



September 2019

U.S. ASSISTANCE TO MEXICO

State and USAID
Allocated over \$700
Million to Support
Criminal Justice,
Border Security, and
Related Efforts from
Fiscal Year 2014
through 2018

Accessible Version

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-19-647](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

For more than a decade, the activities of transnational criminal organizations have led to increased crime, violence, and lawlessness in parts of Mexico. In October 2007, Mexico and the United States created the Mérida Initiative, a bilateral partnership to address crime and violence and enhance the rule of law in Mexico.

State/INL and USAID are the lead U.S. agencies for developing programming for the Mérida Initiative. Both State/INL and USAID also manage and fund the Mérida Initiative with the support of a wide range of project implementers, including the Departments of Defense (DOD), Homeland Security (DHS), and Justice (DOJ); contractors; nongovernmental organizations; and international organizations.

GAO was asked to describe funding and projects the United States has provided under the Mérida Initiative. This report describes (1) State/INL and USAID funding for the Mérida Initiative from fiscal year 2014 through 2018 and (2) the number and type of Mérida Initiative projects active during these years. GAO reviewed State and USAID documents and data, and interviewed officials from State, USAID, DOD, DHS, and DOJ in Washington, D.C., and Mexico City.

View [GAO-19-647](#). For more information, contact Jenny Grover at (202) 512-7141 or groverj@gao.gov.

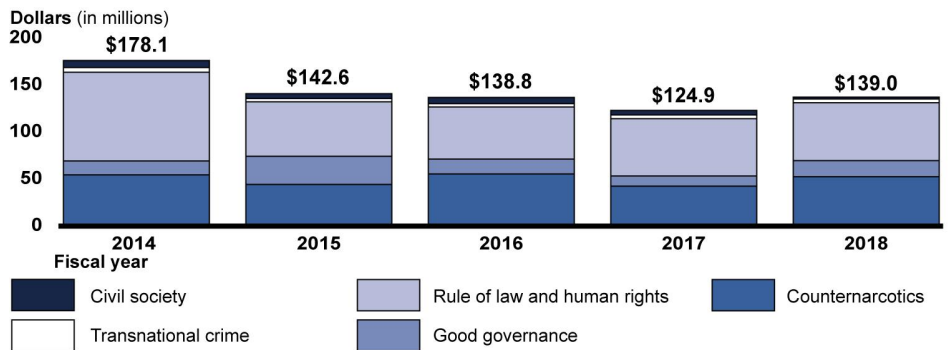
U.S. ASSISTANCE TO MEXICO

State and USAID Allocated over \$700 Million to Support Criminal Justice, Border Security, and Related Efforts from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

What GAO Found

From fiscal year 2014 through 2018, the Department of State's (State) Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) allocated about \$723 million for the Mérida Initiative, which aims to mitigate the impact of the drug trade on the United States and reduce violence in Mexico. State/INL and USAID allocated this funding under the following government-wide foreign assistance funding categories: Civil Society, Counternarcotics, Good Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights, and Transnational Crime. U.S. agencies use these categories to broadly define foreign assistance programs for planning, budgeting, and reporting across agencies, countries, and regions. Over 80 percent of the funding went toward Rule of Law and Human Rights, and Counternarcotics efforts. Of the \$723 million, State/INL allocated about \$542 million and USAID allocated about \$182 million.

State/INL and USAID Funding Allocated for the Mérida Initiative, Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018, by Funding Category



Source: GAO Analysis of Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) data and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) data. | GAO-19-647

There were 445 State/INL and USAID Mérida Initiative projects active from fiscal year 2014 through 2018. State/INL funded 388 of the projects and USAID funded 57, which tended to be larger with higher funding amounts than State/INL projects. State/INL projects generally focused on providing training and assistance to Mexican officials from the justice sector, border security, military, and law enforcement, as well as equipment, including for forensic drug laboratories, drug detection, and border surveillance. Many USAID projects were intended to engage with Mexican civil society organizations and the public to address corruption, promote trust in government, or prevent crime and violence, such as through skill-building for youth, efforts to advance human rights, or technical support for judicial system development. State/INL and USAID implemented their projects mainly through contracts, grants, and interagency agreements, as well as through agreements with international organizations, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Organization of American States.

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Abbreviations

DA	Development Assistance
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOD	Department of Defense
DOJ	Department of Justice

ESF	Economic Support Fund
GOM	Government of Mexico
INCLE	International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
State	Department of State
State/INL	Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
TCO	transnational criminal organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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September 10, 2019

The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman
The Honorable Gary Peters
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United State Senate

The Honorable Albio Sires
Chairman
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives

The Honorable Joaquin Castro
House of Representatives

The Honorable Paul Cook
House of Representatives

The Honorable Michael McCaul
House of Representatives

For more than a decade, the presence of transnational criminal organizations (TCO) has led to increased crime, violence, and lawlessness in parts of Mexico, and has also threatened security along the U.S.–Mexico border. In addition, in the midst of an unprecedented opioid crisis in the United States, TCOs in Mexico supply the majority of heroin consumed in the United States. According to U.S. government reports, organized crime–related violence in Mexico declined from 2011 to 2014, but rose to record levels in 2017. As a result of this violence, more than 109,000 people may have died since December 2006, and the Government of Mexico (GOM) estimates that more than 40,000 people in Mexico may have disappeared.¹

¹Congressional Research Service, *U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Mérida Initiative and Beyond*, June 29, 2017.

In October 2007, the United States and Mexico created the Mérida Initiative and, in doing so, committed to work together to address crime and violence, and enhance the rule of law in Mexico. Through this bilateral partnership, the United States has funded Mérida Initiative projects broadly related to the four pillars of the initiative—combating TCOs, rule of law and human rights, border security, and building strong and resilient communities—with the goals of mitigating the impact of the drug trade on the United States and reducing violence in Mexico. Since fiscal year 2008, U.S. funding allocated for the Mérida Initiative has totaled about \$3 billion.²

You asked us to review U.S. government assistance for the Mérida Initiative. This report describes (1) funding for the Mérida Initiative from the Department of State (State), Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) from fiscal year 2014 through 2018, and (2) the number and type of Mérida Initiative projects in place during this period.³

To describe the funding provided for the Mérida Initiative, we analyzed data provided by State/INL and USAID on funding allocated for the Mérida Initiative from fiscal year 2014 through 2018.⁴ The data were categorized by agency—State/INL or USAID—and by U.S. government-wide foreign assistance funding categories. To describe the number and type of Mérida Initiative projects active during this period, we analyzed detailed project-level data provided to us by State/INL and USAID, including implementers, project descriptions, time frames, and obligated

²Congressional Research Service, *Mexico: Evolution of the Mérida Initiative, 2007-2019*, March 11, 2019.

³Although agencies use different terms to describe agencies' assistance, including programs, projects, and activities, we use the term "projects" to refer to assistance funded by the key U.S. agencies that are implemented directly by U.S. agencies or through awards made to project implementers, which includes contractors, international organizations, and grantees. In general, the term project refers to a set of activities that are designated and executed over a time frame to achieve a specific aim.

⁴We last reported on the Mérida Initiative in fiscal year 2010. See GAO, *Mérida Initiative: The United States Has Provided Counternarcotics and Anticrime Support but Needs Better Performance Measures*, [GAO-10-837](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 21, 2010).

or estimated funding amounts.⁵ Some projects that were active from fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2018 started before this time frame and some projects ended after this time frame. We assessed the reliability of the funding and project data by checking for missing data and obvious errors, and by interviewing State and USAID officials about how the data were compiled. When we found potential errors or duplicate data, we contacted relevant agency officials, and obtained additional information to resolve these data issues. We also obtained additional information about Mérida Initiative funding and projects by reviewing relevant agency documentation, and by interviewing officials from State, USAID, and the Departments of Justice (DOJ), Homeland Security (DHS), and Defense (DOD) in Washington, D.C., and Mexico City. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of our reporting objectives. As part of our review of Mérida Initiative project information, we reviewed State/INL and USAID strategy documents to determine how the initiative's projects align with the initiative's goals. In particular, we reviewed State/INL's Mexico Country Plans and USAID's Mexico Country Development Cooperation Strategy, which outline each agency's goals and objectives related to the Mérida Initiative.

