

Highlights of [GAO-06-311](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, between 1993 and 2004, there were 662 confirmed cases of illicit trafficking in nuclear and radiological materials. Three U.S. agencies, the Departments of Energy (DOE), Defense (DOD), and State (State), have programs that provide radiation detection equipment and training to border security personnel in other countries. GAO examined the (1) progress U.S. programs have made in providing radiation detection equipment to foreign governments, including the current and expected costs of these programs; (2) challenges U.S. programs face in this effort; and (3) steps being taken to coordinate U.S. efforts to combat nuclear smuggling in other countries.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making recommendations to the Secretaries of Energy and State to (1) integrate cost projections for anticorruption measures into long-term program cost estimates; (2) upgrade less sophisticated portal monitors; (3) provide maintenance for all handheld radiation detection equipment provided by U.S. programs; (4) revise the interagency strategic plan; and (5) compile, maintain, and share a master list of all U.S. radiation detection equipment assistance.

DOE and State generally agreed with our conclusions and recommendations. DOD did not provide comments on the report.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-311.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Gene Aloise at (202) 512-5841 or aloise@gao.gov.

COMBATING NUCLEAR SMUGGLING

Corruption, Maintenance, and Coordination Problems Challenge U.S. Efforts to Provide Radiation Detection Equipment to Other Countries

What GAO Found

Since fiscal year 1994, DOE, DOD, and State have provided radiation detection equipment to 36 countries as part of the overall U.S. effort to combat nuclear smuggling. Through the end of fiscal year 2005, these agencies had spent about \$178 million on this assistance through seven different programs. Primary among these programs is DOE's Second Line of Defense "Core" program, which has installed equipment mostly in Russia since 1998.

U.S. efforts to install and effectively operate radiation detection equipment in other countries face a number of challenges including: corruption of some foreign border security officials, technical limitations of some radiation detection equipment, inadequate maintenance of some equipment, and the lack of supporting infrastructure at some border sites. DOE, DOD, and State officials told us they are concerned that corrupt foreign border security personnel could compromise the effectiveness of U.S.-funded radiation detection equipment by either turning off equipment or ignoring alarms. In addition, State and other agencies have installed equipment at some sites that is less effective than equipment installed by DOE. Since 2002, DOE has maintained the equipment but has only upgraded one site. As a result, these border sites are more vulnerable to nuclear smuggling than sites with more sophisticated equipment. Further, while DOE assumed responsibility for maintaining most U.S.-funded equipment, some handheld equipment provided by State and DOD has not been maintained. Lastly, many border sites are located in remote areas that often lack infrastructure essential to operate radiation detection equipment.

As the lead interagency coordinator of all U.S. radiation detection equipment assistance overseas, State has taken some steps to coordinate U.S. efforts. However, its ability to carry out its role as lead coordinator is limited by shortcomings in the strategic plan for interagency coordination. Additionally, State has not maintained an interagency master list of all U.S.-funded radiation detection equipment overseas. Without such a list, program managers at DOE, DOD, and State cannot accurately assess if equipment is operational and being used as intended; determine the equipment needs of countries where they plan to provide assistance; or detect if an agency has unknowingly supplied duplicative equipment.

DOD-Funded Radiation Portal Monitor in Uzbekistan



Source: DOD.