AUDIT OF THE
DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION'S
MOBILE ENFORCEMENT TEAM PROGRAM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) established its Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) program in 1995 to combat violent drug-related crime. METs initially were intended to help local law enforcement agencies, particularly in rural areas, confront drug trafficking problems that were beyond their immediate capabilities. For example, local law enforcement agencies can request MET assistance to help conduct drug investigations they cannot handle on their own because of budget limitations or because their own officers are locally known and cannot conduct undercover operations.

The DEA's policy for approving MET deployments states that the program's goals are to reduce drug related violence and disrupt or dismantle the rapidly increasing number of methamphetamine drug traffickers and laboratories. The DEA's policy states that by targeting these organizations, the DEA seeks through its MET program to remove offenders from communities' streets and have a significant impact on drug-related violence and drug availability.

When a MET operation is approved by DEA headquarters, a DEA MET is deployed to the target area to provide law enforcement assistance, which can include various investigative operations. The most common type of assistance provided by a MET is using informants and making undercover purchases of drugs. A MET usually consists of 8 to 10 DEA Special Agents and a supervisor, and it typically lasts 6 to 7 months.

The MET program operated in all 21 domestic DEA field divisions until June 30, 2007, when the administration discontinued the program because of budgetary constraints. Although the President's appropriation request for fiscal year (FY) 2008 did not include funds for the MET program, Congress provided $20.6 million for the MET program to target methamphetamine trafficking and operations.[1] In May 2008, the DEA set up METs in 10 DEA

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[1] See the explanatory statements to the FY 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Division B–Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies and the House Report accompanying the FY 2008 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill.

field divisions. In FY 2009, Congress appropriated an additional $10 million for the MET program, and the DEA added METs to four more field divisions.[2]

OIG Audit Approach

The objectives of this audit were to examine the design and implementation of the MET program and to evaluate the success of MET enforcement operations.

We performed our audit work at DEA Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia; the Atlanta Division Office; and the St. Louis Division Office. At these locations, we interviewed personnel including Section Chiefs, Staff Coordinators, Special Agents in Charge, Assistant Special Agents in Charge, and Group Supervisors. We also examined MET deployment requests, assessments, and budget documents, as well as arrest, seizure, and MET deployment impact information.

We reviewed all MET deployments from May 2008 through January 2010. We surveyed all DEA divisions with a MET to obtain field management's opinions on the focus of the MET program and information on how they selected MET deployment locations. We also obtained and reviewed additional deployment request letters received and data on results such as arrest and seizure information. Appendix I contains a more detailed description of our audit objectives, scope, and methodology.

Results in Brief

As described in this report, DEA MET program operations have resulted in arrests, convictions, and seizures of drugs. Since restarting the program in FY 2008, the DEA has focused the majority of its MET deployments in urban communities to address violent gangs primarily trafficking cocaine and crack cocaine.[3]

The DEA did not request MET funding for FY 2008, but Congress provided $20.6 million and indicated that the DEA should use METs to focus on combating methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs. The DEA informed Congress through its FY 2009 budget submission that it would use the FY 2008 funds to continue its efforts against gangs and violence.

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[2] See Explanatory statements to the FY 2009 Consolidated Omnibus Appropriations Act, Division B, Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies.

[3] MET deployments initiated to focus on other drugs also may result in some methamphetamine seizures and related arrests.

In FYs 2009 and 2010, the DEA's budget requests stated that METs would focus on gangs and violence. However, conference report language and explanatory statements issued by Congress for both of those years stated that METs should "include a focus on methamphetamine" and did not refer to the focus on gangs and violence.

At a July 2009 congressional committee hearing a DEA Assistant Administrator testified that the DEA established METs at four DEA divisions in FY 2009 to address methamphetamine trafficking. Yet, our review found that only one operation of the five enforcement operations conducted by the METs referenced in the congressional testimony had methamphetamine as its primary focus. We also determined that from the time the MET program restarted in April 2008 through January 2010, 7 (26 percent) of 27 initiated MET deployments had methamphetamine trafficking as the primary focus of the deployment. DEA officials stated that they believed the MET Program's level of methamphetamine enforcement operations is sufficient to meet Congress' intent for the program.

We also determined that with the FY 2008 funding to restart the program, DEA headquarters and field managers decided they could have more METs if the teams operated in metropolitan areas near division offices where MET operations did not require overnight travel. DEA officials told us that they based this decision on a desire to place METs in as many divisions as possible to focus on the known gang problem rather than an approach that considered other options for using METs. Therefore, despite its name, the Mobile Enforcement Teams were not mobile. Rather, they were being operated primarily in metropolitan areas near DEA offices. Consequently, rural law enforcement agencies did not have the benefit of using MET resources to address either methamphetamine or violent gang problems within their jurisdictions.

We also assessed the impact of MET program operations. Since the MET program restarted in 2008, METs made 1,570 arrests, seized almost 1.6 tons of drugs, and disrupted or dismantled 150 drug trafficking organizations.[4] DEA field divisions generally reported that after MET deployments ended, the target locations experienced decreases in drug sales and violent crime, and that community reaction and involvement was positive. However, DEA Post-Deployment reports showed that some types of violent crimes increased in the 6-month period after a deployment ended.

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[4] Audit results are for the period May 1, 2008, through January 31, 2010. Details of the drugs and property that were seized are shown in Exhibits 2 and 3.

The DEA measures the performance of MET operations by tracking arrests, seizures, and outcomes such as changes in crime rates, drug availability, and the effect METs had on drug trafficking organizations. The MET Program Handbook states that METs should assess each operation to determine whether it had a lasting effect on the target area. Our review found some post-deployment assessments were not completed or were completed late, which made it difficult to assess what effect the MET operation may have had on crime rates.

Overall, we believe the DEA should consider whether to use more MET resources to combat methamphetamine trafficking and whether METs should be more mobile. The DEA should also update the MET program handbook so that it accurately reflects the focus of the current MET program, and provide relevant guidance to its field divisions. Further, we believe that the DEA should better evaluate the results of each MET operation and use that information to make decisions about how to best use the MET Program's limited resources.

In our report, we make six recommendations to improve the DEA MET program. The remaining sections of this Executive Summary summarize in more detail our audit findings.

The DEA Informed Congress That It Used MET Program Funds Primarily to Combat Violent Gangs, Although Congressional Directives and DEA Policy Emphasize Methamphetamine Enforcement

MET Program Focus

The congressional conference report for the FY 2006 appropriations directed the DEA to focus the MET program on combating methamphetamine production, trafficking, and abuse.[5]

In July 2007, the MET program was halted because of budget constraints, and the President's FY 2008 Congressional Budget Submission did not request funding for the DEA's MET program. However, Congress appropriated $20.6 million for the MET program in FY 2008. In an explanatory statement to the appropriations act, Congress stated that the

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[5] Conference Report, *Making Appropriations for Science, the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce and Related Agencies for the Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 2006, and for Other Purposes* (H.R. 2862), 2007, H. Rept. 109-272.

appropriation would permit the DEA to assist state and local law enforcement agencies in their fight against methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs.[6] Consequently, DEA officials told us that METs could also be used for enforcement operations other than methamphetamines.

When Congress provided $30.6 million for the MET program in FY 2009, the explanatory statements to the FY 2009 Appropriations Act stated: "The bill provided an increase of $10 million to allow DEA to begin rebuilding the MET program, both through the establishment of additional METs and increasing the funds available for existing teams. The activities of MET should continue to include a focus on methamphetamine enforcement."[7] In addition, a conference report for FY 2010 appropriations discussed a budget increase from $30.6 million to $36.4 million for METs to "include a focus on methamphetamine enforcement."[8] Although the language in the conference report states that METs should "include a focus on methamphetamines" this does not preclude the DEA from using METs to address other drug issues.

In July 2009 the DEA's Assistant Administrator for Intelligence testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security on the DEA's efforts to combat Mexican drug cartels and associated violence.[9] The DEA official told the committee that the DEA was forming four additional METs to target Mexican methamphetamine trafficking operations. However, we found that only one of the five enforcement operations conducted by those four METs had methamphetamine as its

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[6] U.S. House Committee Print on Consolidated Appropriations Act 2008 (H.R. 2764; Public Law 110-1510, *Division B – Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2008*, page 256.

[7] U.S. House Committee Print on Omnibus Appropriations Act 2009 (H.R. 1105; Public Law 111-8), *Division B – Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2009*, page 273.

[8] Conference Report, *Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010* (H.R. 3288). The report stated "The activities of METs should continue to include a focus on methamphetamine enforcement." However, unless specifically referenced in the statute they accompany, conference reports, committee reports, and explanatory statements do not have the force of law and, therefore, are not legally binding on an executive branch agency.

[9] *Statement of Deputy Assistant Director for Field Operations, BATFE; and Assistant Administrator for Intelligence, DEA, Before the Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism Committee on Homeland Security, U.S. House of Representatives Concerning "Combating Border Violence: The Role of Interagency Coordination in Investigations,"* July 16, 2009.

primary focus. The Assistant Administrator did not describe the focus of the other 10 existing METs.

We also sought to identify other DEA documents and statements pertaining to the DEA's planned use for MET appropriations. We found that in March 2009 the DEA's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) issued a memorandum to DEA executives, field managers, agents, and administrative officers pertaining to the FY 2009 appropriation. The CFO's memorandum stated that $10 million of the appropriation was to add additional METs to continue to include a focus on methamphetamine enforcement. Additionally, current MET program policy states that METs should give priority to methamphetamine enforcement operations. Therefore, while the DEA told us in connection with our review that it believes Congress was informed that the primary focus of its METs is on gang-related violence and drug-trafficking, MET program policy and certain DEA statements, both to Congress and to DEA employees, did not describe the focus of the program in this way. We believe the DEA should update its program policy to reflect the current focus of the MET program.

MET Deployment Focus

In FY 2008, Congress provided $20.6 million to restart the MET program. DEA officials decided that these limited funds would not be used for travel costs. As a result, the DEA deployed METs in metropolitan areas, close to the DEA offices.[10] We found that DEA headquarters officials and the 14 field manager we interviewed view the restarted MET program as one that focuses on violent gangs involved in drug trafficking. Because methamphetamine is not trafficked in the inner city as extensively as are drugs such as crack cocaine, methamphetamine was not the primary focus of the restarted MET Program.

We also found that since the restart of the MET program in FY 2008, 7 (26 percent) of 27 initiated deployments focused primarily on methamphetamine trafficking. DEA officials told us that they believe this level of methamphetamine enforcement is sufficient to meet Congress' intent for the MET program.

However, because the DEA focused primarily on violent gangs within commuting distance of the DEA office, METs had limited mobility.

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[10] An April 2008 teletype to DEA field offices stated that METs may still engage in deployments requiring overnight travel, but DEA headquarters would not provide MET funding for those costs.

Consequently, rural law enforcement agencies did not have the benefit of using MET resources to address either methamphetamine or gangs trafficking other types of drugs.

Moreover, as discussed earlier, MET program policy states that field mangers should prioritize MET deployments that focus on methamphetamine. When we raised this program policy statement with DEA officials, they told us the policy needed to be updated to reflect that gangs and violence is the current focus of the MET program.

MET Deployment Locations

As noted above, when the MET program restarted in FY 2008 without authorizing travel funds, decisions about where to deploy METs were based on proximity to the division office. As a result, METs were essentially not mobile. We determined that for FY 2008, the target area for MET operations was an average of 10.8 miles from the division office address.

For FYs 2009 and 2010, the DEA did authorize the use of MET funds for travel expenses. However, for those years only 4 of 16 deployments were more than 50 miles from the division office. None of the deployments were to a rural area where methamphetamine was the focus of the deployment.[11]

In restarting the MET program, the DEA chose to maximize the number of divisions that could operate a MET over allowing the METs mobility to travel to locations away from the division office. The DEA placed METs in as many divisions as possible to focus on the violent crime in the local metropolitan areas. We recognize that these deployments addressed significant law enforcement needs, but the METs were not mobile, as envisioned in the program's design and did not target needs throughout the divisions' geographic jurisdictions, many of which covered large geographic areas.

Exhibit 1 shows the location of the division offices that re-established a MET since FY 2008. Flags with a dot represent the field divisions that initiated at least one deployment where methamphetamine was the primary focus of the deployment.

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[11] In February 2009, one division received a request to deploy to a rural location 62 miles from the division office, but denied it because travel funds were not authorized for METs until March 2009.

Exhibit 1:
DEA Field Divisions with a MET as of June 2010
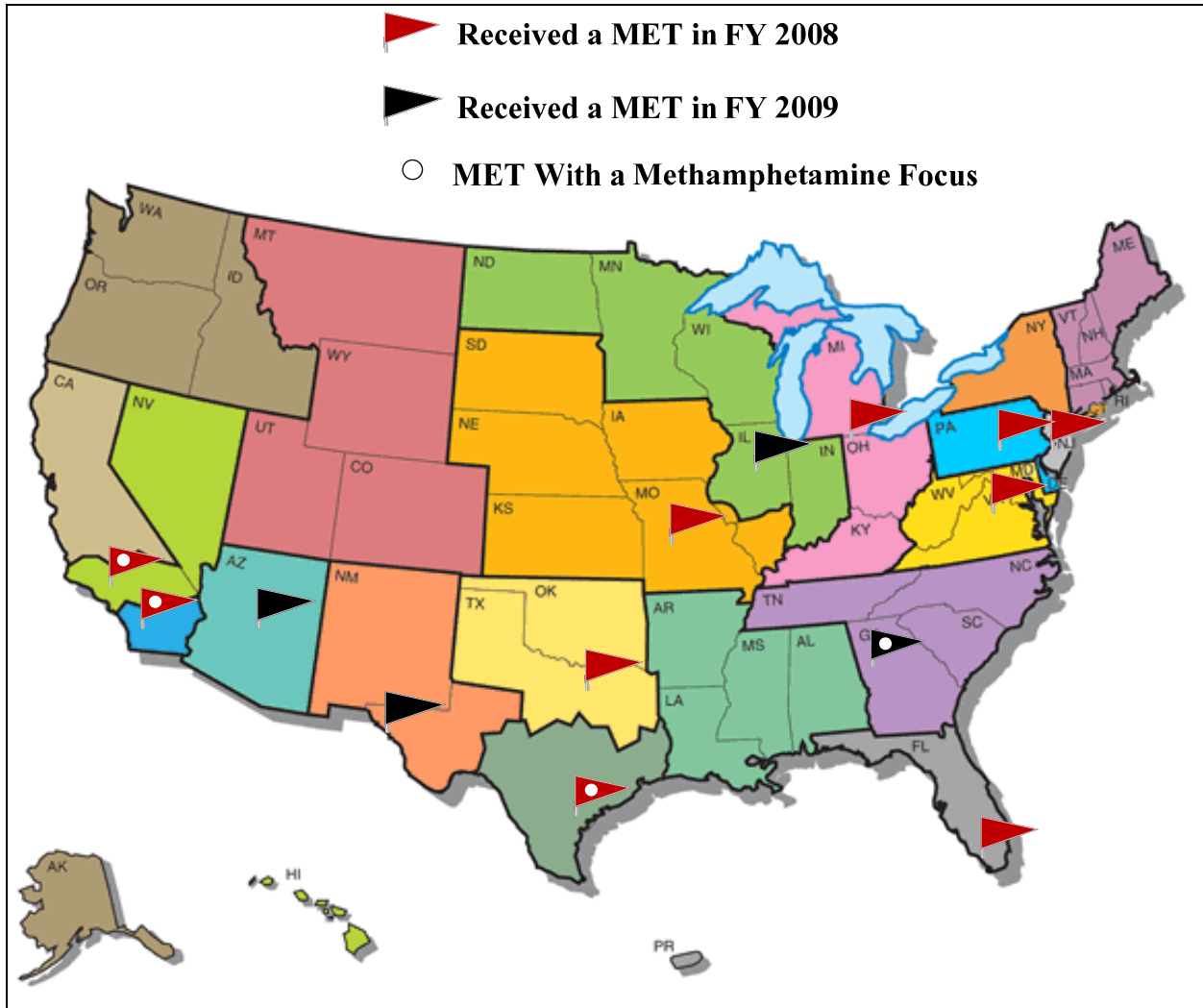
Source: DEA website

Deployment Selection Process

A MET deployment typically begins with a request from a local law enforcement executive or a DEA manager who has jurisdiction for the target area. To assess the need to deploy a MET, the DEA Special Agent in Charge (SAC) evaluates the drug problem and the capabilities of the local law enforcement agency to address the problem. If a deployment is warranted, the SAC approves the initial assessment and forwards that to the DEA Operations Division for review and approval.

However, we found the DEA did not have a standardized process to identify local law enforcement agencies most in need of MET program assistance. We also found that the basis for selecting deployments varied

between divisions. We concluded that the Chicago and Phoenix Division offices provided MET assistance to those local law enforcement agencies that provided better-defined targets. The Miami Division based deployment decisions on DEA agents' personal knowledge about the problem area. The Miami Division also conducted a MET operation within commuting distance of the division office because some of its MET agents had to be near their home office due to other work obligations. The Los Angeles Division chose one of its deployment locations because Division managers believed that the location provided a good training exercise for new MET agents.

