



Highlights of [GAO-07-620](#), a report to the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

Special Operations Command's (SOCOM) duties have greatly increased since the attacks of September 11, 2001. Today, Special Operations Forces are at work in Afghanistan and Iraq, and SOCOM has been assigned to lead U.S. efforts in the Global War on Terrorism. SOCOM's acquisitions budget has also greatly increased in this period—more than doubling from \$788 million in 2001 to approximately \$1.91 billion in 2006. In light of SOCOM's expanded duties, Congress requested that GAO review SOCOM's management of its acquisition programs. GAO's evaluation includes an assessment of: the types of acquisition programs SOCOM has undertaken since 2001 and whether the programs are consistent with its mission; the extent to which SOCOM's programs have progressed as planned; and the challenges SOCOM faces in managing its acquisition programs.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense take steps to ensure SOCOM (1) establishes sound business cases when starting programs, particularly its more complex and department-managed programs; (2) has the workforce size and composition to match its acquisition workload; and (3) improves its acquisition management information system. DOD generally concurred with these recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-620.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Paul Francis at (202) 512-4841 or francisp@gao.gov.

DEFENSE ACQUISITIONS

An Analysis of Special Operations Command's Management of Weapon System Programs

What GAO Found

SOCOM has undertaken a diverse set of acquisition programs that are consistent with the command's mission to provide equipment that addresses the unique needs of the Special Operations Forces. SOCOM has committed to spend about \$6 billion on these programs. About 88 percent of the programs are relatively small, have short acquisition cycles, and use modified commercial off-the-shelf and nondevelopmental items or modify existing service equipment and assets. SOCOM's acquisition plans—as reflected in its current 5-year plan—continue to focus on relatively small-scale, short-cycle programs with modest development efforts.

Overall, SOCOM's acquisition program performance has been mixed. About 60 percent of the acquisition programs SOCOM has undertaken since 2001 have progressed as planned, staying within the original cost and schedule estimates. Included in this grouping are programs that had cost increases because of the need to buy additional quantities of equipment for ongoing combat operations. The other 40 percent of SOCOM's acquisition programs have not progressed as planned and experienced modest to, in a small number of cases, significant cost increases and schedule delays because of a range of technical and programmatic issues. Although fewer in number, the programs that experienced problems comprise about 50 percent of acquisition funding because they tend to be the larger and costlier, platform-based programs that SOCOM is acquiring and those where SOCOM depends on one of the military departments for equipment and program management support.

SOCOM faces management and workforce challenges to ensure its acquisition programs are consistently completed on time and within budget. Urgent requirements to support SOCOM's ongoing combat missions have and will continue to challenge SOCOM's ability to balance near- and long-term needs against available funding resources. In addition, SOCOM has difficulty tracking progress on programs where it has delegated management authority to one of the military departments and has not consistently applied a knowledge-based acquisition approach in executing programs, particularly the larger and more complex programs. Furthermore, SOCOM has encountered challenges ensuring it has the workforce size and composition to carry out its acquisition work.