



United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

National Security and
International Affairs Division

B-284626

February 18, 2000

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

Subject: Drug Control: U.S. Efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Illegal drugs, primarily cocaine and, increasingly, heroin from countries in South America, continue to threaten the health and well-being of American citizens. In 1993, the United States developed a policy designed to reduce the production of illegal drugs in South America and stem their flow through the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean. Despite the expenditure of billions of dollars by the United States and foreign countries to carry out this policy, illegal drugs still flood the United States. Although U.S. and host nation counternarcotics efforts have resulted in the arrest of major drug traffickers and the seizure of large amounts of drugs, they have not materially reduced the availability of drugs in the United States.

In response to your request, we are providing information on (1) the nature of the drug threat facing the United States, (2) the way in which the international drug control strategy of the United States addresses the nature of the drug threat, and (3) the obstacles that foreign governments and the United States face in reducing the drug threat. In gathering information on these issues, we reviewed our prior reports and updated information from these reports through discussions with U.S. law enforcement, military, and Department of State officials in Washington, D.C.; the U.S. Southern Command in Miami, Florida; and the Joint Interagency Task Force-East in Key West, Florida. (For a more detailed discussion of our approach, see the scope and methodology section at the end of this report.)

RESULTS IN BRIEF

The drug threat confronting the United States has changed. Since 1996, Colombia has surpassed Bolivia and Peru as the world's leading source of coca and has become the primary source of cocaine and heroin being shipped into the United States. According to U.S. officials, the most recent data indicate that because of the increase in Colombian coca cultivation, the type of coca being grown, and the production efficiencies of the drug traffickers, the total amount of cocaine produced significantly increased in 1998 and 1999. Moreover, Mexican drug-trafficking organizations have

become the major conduits for cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamines that are consumed in the United States.

The U.S. international drug control strategy emphasizes reducing the production and flow of cocaine and heroin before they reach the United States. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the strategy is designed to reduce drug trafficking in the source countries of Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru and in transit areas within the Caribbean, Central America, and Mexico.¹ Because of the increased drug threat to the United States from Colombia, the U.S. strategy places its highest priority on eliminating drug-trafficking activities in this country. The executive branch recently requested a substantial increase in counternarcotics assistance to Colombia.

Since 1997, we have issued numerous reports discussing the obstacles that foreign governments and the United States encounter in trying to reduce drug-trafficking activities. Many remain.

- Foreign governments and law enforcement organizations frequently lack resources, equipment, and training necessary for them to stop drug production and trafficking activities. This problem continues to be compounded by widespread corruption which, according to U.S. officials, exists within many of these governments. Moreover, counterdrug efforts must compete with other economic and political issues such as dealing with local insurgent groups.
- The level of U.S. support devoted to detection and monitoring activities has declined in the source countries. Moreover, staffing limitations and information-sharing issues continue to impede coordinated counternarcotics efforts. Finally, human rights concerns sometimes make it difficult for the United States to support counternarcotics efforts in some foreign countries.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE DRUG THREAT

Historically, Colombia has always been the world's leading producer of cocaine. However, as shown in table 1, starting in 1997, Colombia surpassed Bolivia and Peru in the number of hectares² that were under coca cultivation. In February 2000, the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy reported that in 1999 the number of hectares under coca cultivation in Colombia exceeded 1997 estimates by 43,000 hectares, or over 50 percent.³

¹The major source countries for coca and cocaine are Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru. The major source countries for heroin in the Western Hemisphere are Colombia and Mexico. The major drug transit areas include Mexico, the Caribbean, the eastern Pacific, and Central America.

²One hectare equals 2.47 acres.

³Statement by General Barry R. McCaffrey, Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy, before the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources, House Committee on Government Reform (Feb. 15, 2000).

Table 1: Hectares Under Coca Cultivation in Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru, 1995-99

Country	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Bolivia	48,600	48,100	45,800	38,000	21,800
Colombia	50,900	67,200	79,500	101,800	122,500
Peru	115,300	94,400	68,800	51,000	38,700
Total	214,800	209,700	194,100	190,800	183,000

Source: Statement by General Barry R. McCaffrey, Feb. 15, 2000.

