

COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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APR 25 1974

The Honorable George W. Mahon
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives



Dear Mr. Chairman:

On April 3, 1974, we forwarded our current staff study on the B-1 aircraft program to your committee. Subsequently, we received a copy of the December 31, 1973, Selected Acquisition Report (SAR) on the B-1 from the Department of Defense. We recognize that your committee receives the SAR but we feel that the significant changes in the technical section of this latest SAR warrant our calling these matters to your attention.

By letter dated March 13, 1974, the Secretary of the Air Force advised you that its latest program cost estimate was \$15 billion. Our staff study stated that the Air Force was making an intensive review of the B-1 program and that substantial cost increases would probably occur. We also pointed out that other major changes relating to performance capabilities were being considered by the Air Force. The performance changes are now reflected in the technical section of the December 1973 SAR.

Two changes which we consider to be very significant are in the estimates of range for the basic design subsonic and supersonic missions. While the total distances for these missions have only been decreased 7 to 8 percent, the effect is to reduce the penetration distances to and from potential targets. The result is that the number of targets that can be reached may be significantly reduced for the basic design missions. We believe that such a range decrease could have a serious effect on the primary mission of the B-1 which is to serve the nuclear deterrence objective through delivery of heavy payload over long ranges through a hostile environment.

The degradation in range is partly due to the fact that the estimated weight of the B-1 has increased to 395,000 pounds. As we noted in our staff study, that is the level at which the structures and landing gear will be at maximum design load. It is at this point that additional

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fuel cannot be added to offset the range degradation based on the design mission. Since the B-1 is also being designed for growth capacity in its avionics, any increases in avionics weight may require further trade-offs that could also impact on the B-1's mission accomplishments.

The final change reported in the technical section of the SAR is in the takeoff distance which increased an additional 550 feet to a current estimate of 7500 feet. This also is related to the increased weight

In view of the significant decreases in the estimates of technical performance, your committee may wish to question the Department of Defense on (1) the impact these changes will have on the planned utilization of the B-1 for its strategic role, and (2) what further changes may be in the offing in the cost, schedule and technical performance of the B-1 program.

Sincerely yours,

(SIGNED) ELMER B. STAATS

Comptroller General
of the United States

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