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Multiyear Procurement (MYP) and Block Buy Contracting in Defense Acquisition: Background and Issues for Congress

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Summary

Multiyear procurement (MYP) and block buy contracting (BBC) are special contracting mechanisms that Congress permits the Department of Defense (DOD) to use for a limited number of defense acquisition programs. Compared to the standard or default approach of annual contracting, MYP and BBC have the potential for reducing weapon procurement costs by several percent.

Under annual contracting, DOD uses one or more contracts for each year's worth of procurement of a given kind of item. Under MYP, DOD instead uses a single contract for two to five years' worth of procurement of a given kind of item without having to exercise a contract option for each year after the first year. DOD needs congressional approval for each use of MYP. There is a permanent statute governing MYP contracting—10 U.S.C. 2306b. Under this statute, a program must meet several criteria to qualify for MYP.

Compared with estimated costs under annual contracting, estimated savings for programs being proposed for MYP have ranged from less than 5% to more than 15%, depending on the particulars of the program in question, with many estimates falling in the range of 5% to 10%. In practice, actual savings from using MYP rather than annual contracting can be difficult to observe or verify because of cost growth during the execution of the contract due to changes in the program independent of the use of MYP rather than annual contracting.

BBC is similar to MYP in that it permits DOD to use a single contract for more than one year's worth of procurement of a given kind of item without having to exercise a contract option for each year after the first year. BBC is also similar to MYP in that DOD needs congressional approval for each use of BBC. BBC differs from MYP in the following ways:

- There is no permanent statute governing the use of BBC.
- There is no requirement that BBC be approved in both a DOD appropriations act and an act other than a DOD appropriations act.
- Programs being considered for BBC do not need to meet any legal criteria to qualify for BBC, because there is no permanent statute governing the use of BBC that establishes such criteria.
- A BBC contract can cover more than five years of planned procurements.
- Economic order quantity (EOQ) authority—the authority to bring forward selected key components of the items to be procured under the contract and purchase the components in batch form during the first year or two of the contract—does not come automatically as part of BBC authority because there is no permanent statute governing the use of BBC that includes EOQ authority as an automatic feature.
- BBC contracts are less likely to include cancellation penalties.

Potential issues for Congress concerning MYP and BBC include whether to use MYP and BBC in the future more frequently, less frequently, or about as frequently as they are currently used; and whether to create a permanent statute to govern the use of BBC, analogous to the permanent statute that governs the use of MYP.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Issues for Congress.....	1
Terminology and Scope of Report.....	1
Two Air Force “Block Buys” That Are Not Discussed in This Report	1
Funding Approaches vs. Contracting Mechanisms	1
Background.....	2
Multiyear Procurement (MYP).....	2
MYP in Brief.....	2
Potential Savings Under MYP	3
Permanent Statute Governing MYP.....	5
Potential Consequences of Not Fully Funding an MYP Contract.....	7
Effect on Flexibility for Making Procurement Changes	7
Congressional Approval	7
Block Buy Contracting (BBC)	9
BBC in Brief	9
Terminology Alert: Block Buy Contracting vs. Block Buys.....	10
Potential Savings Under BBC	10
Frequency of Use of BBC.....	11
Using BBC Rather than MYP	11
MYP and BBC vs. Contracts with Options	11
Issues for Congress.....	12
Frequency of Using MYP and BBC	12
Permanent Statute for BBC	13
Legislative Activity for FY2016.....	13

Tables

Table A-1. Programs Approved for MYP in Annual DOD Appropriations Acts Since FY1990.....	14
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Appendixes

Appendix. Programs Approved for MYP in Annual DOD Appropriations Acts Since FY1990.....	14
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Contacts

Author Contact Information.....	16
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Introduction

Issues for Congress

This report provides background information and issues for Congress on multiyear procurement (MYP) and block buy contracting (BBC),¹ which are special contracting mechanisms that Congress permits the Department of Defense (DOD) to use for a limited number of defense acquisition programs. Compared to the standard or default approach of annual contracting, MYP and BBC have the potential for reducing weapon procurement costs by several percent.

Potential issues for Congress concerning MYP and BBC include whether to use MYP and BBC in the future more frequently, less frequently, or about as frequently as they are currently used; and whether to create a permanent statute to govern the use of BBC, analogous to the permanent statute (10 U.S.C. 2306b) that governs the use of MYP. Congress's decisions on these issues could affect defense acquisition practices, defense funding requirements, and the defense industrial base.

Terminology and Scope of Report

Two Air Force “Block Buys” That Are Not Discussed in This Report

Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle (EELV) Launch Services (ELS) Contract

A contract that the Air Force has for the procurement of Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle (EELV) Launch Services (ELS) is sometimes referred to as a block buy, but it is not an example of block buy contracting as discussed in this report. The Air Force in this instance is using the term block buy to mean something different. This report does not discuss the ELS contract.

Procurement of Two AEHF Satellites

For FY2016, the Air Force is requesting continued procurement funding for two Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF) satellites that were procured in FY2012 and partially funded in FY2012-FY2015. Although the Air Force refers to this two-satellite procurement as a block buy, it is not an example of block buy contracting as discussed in this report. The Air Force in this instance is using the term block buy to mean something different. For further discussion, see “Terminology Alert: Block Buy Contracting vs. Block Buys” below.

