

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee
on National Security, International
Affairs, and Criminal Justice, Committee
on Government Reform and Oversight,
House of Representatives

April 1996

DRUG CONTROL

U.S. Interdiction Efforts in the Caribbean Decline



**National Security and
International Affairs Division**

B-271376

April 17, 1996

The Honorable William H. Zeff, Jr.
Chairman, Subcommittee on National Security,
International Affairs, and Criminal Justice
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

According to U.S. law enforcement officials, approximately 30 percent of the cocaine entering the United States comes through the Caribbean section of the transit zone. As you requested, we have reviewed (1) the nature of drug-trafficking activities that are occurring in the transit zone with particular emphasis on the Eastern Caribbean; (2) host nation impediments to an effective regional strategy; (3) the capabilities of U.S. agencies to interdict drug-trafficking activities throughout the Caribbean transit zone; and (4) the extent of federal agency planning, coordination, and implementation of U.S. interdiction efforts. This report is the second in a series of reports that we plan to issue on various U.S. international strategies to control the flow of cocaine and heroin into the United States. The first report dealt with heroin from Southeast Asia.¹

Background

A primary goal of the U.S. national drug control strategy is to reduce the amount of cocaine entering the United States. In November 1993, the executive branch issued a counternarcotics policy for cocaine in the Western Hemisphere. The strategy called for, among other things, a controlled shift in emphasis from the transit zone to the source countries. The transit zone is the 2-million square mile area between the U.S. and South American borders and covers the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, Central America, Mexico, and the Eastern Pacific. For the purposes of this report, the Caribbean portion of the transit zone consists of the leeward islands, the windward islands, the Bahamas, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In April 1994, the executive branch issued the National Interdiction Command and Control Plan to strengthen interagency coordination. The plan called for creating several joint interagency task forces made up of

¹Drug Control: U.S. Heroin Program Encounters Many Obstacles in Southeast Asia (GAO/NSIAD-96-83, Mar. 1, 1996).

representatives from federal agencies, including the Department of Defense (DOD), the U.S. Customs Service, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Within the transit zone, the Department of State manages and coordinates U.S. government efforts while DOD supports U.S. law enforcement agencies by tracking suspected drug-trafficking activities and provides training to host nations. The U.S. Customs Service and the U.S. Coast Guard also provide aircraft and ships to assist in tracking and interdicting drug-trafficking activities. The various U.S. activities are expected to be coordinated through the Joint Interagency Task Force East (JIATF-East), located in Key West, Florida. JIATF-East was to be supported by personnel from various agencies such as the Department of State, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Results in Brief

Cocaine trafficking through the Caribbean region is a major drug threat to the United States. During the past several years, traffickers in the Caribbean have shifted their operations from primarily air-related activities to maritime activities. Furthermore, traffickers are using improved technologies, such as global positioning systems, to counter efforts by U.S. agencies to identify and monitor their activities.

A major part of the U.S. strategy in the Caribbean is to strengthen the host nations' political will and capabilities to support U.S. international counternarcotics objectives. The State Department has made some progress in implementing the strategy through new agreements with Caribbean countries and islands that promote increased air and maritime cooperation. However, U.S. officials generally believe that a number of host nations lack the capabilities needed to conduct effective antidrug operations. U.S. officials believe that antidrug efforts are also inhibited by corruption, which exists throughout the Caribbean nations.

Budget reductions for interdiction efforts in the transit zone have reduced the ability of DOD and law enforcement agencies to identify, track, and intercept drug traffickers. Funding for drug interdiction declined from about \$1 billion in fiscal year 1992 to \$569 million in fiscal year 1995. DOD's budget reductions resulted in fewer ship days, flight hours, and ground-based radars devoted to drug interdiction. While a reduction in the interdiction effort was envisioned in the new cocaine strategy, the strategy also anticipated an increase in source country funding that never

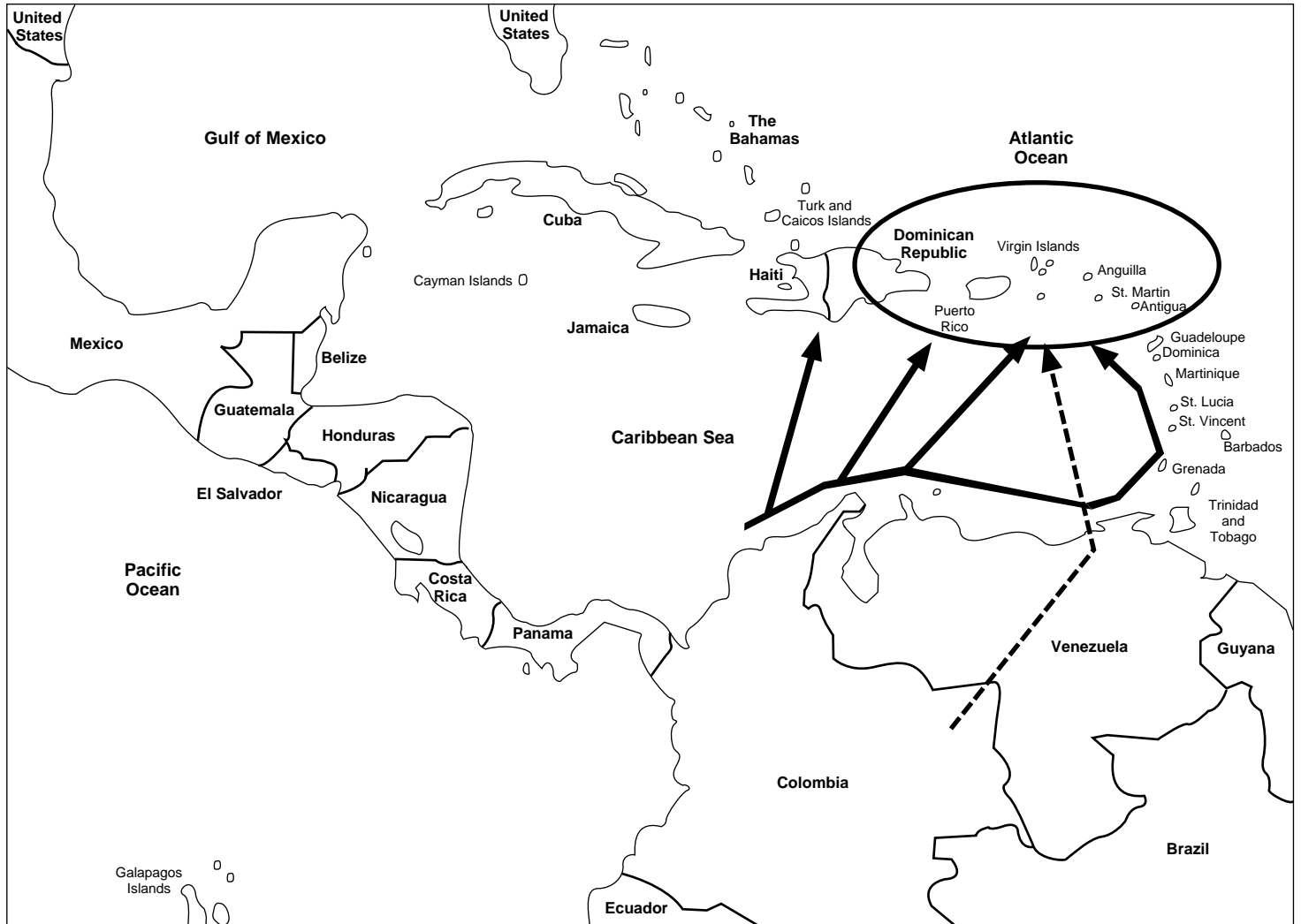
materialized. Cocaine seizures in the transit zone declined from a peak of 70,336 kilograms in 1992 to 37,181 kilograms in 1995.

The executive branch has not developed a plan to implement the cocaine strategy in the transit zone, fully staffed interagency organizations with key roles in the interdiction program, or fully resolved issues on intelligence sharing. U.S. officials noted that neither the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) nor the U.S. Interdiction Coordinator (USIC) had the authority to command the use of any agency's operational assets.

Drug-Trafficking Activities Are Changing, and Interdiction Is Becoming More Difficult

According to the State Department's 1996 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, about 780 metric tons of cocaine is produced each year in South America. U.S. officials believe that about 30 percent of the cocaine shipped into the United States comes through the Caribbean into Puerto Rico and other U.S. entry points. The remaining 70 percent is shipped through Mexico. While trend data on the amount of cocaine shipments through the Eastern Caribbean and Puerto Rico are based on inexact information, U.S. officials believe that the level of activity may be increasing. Figure 1 shows the drug-trafficking routes in the Eastern Caribbean.

