



Highlights of [GAO-10-921T](#), a report to House Government Oversight Committee, Subcommittee on Domestic Policy

Why GAO Did This Study

The overall goal of the U.S. National Drug Control Strategy, prepared by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), is to reduce illicit drug use in the United States. GAO has issued more than 20 products since 2000 examining U.S.-funded international programs aimed at reducing the supply of drugs. These programs have been implemented primarily in drug source countries, such as Colombia and Afghanistan as well drug transit countries, such as Mexico, Guatemala, and Venezuela. They have included interdiction of maritime drug shipments on the high seas, support for foreign military and civilian institutions engaged in drug eradication, detection, and interdiction; and rule of law assistance aimed at helping foreign legal institutions investigate and prosecute drug trafficking, money laundering, and other drug-related crimes.

What GAO Recommends

GAO has made recommendations to the Departments of Defense (DOD) and State and other agencies to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of U.S. counternarcotics-related programs. In particular, GAO has recommended that these agencies develop plans to sustain these programs. GAO has also recommended that they improve performance measurement and results reporting to assess program impacts and to aid in decision making. Agencies have efforts under way to implement some of these recommendations.

[View GAO-10-921T or key components.](#)

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DRUG CONTROL

International Programs Face Significant Challenges Reducing the Supply of Illegal Drugs But Support Broad U.S. Foreign Policy Objectives

What GAO Found

GAO's work on U.S.-funded international counternarcotics-related programs work has centered on four major topics:

- Counternarcotics-related programs have had mixed results.** In Afghanistan, Colombia, and drug transit countries, the United States and partner nations have only partially met established targets for reducing the drug supply. In Afghanistan, opium poppy eradication efforts have consistently fallen short of targets. Plan Colombia has met its goals for reducing opium and heroin but not coca crops, although recent data suggest that U.S.-supported crop eradication efforts over time may have caused a significant decline in potential cocaine production. Data also indicate an increase in coca cultivation in Peru and Bolivia that may eventually offset these declines. Interdiction programs have missed their performance targets each year since goals were established in 2007.
- Several factors have limited program effectiveness.** Various factors have hindered these programs' ability to reduce the supply of illegal drugs. In some cases, we found that U.S. agencies had not planned for the sustainment of programs, particularly those providing interdiction boats in transit countries. External factors include limited cooperation from partner nations due to corruption or lack of political support, and the highly adaptive nature of drug producers and traffickers.
- Counternarcotics-related programs often advance broader foreign policy objectives.** The value of these programs cannot be assessed based only on their impact on the drug supply. Many have supported other U.S. foreign policy objectives relating to security and stabilization, counterinsurgency, and strengthening democracy and governance. For example, in Afghanistan, the United States has combined counternarcotics efforts with military operations to combat insurgents as well as drug traffickers. U.S. support for Plan Colombia has significantly strengthened Colombia's security environment, which may eventually make counterdrug programs, such as alternative agricultural development, more effective. In several cases, U.S. rule of law assistance, such as supporting courts, prosecutors, and law enforcement organizations, has furthered both democracy-building and counterdrug objectives.
- Judging the effectiveness of some programs is difficult.** U.S. agencies often lack reliable performance measurement and results reporting needed to assess all the impacts of counterdrug programs. In Afghanistan, opium eradication measures alone were insufficient for a comprehensive assessment of U.S. efforts. Also, the State Department has not regularly reported outcome-related information for over half of its programs in major drug transit countries. Furthermore, DOD's counternarcotics-related measures were generally not useful for assessing program effectiveness or making management decisions.