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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-07-649T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Aviation Operations, Safety and Security, Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

The skies over America are becoming more crowded every day. The consensus of opinion is that the current aviation system cannot be expanded to meet this projected growth. Recognizing the need for system transformation, in 2003 Congress authorized the Joint Planning and Development Office (JPDO) and requires the office to operate in conjunction with multiple federal agencies, including the Departments of Transportation, Commerce, Defense, and Homeland Security; the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA); the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. JPDO is responsible for coordinating the related efforts of these partner agencies to plan the transformation to the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen): a fundamental redesign of the national airspace system. FAA will be largely responsible for implementing the policies and systems necessary for NextGen, while safely operating the current air traffic control system.

GAO’s testimony focuses on (1) the progress that JPDO has made in planning NextGen and some challenges it continues to face and (2) the challenges that FAA faces transitioning to NextGen. GAO’s statement is based on our recent reports as well as ongoing work, all of which has been conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-649T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Susan Fleming at (202) 512-2834, or flemings@gao.gov.

NEXT GENERATION AIR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

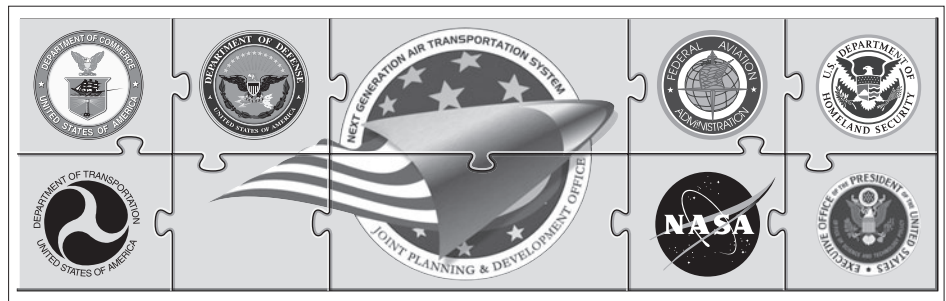
Progress and Challenges in Planning and Implementing the Transformation of the National Airspace System

What GAO Found

JPDO has made substantial progress in planning NextGen, but continues to face several challenges. JPDO has established a framework to facilitate federal interagency collaboration and is involving nonfederal stakeholders in its planning efforts. JPDO has begun leveraging the resources of its partner agencies and is finalizing key planning documents such as the concept of operations and the enterprise architecture. The draft concept of operations has been posted to JPDO’s Web site for public comment and the enterprise architecture is expected to be completed in the next few months. JPDO and FAA have improved their collaboration and coordination by expanding and revamping FAA’s Operational Evolution Plan—renamed the Operational Evolution Partnership—which is intended to provide an implementation plan for FAA for NextGen. Among the challenges JPDO faces are institutionalizing the interagency collaboration that is so central to its mission, developing a comprehensive cost estimate, and addressing potential gaps in research and development for NextGen.

In transitioning to NextGen, FAA faces several challenges. Although FAA has taken several actions to improve its management of current air traffic control modernization efforts, institutionalizing these improvements will require continued strong leadership, particularly since the agency will have lost two of its key agents for change by September 2007. Costs are another challenge facing FAA as it addresses the resource demands that NextGen will likely pose, while continuing to maintain the current air traffic control system. Finally, determining whether it has the technical and contract management expertise necessary to implement NextGen is a challenge for FAA.

Seven Partner Agencies Form the Joint Planning and Development Office



Source: GAO.