Figure 1: Drug-Trafficking Routes in the Eastern Caribbean



- Confirmed noncommercial maritime routes
- - - Air routes
- Airdrop area

Source: DOD.

Drug-Trafficking Activities Occur Throughout the Caribbean

Puerto Rico is the major entry point for cocaine moving through the Eastern Caribbean. U.S. drug officials believe that after 1993 traffickers moved some of their activities from the Bahamas to Puerto Rico because

U.S. interdiction efforts in the Bahamas had increased the risk to traffickers. Puerto Rico has become the primary transshipment point into the southeastern United States. An August 1995 U.S. interagency report stated that Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands accounted for 26 percent of the documented attempts to smuggle cocaine into the continental United States during 1994. U.S. officials stated that cocaine-related activity in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands has increased. The U.S. Customs Service cocaine seizures increased from 5,507 kilograms in fiscal year 1993 to 8,700 kilograms in fiscal year 1995.

Reports are mixed on whether drug-trafficking activities are increasing throughout other islands in the Eastern Caribbean and into the southern United States. A June 1995 local law enforcement report of air-smuggling activities in southern Florida concluded that there were significant increases in drug-trafficking activities occurring from the Caribbean into south Florida. The report also stated that drug-trafficking activities in southern Florida are resulting in a return to the patterns of the 1970s and early 1980s when drug detection and interdiction efforts in the Caribbean were minimal. In contrast, DOD officials stated that they did not have any data indicating that there was air-smuggling activity into Florida from the Caribbean area. USIC staff also noted that they were unaware of significant increases of air smuggling into southern Florida. However, U.S. law enforcement officials stated that various intelligence sources confirm that cocaine-related air activities are increasing in southern Florida.

A brief summary of drug-trafficking activities occurring in Eastern Caribbean nations follows:

The Bahamas

According to the State Department, total drug seizures in the Bahamas represented only a small percentage of cocaine trafficking in the transit zone. DEA officials stated that recently traffickers increased their activities throughout the area, but they could not accurately assess the extent of this increase. U.S. Customs reported that, since the destruction of the base at Gun Cay during hurricane Hugo and the diminution of maritime enforcement since that time, there have been fewer drug interdiction missions in the Bahamas. Neither Customs nor Royal Bahamian Defense Forces are able to deny access to the favorite off-load and stash sites used by drug traffickers. In March 1996, the State Department reported that, although cocaine seizures during 1995 remained below the levels of the late 1980s, there were indications of increased cocaine-trafficking activities.

Hispaniola

Hispaniola refers to Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Hispaniola serves as a convenient staging area for air and maritime drug-related activities because its long, unpatrolled coastline and numerous airstrips facilitate staging and refueling operations. A May 1995 U.S. report stated that cocaine transshipment through Haiti had reemerged since the lifting of the United Nations embargo in October 1994. The U.S. Embassy reported that drug trafficking may be also increasing in the Dominican Republic.

Leeward Islands

The leeward islands extend from the U.S. Virgin Islands to Dominica and include the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Martin, St. Kitts-Nevis, Montserrat, Guadeloupe, and Dominica. The islands are hubs for commercial air and sea traffick. Their proximity to Puerto Rico makes them vulnerable to drug trafficking. Most of the drugs shipped through the islands are destined for further transit through Puerto Rico to the United States.

Windward Islands

The windward islands extend from Dominica to Grenada and include Martinique, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago. The islands are used for drug transit and storage. For example, Trinidad and Tobago is only 7 miles from Venezuela and is a natural staging site for drugs smuggled from South America to other Caribbean islands. However, significant increases in drug-trafficking activity have recently been observed. In February 1994, the U.S. Embassy in Barbados reported that law enforcement officials throughout the islands had reported an escalation in air drops and other trafficking activities, which were leading to increases in crime.

Drug Traffickers
Increasingly Use Maritime
Vessels

Drug enforcement officials told us that drug traffickers are increasingly relying on noncommercial and commercial maritime vessels (such as go-fast boats, sailing and fishing vessels, and containerized cargo ships) to transport drugs. DOD records show that the number of known drug-trafficking aircraft events in the transit zone declined by about 65 percent from 1992 to 1995 and that known maritime events increased by about 40 percent from 1993 to 1995. "Known events," according to DOD officials, represent clear, firm information about a drug shipment, confirmed delivery, aborted mission, or apprehension. "Results" are apprehensions, seizures, or jettisons. Table 1 lists the number of air and maritime events and results for 1992-95 and shows that maritime drug activity accounted for more events and results than drug shipments via air.

Table 1: Air and Maritime Drug-Trafficking Events and Results (1992-95)

Year	Air		Maritime	
	Events	Results	Events	Results
1992	344	66	^a	^a
1993	217	71	174	122
1994	154	45	223	172
1995	125	26	249	135

^aMaritime data for 1992 are not available.

Note: Traffickers' aborts were not counted in results.

Source: DOD.

According to DOD, drug smuggling by commercial vessels is the primary maritime method for shipping drugs in the transit zone. U.S. Customs and DEA officials believe that smugglers have concealed large shipments of cocaine in legitimate containers aboard commercial sea vessels. In some cases, crew members have attached smaller shipments in parasite containers attached to the hull of the mother vessel. DOD and U.S. Coast Guard officials stated that the large number of ships and complexity of smuggling via commercial vessels severely restricts interdiction at sea. These cargo ships are not routinely inspected because they contain perishable goods that, if inspected, could spoil.

U.S. officials stated that the large number of noncommercial vessels traveling in the transit zone makes it difficult to detect or intercept many drug-trafficking activities. Vessels routinely transporting cocaine between the Bahamas and Florida can blend in with legitimate traffic. DOD believes that the number of noncommercial vehicles is difficult to quantify.

While air events and results have decreased significantly since 1992, smugglers continue to use general aviation aircraft to move cocaine to transshipment and staging areas in the Caribbean or Mexico. The decline in recorded air events could be due to a combination of factors, including a reduced capability by U.S. agencies to detect air activities, increased sophistication by cocaine smugglers, and traffickers' preference for maritime smuggling methods.

Drug Traffickers Are Using Improved Technologies

Drug traffickers are using sophisticated communications technology and global positioning systems to avoid detection when airdropping cocaine to boats in the transit zone. U.S. officials stated that the traffickers use

cellular phones and global positioning systems to determine drop coordinates prior to departure. The traffickers relay the coordinates to the boats who will pick up an airdrop. According to U.S. officials, the global positioning systems are available commercially and are accurate to within 10 meters of a target. Because of these systems, traffickers do not have to openly communicate as frequently as they did in the past. According to DOD and U.S. law enforcement officials, the increasing use of these technologies makes it more difficult to gather the information needed to track and interdict cocaine shipments through the Caribbean because traffickers can detect whether they are being followed.

Host Nation Impediments Hinder Counternarcotics Efforts

According to State Department and U.S. law enforcement officials, most Caribbean host nations are cooperating in fighting drug trafficking. However, most Caribbean nations lack resources and law enforcement capabilities and have some corruption problems that hamper their efforts to combat drug trafficking. The Department of State's March 1996 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report provides a detailed discussion on the Caribbean countries. With few exceptions, the report concluded that cooperation with U.S. authorities was excellent in 1995. For example, Barbados was recognized for its excellent cooperation with U.S. law enforcement, strong enforcement, tough courts, and public mobilization that resulted in a drop in crime and an increase in drug arrest. However, the report noted that the governments of many Caribbean countries were unable to finance their law enforcement operations at a level commensurate with the trafficker threat.

The report noted the following:

- The Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas strives to fulfill the goals and objectives of U.S.- Bahamian bilateral counternarcotics accords. A key objective of U.S. counternarcotics assistance is to strengthen the Bahamas' counternarcotics institutions so they can assume a greater share of the financial burden of combating traffickers. However, even with stronger counternarcotics institutions, the Bahamas will probably remain dependent on U.S. assistance because of the Bahamas' small population, geography, and limited resources.
- The Government of the Dominican Republic has fully cooperated with U.S. agencies. However, it lacks effective enforcement mechanisms and the political will to expose and eliminate the corruption that threatens the country's fragile democratic institutions.

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- The Government of Haiti has shown the political will to cooperate, but its lack of institutional experience undermines its effectiveness. Haiti lacks a national police counternarcotics unit and coast guard, a maritime law enforcement agreement, money laundering legislation, and a national counternarcotics plan.
 - The Government of Jamaica and U.S. law enforcement cooperation is considered to be at the highest level in 5 years. However, Jamaica has not completed its counterdrug legislation or fully implemented it. Although the government passed an asset forfeiture act in 1994, it has still not prosecuted an asset forfeiture case.
 - The Governments of Antigua and Barbuda do not have an effective drug and money laundering enforcement policy.
 - The Government of Dominica has severe resource restraints but has fully cooperated with U.S. law enforcement agencies.

