

Highlights of [GAO-14-460](#), a report to the Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

For nearly 20 years, the Army has had limited success in developing an information network—sensors, software, and radios—to give soldiers the exact information they need, when they need it, in any environment. The Army has declared its tactical network as its top modernization priority and estimated the modernization may cost up to \$3 billion per year into the foreseeable future. The Army's current modernization approach is intended to leverage solutions developed by private industry.

Given the costs and importance of the network, GAO was asked to examine aspects of the Army's effort to acquire network capabilities. This is the third report in response to the Subcommittee's requests.

In this report, GAO examines the Army's progress in implementing competitive strategies for tactical networking systems. GAO selected a non-generalizable sample of 9 of these 25 systems that the Army indicated are critical for ensuring soldiers are able to send and receive mission-critical information between units, and that cover the breadth of warfighter operations. GAO reviewed acquisition strategies for evidence that the Army was seeking competition.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making recommendations in this report. DOD provided technical comments on a draft of this report, which were incorporated, as appropriate.

View [GAO-14-460](#). For more information, contact Belva M. Martin at (202) 512-4841 or martinb@gao.gov.

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ARMY NETWORKS

Select Programs Are Utilizing Competition to Varying Degrees

What GAO Found

The Army is incorporating competition in various ways for most of the nine tactical networking acquisition programs GAO examined. To achieve the best return on the government's investment, federal agencies are generally required to award contracts competitively. As the Army has decreased the amount of in-house system development it is doing for tactical networking equipment, it is using various tools to involve private industry to meet its needs. One such tool is the agile capabilities life cycle process whereby the Army determines the capabilities it needs and gaps in those capabilities, and uses market research and semi-annual evaluations, among other means, to involve industry. According to the Army, this agile process provides opportunities for enhancing competition. The Army acquisition strategy for eight of the nine systems discusses plans for competition and market research. An acquisition strategy is not required for the Soldier Radio Waveform Appliqué system because it is not a formal acquisition program; however, the Army conducted market research and is seeking competition. GAO grouped the nine systems into three categories based on similarities in the competition strategy. Specifically,

- In two of the nine systems GAO examined—Mid-tier Networking Vehicular Radio and Soldier Radio Waveform Appliqué—the Army is beginning new programs and structuring the acquisition approaches to competitively procure non-developmental capabilities directly from industry. The Army competitively awarded a procurement contract for its Mid-Tier Networking Vehicular Radio, providing units for risk reduction and requirements verification. In April 2014 the Army competitively awarded contracts to four vendors to buy the Soldier Radio Waveform Appliqué.
- Five of the nine systems GAO studied have been under development for many years. Three of those—the Airborne, Maritime, and Fixed Station radio; the Rifleman Radio; and the Manpack Radio—were part of the Joint Tactical Radio System, which was previously competed and which the Army has restructured. The Army had been developing software-defined radios to interoperate with existing radios. The Army is now seeking non-developmental solutions through competition to provide the needed capability. For the other two systems, the Joint Battle Command–Platform and Nett Warrior, the Army reports that it plans to use full and open competition for individual subcomponents. In both cases, the Army conducted market research to identify vendors or seek feedback on requirements.
- The Army deemed competition impractical for the two remaining systems in GAO's review, the Warfighter Information Network-Tactical Increment 2 and Warfighter Information Network-Tactical Increment 3. The Army considered acquisition strategies for more competition in the development and procurement of these systems but determined that only the incumbent contractor could satisfy the requirements without unacceptable delays. Nevertheless, the Army continues using market research to identify interested contractors and has awarded several competitive contracts for subcomponents under these two systems.