We also found that DEA headquarters had little input into the selection of deployment locations. The Office of Global Enforcement, Regional and Local Impact Section at DEA headquarters, is the program management office for the MET program. Field division managers first select a deployment location and then provide the Regional and Local Impact Section a copy of the request for deployment and their assessment of the request. However, a field division does not provide the Section with details such as other requests the field division receives, the field division's assessment of each request, an explanation of the factors weighed in selecting between other requests, or detailed support for the deployment selected. The Regional and Local Impact Section staff only reviews the documents submitted for completeness and then recommends approval of the deployment.

The Regional and Local Impact Section staff told us that they do not question the deployment decisions of the SACs. This was consistent with the findings of our review, which determined that since the program restarted in 2008 the Section staff recommended approval for every one of the 27 deployment requests it received from field divisions. We concluded that the Regional and Local Impact Section has very limited involvement in the selection process.

We believe the DEA could increase the value of MET deployments through enhancing the involvement of the Regional and Local Impact Section in the deployment selection process. The Section could develop and issue guidance on selecting deployments objectively according to need, obtain from the field divisions complete documentation for all of the deployment requests, and review planned deployments more critically.

MET Outreach

We assessed how the DEA promotes the MET program to law enforcement agencies, including those in rural areas. Two DEA field

divisions sent letters and information packets to local law enforcement agencies with instructions for requesting MET assistance. In the other 12 divisions with a restarted MET, DEA managers told us they met or communicated with local law enforcement agencies.

We found that requests for MET assistance have declined slightly since the MET program restarted in 2008. We could not determine the reasons for the decline, but we believe that the DEA could increase the number of requests by increasing its outreach efforts to state and local law enforcement agencies.

The DEA's Assessment of the Success of MET Deployments

The DEA's System for Evaluating MET Operations

The DEA's MET program handbook states that the goal of the MET program is to reduce violence associated with drug trafficking, disrupt or dismantle drug trafficking organizations, and reduce the availability of drugs. The DEA's policy in its program handbook for approving MET deployments states that DEA Special Agents in Charge should give priority to requests for MET assistance where methamphetamine enforcement is the primary focus of the request.

The DEA tracks arrests, seizures, and numbers of drug trafficking organizations that were disrupted or dismantled. The DEA also conducts pre- and post-deployment assessments of crime statistics within the target area of the deployment. However, the DEA did not always conduct a complete and timely assessment of each MET operation.

Results of MET Operations

We examined the DEA's various reports on MET deployments since the program restarted. Since FY 2008, METs have dismantled 58 drug trafficking organizations and disrupted 92 others.

Moreover, from May 2008 through January 2010, during 27 deployments METs made 1,570 arrests, which resulted in 340 convictions. The outcome for 1,230 arrests was still pending.[12]

In addition to making arrests, the 27 MET deployments resulted in drug and non-drug seizures shown in Exhibits 2 and 3.

Exhibit 2: Grams of Drugs Seized During MET Operations May 2008 through January 2010

Cocaine	Crack	Heroin	Marijuana	Metham-phetamine
49,961.31	18,959.00	11,388.50	1,474,042.00	32,028.60

Source: DEA Divisions with a MET

Exhibit 3: Non-Drug Property Seized During MET Operations May 2008 through January 2010

Cash	Property	Vehicles		Firearms
		Number	Value	
$1,764,698	$554,290	85	$1,729,049	297

Source: DEA Divisions with a MET

Post-Deployment Reporting

According to the MET program handbook, METs should assess and document the results of each completed MET deployment in a Six-Month Post-Deployment report. Between FY 2008 and January 2010, the DEA completed nine MET deployments. We determined that for these nine deployments, two Post-Deployment reports were submitted timely, and six were submitted from 15 to 121 days late. As of July 7, 2010, one other

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[12] The DEA uses a statistical form for tracking arrests, guilty pleas, convictions, acquittals, and dismissals. The DEA told us it only reports the number of arrests for each deployment because of the delays that can occur between arrests and the final outcome of those arrests, including dismissals. The DEA should ensure it completes the statistical form for each arrest and uses that information to improve its operations. Unless the DEA tracks dismissals, it cannot accurately gauge significant trends such as whether an unusually high number of its arrests are resulting in pre-trial dismissals by prosecutors. We believe that tracking dismissals and the reasons for the dismissal could provide information that will help the DEA improve its operations.

report was 327 days late.[13] Four of the late reports were not submitted until we requested them from the DEA. Further, four divisions have opened multiple investigative cases in different geographic target areas under a single MET deployment, but they did not always complete a post-assessment for each target area. The DEA should ensure METs timely complete an assessment when operations in each target area have ended, so that the DEA can assess whether the operation had a lasting impact on each target area.

We also found that for some post-deployment assessments, METs used pre- and post-deployment crime statistics for a geographic area that is much larger than the target area. Consequently, contrary to the implication of these post-deployment assessments, changes in crime rates in large geographic areas may not be attributable to MET operations. We believe that the DEA should base pre- and post-assessments on crime statistics for the defined target area.

Each Six-Month Post-Deployment Report also contained a section explaining how the local community reacted to the MET deployment and what the local community was doing to reduce crime. In general, in these reports the local communities had positive comments about MET operations, but the reports provided little information about community involvement.

According to the MET handbook, each report should include the local law enforcement agency's assessment of the deployment. However, for six of eight assessments we reviewed, the field division provided its own assessment rather than that of the local law enforcement agency. Two divisions prepared nearly identical assessments for two different deployments within each division, indicating that one assessment had been copied from the prior assessment.

Post-Deployment reports are a valuable tool for the DEA to use in examining the success and failures of MET deployments. We believe that it is important that reports be completed in a thorough, accurate, and timely manner to assist the DEA in indentifying best practices and determining areas requiring improvement.

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[13] The DEA has no policy for how quickly the Six-Month Post-Deployment Report should be submitted after the 6-month post-deployment period has ended. We considered the report to be timely if it was submitted within 7 months after the deployment ended. The report that has not been submitted was 327 days past due for a MET deployment initiated by the New Jersey Division. That deployment ended January 16, 2009, and the post-deployment assessment report was therefore due August 14, 2009, according to our definition of timeliness.

Conclusion and Recommendations

DEA MET program operations have resulted in arrests, convictions, and seizures of drugs and other property that led to disruptions and dismantlements of drug trafficking organizations. Congress provided the DEA MET funding for FY 2008 and stated that METs should focus on "methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs." When Congress provided the DEA MET funding for FYs 2009 and 2010, it wanted DEA MET operations to "include a focus on methamphetamine trafficking and operations." However, the DEA informed Congress in it budget submissions and answers to questions from budget hearings that it planned to use METs to address violent gangs trafficking various types of drugs. We determined that from April 2008 through January 2010, 7 (26 percent) of 27 initiated MET deployments focused primarily on methamphetamine enforcement. DEA officials told us they believe this level of methamphetamine enforcement operations is sufficient to meet Congress' intent for the program. Yet, DEA officials agreed that its MET program policy, which states that methamphetamine is the program's main focus, should be updated to reflect the DEA's current view that METs should focus primarily on violent gangs.

We also found that, despite its name, the DEA's "Mobile Enforcement Teams" were not mobile because they operated primarily in metropolitan areas to combat gangs trafficking various types of drugs. Consequently, local law enforcement agencies in rural areas did not have the benefit of using METs to address either methamphetamine or gang problems within their jurisdictions.

In this report, we make six recommendations to help improve the DEA's MET program, including that the DEA consider whether it should use more MET resources to combat methamphetamine production and trafficking, update the MET program handbook to reflect the current focus of the program, and provide relevant guidance to its field divisions. We also recommend that the DEA make improvements pertaining to outreach efforts, its process for reviewing and selecting from competing requests for MET assistance, and its procedures for reporting and evaluating the results of MET operations.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) enforces the controlled substances laws and regulations of the United States and investigates organizations and individuals involved in the growing, manufacture, or distribution of controlled substances.[1] According to the Department's strategic plan for combating illegal drugs and associated violence, the DEA also partners with state and local law enforcement agencies to provide training and carry out enforcement operations. The DEA coordinates with federal, state and local law enforcement officials on mutual drug enforcement efforts when efforts are beyond local or limited federal jurisdictions and resources.

In 1995, the DEA established its Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) program to address violent drug-related crime and help rural local law enforcement agencies confront drug trafficking. METs were placed in DEA field divisions, which often are responsible for a multi-state area. METs can deploy to any location within its field division's jurisdiction when a local law enforcement agency requests MET assistance. For example, a local law enforcement agency can request MET assistance because budget constraints and limited investigative capabilities make it difficult for the agency to conduct a comprehensive investigation of the targeted drug trafficking organization. MET deployments also can be based on a local agency's inability to conduct undercover operations because local drug dealers recognize the local jurisdiction's narcotics officers. The most common type of assistance provided by a MET is using informants and making undercover purchases of drugs.

The DEA's policy for approving MET deployments explains that the goal of the MET program is to reduce drug related violence and disrupt or dismantle the rapidly increasing number of methamphetamine drug traffickers and laboratories. According to the MET program handbook, by targeting these organizations the DEA intends its METs to remove offenders from communities' streets and have a significant impact on drug-related violence and drug availability.

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[1] A controlled substance is a drug that has been declared by federal or state law to be illegal for sale or use. Some controlled substances may be dispensed under a physician's prescription.

MET Program Funding

Beginning in 1995 and through June 2007, each of the DEA's 21 field divisions had a MET consisting of approximately 8 to 10 DEA Special Agents and a supervisor.

In March 2005, the DEA updated the MET program handbook to make methamphetamine investigations a priority for the MET program. The policy for approving MET deployments stated that DEA Special Agents in Charge should give priority to requests for MET assistance where methamphetamine enforcement is the primary focus of the request. In fiscal year (FY) 2005, 41 percent of new MET deployments targeted methamphetamine trafficking organizations.

In July 2007, funding for the MET program was reduced because of budget constraints. The DEA's spending plan for its FY 2007 appropriation, which Congress approved, reduced the MET program funding by two-thirds to just over $20 million, including funding only for the first three quarters of FY 2007. Because the plan did not include funding for the fourth quarter of FY 2007, the DEA determined that all MET deployments had to be completed no later than July 1, 2007.

The President's FY 2008 Congressional Budget Submission did not request funding for the DEA's MET program. As shown in Exhibit 1, between October 1998 and June 2007 MET program staffing peaked in FYs 2000 and 2001, and funding peaked in FY 2004.

Exhibit 1:
Staffing and Funding for METs
October 1, 1998, through June 30, 2007

Fiscal Year	Special Agents	Support Personnel[2]	Funding
1999	260	22	$51,100,000
2000	272	30	$53,900,000
2001	272	30	$56,780,000
2002	264	28	$57,294,000
2003	228	23	$52,049,000
2004	216	23	$59,311,000
2005	212	22	$56,348,000
2006	212	22	$48,517,000
2007[3]	80	3	$20,578,000
Total			**$455,877,000**

Source: DEA Budget Office

For FY 2008, Congress appropriated $20.6 million for the MET program, despite the fact that the President's FY 2008 Congressional Budget Submission did not request any funding for the DEA's MET program. The explanatory statements to the FY 2008 Appropriations Act specified that METs should target methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs.[4]

With this funding enhancement, in May 2008 the DEA re-established a MET in the following 10 DEA field divisions: Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Jersey, Philadelphia, St. Louis, San Diego, and Washington.

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[2] Support personnel include professional, administrative, technical, and clerical personnel such as program analysts, administrative specialists, budget analysts, and group assistants.

[3] The DEA discontinued the MET program July 1, 2007.

[4] U.S. House Committee Print on Consolidated Appropriations Act 2008 (H.R. 2764; Public Law 110-1510, *Division B – Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2008*, page 256. The explanatory statements states "Furthermore, the Administration's proposal to eliminate the Mobile Enforcement Teams (MET) program and reduce further the number of DEA agents and support staff is believed to be ill-advised. Therefore, the Administration is directed to use remaining funds above the request to continue this program. This will enable the DEA to retain special agents, allowing DEA to continue assisting state and local law enforcement in their fight against methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs."

In its FY 2009 budget submission, DEA stated that it planned to use METs to focus on gangs and violence. For FY 2009, Congress appropriated $30.6 million for the MET program and directed in an explanatory statement that MET operations should "include a focus" on methamphetamine trafficking.[5] With the additional $10 million beyond what was appropriated in FY 2008, the DEA established a MET at another four field divisions located in Atlanta, Chicago, El Paso, and Phoenix for the purpose of targeting Mexican methamphetamine trafficking operations and associated violence.[6]

The DEA also informed Congress through its FY 2010 budget submission that it planned to use METs to focus on gangs and violence. For FY 2010, Congress appropriated $36.4 million for MET operations and stated in a conference report that with the increased funding from the prior fiscal year, the DEA MET program should continue to "include a focus" on methamphetamine enforcement.[7] With the increased funding, the DEA added two additional METs in FY 2010 (July) at the New Orleans and Caribbean Divisions.

Exhibit 2 shows the DEA field divisions with a MET as of June 2010. Field divisions with a red flag received a MET in FY 2008 and the field divisions with a black flag received a MET in FY 2009. Flags with a dot represent the field divisions that initiated at least one deployment that focused primarily on methamphetamine.

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[5] The explanatory statements state, "The bill provides an increase of $10,000,000 to allow DEA to begin rebuilding the MET program, both through the establishment of additional teams and by increasing the funds available for existing teams. The activities of MET should continue to include a focus on methamphetamine enforcement."

[6] The Phoenix Division's MET is located in Tucson, Arizona.

[7] The conference report states "The activities of MET should continue to include a focus on methamphetamine."

Exhibit 2:
DEA Field Divisions with a MET as of June 2010[8]
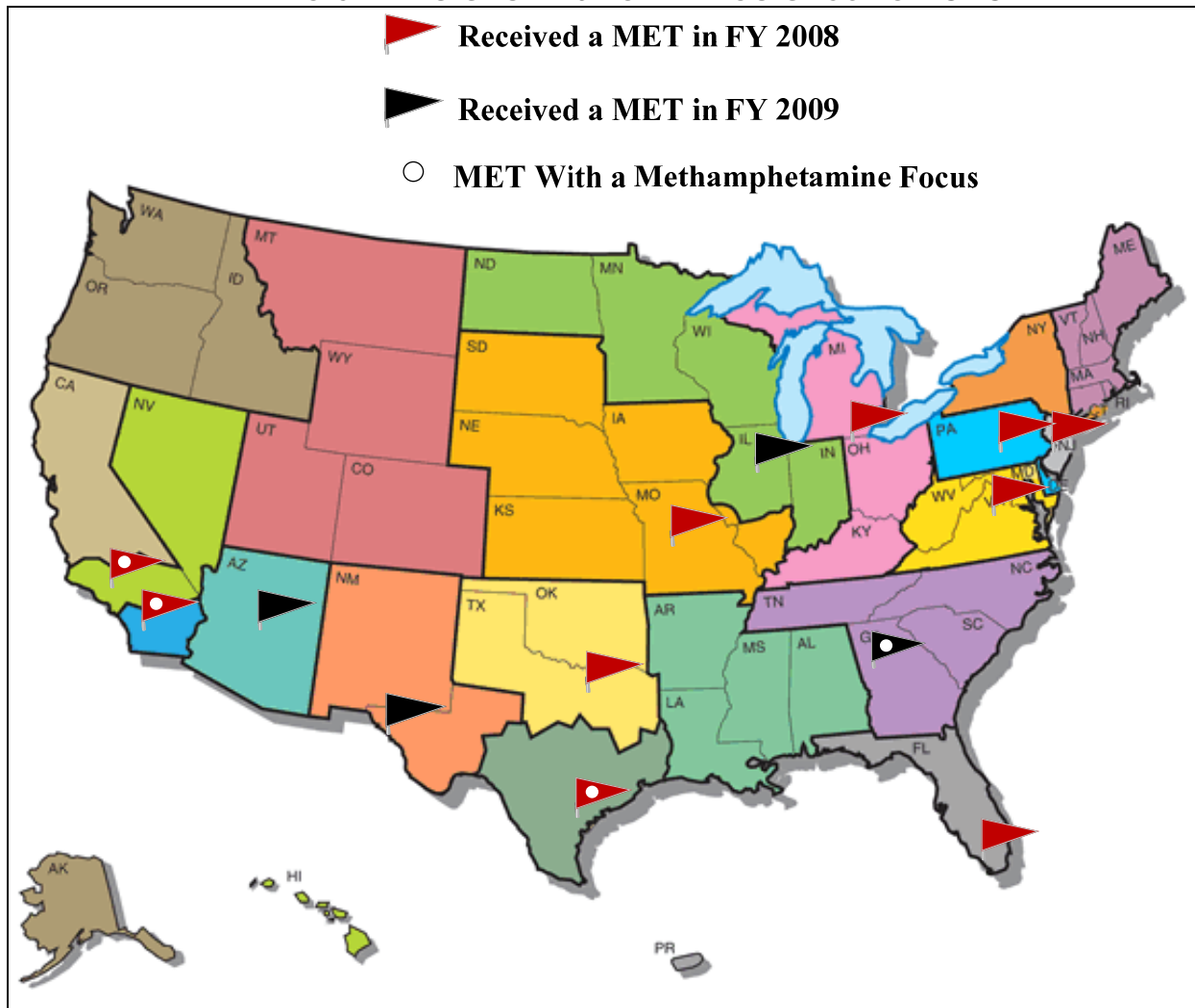
Source: DEA Website

Exhibit 3 shows the number of MET personnel and funding for FYs 2008 through 2010, and the proposed personnel and funding for FY 2011.

