CONCEPTUAL  
PHASE

DOD  
EXAMPLE





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