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DEFENSE ACQUISITIONS

Greater Synergies Possible for DOD's Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Systems

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Highlights

Highlights of GAO-07-578, a report to the Subcommittee on Air and Land Forces, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Defense (DOD) is experiencing a growing demand for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets to provide vital information in support of military operations. Over the next 7 years, DOD plans to invest over $28 billion in existing and new airborne ISR acquisition systems. This represents a marked increase over prior ISR investments.

Given the significant investments, GAO was asked to (1) evaluate various ISR platforms for potential synergies and assess their cost and schedule status and the impact of any increases or delays on legacy systems and (2) assess the effectiveness of ISR investment decisions. To assess cost and schedule status, we reviewed programmatic and budget documentation. To evaluate investment decisions, we collected data on system capability, mission, and concept of operation and analyzed them for similarities.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that DOD (1) develop and implement an integrated enterprise-level investment strategy approach that draws on the results of ongoing studies and (2) report to the defense committees by August 1, 2007, the results of the ISR studies and identify specific plans and actions it intends to get greater jointness in ISR programs. DOD generally believes current initiatives will address our recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-578.

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

What GAO Found

DOD plans to invest over $28 billion over the next 7 years to develop, procure, and modernize 20 major airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems. Nearly all of the systems in development have experienced cost growth or schedule delays. These problems have delayed the fielding of a warfighting capability and have resulted in program restructuring, cancellation, or unplanned investments in older legacy ISR systems. For example, problems in developing the Aerial Common Sensor affected three legacy programs, increasing their collective budgets by 185 percent, or nearly $900 million. In many cases, GAO found that the newer ISR programs lacked a solid business case or a knowledge-based acquisition strategy before entering the development process. A good business case requires the manager to match the system requirements with mature technologies and a system design that can be built. This requires sufficient knowledge about the system gained through basic system engineering concepts and practices.

Although it fights jointly, DOD does not always procure new systems jointly. Instead, each service typically develops and procures systems independently. Opportunities exist for different services to collaborate on the development of similar weapon systems as a means for creating a more efficient and affordable way of providing new capabilities to the warfighter. GAO identified development programs where program managers and services are working together to gain these efficiencies and other programs that have less collaborative efforts and could lead to more costly stovepiped solutions. For example, the Navy and Army have collaborated successfully on the Fire Scout, but in contrast, the Air Force and Army have not been as collaborative on the Predator and Warrior systems, as they each currently plan unique solutions to their similar needs.

Developmental ISR Systems and Capabilities Planned

Platforms	Electro-optical/ Infrared Imagery	Radar imagery	Video	Commu-nications signals	Elec-tronic signals	Unmanned (○); piloted, onboard operator (●)
Aerial Common Sensor (ACS)	✓	✓		✓	✓	●
Fire Scout (Army)	✓	✓		✓	✓	○
Warrior	✓	✓	✓	✓		○
E-10A		✓				●
Global Hawk	✓	✓		✓	✓	○
Reaper	✓	✓	✓			○
Space Radar		✓				○
Broad Area Maritime Surveillance	✓	✓		✓	✓	○
Fire Scout (Navy)	✓					○
Multi-mission Maritime Aircraft		✓				●
EPX (formerly Navy ACS)	✓	✓		✓	✓	●

Source: GAO analysis of DOD data.