

# GAO@100 Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-21-486](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

In 2014, the Secretary of Defense directed two reviews of DOD's nuclear enterprise. The reviews made recommendations to address long-standing issues with leadership, investment, morale, policy, and procedures, as well as other shortcomings adversely affecting the nuclear deterrence mission. In 2015, DOD conducted a review focused on nuclear command, control, and communications systems, resulting in additional recommendations.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 included a provision for GAO to review DOD's processes for addressing these recommendations. GAO assessed the extent to which DOD has (1) made progress implementing the recommendations; (2) evaluated the metrics and milestones for implementing the 2014 nuclear enterprise review recommendations related to nuclear security forces; and (3) implemented oversight mechanisms, including developing an approach for monitoring long-standing issues. GAO reviewed documents and interviewed DOD officials on the recommendations' status and DOD's oversight.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations for DOD to provide guidance to require its components to assess implementation metrics and milestones; and document roles, responsibilities, and communication methods for the new oversight group, as well as a means to monitor long-standing nuclear enterprise issues. DOD concurred with all of the recommendations.

View [GAO-21-486](#). For more information, contact Joseph W. Kirschbaum at (202) 512-9971 or [kirschbaumj@gao.gov](mailto:kirschbaumj@gao.gov).

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## DEFENSE NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE

### DOD Can Improve Processes for Monitoring Long-Standing Issues

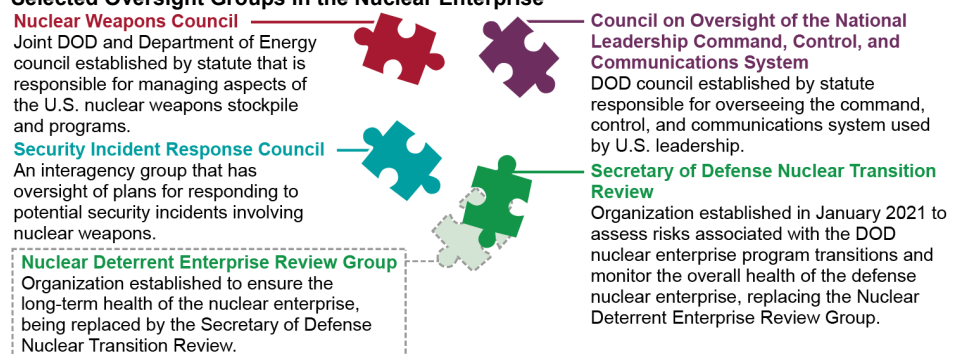
## What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) continues to make progress implementing the recommendations from the 2014 nuclear enterprise reviews and the 2015 nuclear command, control, and communications enterprise review. From the 2014 reviews, DOD identified 175 recommendations. From these 175, DOD identified 247 actions it referred to as sub-recommendations, meaning that a recommendation made to multiple DOD components would be counted as one sub-recommendation for each of those components. Since GAO's March 2020 report, DOD has closed an additional nine of these sub-recommendations, and recommended 11 sub-recommendations for final closure. DOD has also closed one additional recommendation from the 13 made in its 2015 review, with four of the remaining five recommended for final closure.

Regarding the 2014 recommendations related to nuclear security forces, DOD identified initial metrics and milestones for tracking the progress addressing the identified challenges, but GAO found that a key measure for many of the recommendations contained unreliable data. Additionally, more recent reviews of security forces have identified additional metrics and milestones that could help DOD in assessing the progress of recommendation implementation. However, DOD has not reassessed these measures to determine if they are appropriate. As a result, DOD is not in a position to effectively measure progress or assess whether the actions taken have addressed the underlying issues.

In November 2018, GAO found that DOD had taken steps to improve nuclear enterprise oversight in response to the 2014 reviews. However, GAO found a key organization lacked clear roles, responsibilities, and methods to collaborate with other nuclear oversight organizations. Subsequently, in January 2021, DOD created a new entity, the Secretary of Defense Nuclear Transition Review, to take over responsibility for oversight of the defense nuclear enterprise (see figure). However, DOD has not defined specific roles and responsibilities for this organization or how it will communicate internally and with other organizations.

#### Selected Oversight Groups in the Nuclear Enterprise



Source: GAO analysis of statutes and Department of Defense (DOD) information. | GAO-21-486

In addition, DOD and the military services have made some progress in identifying areas for monitoring the health of the nuclear enterprise, but DOD has not identified the means by which it will monitor long-standing issues related to the long-term health of the enterprise.