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## **E-10 Postponed Five Years**

As part of the Fiscal 2006 defense budget, DOD directed the Air Force to restructure the service's E-10A airborne battle management aircraft program, cutting it by more than \$600 million over two years.

Consequently, USAF announced in March that it would delay the start of the project until 2010. The E-10 is one of USAF's emerging top priorities. The service expects it to be the successor to both the E-8 Joint STARS aircraft, which tracks the movement of ground objects, and the E-3 AWACS air battle controller. The new aircraft may also serve as the replacement for the RC-135 Rivet Joint signals intelligence aircraft.

Under a new timeline, USAF has delayed initial operational capability from 2015 to 2018.

According to Gen. John P. Jumper, opponents of the program believe that sensors on unmanned aircraft and in space, supported by analysts in reachback facilities in the US, can perform the E-10 mission at less cost. The Chief of Staff maintains that the E-10 is vital to preserve line-of-sight communications and command and control with combat aircraft over the battlefield.

Jumper also has acknowledged that opponents may simply be waiting for him to retire, which should be this fall, to kill the program entirely.

The Air Force plans to use the five-year program delay to further explore the role of the E-10 in conjunction with new systems such as the Space Radar, which is also slated to observe and track air and ground traffic.

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## **New Multisensor Aircraft in Danger**

The Air Force has been fighting hard since early December to keep intact its E-10 Multisensor Command and Control Aircraft project, despite budgetary pressures and outright opposition from key Pentagon officials.

In the budget wars, the E-10 is squaring off against the Space Based Radar. The E-10, which is to be based on the Boeing 767 airframe, is intended to eventually replace the E-8 Joint STARS ground radar airplane, E-3 AWACS air battle control aircraft, and the RC-135 Rivet Joint signals intelligence airplane.

The chief E-10 opponent seems to be Stephen A. Cambone, undersecretary of defense for intelligence. Cambone has questioned the pace of the project and whether USAF has proper authority to pursue it.

Cambone also thinks it might duplicate the capability to be provided by the Space Based Radar. The primary function of both systems will be to perform the ground moving target mission now carried out by Joint STARS.

The Air Force has argued that the \$5.3 billion E-10 will have ground resolution 12 times better than what will be seen in early versions of the \$7 billion SBR and that it will be available sooner. Moreover, the E-10 will be able to stay in the battle area indefinitely, while the SBR—expected to be a low Earth orbit system—initially will have only a brief capability over any one area. It will take a large constellation of SBR satellites before the system can provide nonstop coverage.

The trump card for the Air Force, however, is the E-10's power to spot and track low-flying cruise missiles, which some defense analysts consider an emerging threat soon to be on a par with weapons of mass destruction. The SBR will lack the resolution to play much of a role in cruise missile detection or tracking.

Cambone wants the SBR as a cornerstone of what he has called “universal situational awareness” and prefers the satellite because it requires no forward-based “footprint” overseas. He has also complained to acting Pentagon acquisition chief Michael W. Wynne that the Air Force has exceeded its authority to develop the airplane. The project started out as simply a radar upgrade for the Joint STARS.

Cambone's case was recently bolstered by Dov S. Zakheim, the Pentagon's comptroller and top budget official, who told reporters in December that he doesn't expect cruise missile defense to become a big-ticket program or concern for some time.

Cruise missiles in the hands of terrorists, said Zakheim, would assume the ability to “seize a ship, configure it with a cruise missile, ... target the missile, ... [and] put in the right mapping information to hit the US,” a scenario which he says strains credibility just now.

The E-10 project's chief proponent is Gen. John P. Jumper, USAF Chief of Staff. Jumper has championed the effort since announcing it in February 2001. He sees it as a way to build greater battlefield awareness and better information networks, as well as a mobile air operations center that could go anywhere in the world.

Most of the E-10 work has been divided up between Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon. A contract to develop the last piece of the project—the battle management system—is expected to be awarded this spring.