

Why GAO Did This Study

Over the past five years, GAO has found potential overlap or duplication in DOD weapon system investments. Overlap occurs when multiple agencies or programs are engaged in similar activities. Duplication occurs when two or more agencies or programs are engaged in the same activities. Senate Report 113-44 accompanying the fiscal year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act mandated that GAO examine the military services' ground radar and air-to-ground precision guided munitions programs for potential duplication. Ground radars are sensors used to detect and track targets, and precision guided munitions are weapons intended to accurately engage and destroy enemy targets.

This report examines the extent to which potential overlap or duplication exists across the military services' (1) ground radar and (2) air-to-ground precision guided munitions programs. GAO analyzed program documentation on system performance requirements and capabilities and interviewed DOD officials about potential duplication.

What GAO Recommends

To address potential duplication, GAO recommends that DOD ensure that new ground radar acquisitions are reviewed by the JROC and CAPE and require the Army and Navy to jointly assess the possibility of using a single solution and a cooperative, preferably competitive, contracting strategy to meet their guided rocket needs. DOD partially agreed with GAO's first recommendation, but stated it should not be mandatory. GAO believes the recommendation remains valid as discussed in its report. DOD agreed with the second recommendation.

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GROUND RADAR AND GUIDED MUNITIONS

Increased Oversight and Cooperation Can Help Avoid Duplication among the Services' Programs

What GAO Found

Several of the Department of Defense's (DOD) active ground radar programs have overlapping performance requirements and two are potentially duplicative. In these instances, the military service pursued separate acquisition programs because other programs did not fully meet their performance requirements, among other reasons. Specifically, GAO found:

- The Marine Corps' Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar (G/ATOR) Block I and the Air Force's Three-Dimensional Expeditionary Long-Range Radar (3DELRR) have some overlapping key requirements, such as range, and are potentially duplicative. The Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), which validates requirements for DOD's largest acquisition programs, did not find unnecessary redundancy, and Air Force officials stated that G/ATOR could not meet all of the 3DELRR's requirements.
- The Army's AN/TPQ-53 Counterfire Radar and the Marine Corps' G/ATOR Block II have some overlapping requirements, but the AN/TPQ-53 does not meet certain key G/ATOR Block II requirements, therefore reducing the risk that the programs are duplicative. In this case, urgent operational needs and different acquisition approaches also led the Army and Marine Corps to establish separate acquisition programs.

As a result of reviews conducted by the JROC and DOD's Office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE), which develops guidance for analyzing alternative ways to fulfill capability needs, the Air Force made positive changes to the 3DELRR program, such as reducing some requirements to improve program affordability. CAPE also expanded the alternatives considered on acquisition programs to minimize potential duplication. DOD missed an opportunity to assess whether the capabilities of the AN/TPQ-53 and G/ATOR Block II were unnecessarily redundant. The JROC did not review the AN/TPQ-53 requirements because it was initially fielded to meet an urgent need and did not meet the dollar threshold to automatically trigger a review. However, the AN/TPQ-53 transitioned to the traditional, non-urgent needs acquisition process at which point the JROC could have reviewed it. Ensuring that the JROC and CAPE review new ground radar acquisitions could help DOD avoid duplication.

DOD's active air-to-ground precision guided munitions programs are not duplicative, but potential for duplication exists in the future. The active programs share some capabilities, but characteristics such as the aircraft that can launch them distinguish them from one another. To the extent that overlapping capabilities exist, DOD officials said these capabilities provided needed flexibility for military operations. Cooperation among the military services contributed to the current lack of duplication. GAO found one example of potential future duplication. Both the Army and the Navy plan to buy the Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System through fiscal year 2015 to meet their guided rocket needs, but starting in fiscal year 2016, they may pursue separate, potentially duplicative, efforts. There are costs and benefits associated with both the Army and Navy's acquisition approaches; however, if the Army and Navy fulfill their guided rocket needs separately instead of cooperatively, it could result in the inefficient use of weapon system investment dollars and a loss of buying power.