

July 2008

# DRUG CONTROL

## Cooperation with Many Major Drug Transit Countries Has Improved, but Better Performance Reporting and Sustainability Plans Are Needed



GAO  
Accountability · Integrity · Reliability

# Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-08-784](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

Each year, criminal organizations transport hundreds of tons of illegal drugs from South America to the United States through a 6 million square mile “transit zone” including Central America, the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the eastern Pacific Ocean. Since fiscal year 2003, the United States has provided over \$950 million to support counternarcotics efforts in transit zone countries, which historically lacked the capacity to interdict drugs. GAO was asked to examine (1) how the United States has assisted transit zone countries in disrupting drug trafficking and (2) what factors have impeded these efforts. GAO analyzed relevant data, met with U.S. and foreign officials, and visited selected countries.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that State (1) report more comprehensively and consistently on the results of U.S. initiatives and (2) develop plans for sustaining U.S.-provided assets. State partially disagreed. GAO modified the first recommendation to emphasize reporting results rather than developing performance measures; however, GAO believes that plans are needed for sustaining U.S.-provided assets. GAO also recommends that DHS determine the feasibility of expanding its Container Security Initiative (CSI) to target and scan containers for illicit drugs. DHS disagreed, indicating that drug interdiction is not in CSI’s mandate. GAO notes that CSI’s 2006-2011 Strategic Plan envisions potential expansion to detect drugs and examining the feasibility of doing so would be a logical first step.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-784](#). For more information, contact Jess Ford at (202) 512-4268 or [fordj@gao.gov](mailto:fordj@gao.gov).

## DRUG CONTROL

### Cooperation with Many Major Drug Transit Countries Has Improved, but Better Performance Reporting and Sustainability Plans Are Needed

#### What GAO Found

U.S. government assistance has improved international counternarcotics cooperation with the eight major drug transit countries GAO reviewed, except Venezuela. First, assistance programs have helped partner nations gather, process, and share information and intelligence leading to arrests and drug seizures. Second, they have enabled these nations to participate in counternarcotics operations—both at sea and on land—by providing assets (such as interceptor boats and vehicles), logistical support, and training for police units. Third, U.S. assistance has helped strengthen the capacity of prosecutors to work more effectively on drug-related cases. Assessing the impact of such a wide variety of programs is difficult because some are indirectly related to drug interdiction, and because results reporting has been limited and inconsistent.

Despite gains in international cooperation, several factors, including resource limitations and lack of political will, have impeded U.S. progress in helping governments become full and self-sustaining partners in the counternarcotics effort—a goal of U.S. assistance. These countries have limited resources to devote to this effort, and many initiatives are dependent on U.S. support. Programs to build maritime interdiction capacity have been particularly affected, as partner nations lack fuel and other resources needed to operate and maintain U.S.-provided boats. Limited political support, particularly in Venezuela, and corruption have also hindered U.S. counternarcotics efforts. In addition, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has implemented a Container Security Initiative (CSI) that targets and scans containers for weapons of mass destruction and terrorist contraband. But CSI has not routinely been used for illicit drug detection, despite its applicability for this purpose.

#### Major Drug Transit Countries in the Transit Zone and Principal Cocaine Vectors to the United States



Source: GAO based on a similar map in ONDCP’s 2007 Interagency Assessment of Cocaine Movement; Nova Development (map).

---

# Contents

---

<b>Letter</b>		<b>1</b>
	Results in Brief	3
	Background	7
	Overall, U.S. Assistance Has Enhanced International Cooperation in Disrupting Illegal Drug Markets	14
	Several Factors Impede the Effectiveness of the Counternarcotics Efforts	25
	Conclusions	34
	Recommendations for Executive Action	35
	Agency Comments and Our Evaluation	36
<b>Appendix I</b>	<b>Scope and Methodology</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Appendix II</b>	<b>Counternarcotics Maritime Law Enforcement Agreements</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Appendix III</b>	<b>Comments from the Department of Homeland Security</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Appendix IV</b>	<b>Comments from the Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Appendix V</b>	<b>Comments from the Department of State</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Appendix VI</b>	<b>Comments from the Office of National Drug Control Policy</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Appendix VII</b>	<b>GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments</b>	<b>59</b>

---

---

## Tables

Table 1: U.S. Agencies' Support for Counternarcotics-Related Activities in Transit Zone Countries (Excluding Mexico), Fiscal Years 2003-2007	12
Table 2: U.S.-Supported Counternarcotics Initiatives in Eight Major Drug Transit Countries, Fiscal Years 2003-2007	22
Table 3: Estimated Cocaine Flow and Removal within the Transit Zone, Fiscal Years 2002-2006	24
Table 4: Transparency International Corruption Perception Index Scores for Eight Major Drug Transit Countries (2007)	31
Table 5: Counternarcotics Maritime Law Enforcement Agreements with Countries in the Transit Zone	43

---

## Figures

Figure 1: Major Drug Transit Countries and Main Drug-Trafficking Vectors through the Transit Zone to the United States	8
Figure 2: U.S.-Provided Maritime Training and Equipment in Panama	17
Figure 3: Training Canines in Ecuador to Detect Drugs in Luggage and on Passengers	19
Figure 4: Interceptor Boat Provided to Panama under Defense's Enduring Friendship Program	28

---

---

## Abbreviations

CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
CPI	Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International)
CSI	Container Security Initiative
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
IACM	Interagency Assessment of Cocaine Movement
JIATF-South	Joint Interagency Task Force-South
ONDCP	Office of National Drug Control Policy
State/INL	State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

This is a work of the U.S. government and is not subject to copyright protection in the United States. The published product may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without further permission from GAO. However, because this work may contain copyrighted images or other material, permission from the copyright holder may be necessary if you wish to reproduce this material separately.



United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

July 15, 2008

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley  
Co-Chairman  
Caucus on International Narcotics Control  
United States Senate

The Honorable Howard L. Berman  
Chairman  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
House of Representatives

The importation of illegal drugs, primarily cocaine, from countries in South America, continues to threaten the health and well-being of American citizens.<sup>1</sup> Criminal drug trafficking organizations transport these drugs into the United States through a 6 million square mile “transit zone,” encompassing Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean island nations, the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, and the eastern Pacific Ocean. The U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) reports that these organizations have smuggled between about 460 and 1,030 metric tons of cocaine through the transit zone to the United States annually since 2003. In recent years, ONDCP has reported that about 90 percent of that cocaine has come to the United States through Central America and Mexico, while approximately 10 percent was trafficked through the Caribbean.

One of the three priorities in the United States’ *National Drug Control Strategy* is to disrupt the illicit drug market by eradicating drug crops, interdicting illicit drugs in the transit zone, and attacking drug trafficking organizations.<sup>2</sup> As we have previously reported, countries in the transit

---

<sup>1</sup>GAO has published several related reports, including: GAO, *Drug Control: U.S. Assistance Has Helped Mexican Counternarcotics Efforts, but Tons of Illicit Drugs Continue to Flow into the United States*, [GAO-07-1018](#) (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 17, 2007); GAO, *Drug Control: Agencies Need to Plan for Likely Declines in Drug Interdiction Assets, and Develop Better Performance Measures for Transit Zone Operations*, [GAO-06-200](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 15, 2006); GAO, *Drug Control: Difficulties in Measuring Costs and Results of Transit Zone Interdiction Efforts*, [GAO-02-13](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 25, 2002); and GAO, *Drug Control: Update on U.S. Interdiction Efforts in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific*, [GAO/NSIAD-98-30](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 15, 1997).

<sup>2</sup>The strategy’s other priorities include stopping drug use before it starts and healing America’s drug users.

---

zone have historically lacked the resources and institutional capacity to conduct counternarcotics operations.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the United States has assisted nations in the region to strengthen their law enforcement, judicial, military, and other sectors. According to the Department of State's (State) *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*,<sup>4</sup> U.S. assistance is intended to help nations become "full and self-sustaining partners" in the international counternarcotics effort.<sup>5</sup> From fiscal year 2003 through fiscal year 2007, the United States provided over \$950 million to directly or indirectly support counternarcotics activities in transit zone countries, excluding Mexico.

As requested, we examined U.S. counternarcotics assistance to selected countries in the transit zone since 2003. Specifically, we examined: (1) how U.S. agencies have assisted these countries in their efforts to disrupt drug trafficking and what results this assistance has yielded, and (2) the factors that have impeded counternarcotics efforts in these countries.

To address these objectives, we analyzed program data and documentation relating to counternarcotics efforts in eight countries within the transit zone designated by the President as major drug transit countries—the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Panama, and Venezuela—from 2003 through 2007. We did not include Mexico because we reported on U.S. counternarcotics assistance to that country in 2007.<sup>6</sup> We met with U.S. government officials from ONDCP; the Departments of Defense (Defense), Homeland Security (DHS), Justice (Justice), and State; and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). We also met with officials at the Joint Interagency Task Force-South and U.S. Southern Command in Florida and traveled to four major drug transit countries (the Dominican Republic, Ecuador,

---

<sup>3</sup>See GAO, *Drug Control: U.S. Efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean*, [GAO/NSIAD-00-90R](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 18, 2000) and [GAO/NSIAD-98-30](#).

<sup>4</sup>*International Narcotics Control Strategy Report* is a congressionally mandated report (22 U.S.C. sec. 2291h(a)). It requires that State report annually on the efforts of source and transit countries to attack all aspects of the international drug trade.

<sup>5</sup>The 1988 UN Drug Convention sets forth a number of obligations that the parties agree to undertake. Generally, it requires the parties to take legal measures to outlaw and punish all forms of illicit drug production, trafficking, and drug money-laundering, to control chemicals that can be used to process illicit drugs, and to cooperate in international efforts to these ends.

<sup>6</sup>See [GAO-07-1018](#).

---

Guatemala, and Panama) to meet with U.S. embassy officials, host government officials, and local program beneficiaries. While in country, we visited a number of project sites relating to maritime operations, port security, intelligence gathering, drug crop eradication, alternative development, and other activities. We also reviewed estimates of illicit drug flow and data on seizures and disruptions of drug trafficking operations. We determined that these data were sufficiently reliable to provide an overall indication of the magnitude and nature of the illicit drug trade and interdiction efforts since 2003.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2007 to July 2008 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. See appendix I for a more complete discussion of our scope and methodology.

---

## Results in Brief

Since 2003, U.S. agencies, primarily State, Defense, Justice's Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), DHS, and USAID, have undertaken a wide variety of efforts, which, overall, have improved international cooperation with the eight major drug transit countries we examined, except Venezuela. Assistance programs focused on three key areas: (1) intelligence-gathering and investigations, (2) maritime and land-based operations, and (3) criminal prosecutions. Through these programs, the United States has gained access to intelligence, evidence, and drug trafficking suspects that it might not otherwise have had to advance its counternarcotics activities.

- *Intelligence-gathering and investigations.* State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), DEA, and Defense have helped all the countries we reviewed develop organizations and methods for gathering, analyzing, and sharing intelligence and information that have led to major arrests and drug seizures. DEA and State/INL have established vetted investigative units, staffed by local law enforcement officers, in all of the major drug transit countries in the region. These units have worked closely with U.S. officials to develop successful drug investigations. Justice has also helped governments draft legislation to broaden the scope of investigative tools available to law enforcement organizations. In addition, Defense has funded the installation of a computer network in six major transit countries through which participating countries have shared



---

information in real time on aircraft and vessels suspected of transporting drugs.

- *Maritime and land-based counternarcotics operations.* State/INL, Defense, and a variety of U.S. law enforcement agencies, including DEA and the Coast Guard, have enabled several partner nations to undertake or participate in law enforcement, military, and other counterdrug-related operations—both at sea and on land—including seizing drugs, weapons, and assets; arresting suspects; disrupting drug shipments; and eradicating drug crops. In addition to providing assets, such as boats, and logistical support for participation in short- and long-term joint maritime operations, the United States and several major drug transit countries have implemented maritime law enforcement cooperation agreements and procedures providing U.S. forces improved access to suspect vessels in international and territorial waters. The United States has supported the development of national counternarcotics police units in all the countries we reviewed, including special units to target drug traffickers at airports, seaports, and transit checkpoints. State/INL and Defense have also provided logistical support for manual eradication of opium poppy and coca plants in Guatemala and Ecuador, respectively.
- *Criminal prosecutions.* State/INL and USAID, in cooperation with Justice, have supported justice sector reforms intended to make the judicial systems in some partner nations more fair, impartial, and efficient and have strengthened the capacity of prosecutors to work effectively on drug-related cases within those systems. In cases where prosecution in the United States is warranted and legal, most partner nations have also supported the deportation or extradition of drug-related defendants to the United States.

Measuring the results of such a wide variety of counternarcotics initiatives is difficult, especially as some efforts are indirectly related to drug interdiction. And while State/INL, DEA, and others have reported on some of the results of their programs, they have not done so in a comprehensive and consistent manner among partner nations and over time. Thus, the effect of particular initiatives is often unclear, making it difficult for agency managers to assess progress in achieving agency goals, compare the relative effectiveness of their initiatives, and make results-based decisions concerning resource allocations.

We noted several factors relating to U.S. assistance programs that have impeded international counternarcotics efforts. In particular, nations' limited ability to sustain assistance programs, limited political support of U.S.-funded initiatives, as well as corruption have kept these nations from

---

becoming full partners in the international counternarcotics effort, which, according to State, is a key goal of U.S. assistance.

