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## Decision

**Matter of:** General Dynamics Land Systems

**File:** B-412525; B-412525.2

**Date:** March 15, 2016

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### DIGEST

1. Protest challenging the agency's evaluation of the protester's technical proposal is denied where the evaluation was reasonable and consistent with the stated evaluation criteria.
  2. Agency's selection of a higher-rated, higher-priced proposal for award is unobjectionable where the agency's tradeoff decision was reasonable, and where the agency adequately documented its tradeoff rationale.
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### DECISION

General Dynamics Land Systems (GDLS), of Sterling Heights, Michigan, protests the award of a contract to Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), of McLean, Virginia, under request for proposals (RFP) No. M67854-15-R-0001, which was issued by the United States Marine Corps, for the first phase of a two-phase procurement for amphibious combat vehicles (ACVs).<sup>1</sup> GDLS challenges the agency's evaluation of its proposal and the agency's selection decision.

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<sup>1</sup> The Marine Corps also awarded a contract to BAE Systems Land & Armaments, L.P. Combined Contracting Officer Statement & Memorandum of Law (COS/MOL) at 10. GDLS does not challenge the award to BAE. See Protest at 1 n.1.

We deny the protest.

## BACKGROUND

On March 26, 2015, the Marine Corps issued the RFP for the procurement of ACVs. The ACV is intended to replace the Marine Corps' current fleet of assault amphibious vehicles (AAV), which are more than 40 years old and present shortcomings in needed amphibious assault capability. COS/MOL at 2. The new amphibious, armored personnel carriers are intended to fill the capability gap while continuing to support infantry operations ashore. Id.; Agency Report (AR), Tab 3b, Source Selection Plan, at 5. Previous efforts to address the AAV shortcomings included the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle program, which was cancelled in 2011, and Marine Personnel Carrier (MPC) program, which was suspended in 2013. COS/MOL at 3. The ACV requirement builds upon the work from the MPC program, and seeks a non-developmental vehicle, i.e., an existing vehicle modified to meet Marine Corps requirements. Id.

The RFP stated that the Marine Corps would employ a two-phased, down-select strategy to procure the ACVs. The first phase, which is the subject of this protest, provides for the award of two contracts, with fixed-price, cost-plus-fixed-fee, and price-incentive contract line item numbers (CLINs). RFP at 2, 91. For this phase, the awardees will provide test vehicles for engineering and manufacturing development. SOW at 1. For the second phase, the government will conduct a competition to choose between the two first phase contractors for the production and supply of the ACVs. For this purpose, the solicitation contained option line items for low-rate initial production and full-rate production.

The solicitation provided for award of the first phase contracts on a best-value basis, considering the following factors, in descending order of importance: (1) technical, (2) cost/price, (3) energy, and (4) small business. RFP, amend. 0004, at 36. The non-price factors, when combined, were more important than cost or price. Id. The RFP identified four subfactors, of equal importance, under the technical factor. Id. These four subfactors were identified as follows: (1) water operations, (2), land operations, (3) carry & payload, and (4) protect.<sup>2</sup> Id. As discussed in more detail below, section M.6 of the RFP provided a detailed process for the agency's best-value determination after completion of the technical and cost/price evaluation. Id. at 42-43.

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<sup>2</sup> The "protect" subfactor under the technical evaluation factor anticipated an assessment of the proposed vehicle's "survivability force protection and the integration of the Government Furnished Property/Equipment Remote Weapon System." RFP, amend. 0004, at 40.

Under the technical factor, the RFP stated that proposals would be evaluated at the subfactor level, using both adjectival and risk ratings. Id. The adjectival ratings for each subfactor were to be based on the offerors' proposed performance levels for specified requirements in each subfactor. The performance requirements were listed in a System Performance Specification (SPS), which was an attachment to the RFP, and which assigned each requirement a unique Dynamic Object Oriented Requirements System (DOORS) identification number. See RFP, attach. 2, SPS. As discussed in further detail below, the risk ratings were to be based on the agency's assessment of the risk that an offeror would not meet its proposed performance level. RFP, amend. 0004, at 37. The RFP required offerors to submit "sufficient information concerning all factors to enable Government personnel to fully ascertain capabilities of the Offeror to perform requirements," and advised offerors that they "must include any data necessary to illustrate the adequacy" of their approach. RFP, amend. 0008, at 5.

