

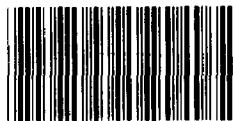


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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES  
WASHINGTON D.C. 20548

B-220908

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To the President of the Senate and the  
Speaker of the House of Representatives

This letter responds to the requirement of the Defense Procurement Reform Act of 1984, Section 1252(a), for the Comptroller General to evaluate and report on the Secretary of Defense's plan to improve the Department of Defense's system for the management of technical data. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Logistics transmitted the Data Management Improvement Plan to the General Accounting Office on November 13, 1985. The plan summarizes improvements and associated milestones that Defense officials deemed appropriate to include in the plan to satisfy the requirements of Section 1252(a).

Section 1252(a) directed that the plan, at a minimum, shall address procedures for (1) indexing, storing, and updating items of technical data in a system; (2) developing, to the maximum extent practicable, a central index and locator system for technical data; and (3) assuring that entitled parties have timely access to complete and accurate technical data. The plan addressed these three areas and, therefore, met the minimum requirements of Section 1252(a). However, on the basis of our evaluation, we believe the plan does not adequately describe the scope and direction of the Department's current technical data improvement initiatives. Without this information it will be difficult to measure improvements as the plan is implemented.

Department of Defense program officials defended their decision to limit the contents and scope of the plan because they believe the law requires only the most significant improvements relating to the act's specific requirements be included in the plan. These officials told us that all actions outlined in the plan are initiatives of the military services and the Defense Logistics Agency who are expected to fully implement them.

During the course of our review, we noted that the Department's Computer-Aided Logistics Support Study Group had also developed a plan to, among other things, improve technical data management. A report prepared by the group recommended that, at a minimum, a Department implementation steering group be appointed with planning and program approval authority over actions taken to implement the recommendations and proposed strategy to achieve a

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unified face to industry and to create, use, and exchange technical data in digital form. However, the Department did not implement this recommendation.

We commented on this fact in our March 1986 report prepared at the request of the Chairman, House Government Operations Committee (GAO/IMTEC-86-7, March 13, 1986). We also reported that agency efforts to automate its technical data repositories are duplicative and nonstandard. We recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Assistant Secretary for Acquisition and Logistics and the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) to expeditiously evaluate the appropriateness of continuing any or all of the current technical data repository efforts. Additionally, we recommended that, following the above evaluation, a central office within the Office of the Secretary of Defense be designated with oversight responsibility to manage and control continuing efforts to automate the technical data repositories. Further, this office should have planning, coordination, budget review, and program approval authority over these efforts.

We believe these recommendations, if implemented by the Secretary of Defense, will assist the Department in achieving the congressional mandate for an improved technical data management system.

We are sending copies of this letter to the Secretary of Defense; Director, Office of Management and Budget; Chairmen, House and Senate Committees on Armed Services and Senate Committee on Small Business; and to other interested parties upon request.

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for Charles A. Bowsher  
Comptroller General  
of the United States