



Highlights of [GAO-08-21](#), a report to Ranking Member, Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

For decades, the United States has tried to impede nuclear proliferation networks that provide equipment to nuclear weapons development programs in countries such as Pakistan and Iran.

GAO was asked to examine U.S. efforts to counter nuclear proliferation networks, specifically the (1) status of U.S. efforts to strengthen multilateral controls, (2) impact of U.S. assistance to help other countries improve their legal and regulatory controls, and (3) impact of U.S. efforts to strengthen its enforcement activities.

GAO's findings focused on seven countries where network activities reportedly occurred.

What GAO Recommends

To assess the impact of the U.S. response to nuclear proliferation networks, GAO recommends that State assess countries receiving U.S. funding and document its risk analyses.

To assess U.S. agencies' progress in combating nuclear proliferation, GAO recommends that each agency modify its data collection processes to identify when enforcement actions involve nuclear proliferation.

Homeland Security and State generally concurred with our recommendations. Commerce and Treasury said recommendations should not be directed to them. We disagree as they cannot identify when certain enforcement actions involved nuclear proliferation.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-21](#). For more information, contact Joseph A. Christoff at (202) 512-8979 or christoffj@gao.gov.

NONPROLIFERATION

U.S. Efforts to Combat Nuclear Networks Need Better Data on Proliferation Risks and Program Results

What GAO Found

The United States has advocated several multilateral actions to counter nuclear proliferation networks. Although multilateral bodies have adopted some U.S. proposals, they have not adopted others. For example, the United States negotiated passage of a United Nations Security Council resolution that obligated all member states to adopt laws and regulations prohibiting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It also led the development of watch lists of nuclear technologies that are not formally controlled by states and formation of a multilateral unit intended to analyze covert nuclear trade activities. However, one multilateral body has not adopted two key U.S. proposals made in 2004 to commit its members to add new restrictions on exporting sensitive nuclear technologies. Also, one multilateral organization has not adopted a recommendation for member states to provide it with more export data that would allow it to better detect covert nuclear activities.

The impact of U.S. bilateral assistance to strengthen countries' abilities to counter nuclear networks is uncertain because U.S. agencies do not consistently assess the results of this assistance. The impact of this assistance is difficult to determine because the Department of State did not evaluate either (1) the proliferation risk for all of the countries in which network activities are alleged to have occurred or (2) the results of its assistance efforts. Between 2003 and 2006, State and the Department of Energy provided about \$9 million to improve the export controls of seven countries in which nuclear proliferation network activities reportedly occurred. State did not evaluate either (1) the proliferation risk for all of the countries in which network activities are alleged to have occurred or (2) the results of its assistance efforts. State did not perform risk analyses for 11 of the 56 countries in its program for those years and did not document the basis for each country's proliferation threat level or explain how the risk analyses were done. Of the six countries in our study to which State provided assistance, State performed risk analyses for five. Also, State did not conduct program assessments for about 60 percent of its participating countries and for two of the six countries in our study that received assistance. Moreover, while State's program assessments characterize a country's export control system and its weaknesses, they do not assess how U.S. training efforts contributed to correcting weaknesses.

Relevant U.S. agencies are impaired from judging their progress in preventing nuclear networks because they cannot readily identify basic information on the number, nature, or details of all their enforcement activities involving nuclear proliferation. The U.S. government identified the prevention of nuclear proliferation as a high priority. U.S. agencies collect information, maintain lists of companies and individuals that they sanction, and maintain case files on investigations of suspected violations of U.S. law. However, most of these agencies cannot readily identify which enforcement activities involve nuclear proliferation as they cannot ensure that searching their case file databases for words, such as nuclear, would reveal all relevant cases.