Funding Approaches vs. Contracting Mechanisms

In discussing MYP and BBC, it can be helpful to distinguish funding approaches from contracting mechanisms. The two are often mixed together in discussions of DOD acquisition, sometimes leading to confusion. Stated briefly:

¹ MYP is an established acronym for multiyear procurement. BBC is not an established acronym for block buy contracting, but is used in this CRS report for purposes of convenience.

- **Funding approaches** are ways that Congress can appropriate funding for weapon procurement programs, so that DOD can then put them under contract. Examples of funding approaches include traditional full funding (the standard or default approach), incremental funding, and advance appropriations.² Any of these funding approaches might make use of advance procurement (AP) funding.³
- **Contracting mechanisms** are ways for DOD to contract for the procurement of weapons systems, once funding for those systems has been appropriated by Congress. Examples of contracting mechanisms include annual contracting (the standard or default approach), MYP, and BBC.

The use of a particular funding approach in a defense acquisition program does not dictate the use of a particular contracting mechanism. Defense acquisition programs consequently can be implemented using various combinations of funding approaches and contracting mechanisms. Most DOD weapon acquisition programs use a combination of traditional full funding and annual contracting. A few programs, particularly certain Navy shipbuilding programs, use incremental funding as their funding approach. A limited number of DOD programs use MYP as their contracting approach, and to date at least two defense acquisition programs (both Navy shipbuilding programs) use or have used BBC as their contracting approach.

This report focuses on the contracting approaches of MYP and BBC and how they compare to annual contracting. Other CRS reports discuss the funding approaches of traditional full funding, incremental funding, and advance appropriations.⁴

Background

Multiyear Procurement (MYP)

MYP in Brief

What is MYP, and how does it differ from annual contracting? MYP, also known as multiyear contracting, is an alternative to the standard or default DOD approach of annual contracting.

² For more on these three funding approaches, see CRS Report RL31404, *Defense Procurement: Full Funding Policy—Background, Issues, and Options for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke and Stephen Daggett, and CRS Report RL32776, *Navy Ship Procurement: Alternative Funding Approaches—Background and Options for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke. Advance appropriations, which are not to be confused with advance procurement (AP) funding (see footnote 3), are essentially a legislatively locked-in form of incremental funding. Unlike incremental funding, advance appropriations qualify under budgeting regulations as a form of full funding.

³ AP funding is provided in one or more years prior to the year of procurement of a weapon system for the procurement of long-leadtime components—components with long construction times. Such components must be funded prior to the procurement of the remainder of the weapon system if they are to be ready for installation in the weapon system at the appropriate point in the construction process. AP funding is a permitted exception to the full funding provision. AP funding is not to be confused with advance appropriations (see footnote 2).

⁴ See footnote 2 for citations to these reports. Appropriating funding for a program and placing a program under contract are steps in a larger sequence of budget-related events that includes authorization, appropriation, obligation, and outlays. For a general discussion of this sequence, see CRS Report 98-721, *Introduction to the Federal Budget Process*, coordinated by Bill Heniff Jr.

Under annual contracting, DOD uses one or more contracts for each year's worth of procurement of a given kind of item. Under MYP, DOD instead uses a single contract for two to five years' worth of procurement of a given kind of item, without having to exercise a contract option for each year after the first year. DOD needs congressional approval for each use of MYP.

To illustrate the basic difference between MYP and annual contracting, consider a hypothetical DOD program to procure 20 single-engine aircraft of a certain kind over the five-year period FY2015-FY2019, at a rate of four aircraft per year:

- **Under annual contracting**, DOD would issue one or more contracts for each year's procurement of four aircraft. After Congress funds the procurement of the first four aircraft in FY2015, DOD would issue one or more contracts (or exercise a contract option) for those four aircraft. The next year, after Congress funds the procurement of the next four aircraft in FY2016, DOD would issue one or more contracts (or exercise a contract option) for those four aircraft, and so on.
- **Under MYP**, DOD would issue one contract covering all 20 aircraft to be procured during the five-year period FY2015-FY2019. DOD would award this contract in FY2015, at the beginning of the five-year period, following congressional approval to use MYP for the program, and congressional appropriation of the FY2015 funding for the program. To continue the implementation of the contract over the next four years, DOD would request the FY2016 funding for the program as part of DOD's proposed FY2016 budget, the FY2017 funding as part of DOD's proposed FY2017 budget, and so on.

Potential Savings Under MYP

How much can MYP save? Compared with estimated costs under annual contracting, estimated savings for programs being proposed for MYP have ranged from less than 5% to more than 15%, depending on the particulars of the program in question, with many estimates falling in the range of 5% to 10%. In practice, actual savings from using MYP rather than annual contracting can be difficult to observe or verify because of cost growth during the execution of the contract that was caused by developments independent of the use of MYP rather than annual contracting.

A February 2012 briefing by the Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) office within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) states that "MYP savings analysis is difficult due to the lack of actual costs on the alternative acquisition path, i.e., the path not taken."⁵ The briefing states that CAPE up to that point had assessed MYP savings for four aircraft procurement programs—F/A-18E/F strike fighters, H-60 helicopters, V-22 tilt-rotor aircraft, and CH-47F helicopters—and that CAPE's assessed savings ranged from 2% to 8%.⁶

A 2008 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report stated that

⁵ Slide 10 from briefing entitled "Multiyear Procurement: A CAPE Perspective," given at DOD cost analysis symposium, February 15-17, 2012, posted at InsideDefense.com (subscription required) May 14, 2012.

