

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-336](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 includes a provision for GAO to select, assess, and report on DOD MAIS programs annually through March 2018. MAIS programs are intended to help the department sustain its key operations. This report: (1) evaluates DOD's implementation of statutory reporting requirements for MAIS programs experiencing a critical change; (2) describes the extent to which selected MAIS programs have changed their planned cost and schedule estimates, and met performance targets; (3) assesses the extent to which selected MAIS programs have used key IT acquisition best practices, including requirements and risk management; and (4) determines the extent to which MAIS programs are represented on the Dashboard. GAO compared information on programs with a critical change to the reporting requirements. GAO selected three programs based on factors, such as representation from each military service (Air Force, Army, and Navy), identified changes to cost, schedule, and performance, and assessed them against selected best practices. GAO traced the programs to the Dashboard and reviewed relevant processes.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends, among others, that DOD examine the critical change reporting process and implement corrections for the reports' timeliness, and address weaknesses with requirements management, and add AT&L as a responsible organization for MAIS programs to the Dashboard. DOD concurred with all recommendations. OMB did not concur but GAO continues to believe that improved transparency is needed.

View [GAO-16-336](#). For more information, contact Carol R. Cha at (202) 512-4456 or [chac@gao.gov](mailto:chac@gao.gov).

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# DOD MAJOR AUTOMATED INFORMATION SYSTEMS

## Improvements Can Be Made in Reporting Critical Changes and Clarifying Leadership Responsibility

### What GAO Found

All 18 major automated information system (MAIS) programs that experienced a critical change to program cost, schedule, or system performance targets submitted complete reports to Congress that contained all four statutory elements, but 16 programs did not meet the requirement to report to Congress within 60 days of the program manager's submission to the senior Department of Defense (DOD) official that led to the critical change determination. Of the 16 critical change reports that exceeded the 60-days to report, 10 of the programs took over 100 days. Officials said that 60 days is too short to perform a program evaluation. Since the reports were not always timely, Congress may not have the necessary information when it is needed to make decisions. Finally, the DOD did not demonstrate that it had an internal control to ensure that MAIS programs not in compliance with reporting requirements were restricted from obligating funds on major contracts as required by law.

All three MAIS programs GAO selected to review experienced changes in their cost and schedule estimates, and one program did not fully meet its technical performance targets (see table).

**Table: Extent of Changes in Cost and Schedule Estimates, and the Results of Technical Performance Targets (from the First Acquisition Program Baseline Estimate)**

Program	Cost increase	Schedule change	Met technical performance targets?
Army program	\$368 million (19%)	3 months (full deployment)	✓
Navy program	\$1.66 billion (477%)	13 years 9 months (full deployment)*	✓
Air Force program	\$129 million (9%)	6 months (milestone C)	

Source: GAO analysis of data provided by DOD officials. | GAO-16-336

\*Delay was attributed to a major change in project scope and restructuring of the program.

The three selected programs implemented all seven IT acquisition best practices for risk management, and most of the best practices were implemented for requirements management: the Army and Navy implemented three of five best practices and the Air Force implemented four of five best practices. For example, the Army program did not adequately manage requirements changes and ensure that deliverables were in alignment with requirements. Until the programs fully implement best practices for requirements management, management of development efforts will likely be impaired.

As of October 2015, all appropriate programs were represented on the Federal IT Dashboard (Dashboard) as required by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB); however, the organization responsible for performance of MAIS programs was not provided. Specifically, DOD's Chief Information Officer is shown as the responsible party because OMB requires this, but the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (AT&L) has overall responsibility for the MAIS programs. Therefore, users of the Dashboard are unaware that AT&L is the responsible organization and, thus, public accountability of the MAIS programs is decreased.