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[8] In July 2010, the DEA established a MET at the New Orleans and Caribbean Divisions.

Exhibit 3:
Personnel and Funding for the MET Program
May 1, 2008, through September 30, 2011

Fiscal Year	Special Agents	Support Personnel	Funding
2008	80	3	$20,578,000
2009	112	15	$30,578,000
2010	128	17	$36,396,000
2011	128	17	$38,046,000
Total			**$125,598,000**

Source: DEA Budget Office

As shown in Exhibit 4, the DEA used most MET funding for pay and benefits for DEA staff. MET infrastructure spending included expenditures for network connections, training, permanent change of stations costs, and supplies.

Exhibit 4:
MET Expenditures for FY 2008 and FY 2009
(Dollars in Millions)[9]
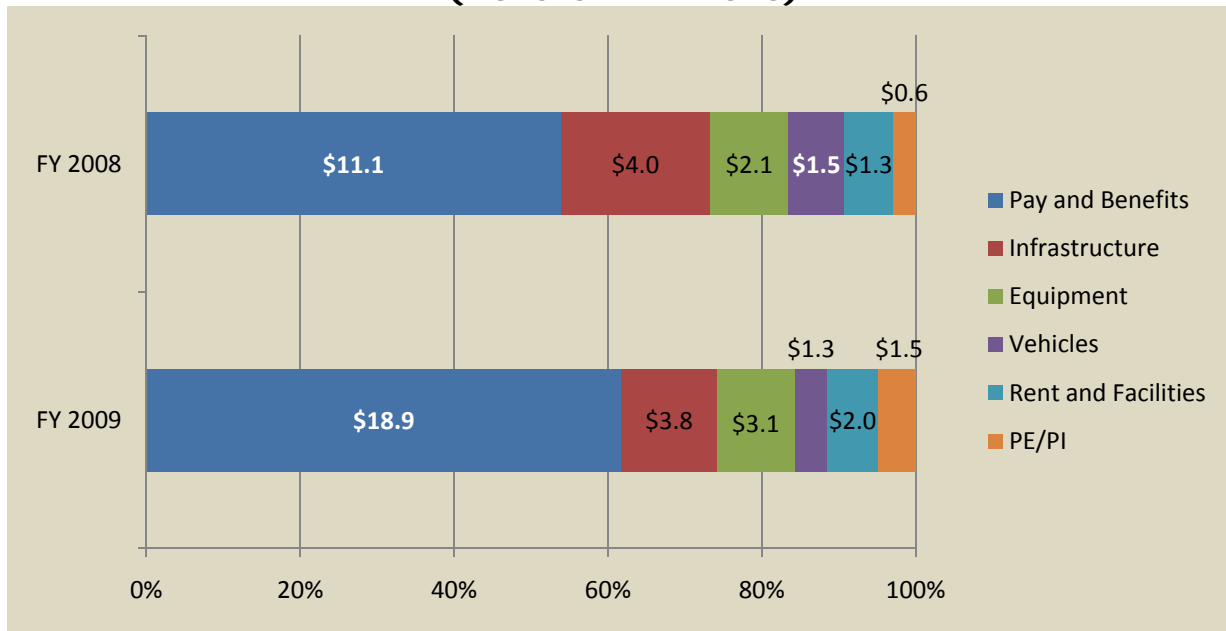
Source: DEA Budget Office

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[9] PE/PI is the purchase of evidence or the purchase of information.

MET Request Process

The DEA MET Program Handbook contains MET program requirements and guidelines and also includes the requirements for requesting MET assistance. When a local law enforcement agency needs MET assistance, it must submit a request letter to its local DEA field division office. Alternatively, a DEA supervisory official, such as an Assistant Special Agent in Charge or Resident Agent in Charge, with knowledge and jurisdiction over the corresponding geographic area, can request a MET deployment through a memorandum to one's field division Special Agent in Charge. If a DEA official requests MET support, the request should include documented concurrence from the local law enforcement agency's chief executive.

According to the MET Program Handbook, all MET deployment requests should include a pre-deployment assessment that documents the drug and related violence problem and that explains the local law enforcement agency's inability to address the problem. The DEA records the pre-deployment assessment in the form of a checklist, which incorporates 18 elements designed to evaluate the needs and the abilities of the local law enforcement agency.

The MET Program Handbook provides that DEA Special Agents in Charge, at their discretion, may deploy the MET to support Priority Target Organization investigations within the field division's geographic jurisdiction, with the concurrence of the DEA Office of Global Enforcement's Regional and Local Impact Section.[10] Deployments initiated at a Special Agent in Charge's discretion, absent the request from a local law enforcement executive, must also include the pre-deployment assessment.

The MET Program Handbook states that when assessing the need to deploy a MET to a community, the Special Agent in Charge should evaluate the scope of the drug and related violence problem within a specifically delineated geographic area. The Special Agent in Charge should also communicate with on-site DEA supervisory personnel and assess the capability of the local DEA office and local law enforcement community to address the drug and violence problem. According to the handbook, because DEA's resources are limited, a MET should deploy only when it is

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[10] Priority Target Organization is a designation that DEA attributes to the most significant international, national, regional, and local drug trafficking and money laundering organizations affecting drug availability. The Office of Global Enforcement Regional and Local Impact Section is the DEA component that monitors the MET Program.

obvious that the problem is beyond the immediate capabilities of both the local DEA office and the local law enforcement community.

The DEA's policy for approving MET deployments also states that the Special Agent in Charge should prioritize all requests for MET deployments where methamphetamine is the primary drug threat. According to the DEA policy, when selecting a deployment that does not target methamphetamine the DEA should focus on the subject community's violent crime rate and the targeted drug trafficking organization's involvement in that violence. Special Agents in Charge should also be sure that the deployment targets meet the criteria of a DEA-designated Priority Target Organization.

Prior Audits, Inspections, and Reviews

General Accounting Office Report

In July 2001, the U.S. General Accounting Office – now the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) – issued a report on the DEA's Mobile Enforcement Teams.[11] The GAO concluded that since establishing the program in 1995 the DEA had enhanced its management of the program and provided for greater headquarters oversight and monitoring. In implementing the program and carrying out deployments, the field division METs generally complied with some of the pertinent requirements and guidelines that the GAO reviewed. The GAO found that MET deployments focused primarily on street-level drug dealers and were mostly local and regional in scope, which was consistent with the objectives of the program.

However, the GAO found that DEA headquarters files did not contain adequate documentation showing the DEA evaluated the local law enforcement agencies' capabilities. Consequently, the GAO could not determine whether local law enforcement agencies could alone address the problems for which they requested MET assistance.

The DEA collected data on various performance measures to assess the results of individual deployments and the overall program. The DEA reported internally and externally on program results for some of the performance measures. The GAO determined that the measures had problems and limitations related primarily to the inconsistency in data collection.

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[11] U.S. General Accounting Office, *DEA'S MOBILE ENFORCEMENT TEAMS, Steps Taken to Enhance Program Management, But More Can Be Done,* GAO-01-482 (July 2001).

The GAO recommended that the DEA provide clear guidance for METs to use in assessing local law enforcement agencies' capabilities, and ensure that the DEA field divisions document such assessments and provide them to DEA headquarters before MET deployments are approved. The GAO also recommended that the DEA develop data collection methods and a survey instrument to better assess individual MET deployments and the MET program as a whole.

In response to the GAO recommendations, in April 2002 the DEA reported that it had updated its MET program guidelines and included a newly mandated MET Assessment Checklist that would be used to assess local law enforcement capabilities and would be submitted with the request for a MET deployment.

The DEA also reported to the GAO that it tried to implement GAO's recommendation regarding data collection and survey instruments. However, the DEA determined that obtaining information using a survey instrument would be cost prohibitive, and the DEA reported to GAO that its MET program would continue collecting information from law enforcement agencies and measuring performance in essentially the same manner as it had when the GAO performed its review.

DEA Office of Inspections Reports

The DEA Office of Inspections performs periodic inspections of division offices covering key program areas, including the MET program. DEA inspection reports outline findings and require field divisions to take appropriate corrective actions.

The DEA Office of Inspections provided us with reports pertaining to MET program activities within six field divisions. Two reports covered a period coinciding with the period covered by our audit. Both reports included arrest and seizure data as support for the MET program's effectiveness. The two reports stated that each MET was utilizing its MET resources to support the DEA's mission and enforcement priorities.

OIG FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I.   THE DEA INFORMED CONGRESS THAT IT USED MET PROGRAM FUNDS PRIMARILY TO COMBAT VIOLENT GANGS, ALTHOUGH CONGRESSIONAL DIRECTIVES AND DEA POLICY EMPHASIZE METHAMPHETAMINE ENFORCEMENT

For FY 2008, an explanatory statement accompanying the DEA appropriation stated that MET operations should focus on "methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs." With the FYs 2009 and 2010 funding enhancements, congressional documents stated that METs should "include a focus on methamphetamine." However, the DEA informed Congress in annual budget submissions and DEA answers to questions from budget hearings that it planned to use METs to address violent gangs involved in drug trafficking. We found that since the DEA's MET program returned to operation in May 2008, 7 (26 percent) of the 27 initiated deployments focused on methamphetamine trafficking. DEA officials told us they believe this level of methamphetamine enforcement operations is sufficient to meet Congress' intent for the program. However, existing DEA MET program policy states that methamphetamine should be the focus of the program. DEA officials stated that this policy requires updating to reflect the DEA's current view that METs should focus primarily on combating violent gangs.

We also found that Mobile Enforcement Teams were not mobile because the DEA deployed METs mainly within field divisions' metropolitan areas to combat gangs trafficking mostly cocaine and crack cocaine. Consequently, rural law enforcement agencies did not have the benefit of using MET resources to address either methamphetamine or gang problems within their jurisdictions.

MET Program Focus

Congressional Interest in Methamphetamine Enforcement and the DEA's Reported MET Focus

Prior to the temporary halt of the MET program in July 2007, and since the program restarted in May 2008, Congress had stated that it was funding

the DEA's MET program to focus on methamphetamine. The Conference Report accompanying the Science, State, Justice, Commerce, and related Agencies Appropriations Bill for FY 2006 stated: [12]

> The conference agreement does not adopt the Administration's proposal to reduce Mobile Enforcement Teams or to eliminate the Demand Reduction program. The conference agreement funds these programs at their current services level. The conferees direct the DEA to focus these programs on combating methamphetamine production, trafficking and abuse.

FY 2007 MET Funding - $20.6 million

The Committee Report accompanying the Science, State, Justice, Commerce, and related Agencies Appropriations Bill for FY 2007 stated:

> The recommendation includes $37,746,000 for the MET program, which is $17,168,000 above the level requested.[13] MET teams are deployed on a temporary basis to assist state and local law enforcement in areas that have been overrun with drug-related violent crime. The Committee is very disappointed that the Administration once again proposed a significant reduction to this program to reduce drug-related violence throughout the country.

On June 30, 2007, the DEA ended the MET program due to budgetary constraints. The sections that follow summarize the annual congressional statements beginning with FY 2008 that pertain to the MET program and information regarding the program provided to Congress by the DEA.

FY 2008 MET Funding - $20.6 million

The July 19, 2007, House Report accompanying the FY 2008 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill discusses the MET program in a section dedicated to methamphetamine trafficking enforcement. The report stated:

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[12] Unless specifically referenced in the statute, conference reports, committee reports, and explanatory statements do not have the force of law and therefore are not legally binding on an executive branch agency.

[13] As explained previously, the DEA MET program budget was cut by two-thirds in FY 2007, and the DEA was only able to fund FY 2007 MET operations for the first three quarters of the fiscal year.

Small domestic amateur labs, in home kitchens, motel rooms, or still (sic) produce methamphetamine within the United States. Since March 2005, the DEA Mobile Enforcement Teams (MET) have made methamphetamine investigations a priority. In fiscal year 2005, 41 percent of new MET deployments targeted methamphetamine trafficking organizations. However, the President's request for fiscal year 2008 terminates this program, which bolsters state and local law enforcement. The Committee rejects this proposal, and includes $20,578,000 for MET teams.

The "Highlights of the Bill" section of the report stated that the DEA is to receive "$2.082 billion, $125 million over FY 2007 and $40 million over the FY 2008 request, including restoring Mobile Enforcement Teams' methamphetamine efforts."

The December 17, 2007, explanatory statements attached to the FY 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Division B-Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies state:

Furthermore, the Administration's proposal to eliminate the Mobile Enforcement Teams (MET) program and reduce further the number of DEA agents and support staff is believed to be ill-advised, and therefore the Administration is directed to use remaining funds above the request to continue this program. This will enable DEA to retain special agents, allowing DEA to continue assisting State and local law enforcement in their fight against methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs.

DEA officials told us that in their view, the language "and other dangerous drugs" indicates a congressional understanding that the MET program would not focus exclusively or primarily on methamphetamine enforcement. Moreover, as discussed below, in May 2008 the DEA told Congress it would use the FY 2008 appropriation to establish 10 METs to focus on the parts of the country with the greatest violent crime and gang problems.

FY 2009 MET Funding - $30.6 million

In February 2008, the DEA submitted its FY 2009 Congressional Budget, which stated:

In DEA's FY 2008 appropriation, $20.6 million and 83 positions for the MET program were funded. DEA is evaluating how best to use these

resources to address drug trafficking that involves criminal street gangs and violent crime. With this funding and these positions, the DEA will continue the Administration's efforts against gangs and violence.

DEA officials told us that the language in its budget submissions clearly indicated to Congress that the restarted MET program had a primary focus of enforcement operations against gangs and violence.

Following an April 2008 Department of Justice House Appropriations Committee hearing, Congress asked what options the DEA was considering to best use the $20.6 million appropriated for METs in FY 2008. In May 2008, the DEA responded that it intended to establish 10 teams and focus them in areas of the country with the greatest violent crime and gang problems.

However, the explanatory statements appended to the FY 2009 Consolidated Omnibus Appropriations Act, Division B-Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies state:

> The bill provides an increase of $10,000,000 to allow DEA to begin rebuilding the MET program, both through the establishment of additional teams and by increasing the funds available for existing teams. The activities of MET should continue to include a focus on methamphetamine enforcement.

DEA officials told us that in their view, the language " to include a focus on methamphetamine enforcement" demonstrated the congressional understanding that MET deployments would focus somewhat on methamphetamine, but would not focus exclusively or primarily in that enforcement area.

FY 2010 MET Funding - $35.6 million

In May 2009, the DEA submitted its FY 2010 Congressional Budget request, which stated:

> Today, MET teams are deployed on a temporary basis (averaging 6 months per deployment) to assist state, local, and tribal law enforcement in the disruption or dismantlement of violent drug trafficking organizations and gangs.

On July 16, 2009, the DEA's Assistant Administrator for Intelligence, and a Deputy Assistant Administrator from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, provided a joint statement to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism on interagency coordination concerning border violence. The statement informed the committee that the DEA was adding METs to four additional field divisions specifically to target Mexican methamphetamine trafficking operations and associated violence. However, we determine that as of January 2010, only one of those four divisions (Atlanta) had a deployment that targeted methamphetamine. The statement did not comment on the focus of the other 10 previously re-established METs.

The December 8, 2009 Conference Report accompanying the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for FY 2010 states:

> The conference agreement includes $5,000,000 above the request to continue re-establishing Mobile Enforcement Teams (MET) in each domestic field office. The activities of MET should continue to include a focus on methamphetamine enforcement.

DEA officials told us they believe that the language "continue to include a focus on methamphetamine enforcement" again demonstrated the congressional understanding that MET deployments would focus somewhat on methamphetamine, but would not focus exclusively or primarily in that enforcement area.

The DEA's MET Program Policies

The MET program operates under a written policy developed in 1995 by personnel in the DEA's Office of Domestic Enforcement. The policy states that the goal of the MET program is to:

- reduce violence that is a result of drug trafficking;

- curb the rapidly increasing number of methamphetamine drug trafficking organizations and the operators of clandestine laboratories; and

- disrupt or dismantle drug trafficking organizations, thus reducing the availability of drugs.

The policy requires Special Agents in Charge to assess the need to deploy a MET to a community, evaluate the scope of the drug and related violence problem within a specifically delineated geographic area, and prioritize all requests for MET deployments where methamphetamine is the primary drug threat.

In 2005, the DEA updated the MET Program Handbook to reflect that Special Agents in Charge should give priority to requests for MET assistance that had methamphetamine as the primary focus of the request.

Our attempts to locate other DEA documents and statements explaining the DEA's planned focus for the MET program identified one internal memorandum pertaining to the DEA's planned use for the FY 2009 appropriation.

On March 31, 2009, the DEA's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) distributed a memorandum to DEA executive managers regarding the FY 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act. The memorandum explained that the FY 2009 appropriation included funds to add four METs to focus on methamphetamine enforcement. An appendix to the memorandum stated that the enhancement would allow the DEA to begin rebuilding the MET program, both through the establishment of additional teams and by increasing the funds available for existing teams. The appendix also stated that the activities of MET should continue to include a focus on methamphetamine enforcement.

