Why GAO Did This Study

Since the UN first deployed a peacekeeping mission to the DRC 2 decades ago, the United States and the international community have sought to improve security in the country. In eastern DRC, armed groups have committed severe human rights abuses, including sexual violence, and reportedly profit from the exploitation of “conflict minerals”—in particular, tin, tungsten, tantalum, and gold—according to the UN. Congress included a provision in the 2010 Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act that, among other things, required the SEC to promulgate regulations regarding the use of conflict minerals from the DRC and adjoining countries. The SEC adopted these regulations in 2012. The act also included a provision for GAO to annually assess the SEC regulations’ effectiveness in promoting peace and security and to report on the rate of sexual violence in the DRC and adjoining countries.

In this report, GAO (1) examines how companies responded to the SEC conflict minerals disclosure rule when filing in 2018 and (2) provides recent information on the rate of sexual violence in eastern DRC and adjoining countries. GAO analyzed a generalizable random sample of SEC filings and interviewed relevant officials. GAO also reviewed U.S. government, UN, and international organization reports; interviewed DRC officials and other stakeholders; and conducted fieldwork in California at an industry conference.