



Highlights of [GAO-04-391](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Following a history of increasing cost estimates to complete F/A-22 development, Congress asked GAO to assess the Air Force's F/A-22 development program annually and determine whether the Air Force is meeting key performance, schedule, and cost goals. On April 23, 2003, a congressional subcommittee requested that the Department of Defense (DOD) provide more detailed information on the business case that supports the estimated quantities and costs for an affordable F/A-22 program. Specifically, GAO (1) identified changes in the F/A-22 program since its inception, (2) reviewed the status of the development activities, and (3) examined the sufficiency of business case information provided for congressional oversight.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD complete a new business case that determines the continued need for the F/A-22 and the number of aircraft required for its air-to-air and air-to-ground roles based on capabilities, need, alternatives, and constraints of future defense spending departmentwide. GAO also recommends that plans and costs for resolving problems identified during initial operational testing be provided to the defense committees prior to the department's full rate production decision. DOD partially concurred with both recommendations. GAO believes a business case and the plans and costs of corrective action should be reported to Congress.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-391.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Allen Li at (202) 512-4841 or lia@gao.gov.

TACTICAL AIRCRAFT

Changing Conditions Drive Need for New F/A-22 Business Case

What GAO Found

The Air Force is developing the F/A-22 aircraft to be less detectable to adversaries, capable of high speeds for long ranges, and able to provide a pilot with improved awareness of the surrounding situation through integrated avionics. In addition, the Air Force plans to expand the F/A-22's ability to engage targets on the ground to provide a robust capability not originally planned at the start of the program. The Air Force plans to begin initial operational test and evaluation in March 2004 and to seek full rate production approval in December 2004.

The F/A-22 program has experienced several significant changes since it began development in 1986. First, the Air Force cannot afford to purchase the quantities of aircraft that were planned 18 years ago. The Air Force had originally planned to buy 750 aircraft, but it now estimates it can only afford 218 aircraft. Second, in order to develop the expanded air-to-ground attack capability, the Office of Secretary of Defense estimates that the Air Force will need \$11.7 billion in modernization funding. Lastly, the Air Force has determined that new avionics computer processors and architecture are needed to support most planned enhancements, which will further increase program costs and risk.

Further, the development test program continues to experience problems and risks further delays. The F/A-22's avionics continue to experience shutdowns and failures. Moreover, the F/A-22 has not met its reliability requirements and has experienced failures in its computerized maintenance support system. This has led to aircraft spending more time on the ground undergoing maintenance.

Due to the risks of future cost increases and schedule delays, a congressional subcommittee requested that DOD provide business case information on the F/A-22. However, the information DOD provided did not address why this aircraft is needed given current and projected threats. The business case also did not address how many aircraft the Air Force needs to accomplish its missions, how many the Air Force can afford considering the full life-cycle costs, whether investments in new air-to-ground capabilities are needed, and what are the opportunity costs associated with purchasing any proposed quantities of this aircraft. While the response stated that the Air Force still plans to buy 277 F/A-22 aircraft, the Air Force estimates that only 218 aircraft are affordable within congressionally imposed funding limitations. In addition, significant investment decisions remain and could affect another \$40 billion to support this program through full rate production and implementation of the spiraled improvement efforts.

In light of the uncertainty concerning how many aircraft are needed in today's environment, the large investments that remain, and unknown outcomes of planned operational testing, GAO continues to have concerns regarding the DOD's readiness to make a full rate production decision.