The DEA's CFO told us that the appendix to the March 2009 memorandum, which states that METs "should continue to include a focus on methamphetamine enforcement," makes it clear that the DEA would focus somewhat on methamphetamine, but would not focus exclusively or primarily in that area.

Since the restart of the MET program, the DEA had described it as a program focusing on gangs and violent crime. However, during this time, MET program policy has not changed from its emphasis on methamphetamine. We believe that policy requires updating to clearly reflect the DEA's intended focus for the program.

MET Deployment Focus

Our review found that in FYs 2005 and 2006, 41 percent and 56 percent of all MET deployments focused on methamphetamine production and trafficking. For FY 2007, before funding for the MET program depleted

that year, the DEA planned to focus 60 percent of its MET deployments on methamphetamine.

However, in April 2008, immediately before the MET program restarted, the DEA headquarters sent a teletype to all DEA Domestic Offices that explained the restart of the MET program and included guidance on a deployment model for anti-gang and violent crime investigations. The teletype stated that the reason for the teletype was to provide guidance for MET and non-MET anti-gang violent crime investigations and that METs should continue to conduct single focus investigations at the request of state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies.

The Chief of the Regional and Local Impact Section told us that this model aligned with the Attorney General's mandate for gang enforcement. He also told us that the direction in the MET Program Handbook that Special Agents in Charge should give priority to deployment requests focusing on methamphetamine needed to be updated to reflect the new focus as reflected in the April 2008 teletype to the Divisions about the restart of the MET program.

Our audit found that since May 2008, when the DEA restarted the MET program, MET deployments have focused primarily on violent gangs involved in drug trafficking. The violent gangs targeted by MET deployments were mainly in metropolitan areas and focused on cocaine and crack cocaine trafficking.

We reviewed deployment requests and pre-deployment assessments prepared by DEA staff for each of the 27 MET deployments from May 2008 through January 2010. We determined that 7 (26 percent) of the 27 deployments included methamphetamine as a focus, as shown in Exhibit 5.

Exhibit 5:
MET Deployment Drug Focus and Distance

	Division Office	Deployment Location	Deployment Drug Focus	Distance[14]
F Y 2 0 0 8	Dallas	Fort Worth, TX	Cocaine/Crack Cocaine	31.4
	Detroit	Detroit, MI	Cocaine/Heroin	0.5
	Houston	Houston, TX	**Methamphetamine**/Cocaine/Marijuana	6.7
	Los Angeles	Pasadena, CA	**Methamphetamine**/Crack Cocaine	10.8
	Miami	Opa-Locka, FL	Crack Cocaine	22.2
	New Jersey	Newark, NJ	Heroin	0.3
	Philadelphia	Philadelphia, PA	Cocaine	1.0
	St. Louis	St. Louis, MO	Crack Cocaine/Heroin/Ecstasy	2.5
	San Diego	San Diego, CA	Cocaine/Crack Cocaine	9.5
	San Diego	Oceanside, CA	Cocaine/Crack Cocaine	32.5
	Washington	Washington, DC	Heroin	1.9
F Y 2 0 0 9	Chicago	Chicago, IL	Heroin	9.1
	Dallas	Greenville, TX	Cocaine/Crack Cocaine	60.9
	Houston	Montgomery Co., TX	**Methamphetamine**	44.4
	Los Angeles	Los Angeles, CA	**Methamphetamine**/Cocaine/Heroin	0.4
	Miami	Coral Springs, FL	Cocaine	17.6
	Miami	Fort Lauderdale, FL	Cocaine	21.4
	New Jersey	Irvington, NJ	Heroin	4.3
	Philadelphia	Darby Borough, PA	Cocaine/Crack Cocaine	6.1
	Phoenix	Casa Grande, AZ	PCP/Cocaine/Crack Cocaine	74.9[15]
	San Diego	San Diego, CA	**Methamphetamine**/Cocaine/Marijuana	9.5
F Y 2 0 1 0	Atlanta	Atlanta, GA	**Methamphetamine**	0.6
	Chicago	Chicago Heights, IL	Heroin/Crack Cocaine	32.3
	El Paso	Espanola, NM	Heroin	347.0
	Los Angeles	Antelope Valley, CA	Cocaine/Crack Cocaine	78.5
	Miami	Allapattah, FL	Cocaine/Crack Cocaine	27.2
	San Diego	San Diego, CA	**Methamphetamine**/Ecstasy	9.5

Source: DEA MET deployment files and OIG calculation of mileage

The focus of each MET deployment is described in the pre-deployment assessment. A MET deployment may result in the seizure of other types of drugs not intended to be the focus of the deployment. For example, the Dallas division had two MET deployments that were to focus on cocaine and crack cocaine. As shown later in this report, those MET operations resulted in seizures of relatively small quantities of heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine in addition to large quantities of cocaine and crack cocaine.

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[14] We used the Division office address on the DEA website and the city center address to calculate the miles between the Division Office and the deployment location.

[15] The division address used to calculate this distance was the Tucson office, where the Phoenix MET is located.

DEA officials at the Regional and Local Impact Section told us that the current MET program focused on drug trafficking associated with violent gangs. We also surveyed the 14 DEA field divisions with a MET and asked officials in those divisions for their view of the program's focus. These 14 divisions stated that the primary focus of their MET deployments was gang-related drug crimes or drug-related violence.[16] For example, the St. Louis Division Assistant Special Agent in Charge told us that the MET would focus on methamphetamine if the violent gang targets were trafficking methamphetamine, but he acknowledged that violent crime is not usually associated with methamphetamine trafficking. The St. Louis Division Assistant Special Agent in Charge told us the Division received a MET because crime rates in the St. Louis area were high.

The DEA's Chief of the Regional and Local Impact Section told us that because the DEA did not authorize MET funding for travel in FY 2008, each MET had to deploy in its local metropolitan area.[17] The Chief said that because methamphetamine is not trafficked in the inner city as extensively as other drugs, methamphetamine was not a focus of the restarted deployments. He also said that the 2008 deployments started late in the year and extended into FY 2009, causing MET efforts to continue focusing on drugs other than methamphetamine. He said that when travel funding did not permit a methamphetamine focus, MET deployments focused instead on the Attorney General's violent gang initiative, which was also an investigative priority. The official also said that the MET policy is outdated and should be revised to reflect violent gangs as its focus.

Because the DEA did not authorize funding for travel and focused on violent gangs within commuting distance of the DEA office, METs had limited mobility. The DEA's Assistant Administrator, Chief of Operations, told us that the $20.6 million appropriated for FY 2008 was not sufficient to reinstate the MET program to its previous levels. The DEA had to choose between having METs in more divisions or having fewer METs that were more mobile. The official told us that headquarters and division managers discussed this problem and decided they could maximize MET resources by

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[16] Twelve of the 14 divisions responded that the primary focus of their METs was gangs, one reported that it was cartel violence, and another responded that violence was its MET focus.

[17] Further details regarding MET travel are contained in the next section of this report.

focusing on violent gangs operating in metropolitan areas, as they did when the MET program first started in 1995.

Deployments

Deployment Locations

As noted above, at the restart of the MET program in FY 2008 the DEA Assistant Administrator, Chief of Operations, decided that the DEA would not use MET funding for travel costs. The Assistant Administrator told us he based this decision on the limited amount of MET funds available for use and the fact that the division offices were located in cities with significant increases in violent crime that the program could target. The decision to limit travel funds required the DEA field divisions to select MET deployments based on proximity to the DEA division office rather than any other consideration of need.

Because the DEA did not authorize MET funding for travel expenses, all FY 2008 initiated deployments were to locations within 50 miles of the division office so that DEA staff would not incur travel expenses.[18] Deployment locations ranged from 0.3 to 32.5 miles from the field divisions' addresses. Some DEA divisions are responsible for a geographic area covering four or five states and more than 350,000 square miles. For FY 2008 deployments, Exhibit 5 on page 17 shows the division office, deployment location, and the distance from the division office to the deployment location. Deployment locations averaged 10.8 miles from the division office address.

For FY 2009, the DEA authorized using MET funds for travel expenses. These funds became available in March 2009. Yet, despite the availability of MET travel funds, field divisions initiated only 2 of 6 deployments more than 50 miles from the division office. Four deployments were initiated prior to the availability of the travel funding. Division offices made only one FY 2009 deployment to an area outside of its immediate metropolitan area – Montgomery County, Texas – where methamphetamine was the focus. The Dallas Division received a request from another rural law enforcement agency, but that request was not considered because

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[18] When assigned to work more than 50 miles from their duty station, DEA staff receive reimbursement for travel costs such as lodging, meals, and incidental expenses. An April 2008 teletype to DEA field offices stated that METs may still engage in deployments requiring overnight travel, but DEA headquarters would not provide MET funding for those costs.

headquarters did not notify divisions until March 2009 that MET funds could be used for travel.

Travel funding was available for FY 2010, but division offices initiated only two of the six deployments more than 50 miles from the division office, and neither deployment focused on methamphetamine.

The DEA's Assistant Administrator, Chief of Operations, told us that the 2008 funding was insufficient to reinstate the program to its previous staffing levels and strength, and DEA headquarters and field division managers had to choose between maximizing the number of divisions that could operate a MET or establishing METs in fewer divisions and enable travel for METs to address drug trafficking problems across a division's territory. The Assistant Administrator said that the managers knew from prior program experience that each MET required a minimum of eight Special Agents to ensure security, safety, and effectiveness. The managers also knew that several field divisions had experienced significant spikes in violent crime and that local law enforcement agencies in the immediate vicinity of the DEA field divisions needed assistance in coping with that crime. He said that these factors led to the decision that the restarted METs could achieve maximum effect by operating in 10 field divisions – each located in proximity to a known violent crime problem.

Therefore, in restarting the MET program the DEA focused on crime in the immediate geographic areas of division offices. Yet, while these deployments addressed significant law enforcement problems, the teams were not mobile and were not available to travel anywhere within the division's jurisdiction, as envisioned in the program's design. Since FY 2008, the DEA's METs mainly deployed to areas close to their field divisions and typically did not employ their "mobile" capacity to support rurally located law enforcement agencies.

Deployment Selection Process

We also found that the DEA does not have a standardized process for choosing between multiple requests for MET assistance. Five divisions received several requests for MET assistance while its METs were already deployed elsewhere. Exhibit 6 shows the deployment and the additional requests for MET assistance. The requestor in bolded text was selected by the division as its next MET deployment.

Exhibit 6:
Divisions with Multiple Requests for MET Assistance

Division	Current Deployment	Requests for Additional Deployments	Request Date
Chicago	Chicago, IL Police Department (PD) (Englewood)	Racine, WI PD	7/22/2009
		Chicago Heights, IL PD	10/7/2009
Los Angeles	Los Angeles, CA PD (Hollenbeck)	Los Angeles, CA PD (Hollywood)	4/1/2009
		Santa Maria, CA PD	2/5/2009
		Long Beach, CA PD	7/7/2009
		Los Angeles, CA Sheriff's Office (SO) (Antelope Valley)	8/19/2009
		Reno, NV Regional Gang Unit	8/19/2009
	Los Angeles, CA SO (Antelope Valley)	**Los Angeles, CA PD (Hollywood)**	4/1/2009
		Santa Maria, CA PD	2/5/2009
		Long Beach, CA PD	7/7/2009
		Reno, NV Regional Gang Unit	8/19/2009
		Kauai, HI PD	11/3/2009
Miami	Fort Lauderdale, FL PD	Broward County SO (Pompano Beach)	4/20/2009
		Coral Springs, FL PD	5/27/2009
		Miami, FL PD (Allapattah)	6/2/2009
	Coral Spring, FL PD	Broward County SO (Pompano Beach)	4/20/2009
		Miami, FL PD (Allapattah)	6/2/2009
		Fort Pierce, FL PD	7/9/2009
		Titusville, FL PD	7/28/2009
Phoenix	Not Applicable[19]	**Casa Grande, AZ PD**	6/24/2009
		Wickenburg, AZ PD	8/18/2009
San Diego	San Diego, CA PD	**Escondido, CA PD**	12/14/2009
		Oceanside, CA PD	12/30/2009

Source: DEA MET Divisions

We determined that the basis for selecting deployments varied among the five divisions. The Chicago and Phoenix Divisions deployed to Chicago Heights and Casa Grande because the local law enforcement agencies' requests had better-defined targets than did other requesting law enforcement agencies. The Miami Division deployed its MET to Coral Springs during FY 2009 because Division staff had personal knowledge of the problem in that area. The Miami Division also deployed to Allapattah because not all MET agents were able to travel due to other work obligations, such as pending adjudication of defendants from past deployment operations, temporary duty assignments and the need to assist

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[19] The Phoenix Division received two requests prior to its first deployment.

the Division in a long-term security detail concerning a high-priority drug trafficking organization investigation.

The Los Angeles and San Diego Divisions deployed to Hollywood and Escondido during FY 2010 because the requesting local law enforcement agencies had not previously received MET assistance, and the other requesting agencies had previously received such assistance. The Los Angeles Division planned to deploy to Antelope Valley during FY 2010 rather than in one of four other requested locations because Los Angeles Division managers believed that the deployment to Antelope Valley provided a good training exercise for new MET agents. In addition, that deployment permitted the agents to return to their office 1 day per week for paperwork and remain at home on the weekends.

It appears that when deciding where to deploy METs, DEA field divisions made decisions based on factors other than a comparison of the needs of potential MET deployment locations. We believe that considering the quality of the proposed target provides a more reasonable approach to determining the location of a deployment than some of DEA field division's considerations discussed above.

The program guidance provided by the DEA to its field divisions does not clearly specify how to choose between multiple requests for a deployment. The MET Program Handbook provides only that the divisions document the requesting agency's need on an Assessment Checklist, but the handbook does not address how to identify, from among several requests, the requesting agency with the greatest need.

At DEA headquarters, the Office of Global Enforcement, Regional and Local Impact Section, is the DEA program office that oversees the MET program. When field division managers decide on a MET deployment location, they provide the Regional and Local Impact Section a copy of the request for deployment and their assessment of the request. However, the field division does not provide this information for all of the requests received, and it does not forward to headquarters an explanation of the factors weighed in selecting between possible deployments. The field division also does not always provide documentation substantiating the local law enforcement's lack of personnel, financial and technical resources, or support for reported violent crime.

Upon receipt of a field division's request to begin a deployment, Regional and Local Impact Section staff review the documents for completeness. If Section staff believes the documentation requires revision,

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they notify the division of the needed revisions. The division then submits a revised assessment and request for deployment. After review of the requests and assessments, the Deputy Chief of Operations at the Office of Enforcement approves the deployment.

We reviewed the handling of 27 deployment requests received by the Regional and Local Impact Section since the MET program restarted in 2008. The Section approved each request it received. Based on our review of deployment requests and the selection process, we concluded that the Regional and Local Impact Section has limited involvement in and oversight of the selection process. The Section does not know the extent of all requests each division receives and does not always receive documentation substantiating the need noted in the assessment checklists. Moreover, a Section official told us that the Section does not question the decision of a division's Special Agent in Charge regarding a MET deployment on the assumption that field division managers best know the needs within their division.

DEA officials disagreed with our conclusions about the deployment selection process. DEA headquarters officials told us that Special Agents in Charge consider many factors when deciding where to deploy a MET and know how best to use MET resources.

However, we believe the value of MET deployments could be increased through more active oversight by the Regional and Local Impact Section in the deployment selection process. The Section could help ensure that divisions are selecting deployments based on standard, objective criteria, rather than the varied, sometimes non-operations-based considerations described earlier, such as deciding to deploy to a particular location because of the training and travel needs of the DEA staff. The Section could develop and issue guidance on how to select among competing requests for deployment. We believe that the guidance should specify which factors should and should not be considered in selecting a MET deployment.

MET Outreach

We also surveyed the 14 DEA field divisions with a MET and asked how they notified local law enforcement agencies of the MET program's availability. Two divisions – Los Angeles and Phoenix – sent letters and information packets to local law enforcement agencies within their jurisdiction announcing the MET's availability as well as instructions for making MET requests. The remaining 12 divisions reported that DEA

personnel in their divisions met or communicated with local law enforcement agencies within their divisions.

However, from the beginning of FY 1999 through June 2007, the 21 divisions with a MET received 2.2 requests for MET assistance annually, on average. Since the restart of the MET program in May 2008, through January 2010, the 14 divisions with a MET received an average of 2.1 requests annually, which represents a 5 percent decrease under the restarted program. These 14 DEA divisions with a MET cover an area of 31 states with almost 11,000 law enforcement agencies. All 14 divisions we surveyed reported that they had conducted outreach efforts after May 2008, including routinely promoting the program to state and local counterparts, using personal contacts and word of mouth, and briefing Chiefs of Police and local Sheriffs. For example, the Dallas Division reported that it met with over 50 local area Chiefs of Police. The Houston Division reported that it contacted all state, local, and other federal agencies in its geographic area to inform them of the restart of the MET program and its mission. At the St. Louis Division, the Special Agent in Charge told us he had only one MET and did not want to offer MET services that he could not provide. However, the Division's written response to our survey questionnaire stated that it had outlined the MET program to nearly all Chiefs of Police and Sheriffs in its region.

