DECISION   **THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL**
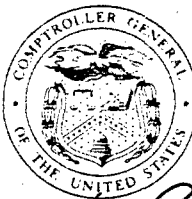**OF THE UNITED STATES**
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

[Protest Against Rejection of Proposal as (Unacceptable)]

FILE: B-197000   DATE: August 8, 1980

MATTER OF: Interscience Systems, Inc.

DIGEST:

1. Protest that agency should have sought
    plug-to-plug compatible disk memory in
    lieu of specified software is denied
    where agency position is not shown to
    be unreasonable.

2. Proposal which does not satisfy agency's legi-
    timate need for specified software require-
    ment is properly rejected as unacceptable.

Interscience Systems, Inc. protests the software
requirements associated with Request for Proposals
(RFP) DAAH03-80-R-0036 and the rejection of its pro-
posal as unacceptable under those requirements. The
solicitation was issued by the U.S. Army Missile
Command (Army) for a UNIVAC Model 8433 disk system,
or equal. The protest concerns the Army's software
requirements (so-called "diagnostic routines") to be
used to test the disk system in various specified
operating modes.

Interscience views the Army's requirements for
diagnostic routines as unduly restrictive of compe-
tition and believes the Army should have met its
needs by simply soliciting for plug-to-plug compatible
disk memory of proven reliability and accepting each
vendor's commercial diagnostic software. Interscience
also argues that its proposal was improperly evalu-
ated. We find the protest to be without legal merit.

The Army reports that the equipment being pur-
chased will be used to verify a prime contractor's
data on a missile system, where the prime is updating

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its computer to a UNIVAC 1100/81 configuration, and
explains the need for the specified software as fol-
lows:

> "Diagnostics are software and, because of
> this user's unique function, are indirectly
> an integral part of the hardware involved
> in this solicitation. If a prime contractor
> could blame any discrepancy between his data
> and that of the Government on a difference
> in function between his equipment and that
> of the Government, an extensive and very
> expensive re-verification and revalidation
> of the prime contractor's data would have
> to be performed by the Government. * * * If
> such discrepancies were frequent, verifica-
> tion and validation would very shortly become
> prohibited by cost, and the Government would
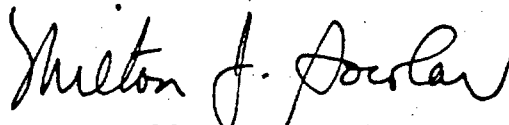> no longer be assured of a reliable and effec-
> tive weapons system."

Consequently, the Army believes it must have diagnostic
software that will operate in three specified modes--
on-line, in-line, and off-line.

We find no basis for taking exception to the Army's
position. It is clear that the Army views diagnostic capa-
bility in the three operating modes specified as necessary
to permit it to detect, correct, or avoid a malfunctioning
component. While the protester believes the Army can obtain
the requisite reliability without in-line diagnostic soft-
ware, it has not shown the Army's position is unreasonable.

The Army viewed the Interscience proposal as unaccept-
able for a variety of reasons. While we have reservations
with respect to some of those reasons, we think it is
clear that with respect to "in-line diagnostic" the pro-
posal was unacceptable. The Army's requirements in this
connection were stated in the RFP and explained during
competitive range discussions. Based on Interscience's
manuals and answers provided during discussions, the Army

concluded that the protester could not meet the diagnostic
requirement because the test button on the Interscience
system control unit disables the Interscience disk system
for the duration of the test and because its diagnostic
procedures did not provide for a complete test of the
entire system during normal operation. Since this was
inconsistent with what the Army was seeking--a test which
could be initiated from the disk drive control unit and
which was comprised of software routines which would be
performed without interrupting normal operation--the
rejection of Interscience's proposal was not improper.

The protest is denied.

For The Comptroller General
         of the United States