

Highlights of [GAO-11-227](#), a report to the Chairman and Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In April 2009, President Obama announced an international initiative to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials worldwide within 4 years. Nonproliferation programs administered by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) are working to secure nuclear materials in Russia and other countries. GAO assessed (1) U.S. governmentwide efforts to implement the President's 4-year nuclear material security initiative; (2) the status and challenges, if any, of NNSA's nuclear security programs in Russia; and (3) NNSA efforts to secure nuclear materials in countries other than Russia. To address these issues, GAO analyzed U.S. nuclear security strategies and plans and interviewed U.S. and Russian government officials. This report summarizes the findings of GAO's classified report on securing nuclear materials worldwide.

What GAO Recommends

GAO suggests that Congress consider extending the deadline for NNSA to complete Material Protection, Control, and Accounting (MPC&A) program activities in Russia. GAO recommends that the Department of Energy (DOE) and NNSA take several actions regarding three nonproliferation program efforts in Russia, such as clarifying the remaining scope and costs of MPC&A work in Russia. GAO also recommends that the National Security Council (NSC) lead interagency development of a more detailed implementation plan for the President's 4-year initiative. DOE and NNSA agreed with the recommendations. NSC did not comment on GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-11-227](#) or key components. For more information, contact Gene Aloise at (202) 512-3841 or aloisee@gao.gov.

NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION

Comprehensive U.S. Planning and Better Foreign Cooperation Needed to Secure Vulnerable Nuclear Materials Worldwide

What GAO Found

NSC officials have approved a governmentwide strategy for the President's 4-year global nuclear material security initiative that describes the scope and objectives of the interagency effort and identifies the main efforts by U.S. agencies and programs to support the initiative. However, this interagency strategy lacks specific details concerning how the initiative will be implemented, including the identity of vulnerable foreign nuclear material sites and facilities to be addressed, agencies and programs responsible for addressing each site, planned activities at each location, potential challenges and strategies for overcoming those obstacles, anticipated timelines, and cost estimates. As a result, key details associated with the initiative are unclear, including its overall estimated cost, time frame, and scope of planned work.

Three NNSA nuclear nonproliferation programs GAO reviewed—the MPC&A program, the Materials Consolidation and Conversion (MCC) program, and the Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI)—have made varying degrees of progress in securing Russian nuclear warheads and materials. While the MPC&A program has made considerable progress securing Russia's nuclear warhead and material facilities, the MCC and GTRI programs have had more limited success achieving their objectives in Russia. Moreover, the future of these efforts in Russia is unclear because of questionable high-level Russian political commitment to nuclear security cooperation with the United States. Each of these three programs also faces implementation challenges. The MPC&A program, in particular, faces challenges in successfully completing upgrades against insider and outsider threats at some Russian nuclear material facilities and in transitioning responsibility to Russia for sustaining MPC&A systems. Because of the time required to address these challenges, NNSA is unlikely to meet a deadline under current U.S. law requiring Russia to assume sole responsibility for sustaining MPC&A by January 1, 2013, and MPC&A program activities will need to continue in Russia beyond the statutory deadline.

In addition to its efforts in Russia, NNSA is working with other countries on issues related to the security of weapon-usable nuclear materials. In two countries believed to have large nuclear material stockpiles—China and India—political sensitivities have limited NNSA's efforts in both nations to the relatively noncontroversial exchange of nuclear security best practices, training, and demonstration projects instead of implementing MPC&A activities directly at nuclear sites. NNSA is also seeking to accelerate the removal of weapon-usable nuclear materials from other priority countries through the GTRI program, including key countries that made new commitments at the April 2010 Nuclear Security Summit to relinquish or reduce their weapon-usable nuclear material stockpiles. In particular, NNSA officials reported progress in negotiations with several nations—including Ukraine and South Africa—following the summit for the removal of some highly enriched uranium located in those countries.