United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Crime, Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives

July 2001

DEA'S MOBILE ENFORCEMENT TEAMS

Steps Taken to Enhance Program Management, But More Can Be Done

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Abbreviations

ASAC	Assistant Special Agent in Charge
DCI	data collection instrument
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DOJ	Department of Justice
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act
MET	Mobile Enforcement Team
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
ONDCP	Office of National Drug Control Policy
RET	Regional Enforcement Team
SAC	Special Agent in Charge
SOD	Special Operations Division
VCTF	Violent Crimes Task Force

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United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

July 26, 2001

The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman, Subcommittee on Crime
Committee on the Judiciary
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In response to a request from your Subcommittee, this report discusses
the results of our review of the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA)
Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) Program. Specifically, the report
discusses (1) DEA's management and implementation of the program; (2)
the types of individuals and groups investigated, geographic scope of
investigations, and investigative techniques used during MET operations;
and (3) the performance measures used by DEA to assess the program's
results. We include recommendations to help improve program
management and performance measurement.

We are sending copies of this report to the Ranking Minority Member of
the Subcommittee, the Attorney General, the Administrator of the Drug
Enforcement Administration, the Director of the Office of Management
and Budget, and interested congressional committees. We will also
provide copies to others on request.

If you or your staff have any questions regarding this report, please
contact Daniel C. Harris or me at (202) 512-8777. Key contributors to this
report are listed in appendix IX.

Sincerely yours,

Laurie E. Ekstrand
Director, Justice Issues

Executive Summary

Purpose

Since its creation in 1973, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has focused its efforts primarily on investigating major organizations involved in interstate and international drug trafficking. DEA has also supported state and local law enforcement efforts directed at lower levels of drug trafficking. In this regard, DEA established the Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) Program in February 1995 to help state and local law enforcement agencies combat drug trafficking and related violent crime in local communities, particularly such crimes committed by violent gangs.

Because the MET Program had been in operation for almost 5 years, the former Chairman of the Subcommittee on Crime, House Judiciary Committee, requested that GAO review the management and performance of DEA's MET Program. In response to this request, GAO agreed to determine the following.

1. How DEA has managed and implemented the MET Program, including (a) how DEA headquarters has monitored field MET operations; (b) whether DEA field divisions have complied with pertinent program requirements and guidelines; and (c) whether the MET operations concluded when their objectives were achieved.

2. What types of individuals and groups are investigated during MET operations, the geographic scope of the MET investigations, and the principal investigative techniques used.

3. How DEA measures the MET Program's results and whether DEA's performance measures have any limitations.

To address our objectives, we reviewed DEA headquarters files for a representative, national sample of 83 completed MET deployments (i.e., operations) selected from a population of 197 deployments[1] conducted from the program's inception in 1995 through June 1999. We also interviewed officials at DEA headquarters, six DEA field divisions, 13 U.S. Attorneys' Offices, 12 District Attorneys' Offices, and 25 local law enforcement agencies. In addition, we collected MET Program resource, management, workload, results, and performance measures information at DEA headquarters.

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[1]For GAO's review of DEA headquarters MET deployment files, GAO considered the deployment of both DEA's Atlanta and Houston Field Division METs to Atlanta, GA, from January 16, 1996, to August 12, 1996, as one deployment. DEA counts this as two deployments.

Background

DEA established the MET Program to help overcome two drug enforcement challenges facing many state and local agencies: (1) state and local police agencies did not have sufficient resources to effectively enforce the drug laws, and (2) 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.

Under the program, DEA may deploy a team of special agents (referred to as a MET) to a community from one of its field divisions after receiving a written request from a police chief, sheriff, or other local law enforcement official. Because DEA's resources are limited, a MET is to be deployed only when it is determined that the problem is beyond the immediate capabilities of the requesting agency. DEA's decision to deploy a MET is to be made only after consulting with the law enforcement agency that made the request and a thorough on-site assessment substantiating (1) the reported drug and related violence problem and (2) the requesting law enforcement agency's inability to address the problem. DEA headquarters approves or disapproves each MET deployment based on a field division's written request for authorization and funding. When deployed, the MET is to work cooperatively with the requesting local law enforcement agency to investigate the targeted individuals, gangs, and organizations responsible for the drug-related violent crime.

DEA headquarters staff manages the MET Program. The primary responsibility of the headquarters staff is to develop, disseminate, and continually monitor the METs' compliance with program policy, requirements, and guidelines.

Results in Brief

Since the MET Program was established in 1995, and particularly since a 1998 DEA headquarters evaluation led to criticism of the program by the former DEA Administrator, DEA has enhanced its management of the MET Program and provided for greater headquarters oversight and monitoring. For example, DEA increased the number of headquarters staff managing the program and monitoring the field division METs' compliance with program requirements and guidelines.

In implementing the program and carrying out deployments, the field division METs generally complied with some of the pertinent requirements and guidelines that GAO reviewed. However, because some DEA headquarters files did not contain adequate documentation, GAO could not determine whether the METs consistently and adequately assessed the requesting local law enforcement agencies' abilities to address, on their

own, the drug and related violence problems for which DEA's MET assistance was requested. Unless the METs adequately assess each requesting law enforcement agency's capabilities, and then document and report their assessments to headquarters, DEA has no assurance that the METs are helping only those agencies with a legitimate need for assistance. GAO is making recommendations to help improve this situation.

DEA expects the METs to focus on specific, targeted gangs/organizations in the geographic areas in which the METs are deployed and that deployments will generally continue until the targeted individuals are arrested and/or the targeted drug gangs/organizations have been disrupted or dismantled. The MET deployments GAO reviewed generally concluded when their objectives were achieved.

Consistent with the nature and objectives of the MET Program, MET investigations focused primarily on street-level drug dealers and were mostly local and regional in scope. In addition, the investigative techniques of purchasing illegal drugs (referred to as drug buys) and using informants were employed more frequently than most other techniques to investigate suspected drug violators. MET investigations sometimes led to other investigations of higher-level drug traffickers and their organizations.

DEA collects data for a variety of performance measures to assess the results of individual MET deployments and the overall MET Program. It reports internally and externally on program results for some of the performance measures. However, the measures have problems and limitations related primarily to the inconsistency in data collection. GAO is making recommendations to help improve this situation.

Principal Findings

DEA Has Enhanced MET Program Management but Lacks Assurance That METs Are Assisting Only Agencies Incapable of Addressing Problems

DEA has enhanced its management of MET operations and provided for greater headquarters oversight and monitoring. However, because of insufficient documentation in DEA headquarters files, GAO could not determine whether the field division METs consistently and adequately complied with the program requirement that they assess each requesting local law enforcement agency's ability to address the drug and related violence problem for which DEA's assistance was requested.

Steps Taken to Enhance MET Program Management and Monitoring	DEA has enhanced its management and monitoring of the MET Program since it was established in 1995. DEA headquarters developed a handbook containing program requirements and guidelines, modified the requirements and guidelines to improve the program, increased the number of staff managing the program and monitoring the METs' compliance with the requirements and guidelines, and took other actions to more actively oversee and monitor the program. Most of these changes took place after a June 1998 DEA headquarters evaluation of the MET Program led to criticism of the program by the former DEA Administrator. Consequently, DEA concluded that additional oversight and monitoring was necessary to ensure that the METs were operating in accordance with program requirements and guidelines.
Compliance With Some MET Program Requirements and Guidelines Is Unclear	GAO's review of DEA headquarters MET deployment files disclosed that the METs generally followed some of the program requirements and guidelines GAO selected for review. However, some deployment files did not contain sufficient evidence that other requirements and guidelines were followed.
	Two key MET Program requirements are that each DEA field division Special Agent in Charge, after receiving a request to deploy a MET to a community, and before deploying, must assess (1) the scope of the drug and related violence problem and (2) the capability of the requesting law enforcement agency to address the problem. Because DEA's resources are limited, a MET is to be deployed only when it is determined that the problem is beyond the immediate capabilities of the requesting agency. The DEA headquarters files GAO reviewed generally had documentation showing that the METs assessed the drug and related violence problems for which DEA's assistance was requested. However, 30 percent[2] of the deployment files did not have documentation showing that the METs consistently and adequately assessed whether the requesting law enforcement agencies were capable of addressing their drug and related violence problems. In addition, many of the deployment files having documentation did not contain specific evidence that the identified drug and violence problem was beyond the immediate capabilities of the requesting agency or explain how this conclusion was reached as the result of a MET assessment.

[2]The sampling error for all estimates in this report based on GAO's review of DEA headquarters' MET deployment files is not greater than 10 percentage points at the 95-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. Appendix II contains a thorough explanation of GAO's probability sample of MET deployment files.

DEA headquarters has not clearly required the METs to document their assessments of the requesting agencies' capabilities, including the rationale and basis used to determine that agencies are incapable of handling their drug and violence problems. Further, DEA's MET Program handbook, which establishes program requirements and guidelines, does not discuss how such assessments should be made and does not identify specific factors that the METs should consider in making this determination, such as the amount of money the agency has available to buy illegal drugs from dealers, availability of technical equipment, and extent of the agency's drug law enforcement expertise. The Comptroller General's internal control standards[3] require that all transactions and other significant events be clearly documented, and that the documentation be readily available for examination. Appropriate documentation is an internal control activity to help ensure that management's directives are carried out. Without such documentation, DEA has no assurance that the METs are helping only those agencies with a legitimate need for assistance.

MET Deployments Generally Conclude When Objectives Are Achieved

DEA expects the METs to focus on specific, targeted gangs/organizations in the geographic areas in which the METs are deployed and that deployments will generally continue until the targeted individuals are arrested and/or the targeted drug gangs/organizations have been disrupted or dismantled. GAO estimates that 62 percent of the 197 DEA headquarters files, or about 122 files, contained documents indicating one or more reasons that deployments were concluded. Of these 122 files, an estimated 80 percent indicated that at least one reason was that the deployment objectives had been achieved or essentially achieved. The files also contained the following other reasons relating to the achievement of the deployment objectives: an estimated 96 percent of the 122 files included the reason that targeted individuals had been arrested; an estimated 40 percent of the files included the reason that targeted gangs/organizations had been disrupted; and an estimated 21 percent of the files included the reason that targeted gangs/organizations had been dismantled.

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[3]*Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1).

| MET Deployments Typically Involved Investigations of Street-Level Drug Dealers and Employed Various Investigative Techniques | MET deployments investigated a wide range of suspected drug violators. However, consistent with the nature and objectives of the program, the primary focus of the investigations was street-level drug dealers (an estimated 87 percent of the 197 deployments). Other categories of suspected violators investigated included drug organizations in an estimated 65 percent of the deployments, violent individuals in an estimated 64 percent of the deployments, wholesale-level drug suppliers in an estimated 62 percent of the deployments, gangs in an estimated 33 percent of the deployments, and international drug trafficking organizations in an estimated 8 percent of the deployments. |

According to DEA data, about 76 percent of the MET investigations initiated through fiscal year 2000 were local or regional in scope, involving suspected drug violators operating in the geographic areas of the DEA offices that conducted the investigations; an estimated 18 percent involved drug traffickers operating on a broader scale within the United States; and an estimated 6 percent involved traffickers operating internationally. A variety of different methods and techniques were used during MET deployments to investigate suspected drug violators, with drug buys and informants used more frequently than most other investigative techniques (i.e., in an estimated 92 and 90 percent, respectively, of the 197 deployments in GAO's review).

GAO's file review and interviews with officials in six of DEA's field divisions indicated that MET investigations sometimes led to other DEA spin-off investigations of higher-level drug traffickers and their organizations. For example, GAO estimates that 14 percent of the 197 deployment files contained documentation indicating that the deployments led to a spin-off investigation.

| DEA's Measures of MET Program Results Have Problems and Limitations | DEA uses various quantitative and qualitative performance measures to assess the results of individual MET deployments and how well the overall MET Program is achieving its goal of helping local law enforcement agencies to disrupt or dismantle drug trafficking gangs or organizations responsible for drug-related crime and violence. Some of the MET Program performance measures are intended to measure program output (activity), while others are intended to measure outcome (results). Two principal performance measures are the disruption or dismantlement of targeted drug trafficking gangs or organizations and the arrest of individuals identified as the primary targets of the MET deployments. Other performance measures are differences in the number of certain violent crimes (i.e., murder, robbery, and aggravated assault) occurring in |

the geographic areas where the deployments take place, the total number of arrests, the amount of drugs seized, the amount of assets seized, and the analysis and opinions of local law enforcement agencies regarding four outcome-oriented areas (i.e., reduction in drug sales, stability of the target area, community reaction and involvement, and overall assessment of the deployment).

DEA periodically summarizes and reports the results related to some of the MET performance measures. This information is provided to DEA top management and the Attorney General; some MET results information has been provided to Congress, in support of DEA's annual budgets and performance plans, and to the public. For example, DEA reported that the MET deployments resulted in 11,283 arrests and the seizure of about 6,000 pounds of drugs (i.e., cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, and marijuana) and about $16.9 million in assets (in constant fiscal year 2001 dollars) from fiscal years 1995 to 2000.

However, DEA lacks standard data collection methods for some of the MET Program performance measures. For example, DEA has no written guidance and specific criteria for determining whether a gang or organization has been disrupted or dismantled, and DEA has no assurance that the METs are consistently considering the same factors. Without standard data collection methods, some performance measures may not provide information needed by DEA to determine how well the MET Program is achieving its goal.

In addition, DEA does not compile information to compare the number of primary individuals, gangs, and organizations targeted for investigation at the beginning of and during deployments to the number arrested, disrupted, and dismantled at the conclusion of deployments. Without such a comparison, DEA cannot accurately determine the progress of the MET Program.

Moreover, the qualitative information collected during post-deployment reviews for the four outcome-oriented areas that are used as performance measures (i.e., reduction in drug activity, stability of the target area, community reaction and involvement, and overall assessment of the deployment) is not as useful as it could be for assessing results because it is not collected and reported in a standardized, structured way.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To help ensure that DEA's MET resources are used only in those instances where the requesting local law enforcement agencies are incapable of addressing drug-related violence problems in their communities, GAO recommends that the Attorney General direct the DEA Administrator to (1) provide clear guidance for METs to use in assessing local law enforcement agencies' capabilities; and (2) ensure that the DEA field divisions document such assessments and provide them to DEA headquarters before MET deployments are approved.

With regard to DEA's MET Program performance measures, GAO recommends that the Attorney General direct the DEA Administrator to (1) establish and ensure the use of standardized data collection methods for obtaining information on the performance measures DEA uses to assess the results of the individual MET deployments and the overall MET Program; (2) compile data and compare the number of primary individuals, gangs, and organizations targeted at the beginning of and during deployments to the number arrested, disrupted, and dismantled; (3) collect and report consistent violent crime statistics that cover comparable crime types and time periods and relate to (a) the specific geographic areas where the MET deployments were focused and (b) to the extent feasible and practical, pertinent adjacent and comparable areas; and (4) use more structured data collection methods, such as a survey instrument, to collect qualitative data on the four outcome-oriented areas included in the post-deployment reviews that can be used to assess the results of the individual MET deployments and be aggregated to evaluate the overall MET Program.

Agency Comments and GAO's Evaluation

GAO provided a draft of this report to the Attorney General for comment. DOJ's written comments and our responses can be found at the end of chapters 2 and 4 and are reprinted in appendix VIII. In its written comments, DOJ agreed with certain aspects of GAO's recommendations and disagreed with other aspects. GAO is retaining all of its recommendations.

With regard to GAO's first recommendation that DEA provide clear guidance for METs to use in assessing local law enforcement agencies' capabilities, DOJ stated it will ask DEA to revise the MET Program handbook to address GAO's concern that it does not discuss how such assessments should be made and identify specific factors for METs to address. Nevertheless, DOJ stated that DEA has provided much guidance in a number of ways. However, GAO does not believe those ways cited by

DOJ provided clear, sufficient guidance for METs' use in assessing capabilities.

Regarding GAO's second recommendation concerning agency capability assessments, DOJ stated that it would ask DEA to ensure that detailed field assessments are documented for DEA headquarters before committing to MET deployments. DOJ noted that DEA suggests that a field division's notice that an assessment has been made and approved by field management is the key documentation needed by headquarters. GAO states, however, that without better documentation, as required by the Comptroller General's Internal Control Standards, DEA headquarters management has no assurance that MET resources are being used to help only those agencies with a legitimate need for DEA's assistance. DOJ also suggested that GAO could have made some methodological changes relating to its findings on the documentation issue, but GAO cites various reasons why such changes would not have been feasible or resulted in different findings.

DOJ disagreed with GAO's first performance measurement recommendation. DOJ stated that DEA's MET Program now uses standardized data collection methods, specifically citing the collection of disruption and dismantlement information and violent crime statistics for each deployment. However, GAO emphasizes that there is no assurance that this information is collected in a standardized way because of the lack of guidance for applying the definitions for disruption and dismantlement and the problems associated with collecting consistent violent crime statistics at the local level.

DOJ disagreed with GAO's second performance measurement recommendation that DEA compile and compare the number of primary individuals, gangs, and organizations targeted at the beginning of and during MET deployments to the number arrested, disrupted, and dismantled. DOJ stated that because MET investigations may evolve and change focus (with regard to targets), it is very difficult to measure the success of a deployment strictly by comparing the number of primary targets at the onset of a deployment against the number of arrests at the conclusion. GAO recognizes that targets can change during a deployment. However, without comparative information, taking into account appropriate target changes, DEA cannot determine to what extent the MET Program is achieving its goal of disrupting and dismantling targeted drug trafficking gangs and organizations.

DOJ disagreed with the first part of GAO's third performance measurement recommendation concerning the collection and reporting of consistent violent crime statistics. DOJ stated that as long as the pre- and postdeployment crime data are based on consistent geographic areas, even though the areas may be larger than the MET deployment areas, DEA will continue to use the best available data. However, GAO believes that violent crime statistics should, as often as feasible, relate to the specific geographic areas where the METs were focused rather than broader geographic areas. When not feasible, GAO believes DEA should ensure that only consistent violent crime data for specific MET deployment geographic areas, time periods, and crime types are aggregated and reported for MET Program performance measurement purposes. With regard to the second part of the recommendation, DOJ stated it would ask DEA to collect and report violent crime statistics for pertinent adjacent and comparable areas whenever feasible and practical.

DOJ agreed with GAO's final performance measurement recommendation regarding the use of more structured data collection methods to collect qualitative data from local law enforcement agencies on the outcome-oriented areas included in the MET postdeployment reviews. DOJ noted that given the difficulty in aggregating the results of the deployments to evaluate the overall MET Program, DEA will appraise creating a more structured data collection instrument that can be used to gather data from a diversity of communities.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Since its creation in 1973, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has focused its efforts primarily on investigating major organizations involved in interstate and international drug trafficking. DEA has also supported state and local law enforcement efforts directed at lower levels of drug trafficking. In 1994, the DEA Administrator undertook a review of DEA's policies and strategies to ensure that DEA was appropriately responding to the nation's drug trafficking problem and related violent crime. One of the results of this review was the creation of the Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) Program in 1995, to help state and local law enforcement agencies combat violent, street-level drug gangs, and other drug-related violent crime in local communities.

Drug-Related Violent Crime

The demand for and supply of illegal drugs persists at very high levels and adversely affects American society in terms of social, economic, and health costs. In addition, many violent crimes committed are drug related, according to the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).[1] There are no overall quantitative data on drug-related violent crime and the relationship between drug abuse or trafficking and violent crime. However, ONDCP has identified several qualitative indicators linking drug abuse or trafficking and other crimes, including violent crimes.

According to ONDCP, many crimes such as murder, assault, and robbery are committed under the influence of drugs or may be motivated by a need to obtain money for drugs. Also, competition and disputes among drug traffickers and dealers can cause violence, as can the location of drug markets in disadvantaged areas where legal and social controls against violence tend to be less effective. DEA reported that gangs responsible for distributing drugs in local communities often commit violent crimes associated with their drug activities.

DEA's Role in Drug Law Enforcement

The mission of DEA, which is a component of the Department of Justice (DOJ), is to (1) enforce U.S. controlled substance laws and regulations and bring drug traffickers 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.

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[1] See ONDCP's *Fact Sheet: Drug-Related Crime* (March 2000, NCJ-181056).

DEA's primary responsibilities for drug law enforcement include:

- investigating major drug traffickers operating at interstate and international levels;
- coordinating and cooperating with federal, state, local, and foreign 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, investigative, and tactical intelligence information;
- seizing and forfeiting drug traffickers' assets;
- providing leadership for, 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 by developing drug enforcement institutions, enhancing drug enforcement agencies' capabilities, and developing and promoting nonenforcement methods, such as crop eradication; and
- coordinating all programs associated with drug law enforcement counterparts in foreign countries under the policy guidance of the Secretary of State and U.S. Ambassadors.