We could not determine the reasons for the moderate decrease in requests for MET assistance since the program restarted, but we believe that the DEA could increase the number of requests by increasing its outreach efforts to state and local law enforcement agencies. DEA officials told us that given the program's limited resources any "advertising" of its availability would falsely raise expectations about the assistance that METs can be provide. Nevertheless, we believe the DEA should ensure that law enforcement agencies in their jurisdictions know of the MET program and its capability. Consequently, we recommend that the DEA better ensure that local law enforcement agencies across DEA divisions' territories know that the MET program is available to provide assistance. Specifically, the DEA should more systemically and widely announce the availability of the program to local law enforcement agencies and track its outreach efforts. This outreach should also be used to help the DEA identify areas to target through the program.

Conclusion

When Congress provided funding to restart the MET program in FY 2008, its comments on the program stated that MET operations were to

focus on "methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs." Since the MET program restarted in April 2008, 7 (26 percent) of 27 initiated MET deployments focused primarily on methamphetamine. DEA officials believe this level of methamphetamine enforcement operations is sufficient to meet Congress' intent for the program.   The DEA also believes it adequately informed Congress that it planned to use METs to attack violent gangs involved in trafficking other types of drugs.

We found that METs were not mobile. When the DEA restarted the MET program in FY 2008, it prohibited METs from using the appropriated funds for travel expenses. In 2009, the DEA made travel optional, but did not notify divisions about this until March 2009. Consequently, one division denied a request it received earlier that year for a deployment to a rural area. Because of the travel expense issues and the DEA's decision to focus on violent gangs operating in metropolitan and suburban areas, rural law enforcement agencies did not have the benefit of using MET resources to address either methamphetamine or gang problems within their jurisdictions. For 26 of 27 deployments we reviewed, the MET target area was an average of 20 miles from the division office. One deployment was about 350 miles from the division office, and the remaining deployments ranged from 0.3 miles to 79 miles from the division office.

We also concluded that the DEA needs to establish a standardized process for reviewing and selecting from competing requests for MET assistance, and it needs to ensure that divisions conduct adequate outreach activities. Divisions with a MET told us they conducted broad outreach efforts, but did not provide records of their contacts and meetings. We found that before FY 2008, divisions received 2.2 requests for MET assistance annually, on average. Since FY 2008, divisions received an average of 2.1 requests annually.

Recommendations

We recommend that the DEA:

1. Consider whether more of its MET resources should be used to combat methamphetamine trafficking, consider whether METs should be more mobile, update the MET Program Handbook to reflect the current focus of the program, and provide relevant guidance to its field divisions.

2. Establish a standardized process for reviewing and selecting from competing requests for MET assistance.

3. Ensure that divisions conduct adequate outreach activities to inform local law enforcement agencies about the availability of MET resources.

II. THE DEA's ASSESSMENT OF THE SUCCESS OF MET DEPLOYMENTS

Our review found that METs have made many arrests and seized drugs and other property to disrupt or dismantle drug trafficking organizations and to reduce violence and the availability of drugs. However, the DEA's measurement of the results of the MET program is inconsistent. After each MET deployment, DEA field Divisions are required complete and submit to headquarters a written assessment on drug sales and crime rates in the target area and community reaction to the MET operation. However, we determined that field divisions did not complete or were slow in completing the required reports. Additionally, field divisions sometimes used the wrong data to evaluate pre- and post-deployment crime rates in the target area. The MET Program Handbook states that the DEA should also assess whether MET operations had a lasting impact on the target area. However, some post-deployment reports showed an increase in certain crimes after a MET operation had ended.

The DEA's System for Evaluating MET Operations

Before the DEA begins a MET operation, it collects pre-deployment crime statistics for the target area to establish a baseline. While the MET operation is ongoing, METs submit bi-weekly and monthly progress reports that include statistics on arrests, seizures, and how many drug trafficking organizations were disrupted or dismantled. At the conclusion of enforcement operations, METs submit an immediate post-deployment report on overall results of the operation. Six months after a deployment has ended, METs submit a Six-Month Post-Deployment Assessment Report, which includes statistics on arrests, seizures, and drug trafficking organizations that were disrupted or dismantled. The reports also include pre- and post-deployment crime rates, observed changes in the supply of drugs, and community reactions to the MET operation. The MET Program Handbook states that the purpose of these assessments is to determine whether MET operations had a lasting impact on the target area.

We reviewed MET performance to determine whether the MET program was achieving its goals and objectives.

Results of MET Operations

We found that the METs made many arrests and seizures to disrupt or dismantle drug trafficking organizations in efforts to reduce violence and the availability of drugs. However, the DEA has not demonstrated that MET operations had a lasting impact on the key program goal of disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking in efforts to reduce drug availability and related violence.

Arrests and Seizures

To assess the number of arrests and seizures from MET operations we obtained documentation for all MET operations from the restart of the program in May 2008 through January 2010. For that period, we summarized arrests and seizures for all ongoing and completed deployments, regardless of whether a post-deployment report had been completed.

Arrests – Exhibit 8 shows aggregate arrests by division for all 27 MET deployments initiated from May 2008 through January 2010.

Exhibit 8: Reported Arrests from MET Operations
May 2008 through January 2010

Division	Arrests[20]
Atlanta	12
Chicago	50
Dallas	66
Detroit	61
El Paso	0
Houston	186
Los Angeles	239
Miami	129
New Jersey	127
Philadelphia	71
Phoenix	10
San Diego	266
St. Louis	72
Washington	281
Totals	**1,570**

Source: DEA Field Divisions with a MET

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[20] The Atlanta and El Paso Divisions started their first deployments in January 2010. The Phoenix Division started its first deployment in September 2009. Since these divisions recently started their first deployments, their arrest statistics are lower than other divisions. The Phoenix MET recently had a takedown in March 2010, where it made several arrests.

Persons arrested include targeted gang members, leaders, and their drug suppliers. Of the 1,570 persons arrested during MET operations, 340 were convicted. As of January 31, 2010, prosecution was still pending for 1,230 arrestees.

For each deployment, a case agent must complete a defendant statistical form for each arrest, guilty plea, conviction, dismissal, or acquittal. One of these forms should be completed and submitted prior to the official closing of a DEA case file. However, criminal proceedings resulting from MET deployments may take years to complete and most case agents do not prepare the statistical report until the proceedings are completed. Consequently, the DEA does not report the results of criminal proceedings as part of its measures for the MET program. The DEA should ensure it completes and reviews the results of each defendant statistical form. Without this information, the DEA cannot accurately gauge significant trends, such as whether an unusually high number of its arrests are resulting in pre-trial dismissals by prosecutors. DEA officials told us that if there were a problem with an investigation that resulted in a high number of dismissals, the U.S. Attorney's Office would let them know. Yet, we believe that tracking dismissals and the reasons for the dismissal could provide information that will help the DEA improve its operations.

Drug and Non-Drug Seizures – Exhibit 9 shows drug seizures by division for all 27 MET deployments initiated from May 2008 through January 2010.

Exhibit 9:
Reported Grams of Drugs Seized During MET Operations
May 2008 through January 2010[21]

Division	Cocaine	Crack	Heroin	Marijuana	Metham-phetamine[22]
Atlanta	-	415.00	2.00	-	906.00
Chicago	-	38.00	1,665.70	2,037.90	-
Dallas	623.00	4,248.90	59.00	410.00	31.10
Detroit	4,380.20	1,367.20	2522.10	1,064,486.20	-
El Paso	-	-	-	-	-
Houston	12,077.91	-	1,033.70	318,918.33	17,527.00
Los Angeles	12,626.60	1,848.70	238.10	207.10	10,669.30
Miami	1,542.00	1,690.00	10.00	9,516.00	-
New Jersey	3,202.00	-	3,657.10	289.90	-
Philadelphia	651.60	-	21.40	-	-
Phoenix	133.00	38.50	-	4,116.00	361.20
San Diego	8,192.00	3,789.00	-	14,203.00	2,446.00
St. Louis	2,636.00	4,049.70	1,890.90	1,473.50	88.00
Washington	3,897.00	1,474.00	288.50	58,383.60	-
Totals	**49,961.31**	**18,959.00**	**11,388.50**	**1,474,041.53**	**32,028.60**

Source: DEA Field Divisions with a MET

Exhibit 10 shows non-drug seizures by division for all 27 deployments from May 2008 through January 2010.

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[21] The Atlanta and El Paso Divisions started their first deployments in January 2010. Since these divisions recently started their first deployments, their seizure statistics are significantly lower than other divisions. Divisions also seized various amounts of other drugs.

[22] The methamphetamine seizures resulted from deployments in seven field divisions. Seven of 27 deployments included methamphetamine as a primary focus. Four field divisions seized methamphetamine during seven methamphetamine-focused deployments. Three field divisions seized small amounts of methamphetamine during non-methamphetamine focused deployments.

Exhibit 10:
Reported Non-Drug Property Seized During MET Operations
May 2008 through January 2010

Division	Cash	Property	Vehicles		Firearms
			Number	Value	
Atlanta	$3,200	-	1	$5,500	5
Chicago	$139,201	$3,000	1	$28,712	2
Dallas	-	$200,000	1	$7,675	13
Detroit	$301,291	$4,880	13	$111,845	8
El Paso	-	-	-	-	-
Houston	$328,412	-	23	$789,140	31
Los Angeles	$80,008	-	5	$99,575	39
Miami	$89,768	-	22	$268,414	33
New Jersey	$115,690	$2,460	6	$54,288	18
Philadelphia	$93,656	-	1	$7,400	-
Phoenix	-	-	-	-	-
San Diego	$106,170	-	-	-	60
St. Louis	$191,563	$224,950	9	$310,500	33
Washington	$316,739	$119,000	3	$46,000	55
Totals	**$1,765,698**	**$554,290**	**85**	**$1,729,049**	**297**

Source: DEA Field Divisions with a MET

The number of arrests and seizures show that MET operations have helped local law enforcement achieve results against drug trafficking organizations.[23]

Disruptions and Dismantlements

The DEA also measures the effect that DEA MET operations had on criminal activities, criminal organizations, and the community affected by the crime. One method the MET program uses to assess the outcome of program operations is to track the disruption and dismantlement of drug trafficking organizations. The disruptions and dismantlements resulted from the arrests of gang members, leaders, and their sources of supply. Exhibit 11 shows the MET program is making progress at achieving program objectives to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations.

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[23] Four divisions' MET operations began more than a year after the initial 10 METs began operations. Two of those four divisions – Atlanta and El Paso – began their first deployments in January 2010. As a result, those divisions had fewer reported arrests and seizures than the other divisions. Also, the focus of the deployment usually determines the type and amount of drugs seized. For example, the Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles, and San Diego Divisions had MET operations that focused on methamphetamine trafficking. Those MET deployments resulted in large quantities of methamphetamine seizures.

Exhibit 11:
Drug Trafficking Organizations Disrupted or Dismantled
by MET Operations - May 2008 through January 2010

Division	Disrupted	Dismantled
Atlanta[24]	-	-
Chicago	3	3
Dallas	3	3
Detroit	1	-
El Paso	-	-
Houston	3	-
Los Angeles	2	-
Miami	24	24
New Jersey	2	2
Philadelphia	2	0
Phoenix	-	-
San Diego	12	4
St. Louis	40	18
Washington	-	4
Totals	**92**	**58**

Source: DEA Divisions with a MET

We found large disparities in the number of disruptions and dismantlements among divisions. Specifically, the number of disruptions and dismantlements reported by the Miami and St. Louis Divisions were significantly higher than the other divisions. The DEA headquarters MET program manager told us that the differences in the numbers reported by the Miami and St. Louis Field Divisions probably resulted from the interpretation of definitions. He said that while the DEA headquarters, field divisions, and individual groups use the same definitions of "disruption" and "dismantlement", these definitions may be applied differently for each investigation.

The DEA headquarters MET program manager also told us that the St. Louis division erroneously reported search warrants and arrest warrants as disruptions and dismantlements. The St. Louis MET Group Supervisor agreed that the reported numbers should be corrected. The DEA

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[24] Staff of the Atlanta and El Paso Divisions told us that their first deployments were in January 2010. Because the reporting period for our audit ended when these deployments were only weeks old, the amounts of disruptions and dismantlements were significantly lower. As of January 31, 2010, the Phoenix MET had no statistics to report.

headquarters MET program manager also told us that the Miami division MET may have similarly interpreted the definitions of "disruption" and "dismantlement" in a manner inconsistent from other MET teams.

MET program managers told us they would discuss this and other issues at a training session for MET supervisors, which is scheduled for September 2010, to ensure consistent reporting among field divisions.

Six-Month Post-Deployment Assessment Reports

As discussed earlier, divisions are required to assess the results of each MET deployment 6 months after the deployment has ended. However, DEA divisions did not always conduct a complete, timely, and objective assessment of each MET operation.

Completed Reports

Of the 27 MET deployments initiated from May 2008 through January 2010, 13 were completed and 14 were still ongoing as of January 31, 2010. Nine of the 13 completed deployments required a Six-Month Post-Deployment Report as of January 31, 2010.[25]

The DEA has no written policy for how quickly Six-Month Post Deployment Reports should be submitted once the 6-month post-deployment period ended. We considered the report was timely if it was submitted within 7 months after the deployment ended. Of the nine required reports, two were submitted timely and six were submitted from 15 to 121 days late. As of July 7, 2010, one other report, which was for a MET deployment by the New Jersey Division, was not submitted and was 27 days late.[26] Moreover, four of the six late reports were not submitted until we requested the reports from the DEA.

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[25] The other four deployments did not require a post-assessment because it had been less than 6 months since those deployments ended.

[26] The deployment ended January 16, 2009. Based on our definition of timeliness, which is 7 months after a deployment ends, the post-deployment assessment report was due August 14, 2009. A DEA official told us that the missing report from the New Jersey Division was due to unique circumstances. The Newark deployment started in late 2008 and ended in early February of 2009. A change in the MET Group Supervisor occurred near the end of the deployment. The new supervisor was unfamiliar with the DEA paperwork related to MET and inadvertently never completed the report. This problem was compounded by staff shortages within Regional and Local Impact Section Staff and changes in Section staff that caused the missing New Jersey report to be overlooked.

While the DEA does not have an established written policy prescribing how soon each division should submit the Six-Month Post-Deployment reports, the Chief of the Regional and Local Impact Section told us that the DEA informally established that the Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports are due 6 months from the date of the conclusion of each deployment.[27] If a post-deployment report is not provided timely, a Section staff coordinator is supposed to contact the responsible MET supervisor and request the report. The Chief told us that reports may be delayed for reasons ranging from staff leave, changes in MET personnel, new deployment responsibilities, changes in supervisors, inspection responsibilities, or other circumstances.

During our testing, we noted that METs opened multiple investigative cases in different geographic areas during a single deployment. For example, the St. Louis Division began a MET deployment in May 2008 and opened three investigative cases in different parts of the city. The team completed operations for the first case, but it did not conduct a Six-Month Post-Deployment assessment. As of January 2010, operations for the two remaining investigative cases were still ongoing. The Houston, Detroit, and Washington Divisions also opened multiple investigative cases during the same MET deployment and did not complete, or did not timely complete, post-deployment assessments.

Delaying the post-deployment assessment process makes it difficult to conduct an objective evaluation of the results. In addition, because of reporting delays, changes in crime rates may not be correlated to MET operations. Division managers told us that deployments are taking longer to complete because the METs are targeting drug dealers and their sources of supply. Nevertheless, the length of a deployment should not affect the field division's timely completion of a Six-Month Post-Deployment assessment for each target area or investigative case.

We reviewed each of the eight completed Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports that the DEA used to measure the impact of MET operations. The assessments included two deployments from the Los Angeles Division, two from the Miami Division, two from the San Diego Division, one from the Dallas Division, and one from the Philadelphia Division.

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[27] These reports are to include statistics for the 6-month period after MET operations have ended. However, having the reports due 6 months from the conclusion of each deployment does not give METs adequate time to prepare and submit the reports. During our audit testing, we considered that a report was submitted timely if it was submitted within 7 months after MET operations had ended.

We found that for one post-deployment assessment, METs used pre- and post-deployment crime statistics for a geographic area that is much larger than the target area for the MET. Consequently, changes in crime rates are less likely to be correlated to MET operations. We recommend that the DEA base pre- and post-assessments on crime statistics for the defined target area.

According to the MET Program Handbook, each Six-Month Post-Deployment Report also contained a section explaining how citizens of the community reacted to the deployment and what the local community is doing to reduce crime. In general, the reports indicated that citizens had positive comments about MET operations. However, the reports provided little information about what the local community is doing to reduce crime.

Moreover, each report should include the local law enforcement agency's assessment of the deployment. However, for 6 of 8 assessments we reviewed, the field division provided its own assessment rather than that of the local law enforcement agency. Two divisions prepared nearly identical assessments for two different deployments within each division, indicating that one assessment had been copied from the prior assessment.

A more detailed assessment of the following sections of completed post-deployment reports is presented in Appendix II and III.

- Synopsis of the Deployment (see Appendix II)

- Reduction in Drug Sales or Visible Drug Sales (see Appendix II)

- Community Reaction and Involvement (see Appendix II)

- Agency Assessment (see Appendix II)

- Stability of the Target Area (see Appendix III). This section of the post-deployment reports shows pre- and post-deployment crime statistics.