⁶ Slide 12 from briefing entitled "Multiyear Procurement: A CAPE Perspective," given at DOD cost analysis symposium, February 15-17, 2012, posted at InsideDefense.com (subscription required) May 14, 2012. Slide 12 also stated that these assessed savings were based on comparing CAPE's estimate of what the programs would cost under annual contracting (which the briefing refers to as single-year procurement or SYP) to the contractor's MYP proposal.

DOD does not have a formal mechanism for tracking multiyear results against original expectations and makes few efforts to validate whether actual savings were achieved by multiyear procurement. It does not maintain comprehensive central records and historical information that could be used to enhance oversight and knowledge about multiyear performance to inform and improve future multiyear procurement (MYP) candidates. DOD and defense research centers officials said it is difficult to assess results because of the lack of historical information on multiyear contracts, comparable annual costs, and the dynamic acquisition environment.⁷

How does MYP potentially save money? Compared to annual contracting, using MYP can in principle reduce the cost of the weapons being procured in two primary ways:

- **Contractor optimization of workforce and production facilities.** An MYP contract gives the contractor (e.g., an airplane manufacturer or shipbuilder) confidence that a multiyear stream of business of a known volume will very likely materialize. This confidence can permit the contractor to make investments in the firm's workforce and production facilities that are intended to optimize the facility for the production of the items being procured under the contract. Such investments can include payments for retaining or training workers, or for building, expanding, or modernizing production facilities. Under annual contracting, the manufacturer might not have enough confidence about its future stream of business to make these kinds of investments, or might be unable to convince its parent firm to finance them.
- **Economic order quantity (EOQ) purchases of selected long-leadtime components.** Under an MYP contract, DOD is permitted to bring forward selected key components of the items to be procured under the contract and to purchase the components in batch form during the first year or two of the contract. In the hypothetical example introduced earlier, using MYP could permit DOD to purchase, say, the 20 engines for the 20 aircraft in the first year or two of the five-year contract. Procuring selected components in this manner under an MYP contract is called an economic order quantity (EOQ) purchase.⁸ EOQ purchases can reduce the procurement cost of the weapons being procured under the MYP contract by allowing the manufacturers of components to take maximum advantage of production economies of scale that are possible with batch orders.⁹

⁷ Government Accountability Office, *Defense Acquisitions[:] DOD's Practices and Processes for Multiyear Procurement Should Be Improved*, GAO-08-298, February 2008, p. 3.

⁸ The term EOQ is occasionally used in discussions of defense acquisition, somewhat loosely, to refer to any high-quantity or batch order of items, even those that do not take place under MYP or BBC. As a general matter, however, EOQs as described here occur only within MYP and block buy contracts.

⁹ A 2008 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on multiyear contracting lists five areas of savings, most of which are covered in the two general areas of savings outlined above. One of GAO's five areas of savings—limited engineering changes due to design stability—can also occur in programs that use annual contracting. The GAO report states:

Multiyear procurement can potentially save money and improve the defense industrial base by permitting the more efficient use of a contractor's resources. Multiyear contracts are expected to achieve lower unit costs compared to annual contracts through one or more of the following sources: (1) purchase of parts and materials in economic order quantities (EOQ), (2) improved production processes and efficiencies, (3) better utilized industrial facilities, (4) limited engineering changes due to design stability during the multiyear period, and (5) cost avoidance by reducing the

(continued...)

What gives the contractor confidence that the multiyear stream of business will materialize? At least two things give the contractor confidence that DOD will not terminate an MYP contract and that the multiyear stream of business consequently will materialize:

- For a program to qualify for MYP, DOD must certify, among other things, that the minimum need for the items to be purchased is expected to remain substantially unchanged during the contract in terms of production rate, procurement rate, and total quantities.
- Perhaps more important to the contractor, MYP contracts include a cancellation penalty intended to reimburse a contractor for costs that the contractor has incurred (i.e., investments the contractor has made) in anticipation of the work covered under the MYP contract. The undesirability of paying a cancellation penalty acts as a disincentive for the government against canceling the contract. (And if the contract is canceled, the cancellation penalty helps to make the contractor whole.)¹⁰

Permanent Statute Governing MYP

Is there a permanent statute governing MYP contracting? There is a permanent statute governing MYP contracting—10 U.S.C. 2306b. The statute was created by Section 909 of the FY1982 Department of Defense Authorization Act (S. 815/P.L. 97-86 of December 1, 1981), revised and reorganized by Section 1022 of the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994 (S. 1587/P.L. 103-355 of October 13, 1994), and further amended on several occasions since. DOD’s use of MYP contracting is further governed by DOD acquisition regulations.

Under this statute, what criteria must a program meet to qualify for MYP? 10 U.S.C. 2306b(a) states that to qualify for MYP, a program must meet several criteria, including the following.

