



Highlights of GAO-05-519T, a testimony before the Subcommittee on AirLand, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate

TACTICAL AIRCRAFT

F/A-22 and JSF Acquisition Plans and Implications for Tactical Aircraft Modernization

Why GAO Did This Study

The F/A-22 Raptor and Joint Strike Fighter (JSF)—two of the Department of Defense’s (DOD) major tactical aircraft fighter programs—are intended to replace aging tactical fighter aircraft with highly advanced, stealthy aircraft. The two programs combined have a potential future investment of more than \$240 billion.

This testimony highlights key concerns in the F/A-22 and JSF programs and discusses the implications on DOD’s overall investment strategy for modernizing its tactical fixed-wing aircraft. Last month, GAO issued comprehensive reports on the numerous setbacks these programs have experienced since they were initiated and their effect on the F/A-22 and JSF business cases.

What GAO Recommends

GAO made recommendations in two reports issued in March 2005. For the F/A-22 program, GAO reiterated and expanded upon its 2004 recommendation for DOD to establish a new business case—one that justifies the continued expenditure of funds on the F/A-22. For the JSF program, GAO recommended that—before the program moves forward—DOD establish an executable business case that is consistent with best practices and DOD policy regarding knowledge-based, evolutionary acquisitions.

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To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Michael J. Sullivan at (202) 512-4841 or sullivanm@gao.gov.

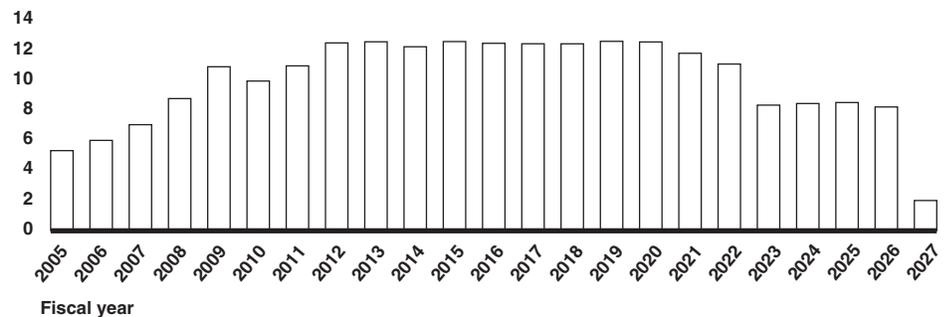
What GAO Found

Significant changes in the F/A-22 program have severely weakened its original business case. Since the F/A-22 program began in 1986, new threats emerged and mission requirements changed; to keep the F/A-22 viable, the Air Force has planned for large investments in new capabilities. Significant delays and cost increases have affected affordability, reducing planned deliveries from 750 F/A-22 aircraft to fewer than 180. The recent budget decision to terminate procurement of the F/A-22 after fiscal year 2008 and the prospect of additional funding cuts also have significant implications for the program’s viability and modernization efforts.

JSF’s original business case, established when the program began in 1996, is unexecutable. The cost estimate to develop the aircraft has increased 80 percent, operational capability has been pushed out 2 years, and expected acquisition quantities have been cut by 535 aircraft. The JSF program is approaching key investment decisions that will greatly influence the efficiency of the remaining funding—more than 90 percent of the \$245 billion estimated total program costs. This sizable investment greatly raises the stakes to meet future promises. While DOD has been working to resolve early design and performance problems, continuing program uncertainties suggest DOD could use more time to gain knowledge before it commits to a new business case and moves forward. To reduce the risk of further cost and schedule growth, any new business case must include an acquisition strategy that adopts an evolutionary, knowledge-based approach to product development. Currently, the JSF program plans to make key production decisions before critical knowledge is captured.

JSF Program’s Annual Funding Requirements from 2005 to 2027

Dollars in billions



Source: GAO analysis of DOD data.

Taken together, these issues have broader implications for the DOD tactical fixed-wing aircraft modernization program, raising questions as to whether overarching goals to reduce average aircraft age and ownership costs while maintaining the force structure are now achievable. The 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review provides an opportunity for DOD to assess needs and plans and to weigh options for accomplishing its tactical aircraft goals.