

Lessons from Maritime Narcotics Interdiction: Interdiction in the Maritime Source, Transit, and Arrival Zones of the Western Hemisphere

Aaron C. Davenport¹
RAND Corporation

Abstract. Terrorism poses a direct threat to the security of the citizens of NATO countries and to international stability and prosperity. Valuable maritime security lessons from counter-narcotics operations have not been fully incorporated into counter-terrorism best practices. Effective domestic and international partnerships are essential to the success of the counterdrug mission. Partnerships provide a force multiplier by encouraging unified and efficient effort by personnel from multiple agencies, and by facilitating the sharing of information and assets. The success of any counter narcotics enterprise encompasses domestic and international efforts and thus depends on cooperation among concerned nations. Sharing information with foreign partners and with regional, local, and private actors has been proven over and over again to be absolutely critical to success in combating any transnational threat and preventing illegal activities from threatening the homeland and allies. These partnerships are based upon a shared commitment to detect, prevent, disrupt, pre-empt, and mitigate the effects of transnational crime. Today's national security challenges lend themselves increasingly to "whole of government" and "unity of effort" solutions that will require structural and cultural changes in the executive and legislative branches. Better interagency organizational constructs are common recommendations in national security reports and commentaries. End-to-end mission management is also key for success. No one organization can do it all, due to the complexity involved and the resources required. Intelligence generation occurs at every step and has been another key to continuously improved performance.

Keywords. Transnational crimes, drug trafficking, terrorism, United States.

Introduction to the Illicit Drug Trade

To understand the parallels between maritime counter-narcotics operations and counter-terrorism operations and to apply the lessons from the former to the latter, one must gain an awareness of the current state of the illicit drug trade. The worldwide illicit drug industry is one of the greatest threats to social stability and welfare in the United States. In addition to the terrible human cost of addiction and associated health concerns affecting individual users of illicit narcotics, drug abuse has a severe impact on the social fabric that affects all Americans. Drug abuse undermines family cohesion and has a terrible effect on the lives of children across the country. The consequences of drug abuse

¹ Contact Information: Aaron C. Davenport, aarond@rand.org.

and trafficking on countries worldwide have posed such major challenges in recent years that they have had profound and lasting effects on regional stability. Countries that today are major narcotics producing or transit areas have experienced ruinous drug addiction problems that have spread with their involvement in the drug trade. The social, economic, and political stresses caused by these problems are felt across national borders, contributing to regional economic difficulties and political tensions (FAS, 2000).²

The International Maritime Organization estimates that over 90 percent of the world's trade is transported by sea (IMO, 2019). Illicit cargo in the form of illegal drugs is routinely hidden in containers, bulk cargo, holds, and specially designed smuggling vessels. The illicit cargo is then shipped from a source zone (where the drugs are manufactured or grown) through a transit zone (comprised of territorial seas and international waters) to an arrival zone or final destination (where the finished product is distributed to local consumers by street gangs). All of this clandestine movement is orchestrated by sophisticated transnational criminal organizations.

In the 2018 Worldwide Threat Assessment, the U.S. Director of National Intelligence concluded: "Transnational organized criminal groups and networks will pose serious and growing threats to the security and health of US citizens, as well as to global human rights, ecological integrity, government revenues, and efforts to deal with adversaries and terrorists. In the most severe cases abroad, criminal enterprises will contribute to increased social violence, erode governments' authorities, undermine the integrity of international financial systems, and harm critical infrastructure." This threat includes supplying the majority of the illicit drugs being consumed in the United States. Figure 1 illustrates the most common routes from source zones in South America through Central America and Mexico.

Worldwide, the United Nations (UN) has estimated the total revenue from the transnational illicit drug trade to be \$2.2 trillion in 2014 (Coats, 2018). Figure 2 provides a worldwide overview of major source zones and trafficking routes.

1. Overview of the U.S. Drug Threat Assessment (DEA, 2018)

The transnational threat should be understood primarily in regard to demand, which is the principle driver of supply. Annually, the U.S. Department of Justice's Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) publishes a National Drug Threat Assessment. For 2018, this assessment concluded as follows: "Illicit drugs, as well as the transnational and domestic criminal organizations who traffic them, continue to represent significant threats to public health, law enforcement, and national security in the United States." Drug poisoning deaths are the leading cause of injury-related deaths in the United States and are currently at their highest level ever recorded. Since 2011, drug poisoning deaths have outnumbered deaths by firearms, motor vehicle crashes, suicide, and homicide. In 2016, 174 people died every day from drug poisoning. The opioid threat—manifested by prescription opioids, heroin (an organic opioid), and synthetic opioids—has reached alarming levels and shows no signs of abating, affecting a large portion of the population.

² This Global assessment was prepared by a US Government interagency working group in support of and pursuant to the President's International Crime Control Strategy. Representatives from the Central Intelligence Agency; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Drug Enforcement Administration; US Customs Service; US Secret Service; Financial Crimes Enforcement Network; National Drug Intelligence Center; the Departments of State, the Treasury, Justice, and Transportation; the Office of National Drug Control Policy; and the National Security Council participated in the drafting of this assessment.



Figure 1 Western Hemisphere Major Drug Trafficking Route. Source: Congressional Research Service, 2010.

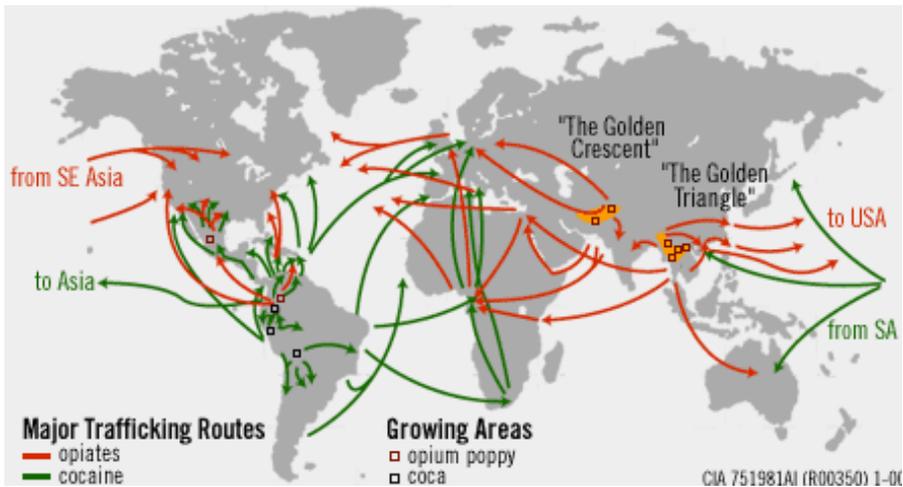


Figure 2 Worldwide Major Drug Growing Areas and Trafficking Routes. Source: CIA

As the availability of prescription opioids is reduced, it is anticipated that users will shift to heroin and other cheaper, more-accessible opioids that produce similar effects. The use of heroin continues to grow at an alarming rate, and deaths attributed to heroin are increasing. It continues to be readily available in many forms, to include fine powder, sticky tar, pills, and a rock-like black substance. The synthetic opioid, fentanyl, has gained popularity among heroin and prescription opioid users due to its extremely strong opioid properties. Fentanyl is trafficked from primarily China and Mexico. The 2018 assessment concludes that fentanyl will continue to be a serious threat, and its illicit production will continue to make its availability prevalent.

Meanwhile, cocaine use, and availability have risen since 2012. Colombian coca cultivation and cocaine production are on the rise again. Colombia remains the primary source of cocaine, and Colombian cocaine is relatively easy to obtain. A dangerous trend of mixing cocaine with fentanyl or other synthetic opioids is expanding, leading to an increase in drug poisoning deaths. The DEA reports that as much as 84 percent of the cocaine departing source zones transited the Eastern Pacific in 2017 via surface maritime routes. Mexican and Colombian transnational criminal organizations dominate wholesale cocaine transportation and rely on criminal groups and street gangs for retail-level distribution in increasing quantities to meet the growing demand.

