

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105856](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

The three countries that make up the Northern Triangle of Central America have historically faced security challenges. To assist these countries, DOD has provided them with equipment and other support. From fiscal years 2017 to 2021, DOD and State provided over \$66 million in assistance to the Northern Triangle.

Section 1336 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 includes a provision for GAO to evaluate DOD's end-use monitoring procedures regarding equipment misuse by Northern Triangle countries. This report examines (1) the extent to which steps taken by DOD and State to address alleged misuse aligned with relevant procedures and guidance, (2) how, and the extent to which, DOD monitored equipment, and (3) the extent to which this monitoring ensures that recipients are using equipment for its intended purposes.

GAO analyzed DOD and State documentation about their response to alleged incidents of misuse and data about DOD's monitoring completed in the Northern Triangle. GAO also interviewed agency officials.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making five recommendations, including that DOD and State improve their policies for recording allegations and that DOD improves policies to maintain accurate equipment data. State agreed with its recommendation. DOD disagreed with two recommendations, stating that existing guidance is sufficient. GAO maintains that additional guidance is necessary to ensure DOD records allegations and has accurate data.

View [GAO-23-105856](#). For more information, contact Chelsa Kenney at (202) 512-2964 or [kenneyc@gao.gov](mailto:kenneyc@gao.gov).

November 2022

## NORTHERN TRIANGLE

### DOD and State Need Improved Policies to Address Equipment Misuse

## What GAO Found

Within the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, the Departments of Defense (DOD) and State reviewed multiple allegations of misuse of DOD-provided equipment in Guatemala. From August 2018 to October 2021, according to agency officials, DOD-provided Jeeps (shown below) were allegedly misused on multiple occasions for purposes outside their intended operations. In one case, DOD determined they were deployed to intimidate U.S. embassy officials. However, neither DOD nor State recorded most of these allegations because they do not have policies outlining how to record them. As a result, the agencies could not identify potential trends in alleged misuse. Further, DOD does not have policies to investigate alleged misuse for equipment provided under certain authorities, and may not be addressing allegations of misuse effectively.

Jeeps Provided by DOD to the Government of Guatemala



Source: Department of Defense (DOD). | GAO-23-105856

DOD established the Golden Sentry program to monitor equipment provided under the Foreign Assistance Act and the Arms Export Control Act, but DOD did not complete required end-use monitoring. GAO found that DOD did not maintain accurate data on which equipment is subject to enhanced end-use monitoring. As a result, DOD did not complete all required enhanced end-use monitoring of sensitive equipment. Without accurate data about the equipment and type of required end-use monitoring, DOD cannot account for the equipment it provided.

Federal law requires for certain defense articles and defense services, to the extent practicable, an end-use monitoring program to provide reasonable assurance that recipients use these defense articles and defense services for the purposes for which they are provided. However, DOD officials told GAO that the Golden Sentry program is not designed to verify how recipients use equipment. Instead, according to DOD officials, the program is designed to verify whether the recipient has maintained custody of the equipment and implemented any required physical security protections. DOD officials said they primarily rely on third-party reports to identify misuse but officials had not considered looking into allegations in third-party reports GAO identified. Because it has not designed its program to identify potential misuse, DOD may lack reasonable assurance that recipients are using equipment for authorized purposes only.