- *Limited ability to sustain programs.* Most partner nations in the transit zone have limited resources to devote to counternarcotics, and many initiatives depend on U.S. support. Programs aimed at building maritime interdiction capacity have been particularly affected, as partner nations have been unable to use U.S.-provided boats for patrol or interdiction operations due to a lack of funding for fuel and maintenance. Assistance programs have not always included plans for the long-term sustainment of U.S.-provided assets. In 2007, Defense began providing new interceptor boats and related equipment to transit zone countries under its program Enduring Friendship without such a plan, expecting that the countries would continue funding the operations and maintenance of the assets after initial U.S.-support ends.
- *Limited political support.* Unwillingness to implement counternarcotics initiatives for political reasons has also impeded cooperative counternarcotics efforts in some countries. This is particularly true in Venezuela, which, due to strained relations with the United States, has ceased cooperating in U.S. counternarcotics initiatives since 2005.
- *Corruption.* State and DEA have reported that key law enforcement officials in some countries have undermined international counternarcotics operations or have been subject to corruption charges. This has limited the opportunities to involve those organizations in all aspects of planning and executing interdiction operations.

In addition, U.S. initiatives relating to cargo container security have been limited and generally ineffective for the international counternarcotics effort. State/INL has funded assistance programs at container ports in four of the eight countries we reviewed and, in three of those countries, results have been unsatisfactory, according to State. DHS has implemented a program overseas as part of its Container Security Initiative (CSI) that could have potential for greater use in counternarcotics operations. CSI has provided foreign ports, including seven in the transit zone, with equipment and personnel to target and scan cargo containers for weapons of mass destruction and terrorist contraband. However, the program is not used routinely to screen for illicit narcotics. DHS officials raised several concerns about using CSI for this purpose, including the need for additional resources and potential difficulty gaining host country agreement, but they have not studied the feasibility of expanding the program.

---

We are recommending that the Secretary of State, in consultation with ONDCP, Defense, DHS, Justice, and USAID, report the results of U.S.-funded counternarcotics initiatives for each country more comprehensively and consistently in State's annual *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*. We are also recommending that State work with these agencies to develop a plan to ensure that U.S.-provided counternarcotics assets in partner nations are operated and maintained for the remainder of their useful life, report this plan to the Congress, and ensure that agencies providing an asset to partner nations determine the operations and maintenance costs over the asset's useful life and develop a plan for how these costs would be funded. We also recommend that the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with State and Justice, determine the feasibility—by assessing the costs, benefits, risks, and other factors—of expanding CSI to include routine targeting and scanning of containers for illegal drugs in major drug transit countries in the transit zone and report their findings to the Congress.

State, DHS, ONDCP, and Justice/DEA provided written comments on a draft of this report. State generally agreed with the report's conclusions, but disagreed with our recommendation on results reporting. State noted that it has already developed broad performance measures to reflect progress in achieving counternarcotics goals and development goals in general, though they do not necessarily capture program-specific results. We revised our recommendation to emphasize the need for more systematic reporting of program-specific results that would link U.S. counternarcotics efforts to State's broader performance goals and measures. State partially agreed with our recommendation on sustainability plans, indicating that its project designs, agreements with recipient countries, and monitoring mechanisms are appropriate for addressing sustainability concerns. Given past experience, we question whether donating assets is justifiable without more discreet sustainability planning that gives better assurances that the recipient country and participating agencies are committed to funding specified operations and maintenance costs. DHS disagreed with our recommendation to study the expansion of CSI, noting that the program is mandated to address the potential risk of terrorism and acts of terrorism. CSI's mandate does not prohibit narcotics interdiction, and we note that the program's 2006-2011 Strategic Plan envisions potential expansion to address narcotics trafficking, as a factor "known to support terrorism." ONDCP strongly concurred with this recommendation and State fully supported any consultation needed to implement it.

---

## Background

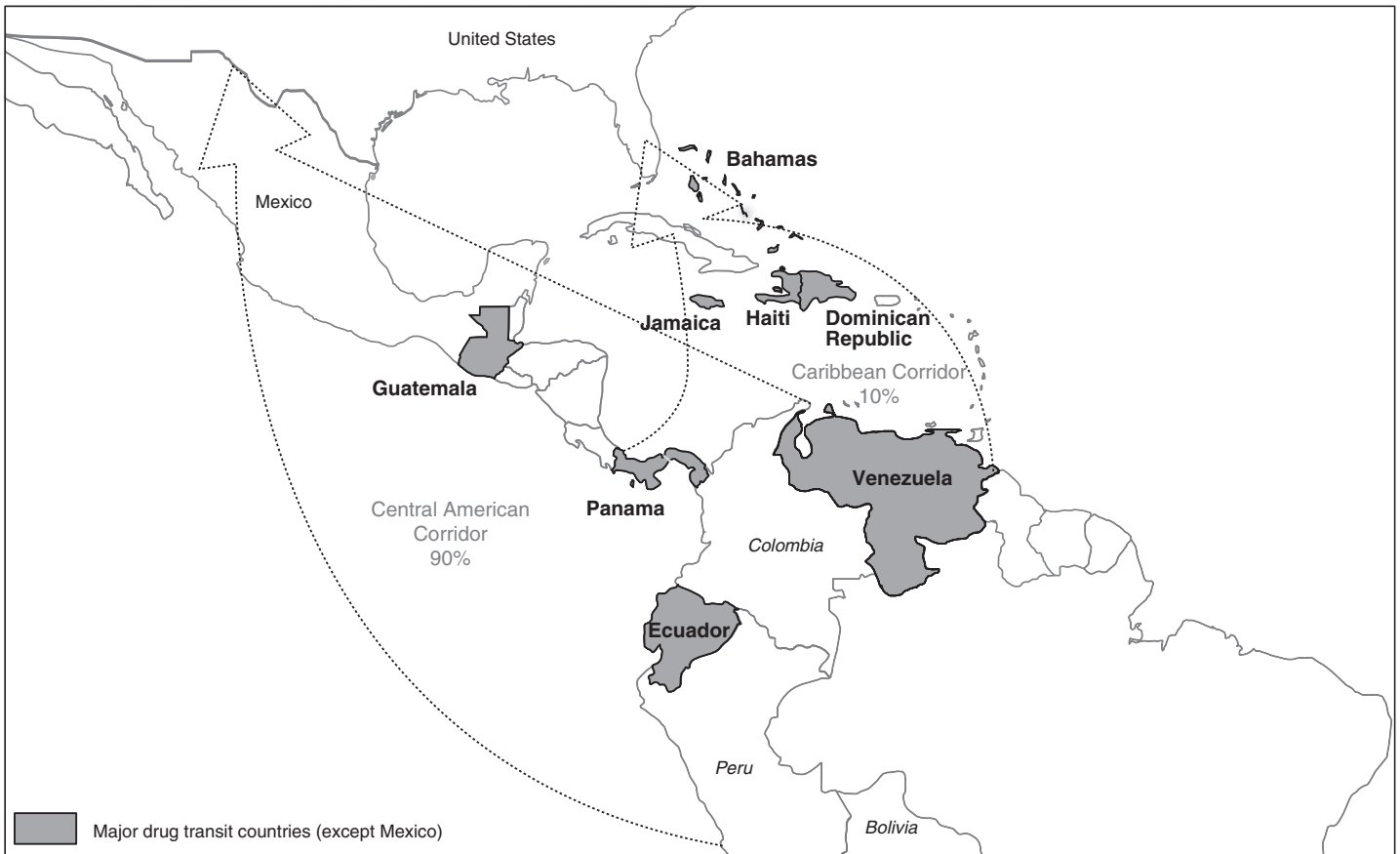
Virtually all the cocaine destined for the United States originates in the Andean countries of Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia and travels through the transit zone. The United States provides significant counternarcotics assistance toward reducing coca cultivation, disrupting cocaine production, and preventing cocaine from reaching the United States. Drug traffickers move cocaine and other drugs to the United States through two main vectors or “corridors.” In recent years, approximately 90 percent of cocaine moving toward the United States has gone through the Central American/Mexican corridor and then over the border to the United States. The remainder, roughly 10 percent, transits the Caribbean and enters the United States through Florida, Puerto Rico, and other eastern locations. (See fig. 1.) More than 25 countries lie within the transit zone. The President has designated eight of these as “major drug transit countries” based on the estimated volume of illicit drugs that pass through their territory each year.<sup>7</sup> These countries are the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Panama, and Venezuela.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>As defined in State’s *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, a major drug-producing, or transit country, is one: (a) that is a significant direct source of illicit narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances significantly affecting the United States or (b) through which such drugs or substances are transported. A country’s presence on this list is not necessarily an adverse reflection of its government’s counternarcotics efforts or level of cooperation with the United States.

<sup>8</sup>The President has also designated Mexico as a “major drug transit country;” however, because we reported on the U.S. drug assistance to Mexico in 2007, we are not reviewing it in this report.

**Figure 1: Major Drug Transit Countries and Main Drug-Trafficking Vectors through the Transit Zone to the United States**



Source: GAO based on a similar map in ONDCP's 2007 Interagency Assessment of Cocaine Movement; Nova Development (map).

## Transit Zone Drug Trafficking Tactics

Drug trafficking organizations and associated criminal networks are extremely adaptive. They shift routes and operating methods quickly in response to pressure from law enforcement organizations or rival traffickers. They ship drugs through the transit zone primarily by sea, though their methods have become more evasive in recent years. They typically use go-fast boats and fishing vessels to smuggle cocaine from Colombia to Central America and Mexico en route to the United States. Go-fast boats are capable of traveling at speeds over 40 knots, are difficult to detect in open water, and are often used at night. When drug traffickers travel in daylight, they often use boats painted blue, or that can be quickly covered with a blue tarpaulin, thereby becoming virtually impossible to see. Even when detected, go-fast boats can often outrun conventional

---

ships deployed in the transit zone. Traffickers also use “mother ships” in concert with fishing vessels to transport illicit drugs into open waters and then distribute the load among smaller boats at sea. In addition, traffickers use evasive maritime routes and change them frequently. Some boats travel as far southwest as the Galapagos Islands in the Pacific Ocean before heading north toward Mexico, while others travel through Central America’s littoral waters, close to shore, where they can hide among legitimate maritime traffic. In addition, the Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-South), under Defense’s U.S. Southern Command,<sup>9</sup> has reported an increase in suspicious flights—particularly departing from Venezuela. In addition, traffickers fly loads of cocaine to remote, ungoverned spaces—such as northern Guatemala, near the Mexican border—and abandon the planes. Planes, however, generally carry much smaller loads than most maritime vessels used for drug trafficking. Traffickers also are using increasingly sophisticated concealment methods. For example, they have built fiberglass semisubmersible craft that can avoid both visual- and sonar-detection, hidden cocaine within the hulls of boats, and transported liquefied cocaine in fuel tanks.

According to Defense’s Office of Counternarcotics, Counterproliferation, and Global Threats, these shifts in drug trafficking patterns and methods have likely taken place largely in response to U.S. and international counternarcotics efforts in the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean, although measuring causes and effects is imprecise. In addition, according to Defense, drug trafficking organizations and associated criminal networks commonly enjoy greater financial and material resources (including weapons as well as communication, navigation, and other technologies) than do governments in the transit zone.

---

## U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy

The U.S. *National Drug Control Strategy’s* goal is to reduce illegal drug usage in the United States. One priority is to disrupt the illegal drug trade abroad—including in the transit zone—by attacking the power structures and finances of international criminal organizations. This involves seizing large quantities of cocaine from transporters, disrupting major drug trafficking organizations, arresting their leaders, and seizing their assets. The strategy also calls for the United States to support democratic

---

<sup>9</sup>JIATF-South includes representatives from Defense, Justice, DHS, and other U.S. agencies; nations such as France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom; and several nations in the transit and source zones.

---

institutions and the rule of law in allied nations, strengthen these nations' prosecutorial efforts, and prosecute foreign traffickers. According to State's *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, the goal of U.S. counternarcotics assistance to other countries is to help their governments become full and self-sustaining partners in the fight against drugs.

ONDCP produces the *National Drug Control Strategy*, establishes policies, priorities, and objectives for the nation's drug control program, and evaluates, coordinates, and oversees the counternarcotics efforts of executive branch agencies, including assistance to countries in the transit zone. State/INL manages and funds law enforcement assistance, including programs implemented by a variety of other U.S. agencies, such as DHS's Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. State also administers security assistance programs generally implemented by Defense, including Foreign Military Financing and International Military Education and Training programs, which are intended to strengthen the overall capacity of foreign forces to address security threats, including violence and instability associated with drug trafficking. Defense, primarily through its Office of Counternarcotics, Counterproliferation, and Global Threats, provides guidance and oversight, as well as funds for counternarcotics and related security activities in the transit zone. DEA works to disrupt drug trafficking operations and dismantle criminal organizations, bringing leaders to prosecution either in the United States or in other countries; it maintains offices in countries throughout the transit zone. USAID also supports the U.S. counternarcotics effort indirectly through its rule of law and alternative development programs.

Table 1 shows assistance provided by State, DEA, Defense, and USAID to support counternarcotics-related programs and activities in transit zone countries for fiscal years 2003 through 2007.

