

ACQUISITION AND SOURCING MANAGEMENT

More than 200 billion tax dollars are spent each year on buying sophisticated weaponry, complex space and satellite systems, advanced technologies, and a broad range of goods and services needed to make the federal government run. This sum comprises the largest element of discretionary funding in the federal budget. Acquisition and Sourcing Management examines whether this money is being spent efficiently and effectively and whether acquisitions maximize agencies' ability to meet their mission objectives. To help the federal government adopt better ways of buying systems, equipment, and services, we analyze commercial practices and assess how they can be applied to government. In the face of global economic pressures, we also focus on identifying trends in national security industries and protecting critical capabilities and technologies.

Our Work

We conduct our work for Congress with the aim of

- improving the government's ability to acquire sophisticated weaponry, space systems, and other goods and services;
- minimizing contracting risks faced by government agencies; and
- improving DOD's access to efficient suppliers with technologically superior products.

We concentrate on the Department of Defense (DOD) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) because they invest most heavily in acquisitions. But we also examine opportunities for bringing about governmentwide improvements, particularly for such things as new contracting approaches and the strengthening of the acquisition workforce.

Our work also has an international focus. For example, we examine foreign military sales improvement efforts, foreign acquisitions affecting national security, export control proposals, and international alliances among DOD contractors.

Because we look at a range of unique situations, much of our work requires us to develop innovative ways of assessing programs and processes. For example, we have developed methodologies based on our best practices work for weapons acquisitions that better enable us to assess whether DOD has the right knowledge at the right time to get the most out of the \$120 billion it spends on weapons. Such methodologies help us to predict problems before they occur and thus to identify constructive interventions.

KEY CONTACTS

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Katherine V. Schinasi

DIRECTORS

David E. Cooper

Paul L. Francis

Robert E. Levin

Allen Li

William T. Woods

Michael Sullivan (Acting)

PHONE

(202) 512-4841

MAILING ADDRESS

U.S. General Accounting Office

*Acquisition and Sourcing
Management*

Room 4440A

441 G Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20548

Accomplishments and Key Projects

Our work consistently results in billions of dollars in savings and in better ways of doing business. For example:

- Using our reports as a guide, DOD is adopting new practices for making sure sophisticated weapon systems are delivered on time, at cost, and effectively. For instance, recent changes in its acquisition policy focus on making sure technologies are demonstrated to a high level of maturity before beginning a program and on taking an evolutionary, or phased, approach to developing the system. By employing similar practices, commercial companies have realized huge cost and time savings.
- DOD is also adopting new practices for acquiring some \$50 billion annually in services ranging from network support, to consulting, to building maintenance. Specifically, it is embracing a strategic framework we identified, which entails developing a better picture of spending and taking an enterprisewide approach to acquiring services. Associated savings are estimated to be more than \$1.5 billion a year.
- Using our in-depth analyses of budget submissions, which target areas of concern such as schedule delays and cost increases, Congress annually targets hundreds of millions of dollars in cost savings. Programs recently identified for reductions include DOD's space-based infrared system and the Air Force's Joint Signal Intelligence Avionics Family.
- Following our recommendation, NASA is taking steps to ensure that the decisions it makes for future space travel are made in concert with plans for the space station, the space shuttle, and partnerships with DOD and the commercial sector.
- Following our recommendation, the Customs Service is taking steps to improve its export control process and mitigate the risk of sensitive military items falling into the wrong hands.

Our current and planned projects include annual crosscutting assessments of major weapon systems and in-depth looks at

- best practices for service and system acquisitions;
- NASA's major management challenges;
- DOD's missile defense program, unmanned aerial vehicles, and satellite systems;
- controls surrounding advanced weapon sales to other countries; and
- methodologies for assessing contracting risks in federal agencies.