WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Nonproliferation Programs Need Better Integration

What GAO Found

GAO found that there is no overall strategy that integrates the threat reduction and nonproliferation programs of the DOD, DOE, and others. DOD and DOE have strategies governing their respective programs, which generally contain the elements of a strategy as established by the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. These strategies include a mission statement and goals, identify external factors that could affect meeting these goals, establish metrics to evaluate the performance of the programs, provide cost estimates, and cover a period of at least 5 years. Given the involvement of multiple agencies, and the expansion of the threat reduction and nonproliferation programs beyond the FSU, integration of agencies’ strategies is important.

The agencies' implementation of very similar programs has not always been well coordinated. While the majority of programs in DOD and DOE are distinct, GAO found three program areas that perform similar functions in the FSU. GAO found that the coordination of programs enhancing security at Russian nuclear warhead sites improved after the National Security Council (NSC) staff issued guidance. Specifically, the guidance delineates agencies’ roles, interactions, and ways to resolve disputes. The biological weapons scientist employment programs in DOD, DOE, and State are well coordinated and also have NSC staff guidance addressing roles, interactions, and disputes. By contrast, there is no governmentwide guidance delineating the roles and responsibilities of agencies managing border security programs. According to DOD and DOE officials managing these programs, agencies’ roles are not well delineated and coordination could be improved.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends (1) that the Secretaries of Defense and Energy develop an integrated plan for all U.S. threat reduction and nonproliferation programs and (2) that the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs issue clear guidance for the coordination of border security programs. DOE agreed with the recommendations, while State and the NSC staff did not comment. DOD concurred with the need for better integrated nonproliferation programs, but did not specify whether it agreed with the need for an integrated plan. DOD concurred with the need for guidance governing border security programs.


To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Joseph A. Christoff, (202) 512-8979 or christoffj@gao.gov; or Gene Aloise, (202) 512-3841 or aloisee@gao.gov.