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 October 2000. Subordinate to these divisions, each of which was headed by a Special Agent in Charge (SAC), were a total of 34 district offices, 117 resident offices, and 49 posts of duty, with at least 1 office in every state. Overseas, DEA had 78 offices in 56 foreign countries. This included 57 country offices, each headed by a country attaché, and 21 resident offices reporting to the country offices. In addition, DEA manages a multiagency intelligence center in El Paso, TX; conducts training at the Justice Training Center in Quantico, VA; and maintains seven drug analytical laboratories in various regions of the country and a special drug testing facility in McLean, VA.

DEA's total budget authority for fiscal year 2001 was $1.4 billion. There were 9,209 DEA employee positions authorized for fiscal year 2001. Of these, 4,601 were special agent positions, 693 were intelligence specialist positions, and 3,915 were other positions.

MET Program

DEA established the MET Program in February 1995 to help state and local law enforcement agencies combat violent crime and drug trafficking in their communities, particularly crime committed by violent gangs. According to DEA officials, federal assistance through the MET Program was designed to help overcome two drug enforcement challenges facing many state and local agencies: (1) they did not have sufficient resources to effectively enforce the drug laws; and (2) their officers were known to local drug users and sellers, making undercover drug buys and penetration of local distribution rings difficult and dangerous.

The MET Program's goal is to provide resources to assist local law enforcement agencies in identifying, targeting, investigating, and disrupting or dismantling drug trafficking gangs/organizations that are responsible for drug-related violence in local communities. Under the program, DEA is to deploy a MET, which is typically comprised of 8 to 12 DEA special agents, to a community only after (1) receiving a written request from a police chief, sheriff, or other local law enforcement official; (2) assessing the scope of the drug and related violence problem in the community; (3) confirming a link between violent crime and identified drug traffickers, gangs, and organizations; and (4) assessing and confirming the requester's need for assistance. METs are based in DEA's field divisions throughout the country.

During a deployment, the MET is to work with the local law enforcement officials to investigate and arrest the targeted violent drug offenders. The MET generally collects intelligence, initiates investigations, participates in undercover operations, makes arrests, seizes assets, and provides support to local or federal prosecutors. Evidence gathered in the course of a MET investigation may also be used to prosecute the same individuals for related crimes, including murder, assault, or other acts of violence.

The MET Program is consistent with the Attorney General's Anti-Violent Crime Initiative, which was started in 1994 to establish partnerships among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to address major violent crime problems, including gangs. The program is also consistent with DOJ's Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2000-2005. One of the plan's goals is to keep America safe by enforcing federal criminal laws, and one of this goal's objectives is to reduce the threat, incidence, and prevalence of violent crime, especially as it stems from organized criminal enterprises and drug and gang-related violence. Another of the goal's objectives is to reduce the threat and trafficking of illegal drugs by identifying, disrupting, and dismantling drug trafficking organizations that are international or multijurisdictional, or have an identified local impact.

The MET Program is also consistent with ONDCP's National Drug Control Strategy.[2] One of the goals of the National Strategy is to increase the safety of America's citizens by substantially reducing drug-related crime and violence, and one of this goal's supporting objectives is to 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.

Finally, the MET Program is consistent with DEA's Strategic Plan: Fiscal Years 2000-2005, which is derived from the goals and objectives delineated in both the National Drug Control Strategy and DOJ's Strategic Plan. DEA's overall strategic goal is to identify, target, investigate, disrupt, and dismantle the international, national, state, and local drug trafficking organizations having the most significant impact on America. The METs are specifically identified as a critical success factor in achieving DEA's Local Impact strategic objective of reducing drug-related crime in American communities, including such crime caused by violent gangs, by providing specialized expertise as required by the local situation.

Table 1 shows the number of active METs, the number of special agents authorized for those METs, and MET costs reported by DEA from the inception of the program through the first 6 months of fiscal year 2001.

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[2]The most recent National Drug Control Strategy was submitted to Congress in February 1999.

Table 1: Selected MET Program Data, Fiscal Year 1995 Through First 6 Months of Fiscal Year 2001

Program data	1995[a]	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001[a]
METs	19	19	23	24	24	25[b]	25[b]
DEA special agents[c]	120[d]	120[d]	250	250	250	262[b]	262[b]
Operating costs (millions)[e]	$1.0	$2.5	$3.2	$4.4	$6.5	$6.4	$3.1
Operating costs in constant 2001 dollars (millions)[e]	$1.1	$2.7	$3.5	$4.7	$6.8	$6.6	$3.1
Payroll costs(millions)[f]		$3.4	$12.9	$21.4	$23.1	$23.2	$9.7
Payroll costs in constant 2001 dollars (millions)[f]		$3.7	$13.8	$22.7	$24.0	$23.8	$9.7

[a]The data for fiscal year 1995 are for the 6-month period ending September 30, 1995. The data for fiscal year 2001 are as of March 31, 2001.

[b]In fiscal years 2000 and 2001, a second MET in the New York Field Division was staffed with 10 special agents that were not included in the total number of positions authorized for the MET Program. The New York Special Agent in Charge redirected resources to create this MET. Table 1 does not include these 10 special agents.

[c]The number of special agent positions were authorized as of the end of each fiscal year, except for fiscal year 2001 positions, which were as of March 31, 2001.

[d]DEA's approved reprogramming authorized 120 special agent positions for the MET Program for fiscal years 1995 and 1996. DEA program managers reported that 167 special agents were assigned to METs during these 2 years.

[e]MET Program operating costs include deployment expenses such as travel, rent, purchase of evidence, and purchase of information. According to DEA, the costs are actual for fiscal years 1995 through 2000 and obligations for the first 6 months of fiscal year 2001.

[f]The MET payroll costs are for special agents and support personnel. However, DEA could not account for all of these payroll costs. According to DEA officials, the costs are actual, as recorded in DEA's payroll system, for fiscal years 1996 through 2000, but not all of the MET payroll costs were recorded because of timekeeping problems, especially in fiscal years before 1998. The costs for the first 6 months of fiscal year 2001 are obligations.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

At the time of our review, DEA had 25 METs in 20 of its 21 domestic field divisions.[3] Table 2 shows the number of MET deployments requested, initiated, completed, and active from the program's inception in fiscal year 1995 through fiscal year 2000.

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[3]DEA's Atlanta, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, and New York field divisions each had two METs. The Caribbean Field Division did not have a MET.

Table 2: MET Deployments, Fiscal Years 1995 Through 2000

Deployment	1995-96[a]	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total[b]
Requested	112	67	79	70	56	384
Initiated	79	46	55	55	52	287
Completed[c]	79	46	55	55	35	270
Active[d]	0	0	0	0	17	17

[a]Fiscal years 1995-96 data are for the 18-month period ending September 30, 1996.

[b]Totals are as of September 30, 2000.

[c]Completed deployments are categorized according to the fiscal year they started.

[d]Active deployments were initiated but not completed as of September 30, 2000.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

Appendix I contains a list of MET deployments completed through fiscal year 2000 by DEA field division, including the location and time period for each deployment.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Because the MET Program had been in operation for almost 5 years, the former Chairman of the Subcommittee on Crime, House Judiciary Committee, requested that we review the management and performance of DEA's MET Program. In response to this request, we agreed to determine the following.

1. How DEA has managed and implemented the MET Program, including (a) how DEA headquarters has monitored field MET operations; (b) whether DEA field divisions have complied with pertinent program requirements and guidelines; and (c) whether the MET operations concluded when their objectives were achieved.

2. What types of individuals and groups are investigated during MET operations, the geographic scope of the MET investigations, and the principal investigative techniques used.

3. How DEA measures the MET Program's results and whether the performance measures DEA uses have any limitations.

We did our review at DEA headquarters and at 6 of the 20 domestic field divisions having MET teams. We did not independently verify the accuracy and reliability of the funding and other statistical data we collected from DEA and used in this report because they were used primarily for

background and descriptive purposes and generally were not directly related to our findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

The six DEA field divisions we visited were in Atlanta, GA; Boston, MA; Chicago, IL; Los Angeles, CA; Phoenix, AZ; and Washington, D.C. These offices were judgmentally selected based on, and to assure diversity among, the following factors: geographic location, the year the field divisions began conducting MET deployments, the length of the field divisions' deployments, and whether rural or urban communities were involved in the field divisions' deployments. We also obtained information from officials representing 13 U.S. Attorneys' Offices, 12 District Attorneys' Offices, and 25 local law enforcement agencies in the geographic regions of the 6 DEA field divisions we visited. These agency representatives had either been involved with or had knowledge of the MET deployments conducted in their local areas.

To determine how DEA has managed and implemented the MET Program, including (a) how DEA headquarters has monitored field MET operations, (b) whether DEA field divisions have complied with pertinent program requirements and guidelines, and (c) whether the MET operations concluded when their objectives were achieved, we interviewed DEA headquarters officials, collected program management, resource, and workload information, and analyzed pertinent DEA documents, including the MET Program handbook containing program policies, requirements, and guidelines.[4] We also reviewed DEA headquarters files for a representative, national sample of 83 completed MET deployments selected from a population of 197 deployments conducted from the program's inception in 1995 through June 1999. (Our methodology for selecting and reviewing MET deployment files is discussed in app. II.) In addition, using structured interviews, we interviewed (1) DEA officials in the six selected field divisions we visited; and (2) U.S. Attorney, District Attorney, and local law enforcement officials in the geographic regions of the six DEA field divisions.

To determine what types of individuals and groups are investigated during MET operations, the geographic scope of the MET investigations, and the

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[4]Based on our review of DEA documents, including the MET Program handbook, and discussions with DEA officials, we identified what we considered important program requirements and guidelines. We then consulted with the Chief of DEA's Mobile Enforcement Section, which oversees the MET Program, to determine whether the particular items were either requirements or guidelines and when they became effective.

principal investigative techniques used, we reviewed the files for our random sample of 83 completed MET deployments. We also obtained and analyzed case initiation data from DEA headquarters for fiscal years 1995 through 2000. In addition, we interviewed DEA headquarters officials, DEA officials in the six field divisions, and local law enforcement officials in the geographic regions of the six divisions.

To determine how DEA measures the MET Program's results and whether the performance measures DEA uses have any limitations, we reviewed the files for our random sample of 83 completed MET deployments; obtained and analyzed DEA headquarters summary program results information for each fiscal year from 1995 to 2000; and interviewed DEA headquarters officials, DEA officials in the 6 selected field divisions, and local law enforcement officials in the geographic regions of the 6 divisions. We also obtained and analyzed DEA's Annual Performance Plans for fiscal years 2000 and 2001, as well as other DEA headquarters information on MET Program performance measures. We used the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) as our basic criteria along with Office of Management and Budget (OMB), DOJ, and GAO guidance on the act, including OMB Circular A-11 and GAO guides for assessing agency annual performance plans and strategic plans.

We performed our work from December 1999 to January 2001 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. In May 2001, we requested comments on a draft of this report from the Attorney General. On June 14, 2001, we received written comments from the Acting Assistant Attorney General for Administration. The comments are discussed at the end of chapters 2 and 4 and reprinted in appendix VIII.

Chapter 2: Program Management Enhanced, but No Assurance METs Are Assisting Only Incapable Local Agencies

DEA has enhanced its headquarters management and monitoring of the MET Program since it was established in 1995, particularly since a 1998 DEA headquarters' evaluation led to criticism of the program by the former DEA Administrator. DEA headquarters developed and modified requirements and guidelines for the program and increased the number of headquarters staff assigned to manage and oversee MET operations.

Based on our examination of evidence contained in DEA headquarters deployment files, the field division METs generally followed some of the program requirements and guidelines we selected for review. However, compliance with other program requirements and guidelines was unclear because the files did not contain sufficient evidence to make that determination.

A key program requirement is that the METs assess the requesting local law enforcement agency's ability to address the drug and related violence problem for which DEA's MET assistance was requested. According to DEA, because its resources are limited, a MET is to be deployed only when it is determined that the problem is beyond the immediate capabilities of the requesting agency. However, insufficient documentation in many of the headquarters deployment files made it impossible for us to determine how consistently and adequately DEA's 24 METs nationwide[1] carried out this requirement. DEA headquarters has not clearly required that METs document and report their assessments of agencies' capabilities. It also has not provided clear, sufficient guidance for independently assessing an agency's capabilities and determining that they are inadequate to address the identified drug and related violence problem for which MET assistance was requested. Unless the METs adequately assess each requesting law enforcement agency's capabilities, and then document and report their assessments to headquarters, DEA has no assurance that the METs are helping only those agencies that have a legitimate need for assistance and, thus, that DEA's MET resources are being used appropriately.

In addition, we found that the MET deployments generally concluded when their objectives were achieved—e.g., targeted individuals were arrested or targeted gangs/organizations were disrupted or dismantled—and at the same time have been shorter in duration, on average, each year over the last few years.

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[1]Although there were 25 METs at the time we completed our work in December 2000, there were 24 METs as of June 30, 1999, the cutoff date for our review of completed deployments.

DEA Headquarters Has Taken Steps to Improve Its Management of the MET Program

As the MET Program has evolved, DEA headquarters has taken a number of actions to improve its management of the program, including increasing the number of staff carrying out this function and becoming more assertive in its oversight. The primary responsibility of the headquarters staff is to develop, disseminate, and continually monitor compliance with MET Program policy, requirements, and guidelines. Figure 1 provides a chronological summary of the key steps DEA has taken to improve its management of the MET program.

Figure 1: Chronology of Key Events Relating to MET Management

1995 February ▶ First headquarters MET Program Staff Coordinator, responsible for overseeing and monitoring the MET Program nationwide, was assigned to the State and Local Programs Section in DEA's Office of Domestic Operations

May ▶ MET Program handbook containing policies, requirements, and guidelines for initiating and implementing MET deployments was first published and distributed to field divisions

1996 April/May ▶ First MET conference held for field division managers

1997 February ▶ Additional headquarters Staff Coordinator assigned

June ▶ First Program Analyst assigned to MET to assist management and the staff coordinators in overseeing and monitoring the MET Program by, among other things, preparing reports and providing analytical support

August ▶ Second MET conference held

1998 June ▶ Following a June 1998 DEA headquarters evaluation, DEA headquarters assumed a more active oversight role of METs

October ▶ Additional Program Analyst assigned

December ▶ MET Program handbook revised

1999 February ▶ Third MET conference held

July ▶ Mobile Enforcement Section established as a separate headquarters unit in the Office of Domestic Operations with a Section Chief to oversee and monitor program implementation by the field divisions consistent with established policies and requirements

▶ Two additional Staff Coordinators and one additional Program Analyst assigned later to the Section

2000 May ▶ Fourth MET conference held

Source: Developed by GAO based on DEA information.

At the time of our review, the Mobile Enforcement Section[2] had a Section Chief, 4 Staff Coordinators, 3 Program Analysts, a secretary, 2 administrative assistants, and a budget technician for a total of 12 staff. According to the Section Chief, the additional staff has enhanced management of the MET Program by allowing the Staff Coordinators to focus on fewer METs and devote more time to each one.[3]

Since DEA headquarters controls funds allocated for METs, before each deployment the responsible field division must submit a written request to the Mobile Enforcement Section for authorization and funding. This request is to include the results of the MET's predeployment assessment of the situation in the requesting community. After receiving the request, DEA headquarters authorizes or disapproves the deployment based on the documented predeployment assessment results. According to the MET Program handbook, the request is to include a discussion of the drug and related violence problem, a summary of the deployment's investigative strategies and objectives, an estimate of the deployment's duration, and an estimate of the resources needed.

If any required information is not provided or is unclear in the request, a headquarters section Staff Coordinator is to contact the MET supervisor to obtain or clarify the information. The deployment should not be authorized and funded until all predeployment requirements have been met. For example, before a New York MET request for the authorization and funding of a deployment to Watertown, NY, was approved, a Staff Coordinator requested that additional information be provided, including information regarding violence attributed to the deployment targets, crime statistics, and a short statement explaining why Watertown needed a MET deployment.

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[2]In May 2001, DEA changed the name of this section to the Tactical Enforcement Section. Because our work for this review was completed before this change, our report refers to the Mobile Enforcement Section.

[3]In addition to managing the MET Program, the Mobile Enforcement Section has carried out similar responsibilities for DEA's Regional Enforcement Team (RET) Program since the program was established in fiscal year 1999. Under the RET Program, DEA deploys mobile teams of special agents to target organized crime syndicates that have established command and control centers, warehouses, and drug transshipment points in small communities throughout the United States. As of September 2000, DEA had established three RET offices—Des Moines, IA; Charlotte, NC; and Las Vegas, NV. Three of the four Staff Coordinators were responsible for monitoring and coordinating with one RET in addition to six or seven METs.

Headquarters is to provide a written deployment authorization that includes approval of a specified length of time, and the amount of operational funding and staffing to conduct the deployment. If it is later determined that a deployment cannot be completed in the amount of time approved and funded by headquarters, the MET can request an extension of time and additional funds. There is no required timeframe for completing a MET deployment. While headquarters guidance suggests that deployments should generally last from 2 to 4 months,[4] it is expected that deployments will generally continue until the targeted drug organization is disrupted or dismantled.

In addition to the requests for authorization and funding of deployments, each MET is to provide the Mobile Enforcement Section with various other documents. These include (1) deployment request letters received from local law enforcement agencies; (2) biweekly activity reports discussing the investigative progress of deployments; (3) monthly reports containing statistics such as the number of arrests, amount of drugs seized, amount of assets seized, and number of deployments requested and pending; (4) a summary of each deployment after completion; (5) an assessment of each deployment's impact immediately after completion; and (6) an assessment of each deployment's impact 6 months after completion. A file for each deployment containing these and other documents is maintained at the headquarters section.

MET operations are managed on a day-to-day basis at the field division level by the Special Agent in Charge (SAC), Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC), and MET group supervisor. In carrying out program oversight responsibilities, Mobile Enforcement Section Staff Coordinators are to monitor all field MET activities, from the receipt of a deployment request to the completion of the postdeployment review, to ensure that the METs are operating in accordance with program policies, requirements, and guidelines.

When problems are identified, Staff Coordinators are to take needed corrective actions in collaboration with field division MET supervisors. In our review of headquarters MET deployment files, we noted that some

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[4]In May 2001, subsequent to the completion of our work for this review, DEA issued a revised MET Program handbook. The new handbook does not suggest a length of time that deployments should last.

identified problems and related actions were noted in the pertinent files.[5]
If warranted, Staff Coordinators are to provide on-scene consultation to
MET supervisors to resolve problems. If the problem persists, discussion
is to take place between headquarters management (e.g., the Mobile
Enforcement Section Chief or a higher level manager) and the field
division ASAC or SAC.

The Mobile Enforcement Section is to inform DEA top management of the
progress of MET deployments and other program activities through
briefings and periodic reports. The section also is to (1) evaluate the
success of each deployment using violent crime statistics and other factors
(as we discuss in chapter 4); (2) evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of
each MET by examining factors such as the number of deployment
requests received, the age of pending requests, how deployments are
conducted, and the amount of oversight and correction needed; and (3)
track all MET obligations using an automated data base program.

In addition, since 1996, DEA headquarters has organized and conducted
conferences for field division MET supervisors and the ASACs to whom
they report. As shown in figure 1, four such conferences have been held
since the MET Program began. According to DEA, the goal of these
conferences has been to (1) establish the future objectives and direction of
the MET Program, (2) enhance the operational effectiveness and efficiency
of the METs, and (3) communicate to the conference attendees the
support that the program receives from top DEA management, DOJ, and
Congress. DEA headquarters managers have used these conferences to
reiterate and clarify reporting requirements and respond to questions.
Conferences have also featured guest speakers who have discussed
successful MET deployments in their communities and other topics of
interest. The conferences also provide MET supervisors with an
opportunity to meet one another and share information based on their
deployments, such as lessons learned, innovative investigative techniques,
and successful approaches to implementing deployments.

DEA Headquarters Has Assumed a More Active Oversight Role

Since a June 1998 DEA headquarters evaluation of the MET Program,
which included an analysis of each field division MET, DEA headquarters
has assumed a more active role in overseeing the program and each

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[5]We did not attempt to determine whether all such problems and related actions were
documented in the files.

deployment. Based on this evaluation, the former DEA Administrator expressed concern and criticism regarding headquarters leadership and oversight of the MET Program. In response to the DEA Administrator, DEA concluded that additional oversight and monitoring was necessary to ensure that METs were operating in accordance with program requirements and guidelines. DEA also concluded that MET deployment problems needed to be quickly identified and addressed to avoid wasted time and resources.

In addition to the biweekly activity reports and monthly statistical reports, which were already being submitted to the headquarters section and considered to be primary oversight mechanisms, the Mobile Enforcement Section Chief said he now meets with headquarters managers on a daily basis to apprise them of noteworthy MET deployment activity. In addition, he said the Mobile Enforcement Section prepares a monthly MET activity report for the DEA Administrator describing the progress of each ongoing deployment. Also, the biweekly activity report was revised to improve monitoring and help ensure that the METs continually direct their investigative resources and activities toward individuals and organizations identified and targeted in each deployment.

