



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **DOJ OIG Releases Audit Report on the Drug Enforcement Administration's Headquarters-Based Oversight of its Supported Foreign Law Enforcement Units**

Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced today the release of a report evaluating the effectiveness of the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) headquarters-based strategic management and oversight of DEA-supported foreign law enforcement units. Through these partnerships, the DEA targets and disrupts transnational drug trafficking organizations, conducts bilateral operations, coordinates Judicial Wire Intercept Programs, and gathers intelligence on illicit drug smuggling into the United States. While these activities are integral to the DEA's global operations, the DEA's involvement with and funding of foreign law enforcement units in areas known for pervasive corruption can pose significant risks to DEA personnel, information security, the safety of U.S. and foreign civilians, and diplomatic relations.

The DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) review, which covered the period of fiscal years 2017 through 2019, found that DEA's headquarters-based management and oversight were insufficient for the high-risk environment in which these units operate. In addition, the DEA lacks a comprehensive strategy for these programs, which impedes its ability to make well-informed decisions, effectively manage its foreign partnerships, and demonstrate the collective success of DEA-supported operations.

The specific findings in the report include:

- **Critical Incidents.** The DEA has experienced various negative and highly publicized incidents that have involved its supported foreign law enforcement units or unit personnel. However, the DEA has not strategically or programmatically evaluated these incidents to identify lessons learned, enhance oversight, or mitigate the risk or impact of future incidents. The DEA also has inadequate guidance on DEA headquarters' responsibilities to track and monitor critical incidents and to hold DEA Country Offices accountable for assessing risks and resolving each critical incident.
- **Oversight of Entities Not Included in Formal Programs.** The DEA has not conducted sufficient oversight or adequately tracked DEA Country Offices' establishment of foreign partner units not included in the Sensitive Investigative Unit (SIU) and Non-SIU Vetted Unit (Non-SIU VU) programs. These units operate with limited oversight and accountability and outside of the DEA's established controls, such as requirements for background investigations and critical incident reporting. In August 2020, the DEA took some steps to mitigate the risks of these units and developed its Foreign Counterparts Program. However, the processes associated with Foreign Counterparts do not provide for a coordinated and

comprehensive headquarters strategy for overseeing Country Offices' financial and other support for these entities.

- **Monitoring of Host Nation Agreements.** We found that the DEA did not ensure that agreements with host nations were in place or updated. We believe that by not having these agreements in place, the DEA has increased the risk that a host nation may not approve of DEA-guided investigative endeavors or have assurance that the host nation concurs with the DEA's prescribed vetting procedures.
- **Judicial Wire Intercept Programs Established and Utilized by DEA-Supported Foreign Law Enforcement Units.** We found that many DEA officials were unaware of established policies related to the provision of sensitive technologies such as the Judicial Wire Intercept Program (JWIP). In addition, DEA had not developed controls and processes to effectively monitor the use of JWIPs by DEA-supported foreign law enforcement units. The lack of oversight regarding the export and provision of this technology exposes the DEA to the risk of noncompliance with export control laws. It also increases the potential that these tools may be used inappropriately.
- **Financial Management and Performance Tracking System.** The DEA does not have a full accounting of all funding provided to and expenditures made for SIUs and Non-SIU VUs. We believe that the DEA is unable to adequately assess its budgetary needs and ensure that all requirements under the Foreign Assistance Act are fulfilled without an accurate accounting of the total funds provided to these units. We also found that the DEA's system for tracking SIU and Non-SIU VU Program requirements was outdated and contained unreliable information, impeding the DEA's ability to track programmatic requirements and demonstrate the collective success of these programs.

Today's report makes 10 recommendations to assist the DEA improve its management and oversight of supported foreign law enforcement units. The DEA agreed with all 10 recommendations and has started corrective measures during our audit, to include securing new or updated host nation agreements.

**Report:** Today's report is available on the OIG's website at the following link:

<https://oig.justice.gov/reports/audit-drug-enforcement-administrations-headquarters-based-oversight-its-supported-foreign>

**Video:** To accompany today's report, the OIG has released a two-minute video of the Inspector General discussing the report's findings. The video and a downloadable transcript are available at the following link: <https://oig.justice.gov/news/multimedia/video/message-inspector-general-audit-drug-enforcement-administrations-headquarters>

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