

July 1999

DRUG CONTROL

DEA's Strategies and Operations in the 1990s





G A O

Accountability * Integrity * Reliability

United States General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

General Government Division

B-279033

July 21, 1999

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

The Honorable Bill McCollum
Chairman, Subcommittee on Crime
Committee on the Judiciary
House of Representatives

As you requested, this report discusses the strategies and operations of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in the 1990s. Specifically, the report discusses (1) what major enforcement strategies, programs, initiatives, and approaches DEA has implemented in the 1990s to carry out its mission, including its efforts to (a) target and investigate national and international drug traffickers and (b) help state and local law enforcement agencies combat drug offenders and drug-related violence in their communities; (2) whether DEA's goals and objectives, programs and initiatives, and performance measures are consistent with the National Drug Control Strategy; and (3) how DEA determined its fiscal year 1998 staffing needs and allocated the additional staff. It includes a recommendation to the Attorney General regarding the development of measurable DEA performance targets for disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking organizations.

We are sending copies of this report to the Honorable Janet F. Reno, Attorney General; the Honorable Donnie R. Marshall, Acting Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration; the Honorable Barry R. McCaffrey, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy; the Honorable Jacob J. Lew, Director of the Office of Management and Budget; and the Honorable Madeleine K. Albright, Secretary of State. Copies will be made available to others on request.

B-279033

If you have any questions, please call me or Dan Harris at (202) 512-8777. Key contributors to the report are acknowledged in appendix III.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Norman Rabkin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'N' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'k'.

Norman J. Rabkin
Director, Administration of
Justice Issues

Executive Summary

Purpose

During the 1990s, the demand for and supply of illegal drugs have persisted at very high levels and continued to adversely affect American society. The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), in its 1999 National Drug Control Strategy, notes that illegal drugs cost our society about \$110 billion annually. The costs of drug abuse include lost jobs and productivity, health problems, and economic hardships to families. In addition, many violent crimes are drug related, according to ONDCP.

Funding for federal drug control efforts has increased, in constant 1999 dollars, by about 49 percent in the 1990s to the fiscal year 1999 level of about \$18 billion. Funding for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) almost doubled, in constant 1999 dollars, from about \$806 million in fiscal year 1990 to about \$1.5 billion in fiscal year 1999; the number of DEA staff increased from about 6,000 in fiscal year 1990 to about 8,400 in fiscal year 1998.

In view of the increased funding for federal drug control efforts and the nation's persistent drug problem, the Chairmen of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control requested that GAO determine, among other things,

- what major enforcement strategies, programs, initiatives, and approaches DEA has implemented in the 1990s to carry out its mission; and
- whether DEA's strategic goals and objectives, programs and initiatives, and performance measures are consistent with the National Drug Control Strategy.

Results in Brief

During the 1990s, DEA has enhanced or changed important aspects of its operations, i.e., its strategies, programs, initiatives, and approaches.

- DEA expanded its domestic enforcement operations to work more with state and local law enforcement agencies and help combat drug-related violent crime in local communities.
- DEA implemented an investigative approach, domestically and internationally, focusing on intercepting the communications of major drug trafficking organizations to target the leaders and dismantle their operations.
- DEA started participating in two interagency programs to target and investigate major drug trafficking organizations in Latin America and Asia.
- DEA changed its foreign operations by screening and training special foreign police units to combat drug trafficking in certain key foreign countries.

DEA has significant responsibilities for the drug supply reduction portion of ONDCP's National Drug Control Strategy. DEA's strategic goals and objectives, and its enhanced programs and initiatives, in the 1990s have been consistent with the National Drug Control Strategy. However, DEA has not developed measurable performance targets for its programs and initiatives that are consistent with those adopted for the National Strategy. As a result, it is difficult for DEA, the Department of Justice (DOJ), Congress, and the public to assess how effective DEA has been in achieving its strategic goals and the effect its programs and initiatives in the 1990s have had on reducing the illegal drug supply. GAO is making a recommendation to help improve this situation.

Background

DEA's overall mission is to enforce the nation's drug laws and regulations and to bring drug traffickers to justice. DEA is the lead agency responsible for enforcing the federal drug control laws and for coordinating and pursuing U.S. drug investigations in foreign countries. DEA's primary responsibilities include (1) investigating major drug traffickers operating at interstate and international levels and criminals and drug gangs who perpetrate violence in local communities; (2) managing a national drug intelligence system; (3) seizing and forfeiting traffickers' assets; (4) coordinating and cooperating with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies on mutual drug enforcement efforts; and (5) working on drug law enforcement programs with its counterparts in foreign countries.

To carry out its responsibilities, in December 1998, along with its headquarters offices, DEA had 21 field divisions throughout the United States and its territories, each with numerous suboffices, and 79 offices in 56 foreign countries. At the end of fiscal year 1998, DEA had about 8,400 persons on board, including about 4,300 special agents.

Principal Findings

DEA's Enforcement Operations Reach From the International Level to the Local Level

Since it was established in 1973, DEA's top priority has been to disrupt and dismantle major drug trafficking organizations. During the 1990s, DEA broadened the focus of its enforcement operations. DEA now focuses on what it calls the "seamless continuum" of drug trafficking, with programs and initiatives directed at major regional, national, and international trafficking organizations; violent, street-level drug gangs and other local community problems; and domestically cultivated and manufactured illegal drugs.

During the 1990s, DEA increased its emphasis on intercepting communications between top-level drug traffickers and their subordinates to identify and target the leaders and dismantle their operations. DEA also started working with other federal agencies on two programs to target and investigate major drug trafficking organizations in Latin America and Asia. In 1996, to improve its effectiveness in several key foreign countries, DEA began to screen and train special foreign police units. The intent of this effort is to improve the capabilities of foreign police and to build trustworthy and reliable foreign antidrug units with which DEA can work.

At the same time, DEA attempted to improve its effectiveness in the 1990s by giving domestic drug trafficking a higher priority than in the past, including focusing resources on regional and “local impact” drug problems. In this regard, during the 1990s, DEA devoted more resources to its State and Local Task Force Program. Also, in 1995, DEA established the Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) Program to assist local police with violent drug gangs and other local drug problems.

DEA Has Not Yet Developed Performance Targets Consistent With the National Strategy

The principal objectives in the National Drug Control Strategy relating to DEA are:

- combat drug-related violence, disrupt criminal organizations, and arrest the leaders of illegal drug syndicates and
- disrupt and dismantle major international drug trafficking organizations and arrest, prosecute, and incarcerate their leaders.

DEA’s strategic goals and objectives and its enhanced programs and initiatives in the 1990s have been consistent with the National Strategy. Both the National Strategy and DEA hope to reduce the illegal drug supply and drug-related violence by disrupting and dismantling domestic and international drug trafficking organizations.

For domestic drug trafficking organizations, the National Strategy calls for increasing by 5 points the percentage of drug trafficking organizations disrupted or dismantled by 2002 as measured against the percentage recorded in the base year using a prioritized list of designated targets. It calls for at least a 10 percentage point increase above the base year by 2007.

For international drug trafficking organizations, the National Strategy calls for achieving by 2002 a 50 percent success rate in the number of organizations disrupted or dismantled as measured against a designated target list established in the base year. The Strategy also calls for

increasing the success rate to 100 percent by 2007 as measured against the base year list. According to ONDCP and DEA, neither the domestic nor international designated target lists referred to above have been developed.

Unlike the National Strategy, DEA's performance plans for fiscal years 1999 and 2000 do not contain performance targets for disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking organizations. DEA has no annual, mid-, or long-range measurable performance targets for disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking organizations. In the absence of such targets, it is difficult to quantitatively assess DEA's overall effectiveness in achieving its strategic goals.

Recommendation

GAO recommends that the Attorney General direct the DEA Administrator to work closely with DOJ and ONDCP to develop measurable DEA performance targets for disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking organizations consistent with the performance targets in the National Drug Control Strategy.

Agency Comments and GAO's Evaluation

DEA provided written comments on a draft of this report. These comments are discussed at the end of chapters 2 and 3. DEA, along with ONDCP and the Office of Management and Budget, also provided technical changes and clarifications, which have been incorporated throughout this report where appropriate.

DEA stated that, overall, the report provides a detailed and factual background of DEA strategies and special operations. Although not directly agreeing with GAO's recommendation, DEA agreed with GAO's principal finding that DEA had not included measurable performance targets for disrupting or dismantling drug trafficking organizations in its fiscal years 1999 and 2000 performance plans. However, DEA disagreed with GAO's draft conclusion that little can be said about DEA's effectiveness in achieving its strategic goals in the absence of measurable performance targets. DEA commented that this statement and supporting information in chapter 3 implied that DEA had not attempted to develop such targets.

DEA pointed out various actions it was taking relating to GAO's recommendation. DEA said that, among other things, it has developed "preliminary performance targets," which it included in its fiscal year 2001 budget submission to DOJ.

DEA's stated action is consistent with the intent of GAO's recommendation. However, because these targets are preliminary and under review within the executive branch, they are subject to change until February 2000 when DEA issues its annual budget submission and performance plan, as part of DOJ's submission, to Congress. Further, DEA indicated that it cannot finalize its performance targets and measures until a designated targeted list of drug trafficking organizations, as called for in the National Strategy, is completed. Therefore, GAO is retaining its recommendation until DEA's preliminary performance targets are finalized for inclusion in its annual performance plan and can be compared for consistency with those in the National Strategy.

Contents

Executive Summary		4
Chapter 1		16
Introduction	Drug Use and Supply Trends in the 1990s	16
	Federal Drug Control Budget in the 1990s	22
	1999 National Drug Control Strategy	24
	DEA's Mission, Role, and Responsibilities	26
	Objectives, Scope, and Methodology	29
Chapter 2		32
DEA Expanded Its Focus in the 1990s to Target Local Drug Dealers in Addition to Major Drug Trafficking Organizations	DEA Modified Its Operational Strategy in the 1990s	32
	DEA More Involved With State and Local Police	34
	DEA Developed an Investigative Approach Focusing on the Communications of Major Drug Trafficking Organizations	48
	Key Changes in DEA's Foreign Operations	54
	Conclusions	59
	Agency Comments	60
Chapter 3		61
DEA Has Not Yet Developed Performance Targets Consistent With the National Drug Control Strategy	DEA's Strategic Goals and Objectives, and Its Programs, Are Consistent With the National Strategy	61
	DEA Has Not Developed Performance Targets Consistent With Those in the National Strategy	68
	Conclusions	78
	Recommendation	79
	Agency Comments and Our Evaluation	79
Chapter 4		81
DEA's Staffing Needs Determination and Allocation Process for Fiscal Year 1998	Federal Budget Formulation Guidance Provides Basis for DEA Staffing Needs Determination Process	81
	Fiscal Year 1998 Process for Determining DEA's Staffing Needs	82
	Congress Added Staff for a New Caribbean Initiative and Changed Staffing Recommended for Other DEA Initiatives	95
	DEA's Fiscal Year 1998 Allocation Process Considered a Variety of Factors	96

	Conclusions	97
Appendixes	Appendix I: Profiles of Selected DEA Domestic Field Divisions and Foreign Offices	98
	Appendix II: Comments From the Drug Enforcement Administration	163
	Appendix III: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments	167
Glossary	Performance Measurement Terms	168
Tables	Table 2.1: Budget for and Number of DEA State and Local Task Forces, Fiscal Years 1991 to 1999	35
	Table 2.2: Number of Law Enforcement Officers on DEA State and Local Task Forces, Fiscal Years 1991 Through 1998, as of the End of Each Fiscal Year	35
	Table 2.3: Number of DEA State and Local Task Force Case Initiations, Arrests, Convictions, and Seizures, Fiscal Years 1991 to 1998	36
	Table 2.4: Geographic Scope of State and Local Task Force Cases Initiated During Fiscal Years 1997 and 1998	37
	Table 2.5: Selected MET Program Data, Fiscal Years 1995 to 1999	39
	Table 2.6: Selected Data on MET Deployments, Fiscal Years 1995 Through 1998	41
	Table 2.7: Geographic Scope of MET Program Cases Initiated During Fiscal Years 1995 Through 1998	44
	Table 2.8: Funding for DEA's Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program, Fiscal Years 1990 Through 1999	46
	Table 2.9: Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program Statistical Results, 1990 Through 1998	47
	Table 2.10: Number of Electronic Surveillance Orders and Facilities Covered, Fiscal Years 1990 Through 1998	51
	Table 2.11: Number of Vetted Units and Officers on Board by Country, as of September 30, 1998	57
	Table 3.1: National Strategy Goals and Objectives for Which DEA Has Responsibilities	63
	Table 3.2: Comparison of DEA Strategic Goals With National Strategy Goals	66

Table 3.3: Comparison of Selected DEA and National Strategy Objectives	67
Table 3.4: National Drug Control Strategy Performance Target and Performance Measure for Disrupting and Dismantling Domestic Drug Trafficking Organizations	70
Table 3.5: National Strategy Performance Target and Performance Measure for Disrupting and Dismantling International Drug Trafficking Organizations and Arresting Their Leaders	71
Table 3.6: National Drug Control Strategy Performance Target and Performance Measure for Disrupting and Dismantling Drug Trafficking Organizations in HIDTAs	71
Table 4.1: Comparison of DEA and DOJ Estimated Additional DEA Total and Special Agent Positions for Fiscal Year 1998	91
Table 4.2: Comparison of DOJ's Estimates and the President's Request for Additional DEA Total and Special Agent Positions for Fiscal Year 1998	94
Table 4.3: Comparison of the President's Request and Congress' Appropriations Guidance for DEA Additional Total and Special Agent Positions for Fiscal Year 1998	96
Table 4.4: Comparison of Congress' Appropriations Guidance and DEA's New Staffing Allocation for Additional DEA Staffing and Special Agent Positions for Fiscal Year 1998	97
Table I.1: Drug Seizures for Washington Division and Baltimore District Office for Fiscal Years 1997 and 1998	130
Table I.2: Caribbean Field Division's Use of Wire Intercepts	159
Table I.3: Arrests Reported by the Caribbean Division, by Case Type, for Fiscal Years 1997 and 1998	161

Figures

Figure 1.1: Trend in the Number of Current Drug Users, Aged 12 and Older, Since 1990	17
Figure 1.2: Trend in the Percentage of 8th, 10th, and 12th Graders Reporting Current Drug Use Since 1991	18
Figure 1.3: Composition of Total Federal Government Funding for Federal Drug Control Activities, Fiscal Years 1990 Through 1999	23
Figure 1.4: Budget Trends in Programs for Federal Drug Control Activities to Reduce Drug Demand and Drug Supply, Fiscal Years 1990 Through 1999	24

Contents

Figure 1.5: DEA's Total Budget Authority, Fiscal Years 1990 Through 1999	27
Figure 1.6: DEA On-Board Staff, Fiscal Years 1990 Through 1998, as of the End of Each Fiscal Year	28
Figure 1.7: Composition by Position Type of Total Number of DEA On-Board Staff, as of the End of Fiscal Year 1998	29
Figure 4.1: Flowchart of DEA's Fiscal Year 1998 Staffing Needs Determination Process	84
Figure 4.1: Continued	85
Figure I.1: Los Angeles Division Map	100
Figure I.2: Miami Division Map	108
Figure I.3: New Orleans Division Map	118
Figure I.4: Washington, D. C. Division Map	125
Figure I.5: Bogota, Colombia Country Office Map	133
Figure I.6: La Paz, Bolivia Country Office Map	141
Figure I.7: Mexico City, Mexico, Country Office Map	148
Figure I.8: DEA Caribbean Division Map	156

Abbreviations

ASAC	Assistant Special Agent in Charge
ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
BNP	Bolivian National Police
BTF	Border Task Force
CA	country attache
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNP	Colombian National Police
DAWN	Drug Abuse Warning Network
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DOD	Department of Defense
DOJ	Department of Justice
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FELCN	Fuerzas Especiales Para la Lucha Contra Narco-Trafico
FMP	field management plan
HCL	hydrochloride
HIDTA	High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
JMD	Justice Management Division
LSD	lysergic acid diethylamide
MET	Mobile Enforcement Team
OCDETF	Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
ONDCP	Office of National Drug Control Policy
OPBAT	Operation Bahamas, Turks, and Caicos Islands
PCP	phencyclidine
PME	Performance Measures of Effectiveness
RET	Regional Enforcement Team
SAC	Special Agent in Charge
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SIU	Sensitive Investigative Unit or Special Investigative Unit
SOD	Special Operations Division
TKO	targeted kingpin organization
VCRP	Violent Crime Reduction Program

Introduction

During the 1990s, the demand for and supply of illegal drugs have persisted at very high levels and have continued to adversely affect American society in terms of social, economic, and health costs and drug-related violent crime. During the same period, funding for federal drug control efforts overall and for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which is dedicated to controlling the supply of illegal drugs, increased significantly.

Drug Use and Supply Trends in the 1990s

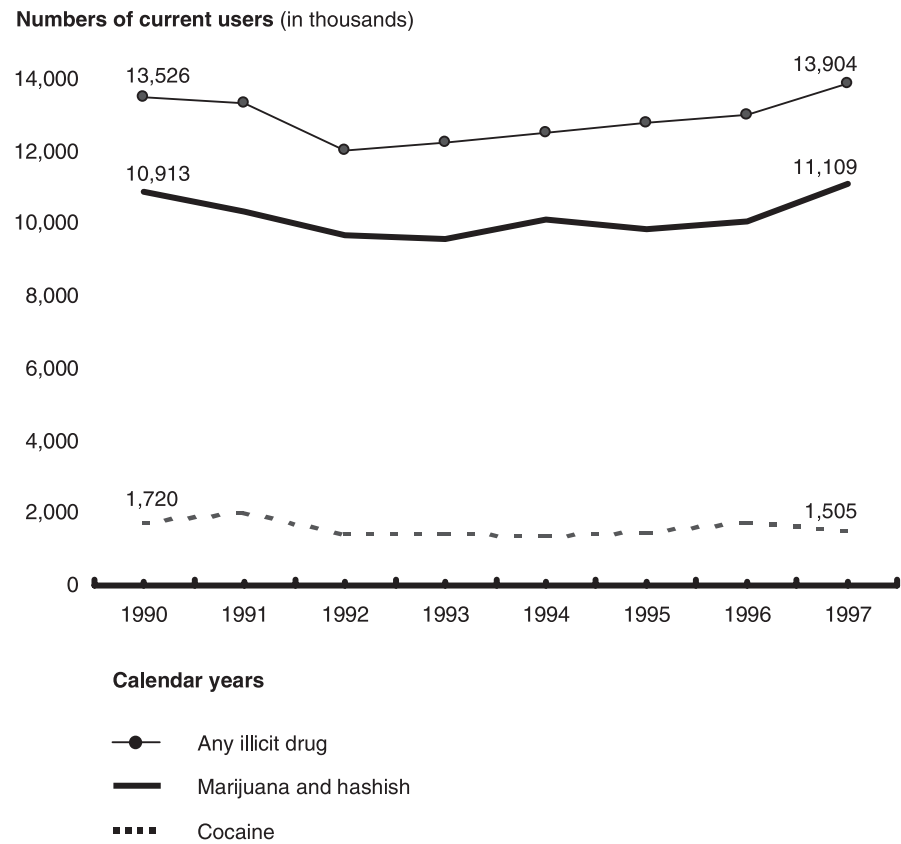
According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), drug use and its consequences threaten Americans of every socioeconomic background, geographic region, educational level, and ethnic or racial identity. Drug abuse and trafficking adversely affect families, businesses, and neighborhoods; impede education; and choke criminal justice, health, and social service systems. A report prepared for ONDCP showed that drug users in the United States spent an estimated \$57 billion for illegal drugs in 1995.¹ Other costs to society include lost jobs and productivity, health problems, and economic hardships to families. ONDCP, in its 1999 National Drug Control Strategy, noted that illegal drugs cost our society approximately \$110 billion each year.

On the basis of the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) estimated that in 1997 there were 13.9 million current users² of illegal drugs in the United States aged 12 and older, representing 6.4 percent of the total population. As figure 1.1 shows, this number has fluctuated somewhat but has remained fairly constant overall since 1990, as have the numbers of current users of cocaine and marijuana, with 1.5 million cocaine users and 11.1 million marijuana users in 1997.

¹ *What America's Users Spend on Illegal Drugs, 1988-1995*; prepared for the Office of National Drug Control Policy by William Rhodes, Stacia Langenbahn, Ryan Kling, and Paul Scheiman; September 29, 1997.

² A current user is an individual who consumed an illegal drug in the month prior to being interviewed.

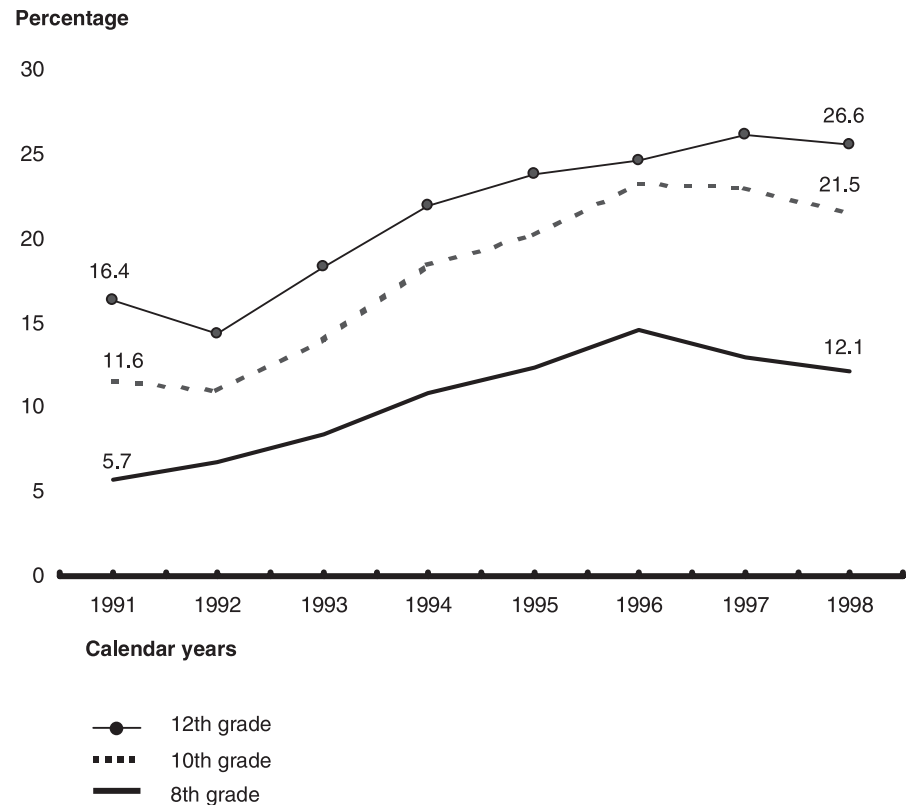
Figure 1.1: Trend in the Number of Current Drug Users, Aged 12 and Older, Since 1990



Source: Preliminary Results from the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, SAMHSA, Department of Health and Human Services, 1996 and 1997.

As shown in figure 1.2, current drug use among youth rose significantly from 1992 to 1996. The trend then improved, with drug use declining for 8th and 10th graders in 1997 and 1998.

Figure 1.2: Trend in the Percentage of 8th, 10th, and 12th Graders Reporting Current Drug Use Since 1991



Source: *Monitoring the Future Study*, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan (Dec. 1998).

Abuse of illegal drugs has serious consequences. For example, SAMHSA's Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) reported 9,310 drug-related deaths in 1996, an increase of 65 percent from the 5,628 deaths reported in 1990. The number of drug-related hospital emergency room visits reported to DAWN rose 42 percent from 1990 to 1997. There were 371,208 emergency room episodes in 1990 and 527,058 episodes in 1997.

According to DEA and ONDCP, illegal drugs, including cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine, have inflicted serious damage and continued to threaten our nation during the 1990s. National and

international drug trafficking organizations continued to bring these drugs into the United States, and certain illegal drugs are clandestinely produced in this country. Drug trafficking gangs and individuals dealing in drugs, as well as drug users, have caused violence in local communities.

Cocaine

DEA considers cocaine to be the primary drug threat to the U.S. population. Cocaine use has remained at a relatively constant high level during the 1990s, as indicated by the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse. The National Narcotics Intelligence Consumers Committee reported that the use of “crack,” a potent and highly addictive form of cocaine that first became widely available in the 1980s, also remained at a high level in the 1990s. ONDCP reported in the summer of 1998 that crack was failing to attract new users, although established users persisted in using it.

Regarding cocaine trafficking trends, DEA intelligence information shows that Colombian trafficking organizations, although more fragmented than in the past, continue to control the worldwide supply of cocaine. However, Mexican organizations have played an increasing role in the U.S. cocaine trade in the 1990s. The Southwest Border is now the primary entry point for cocaine smuggled into the United States.

Heroin

Heroin is readily available in major cities in the United States, and its use is on the rise in many areas around the country, according to DEA. ONDCP has noted that the increasing availability of high-purity heroin has made snorting and smoking more common modes of ingestion than injection, thereby lowering inhibitions to heroin use.

DEA intelligence information indicates that the heroin available in the United States comes from Southeast Asia (principally Burma); Southwest Asia/Middle East (Afghanistan, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Turkey); Mexico; and South America (Colombia). Although Southeast Asian heroin dominated the U.S. market in the 1980s and into the 1990s, Colombian heroin emerged as a significant problem in the mid-1990s. In 1997, 75 percent of the heroin seized and analyzed in the United States was Colombian. DEA reported that independent Colombian drug traffickers established themselves in the U.S. heroin market by distributing high-quality heroin (frequently above 90-percent pure), undercutting the price of their competition, and using long-standing drug distribution networks.

Marijuana

According to DEA, marijuana is the most readily available and commonly used illegal drug in the country. Further, a resurgence of marijuana trafficking and use has taken place in urban centers across the United

States. ONDCP noted that this market is driven by a high level of demand, with users from virtually all age groups, demographic groups, and income levels.

According to DEA intelligence information, most of the foreign marijuana available here is smuggled into the country across the Southwest Border. Mexican drug trafficking organizations are responsible for supplying most of the foreign marijuana, whether grown in Mexico or shipped through Mexico from other locations such as Colombia. Marijuana is also grown domestically in remote outdoor locations in the United States, including on public lands, and indoors. In the 1990s, major outdoor marijuana growths have been found in California, Florida, Hawaii, Kentucky, New York, Tennessee, and Washington.

Methamphetamine and Other Dangerous Drugs

DEA uses the term “dangerous drugs” to refer to a broad category of controlled substances other than cocaine, opiates such as heroin, and cannabis products such as marijuana. The list of dangerous drugs includes drugs that are illegally produced; drugs legally produced but diverted to illicit use (e.g., pharmacy thefts, forged prescriptions, and illegal sales); as well as legally produced drugs obtained from legitimate channels (e.g., legally and properly prescribed). Some of the dangerous drugs are methamphetamine; lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD); phencyclidine (PCP); diazepam (Valium); and flunitrazepam (Rohypnol), commonly called the “date rape” drug.

DEA reports that methamphetamine use has increased in the 1990s, resulting in a devastating impact on many communities across the nation. A powerful stimulant, methamphetamine is the most prevalent synthetic controlled substance clandestinely manufactured in the United States. Historically, methamphetamine has more commonly been used in the western United States, but its use has been spreading to other areas of the country.

According to DEA, methamphetamine suppliers have traditionally been motorcycle gangs and other independent groups. However, organized crime groups operating in California, some with ties to major Mexico-based trafficking organizations, now dominate wholesale-level methamphetamine production and distribution in the United States. Mexican trafficking organizations use their well-established cocaine, heroin, and marijuana distribution networks to smuggle methamphetamine throughout the country. Although large-scale production of methamphetamine is centered in California, it is increasingly being produced in Mexico and smuggled into the United States.

Drug Trafficking Organizations

Trafficking organizations have continued to supply domestic drug consumers despite short-term achievements by both federal and foreign law enforcement agencies in apprehending individuals and disrupting the flow of illegal drugs. When confronted with threats to their operations, drug trafficking organizations have become adept at quickly changing their modes of operation. For example, as we previously reported,³ when law enforcement agencies have successfully carried out efforts to intercept drugs being smuggled by aircraft, traffickers have increased their use of maritime and overland transportation routes.

In another example, DEA reported that a 1989 drug enforcement operation, which involved the seizure of nearly 40 metric tons of cocaine, led to a new arrangement between Mexican transportation organizations and Colombian cocaine organizations. To reduce the complex logistics and vulnerabilities associated with large cash transactions, Mexican organizations started receiving part of the cocaine shipments they smuggled for the Colombians in exchange for their transportation services. By the mid-1990s, Mexican organizations were receiving up to one-half of a cocaine shipment as payment. This arrangement radically changed the role and sphere of influence of the Mexican organizations in the U.S. cocaine trade. By relinquishing part of each cocaine shipment, the Colombian organizations ceded a share of the U.S. cocaine market to the Mexican traffickers.

Drug-Related Violent Crime

In addition, although overall violent crime has steadily declined during the 1990s, many of the violent crimes committed are drug-related, according to ONDCP. There are no overall quantitative data on drug-related violent crime and the relationship between drug abuse or trafficking and violent crime, but ONDCP has identified several qualitative indicators linking drug abuse or trafficking and other crimes, including violent crimes.⁴ According to ONDCP, many crimes (e.g., murder, assault, and robbery) are committed under the influence of drugs or may be motivated by a need for money to buy drugs. In addition, drug trafficking and violence often go hand in hand. Competition and disputes among drug dealers can cause violence, as can the location of drug markets in disadvantaged areas where legal and social controls against violence tend to be ineffective. In this regard, DEA reported in 1996 that violent drug gangs, which were once largely confined to major cities, had migrated to and/or emerged in rural areas and small cities throughout the country. One example cited was

³ Drug Control: Observations on U.S. Counternarcotics Activities (GAO/T-NSIAD-98-249, Sept. 16, 1998).

⁴ See ONDCP's Fact Sheet: Drug-Related Crime (Apr. 1997, NCJ-163928).

Vidalia, GA, where a violent crack cocaine gang was linked to numerous homicides and drive-by shootings.

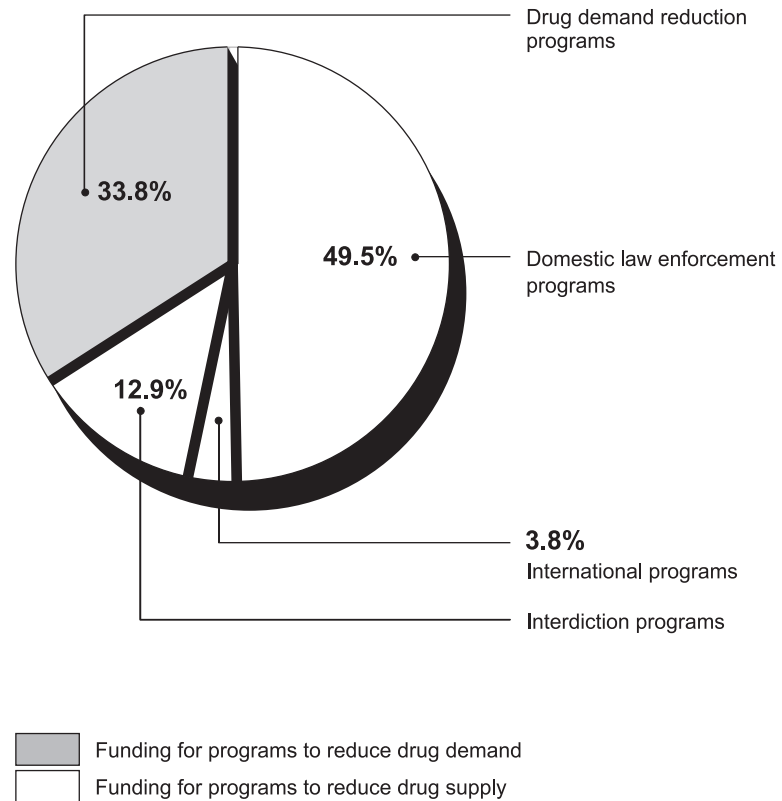
Nevertheless, the Department of Justice (DOJ) reported that overall violent crime in the United States in 1997 had fallen more than 21 percent since 1993 and had reached its lowest level in at least 24 years. Similarly, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reported in its 1997 Uniform Crime Reports that the murder rate in 1997 had declined 28 percent since 1993. It also reported that the number of drug-related murders decreased by 7 percent between 1996 and 1997.⁵

Federal Drug Control Budget in the 1990s

According to ONDCP, from fiscal years 1990 through 1999 the federal government spent about \$143.5 billion, in constant 1999 dollars, on four functional areas that can be divided between two categories—(1) those that are aimed at reducing the demand for illegal drugs and (2) those that are aimed at reducing the availability or supply of such drugs in the United States. As figure 1.3 indicates, about 33.8 percent of the total funds were used for drug demand reduction. About 66.2 percent of the total funds were used for the three functional areas intended to reduce the drug supply, with the largest share—49.5 percent—dedicated to domestic law enforcement programs, 3.8 percent to international programs, and 12.9 percent to interdiction programs.

⁵ Although the Uniform Crime Reports contain data on drug-related murder, they do not contain such data for other types of violent crime, such as assault, robbery, or rape.

Figure 1.3: Composition of Total Federal Government Funding for Federal Drug Control Activities, Fiscal Years 1990 Through 1999



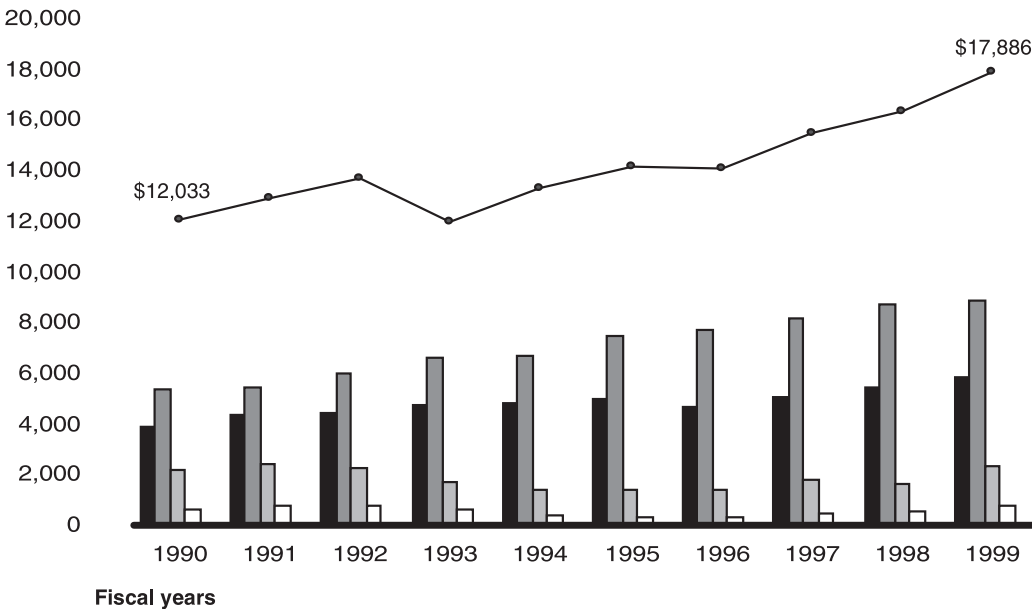
Note: This figure is based on budget amounts for each fiscal year converted to constant 1999 dollars.
Source: Developed by GAO from ONDCP data.

As figure 1.4 indicates, total funds for federal drug control activities increased, in constant 1999 dollars, by about 49 percent—from about \$12 billion to almost \$18 billion—between fiscal years 1990 and 1999. However, funding trends varied for the four functional areas. Although funds for the drug demand reduction functional area generally increased steadily overall by 50 percent from about \$3.9 billion in 1990 to about \$5.8 billion in 1999, funding trends for the three drug supply reduction functional areas were mixed. Funds for domestic law enforcement programs increased steadily overall by about 66 percent from about \$5.4 billion in 1990 to almost \$8.9 billion in 1999. Funds for interdiction programs fluctuated within the time period, increasing overall by about 9 percent from about \$2.2 billion in 1990 to almost \$2.4 billion in 1999. Funds for international programs increased by 23 percent from 1990 to 1992, to a peak of \$759.1 million; they then decreased by 60 percent to a low of

\$303.5 million in 1996; they rose by 163 percent to about \$796.9 million in 1999.

Figure 1.4: Budget Trends in Programs for Federal Drug Control Activities to Reduce Drug Demand and Drug Supply, Fiscal Years 1990 Through 1999

Dollars in millions



Total funds for federal drug control programs
 Drug demand reduction programs
 Domestic law enforcement programs
 Interdiction programs
 International programs

Note 1: The budget amounts for fiscal years 1990 through 1998 are actual, and the fiscal year 1999 budget amount is as enacted.

Note 2: The budget amounts for each fiscal year are in constant 1999 dollars.

Source: Developed by GAO from ONDCP data.

1999 National Drug Control Strategy

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-690), as amended, established ONDCP to set federal priorities for drug control, implement a National Drug Control Strategy, and certify federal drug control budgets. The act specifies that the National Strategy must be comprehensive and research based; contain long-range goals and measurable objectives; and seek to reduce drug use (demand), availability (supply), and related consequences.

ONDCP has produced annual strategic plans since 1989. These strategies recognized that no single approach could solve the nation's drug problem; rather, drug prevention, education, and treatment must be complemented by drug supply reduction actions abroad, on our borders, and within the United States. Each strategy also shared a commitment to maintain and enforce antidrug laws.

In 1998, ONDCP's National Drug Control Strategy established performance targets to reduce illegal drug use and availability in the United States by 25 percent by the year 2002 and 50 percent by 2007.⁶ The strategy focuses on reducing the demand for drugs through treatment and prevention and attacking the supply of drugs through domestic law enforcement, interdiction efforts, and international cooperation. ONDCP's 1999 National Strategy includes the performance targets and 5 goals along with 31 supporting objectives intended to serve as the basis for a coherent, long-term national effort.

- Goal 1: Educate and enable America's youth to reject illegal drugs as well as tobacco and alcohol.
- Goal 2: Increase the safety of America's citizens by substantially reducing drug-related crime and violence.
- Goal 3: Reduce the health and social costs to the public of illegal drug use.
- Goal 4: Shield America's air, land, and sea frontiers from the drug threat.
- Goal 5: Break foreign and domestic sources of supply.

As discussed in detail in chapter 3, strategic goals 2, 4, and 5 address drug supply reduction and involve drug law enforcement activities, including those for which DEA is responsible. Goal 2 seeks, among other things, to reduce the rate of drug-related crime and violence in the United States by 15 percent by the year 2002 and achieve a 30-percent reduction by the year 2007. Goal 4 seeks a 10-percent reduction in the rate at which illegal drugs successfully enter the United States by the year 2002 and a 20-percent reduction in this rate by 2007. Goal 5 seeks a 15-percent reduction in the flow of illegal drugs from source countries by the year 2002 and a 30-percent reduction by 2007. The goal also seeks a 20-percent reduction in domestic marijuana cultivation and methamphetamine production by 2002 and a 50-percent reduction by 2007.