In 1995, JIATF-East personnel developed their own assessment of various Eastern Caribbean nations' maritime law enforcement capabilities. The assessment was based on a subjective judgment of JIATF-East officials regarding the relationships they experienced in operations with host nations. The assessment concluded that, while several countries had relatively good law enforcement capability, others had only fair to poor law enforcement capabilities.

In table 2, we show JIATF-East's inventory of the Eastern Caribbean nations' interdiction assets. The table shows that few assets are available to Caribbean nations for counternarcotics purposes.

Table 2: Selected Eastern Caribbean Host Nation Maritime Interdiction Assets

Nation	Interdiction assets
British Virgin Islands	6 patrol boats and 1 aircraft
Anguilla	2 boats
St. Martin/Guadelope Martinique	3 patrol boats, 6 fixed-wing aircraft, and 4 helicopters
Antigua/Barbuda	3 boats
St. Kitts	4 boats
Montserrat	1 patrol craft with 1 crew and limited fuel
Dominica	4 boats
St. Lucia	4 boats, 2 of which are damaged
St. Vincent	4 boats
Barbados	5 boats, 1 possibly damaged
Grenada	4 boats
Trinidad and Tobago	Large, medium, and small platforms

Source: JIATF-East.

State Department officials stated that many national forces do not always cooperate with one another because of insufficient political will, an inability to coordinate, and insufficient available resources. A February 1995 law enforcement agency reported that cooperation between local law enforcement agencies in Trinidad and Tobago has not been good. In August 1995, a U.S. law enforcement agency reported that there was an underlying problem of mistrust between the Dutch government and local law enforcement agencies in the Antilles and Aruba.

U.S. officials stated that Caribbean nations will always have limited capabilities because they have small populations and limited funds available for counternarcotics. As a result, U.S. officials are trying to improve interdiction capabilities by signing agreements that allow U.S. personnel to conduct antidrug sea and air operations within the territorial waters and airspace of these nations. U.S. agencies are also providing limited supplies and training to the police forces and the judicial institutions.

By the end of 1992, the United States had entered into bilateral agreements with the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, and Belize regarding shipboarding, shipriding, and pursuit and entry into territorial waters. Since March 1995, the State Department has concluded a series of maritime counternarcotics agreements with the Dominican Republic, St. Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and

Barbuda, Dominica, St. Lucia, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. As of March 1996, other maritime counternarcotics agreements were pending with Barbados, Jamaica, Honduras, Haiti, Colombia, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic.

Many of these agreements are limited to maritime matters, and most of the agreements do not authorize overflight and ordering aircraft to land. Currently only the Trinidad and Tobago agreement allows overflight of territorial airspace for the counternarcotics operations along with order-to-land authority. The Bahamas agreement contained overflight authority. Eastern Caribbean nations have authorized overflight authority on an ad hoc basis in support of combined operations. New efforts are underway to address overflight and air issues. Even though the United States has reached agreement with some Caribbean countries, it does not have one with Cuba that would allow forces to either track or interdict drug-trafficking activity that may occur within Cuban territorial waters or airspace. U.S. Customs reported that in both maritime and aviation, they have noted the use of the waters and airspace adjacent to Cuba as a transfer location or air-drop location. However, DOD data indicate that, for the period between fiscal years 1991 and 1995, there were only 13 out of 947 known air events that flew over Cuban airspace.

Government Corruption Exists

Various U.S. officials told us that, despite changes in governments, corruption is still widespread throughout the Caribbean. Drug traffickers' influence in the region is evident. Payoffs are a common form of corruption, particularly in countries with poorly paid public servants. Law enforcement and State Department reports support these statements.

A February 1995 law enforcement agency report on one island indicated that corruption may be occurring at high levels of the government. This report stated that there were indications that the leader of a political party was linked to the illegal drug trade. Furthermore, the report also stated that there were numerous allegations regarding corruption in the country's customs operation at the airport.

A March 1995 U.S. law enforcement report stated that in the Bahamas drug law enforcement efforts have been plagued by corruption. The report further stated that, faced with promises of instant wealth, police officers assigned to these islands often succumb to the bribes offered by traffickers. Corruption, according to the report, can also be found in

Nassau in just about every police division. Efforts by honest authorities are often thwarted by corrupt officials.

Other 1995 U.S. agency reports stated the following:

- Although there were no official confirmed cases of corruption in St. Lucia, a recent undercover operation indicated the appearance of impropriety by high-ranking law enforcement officials.
- On one island, there were continuing rumors and allegations regarding the corruption of high-ranking government officials (including officials in the police department). Also, the current administration and opposition party were both perceived to be involved in illegal activities.
- In Antigua and Barbuda, some individuals with close ties to the current regime are involved in narcotics trafficking. In 1994, authorities reported processing 148 cases involving 152 defendants. Convicted traffickers could pay a heavy fine instead of going to jail.

During February and March 1995, the State Department reported the following:

- In St. Kitts, violence involving politics and drugs plagued the island in 1994, threatening the stability of its minority government. In 1994, a private pleasure craft with the former St. Kitts ambassador to the United Nations, his wife, and family aboard disappeared and was presumed to be lost at sea. The former ambassador had been publicly accused of money laundering and drug charges. Both Colombian and local traffickers have attempted to exploit a tense domestic environment.
- In Trinidad and Tobago unsubstantiated rumors regarding corruption have included ministers, politicians, and judicial and law enforcement personnel at every level. Despite these rumors, authorities have not initiated any investigations. In addition, alleged police drug payoffs identified by a 1993 Scotland Yard team have not been pursued. The report noted that the team could not fully develop cases because of limited police cooperation. According to the report, structures to deal with corruption issues are either not in place or not functioning.

Capabilities to Interdict Drug Traffickers in the Transit Zone Have Been Reduced

From fiscal year 1992 to fiscal year 1995, the budgets for most federal activities in the transit zone declined significantly. A presidential directive issued in November 1993 called for a gradual shift in emphasis from the transit zone to the source countries. As indicated in table 3, the shift in U.S. resources away from the transit zone actually began as early as fiscal year 1993. DOD and most other federal agencies had a large portion of transit zone resources reduced in fiscal year 1994.

Table 3: Counternarcotics Funding in the Transit Zone (fiscal years 1991-95)

Dollars in millions					
Agency	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
DOD	\$407.1	\$504.5	\$426.0	\$220.4	\$214.7
Coast Guard	565.2	443.9	310.5	314.4	301.2
Customs	^a	^a	16.2	12.5	12.8
DEA	26.2	28.8	29.1	28.7	29.6
State	35.9	36.2	14.0	7.9	10.6
Total	\$1,034.4	\$1,013.4	\$795.8	\$583.9	\$568.9

^aCustoms data for 1991 and 1992 are unavailable.

Source: Indicated federal agencies.

As indicated in table 4, the anticipated shift of U.S. funding to efforts in the source countries never materialized, and counternarcotics funding in the source countries declined from fiscal year 1993 to the lower levels in fiscal years 1994 and 1995. Although the actual amount of funds dedicated to source country efforts decreased, source country funding as a percentage of the total increased.

Table 4: Counternarcotics Funding in Source Countries (fiscal years 1991-95)

Dollars in millions					
Agency	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
DOD	\$76.1	\$120.7	\$154.9	\$144.5	\$148.7
Customs	^a	^a	6.0	3.9	5.2
DEA	18.4	21.5	21.0	20.7	21.3
State	160.7	123.6	105.1	55.2	54.8
Total	\$255.2	\$265.8	\$287.0	\$224.3	\$230.0

^aCustoms data for 1991 and 1992 are not available.

Source: Indicated federal agencies.

