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BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL

Report To The Congress

OF THE UNITED STATES

9354

Need For More Accurate Weapon System Test Results To Be Reported To The Congress

*Unsubstantiated
Secret.*



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Report

PSAD-79-46

9 MAR 1979

of a Secret Document
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ASIS Skates
COMP TROLLER GENERAL'S
REPORT TO THE CONGRESS
Addressee

NEED FOR MORE ACCURATE WEAPON
SYSTEM TEST RESULTS TO BE
REPORTED TO THE CONGRESS

D I G E S T

Operational testing is important in predicting how well new weapon systems will work and can be invaluable in identifying ineffective or unreliable systems before they are produced. However, test results have not been accurately reported to the Congress in the past and, consequently, the Congress has not received the information it needs in considering procurement decisions. In the past, some weapon systems entered production prematurely, cost overruns were incurred, and the attainment of required operating capabilities was delayed or degraded. (See pp. 1 to 3.)

To overcome the problem of not receiving accurate information it needs in making weapon system procurement decisions, the Congress enacted legislation requiring the Department of Defense (DOD) to submit annual reports to the Congress (Congressional Data Sheets). Among other things, these documents are to include results of operational tests and evaluations on major systems for which procurement funds are requested. (See pp. 2 and 3.)

GAO found, from discussions with staff members of authorization and appropriation committees, that Congressional Data Sheets are important and useful to them. (See p. 3.)

GAO also found that the results of the tests and evaluations of 10 Navy and 5 Air Force weapon systems contained in the Data Sheets reviewed were incomplete, misleading, and/or outdated. For example:

--The January 1978 Data Sheet on the F-16 aircraft failed to mention five major deficiencies found during operational testing that

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must be corrected if the system is to achieve its full combat capability. (See p. 8.)

- The fiscal year 1978 Data Sheet on the Navy's PHALANX gun system incorrectly reported that during operational testing the system was able to engage multiple-missile targets in an electronic countermeasures environment. (See p. 12.)
- The January 1978 Data Sheet on the F-14A/PHOENIX weapon system failed to include operational test results that show the system's effectiveness is marginal at best against the current and postulated threat. (See pp. 6 to 8.)

The three Army systems GAO selected for review had deficiencies identified during recent operational testing. However, those test results were satisfactorily reported on the Data Sheets. GAO found that the military services' three operational test agencies are producing the type of information concerning weapon system effectiveness and suitability that is essential to the Congress. However, test results generated on Navy and Air Force systems are not being accurately summarized and reported in the Congressional Data Sheets. (See pp. 5, 9, and 19.)

GAO believes that several factors have contributed to the inaccurate reporting of test results to the Congress. One factor is that the portion of Congressional Data Sheets prepared by the independent test agencies is often revised, after the test agencies submit their reports to higher levels, by reviewers who sometimes omit, change, or report out of context the test agencies' conclusions and recommendations. (See pp. 5 and 14.)

Another factor is that Congressional Data Sheets are prepared and provided to the Congress once a year and have not been updated when new test results became available between reporting periods. Consequently, critical

assessments of system capabilities may not be reported for a year or more after they become available to DOD. (See pp. 5 and 15.)

Further, DOD has not provided sufficient instructions regarding the specific type of information required in Congressional Data Sheets. Also, the Office of the Secretary of Defense has not exercised sufficient control to insure that available test results are adequately reported. (See pp. 5, 14, and 15.)

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that the Secretary of Defense, improve the quality and timeliness of operational test results reported in Congressional Data Sheets. Such action would include: (1) more thorough review of Congressional Data Sheets by the Office of the Director of Test and Evaluation before submission to the Congress, (2) more definitive guidelines concerning the kind of test information that is required in Congressional Data Sheets, and (3) continual evaluation and identification of new test results that become available after initial Congressional Data Sheets submissions to determine if updated information should be reported to the Congress. (See p. 18.)

AGENCY COMMENTS

DOD agreed with the main thrust of GAO's draft report that the Congress needs accurate and timely test information on weapon systems. However, DOD did not agree with GAO's recommended ways to improve the quality and timeliness of operational test results reported in Congressional Data Sheets. (See pp. 16, 17, and app. I.)