⁶ The National Drug Control Strategy established 1996 as the base year for determining percentage reductions in drug use and availability.

DEA's Mission, Role, and Responsibilities

The mission of DEA, which is a component of DOJ, is to (1) enforce the drug laws and regulations of the United States and bring drug traffickers⁷ to justice and (2) recommend and support nonenforcement programs aimed at reducing the availability of illegal drugs in domestic and international markets. DEA is the lead agency responsible for federal drug law enforcement and for coordinating and pursuing drug investigations in foreign countries.

According to DEA, its primary responsibilities for drug law enforcement include the following:

- investigating major drug traffickers operating at interstate and international levels and criminals and drug gangs who perpetrate violence in local communities;
- coordinating and cooperating with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies on mutual drug enforcement efforts, including interstate and international investigations;
- managing a national drug intelligence system in cooperation with other federal, state, local, and foreign agencies to collect, analyze, and disseminate strategic and operational drug intelligence information;
- seizing and forfeiting drug traffickers' assets;
- coordinating and cooperating with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and foreign governments on programs designed to reduce the availability of illegal drugs on the U.S. market through nonenforcement methods, such as crop eradication, crop substitution, and the training of foreign officials; and
- operating, under the policy guidance of the Secretary of State and U.S. Ambassadors, all programs associated with drug law enforcement counterparts in foreign countries.

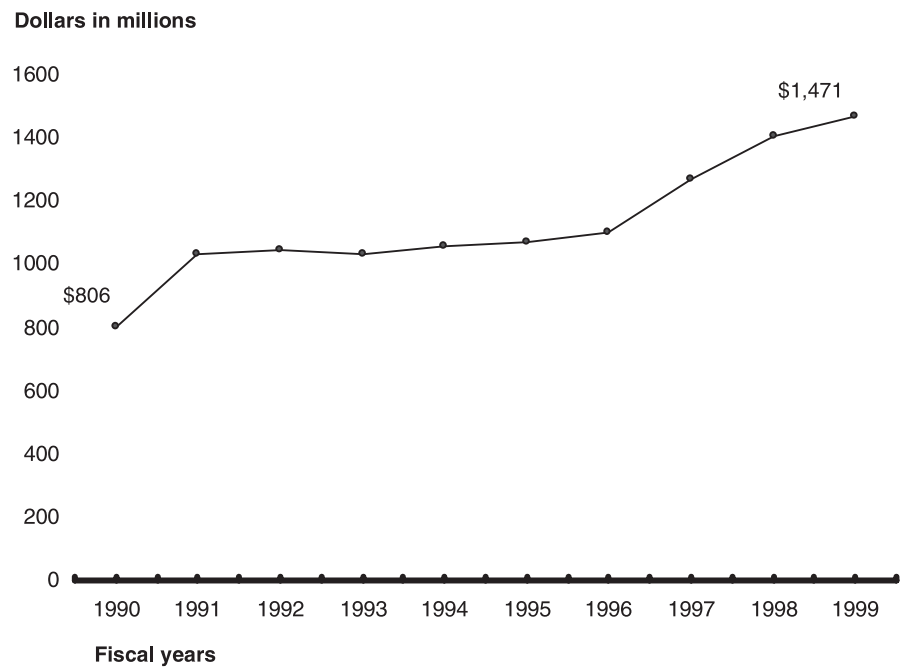
To carry out its mission and responsibilities, DEA, along with its headquarters office, had 21 domestic field divisions throughout the United States and its territories, including Puerto Rico, as of December 1998. Subordinate to these divisions, each of which was headed by a Special Agent in Charge (SAC), were a total of 30 district offices, 115 resident offices, and 46 posts of duty in the United States, with at least 1 office in every state. Overseas, DEA had 79 offices in 56 foreign countries. This included 56 country offices, each headed by a country attaché (CA), and 23 resident offices reporting to the country offices. (App. I contains profiles

⁷ Drug traffickers include those organizations and principal members involved in the growth, manufacture, or distribution of controlled substances appearing in or destined for illicit traffic in the United States.

of the five field divisions and three country offices included in our review.) In addition, DEA manages a multiagency intelligence center in El Paso, TX; conducts training at Quantico, VA; and maintains seven drug analytical laboratories in various regions of the country and a special drug testing facility in McLean, VA.

As shown in figure 1.5, DEA's budget almost doubled, in constant 1999 dollars, from fiscal year 1990 to fiscal year 1999 and totaled about \$11.3 billion during that period.

Figure 1.5: DEA's Total Budget Authority, Fiscal Years 1990 Through 1999



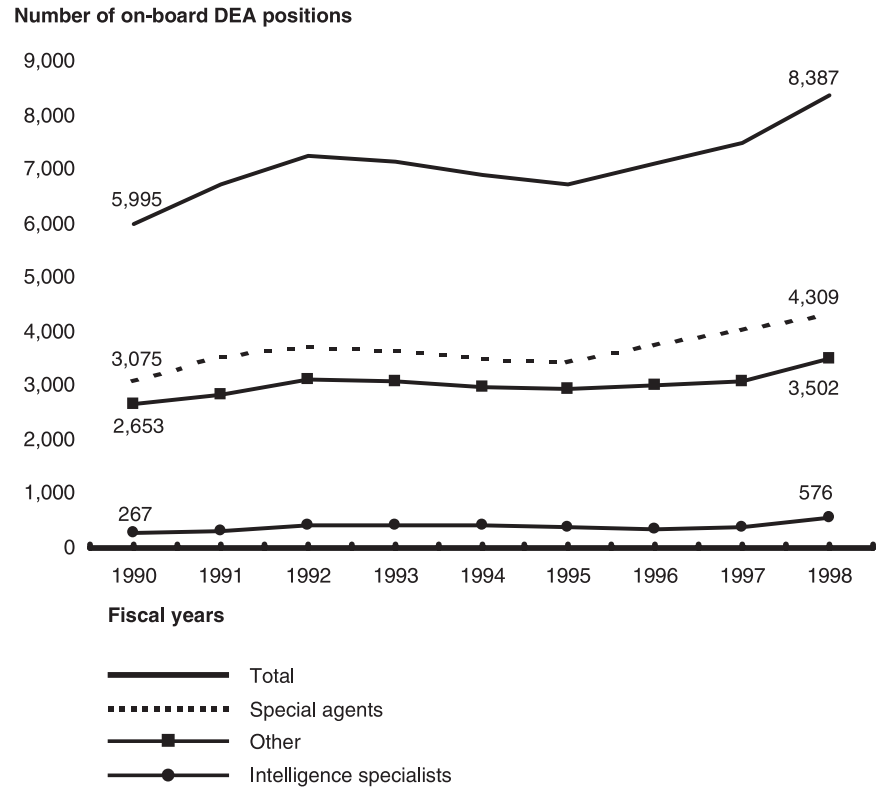
Note 1: The budget amounts for fiscal years 1990 through 1998 are actual, and the fiscal year 1999 budget amount is as enacted.

Note 2: The budget amounts for each fiscal year are in constant 1999 dollars.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

Commensurate with its increased funding, as shown in figure 1.6, the size of DEA's staff also increased during the 1990s by 40 percent—from 5,995 employees in 1990 to 8,387 employees in 1998.

Figure 1.6: DEA On-Board Staff, Fiscal Years 1990 Through 1998, as of the End of Each Fiscal Year



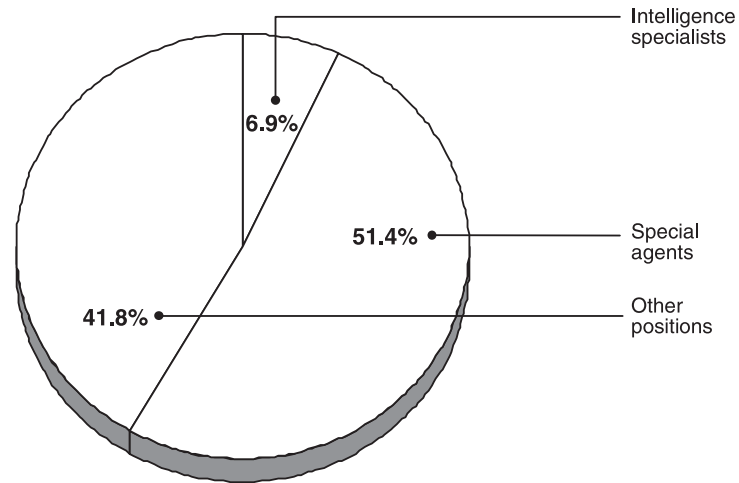
Note: According to DEA, on-board positions are the number of persons employed by DEA at specified time periods as opposed to the number actually authorized.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

During this period, the number of intelligence specialists increased by about 116 percent, special agents by 40 percent, and other positions⁸ by 32 percent. As shown in figure 1.7, of the total on-board positions in fiscal year 1998, special agents made up about 51.4 percent, other positions about 41.8 percent, and intelligence specialists about 6.9 percent.

⁸ These include diversion investigators and various professional, administrative, technical, and clerical positions.

Figure 1.7: Composition by Position
Type of Total Number of DEA On-Board
Staff, as of the End of Fiscal Year 1998



Note: Percentages do not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The Chairmen of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control requested that we determine (1) what major enforcement strategies, programs, initiatives, and approaches DEA has implemented in the 1990s to carry out its mission, including its efforts to (a) target and investigate national and international drug traffickers and (b) help state and local law enforcement agencies combat drug offenders and drug-related violence in their communities; (2) whether DEA's strategic goals and objectives, programs and initiatives, and performance measures are consistent with the National Drug Control Strategy; and (3) how DEA determined its fiscal year 1998 staffing needs and allocated the additional staff.

We did our review at DEA headquarters, as well as at DEA offices in five domestic field divisions and three foreign countries. We also obtained information from officials representing DOJ, ONDCP, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the Department of State. Because the funding and other statistical data we collected from DEA and other agencies and used in this report were used primarily for background and descriptive purposes and were not directly related to our findings, conclusions, and recommendation, we did not independently validate or verify their accuracy and reliability.

The five DEA domestic field division offices we visited are located in Los Angeles, CA; Miami, FL; New Orleans, LA; San Juan, Puerto Rico (the Caribbean Division); and Washington, D.C. We also visited one DEA district office located in Baltimore, MD, which is part of DEA's Washington, D.C., Field Division. The three DEA foreign country offices we visited are located in La Paz, Bolivia; Bogota, Colombia; and Mexico City, Mexico. In Bolivia, we also visited resident offices in Santa Cruz and Trinidad and the Chimore base camp. (See app. I.) In Mexico, we also visited the Guadalajara Resident Office. These locations were judgmentally selected on the basis of geographic location, differences in the drug threat in these areas, and a variety of domestic and foreign drug enforcement operational characteristics. We also obtained information from the U.S. Attorneys' Offices in Baltimore, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, and Puerto Rico; from local police agencies in Baltimore; Los Angeles; South Miami, FL; Pine Bluff, AR; and Puerto Rico; and from State Department officials in Bolivia, Colombia, and Mexico.

To determine what major enforcement strategies, programs, initiatives, and approaches DEA has implemented to carry out its mission in the 1990s, we collected and analyzed pertinent DEA, DOJ, and ONDCP documents. We also interviewed DEA headquarters officials, DEA officials in the selected domestic field offices and foreign country offices, and DOJ and ONDCP officials. We also collected ONDCP and DEA budget data for each fiscal year from 1990 to 1999, which we adjusted to constant 1999 dollars where appropriate. In addition, we obtained and analyzed DEA special agent work-hour statistics; case initiation data; statistical results (e.g., arrests, convictions, and seizures) of investigations; and other information relating to DEA's enforcement programs. We did not evaluate the effectiveness of the individual strategies, programs, initiatives, and approaches discussed in chapter 2.

To determine whether DEA's strategic goals and objectives, programs and initiatives, and performance measures are consistent with the National Drug Control Strategy, we analyzed and compared DEA's annual performance plans for fiscal years 1999 and 2000 with ONDCP's 1998 and 1999 (1) National Drug Control Strategies, (2) National Drug Control Budget Summaries, and (3) Performance Measures of Effectiveness reports. We also reviewed DOJ's (1) Strategic Plan for 1997-2002, (2) performance plans for fiscal years 1999 and 2000, and (3) Drug Control Strategic Plan. We interviewed DEA and ONDCP officials about their plans and how they interrelated. We used the Government Performance and Results Act as our basic criteria along with OMB, DOJ, and our guidance

on the act, including OMB Circular A-11 and our guides for assessing agency annual performance plans and strategic plans.

To determine how DEA's fiscal year 1998 staffing estimates for its enforcement programs and initiatives were developed, we collected and analyzed information on the process, criteria DEA used, and staffing recommendations made during DEA's budget formulation process. We interviewed DEA officials in headquarters and in the selected domestic field offices and foreign country offices, as well as DOJ, ONDCP, and OMB officials to obtain information on how staffing needs were determined and how the budget review process affected staffing estimates, requests, and allocations. We reviewed documents dealing with staffing recommendations and allocations; policies and procedures; DOJ, ONDCP, and OMB budget reviews; and congressional appropriations.

We performed our work from December 1997 to May 1999 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. In June 1999, we provided a draft of this report to the Attorney General and the Director of ONDCP for comment. We also provided relevant sections of the report to OMB and State Department officials for a review of the facts that pertain to those agencies. We received written comments on June 23, 1999, from the Deputy Administrator, DEA, which are discussed in chapters 2 and 3 and reprinted in appendix II. In addition, DEA provided a number of technical changes and clarifications, which we have incorporated throughout the report where appropriate. On June 21, 1999, ONDCP's Acting Deputy Director, Office of Legislative Affairs, orally informed us that ONDCP reviewed the report from a factual standpoint because the overall conclusions and recommendation are directed at DEA. He stated that the report was factually correct from ONDCP's perspective and provided a few technical clarifications, which we incorporated where appropriate. On June 21, 1999, OMB officials responsible for examining DEA's budget orally communicated a few technical comments, which we incorporated in chapter 4. The State Department's liaison for GAO informed us on June 21, 1999, that the Department had no comments.

DEA Expanded Its Focus in the 1990s to Target Local Drug Dealers in Addition to Major Drug Trafficking Organizations

Since its creation in 1973, DEA has focused its efforts primarily on investigating the highest levels of national and international illegal drug trafficking. In addition, DEA has supported state and local law enforcement efforts directed at the lower levels of drug trafficking. In the 1990s, however, DEA revised its strategy to focus its operations on what it refers to as the “seamless continuum” of drug trafficking, from international drug trafficking organizations residing outside the United States to local gangs and individuals illegally selling drugs on city streets. Consequently, during the 1990s, DEA gave a higher priority than in the past and increased resources to working with and assisting state and local law enforcement agencies, including starting a new program to help combat drug-related violent crime in local communities.

Concurrently, in the 1990s, DEA made the following enhancements to its already high priority enforcement operations directed at national and international drug trafficking organizations.

- DEA established the Kingpin Strategy, which evolved into the Special Operations Division (SOD), placing greater emphasis on intercepting communications between top-level drug traffickers and their subordinates (i.e., attacking the “command and control” communications of major drug trafficking organizations) to dismantle their entire trafficking operations.
- DEA started participating in two interagency programs to target and investigate major drug trafficking organizations in Latin America and Asia.
- DEA helped establish, train, and fund special foreign police units to combat drug trafficking in certain key foreign countries, primarily in Latin America.

DEA Modified Its Operational Strategy in the 1990s

Since its establishment, DEA has directed its resources primarily toward disrupting or dismantling major organizations involved in interstate and international drug trafficking. DEA has concentrated on investigating those traffickers functioning at the highest levels of these enterprises, often by developing conspiracy cases for U.S. Attorneys to prosecute and seizing the traffickers’ assets. Federal drug control policymakers considered this investigative approach to be the most effective for reducing the illegal drug supply in the United States.

Consistent with this approach, DEA’s operational strategy in the early 1990s was to identify and exploit trafficker vulnerabilities and to disrupt or dismantle their organizations by conducting investigations leading to (1) the prosecution, conviction, and incarceration of leaders and key players in drug organizations and (2) the seizure and forfeiture of the assets of these organizations. DEA’s enforcement operations were to focus and

apply pressure in four principal areas: source (production overseas and in the United States), transit (smuggling of drugs and essential chemicals), domestic distribution (sales of illegal drugs in the United States), and proceeds (money and assets derived from distribution). DEA operations were also to control the distribution of chemicals used to manufacture illegal drugs and prevent the diversion of legally produced controlled substances.

In 1994, the DEA Administrator undertook a review of DEA's policies and strategies to ensure that DEA was appropriately responding to the drug trafficking problem and related violent crime. The results of the review included recommendations by DEA SACs and senior managers that DEA refocus its investigative priorities by increasing its efforts against domestic drug trafficking, including violent drug organizations, street gangs, local impact issues, regional trafficking organizations, and domestically produced illegal drugs, while, at the same time, continuing to investigate major national and international trafficking organizations. As a result, in 1995, the DEA Administrator established the Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) Program, which focuses a small percentage of DEA's resources on drug-related violent crime in local communities. Then, in a 1997 memorandum to DEA's field offices, he indicated that over the next 5 years DEA was to focus its operations on the "seamless continuum" of the organized crime systems that direct drug trafficking, with agencywide programs and initiatives directed at

- major regional, national, and international cases;
- violent drug organizations, gangs, and local impact issues; and
- domestically cultivated and manufactured illegal drugs.

According to DEA, the international aspects of drug trafficking cannot be separated from the domestic aspects because they are interdependent and intertwined. The operations of major trafficking organizations can involve the cultivation and production of drugs in foreign countries, transportation to the United States, and eventual distribution on city streets. Accordingly, the Administrator emphasized that DEA was to target the highest level drug traffickers and their organizations, as well as violent, street-level drug gangs operating in communities. To implement this strategy, DEA was to pursue a vigorous international enforcement program, while domestically using the MET Program and other enforcement approaches to combat the threat and impact of drugs in local communities. The Administrator cited cooperation with other agencies as a guiding principle for all aspects of DEA's international operations and domestic operations, which included

assisting state and local law enforcement agencies with their most serious drug and drug-related violence problems.

DEA More Involved With State and Local Police

Although DEA has always worked formally and informally with state and local law enforcement agencies, it increased its involvement in, and devoted more resources to, task forces and other multiagency operations with state and local law enforcement agencies in the 1990s. Major DEA programs for working with and assisting state and local police on multiagency operations are the State and Local Task Force Program, MET Program, and Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program.

State and Local Task Force Program

Through its State and Local Task Force Program, which originated in 1970 with DEA's predecessor agency, DEA coordinates with state and local law enforcement agencies, shares information, participates in joint investigations, and shares assets forfeited federally as a result of cases made against drug dealers. In addition, state and local officers often receive drug investigation training and enhanced drug enforcement authority.

Throughout the 1990s, DEA substantially increased the number of its state and local task forces and the number of special agents assigned to them. DEA's budget for state and local task forces also increased substantially during this period. Table 2.1 shows DEA's budget for its state and local task forces and the number of task forces in fiscal years 1991 through 1999. As the table indicates, DEA spent \$45.7 million, in constant 1999 dollars, on this program in fiscal year 1991 and budgeted \$105.5 million for fiscal year 1999. The total number of DEA-sponsored state and local task forces increased by about 90 percent during these years.

Chapter 2
DEA Expanded Its Focus in the 1990s to Target Local Drug Dealers in Addition to Major Drug Trafficking Organizations

Table 2.1: Budget for and Number of DEA State and Local Task Forces, Fiscal Years 1991 to 1999

Fiscal year	Budget (millions) ^a	Funded task forces	Provisional task forces ^b	Total task forces ^c
1991	\$45.7	71	23	94
1992	58.2	73	25	98
1993	82.1	75	25	100
1994	92.7	83	20	103
1995	107.5	79	36	115
1996	48.0	92	41	133
1997	158.0	100	51	151
1998	146.5	122	50	172
1999	105.5	131	48	179

^aThe budget amounts for each fiscal year are in constant 1999 dollars. The budget amounts are based on actual costs for fiscal years 1991 through 1998 and the approved budget for fiscal year 1999. The budget amounts for each year include DEA's Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program, which DEA could not separate out. The budget amounts for fiscal years 1997 through 1999 include approximated payroll costs.

^bProvisional task forces are operational in the field with assigned full-time agents but awaiting authorized funding approval from DEA Headquarters under the State and Local Task Force Program.

^cThe numbers of task forces include DEA's state and local task forces in ONDCP's High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Program.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

Similarly, as shown in table 2.2, the number of special agents assigned to DEA-sponsored state and local task forces increased by about 84 percent between fiscal years 1991 and 1998, while the number of assigned state and local law enforcement officers increased by about 34 percent during the same time period. About 22 percent of DEA's 4,309 special agents in fiscal year 1998 were assigned to state and local task forces, compared to about 14 percent of the total 3,542 special agents at DEA in fiscal year 1991.

Table 2.2: Number of Law Enforcement Officers on DEA State and Local Task Forces, Fiscal Years 1991 Through 1998, as of the End of Each Fiscal Year

Fiscal year	DEA special agents	State and local officers
1991	511	1,153
1992	516	1,209
1993	566	1,226
1994	601	1,221
1995	616	1,251
1996	595	1,296
1997	721	1,435
1998	940	1,548

Note: The table includes the number of DEA special agents and state and local officers assigned to DEA's state and local task forces in ONDCP's High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Program.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

The amount of time spent by DEA special agents overall on state and local task forces also increased steadily in the 1990s. DEA special agents spent

Chapter 2

DEA Expanded Its Focus in the 1990s to Target Local Drug Dealers in Addition to Major Drug Trafficking Organizations

about 19.5 percent of all domestic investigative work hours on these task forces in fiscal year 1998 compared to about 9.2 percent during fiscal year 1990.¹

Table 2.3 shows the number of cases, arrests, convictions, asset seizures, and drug seizures that resulted from the state and local task forces in fiscal years 1991 through 1998.

Table 2.3: Number of DEA State and Local Task Force Case Initiations, Arrests, Convictions, and Seizures, Fiscal Years 1991 to 1998

Activity	Fiscal years							
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Cases initiated	5,294	6,323	5,265	4,256	5,738	5,684	6,622	6,853
Cases closed	4,992	5,383	5,993	5,167	5,130	5,172	5,668	5,854
Arrests	6,648	7,430	6,464	6,036	7,324	7,757	9,902	11,569
Convictions	4,524	4,800	4,987	4,274	4,161	4,597	4,705	5,477
Assets seized (millions) ^a	\$265	\$149	\$159	\$122	\$118	\$85	\$112	N/A
Heroin seized (kilograms)	73	77	82	86	72	172	117	111
Cocaine seized (kilograms)	8,683	14,102	5,433	6,031	6,269	7,460	9,687	8,695
Marijuana seized (kilograms)	22,314	32,392	21,646	20,234	25,005	27,726	24,833	22,933
Methamphetamine seized (kilograms)	214	145	205	192	254	251	444	464

Note 1: Other drugs were also seized.

Note 2: N/A means not available.

^aThe amounts of assets seized each fiscal year are in constant 1999 dollars.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

DEA categorizes each case as local, regional, domestic, foreign, or international, according to the geographic scope covered.² As shown in table 2.4, a little over 50 percent of the task force cases initiated in fiscal years 1997 and 1998 were local and regional. They involved suspected drug violators operating in the geographic areas covered by the DEA offices conducting the investigations, and most of them were local violators. Less

¹ The work-hour data that DEA provided us for fiscal year 1998 were not yet complete, and the percentage of DEA special agent investigative work hours spent on state and local task forces in fiscal year 1998 may have actually been greater than 19.5 percent.

² A local case involves a domestic target who operates principally within a local geographic area less extensive than a regional case; a regional case involves a domestic target who is criminally active throughout the geographic region of the DEA office conducting the investigation; a domestic case is an investigation of a target who is active principally within the jurisdiction of the United States; a foreign case involves a target active principally outside the jurisdiction of the United States; and an international case involves a target whose criminal activities are both domestic and foreign.

than 10 percent of the task force cases targeted people suspected of drug trafficking on an international scale.

Table 2.4: Geographic Scope of State and Local Task Force Cases Initiated During Fiscal Years 1997 and 1998

Scope of case	Fiscal year 1997		Fiscal year 1998	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Local	2,401	36.3	2,633	38.4
Regional	992	15.0	979	14.3
Domestic	2,606	39.4	2,612	38.1
Foreign	36	0.5	30	0.4
International	587	8.9	599	8.7
Total	6,622	100.1	6,853	99.9

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

The following are examples of state and local task force investigations conducted by the Los Angeles; Miami; New Orleans; and Washington, D.C., field divisions, respectively, that DEA considered to be successful.

- DEA’s task force in Santa Ana, CA, targeted a Mexican methamphetamine manufacturing and distribution organization operating throughout southern California. The investigation employed wiretaps of nine telephones, along with extensive surveillance, use of informants, and other investigative techniques. Primarily on the basis of information from the wiretaps, the task force conducted 11 raids in 4 cities resulting in the arrest of 27 Mexican nationals on state drug charges and the seizure of 26 pounds of methamphetamine, 25 gallons of methamphetamine in solution form (estimated to be the equivalent of 50 to 100 pounds of methamphetamine), 100 pounds of ephedrine in powder form, an estimated 164 pounds of ephedrine in solution form, other chemicals used to manufacture methamphetamine, 3 ounces of cocaine, and about \$93,000 in cash. Two methamphetamine laboratories and four ephedrine extraction laboratories were seized and dismantled.
- In Operation Emerald City, DEA, along with state and local law enforcement agencies and state regulatory agencies, targeted a drug trafficking organization that was selling drugs in a Riviera Beach, FL, bar in 1997. Some of the biggest known drug dealers in the greater West Palm Beach area had used the bar and its attached property for drug dealing since the 1960s; and numerous murders, stabbings, drive-by shootings, and robberies had occurred there over the years. Two leaders of one drug organization had been arrested, and another organization had taken control of the bar. DEA obtained a court order allowing surreptitious entry of the bar and installation of covert closed circuit television cameras to record drug transactions, identify traffickers, and afford undercover

officers the ability to buy drugs while under constant camera surveillance. As a result, 38 people were arrested for violations of federal and state drug laws. In addition, the bar's liquor license was revoked, and the business and surrounding property were forfeited to the government.

- DEA's REDRUM ("murder" spelled backward) task force group, which focuses on drug and drug-related homicide cases, targeted a violent heroin trafficking organization operating in New Orleans, LA. DEA conducted the investigation jointly with the New Orleans Police Department Homicide Division and the FBI. As a result of the investigation, which included wiretaps, surveillance, and debriefings of informants, 13 individuals were indicted on a variety of federal drug, firearms, and murder charges. Ten defendants pled guilty prior to trial, and the head of the organization was found guilty of all charges and received a life sentence. In addition, five homicides in the city of New Orleans were solved, and 359 grams of heroin and \$60,000 in drug-related assets were seized. According to DEA, the investigation had a significant local impact by reducing violent crime and disrupting the flow of heroin into New Orleans.
- DEA's Richmond District Office City Strike Force in Virginia learned about a trafficking organization bringing Colombian heroin to the Richmond and Columbus, OH, areas from New York. Through the arrest and debriefing of drug couriers, the task force obtained evidence regarding the organization's distribution of more than 100 pounds of Colombian heroin in the Richmond area over approximately 1 year's time. The task force arrested the 2 heads of the organization and 24 co-conspirators. Three kilograms of Colombian heroin and \$17,000 were seized.

Mobile Enforcement Teams

In February 1995, DEA established the MET Program to help state and local law enforcement agencies combat violent crime and drug trafficking in their communities, particularly crime committed by violent gangs. This was consistent with the Attorney General's Anti-Violent Crime Initiative, which was initiated in 1994 to establish partnerships among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to address major violent crime problems, including gangs. The MET Program was also consistent with ONDCP's 1995 National Drug Control Strategy, which cited the program as an example of how federal agencies would help state and local agencies address drug trafficking and associated violence. According to DEA officials, federal assistance through the MET Program was designed to help overcome two challenges facing state and local agencies in drug enforcement:

Chapter 2

DEA Expanded Its Focus in the 1990s to Target Local Drug Dealers in Addition to Major Drug Trafficking Organizations

- State and local police agencies did not have sufficient resources to effectively enforce drug laws.
- Local law enforcement personnel were known to local drug users and sellers, making undercover drug buys and penetration of local distribution rings difficult and dangerous.

Unlike DEA’s traditional State and Local Task Force Program, previously discussed, in the MET Program, upon request from local officials, DEA deploys teams of special agents (referred to as METs) directly to communities affected by drug-related violence. The METs are based in DEA field divisions throughout the country. The METs are to work cooperatively with the requesting local law enforcement agency—sharing intelligence, coordinating activities, and sometimes combining staff and other resources—to target drug gangs and individuals responsible for violent crime.

Since its creation in fiscal year 1995, funds for the MET Program have totaled about \$173 million in constant 1999 dollars. Table 2.5 shows the MET budget, the number of active METs, and the number of agents authorized for those METs from the inception through fiscal year 1999.

Table 2.5: Selected MET Program Data, Fiscal Years 1995 to 1999

MET Program data	Fiscal years				
	1995 ^a	1996	1997	1998	1999
METs	19	19	23	24	24
DEA special agents ^b	167	167	250	250	250
Budget (millions) ^c	^d	\$55.1 ^d	\$19.7	\$46.9	\$51.1

^aFiscal year 1995 data are for a 6-month period.

^bThe number of special agent positions were authorized as of the end of each fiscal year, except for fiscal year 1999 positions, which were as of March 1999.

^cThe budget amounts for each fiscal year are in constant 1999 dollars. The budget amounts include actual payroll costs for fiscal year 1996 and approximated payroll costs for fiscal years 1997 through 1999. Other costs are actual for fiscal years 1996 through 1998 and as approved for fiscal year 1999.

^dThe fiscal year 1996 budget includes funds spent in fiscal year 1995.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

A typical MET is made up of 8 to 12 DEA special agents. Each MET operation starts with a request to the local DEA field office from a police chief, sheriff, or district attorney for assistance in dealing with drug-related violence. DEA then evaluates the scope of the problem and the capability of local law enforcement to address it. Each assessment is supposed to give particular attention to the violent crime rate in the requesting

Chapter 2**DEA Expanded Its Focus in the 1990s to Target Local Drug Dealers in Addition to Major Drug Trafficking Organizations**

community and the impact of the identified drug group on the violence occurring there. Once DEA decides to deploy a MET, an action plan is to be developed, including identification of the suspects to be targeted. Following this initial planning, the MET is to conduct the deployment outfitted with the necessary surveillance and technical equipment.

During a deployment, the MET is to work with the local law enforcement officials to investigate and arrest targeted violent drug offenders. According to DEA officials, the MET generally collects intelligence, initiates investigations, participates in undercover operations, makes arrests, seizes assets, and provides support to local or federal prosecutors. Evidence developed in MET investigations may also be used to prosecute the same individuals for related crimes, including murder, assault, or other acts of violence. According to DEA, each MET deployment plan establishes a time frame of between 90 and 120 days for completing the deployment.³

At the time of our review, DEA had 24 METs in 20 of its 21 domestic field divisions (with the Caribbean Division being the only exception). Table 2.6 shows the number of MET deployments and their results from the program's inception in fiscal year 1995 through fiscal year 1998.

³ In discussing a draft of our report, DEA noted that a review of all 187 MET deployments completed as of April 20, 1999, showed that the average deployment length was 167 days.

Chapter 2

DEA Expanded Its Focus in the 1990s to Target Local Drug Dealers in Addition to Major Drug Trafficking Organizations

Table 2.6: Selected Data on MET Deployments, Fiscal Years 1995 Through 1998

Selected data on MET deployments	Fiscal years			Total
	1995 (6 months)-1996	1997	1998	
Requests	112	67	79	258
Deployments initiated	79	46	56	181
Deployments completed	79	45	34	158
Deployments active	0	1	22	23
Arrests ^a	1,973	2,200	2,199	6,372
Convictions ^b	240	415	1,071	1,726
Cocaine seized (pounds)	95	747	342	1,184
Methamphetamine seized (pounds)	68	115	199	382
Heroin seized (pounds)	3	31	18	52
Marijuana Seized (pounds)	158	493	646	1,297
Assets seized (millions) ^c	\$3.6	\$2.7	\$3.8	\$10.0

^aIn addition to DEA arrests, MET deployments from the program's inception through 1998 also led to a total of 612 arrests by other law enforcement agencies.

^bAccording to DEA, actual convictions are higher than these numbers indicate due to sentencing delays and the lack of reporting of prosecutorial dispositions in the state systems. Also, the conviction totals may increase due to the delay between arrest and final disposition.

^cThe amounts of assets seized each fiscal year are in constant 1999 dollars. The yearly amounts, when added, do not equal the total due to rounding.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

The DEA offices in Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, and Washington, D.C., had completed 33 MET deployments at the time we made our visits during 1998. In conducting our work at these offices, we spoke with local police officials in selected cities—Baltimore, MD; Los Angeles, CA; Pine Bluff, AR; and South Miami, FL—who had requested MET deployments. The officials said they were pleased with the results of the MET deployments and that the accomplishments met their expectations. Following are summaries of the MET deployments in these four cities.

- A MET deployment conducted for about 2-1/2 months during 1996 in the Rampart area of Los Angeles targeted six violent street gangs: 18th Street, Mara Salvatruches, Orphans, Playboys, Crazy Riders, and Diamonds. In addition to the MET, the Los Angeles Police Department, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and the California Department of Corrections participated. The operation resulted in 421 arrests, including 144 by DEA's MET, and seizures of 1,200 grams of heroin, 630 grams of cocaine, 104 pounds of marijuana, 28 weapons, and \$70,000 in currency. According to a Los Angeles Police Department official, crime statistics (e.g., homicides and aggravated assaults) in the Rampart area fell immediately after the MET deployment was completed. However, DEA's post-deployment assessment of violent crimes in the area, comparing the 6 months after the deployment ended to the 6 months prior to the

deployment, showed that homicides increased from 42 to 47, aggravated assaults increased from 738 to 1,008, robberies increased from 1,091 to 1,275, and sex crimes increased from 130 to 207. In addition, the assessment indicated that drug sales appeared to increase shortly after the deployment was completed, approaching levels observed before the deployment started. It further indicated that a significant number of drug dealers reportedly changed the location of their distribution activities while remaining in the Rampart area.⁴

- The South Miami Police Department requested DEA support in going after crack cocaine dealers. Initially, the police collected intelligence, purchased drugs, and arrested 17 street-level drug dealers. DEA's MET then became involved. The MET bought crack cocaine from drug dealers who came out to sell the drugs after the initial arrests had been made. The MET, which deployed for about 3 months in 1998, made 13 arrests (7 for federal prosecution and 6 for state prosecution) and seized 386.7 grams of crack cocaine. South Miami police officials said some of those arrested had committed weapons violations and some violence (e.g., assaults, batteries, and armed robberies) in the past. According to DEA's post-deployment assessment of violent crimes in the area, comparing the 6 months after the deployment ended to the 6 months prior to the deployment, homicides decreased from 1 to 0, assaults decreased from 11 to 4, aggravated batteries decreased from 9 to 3, and robberies decreased from 14 to 5. The assessment noted that illegal drug activity in the South Miami area had been greatly reduced. The assessment further noted that the availability of crack cocaine in the area had been reduced, as well as drug distribution in surrounding areas.
- A MET deployment conducted for 6 months during 1997 in Pine Bluff targeted violent organizations dealing in crack cocaine and methamphetamine. A total of 46 people were arrested, including 15 who were indicted by a federal grand jury. Four people were suspects in four different homicides. Six ounces of crack cocaine were seized, along with 15 vehicles and \$118,026. The Pine Bluff Police Chief told us that the MET deployment had successfully helped reduce both the city's homicide rate and its crack cocaine problem. However, DEA's post-deployment assessment of violent crimes in the area, comparing the 6 months after the deployment ended to the 6 months prior to the deployment, showed that homicides increased from 4 to 7, assaults increased from 677 to 1,098, rapes increased from 44 to 51, and robberies increased from 168 to 190.

⁴ In discussing a draft of our report, DEA officials said this MET deployment was not typical. It was conducted during a time when DEA was refining the program. The Los Angeles Rampart area deployment focused on a specific area, and DEA now requires each MET deployment to focus on targeted criminal drug organizations.

- A MET deployed in eastern Baltimore for 5 months during 1997 successfully targeted a drug organization—the M&J Gang—in a housing project. This case resulted in 81 arrests, many of which were already “in the works” before the MET deployment, according to Baltimore police officials we contacted. The officials said the MET deployment also reduced violent crime in that area. DEA’s post-deployment assessment showed fewer major crimes overall in the area during the 6-month period starting about 1 month before the deployment ended compared to the 6 months prior to the deployment. Shootings decreased from 527 to 389, aggravated assaults decreased from 3,273 to 2,950, robberies decreased from 4,888 to 3,889, burglaries decreased from 5,775 to 5,684, larcenies decreased from 16,475 to 15,976, and stolen automobiles decreased from 4,851 to 3,213. However, murders increased from 143 to 156, and rapes increased from 175 to 202. DEA’s assessment also reported that narcotic activity in two areas covered by the deployment was significantly reduced, and gang-related criminal activity had decreased in the sections of Baltimore controlled by the M&J Gang and another drug gang.

DEA officials we met with in the four field division offices told us that although MET deployments typically focused on local violent drug offenders, they sometimes led to investigations of higher level drug traffickers. In response to our request for quantitative data on this, a DEA headquarters official responded that it is difficult for DEA to provide statistics on the exact number of deployments that have led to investigations of higher level drug traffickers through MET operations because this information was not systematically maintained in an automated database. However, DEA did provide us with some examples of MET deployments that led to higher level drug traffickers. For example, DEA reported that a MET deployed from DEA’s Phoenix office identified connections in Mexico to MET targets in Lake Havasu City, AZ, and family members in southern California. The resulting intelligence revealed that this Mexican-based organization was responsible for smuggling precursor chemicals from Mexico to clandestine laboratory sites in southern California, where methamphetamine was produced. Multiple-pound quantities of methamphetamine were transported to Lake Havasu City. According to DEA, the organization was also transporting large shipments of methamphetamine to Oregon, Washington, Colorado, and New Mexico.