Each subfactor was comprised of a list of performance requirements and identified specific DOORS requirements related to the subfactor. RFP at 38-41.<sup>3</sup> As relevant here, the protect subfactor was comprised of eleven DOORS IDs. Of these 11 DOORS IDs, two are relevant to this protest: (1) DOORS ID [DELETED]; and (2) DOORS ID 830 (Occupant Protection Against Under Vehicle Attack). The RFP also identified the relationship between the extent to which a proposed vehicle met or exceeded a specific DOORS requirement and the available adjectival rating for that subfactor.<sup>4</sup> Id. at 41.

With regard to the risk rating, the solicitation stated: "Risk will be assessed against the likelihood of failing to meet a threshold requirement and type/methodology of the corroborating data provided." Id. at 37. The RFP also stated that "[t]he greater the

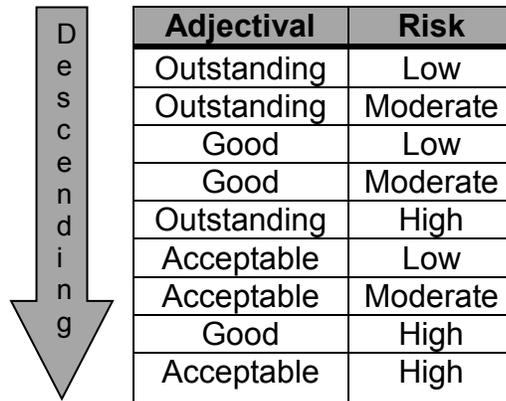
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<sup>3</sup> The SPS further assigned each DOORS ID to one of five Tiers, with Tier 1 being the most critical to the Marines' ability to field the vehicle and use it for its intended purposes, and Tier 5 being the least critical of the requirements. RFP, attach. 2, SPS, at 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> For example, to merit an outstanding rating for the protect subfactor, the solicitation required that an offeror's proposal meet the following minimum requirements: (1) Meet threshold values for all the following requirements: DOORS IDs 819, 840, 846, 855, 4358, 4363, 4496, 7083, & 7148; (2) Exceed threshold values for DOORS IDs 830 and 862; and (3) Have no deficiencies. RFP, amend. 0004, at 41 (emphasis in original). For a good rating, an offeror's proposal was required to meet the following minimum requirements: Meet threshold values for all the following requirements: DOORS IDs 819, 830, 840, 846, 855, 862, 4358, 4363, 4496, 7083, & 7148; (2) Exceed threshold values for at least one of the following requirements: DOORS IDs 830, 840, or 862; and (3) Have no deficiencies. Id.

margin above a threshold requirement, the less risk.” Id. In addition, the solicitation explained that when evaluating risk, the agency would assess the credibility of each offeror’s corroborating data in the following order: (1) independent or government test data, (2) offeror’s test data and artifacts; and (3) modeling, simulation, and analysis of the proposed vehicle. Id.

The RFP explained that the four technical subfactors would be ordered based upon the following adjectival/risk relationship:



	<b>Adjectival</b>	<b>Risk</b>
D e s c e n d i n g	Outstanding	Low
	Outstanding	Moderate
	Good	Low
	Good	Moderate
	Outstanding	High
	Acceptable	Low
	Acceptable	Moderate
	Good	High
	Acceptable	High

Id. at 43.

For the cost/price factor, the solicitation provided a formula which the agency would use to calculate an offeror’s total evaluated cost/price. Id. at 41. In addition, the solicitation required that offerors propose an average unit manufacturing cost (AUMC) of no greater than \$5 million for the production of each ACV.<sup>5</sup> Id. at 34-35.