METs Generally Followed Some Program Requirements; Compliance With Other Requirements and Guidelines Is Unclear

Our review of DEA headquarters deployment files disclosed that in implementing the MET Program, the field division METs generally followed some of the requirements and guidelines we reviewed that were contained in the MET Program handbook. However, some deployment files did not contain evidence that other requirements and guidelines that we reviewed were being followed. Most significantly, it was not clear whether the METs were adequately assessing each requesting law enforcement agency's capabilities as required before deciding whether to approve a deployment request.

METs Are Required to Assess Local Drug and Related Violence Problems and Local Law Enforcement Agencies' Capabilities to Address the Problems

Two key MET Program requirements are that each DEA field division SAC, after receiving a request to deploy a MET to a community and before deploying, must assess (1) the scope of the drug and related violence problem and (2) the capability of the requesting law enforcement agency to address the problem. Particular attention is to be given to determining the violent crime rate in the requesting community and establishing a link between the targeted narcotics group(s) and violence. The decision to

deploy a MET is to be made only after careful consultation with the law enforcement official who made the request and a thorough on-site assessment substantiating the need for a deployment. According to DEA, because its resources are limited, a MET is to be deployed only when it is determined that the problem is beyond the immediate capabilities of the requesting agency.

MET supervisors and ASACs we interviewed in six DEA field divisions told us that their MET special agents almost always visit the requesting law enforcement agency and discuss the drug and related violence problem and the agency's capabilities and limitations with requesting agency officials. The officials said MET agents also (1) visit the specific problem area, (2) identify the potential deployment targets already known by the requesting agency, and (3) obtain information about the area (e.g., crime statistics) and the potential targets (e.g., criminal histories) as part of their assessment of the need for a MET deployment.

Officials we interviewed representing 24 of the 25 local law enforcement agencies included in our review[6] said DEA assessed the drug and related violent crime problems in their communities prior to initiating a deployment. Officials at 19 of these 25 agencies also said DEA assessed whether their agency was capable of handling the problem; officials at 2 of the agencies said DEA did not assess their capabilities; and officials at 4 of the agencies did not know whether such assessments had been made. The MET supervisors and ASACs we interviewed in five of the six DEA field divisions said requests for deployments had previously been denied because it was determined there was not a high level of violent crime or there was no established link between drugs and violence.[7] None of the officials we spoke with said a request for a deployment was denied because it was determined that the requesting agency was capable of addressing the identified drug and violence problem.

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[6]As discussed in chapter 1, we obtained information from officials representing 25 local law enforcement agencies in the geographic regions of the 6 DEA field divisions we visited. These agency representatives had either been involved with or had knowledge of MET deployments that DEA carried out at the request of their agencies. The 25 local law enforcement agencies all carried out police operations and did not include the 13 U.S. Attorneys' Offices and 12 District Attorneys' Offices also included in our review.

[7]The DEA officials in one field division did not know if any requests for deployments had been denied.

In conducting its predeployment assessment, after the MET visits the requesting law enforcement agency, it is required to review the information collected and prepare a thorough and complete written summary of its assessment of the violent drug situation in that community, including a description of the link between drugs and violence. The written summary is also to (1) identify the individuals and organization(s) to be targeted, (2) outline the investigative methods to be used, (3) state the deployment objective(s) to be accomplished, and (4) estimate the duration of the deployment and the resources required. The summary must also include violent crime statistics for, at a minimum, murder, robbery, and aggravated assault, which are supposed to be derived from the area most impacted by the individuals or organization(s) to be targeted and cover the 6-month period prior to the deployment. In addition, the summary must explain the requesting law enforcement agency's reason for requesting MET assistance. After concurrence by the DEA field division SAC, the written summary of the predeployment assessment is to be forwarded to DEA headquarters in the form of a request for the authorization and funding for the deployment.

Figure 2 summarizes the key steps in the MET predeployment assessment process.

Figure 2: MET Predeployment Assessment Process
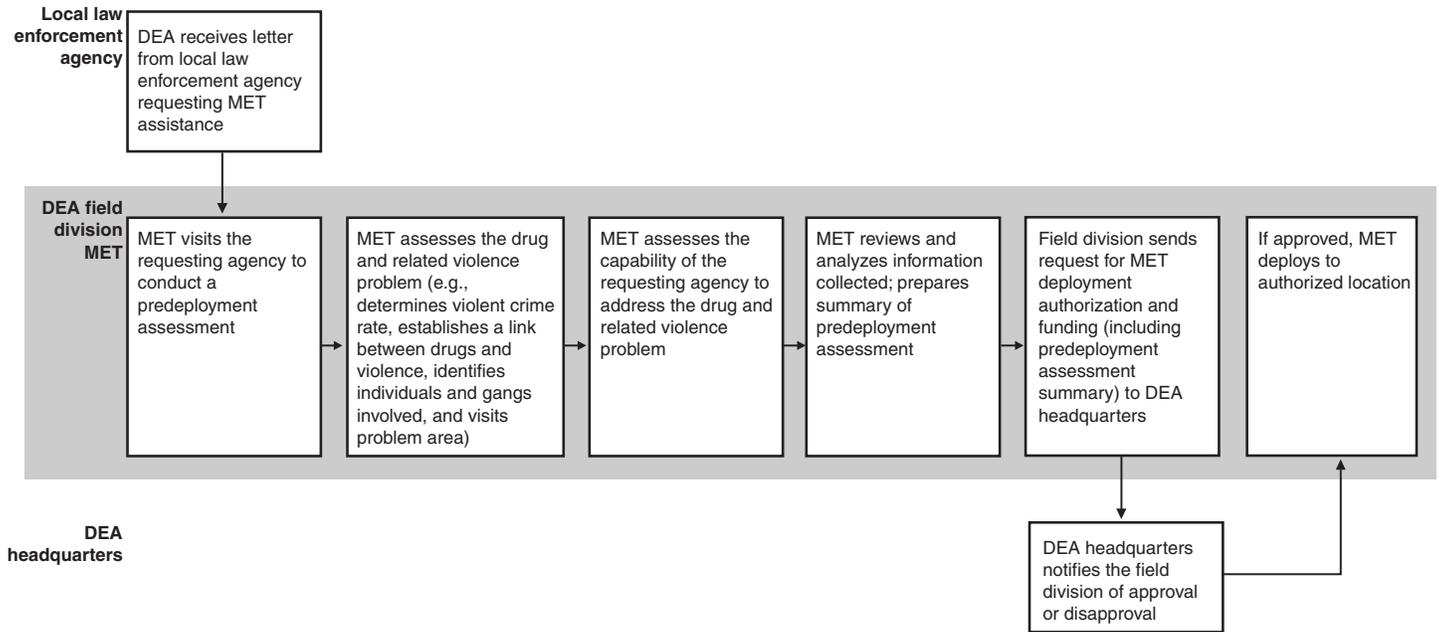
Source: Developed by GAO based on DEA information.

METs Generally Assessed Drug and Violence Problems As Required

Consistent with the remarks of officials in 6 DEA field divisions and of 25 law enforcement representatives we interviewed, our review of a probability sample of DEA headquarters files for 197 MET deployments completed as of June 30, 1999, revealed that the METs generally adhered to the key requirement that they assess the drug and related violence problems for which DEA's assistance was requested. Figure 3 shows the estimated percentages of the files that contained documentation indicating that the METs carried out certain required procedures relating to predeployment assessments of drug and related violence problems.[8]

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[8]The sampling error for all estimates in this report based on our review of DEA headquarters MET deployment files is not greater than 10 percentage points at the 95-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. Appendix II contains a thorough explanation of our probability sample of MET deployment files.

Figure 3: Estimated Percentages of MET Deployments Completed as of June 30, 1999, Following Certain Required Procedures for Assessing Drug and Violence Problems

Predeployment assessment procedures
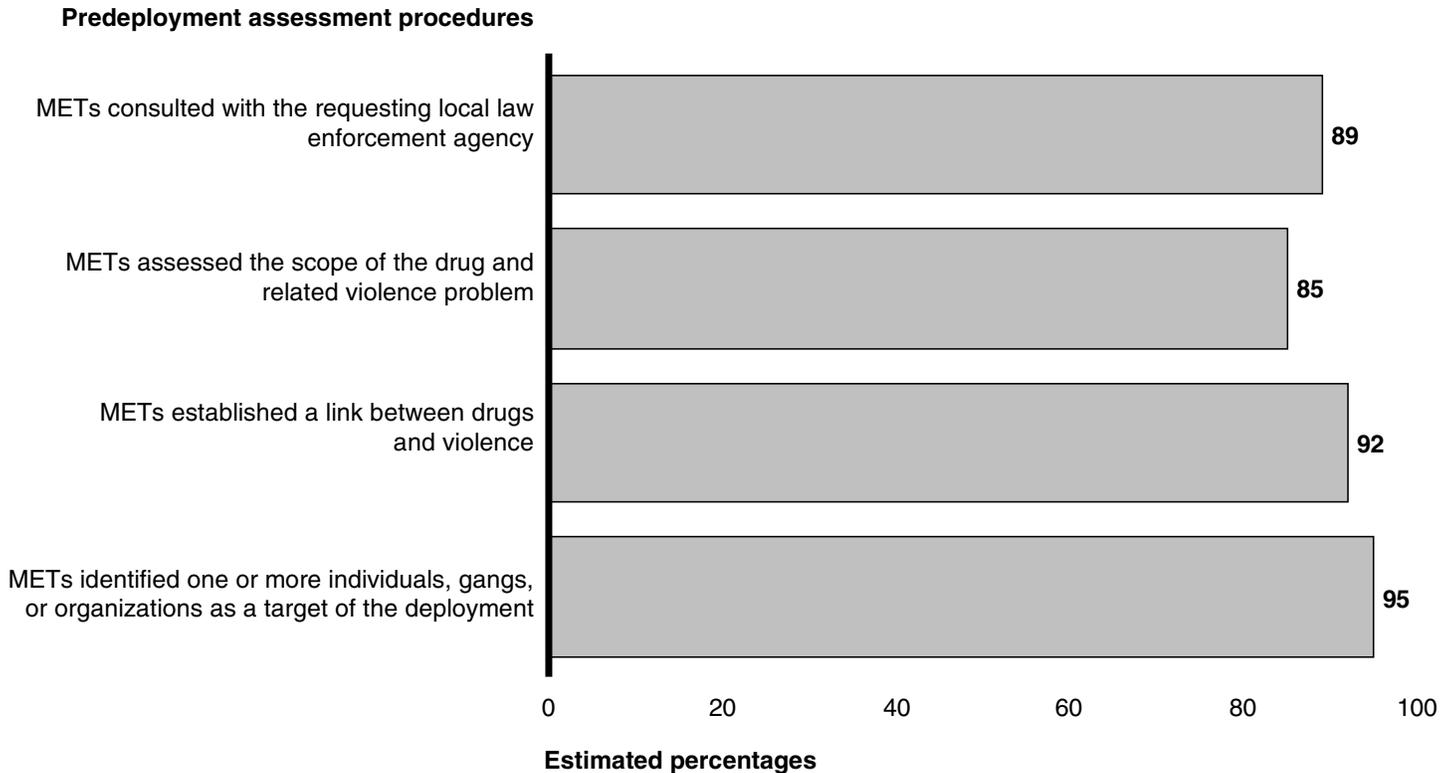
Source: GAO review of DEA headquarters MET deployment files.

Unclear Whether METs Consistently and Adequately Assessed Local Agencies' Capabilities

Due to insufficient documentation in the files we reviewed, it is unclear whether the METs consistently and adequately assessed the requesting law enforcement agencies' capabilities to address drug and related violence problems. The lack of sufficient documentation could be the result of DEA headquarters (1) not clearly requiring that the assessments be documented and (2) not providing clear, sufficient guidance to the METs on how to make these assessments.

Insufficient Documentation Relating to the Assessment of Requesting Agencies' Capabilities

We estimate that 30 percent of the headquarters files for the 197 deployments completed as of June 30, 1999, had no documentation indicating that the METs assessed the capability of requesting law enforcement agencies to address their own drug and related violence problems. Even for the six field divisions we visited, where the officials told us they always assess the requesting agency's capabilities, we

estimate that 34 percent of the headquarters files did not contain this documentation.[9]

For the estimated 70 percent of the headquarters deployment files that did contain this documentation, the documents generally indicated, as justification for the deployments, that the agencies had a limited number of personnel (often providing the number of officers in the police department and in the drug unit) or limited funds. However, many of these documents did not provide specific evidence or an explanation of how, based on its predeployment assessment, the MET concluded that the identified drug and violence problem was beyond the immediate capabilities of the requesting agency.

Appendix III contains four examples from our random sample of deployments that illustrate how METs, in their requests for authorization and funding, summarized the results of their predeployment assessments of requesting agencies' capabilities and the diversity of evidence and support provided. Although all four requests were approved by DEA headquarters, as noted in our analysis of each example, the first two do not provide specific evidence or explain why the requesting agencies were incapable of addressing their drug and related violence problems. To illustrate, in the first example, the MET's request for authorization and funding to deploy stated that the requesting local police department had 357 persons, including 12 narcotics officers, and that the department was seeking DEA's assistance in targeting mid- and upperlevel organizations in select violent neighborhoods. However, the MET request did not explain why or cite specific evidence that the identified drug and violence problem was beyond the police department's immediate capabilities, i.e., why the 12 narcotics officers and perhaps other officers could not successfully target and investigate the drug trafficking organizations of concern without MET assistance.

The third example in appendix III cites a specific reason why the local law enforcement agency cannot successfully address the drug and violence problems identified, but does not put the reason into context by explaining why a particular investigative technique must be used to address the problems. The fourth example cites several specific reasons why two local law enforcement agencies cannot successfully address the drug and

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[9]The sampling error for this estimate based on our review of DEA headquarters MET deployment files is 14 percentage points at the 95-percent confidence level.

violence problems identified. In the example, the request for deployment authorization and funding cites the requesting sheriff department's lack of manpower, insufficient money to make drug purchases, and inability to recruit informants. It explains that the local police department is also incapable of successfully addressing the problems because its drug enforcement activities have been limited to investigating juveniles and it did not have sufficient funds to buy drugs and pay informants. In addition, the request cites prior unsuccessful sheriff and police department efforts against the identified drug trafficking organization.

No Clear Requirement That Assessments of Requesting Agencies' Capabilities Be Documented

DEA headquarters requires METs to document and report their assessments of drug and related violence problems in their requests for authorization and funding. However, it has not clearly required the METs to similarly document and report their assessments of the requesting agencies' capabilities, including the METs' rationale and basis for concluding that the requesting agencies are incapable of addressing the drug and violence problems for which DEA's assistance was requested. The MET Program handbook, in discussing the information the METs are to include in their predeployment assessment summaries requesting authorization and funding of deployments, does not require that information relating to the requesting agency's capabilities be included.

At the February 1999 and May 2000 MET conferences, DEA headquarters provided each MET supervisor with information explaining the elements that are required for the predeployment assessment summaries requesting authorization and funding of deployments. One document provided at the conferences indicated that the METs' deployment requests are to explain the requesting agency's "reason for requesting" a MET deployment, citing such possible reasons as limited manpower, limited expertise, and the need for federal prosecution. Another document indicated that the METs' deployment requests are to explain the requesting agency's "need for" a deployment, citing such possible reasons as limited budget for drug purchases, officers known to traffickers, limited expertise, and limited technical equipment. However, neither of these documents indicated that the METs should explain how they determined that the requesting agency was incapable of addressing its identified drug and related violence problem without DEA's assistance.

The Comptroller General's *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (GAO/AIMD-00-21. 3.1) requires that all transactions and other significant events be clearly documented, and that the documentation be readily available for examination. The documentation should appear in management directives, administrative policies, or

operating manuals and may be in paper or electronic form. All documentation and records should be properly managed and maintained. The documentation of transactions or other significant events should be complete and accurate and should facilitate tracing the transaction or event and related information. Appropriate documentation is an internal control activity to help ensure that management's directives are carried out.

Unclear Guidance for Determining Whether Agencies Are Capable of Addressing Drug and Violence Problems

While DEA headquarters has provided the METs with guidance for assessing drug and related violence problems, including specific factors to address, it has not developed and provided the METs with clear, sufficient guidance for determining whether a requesting agency is capable of addressing its identified drug and related violence problem without DEA's assistance. The MET Program handbook does not discuss how such assessments should be made and does not identify specific factors for the METs to address in making their assessments. The absence of such guidance may have contributed to the lack of sufficient information at DEA headquarters regarding MET assessments of agencies' capabilities.

DEA headquarters provided a predeployment assessment checklist developed by DEA's Miami field division to each MET supervisor at the February 1999 and May 2000 MET conferences. While the checklist identifies some factors to address in assessing the drug and related violence problem, it contains limited guidance for assessing agencies' capabilities. The items on the checklist pertaining to an agency's capabilities are (1) total number of sworn officers, (2) number of narcotics officers, (3) availability of K-9 assistance,[10] (4) ongoing/prior investigations of targeted individuals or organizations, and (5) reason(s) MET assistance was requested.

As previously mentioned, other documents provided at MET conferences indicate that deployment requests are to explain the requesting agency's "reason for requesting" a deployment or "need for" a deployment. These documents cite other reasons an agency may need assistance that are not included on the checklist provided to MET supervisors, such as officers known to traffickers, limited budget for drug purchases, limited expertise, limited equipment, and the need for federal prosecution. These documents, however, do not discuss or provide guidance on how to carry out an assessment and determine whether an agency is capable of

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[10]K-9 assistance is the use of one or more dogs for the detection of illegal drugs.

addressing its identified drug and violence problem without DEA's assistance.

In discussing the MET predeployment assessment requirements, the Chief of the Mobile Enforcement Section acknowledged that DEA headquarters has not specified how the assessments should be conducted. He said headquarters relies on field division managers to determine how to conduct the required assessments. Thus, according to the Section Chief, the length, approach, methodology, and scope of predeployment assessments, including assessments of each requesting agency's ability to address the specific drug and violence problem DEA was asked to address, could vary among the various field divisions.

In our visits to six DEA field divisions, we asked how the METs conducted their assessments of requesting agencies' capabilities. The MET supervisors and ASACs told us they considered the availability of funds and whether local narcotics officers were known or recognizable in the community. Officials in five of the field divisions said they also considered the requesting agencies' number of personnel; officials in four of the field divisions said they also considered the officers' level of expertise; and officials in four of the field divisions said they also considered the agencies' technical capability (i.e., equipment). The DEA officials said that MET personnel collected information and made determinations regarding these factors by talking to officials representing the requesting law enforcement agencies.

Compliance With Other MET Program Requirements and Guidelines Is Unclear

The MET Program handbook cites various other matters that are to be discussed with the requesting law enforcement agency prior to initiating a MET deployment. We reviewed a probability sample of DEA headquarters files for 197 deployments completed as of June 30, 1999, to determine whether the METs complied with some of these requirements. Our review found that the files did not always contain evidence of compliance. The requirements and guidelines we reviewed and our corresponding findings are summarized below.

- The requesting agency must commit to assigning a specific number of personnel for the duration of the deployment. DEA officials in the six field divisions we visited said they always obtain this commitment. We estimate that 32 percent of the 197 deployment files contained documentation indicating that the METs obtained such a commitment before initiating the deployments.

- The MET should work with the requesting agency to make certain that the deployment is coordinated with other federal, state, or local law enforcement agencies or task forces operating within the same jurisdiction to prevent any overlap of ongoing investigations. DEA officials in five of the field divisions we visited said they always coordinate with other law enforcement organizations, and officials in one division said they sometimes coordinate. We estimate that 54 percent of the 197 deployment files had documentation indicating that the METs carried out such coordination.

- Prior to each deployment, the MET should obtain the commitment of federal or local prosecutors to fully support the deployment to ensure the most effective prosecutions. Only four deployments in the probability sample of files we reviewed started after December 1998, when the MET handbook first required that a prosecutor's commitment be obtained to support each deployment. Consequently, we could not reach a conclusion regarding compliance with this requirement. However, we noted that an estimated 53 percent of the 197 deployment files had documentation discussing MET coordination with either, or both, U.S. Attorneys' Offices and District Attorneys' Offices. Of those files, the documents in 60 percent mentioned that the MET had obtained a commitment from prosecutors regarding potential prosecutions. DEA officials in the six field divisions we visited said the MET always coordinates with prosecutors, either federal or state, prior to deployments. Officials in five of the six divisions also said the MET always obtains a federal or state prosecutor's commitment of support, while the officials in one division said they usually, but not always, obtain such a commitment.

- Within 1 month after each deployment is concluded, an "immediate" postdeployment review is to be completed evaluating the deployment's impact in the requesting jurisdiction from the time the deployment started. Since April 1997, METs have also been required to prepare a postdeployment review discussing the deployment's impact 6 months after its completion. This review is to include violent crime statistics, supplied by the requesting law enforcement agency, covering the periods 6 months before and 6 months after the deployment. Based on our review of DEA headquarters files for deployments completed as of June 30, 1999, we estimate that 30 percent of the 197 files contained an immediate postdeployment review, and 81 percent of the files contained a 6-month postdeployment review. For those files containing a 6-month postdeployment review, 89 percent of the reviews included violent crime statistics.