- **Substantial savings.** DOD must estimate that using an MYP contract would result in “substantial savings” compared with using annual contracting.
- **Realistic cost estimates.** DOD’s estimates of the cost of the MYP contract and the anticipated savings must be realistic.
- **Stable need for the items.** DOD must expect that its minimum need for the items will remain substantially unchanged during the contract in terms of production rate, procurement rate, and total quantities.

(...continued)

burden of placing and administering annual contracts. Multiyear procurement also offers opportunities to enhance the industrial base by providing defense contractors a longer and more stable time horizon for planning and investing in production and by attracting subcontractors, vendors, and suppliers. However, multiyear procurement also entails certain risks that must be balanced against potential benefits, such as the increased costs to the government should the multiyear contract be changed or canceled and decreased annual budget flexibility for the program and across DOD’s portfolio of weapon systems. Additionally, multiyear contracts often require greater budgetary authority in the earlier years of the procurement to economically buy parts and materials for multiple years of production than under a series of annual buys.

Government Accountability Office, *Defense Acquisitions[:] DOD’s Practices and Processes for Multiyear Procurement Should Be Improved*, GAO-08-298, February 2008, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ Annual contracts can also include cancellation penalties.

- **Stable design for the items.** The design for the items to be acquired must be stable, and the technical risks associated with the items must not be excessive.

Section 811 of the FY2008 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4986/P.L. 110-181 of January 28, 2008) amended 10 U.S.C. 2306b to require the Secretary of Defense to certify in writing, by no later than March 1 of the year in which DOD requests MYP authority for a program, that these and certain other criteria have been met. It also requires that the Secretary provide the congressional defense committees with the basis for this determination, as well as a cost analysis performed by DOD's office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) that supports the findings.¹¹ Section 811 further amended 10 U.S.C. 2306b to require the following:

- **Sufficient prior deliveries to determine whether estimated unit costs are realistic.** A sufficient number of the type of item to be acquired under the proposed MYP contract must have been delivered under previous contracts at or within the most current estimates of the program acquisition unit cost or procurement unit cost to determine whether current estimates of such unit costs are realistic.
- **No Nunn-McCurdy critical cost growth breaches within the last five years.** The system being proposed for an MYP contract must not have experienced within five years of the anticipated award date of the MYP contract a critical cost growth breach as defined under the Nunn-McCurdy act (10 U.S.C. 2433).¹²
- **Fixed-price type contract.** The proposed MYP contract must be a fixed-price type contract.

What is meant by “substantial savings”? The meaning of “substantial savings” is open to interpretation and might depend on the circumstances of the program in question. In practice, estimated savings of at least 5% might be judged substantial, and estimated savings in the range of 10% (or more) are more likely to be judged substantial. The amount of savings required under 10 U.S.C. 2306b to qualify has changed over time; the requirement for “substantial savings” was established by Section 808(a)(2) of the FY1991 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4739/P.L. 101-510 of November 5, 1990), which amended 10 U.S.C. 2306b in this regard.¹³

What is meant by “stable design”? The term “stable design” is generally understood to mean that the design for the items to be procured is not expected to change substantially during the period of the contract. Having a stable design is generally demonstrated by having already built at least a few items to that design (or in the case of a shipbuilding program, at least one ship to that design) and concluding, through testing and operation of those items, that the design does not require any substantial changes during the period of the contract.

¹¹ §811 states that the cost analysis is to be performed by DOD's Cost Analysis Improvement Group (CAIG). In a subsequent DOD reorganization, CAIG was made part of CAPE.

¹² For more on the Nunn-McCurdy provision, see CRS Report R41293, *The Nunn-McCurdy Act: Background, Analysis, and Issues for Congress*, by Moshe Schwartz.

¹³ For a discussion of the evolution of the savings requirement under 10 U.S.C. 2306b, including a figure graphically summarizing the legislative history of the requirement, see Government Accountability Office, *Defense Acquisitions[:] DOD's Practices and Processes for Multiyear Procurement Should Be Improved*, GAO-08-298, February 2008, pp. 21-22, including Figure 3 on p. 22.

Potential Consequences of Not Fully Funding an MYP Contract

What happens if Congress does not provide the annual funding requested by DOD to continue the implementation of the contract? If Congress does not provide the funding requested by DOD to continue the implementation of an MYP contract, DOD would be required to renegotiate, suspend, or terminate the contract. Terminating the contract could require the government to pay a cancellation penalty to the contractor. Renegotiating or suspending the contract could also have a financial impact.

Effect on Flexibility for Making Procurement Changes

What effect does using MYP have on flexibility for making procurement changes? A principal potential disadvantage of using MYP is that it can reduce Congress's and DOD's flexibility for making changes (especially reductions) in procurement programs in future years in response to changing strategic or budgetary circumstances, at least without incurring cancellation penalties. In general, the greater the portion of DOD's procurement account that is executed under MYP contracts, the greater the potential loss of flexibility. The use of MYP for executing some portion of the DOD procurement account means that if policy makers in future years decide to reduce procurement spending below previously planned levels, the spending reduction might fall more heavily on procurement programs that do not use MYP, which in turn might result in a less-than-optimally balanced DOD procurement effort.