For purposes of selecting the best-value proposal, the solicitation stated that the agency would be willing to pay a 45 percent premium over the lowest proposed AUMC for a superior technical solution. See id. Specifically, the RFP explained that the agency would first determine which proposal offered the lowest proposed AUMC. Id. Then, the agency would establish a premium limit by adding 45 percent to the lowest proposed AUMC. Id. The solicitation stated that any proposals with proposed AUMCs that fall above the defined premium limit would not be considered for award. Id. For higher priced proposals within the premium limit, the solicitation stated “all technical sub-factors will be assessed to determine if the additional cost

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<sup>5</sup> The AUMC includes the procurement-funded costs of all materials, labor, other direct costs incurred in the fabrication, checkout, and processing of parts, subassemblies, major assemblies, and subsystems needed for the final system, and associated burden (overhead, general and administrative, cost of money and profit/fee) necessary to build complete production vehicles. RFP, amend. 0004, at 25.

is warranted.” RFP, amend. 0004, at 43. As mentioned above, the agency calculated total evaluated costs/prices for conducting the best-value tradeoff. In addition, the RFP stated that the agency would “place importance” on the following “emphasis areas” and would “use them to further assess if the additional cost is warranted:” (1) launch from amphibious ships as it relates to DOORS ID 4379; (2) water speed as it relates to DOORS ID 370; (3) reserve buoyancy as it relates to DOORS ID 413; and (4) payload/embarked marines<sup>6</sup> as it relates to DOORS ID 908. The solicitation also required that an offeror’s proposal meet the following two “go/no-go” criteria to be eligible for award: (1) all ACV System Performance Specifications (SPS) Tier 1 and 2 DOORS ID requirements identified in the Technical Requirements Compliance Matrix; and (2) the requirement that the offeror’s ACV vehicle would be produced within an AUMC no greater than \$5 million. RFP, amend. 0004, at 34-35.

The Marine Corps received initial proposals from five offerors, including GDLS and SAIC, on May 18, 2015. COS/MOL at 7. Following an initial evaluation of proposals, the contracting officer established a competitive range of all five proposals. Id. The agency then conducted discussions with the offerors. The agency requested and received final proposal revisions (FPRs) from the offerors, including GDLS and SAIC, on September 21. Id. at 8.

After evaluating FPRs, the ratings for GDLS and SAIC were as follows:

	<b>GDLS</b>	<b>SAIC</b>
<b>TECHNICAL</b>		
Water Operations	Outstanding/Low Risk	Outstanding/Low Risk
Land Operations	Outstanding/Low Risk	Outstanding/Moderate Risk
Carry & Payload	Outstanding/Low Risk	Outstanding/Low Risk
Protect	Acceptable/Moderate Risk	Outstanding/Low Risk
<b>ENERGY</b>	ACCEPTABLE	ACCEPTABLE
<b>SMALL BUSINESS</b>	ACCEPTABLE	ACCEPTABLE
<b>COST/PRICE</b>	\$868,883,267	\$1,192,997,066

AR, Tab 18a, Source Selection Advisory Council (SSAC) Report, at 3.

<sup>6</sup> For this emphasis area, the RFP stated that the offeror “shall clearly identify the number of embarked Marines the proposed ACV can carry.” RFP, amend. 0008, at 10.

As mentioned previously, the adjectival ratings for the subfactors under the technical factor were determined by an offeror's claimed performance against the DOORS IDs in those subfactors. RFP at 51. As relevant here, for the protect subfactor, GDLS's proposal stated that its proposed solution did not meet the threshold for one of the eleven DOORS IDs (DOORS ID [DELETED]). AR, Tab 12b, GDLS Technical Proposal, at 81. For this reason, GDLS's proposal self-identified that its adjectival rating for the protect subfactor could be no higher than acceptable. Id. at 77. Accordingly, in evaluating GDLS's proposal under the protect subfactor, the agency's technical evaluation board (TEB) noted that GDLS's proposal "states that they do not meet the Threshold value for DOORS ID [DELETED]," and assessed GDLS's proposal an acceptable rating for this subfactor. AR, Tab 16a, Final Source Selection Evaluation Board (SSEB) Report, at 126.

Based on the evaluations, the source selection authority (SSA) concluded that BAE's and SAIC's proposals provided the best value under the terms of the solicitation. AR, Tab 18b, SSDD, at 3. With regard to the comparison of SAIC's and GDLS's proposals, the agency concluded that the "significantly increased protection provided by SAIC [as] compared to GDLS, warrants SAIC's higher price." Id. at 2. In addition, the SSA noted: "I believe a price premium for SAIC's proposed protection . . . is merited in order to provide Marines greater protection against loss of life or limb." Id. Accordingly, the Marine Corps concluded that SAIC's proposal, offered the best value to the government and awarded one of the phase 1 contracts to that firm.<sup>7</sup> Id. On December 1, GDLS received a debriefing. This protest followed.

