August 2004

MILITARY TRANSFORMATION

Fielding of Army's Stryker Vehicles Is Well Under Way, but Expectations for Their Transportability by C-130 Aircraft Need to Be Clarified

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Highlights

Highlights of GAO-04-925, a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

In its transformation to a more responsive and mobile force, the Army plans to form 6 Stryker Brigade Combat teams equipped with a new family of armored vehicles known as Strykers. The Stryker—which provides transport for troops, weapons, and command and control—was required by the Army to weigh no more than 38,000 pounds and be transportable in theater by C-130 cargo aircraft arriving ready for immediate combat operations. The Army plans to equip its future force with a new generation of vehicles—Future Combat Systems—to also be transportable by C-130s.

GAO was asked to assess (1) the current status of Stryker vehicle acquisition, including the most current Stryker vehicle program and operating cost estimates; (2) the status and results of Stryker vehicle tests; and (3) the ability of C-130 aircraft to transport Stryker vehicles within a theater of operations. This report also addresses the transportability of the Army's Future Combat Systems on C-130 aircraft.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Department of Defense (DOD) provide to Congress clarification of expected capabilities and limitations of C-130 transport for Stryker vehicles and Future Combat System vehicles; and options for alternative transport. DOD partially concurred with our recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-925.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact William M. Solis at (202) 512-8365 or solisw@gao.gov.

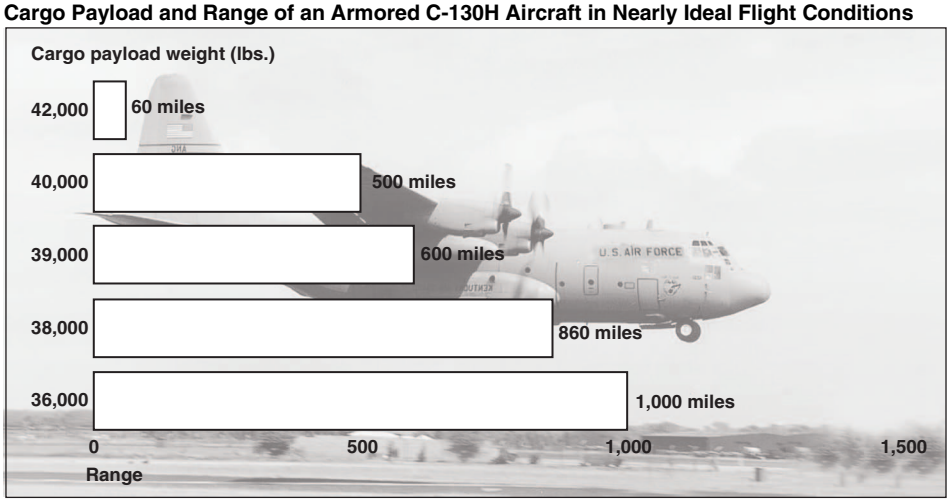
What GAO Found

The acquisition of the Stryker vehicles is about two-thirds complete; with about 1,200 of 8 production vehicle configurations ordered and 800 delivered to units. In addition, limited quantities of two developmental vehicles—the Mobile Gun System and the Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Reconnaissance vehicle prototypes—have also been ordered for testing. Stryker program costs have increased about 22 percent from the November 2000 estimate of $7.1 billion to the December 2003 estimate of $8.7 billion. Total program costs include acquisition costs—procurement, research, development, and test and evaluation—as well as military construction costs related to Strykers. The Army does not yet have reliable estimates of the Stryker's operating costs because of limited peacetime use to develop data.

As of June 2004, testing of the eight production Strykers was mostly complete, with the vehicles meeting Army operational requirements with limitations. However, development and testing schedules of the two developmental Strykers have been delayed, resulting in an over 1-year delay in meeting the vehicles' production milestones and fielding dates.

While the Army has demonstrated the required transportability of Strykers by C-130 aircraft in training exercises, in an operational environment, the Stryker's average weight of 38,000 pounds—along with other factors such as added equipment weight and less than ideal flight conditions—significantly limits the C-130's flight range and reduces the size force that could be deployed. These factors also limit the ability of Strykers to conduct combat operations immediately upon arrival as required. With the similar maximum weight envisioned for Future Combat System vehicles intended for the Army's future force, the planned C-130 transport of those vehicles would present similar challenges.

Cargo Payload and Range of an Armored C-130H Aircraft in Nearly Ideal Flight Conditions



Source: GAO analysis of Air Mobility Command data.