



# Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-03-52](#), a report to the Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration (ACTD) program was started by the Department of Defense (DOD) as a way to get new technologies that meet critical military needs into the hands of users faster and for less cost. GAO was asked to examine DOD's process for structuring and executing ACTDs.

## What GAO Recommends

We are recommending that DOD strengthen its criteria for assessing the military utility of ACTD projects; consider ways to ensure funding is provided for acquisitions; and have the Secretary weigh in on decisions on whether to transition technologies that are tested under the program.

DOD generally concurred with the recommendations on improving military utility assessments and ensuring timely funding for the transition of successful ACTD projects. DOD partially concurred with our recommendation on obtaining high-level concurrence on any decision not to transition ACTD projects addressing joint requirements.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-52](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-52).

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Katherine Schinasi at (202) 512-4841 or [schinasi@gao.gov](mailto:schinasi@gao.gov).

## DEFENSE ACQUISITIONS

### Factors Affecting Outcomes of Advanced Concept Technology Demonstrations

#### What GAO Found

Since the ACTD program was started in 1994, a wide range of products have been tested by technology experts and military operators in realistic settings—from unmanned aerial vehicles, to friend-or-foe detection systems, to biological agent detection systems, to advanced simulation technology designed to enhance joint training. Many of these have successfully delivered new technologies to users. In fact, 21 of 24 projects we examined that were found to have military utility delivered at least some technologies to users that meet military needs.

Though the majority of the projects we examined transitioned technologies to users, there are factors that hamper the ACTD process. For example:

- Technology has been too immature to be tested in a realistic setting, leading to cancellation of the demonstration.
- Military services and defense agencies have been reluctant to fund acquisition of ACTD-proven technologies, especially those focusing on joint requirements, because of competing priorities.
- ACTDs' military utility may not have been assessed consistently.

Some of the barriers we identified can be addressed through efforts DOD now has underway, including an evaluation of how the ACTD process can be improved; adoption of criteria to be used to ensure technology is sufficiently mature; and placing of more attention on the end phase of the ACTD process. Other barriers, however, will be much more difficult to address in view of cultural resistance to joint initiatives and the requirements of DOD's planning and funding process.

#### Advanced Concept Technology Demonstrations Projects

Counterproliferation I



Miniature air-launched decoy



Military operations in urban terrain



Predator



Source:DOD