As shown in table 2.7, the MET deployments conducted in fiscal years 1995 through 1998 resulted in mostly local and regional drug cases. Local and regional cases involve suspected drug violators operating in the geographic areas covered by the DEA offices conducting the investigations. As expected, given the MET program’s purpose, local cases were the single

Chapter 2

DEA Expanded Its Focus in the 1990s to Target Local Drug Dealers in Addition to Major Drug Trafficking Organizations

largest category, making up about 47 percent of the total during that period. About 6 percent of the MET cases involved criminals trafficking in drugs on an international scale.

Table 2.7: Geographic Scope of MET Program Cases Initiated During Fiscal Years 1995 Through 1998

Scope of case	Fiscal year 1995 ^a		Fiscal year 1996		Fiscal year 1997		Fiscal Year 1998		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Local	21	40.4	52	40.0	87	54.4	69	48.6	229	47.3
Regional	18	34.6	38	29.2	32	20.0	38	26.8	126	26.0
Domestic	8	15.4	30	23.1	36	22.5	23	16.2	97	20.0
Foreign	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
International	4	7.7	10	7.7	5	3.1	12	8.5	31	6.4
Other	1	1.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.2
Total	52	100.0	130	100.0	160	100.0	142	100.1	484	99.9

Note: Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

^aFiscal year 1995 data are for a 6-month period.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

After completing a MET deployment, DEA may carry out efforts to help a community maintain a lower level of drug trafficking and violent crime. For example, DEA offers follow-up training to those communities carrying out drug demand reduction activities. In addition, if feasible, DEA may respond to a request for the re-deployment of a MET to prevent drug-related violent crimes from resurfing to the level that existed prior to the initial deployment.

In a June 1998 memorandum to all SACs of domestic field offices, DEA headquarters directed that the field divisions proactively promote the MET Program to increase the number of requests for deployments. The memorandum stated that despite the MET Program's success, much more could and should be done to stimulate interest in the program on the part of state and local law enforcement agencies. The DEA offices were instructed to collect crime statistics in specific areas within their geographic boundaries to determine the existence of drug trafficking problems related to violent crime. After making such determinations, the DEA SAC or a designated assistant was to contact the local police chief or sheriff in those areas to explain the benefits of a MET deployment in their jurisdictions and inform them of the availability of MET resources. The memorandum noted that each SAC or assistant was expected to visit local police officials each month. The memorandum further noted that each office's proactive MET Program activities would be a significant factor in the SACs' annual performance appraisals. According to DEA, the proactive contacts have generated numerous additional requests for MET assistance,

and the majority of recent deployments have been the result of such proactive contacts.

With regard to the results of the MET Program, DEA officials reported decreases in the number of murders, robberies, and aggravated assaults in local areas covered by the program based on an analysis of local crime statistics gathered from the targeted geographic locations before and after 133 deployments that had been completed as of April 20, 1999.⁵ According to DEA, its post-deployment assessments cumulatively showed a 12-percent decline in murders, 14-percent decline in robberies, and 6-percent decline in aggravated assaults in the 133 deployment areas during the 6 months after the deployments ended when compared to the 6 months prior to the deployments. Further, DEA's analysis showed that 28 of the 133 deployment areas had decreases in all 3 major violent crime categories (i.e., murder, robbery, and aggravated assault) during the 6 months after the deployments ended, while only 5 of the areas had increases in all 3 crime categories. (These five deployments included two of the examples summarized above). In commenting on these results, DEA noted that the effectiveness of MET deployments in removing a specific, targeted violent drug gang, for example, cannot by itself eliminate a community's drug trafficking problems because DEA cannot continue to control the deployment areas to prevent other drug dealers from filling the void that a MET deployment might have created.

Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program

DEA started assisting state and local law enforcement agencies in their efforts to control domestically grown marijuana in 1979, when it helped agencies in California and Hawaii. DEA's Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program was established in 1982 to more formally help the states eradicate domestic marijuana while building cases leading to the arrest and prosecution of growers. The program became active in all 50 states in 1985.

To implement the program, DEA provides funds to state and local law enforcement agencies. The funds are to be used by these agencies for program expenses, such as aircraft rentals and fuel, vehicles, equipment, supplies, and overtime payments for state and local officers working on eradication operations. As table 2.8 indicates, funds provided by DEA for the program increased about 177 percent, in constant 1999 dollars, from fiscal year 1990 to fiscal year 1999.

⁵ According to DEA, 187 deployments had been completed as of April 20, 1999. However, DEA only had FBI Uniform Crime Report statistical information for the 6-month period following 133 of the completed deployments.

Chapter 2

DEA Expanded Its Focus in the 1990s to Target Local Drug Dealers in Addition to Major Drug Trafficking Organizations

Table 2.8: Funding for DEA’s Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program, Fiscal Years 1990 Through 1999

Dollars in millions	
Fiscal year	Dollars^a
1990	4.7
1991	16.2
1992	11.5
1993	11.2
1994	10.9
1995	10.7
1996	10.5
1997	13.9
1998	13.7
1999	13.0

^aThe fund amounts for each fiscal year are in constant 1999 dollars. The fund amounts do not include DEA's payroll costs.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

DEA encourages state and local agencies to assume the major responsibility for eradicating domestic marijuana. In coordinating the program in each state, DEA is to assist efforts to detect and eradicate marijuana plants (including coordinating the support of other agencies, arranging for needed equipment, and helping with surveillance); exchange intelligence; investigate marijuana trafficking organizations; and provide training.

Table 2.9 shows the statistical results of DEA’s Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program for 1990 through 1998.

Table 2.9: Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program Statistical Results, 1990 Through 1998

Output	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998 ^a
Cultivated outdoor plants eradicated (millions)	7.3	5.3	7.5	4.0	4.0	3.1	2.8	3.8	2.1
Indoor plants eradicated (millions)	N/A	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Ditchweed plants eradicated ^b (millions)	118.5	133.8	264.2	387.9	504.4	370.3	419.7	237.1	127.9
Arrests	5,729	9,364	12,639	12,397	13,115	14,274	18,733	17,070	10,507
Weapons seized	3,210	4,200	5,541	6,062	5,959	4,151	4,699	4,713	7,351
Assets seized (millions) ^c	\$47.7	\$62.4	\$79.7	\$58.2	\$62.1	\$47.3	\$39.7	\$40.7	\$20.9

Note: N/A means not available.

^aThe 1998 data provided by DEA at the time of our work were not complete.

^bDitchweed is uncultivated marijuana that grows wild.

^cThe amounts of assets seized each year are in constant 1999 dollars.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

DEA Works With State and Local Agencies on Other Multiagency Operations

In addition to its State and Local Task Force, MET, and Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Programs, DEA also participates in other multiagency task force operations involving state and local law enforcement agencies. These include the following:

- The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Program is coordinated by U.S. Attorneys. This program is designed to promote coordination and cooperation among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies involved in drug enforcement in each task force region. The goal of the OCDETF Program is to identify, investigate, and prosecute members of high-level drug trafficking organizations and related enterprises. In fiscal year 1998, DEA sponsored 847, or 62 percent, and participated in 1,096, or 81 percent, of the 1,356 OCDETF investigations that were initiated. DOJ reimburses DEA for its expenditures on OCDETF investigations. For fiscal year 1998, DEA was reimbursed \$94.4 million for the OCDETF Program.
- The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program is administered by ONDCP. The mission of the HIDTA Program is to coordinate drug control efforts among federal, state, and local agencies in designated areas in order to reduce drug trafficking in critical regions of the United States. At the time of our work in September 1998, ONDCP had designated 20 areas as HIDTAs. According to ONDCP, a HIDTA organization typically consists of a major task force led by federal agencies, drug and money laundering task forces led by state or local agencies, a joint intelligence center and information-sharing network, and

other supporting initiatives.⁶ DEA receives funds from ONDCP based upon its participation in the HIDTA Program. For fiscal year 1998, DEA received \$14.8 million in direct HIDTA funding.

DEA Developed an Investigative Approach Focusing on the Communications of Major Drug Trafficking Organizations

Since it was established, DEA's highest priority has been to investigate major drug trafficking organizations, both domestic and foreign, responsible for supplying illegal drugs consumed in the United States. Over the years, DEA has adopted various techniques for focusing its efforts on such investigations. In 1992, DEA started using an investigative approach designed to identify and target drug kingpins and their supporting infrastructures, primarily through the use of wiretaps and other types of electronic surveillance within the United States and the use of intelligence information. DEA called this approach the Kingpin Strategy. This approach, which has led to the dismantling or disruption of major trafficking organizations, was later adopted by SOD when it was established in 1995. More recently, DEA has established the Regional Enforcement Team (RET) initiative to address regional, national, and international drug trafficking in small towns and rural areas within the United States.

The Kingpin Strategy

Developed in 1992, the Kingpin Strategy targeted major Colombian cocaine and Southeast and Southwest Asian heroin trafficking organizations. This strategy was DEA's top priority and its primary enforcement approach for addressing the national priority of reducing the availability of illegal drugs in the United States. The Kingpin Strategy primarily targeted cocaine trafficking organizations operating out of Medellin and Cali, Colombia, with most of its focus on one organization referred to as the Cali cartel. According to DEA, the heads of the Colombian organizations tightly controlled all aspects of their operations and telephoned subordinates to give directions. DEA concluded that this was a weakness in the operations of these organizations. DEA decided to exploit this weakness by monitoring their communications and analyzing telephone numbers called to identify the kingpins and their key subordinates for U.S. and/or foreign investigation, arrest, and prosecution and for seizure of their domestic assets.

The Office of Major Investigations at DEA headquarters was responsible for implementing the Kingpin Strategy. Various intelligence, financial, and operational functions were consolidated within this office to facilitate focusing DEA's investigative resources and capabilities on targeted

⁶ Drug Control: Information on High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program (GAO/GGD-98-188, Sept. 3, 1998).

kingpin organizations (TKO). The office disseminated tips and leads, collected from intelligence sources worldwide, to help agents in the field carry out investigations and enforcement activities. The office centrally directed, coordinated, oversaw, and funded investigations that were being carried out in multiple U.S. cities and foreign countries in cooperation with state, local, and foreign police.

Special Operations Division

DEA's SOD and its investigative approach evolved out of the Office of Major Investigations and the Kingpin Strategy. According to DEA, the Kingpin Strategy was enhanced by the creation of SOD as a separate division. SOD was established at DEA headquarters in August 1995 and given its own budget and additional staff.⁷ As with the Kingpin Strategy, SOD's approach focuses on the command and control communications of major drug trafficking organizations. However, a major difference is that its scope was expanded beyond Colombian cocaine and Southeast and Southwest Asian heroin trafficking organizations to coordinate and support investigations of major organizations trafficking in methamphetamine and Colombian heroin, as well as organizations trafficking illegal drugs along the Southwest Border. SOD's primary emphasis currently is Colombian and Mexican organizations responsible for smuggling illegal drugs into the United States.

Another major difference from the Kingpin Strategy is that representatives from other law enforcement agencies, including the FBI and U.S. Customs Service, are detailed to SOD. The FBI has had agents detailed to SOD since 1995, and the Deputy SAC of SOD is an FBI agent. Similarly, the Customs Service has detailed agents to SOD since 1996. Most of SOD's workload supports cases being conducted by DEA field offices. However, the SOD SAC told us that the workload was increasingly supporting FBI and Customs Service cases. The intelligence agencies and the Department of Defense (DOD) also participate by providing drug intelligence to SOD. In addition, DOJ's Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Section participates by providing legal advice to SOD on investigations.

Like the Kingpin Strategy, SOD's investigative approach and initiatives are to support domestic and foreign investigations of major drug traffickers and trafficking organizations in two principal ways. First, SOD is to disseminate tips and leads collected from intelligence sources worldwide to help agents in the field carry out investigations and enforcement activities. Second, SOD is to assist agents in building and coordinating multijurisdictional drug conspiracy cases that are based primarily on the

⁷ The DEA Administrator approved 40 positions, including 31 Special Agent positions, for the new SOD.

use of wiretaps. Multijurisdictional efforts, such as Operation Reciprocity (described later) with 35 wiretaps in 10 U.S. cities, can involve many different individual investigations across the country. In May 1999, the SOD SAC estimated that SOD was supporting and coordinating about 240 cases throughout the United States. He said that SOD typically had approximately six to eight ongoing major operations at any one time, each having multiple related cases.

Similar to the Kingpin Strategy, SOD does not control the cases that it supports; rather, decisionmaking on cases is left to field supervisors and agents. According to DEA officials, if SOD determines that field offices in different parts of the country are conducting investigations related to the same major drug trafficking organization, it attempts to bring the responsible agents together to develop the best cases for prosecution. In so doing, it is to coordinate and guide the agents' efforts, including their intelligence and electronic surveillance operations, and assist with intelligence collection and analysis.

SOD essentially funds the same types of investigative activities as the Office of Major Investigations funded under the Kingpin Strategy. According to the SOD SAC, SOD provides funds to DEA field offices primarily for conducting electronic surveillance in support of investigations. It also funds payments for informants and drug purchases if doing so is essential to an investigation. However, he said it does so only when an electronic surveillance is being conducted or planned and only in connection with an ongoing case with which SOD is involved. (For example, in the course of an investigation, an agent may acquire a phone number that is determined to be connected with a current SOD-funded investigation.) SOD does not fund individual FBI and Customs drug investigations, but it does support some of those investigations through its various activities.

Collection, Analysis, and
Dissemination of
Intelligence Information
Enhanced

SOD is responsible for the oversight of and guidance for DEA's Title III (electronic surveillance) program. In Title III of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, Congress set forth the circumstances under which the interception of wire and oral communications may be authorized (P.L. 90-351, 18 USC 2510, *et seq.*). SOD is to help special agents in the field focus their intercept operations on the best available targets, choose the best telephone numbers for intercept, correctly conduct the intercepts, make the best use of collected information, and make the most efficient use of transcribers and translators. SOD also is to send teams to the field to assist special agents with their wire intercept operations.

According to DEA officials and data, since the Kingpin Strategy and SOD initiatives have been in operation, DEA has greatly increased the number of wiretaps and other electronic surveillances it conducts. The number of electronic surveillance court orders requested and conducted by DEA, as shown in table 2.10, increased by 183 percent; and the number of facilities (e.g., telephone, pager, and fax machine) covered by the orders increased by 158 percent, from fiscal year 1990 to fiscal year 1998. Most noteworthy is that the number of orders increased by 30 percent between fiscal years 1991 and 1992 after the Kingpin Strategy was initiated, and they increased by 65 percent between fiscal years 1995 and 1996 after SOD was established.

Table 2.10: Number of Electronic Surveillance Orders and Facilities Covered, Fiscal Years 1990 Through 1998

Fiscal year	Orders requested and conducted	Facilities covered
1990	223	219
1991	256	311
1992	332	302
1993	320	320
1994	357	339
1995	330	284
1996	546	584
1997	592	544
1998	631	564

Note: The number of orders requested and conducted is sometimes greater than the number of facilities covered because some DEA requests were for extensions of previous wiretap orders.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

DEA’s Special Intelligence Division is to support SOD’s operations by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating intelligence and other information from a variety of sources. For example, the unit is to analyze and disseminate information from telephone records and access and disseminate information from DEA, FBI, and Customs computerized drug intelligence systems. The unit has expanded both in size and computer and other technological capability. There were 186 staff in October 1998, including DEA, FBI, Customs, DOD, and contractor personnel.

Major International Drug Trafficking Organizations Disrupted

According to the SOD SAC, although DEA did not systematically compile results data on all of the Kingpin and SOD operations, cases supported, and leads disseminated, DEA has used both initiatives to successfully dismantle or disrupt drug trafficking organizations responsible for large amounts of illegal drugs brought into the United States. For example, according to DEA, the Kingpin Strategy contributed to dismantling the Cali cartel, which DEA considered the most powerful criminal organization that law enforcement has ever faced. Since 1995, all of the top Cali cartel

leaders have been captured by or surrendered to the Colombian National Police (CNP), with the exception of one who was killed in a shoot-out with CNP at the time of his arrest. According to DEA, evidence gathered through years of investigations by DEA and other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and CNP led to the identification, indictment, arrest, conviction, and incarceration of the cartel leaders and some of their subordinates on drug charges in Colombia and the United States.

According to DEA, a number of other successful operations have resulted from the Kingpin Strategy and SOD initiatives. These include the following:

- Operation Tiger Trap was a joint operation carried out by DEA and the Royal Thai Police in 1994. Tiger Trap produced U.S. indictments against members of the 20,000-man Shan United Army, a heroin TKO that operated the principal trafficking network in the Golden Triangle area of Thailand, Burma, and Laos for decades.
- Zorro I and Zorro II were multijurisdictional operations involving DEA, the FBI, Customs Service, and numerous state and local law enforcement agencies. Zorro I targeted Colombian drug traffickers based in Cali, Colombia, and their key subordinates operating in Los Angeles, New York, and Miami. Zorro I operated from 1992 to 1994 and included 10 DEA domestic field divisions. Zorro II targeted Mexican transportation groups used by the Colombians, as well as Colombian distribution cells located throughout the United States. It operated from 1995 to 1996 and included 14 DEA field divisions. The two operations relied heavily on the use of wiretaps. There were 117 wiretaps conducted, generating leads that identified Colombian distribution cells, Mexican traffickers' command and control networks, money laundering routes, cocaine cache sites, and other important information. According to DEA, these operations disrupted both Colombian and Mexican organizations. Specifically, Zorro I resulted in 209 arrests, 6.5 tons of cocaine seized, and \$13.5 million seized. Zorro II resulted in 182 arrests, 5.7 tons of cocaine and 1,018 pounds of marijuana seized, \$18.3 million seized, and \$2.5 million in assets seized.
- Operation Limelight was a multijurisdictional operation involving DEA, Customs, and numerous state and local law enforcement agencies. The operation targeted a Mexican drug transportation and distribution organization, which intelligence indicated was responsible for importing over 1-½ tons of cocaine monthly into the United States. The operation, which ran from 1996 to 1997, included the use of 37 wiretaps and other electronically generated intelligence, which helped identify groups in Houston and McAllen, TX; Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco, CA; New York, NY; and Chicago, IL. The operation resulted in 48 arrests, 4 tons

of cocaine seized, 10,846 pounds of marijuana seized, and \$7.1 million seized.

- Operation Reciprocity was a multijurisdictional investigation involving DEA, the FBI, Customs Service, and numerous state and local agencies. In this operation, DEA combined several independent, but related, investigations being simultaneously conducted by federal, state, and local agencies into one investigation and helped other offices start investigations of other subjects by providing leads. The operation focused on two independent group heads based in the Juarez, Mexico, area who were responsible for importing, transporting, and distributing more than 30 tons of cocaine from Mexico to Chicago and New York. The operation involved 35 wiretaps and other electronically generated intelligence information in 10 cities. The operation, which ran from 1996 to 1997, resulted in 53 arrests, 7.4 tons of cocaine seized, 2,800 pounds of marijuana seized, and \$11.2 million seized.

Regional Enforcement Teams

According to DEA, information from some of the above SOD operations and other intelligence sources indicates that some major drug trafficking organizations are adapting to drug law enforcement efforts in large U.S. cities by shifting their operations to small towns and rural areas within the United States. DEA investigations and other information have provided evidence that these trafficking organizations have established command and control centers, warehouses, and drug transshipment points in many small communities. Consequently, according to DEA, these communities have become major distribution centers, as well as production centers in some cases, for illegal drugs, such as cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and marijuana.

To respond to this threat, DEA established the RET initiative in fiscal year 1999, for which Congress provided \$13 million and authorized 56 positions. The RETs are designed to be proactive, highly mobile regional investigative teams whose mission is to (1) target drug organizations operating or establishing themselves in small towns and rural areas where there is a lack of sufficient drug law enforcement resources and (2) better develop and exploit drug intelligence developed by SOD and other sources. The RET initiative's objective is to identify and dismantle these drug organizations before they become entrenched in the communities.

The RETs are similar to METs, previously discussed, only in that they are mobile teams. The RET initiative differs significantly from the MET Program in that the RETs are to only target major drug violators operating at the regional, national, or international level; while the METs, upon

request from local authorities, are to assist urban and rural communities in investigating and eliminating drug-related violence.

DEA is implementing two RETs, which are to become operational in September 1999, one in Charlotte, NC, and one in Des Moines, IA. According to DEA, each RET will consist of 22 personnel, including 15 special agents. In addition, the RETs are to be provided with the investigative equipment and vehicles needed to ensure a high degree of mobility and capability to support the performance of even the most complex investigations.

Key Changes in DEA's Foreign Operations

According to DEA, international drug trafficking organizations have become the most dangerous organized crime forces in the world, and Colombian and Mexican organizations are the most threatening to the United States. DEA documents state that such international trafficking organizations are often headquartered in foreign countries where there is little or no potential for extradition to the United States. Because of the international nature of drug trafficking, DEA had 79 offices in 56 foreign countries as of December 1998. DEA opened 16 offices in 15 foreign countries, and closed 4 offices in 4 countries, from fiscal years 1990 through 1998.

Each foreign DEA office is part of the U.S. Embassy's country team. As a country team member, how DEA operates in a foreign country must be consistent with the embassy's Mission Program Plan, which is a strategic plan required by the State Department for U.S. government activities within each country where there is a U.S. Embassy. Mission Program Plans discuss the embassies' human rights, democratic, economic, law enforcement, and other goals, strategies, and objectives, including efforts to combat drug trafficking. The plan for each country is to be reviewed and approved by DEA and other agencies represented on the country team.

DEA cannot operate in foreign countries as it does in the United States because of various limitations. For example, DEA said its agents cannot make arrests or conduct electronic surveillances in any foreign country, nor can they be present during foreign police enforcement operations without a waiver from the Ambassador.⁸ DEA's primary goal in the countries where it operates is, through bilateral law enforcement

⁸ The Mansfield Amendment, Section 481(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act, as amended, 22 U.S.C. 2291(c), regulates the involvement of U.S. government personnel in foreign drug law enforcement activities.

cooperation, to disrupt and/or dismantle the leadership, command, control, and infrastructure of drug trafficking organizations that threaten the United States. To accomplish this goal, DEA engages in cooperative investigations and exchanges intelligence with its host nation counterparts. In addition, DEA provides training, advice, and assistance to host nation law enforcement agencies to improve their effectiveness and make them self-sufficient in investigating major drug traffickers and combating the production, transportation, and distribution of illegal drugs.

Interagency International Investigative Programs

In addition to SOD operations, DEA has been a participant in two interagency investigative programs that were established during the 1990s to address drug trafficking in certain foreign countries where major trafficking organizations were based. They are the Linear and Linkage Approach Programs.

Linear Approach Program

This program was established in 1991 as a U.S. interagency forum to disrupt and dismantle the key organizations in Latin America responsible for producing and shipping illegal drugs to the United States. The program's foundation rests on three basic tenets: focus law enforcement and intelligence community resources on key targets, foster community collaboration, and enhance host nation capabilities. The Washington Linear Committee, which comprises 15 organizations and is cochaired by DEA, was designed to help better coordinate the counterdrug efforts of U.S. Embassy country teams, field-based regional intelligence centers, and U.S. Military Commands.

The Linear Approach Program initially focused on Colombian and Mexican cocaine organizations. It has since been expanded to include other Latin American trafficking organizations that are primary recipients of significant amounts of drugs directly from the source countries of Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru. Some of these organizations may traffic in heroin and/or methamphetamine, in addition to cocaine. DEA reported that, for the period of 1994 through 1998, 21 main targets of the Linear Program and 22 associates had been arrested.⁹ All of the Cali cartel leaders who were arrested as part of the previously discussed Kingpin Strategy were also primary targets of the Linear Approach Program.

Linkage Approach Program

This program was established in 1992 and has been DEA's principal international strategy to address the heroin threat from Asia. The program is cochaired by DEA. It focuses law enforcement and intelligence community resources on efforts to disrupt and dismantle major Asian

⁹ DEA did not track the number of Linear Approach Program arrests until 1994.

trafficking organizations producing heroin for distribution to the United States.

Linkage Approach Program targets are to have a significant role in one of the Southeast or Southwest Asian heroin trafficking organizations and be subject to extradition to, and arrest and prosecution in, the United States. According to DEA, prior to this program, which was designed to make use of U.S. drug conspiracy laws, major Southeast and Southwest Asian traffickers exploited the lack of conspiracy laws in their own countries by insulating themselves from the actual drugs. The Linkage Program uses a multinational and multiagency approach to gather evidence for use in the U.S. judicial system, securing indictments in federal courts, and pursuing the extradition of the targeted traffickers to the United States for prosecution. DEA reported that through 1998, 33 Linkage Approach Program targets had been arrested, 10 defendants had been extradited to the United States, and 1 defendant was incarcerated pending extradition.

Vetted Units of Foreign Police Established

In 1996, DEA initiated its Vetted Unit Program, under which foreign police participate in special host country investigative and intelligence collection units in selected foreign countries. According to DEA officials, the foreign police participants are screened and then trained by DEA with the intention of enhancing their professionalism and creating an atmosphere of increased trust and confidence between participating foreign police and DEA agents working with the vetted units. DEA believes that these units will (1) enhance the safety of DEA agents in those participating countries and (2) increase the sharing of sensitive information between DEA and foreign police.

All foreign police participating in the DEA program must be successfully “vetted,” that is, pass a computerized criminal background investigation, a security questionnaire and background interview, medical and psychological screening, polygraph testing, and urinalysis testing. They then attend a 4- to 5-week DEA investigative training course in Leesburg, VA. After they are screened and trained, the vetted foreign police are to receive ongoing training as well as random polygraph and urinalysis testing.

The Vetted Unit Program initially began in Mexico in May 1996. After the Government of Mexico approved the concept, 21 Mexican police were screened and then trained by DEA. The vetting process was completed in November 1996, and the Mexico National Sensitive Investigative Unit (SIU) became operational in January 1997.

DEA then expanded the program to other countries. For fiscal year 1997, Congress appropriated \$20 million to support vetted units in Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. In March 1997, the DEA Administrator authorized immediate implementation of vetting in Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru. He also authorized programs in Brazil and Thailand for 1998. The \$20 million appropriation for vetted units in fiscal year 1997 is now part of DEA's budget base and has recurred each subsequent fiscal year.

According to DEA, as of October 1998, vetted units, which were designed to engage in intelligence collection, investigations of drug traffickers, or both, were operational in Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. Program start-up costs in fiscal years 1997 and 1998 amounted to a total of \$7.4 million for Bolivia, \$5.3 million for Colombia, \$4.6 million for Mexico, and \$4.4 million for Peru.¹⁰ According to a DEA official, it took an average of about 6 months to complete the screening and training of the foreign police from the time they were identified to DEA as candidates selected by the host governments for the program, although the actual length of time varied because of factors such as limited availability of polygraphers. As shown in table 2.11, the number of vetted officers varied by country. Each vetted unit had one or two DEA agents assigned for assistance, liaison, and case support.

Table 2.11: Number of Vetted Units and Officers on Board by Country, as of September 30, 1998

Country	Number of vetted units	Number of vetted officers
Bolivia	4	172
Colombia	4	112
Mexico	3	232
Peru	2	135
Total	13	651

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

The following summarizes the status and accomplishments of the existing vetted units under the program as of September 30, 1998, according to DEA.

- Bolivia had four SIUs with vetted personnel. Three SIUs each had 25 Bolivian National Police, and a fourth unit had 97 personnel. The SIUs were located in La Paz, Santa Cruz, and Cochabamba. Two of the SIUs collect intelligence, conduct investigations, and arrest targeted drug traffickers, while the other two SIUs concentrate primarily on collecting

¹⁰ Program start-up costs for the vetted units included expenditures for such items as recruiting, vetting, training, equipment, facilities maintenance, salary supplements for foreign police, operational support, and conducting investigations.

intelligence. DEA reported that the Bolivian SIUs' efforts through fiscal year 1998 resulted in 1,206 arrests and seizures of 3,201 kilograms of cocaine hydrochloride (HCL), 5,392 kilograms of cocaine base, and \$15.8 million in assets.

- Colombia had 4 vetted units consisting of 112 members. The Major Investigations Unit in Bogota had 39 personnel, including both investigators and prosecutors. This unit focused on drug trafficking in the major cities of Colombia, such as Cali, Medellin, and Barranquilla. The Financial Investigation Unit had 14 investigators who focused on money laundering in financial institutions in Colombia's major cities. The Intelligence Group consisted of 39 personnel headquartered in Bogota and operating in the major drug producing regions. This unit collected intelligence to support investigations of Colombian drug trafficking organizations by other CNP units. The fourth vetted unit, consisting of 20 members, monitors the diversion of precursor substances from legitimate manufacturers for the production of illegal drugs. DEA reported that the Colombian vetted units' efforts through fiscal year 1998 resulted in 63 arrests and seizures of 6,398 kilograms of cocaine HCL and cocaine base, 6 kilograms of heroin, and \$250,000 in U.S. currency.
- Mexico had 3 vetted units made up of 232 vetted and trained personnel. The Mexico National SIU, operating out of Mexico City, had 14 Mexican Federal Narcotics Investigators assigned to collect intelligence on Mexican drug traffickers. The Border Task Forces had 106 Mexican Federal Narcotics Investigators. The task forces operated out of regional headquarters in Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, and Monterrey—all along the U.S.-Mexico Border—and Guadalajara. The task forces had a mission similar to the SIU, but the task force investigators were also responsible for executing warrants and making arrests. The narcotics section of the Organized Crime Unit was made up of 112 Mexican federal attorney-investigators and narcotics investigators. This unit's mission was to use information from court-ordered electronic intelligence collection to investigate high-level drug trafficking groups, as well as drug-related money laundering groups, throughout Mexico. The unit's headquarters was in Mexico City, but the assigned personnel were often located in other cities. DEA did not report the number of arrests or seizures for the Mexican vetted units, but noted there had been arrests made in three major organizations, including one of the largest drug cartels in Mexico.
- Peru had 2 vetted units, with a total of 135 personnel. One unit, an intelligence group, consisted of 52 vetted personnel and specialized in collecting intelligence and targeting drug traffickers to support the second unit, the investigation group with 83 vetted police. Both units were headquartered in Lima and operated throughout the cocaine production regions of Peru. DEA reported that the Peruvian vetted units' efforts

through fiscal year 1998 resulted in 199 arrests and seizures of 819 kilograms of cocaine HCL, 2,297 kilograms of cocaine base, 4,350 gallons of precursor chemicals, and numerous weapons and ammunition.

In commenting on a draft of our report, DEA officials informed us that as of April 1999, 2 vetted units with 25 and 75 vetted personnel, respectively, were fully operational in Thailand; 1 vetted unit with a total of 16 vetted personnel was operational in Brazil; and vetted antinarcotics police were expected to be operational in Pakistan in early fiscal year 2000. The officials also noted that assessments were scheduled for Ecuador and Nigeria in May and June, respectively, to examine the future suitability of vetted units in those countries.

Conclusions

DEA expanded its enforcement strategy in the 1990s to focus its operations on what it refers to as the seamless continuum of drug trafficking. It placed emphasis on investigating gangs, drug dealers, and drug-related violence in local communities while continuing to target higher level drug traffickers involved in major national and international drug trafficking organizations. DEA's programs and initiatives discussed in this chapter—for example, its state and local task forces, its MET Program, SOD's initiatives, and its foreign operations—are consistent with DEA's mission and responsibilities to enforce the nation's drug laws and bring drug traffickers to justice, as described in chapter 1.

In carrying out its strategy, DEA's domestic enforcement efforts placed more emphasis on, and devoted more resources to, assisting and working with local law enforcement agencies than in the past. Consequently, funds and staff devoted to DEA's State and Local Task Force Program increased in the 1990s. Also, although not in substantial numbers in comparison to DEA's total dollar and staff resources, DEA began and continued to fund and dedicate agents to the MET Program during the 1990s. These programs targeted drug traffickers operating primarily at the local and regional levels. DEA provided examples of what it considered to be successful program operations at these levels and reported various program results, including federal and state arrests and convictions and seizures of drugs and assets.

To improve the effectiveness of its domestic and international efforts directed at national and international drug trafficking organizations in the 1990s, DEA established and invested increased resources in SOD to continue and enhance the investigative approach initiated under its former Kingpin Strategy. SOD, like the Kingpin Strategy, emphasizes targeting the

Chapter 2**DEA Expanded Its Focus in the 1990s to Target Local Drug Dealers in Addition to Major Drug Trafficking Organizations**

command and control communications of major traffickers. Consequently, the number of DEA electronic surveillances rose significantly in the 1990s. DEA documented the results of some Kingpin and SOD operations that it considered to be successful in disrupting and dismantling major national and international trafficking organizations. However, DEA did not compile results data on all Kingpin and SOD operations, cases they supported, or leads they disseminated.

DEA also made changes to improve its foreign efforts directed at international drug trafficking organizations. In this regard, it has participated in two major interagency programs established in the 1990s to target major organizations in Latin America and Asia. The programs have led to the arrests of some high-level drug traffickers. In addition, the specially trained vetted units of foreign police initiated in recent years by DEA may help increase the sharing of information and the trust level between DEA and foreign police participating in those units. This, in turn, may help DEA and its foreign counterparts in targeting major traffickers and disrupting and dismantling trafficking organizations based in the participating foreign countries, as indicated by the initial results reported by DEA.

Agency Comments

In its written comments on a draft of this report, DEA stated that, overall, the report provides a detailed and factual background of DEA strategies and special operations. DEA also provided a number of technical comments and clarifications, which we incorporated in this chapter and other sections of this report.

DEA Has Not Yet Developed Performance Targets Consistent With the National Drug Control Strategy

DEA's strategic goals and objectives, along with its enhanced programs and initiatives in the 1990s discussed in chapter 2, are consistent with the strategic goals of ONDCP's National Drug Control Strategy. Both the National Strategy and DEA hope to reduce illegal drug supply and drug-related crime and violence by disrupting or dismantling drug trafficking organizations.

The National Strategy contains mid- and long-term measurable performance targets¹ for 2002 and 2007 that identify the extent to which the National Strategy seeks to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations. However, DEA has not yet established comparable measurable performance targets for its operations.

Throughout this chapter, we use footnotes to explain various planning and performance measurement terms as defined by OMB, ONDCP, and DOJ. We also include a glossary at the end of this report, which provides an alphabetical listing of the various planning and performance measurement terms used in this report and their definitions.

DEA's Strategic Goals and Objectives, and Its Programs, Are Consistent With the National Strategy

DEA's strategic goals and objectives, and enhanced programs and initiatives in the 1990s for carrying out its mission are consistent with the National Strategy's strategic goals and objectives defining a 10-year commitment to reduce drug abuse. DEA's mission, as described in chapter 1, is an important element of the National Strategy and DEA, through the implementation of its programs and initiatives as discussed in chapter 2, is a major participant in the National Strategy. As discussed below, we reviewed the National Strategy's strategic goals and objectives, and compared them with DEA's strategic goals and objectives and its programs for consistency.

National Strategy Goals and Objectives

ONDCP has produced National Strategies annually since 1989. Since 1996, the National Strategy has included five strategic goals (listed in ch. 1) and related strategic objectives. These goals and objectives are the basis for a long-term national antidrug effort aimed at reducing the supply of and demand for illicit drugs and the consequences of drug abuse and trafficking. The goals define the major directives of the strategy. The objectives, which are more narrowly focused, stipulate the specific ways in which goals are to be obtained. The 1998 strategy provided a 10-year plan to reduce illegal drug use and availability by 50 percent by the year 2007.

¹ A performance target, as defined by ONDCP for the purpose of the National Strategy, means the desired end state to be achieved; it is a measurable level of performance against which actual achievement can be compared.

Chapter 3

DEA Has Not Yet Developed Performance Targets Consistent With the National Drug Control Strategy

The 1999 National Strategy also continued the goals but eliminated 1 objective, reducing the total number of objectives to 31.

The National Strategy is intended to guide the approximately 50 federal agencies with drug control responsibilities. DEA has significant responsibilities for helping to achieve the following three National Strategy goals.²

- Strategy goal 2: Increase the safety of American citizens by substantially reducing drug-related crime and violence.
- Strategy goal 4: Shield America's air, land, and sea frontiers from the drug threat.
- Strategy goal 5: Break foreign and domestic drug sources of supply.

For these 3 strategy goals, the National Strategy has 15 supporting objectives, at least 10 of which relate to DEA. Table 3.1 identifies the strategy goals and objectives for which DEA has responsibilities.

² DEA has a small drug demand reduction program (\$3.4 million for fiscal year 1999) that supports strategy goal 1: Educate and enable America's youth to reject illegal drugs as well as the use of alcohol and tobacco.

Table 3.1: National Strategy Goals and Objectives for Which DEA Has Responsibilities

Strategy goals	Strategy objectives
Strategy goal 2—Increase the safety of American citizens by substantially reducing drug-related crime and violence.	Objective 1—Strengthen law enforcement—including federal, state, and local drug task forces—to combat drug-related violence, disrupt criminal organizations, and arrest and prosecute the leaders of illegal drug syndicates. Objective 2—Improve the ability of High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) to counter drug trafficking. Objective 3—Help law enforcement to disrupt money laundering and seize and forfeit criminal assets.
Strategy goal 4—Shield America’s air, land, and sea frontiers from the drug threat.	Objective 1—Conduct flexible operations to detect, disrupt, deter, and seize illegal drugs in transit to the United States and at its borders. Objective 2—Improve the coordination and effectiveness of U.S. drug law enforcement programs with particular emphasis on the Southwest Border, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Objective 3—Improve bilateral and regional cooperation with Mexico as well as other cocaine and heroin transit-zone countries in order to reduce the flow of illegal drugs into the United States.
Strategy goal 5—Break foreign and domestic drug sources of supply.	Objective 1—Produce a net reduction in the worldwide cultivation of coca, opium, and marijuana and in the production of other illegal drugs, especially methamphetamine. Objective 2—Disrupt and dismantle major international drug trafficking organizations and arrest, prosecute, and incarcerate their leaders. Objective 3—Support and complement source country drug control efforts and strengthen source country political will and drug control capabilities. Objective 4—Develop and support bilateral, regional, and multilateral initiatives and mobilize international organizational efforts against all aspects of illegal drug production, trafficking, and abuse.

Source: GAO analysis of ONDCP’s 1998 Performance Measures of Effectiveness (PME) document and DEA’s performance plan for fiscal year 2000.

Recently, as part of its reauthorization legislation,³ ONDCP became responsible for monitoring the consistency between the drug-related goals and objectives of drug control agencies to ensure that their goals and budgets support and are fully consistent with the National Strategy. In its National Drug Control Budget Summary for 1999, ONDCP reported that DEA has various programs and initiatives that support strategy goals 1,⁴ 2, 4, and 5.