Conclusion

The MET program reported large numbers of arrests, convictions, and seizures leading to the disruption and dismantlement of targeted drug trafficking organizations. However, the DEA needs to make several improvements in its system for evaluating the success of MET operations.

The MET program requires agents to assess the performance of each MET operation to determine whether the operation had a lasting impact on the community. Part of the assessment includes evaluating crime statistics for the target area before and after each MET operation and documenting the results in Six-Month Post-Deployment reports.

However, the DEA had no written policy stating how quickly Six-Month Post-Deployment reports had to be completed and most reports were submitted late, including four late reports that were not submitted until we requested them from the division.[28] Consequently, the DEA did not timely assess whether MET operations had a lasting impact on the community. The post-deployment assessment reports are a valuable tool for the DEA to use in examining the successes and failures of MET deployments. We believe that it is important that reports be completed in a thorough, accurate, and timely manner to assist the DEA in identifying best practices and determining areas needing improvement.

Recommendations

We recommend that the DEA:

4. Ensure that Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports include the outcome of each arrest, including dismissals and reasons for the dismissals, and use that information to improve MET operations.

5. Define a timeframe for submitting completed Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports and ensure those reports are completed and submitted timely for each defined target area.

6. Ensure that pre- and post-deployment crime statistics used to measure changes in crime rates are for the target area of the MET operation.

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[28] We considered that a report was late if it was not submitted within 7 months after a deployment had ended.

STATEMENT ON INTERNAL CONTROLS

As required by the *Government Auditing Standards*, we tested, as appropriate, internal controls significant within the context of our audit objectives. A deficiency in an internal control exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to timely prevent or detect: (1) impairments to the effectiveness and efficiency of operations, (2) misstatements in financial or performance information, or (3) violations of laws and regulations. Our evaluation of the DEA's internal controls was *not* made for the purpose of providing assurance on its internal control structure as a whole. DEA management is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of internal controls.

Through our audit testing, we did not identify any deficiencies in the DEA's internal controls that are significant within the context of the audit objectives and based upon the audit work performed that we believe would affect the DEA's ability to effectively and efficiently operate, to correctly state financial and performance information, and to ensure compliance with laws and regulations.

Because we are not expressing an opinion on the DEA's internal control structure as a whole, this statement is intended solely for the information and use of the DEA. This restriction is not intended to limit the distribution of this report, which is a matter of public record. However, we are limiting the distribution of this report because it contains sensitive information that must be controlled appropriately.[29]

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[29] A redacted copy of this report with sensitive information removed will be made available publicly.

STATEMENT ON COMPLIANCE WITH
LAWS AND REGULATIONS

As required by the *Government Auditing Standards* we tested, as appropriate given our audit scope and objectives, selected transactions, records, procedures, and practices, to obtain reasonable assurance that the DEA's management complied with federal laws and regulations, for which noncompliance, in our judgment, could have a material effect on the results of our audit. The DEA's management is responsible for ensuring compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations. In planning our audit, we identified the following laws and regulations that concerned the operations of the DEA and that were significant within the context of the audit objectives:

- FY 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act
- FY 2009 Consolidated Omnibus Appropriations Act
- DEA MET Program Handbook

Our audit included examining, on a test basis, the DEA's compliance with the aforementioned laws and regulations that could have a material effect on the DEA's operations, through interviewing personnel, analyzing data, assessing internal control procedures, and examining procedural practices. Except for instances of noncompliance identified in the Finding and Recommendations section of this report, we did not identify any other instances of noncompliance with the guidelines contained in the MET Program Handbook.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The objectives of this audit are to assess the design and implementation of the MET program, and evaluate the success of MET deployments.

Scope and Methodology

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We performed fieldwork at the following locations.

DEA Headquarters	Arlington, Virginia
Atlanta Division Office	Atlanta, Georgia
St. Louis Division Office	St. Louis, Missouri

To determine whether the DEA properly designed and implemented the MET program, we identified and evaluated the policies established by the Congress and the DEA and reviewed MET deployment operations. During the initial phase of our audit, we reviewed all 27 MET deployment files since May 2008, located at the DEA's Headquarters and the Atlanta and St. Louis Division Offices. These files included requests for deployments, pre-deployment assessments, and deployment reports.

At each field office we visited, we interviewed DEA officials and reviewed documentation from MET deployment files. We also obtained and reviewed MET data and information from all DEA field divisions with a MET.

DETAILS OF SIX-MONTH POST-DEPLOYMENT ASSESSMENTS

Synopsis of the Deployment

All Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports showed that METs helped local law enforcement agencies address gang and drug problems. Reports included data on arrests, seizures and the length of the operation. For example, the Los Angeles Division reported that it assisted the Pasadena Police Department for 8 months to target a specific street gang involved in drug trafficking and violent crime. The deployment resulted in 50 arrests (12 federal and 38 state) and the seizure of 1,170 grams of cocaine, 320 grams of crack, 12 grams of marijuana, 770 grams of Ecstasy, and 4,563 grams of methamphetamine. Law enforcement officers also seized 1 vehicle, 10 firearms, and $18,628 in U.S. currency.

Some divisions also reported the number of organizations disrupted and dismantled and that they had identified gang leaders, gang associates, and the primary source of supply for several drugs.

Reduction in Drug Sales or Visible Drug Sales

Changes in the supply and sale, or visible sale, of drugs is based primarily on testimonial evidence from DEA agents, local law enforcement officers, arrested gang members, and confidential sources. Reports from the Los Angeles and Miami Divisions state that local law enforcement personnel stated that visible drug sales diminished. The Los Angeles Division reported that agencies it assisted received fewer calls from citizens requesting assistance. The San Diego Division relied on the testimony of a person it arrested as evidence that there are no drugs available in the area of the deployment. The Philadelphia Division reported that drug trafficking will continue due to the high demand in the targeted area. The Dallas Division reported that traffickers just moved to a different area of town.

The Miami Division Office reports regarding reduction in drug sales were nearly identical for its Opa-Locka and Fort Lauderdale deployments. The Opa-Locka report contained the following:

> The aggressive enforcement initiative led to an evident reduction in visible drug sales and a cycle wherein drug availability had clearly diminished in the target area. Furthermore, agents and local investigators also relied on a variety of Confidential Source reporting

that contributed to the inference that drug availability in the target area had diminished during the surge in enforcement operations.

The Fort Lauderdale report contained the identical wording along with many other statements identical to those made in the Opa-Locka report.

Our concern is that this type of reporting does not demonstrate that MET personnel did an individual analysis of each deployment. We asked the Section Chief of Regional and Local Impact Section if his office detected that the reports were identical and what the Section did to address it. The Chief did note the similar wording of the reports. He said this is not uncommon and occurs because some of the same basic facts existed or that the author has used "tried and true" language to complete the documents. In this case, the Section said that while the wording utilized in both reports is similar, it nonetheless finds the facts to be accurate and the reporting satisfactory.

Stability of the Target Area

The charts contained in Appendix III provide violent crime statistics before and after MET deployments. As shown in the charts, crime rates sometimes increased, as did robbery and sexual assault for the Los Angeles Division's Hollenbeck deployment. Only the Opa-Locka deployment resulted in a decrease in all four types of violent crime that the METs report. The San Diego Division did not report on all four types of violent crime required in Six-Month Post-Deployment Report and instead reported only gang-related crime. The Division attributed a rise in homicides to on-going violence between rival gangs.

For the Fort Worth MET deployment, the pre- and post-deployment crime statistics presented in Appendix III are for an area larger than the area of the MET operation. This occurred because the Dallas Division reported crime statistics for the entire City of Fort Worth rather than just the target area. For this deployment, changes in crime rates cannot be attributed solely to the MET operations.

The DEA needs to ensure it bases pre- and post-assessments on crime statistics for the target area. In addition, because four deployments are more than a year and a half old, some post-deployment reviews would compare post-deployment violent crime statistics to pre-deployment statistics from 2 years prior. Many other factors such as population change or economic climate may affect a community in 2 years. Consequently, it could be difficult to attribute change in violent crime to the deployment.

Community Reaction and Involvement

This section of the post-deployment report assesses community reaction to the deployment and what the community is doing to prevent crime. Below are examples of community reactions and involvement reported in Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports.[30]

- The Hollenbeck Division of the Los Angeles Police Department reported that it had "received many calls from citizens thanking the LAPD for making arrests in areas that drug traffickers and users frequented."

- The Los Angeles and Philadelphia Divisions reported there was no community reaction and involvement information to report for the Pasadena and Philadelphia deployments.

- Residents of the Cities of Opa-Locka and Fort Lauderdale, Florida, often voice their concerns over illicit drug sales and related crime. Since the deployments have ended, the Opa-Locka Police Department and the Fort Lauderdale communities have "remained vigilant in efforts to thwart the re-emergence of drug activity in an effort to avoid the detrimental impact to the citizens and businesses."

- Citizens of San Diego and Oceanside have approached MET members to express gratification.

- The San Diego Police Department hosted a community event and invited community members and activists to attend. Known gang members "who were not arrested were required to attend" the event.

- At an annual recognition luncheon in Oceanside, California, members of the MET were honored for making a positive contribution by removing drugs from Oceanside.

- The DEA office in Fort Worth, Texas, had positive conversations with residents and City officials.

Although DEA reports that citizens had positive comments about MET operations, post-deployment reports contained little information about what the community was doing to prevent crime. As a result, the DEA did not fully address the element. We understand that the communities that the

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[30] The post-deployment reports for the Philadelphia and Pasadena deployments did not contain information on community reaction and involvement.

METs assisted were grateful, but the DEA should document what the community has done to address drug trafficking so that MET assistance would no longer be necessary.

Agency Assessment

The Six-Month Post-Deployment Report also includes the local law enforcement agencies' assessment of the DEA as it relates to the impact of the MET operation. Agency results can include the number of drug trafficking organizations disrupted or dismantled, the overall effectiveness of investigative techniques, and overall cooperation among federal, state, and local counterparts.

The Agency Assessment section did not always contain the local law enforcement agency's assessment of the MET operation. Instead, the reports contained the DEA's assessment of the deployment results. Our review found that the Los Angeles Division completed two deployments, but the Agency Assessment sections of both Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports were prepared by the Division staff and were nearly identical. The Miami Division staff also prepared two Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports with Agency Assessment sections that were nearly identical. The two divisions assisted different law enforcement agencies for each deployment, so results should be unique. In our judgment, such reporting does not demonstrate that an individual analysis was done of each deployment. However, the Chief for the Regional and Local Impact Section told us that the reports properly convey the facts and circumstances associated with each deployment. The Chief said that each deployment report was authored by a seasoned MET supervisory special agent, and that re-wording the reports from deployment to deployment for the sake of individualizing reports is not a requirement.

The San Diego Division reported that the Oceanside, California, deployment was successful. The report stated that the deployments resulted in arrests, seizures, and disruptions and that the MET had achieved its goals and developed a strong relationship with local law enforcement. The San Diego Division completed this assessment of the Oceanside deployment on November 4, 2009. However, about a month later, on December 17, 2009, the Oceanside Police Department submitted another request for a MET deployment to target the same trafficking organization in Oceanside.

The Philadelphia Division reported that because of MET operations, reports of violence had declined. A Philadelphia Police Department

Sergeant, who worked with the MET during the deployment, explained that despite many arrests, the deployment did not make a major impact on the target area. The DEA reported that because drug activity in the target area was not as widespread as the Philadelphia Police Department had initially reported and that the Department could not commit full-time resources to the deployment, it ended the deployment to focus MET resources in other areas.
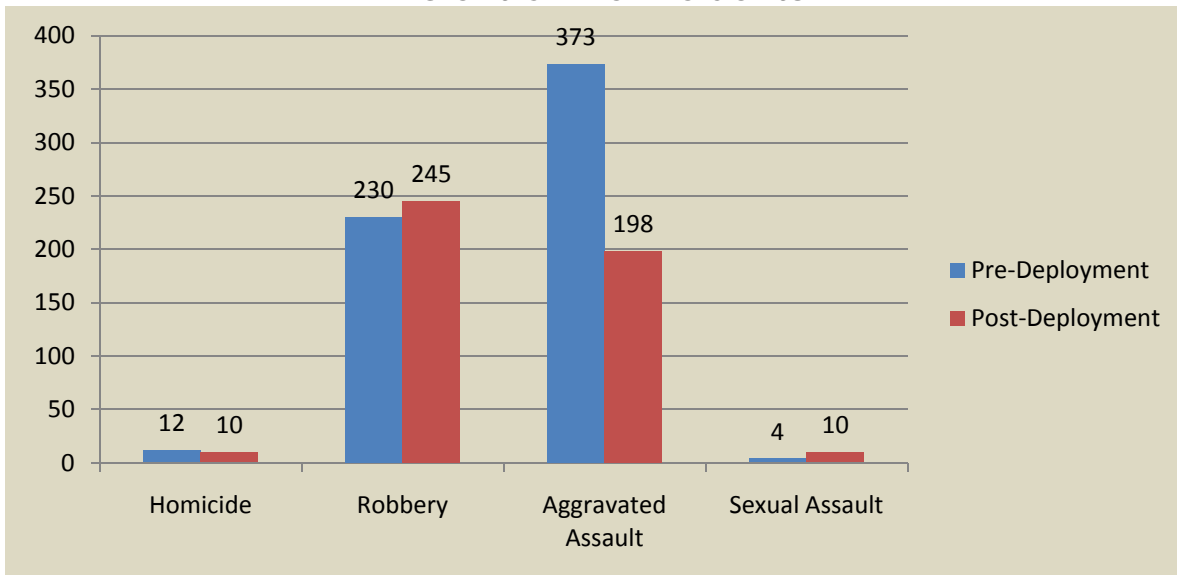
STABILITY OF THE TARGET AREA GRAPHS

Los Angeles Division Office

**Pasadena, California
Violent Crime Incidents**
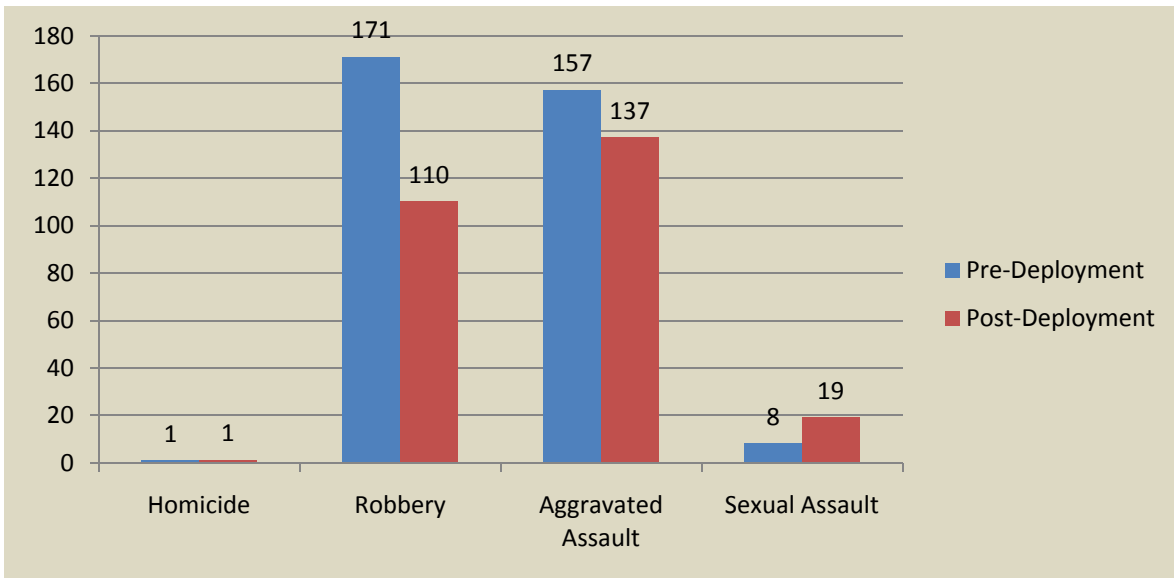
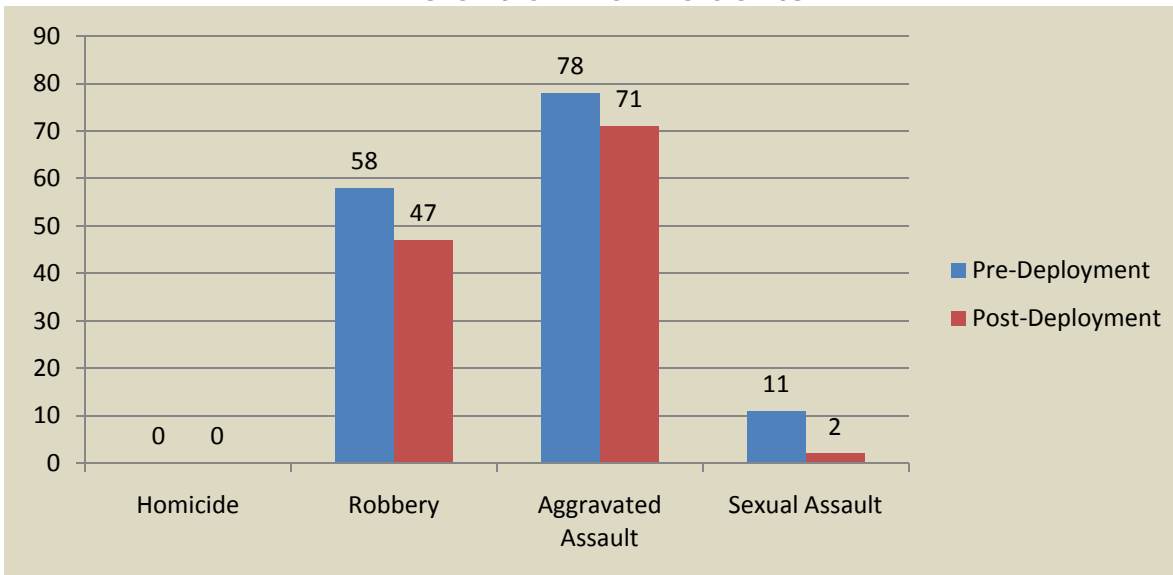Source: Los Angeles Division Office Six-Month Post-Deployment Report

