

Actions Needed to Enhance Cost Reporting and Economic Analysis for Federal Uranium Supply Efforts

GAO-26-107385

August 2026

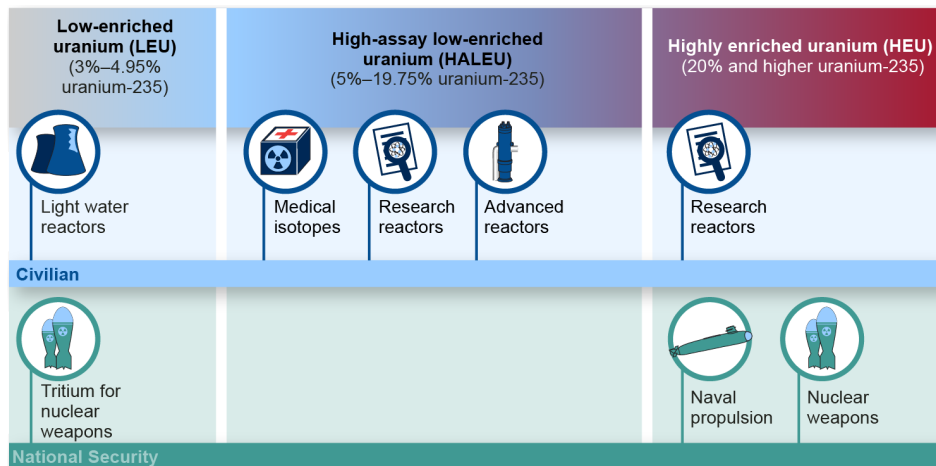
A report to congressional committees

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What GAO Found

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is preserving a sufficient inventory of low-enriched uranium (LEU) and highly enriched uranium (HEU) to meet national security needs until the 2040s. Separately, the largest needs for civilian enriched uranium are fuel for light water and advanced reactors. Estimates from the Department of Energy (DOE) and others about LEU supply and demand are generally well established, but factors such as the ban on LEU imports from Russia could affect availability. Demand estimates for high-assay low-enriched uranium (HALEU) vary, and estimated supply may not meet near-term demands.

National Security and Civilian Use of Enriched Uranium



Source: GAO analysis of National Nuclear Security Administration documentation. | GAO-26-107385

NNSA has a plan to meet national security needs for enriched uranium that includes using current inventory until the 2040s while pursuing three enrichment efforts for long-term needs. NNSA estimates total program costs for these efforts of about \$140 billion through 2105. NNSA has not yet conveyed those costs in a biennial report required by Congress because the estimates are new. Providing this information would inform Congress of future costs for any future production options being considered.

On the civilian side, DOE awarded \$900 million to one company to expand LEU enrichment in the U.S. to support the existing commercial reactor fleet. DOE also issued \$1.8 billion in awards to two companies to build HALEU capacity in the U.S. to support development of advanced reactors. However, DOE did not document an analysis to determine whether its actions are sufficient to induce expansion of commercial LEU and HALEU production in the U.S.

According to agency documents and stakeholders, a range of challenges may affect NNSA's and DOE's goals to increase domestic enriched uranium production, but both agencies are working to mitigate challenges. For example, limitations in domestic fuel cycle infrastructure could challenge NNSA and DOE in achieving their goals. In 2025, DOE entered into an agreement to increase conversion capacity, to address one of the limitations in the domestic fuel cycle.

Why GAO Did This Study

The U.S. needs enriched uranium for national security and civilian purposes. NNSA provides enriched uranium to support missions such as tritium production for nuclear weapons and fuel for naval reactors. Civilian needs include fuel for commercial nuclear power, medical isotope production, and research reactors.

Current law and policy restrict the U.S. from using imported uranium or uranium enriched through foreign technology to meet national security needs and the U.S. does not have a fully domestic enrichment capability. Civilian nuclear fuel can be sourced domestically or internationally. Federal laws direct DOE to support domestic development of advanced nuclear reactors and LEU and HALEU fuels. The fiscal year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act and two congressional committee reports provide for GAO to address NNSA's and DOE's management and development of enriched uranium in the U.S. This report describes estimates of enriched uranium supplies and demands, examines agency plans to meet enriched uranium needs, and describes potential challenges to agency enriched uranium supply goals.

GAO reviewed NNSA and DOE documents and plans, and interviewed DOE, NNSA, other agency officials, and industry representatives.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making five recommendations, including that NNSA report the long-term costs for national security enrichment efforts in a biennial report required by Congress, and that DOE document an analysis aligned with best practices to determine if its actions to support domestic enrichment are sufficient. NNSA and DOE outlined actions they plan to take in response to the recommendations.