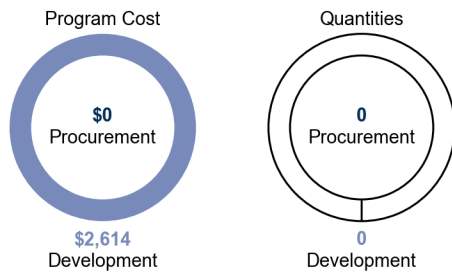# Future Attack Reconnaissance Aircraft (FARA)

FARA is part of the Future Vertical Lift portfolio of systems, a top modernization priority for the Army. The Army envisioned that it would provide enhanced capabilities for reconnaissance, attack, and aerial security. The Army expected FARA to provide these capabilities with increased performance, lethality, range, and sustainability over the current fleet, which is currently using the AH-64 Apache as an interim solution for armed reconnaissance. The Army has been pursuing the major capability acquisition pathway and a two-phase competitive prototyping strategy to acquire FARA. The Army now plans to end FARA development.

Source: U.S. Army. | GAO-24-106831

CONCEPT

2/19	1/24	7-9/24
Program start	GAO review	End of development

Estimated Cost and Quantities

(fiscal year 2024 dollars in millions)

Program Cost

$0 Procurement

$2,614 Development

Quantities

0 Procurement

0 Development

Costs represent fiscal years 2019-2024.

Software Development as of January 2024

Approach: Agile, Incremental, and DevSecOps

Frequency of end user evaluation (months)

Less than 1	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13 or more

Information not available

Frequency of testing and feedback (months)

N/A | N/A

■ **Software percentage of total acquisition cost**
(fiscal year 2024 dollars in millions)

■ **Percentage of progress to meet current requirements**

N/A

The program reported developing software for prototyping but has yet to begin full scale software development.

Program Essentials

Prime contractors: Bell Helicopter Textron, Inc; Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation

Contract type: FFP (prototype design and build) (using other transaction authority)

Current Status

In February 2024, the Army announced a rebalancing of its aviation portfolio. As part of this rebalancing, the Army plans to end the development of FARA at the conclusion of fiscal year 2024 prototyping activities and continue its investments in other aviation systems, including the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft and the CH-47F Block II helicopter. We discuss these aircraft in separate assessments.

Prior to this decision, the Army was developing and testing FARA prototype aircraft, the second phase of its competitive prototyping strategy. According to the program, the two vendors were about 97 percent complete with their prototypes as of September 2023. The remaining work relied on the delivery of a critical technology from a separate Army development program—the Improved Turbine Engine Program (ITEP). Army officials reported that first engine deliveries took place in October 2023, a total delay of 21 months. The Army also attributed delays to the FARA analysis of alternatives to these ITEP delays. The analysis of alternatives was initially scheduled for completion during fiscal year 2022, but was delayed until the second quarter of fiscal year 2024, according to Army officials. We discuss ITEP in a separate assessment.

The program reported using several leading practices for product development, such as using design modeling to iterate on prototype designs for flight testing and final contractor selection. Program officials stated that they developed early digital twins—virtual representations of physical products—for testing and had planned to develop a system-level digital twin as the design progressed. Officials noted that FARA conducted verification demonstrations to gain confidence in the program's modular open system approach and that the Army can apply this approach to its other aviation platforms.
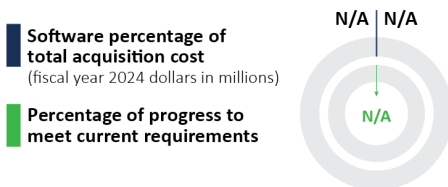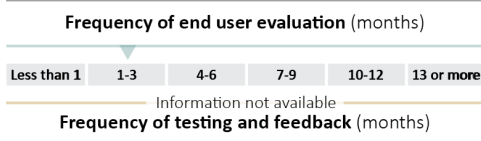
Program Office Comments

We provided a draft of this assessment to the Army for review and comment. The Army provided technical comments, which we incorporated where appropriate. It stated that given the evolution of aerial technologies, it is rebalancing its aviation portfolio to prioritize current, unmanned, joint, and space-based assets to enable it to meet the objectives envisioned for FARA. The Army further noted that this decision reflects the need to quickly adapt to changing requirements and evolving technology to deliver overmatch capabilities to its soldiers.