

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-25-108189](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

Combatting transnational crime and drug trafficking are long-standing national security priorities for the U.S., and the opioid crisis has been a public health emergency since 2017. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have died from misusing drugs, with more than 66 percent of these deaths involving synthetic opioids such as fentanyl. According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, criminal organizations in Mexico supply most of the illicitly manufactured fentanyl smuggled into the U.S. INL's mission is to keep Americans safe by countering crime, illegal drugs, and instability abroad.

This statement discusses four key areas where State and INL have faced challenges implementing programs overseas: (1) performance management, (2) program monitoring, (3) program evaluation, and (4) fraud risk management.

This statement is based on GAO's prior work on a variety of State and INL programs. For that work, GAO analyzed State documents and data and interviewed agency officials. For a full list of the reports, see Related GAO Products at the conclusion of this statement.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO made 16 recommendations in the reports covered by this statement, including to improve performance management, program monitoring, and program evaluation. As of March 2025, six of the recommendations have been implemented, and 10 remain open. GAO continues to monitor State's and INL's progress in implementing the open recommendations.

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## STATE DEPARTMENT

### Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Needs to Fully Address Prior GAO Recommendations

## What GAO Found

The Department of State is responsible for coordinating U.S. assistance supporting international efforts to combat illicit narcotics, a role fulfilled by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

### Fentanyl Seized in Nuevo Leon, Mexico



Source: Department of State: Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. | GAO-25-108189

GAO previously identified challenges State and INL face in determining the effectiveness of assistance they provide to foreign partners. Performance management can help INL identify whether the billions of dollars appropriated to help meet its mission are spent effectively and help achieve its goals. In September 2023, GAO found that INL's efforts to implement assistance to Mexico had been hampered by incomplete performance management efforts. As a result, the U.S. government could not demonstrate that the more than \$3 billion of assistance it had provided to Mexico was spent effectively and helped achieve goals. GAO made three recommendations to INL to better ensure that it spends such assistance effectively. INL has taken steps to address these recommendations but has not fully implemented them.

GAO also previously identified challenges State and INL face in monitoring and evaluating projects. For example, in March 2023, GAO found that State had not conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the collective efforts of U.S. agencies to combat cybercrime and ensure that programs were achieving intended goals. GAO recommended that INL conduct a comprehensive evaluation of capacity building efforts to counter cybercrime. State officials said that INL planned to conduct such an evaluation. INL has taken steps to address this recommendation but has not fully implemented it.

In addition, GAO previously identified challenges INL faces in managing fraud risk in assistance to Mexico. Specifically, in March 2021, GAO found that INL had not fully assessed the potential risks of fraud in assistance to Mexico and made three recommendations to INL to help improve efforts in this area. While INL has developed a preliminary anti-fraud strategy for that assistance, it has not yet issued or implemented a final anti-fraud strategy.