DOD BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

Preliminary Observations on Defense Travel System

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Defense (DOD) has been working to develop and implement a standard end-to-end travel system for the last 10 years. The Subcommittee has been at the forefront in addressing issues related to DOD's travel management practices with the hearing today being another example of its oversight efforts. Because of widespread congressional interest in the Defense Travel System (DTS), GAO's current audit is being performed under the statutory authority given to the Comptroller General of the United States. GAO's testimony is based on the preliminary results of that audit and focuses on the following three key questions: (1) Has DOD effectively tested key functionality in DTS related to flights and fare information? (2) Will DTS correct the problems related to DOD travel previously identified by GAO and others? and (3) What challenges remain in ensuring that DTS achieves its goal as DOD's standard travel system?

In addition, the Subcommittee asked that GAO provide a description of the intellectual property rights of DOD in DTS. This issue is addressed in appendix. I.

Subsequent to this testimony, GAO plans to issue a report that will include recommendations to the Secretary of Defense aimed at improving the department's implementation of DTS.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-998T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact McCoy Williams at (202) 512-6906 or Keith Rhodes at (202) 512-6412.
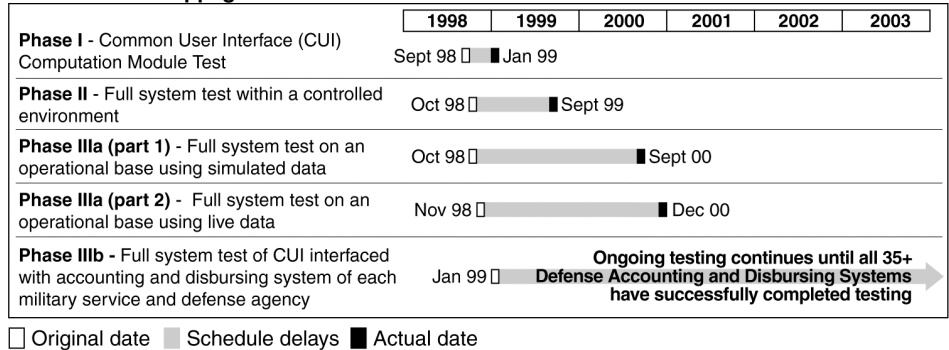
What GAO Found

DTS development and implementation have been problematic, especially in the area of testing key functionality to ensure that the system will perform as intended. Consequently, critical flaws have been identified after deployment, resulting in significant schedule slippages as shown below.

DTS Schedule Slippages

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Phase I - Common User Interface (CUI) Computation Module Test	Sept 98 ☐ ■ Jan 99					
Phase II - Full system test within a controlled environment	Oct 98 ☐ ■ Sept 99					
Phase IIIa (part 1) - Full system test on an operational base using simulated data	Oct 98 ☐ ■ Sept 00					
Phase IIIa (part 2) - Full system test on an operational base using live data	Nov 98 ☐ ■ Dec 00					
Phase IIIb - Full system test of CUI interfaced with accounting and disbursing system of each military service and defense agency	Jan 99 ☐ **Ongoing testing continues until all 35+ Defense Accounting and Disbursing Systems have successfully completed testing** →					

☐ Original date   ▨ Schedule delays   ■ Actual date

Source: GAO.

GAO's recent analysis of selected requirements disclosed that system testing was ineffective in ensuring that the promised capability has been delivered as intended. For example, GAO found that DOD did not have reasonable assurance that DTS properly display flight and airfare information. This problem was not detected prior to deployment, since DOD failed to properly test system interfaces. Accordingly, DOD travelers might not have received accurate information which, could have resulted in higher travel costs.

DTS has corrected some of the previously reported travel problems but others remain. Specifically, DTS has resolved the problem related to duplicate payment for airline tickets purchased with the centrally billed accounts. However, problems remain related to improper premium class travel, unused tickets that are not refunded, and accuracy of traveler's claims. These remaining problems cannot be resolved solely within DTS and will take departmentwide action to address.

GAO identified two key challenges facing DTS in becoming DOD's standard travel system: (1) developing needed interfaces and (2) underutilization of DTS at sites where it has been deployed. While DTS has developed 32 interfaces with various DOD business systems, it will have to develop interfaces with at least 17 additional systems—not a trivial task. Furthermore, the continued use of the existing legacy travel systems results in underutilization of DTS and affects the savings that DTS was planned to achieve. Components incur additional costs by operating two systems with the same function—the legacy system and DTS—and by paying higher processing fees for manual travel vouchers as opposed to processing the travel vouchers electronically through DTS.

United States Government Accountability Office