



United States
General Accounting Office
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General Government Division

B-254530

November 4, 1993

The Honorable Al McCandless
Ranking Minority Member
Legislation and National Security
Subcommittee
Committee on Government Operations
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. McCandless:

This letter is in response to your October 15, 1993, request for GAO's views on the question: "What will it take to give the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) the tools necessary to effectively do what Congress intended for it to do?"

As you know, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 established ONDCP to develop and oversee the implementation of national drug control policies by the many federal agencies that have operational responsibilities relating to drug control. Specifically, the 1988 act authorizes ONDCP to

- require the various federal drug control agencies to provide information that ONDCP may need for drug control purposes;
- annually promulgate a national strategy specifying drug control policies, objectives, and priorities;
- coordinate and oversee drug control agencies' implementation of the annual strategy;
- conduct program and performance audits and evaluations and request assistance from agency inspectors general in carrying out this function;
- review and certify drug control agency budgets for adequacy in meeting each annual strategy's policies, objectives, and priorities;
- notify the President when a drug control agency is not complying with the national drug control strategy; and

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-- recommend to the President any changes in drug control agency organization, management, and budgets deemed warranted.

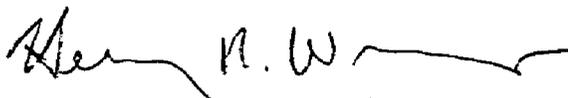
In our view, ONDCP's current statutory authorities give that Office the basic tools necessary to carry out the objectives Congress assigned to it with respect to the development, implementation, and coordination of national drug control policy. Our work does not suggest a need for major changes in ONDCP's statutory authorities. Rather, in the final analysis, we believe ONDCP's future effectiveness will turn on the extent to which it is able to actually influence and obtain the active support of the President as well as the heads of the drug control agencies.

At the same time, our recent report and testimony¹ discuss a number of areas in which we think ONDCP can do better. Most importantly, ONDCP's annual drug control strategies need to (1) specify what the major funding components are expected to accomplish and (2) identify measures for judging progress in meeting those expectations.

ONDCP also needs to work more cooperatively with the drug control agencies and to have more flexibility in performing its budget review and certification functions. These steps will be particularly important if ONDCP staff is substantially "downsized," as has been proposed. With a smaller staff, ONDCP might also benefit by exercising its authority to obtain assistance from agency inspectors general in the conduct of audits and program evaluations.

If you have any additional questions, please call me on (202) 512-5156.

Sincerely yours,



Henry R. Wray
Director, Administration
of Justice Issues

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¹See Drug Control: Reauthorization of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (GAO/GGD-93-144, Sep. 29, 1993; and GAO/T-GGD-94-7, Oct. 5, 1993).