



Highlights of [GAO-10-388SP](#), a report to congressional committees

### Why GAO Did This Study

This is GAO’s eighth annual assessment of selected Department of Defense (DOD) weapon programs. The report examines how well DOD is planning and executing its weapon acquisition programs, an area that has been on GAO’s high-risk list since 1990.

This year’s report is in response to the mandate in the joint explanatory statement to the DOD Appropriations Act, 2009. The report includes (1) observations on DOD’s efforts to manage its portfolio of major defense acquisition programs; (2) an assessment of the knowledge attained by key junctures in the acquisition process for a subset of 42 weapon programs from the 2009 portfolio; (3) data on other factors that can affect program execution; and (4) examples of how DOD is implementing recent acquisition reforms. To conduct the assessment, GAO analyzed data on the composition of DOD’s portfolio of major defense acquisition programs. GAO did not analyze the cost and schedule performance of the portfolio because DOD did not issue timely or complete Selected Acquisition Reports for the second consecutive presidential transition. GAO expects to resume its portfolio analysis in next year’s assessment. GAO also collected data from program offices on technology, design, and manufacturing knowledge, as well as on other factors that can affect program execution. GAO analyzed this data and compiled one- or two-page assessments of 70 weapon programs.

[View GAO-10-388SP or key components.](#) For more information, contact Michael J. Sullivan at (202) 512-4841 or [sullivanm@gao.gov](mailto:sullivanm@gao.gov).

## DEFENSE ACQUISITIONS

### Assessments of Selected Weapon Programs

#### What GAO Found

In 2009, the Secretary of Defense proposed canceling or significantly curtailing weapon programs with a projected cost of at least \$126 billion. Congress supported several of the recommended terminations. DOD plans to develop new options to replace several of the canceled programs. The most significant of these will be the effort to restructure the Army’s terminated Future Combat System program. At the same time, DOD’s 2009 portfolio of major defense acquisition programs grew to 102 programs—a net increase of 6 since last year. DOD did not issue complete Selected Acquisition Reports for these programs in 2009, which precluded an analysis of the overall cost and schedule performance of DOD’s portfolio in this year’s assessment.

**Secretary of Defense’s Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Recommendations**

	Weapon system	Secretary’s comments
<b>Recommended termination</b>	VH-71 Presidential Helicopter	Plan to develop options for a new program
	Combat Search and Rescue Helicopter	Plan to reexamine requirements
	Next-Generation Bomber	Will not initiate new development program without better understanding of the requirement and technology
	Future Combat Systems—Manned Ground Vehicles	Plan to reevaluate requirements, technology, and approach before relaunching and recompeting program
	Transformational Satellite	Plan to buy two more AEHF satellites as alternative
<b>Recommended end of production</b>	Ballistic Missile Defense—Multiple Kill Vehicle	Plan to reexamine requirements; no mention of new program
	C-17	Recommended ending production at 205 aircraft
	DDG-1000	Recommended ending production at 3 ships
	F-22	Recommended ending production at 187 aircraft

Source: GAO analysis of DOD data.

For 42 programs GAO assessed in depth, there has been continued improvement in the technology, design, and manufacturing knowledge programs had at key points in the acquisition process. However, most programs are still proceeding with less knowledge than best practices suggest, putting them at higher risk for cost growth and schedule delays. A majority of programs have also experienced requirements changes, software development challenges, or workforce issues, or a combination, which can affect program stability and execution. DOD has begun to implement a revised acquisition policy that addresses many of these areas. For example, seven programs we examined in technology development plan to test competitive prototypes before starting system development, and nine programs plan to hold early systems engineering reviews. If DOD consistently applies this policy, the number of programs adhering to a knowledge-based acquisition should increase and the outcomes for DOD programs should improve.