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# Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-04-342](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, House Committee on Armed Services

## Why GAO Did This Study

The current generation of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) has been under development for defense applications since the 1980s. UAVs were used in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2002 and 2003 to observe, track, target, and strike enemy forces. These successes have heightened interest in UAVs within the Department of Defense (DOD) and the services.

GAO was asked to (1) determine how much funding DOD requested, was appropriated, and was obligated for major UAV development efforts during fiscal years 1999-2003 and (2) assess whether DOD's approach to planning for UAVs provides reasonable assurance that its investment in UAVs will facilitate their integration into the force structure.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD (1) establish a strategic plan to guide UAV development and fielding and (2) designate the UAV Task Force or other appropriate body to oversee the plan's implementation, ensuring that sufficient authority is provided. DOD partially concurred with one recommendation and disagreed with the other, saying it did not need to provide more authority for an organization within the department. GAO continues to support both recommendations because of growth in the number and cost of UAV programs and their importance to military capabilities.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-342](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-342).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Neal P. Curtin (202) 512-4914 or [curtinn@gao.gov](mailto:curtinn@gao.gov).

## FORCE STRUCTURE

# Improved Strategic Planning Can Enhance DOD's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Efforts

## What GAO Found

During the past 5 fiscal years, Congress provided more funding for UAV development and procurement than requested by DOD, and to date the services have obligated most of these funds. To promote rapid employment of UAVs, Congress has provided nearly \$2.7 billion for UAV development and procurement compared with the \$2.3 billion requested by DOD. Because Congress has appropriated more funds than requested, the services are able to acquire systems at a greater rate than planned. For example, in fiscal year 2003, the Air Force requested \$23 million to buy 7 Predator UAVs, but Congress provided over \$131 million—enough to buy 29 Predators.

DOD's approach to planning for developing and fielding UAVs does not provide reasonable assurance that its investment in UAVs will facilitate their integration into the force structure efficiently, although DOD has taken positive steps to improve the UAV program's management. In 2001 DOD established a joint Planning Task Force in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. To communicate its vision and promote commonality of UAV systems, in 2002, the Task Force published the *UAV Roadmap*, which describes current programs, identifies potential missions, and provides guidance on emerging technologies. While the *Roadmap* identifies guidance and priority goals for UAV development, neither it nor other key documents represent a comprehensive strategic plan to ensure that the services and DOD agencies develop systems that complement each other, perform all required missions, and avoid duplication. Moreover, the Task Force serves in an advisory capacity to the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, but has little authority to enforce program direction. Service officials indicated that their service-specific planning documents were developed to meet their own needs and operational concepts without considering those of other services. Without a strategic plan and an oversight body with sufficient authority to enforce program direction, DOD risks fielding a poorly integrated UAV force structure, which could increase costs and the risk of future interoperability problems.

The Air Force Predator UAV



Source: U.S. Air Force.