Congressional Approval

How does Congress approve the use of MYP? Congress approves the use of MYP on a case-by-case basis, typically in response to requests by DOD.¹⁴ Congressional approval for MYP contracts with a value of more than \$500 million must occur in two places: an annual DOD appropriations act¹⁵ and an act other than the annual DOD appropriations act.¹⁶

In annual DOD appropriations acts, the provision permitting the use of MYP for one or more defense acquisition programs is typically included in the title containing general provisions, which typically is Title VIII.

An annual defense authorization act is usually the act other than an appropriations act in which provisions granting authority for using MYP contracting on individual defense acquisition programs are included. Such provisions typically occur in Title I of the defense authorization act, the title covering procurement programs.

¹⁴ The Anti-Deficiency Act (31 U.S.C. 1341) prohibits the making of contracts in advance of appropriations. A multiple-year commitment may be made when authorized by Congress by entering into a firm commitment for one year and making the government's liability for future years contingent on funds becoming available.

¹⁵ Paragraph (3) of subsection (1) of 10 U.S.C. 2306b states, "The head of an agency may not initiate a multiyear procurement contract for any system (or component thereof) if the value of the multiyear contract would exceed \$500,000,000 unless authority for the contract is specifically provided in an appropriations Act."

¹⁶ Paragraph (3) of subsection (i) of 10 U.S.C. 2306b states, "In the case of the Department of Defense, a multiyear contract in an amount equal to or greater than \$500,000,000 may not be entered into for any fiscal year under this section unless the contract is specifically authorized by law in an Act other than an appropriations Act."

Provisions in which Congress approves the use of MYP for a particular defense acquisition program may include specific conditions for that program in addition to the requirements and conditions of 10 U.S.C. 2306b.

How often is MYP used? MYP is used for a limited number of DOD acquisition programs. As shown in the **Appendix**, annual DOD appropriations acts since FY1990 typically have approved the use of MYP for one or a few DOD programs each year.

A February 2012 briefing by the Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) office within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) shows that the total dollar value of DOD MYP contracts has remained more or less stable between FY2000 and FY2012 at roughly \$7 billion to \$13 billion per year. The briefing shows that since the total size of DOD's procurement budget has increased during this period, the portion of DOD's total procurement budget accounted for by programs using MYP contracts has declined from about 17% in FY2000 to less than 8% in FY2012.¹⁷ The briefing also shows that the Navy makes more use of MYP contracts than does the Army or Air Force, and that the Air Force made very little use of MYP in FY2010-FY2012.¹⁸

A 2008 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report stated:

Although DOD had been entering into multiyear contracts on a limited basis prior to the 1980s, the Department of Defense Authorization Act, [for fiscal year] 1982,¹⁹ codified the authority for DOD to procure on a multiyear basis major weapon systems that meet certain criteria. Since that time, DOD has annually submitted various weapon systems as multiyear procurement candidates for congressional authorization. Over the past 25 years, Congress has authorized the use of multiyear procurement for approximately 140 acquisition programs, including some systems approved more than once.²⁰

In an interview published on January 13, 2014, Sean Stackley, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition (i.e., the Navy's acquisition executive), stated:

What the industrial base clamors for is stability, so they can plan, invest, train their work force. It gives them the ability in working with say, the Street [Wall Street], to better predict their own performance, then meet expectations in the same fashion we try to meet our expectations with the Hill.

It's emblematic of stability that we've got more multiyear programs in the Department of the Navy than the rest of the Department of Defense combined. We've been able to harvest from that significant savings, and that has been key to solving some of our budget problems. It's allowed us in certain cases to put the savings right back into other programs tied to requirements.²¹

¹⁷ Slide 4 from briefing entitled "Multiyear Procurement: A CAPE Perspective," given at DOD cost analysis symposium, February 15-17, 2012, posted at InsideDefense.com (subscription required) May 14, 2012.

¹⁸ Slide 5 from briefing entitled "Multiyear Procurement: A CAPE Perspective," given at DOD cost analysis symposium, February 15-17, 2012, posted at InsideDefense.com (subscription required) May 14, 2012.

¹⁹ S. 815/P.L. 97-86 of December 1, 1981, §909.

²⁰ Government Accountability Office, *Defense Acquisitions[:] DOD's Practices and Processes for Multiyear Procurement Should Be Improved*, GAO-08-298, February 2008, p. 5.

²¹ "Interview: Sean Stackley, US Navy's Acquisition Chief," *Defense News*, January 13, 2014: 22.

Block Buy Contracting (BBC)

BBC in Brief

What is BBC, and how does it compare to MYP? BBC is similar to MYP in that it permits DOD to use a single contract for more than one year's worth of procurement of a given kind of item without having to exercise a contract option for each year after the first year.²² BBC is also similar to MYP in that DOD needs congressional approval for each use of BBC.

BBC differs from MYP in the following ways:

- There is no permanent statute governing the use of BBC.
- There is no requirement that BBC be approved in both a DOD appropriations act and an act other than a DOD appropriations act.
- Programs being considered for BBC do not need to meet any legal criteria to qualify for BBC because there is no permanent statute governing the use of BBC that establishes such criteria.
- A BBC contract can cover more than five years of planned procurements. The BBC contracts currently being used by the Navy for procuring Littoral Combat Ships (LCSs), for example, cover a period of six years (FY2010-FY2015).
- Economic order quantity (EOQ) authority does not come automatically as part of BBC authority because there is no permanent statute governing the use of BBC that includes EOQ authority as an automatic feature. To provide EOQ authority as part of a BBC contract, the provision granting authority for using BBC in a program may need to state explicitly that the authority to use BBC includes the authority to use EOQ.
- BBC contracts are less likely to include cancellation penalties.