## DISCUSSION

GDLS challenges the Marine Corps' evaluation of its proposal under the protect subfactor of the technical evaluation factor, arguing that the agency unreasonably assessed the risk posed by its proposed approach. The protester also argues that the agency's best-value decision was inconsistent with the solicitation, inadequately documented, and based on a flawed technical evaluation. Although our decision does not specifically address all of GDLS's arguments, we have fully considered each of them and find that none provides a basis to sustain the protest.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> As mentioned above, the Marine Corps awarded the other phase 1 contract to BAE. The agency states that the total contract value of the award to BAE, if all options are exercised, is \$1,185,071,555. COS/MOL at 10.

<sup>8</sup> In addition, our Office previously dismissed two of GDLS's protest arguments in response to the agency and intervenor's dismissal requests because they failed to state a valid basis of protest. See GAO Email (Jan. 27, 2016). First, GDLS argued that the agency's stated basis for assigning SAIC a moderate risk in the land operations subfactor was inconsistent with the solicitation's definition for a moderate  
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## Protect Subfactor Evaluation

GDLS contends that the Marine Corps unreasonably assigned a moderate risk rating to its proposal for the protect subfactor, arguing that the agency improperly concluded that GDLS's modeling and simulation data provided insufficient information to substantiate its proposed performance.<sup>9</sup> For the reasons discussed below, we conclude that the agency's evaluation of GDLS's proposal under this subfactor was reasonable.

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risk rating, and therefore, that SAIC should have been rated high risk under this factor. We dismissed this protest ground, noting that “[although] the protester argues that ‘[t]he solicitation provided that modeling and simulation data would present a higher risk to the government than independent or government testing data,’ the protester also acknowledges that ‘[t]he Solicitation does not state that providing modeling and simulation data will dictate a moderate or high risk rating.’” Id. at 17. We found that nothing in the record supported the protester's position that the moderate risk rating was inconsistent with the agency's rationale for that rating, which the agency explained was due to “[d]ependency on modeling, simulation, and analysis,” and “[i]nsufficient information to assess available margin.” Id. Accordingly, we concluded that the protester's allegations failed to reasonably establish a violation of statute or regulation because the allegations relied upon assumptions and characterizations concerning the RFP and the agency's evaluation that were not supported by those documents, and therefore, failed to state a valid basis of protest. 4 C.F.R. §§ 21.1(c)(4) and (f). Second, we similarly found that GDLS failed to allege facts which demonstrated any impropriety regarding the agency's technical evaluation of SAIC's proposal under the water operations subfactor. See GAO Email (Jan. 27, 2016). We also dismissed several protest issues as untimely because they were based on information either provided to GDLS during its debriefing or contained in the agency's January 5 report, but which the protester did not raise until January 19, more than 10 days after the basis of protest should have been known. Id.; 4 C.F.R. §§ 21.2(a)(1); (b).

<sup>9</sup> GDLS also argues that the Marine Corps' assignment of a moderate risk rating for the protect subfactor was unreasonable because the agency's evaluation failed to consider three documents referenced, but not provided, in its proposal, which the protester asserts contain testing data on previous GDLS vehicles. Protester's Comments (Jan. 19, 2016) at 19. Based on our review of the record, we find no merit to this argument. The RFP required offerors to submit substantiating data for every DOORS ID, and specifically stated “it is the Offeror's responsibility to obtain and provide the substantiating data as required in the Solicitation.” RFP at 10, 13; RFP, amend. 0002. Here, however, GDLS did not provide the documents with its proposal. As our Office has long held, it is an offeror's responsibility to submit an adequately written proposal that demonstrates the merits of its approach. Trofholz Techs., Inc., B-404101, Jan. 5, 2011, 2011 CPD ¶ 144 at 3-4. Because GDLS did

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In reviewing a protest against an agency's evaluation of proposals, our Office will not reevaluate proposals but instead will examine the record to determine whether the agency's judgment was reasonable and consistent with the stated evaluation criteria and applicable procurement statutes and regulations. IPlus, Inc., B-298020, B-298020.2, June 5, 2006, 2006 CPD ¶ 90 at 7, 13; Shumaker Trucking & Excavating Contractors, Inc., B-290732, Sept. 25, 2002, 2002 CPD ¶ 169 at 3. A protester's disagreement with an agency's judgment in evaluating proposals is insufficient to establish that the agency acted unreasonably. VT Griffin Servs., Inc., B-299869.2, Nov. 10, 2008, 2008 CPD ¶ 219 at 4.

