UNMANNED CARRIER-BASED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM

Navy Needs to Demonstrate Match between Its Requirements and Available Resources

What GAO Found

Since our last review in September 2013, the intended mission and required capabilities of the Navy’s Unmanned Carrier-Launched Airborne Surveillance and Strike (UCLASS) system have come into question. Ongoing debate about whether the primary role of the UCLASS system should be mainly surveillance with limited strike or mainly strike with limited surveillance has delayed the program, as shown in the figure. Requirements emphasizing a strike role with limited surveillance could be more demanding and costly.

The knowledge the Navy has obtained about the resources needed to develop the UCLASS system may no longer be applicable depending on what requirements are finally chosen. GAO’s prior best practices work has found that before initiating system development, a program should present an executable business case that demonstrates that it has a high level of knowledge and a match between requirements and available resources. If the final UCLASS requirements emphasize a strike role with limited surveillance, the Navy will likely need to revisit its understanding of available resources in the areas of design knowledge, funding, and technologies before awarding an air system development contract.

View GAO-15-374. For more information, contact Michael J. Sullivan at (202) 512-4841 or sullivam@gao.gov.