We conducted this performance audit from November 2018 to September 2019 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.

Background

When Mexico and the United States created the Mérida Initiative in 2007, the Mexican government pledged to tackle crime and corruption and the U.S. government pledged to address domestic drug demand and the illicit trafficking of firearms and bulk currency to Mexico. During the early years of the Mérida Initiative, much of the U.S. funding for the initiative was

⁵For project level funding data, we define obligations as orders placed, contracts awarded, and similar transactions during a given period that will require payments during the same or a future period. State/INL categorizes these as "subobligations," because State/INL considers these funds to have been obligated through the bilateral agreement with Mexico to deliver assistance. For this report, State/INL provided subobligations data for its projects. USAID provided total estimated funding data for its projects.

intended to purchase equipment to support Mexican federal security forces, including about \$591 million for aircraft and helicopters from fiscal years 2008 through 2010. In 2011, U.S. and Mexican officials agreed to expand the scope of the initiative to prioritize institution building, and later increased the initiative's focus on community engagement and human rights efforts. According to State, an Executive Order on TCOs issued in 2017 signaled that the focus of the Mérida Initiative would shift to countering TCOs' illicit activities, such as drug production and the cross-border movement of drugs, cash, and weapons.⁶

State/INL and USAID are the lead U.S. agencies for developing the Mérida Initiative's programming. In these roles, State/INL and USAID work with GOM officials to help outline Mérida Initiative projects' plans, objectives, and intended impact. State/INL and USAID both manage and fund the Mérida Initiative with the support of a wide range of project implementers, including DOJ, DHS, DOD, contractors, nongovernmental organizations, and international organizations.⁷

All Mérida Initiative projects are currently funded through three appropriations accounts:⁸

- the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) account administered by State/INL,
- the Economic Support Fund (ESF) account, from which the Mérida Initiative project funding is administered by USAID, and
- the Development Assistance (DA) account, also from which the Mérida Initiative project funding is administered by USAID.

⁶See Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking, Exec. Order 13,773, 82 Fed. Reg. 10691, Feb. 9, 2017.

⁷Several types of contracts are used to implement Mérida Initiative projects, including personal service contracts and local contracts.

⁸From fiscal years 2008 through 2011, State Foreign Military Financing funding in Mexico was included as part of the Mérida Initiative. Also, USAID Development Assistance (DA) funds in Mexico were included as part of the Mérida Initiative only in fiscal year 2017. According to USAID officials, not all Economic Support Fund (ESF) funds in Mexico are considered part of the Mérida Initiative. In particular, any ESF funding outside of the Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance categories would not be considered part of the Mérida Initiative. From the funds appropriated for these three accounts, State and USAID allocate funding for various Mérida Initiative projects.

According to State/INL and USAID officials, GOM does not provide direct funding to Mérida Initiative projects. Instead, State/INL considers any GOM funding for justice, national security/defense, and public order and domestic security as indirectly supporting the goals of the Mérida Initiative.⁹ In addition, according to USAID data, Mexican nonprofit and private sector entities provided about \$23 million in matching funds for USAID-funded Mérida Initiative projects active from fiscal year 2014 through 2018.

State and USAID Allocated Over \$700 Million for Mérida Initiative Projects from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

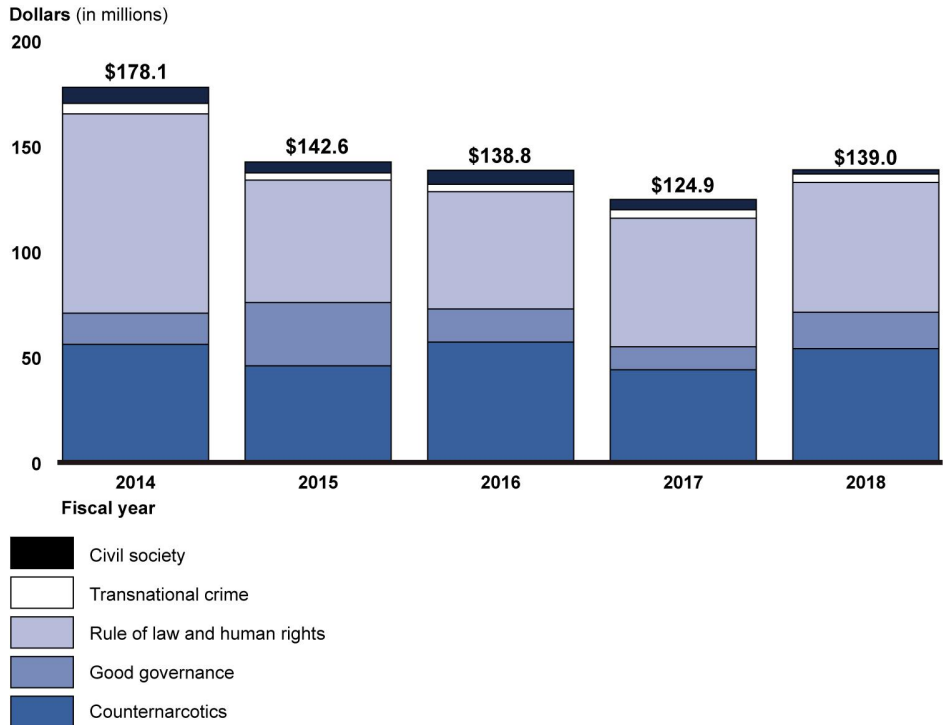
From fiscal year 2014 through 2018, State/INL and USAID allocated about \$723 million for Mérida Initiative projects under the following five U.S. government-wide foreign assistance funding categories: Civil Society, Counternarcotics, Good Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights, and Transnational Crime.¹⁰ U.S. agencies use these government-wide categories to broadly define foreign assistance programs for planning, budgeting, and reporting, which provides a common language

⁹According to State/INL reported data from the Mexican Secretariat of Finance, from fiscal year 2014 through 2018, GOM provided a total of about \$73.6 billion dollars for GOM's budget for Justice, National Security/Defense, and Public Order and Domestic Security. According to State/INL officials, these areas support the goals of the Mérida Initiative. State/INL used average exchange rates per year to calculate GOM funding in U.S. dollars. The average exchange rates were 13.31 pesos per U.S. dollar in 2014, 15.87 pesos per U.S. dollar in 2015, 18.69 pesos per U.S. dollar in 2016, 18.92 pesos per U.S. dollar in 2017, and 19.26 pesos per U.S. dollar in 2018. As these are foreign government data, we did not assess the data's reliability.

¹⁰Civil society assistance focuses on empowering citizens to advance democratic values of citizen participation and government accountability. Counternarcotics assistance focuses on combatting the production, trafficking, and cultivation of narcotics, and limiting the drug trade's public health risks. Good Governance assistance supports the political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels in an inclusive, participatory, transparent, responsive, effective, and accountable manner. Rule of Law and Human Rights assistance supports the principle that all persons, institutions and entities are accountable to laws and the principle that an individual's dignity is to be enjoyed by all regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other status. Transnational Crime assistance focuses on minimizing the adverse effects of transnational threats and criminal activities on the United States and its citizens.

to describe programs across agencies, countries, and regions.¹¹ Over 80 percent of the funding, or \$589 million, went toward Rule of Law and Human Rights, and Counternarcotics efforts. (See fig. 1.) Funding allocated for the Mérida Initiative has decreased over time from \$178 million in fiscal year 2014 to \$139 million in fiscal year 2018.