Moreover, the amount of cocaine being produced in Colombia has also increased significantly since 1997. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the estimated cocaine production in Colombia increased from 350 metric tons in 1997 to 520 metric tons in 1999. Besides the increases in the number of hectares under coca cultivation, the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy attributed the rise in Colombian cocaine production to higher yielding varieties of coca leaf and more efficiency in processing coca leaf into cocaine.

Colombia is not only the major source of the cocaine entering the United States; it also has become the major source of heroin. Previously, according to DEA, Southeast and Southwest heroin dominated the U.S. market, but these types are no longer available in sizable quantities in cities along the east coast, where, historically, there has been the greatest demand. According to U.S. estimates, the number of hectares opium poppies under cultivation in Colombia has increased from almost nothing in 1990 to over 6,000 hectares in 1999.⁴ DEA reports that 65 percent of the heroin seized in the United States during 1998 originated in Colombia.

Despite U.S. and Colombian efforts to disrupt drug-trafficking activities, the U.S. embassy in Colombia has not reported any net reduction in the processing or exporting of refined cocaine to the United States. Moreover, according to DEA, while two major groups (the Medellin and Cali cartels) dominated drug-trafficking activities during the late 1980s and early 1990s, today hundreds of smaller and more decentralized organizations are involved in all aspects of the drug trade. According to DEA, several billion dollars flow into Colombia each year from the cocaine trade alone. This vast amount of drug money has made it possible for these organizations to gain unprecedented economic, political, and social power and influence. Finally, in June 1999 we reported that according to Departments of Defense and State officials, insurgent and paramilitary organizations were becoming increasingly involved in activities related to drug trafficking and were controlling more of Colombia's territory. We also noted that active insurgent groups and their growing involvement in drug-trafficking activities over the past several years were complicating Colombia's ability to reduce drug trafficking.⁵

⁴Statement by General Barry R. McCaffrey, Feb. 15, 2000.

⁵Drug Control: Narcotics Threat From Colombia Continues to Grow (GAO/NSIAD-99-136, June 22, 1999).

The United States is also concerned about the increasing role that Mexico plays in drug-trafficking activities. Mexico continues to be the primary transit country for cocaine entering the United States from South America as well as a major source country for heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamines. In June 1998, we reported that drug-trafficking organizations in Mexico had expanded their cocaine and methamphetamine operations.⁶ We also reported that according to DEA, these organizations are becoming stronger, have billions of dollars in assets at their disposal, and pose an increased threat to citizens in the United States and Mexico.⁷ In October 1999, DEA reported that heroin from Mexico represented about 17 percent of the heroin seized in the United States during 1998. Moreover, in March 1999, the State Department reported that Mexico was a major supplier of methamphetamines to the United States. The State report also showed that the cultivation of opium-producing poppies in Mexico had increased by 25 percent, from 12,000 hectares in 1997 to 15,000 hectares in 1998. However, according to more current DEA estimates, the number of hectares under opium poppy cultivation in Mexico declined during 1999.

In addition to the increased cultivation and production of illegal drugs, the drug threat confronting the United States and foreign governments has changed in terms of drug-trafficking methods of transportation and the greater use of technology. For example, since the early 1990s, traffickers have changed their primary mode of transporting drugs through the Caribbean and Central American transit zones from aircraft to ships and boats, which are more difficult to locate and identify. Also, according to law enforcement agencies, drug-trafficking organizations have used their vast wealth to acquire and use expensive modern technology such as global positioning systems, cellular communications equipment, and communications encryption devices. According to U.S. law enforcement officials, these devices make it more difficult to intercept communications on planned drug-trafficking activities.

