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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-04-519](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The proliferation of man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) has been of growing concern to the United States and other governments. The United States is pursuing a wide variety of activities internationally and domestically to address this threat. GAO was asked to assess efforts by (1) the State Department to control global proliferation of MANPADS, (2) the Department of Defense (DOD) to monitor end-use of U.S.-exported Stingers, and (3) the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to develop technical countermeasures to minimize the threat of a MANPADS attack.

What GAO Recommends

The Secretary of State should develop a strategy to work within multilateral forums to establish mechanisms for assessing foreign governments' implementation of their commitments to reduce MANPADS proliferation.

The Secretary of Defense should (1) establish standardized requirements for keeping Stinger missile records; (2) create an electronic database to consolidate all DOD records for Stinger missile systems sold overseas and track the worldwide Stinger inventory; and (3) direct that standardized procedures for conducting Stinger inspections be issued.

State and DOD concurred with our recommendations. DHS provided only technical comments.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-519.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Joseph Christoff at (202) 512-8979 or christoffj@gao.gov.

NONPROLIFERATION

Further Improvements Needed in U.S. Efforts to Counter Threats from Man-Portable Air Defense Systems

What GAO Found

In 2003, the State Department made important progress in its efforts to control the global proliferation of MANPADS. Thirty-two foreign governments made multilateral commitments to better control MANPADS and prevent their acquisition by terrorists. However, the State Department's ability to assess further progress in MANPADS nonproliferation is limited because the multilateral forums have no mechanisms to monitor members' implementation of commitments. In addition, the State Department obtained foreign government commitments to destroy or better secure MANPADS.

DOD is required annually to inventory every Stinger missile system sold overseas. However, DOD's inventory inspection process has flaws. First, DOD records on the number and destination of Stingers sold overseas are incomplete, unreliable, and largely in hard-copy form. Because DOD has not required DOD agencies responsible for end-use monitoring to retain these records, it does not know how many Stingers have been sold overseas. Second, DOD officials overseas use inconsistent practices when inspecting Stinger inventories because DOD lacks procedures for conducting these inspections.

U.S. Stinger Missile System



Source: U.S. Army.

To develop technical countermeasures to minimize the MANPADS threat to aircraft, the DHS initiated a 2-year program to adapt military aircraft defense systems to commercial aircraft. However, DHS faces significant challenges such as establishing system requirements and setting reliable cost estimates. The department adopted GAO's January 2004 recommendations to implement a knowledge-based approach to this development program. For example, DHS plans to use GAO-recommended criteria that ensure product knowledge is attained at key points in system development.