**Los Angeles, California (Hollenbeck area)
Violent Crime Incidents**

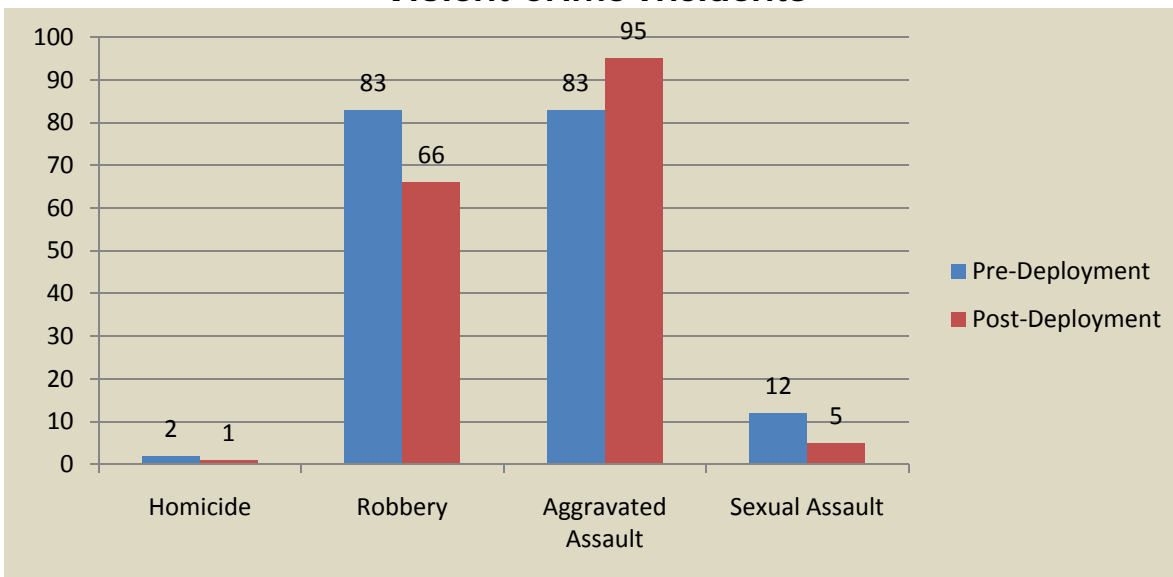Source: Los Angeles Division Office Six-Month Post-Deployment Report

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Opa-Locka, Florida
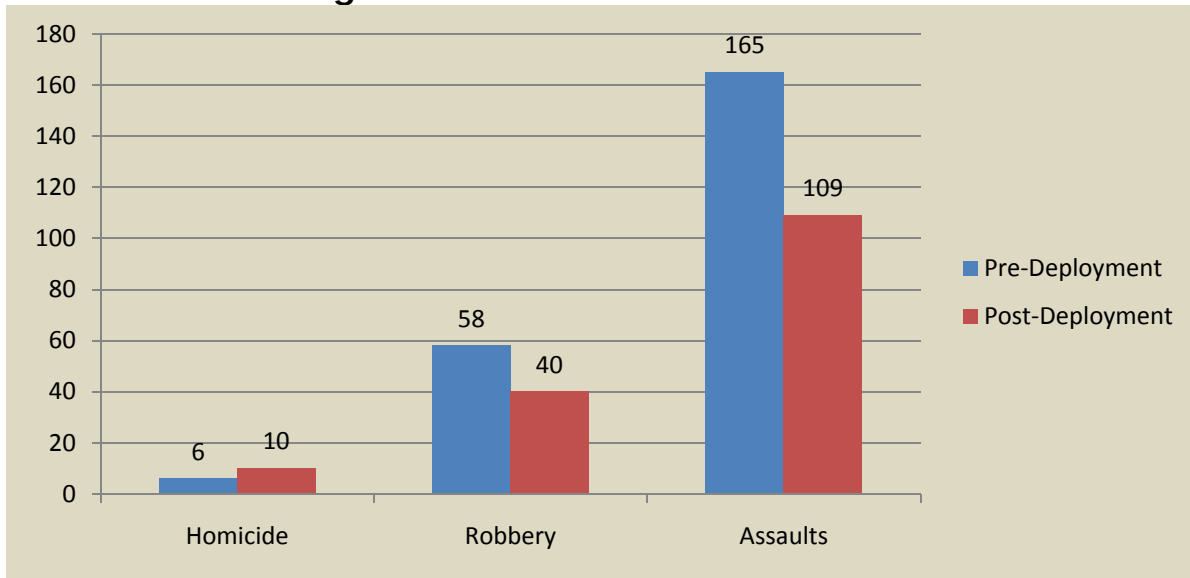## Violent Crime Incidents

Source: Miami Division Office Six-Month Post-Deployment Report
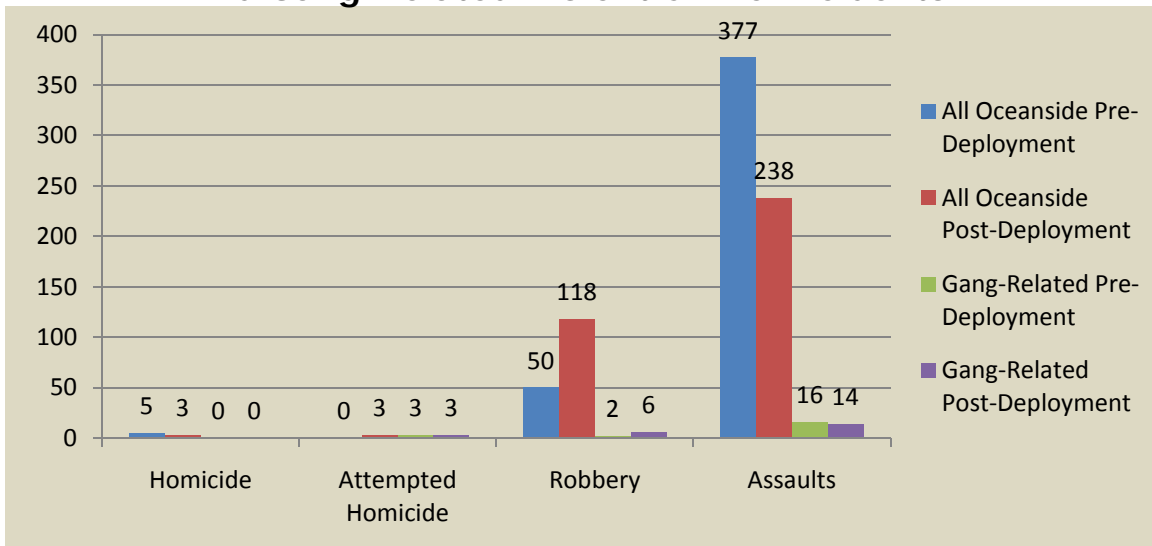
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
Violent Crime Incidents

Source: Miami Division Office Six-Month Post-Deployment Report

San Diego Division Office

San Diego, California
Gang-Related Violent Crime Incidents

Source: San Diego Division Office Six-Month Post-Deployment Report

Oceanside, California
And Gang-Related Violent Crime Incidents[31]

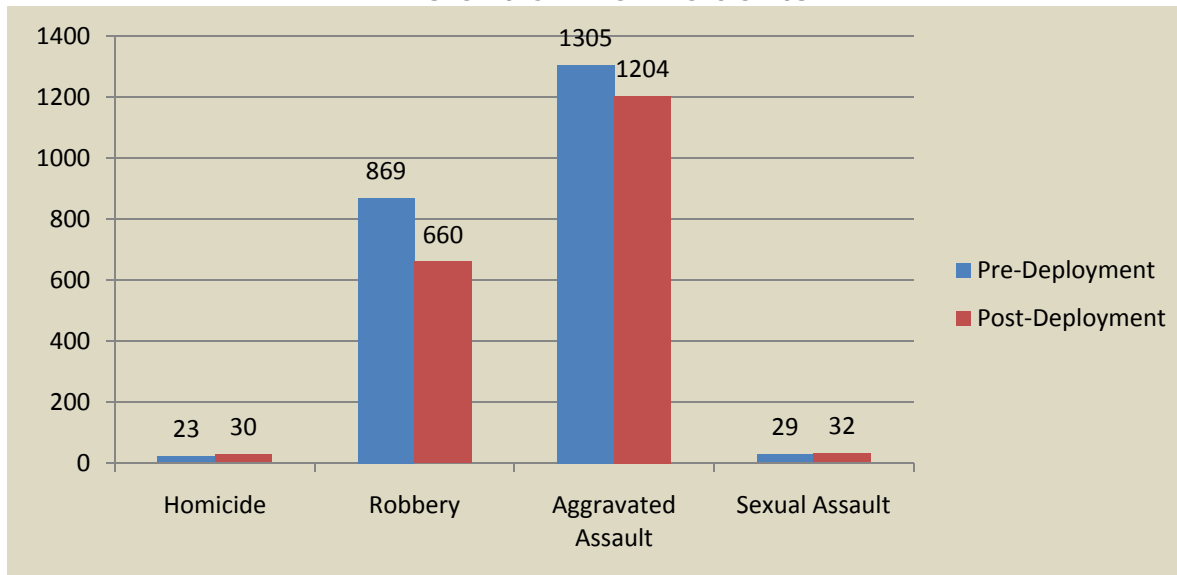Source: San Diego Division Office Six-Month Post-Deployment Report

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[31] All pre- and post-deployment results include gang-related crimes. However, the division reported no pre-deployment attempted homicides for all of Oceanside, but reported three gang-related attempted homicides. We believe the Division should have reported that there were three attempted homicides before the deployment for all Oceanside.
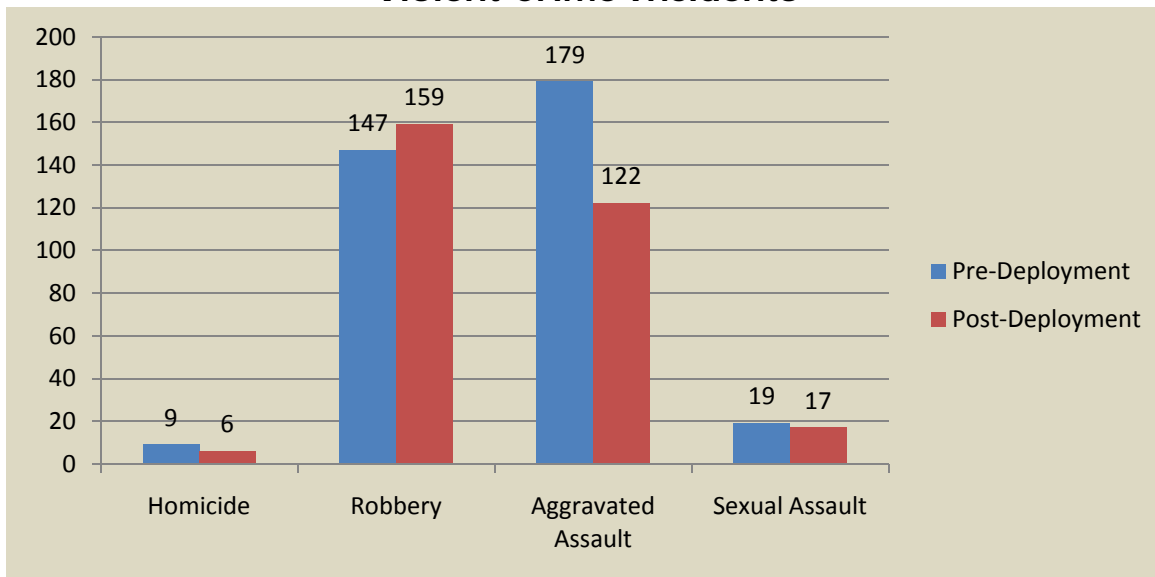
Dallas Division Office

Fort Worth, Texas
Violent Crime Incidents

Source: Dallas Division Office Six-Month Post-Deployment Report

Philadelphia Division Office

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Violent Crime Incidents

Source: Philadelphia Division Office Six-Month Post-Deployment Report

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DURATION OF DEPLOYMENTS
MAY 2008 THROUGH JANUARY 2010

Completed Deployments

Division	Deployment Location	Start Date	End Date	Days Elapsed	Months Elapsed
Initiated in FY 2008					
Dallas	Fort Worth, TX	5/8/2008	1/19/2009	251	8.37
Los Angeles	Pasadena, CA	7/8/2008	10/3/2008	85	2.83
Miami	Opa-Locka, FL	5/15/2008	12/31/2008	226	7.53
Newark	Newark, NJ	5/19/2008	1/16/2009	237	7.90
Philadelphia	Philadelphia, PA	7/21/2008	4/21/2009	270	9.00
San Diego	San Diego, CA	5/11/2008	9/4/2008	113	3.77
San Diego	Oceanside, CA	9/16/2008	2/26/2009	160	5.33
Initiated in FY 2009					
Chicago	Englewood, IL	7/31/2009	12/18/2009	138	4.60
Dallas	Greenville, TX	3/30/2009	12/8/2009	248	8.27
Los Angeles	Los Angeles, CA	11/17/2008	7/31/2009	254	8.47
Miami	Coral Springs, FL	6/5/2009	10/23/2009	138	4.60
Miami	Fort Lauderdale, FL	10/9/2008	5/7/2009	208	6.93
San Diego	San Diego, CA	11/3/2008	9/28/2009	325	10.83
			Average	204.08	6.80

Source: DEA Regional and Local Impact Section

Ongoing Deployments

Division	Deployment Location	Start Date	Days Elapsed	Months Elapsed
Initiated in FY 2008				
Detroit	Detroit, MI	6/30/2008	570	19.00
Houston[32]	Houston, TX	5/28/2008	603	20.10
St. Louis[33]	St. Louis, MO	5/21/2008	610	20.33
Washington	Washington, DC	5/11/2008	620	20.67
		Average	**600.75**	**20.03**
Initiated in FY 2009				
Houston	Montgomery Co., TX	11/21/2008	430	14.33
Newark	Irvington, NJ	3/1/2009	330	11.00
Philadelphia	Darby Borough, PA	3/31/2009	300	10.00
Phoenix	Casa Grande, AZ	9/15/2009	136	4.53
		Average	**299.00**	**9.97**
Initiated in FY 2010				
Atlanta	Atlanta, GA	1/11/2010	20	0.67
Chicago	Chicago Heights, IL	1/21/2010	10	0.33
El Paso	Espanola, NM	1/14/2010	17	0.57
Los Angeles	Antelope Valley, CA	10/19/2009	102	3.40
Miami	Allapattah, FL	10/7/2009	114	3.80
San Diego	San Diego, CA	10/13/2009	108	3.60
		Average	**61.83**	**2.06**

Source: DEA Regional and Local Impact Section

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[32] The Houston Division opened two investigative cases during its MET operation and has submitted Immediate Post-Deployment Reports for one of those cases. One investigative case remained open as of January 2010.

[33] The St. Louis Division opened three investigative cases during its MET operation and has submitted an Immediate Post-Deployment Report for the initial investigative case. The other two investigative cases remained open as of January 2010.

THE DEA'S RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT AUDIT REPORT

U. S. Department of Justice
Drug Enforcement Administration

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www.dea.gov   Washington, D.C. 20537

DEC 0 7 2010

<u>MEMORANDUM</u>

TO: Ferris B. Polk
               Regional Audit Manager
               Atlanta Regional Audit Office
               Office of the Inspector General

FROM: Kevin M. Foley
               Acting Deputy Chief Inspector
               Office of Inspections

SUBJECT: DEA's Response to the OIG's Draft Report: *Audit of the Drug Enforcement Administration's Mobile Enforcement Team Program*

   The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has reviewed the Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of the Inspector General's (OIG's) Draft Audit Report, entitled: *Audit of the Drug Enforcement Administration's Mobile Enforcement Team Program*. DEA acknowledges OIG's efforts in conducting a review of DEA' s coordination with federal, state, and local law enforcement officials regarding mutual drug enforcement efforts. DEA's Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) Program is committed to addressing violent drug-related crime and assisting local law enforcement agencies confront drug trafficking. DEA is also committed to reducing drug-related violence while disrupting and dismantling drug trafficking organizations, Mexican poly-drug trafficking sources of supply, and especially the violent Mexican wholesalers who dominate the methamphetamine markets in the United States.

