

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-395](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The mission of the presidential helicopter fleet is to provide safe, reliable, and timely transportation for the President, Vice President, foreign heads of state, and other official parties as directed by the White House Military Office. The Navy plans to acquire VH-92A helicopters to replace its aging fleet. Initial delivery of VH-92A presidential helicopters is scheduled to begin in fiscal year 2020 with production ending in fiscal year 2023. Total program acquisition cost is estimated to be \$5.1 billion.

This is GAO's seventh report on the program since 2011. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 included a provision that GAO report annually on the acquisition of the VH-92A aircraft. This report discusses (1) the program's cost, schedule, and performance status; (2) challenges it faces in system development; and (3) its adherence to acquisition best practices. To conduct the review, GAO examined program documents, including Navy, contractor, and on-site government program monitor reports. GAO also interviewed officials, reviewed the earned value management system, and assessed the integrated master schedule against GAO best practices.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making recommendations in this report. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that it believes its efforts on this program are aligned with GAO's best practices and it will continue to monitor the program and ensure that mitigations are in place to address potential risk areas. GAO will also continue to monitor the program as it moves forward.

View [GAO-16-395](#). For more information, contact Michael J. Sullivan, (202) 512-4841 or sullivanm@gao.gov

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PRESIDENTIAL HELICOPTER

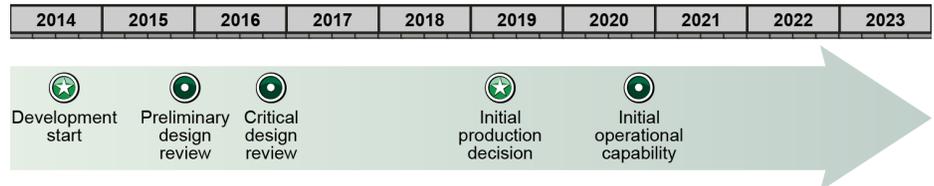
Program Progressing Largely as Planned

What GAO Found

Since 2014, the VH-92A presidential helicopter program has generally progressed as planned. Through November 2015, the contractor accomplished approximately \$239.0 million (22 percent) in development work—leaving about \$863.9 million (78 percent) in estimated work over the next 5 years. As of December 2015, the prime contractor had accomplished nearly all of the expected developmental tasks at only slightly greater cost than anticipated. The program is currently on track to accomplish key development milestones as planned. In the past year, the program successfully conducted its preliminary design review and carried out a number of other significant development activities, including: continued development of the mission communications system, delivery and initial testing of aircraft for risk-reduction activities, and initiation of the conversion of Sikorsky S-92A helicopters into VH-92A developmental models.

VH-92A Presidential Helicopter Program Schedule

Fiscal year



Source: GAO analysis of VH-92A Program data. | GAO-16-395

As expected with a major system development effort, the program faces a number of design and technical challenges, some preexisting and others realized during the course of development. Those challenges include designing passenger doors, incorporating titanium framing in the two initial aircraft, meeting requirements relating to electromagnetic environmental effects, and cybersecurity. The program took advantage of capability and testing trades that produced cost and schedule savings. For example, the program was able to reduce physical testing by relying on existing information about the aircraft's performance, supplemented by additional information collected during testing and through modeling.

When assessed against best practices, GAO found that the contractor's earned value management system, a project management tool for investment planning and control, fully or substantially met the three characteristics for a reliable earned value management system. Similarly, in assessing the program's integrated master schedule against best practices, GAO found that it substantially met all four of the characteristics required for a reliable schedule.