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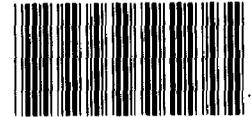
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REPORT BY THE
COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES

THE AIR FORCE LANTIRN
PROGRAM MUST SURMOUNT SOME
FORMIDABLE DIFFICULTIES

D I G E S T

The Air Force's Low Altitude Navigation and Targeting Infrared System for Night (LANTIRN), began full-scale engineering development in August 1979. It has experienced considerable cost growth and major technical difficulties serious enough for the Air Force to have recently lengthened the weapon's development and flight testing schedules by more than a year. The estimated program cost has increased over 70 percent from about \$1 billion to almost \$1.8 billion in slightly more than a year.



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The LANTIRN program provides for the development of two major subsystems--a head-up display and a fire control system. These are to be used with the A-10 and the F-16 aircraft. If successfully developed, LANTIRN could provide these aircraft with improved navigational and targeting capability that would enable them to be used in night operations and under low cloud ceilings. This capability could considerably increase the number of sorties and provide more time in which to conduct tactical operations. (See pp. 1 and 2.)

LANTIRN MAY NO LONGER
BE COST EFFECTIVE

Two major assumptions, which were the basis for the Air Force concluding in early studies that LANTIRN was cost effective, no longer appear to be valid. It is still uncertain that single-seat aircraft, such as the F-16 and the A-10, can be operated at the low altitudes envisioned by the studies without creating an excessive workload for the pilot. This matter is still under study. Second, costs assumed in the Air Force studies have more than tripled. The acquisition and installation costs of the LANTIRN pods now exceed \$5 million for each aircraft.

The Air Force is making another cost-effectiveness study that is assessing LANTIRN's performance at altitudes considered more manageable for the pilot. The study is also assuming higher LANTIRN costs. Air Force

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schedule, LANTIRN skirted the initial development phases of the acquisition process where program risks might have been fully considered.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION
BY THE CONGRESS

The Congress should take the results of the most recent LANTIRN cost-effectiveness studies into account before providing further funds for the LANTIRN program. If the studies show that LANTIRN is not cost effective, the Congress should end the program or direct the Air Force to consider alternative systems.

RECOMMENDATION

If the Congress continues to provide funds for the LANTIRN program, GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense designate LANTIRN as a major acquisition program requiring quarterly reports to the Congress to keep the Congress informed on how it is meeting its cost, schedule, and performance goals.

VIEWS OF AGENCY OFFICIALS

GAO did not request official comments on this report because of the need to issue the report in time for congressional consideration of the fiscal year 1983 defense budget request. GAO did, however, discuss a draft of this report with high level officials associated with management of the program. These officials agreed with the facts presented in this report and their views have been incorporated as appropriate.