DEA's Strategic Goals and Objectives

DEA's most recent planning document is its performance plan for fiscal year 2000,⁵ which it issued in February 1999, in response to the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993⁶ (the Results Act).⁷ That plan contains information on DEA's vision, mission, strategic goals, strategic objectives, and performance indicators.⁸

DEA listed three strategic goals and nine strategic objectives for carrying out its mission:

- DEA strategic goal 1—disrupt/dismantle the leadership, command, control, and infrastructure of drug syndicates, gangs, and traffickers of illicit drugs;
- DEA strategic goal 2—reduce the impact of crime and violence that is the result of drug trafficking activity by providing federal investigative resources to assist local communities; and
- DEA strategic goal 3—facilitate drug law enforcement efforts directed against major drug trafficking organizations by cooperating and coordinating with federal, state, local, and foreign law enforcement and intelligence counterparts.

³ Office of National Drug Control Policy Reauthorization Act of 1998, P.L. 105-277, 112 Stat. 2681, 2681-670 (1998).

⁴ DEA has a small drug demand reduction program (\$3.4 million for fiscal year 1999) that supports strategy goal 1: Educate and enable America's youth to reject illegal drugs as well as the use of alcohol and tobacco.

⁵ Drug Enforcement Administration GPRA Annual Performance Plan FY 2000, February 1999.

⁶ P.L. 103-62.

⁷ DOJ prepares strategic and annual performance plans to meet the requirements of the Results Act and requires its component organizations, such as DEA, to prepare annual performance plans even though they are not required to do so under the Act. DOJ considers its components' performance plans to be an integral part of the department's annual summary performance plan.

⁸ A performance indicator, as defined by OMB for the purposes of the Results Act, means a particular value or characteristic used to measure output or outcome. Performance indicators are associated with performance goals in the annual performance plan.

Along with its strategic goals, DEA listed the following nine strategic objectives:

- DEA strategic objective 1—attack the command and control of international and domestic drug trafficking organizations through the arrest, prosecution, conviction, and incarceration of their criminal leaders and surrogates;
- DEA strategic objective 2—concentrate enforcement efforts along the Southwest Border to disrupt, dismantle, and immobilize organized criminal groups operating from Mexico;
- DEA strategic objective 3—direct enforcement efforts at the escalating threat posed by heroin;
- DEA strategic objective 4—address the dual threats presented by methamphetamine and resurgence in marijuana trafficking;
- DEA strategic objective 5—assist local law enforcement by deploying METs into communities where drug trafficking and related violent crime are rampant;
- DEA strategic objective 6—prevent the diversion of controlled substances and control the distribution of chemicals used to manufacture illicit drugs;
- DEA strategic objective 7—enhance intelligence programs to facilitate information sharing and develop new methods to structure and define drug trafficking organizations;
- DEA strategic objective 8—support interdiction efforts to target drug transshipments destined for the United States; and
- DEA strategic objective 9—seize and forfeit assets and proceeds derived from drug trafficking.

DEA did not align each of its objectives with any particular goals.

Comparison of DEA Strategic Goals and Objectives, and Its Programs, With the National Strategy

Because DEA is the nation's lead drug enforcement agency, its strategic goals and objectives and its programs should be consistent with the National Strategy. Table 3.2 shows DEA's strategic goals compared to National Strategy goals for drug supply reduction.

Table 3.2: Comparison of DEA Strategic Goals With National Strategy Goals

DEA strategic goals	National Strategy goals for drug supply reduction
<u>DEA strategic goal 1</u> —In order to safeguard Americans, DEA will disrupt/dismantle the leadership, command, control, and infrastructure of drug syndicates, gangs, and traffickers of illicit drugs that threaten Americans and erode the quality of life in our communities.	<u>National Strategy goal 2</u> —Increase the safety of American citizens by substantially reducing drug-related crime and violence.
<u>DEA strategic goal 2</u> —In order to reduce the impact of crime and violence that is the result of drug trafficking activity, DEA will provide federal investigative resources to assist local communities.	<u>National Strategy goal 4</u> —Shield America’s air, land, and sea frontiers from the drug threat.
<u>DEA strategic goal 3</u> —In order to facilitate drug law enforcement efforts directed against major drug trafficking organizations, DEA will cooperate and coordinate with our federal, state, local, and foreign law enforcement and intelligence counterparts	<u>National Strategy goal 5</u> —Break foreign and domestic drug sources of supply.

Source: GAO analysis of ONDCP’s 1999 National Drug Control Strategy and DEA’s performance plan for fiscal year 2000.

DEA’s first strategic goal aimed at dismantling and disrupting drug trafficking organizations is consistent with National Strategy goal 4, which calls for shielding America’s air, land, and sea frontiers from the drug threat, as well as with goal 5, which calls for breaking foreign and domestic sources of drug supply. DEA’s goal for dismantling and disrupting trafficking organizations applies to all drug trafficking organizations regardless of where they operate—in the United States, in drug transshipment areas, at U.S. border areas, and in foreign countries.

Similarly, DEA’s strategic goal 2, which calls for providing federal investigative resources to local communities for reducing drug-related crime and violence, is consistent with National Strategy goal 2, which also calls for reducing drug-related crime and violence.

DEA’s strategic goal 3, which calls for DEA to cooperate and coordinate with federal, state, local, and foreign law enforcement and intelligence counterparts, is consistent with National Strategy goals 2, 4, and 5. By coordinating and cooperating with other law enforcement and intelligence groups, DEA’s coordinated efforts reach out in support of the National Strategy’s three supply reduction goals.

As with its goals, DEA’s strategic objectives are also consistent with the objectives of the National Strategy. For example, as can be seen in table 3.3, various DEA strategic objectives for dismantling and disrupting domestic and international drug trafficking organizations, providing

assistance to local communities to reduce drug-related violence, and supporting drug interdiction efforts align with National Strategy objectives.

Table 3.3: Comparison of Selected DEA and National Strategy Objectives

DEA strategic objectives	National Strategy objectives
Assist local law enforcement by deploying METs into communities where drug trafficking and related violence are rampant (DEA strategic objective 5).	Strengthen law enforcement, including federal, state, and local drug task forces, to combat drug-related violence, disrupt criminal organizations, and arrest and prosecute the leader of illegal drug syndicates (National Strategy objective 1 for goal 2).
Concentrate enforcement efforts along the Southwest Border to disrupt, dismantle, and immobilize organized criminal groups operating from Mexico (DEA strategic objective 2).	Conduct flexible operations to detect, disrupt, deter, and seize illegal drugs in transit to the United States and U.S. borders (National strategy objective 1 for goal 4).
Support interdiction efforts to target drug transshipments destined for the United States (DEA strategic objective 8).	Disrupt and dismantle major international drug trafficking organizations and arrest, prosecute, and incarcerate their leaders (National Strategy objective 2 for goal 5).
Attack the command and control of international and domestic drug trafficking organizations through the arrest, prosecution, conviction, and incarceration of their criminal leaders and surrogates (DEA strategic objective 1).	

Source: GAO's analysis of ONDCP's 1999 National Drug Control Strategy and DEA's performance plan for fiscal year 2000.

In addition, as with its strategic goals and objectives, DEA's programs and initiatives in the 1990s as discussed in chapter 2 are also consistent with the goals of the National Strategy. During the 1990s, DEA has enhanced or changed important aspects of its operations, that is, its strategies, programs, initiatives, and approaches.

- DEA gave a higher priority than in the past to and increased resources for working with and assisting state and local law enforcement agencies through its State and Local Task Force Program and started the MET Program to help combat drug-related violent crime in local communities.
- DEA established the Kingpin Strategy, which evolved into SOD, placing greater emphasis on intercepting communications between top-level drug traffickers and their subordinates (i.e., attacking the "command and control" communications of major drug trafficking organizations) to dismantle their entire trafficking operations.
- DEA started participating in two interagency programs—Linear Approach and Linkage Approach—to target and investigate major drug trafficking organizations in Latin America and Asia.
- DEA helped establish, train, and fund special foreign police units to combat drug trafficking in certain key foreign countries, primarily in Latin America.

These and other drug law enforcement programs and initiatives discussed in detail in chapter 2 are consistent with National Strategy goals 2, 4, and 5 previously discussed in this chapter and described in table 3.1. For example, DEA's MET Program, started in 1995, is consistent with National Strategy goal 2, which calls for increasing the safety of American citizens by substantially reducing drug-related crime and violence.

DEA Has Not Developed Performance Targets Consistent With Those in the National Strategy

The 1999 National Strategy established performance targets calling for specific increases in the percentage of drug trafficking organizations disrupted and dismantled. These targets are measurable and can be used to assess the collective performance of drug control agencies responsible for achieving them. However, although DEA is the lead drug enforcement agency, it has not established similar measurable performance targets for its own operations.

To measure the effectiveness and performance of the National Strategy, ONDCP established 5 and 10 year performance targets and performance measures.⁹ These performance targets and measures are intended, in part, to enable policymakers, program managers, and the public to determine efforts that are contributing to the strategic goals and objectives of the National Strategy.

National Strategy Performance Measurement System

To track and measure progress in achieving the strategic goals and strategic objectives of the National Strategy, ONDCP issued its Performance Measures of Effectiveness (PME) system in February 1998.¹⁰ This system is a 10-year plan that identifies performance targets and related performance measures as the means for assessing the progress of the National Strategy in achieving its strategic goals and objectives. The PME system contains 97 performance targets. Although originally undertaken as a policy decision to bring more accountability to drug policy, the PME system is now grounded in legislation. The Office of National Drug Control Policy Reauthorization Act of 1998 requires ONDCP to submit an annual report to Congress on the PME system. ONDCP issued its first annual status report in February 1999.¹¹

⁹ A performance measure, as defined by ONDCP for the purposes of the National Strategy, means data, variables, and events used to track progress toward performance targets. Measures show how progress toward targets will be tracked.

¹⁰ Performance Measures of Effectiveness, A System for Assessing the Performance of the National Drug Control Strategy, 1998–2007, Office of National Drug Control Policy, Feb. 1998.

¹¹ National Drug Control Strategy 1999 Performance Measures of Effectiveness: Implementation and Findings, Office of National Drug Control Policy, Feb. 1999.

Beginning in 1996, interagency working groups involving federal agencies, including DEA, along with outside experts developed the PME performance targets through a consensual process. The performance targets were incorporated into the PME plan issued in February 1998. After the initial PME plan was issued, interagency working groups, including those involving DEA, continued developing, refining, and implementing the PME system during 1998. The working groups, among other things, focused on

- developing specific action plans identifying the responsibilities of each agency in working towards the PME performance targets and
- identifying annual targets that correspond to the achievement of the 5 and 10 year performance targets.

For each performance target, the PME system identifies a “reporting agency” (or “agencies” when there is shared responsibility) and “supporting agencies.” A reporting agency(s) is required to report to ONDCP on progress in achieving the performance target. However, the reporting agency is not necessarily the only agency responsible for achieving the target. Supporting agencies are to assist with data collection and assessment or have programs that contribute to achieving the target.

The initial 1998 PME system document identified performance targets relating to disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking organizations and arresting drug traffickers. These performance targets called for specific percentage increases in the number of domestic and international drug trafficking organizations disrupted or dismantled and the number of drug traffickers arrested by 2002 and 2007. DEA was designated as the sole reporting agency for performance targets aimed at decreasing the capabilities of domestic and international drug trafficking organizations and traffickers. DEA shared reporting-agency responsibilities with HIDTAs for the performance target aimed at drug trafficking organizations identified in HIDTA threat assessments.

As a result of the PME implementation process in 1998, changes were made to performance targets for drug trafficking organizations and drug traffickers. These changes were reported in the 1999 PME report. The performance target for domestic drug traffickers was deleted. The target for international drug traffickers was combined with the target for international drug trafficking organizations to focus on one manageable

Chapter 3

DEA Has Not Yet Developed Performance Targets Consistent With the National Drug Control Strategy

target. In addition, DEA was deleted as a reporting agency for the performance target aimed at drug trafficking organizations identified in HIDTA threat assessments.

Tables 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6 show the performance targets and related performance measures for disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking organizations, along with the current status of achieving the targets as reported by ONDCP in its 1999 PME report.

Table 3.4: National Drug Control Strategy Performance Target and Performance Measure for Disrupting and Dismantling Domestic Drug Trafficking Organizations

Performance target	Performance measure	ONDCP current status statement
Target: By 2002, using a prioritized list of domestic drug law enforcement community designated targets, increase by 5 points the percentage of drug organizations disrupted, dismantled, or otherwise rendered ineffective as measured against the percentage recorded in the 1997 base year. By 2007, increase the target percentage by at least 10 points above the base year.	Measure: The percentage of targeted organizations on the counterdrug community's designated target list that are disrupted, dismantled, or otherwise rendered ineffective, measured annually. Reporting agency: DEA Supporting federal agencies: Department of Defense (DOD), Department of State, FBI, U.S. Customs Service, and the Department of the Treasury.	Data source: To be determined. Relevant data: None Status: ONDCP will charter an interagency working group to develop a consolidated Major Drug Trafficking Organization Target List. The working group will more clearly define what constitutes a major drug trafficking organization and what criteria will be used to determine when an organization has been disrupted, dismantled, or otherwise rendered ineffective. Since no such list currently exists, the base year will need to be adjusted once the list has been developed. Annual performance targets will be constructed after the target list has been developed.

Source: ONDCP's 1999 National Drug Control Strategy PME report.

Table 3.5: National Strategy Performance Target and Performance Measure for Disrupting and Dismantling International Drug Trafficking Organizations and Arresting Their Leaders

Performance target	Performance measure	ONDCP current status statement
Target: By 2002, measuring against the prioritized list of community designated targets established in the 1998 base year, achieve a 50 percent success rate of targeted organizations dismantled or significantly disrupted by either (1) having their principal leaders arrested and incarcerated or otherwise rendered ineffective; or (2) making substantial seizures of those organizations' narcotics, money, or other assets, or arrests of their key network associates, that significantly impair their ability to operate at normal levels for an extended period of time. By 2007, increase the success rate to 100 percent as measured against the 1998 base year list. For additional targets added to the list after the 1998 base year, achieve a similar success rate of at least 10 percent per year as measured against the year in which they were added to the list.	Measure: The percentage of designated drug trafficking organizations dismantled or significantly disrupted either through the incarceration of their principal leaders or through the substantial seizure of their assets or the incarceration of their network key associates, measured annually. Reporting agency: DEA Supporting federal agencies: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), DOD, FBI, and the U.S. Customs Service.	Data Source: To be determined. Relevant Data: None Status: This target was revised by combining two targets—trafficking organizations and traffickers—identified in the initial 1998 PME plan. Annual performance targets are under development.

Source: ONDCP's 1999 National Drug Control Strategy PME report.

Table 3.6: National Drug Control Strategy Performance Target and Performance Measure for Disrupting and Dismantling Drug Trafficking Organizations in HIDTAs

Performance target	Performance measure	ONDCP current status statement
Target: By 2002, increase the proportion of drug trafficking organizations disrupted or dismantled as identified in HIDTA threat assessments by 15 percent above the proportion in the 1997 base year. By 2007, increase the proportion disrupted or dismantled to 30 percent above the base year ratio.	Measure: The proportion of identified drug trafficking organizations disrupted or dismantled by or within HIDTAs. Reporting agency: Each HIDTA Supporting federal agencies: DEA, DOD, Department of State, FBI, U.S. Customs Service, and the Department of the Treasury.	Data Source: HIDTA threat assessments will serve as the foundation of the list. Relevant Data: The Bureau of Justice Statistics collects data on the number of traffickers convicted and sentenced. In 1991, drug trafficking offenses accounted for 19 percent of all defendants convicted. Status: The ONDCP HIDTA Director will develop a consolidated list of the number of drug trafficking organizations targeted by each HIDTA. This HIDTA target will be prepared prior to the beginning of each year. At the end of each year, ONDCP will measure the proportion of those targeted organizations that have been disrupted or dismantled. After the base year proportion has been determined for 1997, the annual target will be revised to reflect the target proportion for each year.

Source: ONDCP's 1999 National Drug Control Strategy PME report.

As can be seen in the tables, the National Strategy performance targets and measures are quantifiable and outcome oriented and can be readily used to assess performance following collection of proposed baseline data on lists of drug trafficking organizations. DEA, with assistance from supporting agencies such as the FBI, is to report progress by the drug law enforcement community in dismantling or disrupting a percentage of identified domestic and international drug trafficking organizations. However, ONDCP, in reporting on the current status of the performance targets for which DEA is the reporting agency, noted that data on drug trafficking organizations needed to assess performance had not been identified nor had annual performance targets been established. Further, according to ONDCP and DEA, neither the domestic nor international designated target lists referred to in tables 3.4 and 3.5 have been developed.

According to ONDCP officials, DEA and various supporting agencies are working toward developing lists of domestic and foreign drug trafficking organizations for use in pursuing the performance targets. ONDCP officials said that the time frames for reporting on performance targets for dismantling and disrupting drug trafficking organizations and their leaders are (1) 1999 for defining organizations and developing trafficker lists, (2) 2000 for collecting data, and (3) 2001 for reporting on data and gauging performance.

According to ONDCP's 1999 report, its PME system tracks the performance of the numerous programs that support each strategy goal and objective. The accomplishment of National Strategy goals and objectives generally require the contributions of many agency programs. The PME system does not track an individual agency's performance nor is it designed to do so. According to ONDCP, agencies such as DEA are required to track their own performance through their Results Act plans, and these plans should be consistent with the National Strategy and the PME system.

DEA Goals Do Not Include Measurable Performance Targets

Over the years, DEA has used arrest and seizure data (drugs and assets) along with examples of significant enforcement accomplishments, such as descriptions of successful operations, to demonstrate its effectiveness in carrying out its enforcement programs and initiatives. However, these data are not useful indicators for reporting on results because arrest and seizure data relate to outputs (activities) and not to outcomes (results). These arrest and seizure data do not present a picture of overall

performance or of DEA's level of success in achieving its goals. Further, the use of arrest data as a performance indicator can be misleading without information on the significance of the arrests and the extent to which they lead to prosecutions and convictions. In addition, using arrest data as a performance target can lead to undesirable consequences when law enforcement agencies place undue emphasis on increasing the numbers of arrests at the expense of developing quality investigations.

More recently, with passage of the Results Act, DEA has been attempting to go beyond reporting outputs to reporting outcomes. In response to the Results Act, DEA prepared annual performance plans for fiscal years 1999 and 2000 that contain information on its strategic goals and objectives and its performance indicators.¹²

DEA's Performance Plan for Fiscal Year 1999

In its fiscal year 1999 performance plan issued in January 1998, DEA described its strategic goals, strategies for achieving those goals, annual goals, and performance indicators. DEA associated these goals, strategies, and performance indicators with its various programs and initiatives.

For example, DEA's strategic goals for "enforcement" provided that DEA will

"... disrupt/dismantle the leadership, command, control, and infrastructure of drug syndicates, gangs, and traffickers, of licit and illicit drugs that threaten Americans and American interests."

Under this goal, DEA's primary strategy provided that DEA will

"... implement drug law enforcement strategies that target and attack the leadership and infrastructure of major drug syndicates, gangs, and traffickers of licit and illicit drugs that threaten America."

Under its strategic goal for enforcement and related strategy, DEA listed annual goals for its domestic enforcement program, including its Southwest Border, Caribbean Corridor, methamphetamine, and heroin initiatives. These annual goals generally stated that DEA would continue or increase its investigative efforts leading to increased arrests and seizures and a reduction in the trafficking capability of drug organizations. For

¹² Among other requirements, the Results Act requires that performance plans (1) establish performance goals; (2) express those goals in an objective, quantifiable, and measurable form, unless OMB approves otherwise; (3) establish performance indicators for assessing progress toward or achievement of the goals; and (4) provide a basis for comparing actual program results with the established goals.

example, DEA's annual goal for its general enforcement activities, including its Southwest Border initiative, stated that:

"DEA will continue its investigative efforts, including the application of forfeiture laws, especially along the Southwest border. This will produce an increase in the number of arrests, removals, and seizures. The primary outcome will be a reduction in the trafficking capability of drug organizations, particularly those associated with the Mexican Federation, that use the southwest border in transshipment."

To assess the extent to which it was accomplishing its strategic and annual goals to reduce trafficking capability, DEA's plan listed performance indicators that were not results oriented. DEA planned to measure performance, using data on total numbers of arrests and total number of major criminal enterprises and other drug trafficking organizations disrupted or dismantled. However, DEA did not identify performance targets for its goals, such as the proportion of identified drug trafficking organizations to be disrupted and dismantled, against which its performance could be assessed. DEA's fiscal year 1999 plan had no annual, mid- or long-range performance targets for disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking organizations.

DEA noted in its performance plan for fiscal year 1999 that data on the number of drug trafficking organizations had not been previously collected and reported and would be available by March 1, 1998. But it never reported these data in its subsequent performance plan for fiscal year 2000. DEA also pointed out that although several of its performance indicators were in the developmental stage, their establishment would help to provide the framework for future evaluations of DEA's efforts.

DEA's Performance Plan for Fiscal Year 2000

DEA organized its fiscal year 2000 performance plan—issued in February 1999—differently from its 1999 plan to align it with its three major budget activities—enforcement, investigative support, and program direction. DEA organized its fiscal year 2000 plan around what it identified as its three core business systems: (1) enforcement of federal laws and investigations, (2) investigative support, and (3) program direction. Along with information on its 3 core business systems and 15 subsystems, the plan, as previously described, listed DEA's strategic goals and objectives. However, unlike its 1999 performance plan, the fiscal year 2000 plan did not have clearly identifiable annual goals.

For its core business system for the enforcement of federal laws and investigation, DEA listed the following:

Chapter 3

DEA Has Not Yet Developed Performance Targets Consistent With the National Drug Control Strategy

“Through effective enforcement effort, DEA will disrupt/dismantle the command & control, and infrastructure of drug syndicates, gangs, and traffickers of licit and illicit drugs that threaten Americans and American interests, including providing enforcement assistance to American Communities to fight drug-related crime and violence.”

Related to its core business system for enforcement, DEA’s fiscal year 2000 performance plan listed a strategic goal and objectives for disrupting drug trafficking organizations. DEA’s description of its core business system and its strategic goal and objective are similar. However, as with its fiscal year 1999 plan, DEA’s fiscal year 2000 plan does not include annual, mid- or long-range measurable performance targets for disrupting or dismantling drug trafficking organizations.

Although DEA does not have a performance target for dismantling international drug trafficking organizations, it does have a performance indicator that may lead to a performance target that is consistent with the target in the National Strategy. DEA’s fiscal year 2000 performance plan contains a performance indicator specifying that DEA plans to use data on the number of targeted organizations disrupted or dismantled as a result of DEA involvement in foreign investigations compared to the total number of targeted organizations as a basis for measuring performance. The plan notes, however, that DEA is currently not collecting data for this performance indicator but expects to do so during fiscal year 1999.

For domestic drug trafficking organizations, DEA’s plan does not include a performance indicator that is quantifiable and results oriented similar to the one it specified for international drug organizations. DEA has no performance indicator specifying that it will measure performance on the basis of the number of targeted domestic organizations disrupted and dismantled compared to the total number of targeted organizations. Further, DEA’s fiscal year 2000 performance plan does not indicate that DEA plans to collect data on domestic drug trafficking organizations for development of a performance target that is consistent with the target in the National Strategy. It is unclear whether DEA plans to develop a performance target for its program aimed at disrupting and dismantling domestic drug trafficking that would be consistent with the performance target and the national effort called for in the National Strategy.

DEA’s fiscal year 2000 performance plan indicates that DEA will be reporting on prior year arrests resulting in prosecutions and convictions as a performance indicator for measuring its enforcement efforts. As required by DOJ policy, to avoid perceptions of “bounty hunting” DEA and other DOJ component organizations cannot specify performance targets for arrests. However, DOJ’s policy would not preclude DEA from developing a

performance target and performance indicator for domestic drug trafficking organizations consistent with those in the National Strategy. The National Strategy performance targets do not involve projecting increased numbers of arrests; rather, they call for increasing the percentage of targeted drug trafficking organizations dismantled or disrupted.

In addition to the lack of result-oriented performance indicators and performance targets for its programs aimed at domestic drug trafficking organizations, DEA's plan lacks performance targets and related performance indicators for other mission-critical programs. For example, DEA's core business system for enforcement and one of its strategic goals call for assistance to local communities to reduce drug-related crime and violence. However, DEA has not established a performance target and performance indicator that could be used to measure the results of its assistance to local communities. In this regard, DEA has a strategic objective calling for assistance to local law enforcement by deploying METs, discussed in chapter 2, into communities where drug trafficking and related crime are rampant. However, DEA has not identified a performance target and performance indicator to measure the results of its MET Program even though, as discussed in chapter 2, resources dedicated to METs and other forms of assistance to local law enforcement have continued to grow in the 1990s. Thus, it is unclear how DEA will measure the results of its strategic objective calling for MET deployments.

In the program accomplishment and highlight section of its performance plan for fiscal year 2000, DEA states that "[t]he effect of METs in reducing violent crime has been clearly established in 1998." The plan further points out that a comparison of violent crime statistics before and after MET deployments indicated reductions in violent crime in areas where MET deployments occurred. Using this type of results-oriented data, DEA should be able to specify a performance indicator that, when tied to a measurable performance target, could be used to assess the results of the MET Program in terms of actual versus expected performance.

In August 1998, DEA's Chief for Executive Policy and Strategic Planning, told us that DEA had not yet identified the performance goals and indicators it will ultimately use. She told us that at the direction of the Administrator, DEA was planning to bring its field representatives together with headquarters officials to obtain their views and input on DEA's goals, strategies, and performance indicators. In April 1999, she told us that the meeting with field representatives, which was initially planned for the fall of 1998 but was delayed pending hiring of a contractor, was expected to be

held by the summer of 1999. However, with the recent resignation of DEA's Administrator, these plans were placed on hold and not addressed in DEA comments on a draft of this report.

In addition, in April 1999, DEA's Chief for Executive Policy and Strategic Planning told us that DEA would have to work with DOJ in developing performance goals and indicators. In this regard, she said that DEA would be following the direction provided by DOJ in its departmentwide drug strategy.¹³ She also pointed out that ONDCP had not yet established a baseline (agreed-upon target list) for its National Strategy performance targets aimed at disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking organizations.

In commenting on a draft of this report in June 1999, DEA pointed out that DEA (1) has developed preliminary performance targets that were included in DEA's fiscal year 2001 budget submission to DOJ; (2) had established a working group consisting of representatives from its operations, strategic planning and executive policy, and resource management staffs to further refine its performance targets; and (3) is working with other DOJ components to develop performance targets and measurements that will be consistent with the targets in the National Strategy.

Difficulties in Measuring Drug Law Enforcement Outcomes

Measuring and evaluating the impact of drug law enforcement efforts is difficult for several reasons. First, antidrug efforts are often conducted by many agencies and are mutually supportive. It is difficult to isolate the contributions of a single agency or program, such as DEA's domestic enforcement program aimed at disrupting and dismantling major drug traffickers, from activities of other law enforcement agencies. Other factors that DEA has little control over, such as drug demand reduction efforts, may also affect drug trafficking operations.

Second, the clandestine nature of drug production, trafficking, and use limits the quality and quantity of data that can be collected to measure program performance. History has shown that drug trafficking organizations continually change their methods, patterns, and operations as law enforcement concentrates its resources and efforts on a specific region or method. Drug law enforcement agencies must continuously deal with unknown and imprecise data, such as the number of drug trafficking organizations and the amount of illegal drugs being trafficked.

¹³ Drug Control Strategic Plan, U.S. Department of Justice, March 31, 1998.

Third, some of the data that are currently collected are not very useful in assessing the performance of individual programs and agency efforts. As previously mentioned, data collected on arrests, drug seizures, and assets forfeited generally measure enforcement outputs but not outcomes. Further, data collected on drug availability and consumption are generally not designed to measure the performance of a single program or agency, and such data are influenced by other factors in addition to enforcement efforts.

Conclusions

DEA's strategic goals and objectives as well as its programs and initiatives are consistent with the National Drug Control Strategy. However, DEA has not developed performance targets for its programs and initiatives aimed at disrupting or dismantling drug trafficking organizations and arresting their leaders.

We recognize the complexity and difficulty of measuring outcomes and impact for drug law enforcement agencies operating in a clandestine drug trafficking environment. Nevertheless, without measurable performance targets and related performance indicators for its mission-critical programs, it is difficult for program managers, policymakers, and others to quantitatively assess DEA's overall effectiveness and the extent to which DEA's programs are contributing to its strategic goals and objectives and those of the National Strategy.

ONDCP has set specific measurable performance targets in the National Strategy for achieving strategic goals that it shares with DEA. DEA has worked with ONDCP and other federal drug control agencies to develop performance targets for the National Strategy and for measuring the progress of federal efforts toward those targets. However, although DEA is the lead federal drug enforcement agency and reporting agency for several National Strategy performance targets, it has not established similar measurable performance targets for its own operations. In this regard, DEA has not established similar measurable performance targets for its operations in either its fiscal years 1999 or 2000 annual performance plans although, as discussed below, it stated in its comments on a draft of this report that it has developed preliminary targets for inclusion in its fiscal year 2001 performance plan.

Measurable DEA performance targets, once finalized, coupled with continued refinement of the National Strategy performance targets on the basis of DEA input and leadership, along with DOJ guidance, should bring DEA and ONDCP closer in pursuing their shared goals and objectives for disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking organizations. Such

performance targets also should provide DEA with a better basis for measuring its own progress in achieving its mission and for making decisions regarding its resource needs and priorities as discussed in the next chapter.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Attorney General direct the DEA Administrator to work closely with DOJ and ONDCP to develop measurable DEA performance targets for disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking organizations consistent with the performance targets in the National Drug Control Strategy.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In its written comments on a draft of this report, although not directly agreeing with our recommendation, DEA agreed with our principal finding regarding measurable performance targets. However, it disagreed with our draft conclusion relating to the finding, pointed out actions it was taking relating to our recommendation, and requested guidance on bringing closure to the recommendation.

DEA agreed with our principal finding that it had not included measurable performance targets for disrupting or dismantling drug trafficking organizations in its fiscal years 1999 and 2000 performance plans. However, it disagreed with our draft conclusion that “In the absence of such targets, little can be said about DEA’s effectiveness in achieving its strategic goals.” DEA indicated that this statement and supporting information in this chapter gave the impression that DEA had not attempted to develop performance targets.

DEA said that it has developed “preliminary performance targets” that have been included in its fiscal year 2001 budget submission to DOJ and that are to be refined for inclusion in subsequent budgets. To further refine its performance targets, DEA said that it had established a working group consisting of representatives from its operations, strategic planning and executive policy, and resource management staffs. DEA also noted that it is working with other DOJ components to develop performance targets and measurements that will be consistent with the targets in the National Drug Control Strategy. To recognize these actions, we added them to the pertinent section of this chapter as an update to information previously provided by DEA. We also modified our draft conclusion that little can be said about DEA’s effectiveness without performance targets to clarify our intent that it is difficult to quantitatively assess DEA’s overall effectiveness without such targets.

Chapter 3**DEA Has Not Yet Developed Performance Targets Consistent With the National Drug Control Strategy**

DEA's stated actions are consistent with the intent of our recommendation. However, because DEA performance targets are preliminary and under review within the executive branch, they are subject to change until February 2000 when DEA issues its annual budget submission and performance plan, as part of DOJ's submission, to Congress. Further, DEA indicated that it cannot finalize its performance targets and measures until a designated targeted list of international drug trafficking organizations, as called for in the National Strategy, is completed. Therefore, we are retaining our recommendation until DEA's preliminary performance targets are finalized for inclusion in its annual performance plan and can be compared for consistency with those in the National Strategy.

DEA and ONDCP also provided technical comments, which we incorporated in this chapter where appropriate.

DEA's Staffing Needs Determination and Allocation Process for Fiscal Year 1998

In order to carry out its mission and operations during the 1990s, including the programs and initiatives discussed in chapter 2 and the strategies discussed in chapter 3, DEA received funds to staff its operations through several sources. These included its annual appropriations salaries and expenses budget; DOJ's Violent Crime Reduction Program (VCRP);¹ and other reimbursable programs, such as OCDETF. This chapter focuses on the process used to determine and allocate additional DEA positions provided through its salaries and expenses budget. Specifically, it discusses the process used in fiscal year 1998, which was, according to DEA and DOJ officials, generally typical of the approach DEA has used in other years.

The process used to determine the need for and to allocate additional DEA staff is linked to the federal budget formulation and execution process and reflects federal laws and budget guidelines promulgated by OMB. In fiscal year 1998, the DEA process considered field input, changes in drug abuse and drug trafficking patterns, and the Administrator's priorities to prepare its staffing enhancement estimates for its budget submission to DOJ. DEA's submission to DOJ estimated the need for 989 new total positions, including 399 special agent positions. As a result of reviews by DOJ, OMB, and ONDCP and consideration of the resources provided in DEA's fiscal year 1997 appropriation,² the President's fiscal year 1998 budget, which was submitted to Congress in February 1997, requested a total of 345 new positions for DEA, including 168 special agent positions. Congress provided 531 additional positions, of which 240 were special agent positions, with guidance as to how the positions were to be allocated. DEA senior management then determined the allocation of additional staff, considering congressional guidance and such other factors as field office prior requests.

Federal Budget Formulation Guidance Provides Basis for DEA Staffing Needs Determination Process

The process used to determine the staffing resources necessary to carry out DEA's mission is generally typical of the federal budget processes and procedures that federal agencies are expected to follow. These processes and procedures are established in federal law and budget guidelines promulgated by OMB.

Each legislative session, the president is required by law to submit a budget to Congress. The Budget and Accounting Act of 1921, as amended,

¹ VCRP was established by the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-322, as amended).

² See Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriation Act, 1997, P.L. 104-208 and H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 104-863 (1996).

provides the legal basis for the president's budget, prescribes much of its content, and defines the roles of the president and the agencies in the process. During budget formulation, the president establishes general budget and fiscal policy guidelines. Policy guidance is given to agencies for the upcoming budget year and later to provide initial guidelines for preparation of agency budget requests. OMB Circular A-11 provides instructions on the preparation of agency submissions required for OMB and presidential review of budget estimates and for formulation of the president's budget.

The budget formulation process begins at the lowest organizational levels of a federal agency and moves to the higher levels. A consolidated agencywide budget is prepared for submission to OMB. This approach is typical of federal agencies, although some have elaborate planning processes that allow for objectives established at the top to guide budget preparation. OMB reviews agency requests according to a process that includes several stages—(1) staff review, (2) director's review, (3) passback, (4) appeals, and (5) final decisions. The final budget is prepared and printed by OMB for submission to Congress no later than the first Monday in February of each year, as required by law.

Fiscal Year 1998 Process for Determining DEA's Staffing Needs

According to DEA and DOJ officials, the DEA fiscal year 1998 staffing needs determination process began in the summer of 1995 and was typical of DEA's staffing determination process. Prior to the commencement of the official budget formulation process, DEA domestic and foreign field offices provided estimates of their staffing needs to DEA headquarters program staff. Program and budget staff reviewed and considered these estimates in the development of DEA's budget submission with staffing estimates, which were sent to DOJ in June 1996. In accordance with the federal budget process, DOJ and OMB reviewed DEA's budget submission and staffing estimates, which resulted in some changes in the estimates. ONDCP reviewed DOJ's budget submission to OMB as part of the national drug budget certification process,³ which is distinct from, but occurs simultaneously with, the budget formulation process and may also affect DEA's staffing estimates. Figure 4.1 depicts DEA's fiscal year 1998 staffing determination process.

³ The Drug Budget Certification process was established by Congress in the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, P.L. 100-690. The act required that the ONDCP director certify, in writing, that drug budget submissions to ONDCP from program managers, agency heads, and department heads with national drug control program responsibilities are adequate to implement the objectives of the National Drug Strategy for the budget request year.

[Figure 4.1 begins on the next page.]

