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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-06-558T](#), a testimony before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

GAO is releasing two reports today on U.S. efforts to combat nuclear smuggling in foreign countries and in the United States. Together with the March 2005 report on the Department of Energy's Megaports Initiative, these reports represent GAO's analysis of the U.S. effort to deploy radiation detection equipment worldwide.

In my testimony, I will discuss (1) the progress made and challenges faced by the Departments of Energy (DOE), Defense (DOD), and State in providing radiation detection equipment to foreign countries and (2) the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) efforts to install radiation detection equipment at U.S. ports of entry and challenges it faces.

What GAO Recommends

In the report on U.S. efforts to combat nuclear smuggling in other countries, GAO made five recommendations to improve, among other things, equipment maintenance, coordination among U.S. programs, and accountability of equipment. Both DOE and State agreed with GAO's recommendations. In the report on radiation detection at U.S. ports of entry, GAO made nine recommendations designed to help DHS speed up the pace of portal monitor deployments, better account for schedule delays and cost uncertainties, and improve its ability to interdict illicit nuclear materials. DHS agreed with GAO's recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-558T.

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

COMBATING NUCLEAR SMUGGLING

Challenges Facing U.S. Efforts to Deploy Radiation Detection Equipment in Other Countries and in the United States

What GAO Found

Regarding the deployment of radiation detection equipment in foreign countries, DOE, DOD, and State have spent about \$178 million since fiscal year 1994 to provide equipment and related training to 36 countries. For example, through the end of fiscal year 2005, DOE's Second Line of Defense program had completed installation of equipment at 83 sites, mostly in Russia. However, these agencies face a number of challenges that could compromise their efforts, including corruption of foreign border security officials, technical limitations and inadequate maintenance of some equipment, and the lack of supporting infrastructure at some border sites. To address these challenges, U.S. agencies plan to take a number of steps, including combating corruption by installing multitiered communications systems that establish redundant layers of accountability for alarm response. State coordinates U.S. programs to limit overlap and duplication of effort. However, State's ability to carry out this role has been limited by deficiencies in its interagency strategic plan and its lack of a comprehensive list of all U.S. radiation detection equipment provided to other countries.

Domestically, DHS had installed about 670 radiation portal monitors through December 2005 and provided complementary handheld radiation detection equipment at U.S. ports of entry at a cost of about \$286 million. DHS plans to install a total of 3,034 radiation portal monitors by the end of fiscal year 2009 at a total cost of \$1.3 billion. However, the final costs and deployment schedule are highly uncertain because of delays in releasing appropriated funds to contractors, difficulties in negotiating with seaport operators, and uncertainties in the type and cost of radiation detection equipment DHS plans to deploy. Overall, GAO found that U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers have made progress in using radiation detection equipment correctly and adhering to inspection guidelines, but CBP's secondary inspection procedures could be improved. For example, GAO recommended that DHS require its officers to open containers and inspect them for nuclear and radioactive materials when they cannot make a determination from an external inspection and that DHS work with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to institute procedures by which inspectors can validate NRC licenses at U.S. ports of entry.

U.S.-Funded Equipment in Uzbekistan and at a Northern U.S. Port of Entry



Sources: DOD and GAO.