



Highlights of [GAO-07-546](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Over 3 years ago, Congress granted limited acquisition authority (LAA)—subject to delegation by the Secretary of Defense—to U.S. Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) for a 3-year period to expedite development and acquisition of certain warfighter equipment. Congress directed GAO to report on JFCOM LAA implementation. GAO’s report, issued in November 2005, said JFCOM finished five LAA projects and was working on a sixth project, and that JFCOM had experienced difficulty finding funding to develop, acquire, and sustain LAA projects. Last year, Congress extended LAA through September 2008 and again directed GAO to report on LAA. This report updates the status of JFCOM LAA efforts since the authority was enacted and key LAA challenges.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense reassess the role of JFCOM LAA in light of changes contemplated for the Joint Rapid Acquisition Cell (JRAC) process, to determine whether and how JFCOM LAA should play a role in meeting joint urgent needs; to the extent JFCOM LAA is to continue to play a role, assess and resolve the challenges identified in this report; and inform Congress of the results of the assessment and decisions. DOD concurred with GAO’s recommendations. GAO added a matter for congressional consideration regarding the timing of the congressional decision on the future of JFCOM LAA.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-546.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Paul L. Francis at (202) 512-4841 or francisp@gao.gov.

DEFENSE ACQUISITIONS

Status and Challenges of Joint Forces Command’s Limited Acquisition Authority

What GAO Found

JFCOM has not approved any LAA projects since GAO’s November 2005 report, and the LAA project that was incomplete as of then remains so. The projects generally fall under the category of battle management command, control, communications, and intelligence. Research funding provided for the six LAA projects has risen from \$9 million in 2005 to \$14 million as of January 2007. No procurement funds had been used for these projects as of then. Feedback from the projects’ recipients—the warfighter—has been mostly positive about the LAA acquisition process and capabilities delivered.

The Department of Defense (DOD) and JFCOM face several LAA challenges, one of which goes to the role of LAA. Shortly after LAA’s enactment, the Deputy Secretary of Defense created the JRAC to provide timely solutions for joint urgent warfighter needs. GAO analysis indicates that JRAC and JFCOM LAA cover similar ground and could overlap even more if JRAC is allowed to address needs other than for ongoing named operations. JRAC might have also been able to carry out most, if not all, of the six LAA projects had it existed when they were approved by JFCOM. The following table shows key aspects of the two processes.

Key Aspects of JFCOM LAA and JRAC Rapid Acquisition Current Processes

	JFCOM LAA	JRAC
Is it to address joint urgent needs?	Yes	Yes
In what time frame are needs to be met?	Within 2 years	Within 2 years
Can solution already be in development?	Yes	Yes
Must the need be for an ongoing, named operation?	No	Yes
Must the need be to prevent loss of life or mission failure?	No	Yes
Is the need to be submitted by a combatant commander?	Yes	Yes
Is there a dollar limit per project for research funding?	Yes, estimated to be less than \$10 million	Yes, \$365 million or less in fiscal year 2000 dollars
Is there a dollar limit per project for procurement funding?	Yes, estimated to be less than \$50 million	Yes, \$2.19 billion or less in fiscal year 2000 dollars

Source: GAO analysis of JFCOM LAA and JRAC processes.

Other challenges relate to how LAA is managed and operated. JFCOM officials said funding remains an issue because LAA is an authority without budgeted funds. JFCOM LAA staff tries to find funding for approved projects from other DOD organizations. When funding could not be found, JFCOM funded most of the six LAA projects with funds budgeted for other JFCOM work. The search for funding lengthens the time to get capabilities to the warfighter. JRAC does not have budgeted funds either, but has greater access to funding than JFCOM. Another challenge involves uncertainty between JFCOM and the Office of the Secretary of Defense regarding what LAA powers were delegated to JFCOM. Until the uncertainty is resolved, how JFCOM should carry out LAA efforts will remain unclear.