NONPROLIFERATION

Improvements Needed for Controls on Exports of Cruise Missile and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Technology

What GAO Found

The growing threat to U.S. national security of cruise missile and UAV proliferation is challenging the tools the United States has traditionally used. Multilateral export control regimes have expanded their lists of controlled technologies that include cruise missile and UAV items, but key countries of concern are not members. U.S. export control authorities find it increasingly difficult to limit or track unlisted dual-use items that can be acquired without an export license. Moreover, a gap in U.S. export control authority enables American companies to export certain dual-use items to recipients that are not associated with missile projects or countries listed in the regulations, even if the exporter knows the items might be used to develop cruise missiles or UAVs. American companies have in fact legally exported dual-use items with no U.S. government review to a New Zealand resident who bought the items to build a cruise missile.

The U.S. government seldom uses its end-use monitoring programs to verify compliance with conditions placed on the use of cruise missile, UAV, or related technology exports. For example, State officials do not monitor exports to verify compliance with license conditions on missiles or other items, despite legal and regulatory requirements to do so. Defense has not used its end-use monitoring program initiated in 2002 to check the compliance of users of more than 500 cruise missiles exported between fiscal years 1998 and 2002. Commerce conducted visits to assess the end use of items for about 1 percent of the 2,490 missile-related licenses we reviewed. Thus, the U.S. government cannot be confident that recipients are effectively safeguarding equipment in ways that protect U.S. national security and nonproliferation interests.

A Chinese SILKWORM Cruise Missile in Iraq

Source: Department of Defense.