---

[This page left intentionally blank.]



**Table 1: U.S. Agencies' Support for Counternarcotics-Related Activities in Transit Zone Countries (Excluding Mexico), Fiscal Years 2003-2007**

	State/ INL subtotal <sup>a</sup>	DEA subtotal <sup>b</sup>	Special investigative units	Other DEA	Defense subtotal <sup>c</sup>
Bahamas <sup>o</sup>	\$4.1	\$20.4	0.0	\$20.4	\$11.3
Barbados <sup>o</sup>	4.8	5.3	0.0	5.3	1.3
Belize <sup>o</sup>	3.6	4.0	0.0	4.0	6.2
Costa Rica <sup>o</sup>	2.1	4.9	0.0	4.9	5.0
Dominican Republic	3.9	12.3	\$2.7	9.6	14.3
Ecuador <sup>f</sup>	128.8	16.2	3.7	12.5	9.4
El Salvador <sup>f</sup>	2.1	2.7	0.0	2.7	39.2
Guatemala	14.0	5.1	0.3	4.8	6.8
Haiti	29.7	5.2	0.0	5.2	4.4
Honduras	2.4	1.8	0.0	1.8	15.2
Jamaica	6.1	9.3	0.0	9.3	10.1
Netherlands Antilles <sup>f</sup>	0.0	4.8	0.0	4.8	0.0
Nicaragua	2.9	3.5	0.0	3.5	10.1
Panama	25.4	7.0	0.0	7.0	17.3
Trinidad and Tobago <sup>o</sup>	0.9	3.2	0.0	3.2	1.6
Venezuela <sup>o</sup>	13.3	11.1	0.0	11.1	9.0
<b>Grand total by program</b>	<b>\$243.9</b>	<b>\$116.7</b>	<b>\$6.8</b>	<b>\$110.0</b>	<b>\$161.3</b>

Counter-narcotics	International Military Education and Training	Foreign military financing	USAID subtotal <sup>d</sup>	Rule of law and human rights	Good governance	Alternative development	Grand total by country
\$9.5	\$1.3	\$0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	\$35.7
1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.4
3.3	1.5	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.7
4.6	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.0
4.2	5.1	5.0	\$14.3	\$6.0	\$8.3	0.0	44.8
7.7	0.7	1.0	91.7	22.5	3.9	\$65.3	246.1
5.0	8.0	26.1	13.1	1.8	11.3	0.0	57.0
4.6	2.3	0.0	66.6	23.9	42.7	0.0	92.5
0.6	0.9	3.0	21.4	6.4	15.1	0.0	60.8
3.6	6.0	5.6	5.1	4.9	0.2	0.0	24.6
3.4	3.8	3.0	23.4	14.0	9.4	0.0	48.9
0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.8
3.6	3.0	3.5	5.2	1.0	4.2	0.0	21.7
8.3	3.3	5.7	190.3	92.1	98.2	0.0	240.0
1.0	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.8
8.4	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	33.5
\$69.0	\$37.2	\$55.1	\$431.2	\$172.6	\$193.3	\$65.3	\$953.1

Source: GAO analysis of agency data.

<sup>a</sup>State/INL data reflect expenditures.

<sup>b</sup>DEA data reflect expenditures for country and resident offices, less payroll expenses.

<sup>c</sup>Defense data reflect estimates of counternarcotics-related support in these countries because Defense budgets by program, not by country.

<sup>d</sup>USAID data reflect expenditures.

<sup>e</sup>USAID does not have programs in these countries.

<sup>f</sup>Defense supports forward operating locations for conducting counternarcotics operations from these three countries. To operate these facilities, Defense expended \$95.9 million in Ecuador; \$25.2 million in El Salvador; and \$83.5 million in Aruba and Curacao, which are part of the Netherlands Antilles.

As part of the “Merida Initiative,” the President has asked the Congress to provide \$1.1 billion in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 to train and equip Mexican and Central American security forces to combat criminal organizations. Of this amount, \$950 million would be dedicated to Mexico,

---

and \$150 million would be dedicated to Central American countries.<sup>10</sup> This proposal is under consideration by the Congress. The Administration's proposal is for all programs to be administered by the State Department, although other U.S. agencies may be involved in implementation.

---

## Overall, U.S. Assistance Has Enhanced International Cooperation in Disrupting Illegal Drug Markets

Since 2003, through U.S.-supported international counternarcotics programs, the United States and the eight major drug transit countries we reviewed, except Venezuela, have enhanced their cooperation in combating drug trafficking, primarily through improvements in investigations and intelligence gathering, maritime and land-based operations, and prosecutions of drug traffickers. Measuring the results of a wide variety of assistance programs across many countries over time is difficult as U.S. agencies have compiled limited and inconsistent performance data. Nevertheless, the improvements attained through these programs have contributed to the U.S. strategy of disrupting the illicit drug market through drug seizures, arrests, prosecutions, and drug crop eradication, according to information provided by State and DEA.

---

## Intelligence-Gathering and Investigations

Actionable intelligence is a critical component of interdiction, and the United States often requires access to raw information and sources from partner nations to develop this intelligence. State/INL, DEA, and Defense have helped all eight partner nations we reviewed develop organizations and methods for gathering, analyzing, and sharing intelligence and information that have led to arrests and seizures of drugs and assets. These efforts have included establishing vetted and specialized investigative units; strengthening investigative authority of local law enforcement; and installing data networks within and among countries to compile, analyze, and share information.

DEA and State/INL have established vetted investigative units, staffed by local law enforcement officers, in all of the major drug transit countries we reviewed.<sup>11</sup> These units have worked closely with U.S. officials to develop successful investigations. The United States provides these units with operational support, from money to pay agents and confidential sources to vehicles and surveillance equipment. For example, in the

---

<sup>10</sup>Including Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

<sup>11</sup>The vetted unit in Venezuela is no longer cooperating with U.S. law enforcement officials, due to political tensions between the U.S. and Venezuelan governments.

---

Dominican Republic, a vetted unit within the counternarcotics police used a U.S.-supported wire intercept program to conduct more than 730 wiretap operations in fiscal year 2007. The program provided daily support to numerous major investigations in the United States and abroad, including the investigation of eight priority target organizations. In Ecuador, DEA estimates that one vetted investigative unit has been responsible for 70 percent of all drug seizures in that country. In Jamaica, according to State, intelligence-driven operations coordinated with DEA and the vetted unit targeted major drug traffickers, and collaboration between Jamaican and international law enforcement agencies have resulted in significant seizures of cocaine and arrests of midlevel and major traffickers—including kingpins—and the dismantling of their organizations, in Jamaica, the United States, the Bahamas, and Colombia. Since late 2004, almost all significant bilateral investigations with Jamaica have included a wire intercept component using DEA-funded facilities. In the Bahamas, according to State, intelligence gathering and surveillance equipment provided by State/INL enabled local law enforcement to dismantle two Bahamas-based drug trafficking organizations in 2006.

DEA has also helped governments draft legislation to broaden the scope of investigative tools available to law enforcement organizations. For example, Guatemala's Organized Crime Bill, put into effect in 2007, authorizes wire intercepts and undercover operations, and allows drugs to be delivered under controlled circumstances in order to identify the traffickers involved—referred to as controlled delivery. DEA also encouraged legislation in Jamaica to authorize wire intercepts and fingerprinting of suspects. Similarly, legislation in Venezuela enhanced police investigative powers in 2005 by allowing controlled deliveries.

In addition, with U.S. technical and financial assistance, several countries are operating information centers to collect, analyze, and disseminate statistical and case-related data to aid local and foreign law enforcement officials in criminal investigations. In the Dominican Republic, for example, the DEA-sponsored Caribbean Center for Drug Information serves as a clearinghouse for narcotics-related intelligence for countries throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. According to DEA, Caribbean countries are both frequent contributors to and beneficiaries of the center's intelligence analysis services. In addition, Defense funded the installation of a computer network in countries throughout the transit zone, including in six of the eight countries we reviewed,<sup>12</sup> called the

---

<sup>12</sup>Venezuela discontinued its participation in this system in 2005.

---

Cooperating Nation Information Exchange System, through which participating countries share information in real time regarding aircraft and vessels suspected of transporting drugs. Defense also posts liaisons throughout the region who facilitate the exchange of actionable intelligence between the United States and host nation counterparts to assist in planning counternarcotics operations.

---

## Maritime and Land-Based Operations

The United States generally cannot intercept shipments of drugs and their precursors and apprehend traffickers in the sovereign territory of another nation without the consent, and often the active participation, of that country's government. The United States has reached cooperative agreements with several partner nations that expand U.S. authority and U.S. ability to conduct interdiction operations in the transit zone. In addition, assistance provided by State/INL, Defense, and U.S. law enforcement agencies has enabled the countries we reviewed to undertake or participate in land-based police, military, and other counternarcotics operations involving seizures, arrests, and eradication.

## Maritime Operations

State/INL, Defense, and the Coast Guard have provided partner countries with equipment, such as new and refurbished boats; infrastructure, such as docks and piers; and training for maritime, littoral, and riverine patrol and interdiction operations. With this support, several countries have participated in short- and long-term maritime interdiction operations with the United States and other countries since 2003. For example, in the Bahamas, State/INL donated several "fast response" boats, which the Bahamian police force has deployed throughout the country for use with U.S. helicopters and personnel under Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos. According to State, these boats have been used in interdiction missions, participating in the seizure of go-fast drug smuggling boats.

---

**Figure 2: U.S.-Provided Maritime Training and Equipment in Panama**



Source: Panamanian National Police.

Since 2003, the United States has also entered into maritime law enforcement cooperation agreements or procedures with four of the eight major drug transit countries we reviewed, affording U.S. forces improved access to suspect vessels in international and territorial waters.<sup>13</sup> (See app. II for a listing of maritime law enforcement agreements with transit zone countries.) For example, in 2003, the Dominican Republic entered into a bilateral agreement granting the United States permanent over-flight rights for counternarcotics operations. In 2006, the United States and Ecuador negotiated operating procedures to facilitate interdiction of suspect Ecuadorian-flagged vessels. According to State, in fiscal year 2007, these new procedures enabled the United States to board seven Ecuadorian flagged vessels and remove about 26 metric tons of cocaine. In addition, according to State, under the terms of maritime agreements, Guatemala and Panama have provided valuable support for international interdictions by permitting the Coast Guard to fly suspected drug traffickers to the United States. This has allowed U.S. assets to remain on station and continue pursuing drug interdiction and homeland security missions. In Panama, according to State, the Coast Guard's 2007 seizure of over 32 metric tons of cocaine—including the single largest maritime drug seizure

---

<sup>13</sup>These countries' consent is required to interdict vessels operating in their territorial waters or vessels operating under their flag in international waters.

---

in U.S. history—was directly related to cooperative efforts executed under provisions of the bilateral agreement between Panama and the United States. Bilateral maritime agreements have proven valuable in the other major drug transit countries, as well. Even Venezuela, which has ceased to cooperate with the United States on many counternarcotics initiatives, continues to honor the provisions of its ship-boarding agreement, authorizing the United States to board Venezuelan flagged vessels on the high seas suspected of being engaged in narcotics trafficking.

In addition, in Ecuador, the United States operates a counternarcotics forward operating location to support host nation and interagency drug detection and monitoring efforts in the transit zone. Facilities such as this permit the United States and allied nations to deploy interdiction assets closer to cocaine departure points in the source zone.<sup>14</sup> According to U.S. officials at the forward operating location in Manta, Ecuador, this facility supported over 1,150 counternarcotics missions in 2007 by providing logistical support for U.S. aircraft that detect and monitor narcotics trafficking.

---

## Land-Based Operations

In several countries, State/INL, in collaboration with DEA and DHS agencies, has helped finance the operations of special law enforcement units to target drug traffickers at airports, seaports, and other transit checkpoints using X-ray equipment, canines, and other methods and technologies. For example, since 2003, Jamaican authorities have arrested thousands of departing passengers at the country's two international airports on drug charges, aided by the use of drug detection equipment provided by the United States and Great Britain. With funding from State and USAID, DHS has deployed advisors and specialized teams for both short- and long-term details to provide training and technical assistance in such areas as customs documentation, airport/border/seaport interdiction operations, mail processing, container examination, security, firearms, and officer safety.

In addition, due to Ecuador's close proximity to drug-producing regions of Colombia, Defense, State/INL, and DEA have provided extensive support for police and military counternarcotics operations there. According to State/INL, it and DEA have provided nearly all the logistical support for

---

<sup>14</sup>The United States operates three other forward operating locations in Aruba, Curacao, and El Salvador.

Ecuador's counternarcotics police, including construction or refurbishment of facilities and the provision of vehicles and equipment. State reported in 2007 that U.S.-supported canine units, which were deployed at airports and checkpoints, were involved in nearly all of Ecuador's drug interdictions. During 2007, the counternarcotics police conducted a series of interdiction operations throughout the country, which resulted in the largest amount of land-based seizures in the country's history. With logistical support from Defense and State/INL, the Ecuadorian armed forces conducted nine operations in 2006 and 17 in 2007, which led to the discovery and destruction of 47 camps used by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia,<sup>15</sup> 36 hectares of coca plants, as well as a number of cocaine producing laboratories.

**Figure 3: Training Canines in Ecuador to Detect Drugs in Luggage and on Passengers**



Source: GAO.