MET Deployments Generally Concluded When Objectives Were Achieved

DEA expects the METs to focus on specific, targeted gangs/organizations in the geographic areas in which the METs are deployed. DEA further expects that deployments will generally continue until the targeted individuals are arrested and/or the targeted drug gangs/organizations have been disrupted or dismantled. The deployments included in our review were generally concluded when these objectives were achieved—e.g., targeted individuals were arrested or targeted gangs/organizations were disrupted or dismantled. We also noted that while there is no required standard timeframe for completing a deployment, the deployments have been shorter in duration, on average, each year over the last few years.

We reviewed a probability sample of DEA headquarters files for the 197 deployments completed as of June 30, 1999, to determine the reasons the deployments were concluded. We estimate that 62 percent of the files, or about 122 files,[11] contained documents indicating one or more reasons for concluding the deployment. Of these 122 files, we found that an estimated 80 percent indicated that at least one reason was that the deployment objectives had been achieved or essentially achieved. The files also contained the following other reasons relating to the achievement of the deployment objectives: an estimated 96 percent of the 122 files included as a reason for terminating the deployment that targeted individuals[12] had been arrested; an estimated 40 percent of the files included the reason that targeted gangs/organizations had been disrupted; and an estimated 21 percent of the files included the reason that targeted gangs/organizations had been dismantled.

The MET supervisors and ASACs we interviewed in the six DEA field divisions we visited said that generally the key reason for concluding a deployment was that the MET and the involved local law enforcement agency collected sufficient evidence to make arrests and seek prosecution. Some of the officials pointed out that not all of the primary targets may have been arrested; for example, some targets may have fled, and their whereabouts may be unknown. However, officials in four of the divisions said that generally the objectives are achieved when a deployment is concluded.

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[11]Because of sampling error, the range for this estimate extends from 104 files to 140 files at the 95-percent confidence level.

[12]The targeted individuals arrested include those identified and targeted during DEA's predeployment assessment and targets added during the deployment.

Our review of the DEA headquarters deployment files also found that targeted individuals were usually arrested when the MET deployments concluded. Figure 4 shows the estimated percentage of the 197 deployment files that contained documentation indicating that, in most instances, all or some of the targets and primary targets had been arrested.[13]

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[13]Documents in the DEA headquarters deployment files referred to "targets" and "primary targets". The Mobile Enforcement Section Chief told us that there is no official definition for these terms; however, he noted that a primary target is generally the head, or in the upper echelon, of an organization.

Figure 4: Estimated Percentage of MET Deployments Completed as of June 30, 1999, with Targets and Primary Targets Arrested

Targets Arrested   **Primary Targets Arrested**
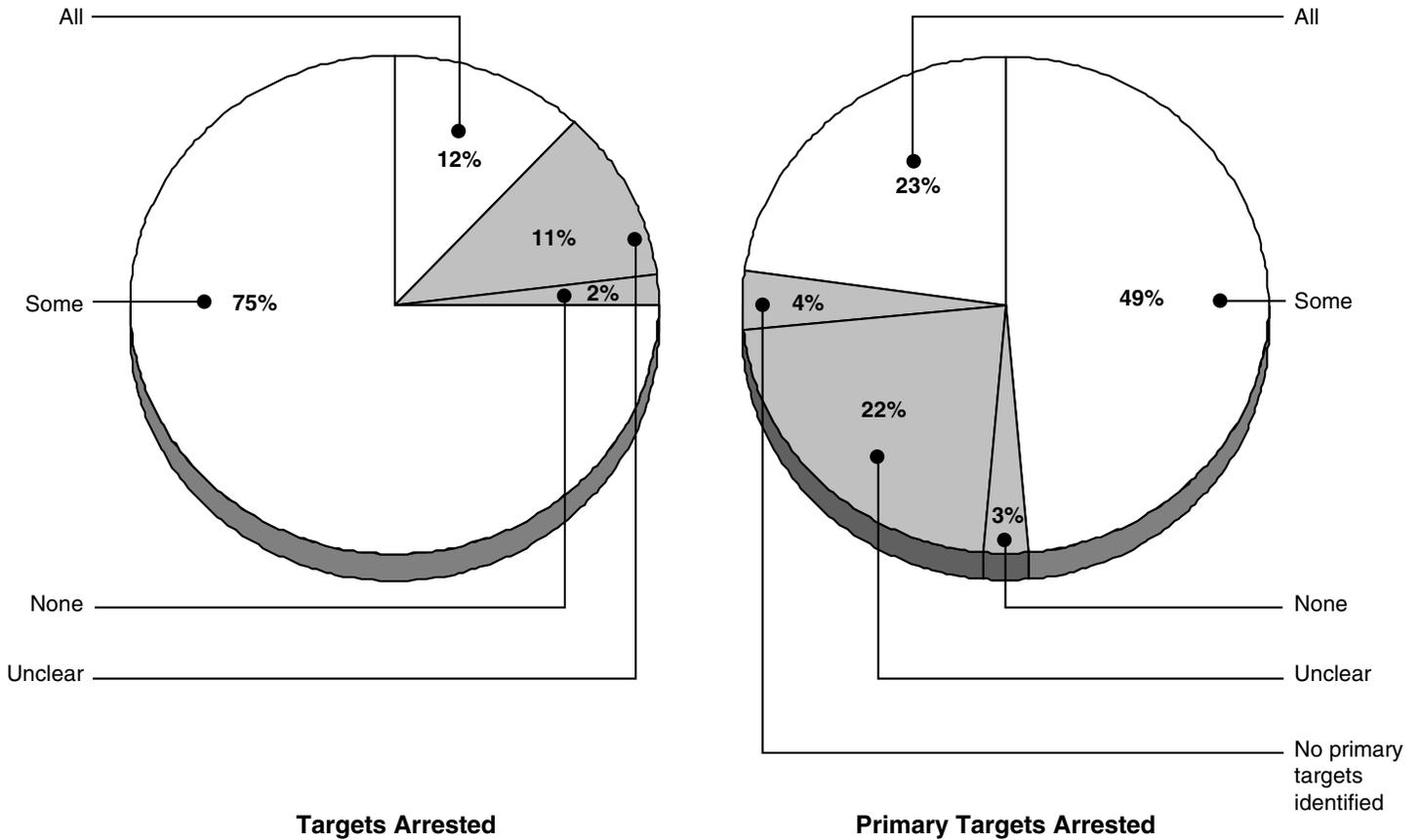
Note: Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: GAO review of DEA headquarters MET deployment files.

Although the MET Program handbook states there is no required timeframe for completing a deployment, it suggests that deployments should generally last 2 to 4 months.[14] Our analysis of DEA data on the timeframes for the 269 deployments completed as of September 30, 2000, showed that the overall median duration was 130 days (or slightly over 4 months) and that the median duration has decreased each year over the

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[14]In May 2001, subsequent to the completion of our work for this review, DEA issued a revised MET Program handbook. The new handbook does not suggest a length of time that deployments should last.

last few years. Table 3 shows the median duration for the completed
deployments categorized by the fiscal year in which they started.[15,16]

**Table 3: Median Duration of MET Deployments Started in Fiscal Years 1995 Through
2000 and Completed by September 30, 2000**

Deployments completed through fiscal year 2000[a]	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Number completed	26	52	46	55	55	35
Median duration in days	78	181	148	130	123	122

[a]The deployments are categorized according to the fiscal year they started. The table does not include 17
deployments started in fiscal year 2000 and not completed by September 30, 2000. The duration of these 17
deployments may change the median duration for fiscal year 2000.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

Nine percent of the 269 deployments in table 3 were completed within 60
days and 44 percent were completed within 120 days. The median duration
for the deployments decreased about 33 percent from fiscal year 1996 to
fiscal year 2000.

Conclusions

DEA has enhanced its management of MET operations. However, because
of insufficient documentation in DEA headquarters deployment files, we
could not determine whether the METs consistently and adequately
complied with the requirement that they assess each requesting local law
enforcement agency's ability to address the drug and related violence
problem for which DEA's assistance was requested. DEA headquarters has
not clearly required the METs to document and report their assessments
of agencies' capabilities. Also, DEA headquarters has not developed clear
guidance for the METs to assess whether each requesting agency is
capable of handling the identified drug and violence problem for which

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[15]We report the median durations because the distribution of durations is skewed by some
unusually long deployments, making the median a better indicator of the central tendency of
durations. We calculated the durations by subtracting the starting dates from the ending dates,
using figures provided by DEA and verified for those cases in our file review sample.
Deployments may be considered completed even though DEA special agents may carry out
certain postdeployment activities, such as testifying in court, and even though further
indictments and arrests may be obtained at a later date.

[16]Appendix I of this report contains a list of all MET deployments completed through September
30, 2000, and includes the starting and ending dates of each. For our calculation of the overall
median duration of these deployments, we considered the deployment of both DEA's Atlanta and
Houston Field Division METs to Atlanta, GA, from January 16, 1996, to August 12, 1996, as one
deployment. DEA counts this as two deployments.

DEA's assistance was requested and comprehensively identifying specific factors to be addressed in making such assessments. Absent such guidance, and internal controls requiring that such assessments be documented and forwarded to DEA headquarters for consideration before MET deployments are authorized and funded, DEA cannot be sure that METs are only being deployed to those requesting law enforcement agencies that have a legitimate need for assistance. As a result, the MET Program may not be making the most effective use of its limited resources.

Recommendation for Executive Action

To help ensure that DEA's MET resources are used only in those instances where the requesting local law enforcement agencies are incapable of addressing drug-related violence problems in their communities, we recommend that the Attorney General direct the DEA Administrator to (1) provide clear guidance for METs to use in assessing local law enforcement agencies' capabilities; and (2) ensure that the DEA field divisions document such assessments and provide them to DEA headquarters before MET deployments are approved.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In its written comments on a draft of this report, DOJ essentially agreed with the two recommendations contained in this chapter. However, it had some comments on the related findings.

With regard to our recommendation relating to guidance for METs to use in assessing whether local law enforcement agencies are capable of addressing drug and related violence problems without DEA's assistance, DOJ stated it will ask DEA to revise the MET Program handbook to address our concern that the handbook does not discuss how such assessments should be made and does not identify specific factors for the METs to address. In agreeing with the recommendation, however, DOJ referred to our finding that DEA does not currently provide clear guidance for assessing a local law enforcement agency's capabilities as "largely interpretive in nature." DOJ said that while DEA has provided much guidance on what to look for in assessing agencies' capabilities, GAO would like to see more detail and the guidance published in the MET Program handbook.

We acknowledge that DEA headquarters has provided the field division METs with some guidance for assessing local law enforcement agencies' capabilities. In fact, our report states on page 32 that a predeployment assessment checklist and other documents provided to MET supervisors at MET conferences cite various reasons why a local agency may need

assistance. However, neither these documents nor the MET handbook discusses or provides clear, sufficient guidance to the METs on how to carry out an assessment and determine whether an agency is capable of addressing its identified drug and violence problem without DEA's assistance. They do not provide specific guidance on how to assess the situation by (1) establishing what the requesting agency's capabilities are; (2) determining what enforcement methods, techniques, resources, and capabilities are needed to resolve the specific, identified problem that DEA has been asked to help address; and (3) determining if there are one or more valid reasons why the requesting agency cannot resolve the problem without a MET deployment.

DOJ discussed three ways it believes DEA has provided guidance for assessing an agency's capabilities. However, as discussed below, we do not believe the three ways cited by DOJ provided clear, sufficient guidance for field division METs to use in conducting their assessments.

First, DOJ stated that it is established policy that DEA will assign MET resources to address a documented threat only when the local police are not capable of doing so themselves. DOJ cites two possible reasons for judging a local law enforcement agency as incapable of addressing the threat without DEA's assistance and notes that there are other reasons. In our opinion, the fact that it is established DEA policy that MET resources be assigned only when the local police are judged incapable of addressing the identified problem for any of a number of reasons is not the same as providing guidance on how to implement the policy and on reasons or factors to be considered in assessing capabilities.

Second, DOJ stated that annual MET conferences provide MET managers with an opportunity to exchange views on best practices and enable DEA headquarters to clarify management issues related to MET deployments. While we agree that the conferences are good forums for exchanging MET experiences and best practices and clarifying issues, our review of detailed summaries of the conferences provided by DEA shows that the topic of assessing agencies' capabilities apparently was not an agenda item at the conferences and was not addressed.

Third, DOJ stated that DEA field division managers are primarily responsible for assessing local agencies' capabilities, and the uniqueness of many situations makes the development of standard protocols difficult. In our opinion, the fact that DEA field division managers are primarily responsible for conducting agency capability assessments, which may address many unique situations, does not constitute guidance on how to

carry out such assessments. On the contrary, the fact that there are 25 different METs in 20 DEA field divisions making capability assessments emphasizes the importance of and need for guidance, that is, established general principles, standards, or criteria to which the field divisions can refer.

With regard to our recommendation relating to the documentation of agency capability assessments, DOJ stated that it accepts our recommendation and will ask DEA to ensure that detailed field office assessments be documented for DEA headquarters before committing funds to MET deployments. DOJ noted that the crucial point is to determine the best use of federal resources in addressing drug and violence problems around the country. DOJ stated that it planned to ask DEA to review this matter, especially as it relates to the MET Program, in the coming months. In our opinion, having clearer, more detailed guidance for assessing local law enforcement agencies' capabilities in the MET Program handbook together with more adequate documentation and explanations of the basis for field assessments and decisions would provide DEA headquarters officials with a sounder basis for making resource decisions related to the deployment of METs across the United States.

Although DOJ accepted our recommendation, it stated that it was based largely on the finding that headquarters program files, in 30 percent of the MET deployments reviewed, did not contain documentation indicating that the field divisions had assessed the capabilities of local law enforcement agencies. While this is true, it is also important to emphasize that, as discussed on page 30, many of the other 70 percent of the files that contain documentation did not provide specific evidence or an explanation of how the METs, based on their predeployment assessments, concluded that the local law enforcement agencies were incapable of addressing the identified drug-related violence problems in their communities.

DOJ also suggested that we could have made three changes in our methodology to probe the documentation issue and determine more definitively whether DEA erred in deploying METs to areas where local law enforcement agencies could have addressed the drug and violence threat by themselves.

First, DOJ suggested that since DEA relies on its field managers and SACs to determine local agencies' capabilities, we could have reviewed DEA field division files to find and examine more detailed documentation on

this issue. The objectives of our review focused mainly on DEA headquarters' overall management and oversight of the MET Program carried out by field division METs and not on determining specifically whether DEA erred in deploying METs to areas where local law enforcement agencies could have addressed the drug and violence threat by themselves. In developing our methodology, we considered reviewing DEA's field office MET deployment files. However, the head of DEA's Mobile Enforcement Section[17] informed us that the section maintains all key documents pertinent to each deployment for management purposes. Also, a significant constraint was that travel to a number of different locations around the country, as compared with reviewing all files in a central location, would have been costly and time-consuming. In addition, the preliminary work we carried out at two field division offices indicated that these field divisions generally did not have more detailed documentation related to their actions to comply with MET Program requirements and guidelines, including the required MET predeployment assessments, than DEA headquarters.

DOJ also stated that DEA suggests that a field division's notice to headquarters that an assessment has been made and the field division SAC concurs with the assessment is the key documentation needed at headquarters for the capability assessment requirement. However, as discussed on pages 31-32, the Comptroller General's internal control standards require that the documentation of significant events, which we believe the assessments of local law enforcement agencies' capabilities are, should be complete and accurate and facilitate tracing the transaction or event and related information. Appropriate documentation can help ensure that management's directives are carried out. Therefore, in our opinion, without better documentation than we found during our review, DEA headquarters management has no assurance that the field division METs are helping only those agencies with a legitimate need for DEA's assistance and that the MET Program is making the most effective use of limited DEA resources.

Second, DOJ stated that we could have sampled and compared deployment files before and after the Mobile Enforcement Section was created (in July 1999) to determine whether increased headquarters

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[17]In May 2001, DEA changed the name of this section to the Tactical Enforcement Section. Because our work for this review was completed before this change, our report refers to the Mobile Enforcement Section.

oversight has led to an increase in detailed documentation of MET deployment decisions. DOJ noted that our review of MET deployment files pertained mostly to deployments initiated before DEA expanded its headquarters oversight of the MET program in 1998, after the DEA Administrator reviewed an internal evaluation. In our opinion, changing the sample would not have changed the results because neither the May 1995 nor December 1998 MET Program handbooks containing policies, requirements, and guidelines for initiating and implementing deployments require that information relating to the requesting agencies' capabilities be documented or included in the predeployment assessment summaries requesting authorization and funding of deployments. Thus, there is no reason to believe that increased headquarters oversight to ensure that METs operate in accordance with program requirements and guidelines would have led to an increase in detailed documentation regarding assessments of agencies' capabilities.

Third, DOJ stated that in addition to approved MET deployments files, our evaluation could have reviewed MET requests that were denied at the field or headquarters level to help determine whether proper management decisions were being made regarding the legitimacy of MET deployments. We considered doing that when we were designing our review and developing our methodology. However, our preliminary work at the time indicated that DEA did not formally track denials. The head of DEA's Mobile Enforcement Section told us when we were developing our methodology that headquarters did not routinely collect and maintain complete information on denied MET deployment requests, including the number of denials and the reasons for the denials. Also, our preliminary work at two field division offices indicated that they did not have documentation containing the reasons for all denied requests. In addition, as discussed on page 26, while officials in five of the six field divisions we visited during our review cited reasons that deployment requests had been denied, none told us a request was denied because it was determined that the requesting agency was capable of addressing the identified drug and violence problem.

Chapter 3: MET Deployments Typically Investigated Street-Level Drug Dealers and Used Various Investigative Techniques

Consistent with the MET Program's nature and objectives as discussed in chapter 1, the MET deployments we reviewed focused primarily on street-level drug dealers and involved mostly local and regional investigations. In addition, to investigate suspected drug violators, the techniques of purchasing illegal drugs (referred to as drug buys) and using informants were employed more frequently than most other investigative techniques. MET investigations also sometimes led to other investigations of higher-level drug traffickers and their organizations.

MET Deployments Focused Primarily on Street-Level Drug Dealers

Our review showed that investigations done as part of MET deployments focused primarily on individuals suspected of street-level drug dealing, with considerable attention also directed at drug trafficking organizations, violent individuals involved in drug activities, and wholesale-level drug suppliers. A wide range of different types of suspected drug violators were investigated during MET deployments, including those in the categories of gangs, drug transporters, drug importers, money launderers, drug manufacturers, and national and international trafficking organizations. Figure 5 shows, based on our review of a probability sample of DEA headquarters files for 197 MET deployments completed as of June 30, 1999, the estimated percentage of deployments in which different types of suspected drug violators were investigated.

Figure 5: Estimated Percentage of MET Deployments Completed as of June 30, 1999, Investigating Different Types of Suspected Drug Violators

Estimated percentage of deployments

Type of drug violator
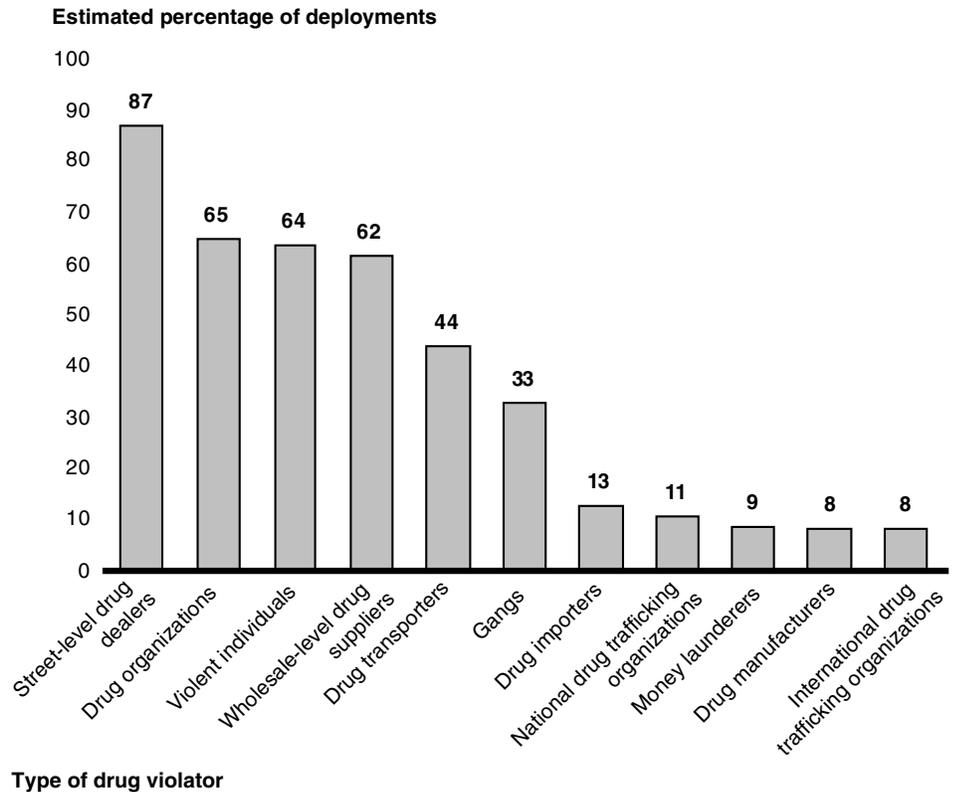
Note: The types of drug violators overlap. For example, a drug organization could include a gang, national drug trafficking organization, international drug trafficking organization, as well as other types of organizations not listed here such as a local or regional trafficking group.

