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# Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-03-1012T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) is a cooperative program between the Department of Defense (DOD) and U.S. allies for developing and producing next generation fighter aircraft to replace aging inventories. As currently planned, the JSF program is DOD's most expensive aircraft program to date, costing an estimated \$200 billion to procure about 2,600 aircraft and related support equipment. Many in DOD consider JSF to be a model for future cooperative programs.

To determine the implications of the JSF international program structure, GAO identified JSF program relationships and expected benefits, and assessed how DOD is managing challenges associated with partner expectations, technology transfer, and recent technical concerns.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making recommendations in this testimony. In a report issued concurrently ([GAO-03-775](#)), GAO is recommending that the Secretary of Defense direct the JSF program office to ensure that international supplier planning anticipates and mitigates risks associated with technology transfer and that information concerning the selection and management of suppliers is available, closely monitored, and used to improve program outcomes. In comments on that report, DOD concurred with the recommendations.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-1012T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-1012T).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Katherine V. Schinasi at (202) 512-4841 or [schinasi@gao.gov](mailto:schinasi@gao.gov).

## JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER ACQUISITION

### Managing Competing Pressures Is Critical to Achieving Program Goals

#### What GAO Found

The JSF program is based on a complex set of relationships among governments and industries from the United States and eight partner countries. The program is expected to benefit the United States by reducing its share of program costs, giving it access to foreign industrial capabilities, and improving interoperability with allied militaries. Partner governments expect to benefit financially and technologically through relationships with U.S. aerospace companies and access to JSF program data.

Yet international participation also presents a number of challenges. Because of their contributions to the program, partners have significant expectations for financial returns, technology transfer, and information sharing. If these expectations are not met, their support for the program could deteriorate. To realize these financial returns, partners expect their industry to win JSF contracts through competition—a departure from cooperative programs, which directly link contract awards to financial contributions. However, recent actions by the prime contractor could indicate a departure from this competitive approach and a return to directed work share. Technology transfer also presents challenges. Transfers of sensitive U.S. military technologies—which are needed to achieve aircraft commonality and interoperability goals—will push the boundaries of U.S. disclosure policy. In addition, a large number of export authorizations are needed to share project information and execute contracts. These authorizations must be submitted and resolved in a timely manner to maintain program schedules and ensure partner industry has the opportunity to compete for subcontracts. Finally, recent technical challenges threaten program costs and possibly partner participation in the program. While partners can choose to share any future program cost increases, they are not required to do so. Therefore, the burden of any future increases may fall almost entirely on the United States. If efforts to meet any of these partner expectations come into conflict with program cost, schedule, and performance goals, the program office will have to make decisions that balance these potentially competing interests within the JSF program.

Joint Strike Fighter



Source: JSF Program Office.