   DEA appreciates OIG's recognition of the positive impact MET deployments had on citizens in communities across the nation. OIG's report states that 25% of MET deployments conducted since 2008 targeted methamphetamine drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), and the fourteen METs operating during the audit period seized over 32,000 grams of methamphetamine. OIG also acknowledged in the audit report that METs executed 1,570 arrests, seized over 1.6 tons of dangerous controlled substances, disrupted or dismantled 150 violent DTOs, and removed approximately 300 weapons from the hands of violent DTO members. OIG further noted that since 2008, MET investigations led to the seizure of U.S. currency, real property, and vehicles totaling $4,048,037.

DEA appreciates OIG's recognition that MET deployments have been successful in the reduction of violent crime. Appendix III of the report shows that after a MET deployment was completed, violent crime was actually reduced in 19 of the 31 crime areas audited.

OIG documented through its audit that no significant deficiencies were noted in DEA's internal controls of MET Program operations. OIG also noted that MET six-month post deployment reviews generally contained positive statements regarding the impact each MET deployment had on targeted communities.

DEA remains committed to process improvements and will work to implement the recommendations made by the OIG. Prior to addressing the recommendations, the DEA provides the following clarification of the report's analysis of the MET program's intentions and deployments.

MET's Poly-Drug and Methamphetamine Trafficking Focus

The OIG report accurately summarizes the on-again, off-again funding history of the MET Program and the evolving focus of the program from 2006 through 2010. Over that time period, the MET Program gradually shifted from a predominant focus on methamphetamine to a focus on gang and drug-related violent crime, which often includes methamphetamine trafficking. Most drug traffickers operate as poly-drug organizations and violence is a hallmark of their activity. Accordingly, whenever a MET deploys to address a violent drug trafficking organization it is likely that methamphetamine will be among the drugs involved.

As DEA increased its focus on gang and drug related violent crime, we were careful to inform the Congress of this shift through frequent, clear statements in our Congressional Budgets, our Congressional testimony and our responses to the questions for the record which followed our appropriations hearings. The Congress responded accordingly by modifying its report language, shifting from a strict directive that the METs should focus on methamphetamine (2006) to more inclusive statements that the activities of the METs should "include a focus on meth" (2008, 2009 and 2010; emphasis added).

In every year since the program was reestablished in 2008, the activities of the METs have included a focus on methamphetamine. During the time period reviewed by the OIG (FYs 2008 - 2010), methamphetamine was the primary focus of 26% of the MET deployments and 48% of all deployments resulted in seizures or purchases of prosecutable amounts of methamphetamine. In fact, of all the drugs seized by the METs during the audit period, methamphetamine seizures were third only behind marijuana and cocaine. Clearly, this demonstrates that methamphetamine has continued to be a significant focus of the MET Program and that the MET deployments are consistent with the direction we received from Congress.

It is, therefore, unclear why the OIG report appears to suggest that DEA has deviated from Congressional intent because we have devoted a significant portion of the MET resources to combating drug-related violent crime. The OIG report itself acknowledges that the Congressional language "does not preclude the DEA from using METs to address other drug issues" (page v). DEA believes a balanced presentation of the history of the program would simply explain that the

focus of the METs has shifted over time, from one that was primarily focused on methamphetamine to one that is primarily focused on violent drug traffickers; that DEA has been clear in explaining that shift to Congress; and that Congress has responded by giving DEA greater latitude in deciding how the METs should be deployed.

Selection of DEA Division MET Sites

The OIG report states that the METs were not mobile because DEA chose to establish more METs in metropolitan areas; therefore, rural law enforcement agencies did not have the benefit of using MET resources to address either methamphetamine or violent gang problems within their jurisdictions. In 2008, during DEA's selection of division MET sites, DEA Headquarters sent requests to each Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of DEA's 21 respective domestic field divisions to gauge the need for a MET. In response to the requests, each division outlined the current level of violence, identified drug-related threat(s) in their respective regions, and addressed the prevalence of violent Mexican poly-DTOs in those regions, as well as the function of the sources of supply for criminal street and prison gangs.

DEA Headquarters collected information regarding elevated levels of violence in those regions and noted increases in serious crimes reported in the Uniform Crime Index. Headquarters acquired information on how the MET Program would be utilized in each of the regions and whether it would be feasible for METs to focus on higher-level Mexican poly-drug sources of supply, including methamphetamine trafficking organizations. DEA reinstated METs in ten of its field divisions after evaluating SAC responses and considering pertinent issues affecting field divisions such as: proximity to the Southwest Border, presence of agency gang resources, and manpower. All ten divisions where METs were reinstated reported high levels of gang activity and violent DTOs. In FY 2008 when METs were reinstated, the METs were advised that DEA Headquarters could not provide temporary duty (TDY) funding to allow deployment travel. This lack of funding made it difficult to provide assistance to local agencies which were outside the 50-mile radius of the field division offices.

However in FY 2009 when funding for deployment travel became available, MET deployments outside of the field division office area were considered. In fact two of the four newly established METs opted to deploy outside the area of their respective division office.

DEA provides the following responses to the OIG's recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Consider whether more of its MET resources should be used to combat methamphetamine trafficking, consider whether METs should be more mobile, update the MET Program Handbook to reflect the current focus of the program, and provide relevant guidance to its field divisions.

DEA concurs with this recommendation. DEA will continue to focus MET Program resources on combating gangs, violent DTOs, and methamphetamine trafficking. DEA will keep the U.S. Congress abreast of DEA's continued intent and overall direction of the program, and will continue the MET focus until otherwise directed by Congress.

DEA also agrees that METs should be mobile and has begun proactive steps to reiterate and

ensure that the MET Program's overall focus is maintained. In 2009, two of the four newly established METs deployed outside of a 50-mile radius of their division office. Additionally in FY 2010, deployments in areas outside the division office increased to five MET deployments demonstrating the goal to increase the mobility of the MET.

On September 28, 2010, the Operations Division held a MET conference for all MET Group Supervisors and back-up supervisors to discuss the overall function of the program and reemphasize guidelines, policies, and procedures of the program. This conference was beneficial to supervisors, especially new supervisors to the MET Program. The supervisors were directed to continue METs' focus on gangs, violent DTOs, and methamphetamine trafficking and manufacturing when feasible. They were also encouraged to deploy outside a 50-mile radius of a DEA division office whenever possible. The Operations Division further informed the MET Group Supervisors that the MET Handbook and all related guidelines, policies, and procedures are in process of being updated to improve the program. It is anticipated that the revised handbook will be finalized within FY 2011.

Recommendation 2: Establish a standardized process for reviewing and selecting from competing requests for MET assistance

DEA concurs with this recommendation. DEA is in the process of developing uniform guidance to all divisions for use in selecting MET deployment locations. It is anticipated that the guidance will be finalized within FY 2011.

The SACs of all METs are to consider the following items in assessing the priority given to a deployment request:

1. Uniform Crime Report Part 1 crime statistics for the specific targeted area of the proposed deployment
2. Primary drug distributed by the targeted groups, and links to Mexican poly-drug trafficking organizations, recognizing the priority of methamphetamine trafficking organizations when feasible
3. Identification of the targeted organization and its members
4. Level of violence attributed to the targeted organization
5. Need of the requesting agency (financial, manpower, technical, etc.)
6. Need of the community requesting a deployment
7. Level and coordination of prosecution at both the state and federal level
8. Projected impact of the deployment on the community
9. The availability and potential utilization of cooperating sources

Recommendation 3: Ensure that divisions conduct adequate outreach activities to inform local law enforcement agencies about the availability of MET resources

DEA concurs with this recommendation. DEA recognizes each division is unique and not all law enforcement agencies within their area of responsibility (AOR) want or need MET assistance. However, in an effort to include all law enforcement agencies, DEA is in the process of developing uniform guidance to all divisions for use in conducting extensive outreach to include all state and local law enforcement agencies within the division's AOR. The goal of the

outreach effort is to give all state and local law enforcement agencies an equal opportunity to request and receive MET assistance. Outreach efforts will be documented and retained by the field by fiscal year. It is anticipated that the guidance will be finalized within FY 2011.

Recommendation 4: Ensure that Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports include the outcome of each arrest, including dismissals and reasons for the dismissals, and use that information to improve MET operations

DEA concurs with this recommendation. DEA is in the process of developing uniform guidance to all divisions for reporting and submission of the six-month Post-Deployment Report (PDR). A new section will be added to the six-month PDR to include deployment arrest outcomes and dismissals. A DEA-210 form, Defendant Disposition Report, will be submitted and used for reporting purposes for all adjudications and/or dismissals that occur after the six-month PDR is submitted. It is anticipated that the guidance will be finalized within FY 2011.

Recommendation 5: Define a timeframe for submitting completed Six-Month Post Deployment Reports and ensure those reports are completed and submitted timely for each defined target area

DEA concurs with this recommendation. DEA is in the process of developing uniform guidance to all METs for the reporting period of the six-month PDR. Clarifications of when the reporting period starts and ends will be included in the guidance. The guidance will also provide dates of when it is to be submitted to DEA Headquarters. Guidance for extensions for reporting will also be provided. It is anticipated that the guidance will be finalized within FY 2011.

Recommendation 6: Ensure that pre-and post-deployment crime statistics used to measure changes in crime rates are for the target area of the MET operation

DEA concurs with this recommendation. DEA is in the process of developing uniform guidance to all METs that when possible, the actual area targeted by the MET is narrowed as much as possible to extract crime statistics from that specific area. The METs will review when available pre and post deployment statistics for the same targeted area to ensure that the statistics are consistent. This practice will result in more accurate reporting of the impact MET deployments actually had on targeted areas. It is anticipated that the guidance will be finalized within FY 2011.

Documentation detailing DEA's efforts to implement each of the recommendations noted in this report will be provided to the OIG on a quarterly basis, until all corrective actions have been completed. If you have any questions or concerns regarding DEA's response to the OIG Audit Report recommendations, please contact the Audit Liaison Team at (202) 307-8200.

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
NECESSARY TO CLOSE THE REPORT

The OIG provided a draft of this audit report to the DEA. The DEA's response is incorporated in Appendix V of this final report. The following provides the OIG analysis of the response and summary of actions necessary to close the report.

Analysis of the DEA's Response

In response to our audit report, the DEA concurred with our recommendations and discussed the actions it will implement in response to our findings. However, the DEA's response disputed several aspects of our findings.

The DEA response stated that the audit report "appears to suggest that DEA deviated from Congressional intent" because it devoted a significant portion of "MET resources to combating drug-related violent crime," and the response questioned whether the report presents a balanced view of the history of the focus of the MET program. The response also stated that the DEA has been clear in explaining to Congress that the focus of the program has shifted and "that Congress has responded by giving DEA greater latitude in deciding how the [MET program] should be deployed." We provide the following reply to these statements before discussing the DEA's specific responses to each of our recommendations and the actions necessary to close those recommendations.

The report clearly explains that in FY 2008 Congress wanted MET operations to focus on methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs, and in FYs 2009 and 2010 Congress wanted MET operations to include a focus on methamphetamine enforcement. As explained in the report and in the DEA's response, congressional language does not preclude the DEA from using METs to address other drug issues. However, because Congress emphasized methamphetamine, we recommended that the DEA consider whether it should devote more MET resources to the methamphetamine problem.

On the second page of its response to our report, the DEA stated that the OIG report accurately summarizes the funding history and the evolving

focus of the MET program from 2006 through 2010. The DEA response states, however, that "a balanced presentation of the history of the program would simply explain that the focus of the METs has shifted over time from one that was primarily focused on methamphetamine to one that is primarily focused on violent drug traffickers; that DEA has been clear in explaining that shift to Congress; and that Congress has responded by giving DEA greater latitude in deciding how the METs should be deployed."

Our report notes the shift in focus of the MET program from methamphetamine to violent drug trafficking, and concludes that DEA could have been clearer in reporting this shift in focus to Congress. For example, at a July 2009 congressional committee hearing a DEA Assistant Administrator testified that the DEA established METs at four DEA divisions in FY 2009 to address methamphetamine trafficking. However, our review found that only one operation of the five enforcement operations conducted by the METs referenced in the congressional testimony had methamphetamine as its primary focus. We also determined that from the time the MET program restarted in April 2008 through January 2010, 7 (26 percent) of 27 initiated MET deployments had methamphetamine trafficking as the primary focus of the deployment. Given that Congress has consistently indicated that the MET program should include a focus on methamphetamine enforcement operations, we recommended that the DEA consider whether to use a greater percentage of its MET resources to combat methamphetamine trafficking.

In addition, based on the decline in methamphetamine focused MET deployments, the report recommends that the DEA update the MET program handbook to reflect the current focus of the program.

The DEA's response also provided detail on the process used to select deployment locations and implies disagreement with our conclusion that the METs – Mobile Enforcement Teams – were not mobile. The DEA states that when METs were reinstated in FY 2008, lack of temporary duty funding to allow deployment travel made it difficult to provide assistance to local agencies which were outside the 50-mile radius of the field division offices. The DEA states that in FY 2009, when funding for deployment travel became available, MET deployments outside of the field division office area were considered and that two of the four newly established METs opted to deploy outside the area of their respective division office.

Our report did find that, when the MET program restarted in FY 2008 without authorizing travel funds, decisions about where to deploy METs were based on proximity to the division office and, as a result, METs were

essentially not mobile. We also found for FYs 2009 and 2010, the DEA authorized the use of MET funds for travel expenses. However, we found that despite the authorization of travel funds for those 2 years, only 4 of 16 deployments were more than 50 miles from the division office. In addition, none of those four deployments were to a rural area where methamphetamine was the focus of the deployment. We recommended that the DEA consider whether METs should be more mobile. The DEA's response to Recommendation 1 discusses its planned efforts to encourage deployments away from the division offices.

Summary of Actions Necessary to Close the Report

1. **Resolved.** The DEA concurred with our recommendation to consider whether more MET resources should be used to combat methamphetamine trafficking, consider whether METs should be more mobile, update the MET Program Handbook to reflect the current focus of the program, and provide relevant guidance to its field divisions. The DEA stated in its response that it will continue to focus MET Program resources on combating gangs, violent drug trafficking organizations, and methamphetamine trafficking; as well as keep Congress abreast of DEA's continued intent and overall direction of the program. The DEA also stated that it will continue the MET focus until otherwise directed by Congress. Further, the DEA stated that METs should be mobile and has begun taking proactive steps to increase its outreach efforts to give state and local law enforcement agencies an equal opportunity to request and receive MET assistance.

   This recommendation can be closed when we receive documentation showing the DEA: (1) considered whether more MET resources should be devoted to methamphetamine trafficking, (2) updated the MET Program Handbook to reflect the current focus of the MET program, (3) provided relevant updated MET guidance to field divisions, (4) issued guidance on conducting and documenting MET outreach efforts, and (5) increased MET outreach activities.

2. **Resolved.** The DEA concurred with our recommendation to establish a standardized process for reviewing and selecting from competing requests for MET assistance. The DEA stated in its response that it was in the process of developing uniform guidance for all divisions to use in selecting MET deployment locations. The DEA expects to finalize this guidance during FY 2011.

This recommendation can be closed when we receive the DEA's standardized process for reviewing and selecting from competing requests for MET assistance.

3. **Resolved.** The DEA concurred with our recommendation to ensure that divisions conduct adequate outreach activities to inform local law enforcement agencies about the availability of MET resources. The DEA stated in its response that it was in the process of developing uniform guidance for all divisions to use in conducting extensive outreach to include all state and local law enforcement agencies within the divisions' area of responsibility. The DEA expects to finalize this guidance during FY 2011.

   This recommendation can be closed when we receive documentation showing that the DEA is ensuring that its field divisions conduct adequate MET outreach activities.

4. **Resolved.** The DEA concurred with our recommendation to ensure that its MET Program's Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports include the outcome of each arrest, including dismissals and reasons for the dismissals, and uses that information to improve MET operations. The DEA stated in its response that it was in the process of developing uniform guidance for all divisions to use in preparing and submitting the Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports. The DEA's response stated that the new guidance, which it expects to finalize during FY 2011, will include a section on arrest outcomes and dismissals.

   This recommendation can be closed when we receive documentation showing the DEA has implemented procedures to ensure the Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports include the outcome of each arrest, including dismissals and reasons for the dismissals, and that the DEA uses that information to improve MET operations.

5. **Resolved.** The DEA concurred with our recommendation to define a timeframe for submitting completed Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports and ensure those reports for each defined target area are completed and submitted timely. The DEA stated in its response that the uniform guidance it is developing will include clarification of the reporting period for Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports, as well as deadlines and instruction for requesting an extension for submitting these reports. Again, the DEA expects to finalize this guidance during FY 2011.

This recommendation can be closed when we receive documentation showing the DEA defined a timeframe for submitting completed Six-Month Post-Deployment Reports and implemented procedures to ensure that the reports for each defined target area are completed and submitted timely.

6. **Resolved.** The DEA concurred with our recommendation to ensure pre- and post-deployment crime statistics used to measure changes in crime rates are for the target area of the MET operation. The DEA stated in its response that it is in the process of developing uniform guidance that METs should ensure that pre- and post-deployment crime statistics for a MET deployment match the target area as closely as possible. The DEA expects to finalize this guidance during FY 2011.

This recommendation can be closed when we receive documentation showing the DEA implemented guidance to help ensure that METs obtain pre- and post-deployment crime statistics for an area that matches the target area as closely as possible.