Given the one key similarity between BBC and MYP (the use of a single contract for more than one year's worth of procurement), and the various differences between BBC and MYP, BBC might be thought of as a less formal stepchild of MYP.

When and why was BBC invented? BBC was invented by Section 121(b) of the FY1998 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 1119/P.L. 105-85 of November 18, 1997), which granted the Navy the authority to use a single contract for the procurement of the first four Virginia (SSN-774) class attack submarines. The four boats were scheduled to be procured during the five-year period FY1998-FY2002 in annual quantities of 1-1-0-1-1. Congress provided the authority granted in Section 121(b) at least in part to reduce the combined procurement cost of the four submarines. Using MYP was not an option for the Virginia-class program at that time

²² Using the hypothetical example introduced earlier involving the procurement of 20 aircraft over the five-year period FY2013-FY2017, DOD would follow the same general path as it would under MYP: DOD would issue one contract covering all 20 aircraft in FY2013, at the beginning of the five-year period, following congressional approval to use BBC for the program, and congressional appropriation of the FY2013 funding for the program. To continue the implementation of the contract over the next four years, DOD would request the FY2014 funding for the program as part of DOD's proposed FY2014 budget, the FY2015 funding as part of DOD's proposed FY2015 budget, and so on.

because the Navy had not even begun, let alone finished, construction of the first Virginia-class submarine, and consequently could not demonstrate that it had a stable design for the program.

When Section 121(b) was enacted, there was no name for the contracting authority it provided. The term block buy contracting came into use later, when observers needed a term to refer to the kind of contracting authority that Congress authorized in Section 121(b). As discussed in the next section, this can cause confusion, because the term block buy was already being used in discussions of DOD acquisition to refer to something else.

Terminology Alert: Block Buy Contracting vs. Block Buys

What's the difference between block buy contracting and block buys? In discussions of defense procurement, the term “block buy” by itself (without “contracting” at the end) is sometimes used to refer to something quite different from block buy contracting—namely, the simple act of funding the procurement of more than one copy of an item in a single year, particularly when no more than one item of that kind might normally be funded in a single year. For example, when Congress funded the procurement of two aircraft carriers in FY1983, and another two in FY1988, these acts were each referred to as block buys, because aircraft carriers are normally procured one at a time, several years apart from one another. This alternate meaning of the term block buy predates by many years the emergence of the term block buy contracting.

The term block buy is still used in this alternate manner, which can lead to confusion in discussions of defense procurement. For example, for FY2014, the Air Force is requesting continued procurement funding for two Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF) satellites that were procured in FY2012 and partially funded in FY2012 and FY2013. (An alternative approach would have been to procure one of the satellites in FY2012 and another in a subsequent year.) The Air Force is referring to this two-satellite procurement as a block buy—which it is, under the older use of the term. But it is not an example of block buy *contracting*.

At the same time, Navy officials sometimes refer to the use of block buy contracts for the first four Virginia-class submarines, and currently in the LCS program, as block buys, when they might be more specifically referred to as instances of block buy *contracting*.

Potential Savings Under BBC

How much can BBC save, compared with MYP? Potential savings under BBC can be less than those under MYP, for at least two reasons:

- The authority to use BBC might not include authority to use EOQ purchasing, which, as discussed earlier (see “Potential Savings Under MYP”), is one of the two principal sources of savings under an MYP contract. The block buy contract for the first four Virginia-class boats and the current block buy contracts for the LCS program do not include authority for EOQ purchasing.
- A BBC contract might not include a cancellation penalty (or might include a more limited one). This can give the contractor less confidence than would be the case under an MYP contract that the future stream of business will materialize as planned, which in turn might reduce the amount of money the contractor invests to optimize its workforce and production facilities for producing the items to be procured under the contract.

Frequency of Use of BBC

How frequently has BBC been used? Since its use at the start of the Virginia-class program, BBC has been used very rarely. The Navy did not use it again in a shipbuilding program until December 2010, when it awarded two block buy contracts, each covering 10 LCSs to be procured over the six-year period FY2010-FY2015, to the two LCS builders.²³

Using BBC Rather than MYP

When might BBC be suitable as an alternative to MYP? BBC might be particularly suitable as an alternative to MYP in cases where using a multiyear contract can reduce costs, but the program in question cannot meet all the statutory criteria needed to qualify for MYP. As shown in the case of the first four Virginia-class boats, this can occur at or near the start of a procurement program, when design stability has not been demonstrated through the production of at least a few of the items to be procured (or, for a shipbuilding program, at least one ship).

MYP and BBC vs. Contracts with Options

What's the difference between an MYP or block buy contract and a contract with options? The military services sometimes use contracts with options to procure multiple copies of an item that are procured over a period of several years. The Navy, for example, used a contract with options to procure Lewis and Clark (TAKE-1) class dry cargo ships that were procured over a period of several years. A contract with options can be viewed as somewhat similar to an MYP or block buy contract in that a single contract is used to procure several years' worth of procurement of a given kind of item.