Figure 4.1: Flowchart of DEA's Fiscal Year 1998 Staffing Needs Determination Process

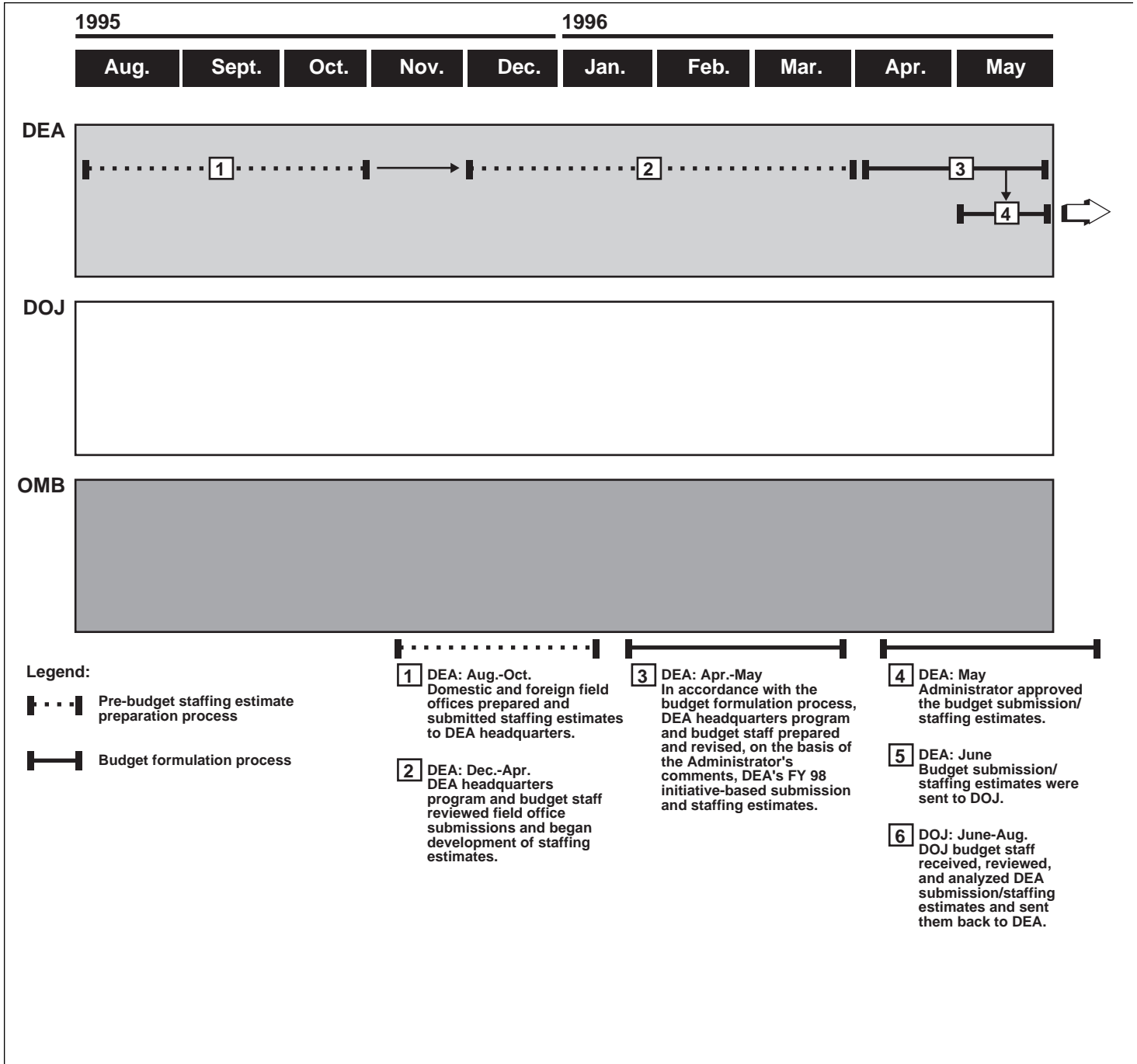
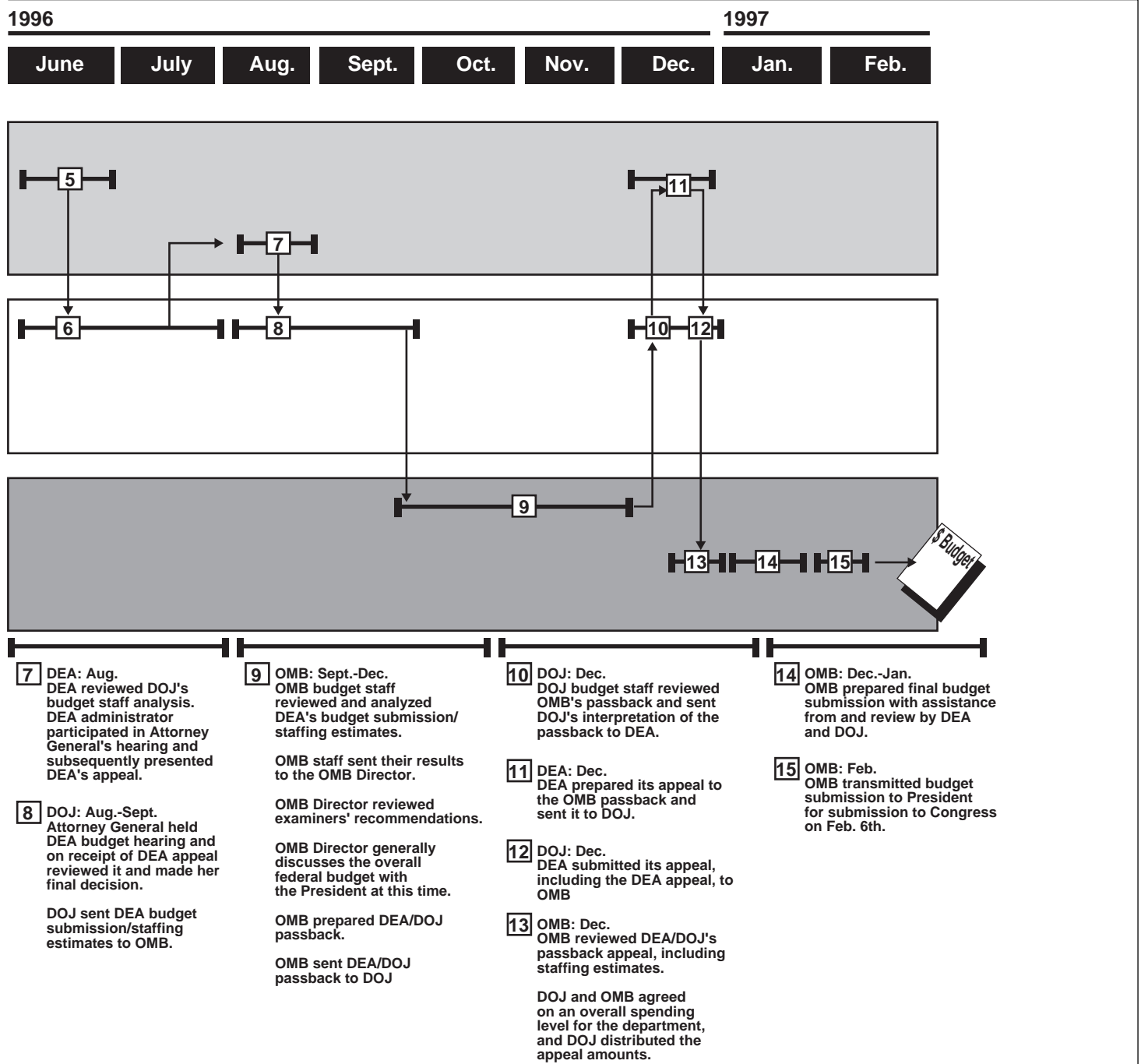


Figure 4.1: Continued



Source: GAO analysis of DEA, OMB, and other information.

**DEA Domestic and Foreign
Field Offices Provided
Staffing Estimates**

DEA's fiscal year 1998 staffing process began in the summer of 1995. Each DEA domestic field division submitted a field management plan (FMP), and foreign offices followed a less structured and more informal staffing request process.

In an August 1995 memorandum to its domestic field divisions, DEA headquarters provided direction and guidelines for preparation of the fiscal year 1996-1997 FMPs. DEA requested detailed, specific, and realistic enhancements for fiscal year 1998 for use in the formulation of DEA's fiscal year 1998 budget/staffing submission. According to DEA officials, an FMP is supposed to be based on the Administrator's vision statement, which is provided to the field divisions; the local SAC's vision statement, which has previously been reviewed and approved by DEA headquarters; and the drug threat that the division expects to confront. The 1995 memorandum directed each field division to indicate the resources it would need. Through the FMPs, which were due in October 1995, DEA's domestic field divisions requested a total of 591 positions, including 369 special agent positions.

According to DEA officials, recommendations and requests for DEA foreign office staffing enhancements and new foreign offices for fiscal year 1998 came from a variety of sources, including DEA country attachés (CA)⁴ and the foreign country through the U.S. Ambassador. Each of the four foreign sections (Central America and the Caribbean, Europe and the Middle East, Far East, and South America) within the Office of International Operations at DEA headquarters was tasked with identifying the issues, including staffing needs, within specific countries. In March 1996, according to a DEA official, the International Operations staff, including the Chief, Deputy Chief, and section heads of International Operations, met to discuss recommendations from the four sections. The official said that to assess and justify staffing requests for their respective regions, DEA foreign section staff used regional and individual DEA country plans, as well as foreign situation and quarterly trends in trafficking reports, which provided context and background. Foreign operational needs were discussed in terms of DEA's goals and objectives and prioritized. DEA officials told us that International Operations

⁴ DEA provided the following description of the National Security Decision Directive 38 (NSDD 38) Process. NSDD 38 requires DEA to gain an ambassador's approval prior to opening an office or adding additional positions to an existing office. Before seeking ambassadorial approval under NSDD 38, DOJ policy requires that DEA obtain approval from DOJ's Executive Office of National Security. Various bureaus within the State Department are to provide an ambassador with advice pertaining to any NSDD 38 request, but the ambassador is the final approving authority. As a matter of course, an ambassador is to seek host nation consent prior to granting NSDD 38 approval.

communicated the results of this meeting (as a discussion document) to DEA's budget section.

**DEA's Fiscal Year 1998
Budget Submission to DOJ
Included Estimates of
Additional Staff Needed**

In accordance with the federal budget formulation process, DEA budget staff prepared the agency's spring budget submission to DOJ, including staffing estimates. After review and approval by its executive staff and the Administrator, DEA sent DOJ its budget submission, which included 6 initiatives with identified additional staffing needs of 989⁵ total positions; 399 were special agent positions, and 590 were support positions.

For preparing DEA's budget submission to DOJ, DOJ budget officials said DOJ provides instructions and usually guidance; and, according to DEA officials, the DEA Administrator also usually provides guidance. Although the documents sent to the agencies varied each year, DOJ provides written planning guidance and instructions in April, about 17 months prior to the beginning of the budget year. However, officials said that informal guidance was usually available earlier. The DEA Administrator may also issue a budget call memorandum to all program managers listing his priorities. According to DEA and DOJ budget officials, for its fiscal year 1998 guidance, DOJ used an amended version of its fiscal year 1997 guidance. In addition, DEA budget officials said that the DEA Administrator sent out a budget call memorandum in February 1996 indicating his priorities.

However, DEA budget officials said that they actually began to develop DEA's fiscal year 1998 budget submission/staffing estimates in December 1995, prior to the guidance, and continued to work through May 1996. As part of this process, officials said that DEA budget staff considered the needs of field and headquarters offices, analyzed information on emerging drug trends, and held discussions with DEA program managers. Budget staff said that after canvassing the program managers, they presented the proposed budget submission and staffing request to the Administrator in March 1996. According to these staff, on the basis of the Administrator's comments, they then prepared DEA's final fiscal year 1998 budget submission/staffing request to DOJ, which DEA's Executive Staff and the Administrator reviewed and approved in May.

In June 1996, DEA sent its fiscal year 1998 budget request with estimates of additional staffing needs to DOJ. In its submission, DEA estimated a

⁵ This number does not include positions to be funded through DEA's Diversion Fee Account, which are included in a separate program-specific budget request. DEA enforces the Comprehensive Drug Abuse and Prevention and Control Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-513) as it applies to the registration of handlers of controlled substances (e.g., manufacturers, distributors, importers, exporters, and others).

need for 989 additional positions, including 399 special agent positions and 590 support positions (e.g., diversion investigators, chemists, intelligence analysts, and professional and clerical staff). DEA identified, prioritized, and requested funding, including staffing enhancements, for six specific initiatives.

- **Countering violent crime:** This included staffing estimates (193 total/98 special agents) for the MET Program and for converting 8 provisional state and local task forces to program-funded status.
- **Methamphetamine strategy:** This initiative included estimated staffing enhancements (279 total/127 special agents), including positions to convert 7 provisional state and local task forces to program-funded status, to fund a comprehensive approach for attacking methamphetamine abuse.
- **Southwest Border project:** This included estimated staffing enhancements (212 total/96 special agents) to continue DOJ's interagency strategy against drug trafficking on the Southwest Border.
- **Domestic heroin enforcement:** This initiative included estimated staffing enhancements (104 total/53 special agents) to continue implementation of DEA's 5-year heroin strategy.
- **International crime:** This included estimated staffing enhancements (76 total/25 special agents) to (1) open DEA country offices in Tashkent, Uzbekistan; Vientiane, Laos; Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; Lisbon, Portugal; and Managua, Nicaragua; (2) provide additional support to DEA offices in Mexico City, Panama City, New Delhi, Bangkok, and Hong Kong; and (3) establish an International Chemical Control Center in order to address the growing international aspects of drug production, transshipment, and trafficking.
- **Investigative shortfalls:** This initiative included estimates of resources and staffing enhancements (125 total) needed to replace lost asset forfeiture revenues, provide support staff for domestic field offices, and provide additional basic and refresher training for special agents and DEA support staff.

The submission included justifications for each initiative and reflected DEA's internal budget/staffing determination process. For example, on the basis of changing trends and input from the field, DEA's fiscal year 1998 budget submission proposed a methamphetamine initiative,⁶ including domestic and international staff enhancements, to fund a comprehensive

⁶ According to officials, however, DEA did not wait for the completion of the fiscal year 1998 budget cycle to address the methamphetamine problem. Although DEA had no base budget for the methamphetamine problem in 1996, it dedicated 405,000 agent hours, or the equivalent of 195 full-time agents, to methamphetamine investigations in fiscal year 1995. The hours dedicated to methamphetamine were expected to rise in fiscal year 1996.

approach for attacking methamphetamine abuse. To justify its fiscal year 1998 estimates, DEA provided (1) DAWN data that indicated a steady increase in the number of methamphetamine-related emergency room episodes and deaths and (2) statistics indicating an increased use of and trafficking in methamphetamine and the proliferation of clandestine drug laboratories in both traditional and new locations.

DOJ Changed Staffing Estimates for DEA's Initiatives

In accordance with the budget formulation process, DEA's fiscal year 1998 budget submission was reviewed by DOJ Justice Management Division (JMD) budget staff and the Attorney General between June and August, 1996. According to DOJ budget staff, as in other years, to assess DEA's fiscal year 1998 enhancements and the corresponding justifications, the budget staff considered the (1) overall illegal drug situation at the time, including drug trends and patterns; (2) link between the specific request and ONDCP, DOJ, and DEA goals, strategies, and indicators; (3) facts and arguments used by DEA to justify the request; and (4) level of resources requested relative to the justified need, including prior year appropriations.

As a result of their analysis of DEA's fiscal year 1998 budget submission, DOJ budget staff estimated that DEA would need 771 additional positions, including 311 special agents, to support the 6 initiatives. This was 218 fewer total positions, including 88 special agent positions, than DEA estimated. Over half of the difference between DEA's and DOJ's estimates can be accounted for by DOJ's not having included positions to convert certain state and local task forces to permanent funding status under the violent crime and methamphetamine initiatives. DOJ argued that (1) local entities must continue to contribute to these efforts to maintain the integrity of the intergovernmental relationship; (2) additional resources were available to these entities through other DOJ state and local grant programs; and (3) in the case of the methamphetamine initiative, further assessment was needed before conversions were made. DOJ budget staff recommended fewer positions than DEA for five of the DEA initiatives but concurred with DEA's staffing estimates for the investigative shortfall initiative. These recommended changes in staffing estimates, including the justifications provided, are summarized below.

- Violent crime: In addition to not including positions to convert state and local task forces to permanent status, as previously discussed, budget staff recommended fewer additional agent positions for the MET Program. DOJ staff concluded that four new MET teams for deployment to areas with higher numbers of outstanding requests were sufficient to keep the waiting time for a MET deployment to acceptable limits.

-
- **Methamphetamine:** Most of the difference between DEA's and DOJ's staffing estimates for this initiative can be attributed to DOJ's not including positions for state and local task force conversion. DOJ also did not recommend additional chemists, concluding that DEA had sufficient chemist resources; or an additional agent for demand reduction to increase public awareness of methamphetamine, given DEA's other critical needs. Budget staff recommended 2 DEA clandestine lab regional training teams to teach 26 classes annually, rather than 4 teams to teach 40 classes annually.
 - **Southwest Border:** DOJ budget staff did not recommend 5 additional chemists and 14 additional support staff, which were included in DEA's submission. DOJ concluded that DEA had sufficient resources to meet these needs.
 - **Domestic heroin:** Asserting that DEA had sufficient chemists to meet its desired staffing ratio, DOJ budget staff did not recommend the five chemists and two clerical support positions included in DEA's estimates for this initiative.
 - **International:** DOJ budget staff recommended 22 fewer total positions, including 6 fewer special agent positions, than DEA estimated for this initiative. More than half of these 22 positions (2 chemists, 4 foreign diversion investigators, and 6 support staff) were to establish an International Chemical Control Center. DOJ argued that DEA could use chemists from other places to meet these needs and use diversion investigators from key locations in other parts of the world to provide intelligence to the Center. DOJ also did not recommend opening new DEA offices in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, or Lisbon, Portugal, contending that DEA lacked "substantive rationale" for offices in these locations. DOJ's estimates also included no staffing enhancements for Bangkok, Thailand, asserting that DEA had sufficient staffing resources to assist Thai police in collecting intelligence about the emerging methamphetamine problem and no additional special agent for Panama, concluding that DEA had not provided "substantive reasons" for that agent.

The DOJ budget staff review was followed on August 2, 1996, by the Attorney General's hearing⁷ on DEA's fiscal year 1998 budget submission. Three working days before the hearing, DOJ budget officials provided their analysis to DEA. According to DOJ budget officials, during the hearing DEA had the opportunity to appeal DOJ's proposed changes in DEA's

⁷ The hearing is usually attended by the Attorney General, the DEA Administrator, the DOJ budget analyst, and JMD officials.

submission and to provide additional information to justify its budget initiatives and enhancements before the Attorney General's final decision.

On August 12, 1996, the Administrator submitted an appeal to the Attorney General in which he requested reconsideration of some of the DOJ budget staff's recommended changes. The appeal asserted DEA's need for staff positions to convert certain state and local task forces, associated with its violent crime reduction and methamphetamine efforts, from provisional to program-funded status. It also addressed DEA's need for resources for its clandestine laboratory cleanup efforts; items previously funded partially by asset forfeiture funds, including awards to informants and marijuana eradication efforts; and in-service training. Nevertheless, for fiscal year 1998, the estimates for additional staffing for DEA included in DOJ's OMB submission were the same as those recommended by DOJ budget staff and previously discussed. Table 4.1 shows the differences between DEA's estimates for additional staffing and those proposed to OMB by DOJ.

Table 4.1: Comparison of DEA and DOJ Estimated Additional DEA Total and Special Agent Positions for Fiscal Year 1998

Initiative	Additional total and special agent positions			
	DEA staffing estimates to DOJ June 1996		DOJ's DEA staffing estimates to OMB September 1996	
	Total	Special agents	Total	Special agents
Violent crime	193	98	94	48
Methamphetamine	279	127	208	96
Southwest Border	212	96	193	96
Domestic heroin	104	53	97	53
International crime	76	25	54	18
Investigative shortfall	125	0	125	0
Total	989	399	771	311

Source: DEA Fiscal Year 1998 Spring Planning Estimates, June 1996, and DEA Fiscal Year 1998 Office of Management and Budget Submission, September 1996.

OMB Specified Minimum Funding for Certain DEA Initiatives, but Indicated No Staffing Levels

DEA's fiscal year 1998 budget submission was sent to OMB for review in September 1996 as part of DOJ's budget request. According to OMB officials, an OMB budget examiner initially reviewed the DOJ budget submission, and the results were presented to and reviewed by the OMB policy officials. Generally, a complete set of budget proposals is presented to the president by early December for his approval. Subsequently, OMB staff prepares the agency passbacks.

An OMB official described OMB's approach to DOJ's fiscal year 1998 budget submission as "flexible." That is, as in other years, OMB made suggestions regarding specific DOJ activities, providing DOJ with an

overall dollar level and specifying minimum funding for certain funding floors. OMB officials said that OMB did not make account-level recommendations, leaving those decisions to the Attorney General to ensure that the budget reflected DOJ's priorities.

By early December 1996, OMB sent DOJ's fiscal year 1998 passback in which it recommended an overall DOJ budget lower than DOJ's submission. For DEA, the passback specified minimum funding for the methamphetamine strategy, the Southwest Border project, and the domestic heroin strategy, but it did not discuss specific staffing estimates or foreign enhancements. Prior to the passback, DEA had received its fiscal year 1997 appropriation, but we were unable to ascertain how it affected the passback.

DEA/DOJ Reviewed OMB Passback and Appealed It With Some Success

According to DOJ budget officials, DOJ reviewed OMB's fiscal year 1998 DOJ passback to determine what could be funded according to the Attorney General's priorities. They said that as a result of OMB's specifying funding levels for DEA's methamphetamine, Southwest Border, and heroin initiatives, no funds for the enhancements in other initiatives were available within the DEA budget submission. The DOJ budget officials said that they then sent DOJ's interpretation—which was based on the Attorney General's priorities—of the OMB passback to DEA.

According to DOJ budget section officials, DEA developed its appeal to the OMB passback and then presented it to OMB, through DOJ, in early December 1996. DEA's specific staffing-related appeals and outcomes were as follows:

- Methamphetamine initiative: DEA requested additional resources, including 131 positions. DOJ and OMB agreed to a slight increase in the funded amount to cover 74 positions.
- Southwest Border initiative: DEA sought 131 additional positions, including 90 special agents. DOJ and OMB agreed to increase the funded amount to cover the additional agents.

OMB and DOJ officials reported that the method used to settle appeals varied from year to year. In fiscal year 1998, OMB and DOJ agreed on an overall spending level on appeal and DOJ's spread of the increase, which provided DEA with funding to cover additional positions for both the methamphetamine and Southwest Border initiatives described above.

**ONDCP Certified DOJ/DEA
Budget Submission**

Concurrent with departmental and OMB reviews of budget submissions, each agency with a drug mission is required by the drug budget certification process to submit a drug control budget to ONDCP. However, in 1996, due to the appointment of a new ONDCP Director and the reformulation and consequent late release of ONDCP's drug strategy, the national drug budget certification process did not follow ONDCP's established procedures and schedule. Specifically, ONDCP requested only one fiscal year 1998 budget submission in September 1996, coincident with the OMB deadline.

On November 8, 1996, while OMB was reviewing DOJ's budget submission, DOJ sent its budget request to ONDCP. On November 18, 1996, for consideration before finalizing DOJ's fiscal year 1998 budget request, the ONDCP Director advised the Attorney General of two DEA program initiatives that did not appear to have been included in DOJ's submission. The initiatives in question were (1) the continued expansion of vetted law enforcement units in key source and transit countries and (2) a request for additional resources for DEA's Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program. The Director's letter did not specifically discuss staffing related to the initiatives.⁸ Final ONDCP budget certification was withheld until ONDCP reviewed DOJ's final budget submission. According to DOJ and ONDCP officials, DEA received sufficient resources in its fiscal year 1997 appropriation to address the ONDCP Director's concerns. Therefore, on the basis of ONDCP's final review, the Director notified the Attorney General on February 7, 1997—1 day after the President submitted the fiscal year 1998 budget request—that the resources requested by DOJ were certified as adequate to implement the goals and objectives of the National Drug Control Strategy.

**The President's Fiscal Year
1998 Budget Submission**

The President submitted his fiscal year 1998 budget to Congress on February 6, 1997. As a result of the iterative process between DEA/DOJ and OMB over DEA staffing estimates and after consideration of the resources provided in DEA's fiscal year 1997 appropriation,⁹ the President's budget requested 345 new positions, including 168 special agents, for DEA domestic offices. As shown in table 4.2, the number of total positions requested was approximately one-half the number DOJ

⁸ Although no specific mention of DEA staffing was made in the ONDCP certification correspondence for fiscal year 1998, DEA officials indicated that during fiscal year 1998, DEA acted on the ONDCP Director's recommendations for additional staffing for DEA offices in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; and Nassau.

⁹ DEA's fiscal year 1997 appropriation, as part of DOJ's appropriation, was enacted on September 30, 1996. See Department of Justice Appropriations Act of 1997, P.L. 104-208; and H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 104-863.

initially estimated in its OMB submission. The number of special agents requested was approximately 50 percent of the original DOJ estimates.

Some of the differences between the DOJ estimates and the DEA staffing request in the President's budget submission reflected changes recommended by DOJ or OMB, which were previously discussed. However, other revisions took into account DEA's fiscal year 1997 appropriation. For example, according to DOJ officials, although DEA's international crime initiative was not included in the President's budget submission for fiscal year 1998, DEA was able to staff the Vientiane and Managua offices, included in that initiative, with fiscal year 1997 funds from the Source Country Initiative.¹⁰ In addition, because Congress provided almost twice the funds for the MET Program requested by DEA in fiscal year 1997, the program was fully funded (130 agents were provided) as of that year. Additional funds for the MET Program, which had been included in the fiscal year 1998 violent crime initiative, were no longer necessary.

Table 4.2: Comparison of DOJ's Estimates and the President's Request for Additional DEA Total and Special Agent Positions for Fiscal Year 1998

Initiative	Additional total and special agent positions			
	DOJ's DEA staffing estimates to OMB September 1996		President's DEA staffing request to Congress February 1997	
	Total	Special agents	Total	Special agents
Violent crime	94	48	^a	^a
Methamphetamine	208	96	74	60
Southwest Border	193	96	192	96
Domestic heroin	97	53	60	12
International crime	54	18	^a	^a
Investigative shortfall	125	0	19	0
Total	771	311	345	168

^aThe conference report for DEA's fiscal year 1997 appropriation provided an additional 75 agents for source countries and 130 special agents for the MET Program, thereby addressing at least some of DOJ's initial estimates for the violent crime and international crime initiatives (H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 104-863).

Source: DEA Fiscal Year 1998 Office of Management and Budget Submission, September 1996, and DEA Fiscal Year 1998 Authorization and Budget Request to Congress.

¹⁰ The conference report for DEA's fiscal year 1997 appropriation included a source country/international strategy, which provided an additional 75 agents, to increase on-site DEA agents in source countries. See H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 104-863.

Congress Added Staff for a New Caribbean Initiative and Changed Staffing Recommended for Other DEA Initiatives

As shown in table 4.3, the conference committee recommended 531 additional positions, of which 240 were special agent positions. On the basis of the recommendations of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, the conference committee also provided guidance as to how those positions were to be allocated, including a new Caribbean initiative.

During the fiscal year 1998 appropriations process, the House Appropriations Committee recommended, and Congress approved as part of the conference committee's report on DEA's appropriation, a new Caribbean initiative, which was not included in the President's budget. According to the House Appropriations Committee report, this initiative was proposed to address the increase in drug trafficking throughout the Caribbean. The initiative provided 60 additional DEA special agents for Puerto Rico, the Northern Caribbean, and south Florida.

In addition, the conference committee recommended additional positions, above the President's request, for the heroin and investigative shortfall initiatives. On the basis of the Senate Appropriations Committee's recommendation, the Conference Committee's report included 120 new positions, 24 of which were special agents (twice the number of total and special agent positions in the President's budget request), to continue efforts to reduce heroin trafficking within the United States. The Conference Committee also identified the need for 85 additional intelligence analysts for the investigative shortfall initiative.

The President signed DEA/DOJ's fiscal year 1998 appropriation into law on November 26, 1996.

Table 4.3: Comparison of the President's Request and Congress' Appropriations Guidance for DEA Additional Total and Special Agent Positions for Fiscal Year 1998

Initiative	Additional total and special agent positions			
	President's DEA staffing request to Congress February 1997		Fiscal year 1998 DOJ appropriation conference report with DEA staffing guidance November 1997	
	Total	Special agents	Total	Special agents
Methamphetamine	74 ^a	60	74	60 ^b
Southwest Border	192	96	192	96
Domestic heroin	60	12	120	24 ^c
Investigative shortfall	19	0	85	0
Caribbean	N/A	N/A	60	60
Total	345	168	531	240

Notes: N/A—Initiative not included at that point in the process.

^aFourteen of the positions were requested through VCRP.

^bThe conference report called for 54 special agents in accordance with the House report. The House report also identified six additional agent positions to conduct clandestine lab training. Fourteen positions were provided through VCRP.

^cThe conference report called for 120 positions, in accordance with the Senate report. The Senate language specified that 24 of the positions be special agents.

Source: DEA FY 1998 Authorization and Budget Request to Congress; the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1998, P.L. 105-119 (1997); H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 105-405; H.R. Rep. No. 105-207; and S. Rep. No. 105-48.

DEA's Fiscal Year 1998 Allocation Process Considered a Variety of Factors

After receipt of its annual appropriation, DEA is responsible for budget execution and the allocation of new staff. In addition to the guidance provided by Congress, DEA officials said they consider factors, such as recently changing drug trends, to determine that allocation.

For fiscal year 1998, according to a DEA official involved in the allocation process that year, DEA's Executive Policy and Strategic Planning, Operations Division, Financial Management Division, and Office of Resource Management staff prepared a draft allocation for the additional resources provided in DEA's appropriation. The official indicated that among the factors considered in determining the allocation of additional staff were congressional direction; the number of agents added by Congress, broken out by mission and team; FMPs and any other written requests from the field divisions; DEA and DOJ strategies, initiatives, and priorities, including the Southwest Border and methamphetamine plans; actual hours worked by agents on particular types of cases; and drug trends that had emerged since the original fiscal year 1998 budget submission. The recommendations were sent to the DEA Administrator for review and final approval.

DEA allocated 531 new positions, including 240 special agent positions, for the 5 initiatives included in its appropriation. As shown in table 4.4, DEA's fiscal year 1998 staffing allocation followed Congress' appropriations guidance.

Table 4.4: Comparison of Congress' Appropriations Guidance and DEA's New Staffing Allocation for Additional DEA Staffing and Special Agent Positions for Fiscal Year 1998

Initiative	Additional total and special agent positions			
	Fiscal year 1998 DOJ appropriation conference report and DEA staffing guidance November 1997		DEA fiscal year 1998 staffing allocation February 1998	
	Total	Special agents	Total	Special agents
Methamphetamine	74 ^a	60	74	60
Southwest Border	192	96	192	96
Domestic heroin	120	24 ^b	120	24
Investigative shortfall	85	0	85	0
Caribbean	60	60	60	60
Total	531	240	531	240^c

^aThe conference report called for the 54 special agents in accordance with the House report. The House report also identified six additional agent positions to conduct clandestine lab training. Fourteen positions were provided through VCRP.

^bThe conference report called for 120 positions, in accordance with the Senate report. The Senate language specified that 24 of the positions be special agents.

^cDEA also allocated 45 additional positions provided through other funding sources for a total of 576 positions allocated, of which 245 were special agents.

Source: The Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1998, P.L. 105-119 (1997); H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 105-405; H.R. Rep. No. 105-207; S. Rep. No. 105-48; and DEA.

Conclusions

The process used for determining DEA's staffing needs, as carried out in fiscal year 1998, was systematically linked to its budget formulation process. The DEA process was typical of and consistent with the processes and procedures that federal agencies are expected to follow, according to federal laws and regulations and procedures promulgated by OMB. Moreover, the DEA process considered factors related to DEA's ability to carry out its mission, including emerging drug trafficking trends, staffing requests from the field, the Administrator's vision statement, and the SAC's vision statement from each field office. Once Congress approved DEA's fiscal year 1998 appropriation, DEA senior management systematically determined the allocation of the additional staff to headquarters and field offices, taking into consideration congressional guidance and such factors as field office requests.

Profiles of Selected DEA Domestic Field Divisions and Foreign Offices

During our review, we visited four Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) domestic field divisions—Los Angeles, CA; Miami, FL; New Orleans, LA; and Washington, D.C./Baltimore, MD. We also visited three foreign country offices—Bogota, Colombia; LaPaz, Bolivia; and Mexico City, Mexico—and the Caribbean (Puerto Rico) Division, which has both foreign and domestic responsibilities. The following profiles provide a snapshot of each division/office at the time we performed our work at those locations between February and September 1998. The profiles include information, as of that time (unless otherwise noted), on the (1) geographic region covered by each division/office and its organizational structure; (2) drug trafficking situation and threat faced by each division/office; (3) enforcement response of each division/office in terms of priorities, programs, and initiatives; and (4) enforcement statistics and case examples. Many of the programs and initiatives referred to in the profiles are generally described in chapter 2 of this report. We developed the profiles on the basis of information—including various documents and statistical data—provided by DEA field officials, although we could not always obtain comparable information from all divisions/offices. We did not independently verify the accuracy of the information provided.

Los Angeles Division

Geographic Region and Organizational Structure

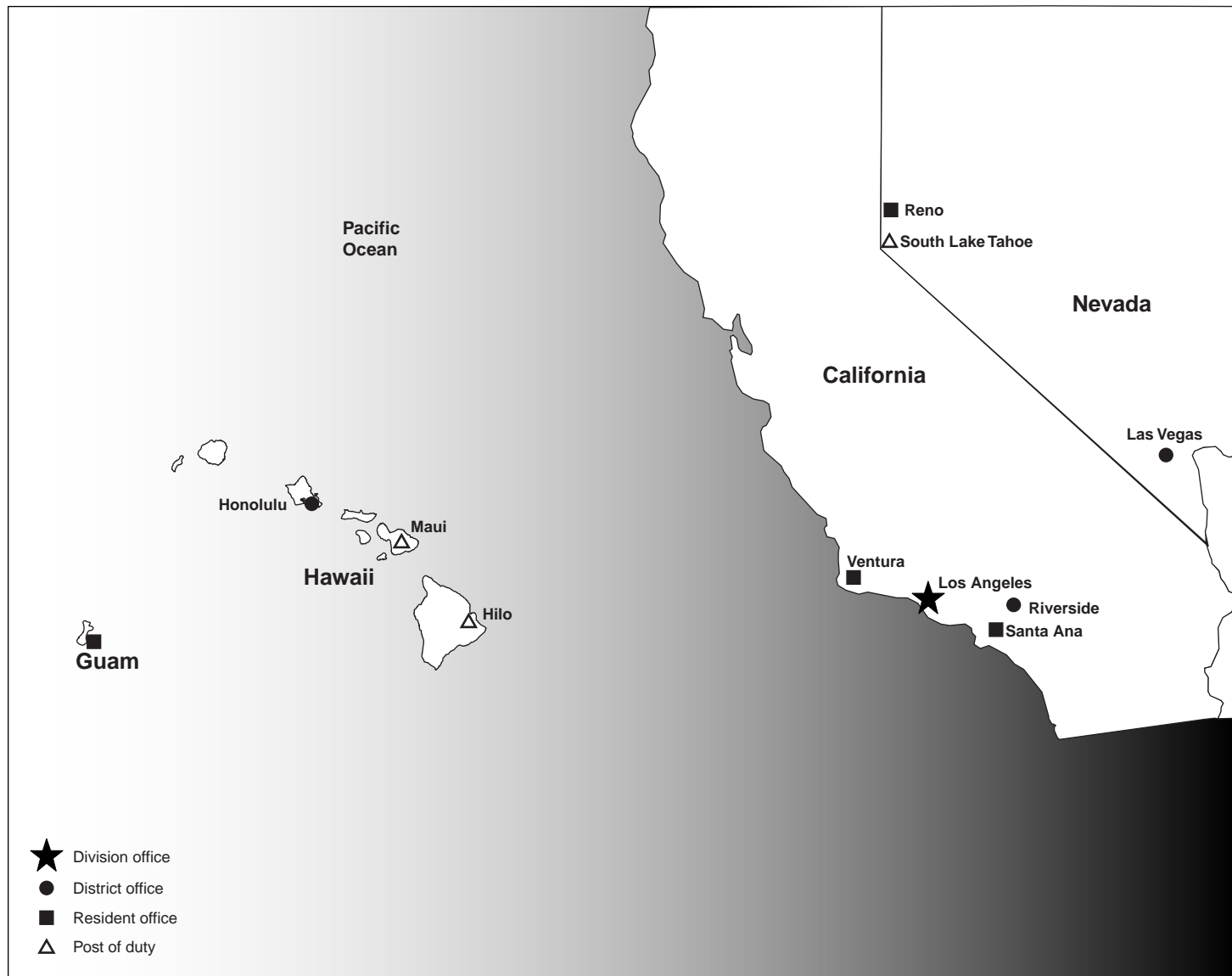
DEA's Los Angeles Division covers a vast geographic area that includes portions of California and all of Nevada, Hawaii, Guam, Saipan, the Republic of Palau, and American Samoa. Los Angeles has the busiest maritime container port complexes in the United States at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. Los Angeles International airport is the third busiest in the world. In addition, there are major airports in Orange and San Bernardino Counties, Las Vegas, and Honolulu. California and Nevada are also served by an extensive highway system.

The Los Angeles Division is headed by a Special Agent in Charge (SAC), two Associate SACs, and seven Assistant SACs (ASACs). It includes the division office, three district offices, four resident offices, and three posts of duty, as shown in figure I.1.¹

¹ The maps included in the profiles in this appendix are not drawn precisely to scale.

Appendix I
Profiles of Selected DEA Domestic Field Divisions and Foreign Offices

Figure I.1: Los Angeles Division Map



Source: DEA's Los Angeles Division.

At the time of our visit in February 1998, the division was authorized to have 445 staff, including 283 special agents. There also were 114 state and local officers from various law enforcement agencies assigned to task forces operated by the division.

Overview of Drug Trafficking Situation and Threat

According to DEA, the region covered by the Los Angeles Division is one of the most significant worldwide centers of drug trafficking, money laundering, and drug-related violence. The region serves as a source, transit area and distribution site for a variety of illegal drugs.

The division's size, multiplicity of jurisdictions, and ethnic diversity all pose law enforcement challenges, as do its myriad entry points and transit corridors. The proximity to the Southwest Border makes the region easily accessible to trafficking organizations bringing cocaine, heroin, and other drugs into the United States. The region is also a major source of methamphetamine clandestinely produced in laboratories and high-grade marijuana cultivated in outdoor and indoor operations. In addition, DEA reported that much of the region is plagued by drug-related violent crime, often gang related, and that most of California's violent gang activity is in Los Angeles county.

Cocaine

At the time of our review, DEA considered cocaine to be one of the biggest drug trafficking problems for the division. Los Angeles is a major transshipment point for cocaine en route to other parts of the United States and Canada. Cocaine is smuggled into Southern California primarily across the U.S.-Mexico border.

According to DEA, Mexican drug trafficking organizations smuggle most of the cocaine coming into and through Los Angeles. Although Colombian traffickers control the worldwide supply of cocaine, they prefer to move their cocaine into Mexico and sell it to Mexican organizations. Cocaine traffickers use various means, such as automobiles and tractor-trailers with hidden compartments, to move cocaine across the border. Other points of entry for cocaine include airports and maritime ports in the region.

DEA reported that traffickers were using "stash houses" to store cocaine in Los Angeles and Riverside counties. From these stash houses, cocaine was being distributed locally or moved to other destinations in the United States and Canada. Mobile street gangs were involved in handling the local cocaine distribution. These gangs were also transporting cocaine and crack cocaine to other destinations.

Heroin

At the time of our review, Mexican heroin was the heroin of choice for users in the area covered by the Los Angeles Division, according to DEA. Heroin was also coming into the region from Southeast Asia (principally Thailand and the Philippines) and Canada, and to a lesser extent from Southwest Asia/Middle East (Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon) and Colombia. Although heroin was being smuggled into the country in a variety of ways, DEA reported that most was arriving in maritime containers or aircraft for passengers or cargo.

Also, according to DEA, black tar heroin and Mexican brown heroin, the most available and popular form of heroin in the Los Angeles area, were both supplied by Mexican traffickers. Trafficking in Southeast Asian heroin, which was being imported into the Los Angeles area and transshipped to the East Coast, was dominated by Thai nationals and Thailand-based Nigerian traffickers.

Methamphetamine and Other
Dangerous Drugs

At the time of our review, methamphetamine was the most manufactured and distributed illegal drug in the geographic area covered by the Los Angeles division, according to DEA. It is the division's top enforcement priority. Although methamphetamine trafficking takes place throughout the region, it is predominantly concentrated in Riverside and San Bernardino counties, where there has been a tremendous increase in clandestine methamphetamine laboratories. These two counties have been designated as the methamphetamine capital of the nation.

The division's most serious methamphetamine threat is from Mexican drug trafficking organizations that dominate the production of high-quality methamphetamine in southern California. At the time of our review, DEA reported that the number of Mexican methamphetamine laboratories was increasing at an alarming rate. Other individuals were operating small, unsophisticated methamphetamine laboratories that made up most of the clandestine laboratories in southern California.

The diversion of legitimately produced controlled substances is also a serious threat in the region, particularly in the Los Angeles area. Numerous means are used to divert these drugs to local abusers and traffickers. At the time of our review, traffickers were shipping the drugs throughout the United States and abroad, according to DEA. Other dangerous drugs are also trafficked in the area covered by the division, including PCP and LSD.