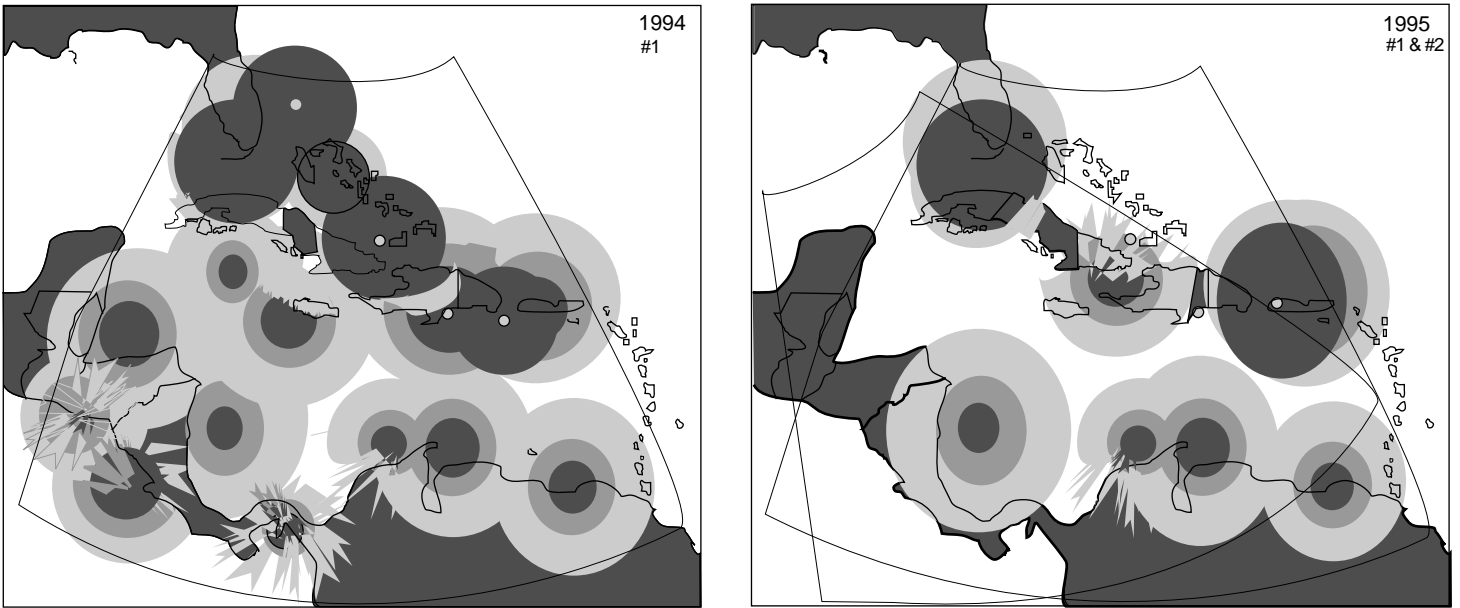
Various agencies stressed that decisions to reduce the funding devoted to drug interdiction were often beyond their control. For example, DOD noted that a resource shift from the transit zone to source countries did not occur because its overall drug budget was reduced in fiscal year 1994 by \$300 million, \$200 million of which was taken from transit zone operations. Also, the U.S. Coast Guard noted that during the early 1990s, it was involved in increasing emigrant activity in the Caribbean that culminated in two mass exoduses of emigrants from Haiti and Cuba. During this period, assets were reallocated from counterdrug missions to respond to this high-priority, national and international humanitarian crisis.

The U.S. Customs Service also reported impacts that budget reductions had on its ability to fulfill its missions. The Customs Marine Law Enforcement Program lost 51 percent of its budget, 54 percent of its personnel, and 50 percent of its vessels in fiscal year 1995. According to the U.S. Customs Service, these reductions resulted in a significant impact on its ability to fulfill its traditional maritime role.

Between December 1994 and November 1995, DOD deactivated three Bahamian Aerostat radars, two Caribbean Basin Radar Network sites, two mobile tactical radars, and two remote high-frequency Link 11 transmitters/receivers. As indicated in figure 2, the loss of these radars significantly reduced the coverage area. Between 1994 and 1995, DOD activated two Relocatable Over the Horizon Radar systems. Although this radar system provides a larger area of coverage footprint than microwave radars, it has less probability to detect an air event and is not as accurate in vectoring in interceptions as microwave radars.

U.S. law enforcement officials have reported that lost radar capabilities have hampered their operations in and around the Bahamas. A March 1995 report concluded that the loss of radar coverage had hampered operations to detect suspect aircraft flying to the Bahamas. Another report noted that the loss of aerostat balloons and ground base radars left the Bahamas virtually free of detection and monitoring assets. DEA officials stated that the reduction in law enforcement resources and direct asset support (e.g., aircraft) have impacted their operations.

Figure 2: Lost Radar Surveillance Capabilities (1994-95)



Source: DOD.

As indicated in table 5, the number of ship days devoted to drug interdiction went from 4,448 ship days in the peak fiscal year 1993 to 2,668 ship days in fiscal year 1994 and 2,845 ship days in fiscal year 1995. The reductions involved almost all classes of ships.

Table 5: JIATF-East Maritime Assets (fiscal years 1991-95)

In number of ship days					
Ship type	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Logistic	128	287	71	40	0
Cruiser	524	558	753	742	488
Destroyer	909	699	602	118	224
Frigate	1,874	2,008	1,441	785	727
Amphibious	51	87	188	9	0
Coast Guard	0	0	138	0	401
Other	750	533	1,255	974	1,005
Total	4,236	4,172	4,448	2,668	2,845

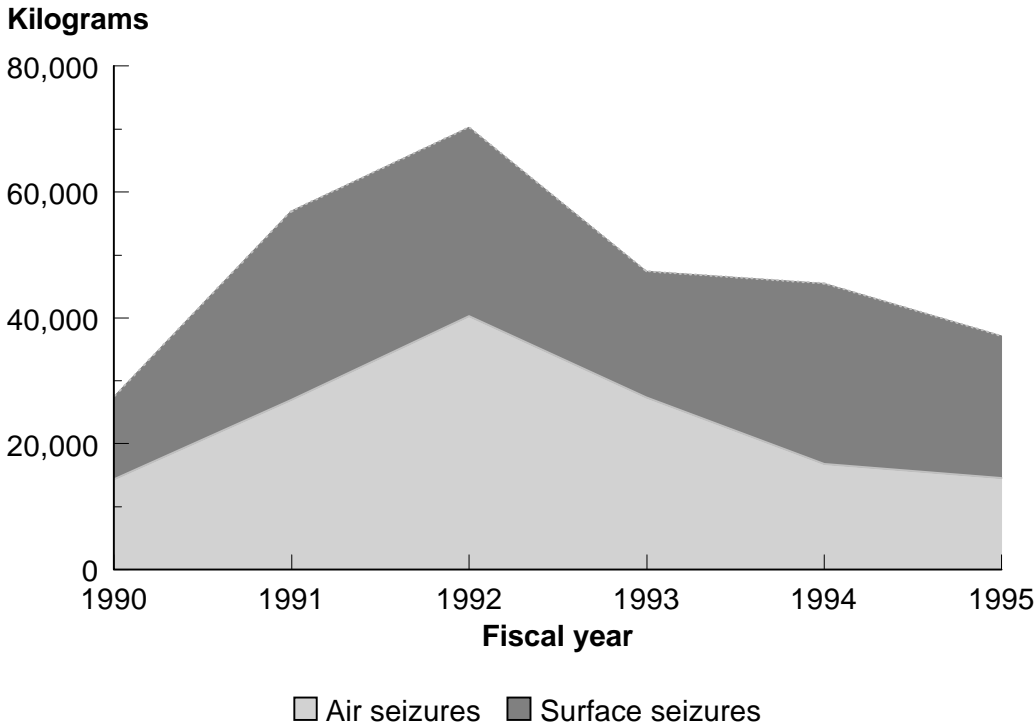
As table 5 shows, in fiscal years 1993 and 1994, the number of ship days for frigates significantly declined from fiscal year 1992 levels. During the same period, the Navy began to deploy other classes of vessels, such as Ocean-Going Radar Picket Ships. This change resulted in reduced capability. These radar picket ships are outfitted with air search radar and are deployed for aerial detection and monitoring. They are not employed for surface law enforcement and, due to their low speed, are not well suited for a surface mission.

In addition to reduced radar coverage and reduced maritime deployments, the number of Airborne Warning and Control System sorties also declined between fiscal years 1993 and 1995. For example, DOD reported that flight hours flown in the transit zone declined by 52 percent—from 38,100 hours in fiscal year 1992 to 18,155 hours in fiscal year 1995. DOD officials stated that Airborne Warning and Control System were flown at the maximum extent possible based on crew availability, operational tempo, and reduced asset availability due to other world hot spots.

Cocaine Seizures Have Declined From 1991-92 Levels

Cocaine seizures in the entire transit zone have declined from 1991-92 levels. As shown in figure 3, cocaine seizures dropped significantly from 70,336 kilograms in fiscal year 1992 to 37,181 kilograms in fiscal year 1995. Air seizures accounted for the greatest amount of decline, from 40,253 kilograms in fiscal year 1992 to only 14,564 kilograms in fiscal year 1995: Maritime seizures increased as a proportion of total seizures, accounting for about 61 percent in fiscal year 1995 compared to about 43 percent in fiscal year 1992.

Figure 3: Cocaine Seizures (fiscal years 1991-95)



Source: JIATF-East.

The decline in recorded cocaine seizures is likely due to a combination of factors, including reduced capability by U.S. agencies to detect air and maritime activities and cocaine traffickers' increased smuggling sophistication.

