MISSILE DEFENSE

Actions Needed to Improve Planning and Cost Estimates for Long-Term Support of Ballistic Missile Defense

What GAO Found

DOD has taken some initial steps to plan for BMDS support, but efforts to date are incomplete, and difficulties in transitioning responsibilities from MDA to the services have complicated long-term planning. DOD key principles for weapon system life-cycle management stress the importance of completing support plans that cover a system’s expected useful life before it is fielded. Although MDA has developed some policies and guidance for BMDS support planning, it has not developed support plans for three of the seven elements that GAO examined, and MDA has not completed an overall support plan for the integrated system. DOD’s long-term support planning for BMDS is incomplete because it has not established a standard process clearly specifying what support planning should be completed before fielding or how to transition the responsibility for supporting BMDS elements from MDA to the services. For five of the seven elements GAO examined, MDA and the services have been unable to reach agreement on who will be responsible for providing support after 2013.

DOD’s recent efforts to develop operation and support cost estimates for BMDS elements have limitations and are not transparent for DOD and congressional decision makers. DOD and GAO key principles for cost estimating state that complete, credible, and independently verified cost estimates are important to support preparation of budget submissions over the short term as well as for assessing the long-term affordability of a program. DOD has started to develop operation and support cost estimates for the seven elements GAO examined, but those efforts are not yet complete and have limitations. First, the estimates are likely to change since DOD is still determining key assumptions. Second, DOD does not plan to have the estimates independently verified. Furthermore, the Future Years Defense Program, DOD’s 6-year spending plan, does not fully reflect BMDS operation and support costs.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD establish a standard process for long-term BMDS support planning and establish a requirement to estimate BMDS operation and support costs. In response, DOD generally agreed stating that its draft proposal for managing BMDS is intended to handle these issues.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on GAO-08-1068. For more information, contact John Pendleton at (404) 679-1816 or pendletonj@gao.gov.