

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-617](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Countering the proliferation of nuclear weapons is a national security priority that is challenged by weapons advances from existing nuclear states and other actors possessing or attempting to possess nuclear weapons. To help address these issues, Congress directed the Administration in 2015 and 2017 to develop a plan for verification and monitoring relating to the potential proliferation of nuclear weapons, components of such weapons, and fissile material. GAO reviewed the first plan submitted to Congress in 2015, and an update submitted in 2017. GAO reported in March 2018 that this plan and update generally did not address the congressionally mandated reporting requirements.

In the fiscal year 2018 NDAA, Congress directed the Administration to develop another plan and included a provision for GAO to review the plan. This report assesses whether the Administration's new plan provided details on the reporting requirements included in the NDAA.

To determine whether the plan provided details on the reporting requirements, GAO reviewed the fiscal year 2018 plan and assessed whether the plan included details for each of the elements as required by the NDAA.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Administrator of NNSA should include in its plan estimates of future costs and funding needed to support the activities in the plan. NNSA neither agreed nor disagreed with the recommendation, but said it planned no further action. GAO maintains that the recommendation is valid.

View [GAO-18-617](#). For more information, contact David Trimble at (202) 512-3841 or trimbled@gao.gov.

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NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION

The Administration's 2018 Plan for Verification and Monitoring Met Most Reporting Requirements but Did Not Include Future Costs and Funding Needs

What GAO Found

GAO found that the 2018 plan provided details on most of the reporting requirements in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2018, but did not include information on future costs and funding needs (see table below). In the NDAA, Congress directed the President to produce a plan that would address four reporting requirements: (1) a plan and roadmap on verification, detection and monitoring efforts, including details on costs and funding needs over 10 years, (2) an international engagement plan, (3) a research and development plan, and (4) a description of interagency engagement. The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), a separately organized agency within the Department of Energy, developed the plan and submitted it to Congress in April 2018.

GAO Assessment of 2018 Verification and Monitoring Plan

Reporting requirements	GAO assessment
Plan and roadmap	Partly addressed; did not provide details on future costs and funding needs
International engagement plan	Addressed with detail
Research and development plan	Addressed with detail
Interagency engagement	Addressed with detail

Source: GAO analysis of National Nuclear Security Administration information. | GAO-18-617

According to NNSA officials, NNSA did not include long-term costs and funding needs in the plan because identifying these needs is unrealistic for several reasons, including because agencies have little influence over the spending priorities of other departments outside of the President's budget process. However, NNSA and other agencies already develop plans with long-term funding priorities and cost estimates for other programs. Because the plan does not include any estimates on future costs and funding needs, it limits congressional understanding of the long-term affordability of the nation's verification and monitoring efforts and its ability to make necessary funding and policy decisions. GAO has previously reported that providing estimates of future costs and funding needs can help congressional decisionmakers prioritize projects and identify long-term funding needs. By including in its plan estimates of future costs and funding needed to support the activities in the plan, NNSA could help provide assurance that agencies are allocating appropriate resources to the verification and monitoring effort and that these resources are aligned with future activities and processes.