



Highlights of [GAO-07-1018](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

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

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that ONDCP, in conjunction with the U.S. counternarcotics interagency community, coordinate with the government of Mexico before completing the Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy's implementation plan to (1) help ensure Mexico's cooperation with any initiatives that require it and (2) address the cooperation issues GAO identified. In commenting on a draft of this report, ONDCP concurred with the recommendation.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-1018.

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

DRUG CONTROL

U.S. Assistance Has Helped Mexican Counternarcotics Efforts, but Tons of Illicit Drugs Continue to Flow into the United States

What GAO Found

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

- The estimated amount of cocaine arriving in Mexico for transshipment to the United States averaged about 275 metric tons per year. Reported seizures averaged about 36 metric tons a year.
- The estimated amount of export quality heroin and marijuana produced in Mexico averaged almost 19 metric tons and 9,400 metric tons per year, respectively. Reported heroin seizures averaged less than 1 metric ton and reported marijuana seizures averaged about 2,900 metric tons a year.
- Although an estimate of the amount of methamphetamine manufactured in Mexico has not been prepared, reported seizures along the U.S. border rose from about 500 kilograms in 2000 to highs of almost 2,900 kilograms in 2005 and about 2,700 kilograms in 2006. According to U.S. officials, this more than fivefold increase indicated a dramatic rise in supply.

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

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

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