IMPLEMENTING STRATEGY FOR DRUG REDUCTION EFFORTS

A presidential directive issued in November 1993 established U.S. policy designed to reduce the flow of cocaine from the source countries of Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru. In 1995, the Office of National Drug Control Policy prepared a National Drug Control Strategy that established goals to reduce drug demand and supply. The strategy includes two goals for reducing the flow of drugs entering the United States. The two goals are to break foreign and domestic drug sources of supply and to protect America's air, land, and sea frontiers from the drug threat.

According to U.S. officials at the agencies we visited, the drug control policy and strategy are the primary guidance they used in developing their counternarcotics

⁶Drug Control: U.S.-Mexican Counternarcotics Efforts Face Difficult Challenges (GAO/NSIAD-98-154, June 30, 1998).

⁷Drug Control: Update on U.S.-Mexican Counternarcotics Activities (GAO/T-NSIAD-99-98, Mar. 4, 1999).

programs. The Department of Defense and DEA developed regional strategies for combating drug-trafficking activities in the source countries based on that guidance. Officials from the Department of State and the U.S. Customs Service said that they have not developed comprehensive plans to support their regional efforts within the source countries. However, these officials also indicated that drug control efforts in the source countries will now focus on Colombia as a top priority and that several initiatives are planned and under way to address the threat from Colombia. Among these initiatives are efforts to enhance the interdiction capabilities of the government of Colombia and expand the capabilities of the Colombian military and police to conduct counternarcotics operations. Finally, the executive branch has proposed an assistance package of approximately \$1.3 billion to primarily support Colombian military and law enforcement activities, interdiction efforts, economic and alternative development, and human rights and the rule of law.

However, at the time of our review, an operational interagency strategy for Colombia had not been developed. An official with the Office of National Drug Control Policy indicated that the office is considering developing such a strategy, but the interagency counternarcotics community disagrees about whether an integrated strategy should be developed.

According to officials from the Office of National Drug Control Policy, Mexico has also become a top priority for U.S. counternarcotics activities, ranking ahead of the source countries of Bolivia and Peru, because of the increased drug threat it poses to the United States. According to U.S. estimates, Mexican drug-trafficking organizations facilitate the movement of between 50 and 60 percent of the almost 300 metric tons of cocaine consumed in the United States annually. According to the Department of State, U.S. counternarcotics policy toward Mexico is aimed at supporting the political commitment and strengthening the institutional capability of the Mexican government and improving bilateral counternarcotics cooperation between the two countries.

DRUG CONTROL EFFORTS BY FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS AND THE UNITED STATES CONTINUE TO FACE OBSTACLES

In 1997, we reported on obstacles to implementing U.S. and host-nation drug control efforts.⁸ Specifically, the counternarcotics efforts in drug-producing and transit countries are constrained by corruption, limited resources and institutional capabilities, and internal problems such as insurgencies and civil unrest. We also reported that U.S. counternarcotics efforts faced organizational and operational limitations and inconsistent funding levels.

Our current review indicates that foreign governments and the United States continue to face obstacles that limit their ability to reduce the production and flow of illegal drugs. Foreign governments are still constrained by corruption, limited resources and institutional capabilities, and in the case of Colombia an ongoing insurgency and

⁸Drug Control: Long-Standing Problems Hinder U.S. International Efforts (GAO/NSIAD-97-75, Feb. 27, 1997).

civil unrest. Moreover, U.S. counternarcotics efforts continue to be hampered by the lack of resources and assets to conduct detection and monitoring operations, shortfalls in staffing, limitations on information sharing, and other restrictions on the U.S. ability to provide assistance to certain foreign organizations that conduct counternarcotics operations.

Obstacles in Foreign Countries

The United States is largely dependent on the countries that produce drugs and are transit points for trafficking-related activities to reduce the amount of coca and opium poppy being cultivated and to make the drug seizures, arrests, and prosecutions necessary to stop the production and movement of illegal drugs. Our review indicates that these countries continue to face long-standing obstacles that limit their drug control efforts.