Marijuana decriminalization continues. As of August 2018, 21 states and the District of Columbia had passed laws imposing minor penalties for personal use and for the possession of recreational amounts, while 30 states had approved “medical” marijuana laws. Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug in the United States, with an estimated nine percent of the population users. The quality of marijuana produced in Mexico and the Caribbean is regarded by users to be inferior to marijuana produced domestically and within Canada. DEA estimates that domestic use and production of marijuana will increase as more states become more lenient and change current marijuana laws.

As Figures 1 and 2 illustrate, Mexico is both a source and a transit zone for both opiates and cocaine. The same applies to marijuana. The reach extends far beyond Mexico. Figure 3 shows the influence and suspected locations of most Mexican drug cartels in the United States (Woody, 2015).

2. Cooperation with Foreign Partners

Effective international partnerships are essential to the success of the counterdrug mission. Cooperation has a force multiplier effect, which unifies efforts from multiple agencies by facilitating the sharing of information and assets. The US Coast Guard routinely leverages existing partnerships and seeks to develop new ones. This section outlines five types of partnerships that have been central to the Coast Guard’s maritime interdiction operations: bilateral agreements, international engagements, cooperative targeting, international training, and UN obligations.

2.1. Bilateral Agreements

To combat drug movements toward the Central American littorals, bilateral agreements have become all the more critical for narcotics interdiction operations. The exploitation of Central American nations by transnational criminal organizations has created a

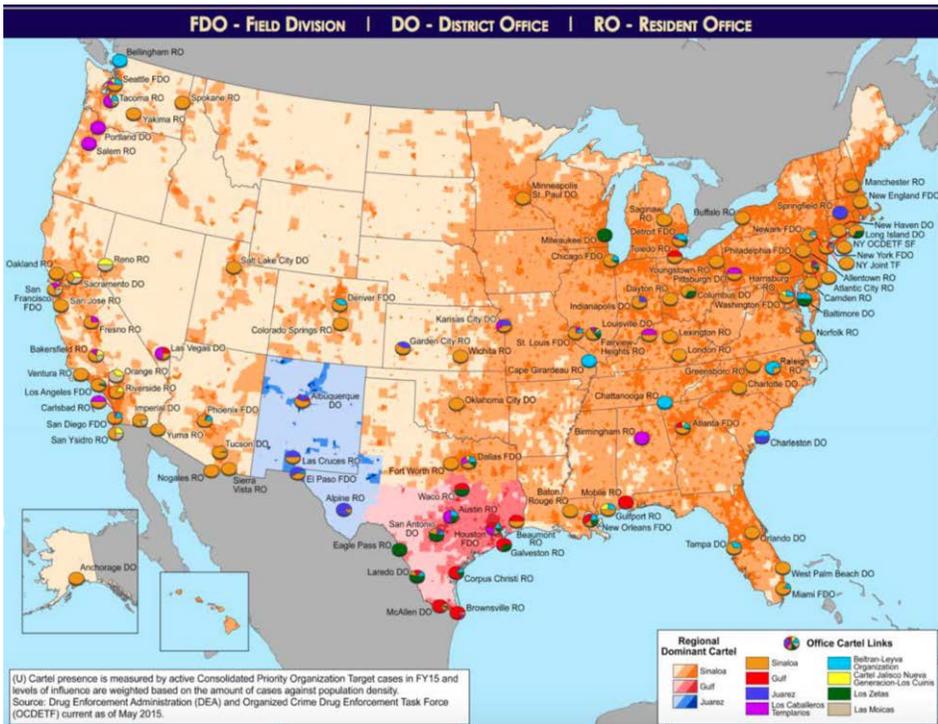


Figure 3 Influence of Mexican Cartels in the United States. Source DEA.

strategically difficult and destabilizing situation, as drug movements from source zones often make landfall in countries incapable of stopping them.

Maintaining and advancing bilateral agreements has been a clearly successful strategy. The Coast Guard, supported by the U.S. Department of State, has established many International Drug Interdiction Bilateral Agreements. Thanks to the years of persistent engagement with international partners to develop these agreements, the Coast Guard has become dramatically more effective. The Coast Guard bolsters these partnerships by providing equipment and training through State Department and Department of Defense (DoD) security assistance programs. Under such programs, the Coast Guard has transferred over 150 vessels to more than 23 countries since 1997, greatly improving their capability and capacity to conduct maritime narcotics interdiction operations within their territorial seas. Some partner nations benefit greatly from training provided by Coast Guard law enforcement experts, while other nations that do not require training but lack standardized boats and communications packages and are unable to adequately communicate with each other, and therefore benefit from combined operations and logistics support.

The Coast Guard's bilateral agreements with partner nations, including foreign militaries and law enforcement agencies, expand the jurisdictional reach of maritime narcotics interdiction operations. There are approximately 45 comprehensive bilateral maritime law enforcement agreements in force with the governments of partner nations around the world, primarily those in the Western Hemisphere. The negotiated authorities differ by country agreement but often include one or more of the following:

- *Ship-boarding*: Standing authority or procedures for the Coast Guard to stop, board, and search suspect foreign vessels located seaward of the territorial sea of any nation.
- *Ship-rider*: Standing authority for partners to embark law enforcement officials on each other's platforms, and the officials may then authorize certain law enforcement actions.
- *Pursuit*: Standing authority or procedures for Coast Guard law enforcement assets to pursue fleeing vessels or aircraft, suspected of illicit traffic, into foreign waters or airspace. This may also include authority to stop, board, and search pursued vessels.
- *Entry-to-investigate*: Standing authority or procedures for U.S. law enforcement assets to enter foreign waters or airspace to investigate suspect vessels or aircraft located therein. This may also include authority to stop, board, and search such vessels.
- *Overflight*: Standing authority or procedures for U.S. law enforcement assets to fly in foreign airspace when in support of counterdrug operations.
- *Relay Order-to-Land*: Standing authority or procedures for U.S. law enforcement assets to relay an order to suspect aircraft to land in the host nation.
- *International Maritime Interdiction Support*: Standing authority or procedures for U.S. law enforcement assets to moor or stay at national ports and for U.S. law enforcement officials to board suspect vessels not flying a U.S. or host nation flag, to escort persons from suspect vessels through and out of the host nation, and to land and temporarily remain at international airports for logistics.

2.2. *International Engagements*

A prime example of successful international engagement was the Caribbean Support Tender. With the support of the Department of State and DoD's U.S. Southern Command, the Coast Guard operated this internationally-crewed ship, which was manned by partner nation mariners and U.S. Coast Guard trainers for several years. The Tender made recurring international port calls, focused on law enforcement training and maintaining partner nation maritime interdiction force competencies. The recurring engagement, from a shared ship, proved to be effective at building partner nation capability and capacity. The international crew systematically grew from its progressive training engagements while building the trust and cooperative relationships critical to future mission success.

2.3. *Cooperative Targeting (Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, 2016)*

Section 706 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act (FRAA), Fiscal Year 2003 (P.L. 107-228) requires that the U.S. President identify each country that is a major drug-transit country or a major illicit drug-producing country. The President is also required to identify any country that has "failed demonstrably to make substantial efforts" to adhere to international counter-narcotics agreements and to take certain counter-narcotics measures set forth in U.S. law. Under the current Foreign Operations Appropriations Act, U.S. assistance may not be provided to any country designated as having "failed demonstrably" unless the President determines that the provision of such assistance is

vital to U.S. national interests or that the country has made “substantial efforts” to comply with the counter-narcotics conditions in the legislation.

Pursuant to Section 706(1) of the FRAA, a country’s presence on the major drug-transit and/or major illicit drug-producing list alone is not a reflection of its government’s counter-narcotics efforts or its level of cooperation with the United States. The reason that major drug-transit or illicit drug-producing countries are placed on the list is the combination of geographic, commercial, and economic factors that allow drugs to transit or be produced, even if a government has been diligent about narcotics control law enforcement measures.

As one example of cooperative targeting, the United States and Mexico have engaged in an unprecedented partnership, called the Merida Initiative, to break the power and impunity of transnational criminal organizations; strengthen border, air, and maritime controls; expand the capabilities and professionalism of Mexican law enforcement at the federal, state, and local levels; and improve the capacity of justice systems to investigate and prosecute cases. The Merida Initiative is guided by four goals: (1) disrupt the capacity of organized crime to operate; (2) institutionalize the capacity to sustain the rule of law; (3) create a 21st-century border; and (4) build strong and resilient communities. Each of these goals has had a positive impact on both countries’ ability to combat narcotics trafficking.