As discussed above, proposals were evaluated using both adjectival and risk ratings for each subfactor. The adjectival ratings were based on an offeror's proposed compliance with particular DOORS IDs. The risk rating evaluated the proposal for risk "against the likelihood of failing to meet a threshold requirement," and the "type/methodology of the corroborating data provided in the [proposal]." RFP, amend. 0004, at 37.<sup>10</sup> The RFP stated that the "greater the margin above a threshold requirement, the less risk." Id. With regard to corroborating data, the RFP stated that the agency would evaluate "[m]odeling, simulation, and analysis" test data as higher risk than other types of test data. Id.

As also discussed above, for the protect subfactor, the solicitation required that offerors submit substantiating data for the eleven DOORS IDs in the subfactor. RFP at 40-41. As relevant here, DOORS ID 830 required the vehicle to conform to under-vehicle attack using conventional anti-tank blast landmines and buried improvised explosive devices (IEDs) threshold requirements, which were defined in a classified annex to the RFP. RFP, attach. 2, SPS, at 79. As the contracting officer explains, this DOORS ID "essentially [required] that the vehicle protect occupants from two different types of threats: mine [threats] and fragmenting IED threats detonating anywhere under the vehicle." COS/MOL at 14.

As support for its compliance with DOORS ID 830, GDLS's proposal provided modeling and simulation (M&S) data to demonstrate capability. AR, Tab 6a, GDLS

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not provide these supporting documents with its proposal, the agency reasonably did not consider them when evaluating GDLS's proposal.

<sup>10</sup> The solicitation defined "low risk" as "[h]as little potential to cause disruption of schedule, increased cost or degradation of performance," and "[n]ormal contractor effort and normal Government monitoring will likely be able to overcome any difficulties." RFP, amend. 0004, at 37. The RFP defined "moderate risk" as "[c]an potentially cause disruption of schedule, increased cost or degradation of performance," and "[s]pecial contractor emphasis and close Government monitoring will likely be able to overcome difficulties." Id.

Proposal, at 79-80, 90. In evaluating GDLS's initial proposal, the TEB found moderate risk for this DOORS ID, and accordingly, during discussions, advised GDLS of the agency's concerns. For example, the agency informed GDLS that it was concerned that the [DELETED] was substantiated "with limited performance margin by [modeling and simulation data] only." AR, Tab 11b, GDLS Plan to Address EN, at C-115. The agency also advised GDLS that the M&S data included in its proposal provided "[DELETED]." Id. In addition, the agency told GDLS that its computer aided design modeling provided insufficient information concerning [DELETED]. Id.

In response, GDLS pointed to "[DELETED]," as well as other information. AR, Tab 11b, GDLS Plan to Address EN, at C-117. GDLS explained, in relevant part, that [DELETED]." Id.

In the final evaluation, the evaluators acknowledged the additional information provided in GDLS's FPR, but found that the "additional information was insufficient to reduce the risk below moderate." AR, Tab 16a, Final SSEB Report, at 128. Specifically, the TEB explained that, although "[t]he proposal asserts the [DELETED] utilized for M&S are approximately [DELETED]," the "M&S threat conditions do not exceed the threat conditions defined by the ACV 1.1 requirements." AR, Tab 16a, Final SSEB Report, at 129. Accordingly, because the modeling and simulation information provided by GDLS did not meet the solicitation's minimum soil density testing requirements, the agency found that the additional information was insufficient to change GDLS's risk assessment below moderate.

The protester disagrees with the agency's evaluation, arguing that its FPR addressed the agency's concern regarding GDLS's limited performance margin, and the reliability of GDLS's testing, for this requirement, and that its response should have merited a low risk rating. In this regard, the protester asserts that the agency's evaluation improperly failed to credit GDLS with a [DELETED] percent above threshold design margin for the DOORS ID 830 requirement. The agency responds that its evaluation was reasonable because although GDLS's FPR stated that its [DELETED]," AR, Tab 12b, GDLS Technical Proposal, at 79, GDLS's proposal did not substantiate that the soil density used for the simulations met the solicitation's minimum soil density requirements. See COS/MOL at 18.