Inadequate Resources and Institutional Capabilities

Our work over the past 3 years indicates that foreign governments continue to lack the resources and capabilities necessary to perform effective counternarcotics operations in the source and transit countries. For example, in February 1997 we reported that Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru lacked adequate resources to conduct interdiction and eradication operations.⁹ Moreover in June 1999 we reported that because of severe budgetary constraints, the Colombian government was unable to increase funding for counternarcotics efforts and as a result would have a difficult time controlling the areas where crops were being grown.¹⁰ We also reported that according to the Department of Defense, the Colombian military lacked a long-term strategy and effective leadership; suffered from poor morale; and had inadequate equipment, logistics, and training. Finally, in December 1999 we noted that according to U.S. embassy officials in Peru, the Peruvian police (the lead agency for counterdrug enforcement) did not have maintenance capabilities or adequately trained staff to manage boats designed for interdicting drug trafficking activities on their rivers.¹¹

The lack of resources and capabilities continues to exist in key drug-transiting countries. For example, in June 1998 we reported that certain Mexican law enforcement units faced operational and support problems, such as inadequate funding for equipment, fuel, and salary supplements for personnel assigned to these units.¹² Moreover, according to the Joint Interagency Task Force–East officials, Haiti became a primary point for drug-trafficking activities within the transit zone during 1999. These officials stated that the principal reason for this was that the government

⁹Drug Control (GAO/NSIAD-97-75, Feb. 27, 1997).

¹⁰Drug Control (GAO/NSIAD-99-136, June 22, 1999).

¹¹Drug Control: Assets DOD Contributes to Reducing the Illegal Drug Supply Have Declined (GAO/NSIAD-00-9, Dec. 21, 1999).

¹²Drug Control (GAO/NSIAD-98-154, June 30, 1998).

of Haiti, despite a significant level of U.S. assistance, continued to lack the resources, equipment, and training needed to conduct effective interdiction activities against drug traffickers. Finally, we also reported that nations within the transit zone had weak economies and insufficient resources for conducting law enforcement activities.¹³

Widespread Corruption

Narcotics-related corruption is a continuing impediment to U.S. and foreign government efforts to reduce drug-trafficking activities. In March 1999, the Department of State reported that despite the efforts of Mexico's president to reduce corruption, it continues to be a serious problem in Mexican institutions, including federal, state, and local police agencies.¹⁴ Moreover, in June 1999, we reported that widespread corruption within all sectors of the Colombian government was a major factor affecting counternarcotics operations.¹⁵ According to the Department of State, drug-related corruption in all branches of the government continued to undermine Colombia's counternarcotics effectiveness. For example, our report noted that according to the State Department, the U.S. Customs Service and DEA personnel searched a Colombian Air Force aircraft in Florida and found 415 kilograms of cocaine and 6 kilograms of heroin in November 1998.

Corruption also exists in countries throughout the transit zone. For example, in March 1999, the State Department reported that corruption in Haiti had infected the justice, customs, and port authority sectors of government.¹⁶ According to the report, judges, whose salaries are often lower than those paid to policemen, are likely targets for drug-trafficking organizations. This report further noted that corruption continues to exist in other transit countries through the Caribbean region.

Internal Strife in Colombia

Internal strife within Colombia is limiting Colombia's ability to reduce drug-trafficking activities. In June 1999, we reported that Colombian insurgent groups had become increasingly involved in drug-related activities and controlled about 40 percent of the country.¹⁷ We also noted that the current alliance of convenience between the insurgents and the drug traffickers posed a clear challenge to Colombia's ability to conduct effective counternarcotics operations in the primary coca- and opium-growing regions of southern Colombia. In addition, powerful paramilitary

¹³Drug Control: Update on U.S. Interdiction Efforts in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific (GAO/NSIAD-98-30, Oct. 15, 1997).

¹⁴International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, Mar. 1999).

¹⁵Drug Control (GAO/NSIAD-99-136, June 22, 1999).

¹⁶International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (Mar. 1999).

¹⁷Drug Control (GAO/NSIAD-99-136, June 22, 1999).

groups are also heavily involved in drug-trafficking activities. Our report further said that these groups were operating with relative impunity in parts of northern Colombia.