Another example of cooperative targeting is the development of helicopter forward operating bases in The Bahamas as part of an international counterdrug effort known as Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos (OPBAT). A cooperative venture with the Bahamian government and the DEA, this operation has been successfully employed for decades. OPBAT started in 1982 and has involved the deployment of U.S. helicopters and law enforcement personnel to the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands, which number in excess of 700 individual islands, most of which are uninhabited. The operation has involved additional support from the British government. OPBAT has both granted U.S. forces explicit access to the many small islands and cays favored as hiding locations by drug smugglers and facilitated the transport of Bahamian law enforcement officers to conduct arrests.

2.4. International Training

A key enabler of maritime narcotics interdiction is international counter narcotics training. In the United States, this training is managed and funded by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and implemented by various U.S. law enforcement organizations, including the DEA, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the Coast Guard. Major objectives of this training are as follows:

- Enhance the professionalism of counter-narcotics law enforcement activities in countries that cooperate with and are considered significant to U.S. narcotics control efforts.
- Improve the technical skills of drug law enforcement personnel in these countries.
- Increase the cooperation between U.S. and foreign law enforcement officials.

INL-funded training supports U.S. counter-narcotics priorities worldwide and focuses on encouraging foreign law enforcement agency self-sufficiency. The overarching goal of U.S. counter-narcotics training is to support the development of effective host country enforcement institutions that are capable of removing drugs from circulation before they can reach the arrival zone. U.S. training can take two forms: as part of a planned bilateral assistance program in target partner countries; or as regional training with international participants from multiple countries. The U.S. bilateral training assistance program works closely with international organizations, including the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the Organization of American States. The United States continuously works to promote burden-sharing with allies in the provision of training and to ensure that all efforts are complementary and directed toward common goals.

2.5. United Nations Obligations

The United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances—also known as the 1988 UN Drug Convention, FAA § 489(a)(1)(A)—sets forth a number of obligations that the parties agree to undertake. In general, the statute requires the parties to take legal measures to outlaw and punish all forms of illicit drug production, trafficking, and drug money laundering; to control chemicals that can be used to process illicit drugs; and to cooperate in international efforts to these ends. The statute lists actions required by foreign countries to take, relevant to evaluating their performance under the Convention. These actions pertain to illicit cultivation, production, distribution, sale, transport, and financing; money laundering; asset seizure; extradition; mutual legal assistance; law enforcement and transit cooperation; precursor chemical control; and demand reduction.

3. Handoffs of Responsibility by U.S. Authorities

This section describes two types of handoffs of responsibility for counterdrug missions by U.S. authorities. The first type involves handoffs of responsibility from DoD to interagency task forces; the second, from the Coast Guard to civilian and international partners.

3.1. Handoffs from the Department of Defense to Interagency Task Forces (Silkman, 2001)

As the frequency and success of maritime drug trafficking increased during the 1980s, the U.S. federal government instituted major organizational changes to increase the effectiveness of maritime counter-narcotics operations. The 1989 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 100-690, Section 1202, which added Section 124 to Title 10 of the U.S. Code) gave DoD statutory responsibility as the lead agency for the “detection and monitoring” of maritime drug trafficking. As a result, DoD established Joint Task Forces, which later evolved into Joint Interagency Task Forces, to coordinate federal interagency detection and monitoring efforts and to provide actionable information to enable law enforcement agencies to perform interdiction activities.

These Task Forces have become the focal points of interagency cooperation and intelligence fusion for the U.S. counterdrug mission. They have evolved to include robust

representative staffs from DoD, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and federal law enforcement agencies capable of leveraging intelligence and cooperation from across the federal government. The interagency staffs contribute greatly to detection and monitoring efforts prior to U.S. Coast Guard interdiction and apprehension operations. The task forces also have partner nation liaison officers, who are critical to enhancing the cooperative efforts of international drug interdiction.

Looking toward the future, a key element of both homeland defense and overseas maritime security will be achieving and maintaining global maritime domain awareness (MDA). MDA will require the integration of local and regional intelligence estimates within a global context. Achieving some level of MDA will be critically important in today's geopolitical context, not just to guard against international terrorism but to promote commerce and safety and to respond to natural disasters, piracy, illegal migration, and arms and drug smuggling. MDA is an important part of DoD's security strategy and achieving MDA will require new thinking regarding the roles of national and international maritime security forces. Establishing "maritime interagency task forces," or something similar, would go a long way toward the goal. Maritime nations are quickly realizing that achieving MDA is a 21st-century strategic imperative (Boraz, 2009).

3.2. Handoffs from the Coast Guard to Civilian and International Partners

A unique agency of the U.S. government, the Coast Guard possesses authorities both as a federal law enforcement agency and as an armed force. U.S. civilian law enforcement agencies cannot take over maritime interdiction because they do not have the resources, capabilities, or authorities to extend operations much beyond the three-mile state waters limit. The U.S. Navy has the resources to take over the mission but lacks the legal authorities and law enforcement training required. The Coast Guard possesses all the necessary law enforcement capability and military experience that comes from years of carrying out this mission. Because of the Coast Guard's broad authorities, it routinely performs handoffs to civil authorities in the execution of its missions, making it the ideal agency to lead the nation's maritime interdiction efforts.

As the lead federal agency for maritime law enforcement, including drug interdiction on the high seas and through the Western Hemisphere Transit Zone, the Coast Guard shares the lead within U.S. territorial seas with Customs and Border Protection. The Coast Guard also works in partnership with DoD, primarily through the Joint Interagency Task Force–South (JIATFS), which is responsible for detecting and monitoring illicit traffic bound for the United States.

The Coast Guard is the primary, and the most critical, force provider of maritime patrol aircraft, surface ships, airborne-use-of-force–equipped helicopters, and law enforcement detachments allocated for counterdrug efforts. The Coast Guard leads the critical phases of maritime interdiction and apprehension by exercising tactical control of end-game actions, to include detaining suspects, preparing case packages, collecting intelligence, and seizing contraband and vessels for handoff to the lead federal agency, task forces, or partner nations for final disposition.

4. Best Practices for Doctrine, Operations, and Information

U.S. and international agencies have compiled numerous sets of best practices for maritime counter-narcotics operations. In this section, we summarize those best practices usually according to source, in this order: DoD, DHS, Coast Guard, and United Nations. We conclude with one particular set of best practices that applies to all parties: sharing information. In the next section, we will discuss the application of lessons learned from maritime counter-narcotics operations to maritime counter-terrorism missions.

4.1. DoD: Enabling and Coordinating Other Agencies (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2007)³

DoD supports federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in their efforts to disrupt the transport and/or transfer of illegal drugs into the United States. DoD's principal mission is detection and monitoring (D&M). The desired end result of successful D&M is interdiction and apprehension by the LEAs. The goal of D&M is to provide early notification to LEAs, enabling them to conduct interdictions and searches for contraband, which leads to interdictions, apprehensions, and seizures. Drug interdiction on the high seas and in U.S. territorial seas is primarily the responsibility of the Coast Guard, although the U.S. Navy and allied vessels with Coast Guard or host nation law enforcement detachments attached are also involved.

In 2018, RAND Corporation researchers identified four categories of capabilities as essential for successfully coordinated border management policies: strategic foundations, operational excellence, community cooperation, and information sharing (Gerstein, et al., 2018). Strategic foundations would include a national strategy for border management, metrics for assessing it, and system architectures for key functional areas (such as national decision-making, intelligence, communications, and information). Operational excellence would require a national exercise program for border forces and organizations, stress-testing of border management systems (to ensure that their capacities meet national requirements), routine joint operations, enhanced investigative procedures, and on-site local training. Community cooperation would involve community engagement programs, a trusted traveler program, and prosecutions for border infractions. Information sharing is discussed in most of the following sections.