Source: GAO review of DEA headquarters MET deployment files.

We asked the MET supervisors and ASACs in the six DEA field divisions we visited about the extent to which their deployments were directed at various types of drug violators. Figure 6 summarizes their responses, which indicate that the deployments among the six divisions focused primarily on street-level drug dealers. This is consistent with the results of our file review shown in figure 5 above.

Figure 6: Level of Drug Dealing Investigated During MET Deployments at Six DEA Field Divisions

Type of drug violator	Division number 1	Division number 2	Division number 3	Division number 4	Division number 5	Division number 6
Street-level drug dealers	●	●	●	□	●	□
Wholesale-level drug suppliers	□	□	●	□	□	□
National drug trafficking organizations	□	□	□	□	□	□
International drug trafficking organizations	▲	□	□	□	□	□
Drug importers	▲	□	□	□	□	□
Drug manufacturers	▲	▲	□	□	□	□
Money launderers	▲	□	▲	▲	□	□

● Always   □ Sometimes   ▲ Never

Source: GAO structured interviews of DEA field division officials.

We asked the MET supervisors and ASACs in the six field divisions whether their MET deployments had ever led to other investigations (referred to as spin-off investigations) of higher-level drug traffickers. In addition, we asked about certain aspects of their deployments that provide indications that the deployments involved or led to investigations of higher-level traffickers. Specifically, we asked whether (1) DEA's Special Operations Division (SOD)[1] was ever involved in any of the deployments, (2) any of the deployments had ever been part of a major operation or multijurisdictional drug enforcement effort coordinated by SOD or some other organization or agency, and (3) the divisions' deployments ever

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[1]SOD implements an investigative approach and initiatives to support domestic and foreign investigations of major drug traffickers and trafficking organizations. This approach focuses on intercepting the communications of major drug trafficking organizations to target the leaders and dismantle their operations.

involved investigative efforts in locations other than the area of the
deployment. The officials' responses are summarized in figure 7.

Figure 7: Selected Aspects of MET Deployment Operations at Six DEA Field Divisions

Question	Division number 1	Division number 2	Division number 3	Division number 4	Division number 5	Division number 6
Did deployment ever lead to other investigations of high-level traffickers?	●	●	●	▲	●	●
Was SOD ever involved in any deployments?	▲	▲	●	▲	●	▲
Were deployments ever part of a major operation?	▲	▲	●	▲	▲	▲
Did any deployments ever involve other locations?	●	●	●	▲	●	●

● Yes   ▲ No

Source: GAO structured interviews of DEA field division officials.

As figure 7 shows, officials in five of the six divisions said that
deployments have led to some spin-off investigations of higher-level drug
traffickers and involved investigative efforts in other locations. In our
review of DEA headquarters files for the 197 MET deployments completed
as of June 30, 1999, we found that an estimated 14 percent of the files
contained documentation indicating that the deployment led to a spin-off
investigation. Our file review also showed that an estimated 30 percent of
the files contained documentation indicating that the deployment involved
investigative efforts in other locations.

We asked DEA headquarters for quantitative data on the extent that MET
deployments have led to investigations of higher-level drug traffickers. In
response to our request, a DEA headquarters official said this information
was not systematically maintained in an automated data base and would
be extremely difficult to track. However, according to DEA, it is not
uncommon for MET deployments to lead to more complex, long-term
investigations, such as Title III (wiretap and other electronic surveillance)
investigations. When this occurs, the deployment-related investigation is

usually transferred to another DEA enforcement group for additional investigation.

MET Deployments Involved Mostly Local and Regional Drug Cases

DEA categorizes each investigation, also called a case, as either local, regional, domestic, foreign, or international, according to the geographic scope covered.[2] As shown in figure 8, the MET deployments conducted in fiscal years 1995 through 2000 involved mostly local and regional investigations of suspected drug violators operating in the geographic areas covered by the DEA offices conducting the investigations. Local cases were the single largest category, making up about 50 percent of the total during that period, followed by regional cases, which made up about 26 percent. About 18 percent of the MET cases involved drug traffickers operating on a broader scale within the United States, including on a national basis, and about 6 percent involved traffickers operating internationally.

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[2]As defined by DEA, 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.

**Figure 8: Geographic Scope of MET Cases Initiated During Fiscal Years 1995
Through 2000**

Estimated percentage of deployments
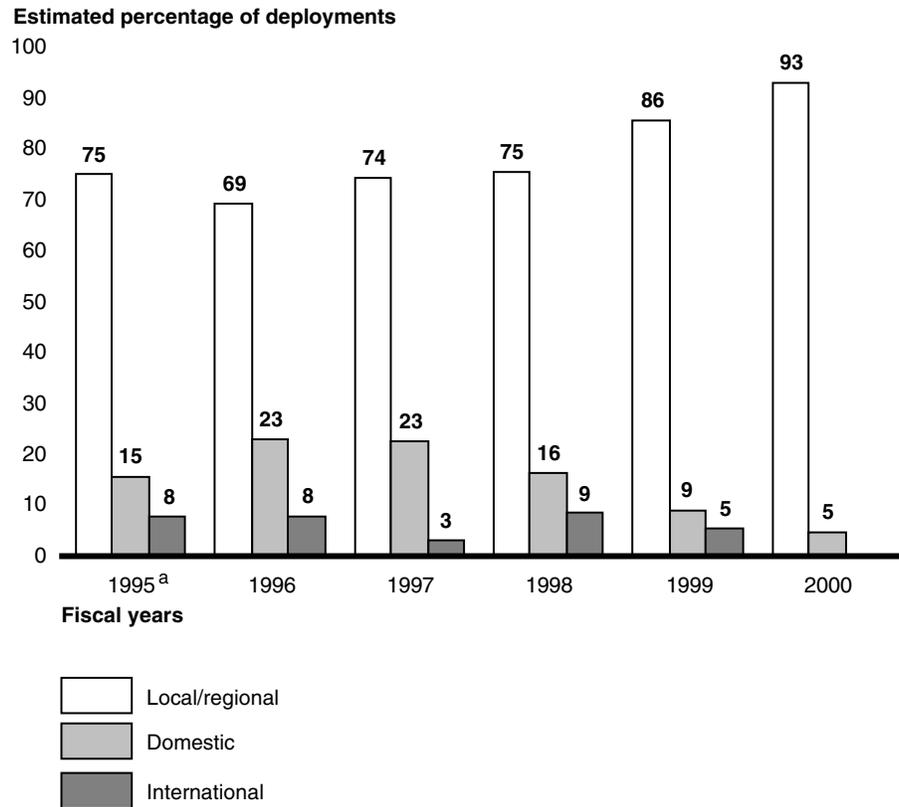
[a]Fiscal year 1995 data are for a 6-month period.

Note: No foreign cases were initiated.

Note: Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding. In addition, figure 8 does not include (1) one case initiated in fiscal year 1995 that DEA categorized as "other" in the geographic scope data it provided us and (2) one case initiated in fiscal year 2000 that was not categorized according to its geographic scope.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

Drug Buys and Informants Used More Than Most Other Investigative Techniques

While the MET deployments we reviewed employed a variety of different methods and techniques to investigate suspected drug violators, drug buys and informants were used more frequently than most other investigative techniques. Undercover operations, search warrants, and physical surveillance were also frequently used. Figure 9 shows the estimated percentage of the deployments that employed various investigative methods and techniques based on our review of a probability sample of DEA headquarters files for 197 deployments completed as of June 30, 1999.

Figure 9: Estimated Percentage of MET Deployments Completed as of June 30, 1999, Using Various Investigative Methods and Techniques
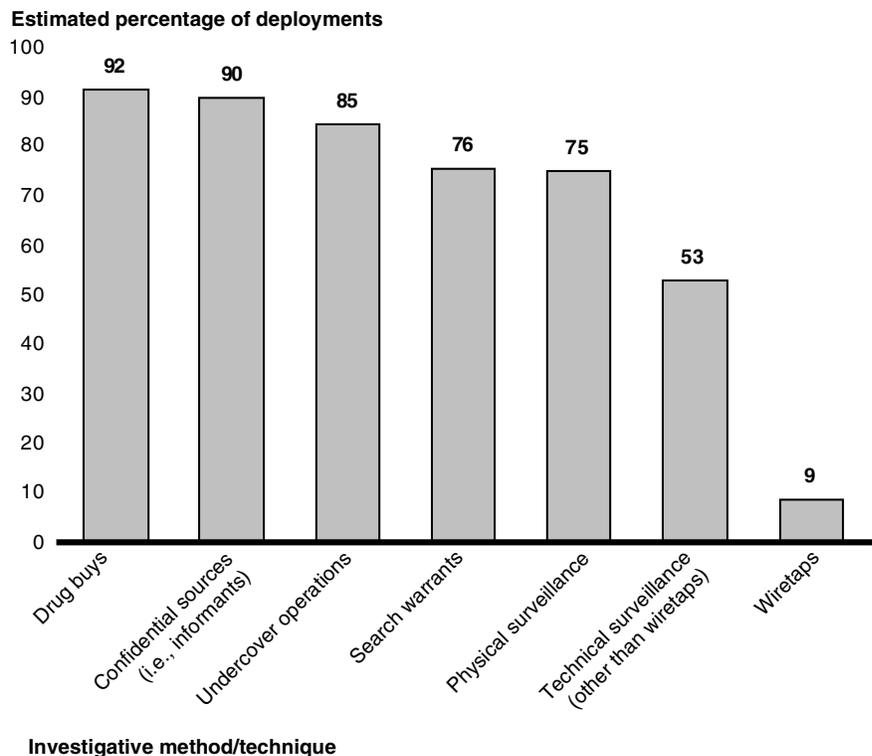
Estimated percentage of deployments

Investigative method/technique

Source: GAO review of DEA headquarters MET deployment files.

We asked the MET supervisors and ASACs in the six DEA field divisions we visited about the types of investigative methods and techniques used during deployments. Their responses were consistent with the results of our file review.

Chapter 4: DEA Measures of MET Program Results Have Problems and Limitations

The MET Program's goal— to provide resources to assist local law enforcement agencies in identifying, targeting, investigating, and disrupting or dismantling drug trafficking gangs/organizations that are responsible for drug-related violence in local communities—is consistent with DEA's overall strategic goal and Local Impact strategic objective as discussed in chapter one. DEA's Mobile Enforcement Section collects data for a variety of performance measures or indicators[1] to assess the results of individual MET deployments as well as the overall MET Program. These performance measures, which are a mix of quantitative and qualitative data, are intended to measure program output[2] (activity) and outcome[3] (results). DEA uses some of the performance measures to report internally and externally on program results. However, the measures have problems and limitations related primarily to the inconsistency in data collection which could impair their value in assessing the extent to which the MET Program is achieving its goal and contributing to DEA's overall strategic goals and objectives.

DEA Uses a Variety of Performance Measures

In an effort to assess the level of success in achieving the MET Program's goal, the Mobile Enforcement Section collects data for specified performance measures from the individual METs. Figure 10 provides basic information on these performance measures.

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[1]A performance measure, as defined by ONDCP for purposes of the National Drug Control Strategy, means data, variables, and events used to track progress toward performance targets or the desired end state to be achieved. The term is largely interchangeable with performance indicators, which as defined by OMB for purposes of the GPRA, means a particular value or characteristic used to measure output or outcome and is associated with performance goals.

[2]Outputs, as defined by DOJ for purposes of the GPRA, are the products and services produced by a program or process and delivered to customers, whether internal or external. 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.

[3]Outcomes, as defined by DOJ for purposes of the GPRA, 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 derived end or ultimate results that the agency hopes to achieve through its program activities. These results are directly related to the agency's mission.

Figure 10: MET Program Performance Measures

Performance Measures	Qualitative	Quantitative	Output	Outcome
Disruption or dismantlement of targeted drug trafficking gang(s) or organization(s) (determined at the completion of the deployment)	●	●	●	●
Primary target(s) arrested		●	●	
Number of arrests		●	●	

Source: GAO analysis.

How data are collected	How data are reported	Measurement issues
METs determine based on factors such as whether the hierarchy of the organization (usually the primary target(s)) was arrested and, in the MET's judgement, is no longer capable of running the organization	METs report in the summary/completion of deployment teletype Mobile Enforcement Section reports on each completed deployment to DEA's Administrator in the monthly activity report	No standardized criteria/ collection methods Subjective No comparative data compiled to measure actual against intended performance
METs determine based on who was targeted and who was arrested	METs report in the biweekly reports and summary/completion of deployment teletype Mobile Enforcement Section reports on each ongoing and completed deployment to DEA's Administrator in the monthly activity report	No comparative data compiled to measure actual against intended performance Significance of results difficult to interpret (e.g., arrests may not result in prosecutions and convictions)
METs collect, and the Mobile Enforcement Section compiles, data based on who was arrested	METs report in the biweekly reports, monthly statistical analysis of deployment reports, and summary/completion of deployment teletype Mobile Enforcement Section reports overall data in the monthly statistical report and on each ongoing and completed deployment to DEA's Administrator in the monthly activity report DEA reports to (1) the Attorney General in its quarterly Management Initiative Tracking System report,[a] (2) Congress in support of its annual budgets and performance plans, and (3) the public	Significance of results difficult to interpret (e.g., arrests may not result in prosecutions and convictions)

Performance Measures	Qualitative	Quantitative	Output	Outcome
Amount of drug and asset seizures		●	●	
Difference between 6-month pre- and 6-month postdeployment violent crime statistics		●		●
Reduction in drug sales and/or reduced visible drug sales	●			●
Stability of target area, including any noticeable reduction in violent crime[b]	●			●
Community reaction and involvement	●			●
Overall assessment of the deployment[b]	●			●

How data are collected	How data are reported	Measurement issues
METs collect, and the Mobile Enforcement Section compiles, data based on drugs and assets seized	METs report in the biweekly reports, monthly statistical analysis of deployment reports, and summary/completion of deployment teletype Mobile Enforcement Section reports overall data in the monthly statistical report and on each ongoing and completed deployment to DEA's Administrator in the monthly activity report DEA reports to (1) the Attorney General in its quarterly Management Initiative Tracking System report, (2) Congress in support of its annual budgets and performance plans, and (3) the public	Significance of results difficult to interpret, e.g., (universe of available illegal drugs unknown)
METs collect from requesting local law enforcement agencies, and the Mobile Enforcement Section compiles selected violent crime statistics	METs report in the immediate and 6-month postdeployment reviews DEA reports to (1) the Attorney General in its quarterly Management Initiative Tracking System report, (2) Congress in support of its annual budgets and performance plans, and (3) the public	No standardized collection methods, including • geographic area of statistics may not match deployment area and • variances in local law enforcement agencies' data collection capabilities Difficulty in determining the specific MET contribution Data reported without appropriate qualifiers
METs primarily obtain analysis and opinions of requesting local law enforcement agencies	METs report in the immediate and 6-month postdeployment reviews	Subjective No standardized collection methods Difficulty in determining the specific MET contribution

[a]The Management Initiative Tracking System report, which the DEA Administrator submits quarterly to the Attorney General, contains information on several major initiatives of interest to the Attorney General, including the MET Program.

[b]In some instances, the 6-month pre- and 6-month postdeployment violent crime statistics are included under these headings in the 6-month postdeployment reviews without any additional information.

As the figure shows, the performance measures include quantitative data, such as the number of arrests or quantity of drugs seized, and qualitative data, such as the stability of the deployment target area following a MET deployment. While most of the quantitative measures are output oriented, all of the qualitative measures are outcome oriented. Both output and outcome measures are helpful for assessing overall program performance, although outcome measures are generally stronger indicators of whether a program is achieving its goals and objectives.

DEA Reports Results for Some MET Performance Measures

The Mobile Enforcement Section periodically summarizes and reports the results of the MET Program. As indicated in Figure 10, the results information relating to some of the performance measures is provided to DEA top management and the Attorney General. DEA also reports some MET results to Congress, in support of its annual budgets and performance plans, and to the public. Program results reported externally by DEA are summarized below.

- As shown in appendix V, DEA reported to the Attorney General, as well as Congress and the public, that the MET deployments resulted in 11,283 arrests and the seizure of about 6,000 pounds of drugs (i.e., cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, and marijuana) and about $16.9 million in assets (in constant fiscal year 2001 dollars) from fiscal years 1995 through 2000.
- DEA reported to the Attorney General and the public that as of September 30, 2000, the MET Program's aggregate effect on violent crime nationwide was a 16-percent reduction in murders, a 14-percent reduction in robberies, and a 15-percent reduction in assaults.

In addition to the results related to the above performance measures, DEA reports to the Attorney General the number of recently completed deployments and includes examples of successful MET deployments. Examples of the MET's positive effect on local communities are also included in DEA's annual performance plans. Appendix VI contains summaries of examples of MET deployments that DEA has reported internally and externally as being successful.

Performance Measures Have Problems and Limitations

As figure 10 shows and as discussed below, the various performance measures on which DEA collects data and reports internally and externally have problems and limitations.

Disruption or Dismantlement of Drug Trafficking Gangs/Organizations

According to DEA's Mobile Enforcement Section Chief, and consistent with the goal of the MET Program, disruption or dismantlement of the targeted drug trafficking gangs or organizations is a principal performance measure. Recently, the section began to systematically collect data on the total number of targeted drug trafficking gangs/organizations that were disrupted or dismantled for each completed deployment and report this information to DEA top management.[4]

With regard to data collection, although METs are to use the definitions for disruption and dismantlement that were developed by DOJ,[5] no written guidance or specific criteria has been provided for applying the definitions and determining if and when a targeted drug trafficking gang/organization has actually been disrupted or dismantled. The Mobile Enforcement Section Chief said that, in making this determination, DEA field divisions consider various factors, with the key determining factor being whether the hierarchy of the organization (usually the primary targets) was arrested and is no longer capable of running the organization. The absence of written guidance or specific criteria could lead to inconsistent judgements and determinations among the field divisions and, thus, the collection of inconsistent information.

In addition, the Mobile Enforcement Section does not compile information to measure the MET Program's actual performance against its intended performance. Specifically, while drug trafficking gangs and organizations are to be identified and targeted by the METs at the beginning of and

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[4]In May 2001, subsequent to the completion of our work for this review, DEA issued a revised MET Program handbook. The new handbook requires that a summary of each completed deployment include a statement regarding the total number of drug trafficking organizations that were either disrupted or dismantled.

[5]Disruption occurs when the normal effective operation of an identified gang/organization is significantly impacted so that it is temporarily unable to conduct criminal operations for a significant period of time. Dismantlement occurs when the identified gang/organization is deprived of vital content or force and is no longer capable of operating as a coordinated criminal enterprise.

during deployments, the Section does not compile either this information or information on the number of targeted gangs and organizations determined to be disrupted and dismantled at the end of the deployments to make a comparison.[6] Without such a comparison, it would be difficult to monitor and evaluate the overall progress of the MET Program in achieving its goal of disrupting and dismantling the targeted drug trafficking gangs and organizations.

Primary Targets Arrested

According to the Mobile Enforcement Section Chief, another principal performance measure is whether the primary individuals targeted by the MET deployments were arrested.[7] However, similar to the disruption/dismantlement measure, the Mobile Enforcement Section does not compile information to measure the MET Program's actual performance against its intended performance. While it is consistent with the MET Program goal to compile and report the number of primary targets arrested, the significance of such information as a measure of success is difficult to interpret without comparing it to the total number of primary individuals targeted initially and during a deployment.[8] Moreover, it would be difficult to monitor and evaluate the MET Program's overall progress in achieving its objective of apprehending such individuals. For instance, if four of five primary targets were arrested the deployment may have done well in achieving its goals. However, if 4 of 10 primary targets were arrested, the success of the deployment might be viewed quite differently. Furthermore, as discussed below, the use of arrest data as a performance measure has other limitations.

Number of Arrests

Another performance measure used by the Mobile Enforcement Section is the total number of arrests, which includes the primary targets arrested discussed above, made during the MET deployments. Arrest data alone are difficult to interpret in terms of their significance. In this regard, DEA stated in its fiscal year 2001 annual performance plan that there is currently no analytical process in place to determine the value of a

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[6]A MET deployment can target more than one drug trafficking gang/organization and can add or delete targets based on their investigations.

[7]Depending on the circumstances, a primary target could include an organization leader, a member, or a street-level dealer.

[8]A MET deployment can target more than one individual and can add or delete individual targets based on its investigation.

specific arrest. For example, the current process does not distinguish the arrest of a street-level dealer from an organization leader. Moreover, the use of total arrest data as a performance measure can be misleading without information on the extent to which arrests lead to prosecutions and convictions.

