HOMELAND DEFENSE

Urgent Need for DOD and FAA to Address Risks and Improve Planning for Technology That Tracks Military Aircraft

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD has until January 1, 2020, to equip its aircraft with ADS-B Out technology that would provide DOD, FAA, and private citizens the ability to track their flights in real-time and track flight patterns over time. This technology is a component of NextGen, a broader FAA initiative that seeks to modernize the current radar-driven, ground-based air transportation system into a satellite-driven space-based system.

Senate Report 114-255 included a provision for GAO to assess the national defense implications of FAA’s implementation of ADS-B. This report assesses the extent to which (1) DOD and FAA have identified operations and security risks and approved solutions to address these risks to ADS-B Out-equipped military aircraft; and (2) DOD has implemented key tasks in the 2007 memorandum on implementing NextGen.

GAO analyzed risks identified by DOD and FAA related to ADS-B vulnerabilities, and how they could affect current and future air defense and air traffic missions. GAO also reviewed the tasks in the 2007 NextGen Memorandum and assessed whether the eight tasks specifically related to ADS-B were implemented.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that DOD and FAA approve one or more solutions to address ADS-B-related security risks; and that DOD implement key tasks to facilitate consistent, long-term planning and implementation of NextGen. DOD and the Department of Transportation generally concurred and described planned actions to implement the recommendations.

View GAO-18-177. For more information, contact Joseph Kirschbaum at (202) 512-9971 or kirschbaumj@gao.gov.