ONDCP-Supported Transit Zone Study

In 1995, the ONDCP contracted with Evidence-Base Research to conduct a study to (1) develop a baseline inventory for fiscal year 1994 of interdiction and law enforcement operations and resources in the transit zone and (2) consider the impact on disruption success rates with a \$200-million and a \$500-million increase in resources. The study had a number of recognized limitations, including a low level of confidence in its predictions and a limited scope. For example, the scope of the study did

not analyze the potential benefits of investing resources in the source countries.

It reported that in fiscal year 1994, drug smugglers were not disrupted in 69 percent of the attempts to bring drugs into the United States. With a \$200-million and a \$500-million increase in spending, the study estimated within a 10- to 20-percent confidence level that the smugglers success rate would decline to 58 percent and 53 percent, respectively. If funding was increased, it suggested the following order of priority:

- Increase intelligence, which because of its relative low cost, has the greatest leverage and is critical for responding to the maritime threat.
- Improve disruption capability because, without it, law enforcement would be unable to respond to the targets identified by increased and improved intelligence.
- Increase detection and monitoring to fill geographic gaps and ensure an ability to link intelligence and disruption capability.

The study noted that the federal policy challenge is not only to determine the benefits from direct investment in the transit zone but also to consider whether the investment of a similar level of resources elsewhere in the drug strategy might produce even more benefits.

U.S. officials stated that they generally agreed that if additional funds were provided for the transit zone that they should follow the priorities contained in the contractor's report. However, they pointed out that the study's low confidence level made the conclusions about stopping drug activities highly questionable. DEA officials stated that the conclusions of the study were questionable because no one knows the actual amount of cocaine that is flowing through the transit zone into the United States. These data would be needed to address the study's conclusions about potential success of increased interdiction efforts.

Lack of Regional Plan Hampers Interdiction Effort

The executive branch has not developed a plan to implement the U.S. antidrug strategy in the Caribbean. DOD, the Department of State, and law enforcement agencies have various agreements to implement the national drug strategy in the Caribbean region. However, counternarcotics officials expressed concern over the lack of overall responsibility for implementing the current cocaine strategy in the Caribbean. Although agencies had developed individual operational plans, they cited the lack of a coordinated regional action plan as the foremost impediment to

accomplishing the goals of the national strategy. Furthermore, they believed that implementing a coordinated regional plan, if one was developed, would be difficult unless someone with real authority was in charge. DOD officials responsible for implementing the detection and monitoring program stated that, because no authority existed that would require participating agencies to commit resources to drug interdiction efforts, it was difficult for them to develop effective plans. Participating agencies indicated that they often had to juggle competing priorities at a time when they were downsizing.

Various U.S. officials noted that there is a need for leadership and commitment by ONDCP to ensure that agencies are carrying out their missions to achieve U.S. counternarcotics objectives in the Caribbean. These officials stated that neither ONDCP nor the USCIB had authority to direct other participating agencies in meeting agreed-to resource commitments and operational plans. DOD officials stated that if the U.S. government was serious about eradicating drugs in the United States, ONDCP needed to become more authoritative and directive.

Interagency Staffing Responses Are Inadequate

Because participating agencies have not adequately staffed JIATF-East, it has not achieved the interagency culture initially hoped for at its creation. In April 1994, ONDCP and the participating agencies approved the National Interdiction Command and Control Plan. This plan provided for establishing three geographically oriented counterdrug Joint Interagency Task Forces and a Domestic Air Interdiction Coordination Center. The task forces were to be headed up and staffed by DOD, the U.S. Customs Service, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

A major premise of the plan was that the full-time personnel assigned to the task forces would become stakeholders in its operations. It was anticipated that this would ensure close planning and operational coordination; the availability of federal assets; and a seamless handoff of suspected air, sea, or land targets. Other agencies who either had an interest in or who are impacted by the operations were to provide liaison personnel. Unfortunately, participating agencies have not provided the required staffing to the task force and, thus, JIATF-East has been dominated by DOD personnel and has not achieved the intended interagency makeup.

The U.S. Customs Service has provided only 8 of 22 authorized staff. U.S. Customs stated that it could not provide additional staff due to agency downsizing. Furthermore, JIATF-East officials experienced problems with

the personnel assigned by the U.S. Customs Service. For example, some U.S. Customs personnel lacked the proper security clearances and could not be trained as operators in the classified watch environments. Also, U.S. Customs personnel sent to fill the high-level positions of Vice Director and Deputy Director for Plans had not obtained the security clearances required for these positions and could not participate in planning for and using DOD classified assets.

The Department of State has not filled a position to meet the JIATF-East requirement due to downsizing. Although the Federal Bureau of Investigation periodically assigned an intelligence analyst on temporary duty, it has not assigned a full-time person because of personnel constraints. Federal Bureau of Investigation officials stated that they have developed a plan to assign two agents—an intelligence analyst and a Supervisory Special Agent. These officials stated that the plan has not been approved. Although DEA had a Supervisory Special Agent performing as a liaison officer, DEA disagreed with JIATF-East on the integration of a DEA person into the operational aspects of JIATF-East and did not fill an intelligence analysis position because of resource constraints.

Agency responses to staffing theUSIC have also been inadequate. ONDCP agreed to an interagency staffing level of 11 positions forUSIC, including 5 positions to be filled from the U.S. Coast Guard and 1 each from the Joint Chief of Staff, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, the U.S. Customs Service, the Department of State, and DEA. As of March 1996, 2 of the 11 positions had not been filled. The Department of State and the Office of the Secretary of Defense have not filled these positions.

Intelligence Sharing Remains a Contentious Issue

Although progress has been made in improving intelligence sharing in the last 2 years, it remains a contentious issue among various collectors and users of intelligence data. In June 1994, DOD, along with other federal agencies, assessed counterdrug support programs in the transit zone. A major conclusion of the review was that, although accurate intelligence was essential to efficient transit zone operations, transit zone intelligence functions were hampered by (1) legal and agency-imposed limitations on access to law enforcement intelligence, (2) limited predictive analysis, and (3) problems of host nation corruption. Available intelligence information was not considered timely or specific enough regarding locations to support successful operations. DOD concluded that better coordination of intelligence and targeting information among users would improve

resource use and recommended a concerted effort to alleviate the effects or reduce the scope of constraints in interagency information sharing.

According to DOD officials, the requirements for collecting, retaining, and sharing counterdrug information and intelligence with other federal agencies are contained in a myriad of executive orders, individual agency regulations, and agreements between agencies. Also, the sharing of counterdrug information and intelligence with U.S. allies is governed by many of the same executive orders, regulations, and agreements, as well as existing bilateral agreements.

JATF-East officials told us that they had found limited understanding of regulations and much misinformation about intelligence sharing within the counternarcotics community. DOD officials stated that ONDCP had issued the Interdiction Intelligence Support Plan in March 1995 to ensure that the JATF-South, the Domestic Air Interdiction Control Center, the Intelligence Analysis Center, and the U.S. Customs Service National Aviation Center were provided access to tactical information necessary to perform their mission. DOD officials believe the current regulations allow sharing and dissemination of significant information beyond that currently being provided. They also believe that restrictions on information sharing are most likely the result of institutional practices and can be rectified by implementing existing procedures, not by creating additional procedures.

U.S. law enforcement officials believed that the sharing of their intelligence and information with other agencies was consistent with the legal limitation on the availability of the information and existing regulations. DEA officials noted that there are limitations on what intelligence they can legally provide other federal agencies developed from Grand Jury information, wire taps, and court sealing orders. They also noted that some intelligence is not released to protect sources and the integrity of ongoing investigations. DEA officials also stated that the El Paso Intelligence Center provides JATF-East with the necessary information to track suspect aircraft and vessels until the respective U.S. and foreign authorities can take appropriate law enforcement action.

While the debate over whether DOD is receiving required intelligence continues, ONDCP has been involved in developing an intelligence infrastructure to implement the plan and improve intelligence sharing. Agencies have installed a system that allows the various agencies to pass information from one data base to another on an interagency network.

Moreover, according to JIATF-East officials, Caribbean host nations are also concerned about the significant lack of counterdrug information flowing back to their counterdrug forces. The officials said that continued host nation cooperation in counterdrug programs may depend on improvements to intelligence and information sharing with host nation forces. However, given the widespread corruption within the region, it may be difficult to strike a balance that satisfies all parties.

