

NONPROLIFERATION

Delays in Implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention Raise Concerns About Proliferation



Highlights of GAO-04-361, a report to the Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) bans chemical weapons and requires their destruction by 2007, with possible extensions to 2012. The CWC also seeks to reduce the proliferation of these weapons by requiring member states to adopt comprehensive national laws to criminalize CWC-prohibited activities. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) monitors the destruction of chemical weapons and inspects declared commercial facilities in member states.

GAO was asked to review (1) member states' efforts to meet key convention requirements, (2) OPCW's efforts in conducting inspections to ensure compliance with the convention, and (3) Russia's efforts to destroy its chemical weapons stockpile.

Agency Comments

The Departments of State and Defense commented that our report is not balanced because it does not provide more examples of successful CWC implementation. We believe the CWC has made important contributions to nonproliferation and further clarified this point in this report. State and Defense also expressed concern that we included a policy option to condition future U.S. aid on development of a credible Russian chemical weapons destruction plan. However, we provide several policy options, including increasing aid to Russia.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-361.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Joseph Christoff, (202) 512-8979 or christoffj@gao.gov.

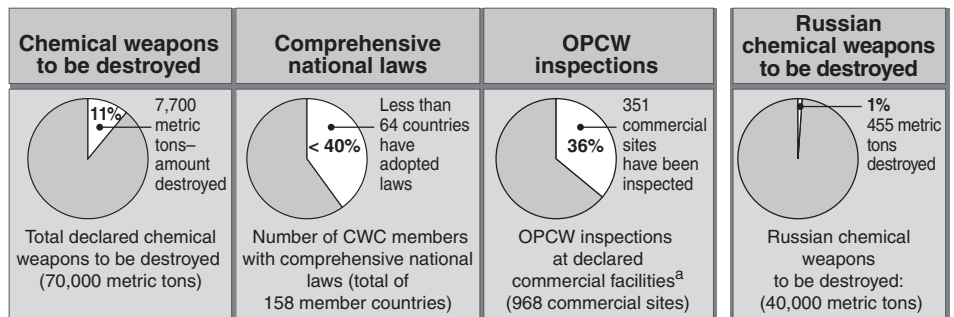
What GAO Found

The CWC has helped reduce the risks from chemical weapons, but CWC member states are experiencing delays in meeting key convention requirements as the CWC's goals have proven more difficult to achieve than anticipated. For example, we estimate that Russia and the United States will not complete destruction of their chemical weapons stockpiles until after the convention's deadline of 2012, if extended. Less than 40 percent of member states have adopted national laws to prosecute individuals that pursue CWC-prohibited activities. The Department of State also believes that China, Iran, Russia, and Sudan have not fully declared the extent of their chemical weapons programs.

The OPCW faces resource challenges in addressing the proliferation threat posed by commercial facilities and inspecting an increased number of military facilities that destroy possessor states' chemical weapons. Although the OPCW has conducted nearly 1,600 inspections in 58 member states since April 1997, more than half have been conducted at military facilities. About 36 percent of OPCW commercial inspections have taken place at facilities producing the most dangerous chemicals identified by the CWC. The OPCW recognizes that it must increase the number of inspections conducted at facilities that produce dual-use chemicals. Some of these facilities may pose a proliferation threat.

The lack of a credible Russian chemical weapons destruction plan has hindered and may further delay destruction efforts, leaving Russia's vast chemical weapons arsenal vulnerable to theft or diversion. As of September 2003, Russia had one operational destruction facility and had destroyed 1.1 percent of its 40,000 metric tons of chemical weapons. Russia's destruction efforts rely heavily on international assistance. Since 1993 international donors, including the United States, have obligated about \$585 million for Russian destruction efforts while Russia has spent about \$95 million.

Status of CWC Implementation and Russian Destruction Efforts 1997-2003



Sources: GAO analysis of Department of Defense and OPCW data.

^aIncludes only facilities that produce scheduled chemicals as defined by the CWC.