Figure 1: State/INL and USAID Funding Allocated for the Mérida Initiative, Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018, by Funding Category



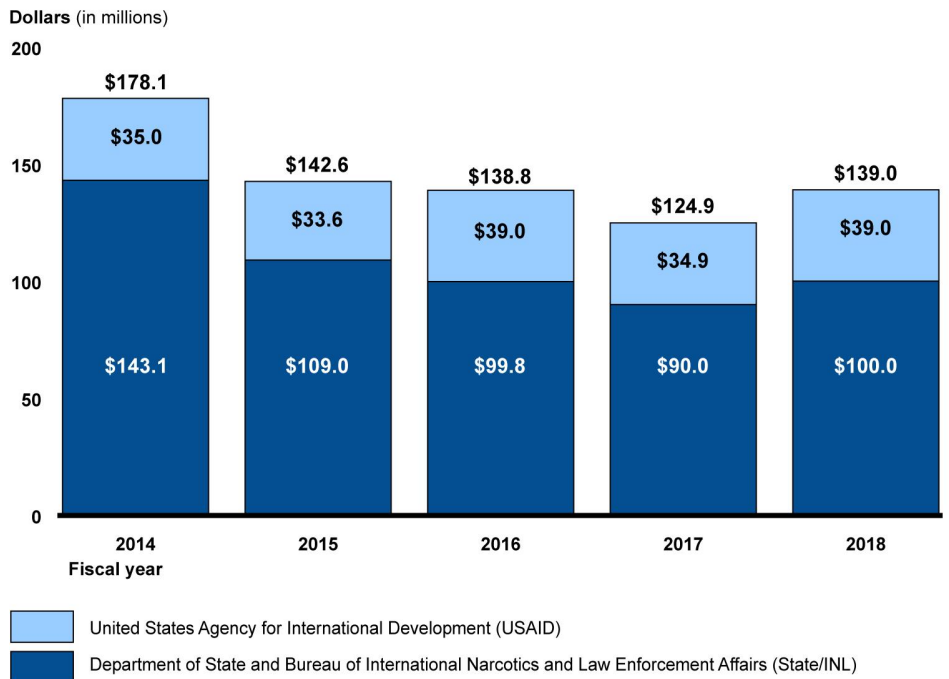
Source: GAO Analysis of Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) data and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) data. | GAO-19-647

Notes: These funding categories are part of a U.S. government-wide framework—the Standardized Program Structure and Definitions—used for foreign assistance planning, budgeting, and reporting. Amounts have not been adjusted for inflation.

¹¹This is known as the Standardized Program Structure and Definitions. According to State/INL, the Rule of Law and Human Rights category combines two Standardized Program Structure and Definitions categories—(1) Rule of Law and (2) Citizen Security and Law Enforcement. In addition, the Rule of Law and Human Rights category was split into two categories in the Standardized Program Structure and Definitions starting in fiscal year 2018. Transnational Crime is the Transnational Threats and Crime category in the Standardized Program Structure and Definitions.

Of the \$723 million, State/INL allocated about \$542 million and USAID allocated about \$182 million. (See fig. 2.)

Figure 2: State/INL and USAID Funding Allocated for the Mérida Initiative, Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018



Source: GAO Analysis of State/INL and USAID data. | GAO-19-647

Note: Amounts have not been adjusted for inflation.

445 State and USAID Mérida Initiative Projects Were Active from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018, Supporting a Wide Range of Efforts

Four hundred and forty-five Mérida Initiative projects were active from fiscal year 2014 through 2018, with State/INL funding 388 projects and USAID funding 57 generally larger projects.¹² State/INL and USAID each

¹²These projects are those that were active at any point from fiscal year 2014 through the end of fiscal year 2018, which includes some projects that started before this time period and ended after this time period. Compared to State/INL projects, USAID projects are generally larger with higher funding amounts.

categorized their projects with greater specificity than the broad categories used for overall allocated funding. Both State/INL and USAID funded projects to assist Mexico's transition to a newly reformed criminal justice system that includes oral arguments and the presumption of innocence, categorized by State/INL as "criminal justice" and by USAID as "rule of law."¹³ In addition to projects related to criminal justice, most funding for State/INL projects was for those that focused on border and port security, professionalizing the police, and counternarcotics. For example, numerous State/INL projects provided training; technical assistance; and equipment—including for drug detection, border surveillance, and forensic drug laboratories—for Mexican law enforcement, border security, justice sector, and military officials. In addition to rule of law projects, most funding for USAID projects was for those that focused on crime and violence prevention, human rights, and transparency and accountability. Similar to State/INL, numerous USAID projects provided technical assistance to Mexican justice sector officials. Other USAID projects were designed to engage with civil society groups to address crime and violence, and corruption, and to promote trust in government. State/INL and USAID implemented these projects primarily through contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, interagency agreements, and agreements with international organizations.

State/INL Mérida Initiative Projects Focused on Criminal Justice, Border and Port Security, Professionalizing the Police, and Counternarcotics

State/INL-funded Mérida projects focused on criminal justice, border and port security, professionalizing the police, and counternarcotics. State/INL categorizes its Mérida Initiative projects under priority lines of effort developed by State/INL Mexico specifically for the Mérida Initiative. These lines of effort are defined in State/INL's Mexico Country Plan: *Advance Criminal Justice, Counternarcotics, Disrupt Illicit Finance, Professionalize the Police, and Secure Border and Ports*.¹⁴ While State/INL uses these lines of effort to categorize State/INL-funded Mérida Initiative projects, these lines of effort also align with the broader U.S. government-wide

¹³According to U.S. government reports, in June 2016, Mexico transitioned from an inquisitorial, closed-door process based on written arguments presented to a judge to a more transparent adversarial system.

¹⁴State/INL categorizes some projects as "Multiple" when they span more than one line of State/INL line of effort.

foreign assistance funding categories outlined in figure 1 above. See table 1 for a description of State/INL’s lines of effort for the Mérida Initiative, and how these lines of effort align with the U.S. government–wide foreign assistance funding categories.

Table 1: State/INL Lines of Effort for Mérida Initiative Projects

State/INL line of effort	Definition	Government-wide foreign assistance funding categories that align with State/INL line of effort
Advance Criminal Justice	Advance Mexico’s implementation of the accusatory criminal justice system to reduce impunity and corruption and to build public confidence in the justice sector. Increase prosecutions of Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCO) networks within Mexico.	Rule of Law and Human Rights Good Governance ^a
Counternarcotics	Improve Mexico’s capacity to reduce the production of heroin, fentanyl, methamphetamine, cocaine, and other illicit drugs, and reduce the trafficking of these drugs from Mexico to the United States.	Counternarcotics
Disrupt Illicit Finance	Improve Mexico’s capacity to conduct and partner on intelligence-led investigations of TCO networks and their illicit finance.	Transnational Crime
Professionalize the Police	Improve Mexico’s civilian law enforcement capability while ensuring respect for human rights and enhancing public trust.	Rule of Law and Human Rights
Secure Borders and Ports	Improve Mexico’s capacity to secure borders and ports against transit of drugs, illicit goods, and irregular migration, without hindering legitimate trade and travel.	Counternarcotics

Source: Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL). | GAO-19-647

^aAccording to State/INL, since fiscal year 2017, no State/INL funded Mérida Initiative projects have been grouped under the Good Governance funding category.

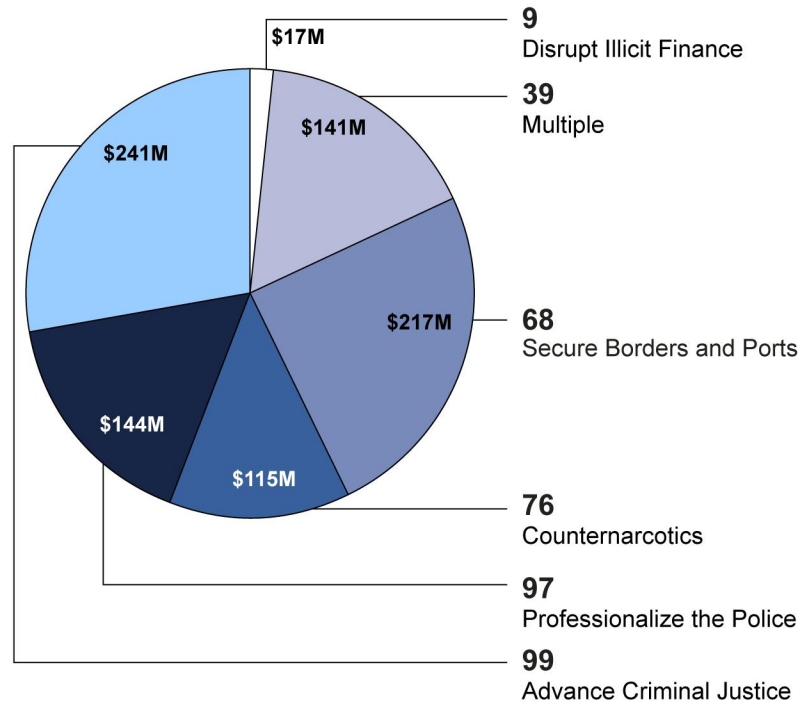
The Rule of Law and Human Rights category was split into two categories in the Standardized Program Structure and Definitions starting in fiscal year 2018.