Amount of Drug and Asset Seizures

The Mobile Enforcement Section also uses the amount of drugs and assets seized during MET deployments as a performance measure. However, as with the arrest data, these results are difficult to interpret in terms of their significance. While the amount of drugs and assets seized may be important output-oriented measures for MET deployments, they do not measure the extent to which the deployments may have reduced the availability of drugs and the assets of drug dealers in the target areas. In this regard, DEA's fiscal year 2001 annual performance plan states that the actual impact of drug seizure amounts cannot be determined because the universe of available illegal drugs cannot be measured. It further states that there is no way to ascertain if seized drugs have been replaced by lesser, equal, or greater quantities.

Pre-Versus Postdeployment Violent Crime Statistics

A quantitative outcome measure that DEA uses to determine the results of MET deployments is the difference between violent crime statistics 6 months before and 6 months after each deployment. This measure is directly linked as an outcome to the MET Program's goal of reducing the level of drug trafficking and related violence. The statistical data for this measure are to be collected and provided to DEA by the requesting local law enforcement agencies in the deployment target areas.

The Mobile Enforcement Section has instructed the METs to obtain statistics on specific violent crimes (i.e., murder, robbery, and aggravated assault) in the targeted geographic areas for 6 months before and after each deployment. However, our review of DEA's deployment files showed that the statistics obtained from local law enforcement agencies by some METs varied in that they included additional types of crimes, different geographic areas than where the deployments were focused, and different time periods. In explaining the data variances among METs, DEA indicated that it must deal with the fact that local law enforcement agencies vary in their capabilities to collect and provide this data. For example, some have automated systems while other may keep statistics on index cards.

Notwithstanding, these inconsistencies in the collection of violent crime statistics among the METs raise concerns about the validity and usefulness of the data depending on how they are used and reported. For example, reporting violent crime statistics for an entire city rather than the specific geographic area where the MET deployment took place could distort program results. Indeed, reporting for a geographic area substantially larger than the area of the MET deployment could result in underestimating MET results, depending on the circumstances.

To illustrate, as reported in one of the 6-month postdeployment reviews included in our sample of deployment files, the Chicago MET assisted a local police department in containing the spreading gang and drug activity in three targeted areas within the city where the MET deployed. The review provided violent crime statistics for both the city and the three targeted areas. The citywide statistics showed that robberies and homicides increased 8 and 23 percent, respectively. On the other hand, robberies and homicides in the three targeted areas of the deployment decreased 59 and 100 percent, respectively. Thus, if the review had only provided the citywide statistics, the MET results would have been understated.

Despite these inconsistencies, DEA periodically reports internally and externally on the MET Program's effect on violent crime without appropriate qualifiers. For example, DEA's September 30, 2000, Management Initiative Tracking Report to the Attorney General did not indicate that the violent crime data included geographic areas other than where METs were deployed. Also, such reporting does not consider the effect of other factors on the crime rate, such as the local economy and anti-crime social programs.

Further, recognizing DEA's dependency on local law enforcement agencies and the associated problems, the usefulness of pre- and postdeployment violent crime statistics as a measure of MET performance could be enhanced if similar statistics were collected for adjacent areas or other areas with demographic characteristics and past crime statistics similar to the geographic areas covered by the MET deployments. Such statistics could allow changes in violent crime rates to be considered in relation to any general trends (such as recent overall drops in violent crime rates) in adjacent or comparable areas that were not the focus of a MET deployment.

Postdeployment Information on Specific Areas

In addition to the above performance measures, the MET Program handbook requires the METs to conduct two postdeployment reviews—one immediately after completion and another 6 months later—- to assess the effectiveness of each MET deployment. The handbook requires that each review address five areas: (1) reduction in drug sales and/or reduced visible drug sales; (2) stability of the target area, including any noticeable reduction in violent crime; (3) community reaction and involvement; (4) an overall assessment of the deployment; and (5) media coverage. While the MET handbook requires that the postdeployment reviews include information on media coverage, the Mobile Enforcement Section Chief stated that media coverage is not used as a performance measure for the MET Program.

With regard to the other four outcome-oriented areas, the Mobile Enforcement Section has not prescribed standardized data collection methods for obtaining and reporting information. Rather, as stated in the handbook, the METs are to rely primarily on, and report the opinions and analyses of, the cognizant local law enforcement agencies. While opinions and perceptions can be part of a valid qualitative measurement program, without standardized guidance as to specific criteria or factors to consider in developing these judgements, interpretation of the results can be problematic. Also, without a standard, structured method, such as a survey instrument, for collecting such qualitative information, the results are inconsistent and not comparable. For example, with regard to reduction in drug sales, one MET reported that crack cocaine arrests had increased substantially following the MET deployment; but, the MET did not relate or link this information to any change in drug sales. In contrast, another MET reported that the availability of certain illegal drugs in a deployment area had decreased significantly and that drug traffickers were attempting to conceal their illegal activities. The MET noted that the local police had received fewer calls concerning complaints about narcotic or violent drug-related activity. Appendix VII contains these and other examples of how METs reported information in postdeployment reviews.

Conclusions

DEA's current measures for determining the results of MET deployments and the overall MET Program have several problems and limitations. For example, as a result of the lack of standard data collection methods and written guidance, DEA has no assurance that all METs are consistently using the same criteria or factors for determining whether they have disrupted or dismantled their targeted gangs and organizations. Also, DEA cannot measure actual against intended performance because it does not compile data to compare the number of primary individuals, gangs, and

organizations targeted at the beginning of and during deployments to the number actually arrested, disrupted, and dismantled. In addition, DEA's attempts to measure the effect of MET deployments by comparing pre-and postdeployment violent crime statistics has been affected by (1) variances in the data provided to DEA, including some agencies providing data for a larger area than that targeted by the MET deployment; and (2) the lack of violent crime statistics for adjacent and other areas with similar demographic characteristics, to be used for purposes of comparison. Moreover, because the postdeployment information used to assess MET effectiveness is not collected and reported in a standardized, structured way, its usefulness is limited. As a result of these various problems and limitations, DEA management has no way of accurately assessing the effect of individual METs or the effectiveness of the MET Program as a whole.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We recommend that the Attorney General direct the DEA Administrator to (1) establish and ensure the use of standardized data collection methods for obtaining information on the performance measures DEA uses to assess the results of the individual MET deployments and the overall MET Program; (2) compile data and compare the number of primary individuals, gangs, and organizations targeted at the beginning of and during deployments to the number arrested, disrupted, and dismantled; (3) collect and report consistent violent crime statistics that cover comparable crime types and time periods and relate to (a) the specific geographic areas where the MET deployments were focused and (b) to the extent feasible and practical, pertinent adjacent and comparable areas; and (4) use more structured data collection methods, such as a survey instrument, to collect qualitative data on the four outcome-oriented areas included in the postdeployment reviews that can be used to assess the results of individual MET deployments and be aggregated to evaluate the overall MET Program.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In its written comments on a draft of this report, DOJ indicated agreement with certain aspects of our recommendations in this chapter and disagreement with other aspects.

DOJ disagreed with our recommendation on standardized data collection methods. DOJ stated that DEA's MET Program now utilizes such methods for obtaining information on performance measures used to assess the results of individual MET deployments and the overall MET Program. DOJ specifically cited the collection of disruption and dismantlement

information and violent crime statistics. While DEA recently began collecting this information for each deployment, there is no assurance that METs are collecting it in a standard way. Therefore, we are retaining our recommendation.

With regard to the collection of disruption and dismantlement information, DOJ stated that the criteria used in determining the disruption or dismantlement of MET targeted drug trafficking gangs or organizations are the DOJ definitions for disruption or dismantlement. We believe the development and use of definitions for disruption and dismantlement is a good first step. However, these definitions are broad and, as indicated on page 57, no written guidance or specific criteria have been provided to assist the DEA field divisions in applying the definitions and determining if and when a targeted drug trafficking organization has actually been disrupted or dismantled. Without such guidance or criteria, there is little assurance that judgments and determinations relating to disruption and dismantlement are being made in as standard and consistent a manner as possible. In this regard, DEA's 2001 and 2002 annual performance plans indicate that DEA staff are developing criteria to determine whether or not enforcement activities meet the threshold of either disruption or dismantlement as defined by DOJ.

With regard to the collection of violent crime statistics, DOJ noted that the MET guidelines require, at a minimum, that the (pre- and postdeployment) assessment(s) include violent crime statistics for murder, robbery, and aggravated assault, which (according to the requesting agency) are derived from the area most impacted by the targeted organizations. DOJ further noted that, as indicated in our report, DEA instructed the METs to obtain statistics on these crimes (in the targeted geographic areas for the 6 months before and after each MET deployment). However, as discussed below, the METs are not collecting and reporting consistent violent crime statistics. Thus, while DEA has promulgated standard guidelines, the field divisions are not consistently following them.

DOJ disagreed with our recommendation regarding compiling data on the number of primary individuals, gangs, and organizations targeted at the beginning of and during deployments and comparing them with the number arrested, disrupted, and dismantled. DOJ stated that a MET investigation may evolve, or redirect its focus several times, making it very difficult to measure the success of a deployment strictly by comparing the number of primary individuals, gangs, and organizations targeted at the onset of a deployment against the number of arrests at the conclusion. We recognize that targets identified at the onset of a deployment can change

during the deployment. We are not suggesting that DEA measure the success of the METs only by comparing the number of primary targets identified at the onset of a deployment against the number of arrests, disruptions, and dismantlements at the conclusion. That is why our recommendation states that DEA should compile data on the number of primary targets identified during, as well as at the beginning of, deployments and compare them with the number actually arrested, disrupted, and dismantled. Further, we recognize that changes in targets complicate the comparison, although DEA has a basis for tracking changes in targets in that, as DOJ notes, DEA requires that field divisions inform DEA headquarters of target changes in their biweekly activity reports. Nevertheless, without comparative information, taking into account appropriate target changes, DEA cannot measure actual against intended performance and determine to what extent the MET Program is achieving its goal of disrupting and dismantling targeted drug trafficking gangs and organizations. Therefore, we are retaining our recommendation on this matter.

In commenting on this recommendation, DOJ also noted that some assessment of a MET's success is subjective and can only be measured on a case-by-case basis when the quality of life in the community is studied. DOJ further stated that it is extremely important to recognize that the number of arrests at the conclusion of a deployment does not adequately measure, by itself, the success of the deployment. We agree with these two statements. In fact, on pages 58-59, we discuss the limitations of arrest data as a measure of the success of a deployment. Moreover, our report indicates that DEA uses a variety of qualitative and quantitative performance measures to assess the individual MET deployments as well as the overall MET Program, and we agree with this approach.

DOJ disagreed with the first part of our recommendation regarding the collection and reporting of consistent violent crime statistics. DOJ stated that as long as the pre- and postdeployment crime data are based on consistent geographic areas, DEA will continue to use the best available data, ensuring that the data collection areas are the same within each deployment. DOJ acknowledged that in many cases, a local law enforcement agency provides crime data for a geographic area that is larger than DEA's MET deployment area. Due to differences in the data collection systems used by local law enforcement agencies, DEA often takes the best available data rather than the exact data for the specific deployment area. DOJ believes that it is unreasonable to expect local law enforcement agencies to manually count statistics in order to satisfy DEA's data collection standards for the MET Program.

While we agree that local law enforcement agencies should not be expected to expend an unreasonable amount of time and resources obtaining data for DEA, it is not clear how much effort would be involved in some cases. All things being equal, we continue to believe that the data should, as often as feasible, relate to the specific geographic areas where the METs were focused because, as discussed on page 60, the inconsistencies in the collection of violent crime statistics raise concern about the validity and usefulness of the data as a measure of MET deployment results. Therefore, we are retaining our recommendation.

To the extent it is not already doing so, DEA needs to make sure it is making a reasonable, concerted effort to obtain the required data. For example, DEA could emphasize in its promotion of the MET program, and in its initial contact with local law enforcement agencies requesting MET deployments, the need to have pre- and postdeployment violent crime statistics for the specific targeted area of the MET deployments as well as for the specified time period and crime types. To the extent that DEA is unsuccessful in obtaining violent crime statistics for the specific deployment area, it needs to ensure that only data for the specific geographic areas where the METs were focused, specified time periods, and specified crime types are aggregated and reported for purposes of measuring the performance of the overall MET Program.

DOJ agreed with the second part of our recommendation regarding violent crime statistics, stating that it would ask DEA to collect and report pertinent adjacent and comparable statistics whenever feasible and practical. However, it noted that collecting both adjacent and comparable statistics would be difficult in many areas where METs are deployed. We recognize that DEA may not be able to obtain these data for all deployments, but we believe that, to the extent feasible, DEA should make a concerted effort to collect these statistics for all of its MET deployments.

Finally, DOJ agreed with our recommendation regarding the use of more structured data collection methods to collect qualitative data from local law enforcement agencies on the four outcome-oriented areas included in the MET postdeployment reviews. DOJ stated that the current system of capturing qualitative data from police departments allows DEA to grasp the sentiment and reaction of the departments and is within the parameters of the MET guidelines (namely, obtaining the analysis or opinions of police department officials as to the impact or success of the deployments). However, DOJ noted that given the difficulty in aggregating the results of the deployments to evaluate the overall MET Program, DEA

will appraise creating a more structured data collection instrument that will still be able to gather data from a diversity of communities.

Appendix I: Completed MET Deployments, Fiscal Years 1995 Through 2000

DEA field division	Location of deployment	Beginning date	Ending date	Duration (in days)
Atlanta	Columbus, GA	6/15/95	10/1/95	108
	Bowden, GA	6/15/95	10/15/95	122
	Monroe, NC	10/3/95	1/5/96	94
	Chattanooga, TN	10/15/95	12/30/95	76
	Atlanta, GA (lead)	1/16/96	8/12/96	209
	Spartanburg, SC	9/9/96	12/20/96	102
	Greenville, SC	9/9/96	2/5/97	149
	Marietta, GA	1/6/97	6/1/97	146
	Macon, GA	7/7/97	12/3/97	149
	Kinston, NC	7/8/97	12/30/97	175
	Glynn County, GA	3/16/98	8/11/98	148
	Durham, NC	9/14/98	1/27/99	135
	Griffin, GA	3/23/99	7/14/99	113
	Dalton, GA	3/23/99	7/27/99	126
	Clarksville, TN	8/23/99	2/11/00	172
	Dillon, SC	3/27/00	7/21/00	116
Boston	Worcester, MA (#1)	5/15/95	8/7/95	84
	Lynn, MA	5/15/95	11/1/96	536
	Revere, MA	12/15/95	3/28/97	469
	Boston, MA (#1)	4/1/96	3/12/97	345
	Worcester, MA (#2)	5/22/96	1/7/97	230
	Boston, MA (#2)	8/16/96	3/28/97	224
	Webster, MA	5/14/97	9/23/97	132
	Pawtucket, RI	11/15/97	8/13/98	271
	Springfield, MA	6/30/98	1/19/99	203
	Lawrence, MA	9/25/98	5/1/99	218
	Everett, MA	3/3/99	10/15/99	226
	Fitchburg, MA	5/17/99	12/31/99	228
	Southbridge, MA	1/4/00	4/14/00	101
	Bridgeport, CT	4/25/00	6/23/00	59
Chicago	Fort Wayne, IN	7/1/95	9/1/95	62
	Racine, WI	2/1/96	7/29/96	179
	Kankakee, IL	6/15/96	1/9/97	208
	North Chicago, IL	10/1/96	4/16/97	197
	Milwaukee, WI	4/21/97	10/4/97	166
	Minneapolis, MN	9/2/97	11/20/97	79
	Aurora, IL	1/2/98	8/19/98	229
	Beloit, WI	9/21/98	12/2/98	72
	Chicago Heights, IL	1/19/99	6/30/99	162

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DEA field division	Location of deployment	Beginning date	Ending date	Duration (in days)
Chicago (cont.)	Indianapolis, IN	8/2/99	11/19/99	109
	Bloomington, IL	1/18/00	4/13/00	86
	Chicago, IL	6/5/00	9/22/00	109
Dallas	Arlington, TX	5/10/95	7/6/95	57
	Wichita Falls, TX	8/28/95	11/16/95	80
	Tyler, TX	12/5/95	6/21/96	199
	Ft Worth, TX	3/6/96	10/26/96	234
	Athens, TX	4/1/96	8/22/96	143
	Greenville, TX	11/1/96	3/6/97	125
	Paris, TX	11/1/96	4/15/97	165
	Terrell, TX	5/5/97	11/18/97	197
	Mt. Pleasant, TX	6/23/97	12/17/97	177
	Henderson, TX	10/27/97	5/12/98	197
	Corsicana, TX	1/15/98	9/22/98	250
	Fort Worth, TX	5/27/98	9/14/99	475
	Brownwood, TX	10/26/98	3/25/99	150
	Sherman, TX	4/20/99	11/16/99	210
	Texarkana, TX	1/24/00	7/28/00	186
Denver	Denver, CO (#1)	4/1/95	7/1/95	91
	Lakewood, CO	11/1/95	5/21/96	202
	Albuquerque, NM	11/1/95	12/1/96	396
	Durango, CO	12/1/95	9/25/96	299
	Denver, CO (#2)	2/16/96	6/15/96	120
	Clayton, NM	7/1/96	9/1/96	62
	Salt Lake City, UT	7/22/96	11/14/96	115
	Denver, CO (#3)	11/27/96	12/29/97	397
	Edgewater, CO	12/13/96	2/28/97	77
	Park County (Cody), WY	7/13/97	9/16/97	65
	Denver, CO (#4)	10/1/97	4/1/98	182
	Avon, CO	3/1/98	6/15/98	106
	Eagle/Garfield Counties, CO	3/1/98	9/15/98	198
	Pueblo, CO	8/10/98	11/2/98	84
	La Plata County, CO	2/1/99	7/14/99	163
	Longmont, CO	7/12/99	12/30/99	171
	Midvale, UT	4/10/00	6/7/00	58
Detroit	Pontiac, MI	4/12/95	5/10/95	28
	Ypsilanti, MI	7/17/95	10/2/95	77
	Lincoln Park/Melvindale, MI	11/14/95	8/23/96	283
	Toledo, OH	7/29/96	12/31/96	155

DEA field division	Location of deployment	Beginning date	Ending date	Duration (in days)
	Inkster, MI	2/10/97	6/30/97	140
	E Cleveland, OH	7/28/97	10/26/97	90
Detroit (cont.)	Louisville, KY	7/30/97	9/27/97	59
	Muskegon, MI	8/20/97	10/14/97	55
	Jefferson County, OH	2/8/98	5/20/98	101
	Benton Harbor, MI	6/15/98	9/22/98	99
	Village of Lincoln Heights, OH	10/1/98	1/21/99	112
	Warren, OH	2/1/99	5/5/99	93
	Youngstown, OH	2/1/99	5/5/99	93
	Mount Clemens, MI	7/6/99	11/3/99	120
	Flint, MI	1/26/00	6/15/00	141
El Paso	El Paso County, TX	11/17/97	3/27/98	130
	Odessa, TX	4/26/98	7/21/98	86
	El Reno, OK	9/10/98	11/27/98	78
	Midland, TX	1/19/99	6/29/99	161
	Portales, NM	8/24/99	11/30/99	98
	Las Vegas, NM	1/18/00	5/30/00	133
Houston	Galveston, TX	5/15/95	12/1/95	200
	Atlanta, GA (assist)	1/16/96	8/12/96	209
	Orange County, TX	6/10/96	11/21/97	529
	Port Arthur, TX	6/10/96	11/21/97	529
	East Harris County, TX	9/4/97	3/27/99	569
	Freeport, TX	6/2/98	3/31/99	302
	Kingsville, TX	3/1/99	10/7/99	220
	Corpus Christi, TX	5/14/99	9/2/99	111
	Victoria, TX	11/15/99	4/6/00	143
	Tomball, TX	5/1/00	9/14/00	136
Los Angeles	San Luis Obispo, CA (#1)	5/22/95	7/31/95	70
	Oxnard/Ventura, CA	9/9/95	11/19/95	71
	Gardena, CA	11/20/95	1/12/96	53
	Century, Los Angeles, CA	2/21/96	7/29/96	159
	Rampart, Los Angeles, CA	4/13/96	7/29/96	107
	Antelope Valley, CA	9/10/96	12/13/96	94
	El Monte, CA	2/18/97	4/18/97	59
	Santa Maria, CA	5/5/97	7/3/97	59
	"Quad Cities" (4 cities), L.A. Metro Area, CA	8/4/97	10/3/97	60
	Coachella Valley, CA	10/20/97	12/23/97	64
	Wilshire, Los Angeles, CA	1/17/98	5/22/98	125

