



Highlights of [GAO-10-508T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

For the last several years, the Department of Defense (DOD) has planned to invest billions of dollars in development and procurement of unmanned aircraft systems. In its fiscal year 2011 budget request the department indicated a significant increase in these investments, expecting to need more than \$24 billion from 2010 through 2015. DOD recognizes that to leverage its resources more effectively, it must achieve greater commonality among the military services' unmanned aircraft system acquisition programs.

This testimony is based primarily on GAO's July 2009 report (GAO-09-520) which examined 10 unmanned aircraft acquisition programs: eight unmanned aircraft systems—Global Hawk, Reaper, Shadow, Predator, Sky Warrior, Fire Scout, Broad Area Maritime Surveillance, and Unmanned Combat Aircraft System-Demonstration; and two payload development programs—Multi-Platform Radar Technology Insertion Program, and Airborne Signals Intelligence Payload. The testimony focuses on: 1) the cost, schedule, and performance progress of the 10 programs as of July 2009; 2) the extent to which the military services collaborated and identified commonality among the programs; 3) factors influencing the effectiveness of the collaboration; and, 4) recent DOD investment decisions related to these acquisitions.

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DEFENSE ACQUISITIONS

DOD Could Achieve Greater Commonality and Efficiencies among Its Unmanned Aircraft Systems

What GAO Found

Most of the 10 programs reviewed had experienced cost increases, schedule delays, performance shortfalls, or some combination of these problems. The programs' development cost estimates increased by more than \$3 billion collectively, or 37 percent, from initial estimates. Procurement funding requirements for most programs also increased, primarily because of increases in numbers of aircraft being procured, changes in system requirements, and upgrades and retrofits to fielded systems. Procurement unit costs increased by an average of 12 percent, with three aircraft programs experiencing unit cost increases of 25 percent or more. Four programs reported delays of 1 year or more in delivering capability to the warfighter. Global Hawk, Predator, Reaper, and Shadow had been used in combat operations with success and lessons learned, but had been rushed into service in some cases, leading to performance issues and delays in development and operational testing and verification.

Programs collaborated and identified areas of commonality to varying degrees. The Marine Corps was able to avoid the cost of initial system development and quickly deliver useful capability to the warfighter by choosing to procure existing Army Shadow systems. The Navy expected to save time and money on Broad Area Maritime Surveillance (BAMS) by using Air Force's Global Hawk airframe, and payloads and subsystems from other programs. However, Army and Air Force had not collaborated on their Sky Warrior and Predator programs, and might have achieved greater savings if they had, given that Sky Warrior is a variant of Predator and being developed by the same contractor. DOD encouraged more commonality between these programs.

Although several programs achieved airframe commonality, service-driven acquisition processes and ineffective collaboration were key factors that inhibited commonality among subsystems, payloads, and ground control stations, raising concerns about potential inefficiencies and duplication. Despite DOD's efforts to emphasize a joint approach to identifying needs and commonality among systems, most of the programs assessed continued to pursue service-unique requirements. The services also made independent resource allocation decisions to support their unique requirements. DOD had not quantified the costs and benefits associated with pursuing commonality among these programs, and efforts to collaborate had produced mixed results. However, in order to maximize acquisition resources and meet increased demand, Congress and DOD have continued to push for more commonality.

Since July 2009, DOD has made several investment decisions regarding unmanned aircraft systems, which in general, reflect increased emphasis on developing advanced capabilities and acquiring larger numbers of specific systems. However, the decisions do not appear to focus on increasing collaboration or commonality among the programs.