There is, however, a key difference between an MYP or block buy contract and a contract with options: In a contract with options, the service is under no obligation to exercise any of the options, and a service can choose to not exercise an option without having to make a penalty payment to the contractor. In contrast, in an MYP or block buy contract, the service is under an obligation to continue implementing the contract beyond the first year, provided that Congress appropriates the necessary funds. If the service chooses to terminate an MYP or block buy contract, and does so as a termination for government convenience rather than as a termination for contractor default, then the contractor can, under the contract's termination for convenience clause, seek a payment from the government for cost incurred for work that is complete or in process at the time of termination, and may include the cost of some of the investments made in anticipation of the MYP or block buy contract being fully implemented. The contractor can do this even if the MYP or block buy contract does not elsewhere include a provision for a cancellation penalty.²⁴

²³ For further discussion, see CRS Report RL33741, *Navy Littoral Combat Ship (LCS)/Frigate Program: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

²⁴ Source: Telephone discussion with Elliott Branch, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Acquisition & Procurement, October 3, 2011, and email from Navy Office of legislative Affairs, October 11, 2011. Under the termination for convenience clause, the contractor can submit a settlement proposal to the service, which would become the basis for a negotiation between the contractor and the service on the amount of the payment.

Issues for Congress

Potential issues for Congress concerning MYP and BBC include whether to use MYP and BBC in the future more frequently, less frequently, or about as frequently as they are currently used; and whether to create a permanent statute to govern the use of BBC, analogous to the permanent statute that governs the use of MYP.

Frequency of Using MYP and BBC

Should MYP and BBC in the future be used more frequently, less frequently, or about as frequently as they are currently used? Supporters of using MYP and BBC more frequently in the future might argue the following:

- Since MYP and BBC can reduce procurement costs, making greater use of MYP and BBC can help DOD get more value out of its available procurement funding. This can be particularly important if DOD's budget in real (i.e., inflation-adjusted) terms remains flat or declines in coming years, as many observers anticipate.
- The risks of using MYP have been reduced by Section 811 of the FY2008 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4986/P.L. 110-181 of January 28, 2008), which amended 10 U.S.C. 2306b to strengthen the process for ensuring that programs proposed for MYP meet certain criteria (see "Permanent Statute Governing MYP"). Since the value of MYP contracts equated to less than 8% of DOD's procurement budget in FY2012, compared to about 17% of DOD's procurement budget in FY2000, MYP likely could be used more frequently without exceeding past experience regarding the share of DOD's procurement budget accounted for by MYP contracts.

Supporters of using MYP and BBC less frequently in the future, or at least no more frequently than now, might argue the following:

- Using MYP and BBC more frequently would further reduce Congress's and DOD's flexibility for making changes in DOD procurement programs in future years in response to changing strategic or budgetary circumstances. The risks of reducing flexibility in this regard are increased now because of uncertainties in the current strategic environment and because efforts to reduce federal budget deficits could include reducing DOD spending, which could lead to a reassessment of U.S. defense strategy and associated DOD acquisition programs.
- Since actual savings from using MYP and BBC rather than annual contracting can be difficult to observe or verify, it is not clear that the financial benefits of using MYP or BBC more frequently in the future would be worth the resulting further reduction in Congress's and DOD's flexibility for making changes in procurement programs in future years in response to changing strategic or budgetary circumstances.

Permanent Statute for BBC

Should Congress create a permanent statute to govern the use of BBC, analogous to the permanent statute (10 U.S.C. 2306b) that governs the use of MYP? Supporters of creating a permanent statute to govern the use of BBC might argue the following:

- Such a statute could encourage greater use of BBC, and thereby increase savings in DOD procurement programs by giving BBC contracting a formal legal standing and by establishing a clear process for DOD program managers to use in assessing whether their programs might be considered suitable for BBC.
- Such a statute could make BBC more advantageous by including a provision that automatically grants EOQ authority to programs using BBC, as well as provisions establishing qualifying criteria and other conditions intended to reduce the risks of using BBC.

Opponents of creating a permanent statute to govern the use of BBC might argue the following:

- A key advantage of BBC is that it is *not* governed by a permanent statute. The lack of such a statute gives DOD and Congress full flexibility in determining when and how to use BBC for programs that may not qualify for MYP, but for which a multiyear contract of some kind might produce substantial savings.
- Such a statute could encourage DOD program managers to pursue their programs using BBC rather than MYP. This could reduce discipline in DOD multiyear contracting if the qualifying criteria in the BBC statute are less demanding than the qualifying criteria in 10 U.S.C. 2306b.

Legislative Activity for FY2016

As part of DOD's proposed FY2016 budget, the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) is requesting authority for using an MYP contract to acquire SM-3 Block IB ballistic missile defense (BMD) interceptors (a type of missile used on Navy ships) that MDA plans to procure in FY2016-FY2019.

