



# INSPECTOR GENERAL

*U.S. Department of Defense*

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## Summary Report: Lessons Learned from DoD OIG Reports on Acquisition Oversight

INDEPENDENCE ★ INTEGRITY ★ EXCELLENCE ★ TRANSPARENCY







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September 11, 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS  
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION AND SUSTAINMENT  
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS  
AUDITOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
AUDITOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
AUDITOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

SUBJECT: Summary Report: Lessons Learned from DoD OIG Reports on Acquisition Oversight  
(Report No. DODIG-2025-155)

This summary report is one in a series of reports that summarizes key themes and lessons learned from our body of oversight work in several key areas. The purpose of these summaries is to provide helpful and timely information that is relevant to the DoD's priorities.

The goal of DoD acquisitions is to acquire quality products and services that satisfy user needs, increase mission capability, and improve operational support. The DoD requested \$384.3 billion in acquisition program funding in the FY 2026 Presidential Budget to fund over 2,049 DoD acquisition programs, projects, and activities. We recognize that DoD acquisition policy continuously adapts to allow the DoD to deliver strategic capabilities at an optimal speed to address constantly evolving world threats in the most cost-effective manner. Implementing the recommendations in our reports should also assist DoD acquisition officials in providing better acquisition management.

This summary report provides lessons learned related to acquisition oversight identified in 16 audit and evaluation reports that the DoD OIG issued from April 2020 through August 2025. We analyzed the reports, identified challenges related to the DoD's management of acquisition programs, and selected three lessons learned that were applicable to the identified challenges.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [REDACTED].

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Carmen J. Malone", is positioned above the printed name.

Carmen J. Malone  
Assistant Inspector General for Audit  
Acquisition, Contracting, and Sustainment





# Introduction

According to DoD Directive 5000.01, the Defense Acquisition System supports the National Defense Strategy through the development of a more lethal force based on U.S. technological innovation and a culture of performance that yields a decisive and sustained U.S. military advantage. The acquisition system is designed to acquire products and services that satisfy user needs with measurable and timely improvements to mission capability, material readiness, and operational support, at a fair and reasonable price.

To achieve that objective, the DoD employs an adaptive acquisition framework. The adaptive acquisition framework supports the Defense Acquisition System with the objective of delivering effective, suitable, survivable, sustainable, and affordable solutions to the end user in a timely manner. Milestone Decision Authorities, other Decision Authorities, and Program Managers have broad authority to plan and manage acquisition programs consistent with sound business practices.

The FY 2026 Presidential Budget shows that the DoD requested \$384.3 billion (40 percent) of the total \$961.6 billion budget request for acquisition program funding in procurement and research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E) appropriations. The request will fund over 2,049 DoD acquisition program, projects, and activities. Robust and continuous acquisition planning is crucial to ensure the DoD's ability to execute the National Defense Strategy and deliver weapon systems with the right capability, at the right time, and at the best cost.

## Lessons Learned from Past DoD OIG Reports

The DoD OIG covers a wide range of acquisition-related issues. Over the last 5 years, the DoD OIG has issued 16 audit and evaluation reports that have highlighted challenges in the DoD's acquisition system.<sup>1</sup> Although the types of weapon systems and the DoD Component responsible for acquiring them have varied across our projects, we identified three lessons learned related to DoD acquisition oversight. These lessons learned are that the DoD should: (1) develop effective performance requirements, (2) plan and execute adequate test and evaluation procedures, and (3) establish and consistently follow DoD acquisition policy.

### ***Develop Effective Performance Requirements***

Performance requirements are program attributes designed to fill validated capability gaps. If a weapon system cannot meet a validated performance requirement, the system will not meet mission needs. Program managers are responsible for demonstrating progress or achievement of performance requirements before major decision points in the acquisition process.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Appendix, Table 1 shows the DoD OIG audit and evaluation reports we reviewed related to DoD acquisition oversight and Table 2 shows the associated lessons learned for those reports.

In the reports we issued, we determined that the DoD did not:

- develop and continually evaluate performance requirements to ensure they met relevant capability gaps,
- monitor and resolve developmental deficiencies that prevented acquisition programs from successfully meeting performance requirements before milestone decisions to ensure the weapon system performed as intended, and
- ensure acquisition programs were successfully meeting performance requirements before the programs entered production.

If weapon systems do not meet the required capabilities to support warfighter needs, the programs could require costly retrofits of existing structural design, as we reported on the MQ-4C Triton.<sup>2</sup> Retrofits often lead to significant schedule delays, which can affect the DoD's ability to perform vital missions. If acquisition programs do not meet performance requirements or revalidate changes to the technologies before entering production, schedules can slip and costs will rise, as we reported on the KC-46A tanker refueling boom.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Plan and Execute Adequate Test and Evaluation Procedures***

Test and evaluation enables an assessment of technical performance, specifications, and system maturity to determine whether systems are operationally effective, suitable, and survivable for their intended use. Test and evaluation requires the program manager to conduct an appropriate amount of testing to validate that the program will meet performance requirements. It is essential that acquisition officials effectively plan and execute testing evaluations to reduce the likelihood of inadequate performance, increased program costs, canceled programs, operator injuries, and capability and safety failures.

