

No date set for GPS III competition, Boeing says

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EL SEGUNDO, Calif. - Although a request for proposals was to be issued this August for the Global Positioning System III, an industry official said the date has been pushed back and no new deadline has been established.

"The request for proposals was expected on August 29 of this year," Mike Rizzo, the Boeing Co.'s program director for navigation systems, told reporters June 19 at the company's facility here. The Air Force is still "settling down the requirements" for GPS III and trying to determine whether it has the funding to support the program, he said.

A critical meeting of the Defense Space Acquisition Board on the GPS III has been "postponed indefinitely," he said. Boeing now doesn't expect a decision until after this year's budget planning cycle is completed in the fall. "Between now and January or so, we'll know what the funding for this program looks like," Rizzo said. However, the delay in issuing the RFP also may push back the first launch date. GPS III would have had its first satellite launch in 2011. "Now, I'm not really sure when we're going to launch," he said.

Boeing is the prime contractor for the GPS Block IIF satellites, which are scheduled to begin launching in 2005. Those satellites, as well as some of Lockheed Martin's Block IIR satellites, are slated to get additional funding to boost their signal. The signal boost would be about eight to 10 decibels, or 10 times the current output, according to Rizzo. The enhanced signal output is intended to protect the system from jamming.

Congress has chipped away at the Defense Department's fiscal year 2003 request of \$50 million to boost the signal of the current GPS constellation, but Rizzo said Boeing is confident those funds will be returned before the final budget is approved.