

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-20-356](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The mission of the presidential helicopter fleet is to provide safe, reliable, and timely transportation in support of the President. The Navy plans to acquire a fleet of 23 VH-92A helicopters to replace the current Marine Corps fleet which has been in use for more than 40 years. Delivery of production VH-92A helicopters is scheduled to begin in April 2021 and be completed in January 2023.

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2014 included a provision for GAO to report annually on the acquisition of the VH-92A helicopter. This report, GAO's sixth related to the provision, examines (1) the extent to which the program is meeting cost goals and (2) performance and schedule challenges that the program has experienced.

To conduct this work, GAO compared the Navy's April 2019 cost estimates for acquiring and maintaining the new helicopters and October 2019 program schedule information to its April 2014 acquisition baseline. GAO reviewed development test results and status reports from the program. GAO also interviewed officials from the program office, Navy test organizations, and the contractor.

GAO is not making any recommendations in this report.

View [GAO-20-356](#). For more information, contact Timothy J. DiNapoli at (202) 512-4841 or dinapolit@gao.gov.

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PRESIDENTIAL HELICOPTER

Program is Meeting Cost Goals but Some Technical and Schedule Risks Remain

What GAO Found



Source: United States Navy (NAVAIR 2019-566). | GAO-20-356

The Navy estimates the cost to develop, procure, and maintain the VH-92A[®] over its 40-year operational life to be just over \$20.5 billion, or about 10 percent less than the Navy's 2014 baseline estimate (see table).

VH-92A Helicopter Program Cost Estimate Has Decreased

Then-year dollars in millions	April 2014 Baseline	April 2019 Estimate	Change
Development	\$2,805.7	\$2,648.8	-5.6%
Procurement	2,379.0	2,246.5	-5.6
Total Program Acquisition Costs	5,184.7	4,895.3	-5.6
Operations and support	17,674.3	15,641.9	-11.5
Total Estimated Life Cycle Costs	\$22,859.0	\$20,537.2	-10.2

Source: GAO presentation of Navy data | GAO-20-356

Navy and contractor officials worked to remain within the program's April 2014 cost baseline estimate, in part, by keeping program requirements stable, limiting design changes, and taking advantage of cost saving initiatives. The Navy also plans to use Navy personnel and facilities to perform depot-level maintenance for the VH-92A fleet, rather than sending the helicopters back to the contractor as is currently done.

The program has made progress addressing technical risks and performance challenges GAO discussed in prior reports; however, an April 2019 operational assessment confirmed several other risks that could affect the helicopter's ability to meet its reliability and availability requirements. For example, Navy officials stated that the assessment confirmed known limitations with the mission communications system. Upgraded software intended to address those limitations is to be evaluated during the initial operational test and evaluation scheduled to be conducted between June and September 2020. The results of that testing could impact the Navy's planned January 2021 decision to begin using the helicopters as part of the presidential helicopter fleet.