Why GAO Did This Study

The Air Force’s EELV program is the primary provider launches for military and intelligence satellites. The Air Force is working to introduce competition into the program, which for almost 10 years had one company capable of providing launches. In working to introduce competition into launch contracts, the Air Force is changing its acquisition approach for launch services, including the amount of cost and performance data that it plans to obtain under future launch contracts.

Given these expected changes, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 included a provision for GAO to examine this new approach. This report examines the (1) Air Force’s new approach for competing launches, the resulting changes on the types of cost or performance data required and commensurate business systems needed compared to what is currently required of the incumbent contractor, and the benefits and drawbacks of this approach; and (2) risks the Air Force faces when planning for future launch acquisitions. To address these questions, GAO reviewed acquisition documents and the contract request for proposals, and interviewed DOD and contractor officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that, when planning for the next phase of competition for launches, the Air Force use an incremental approach to the next acquisition strategy to ensure that it does not commit itself to a strategy until data is available to make an informed decision. DOD concurred with the recommendation.

View GAO-15-623. For more information, contact Cristina Chaplain at (202) 512-4841 or chaplainc@gao.gov.