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# **Defense Research and Engineering: Action Needed to Improve Management and Oversight of Technology Investments**

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## Background

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- House Report accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 included a provision for GAO to review how the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (OUSD(R&E)) manages, oversees, and improves DOD's innovation investments and outcomes.
  - The provision also included language for GAO to recommend any policy and statutory changes needed to better position OUSD(R&E) to manage, oversee, and improve those investments and outcomes.
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## Background, continued

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- In FY26, DOD will receive nearly \$183 billion for research, development, test and evaluation activities.
    - This includes more than \$24 billion for science and technology (S&T) activities (BA 1-3) and almost \$42 billion for advanced component development and prototyping efforts (BA 4).
    - Included in this amount is the more than \$2 billion in BA 1-3 and almost \$10 billion in BA 4 funding as part of the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” received beginning in FY25.
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## **Selected Legislative Provisions Affecting OUSD(R&E) Since 2019**

- **NDAAs for Fiscal Year 2021**
    - Sec. 217 required USD(R&E) to identify critical technology areas and to designate a senior official to coordinate research and engineering activities in that area.
  - **NDAAs for Fiscal Year 2022**
    - Sec. 211 required the Secretary of Defense to develop an S&T strategy and to update that strategy following an issuance of the National Defense Strategy.
    - Sec. 834 required the Secretary of Defense to establish the Accelerate the Procurement and Fielding of Innovative Technologies (APFIT) program
    - Sec. 903 designated USD(R&E) as the Chief Technical Advisor to the JROC and required a study to determine a further enhanced role for USD(R&E) on the JROC.
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# OUSD(R&E) Challenges Managing and Overseeing Military Department Technology Efforts

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- We identified three primary challenges:
    - **OUSD(R&E)'s Critical Technology Area roadmaps lack consistent information to guide military departments' technology investments**
      - OUSD(R&E) has not developed formal guidance for those roadmaps.
    - **Statute does not provide OUSD(R&E) with authority to provide input on military departments' technology investments**
      - OUSD(R&E) does not have statutory authority to review and provide meaningful input to those budgets.
    - **Military departments' science and technology strategies do not fully align with the OUSD(R&E)-issued National Defense Science and Technology Strategy**
      - There is not a requirement in policy or statute for the military departments to update their department-level strategies, nor is there a requirement that these department-level strategies align to the National Defense S&T Strategy.
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# Impact on Technology Investments

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- **Lack of information in, and guidance for, CTA roadmaps**
    - OUSD(R&E) risks having incomplete information about the technology development efforts being pursued by the military departments. Further, by not identifying the content of the roadmaps, OUSD(R&E) risks them not being used to ensure military department efforts align to OUSD(R&E) priorities.
    - Without directing the level of investment needed in each CTA, OUSD(R&E) lacks reasonable assurance that sufficient investments are being made towards progress in any given CTA to ensure timely delivery of future capabilities.
  - **Lack of statutory authority to provide input on military investments**
    - Without OUSD(R&E) having the proper authority and time to review and assess RDT&E budget submissions, DOD risks the military departments not investing in technologies needed for the current and future fight.
    - DOD also risks OUSD(R&E) not having a complete understanding of the full breadth of technology efforts undertaken by the military departments to enable OUSD(R&E) to provide effective management and oversight of these efforts and to provide Congress with this information.
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## Impact on Technology Investments, continued

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- **Lack of alignment with S&T strategies**
    - Without a requirement for the military departments to update and align their S&T strategies to the National Defense S&T Strategy, there is a risk that the military departments are pursuing technology development efforts that do not match OUSD(R&E)'s visions for technology development across DOD.
    - The military departments also risk pursuing technologies that do not match the objectives of the NDS.
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# Matter for Congressional Consideration and Recommendations

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- **Matter for Congressional Consideration**
    - Congress should consider providing OUSD(R&E) with budget certification authority for research, development, test and evaluation activities.
  - **Recommendations**
    - The military departments should each develop and issue a science and technology strategy that aligns with the National Defense Science and Technology Strategy to the maximum extent practicable, and to update their strategies as needed to ensure continued alignment.
    - OUSD(R&E) should issue guidance for the development of the CTA roadmaps. This guidance should identify stakeholders—including from the military departments—to involve when the roadmaps are developed, as well as identify the content to include in the roadmaps.
    - OUSD(R&E) should provide annual guidance to the military departments on the amount of military department investment that OUSD(R&E) considers necessary to ensure alignment to the maximum extent practicable with each CTA roadmap.
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## Questions?

- For additional information, please contact:
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