The State/INL projects with the highest percentage of State/INL funding were those focused on Advancing Criminal Justice (28 percent) and Securing Borders and Ports (25 percent). Law enforcement related categories—Counternarcotics and Professionalize the Police—also constituted a substantial proportion (30 percent) of State/INL funding, as shown in figure 3.¹⁵ For a list of State/INL’s highest dollar value projects

¹⁵Total obligated funding for these projects does not match the allocated funding in figs. 1 and 2 because State/INL project funding in fig. 3 includes the total funding for projects active at any point in time from fiscal year 2014 through 2018; thus, funding provided for these projects might have been provided in prior fiscal years or might be provided in future years to complete the projects.

active from fiscal year 2014 through 2018 by these categories, see appendix I.

Figure 3: Obligated Funding for and Number of State/INL Mérida Initiative Projects Active from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018



Source: GAO analysis of Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) data. | GAO-19-647

Notes: State/INL categorizes some projects as “Multiple” when they span more than one of the State/INL lines of effort.

We define obligations as orders placed, contracts awarded, and similar transactions during a given period that will require payments during the same or a future period. State/INL categorizes these as “subobligations,” because State considers these funds to have been obligated through the bilateral agreement with Mexico to deliver assistance.

Funding amounts presented are for the entire duration of the project, and these amounts have not been adjusted for inflation.

Below are some examples of State/INL-funded Mérida Initiative projects supporting the agency’s five lines of effort in Mexico:

- Advance Criminal Justice.** These 99 projects, with State/INL funding estimated at \$241 million, focused on providing training, technical assistance, and equipment to Mexican justice sector and law enforcement officials as they transition to a new judicial system. These projects also provided tools and guidance to civil society to promote the rule of law and trust in government. For example:

- One DOJ project supported criminal investigations and prosecutions by providing training to GOM officials to improve their forensic laboratories, and by providing technical assistance to forensic scientists testifying as expert witnesses in criminal cases.
- Through another project, DOJ developed training materials and instructors to assist the GOM Attorney General's office with the mechanics of Mexico's judicial system reforms and to create a culture of professionalization within the Attorney General's office.
- Some criminal justice projects engaged with civil society, such as a project that worked to promote a culture of lawfulness among Mexican children who attend elementary school in high-crime areas.
- **Counternarcotics.** These 76 projects, with State/INL funding estimated at \$115 million, focused on assisting Mexican agencies countering the illicit drug trade in Mexico, primarily through technical assistance and equipment, including for forensic labs, drug detection, and surveillance. For example:
 - Intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance technology has been provided to the Mexican Navy to expand its capacity to conduct counternarcotics operations.
 - The Organization of American States implemented a project that expanded Mexico's drug treatment courts, which offer rehabilitation services and other nonpunitive alternatives for drug offenders who would otherwise face time in prison.
- **Disrupt Illicit Finance.** These nine projects, with State/INL funding estimated at \$17 million, provided equipment, training, and a public awareness campaign to assist the GOM in its efforts to address TCO's money-laundering and other illicit financial activities. For example:
 - One DOJ project provided anti-money laundering training to Mexican prosecutors at the state and federal levels.
 - Another United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime project aims to combat money laundering through a public awareness campaign and complaint call center in Mexico.
- **Professionalize the Police.** Many of these 97 projects, with State/INL funding estimated at \$144 million, provided training and technical assistance to Mexican law enforcement officials at all levels to improve their effectiveness, accountability, and adherence to the rule of law.

-
- An aspect of one project conducted surveys with law enforcement personnel and civil society to better inform effective police practices and to link these practices with levels of citizen trust.
 - Two other projects supported tours to the United States for Mexican officials to study issues related to gender-based violence and women’s access to justice.
 - **Secure Borders and Ports.** These 68 projects, with State/INL funding estimated at \$217 million, focused on various efforts and equipment for GOM border and military officials—including equipment for biometrics, surveillance, and telecommunications—to secure Mexico’s air, land, and sea borders and ports. For example, DHS’s Customs and Border Patrol provided mentors and training to GOM border officials to improve their capacity to stem the northward flow of migrants entering Mexico along its southern border.

USAID Mérida Initiative Projects Focused Primarily on Crime and Violence Prevention and Rule of Law

USAID-funded Mérida Initiative projects focused on crime and violence prevention, rule of law, transparency and accountability, and human rights efforts. USAID categorizes its Mérida Initiative projects under the following development objectives developed by USAID Mexico and outlined in USAID’s Mexico Country Development Cooperation Strategy: *Crime and Violence Prevention, Human Rights, Rule of Law, and Transparency and Accountability*.¹⁶ Similar to State/INL’s Mérida Initiative lines of effort, USAID Mexico uses its development objectives to categorize USAID-funded Mérida Initiative projects. These objectives also align with the broader U.S. government-wide foreign assistance funding categories outlined in figure 1. See table 2 for a description of USAID’s development objectives for the Mérida Initiative, and how these objectives align with the U.S. government-wide foreign assistance funding categories.

¹⁶According to USAID, Transparency and Accountability is not listed as a separate development objective in USAID Mexico Country Development Cooperation Strategy. Instead, it is a subcomponent of the Human Rights development objective. USAID categorizes some projects as “cross-cutting” when they contribute to the results of more than one USAID development objective.

Table 2: USAID Development Objectives for Mérida Initiative Projects

Development objective	Definition	Government-wide foreign assistance funding categories that align with USAID development objectives
Crime and Violence Prevention	Crime and violence prevention models will be replicated by local stakeholders.	Good Governance Civil Society
Human Rights	An enabling environment to protect human rights and prevent abuses will be improved.	Rule of Law and Human Rights Civil society
Rule of Law	Constitutional criminal justice reforms of 2008 will be operational.	Rule of Law and Human Rights Civil Society
Transparency and Accountability ^a	Government of Mexico accountability and transparency will be strengthened	Rule of Law and Human Rights Civil Society

Source: United States Agency for International Development (USAID). | GAO-19-647

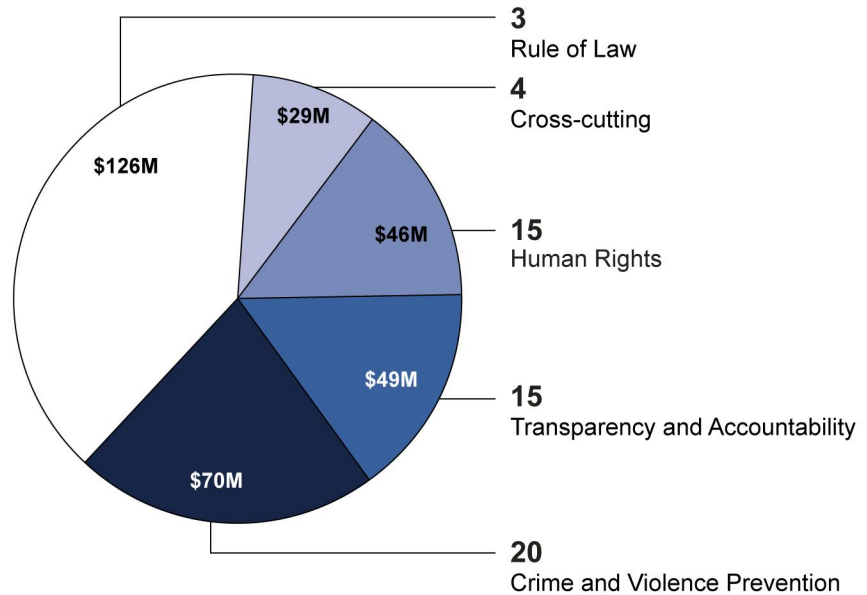
^aAccording to USAID, Transparency and Accountability is not listed as a separate development objective in the USAID Mexico Country Development Cooperation Strategy. Instead, it is a subcomponent of the Human Rights development objective.