4.2. DHS: Unifying Principles, Priorities, Products, and Partners (DHS, 2010)

Within DHS, the counter-narcotics effort crosses component lines, with Customs and Border Protection, the Coast Guard, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, all playing major roles. The multi-component character of the DHS counter-narcotics effort creates valuable operational synergies. But to optimize these capabilities, leadership at all levels must understand and apply a set of unifying principles and priorities. DHS Counternarcotics Doctrine provides a means for achieving this end by coordinating counter-narcotics operations and enabling “unity of effort.”

³ This publication has been prepared under the direction of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It sets forth joint doctrine to govern the activities and performance of the Armed Forces of the United States in joint operations and provides the doctrinal basis for interagency coordination and for US military involvement in multinational operations. It provides military guidance for the exercise of authority by combatant commanders and other joint force commanders and prescribes joint doctrine for operations, education, and training.

The basic tenets of the DHS Counternarcotics Doctrine for unity of effort are as follows:

1. Develop and maintain a comprehensive view of the illicit drug trafficking industry.
2. Establish and aggressively exploit robust organizational and interagency intelligence capabilities spanning the spectrum of disciplines.
3. Establish and employ an effective array of counter-narcotics forces to counter the threat.
4. Maintain operational agility and anticipate the actions of our adversaries.
5. Collaborate with and support our federal, state, local, and tribal partners.
6. Create synergies through collaboration and cooperation with international partners.
7. Establish, support, and maintain effective command and control elements and multi-agency task forces.
8. Establish and employ effective methods for evaluating counter-narcotics performance, and regularly evaluate that performance.

According to the DHS doctrine, nearly all drug trafficking is carried out by Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTO). DTOs are criminal business enterprises that produce, market, and transport illicit drugs for profit, but do not limit their activities to illicit drugs. DTOs also smuggle special interest aliens, members of transnational gangs, weapons, money, and other contraband. DTOs employ a variety of tactics to control and manipulate the drug trafficking industry, including extreme violence and coercion and the use of drug proceeds to garner public support and acquiescence, instill corruption, and undermine good governance and the rule of law. In some instances, these enterprises take on political trappings in an attempt to institutionalize their existence and ensure longevity. When successful in this effort, criminal enterprises can threaten legitimate political authority and national sovereignty. According to intelligence and open-source reporting, designated foreign terrorist organizations derive financial benefits from participation in drug trafficking activities. Relationships between drug trafficking and terrorist organizations can be permanent or ad hoc and often change over time. DHS counter-narcotics efforts include a concerted focus on the drug-terror nexus.

DHS has come to understand the importance of interagency information sharing. DHS seeks to expand and refine its abilities to share intelligence and collaborate with interagency partners in state, local, and tribal law enforcement. To this end, DHS strives to produce intelligence products that are classified appropriately for release to state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies, and to work with them to ensure maximum dissemination of relevant information.

It is also important for DHS counter-narcotics forces to strike drug traffickers at times, in locations, and/or in manners for which the traffickers are unprepared. To exploit the element of surprise, one must develop and field forces capable of operating in a variety of conditions and environments throughout the entire operating area and employ them in ways that maximize their mobility. To maintain operational agility and preserve the element of surprise, DHS forces must also work diligently to identify and mitigate the drug traffickers' counterintelligence efforts.

The success of the DHS counter-narcotics enterprise depends on cooperation among nations. As illicit drugs move from South and Central America toward areas of demand, they generally pass through the landmass, airspace, or waters of a number of countries, all of which view drug trafficking as a threat to national and international security. These countries generally seek to cooperate with U.S. drug interdiction efforts. A given

shipment of illicit drugs is more vulnerable to seizure while it is in its bulk state, moving from its country of origin toward the U.S. border, than it is after it gets dispersed and enters the United States. It is therefore critical for DHS to establish and maintain close cooperative counter-narcotics partnerships with the countries from which drug shipments originate and through which they pass. Relevant bilateral and multilateral agreements include but are not limited to those that deal with forward basing, ship boarding, host nation “ship-riders,” counter-narcotics operations in and above territorial seas, information sharing, air interdiction, waiver of jurisdiction to prosecute, and the extradition of drug suspects.

The complexity and geographic scope of the illicit drug trade requires DHS to integrate its counter-narcotics efforts with those of its interagency and international partners. The arrest of a single trafficker or the seizure of a single vessel might hinge on the cooperation of several federal departments; numerous state, local, and/or tribal law enforcement organizations; and a number of international partners. Effective cooperation of this kind is the product of mutually beneficial policies and good leadership being exercised under the authority of interagency command and control elements. These elements tie intelligence, planning, operational employment, and law enforcement response into an optimized whole. Through these elements, participating organizations bring their specialized knowledge and expertise to bear against a common threat. In doing so, they harmonize the activities of multiple organizations working toward a common objective while respecting the authorities of each of the organizations.

4.3. Coast Guard: Five Enabling Concepts (USCG, 2014)

The Coast Guard has identified three priorities in the Western Hemisphere: Combating Networks, Securing Borders, and Safeguarding Commerce. For the Coast Guard to succeed, its Western Hemisphere Maritime Strategy highlights five enabling concepts: *Unity of Effort, Offshore Presence, Integration of Operations and Intelligence, Leveraging Partnerships, and Layered Defense.*

Thus, the Coast Guard must work together with many of the other 21 DHS component agencies to capitalize on their unique authorities and capabilities. This unity of effort, integration, and synchronization of planning will be essential at every level of coordination across the homeland security enterprise.

Offshore presence will be necessary to remain effective and adaptable against increasingly sophisticated and well-resourced transnational criminal organizations. An integration of operations and intelligence will inform commanders and other decision-makers by providing actionable knowledge about adversaries and threats.

Leveraging partnerships will enable the Coast Guard to prevent, detect, and defeat threats as far from the shoreline as possible. Finally, a layered defense will allow operating forces to identify and defeat maritime threats in their inland, coastal, and offshore arenas.

4.4. United Nations: 15 “Good Practices”

The UN Counter-Terrorism Center and the Global Counterterrorism Forum have cooperated to produce a set of “good practices” for border security and management. Their collaboration included a series of conferences and workshops in 2015 and 2016 to present lessons learned to help countries shape policies, programs, and approaches for

border security and management. Table 1 includes the 15 best practices identified by these efforts (Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2016).

Table 1 UN-Identified Border Security and Management Good Practices

Good practice	Description
1	Enhance intra-agency cooperation.
2	Enhance interagency cooperation.
3	Enhance international cooperation.
4	Develop and establish comprehensive remote border area surveillance programs.
5	Engage with and empower border communities as key contributors in border security and management.
6	Develop and implement border community policing programs.
7	Develop and implement border security and management information exchange programs and mechanisms
8	Establish border cooperation centers.
9	Nominate and assign border liaison officers.
10	Conduct joint and coordinated cross-border patrols, as well as joint multi-agency and interdisciplinary operation exercises.
11	Define parameters for cross-border operational engagement
12	Conduct effective risk analysis assessments.
13	Create national border management strategies and action plans.
14	Establish joint border crossing points.
15	Identify corruption as a serious risk for effective and robust border security and management.

4.5. All Parties: Information Sharing Strategy (U.S. Government, 2007)

Information sharing has emerged as a key element in any successful maritime narcotics interdiction activity. Lessons learned from the U.S. terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, regarding the sharing of operationally relevant information, were captured in the 2007 National Strategy for Information Sharing. These lessons apply well to nationally or internationally coordinated maritime law enforcement operations. Sharing information with foreign, regional, local, and private parties has been proven over and over again to be absolutely critical to achieving success in combating any transnational threat and preventing illegal activities from threatening the homeland and allies. A successful information sharing environment must be constructed upon a foundation of trusted partnerships across all levels of government, the private sector, and foreign allies. These partnerships are based upon a shared commitment to detect, prevent, disrupt, pre-empt, and mitigate the effects of transnational crime.