In Guatemala, which has recently experienced a growth in illicit opium poppy cultivation, State/INL and Defense have provided aerial reconnaissance, transportation, and other logistical support for several large-scale, manual eradication missions. In 2007, Guatemalan authorities

<sup>15</sup>According to ONDCP, all fronts of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are involved in the drug trade at some level, which includes controlling cocaine production, securing labs and airstrips, and, at times, cooperating with other organizations to transport multiton quantities of cocaine from Colombia through transit zone countries to the United States and Europe.



---

destroyed nearly 450 hectares of poppy—over half of the estimated area of cultivation.

---

## Prosecution

Dismantling drug trafficking organizations requires the criminal prosecution of key traffickers. State/INL and USAID have supported judicial reforms within some partner nations intended to make judicial systems more fair, impartial, and efficient, and have strengthened the capacity of prosecutors to work effectively within those systems on drug-related cases. For example, in Ecuador and the Dominican Republic, State/INL and USAID sponsored training of police, prosecutors, and judges on the application of new criminal procedure codes.

State/INL has also supported national task forces in several countries to prosecute drug-related crimes. In Guatemala, State/INL has worked with the country's Attorney General to support three task forces dealing with narcotics, corruption, and money-laundering cases. In 2004, the anticorruption prosecutor in Guatemala brought cases against over 380 individuals, including many high-ranking former public officials, army officers, and police. In Venezuela, until 2005, State/INL provided extensive logistical support, and DEA provided advice and supervision, to help develop the professional investigative and operational capability of the Prosecutors' Drug Task Force, which was composed of three dozen vetted prosecutors and investigators from three agencies.<sup>16</sup> According to State and DEA, the work of this task force resulted in multiton seizures of drugs, the arrest of numerous traffickers (including at least one kingpin), and asset seizures.

In many cases where prosecution in the United States is warranted and legal, partner nations have also transferred or extradited drug-related defendants. For example, in 2007, Haiti's President authorized the narcotics police to cooperate with DEA and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel in locating, arresting, and removing nine high-level drug trafficking defendants. Also, according to State, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica have been particularly cooperative with the U.S. Marshals Service in locating, extraditing, and deporting defendants.

---

<sup>16</sup>The task force ceased operation in 2005, when the government of Venezuela began refusing nearly all counternarcotics cooperation with the United States.

---

## Measuring Results Is Difficult, but Cocaine Interdiction in the Transit Zone Reflects International Cooperation

### Assistance Programs Are Diffuse, and Results Are Not Reported Comprehensively and Consistently

While State/INL, DEA, and others have reported the results of their assistance programs, they have not done so in a comprehensive and consistent manner among partner nations and over time. Reports we reviewed showed that some programs have helped disrupt drug markets through seizures and arrests. Other programs, such as alternative development, justice reform, and security service capacity building, are less directly related to drug interdiction operations but are designed to have longer-term and more systemic results, which are more difficult to measure.

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 requires federal agencies to develop performance measures to assess progress in achieving their goals and to communicate their results to the Congress.<sup>17</sup> The act requires agencies to set multiyear strategic goals in their strategic plans and corresponding annual goals in their performance plans, measure performance toward the achievement of those goals, and report on their progress in their annual performance reports. These reports are intended to provide important information to agency managers, policymakers, and the public on what each agency accomplished with the resources it was given. Moreover, the act calls for agencies to develop performance goals that are objective, quantifiable, and measurable, and to establish performance measures that adequately indicate progress toward achieving those goals. Our previous work has noted that the lack of clear, measurable goals makes it difficult for program managers and staff to link their day-to-day efforts to achieving the agency's intended mission.<sup>18</sup>

U.S.-funded transit zone counternarcotics assistance encompasses a wide variety of initiatives across many countries, but State/INL and other agencies have collected limited information on results. Records we obtained from State/INL and DEA, including State's annual *International Narcotics Control Strategy Reports* and *End Use Monitoring Reports*, provide information on the outcomes of these initiatives but do not do so comprehensively. For example, in our review of State's *International Narcotics Control Strategy Reports* for 2003 to 2007, we identified over 120 counternarcotics initiatives in the countries we reviewed, but for over half of these initiatives, the outcomes were unclear or not addressed at all in the reports. Table 2 depicts the range of U.S.-supported

---

<sup>17</sup>Pub. L. No. 103-62, as amended.

<sup>18</sup>See GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: GPRA Has Established a Solid Foundation for Achieving Greater Results*, [GAO-04-38](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 10, 2004).

counternarcotics efforts in the countries we reviewed, including those described in State or DEA records as having negligible or unsatisfactory outcomes.

**Table 2: U.S.-Supported Counternarcotics Initiatives in Eight Major Drug Transit Countries, Fiscal Years 2003-2007**

Initiative	Country							
	Bahamas	Guatemala	Haiti	Ecuador	Jamaica	Venezuela	Dominican Republic	Panama
<b>Intelligence gathering and investigation</b>								
Special investigative unit		•	•	•			•	
Other vetted police investigative unit	•	•		•	•	o	•	•
Financial intelligence unit		•	o	•	o	o	o	
Wire intercept					•	o	•	•
Hotline		•	•	•				
Information center	o	•	•		•		•	•
Cooperating Nation Information Exchange System		•		•	•	o	•	•
JIATF-South intelligence liaison	•	•		•	•	o	•	•
Expanded legal authority for investigation		•			•	•	•	
<b>Maritime operations</b>								
Interceptor boats	•	o	o	•	o		o	o
Maritime facilities	•	•	•	•	o			•
New maritime agreement or procedures	•	•		•	•		•	
<b>Land-based operations</b>								
Canine detection program	o	•	•	•		o	•	•
Airport interdiction	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Cargo container inspection <sup>a</sup>	o	o		•		o		
Interdiction checkpoints				•		•		o
Mobile units	•			•				•
Police bases		•	•	•				•
Police vetting		•						
Crop eradication		•		•				
<b>Prosecution</b>								
Criminal procedures code training				•			•	
Prosecution task forces		•	o			o		
Anticorruption prosecutor		•						•
Fugitive apprehension			•		•		•	

Initiative	Country							
	Bahamas	Guatemala	Haiti	Ecuador	Jamaica	Venezuela	Dominican Republic	Panama
Other								
Alternative development				•				
Police reform		•	•			o		

Legend

• = initiative funded by United States during fiscal years 2003-2007

o = initiative reported by State, DEA, or Defense as having negligible or unsatisfactory outcomes

Sources: GAO analysis of information provided by State, DEA, Defense, DHS, and USAID.

\*The Bahamas, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, and Panama have ports participating in DHS's Container Security Initiative, which is not explicitly counternarcotics-related.

State has attempted to measure the outcomes of counternarcotics programs in its annual mission performance reports, which report on a set of performance indicators for each country. However, these indicators have not been consistent over time or among countries. In our review of mission performance reports for four major drug transit countries covering fiscal years 2002 through 2006, we identified 86 performance indicators directly and indirectly related to counternarcotics efforts; however, over 60 percent of these indicators were used in only one or two annual reporting cycles, making it difficult to discern performance trends over time. Moreover, nearly 80 percent of these performance indicators were used for only one country, making it difficult to compare program results among countries.

Cocaine Seizures and Disruptions Reflect Cooperation with Partner Nations

Program specific information we reviewed indicates that these U.S. counternarcotics assistance programs, along with other efforts, have contributed to an active international interdiction effort in the transit zone. Data reported by the U.S. interagency counternarcotics community indicate that, since 2002, the United States and its partner nations have removed, through seizures and disruptions,<sup>19</sup> between 22 and 38 percent of the estimated amount of cocaine flowing through the transit zone, excluding Mexico (see table 3).

<sup>19</sup>Seizures are defined as taking physical possession of the cocaine. Disruptions are defined as forcing individuals suspected of transporting cocaine to jettison or abandon their cargo.

**Table 3: Estimated Cocaine Flow and Removal within the Transit Zone, Fiscal Years 2002-2006**

Amounts in metric tons						
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total <sup>a</sup>
<b>Total estimated cocaine flow<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>460 to 760</b>	<b>660 to 960</b>	<b>540 to 900</b>	<b>520 to 1,030</b>	<b>460 to 1,010</b>	<b>2,650 to 4,650</b>
<b>Total removals (seizures and disruptions)</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>1,006</b>
Central America	17	27	30	39	27	140
Ecuador and Venezuela	27	20	30	36	27	140
Caribbean Sea	32	51	47	67	30	227
Eastern Pacific	86	66	101	112	134	499
Estimated percentage of cocaine flow removed (seized and disrupted)	21% to 35%	17% to 25%	23% to 39%	25% to 49%	22% to 47%	<b>22% to 38%</b>

Source: 2007 Interagency Assessment of Cocaine Movement (IACM).

Note: Data for 2007 were not available at the date of issuance of our report.

<sup>a</sup>Totals may not add due to rounding.

<sup>b</sup>The IACM reports low and high estimates of the metric tons of cocaine flowing through the transit zone. Because of the uncertain nature of the estimates involved, we rounded the figures to the nearest "10."

**Results of Indirectly-Related Assistance Are More Difficult to Assess**

U.S. agencies have supported a wide variety of programs that relate to the counternarcotics effort indirectly, and results are therefore difficult to assess. These programs generally focus on root causes of drug-related crime, as well as strengthening the overall rule of law and security of partner nations. Since these programs are not directly associated with interdiction efforts and outcomes, and some are long-term efforts, their results and effect on the overall success of counternarcotics efforts are even more difficult to assess.

State/INL has funded programs, including training and public awareness campaigns, which address some of the underlying causes of drug trafficking, such as local drug consumption and corruption. Some programs are also aimed at strengthening institutions, such as public health, educational, and financial accountability organizations, which can help prevent drug-related crime by fostering a culture that does not tolerate drug consumption and corruption. Very limited data were available in State reports to discern trends in either corruption or drug consumption that could be attributable to these programs. However, in several countries, State/INL has reported an increased willingness among local law enforcement entities to prosecute public officials.

---

Several USAID programs combat narcotics trafficking indirectly in vulnerable populations by addressing underlying social problems, such as crime, inadequate public services, and lack of economic opportunities. In Jamaica, according to State/INL, anticrime and community policing programs contributed to a 16 percent reduction in crime in 2006, but the crime rate rose again in 2007. Development programs in Ecuador have helped stabilize communities along the border with Colombia most likely to become involved in drug trafficking by providing social services and productive infrastructure, including water and sanitation systems, bridges, roads, and irrigation canals. These programs have also helped strengthen local governments and promote citizen participation in a number of municipalities and parishes. While these programs have focused national and international development assistance on these vulnerable communities, their effect on the drug trade in the Colombian border region of Ecuador has not been evaluated.

Defense and DHS have implemented many programs aimed at building the overall capacity and professionalism of military and security organizations through international cooperation. Defense officials in both Ecuador and Panama told us they considered all U.S. cooperative programs with the security forces of those countries to be counternarcotics-related because they help counter the threats posed by trafficking organizations, including incursions by the irregular armed forces of neighboring Colombia. However, because many defense assistance programs in partner nations do not have specific goals related to interdiction, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the programs for counternarcotics. Similarly, State/INL has funded training programs through DHS agencies to help improve overall immigration, customs, and coast guard operations.

---

## Several Factors Impede the Effectiveness of the Counternarcotics Efforts

Several factors relating to U.S. assistance programs have impeded international counternarcotics efforts in the transit zone. Partner nations have limited resources to devote to counternarcotics efforts, and many U.S.-supported counternarcotics initiatives are not self-sustaining but, rather, are dependent on continued U.S. funding. Limited political support of U.S.-funded initiatives, as well as corruption, have also kept these nations from becoming full partners in the international counternarcotics effort—a goal of U.S. assistance, according to State. In addition, the effect of U.S. cargo container security assistance for the counternarcotics effort has been limited.

---

---

## Many Partner Nations Cannot Sustain U.S. Supported Initiatives

The inability of transit zone countries to patrol their shores effectively and conduct other maritime operations presents a major gap in drug interdiction. In many of the countries we reviewed, State has reported that partner nations cannot operate U.S.-provided maritime assets for counternarcotics missions due to a lack of operations and of maintenance resources. Some examples are as follows:

- In the Dominican Republic, the United States has provided a wide range of new and refurbished boats, including interceptor and patrol craft, that the Dominican Navy has been unable to employ due to a lack of fuel, fuel filters, and other routine maintenance supplies. Also, several U.S. vessels that were transferred to the Dominican Navy as excess defense articles are in poor condition due to a lack of preventive maintenance and funds for repairs. State reported in 2006 that the Navy's maintenance command lacked necessary equipment, parts, and training.
- In Haiti, State/INL and the U.S. Coast Guard provided substantial support to the Haitian coast guard, including interceptor boats, vessel overhauls and retrofitting, infrastructure improvements, and training and equipment. However, according to State, a lack of necessary equipment, maintenance, fuel, and logistical support has continued to impair the Haitian coast guard's ability to conduct maritime operations and combat drug trafficking effectively.
- In Guatemala, State/INL provided the counternarcotics police force with two fiberglass boats—one located on the Caribbean Coast and the other on the Pacific Coast—for limited counternarcotics operations. In 2007, State reported that both boats were inoperable because the police had not maintained the engines.
- In Jamaica, the United States donated several patrol vessels capable of intercepting go-fast boats. State reported in 2006 that the vessels had only limited operational capability because they were not in good working order.
- In Panama, the U.S. Coast Guard donated a 180-foot cutter. However, Panama's National Maritime Service, which is highly dependent on U.S. support for operations and maintenance resources, has been unable to keep the vessel seaworthy.