Based on our review of the record, we find nothing unreasonable regarding the agency's evaluation. The record reflects that the solicitation's specification for [DELETED] testing stated that the soil was required to have a "soil density which will be up to [DELETED]." RFP, attach. 2, SPS, at 19-20. As the agency notes, however, the [DELETED] used in GDLS's testing failed to meet this requirement because it used a [DELETED]. COS/MOL at 18 (citing AR, Tab 12c, GDLS, Technical Proposal at 40). The agency explains that because "[t]he [RFP] requirement of [DELETED] is more [DELETED]," GDLS "did not substantiate [that it

conducted its] testing with the [DELETED]” required by the solicitation. Id. The protester does not dispute the agency’s assertions that the [DELETED] failed to meet the solicitation’s minimum requirements. Instead, the protester contends that the agency failed to consider other information in GDLS’s FPR regarding [DELETED], which the protester asserts demonstrated [DELETED] percent more [DELETED] than [DELETED]. In effect, the protester asserts that the agency should have found that its data was more persuasive.

The Marine Corps responds that GDLS’s proposal failed to provide any data to substantiate the protester’s claim that [DELETED] provides [DELETED]. COS/MOL at 19. Specifically, the contracting officer states:

GDLS utilized [DELETED] based on unknown soil density. This affected the reliability of any comparison to ACV 1.1 requirements. Therefore, the [DELETED]% design margin cannot be substantiated using the data presented in the proposal and does not clearly demonstrate design margin over the requirements.

COS/MOL at 19. We find that the agency reasonably concluded that GDLS’s proposed [DELETED]% design margin could not be substantiated using the modeling and simulation data presented. The protester did not submit data on soil density in its proposal, and instead raised this issue only in response to the protest. Accordingly, to the extent that the protester contends that the agency improperly discounted GDLS’s data without making a meaningful examination of its reliability solely because it was modeling and simulation data (which was assessed in the solicitation, as the least credible, or persuasive, of the three categories of identified corroborating data), we conclude that the agency’s evaluation was reasonable and consistent with the RFP. On this record, we conclude that GDLS has not shown that the agency’s evaluation was inconsistent with the RFP’s definitions, or was otherwise unreasonable.

#### Tradeoff Analysis and Source Selection Decision

GDLS argues that the agency’s best-value decision was inconsistent with the solicitation’s stated evaluation scheme, failed to consider the evaluated differences between proposals, and was inadequately documented. Specifically, GDLS argues that the agency’s source selection decision improperly ignored the four emphasis areas identified in the solicitation as possible bases to justify a price premium. GDLS also argues that the Marine Corps gave undue weight to the protect evaluation subfactor, thereby deviating from the solicitation’s evaluation criteria.<sup>11</sup> As discussed below, we find no merit to these arguments.

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<sup>11</sup> The protester also asserts that the agency’s best-value determination was based on a flawed technical evaluation. Because, however, as discussed above, we  
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In a best-value procurement, it is the function of the selection official to perform a price/technical tradeoff, that is, to determine whether one proposal's technical superiority (however represented) is worth the higher price, and the extent to which one is sacrificed for the other is governed only by the test of rationality and consistency with the stated evaluation criteria. Savvee Consulting, Inc., B-408416.3, Mar. 5, 2014, 2014 CPD ¶ 92 at 7; The MIL Corp., B-297508, B-297508.2, Jan. 26, 2006, 2006 CPD ¶ 34 at 13. An agency, in making its tradeoff analysis, may ultimately focus on a particular discriminator between proposals, even if it is not related to one of the most-heavily weighted evaluation factors, where it has a reasonable basis to do so. See Keane Fed. Sys., Inc., B-280595, Oct. 23, 1998, 98-2 CPD ¶ 132 at 16. A protester's disagreement with the agency's judgments about the relative merit of competing proposals does not establish that the evaluation was unreasonable. VT Griffin Servs., Inc., supra.

