



Highlights of [GAO-08-189](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

To address concerns about unemployed or underemployed Soviet-era weapons scientists in Russia and other countries, the Department of Energy (DOE) established the Initiatives for Proliferation Prevention (IPP) program in 1994 to engage former Soviet weapons scientists in nonmilitary work in the short term and create private sector jobs for these scientists in the long term. GAO assessed (1) DOE's reported accomplishments for the IPP program, (2) DOE's exit strategy for the program, and (3) the extent to which the program has experienced annual carryovers of unspent funds and the reasons for any such carryovers. To address these issues, GAO analyzed DOE policies, plans, and budgets and interviewed key program officials and representatives from 22 Russian and Ukrainian institutes.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends, among other things, that DOE assess the continuing need for the IPP program with input from other federal agencies, including State and the intelligence community. DOE and State generally agreed with GAO's recommendations, although DOE disagreed with the need to reassess the IPP program. However, the nature, scope, and volume of problems GAO identified during the course of its review necessitates such a reassessment to ensure that limited IPP program funds are directed to the scientists and institutes of highest proliferation risk.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-189](#). For more information, contact Gene Aloise at (202) 512-3841 or [aloisee@gao.gov](mailto:aloisee@gao.gov).

# NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION

## DOE's Program to Assist Weapons Scientists in Russia and Other Countries Needs to Be Reassessed

### What GAO Found

DOE has overstated accomplishments for the 2 critical measures it uses to assess the IPP program's progress and performance—the number of scientists receiving DOE support and the number of long-term, private sector jobs created. First, although DOE claims to have engaged over 16,770 scientists in Russia and other countries, this total includes both scientists with and without weapons-related experience. GAO's analysis of 97 IPP projects involving about 6,450 scientists showed that more than half did not claim to possess any weapons-related experience. Furthermore, officials from 10 Russian and Ukrainian institutes told GAO that the IPP program helps them attract, recruit, and retain younger scientists who might otherwise emigrate to the United States or other western countries and contributes to the continued operation of their facilities. This is contrary to the original intent of the program, which was to reduce the proliferation risk posed by Soviet-era weapons scientists. Second, although DOE asserts that the IPP program helped create 2,790 long-term, private sector jobs for former weapons scientists, the credibility of this number is uncertain because DOE relies on "good-faith" reporting from U.S. industry partners and foreign institutes on the number of jobs created and does not independently verify the number of jobs reported to have been created.

DOE has not developed an exit strategy for the IPP program, even though officials from the Russian government, Russian and Ukrainian institutes, and U.S. companies raised questions about the continuing need for the program. Importantly, a senior Russian Atomic Energy Agency official told GAO that the IPP program is no longer relevant because Russia's economy is strong and its scientists no longer pose a proliferation risk. DOE has not developed criteria to determine when scientists, institutes, or countries should "graduate" from the program. In contrast, the Department of State (State), which supports a similar program to assist Soviet-era weapons scientists, has assessed participating institutes and developed a strategy to graduate certain institutes from its program. Instead of finding ways to phase out the IPP program, DOE has recently expanded the program to include new countries and areas. Specifically, in 2004, DOE began providing assistance to scientists in Iraq and Libya. In addition, the IPP program is working with DOE's Office of Nuclear Energy to develop projects that support the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership—a DOE-led international effort to expand the use of civilian nuclear power.

In every fiscal year since 1998, DOE carried over unspent funds in excess of the amount that the Congress provided for the program. For example, as of September 2007, DOE carried over about \$30 million in unspent funds—\$2 million more than the \$28 million that the Congress had appropriated for the IPP program in fiscal year 2007. Two main factors have contributed to this recurring problem—lengthy review and approval processes for paying former Soviet weapons scientists and delays in implementing some IPP projects.