



Highlights of [GAO-03-603T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, House Committee on Armed Services

Why GAO Did This Study

The Air Force is developing the F/A-22 aircraft to replace its fleet of F-15 air superiority aircraft. The F/A-22 is designed to be superior to the F-15 by being capable of flying at higher speeds for longer distances, less detectable, and able to provide the pilot with substantially improved awareness of the surrounding situation.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1998 requires us to annually assess the F/A-22 development program and determine whether the program is meeting key performance, schedule, and cost goals. We have issued six of these annual reports to Congress. We have also reported on F/A-22 production program costs over the last 3 years. Most recently, we reported on F/A-22 production and development in February and March 2003 respectively.

This testimony summarizes our work on the F/A-22 program, covering performance, cost, and scheduling issues.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making recommendations in this testimony. However, recommendations in several prior GAO reports have stressed the need for the Air Force to not increase annual production rates until greater knowledge is achieved through the completion of testing.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-603T.

To view the full testimony, click on the link above.
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TACTICAL AIRCRAFT

Status of the F/A-22 Program

What GAO Found

In the past several years, we have reported on a range of problems affecting the development of F/A-22. Specifically:

- F/A-22 estimated performance in the areas of supercruise, acceleration, maneuverability, radar observability, combat radius, and range in searching targets have so far been met or exceeded. However, problems have surfaced related to overheating during high-speed flight-testing, reliability, avionics that perform radar, communication, navigation, identification and electronic warfare functions as well as excess movement of the vertical tails. Modifications are being made to some test aircraft to address some of these problems. For now, however, testing in some areas is restricted.
- Each year since 1998, we have reported that assembly of the test aircraft was requiring more time than planned and that this was causing the test aircraft to be delivered late to the test center for flight-testing. We have also reported annually since 2000 that flight-test program efficiency—the amount of flight-testing accomplished—has been less than planned.
- Cost increases have plagued the F/A-22 program since development began in 1991. Since 1997, the Air Force's estimated cost to develop the F/A-22 has increased by \$3.2 billion bringing the total estimate to \$21.9 billion. In addition, over the last 6 years, DOD has identified about \$18 billion in estimated production cost growth bringing the total estimate to \$42.2 billion—which exceeds the congressionally mandated production cost limit of \$36.8 billion. Further, modernization costs have increased dramatically in recent years. Actions to offset estimated cost growth have had mixed success.

These problems have dramatically affected the F/A-22 program. Cost increases, in part, have forced the Air Force to substantially decrease the number of aircraft to be purchased—from 648 to 276. Delays in testing also have significant consequences. Continuing to acquire aircraft before adequate testing is a high-risk strategy that could serve to further increase production costs.

Moreover, F/A-22 problems have limited DOD's ability to upgrade its aging tactical aircraft fleet. If the F/A-22 program had met its original goals, the Air Force could have been replacing older aircraft with F/A-22 aircraft over 7 years ago. Now, however, it will not begin replacing aircraft until late 2005 at the earliest. The rate of replenishment will be substantially lower, due to the decrease in the number of new aircraft to be purchased. As a result, DOD will have to continue to use tactical aircraft that contribute to increased operating and support costs and it will have to wait longer than anticipated to have access to the advanced capabilities to be offered by the F/A-22.