As discussed above, the RFP stated that the technical factors, when combined, were more important than cost or price. RFP at 36. In addition, section M.6 of the solicitation further addressed the relationship of the technical subfactors to the best-value decision: "For higher priced proposals, . . . all technical sub-factors will be assessed to determine if the additional cost is warranted." RFP, amend. 0004, at 43. In addition, the solicitation advised that the government would pay up to a 45 percent premium over the lowest average unit manufacturing cost for a superior technical solution. See id. ("The premium limit will be set at 45% of the LPTA's AUMC."). The RFP also stated that the agency would "place[ ] importance" on the following emphasis areas and would "use them to further assess if the additional cost is warranted:" (1) launch from amphibious ships as it relates to DOORS ID 4379; (2) water speed as it relates to DOORS ID 370; (3) reserve buoyancy as it relates to DOORS ID 413; and (4) payload/embarked marines as it relates to DOORS ID 908. Id.

The record reflects that the SSA conducted a detailed comparison of GDLS's proposal against SAIC's considering each evaluation factor and subfactor, as well as the emphasis areas. In considering whether and to what extent any of the differences between the proposals amounted to discriminators, the SSA received and reviewed the final Source Selection Evaluation Board (SSEB) and SSAC reports and received a briefing from the SSEB regarding the final evaluations. AR, Tab 18a, SSAC Report, at 2.

With regard to the four emphasis areas, the SSEB concluded that GDLS's and SAIC's proposals were "essentially equivalent in the capabilities proposed for these requirements." Id. at 7; AR, Tab 17a, SSAC FPR Brief, at 82. For example, for the

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conclude that the agency's technical evaluation was reasonable, we need not address this allegation further.

water speed requirement (DOORS ID 370), the minimum requirement was 5 knots in calm water. The TEB concluded, based on the government model result, that both GDLS and SAIC would similarly meet this requirement. See AR, Tab 17a, SSAC FPR Brief, at 82 (finding GDLS's vehicle had a water speed of [DELETED] knots, and SAIC's vehicle had a water speed of [DELETED] knots). For the reserve buoyancy requirement (DOORS ID 413), which had a minimum requirement of 18 percent in fresh water, GDLS proposed a reserve buoyancy of [DELETED] percent, and SAIC of [DELETED] percent. Id. Based on this information, the agency found that the reserve buoyancies of the two offerors proposed vehicles were almost identical. Id. (finding [DELETED] percent buoyancy for GDLS versus [DELETED] percent for SAIC). For the payload/embarked marines requirement (DOORS ID 908), [DELETED] GDLS and SAIC proposed vehicles that could carry [DELETED] embarked marines. Id. Finally, for the launch from amphibious ships requirement (DOORS ID 4379), the agency concluded, based on its testing model, that both GDLS's and SAIC's vehicles had the ability to launch from amphibious ships. Id.

Accordingly, because the SSA found that GDLS's and SAIC's proposals were essentially equal for the emphasis areas, the SSA focused on discriminators between GDLS's and SAIC's proposals, which were under the protect and land operations subfactors, and weighed those discriminators against the total evaluated price. AR, Tab 18b, SSDD, at 1. Specifically, in comparing the proposals, the SSA explained that "SAIC's rating of Outstanding/Moderate risk in the Protect sub-factor far exceeds GDLS' rating of Acceptable/Moderate risk." Id. at 2. In this regard, the SSA explained that "[f]or [DELETED] protection SAIC met the threshold, but GDLS did not." Id. at 2. The SSA also concluded that SAIC's "vehicle provides a [DELETED] % margin over threshold for [DELETED] protection" whereas "GDLS only meets the threshold level for [DELETED] protection." Id. The SSA noted the importance of these differences, stating:

In highlighting these differences, I am mindful of the proliferation of improvised explosive devices on the battlefield and I believe a price premium for SAIC's proposed protection . . . is merited in order to provide Marines greater protection against loss of life or limb.

Id.

In addition, the SSA noted a "marginal advantage" GDLS's proposal presented in the land operations subfactor as compared to SAIC's proposal, but concluded that SAIC's "substantial advantage in [the] Protect [subfactor] merits SAIC's higher price despite this marginal advantage." Id. The SSA explained that although "[a]ll sub-factors are equal in their importance," the "significantly increased protection provided by SAIC compared to GDLS, warrants SAIC's higher price." Id.

