

Further Action Needed to Improve Travel and Other Business Systems

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A report to congressional requesters.

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What GAO Found

In May 2023, the Department of Defense (DOD) discontinued its MyTravel initiative and directed all users to return to the previous Defense Travel System (DTS). Based on information from DOD, the department's abandonment of MyTravel was due to four primary factors: lack of a central leadership authority and advocate for change; insufficient program management practices; inadequate outreach to understand evolving stakeholder needs; and inconsistent inclusion of key users in gathering and tracking program requirements.

While DOD is reinvesting in DTS to add key capabilities, the department has not yet fully addressed applicable leading practices related to the primary factors of MyTravel's abandonment (see figure). These practices include statutory department-specific business system requirements. Overall, DOD fully addressed 12 practices, partially addressed six, and did not address four. Of particular concern are the three program management and five requirements management practices that are not yet fully addressed. Until it fully implements these practices, DOD risks shortcomings in managing the program and in ensuring that users are involved in requirements gathering and tracking.

Assessment of DOD's Defense Travel System Against Selected Leading Practices and Statutory Elements Related to the MyTravel System's Abandonment

Primary Factors Related to the Defense Travel System Modernization Initiative

Leadership authority and advocacy for change



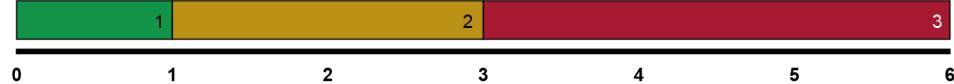
Program management



Outreach to understand evolving stakeholder needs



Inclusion of key users in gathering and tracking requirements



Number of leading practices and statutory requirements addressed



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-26-107663

Regarding overall system modernization, DOD has department-wide improvements underway. However, its policies and guidance for managing and directing these efforts do not fully address 11 of 23 leading practices and statutory requirements related to the above four factors. For example, the department has established a framework to monitor progress of selected programs but has not established a permanent leadership structure for the efforts or taken steps to ensure that programs fully align with department-wide goals and priorities. Without fully implementing these leading practices and statutory requirements, DOD can experience coordination issues and inconsistent execution in planning and making improvements to its business systems modernization efforts.

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD relies on its travel system to support mission-critical operations. DOD has faced multiple challenges in its many attempts to modernize this system, most recently through the abandoned MyTravel initiative. Similar challenges have kept DOD's business systems modernization on GAO's High-Risk List since 1995.

GAO was asked to review the DTS modernization program and DOD's overall business system modernization. This report examines (1) primary factors that caused DOD's abandonment of MyTravel, (2) the extent to which DOD is following applicable leading practices in modernizing DTS, and (3) the extent to which DOD is following selected practices in its overall business systems modernization.

To conduct this review, GAO analyzed DOD documentation related to MyTravel and identified leading practices for system modernization. GAO analyzed DOD efforts to modernize its travel system, as well as documentation related to departmentwide business system modernization efforts, against the leading practices. GAO also interviewed relevant DOD officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making 13 recommendations to DOD, including to identify leadership roles for the DTS modernization and department-wide Defense Business Council, and to document details for the tracing and prioritization of requirements. The department concurred with 11 recommendations. Although partially concurring with the remaining two, DOD provided information on steps it had underway or planned to implement all 13 recommendations. GAO will continue to monitor the department's actions to address these recommendations.