Increased Oversight and Cooperation Can Help Avoid Duplication among the Services’ Programs

What GAO Found

Several of the Department of Defense’s (DOD) active ground radar programs have overlapping performance requirements and two are potentially duplicative. In these instances, the military service pursued separate acquisition programs because other programs did not fully meet their performance requirements, among other reasons. Specifically, GAO found:

- The Marine Corps’ Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar (G/ATOR) Block I and the Air Force’s Three-Dimensional Expeditionary Long-Range Radar (3DELRR) have some overlapping key requirements, such as range, and are potentially duplicative. The Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), which validates requirements for DOD’s largest acquisition programs, did not find unnecessary redundancy, and Air Force officials stated that G/ATOR could not meet all of the 3DELRR’s requirements.

- The Army’s AN/TPQ-53 Counterfire Radar and the Marine Corps’ G/ATOR Block II have some overlapping requirements, but the AN/TPQ-53 does not meet certain key G/ATOR Block II requirements, therefore reducing the risk that the programs are duplicative. In this case, urgent operational needs and different acquisition approaches also led the Army and Marine Corps to establish separate acquisition programs.

As a result of reviews conducted by the JROC and DOD’s Office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE), which develops guidance for analyzing alternative ways to fulfill capability needs, the Air Force made positive changes to the 3DELRR program, such as reducing some requirements to improve program affordability. CAPE also expanded the alternatives considered on acquisition programs to minimize potential duplication. DOD missed an opportunity to assess whether the capabilities of the AN/TPQ-53 and G/ATOR Block II were unnecessarily redundant. The JROC did not review the AN/TPQ-53 requirements because it was initially fielded to meet an urgent need and did not meet the dollar threshold to automatically trigger a review. However, the AN/TPQ-53 transitioned to the traditional, non-urgent needs acquisition process at which point the JROC could have reviewed it. Ensuring that the JROC and CAPE review new ground radar acquisitions could help DOD avoid duplication.

DOD’s active air-to-ground precision guided munitions programs are not duplicative, but potential for duplication exists in the future. The active programs share some capabilities, but characteristics such as the aircraft that can launch them distinguish them from one another. To the extent that overlapping capabilities exist, DOD officials said these capabilities provided needed flexibility for military operations. Cooperation among the military services contributed to the current lack of duplication. GAO found one example of potential future duplication. Both the Army and the Navy plan to buy the Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System through fiscal year 2015 to meet their guided rocket needs, but starting in fiscal year 2016, they may pursue separate, potentially duplicative, efforts. There are costs and benefits associated with both the Army and Navy’s acquisition approaches; however, if the Army and Navy fulfill their guided rocket needs separately instead of cooperatively, it could result in the inefficient use of weapon system investment dollars and a loss of buying power.