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DEA field division	Location of deployment	Beginning date	Ending date	Duration (in days)
	Reno, NV	6/29/98	8/29/98	61
	Pico Rivera, CA	10/19/98	2/5/99	109
	Devonshire (North Hills), CA	10/26/98	2/26/99	123
	Hawthorne, CA	3/15/99	7/16/99	123
	San Luis Obispo, CA (#2)	4/19/99	7/19/99	91
Los Angeles (cont.)	Carson City, NV	8/29/99	11/23/99	86
	Ontario, CA	9/1/99	11/23/99	83
	Hawaii County, HI	2/23/00	5/7/00	74
	Inglewood, CA	3/6/00	8/6/00	153
Miami	Fort Pierce/St Lucie, FL	7/18/95	8/28/95	41
	Collier County, FL	11/25/95	3/10/97	471
	Opa Locka, FL	2/5/96	1/22/98	717
	Homestead, FL	3/24/97	8/1/97	130
	Hendry County, FL	5/28/97	11/12/97	168
	Sarasota, FL	8/18/97	1/5/98	140
	South Miami, FL	3/1/98	5/19/98	79
	Florida City, FL	3/6/98	9/6/98	184
	Hardee County, FL	3/8/98	11/13/98	250
	North Miami Beach, FL	9/1/98	12/3/98	93
	Riviera Beach, FL	10/5/98	3/10/99	156
	Franklin County, FL	1/19/99	5/12/99	113
	Fort Lauderdale, FL	4/26/99	12/31/99	249
	Key West, FL	6/21/99	12/9/99	171
	Fernandina Beach, FL	9/20/99	2/23/00	156
	Delray/Boca Raton, FL	2/22/00	7/12/00	141
	Fort Pierce, FL	4/17/00	5/7/00	20
	Highland County, FL	6/12/00	8/25/00	74
New Orleans	Selma, AL	5/12/95	7/29/95	78
	Pritchard, AL	7/20/95	3/1/96	225
	Jackson, MS (#1)	1/18/96	12/6/96	323
	Alexandria, LA (#1)	8/1/96	7/10/97	343
	Alabaster, AL	1/6/97	9/10/97	247
	Pine Bluff, AR	1/13/97	7/15/97	183
	Donaldsonville, LA	6/16/97	2/10/98	239
	Hancock County, MS	10/14/97	3/18/98	155
	Enterprise, AL	12/1/97	5/20/98	170
	Concordia Parish, LA	4/13/98	9/2/98	142
	Gadsden, AL	5/1/98	11/4/98	187
	Slidell, LA	9/9/98	4/21/99	224
	Hammond, LA	10/1/98	4/7/99	188

DEA field division	Location of deployment	Beginning date	Ending date	Duration (in days)
	New Orleans, LA	10/5/98	12/31/98	87
	Anniston, AL	1/4/99	9/8/99	247
	Jackson, MS (#2)	3/15/99	7/2/99	109
	Brent /Fairfield, AL	6/14/99	12/3/99	172
	Greenville, MS	8/9/99	11/4/99	87
	Alexandria, LA (#2)	2/1/00	4/7/00	66
New Orleans (cont.)	Hattiesburg, MS	2/1/00	6/2/00	122
	Green /Tuscaloosa Counties, AL	6/12/00	8/25/00	74
New York	Niagara Falls, NY	6/21/95	11/2/95	134
	Southampton, NY	8/22/95	10/14/95	53
	Albany, NY	10/26/95	8/1/96	280
	Schenectady, NY	6/15/96	9/30/97	472
	Troy, NY	11/21/96	9/1/97	284
	Amsterdam, NY	10/21/97	4/20/98	181
	Utica, NY	5/29/98	9/22/98	116
	Monticello, NY	7/1/98	10/26/98	117
	Watertown, NY	11/15/98	2/25/99	102
	Poughkeepsie, NY	11/24/98	8/27/99	276
	Kingston, NY	4/6/99	9/13/99	160
	Mount Vernon, NY	10/29/99	6/7/00	222
	Newburgh, NY	11/1/99	5/12/00	193
	Liberty, NY	5/22/00	9/25/00	126
Newark	Asbury Park, NJ	9/27/95	5/21/96	237
	Camden, NJ	11/29/95	5/21/96	174
	Paterson, NJ	3/11/96	2/28/97	354
	Newark, NJ	2/13/97	9/10/97	209
	Atlantic City, NJ	7/14/97	7/31/97	17
	Lakewood, NJ	8/18/97	12/9/97	113
	Elizabeth, NJ	2/2/98	7/30/98	178
	Passaic, NJ	9/1/98	1/17/99	138
	Plainfield, NJ	2/24/99	9/24/99	212
	Pleasantville, NJ	10/4/99	2/15/00	134
	Trenton, NJ	3/28/00	6/28/00	92
Philadelphia	Bristol, PA	6/8/95	10/4/95	118
	Chester City, PA	5/21/96	9/1/96	103
	Clairton, PA	6/3/96	11/26/96	176
	Easton, PA	9/3/96	5/8/97	247
	Norristown, PA	6/24/97	6/18/98	359
	Wilmington, DE	2/9/98	5/13/98	93
	Philadelphia, PA	6/5/98	11/1/98	149

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DEA field division	Location of deployment	Beginning date	Ending date	Duration (in days)
	Reading, PA	12/21/98	5/27/99	157
	Allentown, PA	6/14/99	10/8/99	116
	York, PA	10/18/99	2/25/00	130
	Pottstown, PA	4/26/00	8/25/00	121
Phoenix	Eloy/Pinal, AZ	11/12/95	7/29/96	260
	Bullhead City, AZ	2/1/96	7/29/96	179
	Prescott, AZ	8/14/96	11/26/96	104
Phoenix (cont.)	Lake Havasu, AZ	11/19/96	5/20/97	182
	Sierra Vista, AZ	6/18/97	2/13/98	240
	Apache County, AZ	3/10/98	7/9/98	121
	Coconino County, AZ	7/28/98	3/16/99	231
	Navajo County, AZ	4/1/99	7/30/99	120
	Payson, AZ	10/18/99	4/20/00	185
San Diego	Oceanside, CA	8/4/95	10/15/95	72
	El Cajon, CA	4/10/96	10/10/96	183
	Chula Vista, CA	6/3/96	10/26/96	145
	National City, CA	10/1/96	9/10/97	344
	Vista, CA	6/2/97	3/5/98	276
	San Diego (Logan Heights), CA	4/1/98	12/4/98	247
	San Diego (Mid-City), CA	4/1/98	12/4/98	247
	La Mesa , CA	1/4/99	3/3/99	58
	Escondido, CA	4/26/99	2/18/00	298
	San Marcos, CA	3/6/00	8/17/00	164
San Francisco	Richmond, CA	10/16/95	1/8/96	84
	Vallejo, CA	3/1/96	6/21/96	112
	Seaside/Marina, CA	7/29/96	11/14/96	108
	Merced, CA	1/21/97	4/3/97	72
	Modesto, CA	4/28/97	8/27/97	121
	Oakland, CA	10/27/97	2/27/98	123
	W. Contra Costa County, CA	5/14/98	8/29/98	107
	Eastern Kern County, CA	9/29/98	2/4/99	128
	Yuba County, CA	3/8/99	7/2/99	116
	San Jose, CA	8/23/99	12/10/99	109
	Stanislaus County, CA	1/17/00	5/5/00	109
	Oakland, CA	5/15/00	7/15/00	61
	Woodland, CA	7/17/00	9/8/00	53
Seattle	Puyallup/Tacoma, WA	7/7/95	10/1/95	86
	Woodburn, OR	4/1/96	6/20/96	80
	Lewiston, ID	7/8/96	9/24/96	78

DEA field division	Location of deployment	Beginning date	Ending date	Duration (in days)
	Madras, OR	11/10/96	1/31/97	82
	Klamath Falls, OR	3/1/97	6/30/97	121
	Washington County, OR	7/27/97	8/23/97	27
	Keizer, OR	11/9/97	1/30/98	82
	Portland, OR	3/15/98	6/3/98	80
	Everett, WA	6/22/98	1/8/99	200
	Chehalis, WA	2/1/99	6/2/99	121
	Thurston /Yelm, WA	6/7/99	9/28/99	113
	Seattle, WA	6/23/99	1/16/00	207
Seattle (cont.)	Lakewood, WA	2/28/00	6/30/00	123
St Louis	Sikeston, MO	7/5/95	8/5/95	31
	Fountain Park, MO	10/16/95	12/15/95	60
	East St Louis, IL	3/4/96	9/27/96	207
	Alton, IL	11/1/96	4/11/97	161
	Lexington, NE	3/31/97	5/2/97	32
	St. Charles County, MO	11/3/97	1/30/98	88
	Audrain County, MO	3/2/98	5/29/98	88
	Yankton Sioux Reservation, SD	7/6/98	7/23/98	17
	Crystal City, MO	8/17/98	10/23/98	67
	Berkley, MO	12/8/98	3/26/99	108
	Hannibal, MO	4/6/99	5/20/99	44
	Madison, IL	7/6/99	2/25/00	234
	Fort Dodge, IA	4/17/00	6/28/00	72
Washington, DC	Manassas City, VA	5/1/95	6/9/95	39
	Chincoteague, VA	6/26/95	8/10/95	45
	Fredericksburg, VA	9/12/95	10/6/95	24
	Richmond, VA	11/29/95	10/11/96	317
	Washington, DC	10/21/96	4/3/97	164
	Baltimore, MD	4/28/97	9/26/97	151
	Annapolis, MD	11/3/97	3/3/98	120
	Petersburg, VA	4/27/98	8/14/98	109
	Hampton, VA	10/5/98	6/30/99	268
	Charles Town, WV	5/3/99	8/20/99	109
	Hagerstown, MD	10/13/99	3/23/00	162
	Prince William County, VA	5/1/00	8/31/00	122

Note: An asterisk (*) marks each of the 197 MET deployments completed as of June 30, 1999. We reviewed DEA headquarters files for a representative, national sample of these deployments.

[a]The Atlanta, GA, deployment was led by DEA's Atlanta Field Division MET, and the Houston Field Division MET assisted. DEA counts this as two deployments. For our review of DEA's MET deployment files, we considered the deployment of the two METs as one deployment.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

Appendix II: GAO Methodology for Selecting and Reviewing Completed DEA MET Deployment Files

As discussed in chapter 1, to address several of our objectives, we reviewed a probability sample of DEA headquarters files[1] for 83 randomly selected MET deployments.[2] We obtained from DEA a listing of all 197 MET deployments completed by June 30, 1999.[3] Because we needed to review DEA's 6-month postdeployment reports, we used June 30, 1999, as our cutoff date. To recognize the potential effect of program policy and procedural changes on the implementation of deployments, we divided the 197 deployments into 4 strata depending on whether they started before January 1, 1997, or later, and whether they lasted up to or more than 6 months.[4] We then randomly selected a total of 83 deployments from the 4 separate strata, to assure coverage of deployments of varying length and age. Table 4 provides details of the strata samples and populations.

Table 4: File Review Strata for Completed MET Deployments

Initiation date/duration of deployment	Population size	Sample size
Prior to Jan. 1997/6 months or less	55	15
Prior to Jan. 1997/longer than 6 months	34	17
Jan. 1997 or later/6 months or less	82	31
Jan. 1997 or later/longer than 6 months	26	20
Total	**197**	**83**

Source: GAO.

Our probability sample allows us to make estimates to the population of all 197 deployments. Because we used random sampling, the results

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[1]We reviewed DEA headquarters files rather than field division files because the head of DEA's Mobile Enforcement Section, a headquarters unit which oversees the MET Program, advised us that the section maintains all key documents pertinent to each deployment for management purposes.

[2]A probability sample is drawn using statistical, random selection methods that assure that each member of the population has a known, positive probability of being selected. This approach allows us to make inferences about the entire population.

[3]For our file review, we considered the deployment of both DEA's Atlanta and Houston Field Division METs to Atlanta, GA, from January 16, 1996, to August 12, 1996, as one deployment. DEA counts this as two deployments.

[4]We consulted with the head of DEA's Mobile Enforcement Section regarding the appropriate date for stratifying MET deployments to recognize significant policy and procedural changes that could have affected how deployments were implemented over time. He advised us that January 1, 1997, was an appropriate date. Regarding the length of deployments, we used 6 months to distinguish between short and long. While MET Program guidelines state that deployments generally should last 2 to 4 months, DEA advised us that the average length of a deployment at the time was 163 days.

obtained are subject to some uncertainty or sampling error. The sampling error can be expressed in terms of confidence levels and ranges. The confidence level indicates the degree of confidence that can be placed in the estimates derived from the sample. The range is a pair of values derived from the sample data, an upper and lower limit, between which the actual population values might be found. Our samples were designed so that the sampling error around the estimates of percentages would not be greater than 10 percentage points at the 95-percent confidence level. Thus, if all cases in our population had been examined, the chances are 95 out of 100 that the results obtained would be included in the range formed by adding or subtracting no more than 10 percentage points from the sample estimates. In this report, all sampling errors fall within this range, unless otherwise noted.

In addition to the reported sampling errors, the practical difficulties of conducting any file review may introduce other types of errors, commonly referred to as nonsampling errors. For example, differences in how two reviewers interpret a question, or in the ways in which two DEA officials provided documentation, can introduce unwanted variability into the results. We took steps to minimize such nonsampling errors. We developed our data collection instrument (DCI) in consultation with DEA officials, and we conducted collective training and pretesting with our reviewers. During the review process, a second reviewer was involved in assuring consistency and accuracy for all key questions on the DCI. When reviewers did not find required documentation in the deployment files, we provided DEA the opportunity to obtain the documents from its filing system and provide them for our review; and we considered these documents as part of the files. We verified all data entry of the DCIs as well as all the programming used in the analyses.

Appendix III: Summary Examples of MET Assessments of Local Law Enforcement Agencies' Capabilities

The following four examples are from DEA headquarters files for the 197 MET deployments completed as of June 30, 1999 that were included in our review. The examples show how four METs, in their requests for authorization and funding, summarized the results of their predeployment assessments of requesting local law enforcement agencies' capabilities and the diversity of evidence and support provided. Our analysis is included at the end of each example.

Example 1

"The [name deleted] Police Department is 357 persons strong, with a dozen officers assigned to narcotics to date. The [name deleted] Police Department has addressed the drug epidemic at a street level but would now like to target mid and upper level organizations in select violent neighborhoods . . . . [name deleted] Police Department would like MET to assist them in targeting some of these areas of friction where rival drug dealers and street gangs continue an open air drug market, and where gunfire and homicides permeate surrounding streets and area residents."

Analysis

Based on our analysis, this example does not cite specific evidence that the identified drug and violence problem is beyond the police department's immediate capabilities. There is no explanation of why the 12 police officers assigned to narcotics cannot, without MET assistance, successfully target and investigate the drug trafficking organizations that are of concern. The request for authorization and funding does not cite possible reasons such as an insufficient amount of money available to buy drugs, a lack of needed technical equipment, officers' lack of necessary investigative or foreign language skills, or the officers being incapable because they are known by the drug traffickers.

Example 2

"The [name #1 deleted] Department consists of eighty-four sworn officers. [name #1 deleted] has a four-man Special Investigations Unit that investigates vice related crimes including drug complaints. [name #1 deleted] has members of the department assigned to the [name #2 deleted] Violent Crimes Task Force, [name #3 deleted] Law Enforcement Task Force and [name #4 deleted] Task Force. The [name #3 deleted] Law Enforcement Task Force consists of approximately eight local municipality police departments and the [name #3 deleted] Sheriff's Department. This task force directs its efforts to high profile criminal activity including drug distribution investigations. The [name #2 deleted] . . . operates a Violent Crimes Task Force (VCTF). This task force consists of ten to twelve local police officers. The VCTF investigates violent crimes

in [name #3 deleted] and [name #5 deleted] counties of northeast [name #6 deleted]. The [name #5 deleted] Sheriff's Department has a drug investigation unit that works independently of any local law enforcement task forces. There is no local area task force that concentrates its efforts solely on drug trafficking investigations."

Analysis

In this example, it is not clear why the police department's four-man unit and the various task forces in the area cannot resolve the drug and violence problem DEA was asked to address. As in the first example, the request for authorization and funding does not explain specifically why the problem is beyond the immediate capabilities of the local law enforcement resources. Possible limiting factors, such as a lack of money available to buy drugs and the unavailability of needed technical equipment, are not addressed.

Example 3

"The [name #1 deleted] police force has 130 full time police officers with four officers assigned to work narcotics full time. In addition to the full time narcotics officers there is a drug task force comprised of [name #2 deleted] state troopers and officers from neighboring communities to include one officer from [name #1 deleted]. The [name #1 deleted] narcotic officers and the drug task force officers are well known to the owners of these bars, making it difficult and dangerous for undercover operations."

Analysis

This example does cite a specific reason as to why the local police department and drug task force officers are not considered capable of resolving the identified drug and violence problems, i. e., that there is a high risk that the narcotics officers would be recognized if they were to conduct undercover operations. However, the example does not put the reason into context by explaining why the investigative technique of undercover operations must be carried out to successfully address the drug and violent crime problems, and it does not discuss the viability of, and the police department's and task force's capabilities relating to, other techniques and approaches.

Example 4

"The [name #1 deleted] County Sheriff's Department has approximately 170 officers with 18 assigned to their narcotics division. The drug unit is further divided into small enforcement groups assigned to cover particular areas within county jurisdiction. The Sheriff's Department has identified the communities of [name #2 deleted], East [name #3 deleted], and [name

#4 deleted] as the most active and difficult areas for the department to police . . . in large part due to relentless daily crack cocaine distribution activity and related violent crime conducted openly on the streets . . . . The Sheriff's department has deemed drug law enforcement in [name #2 deleted] to be virtually impossible citing a lack of manpower, a small budget to purchase evidence, and an inability to recruit reliable confidential informants to work in the area. Drug trafficking in [name #2 deleted] continues with minimal police presence, resulting in increased community concern over the apparent lawlessness that exists. . . . The [name #5 deleted] crack cocaine and cocaine distribution organization operates within the East [name #3 deleted] and the [name #4 deleted] areas of [name #1 deleted] County. Continuous sheriff department enforcement efforts against [name #5 deleted] have met with negative results due to similar manpower problems and the inability to infiltrate this organization . . . . The [name #3 deleted] Police Department consists of 70 officers with two detectives assigned to a drug unit to cover approximately 13 square miles. Due to the small size of the drug unit and department budgetary constraints, narcotics enforcement has been limited to investigation of juveniles and juvenile gang activity . . . . The [name #3 deleted] Police Department has also been unsuccessful infiltrating the [name #6 deleted] group due to a lack of undercover police personnel not already known to [name #3 deleted] drug distributors. The [name #3 deleted] Police Department also does not have the funds necessary to purchase evidence and secure informants to effectively investigate the activities of this organization. Virtually all narcotic enforcement has been limited to assistance provided by outside law enforcement agencies . . ."

Analysis	This example cites several specific reasons why local law enforcement agencies cannot successfully address the drug and violence problems identified. For example, the request for deployment authorization and funding points out the sheriff department's lack of manpower, insufficient money to buy drugs, and inability to recruit informants in the area. The request also cites the negative results of previous sheriff department enforcement efforts against the identified crack cocaine and cocaine trafficking organization. In addition, the request explains that the local police department is also incapable of successfully addressing the identified problem: its narcotics enforcement activities have been limited to investigating juveniles; it was unable to infiltrate the identified trafficking organization; and it did not have sufficient funds to buy drugs and pay informants.

Appendix IV: Geographic Scope of MET Cases Initiated, Fiscal Years 1995 Through 2000

Scope of case	1997		1998		1999		2000		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Local	87	54.4	69	48.6	35	62.5	25	58.1	289	49.6
Regional	32	20.0	38	26.8	13	23.2	15	34.9	154	26.4
Domestic	36	22.5	23	16.2	5	8.9	2	4.7	104	17.8
Foreign	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
International	5	3.1	12	8.5	3	5.4	0	0.0	34	5.8
Other/unknown	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.3	2	0.3
Total	**160**	**100.0**	**142**	**100.1**	**56**	**100.0**	**43**	**100.0**	**583**	**99.9**

[a]Fiscal year 1995 data are for a 6-month period ending September 30, 1995.

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

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

Appendix V: MET Program Arrests and Seizures Data, Fiscal Years 1995 Through 2000

Selected data	1995-96[a]	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Deployments completed	79	46	55	55	35	270
Arrests	2,577	2,157	2,250	1,965	2,334	11,283
Cocaine seized (pounds)	95	747	342	333	195	1,712
Methamphetamine seized (pounds)	68	115	199	86	135	603
Heroin seized (pounds)	3	29	18	17	36	103
Marijuana seized (pounds)	159	953	646	998	672	3,428
Assets seized (millions)[b]	$3.8	$2.7	$3.9	$3.1	$3.4	$16.9

[a]Fiscal year 1995-96 data are for the 18-month period ending September 30, 1996.

[b]The amounts of assets seized each fiscal year are in constant fiscal year 2001 dollars.

Source: Developed by GAO from DEA data.

Appendix VI: Summary Examples of DEA-Reported Successful MET Deployments

The following are summaries of examples of successful MET deployments reported internally and externally by DEA.

