



Highlights of [GAO-08-877](#), a report to the Subcommittee on Air and Land Forces, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Department of Defense (DOD) has spent an estimated \$12 billion on the development and production of tactical radios over the last 5 years—about as much as was spent producing Virginia Class submarines (\$10.8 billion) in the same period. Survivability and lethality in warfare are increasingly dependent on superior information and communication capabilities. DOD is counting on the Joint Tactical Radio System (JTRS) to deliver the breakthroughs in this area. At the same time as it is developing JTRS, DOD wants to ensure that current forces are equipped with sufficient legacy radios. To address Subcommittee concerns regarding DOD's approach to meeting current and future radio needs, GAO examined this subject. In response, this report addresses (1) how planned investments in key tactical radio systems changed over the last 5 years, (2) why these changes occurred, and (3) the challenges ahead.

To assess these topics, GAO's work included reviewing 2003 through 2007 budget requests, legacy radio procurements, and the status of the JTRS program; and interviewing officials from DOD organizations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense develop a comprehensive investment strategy for tactical radios and take actions to improve oversight of their acquisition. In commenting on a draft of this report DOD agreed with these recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-877](#). For more information, contact Paul Francis at (202) 512-4841 or francisp@gao.gov.

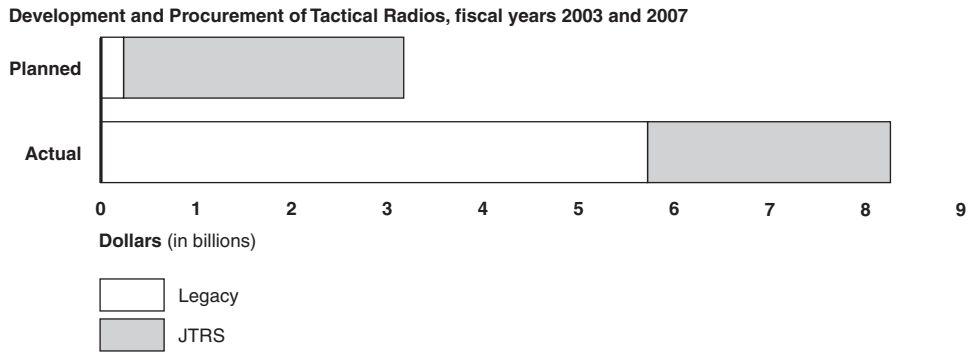
DEFENSE ACQUISITIONS

Department of Defense Needs Framework for Balancing Investments in Tactical Radios

What GAO Found

Over the past 5 years, DOD investments in key tactical radios have shifted dramatically, both in size and composition. In 2002, when JTRS first began system development, DOD planned to invest close to \$3 billion in JTRS over fiscal years 2003-2007. However, as shown below, actual investments more than doubled and shifted to producing thousands more legacy radios. Compared with the \$3.2 billion that was slated to be spent on JTRS and the Army and Marine Corps legacy radios, about \$8.3 billion was actually spent. Of this, about \$5.7 billion was spent on the legacy radios, while \$2.5 billion was spent on JTRS development.

Planned and Actual Spending on Tactical Radios, 2003-07



Source: GAO analysis of service and JTRS annual budget requests.

The change in tactical radio investments was brought about by (1) delays in the development and production of JTRS and (2) urgent demands for more radios to equip current forces. JTRS has encountered significant cost, schedule, and performance problems, causing some users to buy more legacy radios instead. Moreover, the military services' demand for tactical radios soared because of combat operations, the need to equip Guard and Reserve forces with modern radios, and to add more radios per combat unit. Supplemental funding of \$5.5 billion paid for most of these legacy radios.

Over the next 5 years, DOD faces several challenges in providing needed tactical communications capabilities to the warfighter, including:

- Overcoming technology hurdles, size and power constraints, and security architecture issues to complete JTRS development.
- Managing investments within defined fiscal constraints. A legacy vehicle radio costs about \$20,000, while its more capable JTRS replacement is estimated to cost up to 10 times more.
- Phasing in JTRS without prematurely retiring a relatively young inventory of legacy radios.

DOD does not have a strategy to meet these challenges and thus runs the risk of having its future communications capabilities decided ad hoc.