The Rule of Law and Human Rights category was split into two categories in the Standardized Program Structure and Definitions starting in fiscal year 2018

The USAID projects with the highest percentage of USAID funding were those focused on Rule of Law (39 percent) or Crime and Violence Prevention (22 percent) with Transparency and Accountability and Human Rights constituting slightly smaller percentages (15 percent and 14 percent, respectively). While funding for USAID projects was concentrated in the Rule of Law category, the number of USAID projects was spread relatively evenly among the categories of Crime and Violence Prevention, Human Rights, and Transparency and Accountability, as shown in figure 4.¹⁷ For a list of USAID’s highest dollar value projects active from fiscal years 2014 through 2018, see appendix II.

¹⁷Total estimated funding for these projects does not match the allocated funding in figures 1 and 2 because USAID project funding in figure 4 includes the total funding for projects active at any point in time from fiscal years 2014 through 2018; thus, funding provided for these projects might have been provided in prior fiscal years or might be provided in future years to complete the projects.

Figure 4: Estimated Funding for and Number of USAID Mérida Initiative Projects, Active Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018



Source: GAO analysis of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) data. | GAO-19-647

Notes: USAID categorizes some projects as “cross-cutting” when they contribute to the results of more than one USAID development objective.

According to USAID, “estimated funding” represents the total expected multiyear funding for the project, and the funding amounts for concluded projects are final.

Funding amounts presented are for the entire duration of the project, and these amounts have not been adjusted for inflation.

Below are some examples of USAID-funded Mérida projects supporting the agency’s four development objectives in Mexico for the Mérida Initiative:

- Crime and Violence Prevention.** These 20 projects, with USAID funding estimated at \$70 million, worked with civil society, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and GOM officials to implement various activities, such as training, workshops, and outreach efforts, to mitigate crime and violence. A number of these projects focused on building the skills and knowledge of at-risk youth, such as those in high-crime areas or at risk of dropping out of school. For example, one project aimed to help at-risk youth in communities and detention centers return to school, gain employment, and improve life skills.
- Human Rights.** These 15 projects, with USAID funding estimated at \$46 million, worked to advance human rights through various activities

that, for example, focused on protecting journalists and human rights defenders, preventing forced disappearances, and promoting freedom of expression.¹⁸ For example, one project supported the GOM's efforts to implement its National Human Rights Plan by implementing clear procedures in line with international human rights standards.

- **Rule of Law.** These three projects, with USAID funding estimated at \$126 million primarily provided technical assistance and outreach to assist Mexican officials as they transitioned to a new judicial system.
 - For example, two large projects—one \$68 million project and one \$56 million project that has since closed—provided a wide range of technical assistance to GOM judges, public defenders, and attorneys general.
 - Another smaller project worked with law schools to adapt their curricula to the new criminal justice system.
- **Transparency and Accountability.** These 15 projects, with USAID funding estimated at \$49 million engaged with Mexican officials and civil society to address corruption and promote ethical behavior. Projects helped Mexican officials develop and implement anticorruption policies, strengthen transparency in their procurement processes, and implement GOM's National Anti-Corruption System. For example, one project aimed to deter corruption and support transparency by improving the quality of investigative and data journalism in Mexico.

State and USAID Primarily Use Contracts, Grants, and Interagency Agreements to Implement Mérida Initiative Projects

State/INL and USAID implement Mérida Initiative projects primarily through contracts, grants, and agreements with international organizations, but State/INL also employs agreements with U.S. agencies

¹⁸State defines forced disappearances as the secret abduction or imprisonment of a person by security forces.

(DOJ, DHS, and DOD). See tables 3 and 4 for the number of and funding for each type of State/INL and USAID funding mechanism, respectively.¹⁹

Table 3: State/INL Funding Mechanisms for the Mérida Initiative, for Projects Active from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

Type of funding mechanism ^a	Number of funding mechanisms	Total obligated funding (dollars)	Percentage of total obligated funding
Contracts	133	437,702,199	50.0
Grants	56	176,958,459	20.2
Interagency agreements with U.S. agencies ^b	50	168,862,777	19.3
Agreements with international organizations	19	71,417,081	8.2
Local contracts ^c	66	11,096,643	1.3
Personal service contracts ^d	64	9,016,609	1.0
Total	388	875,053,769	100

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) data. | GAO-19-647

Notes: Funding amounts presented are for the entire duration of the project, and these amounts have not been adjusted for inflation.

^aThe type of and number of funding mechanisms by these categories was based on Mérida Initiative project-level information provided by State/INL. GAO did not review all 388 State/INL funding mechanisms.

^bAccording to State/INL officials, State/INL used Memorandums of Agreement for its agreements with other U.S. agencies for the Mérida Initiative before 2015. For purposes of this report, we group four Memorandums of Agreement under the Interagency Agreements category.

^cAccording to State/INL officials, a local contract is executed by a contracting officer at a U.S. embassy and must be within the maximum \$250,000 overseas warrant of the contracting officer.

^dPersonal service contracts directly engage the time and effort of a contractor whose primary purpose is to perform an identifiable task rather than to furnish an end item of supply.

¹⁹As noted above, total funding for these projects does not match the allocated funding for fiscal years 2014 through 2018 shown in figs. 1 and 2, because project funding shown in tables 3 and 4 include funding provided for these projects in prior fiscal years as well as estimated funding to be provided in future years to complete the projects.

Table 4: USAID Funding Mechanisms for the Mérida Initiative, for Projects Active from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

Type of funding mechanism ^a	Number of funding mechanisms	Estimated funding (dollars)	Percentage of total estimated funding
Contracts	9	220,816,942	69
Grants or cooperative agreements	46	93,837,695	29.3
Agreements with International Organizations	1	2,800,000	.9
Trust fund contribution ^b	1	2,700,711	.8
Total	57	320,155,408	100

Source: GAO analysis of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) data. | GAO-19-647

Notes: According to USAID, “estimated funding” represents the total expected multiyear funding for the project, and the funding amounts for concluded projects are final.

Funding amounts presented are for the entire duration of the project, and these amounts have not been adjusted for inflation.

^aThe type of and number of funding mechanisms by these categories was based on Mérida Initiative project-level information provided by USAID, and GAO did not review all 57 USAID mechanisms.

^bA trust fund is a financing arrangement set up with contributions from one or more donors and for which an entity serves and administers the trust as the trustee, but title to the contribution remains with USAID.

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to State and USAID for review and comment. State and USAID both provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate. USAID also provided formal comments, which are reproduced in appendix III. In these comments, USAID noted that, with its support, the Mérida Initiative has been instrumental in advancing reforms to the Mexican criminal justice sector, promoting human rights, building strong and resilient communities, and improving integrity and accountability.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of State, and the USAID Administrator. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-7141 or groverj@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made contributions to this report are listed in appendix IV.



Jennifer A. Grover
Director, International Affairs and Trade

Appendix I: Highest Dollar Value State/INL Mérida Initiative Projects, by Category, Active from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

This appendix provides a detailed list of the 10 highest dollar value Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) Mérida Initiative projects active from fiscal year 2014 through 2018 by State/INL’s five lines of effort—Advance Criminal Justice, Counternarcotics, Disrupt Illicit Finance, Professionalize the Police, and Secure Border and Ports. State/INL provided the details in tables 5 to 9 below.

Table 5: State/INL “Advance Criminal Justice” Mérida Initiative Line of Effort Projects Active from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

Project name	Implementer	Obligated funding	Project start and end date	Description
Forensics Laboratory Assistance	DOJ, International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program	33,685,167	9/16/16-9/30/19	To advance Mexican states’ forensic capacity in seven disciplines (genetics, chemistry, ballistics, fingerprints, questioned documents, forensic medicine, and crime scene investigations) that support criminal prosecutions under the new justice system in Mexico. The training is intended to yield internationally accredited labs, which work to provide better analysis and convincing evidence for criminal cases in Mexico’s criminal justice system, and improving prosecutions of transnational crime.

