ARMY WEAPON SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Need to Address Workforce Shortfalls to Make Necessary Improvements

Why GAO Did This Study

Over the past decade, the Army spent over $20 billion annually to develop and acquire weapon systems, yet it canceled many of them due, in part, to the realization that requirements would not be met. In 2011, the Secretary of the Army commissioned a report (called the Decker-Wagner report) to identify why the Army has experienced a poor acquisition track record. One contributing factor identified in the report was poorly developed requirements.

GAO was asked to review the Army's process for developing weapon system requirements. This report (1) identifies what actions the Army has taken to improve its requirements development process since 2011; (2) evaluates the extent to which the Army ensures that requirements are well-informed and feasible: and (3) provides information on the current status of nine major defense programs. GAO reviewed the Decker-Wagner report and actions taken; reviewed Army requirements policy documentation and interviewed officials; assessed the composition of the requirements development workforce; and analyzed a non-generalizable sample of nine case studies of major defense acquisition programs, selected based on their acquisition phase.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of the Army conduct an assessment of the requirements development workforce needed to support the requirements process. The Army concurred with this recommendation.

View GAO-17-568. For more information, contact Marie A. Mak at (202) 512-4841 or makm@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

Since 2011, the Army has taken a number of actions to improve its requirements development process for major defense acquisition programs. For example, the Army has established teams of research analysts at its Centers of Excellence—where requirements are generated—to provide greater analytical support. Further, it has instituted knowledge reviews to provide Army leadership the opportunity to make informed decisions early in a major defense acquisition program. Additionally, the Army Chief of Staff, as a result of this review conducted pursuant to section 801 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016, has elevated and modified the role and composition of the Army Requirements Oversight Council. However, the Army is still determining the methodologies and metrics to assess the council's performance and its effectiveness.

Even with these actions, GAO found that the Army is unable to ensure requirements for major defense acquisition programs are well-informed and feasible, as its requirements development workforce is declining. The requirements development workforce has decreased by 22 percent since 2008, with some requirements development centers reporting more significant reductions. The current status of the requirements development workforce is driven in part by the Army's prioritization of readiness amid funding constraints. Federal standards for internal controls state that management should establish the organizational structure necessary to achieve its objectives and periodically evaluate this structure. Until the Army comprehensively assesses the needs of its requirements development workforce—to include research analysts, systems engineers, and others—it will continue to lack the necessary foundation for viable major acquisition programs.

Army Requirements Development Workforce
Number of personnel
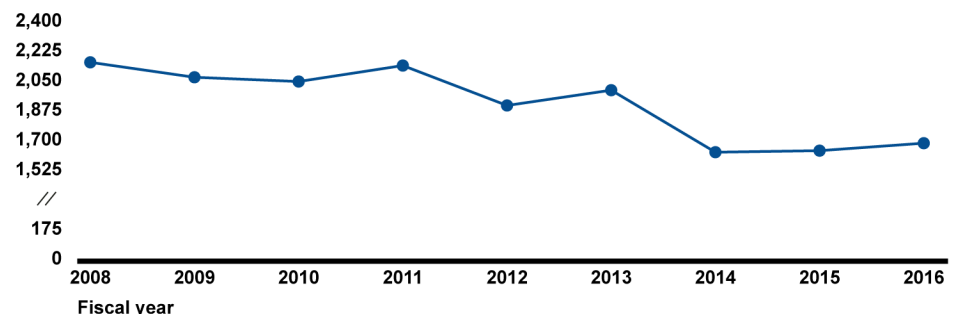
Source: GAO analysis of TRADOC data. | GAO-17-568

GAO's analysis of nine Army weapon acquisition programs illustrates that the un-executable requirements and negative program outcomes, which a 2011 Army commissioned report described, continue to exist. GAO's best practices work identifies the factor that separates successful from unsuccessful programs as the presence of requirements informed by early, robust systems engineering analyses. Of the nine programs GAO reviewed those that lacked such analyses generally faced developmental challenges.

_____ **United States Government Accountability Office**