In the reports we issued, we determined that the DoD did not:

- define clearly acceptable measures to determine whether a test was successful,
- conduct proper test and evaluation before initial operational capability decisions,
- demonstrate critical testing in a relevant test environment, and
- track, evaluate, and correct unresolved test deficiencies from initial operational tests.

Test and evaluation identifies potential safety failures and ensures that the weapon system can meet its performance requirements. It is critical that program officials determine that systems work as planned. Making critical production decisions without performing developmental and operational tests and evaluations to verify whether the system will meet its operational capability requirements, as we reported on the MQ-25 program, could require costly, time-consuming engineering changes, and deployment delays.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Report No. DODIG-2025-151, "Audit of the Navy's Management of the MQ-4C Triton Unmanned Aircraft Program's Operational Capabilities," September 4, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Report No. DODIG-2021-088, "Evaluation of the Air Force Systems Engineering Processes Used in the Development of the Refueling Boom for the KC-46A Tanker," May 21, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Report No. DODIG-2024-026, "Audit of the Navy's Management of the MQ-25 Stingray Program," November 16, 2023.

## ***Establish and Consistently Follow DoD Acquisition Policy***

Acquisition guidance provides overarching management principles and detailed procedures that guide acquisition officials in acquiring weapon systems within the Defense Acquisition System. The Defense Acquisition System is the management process by which the DoD seeks to provide effective, affordable, and timely weapon systems to the users. To do this, the DoD established the adaptive acquisition framework to accelerate acquisition processes while still ensuring programs meet statutory and regulatory requirements. This process simplifies acquisition policy and reduces a program's reporting requirements. However, the DoD must ensure that programs still report to DoD and Congressional leaders.

In the reports we issued, we determined that the DoD did not always:

- implement policy to ensure that programs operate within the adaptive acquisition framework,
- maintain relevant and up-to-date policy and guidance, and
- adhere to existing DoD policy.

DoD policy must balance speed and efficiency with sufficient accountability measures to ensure the DoD acquires the systems the warfighter needs, while preventing fraud, waste, and abuse within the Defense Acquisition System. Although it is important that the DoD can rapidly develop these technologies, acquisition programs operating outside of the adaptive acquisition framework can continue to spend funds developing and testing systems with less oversight from DoD and Congressional leaders, as we reported on the Lower Tier Air and Missile Defense System program.<sup>5</sup>

## **Change in the DoD Acquisition Culture**

It is a top priority for the DoD to reform its acquisition processes to acquire, deliver, and sustain its weapon systems at a speed and scale for the warfighter. Both Congress and DoD officials have sought to change the way the DoD acquires weapon systems, focusing on efficient procurement methods and the use of calculated risks. Despite changes to the DoD acquisition process, the overall goal of DoD acquisitions is unchanged—to acquire quality products and services that satisfy user needs, increase mission capability, and improve operational support.

Prior acquisition reforms gave the Military Services significantly more authority for managing acquisition programs, including transferring milestone decision authority responsibility to the Military Department Service Acquisition Executives. These reforms also assigned the Military Services greater responsibility and accountability for program execution and performance.

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<sup>5</sup> Report No. DODIG-2025-076, "Audit of the Lower Tier Air and Missile Defense Sensor Program's Transition," March 11, 2024.



Our lessons learned highlight that acquisition officials must weigh weapon system benefits against their risks earlier in the acquisition life cycle to ensure the DoD is investing wisely. DoD acquisition policy should embrace continuous adaptation and enable more opportunities to reflect on the relevancy of weapon system requirements and ensure programs still meet mission needs. In doing so, DoD might avoid terminating acquisition programs after spending multiple years and billions of dollars to develop them, such as with the M10 Booker Combat Vehicle program, which the Army terminated in response to the Army Transformation Initiative.

## Conclusion

As a result of the challenges identified by the DoD OIG, the DoD did not always develop weapon systems as intended, despite spending billions of dollars on development and procurement. Performance requirements drive weapons systems and allow the DoD to remain the strongest and most lethal force in the world. If weapon systems do not meet the required capabilities to support warfighter needs, then the mission will suffer. It is essential that acquisition officials effectively plan and execute testing and evaluation to ensure DoD weapon systems will meet the needs of the mission, today and in the future.

As Congress and the DoD continue to reduce the regulatory burden and promote the efficiency of DoD acquisitions, it is important to consider how policy changes will allow acquisition officials to meet the dynamic requirements of the future. The DoD must ensure that it acquires weapon systems that address a validated need and meet performance capabilities during weapon systems' development while continuing to ensure those requirements are relevant to the ever-changing conditions of warfare.