U.S. Government Obstacles

Our recent work shows that the U.S. counternarcotics efforts continue to be hindered by the lack of adequate levels of detection and monitoring support, staffing shortfalls, information-sharing limitations, and U.S. legal restrictions on the ability of the United States to provide assistance to certain foreign organizations that conduct counternarcotics operations.

Shortfalls in Detection and Monitoring Support

The Department of Defense, the U.S. Customs Service, and the U.S. Coast Guard play a key role in providing the resources necessary to detect and monitor suspected air and maritime drug-trafficking activity. However, as stated in our June 1999 report, Defense and the U.S. Customs Service had not provided the number of aircraft needed to meet the U.S. Southern Command's detection and monitoring plans for source countries, including Colombia, primarily because of competing worldwide demands to support higher priority missions, such as those in Bosnia and Kosovo.¹⁸ In December 1999, we reported that the Department of Defense's level of support to international drug control efforts had significantly declined since 1992.¹⁹ Our report noted that the number of flight hours and ship days dedicated to detecting and monitoring illegal drug shipments declined by about 68 percent and 62 percent, respectively, between 1992 and 1999.

Even though the decline in Defense assets has been offset somewhat by increases in the U.S. Coast Guard assets, our recent discussions with Task Force officials indicate that the lack of sufficient assets continues to hinder U.S. counternarcotics efforts, particularly in the source countries. According to Task Force officials, the U.S. government is implementing a plan to enhance its coverage of illegal air-trafficking activities in southern Colombia using existing resources. These officials consider the resources to be inadequate to provide the coverage necessary for an effective detection and monitoring mission.

U.S. officials also expressed concern that without authority for U.S. detection and monitoring aircraft to overfly Venezuela, the forward operation locations in Curacao and Aruba were not close enough to the southern Colombia operations areas. These officials stated that while the Manta, Ecuador, location was more strategically located, it did not currently have the facilities necessary to support the aircraft needed to conduct detection and monitoring operations. These officials further stated that they are surveying five different locations to provide U.S. aircraft the flexibility necessary to operate in areas of southern Colombia. These surveys are

¹⁸Drug Control (GAO/NSIAD-99-136, June 22, 1999).

¹⁹Drug Control (GAO/NSIAD-00-9, Dec. 21, 1999).

being conducted to determine if the sites have the facilities and security needed to support the aircraft that would be located there. Task Force officials stated that the surveys would not be completed until at least the end of March 2000.

Although U.S. officials recognized that the limited assets would be an impediment to adequately detecting and monitoring illegal air activity in southern Colombia, they stated that even with increased assets, the ability of the Colombian Air Force to intercept drug-trafficking flights is limited by equipment and training limitations and by the inability of the Colombian air traffic control system to respond in a timely manner to requests for identifying suspicious air activity. According to the Department of Defense, portions of the proposed \$1.3 billion assistance package are being targeted to enhance the equipment and training capabilities of the Colombia Air Force.

Staffing Shortfalls in the Joint Interagency Task Force–East

In 1999, the United States closed its counternarcotics operations in Panama. As a result of this closure, the Joint Interagency Task Force–East in Key West, Florida, assumed responsibility for planning and conducting detection and monitoring operations throughout the source and transit countries.

Staffing shortfalls have been a continuing problem in the Task Force. In October 1997, we reported that 37 of the 184 permanent positions in the Task Force were vacant and that the anticipated mix of law enforcement positions had not been achieved. As shown in table 2, this situation continues in the Task Force, where as of February 18, 2000, 59 of 290 positions were vacant.

Table 2: Authorized and Assigned Personnel in the Joint Interagency Task Force–East, Key West, Florida (as of February 18, 2000)

Source of personnel	Authorized	Assigned	Shortfall
Department of Defense	179	147	32
U.S. Coast Guard	22	18	4
Other U.S. agencies ^a	34	15	19
Contract personnel	55	51	4
Total	290	231	59

Note a: According to DEA, the number of authorized positions for U.S. agencies was developed by the Department of Defense with no input for the affected U.S. agencies. The number of positions that U.S. agencies will eventually provide is being negotiated and may change from these figures.