Marijuana

According to DEA, marijuana importation, cultivation, and trafficking remain an ongoing enforcement challenge throughout the division. Marijuana is prolific throughout the region, and Los Angeles is a major

transshipment area for marijuana destined for other parts of the United States.

Mexican trafficking organizations smuggle marijuana into the region. DEA reported that these organizations had cornered the wholesale and retail distribution markets for marijuana in Southern and Central California. Colombian organizations also were involved in marijuana trafficking, using Mexican organizations to transport marijuana across the U.S.-Mexico border.

Domestic cultivation also is a problem, with high-grade marijuana being grown in outdoor gardens and on farms in Hawaii, California, and Nevada. According to DEA, Hawaii leads the nation in domestic marijuana cultivation. The division reported seeing an increase in the number of large-scale indoor operations in California and Nevada.

Priorities, Programs, and Initiatives

At the time of our review, the Los Angeles Division reported operating various programs and initiatives in response to the drug trafficking threat in the region. The division was working with other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to carry out its programs and initiatives. For fiscal year 1998, the division's goal was to focus available resources on identifying, investigating, and prosecuting criminal drug enterprises, their support systems, and the individuals responsible for their origin and proliferation. Another priority of the division was to use federal asset forfeiture laws to affect criminal organizations by seizing proceeds derived from their criminal activity.

Division resources to carry out its programs and initiatives included task force operations, an asset forfeiture group, an intelligence program, a drug diversion control program,² investigative initiatives aimed at gangs involved in drug-related violent crimes, Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) Program operations, the Southwest Border Initiative, and a methamphetamine initiative. At the time of our review, the division had planned to continue expanding its Title III (electronic surveillance) program; promote greater cooperation in developing joint investigations with other federal, state, and local agencies aimed at the highest level of drug trafficking; and widen the scope of interagency task forces.

² DEA's drug diversion control program is designed to enforce federal laws and regulations controlling the legal production and distribution of legitimately manufactured controlled substances; prevent and detect, through criminal, civil, and administrative actions, the diversion of controlled substances from legitimate channels; and control the diversion of legally produced precursor and essential chemicals to the illicit manufacture of drugs.

The division office in Los Angeles had nine enforcement groups at the time of our review. According to the SAC, three of the groups were working on the Southwest Border Initiative,³ a major drug enforcement operation along and across the Mexican border using resources from DEA, FBI, the Customs Service, and state and local law enforcement agencies. The office also had groups focusing on Southeast Asian heroin, Mexican heroin, drugs primarily from Southeast Asia and Europe, methamphetamine, and violent drug trafficking groups. In addition to the enforcement groups, the division office had support groups, including technical operations, asset removal, intelligence, and diversion control.

The division's district offices, resident offices, and posts of duty all had enforcement groups focusing primarily on specific drug trafficking problems in their areas. For example, the Riverside district office, with four enforcement groups, concentrated on methamphetamine trafficking and the Southwest Border Initiative. These outlying offices are encouraged to cooperate and conduct joint efforts with state and local law enforcement agencies in developing cases and conducting other operations.

The division had state and local task forces in Riverside, Santa Ana, Reno, Las Vegas, Honolulu, Saipan, and Guam. Though not part of a DEA-funded state and local task force, the Ventura office assisted three narcotics task forces in its area. Also, DEA's group at Los Angeles International airport was an informal task force with officers from the Los Angeles Police Department and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office working together with DEA special agents.

At the time of our review, the division had one MET that it was using to target organizations engaged in violent drug-related crimes, particularly with regard to cocaine and crack cocaine trafficking. In commenting on a draft of our report, DEA officials informed us that a second MET was established in October 1998. The officials also informed us that as of May 1999, the first MET had 10 special agents assigned to it, and the second MET had 11 special agents assigned.

Further, as of May 1999, the first MET had received 19 requests for assistance since 1995 and was deployed for 14. Since its inception, the second MET had received two requests for assistance and was deployed for both.

³ In addition, four DEA special agents were assigned to a Southwest Border Initiative group located at the Los Angeles FBI office.

The division is a major participant in the Los Angeles High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), which is the largest HIDTA in the country. At the time of our review, a DEA Associate SAC headed the Southern California Drug Task Force (SCDTF) in the HIDTA, and a DEA ASAC headed one of three SCDTF divisions. The SCDTF is a multiagency, integrated task force that comprised 105 federal, state, and local law enforcement officers, including 40 DEA special agents, at the time of our review. SCDTF's primary objective is to conduct investigations targeting major drug trafficking organizations that operate on a regional, national, and international level. The Los Angeles HIDTA's fiscal year 1998 strategy referred to SCDTF as the "cornerstone" of the HIDTA. DEA also had an intelligence group assigned to SCDTF, as well as staff assigned to other Los Angeles HIDTA units.

Other major programs and initiatives being implemented by DEA's Los Angeles Division at the time of our review included the following: (1) the Methamphetamine Strategy, which was aimed at major domestic and Mexican traffickers involved in producing methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs and was being carried out with state and local law enforcement agencies; (2) money laundering investigations and seizures of criminally derived drug-related assets, which were carried out in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. Customs Service, Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement; and (3) the Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program (marijuana program), particularly initiatives conducted in cooperation with state and local law enforcement agencies in Hawaii.

Most of the division's resources have been devoted to cases involving cocaine, methamphetamine, and other dangerous drugs. For example, in fiscal year 1997, the division's special agents spent about 35.7 percent of their investigative work hours on cocaine cases and about 35.7 percent on cases involving dangerous drugs, including methamphetamine. In fiscal year 1998, they spent about 33.2 percent of their investigative work hours on cocaine cases and about 41.8 percent on cases involving dangerous drugs, including methamphetamine.

Enforcement Statistics and Case Examples

Enforcement activity results reported by the Los Angeles Division indicated that the division initiated 1,573 cases in fiscal year 1997 and 1,446 cases in fiscal year 1998. The division reported 1,892 arrests in fiscal year 1997 and 2,214 arrests in fiscal year 1998. The division also reported seizing approximately 4,500 kilograms of cocaine, 25 kilograms of heroin, 16,400 kilograms of marijuana, and 268 kilograms of methamphetamine in

fiscal year 1997. For fiscal year 1998, the division reported seizing approximately 4,656 kilograms of cocaine, 59 kilograms of heroin, 9,235 kilograms of marijuana, and 673 kilograms of methamphetamine. In addition, the division reported seizing assets amounting to \$52.4 million in fiscal year 1997 and assets amounting to \$122.2 million in fiscal year 1998. Further, the division reported seizing 87 clandestine laboratories in fiscal year 1997 and 90 clandestine laboratories in fiscal year 1998.

The following are two examples of what the Los Angeles Division considered to be successful major investigations.

- DEA's Los Angeles Division conducted an investigation targeting a Mexican-based cocaine trafficking organization operating in the Los Angeles area. The organization was responsible for smuggling large quantities of cocaine into the United States from Mexico, stockpiling it in the Los Angeles area, and distributing it throughout the United States. Members of the organization collected drug proceeds and transported the money to Mexico. The investigation involved the wire interception of 29 cellular telephones and the electronic interception of 19 digital paging devices. It resulted in the arrest of 52 individuals and seizures of over \$15 million, 3.5 tons of cocaine, and 570 pounds of marijuana. On the basis of leads developed from this investigation, DEA offices in San Diego, San Francisco, Chicago, New York, and Calexico, Mexico initiated related investigations and wiretaps. Surveillance teams comprising state and local agencies assisted DEA with this investigation.
- DEA's Los Angeles Division and Islamabad Country Office worked with the Pakistan Antinarcotics Force to conduct a controlled delivery⁴ of Southwest Asian heroin. DEA, U.S. Customs agents, local law enforcement officers, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were subsequently involved in the arrest of several drug traffickers. The operation resulted in the seizure of 106 kilograms of Southwest Asian heroin and approximately \$509,000 in U.S. currency, as well as three arrests in the United States, three in Canada, and one in Pakistan.

⁴ A controlled delivery is an investigative tool whereby law enforcement authorities monitor a shipment of illegal drugs to its intended destination for eventual seizure.

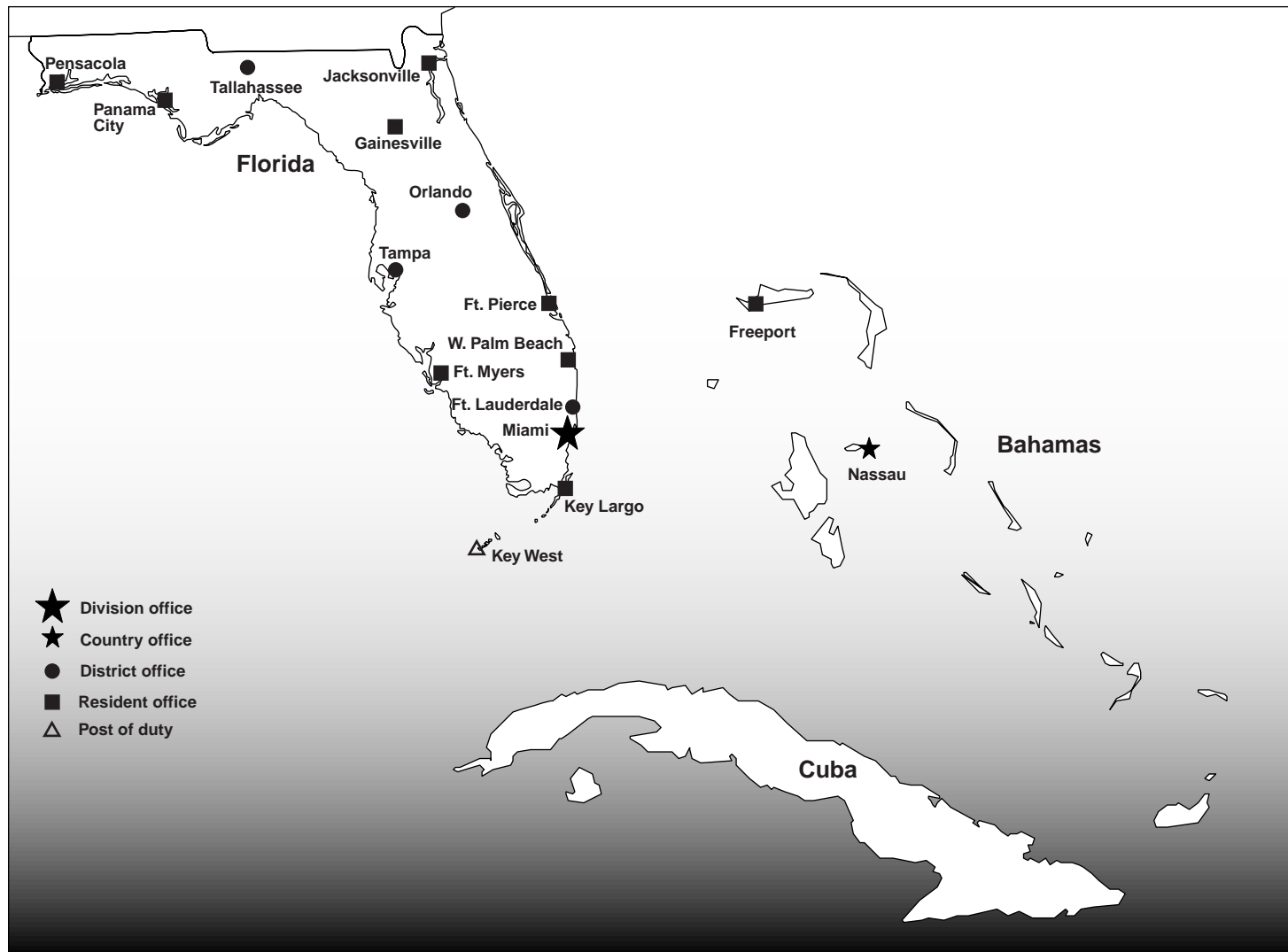
Miami Division

Geographic Region and Organizational Structure

DEA's Miami Division is responsible for federal drug law enforcement in Florida, the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands, and Cuba. The division's 8,462 miles of coastline and 14 deep-water ports have made it very attractive for maritime smugglers, and its 18 commercial cargo and passenger carrier airports also pose a smuggling threat. The Miami Division, which is headed by a SAC, 2 Associate SACs, and 8 ASACs, includes the division office, 3 district offices, 10 resident offices, 1 post of duty, and 1 country office, as shown in figure I.2.

Appendix I
Profiles of Selected DEA Domestic Field Divisions and Foreign Offices

Figure I.2: Miami Division Map



Source: DEA's Miami Division.

At the time of our visit in June 1998, the division was authorized to have 600 staff, including 400 special agents. In addition, there were 99 staff from state and local agencies authorized for various task forces and groups in the division, including 92 law enforcement officers.

Overview of Drug Trafficking Situation and Threat

According to DEA, at the time of our review, South Florida continued to be one of the principal gateways for cocaine entering the United States. The Miami Division reported that South American drug traffickers were shifting their trafficking patterns back to routes in the Caribbean, as evidenced by the amount of trafficking activity in the Bahamas and Florida. Further, as Colombian traffickers have become increasingly involved in heroin trafficking, Miami International Airport became the principal port of entry for Colombian heroin into the United States.

Other drugs were also a concern of the division. For example, DEA reported that marijuana trafficking through the Caribbean has traditionally been a problem, and there had been an increase in the amounts of marijuana and methamphetamine from the Southwest Border being transshipped through central and northern Florida. DEA also reported an increase in the production of methamphetamine in clandestine laboratories in the Florida area.

Cocaine

The Miami Division reported that as drug law enforcement efforts increased along the Southwest Border in recent years, South Florida became the North American command and control center for major South American trafficking organizations. Colombians dominate the major South Florida drug-smuggling organizations, and they continued to finance and control the wholesale cocaine distribution market in the area. The division further reported that drug intelligence indicated that the Colombian traffickers did not completely trust Mexican trafficking organizations; consequently, cocaine trafficking patterns had begun to shift in 1997 and 1998. Once again, large shipments of cocaine were being sent from South America, through Mexico and the Caribbean, to South Florida.

The Caribbean serves as a major transit zone for cocaine from Central and South America, and Florida is a significant importation and transit area for cocaine smuggled through the Bahamas. According to DEA, airdrops of cocaine from planes coming directly from Colombia to the Bahamas were taking place at an accelerating rate in 1998. The primary threat, however, was “go-fast” boats and pleasure craft. Such vessels were being used to carry up to 1,500 kilograms of cocaine through the Bahamas to the United States. Small commercial cargo vessels were also being used to smuggle drugs through the Bahamas.

Cocaine was also smuggled in other ways into the area covered by the division. For example, DEA reported that aircraft were used to smuggle cocaine directly into Florida from the Eastern Caribbean. Maritime smuggling continued to be a significant factor, including the shipment of cocaine hidden within containerized cargo on ships travelling from South America to Florida. There also were indications that the Florida Keys were increasingly being used as an off-load point for Cuban traffickers.

According to DEA, crack cocaine was the most significant problem for the division's offices outside South Florida. South Florida traffickers were supplying most of the state, except for the Florida panhandle area, which was being supplied by trafficking organizations along the Southwest Border.

Heroin

According to DEA, the drug threat in the area covered by the Miami Division has expanded to include increased heroin importation from South America to the United States through Florida. Opium poppy cultivation and heroin trafficking have become part of the Colombian illegal drug trade, and Colombian traffickers were increasing their efforts to sell multikilogram quantities of heroin to distributors in the United States.

Miami International Airport replaced New York's John F. Kennedy Airport as the principal port of entry for Colombian heroin into the United States. Another significant heroin smuggling route was from the Caribbean directly to Orlando, where the heroin was then transported through Florida and on to large markets in major northeastern cities.

Methamphetamine and Other Dangerous Drugs

According to DEA, methamphetamine trafficking and use had increased throughout Florida, particularly in central and northern Florida. Mexican organizations in Florida were the primary sources of methamphetamine. DEA reported that most of these organizations had ties to similar organizations in Southern California and/or Mexico where they were obtaining the drug. In addition to smuggling methamphetamine into Florida, local organizations were becoming increasingly adept at clandestinely manufacturing it. DEA also reported there was a great amount of drug-related violence associated with the distribution and use of methamphetamine.

The diversion of legal pharmaceutical drugs to illegal channels continued to be a problem in Florida. Physicians and pharmacists were the source of most of these drugs through activities such as indiscriminate and illegal prescribing practices and forged prescriptions. In addition, numerous chemical companies and brokers in Florida were diverting and supplying

chemicals used by clandestine laboratory operators to produce methamphetamine, cocaine, and heroin.

Marijuana

Marijuana was widely available throughout the area covered by the division, according to DEA. Although marijuana trafficking through the Caribbean has traditionally been a concern, the division also reported an increase in the amount of marijuana coming from the Southwest Border and being transshipped through central and northern Florida.

Traffickers were using a variety of smuggling routes and methods to bring marijuana into Florida. For example, DEA reported that trafficking groups were transshipping marijuana from Colombia through Florida using private vessels. Other traffickers were using commercial trucks to bring marijuana into Florida from Texas and Mexico. Smaller quantities of marijuana were being dispatched in luggage on commercial airline flights or via AMTRAK. Additionally, Federal Express and other package delivery services were frequently used to transport small quantities of marijuana.

A large percentage of the marijuana consumed in South Florida was being grown locally. DEA reported that indoor marijuana cultivation had reached record levels. Typically, indoor growing operations were located in private residences and consisted of about 200 to 300 plants. Larger indoor operations consisting of up to 10,000 plants were becoming more prevalent. Outdoor growing operations, sometimes amounting to several thousand plants, were usually located on private property in more rural areas or on protected forest land.

Money Laundering

According to DEA, South Florida continues to be a major center for Colombian drug traffickers' money laundering activities. At the time of our review, recent financial investigations indicated that traffickers were using electronic fund transfers to move narcotics proceeds from the United States to Central and South America. Traffickers were also using both legitimate and illegitimate import/export businesses to purchase products with illegal drug proceeds for export mostly to South America, thus hiding the source of the proceeds and providing additional profit.

Intelligence also indicated that smuggling of large shipments of bulk United States currency from Florida to Colombia has continued. In recent cases, traffickers wrapped and shipped bulk currency in hollowed appliances and containers. At times, these bulk shipments were sent to Colombia via third countries, such as Venezuela or Panama.

Priorities, Programs, and
Initiatives

The Miami Division's traditional priority has been regional, national, and international investigations aimed at disrupting the ability of major South American traffickers to import and distribute cocaine, as well as their ability to move the proceeds of their operations to South America. The division believes such investigations have become increasingly important as drug trafficking through the Caribbean has increased.

In this regard, the division's management plans, at the time of our review, called for it to (1) direct investigative efforts towards major international organizations, targeting every aspect of their operations; and (2) increase cooperative efforts with foreign counterparts as well as other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. The plan also called for the division to (1) attack street-level drug gangs through the MET Program, task forces, and drug enforcement training for state and local officers; and (2) continue to take a proactive role with the media, business and community groups, and schools to increase awareness of DEA's mission and the dangers of drug abuse.

At the time of our review, the division office in Miami had eight enforcement groups as well as four HIDTA task force groups and two METs. In addition to these groups, the division office had a diversion control group and support groups, including technical operations, asset removal, and intelligence. The division's outlying district, country, and resident offices had various enforcement groups, including eight state and local task forces and a HIDTA task force group. Also, the Orlando and Tampa district offices each had a diversion control group.

The Miami Division received 62 new positions in fiscal year 1998. Most of these positions resulted from a congressional appropriation designed to increase DEA's efforts against drug trafficking in the Caribbean and Florida (referred to as the Caribbean initiative). The additional positions were added to offices throughout the division, particularly in South Florida, the Bahamas, and the Florida Keys.

The division office's four HIDTA task force groups were part of the Miami HIDTA established in 1990. The Miami HIDTA's fiscal year 1998 goals were to reduce drug trafficking, money laundering, and drug-related crime and violence as well as to prevent and reduce drug abuse. DEA officials said that all four HIDTA groups focused primarily on Colombian cocaine cases. However, one group also investigated indoor marijuana growing operations, and another group also conducted "street sweeps" with City of Miami and Miami-Dade police. Miami HIDTA task force group participants

included special agents from DEA, Customs, IRS, and the FBI as well as officers from various state and local law enforcement agencies.

The Central Florida HIDTA was established in Orlando, FL, in 1998. Its fiscal year 1998 mission was to measurably reduce drug trafficking and related money laundering and apprehend violent drug fugitives, thereby reducing the impact of drug-related crimes in Central Florida. As part of this HIDTA, the Miami Division's Orlando District Office operated a multiagency heroin task force, and its Tampa District Office managed a multiagency methamphetamine task force.

Financial investigations are a priority of the division. Enforcement groups have carried out investigations targeting money launderers, such as Operation Cali-Man, and also initiated Operation Greenskeeper to penetrate major trafficking organizations by offering money laundering services to traffickers. In addition, the division reestablished its asset removal group, whose primary goal was to provide asset forfeiture training to special agents and task force officers. The division planned that this group would expand its role to support the division's financial investigations and then eventually assume a proactive role in conducting and assisting financial investigations.

The division's efforts to combat marijuana trafficking included investigations of organizations responsible for smuggling marijuana into the United States, transporting marijuana to Florida from the Southwest Border, and transporting marijuana to other locations within the United States. DEA offices located in the Florida Panhandle, for example, participated in Operation Pipeline with state and local agencies to interdict marijuana being shipped on Florida highways.

In addition, the division participated in DEA's marijuana eradication program to assist in the detection and eradication of marijuana plants grown in Florida. DEA provided the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) with \$320,000 to implement this program in fiscal year 1998. The division's marijuana eradication program manager in Tallahassee, along with DEA field coordinators in various district and resident offices, are to work with the FDLE and maintain liaison with the various federal, state, and local agencies involved in the program to coordinate their activities. DEA also participates in eradication operations and investigations of growers and provides program training.

The Miami Division had two METs at the time of our review. The first was established in February 1995 and the second in February 1997. Each MET

had 12 special agents. According to the ASAC responsible for the METs, in assessing a request from a police chief or sheriff for MET assistance, the teams decide whether they can make an impact on the drug-related violence in the community. The assessment includes, but is not limited to, the extent of drug-related violence as measured by criteria such as the murder rate and the number of violent gangs. At the time of our review, the first MET had been deployed to four local communities in the geographic area covered by the division; the second MET had completed deployments to three local communities and was conducting a fourth.

At the time of our review, another major program conducted by the Miami Division was Operation Bahamas, Turks, and Caicos Islands (OPBAT). OPBAT was designed to interdict illegal drugs being shipped through the Bahamas to the United States. The division's Nassau Country Office works with the Bahamian police, U.S. Coast Guard, and U.S. Army to carry out this operation. The DEA ASAC responsible for OPBAT said it is basically a response force. Some patrols are conducted, but OPBAT personnel primarily react to specific intelligence about drug shipments.

Most of the division's resources have been devoted to cocaine cases. For example, in fiscal year 1997, the division's special agents spent about 71.6 percent of their investigative work hours on cocaine cases. In fiscal year 1998, they spent about 70.6 percent of their investigative work hours on cocaine cases.

Enforcement Statistics and Case Examples

The Miami Division reported 3,945 arrests in fiscal year 1997 and 3,417 arrests in fiscal year 1998. The division reported seizing 17,860 kilograms of cocaine, 34.1 kilograms of heroin, and 14,935 kilograms of marijuana in fiscal year 1997. For fiscal year 1998, the division reported seizing 24,484 kilograms of cocaine, 96 kilograms of heroin, and 26,849 kilograms of marijuana. The division also reported that 108,178 marijuana plants were eradicated in calendar year 1997, and 55,311 marijuana plants were eradicated in calendar year 1998. In addition, the division reported seized assets totaling \$142 million in fiscal year 1997 and \$68 million in fiscal year 1998.

Operation Zorro II is an example of what DEA officials considered a successful major investigation by the Miami Division. Operation Zorro II targeted Colombian drug trafficking organization cell or group heads responsible for importing and distributing large shipments of cocaine and laundering money throughout the United States. The groups were associated with the Colombian Cali cartel. Operation Zorro II consisted of joint investigations initiated by DEA offices in Miami, New York, and Los

Angeles in coordination with DEA Headquarters' Special Operations Division (SOD) and the Department of Justice, targeting the Colombian group heads in their respective cities. In addition, DEA's Miami Division worked jointly with the City of Miami Police Department and received assistance from several other local law enforcement agencies during this operation.

Operation Zorro II was conducted in three phases. During the first phase, Miami Division special agents arrested 26 group members responsible for importing and distributing throughout the United States multithousand-kilogram quantities of cocaine. During the second phase, the special agents used Title III (electronic surveillance) intercepts to monitor the activities of the money launderers associated with the organization. As a result of this phase of the investigation, 11 Colombian money launderers were indicted and arrested, and over \$1 million in cash and assets were seized. Finally, during the third phase, the special agents targeted the distribution networks that were assisting the organization in distributing multikilogram quantities of cocaine in the South Florida area. An additional 11 defendants were indicted. At the time of our review, a total of 47 arrests had been made in Miami as part of Operation Zorro II.

Another example of what DEA officials considered a successful major investigation involved the Miami Division's district office in Orlando, FL. Working in cooperation with the division's Fort Lauderdale office, special agents in Orlando identified a drug trafficking organization headed by two individuals, including a transportation specialist for Colombian drug traffickers. The transportation specialist's primary role was to accept delivery of drugs in Puerto Rico, store the drugs, and later transport the drugs to central Florida and other regions of the United States.

The Orlando office led an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation targeting this trafficking organization, and representatives of the Customs Service, IRS, Marshal's Service, Postal Service, and local law enforcement agencies participated. The investigation revealed that from 1994 through June 1998 (the time of our visit), the organization had transported over 166,000 kilograms of cocaine and about 200 kilograms of heroin from Colombia, via Puerto Rico, into the United States. Cocaine and heroin were distributed and sold in Miami, New York, Orlando, and Charleston, SC, as well as in Puerto Rico. The investigation also uncovered numerous acts of violence committed by organization members, including three homicides.

Appendix I
Profiles of Selected DEA Domestic Field Divisions and Foreign Offices

At the time of our review, DEA reported that the investigation had resulted in the arrest of 61 individuals, including both of the principal targets. Fifty-six of the individuals had been convicted in federal court, and 4 were convicted in state court. The drug transportation specialist and another individual were each sentenced in federal court to life in prison, and several organization members received prison sentences exceeding 20 years. Over 800 kilograms of cocaine; 1 kilogram of heroin; numerous firearms; over \$19 million in U.S. currency; and \$4 million in real estate, cars, and boats were seized. In addition, two of the homicides were solved.

New Orleans Division

Geographic Region and Organizational Structure

DEA's New Orleans Division is responsible for federal drug law enforcement in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi and covers an area of 205,882 square miles within 10 federal judicial districts. Although largely rural and heavily forested, the division has seven metropolitan areas within its jurisdiction. Three of the states border the Gulf of Mexico and provide substantial maritime access to the interior portion of the region. The New Orleans Division, which is headed by a SAC and five ASACs, includes the division office, two district offices, eight resident offices, and three posts of duty, as shown on figure I.3.

Figure I.3: New Orleans Division Map



Source: DEA's New Orleans Division.

At the time of our visit in March 1998, the division was authorized to have 220 staff, including 136 special agents. In addition, there were 141 staff from state and local agencies authorized for various task forces and groups in the division, including 133 law enforcement officers.

Overview of Drug Trafficking Situation and Threat

According to DEA, the major drug-producing countries of Central and South America have a significant impact on the New Orleans Division because of its proximity to the Gulf Coast. Ports on the Gulf coastline and vast waterways, which are not patrolled, provide opportunities for smuggling, thereby making the area potentially attractive to drug traffickers.

Cocaine

Cocaine and crack cocaine pose the most significant drug threats in the area covered by the division, according to DEA. At the time of our review, cocaine was readily available, with distribution and use trends either stable at high levels or increasing in every metropolitan area, while crack cocaine continued to make inroads into rural areas.

DEA reported that Colombian and Mexican organizations operating out of Texas were responsible for bringing in most of the cocaine. Local cocaine trafficking organizations varied widely. Some organizations were loose-knit local violators with ties to traffickers in the source areas, while others were well-organized small groups with well-established markets. Some of the organizations were in the form of "street gangs" modeled after, and affiliated with, certain Los Angeles gangs. Violence common with gang activity was occurring in some areas within the division.

Heroin

At the time of our review, heroin was not considered a significant threat to most of the area covered by the New Orleans Division, according to DEA. Heroin availability and trafficking were confined mainly to the Greater New Orleans area. However, there were indications that higher purity Colombian heroin in the New Orleans area was surfacing.

Methamphetamine and Other Dangerous Drugs

DEA reported that the manufacture and use of methamphetamine have continued to grow. DEA identified several organizations that were bringing methamphetamine into the area from California, Arizona, and Texas. Methamphetamine laboratories have proliferated, especially in Arkansas.

The diversion of legal drugs to illicit use was occurring primarily at the pharmacy and practitioner level, according to DEA. Such diversion resulted from indiscriminate prescribing and dispensing of drugs, forgeries, illegal call-ins of prescriptions, and people "doctor-shopping" to

Marijuana

obtain numerous prescriptions. Diverted drugs were either being sold or used by individuals.

According to DEA, marijuana is the most widely abused drug in the area covered by the division, and the profit margin for marijuana trafficking is second only to that of cocaine. Although most of the marijuana encountered was coming from Mexico, at the time of our review, DEA reported that a substantial portion was domestically cultivated, and marijuana cultivation was extensive in each of the four states in the division's area.

Priorities, Programs, and Initiatives

The New Orleans Division's management plan called for it to focus enforcement activities, beginning in fiscal year 1998, on (1) disrupting the flow of drugs in the area covered by the division and (2) responding more effectively to drug-related crime and the attendant violence plaguing its communities. The plan's domestic operational strategy attempted to strike a balance between major regional cases with interstate ties and local impact cases targeting violent drug organizations and gangs.

The cornerstone of the division's plan is increased cooperation with counterpart law enforcement agencies at all levels, making optimum use of resources available in programs such as OCDETF, HIDTA, and MET. According to the division's SAC, although cooperation with state and local police agencies has long been a hallmark of DEA, his intent was to make DEA more visible, accessible, and "user friendly" to such agencies. He noted that unilateral DEA investigations would become a thing of the past, and every involved agency would benefit by pooling its resources.

As part of the plan, the SAC directed all the offices in the New Orleans Division to develop a targeting strategy for all types of drugs in their areas. Individuals and organizations are to be identified and prioritized for joint investigations with federal, state, and local agencies. The division's enforcement components are to use the various resources available through the OCDETF and HIDTA Programs. According to the SAC, he is committed to aggressively pursuing joint federal, state, and local investigations where productive and practical.

At the time of our review, the New Orleans Division had 12 state and local task forces in the 4 states it covers.⁵ Two of the state and local task forces were at the division office in New Orleans, and, according to DEA, one of

⁵ Four of the 12 task forces were provisional, awaiting authorized funding approval from DEA Headquarters.

these worked mostly OCDETF conspiracy cases. This task force was staffed by four DEA special agents, including a supervisor, and seven officers from local police and sheriff's departments.

The other state and local task force at the division office was called the REDRUM ("murder" spelled backward) task force. It was established in 1992 to identify and dismantle the most violent groups involved in drug-related crimes in the city of New Orleans. At the time of our visit, the task force was staffed by six DEA special agents (including a supervisor), a deputy U.S. Marshal, an INS agent, a Louisiana state police officer, a New Orleans police department homicide detective, and a National Guard intelligence analyst. In addition to carrying out the REDRUM mission, the task force sometimes conducts drug investigations that do not involve violence.

The New Orleans Division had two METs at the time of our review. According to the division's management plan, the major portion of the division's response to the cocaine and crack cocaine problems is an enhanced MET Program, with a second MET added. The division's first MET was established in 1995, and the second MET became operational at the start of fiscal year 1998. Each MET was made up of 10 DEA special agents. Between May 1995 and March 1998, the METs had been deployed to nine local communities in the geographic area covered by the division. The deployments were short-term operations conducted to identify and arrest local violent drug dealers.

The division had six HIDTA task force groups in three states at the time of our review. In December 1996, ONDCP established the Gulf Coast HIDTA in the states of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana to reduce the impact of Gulf Coast drug trafficking on other parts of the United States and to reduce violent drug trafficking in the three-state area. DEA is one of many agencies participating in the Gulf Coast HIDTA. In participating, DEA carries out its own mission and strategies in coordination with other agencies participating on multiagency teams.

The division office had one enforcement group made up entirely of DEA special agents who concentrated primarily on interstate and international drug investigations. According to DEA officials, most of the group's cases involve high-level drug traffickers and result in federal drug conspiracy charges. This group had more OCDETF cases than any other group in the division. The group was staffed with nine DEA special agents, including a supervisor.

Most of the division's resources have been devoted to cocaine cases. For example, in fiscal year 1997, the division's special agents spent about 68.6 percent of their investigative work hours on cocaine cases. In fiscal year 1998, they spent about 71.9 percent of their investigative work hours on cocaine cases.

Enforcement Statistics and Case Examples

The division made 1,864 arrests in fiscal year 1997 and 2,286 arrests in fiscal year 1998. In addition, the division made 688 seizures of assets valued at \$12.5 million in fiscal year 1997 and 644 seizures of assets valued at \$11.5 million in fiscal year 1998. In fiscal year 1997, the division opened 839 cases and closed 563 cases. In fiscal year 1998, it opened 950 cases and closed 356 cases.

An example of what the New Orleans Division considered a successful major investigation involved the REDRUM task force. In 1996, the task force initiated an investigation targeting a violent heroin trafficking organization operating in the city of New Orleans. This case evolved into an OCDETF investigation and was worked jointly with the New Orleans Police Department Homicide Division and the FBI. Various investigative techniques were used, including conducting two federally court-authorized wiretaps. As a result, 13 people were indicted by a federal grand jury in the Eastern District of Louisiana for violations including murder, engaging in a continuing criminal enterprise,⁶ conspiracy, and other drug-related charges. Ten defendants pled guilty prior to trial. In June 1997, the head of the organization was found guilty of all charges and received a life sentence. According to DEA, as a result of this investigation five homicides in the city of New Orleans were solved, and 359 grams of heroin and \$60,000 in drug-related assets were seized. DEA also reported that this investigation significantly reduced violent crime locally and disrupted the flow of heroin into the inner city.

Another example of what the division considered a successful major case involved the Mobile, AL, resident office. In 1997, the resident office collaborated with a U.S. Customs Service undercover group in "Operation Skymaster" to initiate an investigation of an individual who was seeking transportation for a multikilogram shipment of cocaine from South America to the United States. After a series of undercover meetings in Alabama and Florida, a fake delivery of cocaine took place. Since that time, the investigation has resulted in the arrest of 26 individuals and the

⁶ The federal Continuing Criminal Enterprise statute (21 U.S.C. 848) is directed at major drug traffickers and the forfeiture of their assets. A person is considered as engaging in a continuing criminal enterprise if he or she occupies a position of authority over five or more people engaged in a series of drug violations from which substantial income is derived.

Appendix I
Profiles of Selected DEA Domestic Field Divisions and Foreign Offices

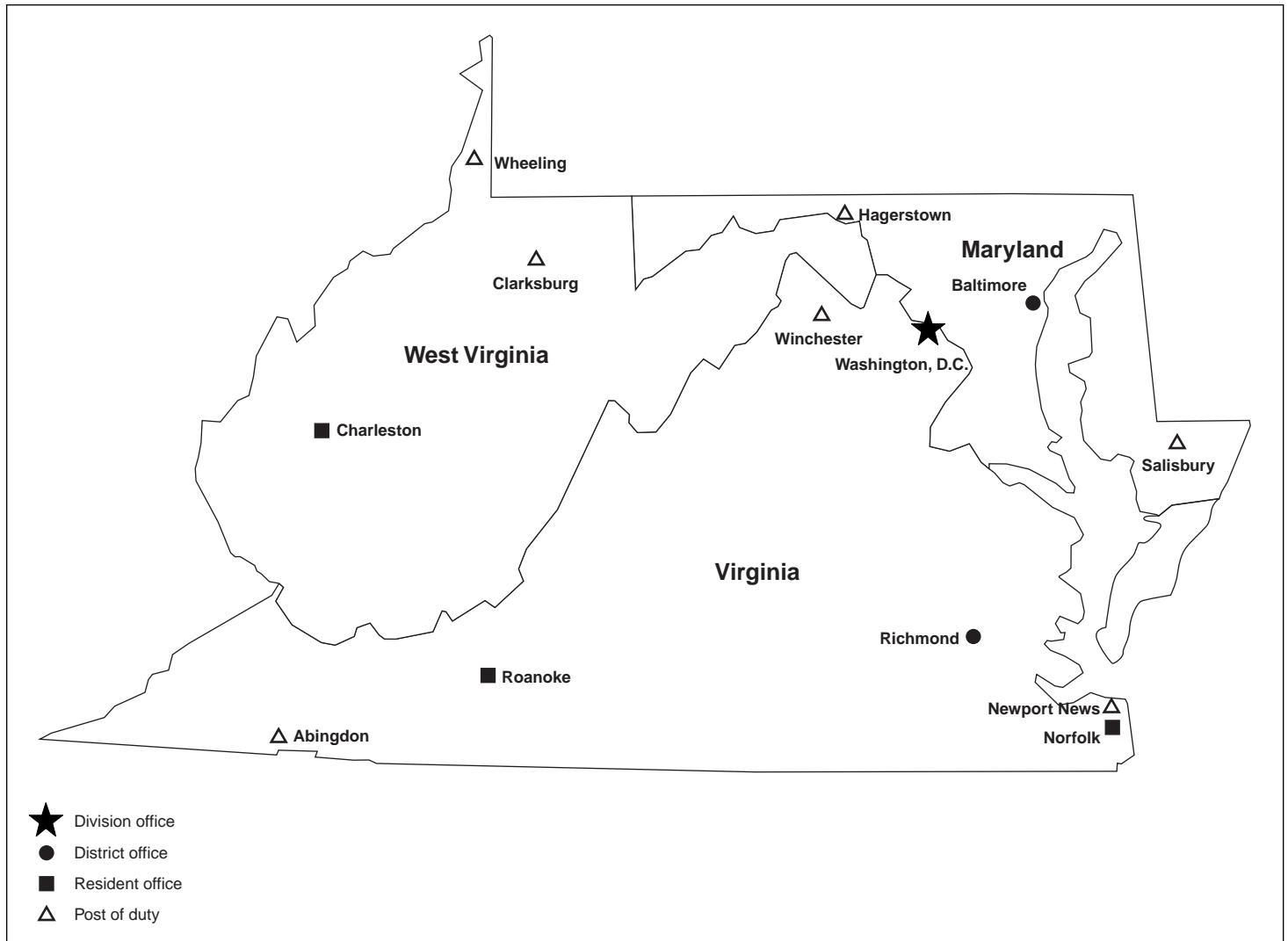
seizure of approximately \$145,000 in U.S. currency and 8 vehicles. The investigation identified international smugglers of multikilogram quantities of cocaine as well as the recipients of the cocaine in Alabama, Florida, and Michigan. The case led to several domestic investigations in Florida, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Washington Division and Baltimore District Office

Geographic Region and Organizational Structure

The Washington Division is located on the East Coast corridor between two major drug import cities, Miami and New York. Its area of responsibility extends through Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Three international airports, two international seaports, railway systems, and an extensive interstate highway network provide commercial and noncommercial transit to and through the region. The area's population is ethnically diverse and international, with urban, suburban, and rural communities. At the time of our July 1998 visit, the division, which was headed by a SAC and five ASACs, comprised the division office in Washington, D.C.; two district offices; three resident offices; and seven posts of duty, as shown on figure I.4.

