



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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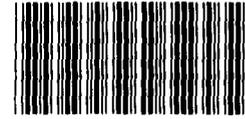
MISSION ANALYSIS AND
SYSTEMS ACQUISITION DIVISION

B-205764

DECEMBER 16, 1981

The Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger
The Secretary of Defense

Attention: Assistant for Audit Reports



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Dear Mr. Secretary:

Subject: Air Force Purchase of 30mm Gun Pod System
(MASAD-82-9)

We are concerned that the Air Force has entered into a highly concurrent development and production program for a 30mm gun pod when there appears to be a questionable urgency for it.

The 30mm gun pod is a self-contained pneumatic driven four-barrel gun system to be externally mounted on high performance aircraft such as the F-4, A-7, and F-16. The system will also include an ammunition loading system. The weapon system is to provide the Tactical Air Force with an increased capability to attack numerous and varied ground targets and provide a low cost, low complexity alternative to several existing systems to meet near term requirements.

In April 1980, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Research and Engineering, in an attempt to improve the antiarmor capability of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), requested that the Air Force undertake the development of a 30mm gun pod with a target initial operational capability date of June 1982, or at least, no later than fiscal year 1983. Having previously flight tested two engineering test pods in 1979, the Air Force in July 1980 entered into a full-scale development contract to correct problems identified in the tests. The contractor, General Electric Company, is to provide two pods in January 1982, and two in April 1982, for environmental, developmental, and operational testing. In August 1981, the Air Force entered into a \$32 million production contract for (40) 30mm gun pods. In November 1981, it exercised a \$42 million option for 104 additional pods.

With the environmental, developmental, and operational testing not scheduled to begin until January 1982, it would appear that the Air Force's action to enter into a production contract may have been premature. Further, certain events and plans for the gun pods raise questions about the urgency of this program.

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Specifically:

--in May 1981, the Air Force deleted from its fiscal year 1983 program plan due to higher funding priorities, 180 gun pods designated for the F-16. We understand however, that the pods are to be designed to be compatible with the F-16.

--about 70 percent of the total of 340 production pods currently planned will be assigned to the Air National Guard. About 30 percent will be assigned to the RDF.

In our view, these plans strongly indicate that the 30mm gun pod program does not warrant the level of concurrency involved in this program, and that, perhaps, the entire procurement ought to be reassessed.

We would appreciate your comments on these matters within 15 days.

Copies of this letter are being sent to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations and Armed Services as well as the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on Government Operations.

Sincerely yours,



W. H. Sheley, Jr.
Director