U.S. agencies have not always planned for the sustainability of the counternarcotics-related assets they provided to partner nations. According to State officials we spoke to, when receiving these assets, country officials have typically signed agreements accepting the long-term

---

responsibility of operating and maintaining them, including providing the necessary staff, as well as fuel, parts, and other maintenance resources, unless these are provided for by the United States. However, the long-term cost of operating and maintaining the assets and the source of funding are not typically included in such agreements, according to these officials.

In 2007, Defense began providing additional boats to partner nations, including Panama, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and the Bahamas, under its Enduring Friendship program, for use in maritime security operations.<sup>20</sup> However, Defense has not developed plans to address long-term sustainability of these assets over their expected 10-year operating life. These interceptor boats were accompanied by support equipment such as trucks and trailers for on-land mobility; radios; infrared cameras; as well as training and a limited maintenance program, at a cost of between \$6 million and \$11 million for each country. However, Defense did not make provisions to ensure that the partner countries can fuel the donated boats and maintain them beyond an initial short-term maintenance contract period. For the boats provided to the Dominican Republic, for example, the agreement between Defense and the Dominican Republic did not specify the estimated costs or funding source of operating the boats and related equipment. The agreement indicated the United States may provide some additional support for repair parts, contingent upon the availability of funds. The ability to provide the necessary resources to operate these assets over the long-term is a concern, according to the U.S. and partner nation officials we spoke to in the Dominican Republic and Panama. According to the Coast Guard attaché in the Dominican Republic, although the Dominican Navy has added these and other boats to its fleet in recent years, it has not increased its budget for fuel since 2002, and the cost of fuel has since doubled. Similarly, according to a senior official of the Panamanian National

---

<sup>20</sup>Enduring Friendship is a regional multiyear initiative that provides maritime security assistance to select countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Enduring Friendship is intended to strengthen partner nations' maritime domain awareness and operational capabilities to anticipate and respond to threats, maritime emergencies, and natural disasters, and to enhance control over illicit trafficking lanes. This program is intended to improve partner nation maritime command, control, and communications capability; increase interoperability; and integrate maritime operational pictures, thus laying the foundation for maritime theater-wide information sharing and coalition operations. The first of three Enduring Friendship phases focused on the Dominican Republic, Panama, Jamaica, and the Bahamas. Phase two will include Belize, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. The eastern Caribbean and the Regional Security Systems countries will be included in phase three.



---

Maritime Service, it has been operating under a static budget and fuel allotment, even as the number of assets and staff under its control has increased. State/INL officials in both Panama and the Dominican Republic told us that these countries have not effectively used the interceptor boats for counternarcotics purposes.

In addition, the personnel operating the interceptor boats have limited maritime interdiction skills. Training included in the assistance package focused on operation and maintenance of boats and included some training in first aid, navigation, and communications but only limited training on interdiction tactics. The memorandum of understanding between Defense and the Dominican Republic for this program indicated that Defense may provide some additional training, contingent upon the availability of funds, but did not specify the training likely to be needed for conducting counternarcotics operations or its cost.

**Figure 4: Interceptor Boat Provided to Panama under Defense’s Enduring Friendship Program**



Source: GAO.

In some cases, however, State/INL has recognized the long-term sustainability challenges associated with providing capital assets and has planned and budgeted for operations and maintenance costs, thus helping to ensure the assets will be used effectively for counternarcotics

---

operations. For example, State reported that it has funded maintenance contracts in the Bahamas that provide a means for keeping U.S.-provided boats operational for drug interdiction missions. Also, State/INL helps sustain U.S.-funded initiatives along the Ecuador-Colombian border by funding a large spare parts program, as well as maintenance training for the heavy trucks and other vehicles it has provided, and by budgeting for gas and maintenance costs over the long term. State/INL has also funded contractors to maintain the electrical and plumbing systems in the police buildings constructed for the police in Ecuador.

According to State, the counternarcotics police of several partner nations are dependent on logistical and operational support of State/INL and DEA, as the following examples show:

- In the Dominican Republic, the police force's effectiveness in counternarcotics affairs is almost completely attributable to equipment, training, and close support provided by DEA and State/INL over several years. State also reported that the financial intelligence unit, begun with U.S. support in 2003, lacks the resources and institutional support to perform effectively and has reported no real successes in implementing its money-laundering legislation since the unit was established.
- In Ecuador, State/INL and DEA provide almost all logistical and operational support to the Ecuadorian National Police Anti-Drug Division.
- In Haiti, the lack of government resources makes the national police largely dependent upon DEA and State/INL for logistical and advisory support.

---

### Some Countries' Limited Political Support Impairs U.S. Counternarcotics Initiatives

According to State, a few governments in the region have demonstrated limited political support for U.S. counternarcotics efforts. In particular, Venezuelan cooperation has declined dramatically in recent years, and in 2006 and 2007 State reported that Venezuela had failed "demonstrably" to make substantial efforts in the war on drugs.<sup>21</sup> In 2005, the Venezuelan President accused DEA of espionage and planning a coup, and the

---

<sup>21</sup>Section 706 of the Foreign Assistance Act requires that the President identify any country that has "failed demonstrably... to make substantial efforts" to adhere to international counternarcotics agreements and to take certain counternarcotics measures set forth in U.S. law. Any country so identified may not receive U.S. assistance except under certain conditions. This prohibition does not affect counternarcotics, humanitarian, and certain other types of assistance.

---

government eventually withdrew from both U.S.-supported vetted units and has refused counternarcotics cooperation with the United States.

State has also reported that Jamaica has shown limited political support for some U.S. counternarcotics-related initiatives. For example, the United States helped develop a corporate reform strategy for the Jamaican constabulary forces, but it was never implemented due to a combination of internal resistance to change and a lack of power to ensure implementation of the strategy's recommendations. In addition, the government of Jamaica has not enacted an initiative to permit extended data-sharing between U.S. and Jamaican law enforcement agencies concerning money-laundering cases.

In Ecuador, even though the government has generally supported U.S.-funded counternarcotics initiatives, political developments may threaten future international cooperation in maritime operations. Ecuador's President has stated that he no longer supports a U.S. military presence in Ecuador and that his government will not renew the agreement allowing the United States to operate its forward operating location there when the agreement expires in November 2009.<sup>22</sup>

---

## Corruption Undermines Interdiction Efforts

The United States relies on the cooperation of partner nations' law enforcement and security agencies in the transit zone to conduct successful counternarcotics operations. But, corruption in these agencies limits the extent to which U.S. law enforcement agencies can involve their counterparts in investigations. According to data compiled by Transparency International, a civil society organization that monitors corruption issues worldwide, corruption is a major problem in transit zone countries. Its Corruption Perception Index (CPI) ranks countries from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean) based on a series of indicators. Seven of the eight countries in our review received a score of 3.3 or lower

---

<sup>22</sup>According to the agreement, signed in November 1999, following the initial 10-year period, it may be renewed by both countries for additional 5-year periods or terminated by either country, effective 1 year later.

(compared with a score of 7.2 for the United States and 8.7 for Canada).<sup>23</sup> The eighth country, the Bahamas, was not reviewed. (See table 4.)

**Table 4: Transparency International Corruption Perception Index Scores for Eight Major Drug Transit Countries (2007)**

Country	World-wide country rating (of 180 countries)	Regional rating (of 32 countries)	CPI score <sup>a</sup>
Bahamas	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Mexico	72	13	3.5
Jamaica	84	19	3.3
Panama	94	20	3.2
Dominican Republic	99	21	3.0
Guatemala	111	25	2.8
Ecuador	150	30	2.1
Venezuela	162	31	2.0
Haiti	177	32	1.6

Source: Transparency International.

<sup>a</sup>The CPI score should be interpreted as a ranking of countries ranging from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean).

In addition, U.S. officials have noted instances of official corruption—particularly among military and police units—that have limited the opportunities for and scope of cooperation with the United States and, in some cases, undermined specific interdiction operations. Some examples of this official corruption are as follows:

- Guatemala disbanded its antinarcotics police unit in 2002 in response to reports of widespread corruption within the agency and its general lack of effectiveness in combating the country’s drug problem. The government reassigned most of the unit’s law enforcement agents to the national civilian police, and the U.S. government suspended major joint operations in light of these circumstances. With U.S. assistance, Guatemala established a successor antinarcotics police force but, in 2005, in a joint

<sup>23</sup>We present the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index as a useful, broad gauge of corruption; however, the index is an imprecise measure. It gauges survey respondents’ perceptions of corruption rather than directly measuring the incidence of corruption. The index is not intended to guide specific program or policy decisions.

---

operation with DEA, the Chief and Deputy of this agency were arrested in the United States for corruption. Later that year, DEA suspected that members of the antinarcotics force stole 475 kilograms of cocaine from an evidence storage facility. Further, according to DEA, Guatemalan antinarcotics agents misused intelligence leads provided by DEA to extort investigative targets.

- In Haiti, in 2003, State reported strong evidence of Haitian law enforcement officials leaking information on planned operations and trafficking drugs. DEA reported that planes under surveillance for drug shipments were met and off-loaded by heavily armed uniformed police officials with vehicles that transported the drugs. In 2007, the Haitian government removed both the National Police Director of Administration and Director of Logistics for suspected corruption.
- In the Dominican Republic, the government removed 24 judges from office for improperly handing out favorable sentences to known traffickers in 2006. Corruption has also hampered Dominican-based, money-laundering investigations, according to DEA.
- In Panama, in 2005, the head of a police counternarcotics unit was arrested and charged with corruption. In 2007, after years of lackluster counternarcotics cooperation from the National Maritime Service, the former head of this organization was also arrested on corruption charges.
- In the Bahamas, State reported in 2003 that it was reluctant to include Bahamian defense personnel in *Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos* and to share sensitive law enforcement information with them due to corruption concerns.
- In Ecuador, in 2002, the Deputy Chief of Operations of the Ecuadorian Army was arrested for facilitating the transshipment of drugs through cargo containers by providing trafficking organizations with false security seals.

---

### Cargo Container Security Programs Have Had Limited Effect on the Counternarcotics Effort

According to DEA, drug smuggling on containerized cargo ships poses a significant threat to U.S. counternarcotics efforts. Both State/INL and DHS have provided cargo security assistance to countries in the transit zone. However, most of State/INL's initiatives have not been effective, and DHS has not routinely used its program of targeting and scanning cargo containers overseas to detect illicit drugs.

---

State/INL has supported counternarcotics initiatives at cargo container ports in four of the eight countries we reviewed, and in three of those countries State's *International Narcotics Control Strategy Reports* indicate that these initiatives were largely ineffective. For example, in Guatemala, although State/INL has provided technical assistance, logistical support, and training for the country's port security program for several years, State reported in 2006 that the program had little interdiction success, and seizures were very low. In the Bahamas, State/INL supported a canine unit of the Bahamian Customs Department to help detect drugs shipments at the Freeport container port but discontinued the assistance in 2004 due to high maintenance costs and its failure to produce expected results. In Venezuela, the United States funded a sophisticated container inspection facility at a large port known to be an embarkation point for multiton shipments of cocaine, but the Venezuelan government has not put it into operation.

DHS, through CBP, has implemented the Container Security Initiative (CSI) overseas, which may have potential for greater use in counternarcotics operations. CBP initiated CSI under its existing authority in January 2002 to assist selected overseas ports in targeting suspicious containers and scanning their contents.<sup>24</sup> The program subsequently received specific congressional authorization in 2006.<sup>25</sup> By 2007, CSI operated in 58 ports, including seven in the transit zone.<sup>26</sup> CBP officers stationed at foreign ports collaborating with host-country partners use intelligence and automated risk assessment information to target shipments and identify those that may contain weapons of mass destruction or other terrorist contraband. DHS has generally not used the technology to detect and interdict illicit drug shipments, though CSI technology can help detect illicit drugs. In fact, the automated targeting system that CSI uses to help target containers for inspection was originally designed for this purpose. The first time the CSI scanning equipment was used in the port of Caucedo in the Dominican Republic, operators detected a shipment of cocaine that was packed amidst canned fruit.

---

<sup>24</sup>In 2007, CBP and the Department of Energy also began the Secure Freight Initiative, a pilot program implemented at selected CSI seaports to scan 100 percent of U.S.-bound cargo containers for nuclear and radiological materials overseas. Honduras is the only transit zone country with a Secure Freight Initiative program.

<sup>25</sup>Pub. L. No. 109-347, sec. 205 (codified at 6 U.S.C. 945).

<sup>26</sup>The seven CSI ports in the transit zone are: Puerto Cortes, Honduras; Caucedo, Dominican Republic; Kingston, Jamaica; Freeport, the Bahamas; and Balboa, Colon, and Manzanillo, Panama.

---

Ultimately, several metric tons of cocaine were seized, and suspected traffickers were arrested.