DoD's information sharing strategy was developed with the understanding that homeland security information, terrorism information, and law enforcement information can come from multiple sources, all levels of government, private sector organizations, and foreign sources. Effective information sharing comes through strong partnerships

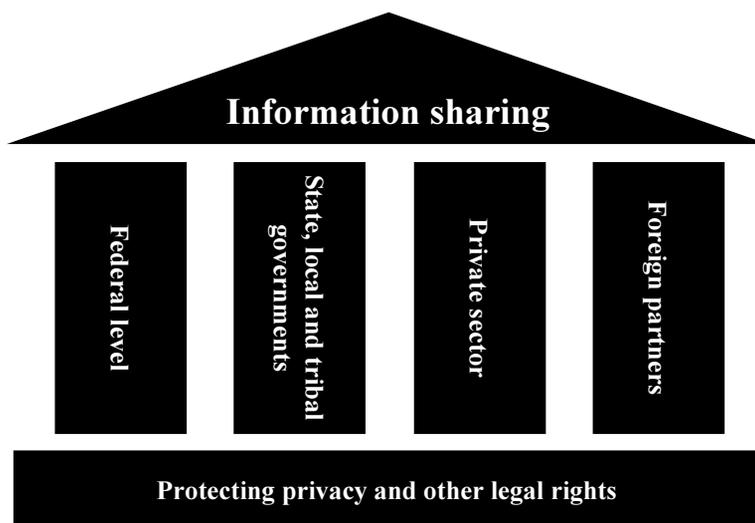


Figure 4 Foundations for an Information Sharing Strategy. Source: U.S. Government, 2007.

among federal, state, local, and tribal authorities, private sector organizations, and foreign partners and allies. Information acquired for one purpose, or under one set of authorities, might provide unique insights when combined with seemingly unrelated information from other sources, and therefore we must foster a culture of awareness in which people at all levels of government remain cognizant of the functions and needs of others and use the knowledge and information from all sources. The foundations for an information sharing strategy are provided in Figure 4.

The strategic objectives for sharing information with foreign partners can be summarized as follows:

- Expand and facilitate the appropriate and timely sharing of operationally relevant and perishable information between the United States and foreign partners.
- Ensure that exchanges of information between the United States and foreign governments are accompanied by proper and carefully calibrated security requirements.
- Ensure that information received by federal agencies from a foreign government under a sharing arrangement is provided to appropriate subject matter experts for interpretation, evaluation, and analysis; and can be rapidly disseminated and used to advance national objectives.

5. Lessons for Maritime Counter-Terrorism Missions

The evolution of security cooperation has pushed cocaine flows from the Caribbean to Central America and the Eastern Pacific. Over time, increased state capacity and cooperation has altered cocaine trafficking and cut into the profit margins of drug cartels. Increased security cooperation in the Caribbean—using naval strengths, interdiction data, and government estimates—has caused narcotraffickers to shift their trafficking and smuggling routes to regions without multilateral mechanisms. Multilateral security

arrangements have also been found to be more effective than unilateral state action against transnational criminal networks. The largest increases in interdiction and security have occurred when the United States has worked with, and enabled, regional partners and organizations (Conners, 2018).

After years of maritime narcotics interdiction operations, several valuable lessons have emerged as potentially useful for coordinated interdiction efforts, to include maritime counter-terrorism operations. As described below, these lessons include the importance of cueing, bilateral relationships, regional intelligence sharing, strengthened port state control, interagency coordination, and related findings from U.S. government, joint interagency, and other reports.

5.1. Cueing

Cueing is the process of directing surface assets and law enforcement teams to interdict suspect vessels. Cueing occurs when an asset or a maritime surveillance radar station detects a target of interest, based upon intelligence, suspicious activity, or profile. These assets then direct surface ships or aircraft to intercept, visually identify, stop, inspect, and detain suspect vessels. Nation-states with extended coastlines, multiple small islands, and broad swaths of sea space cannot rely on deployed surface craft alone, because aircraft and patrol boats often lack the endurance to dwell for prolonged periods at sea and are best deployed with specific information. Cueing may also take the form of simply informing friendly ships and partner nations of potential targets, relaying critical intercept data to partner nations to investigate as they see fit.

5.2. Bilateral Relationships: “*Pardon Me While I Enforce Your Laws*”

A fascinating element of the U.S. relationship with Western Hemisphere nations has been the willingness of the region’s small independent states to cooperate. The importance of bilateral maritime security arrangements plays out in the performance of the U.S. Coast Guard. Vice Admiral Charles Ray stated that, in FY2016, 59 percent of Coast Guard interdictions relied upon “bilateral or operational procedure agreements” (DHS, 2017).⁴

An example of a successful bilateral interdiction methodology that could be applied to counter-terrorism operations is the Western Hemisphere multinational maritime narcotic interdiction effort called “Operation Martillo.” Operation Martillo resembles a hub-and-spoke operation, whereby the United States operates as an information collector and distributes cueing data to regional partners who are the spokes. Operation Martillo receives external assistance from the Netherlands, Spain, France, and Canada. The operation also involves Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

Functionally, DoD’s Joint Interagency Task Force–South (JIATFS), coordinates the efforts of these component states. Operation Martillo’s goal is to increase littoral interdiction, forcing smugglers further into the Eastern Pacific and extending their time at sea, thus allowing additional interdiction by longer range Coast Guard and naval assets. More significant is that Operation Martillo places JIATFS partner nation assets under U.S. tactical control, a previously unheard-of surrender of sovereignty. The result

⁴ Written Testimony of USCG Deputy Commandant for Operations Vice Admiral Charles Ray for a Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control for A Hearing Titled, Adapting U.S. Counter-narcotics Efforts in Colombia.

has been the development of a counter-narcotics network in which a central processor coordinates and cues individual state security forces. Since its implementation in January of 2012, Operation Martillo has succeeded in the seizure of 693 metric tons of cocaine and 581 suspect vessels and aircraft (not to mention numerous arrests, convictions, and intelligence leads resulting in many more seizures) (Rabasa, et al., 2017).

5.3. Regional Intelligence Sharing

Another lesson, which offers potentially great utility for the counter-terrorism arena, is the U.S. effort to promote regional intelligence sharing and cueing by promoting technological tools. In the Caribbean and Central America, cueing is an integrative process that involves data sharing. While individual states may maintain discreet security forces, a significant degree of data sharing occurs under the Cooperative Situational Information Integration (CSII) System and the Regional Domain Awareness (RDA) system, hosted by the DoD U.S. Southern Command's organized data sharing systems. The system's precursor, the Cooperating Nations Information Exchange System (CNIES), had been in place since 1998. CNIES had functioned as a bilateral information sharing system. The newer RDA and CSII systems employ unclassified, internet-based data sharing systems that allow participants to actively exchange tracking data and make it more accessible and therefore actionable, leading to greater efficiency and interdiction success.

The regional collaborative network promotes and facilitates sub-regional cooperation while building partner nation interdiction capacity. Through the network, the United States has been able to provide a greater contribution to the security of the region, while the partner nations engaged in routine data sharing have done a better job at interdiction operations than states that have tried to tackle the problem alone. As interstate cooperation and intelligence sharing have improved, interdiction rates have increased.

Future policymakers should draw on these models of operational cooperation in the construction and facilitation of a cooperative security framework. Because of the cooperative mechanisms, participating Caribbean nations have been more likely than non-participating Central American nations to seize cocaine shipments. Central America and Mexico have not implemented such cooperative mechanisms and accordingly operate in a less secure environment. The result is that traffickers opt for an Eastern Pacific and Central American route over the more direct Caribbean route.

Collaborative maritime law enforcement mechanisms allow regional partners to augment their forces with shared intelligence and cueing from their neighbours. The construction of regional security institutions and information sharing mechanisms have helped to secure the Caribbean and are helping to secure Central America. Ultimately, these relationships are more effective than simply adding ships to regional navies. However, cooperative security requires maintenance, diplomacy, and patience; when in place, these relationships can be highly effective. When states look past their political restrictions and take pragmatic action with their neighbours, regional security will benefit, and transnational criminal networks will suffer (Conners, 2018).

5.4. Strengthened Port State Control (Griffiths & Jenks, 2012)

Maritime transport dominates the international trade in licit and illicit goods. Maritime transport accounts for the majority of seizures and suspect shipments of military

equipment and dual-use goods originating from, or destined for, embargoed states such as Iran and North Korea. Dual-use goods have both civilian and potential military applications, including the development of weapons of mass destruction and missiles. Maritime transport is the primary means of delivering shipments of conventional arms to actors involved in conflicts in Africa. It plays a major role in the global flows of narcotics and associated chemical precursors. It is also the main mode of transport for other illicit and potentially destabilizing commodities, such as smuggled tobacco, oil, and counterfeit goods.