**Appendix I: Highest Dollar Value State/INL
Mérida Initiative Projects, by Category, Active
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Project name	Implementer	Obligated funding	Project start and end date	Description
Technical Secretariat of the Coordination Council for the Implementation of the Judicial System, Reporting Infrastructure INL Mexico	Muscogee International	19,290,910	9/27/16-3/05/19	To procure and deploy court reporting infrastructure, including video and audio recording equipment in line with the requirements of Mexico's new accusatorial criminal justice system. To provide assistance to under-resourced state courts to help bring them into compliance with the accusatorial criminal justice system and ensure proper record-keeping required for oral trials, including for transnational criminal organizations. To review recordings to allow oversight of the protection of human rights of victims, witnesses, and defendants; assessment of best practices; and evaluation of the trial performance of prosecutors, judges, and other actors.
Technical Secretariat of the Coordination Council for the Implementation of the Judicial System, Information Technology Communications Infrastructure Project	Alutiiq Essential Services	18,401,332	7/11/16-7/10/17	To procure and deploy an information technology and communications platform designed to allow each courtroom location to operate effectively, efficiently, and independently in support of required judicial processes, including video and audio recording. To provide assistance to under-resourced courts intended to help to bring them into compliance with the accusatorial criminal justice system and ensure proper record-keeping required for oral trials.
Mexico's Transition to the Accusatory System	DOJ, Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance, and Training	12,999,999	9/29/14-9/30/17	To provide capacity-building support to Mexican prosecutors and judges in the transition to the new criminal justice system to institutionalize best judicial practices and increase the number of prosecutions and resolutions of cases involving transnational organized crime.
Forensics Laboratory Assistance, International Accreditation, State Forensics Laboratories	DOJ, International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program	12,922,920	6/23/14-9/30/16	To advance Mexican forensic capacity at the state level in all 32 states following an initial pilot project in six states. Training of forensic lab officials is intended to provide better analysis and support for criminal cases passing through the Mexican criminal justice system.
Strengthen the Accusatorial Justice System	DOJ, Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance, and Training	10,717,412	9/06/17-9/30/19	To support Mexican states with implementing the accusatorial criminal justice system. Activities include training and mentoring for prosecutors and judges intended to increase prosecutions and resolutions of cases involving transnational criminal organizations.
Evaluate the Performance of Mexico's Criminal Justice Sector Actors and Facilities	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	9,239,863	9/17/18-9/16/21	To assess the performance of 10 key criminal justice system operators and standards for courtroom facilities in 32 Mexican states. Assessments aim to provide qualitative and quantitative analysis and reports as well as a series of recommendations for public policies to further advance implementation of the accusatorial criminal justice system in Mexico.

**Appendix I: Highest Dollar Value State/INL
Mérida Initiative Projects, by Category, Active
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Project name	Implementer	Obligated funding	Project start and end date	Description
Technical Secretariat of the Coordination Council for the Implementation of the Judicial System, Reporting Infrastructure, INL Mexico	Muscogee International	7,889,114	9/29/14-9/29/16	To procure and deploy court reporting infrastructure, including video and audio recording equipment in line with the requirements of Mexico's new criminal justice system. To provide assistance to under-resourced state courts designed to help bring them into compliance with the accusatorial criminal justice system and ensure proper record-keeping required for oral trials, including for transnational criminal organizations. To review recordings intended to allow oversight of the protection of human rights of victims, witnesses, and defendants; assessment of best practices; and evaluation of the trial performance of prosecutors, judges, and other actors.
Binational State Attorneys General Exchange and Education Program	Conference of Western Attorneys General	7,000,000	10/25/11-2/28/17	To increase the competency and capacity of justice system actors from Mexican states' Attorneys General offices to implement justice system reforms by sharing the experiences of U.S. counterparts who operate under an oral, adversarial criminal justice system. Activities work to establish, maintain, and strengthen relationships among state Attorneys General offices in northern Mexico and the western United States and worked to support participation in taskforces to address cross-border crime issues.
Specialized Training to Government of Mexico Federal and State Attorneys General	DOJ, Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance, and Training	6,658,100	9/10/14-12/31/16	To provide specialized training for Mexican federal and state Attorneys General offices and legislative advocacy support to Mexican officials. This training and support focus on kidnapping, trafficking in persons, and money laundering cases to improve prosecutions of cases that involve transnational criminal organizations.

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) data. | GAO-19-647

Note: Funding amounts presented are for the entire duration of the project, and these amounts have not been adjusted for inflation.

**Appendix I: Highest Dollar Value State/INL
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Table 6: State/INL “Counternarcotics” Mérida Initiative Line of Effort Projects Active from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

Project name	Implementer	Obligated funding	Project start and end date	Description
Mexico Helicopter Simulator	United States Army's Utility Helicopters Project Office	15,640,458	12/18/17-9/30/20	To provide a Blackhawk Aircrew Trainer flight simulator and related training to the Mexican Federal Police to modernize their training program and sustain the operational longevity of donated air assets used in counternarcotics missions.
Drug Treatment Court Model in Mexico	Organization of America States, Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission	8,599,500	9/15/17-9/14/20	To build upon a previous project with the Organization of America States, Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission that created 22 drug treatment courts in five Mexican states. This project provides the Government of Mexico with technical assistance, training, certification, monitoring, and evaluation to further expand drug treatment courts to six additional states, and assess capacity to expand drug treatment courts in the remaining Mexican states. Drug treatment courts support drug demand reduction in Mexico and divert appropriate cases from a criminal justice and corrections system to community-based treatment.
Federal Police Flight Simulator for Black Hawk UH60 Helicopters	DOD, Counter Narco-Terrorism Program Office	6,930,000	7/01/12-11/14/14	To provide a Blackhawk flight training simulator to the Mexican Federal Police to modernize their training program and sustain the operational longevity of donated air assets used in counternarcotics missions.
Chemistry Equipment for States	Alutiiq	6,266,918	9/24/18-9/25/19	To provide chemistry forensic equipment to state forensic laboratories in Mexico with the aim of enhancing investigative techniques of Mexican authorities in combating organized crime.
Handheld Detectors	Thermo Scientific Portable Analytical Instruments	4,635,709	5/29/15-7/10/15	To provide handheld detectors and personal protection equipment to clandestine drug lab detection units as part of training implemented by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration.
Chihuahua Communications Project	Alutiiq Technical Services	4,493,953	8/13/14-10/27/16	To support the development of a secure radio communications network along Mexico's southern border to enable Mexican interagency coordination to disrupt transnational organized crime.
Monitoring Illicit Crop Eradication Program in Mexico	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	3,852,809	8/22/17-2/21/20	To build Mexico's capacity to monitor and improve opium poppy crop eradication.
Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance Technology for Mexican Navy	Fidelitad	3,748,366	7/26/18-1/22/19	To provide intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance technology to the Mexican Navy intended to expand its capacity to conduct counternarcotics operations.
Coalition Development on the U.S.-Mexico Border	<i>Programa Compañeros</i> (Partners Program)	3,391,013	11/16/11-11/15/13	To develop and expand local coalitions to improve health and safety in participating communities by implementing strategic prevention efforts to reduce substance abuse and violence.

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Project name	Implementer	Obligated funding	Project start and end date	Description
DOD Security Assistance Training Field Activity Mexico Courses	DOD Security Assistance Training Field Activity	3,051,426	10/01/17-9/30/18	To provide aviation training at the Security Assistance Training Field Activity pilot school for the Mexican Federal Police intended to increase their ability to conduct counternarcotics operations.

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) data. | GAO-19-647

Note: Funding amounts presented are for the entire duration of the project, and these amounts have not been adjusted for inflation.