Source: The Joint Interagency Task Force–East.

According to Task Force officials, the staffing shortages have caused operational problems and, if continued, morale could suffer. These officials stated that the shortages are caused by the inability to attract an adequate number of skilled personnel necessary to fill the positions, the scarcity of housing, and the high cost of living for civilian personnel living in Key West. These officials stated that actions are

under way to provide housing and to obtain a cost of living allowance for personnel assigned to Key West.

Information Sharing

In the past, we have reported that the reluctance to share intelligence among U.S. agencies and between the United States and foreign governments has been a long-standing impediment to conducting effective counternarcotics operations.²⁰ Although our work indicates that progress has been made in increasing intelligence sharing among U.S. agencies, the issue continues to be contentious, particularly at the Task Force where foreign liaison officers participate in planning and conducting counternarcotics operations. According to DEA and Task Force personnel, approximately 80 to 90 percent of the data used by the Task Force originates from DEA sources. DEA officials stated that they are concerned about the types of information that should be released to foreign liaison officers until they have been properly cleared to receive sensitive law enforcement information. DEA officials said that they are developing a procedure to address the release of information to foreign liaison officers.

Information-sharing restrictions also limit the ability of U.S. and foreign government to conduct counternarcotics operations. For example, in June 1999 we reported that U.S. guidance, initially issued in 1998, restricted the sharing of any information on insurgent capabilities and activities in Colombia unless it was directly related to an approved counternarcotics operation.²¹ As a result of this guidance, U.S. officials frequently had to make difficult decisions regarding whether and when information on insurgent activities should be provided to the Colombian military. U.S. embassy officials stated that within the area where most drug-trafficking activities occur, the drug traffickers and insurgents have become virtually indistinguishable. In responding to the 1999 report, U.S. officials stated that new guidelines on information sharing have been issued and that these guidelines should improve the information-sharing process. We have not assessed whether these guidelines have improved information sharing with the Colombian military.

Restrictions on Assistance

Human rights concerns also limit the ability of the United States to provide counternarcotics assistance to foreign governments. U.S. law prohibits giving counternarcotics assistance to personnel or units in foreign countries if credible evidence shows that they have committed gross human rights violations.²² In June 1999, we reported that the Department of State had established screening procedures

²⁰Drug Control (GAO/NSIAD-98-30, Oct. 15, 1997).

²¹Drug Control (GAO/NSIAD-99-136, June 22, 1999).

²²22U.S.C. 2304(a)(2). Congress has similar restrictions in appropriations acts. See the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Appropriations Act, 2000 (Sec. 564 of Title V, Appendix B of P.L. 106-113). The Congress also included similar language in the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2000 (Sec. 8098 of P.L. 106-79).

to determine which Colombian units meet the requirements of this policy before providing U.S. counternarcotics assistance.²³ We further reported that according to the Department of State, all units of the Colombian National Police and the Colombian Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps could receive U.S. assistance; however, only three of six army brigades operating in major drug-trafficking areas had met the requirements. U.S. embassy personnel stated that unless other army units could meet the screening process requirements, it would be difficult to provide the level of Colombian military support that the National Police needs to effectively reduce drug-trafficking activities.

AGENCY COMMENTS

In oral comments on a draft of this report from the Departments of Defense and State, DEA, and the Joint Interagency Task Force–East, the agencies generally agreed with the information contained in this report. They also suggested some technical changes, which we have incorporated, as appropriate.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

To determine the nature of the drug threat, we received briefings and analyzed documents from U.S. law enforcement and military officials at the Departments of State and Defense, DEA, and the U.S. Interdiction Coordinator in Washington, D.C.; the U.S. Southern Command in Miami, Florida; and the Joint Interagency Task Force–East in Key West, Florida.