One reason why maritime transport offers the greatest scope for the trafficking of destabilizing commodities is that it is more difficult for states to monitor and control than any other means of international bulk transport. Jurisdiction over merchant shipping in international waters rests with a vessel's flag state. As a result, ships suspected of carrying destabilizing commodities cannot be boarded and the commodities seized without the prior agreement of the flag state. The majority of ships involved in reported destabilizing military equipment, dual-use goods, and narcotics sail under so-called "flags of convenience" and are registered in flag states with limited regulation and control of their merchant fleets.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides flag states with exclusive sovereignty and jurisdiction over their vessels in international waters. A disproportionate majority of the cases in which the ship's owners, commercial operator, or officers appear to have been complicit in destabilizing military equipment, dual-use goods, and narcotics transfers between 1991 and 2011 involved ships registered in those flag states least capable of enforcing national and international laws. This fact, along with the ease with which ships can reflag from one open registry to another, suggests that anti-trafficking efforts that rely largely on the cooperation of flag states alone are unlikely to be effective.

The most common ship types used in reported destabilizing military equipment, dual-use goods, and narcotics transfers are general cargo ships and container ships. Ships involved in cases in which the owner, commercial operator, or officers appear to have been complicit in the transfers have an average age of more than 27 years. These ships tend to have poor safety and environmental inspection records or to have been involved in previous accidents or pollution incidents. A majority of the flags of convenience under which these vessels sail have been consistently targeted for inspection in other countries by port state control (PSC) regimes on the basis of poor performance in previous inspections.

In most cases, PSC inspections are the only occasions when state authorities have the right to board a ship without consulting the flag state. PSC inspections allow inspection of the ship, including the cargo hold and crew's quarters. They also provide a mechanism to control the movement of targeted ships through detention in port and even to ban the suspect ships from all ports operating under the same cooperative PSC regime. Recommendations for strengthening PSC include the following:

- Efforts to counter maritime trafficking should recognize the utility of PSC as a "choke point" to monitor and control poorly regulated flag-of-convenience ships suspected of involvement in destabilizing commodity flows.
- The more advanced PSC regimes should initiate outreach, training, and technical cooperation to PSC authorities at ports identified as being more frequently visited by vessels that are suspected of involvement in destabilizing commodity flows.

- Within nations, operational links should be strengthened between the PSC authorities and the export control, customs, security, and intelligence agencies.
- At international and regional levels, formal and informal information sharing on suspect vessels should be improved between different governments and relevant PSC authorities.
- Political support should be enhanced for a holistic approach to maritime security, using technologies, instruments, and assets currently used for environmental protection, ship monitoring, fisheries protection, and other aspects of maritime governance and surveillance to better target destabilizing maritime trade.
- Governments should initiate dialogue with global shipping industry representatives to address destabilizing maritime trade, particularly the growing use of containerization.

5.5. Interagency Coordination

Today's national security challenges lend themselves increasingly to "whole-of-government" solutions that "require structural and cultural changes in the executive and legislative branches" (Munsing & Lamb, 2011). Better interagency (or whole-of-government) organizational constructs are common recommendations in national security reports and commentaries. End-to-end mission management is often deemed critical for success. No one organization can do it all, due to the complexity and resources required. Intelligence generation occurs at every echelon; and drawing on each echelon for intelligence has become recognized as a key to continuous improvement.

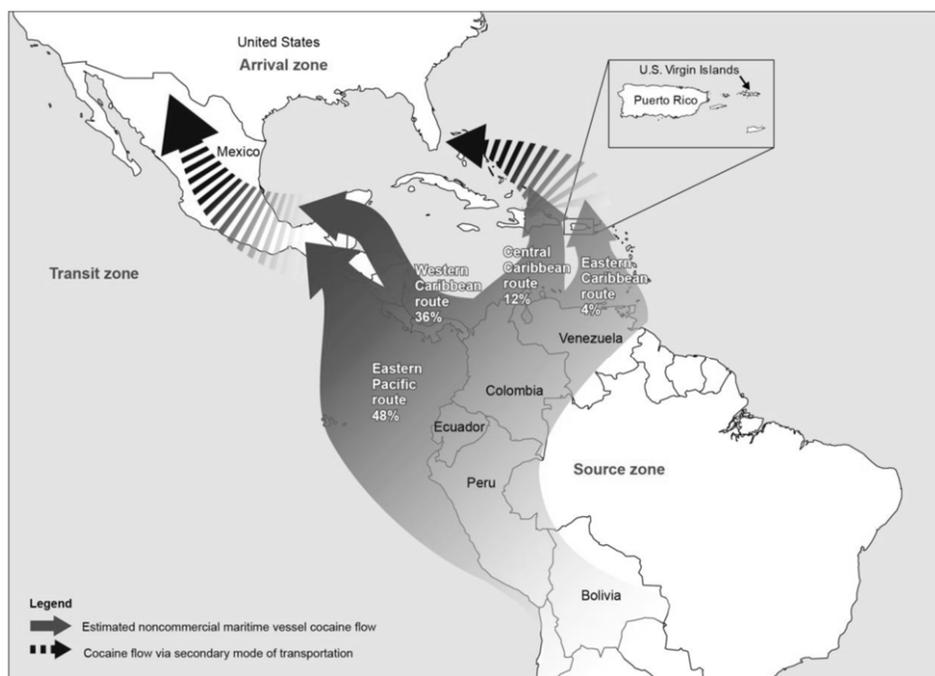
According to a 2011 study by the National Defense University, there is a "need to be ruthless about a couple of very important guidelines" that greatly facilitate trust:

- No single group has all the answers.
- Each agency has a set of organizational competencies that should be respected and leveraged.
- Each group has particular procedures that need to be respected and integrated.

5.6. Lessons from Congressionally-Mandated Reports

As part of its oversight duties, the U.S. Congress routinely asks the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) to examine various federal programs, their efficacy, and their efficiency. The huge investment in executing the National Drug Control Strategy continues to be reviewed on an ongoing basis. In a 2014 GAO report on the Coast Guard and its drug interdiction mission, the following salient points were made (USGAO, 2014):

Virtually all of the cocaine shipped to the United States travels through the transit zone from South America, entering Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean enroute to the United States. The transit zone is a 6-million-square-mile area that encompasses Central America, Mexico, the eastern Pacific Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean Sea. Figure 5 provides an informative visual of the primary non-commercial cocaine flow, which represents the majority of known smuggling events.



Source: U.S. Coast Guard based on the Consolidated Counterdrug Database; Map Resources (Map). | GAO-14-527

Figure 5 Source, Transit, and Arrival Zones and the Estimated Percentage of Noncommercial Cocaine Flows, by Smuggling Route, in FY 2013. Source: U.S. Coast Guard.

- JIATFS (the joint DoD, federal, and international counterdrug task force) relies upon DHS (the Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection) and DoD (the Navy) to provide vessels and aircraft for drug interdiction operations in the transit zone. JIATFS also receives operational resources from allied countries, with Canada, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom providing maritime detection and monitoring assistance.
- The strategy is to use vessel and aircraft resources to patrol the transit zone far from U.S. shores and close to the source zone countries in South America in order to increase the chances that interdictions are of larger load sizes and higher purity than would otherwise be the case—and to cause greater disruption to illicit drug smuggling organizations.
- The Coast Guard determines the number of vessels, aircraft, and law enforcement detachments needed by JIATFS through an annual planning process that considers strategic priorities, maritime risks, and the availability of Coast Guard vessels and aircraft.
- Factors that support mission performance include asset readiness (the availability and reliability of platforms), consistent and adequate financial resources, and consistent support from other federal agencies and international partners.

