

## Why GAO Did This Study

The U.S. government has identified illicit drugs, as well as the criminal organizations that produce and traffic them, as significant threats to both the U.S. and partner nations. DOD is the lead department responsible for detecting and monitoring the aerial and maritime transport of illicit drugs to the U.S.

Senate report 117-130 accompanying the FY 2023 National Defense Authorization Act contains a provision for GAO to examine issues related to counternarcotics and counter-transnational organized crime activities. This report examines (1) funding available for DOD's activities and funding allocation in FYs 2018 through 2022; (2) the extent to which DOD components coordinate activities; and (3) how DOD assessed the effectiveness of these activities, and the extent to which its future assessments align with key practices.

GAO reviewed DOD documents and data about its authorities, funding, and activities, including coordination and performance management. GAO also interviewed DOD officials, including officials at headquarters and combatant commands.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations, including that DOD develops a plan to assess agency-wide progress. DOD partially agreed with all recommendations. GAO maintains that fully implementing them is necessary to improve DOD's coordination and assessment of activities.

View [GAO-24-106281](#). For more information, contact Chelsa Kenney at (202) 512-2964 or [kenneyc@gao.gov](mailto:kenneyc@gao.gov).

# COUNTERNARCOTICS

## DOD Should Improve Coordination and Assessment of Its Activities

### What GAO Found

The amount of funding available for Department of Defense (DOD) counternarcotics and counter-transnational organized crime activities changed from about \$750 million in fiscal year (FY) 2018 to about \$580 million in FY 2022. In FY 2022, DOD allocated most of the funding to support detection and monitoring activities and allocated the remainder to support intelligence activities and efforts, such as constructing training facilities, in partner nations.

DOD's six geographic combatant commands—DOD components responsible for efforts in designated geographic areas—coordinate on activities. However, three reported varying understandings of their roles in an overlapping joint operation area, including confusion over the management of air and naval operations. Although DOD required the three commands to develop agreements defining their responsibilities, the three commands have not fully documented their roles in the overlapping joint operation area. Without such agreements, confusion about the commands' responsibilities in the area may continue, reducing DOD's ability to disrupt the transport of illicit drugs to the U.S.

Map Showing Overlap of Joint Operation Area



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) information; Map Resources (map). | GAO-24-106281

DOD has not assessed the agency-wide effectiveness of its counternarcotics and counter-transnational organized crime activities and does not have a plan for future assessments. DOD has defined its strategic objectives, strategies, and performance goals. But contrary to key practices, it has not identified measurable outcomes for each strategic objective. As a result, DOD cannot measure progress toward these objectives. Officials also said they intend to assess agency-wide progress but have not developed a plan to do so. Assessing agency-wide progress toward its strategic objectives would better position DOD to make decisions about priorities, resource allocations, and strategies for improvements.