Appendix. Programs Approved for MYP in Annual DOD Appropriations Acts Since FY1990

Table A-I. Programs Approved for MYP in Annual DOD Appropriations Acts Since FY1990

Fiscal Year	Bill/Law	Section on MYP	Program(s) Approved for MYP
2015	H.R. 83/P.L. 113-235	Section 8010 of Division C	[none]
2014	H.R. 3547/P.L. 113-76	Section 8010 of Division C	E-2D Advanced Hawkeye SSN 774 Virginia class submarine KC-130J, C-130J, HC-130J, MC-130J, AC-130J aircraft, and government-furnished equipment
2013	H.R. 933/P.L. 113-6	Section 8010 of Division C	F/A-18E, F/A-18F, and EA-18G aircraft Up to 10 DDG-51 destroyers, as well as the AEGIS Weapon Systems, MK 41 Vertical Launching Systems, and Commercial Broadband Satellite Systems associated with those ships Virginia class submarines and government-furnished equipment CH-47 Chinook helicopters V-22 Osprey aircraft variants
2012	H.R. 2055/P.L. 112-74	Section 8010 of Division A	UH-60M/HH-60M and MH-60R/MH-60S Helicopter Airframes MH-60R/S Mission Avionics and Common Cockpits
2011	H.R. 1473/P.L. 112-10	Section 8010 of Division A	Navy MH-60R/S helicopter systems
2010	H.R. 3326/P.L. 111-118	Section 8011 of Division A	F-18 aircraft variants
2009	H.R. 2638/P.L. 110-329	Section 8011 of Division C	SSN Virginia class submarine
2008	H.R. 3222/P.L. 110-116	Section 8010 of Division A	Army CH-47 Chinook helicopter M1A2 Abrams System Enhancement Package upgrades M2A3/M3A3 Bradley upgrades SSN Virginia Class submarine
2007	H.R. 5631/P.L. 109-289	Section 8008 of Division A	C-17 Globemaster F-22A MH-60R Helicopters MH-60R Helicopter mission equipment V-22 Osprey
2006	H.R. 2863/P.L. 109-148	Section 8008 of Division A	UH-60/MH-60 helicopters C-17 Globemaster Apache Block II Conversion Modernized Target Acquisition Designation Sight/Pilot Night Vision Sensor (MTADS/PNVS)
2005	H.R. 4613/P.L. 108-287	Section 8008	Lightweight 155mm Howitzer

Fiscal Year	Bill/Law	Section on MYP	Program(s) Approved for MYP
2004	H.R. 2658/P.L. 108-87	Section 8008	F/A-18 aircraft E-2C aircraft Tactical Tomahawk missile Virginia Class submarine
2003	H.R. 5010/P.L. 107-248	Section 8008	C-130 aircraft FMTV F/A-18E and F engine
2002	H.R. 3338/P.L. 107-117	Section 8008 of Division A	UH-60/CH-60 aircraft C-17 F/A-18E and F engine
2001	H.R. 4576/P.L. 106-259	Section 8008	Javelin missile M2A3 Bradley fighting vehicle DDG-51 destroyer UH-60/CH-60 aircraft
2000	H.R. 2561/P.L. 106-79	Section 8008	Longbow Apache helicopter Javelin missile Abrams M1A2 Upgrade F/A-18E/F aircraft C-17 aircraft F-16 aircraft
1999	H.R. 4103/P.L. 105-262	Section 8008	E-2C aircraft Longbow Hellfire missile Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement (MTVR)
1998	H.R. 2266/P.L. 105-56	Section 8008	Apache Longbow radar AV-8B aircraft Family of Medium Tactical Vehicles
1997	H.R. 3610/P.L. 104-208	Section 8009 of Section 101(b) of Title I of Division A	Javelin missiles Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) Mk19-3 grenade machine guns M16A2 rifles M249 Squad Automatic Weapons M4 carbine rifles M240B machine guns Arleigh Burke (DDG-15 [sic:51] class destroyers
1996	H.R. 2126/P.L. 104-61	Section 8010	UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter Apache Longbow helicopter M1A2 tank upgrade
1995	H.R. 4650/P.L. 103-335	Section 8010	Mk19-3 grenade machine guns M16A2 rifles M249 Squad Automatic Weapons M4 carbine rifles
1994	H.R. 3116/P.L. 103-139	Section 8011	[none]

Fiscal Year	Bill/Law	Section on MYP	Program(s) Approved for MYP
1993	H.R. 5504/P.L. 102-396	Section 9013 ^a	Defense Support Satellites 23, 24 and 25 Enhanced Modular Signal Processor
1992	H.R. 2521/P.L. 102-172	Section 8013	MK-48 ADCAP Torpedo UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter Army Tactical missile
1991	H.R. 5803/P.L. 101-511	Section 8014	Line of Sight-Rear (Avenger)—Pedestal Mounted Stinger Family of Medium Tactical Vehicles (FMTV) LCAC Landing Craft LHD Amphibious Ship MK-45 Gun Mount/MK-6 Ammo Hoist NAVSTAR Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) Defense Support Program Satellites 22 and 23
1990	H.R. 3072/P.L. 101-165	Section 9021 ^a	M-1 tank engines M-1 tank fire control Bradley Fighting Vehicle Family of Heavy Tactical Vehicles Maverick Missile (AGM-65D) SH-60B/F helicopter DDG-51 destroyer (two years)

Source: Table prepared by CRS based on text of bills.

a. In H.R. 5504/P.L. 102-396 and H.R. 3072/P.L. 101-165, the general provisions title was Title IX.

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