A 2017 GAO report on counter-narcotics efforts in the Western Hemisphere explored how agencies are gathering and sharing best practices and lessons learned from both domestic and international operations (USGAO, 2017) (USGAO, 2014). Figure 6 presents the geography and countries in the Western Hemisphere source, transit, and

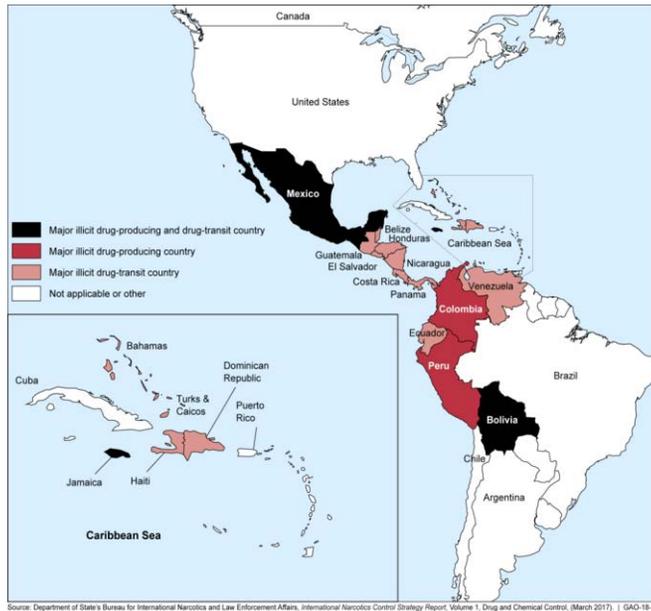


Figure 6 Major Drug-Producing and Drug-Transit Countries in the Western Hemisphere Source: U.S. Department of State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement.

arrival zones that are majority players in the drug flow to the continental United States. To counter this flow, eight primary agencies cooperate extensively on the following six activities:

- interdictions at U.S. borders;
- maritime drug interdictions in international waters, along with international interdictions in concert with partner nations in international and territorial waters;
- intelligence gathering to support drug interdictions, investigations, and international activities;
- investigations of drug organizations based in countries outside the United States;
- eradication support and efforts;
- and building foreign partner capacity to conduct counter-narcotics activities.

In summary, the best practices and lessons learned, as elucidated in the GAO reports, fall into six categories:

- *Security.* Security must be maintained to allow the expansion of legal economic activities and the delivery of civilian services, including justice, education, and health, to a population unaccustomed to a significant government presence.
- *Flexibility.* Programs must adapt to changing circumstances, including adjusting programs that are not working as expected and adding new initiatives, if necessary.
- *Long-term approach.* Major counter-narcotics programs designed to address complex and long-standing challenges require a multi-year investment in terms of financial resources and political commitment.

- *Political will is critical.* According to the State Department, one of the clearest symbols of political will is the dedication of resources to improve economic opportunities, governance, and public safety. Governments must develop budgets to target criminal networks, tackle corruption, and strengthen government institutions.
- *No lasting security without enhanced access to justice.* Governments must undertake efforts to expand access to justice in their countries and work to improve the transparency and efficiency of judicial systems by implementing oral-based accusatorial systems.
- *Partnership across agencies is critical.* A whole-of-government approach, with a broad interagency presence representing the breadth of the government, builds linkages at all levels and ensures a continuity of vision through transitions in government leadership.

5.7. Lessons from Naval Postgraduate School Research

It is conceivable that terrorists will also learn from successful drug smuggling strategies and will develop the most promising counter-techniques and tactics. Research and analysis completed at the Naval Postgraduate School in June 2017 provided a ranking of drug smuggling methods, as presented in Table 2, based upon seizures and independent analysis (Harney, 2017).

Table 2 Effectiveness Rankings of Drug Smuggling Methods. Description: Final Ranking 1st = best, 10th = worst. Source: (Harney, 2017).

All Methods of Drug Smuggling									
Tunnels	Semi-Submersible Narco sub	Panga Go-Fast Boats	Big Rig	Car	Ultralight Aircraft	Drone	Container Vessels	Private Jet	Mules/Packers
1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th

The researchers concluded that the United States must strengthen partnerships with transit zone countries, enhance partner nation abilities, and concentrate efforts in high payoff areas of interest; that strengthening partnerships builds trust among the United States and its partners and provides access to geographic areas of interest; and that enhancing the abilities of partner nations serves to fill existing capacity gaps borne of declining resources. The United States must basically ignore a majority of the 42-million-square-mile operating area and concentrate forces exclusively in high-payoff areas; specifically, coastal areas nearest the source zones and at transit zone arrival points. It is understood that this approach will likely be countered eventually, but the gains achieved by this strategy will likely have lasting impacts on the smuggling enterprise.

5.8. *Lessons from Joint Interagency Task Force–South Experience (Harney, 2017)*

The JIATFS experience has generated sets of do's and don'ts for counter-narcotics campaigns that could apply to maritime counter-terrorism campaigns. These do's and don'ts largely overlap with the lessons learned from other sources described above. First, the do's.

Get a mandate from a higher authority. The mission and the team must have sufficient legitimacy—that is, be clearly sanctioned by a higher authority as a priority—to gain the cooperation of other organizations. Even if cooperation is on a voluntary basis, there should be a single organization dedicated to leading the effort. To overcome natural organizational tendencies to seek autonomy rather than collaboration, all parties involved must also believe there are rewards for pursuing the mission.

Tailor a holistic solution to a discrete problem. It is easiest to forge collaboration around a discrete, clearly identifiable problem with a meaningful and measurable outcome. Using JIATFS as an example, the mission is discrete and clearly identified (stop drug trafficking from entering the United States); it requires cross-functionality (different types of intelligence, different assets from different services, and the cooperation of international partners); and it results in readily identifiable outcomes (drug shipments disrupted, traffickers prosecuted, drug cartels weakened).

Know your partners. To build a coalition of partners willing to collaborate, the JIATFS leadership had to learn about the organizations it wanted to partner with, understand their equities, and appreciate what it would take to build trust with them. These requirements, in turn, demanded a degree of open-mindedness, humility, patience, and persistence. A team needs to know how its mission ties into the missions of other organizations and to have a broad understanding of the problem. This understanding will help the team build its networks, elicit support from the other organizations, and attack the problem in a holistic manner.

Obtain resources. The national security system was not designed with teams in mind. It will require extra work to ensure teams are adequately supported with resources and sufficient levels of legal authority to use those resources with flexibility. Having an established resource base will reduce the need to barter with other organizations that might not be inclined to support the team effort. Resources provide a powerful incentive for other organizations to collaborate. Over time, operational success and a willingness to share credit will likely attract additional resources from grateful partners. Resources also indicate that national authorities take the mission seriously.

Build networks. The complex problems tackled by national security teams often require them to build networks with a diverse set of interested parties. These networks should be both horizontal and vertical; that is, a team needs to reach sideways to other independent but interested parties, but it should also reach both upward (to a higher authority that must be satisfied with the success of the enterprise) and downward (to subordinate or smaller entities that can deliver important peripheral but supporting capabilities).

Don'ts. Members of the JIATFS leadership team also noted some common mistakes they believe others have made in standing up interagency teams of one sort or another. Among the top mistakes to avoid are the following:

- Don't command the presence of interagency personnel on your team.
- Don't segregate interagency staff in separate buildings.
- Don't disrespect smaller partners, because they can make big contributions.

- Don't demand binding agreements on cooperation (at least initially).
- Don't ignore any partner's need to feel they contribute.
- Don't make binding decisions without substantial vetting and support.
- Don't forget to build a culture of trust and empowerment.
- Don't take the credit for collaborative success.

5.9. *Lessons from RAND Corporation Research*

In 2017, the RAND Corporation, under the auspices of its ongoing work for the U.S. Army, published a report on countering the expansion of two transnational criminal networks (TCNs) originating in South America. The first emanated from the Andean region and spread through Central America and Mexico to the United States; the second reached from South America across the Atlantic to West Africa, the Sahel, and then to Europe. Some of the findings may be easily applied to countering maritime terrorist networks. The nexus or linkages between terrorist and insurgent groups and crime is a critical aspect of the problem of international terrorism because, in many cases, terrorist groups cannot sustain themselves and survive without the income and resources that they derive from criminal activity. The most salient findings and recommendations from the RAND report are summarized below (Rabasa, et al., 2017).