To determine the status of the implementation of the international portions of the National Drug Control Strategy and the limitations that host governments and the United States face, we visited agencies involved in counternarcotics activities in Washington, D.C.; Miami, Florida; and Key West, Florida. In Washington, D.C., we interviewed officials and reviewed various documents and reports at the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Transportation, and the Treasury. In Miami, we interviewed U.S. officials at the U.S. Southern Command and reviewed documents relating to the planning and implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy. In Key West, we interviewed officials at the Joint Interagency Task Force, including foreign liaison officers from the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Colombia, Brazil, and Venezuela, and reviewed reports and documents relating to the planning and implementation of various operations in the source and transit zones.

We also reviewed our various reports and testimony that address issues discussed in this letter (see related GAO products at the end of this report).

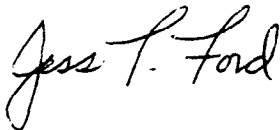
²³Drug Control (GAO/NSIAD-99-136, June 22, 1999).

We conducted our work from July 1999 through January 2000 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

We are sending copies of this letter to interested congressional committees; the Honorable Madeleine K. Albright, Secretary of State; the Honorable William S. Cohen, Secretary of Defense; the Honorable Lawrence H. Summers, Secretary of the Treasury; the Honorable Rodney E. Slater, Secretary of Transportation; the Honorable Janet F. Reno, U.S. Attorney General; the Honorable Barry R. McCaffrey, Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy; the Honorable Donnie R. Marshall, Acting Administrator, Drug Enforcement Administration; and the Honorable Louis Freeh, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Copies will also be made available to other interested parties upon request.

Please contact me on (202) 512-4268 if you have any questions concerning this report. The major contributors to this report were Allen Fleener and Ronald Hughes.

Sincerely yours,



Jess T. Ford
Associate Director,
International Relations and Trade Issues

RELATED GAO PRODUCTS

Drug Control: DOD Allocates Fewer Assets to Drug Control Efforts
(GAO/T-NSIAD-00-77, Jan. 27, 2000).

Drug Control: Assets DOD Contributed to Reducing the Illegal Drug Supply Have Declined (GAO/NSIAD-00-9, Dec. 21, 1999).

Drug Control: DEA's Strategies and Operations in the 1990s
(GAO/GGD-99-108, July 21, 1999).

Drug Control: Narcotics Threat From Colombia Continues to Grow
(GAO/NSIAD-99-136, June 22, 1999).

Drug Control: Update on U.S.-Mexican Counternarcotics Activities
(GAO/T-NSIAD-99-98, Mar. 4, 1999).

Drug Control: Update on U.S.-Mexican Counternarcotics Efforts
(GAO/T-NSIAD-99-86, Feb. 24, 1999).

DOD Counterdrug Activities: Reported Costs Do Not Reflect Extent of DOD's Support (GAO/NSIAD-98-231, Sept. 23, 1998).

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

Drug Control: U.S.-Mexican Counternarcotics Efforts Face Difficult Challenges
(GAO/NSIAD-98-154, June 30, 1998).

Drug Control: An Overview of U.S. Counterdrug Intelligence Activities
(GAO/NSIAD-98-142, June 25, 1998).

Drug Control: Status of Counternarcotics Efforts in Mexico
(GAO/T-NSIAD-98-129, Mar. 18, 1998).

Drug Control: Status of U.S. International Counternarcotics Activities
(GAO/T-NSIAD-98-116, Mar. 12, 1998).

Drug Control: Counternarcotics Efforts in Colombia Face Continuing Challenges
(GAO/T-NSIAD-98-103, Feb. 26, 1998).

Drug Control: U.S. Counternarcotics Efforts in Colombia Face Continuing Challenges
(GAO/NSIAD-98-60, Feb. 12, 1998).

Drug Control: Update on U.S. Interdiction Efforts in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific (GAO/NSIAD-98-30, Oct. 15, 1997).

Drug Control: Observations on Elements of the Federal Drug Control Strategy
(GAO/GGD-97-42, Mar. 14, 1997).

Drug Control: Long-Standing Problems Hinder U.S. International Efforts
(GAO/NSIAD-97-75, Feb. 27, 1997).

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