



Highlights of [GAO-04-634T](#), testimony to the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Since its inception in 1985, the Chemical Demilitarization (Chem-Demil) Program has been charged with destroying the nation's large chemical weapons stockpile of over 31,000 tons of agent. The program started destroying the stockpile in 1990. As of March 2004, the program had destroyed over 27 percent of the stockpile. The program has recently reorganized into the Chemical Materials Agency (CMA) to manage seven of the nine sites. There are five sites using incineration to destroy the agent and two bulk agent only sites using neutralization. The Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives (ACWA) Program, in the Department of Defense (DOD), manages two sites using neutralization to destroy agent in weapons.

This testimony updates GAO's September 2003 report and October 2003 testimony. As requested, it focuses on the following issues: (1) changes in the status of schedule milestones and costs at the sites, (2) recent developments that impact the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) deadlines, (3) the challenges associated with managing the program, and (4) an update on the status of the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP).

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-634T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Raymond J. Decker at (202) 512-6020 or deckerrj@gao.gov.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Destruction Schedule Delays and Cost Growth Continue to Challenge Program Management

What GAO Found

Since GAO testified in October 2003, the Chem-Demil Program continues to fall behind its schedule milestones, which were last extended in 2001. In the last 6 months, very little agent has been destroyed. While one site has closed, no new sites have started destroying agent (two were scheduled to start by March 2004). The delays stem from incidents during operations, environmental permitting issues, concerns about emergency preparedness, and unfunded requirements. If these delays persist, GAO continues to believe that program costs will rise substantially higher than the October 2003 estimate of more than \$25 billion. These rising costs have led to the need to reallocate funds within the program's fiscal year 2005 budget.

Due to schedule delays, the United States will not meet the CWC April 2004 deadline to destroy 45 percent of the stockpile. Although it has received an extension for this task to December 2007, it is questionable if the program will meet this deadline. DOD has said it will ask for an extension of the final deadline to destroy 100 percent of the stockpile beyond 2007. Unless the program resolves the problems causing program delays, the United States risks not meeting this deadline, if extended.

One positive development in the program is that the leadership has been stabilized for over a year since the program was reorganized. However, several long-standing organizational and strategic planning issues remain. One problem is that the program's new management structure is complex, with multiple lines of authority within the Army and the separation of ACWA from the rest of the program. These complexities raise concerns about the roles and responsibilities of the different parts of the program. Program officials also told us that they are developing strategic and risk mitigation plans, as GAO recommended.

Since GAO testified in October, there continues to be improvement in the preparation of state and local communities to respond to chemical emergencies. As of January 2004, 6 of 10 states near the stockpiles report they are fully prepared. This is a marked improvement from the status we reported in 2001 when three states reported they were far from being prepared. However, CSEPP costs continue to rise because some states have expanded their preparedness requests beyond their approved budgets.