Based on our review, we find that the tradeoff between GDLS's and SAIC's proposals was reasonable and consistent with the RFP's evaluation criteria. To the extent GDLS maintains that the SSA gave undue weight to the protect subfactor in making the tradeoff decision, noting that it was only one of four equally weighted subfactors, this argument is without merit. It is not inconsistent with an evaluation scheme in which technical factors are of equal weight for an agency to distinguish between proposals on the basis of one of those factors. See Keane Fed. Sys., Inc., supra. Moreover, as the Marine Corps notes, the RFP provided that the difference between a proposal with an outstanding rating with moderate risk (e.g., SAIC's rating for the protect subfactor) and an acceptable proposal with moderate risk (e.g., GDLS's rating for the land operations subfactor), was five ranks. See RFP, amend. 0004, at 43. In this regard, as set forth above, the RFP expressly identified the relative weight and ranking of specific combinations of adjectival and risk ratings. Id. Thus, contrary to the protester's argument, the selection decision appropriately considered SAIC's advantage under the protect subfactor based on the magnitude of that advantage, and did not depart from the evaluation scheme set forth in the RFP.

We also find no merit to the protester's contention that the SSA improperly ignored the emphasis areas that the solicitation highlighted for consideration in the best-value tradeoff.<sup>12</sup> As discussed above, the solicitation stated that, in addition to considering the four emphasis areas, "all technical sub-factors will be assessed to determine if the additional cost is warranted." RFP at 43. As also detailed above, the record reflects that the agency conducted a detailed evaluation of GDLS's and SAIC's proposals under these four emphasis areas, and that the SSA concurred

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<sup>12</sup> GDLS also argues that the Marine Corps' best-value determination improperly failed to recognize what the protester argues was an advantage in GDLS's proposal for the water operations subfactor as compared to SAIC's proposal for this subfactor. Protester's Supp. Comments (Feb. 2, 2016), at 7. The protester points to the difference between "SAIC's claimed performance of [DELETED] knots and its actual estimated performance [by the government] of [DELETED] knots," for the water speed requirement as "indicative of the quality of SAIC's [DELETED] data," which the protester further contends, for this subfactor, was only supported by some [DELETED] data and some [DELETED] data. Id. The protester argues that GDLS's proposal should have been evaluated as less risky than SAIC's proposal under this subfactor because GDLS's claimed performance was [DELETED] knots and its actual estimated performance was [DELETED] knots, and therefore was within only [DELETED] knots of the agency's evaluated estimate. GDLS's disagreement with the agency's evaluation in this regard, however, without more, is not sufficient to render the agency's evaluation unreasonable or provide a basis to sustain the protest. See Ben-Mar Enters., Inc., B-295781, Apr. 7, 2005, 2005 CPD ¶ 68 at 7. Here, the agency credited both SAIC and GDLS with the actual level of performance that the agency could verify.

with the SSAC's assessment that GDLS's and SAIC's proposals were essentially equal in all four emphasis areas. See AR, Tab 18a, SSAC Report, at 7; AR, Tab 17a, SSAC FPR Brief, at 82. In the best-value tradeoff, therefore, the SSA focused on discriminators between GDLS's and SAIC's proposals in the protect and land operations subfactors, and weighed those discriminators against the total evaluated price. AR, Tab 18b, SSDD, at 1. We disagree with the protester that the agency's evaluation in this regard either ignored the emphasis areas or somehow deviated from the solicitation's evaluation scheme.

Finally, the protester's assertion that the SSA failed to document the basis for the best-value determination is not supported by the record. Although source selection decisions must be adequately documented, there is no need for extensive documentation of every consideration factored into the tradeoff decision; rather, the documentation need only be sufficient to establish that the agency was aware of the relative merits and costs of the competing proposals and that the source selection was reasonably based. Wyle Labs., Inc., B-407784, Feb. 19, 2013, 2013 CPD ¶ 63 at 11. Here, as discussed above, the SSA clearly identified discriminators between the offerors' technical proposals, and concluded the "substantial advantage" provided by SAIC's proposal under the protect subfactor outweighed both the "marginal advantage" of GLDS's proposal under the land operations subfactor and GLDS's lower price/cost. See AR, Tab 18b, SSDD, at 1.

In sum, based on this record, we find no merit to the protester's arguments that the SSA failed to weigh the benefits of each proposal or comply with the solicitation's evaluation scheme, or that the agency failed to document the tradeoff analysis and selection decision.

The protest is denied.

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