

# FBI TRANSFORMATION

## Data Inconclusive on Effects of Shift to Counterterrorism-Related Priorities on Traditional Crime Enforcement



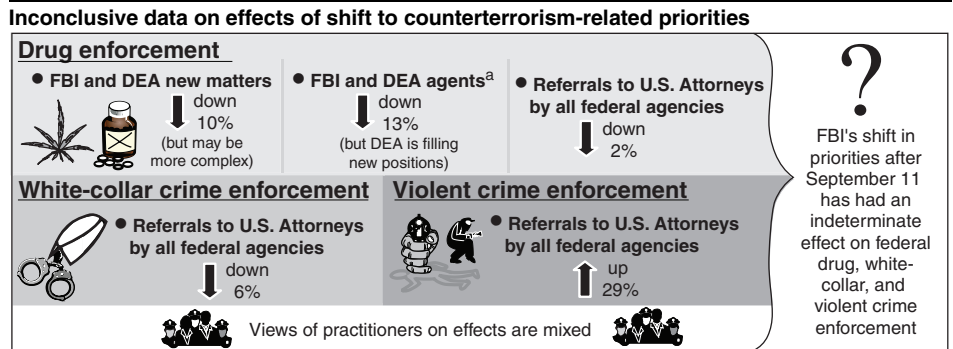
Highlights of [GAO-04-1036](#), a report to the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, and the Judiciary and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives

### Why GAO Did This Study

As a result of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has committed to a transformation to increase its focus on national security. The FBI has shifted agent resources to its top priorities of counterterrorism, counterintelligence, and cyber crime. Some of these agent resources were shifted away from drug, white-collar, and violent crime enforcement programs. The FBI's drug program has sustained, by far, the largest reduction in FBI agent workforce—about 550 positions, or more than 80 percent of the nonsupervisory field agents who were permanently reprogrammed. In addition, the FBI has had a continuing need to temporarily redirect agents from drug, white-collar, and violent crime enforcement to address counterterrorism-related workload demands. While GAO and other organizations have focused considerable attention on the progress of the FBI's transformation, this report addresses questions about the extent to which the shift in resources has affected federal efforts to combat drug, white-collar, and violent crime and whether other agencies, including the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in the drug enforcement area, are filling gaps created by FBI resource shifts.

### What GAO Found

The data GAO examined are inconclusive about the effect of the shifts in the FBI's priorities after September 11 on federal efforts to combat drug, white-collar, and violent crime. As the figure below shows, indicators are mixed on the effect of the FBI shift on federal drug, white-collar, and violent crime enforcement. Further, GAO's analyses should be cautiously viewed as short-term indicators that are not necessarily indicative of long-term trends.



Source: GAO.

<sup>a</sup>Includes only nonsupervisory field agent positions directly focused on investigations.

Data GAO examined on federal drug enforcement efforts did not show a conclusive effect of the FBI's shift in agent resources to priority areas. GAO found that combined FBI and DEA nonsupervisory field agent resources decreased by about 10 percent since September 11 but that DEA is expecting significant increases in positions over the next 2 fiscal years. The combined number of newly opened FBI and DEA drug matters has declined by about 10 percent since 2001, from 22,736 matters in fiscal year 2001, which ended just after September 11, to 20,387 matters in fiscal year 2003. This decline may be attributed, at least in part, to an increased emphasis on cases targeting major drug organizations rather than to fewer investigative resources. In addition, referrals of drug matters to U.S. Attorneys from all federal sources decreased about 2 percent.

Similarly, data do not show a conclusive impact on federal efforts to combat white-collar and violent crime resulting from the FBI's shift in priorities. For example, while the number of white-collar crime referrals from federal agencies to U.S. Attorneys declined by about 6 percent, from 12,792 in fiscal year 2001 to 12,057 in fiscal year 2003, violent crime referrals from all federal sources have increased by about 29 percent, from 14,546 in fiscal year 2001 to 18,723 in fiscal year 2003.

Views of law enforcement practitioners GAO interviewed were mixed on the effect of the FBI's shift in resources on drug, white-collar, and violent crime enforcement efforts. Although these views are not representative of all practitioners, some did not think the FBI's shift had a significant impact on these crime enforcement efforts in their communities, while others said that drug, white-collar and violent-crime investigations had suffered.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-1036](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-1036).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Laurie Ekstrand at (202) 512-8777 or [eskstrand@gao.gov](mailto:eskstrand@gao.gov).