Figure I.4: Washington, D. C. Division Map



Source: DEA's Washington Division.

As of March 1998, the Washington Division had 262 staff, including 158 special agents.

In response to the interests of the congressional requesters, this section also provides information on the Baltimore District Office, which is part of the Washington Division. At the time of our review, the office included two of the division's seven posts of duty, as shown on figure I.4. As of March 1998, it had 60 staff, including 39 special agents.

Overview of Drug Trafficking Situation and Threat

The Washington region, according to DEA officials, is both a drug transit zone between Miami and New York and a final destination point for drugs, serving as a secondary distribution region. Cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine are available throughout the area. The most significant threat is cocaine and crack distribution, dominated primarily by Dominican traffickers, and the violence associated with these activities. However, the division has recently seen a dramatic increase in heroin trafficking and distribution. Jamaican traffickers also threatened the region because of their wide-ranging distribution of marijuana and other drugs. Also available are LSD, MDMA (Ecstasy), Rohypnol, Ketamine, and GHB,⁷ drugs that are consumed at “raves,”⁸ in nightclubs, and on college campuses.

According to DEA officials, three levels of drug violators operate in the Washington division’s area of responsibility. These include (1) major international organizations; (2) mid-level organizations, which include major national and regional organizations, usually made up of longtime local traffickers; and (3) retail groups, including street-level violators and violent drug gangs. The majority of the violators are mid- and retail-level. Small neighborhood-based drug trafficking groups or “crews” use violence to control their areas and protect their drug trafficking enterprises from rival groups.

Baltimore Overview

Baltimore, according to DEA, although primarily a consumer drug market, is also a drug source for smaller Maryland cities and towns, including Annapolis, Hagerstown, and Salisbury. Cocaine, heroin, and marijuana are the primary drug threats to the area. Typically, drugs are transported into Baltimore from Miami, New York, and other source states by car, train, airline, bus, or sometimes via ship through the port. However, DEA officials indicated that airports are relied upon less, possibly due to past enforcement successes. Traffickers tended to be street- to mid-level violators.

Cocaine Trafficking in Baltimore

At the time of our review, according to DEA, cocaine was a major drug of choice in the Baltimore area, and the urban crack threat was migrating to smaller towns and cities throughout the surrounding suburban jurisdictions. Generally, local independent dealers go to New York City

⁷ MDMA (methylenedioxymeth-amphetamine) has hallucinogenic effects. Rohypnol (flunitrazepam), smuggled primarily from Mexico, is a depressant not approved for sale in the United States. Ketamine is an animal tranquilizer with legitimate uses in veterinary medicine. GHB (gamma hydroxy butyrate) is used as a date rape drug.

⁸ A rave is a party designed to enhance a hallucinogenic experience through music and behavior.

weekly, buy 2 to 3 kilograms of cocaine from Dominican sources, bring the drugs back to Baltimore, and distribute them over a several block area. These distributors have no ties to larger organizations. Law enforcement officials reportedly believed that youth gangs were increasingly involved in drug distribution and related criminal activity, primarily violent crime.

Heroin Trafficking in Baltimore

Baltimore is also one of the largest and most active heroin markets in the country, according to both DEA and ONDCP. Dominican traffickers bring wholesale quantities of high-quality Colombian heroin into the city, and Nigerians distribute Southeast Asian heroin from Thailand. Traffickers are street- to mid-level violators, distributing drugs in open-air drug markets and in housing projects. Violence has increased, even at the lower level of drug street sales. Moreover, in 1996, the Drug Abuse Warning Network⁹ (DAWN) reported that Baltimore had the highest rate of heroin-related emergency room episodes per 100,000 population.

Marijuana Trafficking in Baltimore

According to DEA, marijuana is transported into the Maryland area from the Southwest border states and Mexico. Much of the marijuana entering the area is conveyed by individuals using highways and mass transportation. Jamaicans supply wholesale quantities of marijuana in Baltimore. In addition, marijuana is also cultivated along Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Priorities, Programs, and Initiatives

At the time of our review, the majority of the Washington Division's efforts were, according to DEA, directed toward violent drug trafficking gangs. In Baltimore, an Assistant U.S. Attorney said that since the mid-1990s, that office had received cases involving violence from DEA. Moreover, DEA and the U.S. Attorney were responding to requests for assistance and now prosecuting cases from the state's attorneys' offices in order to obtain higher federal penalties for defendants.

The division's and Baltimore district office's targeting of drug trafficking gangs was reflected in the distribution of its investigative work hours. By geographic scope, combined domestic and local cases for fiscal years 1997 and 1998 accounted for about two-thirds of the total investigative work hours expended each year by the division and more than one-half and two-thirds of the total investigative work hours, respectively, for those years, expended by the district office. Investigative work hours expended on international and regional cases, in contrast, accounted for approximately 30 percent of the division's investigative work hours and almost 40 percent

⁹ Since the early 1970s, DAWN has collected information on patients seeking hospital emergency room treatment related to illegal drug use or nonmedical use of legal drugs.

and 30 percent of the district's investigative work hours in those years, respectively. By type of organizations targeted, the division expended the greatest portion of its investigative work hours on independent traffickers (31 percent and 42 percent for fiscal years 1997 and 1998, respectively). The Baltimore Office expended the greatest portion of its investigative work hours on violent organizations (almost one-third) in both fiscal years 1997 and 1998.

As indicated above, cocaine and heroin presented the major drug threats to the region. By drug, both the division and the Baltimore district work-hour statistics for fiscal years 1997 and 1998 reflect the cocaine and heroin threats. Each year, the division expended more than half its investigative work hours on cocaine-related cases and about 20 percent of its investigative work hours on heroin-related cases. The Baltimore office also spent about half its investigative work hours each year on cocaine-related cases and 33 percent on heroin-related cases.

As proposed in its 1998-2000 Field Management Plan, the number of Washington Division cases accepted as OCDETF cases increased in fiscal year 1998. During that year, the division had 73 of its cases accepted as OCDETF cases compared to 36 cases in 1997, an increase of 103 percent. Similarly, the percentage of the division's investigative work hours, by source of case, expended on OCDETF cases increased from about 29 percent in fiscal year 1997 to 31 percent in fiscal year 1998. Most of the division's higher level cases were handled through OCDETF. The Baltimore District Office reported 6 cases accepted as OCDETF cases in fiscal year 1997 and 22 in fiscal year 1998.

The Washington Division's 1998-2000 plan also called for the continued targeting of violent drug traffickers through the MET Program. The division had 1 MET team that had 10 special agents. In fiscal years 1997 and 1998, the team conducted deployments in Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, MD; Annapolis, MD; and Petersburg, VA.

Division officials emphasized to us the importance of their undertaking enforcement efforts with state and local law enforcement agencies to address the drug problems of the region. According to these officials, the division worked with approximately 240 state and local law enforcement agencies in Washington, D.C., and the 3 states in its area of responsibility. In addition, the division was involved in training state and local law enforcement personnel throughout the division. The Baltimore District Office had a task force, including DEA agents and Baltimore City police

officers, which investigated major heroin distribution networks or distributors in open-air markets.

In fiscal year 1998, 10 HIDTA task forces were operating within the division's area of responsibility, including 3 led by the Baltimore District Office. The latter three comprised law enforcement officers from DEA, the Baltimore Police Department, the Baltimore County Police Department, the Maryland State Police, and other local police agencies. One task force investigated violent drug traffickers and trafficking organizations that affected safety in the Baltimore metropolitan area; the second concentrated on major heroin and cocaine traffickers and targets of opportunity; and the third conducted interdiction operations—"hit and runs"—targeting the movement of drug and currency shipments at the Baltimore/Washington International Airport and the train and bus stations.

During fiscal year 1998, the Washington Division also participated in several special enforcement programs coordinated by DEA Headquarters. The Division reported that in fiscal year 1998, 20 investigations had resulted from its participation in a special enforcement program that focused on traffickers operating in the United States under the direction of Colombian, Dominican, and/or Mexican drug organizations. As part of another such program, the Baltimore District Office investigated West African drug trafficking organizations dealing in heroin, their foreign sources of supply, and their distributors within the United States.

In addition, the division participated in DEA's Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program. However, this effort was undertaken state by state. The Baltimore and Richmond District Offices and the Charleston, WV, Resident Office each provided assistance to drug enforcement groups in their respective states.

Enforcement Statistics and Case Examples

As a result of its efforts, the Washington Division reported 2,056 defendants arrested in fiscal year 1997 and 2,156 defendants arrested in fiscal year 1998. Approximately 60 percent of those arrested in both years were categorized as being involved in cocaine-related cases. In fiscal year 1997, almost 50 percent (985) of the defendants arrested were categorized as independent traffickers, 19 percent as associated with violent crime organizations (382), and 15 percent (309) as involved in criminal organizations. Fiscal year 1998 data showed the continued predominance of independent traffickers, 51 percent (1,093), among defendants arrested; this compared to defendants associated with violent crime organizations, 13 percent (275), or criminal organizations, 12 percent (251).

Appendix I
Profiles of Selected DEA Domestic Field Divisions and Foreign Offices

The Baltimore Office reported 745 arrests in fiscal year 1997 and 705 arrests in fiscal year 1998. For these fiscal years, respectively, 55 and 61 percent of these arrests were cocaine-related, and 22 and 20 percent were heroin-related.

In addition, DEA reported defendants arrested in OCDETF cases in which the Washington Division participated—409 in fiscal year 1997 and 729 in fiscal year 1998. Over half of the arrests each year were cocaine-related. The Baltimore Office reported 100 and 248 defendants arrested in OCDETF cases in fiscal years 1997 and 1998, respectively.

For fiscal years 1997 and 1998, the division and the Baltimore Office reported drug seizures of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana, as well as other dangerous drugs. These data are presented in table I.1.

Table I.1: Drug Seizures for Washington Division and Baltimore District Office for Fiscal Years 1997 and 1998

Drug seized	Washington Division		Baltimore District Office	
	Fiscal year	Fiscal year	Fiscal year	Fiscal year
	1997	1998	1997	1998
Heroin (Kgs)	17.7	14.8	12.4	9.6
Cocaine (Kgs)	1,158.2	125.9	1,053.6	56.8
Marijuana (Kgs)	254.8	401.4	159.3	127.8
Hashish (Kgs)	1.0	5.7	1.0	1.4
Stimulants (D.U.)	313,328	303,602	15,988	27,637
Depressants (D.U.)	10,936	1,799	782	587
Hallucinogens (D.U.)	13,922	10,860	305	43
Other narcotics (D.U.)	7,886	4,083	7,231	38

Note: D.U. refers to dosage unit.

Source: DEA.

As a result of its fiscal years 1997 and 1998 MET deployments in Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, MD; Annapolis, MD; and Petersburg, VA, at the time of our visit, the Washington Division reported 165 arrests, in total. These deployments resulted in the seizure of about 2.5 kilograms of crack, 1.8 kilograms of cocaine, 176 grams of heroin, and 1.2 kilograms of marijuana, as well as a number of weapons, more than \$34,000 in cash, and over \$120,000 in assets. This included the Baltimore deployment, which accounted for 81 defendants arrested and 950 grams of crack, 501 grams of cocaine, 176 grams of heroin, and 453.5 grams of marijuana seized.

The Washington Division's Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program, carried out by the DEA office with state and local law enforcement within the three states in the division's area of responsibility, resulted in the eradication of marijuana plants and arrests. For example, in

calendar year 1997, with the support of DEA's Baltimore Office, DEA reported that 4,826 marijuana plants (836 cultivated indoors and 3,990 cultivated outdoors) were eradicated; and 120 persons were arrested in Maryland. In calendar year 1998, DEA reported that 3,442 marijuana plants (2,724 cultivated indoors and 718 cultivated outdoors) were eradicated; and 89 persons were arrested.

In addition, the Division also provided the following examples of cases it considered successful.

- The Baltimore Office conducted an investigation with the Baltimore City Police and the Offices of the U.S. Attorney and local State's Attorney that led to the conviction of local drug dealer on such charges as conspiracy to murder and kidnap in aid of a racketeering enterprise, murder in aid of a racketeering enterprise, attempted murder in aid of a racketeering enterprise, conspiracy to retaliate against a witness, and conspiracy to distribute heroin and cocaine. In addition, nine other members of the organization were found guilty of a variety of charges, including conspiracy to murder and kidnap in aid of a racketeering enterprise and conspiracy to distribute heroin and cocaine. Evidence of 10 murders was presented at the trials. Moreover, according to DEA, witnesses testified that the dealer sold \$30,000 worth of heroin and cocaine a day in the Eastern District of Baltimore City. Sixty-six arrests were made during this investigation. The Division identified this case as an OCDETF case.
- According to DEA, in the investigation of one trafficker, DEA, with other state and local agencies—the Fairfax County, VA, Police Department; Arlington County, VA, Police Department; Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police Department; and Maryland State Police—dismantled a violent drug distribution organization in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area and solved the attempted murder of a Maryland State trooper. In December 1995, while transporting a kilogram of cocaine from New York to Washington, D.C., in a vehicle owned by the trafficker, a long-time kilogram-level cocaine distributor in the District was stopped and arrested by a Maryland State trooper. Subsequently, the distributor conspired with other individuals to kill that trooper to eliminate him as a witness in an upcoming trial; however, the wrong trooper was shot. During March 1997, investigations by the Fairfax, Arlington, and Washington, D.C., Police Departments focused on the trafficker's cocaine activities. DEA reported that the distributor was involved in a conspiracy, with others, to distribute cocaine in the Washington, D.C., area, and launder the proceeds through legitimate businesses. As a result of this investigation, a total of 18 individuals were found guilty of various charges, and nearly half a million dollars in criminally acquired assets were seized.

Bogota, Colombia, Country Office

Geographic Regional and Organizational Structure

At the time of our visit in July 1998, DEA's Bogota, Colombia Country Office was the second largest DEA office in South America. It covers the country of Colombia, which is bordered by the Caribbean Sea, Pacific Ocean, and four other countries and divided by the Andes Mountains. The Bogota Country Office, which is headed by a Country Attaché, includes a DEA resident office in Barranquilla, Colombia, as shown in figure I.5.

Figure I.5: Bogota, Colombia Country Office Map



Source: DEA's Bogota, Colombia, Country Office.

The country office was staffed with 65 DEA personnel, including 43 special agents. Also, representatives from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), Customs Service, FBI, IRS, Secret Service, and the Department of Defense (DOD) were working with DEA in Colombia. DEA had two enforcement groups and an intelligence group located in Bogota and one enforcement group in the Barranquilla office.

DEA is a member of the U.S. Embassy's Bogota Country Team, which is headed by the Ambassador and consists of U.S. agencies attached to the embassy in Colombia. DEA works with Colombian law enforcement authorities, primarily the Colombian National Police (CNP), to carry out drug enforcement and intelligence operations. However, DEA agents in Colombia do not have police authority and cannot make arrests or seize drugs in that country.¹⁰

Overview of Drug Trafficking Situation and Threat

According to DEA, Colombian drug traffickers continue to supply most of the world's cocaine. However, Colombian trafficking organizations had become much more fragmented in the 1990s. In the past, large Colombian cartels controlled the cocaine industry. There are now numerous independent traffickers and organizations with decentralized operations.

According to DEA, clandestine laboratories in Colombia are used to convert cocaine base into cocaine hydrochloride (HCL) for eventual export to the United States and Europe. The cocaine base is either imported from other countries, primarily Peru, or made from coca leaves grown in Colombia. The cocaine laboratories are primarily located in jungle areas southeast of the Andes Mountains in Colombia, referred to by DEA as the Colombian Source Zone. After processing, the cocaine is typically flown across the Andes mountains to northwest Colombia for further transport out of Colombia.

The major cocaine transportation points in northwest Colombia, according to DEA, are located in an area that includes the Pacific and Caribbean coasts and all of Colombia's major population centers. The transportation points include clandestine airstrips, major airports, seaports, and locations from which small "go-fast" boats and commercial containerized cargo vessels can transport cocaine. Preferred transshipment areas for drugs originating from Colombia are Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, and Puerto Rico. Mexico- and Caribbean-based transportation groups are involved in shipping cocaine to the United States.

The diversion of chemicals essential to cocaine production continues to increase in Colombia, according to DEA. For the most part, these chemicals are legally imported into Colombia from the United States,

¹⁰ We recently reported on the narcotics situation in Colombia, U.S. and Colombian efforts to address drug trafficking activities in Colombia, and the continuing challenges each government faces to combat these activities: *Drug Control: Narcotics Threat From Colombia Continues to Grow* (GAO/NSIAD-99-136, June 22, 1999).

Europe, and the Far East. They are then diverted for the production of cocaine.

The availability of heroin produced in Colombia and smuggled into the United States dramatically increased in recent years, according to DEA. In 1997, 75 percent of the heroin seized and analyzed in the United States was Colombian. The Colombian heroin trade is dominated by trafficking groups operating independently of the major cocaine trafficking organizations. Colombia's climate allows for year-round cultivation of opium poppies, from which opium gum is processed into heroin in clandestine laboratories throughout the country.

At the time of our review, according to DEA, the majority of the heroin produced in Colombia was being exported through the international airports in Bogota, Medellin, Cali, and, to a lesser extent, Barranquilla. DEA estimated that about 90 percent of the Colombian heroin destined for the United States was transported via couriers (also known as "mules") on commercial airlines. Miami, Dallas, and New York City were principal "gateways" for Colombian heroin entering the United States. Heroin traffickers were also transporting heroin into the United States through other countries in South and Central America and the Caribbean. The primary method of smuggling heroin was ingestion or concealment on the couriers' bodies. The heroin might also have been concealed in such items as false-sided luggage, clothing, food, or equipment.

Insurgent guerrilla groups have been associated with cocaine and heroin trafficking in Colombia. Guerrillas have provided security for cocaine laboratories, opium poppy fields, and clandestine airstrips. They have also been known to charge a "tax" for guarding coca and opium poppy fields, for permission to transport opium gum or morphine to sites for sale within the guerilla territory, for kilograms of coca leaf sold to produce cocaine base, and for kilograms of cocaine exported from the Colombian Source Zone. The "tax" has often been paid in weapons instead of currency. According to DEA, the guerillas have increased the risk of conducting drug enforcement operations. For example, a guerilla ambush of a CNP unit at a clandestine airstrip and cocaine storage complex in March 1998 left one CNP officer dead, two officers wounded, and five officers captured.

According to DEA, marijuana is exported in tons from Colombia to the United States and Europe. It is reportedly grown in mountain ranges near the Colombian Caribbean coast and is usually compressed into bales. The primary method of transportation is containerized commercial cargo and commercial cargo vessels departing from ports on the northern coast of

Colombia. It might be off-loaded at sea onto smaller ships or speedboats for delivery to locations in Mexico and onward transport to the United States.

Priorities, Programs, and
Initiatives

The Bogota Country Office is involved in activities to combat the Colombian drug trafficking threat and support DEA's South America Regional Plan.¹¹ The September 1997 South America Regional Plan contains the following seven objectives:

- identify, investigate, and dismantle major drug trafficking organizations;
- support U.S. domestic investigations;
- enhance host nation counterdrug capabilities;
- develop a country intelligence program;
- control essential chemicals;
- conduct financial investigations; and
- promote regional counterdrug cooperation.

DEA's Bogota Country Office also supports the U.S. Embassy's Flow Reduction Strategy, which is designed to reduce the flow of cocaine and heroin from Colombia. This strategy is carried out by the embassy's Bogota Country Team. The goal of the strategy, which focuses on the Colombian Source Zone southeast of the Andes Mountains, is to reduce the amount of cocaine crossing the Andes into northwest Colombia by 50 percent. The Flow Reduction Strategy concentrates on eradicating coca plants and opium poppies, destroying cocaine laboratories, and controlling the transportation of cocaine base and HCL into and out of the Colombian Source Zone by aircraft or rivercraft. For its part, DEA focuses primarily on the organizations responsible for controlling the manufacture and transportation of cocaine, while the State Department is responsible for eradication efforts.

At the time of our review, DEA was involved in three intelligence initiatives focused on the Colombian Source Zone.

- Information Analysis/Operations Center (IA/OC): The IA/OC was created to collect drug intelligence from U.S. and Colombian agencies and other sources, particularly regarding the production and transportation of cocaine in the Colombian Source Zone; serve as a focal point for U.S. and Colombian agencies' requests for information; and support drug enforcement operations in the Colombian Source Zone. The center was

¹¹ DEA's South America Regional Plan, which is updated periodically, provides strategic guidance for DEA's operations in South American countries, including Colombia and Bolivia.

staffed by DEA, Customs, and U.S. military personnel at the time of our review.

- **Operation Papagayo:** The objective of this operation is to intercept traffickers' communications in the Colombian Source Zone to help identify organizations controlling the manufacture and transportation of cocaine. The operation is conducted by a vetted or screened CNP unit that is to share the collected intelligence with DEA.
- **Operation Selva Verde:** The objective of this operation is to identify the organizations manufacturing cocaine in the Colombian Source Zone, locate and destroy their laboratories, collect evidence and intelligence, and arrest those involved. CNP, Colombian military, and DEA personnel operating in the Colombian Source Zone collect intelligence and provide it to IA/OC. Using this and other intelligence, IA/OC identifies targets for enforcement operations. CNP jungle units, in coordination with the Colombian military, then raid the targeted cocaine laboratories. Evidence and intelligence collected at the raided laboratories are used to help identify the trafficking organizations involved.

The DEA office in Bogota had committed one of its enforcement groups to investigations of major drug traffickers, including those on DEA's list of major targets in Colombia. The DEA agents in this group work with a CNP Special Investigative Unit (SIU), which was vetted by DEA. The SIU collects intelligence and targets and investigates major traffickers. At the time of our visit, another Colombian SIU had been vetted by DEA and was starting to work with this DEA enforcement group. This SIU was established to target major money laundering organizations, and an IRS agent assigned to the embassy was slated to assist the SIU. There were three vetted Colombian prosecutors assigned to work with the two SIUs.

At the time of our review, DEA's other enforcement group in Bogota was committed to working with CNP on several different programs, including the major programs discussed below.

- **Aircraft Control Program (Operation Gemini Clipper):** This is a CNP-operated general aviation aircraft inspection and enforcement program designed to help identify trafficking organizations using aircraft to transport illegal drugs. The program is based on a requirement by the Colombian government that all general aviation aircraft in Colombia be registered and inspected. Under the program, CNP inspects aircraft and their registrations, immobilizes or seizes aircraft found to be illegal, and collects information to help identify those responsible for using the aircraft to transport drugs.

-
- Chemical Control Program: A DEA diversion investigator and special agent were working with a CNP chemical control unit. This unit, which was vetted by DEA in 1998, audits companies authorized to legally import the chemicals essential to cocaine processing and companies that distribute chemicals in Colombia. The unit is authorized to seize or immobilize unauthorized or illegal chemicals and can coordinate with another Colombian government agency to revoke the licenses of chemical importers violating the law.
 - Heroin Program: DEA and CNP established a heroin task force to focus on Colombian heroin trafficking organizations. The CNP on this task force were not vetted at the time of our visit. Although the task force primarily concentrates on heroin transportation organizations, it has also identified and targeted heroin laboratories, according to DEA.

Enforcement Statistics and Case Examples

The Bogota Country Office reported the following as significant accomplishments for fiscal years 1997 and 1998.

- Operation Papagayo was established, and CNP officers assigned to this operation identified 13 different drug trafficking organizations.
- Operation Selva Verde destroyed 189 cocaine laboratories.
- CNP vetted units carried out 10 major investigations with DEA domestic offices. One of the vetted units' investigations produced the first two "controlled deliveries"¹² of cocaine and heroin from Colombia to the United States. This investigation resulted in 17 arrests in Cali, Colombia, as well as wiretaps in Miami and Newark.
- The vetted units had a total of 17 investigations; 30 arrests that DEA considered significant; and seizures of 2,666 kilograms of cocaine, 1.5 kilograms of heroin, 520 real estate properties, 17 vehicles, and \$4.6 million in U.S. currency.
- The Aircraft Control Program resulted in 29 aircraft seized by CNP in calendar year 1997, with a value estimated at \$57 million. During calendar year 1998, 81 aircraft were grounded or seized, 10 of which were returned due to innocent third party ownership. In addition, 5 stolen aircraft were recovered in 1998.
- The Chemical Control Program produced the first two arrests of chemical diverters in Colombia. In addition, the Colombian government revoked five chemical licenses during this period. In fiscal year 1997, 26.7 tons of chemicals were seized by the CNP chemical control unit; and in fiscal year 1998, the CNP unit seized 2,191 tons of solid chemicals and about 1.5 million gallons of liquid chemicals.

¹² A controlled delivery is an investigative tool whereby law enforcement authorities monitor a shipment of illegal drugs to its intended destination for eventual seizure.

-
- The heroin task force destroyed 11 heroin laboratories and seized 237 kilograms of heroin, 55 kilograms of morphine, and 85.5 kilograms of opium.
 - Since its inception in October 1997, the Airport Passenger and Cargo Inspection Program had yielded 175 arrests and seizures of 911 kilograms of cocaine and 58 kilograms of heroin.
 - The Barranquilla Resident Office reported drug seizures of 16,133 kilograms of cocaine, 18 kilograms of heroin, 22 kilograms of morphine, 17 kilograms of opium, and 17 metric tons of marijuana. This office also contributed to the seizure of 12,741 kilograms of cocaine, 2 kilograms of heroin, and 2 tons of marijuana being smuggled outside of Colombia.

According to DEA, a major success in Colombia was the dismantlement of the Cali cartel, which DEA considered to be the most powerful criminal organization that law enforcement had ever faced. Since 1995, all of the top Cali cartel leaders have been captured by or surrendered to CNP, with the exception of one who was killed in a shoot-out with CNP at the time of his arrest. According to DEA, evidence gathered through years of investigations by DEA, CNP, and other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies led to the identification, indictment, arrest, conviction, and incarceration of the cartel leaders on drug charges in Colombia.

La Paz, Bolivia, Country Office

Geographic Region and Organizational Structure

At the time of our visit in July 1998, the La Paz, Bolivia, Country Office was DEA's second largest foreign office worldwide. The Office covers the country of Bolivia, which is surrounded by the countries of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Peru. The Office, which is headed by a Country Attaché, included resident offices in Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, and Trinidad, Bolivia, as shown on figure I.6.

Figure I.6: La Paz, Bolivia Country Office Map



Source: DEA's La Paz, Bolivia, Country Office.

The country office was staffed with 114 personnel, including 43 special agents. Some of these personnel were located at a Bolivian police camp in the Chapare region where coca is grown. In addition, representatives from DOD were assigned to work with DEA in Bolivia.

The U.S. Ambassador is responsible for the drug control efforts of all U.S. agencies in Bolivia. The U.S. Embassy gives a high priority to drug control activities, such as the State Department's crop eradication efforts, the U.S. Agency for International Development's support for alternative

development activities enabling farmers to support themselves and their families without the need to cultivate coca, and DEA's drug enforcement programs and operations. In carrying out its responsibilities, DEA works with and assists Bolivian law enforcement authorities. However, DEA special agents in Bolivia do not have police authority and cannot make arrests or seize drugs in that country.

Overview of Drug Trafficking Situation and Threat

DEA reported that coca leaf cultivation continues in Bolivia. Bolivia is also a source country for cocaine, which is processed from coca leaves and smuggled into the United States and Europe.¹³

Coca cultivation in Bolivia occurs primarily in two areas—the Chapare region in the Cochabamba Department and the Yungas region situated in the Altiplano of the La Paz Department. DEA estimated that 90 to 95 percent of the coca leaves produced in the Chapare region, Bolivia's major cultivation area, is illegally processed into cocaine products. Most of the coca leaf cultivated in the Yungas region is cultivated in accordance with Bolivian law for legal consumption.

After Bolivian peasants harvest their coca fields, the leaves are dried and packaged in 100-pound bags. Low-echelon producers or the coca growers themselves process the dried leaves into cocaine base in clandestine laboratories, mostly in the Chapare region. The cocaine base is sold to buyers who act as agents for cocaine trafficking organizations and consolidate shipments for transport out of the Chapare.

In the past, according to DEA, the cocaine base was primarily transported out of Bolivia, usually to Colombia, for further processing into cocaine HCL. In recent years, however, Bolivian trafficking organizations have begun producing cocaine HCL in clandestine laboratories as well as distributing Bolivian-produced cocaine. At the time of our review, DEA reported that traffickers were moving cocaine base out of the Chapare region, primarily to the Santa Cruz and El Beni regions of Bolivia, using a variety of land, river, and air transportation methods. Once the cocaine base reaches the Santa Cruz and El Beni regions, it is either processed locally into cocaine HCL or transported into Brazil or Colombia for processing.

¹³ Coca has deep cultural roots in Bolivia, where it has been cultivated for at least 2,000 years. Today, coca cultivation and consumption still have considerable cultural and economic importance, and even legal acceptance, in Bolivia. At the time of our review, it was estimated that 400,000 to 500,000 Bolivians chewed coca leaf to alleviate the effects of cold, hunger, fatigue, and altitude sickness. A type of tea is also brewed from coca. In general, the leaf is a focus for rituals and social occasions.

According to DEA, at the time of our review, several Bolivian family-based transportation/production networks dominated cocaine trafficking in the country. The networks were managing the majority of cocaine moved within Bolivia as well as the cocaine shipped out of the country. The trafficking networks were financing cocaine base purchases from Chapare-based suppliers, arranging for transportation from the Chapare, operating base purification and/or cocaine laboratories, and consolidating large shipments for international transport. A few of these networks still dealt with Colombian drug organizations; but Bolivians were also working with traffickers from other countries, such as Brazil, Peru, Chile, Paraguay, Mexico, and Nigeria.

Priorities, Programs, and Initiatives

During the 1990s, the La Paz Country Office shifted from conducting predominantly “jungle operations” in Operation Snowcap—which identified and destroyed cocaine base laboratories and interdicted cocaine base shipments—to placing increased emphasis on identifying, targeting, and investigating cocaine trafficking organizations. Using funds appropriated for DEA’s Andean Ridge Initiatives and vetted Sensitive Investigative Units (SIU) of the Bolivian National Police (BNP), DEA reported that drug intelligence collection efforts in Bolivia have been enhanced; and the investigative capabilities of BNP’s Special Forces for the Fight Against Narcotics Trafficking (Fuerzas Especiales Para la Lucha Contra Narco-Trafico, or FELCN) have been improved with more personnel, additional equipment, and better training.

The La Paz Country office’s programs and initiatives were designed to combat the Bolivian drug trafficking threat and support DEA’s South America Regional Plan.¹⁴ The South America Regional Plan contains the following seven objectives:

- identify, investigate, and dismantle major drug trafficking organizations;
- support U.S. domestic investigations;
- enhance host nation counterdrug capabilities;
- develop a country intelligence program;
- control essential chemicals;
- conduct financial investigations; and
- promote regional counterdrug cooperation.

According to DEA, at the time of our review, the country office’s priority was investigating Bolivia-based drug trafficking organizations with

¹⁴ DEA’s South America Regional Plan, which is updated periodically, provides strategic guidance for DEA’s operations in South American countries, including Bolivia and Colombia.

connections to the United States. However, DEA officials said this has become more difficult. In the past, there was a link from Bolivia to the United States through Colombia. At the time of our review, however, fewer Colombian drug traffickers were involved with the Bolivian cocaine trade, and Bolivian traffickers were dealing with people from a number of different countries. The country office was focusing most of its operations in two areas: the Chapare region, where most of the cocaine base comes from, and the Santa Cruz area, where most of the cocaine HCL comes from.

The country office, according to DEA, was working closely with FELCN to carry out drug enforcement and intelligence operations. FELCN exercises operational control over various Bolivian drug law enforcement units, such as the Mobile Rural Patrol Unit (Unidad Movil de Policia Rural, or UMOPAR); Financial Investigative Unit (FIU); Grupo de Inteligencia y Operaciones Especial (GIOE), FELCN's intelligence arm; and Grupo Investigaciones de Substancias Quimicas (GISUQ), FELCN's Chemical Investigations Group. The police units are supported by the Bolivian Air Force's Red Devil Task Force, which provides aviation support, and the Bolivian Navy's Blue Devil Task Force, which patrols rivers.

At the time of our review, FELCN/UMOPAR units were stationed throughout Bolivia and were based primarily in the Chapare region, Trinidad, and the Yungas region. Members of UMOPAR are considered specialists in paramilitary counterdrug operations, including jungle patrol and reconnaissance, air insertions, mobile roadblocks in rural areas, and river operations. DEA started Operation Gatekeeper primarily to focus UMOPAR resources on interdicting cocaine base leaving the Chapare. With specialized teams of police conducting mobile roadblocks on highways, Operation Gatekeeper provides a rapid response in areas of Bolivia where intelligence indicates the movement of large quantities of drugs or chemicals. In 1998, UMOPAR established new mobile enforcement teams (called Border Enforcement Teams), headquartered in La Paz, to conduct intelligence-driven drug interdiction operations, including roadblocks, along Bolivia's borders with Chile, Peru, Brazil, and Argentina. DEA refers to this program as Operation GRIRMO.

At the time of our review, FELCN/GIOE had 3 SIUs with approximately 75 vetted personnel. The SIUs were located in Cochabamba, La Paz, and Santa Cruz. They were collecting information through surveillance operations, with special emphasis on violators operating at the highest levels. The intelligence was being used to help investigate and dismantle

major drug trafficking organizations in support of both Bolivian and U.S. drug enforcement objectives.

The La Paz, Bolivia, Country Attaché told us that he believed the Bolivian SIUs are helping to create a DEA-like organization in Bolivia. He said the vetting process for members of these units is similar to DEA's hiring process, and the SIUs consist of police with integrity, training, expertise, equipment, and other tools needed to successfully conduct drug enforcement operations. He said DEA is building the infrastructure of FELCN and trying to do more intelligence-driven investigations of drug trafficking organizations.

In addition, the following efforts were ongoing at the time of our review, according to DEA:

- The country office had established a Major Violators Task Force with FELCN officers. This program focused on arresting high-level traffickers involved in transporting cocaine and dismantling their organizations. Task force operations were being carried out in Cochabamba, La Paz, and Santa Cruz.
- Operation Argus had consistently been the most valuable intelligence resource in Bolivia, according to DEA. This FELCN intelligence operation was feeding actionable intelligence to FELCN/GIOE, which led to arrests and seizures in numerous cases. The program has been funded almost entirely by DOD and the State Department and was expanded to several locations in Bolivia.
- Operation Camba is an enforcement and intelligence-gathering program that was targeting drug traffickers who used trains in Bolivia's Santa Cruz and Tarija Departments to transport cocaine and precursor chemicals to and from the Bolivian frontiers with Brazil and Argentina. According to DEA, Operation Camba enabled the country office and FELCN to gather extensive intelligence that, combined with enforcement operations, significantly increased seizures of cocaine and precursor chemicals being transported on Bolivian trains.
- FELCN/FIU is responsible for investigating money laundering and other links between finances and drug trafficking and for providing case support when financial assets are seized in drug investigations. According to DEA, the country office has been working with the FIU to refine a 1998 Bolivian money laundering law to help make it fully functional.
- According to DEA, the country office had a diversion investigator working with FELCN/GISUQ, which is responsible for investigating violations of Bolivia's laws against trafficking in chemicals essential to processing cocaine. GISUQ intercepts contraband chemicals entering Bolivia from

foreign countries, develops intelligence concerning precursor chemical diverters throughout Bolivia, has operated checkpoints to seize precursor chemicals in the Chapare, and investigates established chemical handlers in conjunction with the Bolivian National Directorate for the Control of Chemicals.

- Operation Mugshot is an airport intelligence program that was being conducted by the country office. In the program, names from passengers' passports and airport employee lists were being run through DEA's worldwide computer database containing information on known and suspected drug traffickers.
- Operation Civic Action Plan is a television, radio, and poster campaign that advertised rewards for information about drug trafficking.
- Operation Education was designed to develop schools for Bolivian law enforcement personnel to enhance their investigative capability through specialized training.
- Through Operation Night Watch, the country office assisted in restructuring FELCN to make it a more effective and less bureaucratic organization.

Enforcement Statistics and Case Examples

The La Paz Country Office provided us with the results of drug enforcement operations in Bolivia during fiscal years 1997 and 1998.

In fiscal year 1997, the country office initiated 219 investigations. Of this total, 99 investigations involved cocaine HCL, 90 involved cocaine base, 26 involved cocaine-related chemicals, 3 involved marijuana, and 1 involved heroin. The Santa Cruz Resident Office initiated 94 of the investigations; the Cochabamba Resident Office initiated 93 investigations; and the office in La Paz initiated 32 investigations. The country office reported that BNP made 1,483 arrests and seized 11,452 kilograms of cocaine HCL and base during fiscal year 1997 in association with DEA's activities in Bolivia.

In fiscal year 1998, the country office initiated 487 investigations. Of these, 483 investigations involved cocaine, 3 involved marijuana, and 1 involved heroin. The Santa Cruz Resident Office initiated 262 of the 487 investigations, the Cochabamba Resident Office initiated 156 investigations, the Trinidad Resident Office initiated 12 investigations, and the office in La Paz initiated 57 investigations. BNP made 2,112 arrests and seized 11,554 kilograms of cocaine base and HCL during fiscal year 1998 in association with DEA's activities in Bolivia.

An example of what DEA officials considered a successful investigation involved the Santa Cruz resident office. In May 1997, DEA and BNP's FELCN initiated an investigation into the cocaine air shipment activities of

a Bolivian trafficking organization. Intelligence revealed that the organization was shipping multihundred-kilogram loads of cocaine to a Brazilian organization located in Campo Grande, Brazil, several times a month. In addition, through intelligence, DEA and FELCN were able to identify the majority of the members of the organization and their operating areas. In October 1997, information surfaced about a scheduled air shipment of cocaine by the Bolivian organization. On the basis of this information, in November 1997 a joint operation resulted in the arrest of the Bolivian organization's head and 17 members of his organization. In addition, 354.4 kilograms of cocaine base and \$1.4 million in trafficker-owned assets were seized.

