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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

April 29, 2005

The Honorable David M. Walker  
Comptroller General of the United States  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

05-0776

Dear Mr. Walker:

I write in my capacity as Chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, and International Security to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct a review of Department of Defense (DoD) efforts to assist the Russian Federation in the construction of the chemical weapons destruction facility (CWDF) at Shchuch'ye, Russia. The subcommittee has jurisdiction over arms proliferation and national security methods, as well as the efficient and effective use of federal funds. Therefore, I am particularly interested in current cost estimates and expected timelines necessary to complete the CWDF facility; the management of DoD's Cooperative Threat Reduction program; and the extent to which the Russian Federation is cooperating with the United States to ensure effective and efficient implementation of the project.

Since 1996, Russia and the United States have been working toward the goal of building an operational CWDF in Shchuch'ye, Russia, and originally estimated that the facility would be completed in 2006. Once completed, the Shchuch'ye facility will include about 100 buildings and structures to support and complete the destruction of approximately 30 percent of Russia's total declared chemical weapons stockpile. The United States has agreed to pay for the construction of this facility. The subcommittee is increasingly concerned, however, that the project will cost more and take longer to complete than originally expected. For example, original cost estimates projected that the total construction costs would amount to \$750 million. In 2004, however, GAO reported that DoD projections for the Shchuch'ye facility increased to more than \$1 billion.

Of additional concern are construction delays that have increased the Shchuch'ye project's costs. The construction of the facility, which began in 2003, is scheduled for completion in 2008, but may not be finished until 2009. A 2004 GAO report stated that the Russian government's failure to submit a credible chemical weapons destruction plan hindered, and may further delay, chemical weapon destruction efforts in Russia. I am also informed that other difficulties may have caused delays and increased costs. For example, within the past year, new construction at the Shchuch'ye facility was halted for three months due

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Forward for Unit Control to: <b>IAT</b>	
Advance or by to:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For Action <i>Williams Bridges</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For Info. <i>Gombos, Keppelgren, May, Speight Down Christoff</i>
SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS <i>CR acknowledged receipt via v-m with Chris Beck 5/10</i>	
By: <i>ADF</i>	Date: <i>5/10/05</i>

*Stamped on MAY 11, 2005*

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to a dispute between DoD and Russian authorities regarding the equipment to be installed at the facility.

In light of these concerns, I am requesting that GAO assess the following: (1) DoD management of ongoing efforts to construct the CWDF at Shchuch'ye, including the cost, schedule, and performance; (2) the level of cooperation the Russian Federation and other countries are providing in completing the project; and (3) factors that may contribute to additional delays completing the construction of the facility on time and within budget.

Thank you for your attention to this request. If you have any questions, please contact Chris Gacek of my subcommittee staff at (202) 224-0609.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Coburn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T".

Tom Coburn  
Chairman

Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management,  
Government Information, and International Security