Some Requests for Operational Assistance Are Not Met

JIATF-East records covering known counterdrug events occurring between October 1, 1994, and November 30, 1995, showed that in 87 of 92 cases other federal agencies have fully cooperated with them and provided required operational assistance. JIATF-East officials stated that they were pleased with the cooperation and contributions from U.S. Customs air resources. We noted five occasions where the U.S. Customs Service did not to support JIATF-East requests to track and pursue suspected drug smugglers. In these cases, JIATF-East officials stated that U.S. Customs always had valid reasons such as asset limitations, the geometry of the intercept problem, or the timeliness of the notification.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Director of ONDCP develop a regional action plan focused on the Caribbean part of the transit zone to fully implement the U.S. policy for cocaine in the Western Hemisphere. At a minimum, the plan should determine resources and staffing needed and delineate a comprehensive strategy to improve host nation capabilities and commitment to counternarcotics interdiction.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

ONDCP, USIC, and DEA provided written comments on a draft of this report (see apps. I through III); the Departments of State and Defense and the U.S. Custom Service provided oral comments.

ONDCP, the Departments of State and Defense, and the U.S. Customs Service generally agreed with the report's major conclusions and recommendations. ONDCP stated that many of the recommendations were sound and that it was in the process of implementing some of them. ONDCP said it will carefully examine all of the recommendations in preparing the 1996 National Drug Control Strategy.

Several agencies, including USIC, provided additional information or suggested language to clarify the facts presented in this report. We have incorporated these comments into the report.

DEA raised concerns regarding intelligence sharing in the Caribbean. DEA believed that every effort was being made to share intelligence within the counternarcotics intelligence community. However, as we noted in our report, JIATF-East and DOD still voiced concerns on intelligence sharing.

Several agency comments addressed the impact that budget reductions and downsizing have had on the ability to support transit zone operations. For example, State Department officials noted that the Congress had substantially reduced the State Department's budget below the levels requested by the President for international law enforcement programs. Also, ONDCP stated that successive cuts in the interdiction budgets over the past several years have served to reduce dramatically the resources available in the interdiction efforts from the transit zone to the source countries.

Scope and Methodology

We interviewed officials and reviewed pertinent documents in Washington, D.C., at ONDCP, the Departments of State and Defense, DEA, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the U.S. Customs Service. We also interviewed officials and reviewed documents at the Office of the U.S. Interdiction Coordinator, located within the headquarters of the U.S. Coast Guard.

In addition, we interviewed officials and reviewed pertinent documents at the U.S. Atlantic Command in Norfolk, Virginia; the JIATF-East in Key West, Florida; the offices of the DEA, the U.S. Customs Service, and the U.S. Coast Guard in Miami, Florida. We also interviewed officials from the U.S. Customs Air Wing in Puerto Rico and the DEA's office in Nassau, Bahamas.

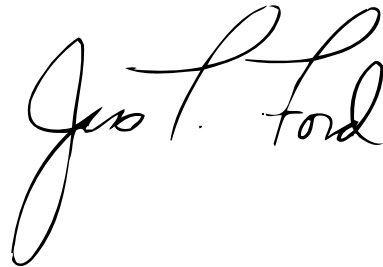
We conducted our review between November 1995 and March 1996 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

As arranged with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days after its issue date. At that time, we will send copies to the Director of ONDCP, the Secretaries of the Departments of Defense and State, the Commissioner of the U.S. Customs Service, the Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Interdiction Coordinator, the Administrator of DEA, the Director of

the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and interested congressional committees. We will make copies of this report available to others upon request.

Please contact me on (202) 512-4128 if you or your staff have any questions concerning this report. Major contributors to this report were Louis Zanardi, Ronald Hughes, and Robert Jaxel.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jess T. Ford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J" and a distinct "T" and "F".

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

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Abbreviations

DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
DOD	Department of Defense
JIATF	Joint Interagency Task Force
ONDCP	Office of National Drug Control Policy
USIC	U.S. Interdiction Coordinator

Comments From the Office of National Drug Control Policy

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



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY
Washington, D.C. 20503

April 3, 1996

Jess T. Ford
Associate Director
International Relations and Trade Issues
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ford:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft report:
Drug Control: U.S. Interdiction Efforts in the Caribbean Decline.

Overall, the report provides a good analysis of the status of U.S. interdiction efforts in the Caribbean, but it does not explain fully how the current situation developed.

As you know, successive cuts in the interdiction budget over the past several years have served to reduce dramatically the resources available in both the transit zone and the source countries. In response to Congressional criticism of the so-called "controlled shift" in interdiction efforts from the transit zone to the source countries, ONDCP commissioned the study of the transit zone interdiction efforts cited in the GAO report. As noted, this study examined the projected results of adding significant resources to transit zone interdiction.

It is important to clarify ONDCP's statutory authority in light of the reference contained in the report to "counternarcotics officials" who have said that "neither ONDCP nor the U.S. Interdiction Coordinator had authority to direct other participating agencies in meeting agreed to resource commitments and operational plans." In fact, pursuant to P.L. 100-690, as amended, (the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988), ONDCP has the authority to certify the drug budget of every Federal agency and department. This authority was expanded in P.L. 103-322 (Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994) to permit ONDCP to "request the head of a department or agency to include in the department's or agency's budget submission to the Office of Management and Budget funding requests for specific initiatives that are consistent with the President's priorities for the National Drug Control Strategy..."

Many of the report's recommendations are sound, and in fact, implementation of several of them is already underway. For

See comment 1.

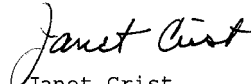
Appendix I
Comments From the Office of National Drug
Control Policy

Jess T. Ford
Page Two

example, efforts initiated at the J3/USIC Quarterly Conference will determine the resources and staffing needed to fully implement PDD-14. CINC SOUTH is working with our embassies and host nations to develop resource and staffing needs to support the source country strategy. As host nations build end-game capability and improve cooperation with U.S. counternarcotics programs, increased intelligence sharing will follow. Strategies to improve host nation capabilities and help strengthen their commitment are included in Southern Command's regional operations planning, as well as in development of host nation agreements in the Caribbean.

ONDCP will examine carefully the full range of recommendations in preparing the 1996 *National Drug Control Strategy*. Thanks again for sharing your draft with us.

Sincerely,


Janet Crist
Chief of Staff

Appendix I
Comments From the Office of National Drug
Control Policy

The following is GAO's comment on the Office of National Drug Control Policy's (ONDCP) letter dated April 3, 1996.

GAO Comment

1. ONDCP has the statutory authority to certify the drug budgets of every federal agency and department. However, ONDCP has limited authority to direct agencies to meet agreed-to resource commitments and operational plans.

Comments From the United States Interdiction Coordinator

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



UNITED STATES INTERDICTION COORDINATOR
OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY
2100 Second St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20593-0001

15 March 1996

Mr. Jess T. Ford
Associate Director, International
Relations and Trade Issues
United States General Accounting Office
National Security and International
Affairs Division
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Ford,

In response to your letter of 7 March 1996, requesting review and comment on your draft report on U.S. international strategies to control drug trafficking activities in the transit zone (GAO Code 711161, "U.S. Interdiction Efforts in the Caribbean Decline"), we offer the following comments. Please note that comments from the Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard will be forwarded separately.

Comments:

Pg. 3, para. 4: "Two years after the executive branch issued its counter narcotics policy for cocaine, it has not developed a regional plan to implement the strategy, has been unable to **fully** staff interagency organizations with key roles in the interdiction program, and has made little progress in improving intelligence sharing."

Reason: accuracy. The JIATFs, and the DAICC are manned and operating. However, they have not been manned to the full complement planned under the NICCP.

Pg. 4, middle para. last sentence: "Smugglers have responded to drug interdiction efforts by changing their modus operandi, **improving their operational security**, and employing new technologies to avoid detection."

Reason: accuracy.

last para, third sentence: "The remaining 70 per cent is shipped ~~from~~ **through** Mexico."

Reason: clarity.

Now on p. 3.
See comment 1.

Now on p. 2.
See comment 1.

Now on p. 3.
See comment 1.

**Appendix II
Comments From the United States
Interdiction Coordinator**

See p. 5.

Pg. 6, second paragraph, second sentence: "A June 1995 report of air smuggling activities concluded that there were significant increases in drug trafficking activities occurring from the Caribbean into southern Florida.:

Comment: USIC staff is unaware of significant increases of aerial smuggling into southern Florida. It would be very helpful to cite this report for reference, and would give your report more credibility.

Sentence deleted from final report.

Pg. 11, paragraph two, last sentence: "Even though the United States has reached agreement with some Caribbean countries, it does not have one with Cuba which would allow forces to either track or interdict drug-trafficking activity that may occur within Cuban territorial waters or airspace."

Reason: accuracy.

Comment: USIC supports engaging the Cubans on counternarcotics issues. However, in light of recent events involving the Cuban shutdown of two U.S. registered civil aircraft, it is unlikely that such discussions will be possible in the near future.

See pp. 8-11.
See comment 2.

Pg. 13, Table, "Analysis of Selected Eastern Caribbean Host Nations Counterdrug Capabilities."

