

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-45](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Nuclear weapons have been and continue to be an essential part of the nation's defense strategy. The end of the cold war resulted in a shift from designing, testing, and producing new nuclear weapons to maintaining the existing stockpile indefinitely and extending the operational lives of these weapons through refurbishment, without nuclear testing. At the same time, the production infrastructure for nuclear weapons has become outdated.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 mandated GAO to report annually on whether NNSA's nuclear security budget materials provide for sufficient funding to modernize and refurbish the nuclear security enterprise. This report addresses (1) changes to NNSA's budget estimates for modernizing the nuclear security enterprise since fiscal year 2012 and (2) the extent to which these budget estimates align with NNSA's modernization plans.

To answer these objectives, GAO reviewed NNSA's fiscal year 2012 and 2014 nuclear security budget materials, which are composed of NNSA's budget request justification and its *Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan*, which describes modernization plans and budget estimates for the next 20 years or longer. GAO also interviewed NNSA and DOD program officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that NNSA include a range of budget estimates for preliminary projects and programs in future modernization plans. NNSA generally concurred with the recommendation.

View [GAO-14-45](#). For more information, contact David C. Trimble at (202) 512-3841 or trimbled@gao.gov.

December 2013

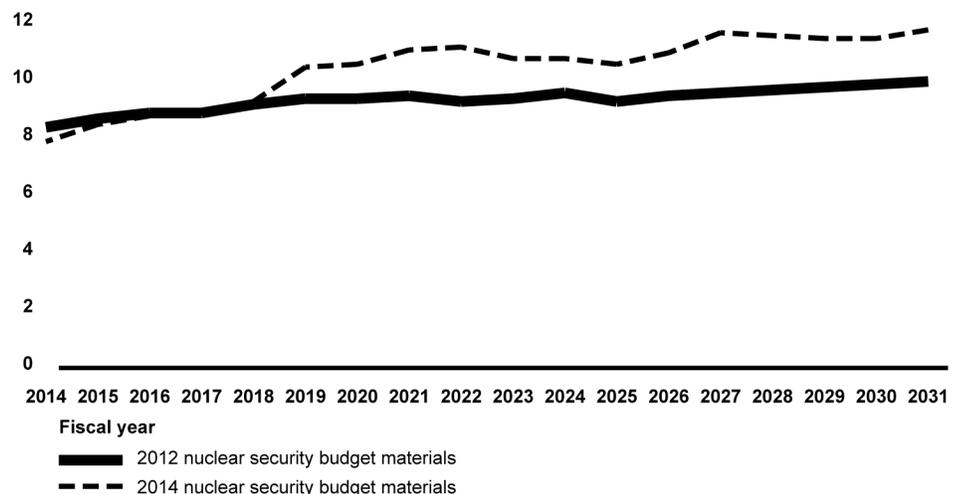
MODERNIZING THE NUCLEAR SECURITY ENTERPRISE

NNSA's Budget Estimates Do Not Fully Align with Plans

What GAO Found

The National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) total budget estimates for modernizing the nuclear security enterprise for fiscal years 2014 through 2031 have increased by about \$19 billion overall when compared with the estimates in the agency's fiscal year 2012 budget materials, with most of the increase occurring in fiscal year 2019 and beyond (see fig.). Factors such as sequestration, the achievability of planned cost savings, and pension liabilities could affect the accuracy of future budget estimates as presented.

Comparison of Budget Estimates for Nuclear Modernization Activities in the National Nuclear Security Administration's 2012 and 2014 Budget Materials
Dollars in billions



Source: GAO analysis of National Nuclear Security Administration data.

Budget estimates for two of three areas discussed in NNSA's modernization plans may not represent total funding needed and therefore do not fully align with aspects of these plans. In the area of stockpile maintenance and refurbishment, budget estimates increased by \$27 billion—accounting for more than the total increase of \$19 billion to overall budget estimates for modernization—primarily due to changes in the way that NNSA calculated budget estimates for nuclear weapons refurbishment programs. However, NNSA's plans for two weapons refurbishment programs also indicate that additional funding may be needed before fiscal year 2019 to meet scheduled milestones. In the infrastructure and science, technology, and engineering capabilities areas, NNSA's budget estimates decreased slightly. However, in the infrastructure area, NNSA did not include in its budget estimates billions of dollars in planned major construction projects because officials said these infrastructure plans were too preliminary. Providing Congress with budget estimates that reflect long-term plans and the expected funding needed to execute these plans, even if preliminary, helps in prioritizing projects and funding and aids in congressional decision making.