



United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

National Security and
International Affairs Division

B- 270468

December 4, 1995

The Honorable Sheila E. Widnall
The Secretary of the Air Force

Dear Madam Secretary:

This is to inform you that we have completed our survey of the B-1B Conventional Mission Upgrade Program (CMUP). The major components of the CMUP are not scheduled to start until late 1996 and beyond, however, we would like to share some observations for the Air Force to consider as it begins to implement the CMUP.

Our survey is one of several ongoing GAO audits that include the B-1B. The other audits are addressing such things as (1) the status of the Air Force's efforts to upgrade the computers and software for the CMUP and (2) the cost to keep bombers in the force and to modify them to use precision-guided munitions. These audits are still in process; therefore, the extent to which they will address CMUP issues is not known at this time. The survey discussed in this letter focused on the estimated costs and schedules for the various elements of the CMUP program, the technical risks and planned risk reduction efforts for each aspect of the program, and the current program status.

Our survey indicated that the Air Force has established a sound plan for modifying the B-1B to enhance its conventional capability. We were especially encouraged by the emphasis being given to establishing an adequate test program for the CMUP, particularly as it relates to the defensive system upgrade portion of the program. This has been an area of concern to us during our past reviews of the B-1B program.

As you know, because of pressure to maintain schedule, the B-1B was fielded with several unproven systems that, it was later learned, did not meet user requirements. In the case of the defensive avionics system, a new system was required. This situation occurred in large part because testing was sacrificed to meet the schedule for fielding the system. In our July 1982 testimony before the House Appropriations Committee during the early stages of the B-1B development program, we pointed out that although the B-1B Combined Test Force had recommended a 2,000-hour flight test program, a 1,000-hour test program was approved by the Air Force. We

GAO/NSIAD-96-52R B-1B Conventional Upgrades

155707

B-270468

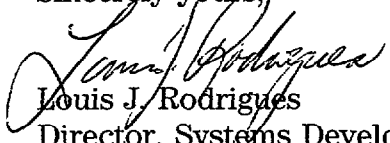
stated that the test program was constrained so that it could be completed before September 30, 1986, the scheduled date for initial operational capability of the B-1B. During that testimony, we stated that the test program was high risk because it depended on successful tests and did not allow for the possibility of difficulties arising during flight testing.

In contrast, we have been assured by Air Staff and program officials that the Air Force is committed to an extensive test program for the CMUP to preclude the acquisition of unproven systems. Our review of the CMUP schedule and related program documents confirms this emphasis. We believe this is a prudent approach because it is likely that the CMUP test program will surface problems that may again put pressure on the schedule. Should this occur, we suggest that the stated emphasis on testing be maintained, even if it means extending the schedule for initiating acquisitions under and completing the CMUP program.

We performed our work at the Office of the Secretary of Defense and at headquarters, U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.; and the B-1B System Program Office, Air Force Material Command, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. At these locations, we interviewed responsible agency personnel and reviewed applicable documents. We conducted our work between July 1995 and November 1995 in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.

We appreciate the courtesies extended to us during our survey. If you or your staff have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me on (202) 512-4841 or Steven F. Kuhta on (202) 512-4328.

Sincerely yours,


Louis J. Rodrigues
Director, Systems Development
and Production Issues

(707120)

Ordering Information

The first copy of each GAO report and testimony is free. Additional copies are \$2 each. Orders should be sent to the following address, accompanied by a check or money order made out to the Superintendent of Documents, when necessary. Orders for 100 or more copies to be mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent.

Orders by mail:

**U.S. General Accounting Office
P.O. Box 6015
Gaithersburg, MD 20884-6015**

or visit:

**Room 1100
700 4th St. NW (corner of 4th and G Sts. NW)
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, DC**

Orders may also be placed by calling (202) 512-6000 or by using fax number (301) 258-4066, or TDD (301) 413-0006.

Each day, GAO issues a list of newly available reports and testimony. To receive facsimile copies of the daily list or any list from the past 30 days, please call (202) 512-6000 using a touchtone phone. A recorded menu will provide information on how to obtain these lists.

For information on how to access GAO reports on the INTERNET, send an e-mail message with "info" in the body to:

info@www.gao.gov

**United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001**

<p>Bulk Rate Postage & Fees Paid GAO Permit No. G100</p>

**Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300**

Address Correction Requested