CBP officials we spoke with noted that including routine container screening for drugs in CSI's scope of operations would be difficult and could conflict with achievement of CBP's counterterrorism objectives. They indicated that CSI's budget and staffing are based on its counterterrorism-related workload, and targeting drugs would require additional research and analysis resources. They said that, without more funding, DHS would have to shift its priorities away from counterterrorism activities. Furthermore, they said that expanding existing agreements with CSI participating countries would entail difficult and sensitive negotiations. According to these officials, proposing that CSI should search for illicit drugs could undermine the international political support for CSI and other CBP counterterrorism initiatives because additional container screening could cause transshipment delays and related economic costs and involve other concessions that participating countries may not be willing to accept.

However, CBP officials acknowledged that they have not formally assessed the feasibility of conducting additional container targeting and inspection in selected major drug transit countries. In particular, CBP has neither calculated the related costs, including human resource requirements, nor has it consulted with State and Justice on the related diplomatic and security risks or the potential law enforcement benefits. Senior officials we spoke to at State/INL, DEA, and ONDCP indicated that it would be useful to examine the feasibility of a limited expansion of CSI on an interagency basis.

---

## Conclusions

U.S. agencies, primarily State, DEA, Defense, DHS, and USAID, have supported initiatives that have fostered cooperation with partner nations in the transit zone, enabling these nations to engage in the counternarcotics effort in ways that the United States alone could not. Through these initiatives, U.S. law enforcement has been able to extend the scope and effectiveness of its drug interdiction activities by (1) gaining access to critical information and intelligence, (2) participating in seizure and eradication operations within the territory or jurisdiction of partner nations, and (3) bringing suspected drug traffickers to justice.

The absence of comprehensive and consistent reporting on the results of these initiatives makes it difficult to monitor their outcomes over time, assess their relative effectiveness, and make resource allocation decisions

---

based on results. However, available information concerning results indicates that the United States has not made significant progress toward its goal of assisting governments to become full and self-sustaining partners in the international counternarcotics effort. Partner nations are dependent on U.S. logistical, financial, and advisory support, and without this support many U.S. initiatives are not sustainable. U.S. agencies have funded initiatives and invested in assets, particularly for maritime operations, without planning for the long-term operations and maintenance of these assets, and partner nations have not utilized many of them to their maximum capacity.

U.S. assistance in cargo container security has been largely ineffective for the international counternarcotics effort. However, DHS has invested in cargo container security programs overseas that in at least one instance helped detect illicit drugs being shipped in the transit zone. DHS has raised a number of concerns about using CSI routinely for this purpose, but has not assessed the feasibility of this program as another tool in the U.S. counternarcotics strategy.

---

## Recommendations for Executive Action

To link U.S.-funded initiatives in transit zone countries to the priority of disrupting illicit drug markets and the goal of assisting nations to become full and self-sustaining partners in the international counternarcotics effort, we recommend that the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Director of ONDCP, the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security, the Attorney General, and the Administrator of USAID, report the results of U.S.-funded counternarcotics initiatives more comprehensively and consistently for each country in the annual *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*.

We recommend that the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Director of ONDCP, the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security, and the Attorney General, (1) develop a plan to ensure that partner nations in the transit zone can effectively operate and maintain all counternarcotics assets that the United States has provided, including boats and other vehicles and equipment, for their remaining useful life and report this plan to the Congress for the fiscal year 2010 appropriations cycle and (2) ensure that, before providing a counternarcotics asset to a partner nation, agencies determine the total operations and maintenance cost over its useful life and, with the recipient nation, develop a plan for funding this cost.



---

To help maximize cargo container security assistance, we recommend that the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of State and the Attorney General, determine the feasibility of expanding the Container Security Initiative to include routine targeting and scanning of containers for illicit drugs in major drug transit countries in the transit zone, and report the results to the Congress. Factors to be assessed should include the cost, workload and staffing ramifications, the potential benefits to international counternarcotics law enforcement efforts, the political support of CSI participating countries, statutory authority, and any risks associated with such an expansion.

---

## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to Defense, DHS, Justice/DEA, ONDCP, State, and USAID for their comment. DHS, Justice/DEA, ONDCP, and State provided written comments, which are reproduced in appendixes III through VI. All agencies provided technical corrections, which we incorporated into the report, as appropriate.

State generally agreed with the report's conclusions, but disagreed with our recommendation on results reporting. State noted that it has already developed performance measures to reflect progress in achieving broad counternarcotics goals and development goals in general, though they do not necessarily capture program-specific results. We modified our recommendation to emphasize the need for more systematic reporting of program-specific results that would link U.S. counternarcotics efforts to State's broader performance goals and measures. State also noted that there is substantial variation in assistance programs in particular countries in terms of program types and funding levels. However, we observed that many programs in several countries are similar in nature and lend themselves to the comparison of results among countries. Developing a method of reporting these results more comprehensively and consistently across years and among country programs in the *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report* would address our concern.

State partially agreed with our recommendation on sustainability planning and indicated that its project designs, agreements with recipient countries, and monitoring mechanisms are appropriate for addressing sustainability concerns, given the unpredictability of recipient countries' long-term priorities and budgetary resources. Furthermore, State commented that it has limited ability to influence the coordinated sustainability planning of other agencies and has no influence over Defense's Enduring Friendship program. Given past experience, we question whether providing assets is justifiable without more specific and detailed plans that give better

---

assurances that the recipient country and participating agencies are committed to funding specified operations and maintenance costs. State is in a unique position as the lead foreign affairs agency to ensure that all participating U.S. agencies involved in providing counternarcotics assets agree on a discrete sustainability plan. State, in particular, can influence Defense's sustainability planning when it approves security assistance programs, such as Enduring Friendship. Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2006, under which Enduring Friendship was authorized, requires State and Defense to jointly approve all projects and coordinate their implementation.<sup>27</sup>

State fully supports any consultation needed to determine the feasibility of expanding DHS's container security assistance program.

DHS did not concur with our recommendation to study the feasibility of expanding the CSI program. According to DHS, expanding CSI to include narcotics interdiction would unnecessarily broaden the program's strategic goals and is inconsistent with its mandate to secure the international supply chain from high-risk shipments with a potential risk of terrorism and acts of terrorism. CSI's mandate does not prohibit leveraging the program's resources for other agency missions. In addition, the CSI Strategic Plan for 2006-2011 states that, "at some point in the future, consideration should be given to potential expansion of the program from focusing on terrorism alone to encompassing other activities known to support terrorism, such as smuggling narcotics, violations of intellectual property rights and currency violations." A logical first step would be for relevant stakeholders to study the feasibility of enlisting CSI as a counternarcotics tool, formally assessing the program's statutory authority, among other factors. DHS also noted that 90 percent of cocaine moves through Mexico, but that no CSI ports are located in Mexico. However, as we reported, approximately 90 percent of the cocaine flowing toward the United States has gone through the Central American/Mexican corridor, in which four CSI ports are located.

ONDCP accepted our recommendation that it assist other agencies in developing performance measures and sustainability plans for U.S.-

---

<sup>27</sup>National Defense Authorization Act of 2006, Pub. L. No. 109-163, § 1206. 119 Stat. 3136, 3456-58 (2006). See GAO, *Section 1206 Security Assistance Program—Findings on Criteria, Coordination, and Implementation*, [GAO-07-416R](#) (Washington, D.C.: February 28, 2007).

---


provided counternarcotics assets. In addition, ONDCP strongly concurred with the recommendation to determine the feasibility of expanding CSI.

DEA said that, while it is difficult to measure the outcome of all U.S. counternarcotics efforts, it has tracked statistical data to ensure that it is achieving its strategic goals and assists State and ONDCP in developing overall performance measures for U.S. counternarcotics programs.

---

As agreed with your offices, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution until 30 days from the report date. At that time, we will send copies of this report to the Secretaries of Defense, Homeland Security, and State; the Attorney General; the Administrator of USAID; the Director of ONDCP; and interested congressional committees. We also will make copies available to others upon request. In addition, this report will be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-4268 or [fordj@gao.gov](mailto:fordj@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff members who made major contributions to this report are listed in appendix VII.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jess T. Ford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jess T. Ford, Director  
International Affairs and Trade

---

# Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

---

Our review encompassed U.S.-funded counternarcotics initiatives during 2003 through 2007, in countries in the Caribbean Sea and Central America, as well as Ecuador and Venezuela. We specifically focused our efforts on eight countries designated by the President as “major drug transit countries.” Those countries include the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Panama, and Venezuela. Although Mexico is also a major transit country, we excluded it from our review because we reviewed U.S. counternarcotics assistance to that country in 2007.<sup>1</sup>

To identify U.S.-funded assistance programs and initiatives, we reviewed the Department of State’s (State) *International Narcotics Control Strategy Reports* (INCSR), Mission Performance Plans for fiscal years 2003 through 2007, and end use monitoring reports, as well as work plans, activity reports, and country summaries provided by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). We also met with Washington, D.C.-based representatives of the White House’s Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP); the Department of State’s (State) Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (State/INL); the Department of Justice’s Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Criminal Division; the Department of Defense’s (Defense) Office of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics, Counterproliferation and Global Threats; the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Coast Guard, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP); and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).<sup>2</sup> We also met with cognizant officials at the U.S. Southern Command in Miami, Florida, and the Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF)-South in Key West, Florida. We included among the initiatives we reviewed those cooperative endeavors that may not have had any identifiable costs associated with them, including support for legislative reform in partner nations and efforts to reach agreements that enhance international cooperation in interdiction, including bilateral maritime law enforcement agreements and agreements to establish forward operating locations.

---

<sup>1</sup>See [GAO-07-1018](#).

<sup>2</sup>The Department of the Treasury (Treasury) implements a relatively small amount of counternarcotics related assistance in the transit zone, primarily relating to training on money-laundering investigations; however, since State funded and reported on this assistance, we relied on State-provided information and did not meet with Treasury officials, other than officials from the Office of Foreign Assets Control, who indicated they had undertaken very little activity in the countries we reviewed.

To document the cost of U.S. counternarcotics support, we focused on fiscal years 2003 through 2007 by reviewing and analyzing program funding data from the various departments and agencies in Washington, D.C., including State and Defense,<sup>3</sup> USAID, and DEA for background purposes. While we performed some checks on the data, we did not perform a full reliability assessment of them. We believe the data provide a reasonable indication of spending on counternarcotics-related activities, but we recognize that the data the agencies gave us included funding for some activities that go beyond counternarcotics assistance and may include some U.S. interdiction-related activities.

To assess program results and factors that have impeded counternarcotics efforts, we reviewed *State's International Narcotics Control Strategy Reports* and Mission Strategic Plans for fiscal years 2002 through 2007, End Use Monitoring reports, and other relevant State documents. At DEA, we reviewed Significant Action Reports and “blue notes”—reports to the agency’s Administrator on selected significant drug interdiction and other activities—as well as all available “rightsizing reports” and all country and work plans for the eight major drug transit countries in our review. We also reviewed evaluations, midterm and final reports, and other program documents for those activities which USAID officials and State/INL documents had identified as related to the international counternarcotics effort. In addition, we reviewed Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index to evaluate the level of corruption in these countries. The index is based on the results of surveys of business people and citizens and analysis by country experts. It ranks countries by the degree of corruption perceived to exist in each country rather than by actual corruption, which is difficult to measure directly. In a previous GAO report, we determined that Transparency International’s data were sufficiently reliable to provide a broad gauge of corruption and demonstrate that levels of corruption vary among countries.<sup>4</sup>

To obtain more detailed information on program results and impediments, we traveled to four of the eight major drug trafficking countries in our review: the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Panama. We chose these four countries based on: (1) the size of the U.S. assistance

---

<sup>3</sup>Defense counternarcotics data reflect estimates of counternarcotics-related support in these countries, because Defense budgets are by program, not by country.

<sup>4</sup>GAO, *Foreign Assistance: U.S. Anticorruption Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa Will Require Time and Commitment*, [GAO-04-506](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 26, 2004).

program; (2) the location within the various geographic regions of the transit zone, including Central America, South America, and the Caribbean Islands; (3) designation as a major money-laundering country; (4) posting of senior embassy officials representing State/INL, DEA, DHS, ICE, and CBP, and Defense; and (5) implementation of major USAID rule of law and alternative development initiatives. During our visits we obtained information from U.S. embassy officials, host government officials, and local program beneficiaries. While in country, we visited a number of project sites relating to maritime operations, port security, intelligence gathering, drug crop eradication, alternative development, and other activities.

To identify trends in cocaine flow, seizures, and disruptions, we reviewed data from the *Interagency Assessment on Cocaine Movement* from 2002 through 2007, with limited updated data provided by ONDCP. In the course of previous work, we discussed how cocaine flow data were developed with officials from the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency, Crime and Narcotics Center. In addition, we discussed how seizure and disruption data were developed with officials from ONDCP. Overall, the data have limitations, due in part to the illegal nature of the drug trade and the time lag inherent in collecting meaningful data. Notwithstanding the limitations of the drug production and seizure data, we determined that these data were sufficiently reliable to provide an overall indication of the magnitude and nature of the illicit drug trade since 2003. We supplemented this data with information about trends in drug trafficking, interdiction, and cooperation with transit zone countries obtained from officials at JIATF-South.

Finally, the information and observations on foreign law in this report do not reflect our independent legal analysis but are based on interviews with cognizant officials and secondary sources.