We made 55 recommendations across the reports shown in Table 1, many of which are related to the lessons learned in this report. Of the 55 recommendations, 17 are still open. Although many of the recommendations in the previous reports were specific to the individual weapon systems audited, all acquisition personnel should be aware of these recommendations and take necessary steps to mitigate and avoid problems that could occur during the acquisition management process.

# Appendix

## Reports Reviewed and Categorized by Lessons Learned and Ongoing Projects

We reviewed DoD OIG audit and evaluation reports issued from April 2020 through August 2025 to identify recurring challenges related to acquisition program management. Table 1 shows the DoD OIG reports that we reviewed to prepare this summary report. Table 2 shows the applicable lessons learned for those reports. We are providing the tables as a resource for DoD management. The reports listed in each table contain additional details related to the lessons learned and past deficiencies identified by the DoD OIG. Unrestricted DoD OIG reports can be accessed at <http://www.dodig.mil/reports.html/>.

*Table 1. DoD OIG Reports Reviewed for This Summary Report*

Report Number	Report Title	Issue Date
<a href="#">DODIG-2025-151</a>	Audit of the Navy's Management of the MQ-4C Triton Unmanned Aircraft Program's Operational Capabilities	September 4, 2025
<a href="#">DODIG-2025-132</a>	Audit of the Impact of Continuing Resolutions on DoD Acquisition Programs	July 30, 2025
<a href="#">DODIG-2025-076</a>	Audit of the Lower Tier Air and Missile Defense Sensor Program's Pathway Transition	March 11, 2025
<a href="#">DODIG-2025-018</a>	Audit of the Test and Evaluation for CH-53K Helicopter Survivability	November 6, 2024
<a href="#">DODIG-2024-136</a>	Audit of the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye Capabilities	September 19, 2024
<a href="#">DODIG-2024-124</a>	Evaluation of Sustaining Engineering Actions for the Space Force's Upgraded Early Warning Radar	August 28, 2024
<a href="#">DODIG-2024-066</a>	Evaluation of the Army-Navy Transportable Radar Surveillance and Control Model 2 Ballistic Missile Defense System in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's Area of Responsibility	March 28, 2024
<a href="#">DODIG-2024-057</a>	Evaluation of the DoD's Sustainment Plan for Bradley, Stryker, and Abrams Armored Weapon Systems Transferred to the Ukrainian Armed Forces	February 15, 2024
<a href="#">DODIG-2024-048</a>	Evaluation of the Alaska Radar System	January 22, 2024
<a href="#">DODIG-2024-026</a>	Audit of the Navy's Management of the MQ-25 Stingray Program	November 16, 2023
<a href="#">DODIG-2023-118</a>	Audit of the Acquisition of the U.S. Air Force Three-Dimensional Expeditionary Long-Range Radar	August 24, 2023
<a href="#">DODIG-2022-085</a>	Audit of the Army's Integrated Visual Augmentation System	April 20, 2022
<a href="#">DODIG-2022-056</a>	Evaluation of the Ground Test and Evaluation Infrastructure Supporting Hypersonic Capabilities	February 1, 2022

*Table 1. DoD OIG Reports Reviewed for This Summary Report (cont'd)*

Report Number	Report Title	Issue Date
<a href="#">DODIG-2022-007</a>	Management Advisory Regarding Proposed Changes to the Concept of Operations for the Space Based Infrared System SBIRS Survivable and Endurable Evolution (S2E2) System	May 18, 2021
<a href="#">DODIG-2021-125</a>	Evaluation of U.S. Special Operations Command's Supply Chain Risk Management for the Security, Acquisition, and Delivery of Specialized Equipment	September 14, 2021
<a href="#">DODIG-2021-088</a>	Evaluation of the Air Force Systems Engineering Processes Used in the Development of the Refueling Boom for the KC-46A Tanker	May 21, 2021

Source: The DoD OIG.

*Table 2. Applicable Lessons Learned*

Report Number	Performance Requirements	Test and Evaluation	DoD Policy
DODIG-2025-151	X	X	
DODIG-2025-132			X
DODIG-2025-076			X
DODIG-2025-018		X	
DODIG-2024-136	X	X	
DODIG-2024-124	X		
DODIG-2024-057			X
DODIG-2024-026		X	
DODIG-2023-118			X
DODIG-2022-085		X	X
DODIG-2022-056		X	
DODIG-2021-125			X
DODIG-2021-088	X	X	

Note: In preparing this summary report, we also reviewed Report Nos. DODIG-2024-066, DODIG-2024-048, and DODIG-2022-007; however, those reports contained findings and recommendations that the DoD identified as Classified and are not releasable to the public.

Source: The DoD OIG.



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