

Highlights of [GAO-12-972](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

Both Justice and Treasury operate separate asset forfeiture programs that are designed to prevent and reduce crime through the seizure and forfeiture of assets that represent the proceeds of, or were used to facilitate, federal crimes. Annually, participating agencies within Justice and Treasury seize millions of dollars in assets as a result of their law enforcement activities. In fiscal year 2011, the combined value of assets in these two programs was about \$9.4 billion. Beginning in 1988 and through 2003, Congress and GAO have called on Justice and Treasury to consolidate management activities between their programs. GAO was asked to assess the extent to which Justice and Treasury have assessed and acted on opportunities to coordinate or consolidate forfeiture property management activities since 2003 to reduce any duplication and achieve cost savings. GAO interviewed officials to determine actions under way or completed to consolidate their management activities. GAO also analyzed IT asset tracking systems functions and the geographic proximity of contracted facilities that store vehicles, vessels, and aircraft.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that Justice and Treasury conduct a study to evaluate the feasibility, costs, and benefits of consolidating their asset management activities. Justice and Treasury concurred with GAO's recommendation.

View [GAO-12-972](#). For more information, contact David C. Maurer at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov.

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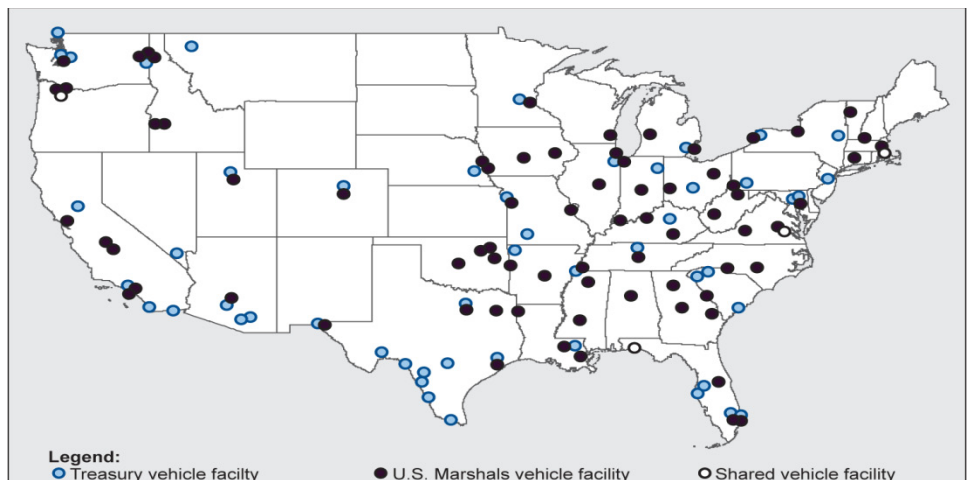
ASSET FORFEITURE PROGRAMS

Justice and Treasury Should Determine Costs and Benefits of Potential Consolidation

What GAO Found

Since 2003, the Departments of Justice (Justice) and the Treasury (Treasury) have taken some steps to explore coordinating forfeiture program efforts, including sharing a website for posting notifications and pursuing a contract for seizure efforts abroad. However, limited progress has been made to consolidate the management of their assets. According to department officials, when Congress established the Treasury Forfeiture Fund in 1992, it recognized the differences in the programs' missions, which warranted creating separate programs, and this encouraged independent operational decisions that eventually created differences between the programs. There are some differences between the programs, but both departments seize similar assets such as vehicles. Nevertheless, the departments have not assessed the feasibility of consolidation, including whether such efforts would be cost-effective, and continue to duplicate efforts by separately managing and disposing of their seized and forfeited property. Specifically, Justice and Treasury maintain four separate information technology (IT) asset tracking systems, which perform similar functions to support their respective asset forfeiture program activities. In addition, both departments procure separate national contracts for the management of real property and they separately store assets seized under each program that are in some cases located within the same geographic area. For example, as shown in the figure below, both the United States Marshals Service (Marshals)—the primary custodian of Justice's seized assets—and Treasury maintain vehicle storage facilities, 40 percent of which are within 20 miles of each other. GAO recognizes the separate legal authorities of the asset forfeiture funds, but those authorities do not preclude consolidating certain management activities within the programs. Conducting a study to evaluate the feasibility of consolidation that considers associated costs and benefits, among other things, could help Justice and Treasury effectively identify the extent to which consolidation would help increase efficiency, effectiveness, and cost savings.

Locations of Marshals and Treasury Vehicle Storage Facilities



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Marshals and Treasury storage facility data.