



Highlights of [GAO-08-215T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The overall goal of the U.S. National Drug Control Strategy, which is prepared by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), is to reduce illicit drug use in the United States. One of the strategy's priorities is to disrupt the illicit drug marketplace. To this end, since fiscal year 2000, the United States has provided about \$397 million to support Mexican counternarcotics efforts. According to the Department of State (State), much of the illicit drugs consumed in the United States flows through or is produced in Mexico. GAO examined (1) trends in Mexican drug production and trafficking since calendar year 2000 and (2) U.S. counternarcotics support for Mexico since fiscal year 2000. This testimony is based on a recently issued report (GAO-07-1018) that addresses these issues.

What GAO Recommends

In the recent report, GAO recommended that ONDCP and the U.S. counternarcotics community coordinate with Mexico before completing the Southwest Border Strategy's implementation plan to (1) help ensure Mexico's cooperation with any initiatives that require it and (2) address the cooperation issues GAO identified. ONDCP concurred with the recommendation and has since assured GAO that the interagency community is engaged with its Mexican counterparts.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-215T](#). For more information, contact Jess T. Ford at (202) 512-4268 or fordj@gao.gov.

DRUG CONTROL

U.S. Assistance Has Helped Mexican Counternarcotics Efforts, but the Flow of Illicit Drugs into the United States Remains High

What GAO Found

According to the U.S. interagency counternarcotics community, hundreds of tons of illicit drugs flow from Mexico into the United States each year, and seizures in Mexico and along the U.S. border have been relatively small in recent years. The following illustrates some trends since 2000:

- The estimated amount of cocaine arriving in Mexico for transshipment to the United States averaged about 290 metric tons per year. Reported seizures averaged about 36 metric tons a year.
- The estimated amount of export quality heroin and marijuana produced in Mexico averaged almost 19 metric tons and 9,400 metric tons per year, respectively. Reported heroin seizures averaged less than 1 metric ton and reported marijuana seizures averaged about 2,900 metric tons a year.
- Although an estimate of the amount of methamphetamine manufactured in Mexico is not prepared, reported seizures along the U.S. border rose from about 500 kilograms in 2000 to highs of about 2,800 kilograms in 2005 and about 2,700 kilograms in 2006. According to U.S. officials, this more than fivefold increase indicated a dramatic rise in supply.

In addition, according to State, corruption persists within the Mexican government and challenges Mexico's efforts to curb drug production and trafficking. Moreover, Mexican drug trafficking organizations operate with relative impunity along the U.S. border and in other parts of Mexico, and have expanded their illicit business to almost every region of the United States.

U.S. assistance since fiscal year 2000 has helped Mexico strengthen its capacity to combat illicit drug production and trafficking. Among other things, extraditions of criminals to the United States increased; thousands of Mexican law enforcement personnel were trained; and controls over chemicals to produce methamphetamine were strengthened. Nevertheless, cooperation with Mexico can be improved. The two countries do not have an agreement permitting U.S. law enforcement officers to board Mexican-flagged vessels suspected of transporting illicit drugs on the high seas; an aerial monitoring program along the U.S. border was suspended because certain personnel status issues could not be agreed on; State-provided Vietnam-era helicopters have proved expensive and difficult to maintain and many are not available for operations; and a State-supported border surveillance program was cut short due to limited funding and changed priorities.

In 2006, in response to a congressional mandate, ONDCP and other agencies involved in U.S. counternarcotics efforts developed a strategy to help reduce the illicit drugs entering the United States from Mexico. An implementation plan was prepared but is being revised to address certain initiatives recently undertaken by Mexico. Based on our review of the plan, some proposals require the cooperation of Mexico; but, according to ONDCP, they had not been addressed with Mexican authorities at the time of our review.