Challenge conventional thinking. To address the threat of hybrid illicit actors who combine aspects of criminal organizations, terrorist groups, and insurgencies, it might be wise to reconsider how we classify and address non-traditional security threats. Instead of defining them in traditional categories such as “terrorists,” “insurgents,” or “criminal organizations,” they could be defined as networks that pose crosscutting threats to U.S. security interests. This redefinition would make it possible to prioritize the level of threat they pose and the tools and resources to deploy against them. This approach could also enable us to break down some of the barriers among counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, and counter-networks that impede U.S. action.

Improve interagency coordination. A major structural obstacle to waging an effective counter-network campaign is the lack of unified effort and command. Unlike in the counter-terrorism arena, where extensive interagency coordinating mechanisms were created after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a mechanism for addressing the threat of TCNs is only now in the process of being developed. The 9/11 attacks generated a sense of urgency and a set of incentives to coordinate efforts against the threat of international terrorism, but no similar consensus has developed on the importance of countering TCNs. The agencies with the most relevant capabilities for attacking these illicit networks have other missions and are reluctant to focus their resources on taking down these networks.

Address criminalized and deeply corrupted states. Criminalized states are hubs of transnational criminal activity. Deep, multi-layered corruption in these states vitiates U.S. efforts to engage partner nations constructively in efforts against TCNs, to strengthen local governance, and to promote regional stability. The United States has tried to work around the problem of corruption in a partner country's security agencies by working with vetted units within larger organizations. However, there are severe limitations to what can be achieved by working with these units, even if they could be kept corruption-free, if they operate within an environment of deeply entrenched corruption.

Work with partner nations and militaries to help them strengthen border control. By definition, TCNs operate across national borders, often those of countries with little capacity to effectively control them. By assisting with border control, the military can help impede the activities of not only TCNs but also terrorist, insurgent, and other violent illicit actors. Moreover, assistance with border control will be positively received by partners who might not be on board with other U.S. security priorities but are concerned about the security of their own borders. The capabilities needed for this mission are not particularly technologically advanced. Capacity building and sustainability should be the main priorities.

6. Conclusions: Common Themes and Consistent Recommendations

There are some consistent and repetitive themes that have emerged from decades of counterdrug operations, resulting in a set of recommendations that could also be employed in maritime counter-terrorism missions:

Continue to develop regional partnerships that grant access to partner nations.

Cooperation and collaboration among nation states within their respective source and transit zones have clearly been force multipliers and key contributors to successfully countering the drug trafficking threat. Organizations like the US Joint Interagency Task Force South, whose sole focus for over 30 years is coordinating multi-national, multi-agency, and multi-unit drug interdiction operations, have witnessed the utility and success rate of operations that can leverage international partnerships. Nations that seek to develop strategic regional partnerships to combat illegal contraband flow can leverage these same relationships to combat other transnational regional threats utilizing a similarly structured regional partnership model.

Assist regional nations in their efforts to combat drug trafficking by offering incentives, including beneficial trade agreements and other economic aid packages, to transit zone partners willing to spend time and resources. A regional or multi-national approach for counter-narcotics operations has proven more successful and potentially self-sustaining if consistent and appropriate assistance can be realized. Rewarding and reinforcing regional efforts with assistance may incentivize cooperation and serve as a vehicle or model for other joint regional operations, such as counter-terrorism.

Continuously update and analyse data to facilitate optimal placement of the limited assets dedicated to interdiction, as well as analysis of national attitudes in the transit and source zone countries – all of which could help target diplomatic and economic incentives for the most efficient uses of limited resources. Consistent and routine capture and analysis of operational performance data can aid in the optimization of asset placement in resource constrained environments. Robust information sharing, operations research and analysis of interdiction data can reveal patterns and maximize the effectiveness of available assets. Public opinion and political support are factors that should be thoughtfully taken into account when determining where to best place assets and/or expend resources.

Pursue new basing locations, based on diplomatic initiatives and geographic proximity to source zones. The ability to support sustained, efficient operations in the source zone can be susceptible to the “tyranny of distance”. Long transits for interdiction assets challenge the ability to support continuous operations and extended supply chain distances consume limited resources that could otherwise be used in the threat vector. Ideally, staging or basing resources closer to the operational area is more likely to

translate to greater success rates due to the enhanced ability to stage and sustain operations closer to the source. This may also hold true for counter-terrorism operations, particularly for operations that require shorter planning windows, transits, availabilities or shorter response times based upon more perishable information.

Efforts to improve the information-sharing processes, procedures, and technologies among federal, state, local, tribal, and international partners will continue to expand the scope, quality, and timeliness of actionable and strategic information. Decades of interdiction performance has revealed that information-sharing is a critical enabler and often the fundamental basis for the development and communication of key information needed to realize operational success, regardless of the final law enforcement or military objective. Operations and communications security culture runs counter to information-sharing tenets, precipitating natural conflict. Deliberate sharing must be exercised in order to change a culture of guarding information within interdiction communities.

References

- Boraz, S. C. (2009). Maritime Domain Awareness, Myths and Realities. *Naval War College Review*, 62(3), 137-146.
- Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. (2016). *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*. Washington: United States Department of State.
- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2007). *Joint Counterdrug Operations*. Washington: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
- Coats, D. R. (2018). *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community*. Washington: Office of the Director of National Intelligence.
- Connors, M. R. (2018, March). Caribbean And Eastern Pacific Maritime Security: Regional Cooperation in Bridge and Insular States. *Thesis for Master of Arts in Security Studies*. Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School.
- DEA. (2018). *2018 National Drug Threat Assessment*. Washington: Drug Enforcement Administration.
- DHS. (2010). *Counternarcotics Doctrine*. Washington: Department of Homeland Security.
- DHS. (2017, September 12). *Testimony*. Retrieved from Department of Homeland Security: www.dhs.gov/news
- FAS. (2000, December). *International Crime Threat Assessment*. Retrieved from Federation of American Scientists: www.fas.org
- Gerstein, D. M., Adler, A., Davenport, A. C., Grill, B., Kadlec, A., & Young, W. (2018). *Managing International Borders: Balancing Security with the Licit Flow of People and Goods*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.
- Global Counterterrorism Forum. (2016, September). Good Practices in the Area of Border Security and Management in the Context of Counterterrorism and Stemming the Flow of "Foreign Terrorist Fighters". New York, New York, United States.
- Griffiths, H., & Jenks, M. (2012). Maritime Transport and Destabilizing Commodity Flows. Policy Paper No. 32. Solna, Sweden.
- Harney, S. M. (2017, June). By land, sea, or air? A comparative analysis of cartel smuggling strategies. Monterey, California, United States: Naval Postgraduate School.
- IMO. (2019, June). *IMO Profile*. Retrieved from International Maritime Organization: www.business.un.org
- Munsing, E., & Lamb, C. (2011). *Joint Interagency Task Force-South: The Best Known, Least Understood Interagency Success*. Washington: National Defense University Press.
- Rabasa, A., Schnaubelt, C. M., Chalk, P., Farah, D., Midgette, G., & Shatz, H. J. (2017). *Counter-network: Countering the Expansion of Transnational Criminal Networks*. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation.
- Silkman, W. R. (2001). The Use of U.S. Naval Surface Combatants in The Maritime Counter narcotics Interdiction Effort: A Major Impact on The Flow of Drugs. Newport, Rhode Island, United States. Retrieved from Naval War College.
- U.S. Government. (2007, October). National Strategy for Information Sharing, Successes and Challenges in Improving Terrorism-Related Information Sharing. Washington.
- USCG. (2014). *Western Hemisphere Strategy*. Washington: United States Coast Guard.
- USGAO. (2014). *Coast Guard: Resources Provided for Drug Interdiction Operations in the Transit Zone, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands*. Washington: United States Government Accountability Office.

- USGAO. (2017). *Counter-narcotics, Overview of US Efforts in the Western Hemisphere*. Washington: United States Government Accountability Office.
- Woody, C. (2015, November 15). We have a clearer picture of who's fueling the US heroin epidemic — and how they're doing it. *Business Insider*.

The author(s) of this publication is/are solely responsible for its content. This publication does not reflect the opinion of the publisher. The publisher cannot be held liable for any loss or damage that may occur because of this publication.