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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-03-471](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The attacks of September 11, 2001, intensified long-standing concerns about the adequacy of safeguards and security at four nuclear weapons production sites and three national laboratories that design nuclear weapons—most of these facilities store plutonium and uranium in a variety of forms. These facilities can become targets for such actions as sabotage or theft. The Department of Energy (DOE) and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA)—a separately organized agency within DOE—are responsible for these facilities. NNSA plays a crucial role in managing the contractors operating many of these facilities to ensure that security activities are effective and in line with departmental policy. GAO reviewed how effectively NNSA manages its safeguards and security program, including how it oversees contractor security operations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations to the Secretary of Energy and the Administrator of NNSA to focus more on certain key management and oversight issues. Commenting on the draft report, NNSA disagreed with GAO's conclusion that NNSA was not ensuring the comprehensive, annual assessments of contractors' performance that DOE policy requires. GAO continues to believe that NNSA's current efforts do not ensure conformance to DOE policy.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-471.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Robin M. Nazzaro at (202) 512-3841 or nazzaror@gao.gov.

NUCLEAR SECURITY

NNSA Needs to Better Manage Its Safeguards and Security Program

What GAO Found

NNSA has not been fully effective in managing its safeguards and security program in four key areas. As a result, NNSA cannot be assured that its contractors are working to maximum advantage to protect critical facilities and material from individuals seeking to inflict damage. The four areas are as follows:

- *Defining clear roles and responsibilities.* NNSA still has not fully defined clear roles and responsibilities for its headquarters and site operations.
- *Assessing sites' security activities.* Without a stable and effective management structure and with ongoing confusion about roles and responsibilities, inconsistencies have emerged among NNSA sites on how they assess contractors' security activities. Consequently, NNSA cannot be assured that all facilities are subject to the comprehensive annual assessments that DOE policy requires.
- *Overseeing contractors' corrective actions.* To compound the problems in conducting security assessments, NNSA contractors do not consistently conduct required analyses in preparing corrective action plans. As a result, potential opportunities to improve physical security at the sites are not maximized because corrective actions are developed without fully considering the problems' root causes, risks posed, or cost versus the benefit of taking corrective action.
- *Allocating staff.* NNSA has shortfalls at its site offices in the total number of staff and in expertise, which could make it more difficult for site offices to effectively oversee security activities.

Security Force in Action



Source: DOE.