Comment: *Strongly recommend deleting* this Table, or at the very least, deleting the column labeled "Political Will." The USG has counternarcotics agreements with a number of these countries and a fairly long history of cooperation with them in a number of areas of mutual concern, including counternarcotics. This Table represents the opinion of JIATF-East and not an interagency, USG position. Moreover, the U.S. Department of State is the lead agency for an analysis of "Political Will" vis-à-vis the annual Certification Process. Publication of this Table as is could be inflammatory and counterproductive in terms of our relations with the nations listed.

Pg. 13-14, beginning with: "In August 1995, a U.S. law enforcement agency reported that there is an underlying problem of mistrust between the Dutch government and local law enforcement agencies in the Antilles and Aruba. The report stated that a recent attempt to establish a coast guard for the Antilles and Aruba turned into a power struggle between the Dutch government and local officials."

Comment: *Strongly recommend deleting this statement.* While elements of it are true, improvements have been made. A local coast guard has, in fact, been established. The problems referred to are the stuff of long-standing internal political squabbles, no different than what we experience here in Washington every day. Moreover, the statement could be inflammatory and damage the truly outstanding working relationship that the USG operational counterdrug community enjoys with the Dutch.

Appendix II
Comments From the United States
Interdiction Coordinator

Pg. 20, Table 4. "JIATF East Maritime Assets for FY 1990-1995"

Comment: Recommend you footnote the figures for Coast Guard, to reflect that in FYs 91, 92, and 94 the Coast Guard, as an urgent national security matter, was heavily tasked with illegal alien interdiction operations and could not provide additional resources for JIATF-East.

Pg. 20, last paragraph, concerning employment of TAGOS ships.

Comment: It is correct that the change to TAGOS ships is not an "even swap" for frigates. They are in fact "Radar Picket Ships." However, they are outfitted with air search radar and are employed for aerial detection and monitoring, not surface. It is possible for them to embark law enforcement detachments, but surface law enforcement is not how they are employed. Due to their low speed, they are not well suited for surface law enforcement. Moreover, their employment in surface law enforcement operations could raise some legal issues, since TAGOS ships are operated by civilian crews under contract to the Navy, with embarked Navy radar and communications operators. The "bottom line" is that they are not an "even swap" for frigates in the overall force laydown. Navy ships (frigates, destroyers, cruisers) with Coast Guard LEDETS embarked can handle both the surface and aerial counternarcotics missions. Budget cutbacks have drastically reduced their availability.

Pg. 27, second paragraph: "As of January 1996, three of the 11 positions had not been filled. The Coast Guard filled its five positions -- Interdiction Coordinator, executive director, ~~assistant director~~ **action officer**, office manager, and an administrative support position. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Central Intelligence Agency each provided an action officer and DEA provided a liaison position. Department of State and U.S. Customs Service did not fill the requested positions citing personnel shortages, **although Customs has recently (March 96) provided USIC with an action officer.** And The Office of the Secretary of Defense **had provided an action officer since May of 1994, but the position has been vacant for several months.** also failed to provide the requested staff."

Reason: accuracy.

Pg. 29, entire page:

Comment: This section is counterproductive. It appears to be written as a third party forum for airing some fairly minor, localized operational complaints between JIATF-East and the DAICC. Operational coordination and cooperation has never been better and minor problems are usually ironed out during the various quarterly planning conferences, including the J-3/USIC Quarterly Counterdrug Conference. Recommend deleting this part and the earlier reference to it. It serves no useful purpose.

Now on p. 16.
See comment 1.

Now on p. 16.
See comment 1.

Now on p. 20.
See comment 1.

See pp. 20-21.

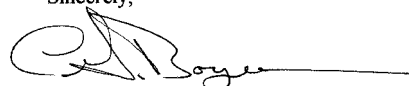
Appendix II
Comments From the United States
Interdiction Coordinator

Other. Entire document: change all references to JIATIF-E to JIATF-E or JIATF-East.

Reason: accuracy. JIATF is an acronym for Joint Interagency Task Force. Your text includes an additional letter I.

If you have any questions or if I can be of further assistance, please contact me at (202) 267-6628. My staff point of contact is CDR Bill Ross, Assistant Staff Director. He can be reached at (202) 267-6632 or -6638. Non-secure facsimile number is (202) 267-4723.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. G. Boyer", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

C. G. BOYER
Executive Director

The following are GAO's comments on the United States Interdiction Coordinator's letter dated March 15, 1996.

GAO Comments

1. We have made appropriate technical changes to the report.
2. The Joint Interagency Task Force East's (JIATF-East) assessment of the political will was deleted from the report after further discussions with the State Department and JIATF-East officials. However, the State Department concurred with our conclusion that U.S. antidrug activities are impeded by some countries' lack of political will, corruption, and limited local law enforcement capabilities. These conclusions are supported by State Department's March 1996 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report.

Comments From the Drug Enforcement Administration

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



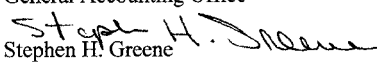
U.S. Department of Justice
Drug Enforcement Administration

Washington, D.C. 20537

APR 02 1996

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jess T. Ford
Associate Director
International Relations and Trade Issues
General Accounting Office

FROM: 
Stephen H. Greene
Deputy Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration

SUBJECT: Revised Draft Report on Drug Control U.S. Interdiction Efforts In the Caribbean

This is in response to your request on March 27, 1996 to provide the General Accounting Office (GAO), by close-of-business April 1, 1996, with the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) comments regarding the revisions to the above entitled report. DEA will only address the major contextual facts and language due to time limitations. The Department of Justice (DOJ) will be forwarding the grammatical corrections and rewording to improve the accuracy of the report under separate cover. In many instances, the revised draft report credits law enforcement officials for making specific comments or validating certain Joint Interagency Task Force-East (JIATF-E) assertions. Since GAO does not identify those individuals or their representative agencies, DEA's response is made without the knowledge of the actual discussion leading up to those comments or assertions.

While the revised draft report recognizes a few of the concerns DEA expressed during the March 27th meeting with GAO representatives, the overall presentation still does not:

- 1) Reflect the law enforcement community's position;
- 2) Take into account the importance of the law enforcement community's investigative or intelligence gathering contributions;
- 3) Go far enough in stressing the subjective nature of JIATF-E's assessments and incomplete analyses pertaining to the host nations' political will and law enforcement capabilities; and

See comment 1.

**Appendix III
Comments From the Drug Enforcement
Administration**

See comment 2.

- 4) Accurately describe the law enforcement and counternarcotic intelligence communities' willingness to coordinate and share information. Particularly, the revised draft report neither acknowledges the existence of a national plan and the various interagency agreements, nor the El Paso Intelligence Center's (EPIC) role as the national tactical drug intelligence center and its responsibility to provide actionable intelligence to JIATF-E.

See comment 3.

The generalization of important and potentially explosive issues throughout the report usurps the Department of State (DOS) and DOJ of their assessment responsibilities. The potential damage in relations with host nations by making unsupportable subjective conclusions can cause irreparable damage to United States law enforcement activities in the Caribbean.

Now on pp. 2, 8-12.
See comment 4.

Set forth below are DEA's specific comments and concerns:

- Pages 3 and 12 through 16 discuss the host nations' political will and capabilities to conduct effective antidrug operations. As DEA asserted at the March 27th meeting, JIATF-E lacks the mandate or the knowledge and experience to effectively assess host nations' political will and capabilities. As previously discussed and agreed upon, GAO must avoid using JIATF-E's subjective generalization to specifically rate (i.e., good, fair, or poor) host nations in the Caribbean. This can result in a negative impact on United States law enforcement relations and effectiveness in the Caribbean. Furthermore, DEA feels that the report, at a minimum, must clearly and completely balance any reference to a JIATF-E assessment of host nations with that of the DOS and the DOJ.

Now on p. 10.
See comment 5.

DEA points out that the original draft report acknowledges JIATF-E's use of "their subjective judgement" to determine the political will of various Caribbean nations. They did not use "objective criteria in their evaluations." The revised draft report, however, no longer describes JIATF-E's judgement as subjective and, thus, enhances the credibility of their statements.

Furthermore, JIATF-E's assessment on page 16 is very inflammatory and inaccurate in its subjective assertion that: "In addition, many national forces do not always cooperate with one another because of insufficient political will, inability to coordinate, and insufficient resources." There are a number of past and current activities GAO can reference to refute this broad generalization.

Also, the assertion made above greatly differs from the original draft report's statement: "In addition to having few assets that are available for counternarcotics purposes, some national forces involved in counternarcotics may not always cooperate with one another." The original statement, although not completely reflective of the complex realities of the cooperation between the Caribbean nations, at least provides one factor, i.e., few assets, that can affect some of the nations ability to cooperate.

**Appendix III
Comments From the Drug Enforcement
Administration**

Now on pp. 3 and 18.

