

Why GAO Did This Study

Since 2002, the Department of Defense (DOD) has spent over \$80 billion on developing and fielding a Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS) comprised of various land-and-sea-based elements employed by multiple combatant commands and services. Since the time available to intercept a missile is short, integrating training among all organizations involved is important to connect seams where commands and elements must work together. In response to House Report 111-491 which accompanied H.R. 5136, GAO assessed the extent to which DOD has (1) developed a plan for integrating ballistic missile defense training across and among commands and multiple elements, and identified training roles, responsibilities, and commensurate authorities; and (2) identified and budgeted for the resources to support training. To do so, GAO analyzed DOD training instructions, plans, exercises, and budgets and assessed the extent to which the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) and the services have agreed on training cost estimates and funding responsibilities.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD designate an entity with authority to develop a strategy for integrating training, and set a deadline to complete training cost estimates and funding agreements and report total BMDS training cost estimates. DOD generally concurred with the merits of our recommendations but did not commit to a timeframe for implementation.

BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE

Actions Needed to Improve Training Integration and Increase Transparency of Training Resources

What GAO Found

DOD has identified roles and responsibilities and developed training plans for individual ballistic missile defense elements and combatant commands, but has not developed a strategy for integrating training among ballistic missile defense organizations and elements in a manner that requires them to operate as they would in an actual engagement. A Joint Staff Instruction sets out tenets of joint training including “train the way you operate” and DOD guidance requires synchronization of training among the services and combatant commands. The services and combatant commands are conducting some integrating training—training across and among combatant commands and services—but our analysis of exercises shows that there may be some training gaps. For example, although some exercises included more than one combatant command, few included multiple live elements. GAO’s guide for assessing training programs states that a training program should include an overall training strategy and an organization that is held accountable for achieving training goals. However, DOD has not developed an overall strategy that includes requirements and standards for integrating ballistic missile defense training because DOD has not clearly designated an entity to be responsible for integrating training across and among all organizations involved and provided it with the authority to do so. Without an overall strategy that includes requirements and standards for integrating training, DOD runs the risk that the organizations that need to work together may have limited opportunities to realistically interact prior to an actual engagement.

DOD lacks visibility over the total resources that may be needed to support ballistic missile defense training since the funds are currently dispersed across MDA and the services, and some of the services’ budget estimates do not separately identify ballistic missile defense training. A further complication is that agreements between MDA and the services on funding responsibilities and life-cycle cost estimates—which include training—have not been completed and approved for all elements. GAO compiled budget documents and data from various sources and estimated about \$4 billion has been planned for ballistic missile defense training from fiscal years 2011 through 2016. However, some of the services’ resources for ballistic missile defense training are not easily identifiable since some training is funded as part of a more comprehensive training program. GAO found examples of gaps between training requirements and budgeted resources, such as a \$300 million requirement in the Terminal High Altitude Air Defense program that is not included in MDA’s budget plans. DOD and MDA policies identify the need to complete cost estimates and funding responsibilities for elements as they are developed; however, there are no procedures or deadlines in place requiring that MDA and the services agree on funding responsibilities and complete training cost estimates before elements are fielded. As a result, DOD and congressional decision makers do not have a full picture of the resources that will be needed over time and risk training gaps.