---

# Appendix II: Counternarcotics Maritime Law Enforcement Agreements

---

The United States has signed Counternarcotics Maritime Law Enforcement agreements with 25 countries in the transit and source zones. According to Coast Guard officials, these agreements have improved cooperation with nations in the region and increased the United States' and, in particular, the Coast Guard's capability to board suspect vessels and detain suspected drug traffickers. These bilateral agreements typically have six provisions to them. The United States and the other countries negotiate each provision separately, which means that some countries may agree to some provisions and not others. The six parts provide for the following:

- Ship-boarding provisions establish an expedited process for U.S. law enforcement agencies to obtain authorization from the competent authority of a designated country to board and search a vessel flying its flag and suspected of being engaged in illicit traffic outside the territorial waters of any nation. In certain limited circumstances, U.S. vessels may stop, board, and search suspicious vessels flying the flag of a designated country without having specific permission.
- Ship-rider provisions permit countries to place law enforcement officials on each other's vessels.
- Pursuit provisions allow U.S. law enforcement agencies, under very limited circumstances, to pursue aircraft and vessels in a country's airspace and territorial waters. In particular, the provisions permit U.S. law enforcement agencies to stop, board, and search a suspect vessel if the country does not have a vessel or aircraft available to respond immediately.
- Entry-to-investigate provisions allow the U.S. law enforcement agencies, under very limited circumstances, to enter a country's airspace or territorial waters to investigate aircraft or vessels suspected of illicit drug trafficking. Specifically, the provisions permit U.S. law enforcement agencies to board and search a suspect vessel if the country does not have a vessel or aircraft available to respond immediately.
- Over-flight provisions permit the U.S. law enforcement aircraft to fly over the country's territorial waters, with appropriate notice to the country's coastal authorities.
- Relay order-to-land provisions allow U.S. law enforcement agencies to relay an order to land from the host country to the suspect aircraft. Moreover, an additional International Maritime Interdiction Support clause permits U.S. law enforcement agencies, principally the Coast Guard, to transport suspected drug traffickers through that country to the

**Appendix II: Counternarcotics Maritime Law Enforcement Agreements**

United States for prosecution and provides for expedited access to that country’s dockside facility to search suspect vessels. Since 2003 the United States has entered into support clauses with five countries.

Table 5 lists the law enforcement agreements, including the international maritime interdiction support clause, that the United States has negotiated with countries in the transit and source zones.

**Table 5: Counternarcotics Maritime Law Enforcement Agreements with Countries in the Transit Zone**

Country	Provisions						
	Ship-boarding	Ship-rider	Pursuit	Entry-to-Investigate	Over-flight	Relay order-to-land	International Maritime Interdiction Support clause
Antigua and Barbuda	X	X	X	X	X	X	X <sup>a</sup>
Bahamas	X <sup>a</sup>	X	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>	X	X	X <sup>a</sup>
Barbados	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Belize	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Colombia	X						
Costa Rica	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dominica	X	X	X	X			
Dominican Republic	X	X	X	X	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>
Ecuador <sup>b</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>				X <sup>c</sup>		
El Salvador					X <sup>c</sup>		
Grenada	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Guatemala	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>
Haiti	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Honduras	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jamaica	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Netherlands Antilles and Aruba		X	X	X	X <sup>c</sup>		
Nicaragua	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>
Panama	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
St. Kitts and St. Nevis	X	X	X	X	X		
St. Lucia	X	X	X	X	X	X	
St. Vincent and Grenadines	X	X	X	X			
Trinidad and Tobago	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Turks and Caicos		X					
Venezuela	X						

Source: JIATF-South.



---

**Appendix II: Counternarcotics Maritime Law  
Enforcement Agreements**

---

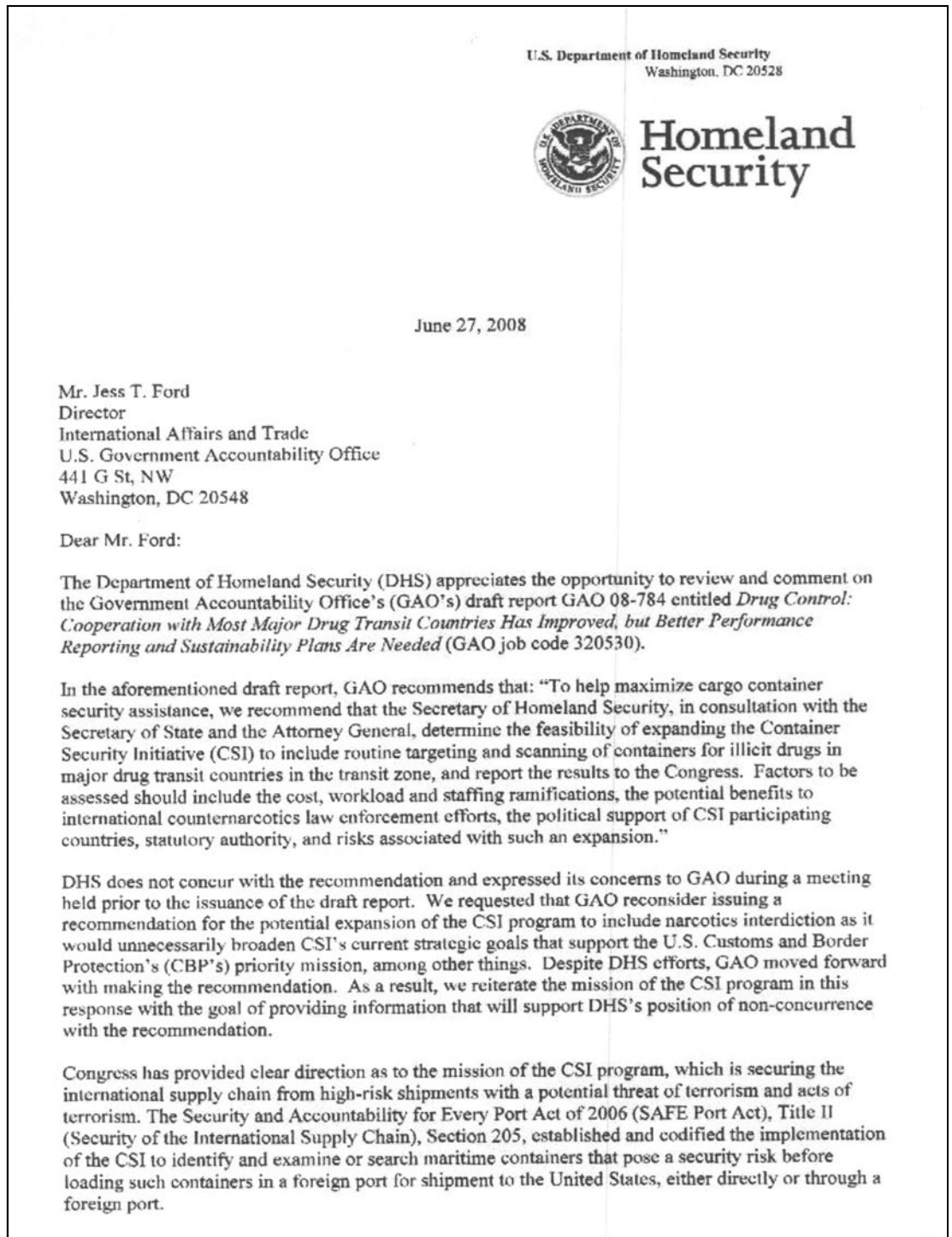
<sup>a</sup>Indicates that the provision or clause was agreed to since 2003.

<sup>b</sup>The United States and Ecuador do not have a counternarcotics maritime law enforcement agreement for ship-boarding but have agreed to ship-boarding procedures.

<sup>c</sup>Over-flight rights have been negotiated in the context of a forward operating location agreement through which the United States is allowed the use of aviation and other facilities.

# Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.



See comment 1.

See comment 2.

Appendix III: Comments from the Department  
of Homeland Security

- 2 -

CSI was created to ensure the twin goals of CBP are met – preventing terrorists and terrorist weapons from entering the United States, while facilitating the flow of legitimate trade and travel. CSI's effectiveness and success can be measured by several factors. At CSI's core is the unique and unparalleled cooperation and information sharing between the CBP officers at the foreign seaports and the host government customs personnel when pre-screening maritime containerized cargo destined to the United States for weapons of mass destruction or other terrorist related activities.

See comment 3.

In the draft report, GAO states that 90 percent of cocaine moves through Mexico; however, no CSI ports are located in Mexico. The report also states that the U.S. government efforts to interdict narcotics in the Central American and Caribbean corridors have not made significant progress due to these countries' limited resources, limited political support (within their own government), inability to maintain equipment and vessels provided by the United States and corruption of government officials. The CSI program is not the mechanism to address these vast discrepancies.

See comment 4.

As stated above, CSI was implemented to address the threat to border security and global trade posed by the potential for terrorist use of a maritime container to deliver a weapon of mass destruction. Importantly, CSI focuses efforts and resources on maritime containerized cargo destined to the United States with a nexus to terrorism. The CSI program is a voluntary program and there are no binding agreements which can be enforced if a country refuses to continue with the CSI program. CSI's focus, as stipulated in the SAFE Port Act, is the security of the international supply chain.

See comment 5.

In March 2008, CBP met with the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and representatives of the Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF South) to discuss the CSI program and its mission. At this meeting, ONDCP and JIATF South inquired whether CSI tracked maritime containers not destined to the United States, such as maritime containers from the Central American and Caribbean corridors destined to Europe and/or Mexico. CBP reiterated that the CSI program, as mandated by Congress, only pre-screens and targets maritime containers destined to the United States. In essence, what GAO and ONDCP are requesting, is not only expanding the CSI program to target for narcotics, but to also target maritime containers that are destined to other countries. Such an expansion is outside the mandate of the CSI program.

See comment 6.

In addition, although the draft report does not recognize CBP's counter-narcotics program, CBP will continue to use its assets within its domestic operations to target for narcotics and will continue to work with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and our foreign counterparts in what we believe is an effective counter-narcotics program.

See comment 7.

With regard to GAO's comments and observations made on intelligence-gathering and investigations, we would like to emphasize that a constant flow of information pertaining to drug trafficking networks and organizations is the key to our targeting and interdiction efforts.

The draft report also tends to focus principally on Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) or military assistance given to host governments. The report does not mention that DHS has deployed advisors (funded by Department of State or U.S. Agency for International Development) for both short and long term details to provide training and technical assistance.

See comment 6.

DIIS advisory presence has existed in Ecuador since 2001. In addition, DHS has provided support to other transit zone countries by deploying specialized teams to those locations. The advisors have provided guidance or training in the following areas: customs documentation, 24 hour rule, targeting/risk management, integrity awareness, airport/border/seaport interdiction operations, management, mail processing, container examination, security, firearms, and officer safety.

Lastly, the draft report does not include the significant efforts contributed by CBP Air and Marine (A&M). All of these efforts are resource intensive for an office of its size whose personnel, assets,

- 3 -

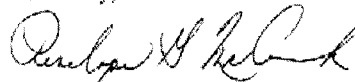
and budget are self contained and do not receive the benefit of State Department funding. Some specific examples of CBP A&M efforts include but are not limited to:

- P-3 Transit Zone Operations – Currently CBP’s entire fleet of P-3 aircraft supports counterdrug operations in the Transit Zone, to include missions flown from Central and South America.
- Operation Halcon - Up until November 30, 2006, legacy Customs and CBP aircraft supported a continuous joint interdiction operation with Mexico that began in 1990;
- Air to Air Interdiction, Dominican Republic - An interdiction effort that was reinstated after a resurgence of airborne smuggling activity near the island nations of Hispaniola;
- Longstanding Support to The Bahamas - CBP A&M has placed an Aviation Advisor in the U.S. Embassy in Nassau to provide enhanced support to Operation Bahamas Turks and Caicos (OPBAT), which targets smuggling operations destined to the Bahamas from other source countries as well as smuggling operations from the Bahamas to the United States, specifically southern Florida.

In addition to sustained efforts by P-3 aircraft in the Eastern Pacific conducting maritime operations and the Citation (C-550) interceptors conducting airborne interdiction operations in Mexico, CBP A&M re-initiated the airborne interdiction and Blackhawk helicopter endgame operations in the Dominican Republic to combat smuggling operations. These interagency joint nation operations are assisting in the disruption of smuggling operations operating in the transit vector to the Dominican Republic. CBP A&M was also instrumental in providing maritime enforcement interdiction training to the Government of Colombia Coast Guard, including high speed boat-to-boat tactical enforcement techniques and disabling procedures.

We thank you again for the opportunity to offer comments on this draft report and look forward to working with you on future homeland security issues.

Sincerely,



Penelope G. McCormack  
Acting Director  
Departmental Audit Liaison Office

---

The following are GAO's comments on the Department of Homeland Security's letter dated June 27, 2008.

