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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-04-597T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Defense's (DOD) two major tactical aircraft fighter programs, the F/A-22 and the Joint Strike Fighter, represent an investment of about \$280 billion. Problems in the F/A-22 development program have led to a 10-year delay in delivering the initial capability and development cost increases of \$16 billion. The Joint Strike Fighter, which experienced problems early in the program, is now at a critical crossroad in development. Any discussion of DOD's sizeable investment that remains in these programs must also be viewed within the context of the fiscal imbalance facing the nation within the next 10 years.

GAO was asked to testify on the status of the F/A-22 and draw comparisons between both F/A-22 and Joint Strike Fighter programs' acquisition approaches.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making recommendations. In a recently issued report on the F/A-22 ([GAO-04-391](#)), GAO recommended that DOD complete a new business case for the F/A-22 to justify its need and the quantities necessary and affordable to carry out its mission. GAO also recommended that DOD provide plans and costs for resolving problems identified during initial operational testing to the defense committees before the DOD's full rate production decision. DOD partially concurred with both recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-597T.

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

Status of the F/A-22 and Joint Strike Fighter Programs

What GAO Found

The F/A-22 program has experienced several significant challenges since it began development in 1986. First, the Air Force had originally planned to buy 750 aircraft, but it now estimates it can only afford about 218 aircraft. Second, in order to develop an expanded air-to-ground attack capability, DOD estimates that the Air Force will need \$11.7 billion in modernization funding. Third, 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. Lastly, the development test program continues to experience problems and risks further delays primarily due to avionics failures and problems meeting reliability requirements.

Because of 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 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.

The Joint Strike Fighter program started system development and demonstration in 2001 and has already encountered some cost and schedule problems. It is now working toward maturing the aircraft design and is considering delays in its critical design reviews to attain greater knowledge before making a decision to increase its investment significantly. In contrast, the F/A-22 program encountered poor cost and schedule outcomes because it had not gathered the appropriate knowledge at critical junctures in the program. The Joint Strike Fighter program is still early in its development program, with a greater opportunity to efficiently apply knowledge to its critical investment decisions.

Joint Strike Fighter and F/A-22 Aircraft



Source: JSF and F/A-22 System Program Offices.