- Pages 4 and 29 discuss the lack of a regional plan in the transit zone to implement the Executive Branch's cocaine strategy. According to GAO, the revised draft report was to incorporate language that acknowledges the coordination of strategic planning among the DOS, the Department of Defense (DOD), and the various law enforcement and counternarcotic intelligence agencies. In addition, the revised draft report was to reflect the existence of a national plan and the various interagency agreements. The revision to the original draft, however, only includes a brief, incomplete statement showing that individual agencies develop operational plans.

See p. 22.

- Pages 4 and 34 present two different figures for the number of JIATF-E requests for air support sent to the United States Customs Service (i.e., page 4 reflects 91 and page 34 reflects 92). In either instance, the revised draft report should note that these figures represent a cooperative rate in excess of 94 percent. A positive rate which is clearly admirable.

Now on p. 3.

- Page 5 makes reference that "cocaine shipped into the United States comes through the eastern Caribbean into Puerto Rico and other eastern and western United States entry points..." This is incorrect. The eastern and *southern* continental United States is the point of entry for cocaine shipments coming by way of eastern Caribbean transit routes.

Now on p. 5.
See comment 6.

- Page 7 includes the statement that "DOD officials stated that according to their data base on known air events, there have been no events of air smuggling activity into the continental United States." This is in contradiction to DOD's statement on page 23 that "the lost radar capabilities hampered their operations and significantly increases the number of border intrusions into Florida from the Bahamas."

Now on pp. 5-6.
See comment 7.

- Page 8 reflects inaccurate information regarding the total seizure of cocaine in the Bahamas prior to 1995. Until 1994, cocaine seizures in the Bahamas had been a significant portion of the total seizures in the Caribbean. The total amount of cocaine seized in the Bahamas in 1994 was the smallest amount since the mid-1980s.

Now on p. 7.

- Page 11 includes the statement: "U.S. Customs and DEA officials believe that smugglers have concealed large shipments of cocaine in legitimate containers aboard commercial sea vessels." DEA points out that smuggling cocaine via containers is a fact supportable by many cases resulting in the seizure of drugs. Therefore, please revise the report to accurately acknowledge the law enforcement community's ability to substantiate this method of smuggling.

Now on pp. 11-12.
See comment 8.

- Page 17 through Page 19 discusses government corruption in Caribbean nations. Like the discussion above on political will, the revised draft report must not generalize the character of government officials throughout the Caribbean with unsubstantiated opinions, allegations, unconfirmed accusations, rumors, or incomplete assessments. GAO must be careful not to suggest that speculation and perception of corruption based

**Appendix III
Comments From the Drug Enforcement
Administration**

on unsupported claims and innuendoes are bases for fact. For instance, the revised draft report references various other reports to support an argument on government corruption. Ironically, all the examples include statements such as "may be occurring," "allegations," "unsubstantiated rumors," "could not fully develop cases," "no officially confirmed cases," etc. Therefore, this section should be rewritten or, more preferably, entirely deleted from the report.

See pp. 14-17.

- Page 23 discusses the impact the loss of radar coverage has had on OPBAT. The loss of radar coverage is just one aspect that impacts OPBAT. As discussed at the March 27th meeting, GAO should include the other equally relevant factors such as the reduction in law enforcement resources and direct asset support (e.g., aircraft) to place the loss of radar coverage in its proper perspective.

Now on p. 18.

- Page 28 references the study done by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). The 20 percent margin of error rate is very unsettling. Therefore, DEA, in consonance with GAO's concurrence at the March 27th meeting, places a low level of confidence in the overall projection of success, especially when it comes to the report's recommendation to increase interdiction spending in the amount of \$200 to \$500 million. Furthermore, GAO should recognize the following:

See comment 9.

- 1) The ONDCP study concentrated on the maritime threat and does not address the air threat;
- 2) It called for greater effectiveness through closer coupling of the various "zone defenses," including source country, transit country, etc.; and
- 3) It indicated that DEA's South American "intelligence programs" were underfunded.

In addition, GAO should reference its past reports which conflict with some of the ONDCP study assertions regarding the increase of funding in the area of drug interdiction.¹

Now on pp. 20-22.
See comment 10.

- Pages 32 through 34 discuss "Counterdrug Information and Intelligence Sharing..." The revised draft report still does not accurately describe the law enforcement and counternarcotic intelligence communities' willingness to coordinate and share

¹ A few examples are "Capabilities for Interdicting Airborne Drug Smugglers Are Limited and Costly", June 9, 1989 (GAO/T-GGD-89-28); "Drug Interdiction: Funding Continues to Increase but Program Effectiveness Is Unknown", December 11, 1990 (GAO/GGD-91-10); and "Drug Control: Impact on DOD's Detection and Monitoring of Cocaine Flow", September 19, 1991 (GAO/NSIAD-91-297).

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information. As discussed at the March 27th meeting, there is no reference to EPIC's role as the national tactical drug intelligence center and, more specifically, its responsibility to provide actionable intelligence to JIATF-E.

In addition, DOJ notes that the revised draft report does not acknowledge the Federal Bureau of Investigation's resource contribution to JIATF-E. Please revise the report to reflect this fact.

Furthermore, the revised draft report still implies that interdiction centers such as JIATF-E need access to all law enforcement investigative information to fulfill their mission to direct detection and monitoring assets. The language in the report downplays the fact that DEA as well as many law enforcement agencies make every effort to share intelligence and information throughout the counternarcotics intelligence community. Contrary to JIATF-E's assertions, EPIC as well as many law enforcement agencies provide them with the necessary information to track suspect aircraft and vessels until the respective United States and foreign authorities can take the appropriate law enforcement action.

For example, DEA and EPIC make use of the Anti-Drug Network (ADNET) to coordinate and disseminate tactical and strategic intelligence to the JIATFs, the United States Coast Guard (USCG), the Tactical Analysis Teams in Central and South America and the Caribbean, as well as others in the intelligence community and DOD. This information assists the JIATFs in performing their detection and monitoring functions. As GAO was previously advised, USCG and JIATF-E assets can use ADNET to directly query data available at EPIC. Furthermore, JIATF-E has two of its personnel at EPIC. They are able to directly query DEA's specific intelligence data bases. Memorandums of Understanding between JIATF-E and EPIC further facilitate the sharing of intelligence by allowing the dissemination of information regarding actionable intelligence to Dutch and French units under the tactical control of JIATF-E.

To place intelligence sharing in perspective, the revised draft report must also emphasize the law enforcement community's limitations on providing actionable intelligence to other non-law enforcement Federal agencies. The sharing of certain information resulting from grand jury investigations, court ordered wire taps, court ordered seals of case records, and ongoing investigations is limited by legal as well as integrity concerns. The improper release of this information can result in criminal and civil liability and compromise the safety of law enforcement personnel and sources. This responsibility can not be taken lightly by the law enforcement community.

Thank you for the opportunity to present DEA's concerns, which are in consonance with DOJ, regarding GAO's revised draft report. I hope this will assist you in making the necessary revisions to the final report.

The following are GAO's comments on the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) letter dated April 2, 1996.

GAO Comments

1. The JIATF-East assessment of the countries' political will was deleted from the draft report after further discussions with the Department of State and JIATF-East.
2. The report includes information on the El Paso Intelligence Center's role in providing information to JIATF-East.
3. The Department of State concurred with our conclusion that U.S. counterdrug activities are impeded by a lack of political will, corruption, and limited local law enforcement capabilities in some countries. Furthermore, the report is consistent with the State Department's March 1996 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report.
4. The report clarifies JIATF-East's subjective views.
5. The statement is supported not only by statements made by JIATF-East officials but also by various law enforcement agency reports.
6. We have clarified the report and eliminated the apparent contradiction.
7. Notwithstanding the fact that drug seizures were relatively high before 1994, they still represented a relatively low percentage of drugs transiting the area.
8. This information is taken from Department of State reports and law enforcement reports. Moreover, the concern of those reporting unsubstantiated rumors and allegations is not only whether they are true but, more importantly, that often the country is not investigating them. While most U.S. officials agreed that corruption was a problem, the evidence that it occurred was admittedly weak and we took care to properly detail it as such.
9. Our prior reports dealt with existing conditions in the 1989 to 1991 time frame. We are not suggesting that increased funding cited in the ONDCP study will lead to any greater interdiction success.
10. We have added DEA statements concerning their belief that JIATF-East is receiving all the actionable intelligence it requires and the limitations DEA

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has in providing intelligence. Nevertheless, there is clearly a disagreement between JIATF-East and DEA over whether it is getting all of the necessary intelligence notwithstanding the fact that progress has been made, including the stationing of two JIATF-East personnel at the El Paso Intelligence Center. DOD believes that better understanding of current regulations would further improve the sharing of intelligence information.

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