In another example provided by DEA officials, 602 kilograms of cocaine base were seized in July 1997 at a checkpoint in the Yungas region. This drug seizure, along with subsequent arrests and document seizures, led to the discovery of a large, multifaceted trafficking organization. Document analysis and related research of personal telephone directories, financial documents, business papers, and personal papers seized from members of the organization revealed a network of drug and illicit chemical traffickers numbering over 100 persons. Investigative developments revealed that the organization was responsible for the full range of cocaine trafficking, including obtaining cocaine-essential chemicals, operating cocaine base laboratories, transporting cocaine base out of the Chapare region for further processing into HCL, and shipping the drugs out of Bolivia. Although the majority of the organization members identified were Bolivian nationals, other possible targets were located in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. Arrests tied to this cocaine trafficking organization numbered over 55, and the value of seized assets exceeded \$1 million.

Mexico City, Mexico, Country Office

Geographic Region and Organizational Structure

DEA's Mexico City Country Office covers all of Mexico, which is approximately 761,600 square miles in size, or about three times larger than Texas. Mexico has a 2,000-mile border with the United States, 5,804 miles of coastline, and is situated between the United States and the South American countries that supply much of the illegal drugs smuggled into the United States.

At the time of our visit in September 1998, the Mexico City Country Office, which was headed by a Country Attaché, included seven resident offices spread throughout Mexico, as shown in figure I.7.¹⁵

Figure I.7: Mexico City, Mexico, Country Office Map



Source: DEA's Mexico City, Mexico, Country Office.

¹⁵ The country office had resident offices in Guadalajara, Hermosillo, Ciudad Juarez, Mazatlán, Merida, Monterrey, and Tijuana.

There were 88 DEA staff authorized, 45 of which were special agent positions. The Government of Mexico limits the number of special agents DEA can have in Mexico, and it permitted DEA to increase the number of special agents in the country from 39 to 45 in July 1997. Also, representatives from the FBI and DOD were assigned to the country office.

DEA is the principal U.S. agency for drug investigation and drug intelligence coordination in Mexico. DEA works with Mexican law enforcement authorities to carry out drug enforcement and intelligence operations. DEA agents in Mexico do not have police authority and cannot make arrests or seize drugs in that country.¹⁶

Overview of Drug Trafficking Situation and Threat

According to the State Department, no country poses a more immediate drug threat to the United States than Mexico. Mexico is the principal transit country for cocaine entering the United States, with an estimate of almost 60 percent of the U.S. cocaine supply smuggled across the U.S.-Mexico border in 1998, typically coming from Colombia through Mexico. Mexico is also a major source country for heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine.

Since the late 1980s, according to DEA, the Mexican/Central American corridor has been the primary smuggling route for cocaine destined for the United States from source countries in South America. Cocaine is shipped to Mexico in various ways (e.g., in fishing vessels, in containerized cargo on commercial ships, and on small planes and trucks). Once in Mexico, most of the cocaine is smuggled into the United States by vehicle.

In recent years, Mexican drug trafficking organizations have expanded their cocaine operations. According to DEA, Mexican trafficking groups were once solely transporters for Colombian cocaine traffickers. In the early 1990s, however, major Mexican organizations began receiving payment in cocaine for their services. These organizations ultimately emerged as wholesale distributors of cocaine within the United States, significantly increasing their profit margin.

Mexico has been a significant source of heroin used in the United States for many years, according to DEA. Analysis of drug seizures indicates that 14 percent of the heroin available in the United States is produced in Mexico. Opium poppy cultivation takes place in the central and

¹⁶ In June 1998, we reported on the status of counternarcotics activities in Mexico: [Drug Control: U.S.-Mexican Counternarcotics Efforts Face Difficult Challenges](#) (GAO/NSIAD-98-154, June 30, 1998). We later updated that report in congressional testimony: [Drug Control: Update on U.S.-Mexican Counternarcotics Activities](#) (GAO/T-NSIAD-99-98, March 4, 1999).

southwestern parts of the country. Clandestine laboratories are used to produce heroin from opium with essential chemicals that are widely available in Mexico. DEA reported that Mexico has also been increasingly used as a transit country for heroin from other source countries.

According to DEA, Mexico is the primary foreign supplier of marijuana to the United States, and Mexican organizations have been involved with marijuana trafficking for decades. Marijuana is cultivated in Mexico, with the heaviest concentration in the western states. In recent years, growers have increased their efficiency and are cultivating higher grade marijuana, which commands a higher price in the United States.

Mexican drug trafficking organizations, according to DEA, have expanded their methamphetamine operations, using their well-established cocaine, heroin, and marijuana distribution networks to dominate wholesale-level methamphetamine production and distribution in recent years. At the time of our review, DEA estimated that the majority of the methamphetamine available in the United States was either produced in Mexico and transported to the United States or manufactured in the United States by Mexican drug traffickers.

DEA reported that Mexican drug trafficking organizations are becoming stronger. According to DEA, Mexican organizations have billions of dollars in assets and have at their disposal airplanes, boats, vehicles, radar, communications equipment, and weapons that rival the capabilities of some legitimate governments. One such Mexican organization generated tens of millions of dollars in profits per week.

The State Department reported that Mexico has become a major money laundering center. Drug trafficking organizations launder the proceeds of illegal drug sales in legitimate businesses in both Mexico and the United States. They favor transportation and other industries that can be used to facilitate drug, cash, and arms smuggling and other types of illegal activities.

DEA reported that Mexican traffickers are also a growing threat to citizens within Mexico and the United States because of their willingness to murder and intimidate witnesses and public officials. According to the Justice Department, the number of threats to U.S. law enforcement officials in Mexico has also increased.

Priorities, Programs, and
Initiatives

The Mexico City Country Office maintains liaison with Mexican law enforcement and intelligence organizations, and it promotes interagency cooperation and coordination in the areas of drug law enforcement activities and intelligence collection and dissemination. The country office's mission is to (1) coordinate with Mexican law enforcement authorities on investigations directed against major drug trafficking organizations in Mexico, (2) collaborate in developing a connection to the United States for the investigations initiated in Mexico, and (3) engage in cooperative "institution building" to improve the capabilities and effectiveness of Mexican drug law enforcement authorities.

The office's work plan cited the following priorities for fiscal year 1998:

- develop focused intelligence-gathering activities,
- increase the impact of counterdrug efforts in Central America on drug trafficking in the United States,
- enhance host nation counterdrug capabilities, and
- initiate regional counterdrug cooperation.

According to DEA's Country Attaché, the country office focuses on investigating major drug trafficking organizations in Mexico involved in supplying illegal drugs to the United States. He said that at the time of our visit, the Mexico City Country Office had a list of 10 major targets, and virtually all of the office's efforts were devoted to investigations of these targets. In these investigations, the country office was attempting to attack the "command and control" communications of targeted organizations and was working closely with DEA's Special Operations Division at headquarters.

Another priority of the Mexico City Country Office has been the attempt to locate a fugitive accused of participating in the June 1994 murder of a DEA special agent in Arizona. According to DEA, the country office has dedicated all available staff and equipment, in coordination with and in support of the Mexican government, to apprehend this fugitive.

The Country Attaché told us that the key change to DEA's operations in Mexico in the 1990s was the establishment of Mexican vetted units for drug law enforcement. He said this was a dramatic departure from the way the country office previously operated and coordinated with Mexican law enforcement authorities. At the time of our review, DEA's Mexico office was essentially working only with the vetted units, which are part of the Mexican Special Prosecutor for Crimes Against Health (FEADS) and include personnel assigned to the Organized Crime Unit (OCU) and the

Border Task Forces (BTF). FEADS reports to Mexico's Office of the Attorney General (PGR).

OCU, located in Mexico City, is the principal agency responsible for enforcing a Mexican organized crime law passed in November 1996 covering drug trafficking, money laundering, conspiracy, electronic surveillance, and organized crime corruption. The narcotics section of OCU has vetted personnel whose mission is to investigate high-level drug trafficking groups, as well as drug-related money laundering groups, throughout Mexico.

OCU is also the umbrella agency for the Sensitive Investigative Unit (SIU), which has vetted personnel. The SIU collects and analyzes intelligence from various sources, develops investigations against major organizations, and disseminates actionable information to other law enforcement units.

At the time of our review, the BTFs were investigating what DEA considered the most significant drug trafficking organizations along the U.S.-Mexico border as well as a major organization in Central Mexico considered key to the booming U.S. methamphetamine trade.¹⁷ The primary work of the BTFs is intelligence; i.e., they gather, analyze, integrate, and interpret information from various sources. The FEADS officers assigned to the BTFs are vetted; and, at the time of our work, they were assigned to BTF locations in Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, Monterrey, and Guadalajara and their respective suboffices in several other locations in Mexico.

Mexico passed a law in May 1996, and expanded it in December 1997, establishing trafficking in precursor and essential chemicals as a criminal offense. These chemicals can be used in the production of heroin, cocaine, and synthetic drugs of abuse. The implementation of the law and development of an administrative infrastructure for enforcing it were under way at the time of our visit. As part of the U.S. assistance and training to Mexico for carrying out the law, the country office was participating in a Bilateral Chemical Control Working Group and encouraging the establishment of Mexican chemical control programs. The country office was also working with specialized chemical control units in FEADS and CENDRO, a Mexican intelligence unit, to exchange chemical import/export information and other intelligence. In addition, the BTF that

¹⁷ The Guadalajara BTF was instrumental in apprehending two brothers who headed this organization in June 1998. As of May 1999, the brothers were incarcerated in Mexico awaiting extradition to the United States.

DEA works with in Guadalajara was considered to be the first Mexican chemical task force and had targeted the Amezcua-Contreras organization, which DEA reported as the most powerful and dominant methamphetamine trafficking organization in Mexico.

The country office also participates in the U.S. Embassy's Money Laundering Task Force. Membership includes the FBI, Customs, IRS, and the Economic, Political, and Narcotics Affairs sections of the embassy. The task force oversees joint financial investigations, provides training to Mexican counterparts, and coordinates an exchange of information with Mexico. In addition, the task force encouraged the Mexican government to develop major investigations to test Mexico's May 1996 law making money laundering a criminal offense.

Also located at the country office is an Information Analysis Center (IAC) that develops tactical intelligence for interdicting drugs and chemicals being smuggled. According to DEA, the IAC interacts daily with CENDRO and an antismuggling unit of the Mexican military. The IAC is staffed with DEA intelligence analysts, DOD analysts and computer support personnel, a Customs air officer, and assigned liaison personnel from an intelligence agency.

At the time of our review, DEA special agents in the Mexico City Country Office were spending the majority of their investigative work hours on programs and initiatives involving cocaine. During fiscal year 1997, cocaine operations accounted for 71.4 percent of the special agents' reported investigative work hours. In fiscal year 1998, the special agents reported spending 62.8 percent of their investigative work hours on operations involving cocaine.

Enforcement Statistics and Case Examples

The Mexico City Country Office provided us with a statistical summary of the results of its operations during fiscal years 1997 and 1998.

In fiscal year 1997, the country office initiated 90 investigations. The office's operations resulted in 57 arrests, 26 of which were related to cocaine and 23 of which were related to marijuana. The office reported seizures of approximately 4,025 kilograms of cocaine, 3 kilograms of heroin, 24,290 kilograms of marijuana, and 264,314 dosage units of dangerous drugs such as amphetamines.

In fiscal year 1998, the country office initiated 77 investigations, 44 of which were related to cocaine and 23 of which were related to marijuana. The office's operations resulted in five arrests, of which three were related

to cocaine and two were related to marijuana. The office reported seizures of 573 kilograms of cocaine, 26 kilograms of heroin, 860 kilograms of marijuana, and 64,000 dosage units of dangerous drugs.

An example of what DEA considered a successful major investigation involved the Mexican drug trafficking organization known as the Gulf cartel. This organization transported cocaine, marijuana, and heroin into the United States from Mexico and was closely aligned with the Colombian Cali cartel. The organization was headquartered in both Matamoros and Monterrey, Mexico, and had significant influence in the Mexican states of Chihuahua, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, and Veracruz. DEA, in conjunction with the FBI and the Customs Service, initiated an investigation that was expanded to include task forces from U.S. federal, state, and local agencies and international agencies. The Mexican Attorney General's Office took the lead in the investigation, arrested several key organization members, and provided valuable information from cooperating defendants and intelligence sources. DEA's Monterrey resident office cultivated and used informants, resulting in the arrest of other organization members and, eventually, the head of the organization. The individuals were indicted on 30 counts of drug and money laundering violations.

After the arrest of the Gulf cartel's leader, another individual took control of the organization. DEA's Monterrey office took the lead in an investigation that involved DEA domestic offices, the FBI, U.S. Attorneys' Offices, and Mexican law enforcement authorities. The new organization head was arrested and charged with numerous drug and money laundering violations. At the time of our review, he was incarcerated in a Mexican prison.

Despite the incarceration of the second leader, the Gulf cartel continued to bring ton quantities of cocaine into the United States, according to DEA. Thus, at the time of our review, investigations of the remaining organization members were being conducted and coordinated by U.S. and Mexican law enforcement agencies, including DEA's Monterrey office.

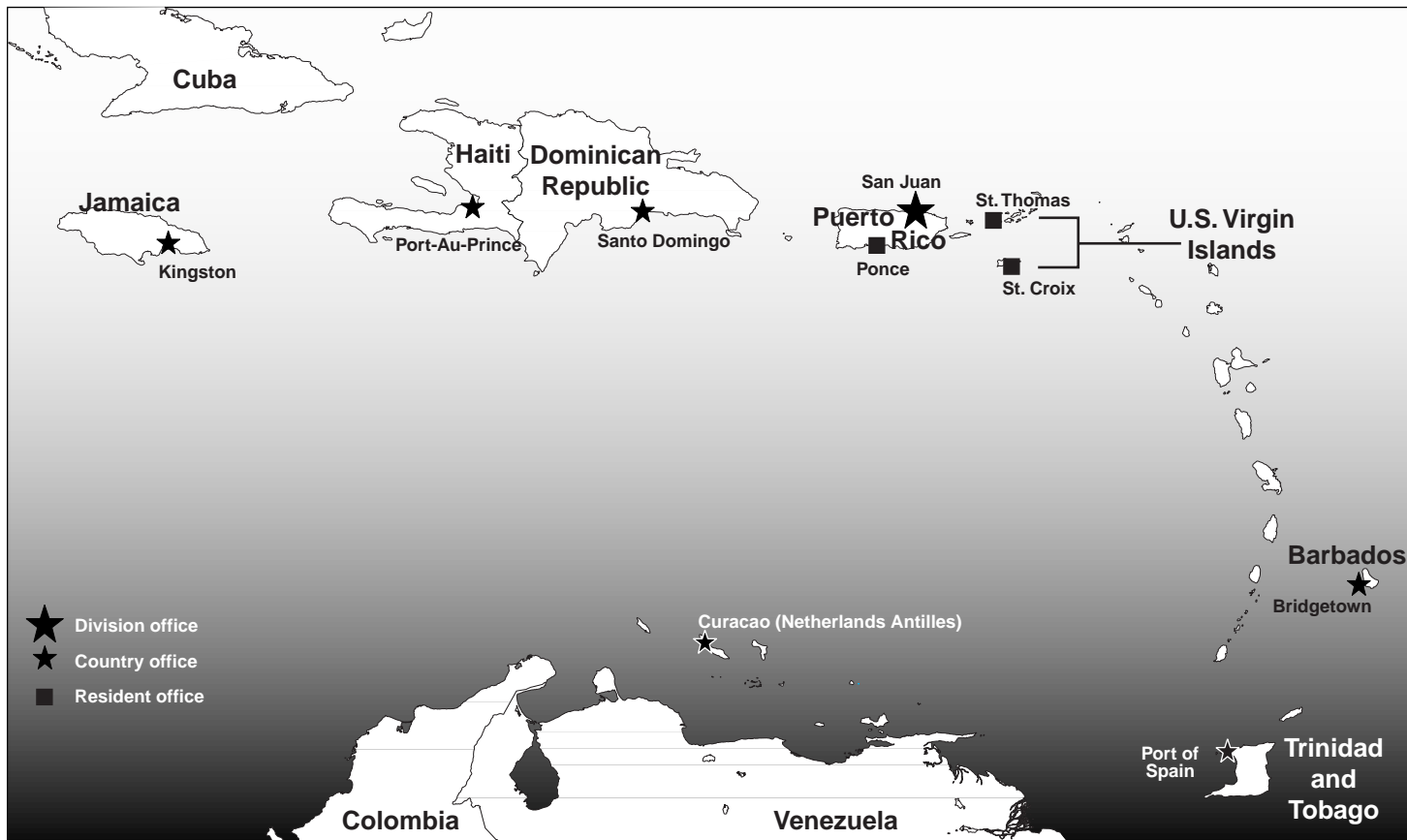
Caribbean Division

Geographic Region and Organizational Structure

Established in October 1995, the Caribbean Division is unique in that it has both foreign and domestic responsibilities. The Division's area of responsibility is the entire Eastern Caribbean Corridor, including the commonwealth of Puerto Rico;¹⁸ the U.S. Virgin Islands; and the countries of Barbados, the Netherlands Antilles (Curacao), and Trinidad and Tobago, as well as Hispaniola (the Dominican Republic and Haiti) in the Central Caribbean and Jamaica in the Western Caribbean. At the time of our visit in September 1998, the division's field office, which was headed by a SAC and two ASACs, was located in San Juan, Puerto Rico. It also had six foreign county offices and three domestic resident offices, as shown in figure I.8.

¹⁸ Puerto Rico is a self-governing commonwealth, in union with the United States.

Figure I.8: DEA Caribbean Division Map



Source: DEA's Caribbean Division.

As of March 1998, the division's 161 staff (140 in domestic offices, 21 in foreign offices) included 105 special agents (87 domestic and 18 foreign), 12 domestic intelligence staff, 13 diversion staff, and 31 other support staff.¹⁹

Overview of Drug Trafficking Situation and Threat

According to DEA, in recent years the Caribbean Corridor has reemerged as a major trafficking route between Colombia and the continental United States. In 1995, the El Paso Intelligence Center estimated that approximately 100 drug trafficking organizations were working in the Caribbean area. Caribbean drug organizations are generally multinational, but dominated primarily by Colombians, who were the command and control managers, and Dominican nationals, who operated the

¹⁹ DEA's Fiscal Year 1998 appropriation included a Caribbean initiative, which increased the number of staff in the division (see ch. 4).

transportation networks. The traffickers transport cocaine, heroin, and marijuana through the Caribbean corridor using private planes and yachts; commercial airlines; cargo air; “motherships”; fishing vessels; small, motorized, high-performance “go-fast” boats; cruise ships; and cargo container vessels. Once in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, the southernmost entry points of the United States, drugs are more easily smuggled into the continental United States, because no additional Customs inspections are required.

Cocaine

According to DEA, cocaine, in both powder and crack forms, continues to be the drug of choice of both traffickers and users in the region. The Caribbean basin is a major transshipment point for cocaine destined for the continental United States and Europe. The primary routes are the Western Caribbean (Jamaica-Bahamas), the Central Caribbean (Hispaniola), and the Eastern Caribbean (Lesser Antilles-Puerto Rico). The El Paso Intelligence Center has estimated that 140 tons of cocaine flow through the Eastern Caribbean each year and, according to the Interagency Flow Assessment Committee, approximately one-third of the cocaine arriving in the continental United States comes through Puerto Rico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. DEA also reported the emergence of new local markets in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean due to Colombian traffickers paying for services using drugs, not currency.

Cocaine traffickers use a variety of smuggling methods—via air, land, and sea, according to DEA. For example, cocaine destined for the United States may be dropped from private planes to waiting maritime vessels or smuggled in “go-fast” boats into the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. From Puerto Rico cocaine may be transported into the continental United States in airfreight cargo. Couriers on commercial airlines from Colombia and Panama are also used to move cocaine through the Dominican Republic, from Haiti to Miami, and from Puerto Rico to the U.S. mainland.

DEA attributed the dramatic rise in drug-related violence in Puerto Rico to the increased influx of cocaine into the region. Competition for control of the domestic Puerto Rican cocaine market, which makes up an estimated 10 to 20 percent of the total cocaine smuggled onto the island, accounted for some of the drug-related violence, according to DEA. Citing statistics from the Puerto Rico Police Department (PRPD), DEA officials reported that between 1995 and 1998, the percentage of homicides in Puerto Rico that were drug-related had risen from 63 to 81 percent.

Heroin

DEA sources indicated that Puerto Rico has become an arrival area and a major transshipment point for high-purity Colombian heroin entering the United States. The Eastern Caribbean island nations are used as transshipment points for heroin, which is then transshipped through Puerto Rico to the continental United States. Heroin is also transshipped through Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic, with Puerto Rico as a second transshipment point, and on to the United States. According to DEA, heroin from Colombia may be transported through Central America into Haiti via couriers on commercial airlines. Moreover, the availability of heroin in Puerto Rico itself has also increased.

Marijuana

According to DEA, marijuana continues to be cultivated throughout the Eastern Caribbean islands (particularly on St. Vincent and the Grenadines), Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Puerto Rico. Jamaica is one of the major marijuana producers in the world. Marijuana grown in other parts of the Eastern Caribbean is transshipped through Puerto Rico to external markets. In Puerto Rico, marijuana is not only cultivated both indoors and outdoors in its central mountains, but also smuggled onto the island from the continental United States. Containerized cargo ships have been the preferred concealment and transportation method for large-scale, well-established marijuana traffickers. Express mail is another method used to smuggle marijuana into Puerto Rico.

Priorities, Programs, and Initiatives

At the time of our review, both the domestic and foreign priority of the Caribbean Division was to stem the flow of drugs through the region into the United States. In 1998, the division's overall objective was to reduce the capabilities of major drug trafficking organizations by immobilizing their command and control centers and distribution networks through the arrest, prosecution, conviction, and incarceration of both leaders and members. Puerto Rico was considered to be the "linchpin" of DEA's strategy in the Caribbean because it is the outermost entry-point to the continental United States.

As noted above, the Caribbean Division included both domestic and foreign offices. The Domestic Subdivision included eight enforcement groups and the diversion program. The Foreign Subdivision included six Country Offices and the Foreign Operations Group.

The division's response to the international and transit character of the drug threat in the region was underscored by its work-hour statistics. During fiscal years 1997 and 1998, more than 50 percent of its investigative work hours, categorized by geographic scope of the case, were expended on international cases, which involve both foreign and U.S. domestic

components. Moreover, during those same fiscal years, 52.6 percent and 39.9 percent, respectively, of the division’s investigative work hours, categorized by case target, were expended on transportation-related cases.

In order to stem the flow of drugs into the region, the division’s investigative priorities for fiscal year 1998 included: (1) cocaine-related investigations involving violent organizations, (2) the initiation of major heroin investigations, and (3) marijuana-related investigations. The division’s investigative work-hour statistics for fiscal year 1998, categorized by the drug involved indicated that 71 percent of investigative work hours were expended on cocaine-related cases; 19 percent on heroin-related cases (about double the previous year); and 10 percent on other drugs, including marijuana. The increased investigative work hours expended on heroin investigations corresponded to the changing drug threat—the increased availability and use of heroin within, and transshipment through, the region.

According to DEA officials, although the Caribbean Division used a variety of investigative methods to accomplish its priorities, during the late 1990s the division pursued a strategy that included the use of wire intercepts. For example, in a 1995 DEA-led OCDETF case (See ch. 2 for discussion of OCDETF), “Operation Omega,” DEA used undercover buys, on-site surveillance, liaison with local law enforcement, confidential source information, and cooperating defendant testimony to investigate the Ponce-based Angela Ayala-Martinez cocaine-trafficking organization. However, the 1996 DEA-led OCDETF investigation, “Operation Santa Isabel,” used Title III (electronic surveillance) telephonic intercept orders extensively in Puerto Rico. As in DEA generally (see ch. 2) and as shown in table I.2, the division increased its use of wire intercepts from 1995 through 1998.

Table I.2: Caribbean Field Division’s Use of Wire Intercepts

Fiscal year	Wire intercepts
1995	0
1996	6
1997	12
1998	30

Source: DEA.

During 1998, the division worked domestically with various task forces that included other federal and/or commonwealth and local agencies. In

Puerto Rico, DEA carried out investigations with PRPD,²⁰ Hacienda (Treasury Department), and the Special Investigations Bureau²¹ of the Attorney General's Office. One DEA-led enforcement group, which included FBI agents and officers from PRPD, worked at the airport. A task force group, comprising DEA agents and members of PRPD, targeted lower level individuals in drug organizations with the objective of working toward the upper echelons of the organization.

In addition, in San Juan and Ponce, DEA led task forces, supported by HIDTA funds from ONDCP (see ch. 2 for discussion of HIDTA). The San Juan task force, which included DEA and the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service among other federal agencies as well as officers from the Puerto Rico Police Department, focused on major drug organizations in San Juan and along the northern coast of Puerto Rico. The Ponce task force, which included agents from DEA, FBI, IRS, and the Customs Service, among others; a Coast Guard investigator; an Assistant U.S. Attorney on site; local officials from PRPD and Hacienda; and a special local prosecutor, focused on major drug organizations in the Ponce area.

Investigative work-hour statistics for the division, when analyzed according to source of cases, highlight the significance of its cooperative efforts. State and local task force efforts accounted for 36.4 percent and 28.8 percent of the division's investigative work hours expended in fiscal years 1997 and 1998, respectively. Joint state and local cases accounted for another 5.5 and 12.9 percent of its investigative work hours expended during those years, respectively. In addition, investigative work hours dedicated to OCDETF cases by the division almost doubled, from 7.9 to 15.1 percent, between fiscal years 1997 and 1998.

Internationally, the division's six country offices in the islands worked with their foreign counterparts in those countries to respond to the drug threat in the region. Cooperative law enforcement efforts varied from country to country. For example, in Haiti, DEA was engaged in vetting (see ch. 2 for discussion of vetting) local law enforcement personnel. The division was involved in a number of special operations. For example, Operation Buccaneer, an ongoing campaign to eradicate marijuana, was

²⁰ In Puerto Rico, the police are primarily commonwealth police, and law enforcement matters are handled through them.

²¹ According to its director, the Special Investigations Bureau was formed 20 years ago and focuses on organized crime and public corruption in Puerto Rico. At the time of our review, it had 250 agents, of whom 40 were assigned to federal task forces. The bureau has a drug section, which develops cases. Some of these cases are worked with DEA.

carried out by the Jamaicans and supported by DEA, DOD, and the State Department. In Operation Summer Storm, the division and DEA's Belize Country Office worked with the 26 Caribbean nations, Belize, Suriname, and Guyana to conduct a combined, coordinated air, land, and maritime counternarcotics operation within each nation's territorial borders to interdict, disrupt, and dismantle the flow of drugs. In the Dominican Republic, the DEA country office provided wire intercept assistance. During fiscal years 1997 and 1998, joint federal foreign efforts accounted for 35.3 percent and 24.2 percent, respectively, of investigative work hours categorized by source of cases.

Enforcement Statistics and Case Examples

The Caribbean Division provided enforcement statistics for fiscal years 1997 and 1998. These data indicated the division's involvement in 654 arrests in 1997 and 1,147 arrests in 1998. DEA also provided arrest data reported by type of case—international, national, and foreign. Domestic arrests were categorized as international or national and included arrests related to OCDETF cases. Table I.3 below shows the distribution of the division's arrests by type of case.

Table I.3: Arrests Reported by the Caribbean Division, by Case Type, for Fiscal Years 1997 and 1998

Fiscal year	Number of arrests			Total
	Type of cases			
	International ^a	National ^a	Foreign ^a	
1997	403	182	69	654
1998	483	556	108	1147

^aAn international case includes targets involved in U.S. domestic and foreign criminal activities; a foreign case includes targets operating principally outside the jurisdiction of the United States.

Source: DEA.

The division reported seizures of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana in both domestic and foreign cases. For fiscal year 1997, the division reported total seizures of 7,780.2 kilograms of cocaine, 25.3 kilograms of heroin, and 18,835.8 kilograms of marijuana. For fiscal year 1998, the division reported cocaine seizures of 5,442.2 kilograms, heroin seizures of 40.2 kilograms, and marijuana seizures of 5,910.8 kilograms.

DEA also provided information on the results of specific cases mentioned above. Operation Omega, which targeted the Ponce-based Angela Ayala-Martinez cocaine-trafficking organization, resulted in 77 arrests and the seizure of more than \$1 million in drug-related assets. Indictments against another 20 defendants were expected in late 1998. In Operation Santa Isabel, the Ponce Resident Office used information gathered through traditional investigative techniques to apply for Title III wiretap orders for 12 telephones associated with the Rivera-Rosa cocaine importation and

cocaine and heroin distribution organization. These intercepts produced more than 60 calls related to drug trafficking and resulted in a seizure of 1,300 kilograms of cocaine in November 1996. With information on Rivera-Rosa's activities in the Dominican Republic gathered from these intercepts, DEA's Santo Domingo Country Office worked with Dominican officials to arrest 25 members of the organization, including Rivera-Rosa, and to seize cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and drug-related assets. As of August 1998, DEA reported 81 arrests and the complete dismantling of this drug organization.

Comments From the Drug Enforcement Administration

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



U. S. Department of Justice

Drug Enforcement Administration
Office of the Deputy Administrator

JUN 23 1999

Mr. Norman J. Rabkin
Director
Administration of Justice Issues
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Rabkin:

This is in response to your request on June 7, 1999 to Attorney General Janet Reno to review and comment on the General Accounting Office (GAO) report titled *Drug Control: DEA's Strategies and Operations in the 1990s*. The Department of Justice (DOJ) has directed that DEA prepare the final response to this report and all appropriate comments have been included.

First, DEA would like to acknowledge the significant changes to the prior draft reviewed at the exit conference and note that DEA's comments were considered and included in this revised draft report. Overall, DEA finds that the report gives a detailed and factual background for DEA strategies and special operations. After review of the revised report, DEA submits the following for your consideration in finalizing the report for publication.

Results in Brief

Page 3:

The report should state up front that it is speaking of the lack of numerical or percentage targets when it states that "DEA has not developed **numerical** performance targets for its programs and initiatives that are consistent with those adopted for the National Strategy." As currently written, this is not made clear until much later in the document.

Principal Findings

DEA Has Not Yet Developed Performance Targets Consistent With the National Strategy:

Page 7, second paragraph:

The report states that, "For international drug trafficking organizations, the National Strategy calls for achieving a 50 percent success rate in the number of organizations disrupted or dismantled by 2002 as measured against the targeted list established in 1998..." This is misleading as the reader has to wait

See comment 1.

Now on pp. 6.

Appendix II
Comments From the Drug Enforcement Administration

Norman J. Rabkin

Page 2

until page 92 to know that the list has yet to be established. Also, the sentence reads as if 100 percent of all drug organizations will be dismantled by 2007. DEA suggests changing the information to read:

See comment 2.

“For international drug trafficking organizations, the National Strategy calls for achieving, by 2002, a 50 percent success rate in the number of organizations disrupted or dismantled using the targeted list (which has yet to be established) and increasing the success rate to 100 percent **against this list** by 2007.”

See comment 3.

DEA suggests adding: **“The targeted list was not developed by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) in 1998, and the list has not become final as of June 1999. Until this list is established, DEA is unable to assess whether its enforcement operations are addressing these targets and cannot establish performance measures that include the percentages of success against these targets.”**

The report states that “Unlike the National Strategy, DEA’s performance plans for fiscal years 1999 and 2000 do not contain performance targets for disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking organizations.” Please note that preliminary performance targets have been established and were included in DEA’s Fiscal Year 2001 budget submission to DOJ. These performance targets will continue to be refined for inclusion in subsequent budgets. To further refine the established targets, DEA has established a working group whose members include representatives from the Operations Division, the Executive Policy and Strategic Planning Staff, and the Office of Resource Management.

Now on p. 7.

Page 8:

See comment 4.

While DEA agrees with the assertion that performance targets were not contained in DEA’s fiscal year 1999 and 2000 performance plans, we disagree with the statement that “In the absence of such targets little can be said about DEA’s effectiveness in achieving its strategic goals.” This finding (and supporting information in Chapter 3) gives the impression that we have not attempted to comply with stated requirements. DEA is working with other DOJ components to develop performance targets and measurements that will be consistent with the targets in the National Drug Control Strategy.

Recommendation

GAO issued one recommendation: “The Attorney General should direct DEA’s Administrator to work closely with DOJ and ONDCP to develop measurable performance targets for disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking organizations consistent with the targets set forth in the National Drug Control Strategy.”

As just noted, DEA has established a working group that is working to develop measurable performance targets in line with the National Drug Control Strategy. DEA requests guidance from GAO to determine what information is required to indicate sufficient action by DEA to close this recommendation.

Appendix II
Comments From the Drug Enforcement Administration

Norman J. Rabkin

Page 3

Some factual and language changes should be made to the report to ensure accuracy. For additional changes and language corrections see the enclosure.

Thank you for the opportunity to present DEA's concerns and factual corrections regarding GAO's revised draft report. I hope this will assist you in making the necessary revisions to the final report.

Sincerely,



Donnie R. Marshall
Deputy Administrator

Enclosure

We did not reproduce the enclosure.

The following are GAO's comments on the Drug Enforcement Administration's letter of June 23, 1999.

GAO Comments

1. We inserted the word "measurable" to cover any measurable level of performance, whether numerical or percentage, against which actual achievement can be compared.
2. We added the phrase "against the base year list" and a statement to indicate that neither the domestic nor the international target lists of drug trafficking organizations called for by the National Strategy have yet to be developed.
3. We did not add DEA's suggested statement. However, in our evaluation of DEA's comment at the end of chapter 3, we noted DEA's inference that it cannot finalize performance targets and measures until a designated targeted list of drug trafficking organizations, as called for in the National Strategy, is completed.
4. We revised the statement that little can be said about DEA's effectiveness without performance targets to clarify our intent that it is difficult to quantitatively assess DEA's overall effectiveness without such targets.

GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contacts

Norman J. Rabkin, (202) 512-8777
Daniel C. Harris, (202) 512-8777

Acknowledgments

In addition to those named above, Ronald G. Viereck, Samuel A. Caldron, Lemuel N. Jackson, Barbara A. Stolz, Michael H. Little, Barry J. Seltser, Ann H. Finley, Katherine M. Raheb, and Donna M. Leiss made major contributions to this report.

Glossary

Performance Measurement Terms

This glossary contains definitions of performance measurement terms used in this report. Because limited standard definitions exist, we used definitions from a variety of sources, including OMB's circular A-11, DOJ's guidance to components on the preparation of fiscal year 2000 budget estimates and related annual performance plans, and ONDCP's 1998 performance measure of effectiveness plan. Essentially, OMB and DOJ definitions relate to measuring agency performance as provided for in the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (the Results Act). ONDCP definitions relate to assessing the performance of the National Drug Control Strategy (the National Strategy).

Performance Goal

A performance goal, as defined by OMB for purposes of the Results Act, means a target level of performance expressed as a tangible, measurable objective, against which actual achievement can be compared. As used in this report, the terms performance goal and performance target (defined below) are largely interchangeable. DEA uses the term performance goal, and ONDCP uses performance target.

Performance Indicator

A performance indicator, as defined by OMB for purposes of the Results Act, means a particular value or characteristic used to measure output or outcome (defined below). Performance indicators are associated with performance goals in annual performance plans. As defined by DOJ, performance indicators are signs that point to success or failure in performance and answer the question, "How will we know when we have been successful?" They refer to what specifically is to be measured. As used in this report, the terms performance indicator and performance measure (defined below) are largely interchangeable. DEA uses the term performance indicator, and ONDCP uses performance measure.

Performance Measure

A performance measure, as defined by ONDCP for purposes of the National Strategy, means data and variables and events used to track progress toward performance targets. Measures show how progress toward performance targets will be tracked. As used in this report, the terms performance measure and performance indicator are largely interchangeable. ONDCP uses the term performance measure, and DEA uses performance indicator.

Performance Target

A performance target, as defined by ONDCP for purposes of the National Strategy, means the desired end state to be achieved. It is a measurable level of performance against which actual achievement can be compared. As used in this report, the terms performance target and performance goal are largely interchangeable. ONDCP uses the term performance target, and DEA uses performance goal.

Glossary

Outcomes	Outcomes, as defined by DOJ for purposes of guidance on the Results Act, means an event, occurrence, or condition that indicates progress toward achievement of the mission of the program. Outcomes can be measured in terms of the extent to which they are achieved, or they can reflect the quality of service delivery or customer satisfaction. Intermediate outcomes are expected to lead to the desired ends but are not in themselves ends. In many programs, a progression or sequence of outcomes usually occurs. End outcomes are the desired end or ultimate results that the agency hopes to achieve through its program activities. These results are directly related to the agency's mission.
Outputs	Outputs, as defined by DOJ for purposes of guidance on the Results Act, means the products and services produced by a program or process and delivered to customers, whether internal or external. Outputs result from internal activity or effort. Outputs are important for measuring internal work performance, but they do not in themselves indicate the extent to which progress has occurred toward the program's mission or what impact a program has had on a particular goal or objective.
Reporting Agency	A reporting agency, as defined by ONDCP for purposes of the National Strategy, means the agency designated to report to ONDCP on progress in achieving established performance targets. The reporting agency is not necessarily the only agency responsible for achieving performance targets.
Supporting Agency	A supporting agency, as defined by ONDCP for the purposes of the National Strategy, means the agency that is designated to assist the reporting agency with data collection and assessment or that has programs that contribute to achieving the performance target.

Ordering Information

The first copy of each GAO report and testimony is free. Additional copies are \$2 each. Orders should be sent to the following address, accompanied by a check or money order made out to the Superintendent of Documents, when necessary. VISA and MasterCard credit cards are accepted, also. Orders for 100 or more copies to be mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent.

Order by mail:

**U.S. General Accounting Office
P.O. Box 37050
Washington, DC 20013**

or visit:

**Room 1100
700 4th St. NW (corner of 4th and G Sts. NW)
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, DC**

Orders may also be placed by calling (202) 512-6000 or by using fax number (202) 512-6061, or TDD (202) 512-2537.

Each day, GAO issues a list of newly available reports and testimony. To receive facsimile copies of the daily list or any list from the past 30 days, please call (202) 512-6000 using a touch-tone phone. A recorded menu will provide information on how to obtain these lists.

For information on how to access GAO reports on the INTERNET, send e-mail message with "info" in the body to:

info@www.gao.gov

or visit GAO's World Wide Web Home Page at:

<http://www.gao.gov>

**United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001**

**Bulk Rate
Postage & Fees Paid
GAO
Permit No. G100**

**Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300**

Address Correction Requested

