

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-565](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

In July 2015, multilateral talks with Iran culminated in an agreement called the JCPOA, through which Iran committed to limits on its nuclear program in exchange for relief from sanctions put in place by the United States and other nations. IAEA, an independent international organization that administers safeguards designed to detect and deter the diversion of nuclear material for nonpeaceful purposes, was requested to verify and monitor Iran's implementation of these commitments. The U.S. Department of State coordinates the United States' financial and policy relationship with IAEA.

GAO was asked to review the authorities and resources IAEA has to carry out its activities regarding the JCPOA. This report, which updates the preliminary findings from an interim report released in February 2016 (GAO-16-417), examines (1) the JCPOA commitments that IAEA has been asked to verify and monitor and its authorities to do so, (2) the resources IAEA has identified as necessary to verify and monitor those JCPOA commitments, and (3) potential challenges and mitigating actions IAEA and others have identified with regard to verifying and monitoring the JCPOA. GAO analyzed the JCPOA and key IAEA documents and interviewed current and former IAEA officials, U.S. government officials, national laboratory representatives, and experts from research institutions.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making any recommendations.

View [GAO-16-565](#). For more information, contact David C. Trimble at (202) 512-3841 or trimbled@gao.gov.

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IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT

The International Atomic Energy Agency's Authorities, Resources, and Challenges

What GAO Found

As outlined in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was asked to verify and monitor Iran's implementation of a range of nuclear-related commitments. IAEA is using its safeguards authorities and conducting additional activities agreed to by Iran under the JCPOA to do so. Iran's commitments include limits on uranium enrichment levels and on enriched uranium inventories. IAEA is verifying and monitoring Iran's implementation of these commitments through a range of activities conducted by its Safeguards Department, such as inspecting Iran's nuclear facilities, analyzing environmental samples, and monitoring Iran's uranium mines and mills. Under the JCPOA, Iran agreed to provisionally apply the Additional Protocol, an agreement that will give IAEA's inspectors access to an expanded range of locations, including where the agency seeks assurance regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities. The JCPOA also includes a mechanism in which participants to the agreement commit to resolve an access request from the agency within 24 days after the request is made.

IAEA has identified the financial, human, and technical resources necessary to verify and monitor Iran's nuclear-related commitments in the JCPOA. IAEA has estimated that it needs approximately \$10 million per year for 15 years in additional funding above its current safeguards budget for JCPOA verification. According to IAEA documents, this \$10 million will be entirely funded through extra-budgetary contributions through 2016. IAEA officials said that the agency intends to propose that of the \$10 million approximately \$5.7 million for all Additional Protocol activities and inspector costs attributable to the JCPOA be funded through IAEA's regular budget after 2016; approximately \$4.4 million will be supported through extra-budgetary contributions from member states, such as the United States. IAEA also plans to transfer 18 experienced inspectors to its Office of Safeguards Verification in Iran from other safeguards divisions and to hire and train additional inspectors. According to IAEA officials, existing safeguards technical resources are sufficient to implement the JCPOA.

IAEA may face potential challenges in verifying and monitoring Iran's implementation of certain nuclear-related commitments in the JCPOA. According to current and former IAEA and U.S. officials and expert organizations, these potential challenges include (1) integrating JCPOA-related funding into IAEA's regular budget and managing human resources in the safeguards program, (2) access challenges depending on Iran's cooperation and the untested JCPOA mechanism to resolve access issues, and (3) the inherent challenge of detecting undeclared nuclear materials and activities. IAEA has identified mitigating actions, such as utilizing remote monitoring and cost-free experts to address potential understaffing of IAEA safeguards activities in other countries as additional experienced inspectors are transferred to work on Iran-related safeguards. In addition, according to IAEA and U.S. officials as well as a former IAEA official GAO interviewed, IAEA has improved its capabilities in detecting undeclared activity. For example, according to U.S. officials, IAEA has adapted its inspector training program to focus on potential indicators of undeclared activities.