**Appendix I: Highest Dollar Value State/INL
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Table 7: State/INL “Disrupt Illicit Finance” Mérida Initiative Line of Effort Projects Active from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

Project name	Implementer	Obligated funding	Project start and end date	Description
Financial Intelligence Unit expansion of computing capacity	Alutiq Technical Services	8,839,454	4/07/16-9/05/16	To expand the Mexican Financial Intelligence Unit’s investigative capacity by providing information equipment systems to better manage and investigate money laundering cases, supporting efforts to target transnational criminal organizations’ illicit profits.
INL Mexico Oracle Exadata Project	IT Solutions	2,810,598	1/26/15-3/27/15	To expand the Mexican Financial Intelligence Unit’s investigative capacity by providing database management software to improve money laundering cases and support efforts to target transnational criminal organizations’ illicit profits.
Anti–Money Laundering Initiative	DOJ, Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance, and Training	2,305,300	3/13/17-12/31/18	To expand the capacity of select Mexican anti–money laundering prosecutors at the state and federal levels. To provide anti–money laundering and asset forfeiture training to state and federal Attorneys General offices.
Combat money laundering through a public awareness campaign and complaint call center in Mexico	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	1,235,538	9/18/18-3/17/21	To combat money laundering by raising public awareness and establishing a money laundering complaint and tracking call center in Mexico.
Renewal of End User Infrastructure for the Mexican Financial Intelligence Unit	Axxera	939,541	11/09/17-1/08/19	To expand the Mexican Financial Intelligence Unit’s investigative capacity by updating information technology infrastructure to manage and analyze information and respond to requests by investigators of money laundering and illicit finance cases.
Equipment for the Mexican Ministry of Finance and Public Credit	<i>Activar Soluciones</i> (Activate Solutions)	704,061	10/24/13-11/08/13	To expand the Mexican Financial Intelligence Unit’s financial investigative capacity by providing information management equipment, software, and technical support designed to better investigate money laundering cases and target transnational criminal organizations’ illicit profits.
Anti–Money Laundering Coordinator	Personal services contractor	176,920	11/23/17-11/23/18	To support programming designed to increase Mexico’s capacity to target the illicit finances of transnational criminal organizations.
Anti–Money Laundering Coordinator	Personal services contractor	166,026	11/23/16-11/22/17	To support programming designed to increase Mexico’s capacity to target the illicit finances of transnational criminal organizations.
Anti–Money Laundering Coordinator	Personal services contractor	100,686	11/23/15-11/22/16	To support programming designed to increase Mexico’s capacity to target the illicit finances of transnational criminal organizations.

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) data. | GAO-19-647

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Notes: There are only nine Disrupt Illicit Finance State/INL Mérida Initiative projects, so unlike the other tables in this appendix, table 7 lists nine projects.

Funding amounts presented are for the entire duration of the project, and these amounts have not been adjusted for inflation.

Table 8: State/INL “Professionalize the Police” Mérida Initiative Line of Effort Projects Active from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

Project name	Implementer	Obligated funding	Project start and end date	Description
Supporting Rule of Law in Mexico: Strengthening Security Sector Capacity to Consolidate Criminal Justice System Reform	International Development Law Organization	18,734,539	9/15/17-9/14/20	To provide training to and enhance professionalization of Mexican municipal police and first responders in their duties and responsibilities under the accusatorial criminal justice system. Curricula and training are intended to support the Government of Mexico’s (GOM) requirement that all police achieve professional certification by 2020.
United States Marshals Service Sustainable Specialized Training to Mexican Law Enforcement	DOJ, Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance, and Training	8,353,926	7/28/14-9/30/17	To provide specialized training by the U.S. Marshalls to Mexican law enforcement in fugitive investigations, tactical driving, protection of high-value targets, and development of special operations units.
Law Enforcement Capacity-Building Strategy of GOM Federal Ministerial Police and Attorney General’s Office	DOJ, International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program	8,134,969	2/29/12-11/11/16	To support the Mexican Federal Police and Attorney General’s office to help professionalize agencies by reviewing and improving standard operating procedures and manuals, human resources and personnel systems, and leadership training.
Police Professionalization Exchange Program	Global Ties	7,771,747	8/05/16-7/31/19	To support Mexico’s efforts to professionalize police leadership through study tours to learn best practices from U.S. state and local counterparts, including in accountability, integrity, task delegation, and the organization of law enforcement agencies.
INL Mexico Police Instructor Training Program	Alutiq Technical Services	6,212,803	9/30/15-9/29/16	To provide standardized training to Mexican police in areas such as first line supervision, basic training, background investigations, and interviewing skills.
First Responder Training for Mexican Law Enforcement	DOJ, International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program	6,032,372	8/04/14-12/31/16	To support GOM’s efforts to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies to effectively preserve and control crime scenes through Crime Scene Responder Instructor training that meets United Nations guidelines for state and federal academies.
Institutionalization of Standards and Training	DOJ, International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program	5,399,660	7/08/14-12/31/16	To provide subject matter expertise in developing performance and evaluation standards and training for law enforcement institutions across all states in Mexico.

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Project name	Implementer	Obligated funding	Project start and end date	Description
Women Justice Centers, Strengthen Police Response to Victims of Gender-based Crimes in Mexico	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	5,334,562	3/23/18-3/22/20	To professionalize police response and attention to victims of gender-based violence—including the effects of organized crime on gender-based violence—through curricula development and training for Mexican police and emergency call center operators. The project is intended to improve coordination between Women’s Justice Centers and state officials.
State Municipal Training Initiative 2013	Alutiq	5,079,110	2/13/13-2/12/14	To provide a cadre of police instructors for law enforcement curriculum assessment and development, instruction, mentoring, advising, and delivery of training courses in Mexico.
Building effective, resilient and trusted police organizations in Mexico	Yale University	4,860,306	2/16/17-2/28/20	To study optimal organizational and structural design to provide recommendations on how to apply factors to Mexican police forces to increase resiliency, effectiveness, and public trust. The project includes an assessment of the Mexican police certification requirements to provide the GOM with recommendations to improve implementation.

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) data. | GAO-19-647

Note: Funding amounts presented are for the entire duration of the project, and these amounts have not been adjusted for inflation.

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Table 9: State/INL “Secure Border and Ports” Mérida Initiative Line of Effort Projects Active from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

Project name	Implementer	Obligated funding	Project start and end date	Description
Whole-of-Mexican-Government Biometrics System	CSRA	58,106,862	9/30/17-3/29/18	To provide capabilities for multiple Government of Mexico (GOM) agencies to store, match, and share biometric information to disrupt transnational organized crime.
Mexico Southern Border Telecommunications Equipment	Alutiiq	42,700,369	6/07/18-6/06/22	To provide a secure radio communications network along Mexico’s southern border intended to enable Mexican interagency coordination to disrupt transnational organized crime.
Z Backscatter Van Mobile X-Ray Screening Systems	American Science Engineering	16,194,997	5/18/15-8/01/15	To provide systems to improve capacity for nonintrusive inspection of vehicles and to identify and interdict shipments of narcotics, weapons, contraband, and other illicit goods.
SICOM system for National Institute of Migration	Alutiiq Technical Services	15,087,515	9/05/14-9/04/15	To provide servers and equipment for data centers to enable Mexico’s National Migration Institute to match, store, and share biometric information.
Mobile X-Ray Cargo Inspection System	Leidos	9,911,515	6/30/15-2/25/16	To provide systems to improve capacity for nonintrusive inspection of vehicles and to identify and interdict shipments of narcotics, weapons, contraband, and other illicit goods.
Materials for Telecommunications Network along Mexico’s Southern Border	Alutiiq Information Management	9,337,584	5/26/17-12/15/18	To provide materials in support of a telecommunications network along Mexico’s southern border intended to enable Mexican interagency coordination to disrupt transnational organized crime.
Biometrics Project Support	CSRA	6,255,367	7/13/18-10/14/19	To provide capabilities for multiple GOM agencies to store, match, and share biometric information to disrupt transnational organized crime.
Application for Biometric Collection	Alutiiq Advance Security Solutions	4,318,422	2/21/17-08/18/18	To provide a mechanism for Mexico’s National Migration Institute to collect and verify biometric information to disrupt transnational crime.
Biometrics Project Support	Alutiiq	3,568,905	11/09/12-2/27/15	To provide capabilities for multiple GOM agencies to store, match, and share biometric information to disrupt transnational organized crime.
Chemical Detection Equipment	Thermo Scientific Portable Analytical Instruments	3,508,233	6/13/16-10/11/16	To provide equipment to detect narcotics.

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL) data. | GAO-19-647

Note: Funding amounts presented are for the entire duration of the project, and these amounts have not been adjusted for inflation.

Appendix II: Highest Dollar Value USAID Mérida Initiative Projects Active from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

This appendix provides a detailed list of the 10 highest dollar value United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mérida Initiative projects active from fiscal year 2014 through 2018. USAID provided the details in table 10 below.