- In its fiscal year 2001 congressional budget submission, DEA reported that from July 1998 until March 1999, the Phoenix Field Office MET worked closely with the Northern Arizona Street Crimes Task Force in targeting two drug trafficking organizations. One organization was responsible for supplying street-level dealers with multiple-pound quantities of methamphetamine. The other, a polydrug trafficking group, had a reputation for extreme violence; some of its members had criminal histories, which included armed robberies, home invasions, assault, sex crimes, and child abuse. Using confidential sources, the MET was able to successfully infiltrate these organizations and severely disrupt their operations. The 9-month deployment resulted in the seizure of 7 operational and 3 dismantled methamphetamine labs, 44 grams of heroin, 22 pounds of marijuana, 500 dosage units of LSD, 40 weapons, 18 motor vehicles, and $16,292 in U.S. currency. In addition, the MET secured 86 arrests, including the arrest of 2 primary targets.

- In its fiscal year 2000 annual performance plan, DEA reported that in June 1998, the New York MET initiated a deployment at the request of the Utica Chief of Police who indicated that Utica was experiencing a surge in drug-related criminal activity attributable to turf battles between competing drug organizations, drug-related robberies, and retaliation shootings. The MET, in conjunction with the Utica Police Department, identified two significant drug trafficking organizations operating in the Utica area. Utilizing cooperating sources and undercover operations, MET and Utica agents successfully infiltrated the targeted organizations. This cooperative investigative strategy led to the indictment of 25 defendants by a federal grand jury. The indictments included the primary deployment targets and their identified source of supply. On September 22, 1998, the New York MET--working in conjunction with their local, state and federal counterparts--conducted a round-up which concluded its 3-month deployment. Nineteen of the 25 indicted subjects were arrested and the targeted organizations were dismantled.

- In its September 1999 quarterly Management Initiative Tracking Report, DEA reported that from April 1999 until July 1999, the Los Angeles MET deployed to a county that was experiencing an epidemic of violent criminal conduct perpetrated by gang members. The Los Angeles MET infiltrated the methamphetamine trafficking activities of the deployment targets by utilizing: (1) observation posts in areas of high pedestrian traffic where gangs sell narcotics in the open; (2) undercover operations in an

attempt to eliminate sources of supply; and (3) search warrants to eliminate locations where narcotics were being produced and stored. During the course of this 3-month deployment, the following seizures were made: 144.38 grams of powder cocaine; 2,268.5 grams of methamphetamine; 3.55 grams of heroin; 3,907.57 grams of marijuana; 1,330 marijuana plants; 35 weapons; and $23,014 in U.S. currency. Arrests took place throughout the investigation, and there was a limited round-up operation. A total of 51 suspects, including the 3 primary targets of the investigation, were arrested.

Appendix VII: Examples of Postdeployment Information Reported for Four Areas

The following are examples from DEA headquarters files for the 197 MET deployments completed as of June 30, 1999, that were included in our review. The examples show the inconsistencies in the type and amount of data reported by the METs, in their 6-month postdeployment reviews, from requesting local law enforcement agencies. Our analysis is included at the beginning of each review area.

Reduction in Drug Sales or Reduced Visible Drug Sales

Based on our analysis, the first two examples do not relate or link the provided information to any change in drug sales and/or reduced visible drug sales. In contrast, the third example provides information indicating that there was a reduction in visible sales.

Example 1

"Sgt. [name #1 deleted] ([name #2 deleted] Police Department) stated that crack cocaine arrests have increased substantially for the six-month period following termination of the MET deployment. This is attributable to the success of the MET deployment. Patrol officers assigned to the designated area are taking a more aggressive posture in the enforcement of state narcotics laws. This aggressive position is most evident in the statistics regarding unlawful possession of a controlled substance."

Example 2

"The reputation for the [name deleted] as being a principal in the distribution of methamphetamine and cocaine has been eliminated."

Example 3

"According to the [name deleted] Police Department, the availability of cocaine, methamphetamine and other controlled substances has decreased significantly. During the MET deployment, drug sales were conducted with little fear of police intervention. [Name deleted] Police Department officials report that traffickers now attempt to conceal their illegal activity and have been hampered by increasing police pressure. Open narcotic activity in the area has been almost completely eliminated. Patrol Officers in this community no longer respond to as many drug related incident calls as in the past. The department receives fewer calls concerning complaints about narcotic or violent drug related activity."

Stability of Targeted Area or Noticeable Difference in Violent Crime

Based on our analysis, the first example does not relate or link the provided information to the stability of the targeted area and any noticeable difference in violent crime. The second example while containing a statement that there has been a difference in violent crime, does not provide any supporting information. In contrast, the third example provides supporting information that there was a noticeable difference in violent crime.

Example 1	"It should be noted that during the MET deployment to [name deleted] there was a homicide committed in the community. As a result of undercover purchases which were made by DEA agents, homicide detectives were able to bring in suspects and uncooperative witnesses for questioning based on arrest warrants obtained from MET undercover operations."
Example 2	"Chief [name deleted] reported that there has been a decrease in street crime associated with drug trafficking in the target area since the deployment."
Example 3	"Information provided by the [name deleted] PD narcotics unit disclosed that there has been a reduction in narcotics activity within the targeted area. There has also been a reduction in threats against citizens and violent related calls. A review of the statistical data provided by the [name deleted] PD crime analysis unit revealed the following:" [pre- and postdeployment violent crime statistics provided].

Community Reaction and Involvement

Based on our analysis, the first two examples do not cite any information pertaining to community reaction and involvement. In contrast, example 3 provides information about community involvement while example 4 provides information about community reactions.

Example 1	"Since the arrests of members of the [name #1 deleted] and [name #2 deleted] organizations, activity typically attributed to those organizations (i.e.: narcotics trafficking, assaults and citizen harassment) have been greatly reduced. According to the [name #3 deleted] PD detectives, life in the city of [name #3 deleted] is of better quality. Patrol officers who worked the downtown [name #3 deleted] area appreciated the efforts of MET 2."
Example 2	"Since the arrest of the high level organizations members, activity typically attributed to the group (i.e., narcotics trafficking, assaults and citizen harassment) have been greatly reduced. Suspected narcotics traffickers believe that their distribution areas continue to be surveilled by MET-2. According to a confidential source, the crack cocaine in the targeted area is either fake or of very poor quality. The source confirmed reports by the [name deleted] PD officers that narcotics activity is "almost non-existent"."
Example 3	"Chief [name #1 deleted] advised that since the deployment the [name #2 deleted] PD has joined a program with local churches to attempt to reduce crime and revitalize crime laden areas. Chief [name #1 deleted] stated that

the police department has also become involved in the "Weed and Seed" Program."

Example 4	"Community reaction was positive, mostly stemming from local newspaper stories. There was no attempt made by the police department to gauge local reaction or to establish any new programs as a result of the MET operation."
Agency Assessment	Based on our analysis, the first example provides some statistics and the opinion of a police official as to the state of the community after the MET. However, there is no supporting trend analysis of the statistics or evidence of a cause/effect relationship between the MET deployment and the trends in violent crime. Moreover, the official's statement does not demonstrate how the community is noticeably difference and how the MET contributed to making the difference. The last two examples are statements of opinion without any supporting evidence and analysis.
Example 1	"Listed below are the statistics furnished by the [name #1 deleted] Police Department's Crime Analysis Section. . . . . Sgt. [name #2 deleted] stated that there is a noticeable difference in the community and that very few of the violent drug dealers are on the streets of [name #1 deleted]."
Example 2	"It is apparent that MET-2's deployment was not only successful but greatly appreciated by the [name #1 deleted] Police Department. [Name #1 deleted] PD Chief [name #2 deleted} has expressed his appreciation in writing to DEA Administrator [name #3 deleted]."
Example 3	"The [name deleted] deployment was not only successful, but was also greatly appreciated by the [name deleted] PD."

Appendix VIII: Comments From the Department of Justice

JUN I 4 2001

Washington, D.C. 20530

Ms. Laurie E. Ekstrand
Director
Justice Issues Division
General Accounting Office
441 G Street, NW, Room 2A38
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Ekstrand:

The Department of Justice and the Drug Enforcement
Administration (DEA) have reviewed the General Accounting
Office (GAO) draft report entitled "DEA'S MOBILE ENFORCEMENT
TEAMS: Steps taken to Enhance Program Management, But More Can
Be Done." We are encouraged that the GAO found that DEA's MET
Program is compatible with DEA's authorized mission and
largely consistent with both the Department's Anti-Violent
Crime Initiative and broader Strategic Plan, as well as the
National Drug Control Strategy. Furthermore, we note that GAO
finds that "MET deployments generally conclude when objectives
are achieved."

We also note that the GAO found a number of problems and
issues, primarily related to program guidance, documentation,
and evaluation, and offered a number of corrective
recommendations. The Attorney General will direct the DEA
Administrator to provide a full response to each
recommendation for the 60-day follow-up report, but the
Department and DEA offer these preliminary comments on each
recommendation of the draft report.

Chapter 2, Recommendation 1

*   provide clear guidance for METs to use in assessing local
     law enforcement agencies' capabilities

Response:

It would appear that this recommendation is based upon GAO's
interpretive finding that DEA does not now provide clear
guidance on how assessments are to be made of a local police
agency's capabilities to address established drug and violence

Now on p. 32.

Now on p. 14.

Now on p. 24.

Ms. Laurie E. Ekstrand   Page 2

problems in the local community. GAO states "The MET Program
handbook does not discuss how such assessments should be made
and does not identify specific factors for the METs to address
in making their assessments." (Page 30) The Department will
ask DEA to revise the MET handbook to address this concern.
Nevertheless, the record should also show that DEA has
provided considerable guidance in this area in a number of
ways.

First, it is established policy that DEA will assign MET
resources to address a documented threat only when the local
police authorities are not capable of doing so themselves.
Two possible reasons that can establish this lack of
capability are either that the local agency lacks sufficient
knowledge or skills (such as undercover expertise) in drug law
enforcement, or that the local agency lacks personnel and
financial resources to sustain the requisite enforcement
action. (See page 12 of the GAO draft) By no means are these
the exclusive reasons for judging a local law enforcement
agency incapable of addressing the threat without DEA
assistance.

Second, there are other ways than through the MET handbook to
convey clear guidance to the MET managers in the field
divisions. Annual conferences provide MET managers an
opportunity to exchange views on best practices and enable DEA
headquarters to clarify management issues related to MET
deployments. (See page 23 of the GAO draft)

Third, DEA field division managers are primarily responsible
for making assessments of local agency capabilities. These
capabilities must be judged with respect to the specific
circumstances of the drug and violence threat. The uniqueness
of many situations makes the development of standard protocols
difficult. The routine interaction between the Headquarters
MET Section and the field divisions recognizes that the
assessments are more complicated than filing a detailed
checklist.

To summarize, the Department acknowledges the GAO
recommendation to be based on a finding that is largely
interpretive in nature. While DEA has provided much guidance
on what to look for in assessing local agency capabilities,
GAO would like to see more detail and they would like to see
this guidance published in the MET Handbook. The Department
will ask DEA to address this in the 60-day follow up report.

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Chapter 2, Recommendation 2

•   ensure that the DEA field divisions document such
     assessments and provide them to DEA Headquarters before
     MET deployments are approved

Response:

This recommendation is largely based on the finding that
headquarters program files, in 30 per cent of the MET
deployments reviewed, did not contain documentation that the
field divisions had adequately assessed the capabilities of
local law enforcement agencies. (Page 6) GAO further notes
"Without such documentation, DEA has no assurance that the
METs are helping only those agencies with a legitimate need
for assistance." (Page 6)

Since DEA relies on field managers to make these assessments
in the first place, notice to DEA headquarters that the
assessment has been made, and that the Special Agent in Charge
(SAC) of the relevant field office concurs, constitute one
form of documentation. GAO is suggesting that additional
detail should be provided.

The Department suggests that GAO could have made three changes
in their methodology to probe this issue and determine more
definitively whether DEA may have erred in deploying METs
where local law enforcement could have addressed the drug and
violence threat by themselves. Since DEA relied on field
managers, and the relevant SAC, to determine local agency
capability, GAO could have reviewed field office files to find
this detailed documentation. However, GAO notes on page 64,
Appendix II of the draft report that only DEA headquarters
files rather than field division files were reviewed because
DEA stated that headquarters "maintains all key documents
pertinent to each deployment for management purposes."
(Footnote 1, page 64) Having adopted this methodology, the
disagreement between GAO and DEA on this point is whether the
detailed assessment is a "key document." DEA suggests that
the SAC's concurrence on the assessment is the key requirement
from a headquarters management perspective.

The Department also suggests that the lack of documentation in
30 percent of the headquarters deployment files may be a moot
issue. GAO acknowledges that DEA expanded its headquarters

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oversight of the MET program beginning in 1998 after the
Administrator of DEA reviewed an internal evaluation. Yet
most of GAO's file reviews pertain to MET deployments that
were initiated prior to 1998 and prior to the improvement in
headquarters management. GAO could have sampled deployment
files from before and after the creation of the DEA Mobile
Enforcement Section to determine whether increased oversight
has led to increased detailed documentation of MET deployment
decisions.

Finally, the Department suggests that the evaluation could
have reviewed not only approved MET deployment files, but also
MET requests that were denied, either due to a field office
nonconcurrence, or by headquarters management.   Uncovering
the reasons for these denials could have provided some
assurance to GAO, and confirmation to DEA, that proper
management decisions were being made regarding the legitimacy
of MET deployments. In fact, GAO notes on page 25 of the
report that they interviewed local law enforcement officials
and found that 19 of the 25 agencies "said DEA assessed
whether their agency was capable of handling the problem."
Two of the 25 said no assessment was made, and 4 officials
said they did not know whether an assessment had been made.
This helps to put the issue of a lack of headquarters
documentation, and the dimensions of the potential problem, in
perspective.

The Department, nevertheless, accepts the recommendation and
will ask DEA to ensure that the detailed, field office
assessments be documented for DEA headquarters prior to
committing MET deployments. The crucial point here is to
determine the best use of federal resources in addressing drug
and violence problems around the country, and the Department
will ask DEA to review this matter, especially for the MET
program, in the coming months.

Chapter 4, Recommendation 1

•   *establish and ensure the use of standardized data
      collection methods for obtaining information on the
      performance measures DEA uses to assess the results of
      the individual MET deployments and the overall MET
      Program.*

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Response:

The DEA's MET Program now utilizes standardized data
collection methods for obtaining information on performance
measures used to assess the results of individual MET

deployments and the overall MET Program. As cited on page 51
in the GAO draft report, "Recently, the [MET Program] section
began to systematically collect data on the total number of
targeted drug trafficking gangs/organizations that were
disrupted or dismantled for each completed deployment and
report this information to DEA top management." The criteria
used in determining the disruption or dismantlement of MET
targets are as follows:

>   Disruptions: "occurs when the normal effective
>   operation of an identified organization is significantly
>   impacted so that it is temporarily unable to conduct
>   criminal operations for a significant period of time.
>   This disruption must be the result of an affirmative law
>   enforcement action including, but not limited to, the
>   arrest, indictment and conviction of the organization's
>   leadership or a substantial seizure of the organization's
>   assets."

>   Dismantlement: "occurs when an identified organization
>   is eviscerated and no longer capable of operating as a
>   coordinated criminal enterprise. The dismantlement must
>   be the result of an affirmative law enforcement action
>   including, but not limited to, the arrest, indictment and
>   conviction of all or most of its principal leadership,
>   the elimination of its criminal enterprises and
>   supporting networks and the seizure of its assets. The
>   organization must be impacted to the extent that it is
>   incapable of reforming."

In addition, the MET Guidelines require at a minimum, that the
assessment include violent crime statistics for murder,
robbery, and aggravated assault which (according to the
requesting agency/assessment) are derived from the area most
impacted by the targeted organizations. As referred to on

page 53 of the GAO draft report, the Mobile Enforcement
Section has instructed the METs to obtain statistics on the
aforementioned specific violent crimes.

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Chapter 4, Recommendation 2

•   compile data and compare the number of primary
      individuals, gangs, and organizations targeted at the
      beginning of and during deployments to the number
      arrested, disrupted, and dismantled.

Response:

The DEA METs identify primary individuals, gangs and
organizations targeted at the inception of the deployment, as
well as throughout the course of the investigation. The MET
identifies and tracks those primary individuals, gang and
organization members who were identified as additional targets
in the investigation. MET reporting requirements mandate that
bi-weekly activity reports containing pertinent deployment
information be submitted to DEA headquarters. If additional
targets were identified, or the MET redirected its focus of
the deployment, this information would be specifically
reported on the bi-weekly activity report.

During the course of a MET investigation, intelligence
developed and evidence gathered against targets will
ultimately dictate any arrests, or the disruption or
dismantlement of a targeted individual, gang, or organization,
thus affecting the outcome of the investigation. In many
instances, a MET investigation may evolve, or redirect its
focus several times, making it very difficult to measure the
success of a deployment operation strictly by comparing the
number of targets identified at the outset, against the number
of arrests at the conclusion.

The MET Program impact in communities is significant, but some
assessment of a MET's success is subjective, and can only be
measured on a case-by-case basis when the quality of life in
the community is studied. For example, one community may find
that a top echelon trafficker was arrested, resulting in the
dismantlement of the entire targeted organization. Another
community may find that while numerous traffickers were
arrested, it may only lead to the disruption of the
organization due to the organizational hierarchy. It is
extremely important to recognize that the number of arrests at
the conclusion of a deployment does not adequately measure, by
itself, the success of the deployment.

See comment 1.

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Chapter 4, Recommendation 3

•   *Collect and report*
     *(a) consistent violent crime statistics that cover
     comparable crime types and time period and relate to the
     specific geographic areas where the MET deployments were
     focused, and
     (b) to the extent feasible and practical, pertinent
     adjacent and comparable areas.*

Response:

(A) DEA requires that METs obtain consistent violent crime
statistics, to include homicide, robbery, and aggravated
assault, for the six months prior to the commencement of the
deployment and six months following the conclusion of the
deployment, for the same targeted area where the MET
deployment operation took place.

This information is reported in the Six-Month Post Deployment
Review that is prepared by the Special Agent in Charge of the
division in which the MET operation occurred and sent to the
Chief of Domestic Operations at DEA headquarters. Further, in
many cases, the local law enforcement entity provides pre- and
post-deployment crime data based on a geographic area that is
larger than DEA's MET deployment area. Due to differences in
the data collection systems utilized by local law enforcement,
DEA often takes the best available data rather than the exact
data for the specific deployment area. It is unreasonable to
expect local law enforcement to manually count statistics in
order to satisfy DEA's data collection standards for this
particular program. The data comparison is longitudinal,
therefore, as long as the data collection areas remain
consistent with a deployment assessment, DEA will continue to
use the best available data, ensuring that the data collection
areas are the same within each deployment.

(B) The Department will ask DEA to collect and report
pertinent, <u>adjacent</u> and <u>comparable</u> violent crime statistics
whenever feasible and practical. We are sure that GAO
understands that meeting both conditions will be difficult in
many areas where METs are deployed.

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Chapter 4, Recommendation 4

•   *use more structured data collection methods, such as a
      survey instrument, to collect qualitative data on the
      four outcome-oriented areas included in the
      postdeployment reviews that can be used to assess the
      results of individual MET deployments and be aggregated
      to evaluate the overall MET Program.*

Response:

The current system captures information directly from the
police departments that assess a variety of factors, such as:
the reduction in drug sales and/or reduced visibility of drug
sales; the stability of the target area; noticeable
differences in violent crime; community reaction and
involvement; and, media coverage. Local police department
assessments provide a post-deployment review that allows DEA
to grasp the sentiment and reaction of each individual police
department. This system of collecting qualitative data is
within the parameters of the MET Guidelines which state "The
five areas to be addressed in both reviews [immediate and six-
month] primarily should reflect the analysis/opinion of the
officials from the requesting agency as to the impact/success
of the deployment, relative to both time periods." Given the
difficulty in aggregating the results of the deployments to
evaluate the overall program, DEA will appraise creating a
more structured data-collection instrument, which will still
be able to gather data from a diversity of communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft report.
If you have further questions, please contact Deputy Chief
Inspector Gloria J. Woods or DEA Audit Liaison Unit Chief
Marjorie Snider at 202-307-8200.

Sincerely,

Janis A. Sposato
Acting Assistant Attorney General
for Administration

cc: Donnie Marshall, Administrator
      Drug Enforcement Administration

The following is GAO's comment on DOJ's letter of June 14, 2001.

GAO Comment

1. For clarification purposes, we revised the introductory portion of our third recommendation in Chapter 4 as follows: "(3) collect and report consistent violent crime statistics that cover comparable crime types and time periods and relate to (a) the specific geographic areas … and (b)…." (See pp. 9 and 62 of this report.)

Appendix IX: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contacts

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Acknowledgments

In addition to the persons named above, the following persons made key contributions to this report: Ronald G. Viereck, Katrina R. Moss, Lemuel N. Jackson, Roosevelt R. Burns, Lawrence T. Kinch, Barry J. Seltser, Michael P. Dino, Michael H. Little, Katherine M. Raheb, Jena Y. Sinkfield, and Ann H. Finley.

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