



Highlights of [GAO-07-428T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

During the late 1990s, the Department of Energy (DOE) experienced difficulties with a lack of clear management authority and responsibility that contributed to security problems at the nation's nuclear weapons laboratories and management problems with major projects. In response, Congress created the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) as a separately organized agency within DOE under Title 32 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000—the NNSA Act. Since its creation, NNSA has continued to experience security problems, such as unauthorized access to NNSA computer systems, and cost and schedule overruns on major projects, such as the National Ignition Facility.

GAO was asked to review the extent to which NNSA has taken steps to (1) improve security at its laboratories and plants and (2) improve its management practices and revise its organizational structure. In January 2007, GAO issued a report—*National Nuclear Security Administration: Additional Actions Needed to Improve Management of the Nation's Nuclear Programs*, (GAO-07-36)—that addressed these matters.

To carry out its work, GAO reviewed legislation; NNSA policies, plans and budgets; collected and analyzed security performance ratings and interviewed current and former DOE and NNSA officials.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-428T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-428T).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Gene Aloise at (202) 512-3841 or aloisee@gao.gov.

# NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

## Security and Management Improvements Can Enhance Implementation of the NNSA Act

### What GAO Found

While NNSA has better delineated lines of authority and improved communication through a reorganization and has made progress in establishing critical management systems, especially in the development of its Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Evaluation process, important weaknesses remain with respect to security; the Administration's relationship with DOE; and project, program and financial management.

Although NNSA has begun to build an effective headquarters security organization, it still cannot demonstrate that all of its security program objectives are being met at all of its sites. Specifically, GAO identified weaknesses in physical security at several NNSA sites, including the Nevada Test Site, the Sandia National Laboratories, and the Y-12 National Security Complex; and weaknesses in cyber security throughout NNSA. Four factors have contributed to these problems: (1) lack of consistent NNSA headquarters leadership and direction for security; (2) security personnel staffing shortages at NNSA site offices; (3) lack of adequate training resources and opportunities for site office security staff; and (4) incomplete security data to gauge the effectiveness of NNSA's security program.

While NNSA has focused considerable attention on reorganizing its internal operations, it and DOE have continued to struggle with agreeing on how NNSA should operate as a separately organized agency within the department. This lack of agreement has resulted in organizational conflicts that have inhibited effective operations. While there have been continuing calls for removing NNSA from DOE and establishing it as a separate agency, GAO does not believe that such drastic change is necessary to provide effective oversight of the nuclear weapons complex. Rather, DOE and NNSA need to clearly define their working relationships and determine how conflicts will be resolved.

Finally, GAO identified several other management weaknesses where additional NNSA actions could strengthen its ability to manage the nuclear weapons complex. For example, among other things, NNSA has not (1) implemented a plan for improving its project management efforts; (2) identified all of its program managers and trained them to a certified level of competency; and (3) established an independent analysis unit to review program budget proposals and analyze budget alternatives.

In its recent report, GAO made recommendations to the Secretary of Energy and the Administrator of NNSA to (1) improve NNSA's security oversight program; (2) clearly define NNSA's status as a separately organized agency within DOE; and (3) improve project and program management, and the Administration's planning, programming, budgeting, and evaluation process. NNSA generally agreed with the report and its recommendations. NNSA considered the agency a success but acknowledged there was considerable work yet to be accomplished.