Table 10: Highest Dollar Value USAID Mérida Initiative Projects Active from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

Project name	Implementer	Estimated funding	Project start and end date	Description
<i>Projusticia</i> (Projustice)–Mexico Promoting Justice	Management Systems International and Tetra Tech	68,255,703	7/16/14- 10/15/19	To provide technical assistance to the Government of Mexico (GOM) in support of an effective consolidation of the new criminal justice system. Activities focus on: strengthening the legal framework; increasing prosecutorial and judicial capacity; promoting outreach; building analytical capacity in justice sector institutions to better track progress; and supporting victims' assistance and access to justice, particularly for women. State-level support expands on previous programming to address policy, procedural, and institutional capacity needs.
Rule of Law III: Support for Legal Reforms	Management Systems International	55,940,788	3/14/08- 3/13/15	To work with state and federal justice institutions to strengthen their capacity to improve transparency, public oversight, and public accountability, and better serve Mexican citizens under the new constitutional reforms that shape the police and criminal procedure codes.
<i>Juntos Para la Prevención de la Violencia</i> (Together for Violence Prevention)	Chemonics	24,465,000	10/30/15- 10/29/20	To strengthen the capacity and sustainability of local violence prevention systems by improving the GOM's crime and violence prevention policy at the federal, state, and local levels. To strengthen the main actors, and promote the adaptation of evidence-based crime and violence prevention practices and policies within local systems. The program works in nine municipalities in the states of Nuevo Leon, Baja California, Chihuahua, Jalisco, and Michoacán.

**Appendix II: Highest Dollar Value USAID
Mérida Initiative Projects Active from Fiscal
Year 2014 through 2018**

Project name	Implementer	Estimated funding	Project start and end date	Description
<i>Programa de Política Económica para México</i> (Mexico Economic Policy Program)	Abt Associates	22,287,274	4/18/13-4/22/19	To support open government information standards and practices, regulatory transparency, and integrity for businesses. To strengthen transparency in GOM public procurement processes and implementation of the Mexican Government's National Anti-Corruption System.
Civil Society Activity	Social Impact	21,273,738	10/1/16-9/30/20	To improve the human and institutional capacity of Mexican civil society organizations to implement activities related to the USAID development objectives of crime and violence prevention, criminal justice reform, and human rights.
Crime and Violence Prevention Program	ARD	16,244,632	2/6/12-2/5/15	To address challenges related to crime and violence.
EnfoqueDH Human Rights Public Policy Activity	Chemonics	10,675,685	10/30/15-10/29/20	To support GOM efforts to implement its National Human Rights Plan 2014-2018, with the purpose of addressing structural human rights challenges. This project seeks to incorporate human rights-based approaches into GOM initiatives by strengthening GOM federal and state-level legislative frameworks and capacity to implement clear guidelines and procedures in line with international human rights standards. This project is also designed to strengthen GOM's capacity for outreach and dialogue with civil society organizations on human rights policies, support the development of policies that help prevent abuses and assist victims of human rights violations, and support a state response to human rights violations, including forced disappearances.
<i>Pro Voces</i> (Pro Voices)	Tetra Tech ARD	7,110,000	9/18/17-9/17/22	To address impunity with the goal of increasing trust and confidence that the GOM will more effectively address aggressions against journalists and human rights defenders. To support organizational and operational improvements to the National Mechanism to Protect Journalists and Human Rights Defenders. To build and strengthen linkages and coordination among the special prosecutor for crimes against freedom of expression; civil society (including academia and networks of journalists and human rights defenders); and the private sector (particularly large media houses).

**Appendix II: Highest Dollar Value USAID
Mérida Initiative Projects Active from Fiscal
Year 2014 through 2018**

Project name	Implementer	Estimated funding	Project start and end date	Description
Protecting Human Rights and Freedom of Expression in Mexico	Freedom House	6,873,500	9/28/11-9/29/16	To complement the GOM's response to dangers facing journalists and Human Rights defenders in Mexico. To work with government and civil society to strengthen human rights protections that increase capacity to monitor and assess human rights risks. To provide training to journalists and human rights defenders on how to prevent potential abuses through self-protection measures. To bolster the GOM's capacity to protect journalists and human rights defenders based on international best practices, and to raise civil society awareness of these measures. To provide technical assistance to develop and strengthen the legal framework for the National Mechanism to Protect Journalists and other human rights defenders, and to investigate and prosecute crimes against journalists.
Investigative Journalism Activity	International Center for Journalists	6,000,000	8/28/18-8/9/23	To focus on partnerships with local organizations to help improve the quality of investigative and data journalism at the sub-national level in Mexico.

Source: GAO analysis of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) data. | GAO-19-647

Notes: According to USAID, "estimated funding" represents the total expected multiyear funding for the project, and the funding amounts for concluded projects are final.

Funding amounts presented are for the entire duration of the project, and these amounts have not been adjusted for inflation.

Appendix III: Comments from the United States Agency for International Development



AUG 28 2019

Jenny Grover
Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20226

Re: U.S. Assistance to Mexico: State and USAID Allocated Over \$170 Million to Support Criminal Justice, Border Security, and Related Efforts from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018 (GAO-103453)

Dear Ms. Grover:

I am pleased to provide the formal response of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to the draft report produced by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) titled, *U.S. Assistance to Mexico: State and USAID Allocated Over \$170 Million to Support Criminal Justice, Border Security, and Related Efforts from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018* (GAO-103453).

The report contains no recommendations for USAID, but we are pleased the GAO noted in the draft report the important role the Agency plays in implementing programming under the Mérida Initiative. With USAID's support, the Initiative has been instrumental in advancing reforms to the Mexican criminal-justice sector, promoting human rights, building strong and resilient communities, and improving integrity and accountability. These programs also have strengthened the overall U.S. bilateral relationship with México and our own national security by improving our ability to manage transnational threats, including organized crime. USAID is committed to continuing the maximum effectiveness of taxpayer dollars through our engagement in the Mérida Initiative, and as we reorient our programming in México to focus on leveraging private-sector investments and engage more local implementers.

I am transmitting this letter from USAID for inclusion in the GAO's final report. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft report, and for the courtesies extended by your staff while conducting this engagement.

Sincerely,

Angelique M. Crumbly
Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Management

Agency Comment Letter

Text of Appendix III: Comments from the United States Agency for International Development

Page 1

August 28, 2019

Jenny Grover
Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20226

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Sincerely,

Angelique M. Crumbly
Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Management

Appendix IV: GAO Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Jennifer Grover, (202) 512-7141 or GroverJ@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, James Michels (Assistant Director), Teresa Heger (Analyst-in-Charge), Terry Allen, Ashley Alley, Lilia Chaidez, Martin DeAlteriis, Neil Doherty, Francisco Enriquez, John Hussey, and Andrew Kincare made key contributions to this report.

Appendix V: Accessible Data

Data Tables

Data Table for Figure 1: State/INL and USAID Funding Allocated for the Mérida Initiative, Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018, by Funding Category

Dollars in millions

Fiscal Year	Civil Society	Counter Narcotics	Good Governance	Rule of Law And Human Rights	Transnational Crime	Total
2014	7.6	56.2	14.8	94.5	5.0	178.1
2015	5.2	46.0	30.0	58.1	3.4	142.6
2016	6.7	57.3	15.7	55.6	3.5	138.8
2017	4.9	44.2	10.9	60.9	4.0	124.9
2018	2.0	54.2	17.2	61.6	4.0	139.0
Total	26.4	257.8	88.6	330.7	19.9	723.4

Data Table for Figure 2: State/INL and USAID Funding Allocated for the Mérida Initiative, Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

Dollars in millions

Agency	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
State/INL	143.1	109.0	99.8	90.0	100.0	541.9
USAID	35.0	33.6	39.0	34.9	39.0	181.5
Total	178.1	142.6	138.8	124.9	139.0	723.4

Data Table for Figure 3: Obligated Funding for and Number of State/INL Mérida Initiative Projects Active from Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

Dollars in millions

Agency	Disrupt Illicit Finance	Multiple	Secure Borders and Ports	Counter Narcotics	Professionalize the Police	Criminal Justice and Rule of Law
Projects	9	39	68	76	97	99
Funds Provided (millions)	\$17	\$141	\$217	\$115	\$144	\$241

Data Table for Figure 4: Estimated Funding for and Number of USAID Mérida Initiative Projects, Active Fiscal Year 2014 through 2018

Dollars in millions

	Rule of Law	Cross-cutting	Human Rights	Transparency and Accountability	Crime and Violence Prevention
Projects	3	4	15	15	20
Funds Provided (millions)	126	29	46	49	70

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