---

## GAO Comments

1. A decision on whether to enlist CSI as a counternarcotics tool should be based on a reasoned study of its feasibility by relevant stakeholders, formally assessing the program's statutory authority among other factors. ONDCP and State support this recommendation.
2. CSI's mandate does not prohibit leveraging the program's resources for other agency missions. In addition, DHS/CBP notes in the CSI Strategic Plan for 2006-2011 that, "at some point in the future, consideration should be given to potential expansion of the program from focusing on terrorism alone to encompassing other activities known to support terrorism, such as smuggling narcotics, violations of intellectual property rights and currency violations."
3. As noted in our report, seven CSI ports are located the Caribbean and Central America. Four of those ports (Balboa, Colon, and Manzanillo in Panama and Puerto Cortes in Honduras), are located on the central American isthmus and, as such, are included in the "Central American/Mexican Corridor," through which nearly 90 percent of cocaine destined for the United States moves. (See fig. 1.)
4. As DHS notes in its letter, the United States has "unique and unparalleled cooperation and information sharing between the CBP officers at the foreign seaports and the host government customs personnel." CSI's way of working with host country partners may serve as a model for combating corruption and gaining the political support necessary to make U.S. efforts successful.
5. We are not recommending that CSI target maritime containers destined for other countries. Rather, we are recommending that, in addition to the factors CSI currently uses to target containers for inspection, DHS study the feasibility of using potential narcotics trafficking as one of the targeting factors.
6. We added information on CBP's advisory program.
7. The focus of our review was on U.S. initiatives to assist selected major drug transit zone countries and we intentionally did not address many U.S. interdiction operations DHS described. We have reported previously on CBP's activities. See GAO, *Drug Control: Agencies Need to Plan for Likely Declines in Drug Interdiction Assets, and Develop*

---

*Better Performance Measures for Transit Zone Operations*, [GAO-06-200](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 15, 2005); and GAO, *Drug Control: Difficulties in Measuring Costs and Results of Transit Zone Interdiction Efforts*, [GAO-02-13](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 25, 2002).

# Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration



U. S. Department of Justice  
Drug Enforcement Administration

[www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov)

JUN 19 2008

Mr. Jess T. Ford  
Director, International Affairs and Trade  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Ford:

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) draft report, entitled: *Drug Control: Cooperation with Major Drug Transit Countries Has Improved, But Better Performance Reporting and Sustainability Plans Are Needed*, GAO-07-784. This letter constitutes DEA's formal response.

GAO's draft report addressed how U.S. agencies have assisted with disrupting drug trafficking through the eight major transit zone countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean. GAO's report also focused on U.S. efforts to assist these countries with becoming self-sustaining partners in the international counternarcotics effort.

The report recognized the significant accomplishments of DEA's vetted investigative units. These vetted units are located in the principal drug transit countries in the region and are staffed by local law enforcement officers working in cooperation with DEA. These units have conducted numerous successful investigations targeting priority drug trafficking organizations (DTO). The report also noted DEA's efforts to assist these countries with developing methods for gathering, analyzing, and sharing intelligence.

In the report, GAO acknowledged the difficulty in measuring the collective outcomes of all U.S. counternarcotics efforts for each transit zone country. While it is difficult to measure the outcome of all efforts, DEA has tracked statistical data to include financial and drug seizures, arrests, intelligence sharing, and the disruption/dismantling of DTOs in the transit zone countries to ensure DEA is achieving its strategic goals. DEA utilizes its performance goals regarding disrupting and dismantling DTOs to assist the Department of State and the Office of National Drug Control Policy in developing overall performance measures for US counternarcotics programs.

---

**Appendix IV: Comments from the Department  
of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration**

---

Mr. Jess T. Ford, Director, International Affairs and Trade

Page 2

DEA has also reviewed the draft report for sensitivity and technical issues and has no recommendations for redactions or revisions.

Sincerely yours,



Gary W. Oetjen  
Deputy Chief Inspector

Cc: Richard Theis, ALG  
AD, OC, NC, CC, CP, OG



# Appendix V: Comments from the Department of State

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.



United States Department of State

*Assistant Secretary for Resource Management  
and Chief Financial Officer*

Washington, D.C. 20520

JUN 25 2008

Ms. Jacquelyn Williams-Bridgers  
Managing Director  
International Affairs and Trade  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Ms. Williams-Bridgers:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "DRUG CONTROL: Cooperation with Most Major Drug Transit Countries Has Improved, but Better Performance Reporting and Sustainability Plans Are Needed," GAO Job Code 320530.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Pat Yorkman, Procurement Specialist, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs at (202) 776-8806.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bradford R. Higgins".

Bradford R. Higgins

cc: GAO – Al Huntington  
INL – David Johnson  
State/OIG – Mark Duda

**U.S. Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report**

**DRUG CONTROL: Cooperation with Major Drug Transit Countries Has Improved, but Better Performance Reporting and Sustainability Plans Are Needed, (GAO-08-784/Code 320530)**

The Department has reviewed the draft report, “*DRUG CONTROL: Cooperation with Major Drug Transit Countries Has Improved, but Better Performance Reporting and Sustainability Plans Are Needed,*” and generally agrees with its main conclusions. However, we partially disagree with the recommendations concerning the establishment of performance measures and the operation and maintenance of donated counternarcotics assets.

See comment 1.

Specifically, we disagree with the recommendation that the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Director of ONDCP, the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security, the Attorney General, and the Administrator USAID, establish performance measures for U.S. assistance efforts and report the results annually for each country in the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR).

See comment 2.

The recommendation is duplicative of uniform performance measures already established by the State Department and USAID as part of the Transformational Diplomacy Initiative, which is designed not only to assess the impact of counternarcotics efforts but to evaluate development assistance in general.

While these measures do not necessarily capture the impact of specific projects such as boats for maritime interdiction, they do indicate movement toward the larger, long-term objective of assisting countries to become full and self-sustaining partners in the international counternarcotics effort, especially when incorporated into a holistic program performance plan.

See comment 3.

While true that the standard measures of cooperation appearing in the INCSR are not directly aligned by country and program, there is substantial variation in assistance programs to particular countries in terms of program types and funding levels. Additional variation occurs due to the fact that many countries in the INCSR receive no program assistance at all.

The Department agrees in part with the recommendation that “the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Director of ONDCP, the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security, and the Attorney General, (1) develop a plan to ensure that

partner nations in the transit zone can effectively operate and maintain all counternarcotics assets the U.S. has provided... and report this plan to the Congress for the fiscal year 2010 appropriations cycle; and (2) ensure that before providing a counternarcotics asset to a partner nation, agencies determine the total operations and maintenance cost over its useful life, and, with the recipient nation, develop a plan for funding this cost.”

The Department recognizes the need to consider the sustainability of donated assets; we address this concern in designing projects and in drafting letters of agreement (LOAs) with partner countries. However, we caution that foreign assistance cannot always be preconditioned on the recipient government’s ability or willingness to sustain donated equipment for its projected useful life.

While we strive to forge agreements with the recipient governments for sustainability, it is difficult to project another government’s budgetary resources; moreover, governments and priorities change. A case in point involved the donation of two C-26 surveillance aircraft for maritime interdiction operations to the Regional Security System of the Eastern Caribbean in 1999. According to the “plan”, the U.S. would support the operation and maintenance of the aircraft for a period of five years, after which the RSS would gradually assume responsibility for the program over a four-year period. Despite our best efforts, in 2004 the RSS refused to begin cost-sharing, the U.S. cut funding completely in 2006, and the planes are no longer being used for surveillance and interdiction operations. Sustainability is an important goal, but given the unpredictability of foreign partners’ long-term priorities, we believe our existing oversight mechanisms are appropriate to monitor partner nations’ commitment towards counternarcotics efforts.

Developing an interagency plan beyond the Department’s present monitoring capability is impractical. Agencies presently work together collegially at an interagency level. Sustainability of assets is one of the aspects considered in State’s decisions to provide development support to other countries. However, options are limited beyond the ability to influence other agencies for a coordinated plan when, for example, competing program objectives arise. For example, the Department has no influence over a Department of Defense program like “Enduring Friendship” which has donated boats to foreign countries who then request fuel and maintenance assistance from State to keep the boats operational.

See comment 4.

See comment 5.

The Department fully supports any consultations needed to implement the recommendation that “the Secretary of Homeland Security (should) determine the feasibility of expanding its container security assistance program to include routine targeting and scanning of containers for illegal drugs in major drug transit countries.”

---

The following are GAO's comments on the Department of State's letter dated June 25, 2008.

---

## GAO Comments

1. We modified our recommendation to emphasize the need for State to report the results of U.S.-funded counternarcotics initiatives more comprehensively and consistently for each country in its annual *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*. Such information would complement and aid interpretation of the broad performance measures State includes in its performance plan.
2. While the broad performance measures State has developed are important, they do not capture results of specific assistance programs, and, without other information, their usefulness in managing counternarcotics programs is limited. Reviewing program-specific results in a particular country over time or comparing results among countries with similar programs can help identify patterns and lessons learned that may be useful in evaluating and managing these programs more effectively. Furthermore, without consistently reported program-specific results information, State cannot assess the extent to which the results of specific programs have contributed to overall progress reflected in State overall performance measures.
3. While we agree that assistance programs vary, we observed that many programs in several countries are similar and comparable.
4. Past experience with U.S.-provided assets has shown that State's monitoring of nation's commitment alone has not been sufficient to ensure that such assets are utilized effectively. We question whether such U.S. investments are justifiable without stronger up-front assurances, beyond an agreement, that recipient countries or sponsoring U.S. agencies can afford the long-term operations and maintenance costs and are committed to providing those resources. We continue to believe that explicit sustainability plans are needed that include a projection of total asset ownership costs that have been considered and agreed upon by all relevant parties with adequate contingency plans in case assumptions change about sustainability and commitment.
5. State is in a unique position as the lead foreign affairs agency to ensure that all participating U.S. agencies involved in providing counternarcotics assets agree on a discreet sustainability plan. State, in particular, can influence Defense's sustainability planning when it approves security assistance programs, such as Enduring Friendship.

---

Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2006, under which Enduring Friendship was authorized, requires State and Defense to jointly approve all projects and coordinate their implementation.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>National Defense Authorization Act of 2006, Pub. L. No. 109-163, § 1206. 119 Stat. 3136, 3456-58 (2006). See GAO, *Section 1206 Security Assistance Program—Findings on Criteria, Coordination, and Implementation*, [GAO-07-416R](#) (Washington, D.C.: February 28, 2007).

# Appendix VI: Comments from the Office of National Drug Control Policy



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY

Washington, D. C. 20503

June 23, 2008

Mr. Jess Ford  
Director, International Affairs and Trade Issues  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, Dc 20548-0001

Dear Mr. Ford:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft GAO 08-784 Report to Congressional Requesters, entitled *Cooperation with Most Major Drug Transit Countries Has Improved, but Better Performance Reporting and Sustainability Plans Are Needed*. Your report comes during a unique period in our bi-lateral relations with many of these major transit countries. We are diligently working to improve the effectiveness of counternarcotics cooperation throughout the Western Hemisphere.

We accept your recommendation that ONDCP provide technical assistance to the National Drug Control Program agencies in the development of appropriate performance measures, and also in the development of plans to ensure that partner nations are able to effectively operate and maintain all counternarcotics assets provided by the United States. In addition, we strongly concur with your recommendation that DHS determine the feasibility of expanding the Container Security Initiative to include routine targeting and scanning of containers for illicit drugs.

Once again, we appreciate the opportunity to review this report and believe we are already on the right course concerning your recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John P. Walters". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

John P. Walters  
Director

---

# Appendix VII: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

---

## GAO Contact

Jess T. Ford, (202) 512-4268, or [fordj@gao.gov](mailto:fordj@gao.gov)

---

## Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the individual named above, A. H. Huntington, III, Assistant Director; Joseph Carney; Miriam A. Carroll; and James Michels made key contributions to this report.



---

## GAO's Mission

The Government Accountability Office, the audit, evaluation, and investigative arm of Congress, exists to support Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the American people. GAO examines the use of public funds; evaluates federal programs and policies; and provides analyses, recommendations, and other assistance to help Congress make informed oversight, policy, and funding decisions. GAO's commitment to good government is reflected in its core values of accountability, integrity, and reliability.

---

## Obtaining Copies of GAO Reports and Testimony

The fastest and easiest way to obtain copies of GAO documents at no cost is through GAO's Web site ([www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov)). Each weekday, GAO posts newly released reports, testimony, and correspondence on its Web site. To have GAO e-mail you a list of newly posted products every afternoon, go to [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov) and select "E-mail Updates."

---

## Order by Mail or Phone

The first copy of each printed report is free. Additional copies are \$2 each. A check or money order should be made out to the Superintendent of Documents. GAO also accepts VISA and Mastercard. Orders for 100 or more copies mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent. Orders should be sent to:

U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street NW, Room LM  
Washington, DC 20548

To order by Phone: Voice: (202) 512-6000  
TDD: (202) 512-2537  
Fax: (202) 512-6061

---

## To Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse in Federal Programs

Contact:

Web site: [www.gao.gov/fraudnet/fraudnet.htm](http://www.gao.gov/fraudnet/fraudnet.htm)

E-mail: [fraudnet@gao.gov](mailto:fraudnet@gao.gov)

Automated answering system: (800) 424-5454 or (202) 512-7470

---

## Congressional Relations

Ralph Dawn, Managing Director, [dawnr@gao.gov](mailto:dawnr@gao.gov), (202) 512-4400  
U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7125  
Washington, DC 20548

---

## Public Affairs

Chuck Young, Managing Director, [youngc1@gao.gov](mailto:youngc1@gao.gov), (202) 512-4800  
U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street NW, Room 7149  
Washington, DC 20548