

GAO  
Accountability · Integrity · Reliability

# Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-05-122](#), a report to the Senate and House Committees on Appropriations

## Why GAO Did This Study

In fiscal year 2002, the Attorney General called upon law enforcement to target the “most wanted” international drug traffickers responsible for supplying illegal drugs to America. In September 2002, law enforcement, working through the multi-agency Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Program, developed a list of these drug traffickers, known as the Consolidated Priority Organization Target List (CPOT), to aid federal law enforcement agencies in targeting their drug investigations. Also, the White House’s Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) collaborated with law enforcement to encourage existing High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) to conduct CPOT investigations. According to ONDCP, the 28 HIDTAs across the nation are located in centers of illegal drug production, manufacturing, importation, or distribution. ONDCP distributed discretionary funds to supplement some HIDTAs’ existing budgets beginning in fiscal year 2002 to investigate CPOT organizations. Out of concern that a CPOT emphasis on international drug investigations would detract from the HIDTA program’s regional emphasis, the Senate Committee on Appropriations directed GAO to examine whether investigations of CPOT organizations are consistent with the HIDTA program’s mission and how ONDCP distributes its discretionary funds to HIDTAs for CPOT investigations.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-122](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-122).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Laurie Ekstrand, (202) 512-2758 or [ekstrandl@gao.gov](mailto:ekstrandl@gao.gov).

## DRUG CONTROL

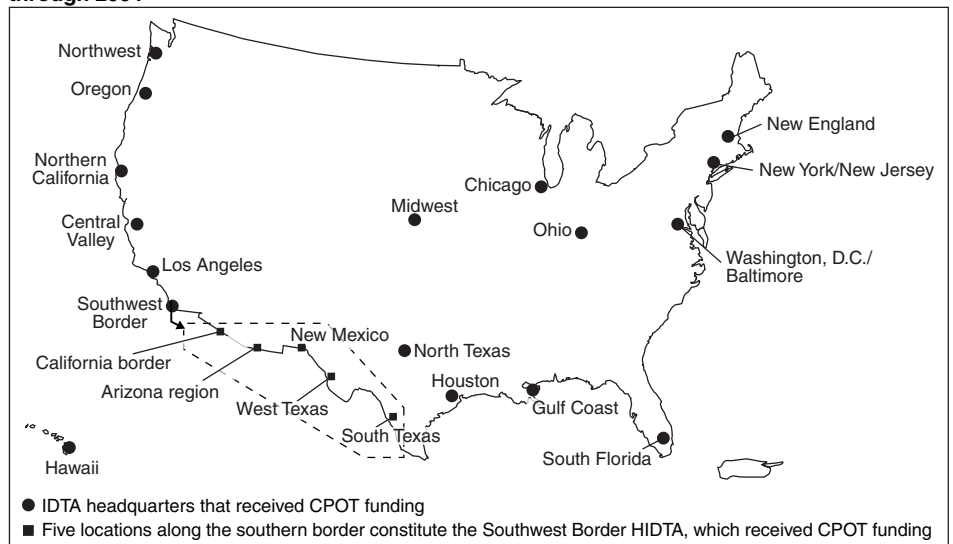
# High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas' Efforts to Link Investigations to International Drug Traffickers

## What GAO Found

The mission of the HIDTA program is to enhance and coordinate U.S. drug control efforts among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to eliminate or reduce drug trafficking and its harmful consequences in HIDTAs. CPOT investigations were not inconsistent with this mission because HIDTAs’ targeting of local drug traffickers linked with international organizations on the CPOT list was one possible strategy for achieving the program’s goal of eliminating or reducing significant sources of drug trafficking in their regions. GAO found that in fiscal years 2002 through 2004, ONDCP distributed discretionary funds to 17 of the 28 HIDTAs for CPOT investigations. Some HIDTA officials said they did not receive CPOT funding for several reasons including unclear guidance, insufficient application information to the HIDTAs for funding, and local priorities not linking with CPOT investigations. Reduced discretionary funding in fiscal year 2004 for CPOT investigations affected the number of HIDTAs that received this funding.

ONDCP and the Department of Justice (Justice) agreed with the facts in this report. Regarding application information provided to HIDTAs, ONDCP did not agree with some HIDTA officials’ view that it was insufficient. Justice acknowledged that some HIDTAs faced difficulty obtaining the CPOT list but were confident the problem has been overcome. Regarding local priorities not linking with CPOT investigations, ONDCP stated HIDTAs should be focusing on investigations of local activities that reach beyond the boundaries of the HIDTA, given their designation as centers of illegal trafficking that affect other parts of the country.

**High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas That Received CPOT Funding for Fiscal Years 2002 through 2004**



Source: GAO.