

The Army's Ground Combat Vehicle (GCV) and Early Infantry Brigade Combat Team (E-IBCT) Programs: Background and Issues for Congress

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In April 2009, Secretary of Defense Gates announced that he intended to significantly restructure the Army's Future Combat System (FCS) program. The FCS was a multiyear, multibillion dollar program that had been underway since 2000 and was at the heart of the Army's transformation efforts. In lieu of the cancelled FCS Manned Ground Vehicle (MGV), the Army was directed to develop a Ground Combat Vehicle (GCV) that would be relevant across the entire spectrum of Army operations and would incorporate combat lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan. As part of the FCS program, the Army had been "spinning out" selected FCS technologies to brigade combat teams (BCTs) that were deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan. Secretary Gates's April 2009 restructuring decision included provisions to continue these efforts, and the Army decided that initially these technologies would be provided to Infantry Brigade Combat Teams (IBCTs); the Army designated this effort as the Early Infantry Brigade Combat Team (E-IBCT) program.

The Army reissued a request for proposal (RFP) for the GCV on November 30, 2010, and plans to begin fielding the GCV by 2015-2017. The first E-IBCT capabilities package (Increment One), consisting of an unmanned aerial and ground vehicle, unattended sensors, and a network integration kit, was tested in September 2009 and demonstrated poor performance and reliability. Because of the test results, Increment One was judged not ready to field and the Army was required to repeat the limited users test in September 2010. On February 3, 2011, the Department of Defense (DOD) cancelled the E-IBCT program but permitted the limited development of two of its systems—the Small Unmanned Ground Vehicle (SUGV) and the Network Integration Kit (NIK).

The FY2012 budget request for the GCV is \$884.37 million for Research, Development, and Technology (RDT&E), reflecting a seven-month delay in the program. The FY2012 E-IBCT budget request is for \$243 million for Procurement and \$506 million for RDT&E. The House and Senate Armed Services Committees recommended full funding for the GCV program, contingent on the Army meeting a number of provisions. The House Armed Services Committee also recommended fully funding E-IBCT procurement, but it is not clear if all E-IBCT RDT&E efforts will be funded because surviving E-IBCT RDT&E efforts have been placed under other Army programs. The Senate Armed Services Committee recommended cutting \$192.3 million from the E-IBCT budget request.

There are potential issues for Congress. Some believe that based on (1) beliefs that fewer armored forces might be required in the future and (2) the Army's poor acquisition track record, there is not a compelling need to develop and acquire the GCV in seven years. Some critics contend that the Army has not yet adequately established a requirement for the GCV, and others question the need to have all nine soldiers of an infantry squad to be transported in a single GCV. Another concern is that the NIK, which has fared poorly in testing and has received a variety of criticisms from the soldiers that have used it in testing, might not be a viable option for the future. Although Army leaders have indicated that the current NIK will only serve as a interim step to a more enhanced version of the NIK, it can be argued that using the NIK as a basis for future versions is "building on failure." Reports suggesting that alternatives to the NIK are being developed by various companies might provide the Army with other options if the NIK continues to be both costly and

unreliable. This report will be updated.



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