


GAO
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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-03-451](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations, House Committee on Government Reform

Why GAO Did This Study

The services have billions of dollars worth of outdated and obsolete automatic test equipment (ATE) used to test components on military aircraft or weapon systems. Department of Defense (DOD) policy advocates the development and acquisition of test equipment that can be used on multiple types of weapon systems and aircraft and used interchangeably between the services.

At the request of the Subcommittee's Chairman, GAO examined the problems that the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps are facing with this aging equipment and their efforts to comply with DOD policy.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense reemphasize the policy and reconsider the organizational placement and authority of the Executive Agent for ATE.

DOD concurred with GAO's recommendations and agreed that its Executive Agent for ATE should be given the authority and resources to more effectively fulfill the Department's oversight responsibilities.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-451.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Neal Curtin at (757) 552-8100 or curtinn@gao.gov.

MILITARY READINESS

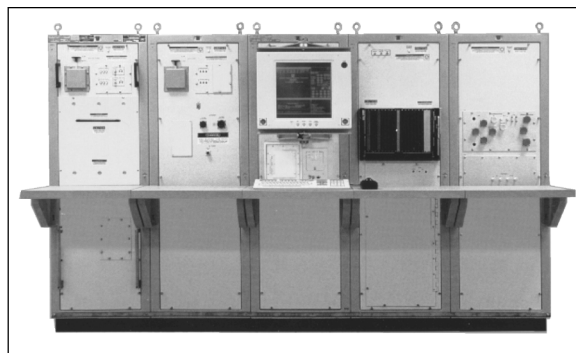
DOD Needs to Better Manage Automatic Test Equipment Modernization

What GAO Found

DOD and the services face growing concerns regarding obsolete automatic test equipment, given the high costs of modernizing or replacing it and its potential effect on aircraft readiness. The Navy and Air Force, for example, estimate that they will spend billions of dollars to modernize or replace this equipment, much of which was acquired in the 1970s and 1980s. In the meantime, the aging testers are becoming increasingly out of date and more difficult to support. When the testers do not work properly, maintenance can suffer and readiness can be adversely affected.

Since 1994, DOD policy has advocated the acquisition of test equipment that can be used on multiple weapon systems and aircraft and can be used interchangeably between the services; progress in this regard has been slow. For example, although the Navy set out in 1991 to replace 25 major tester types with one standard tester by 2000, budget cuts and delays in developing software have resulted in delays in completing the replacement of these obsolete testers until 2008. The Air Force has only recently initiated a test equipment modernization plan. However, little evidence suggests that consideration is being given to the acquisition of equipment that would have common utility for more than one weapon system as DOD policy advocates. For procurement of new weapon systems, the Air Force is giving little consideration to the use of a common tester, while a common tester is planned for use as the primary tester for the Joint Strike Fighter.

Although DOD tasked the Navy as its Executive Agent for automatic test equipment in 1994, the agent has made only limited progress in achieving compliance across all the services with DOD policy advocating the development of common systems. While the Executive Agent can point to some successes in individual systems, its officials acknowledged that the organization does not have sufficient authority or resources to fully implement the policy and achieve the maximum commonality possible.



Source: U.S. Navy.

The Navy's Consolidated Automated Support System will minimize unique types of testers.