



Counternetwork

Countering the Expansion of Transnational Criminal Networks

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Through an analysis of transnational criminal networks originating in South America, this report presents operational characteristics of these networks, strategic alliances they have established, and the multiple threats that they pose to U.S. interests and to the stability of the countries where they operate. It also identifies U.S. government policies and programs to counter these networks and examines the military's role in that context.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the operational characteristics of transnational criminal networks? What are the strategic alliances among criminal groups and other actors along the key nodes of clandestine smuggling routes?
- How do transnational criminal networks threaten U.S. interests?
- What U.S. government policies and programs can be used to combat these networks?
- What are some roles the U.S. Army could play in combatting TCNs, consistent with U.S. policy?



KEY FINDINGS

Countering Transnational Organized Crime Is a New Mission for the Department of Defense

- Success in counternarcotics has been traditionally measured by the amount of illicit drugs interdicted.
- However, even if drug flow reduction goals are met, the drug trafficking infrastructure would still be in place.
- Countering transnational criminal networks requires identifying the critical nodes in the criminal organizations and determining where operations can achieve the greatest effect.
- Gaps in authorities may create difficulties in military abilities to participate in this effort.

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Destabilizing Effects of Transnational Criminal Networks

- These criminal organizations take root in supply areas and transportation nodes while usurping the host nations' basic functioning capacity.
- Over time, the illicit economy grows and nonstate actors provide an increasing range of social goods and fill the security and political vacuum that emerges from the gradual erosion of state power, legitimacy, and capacity.

The U.S. Army Could Play a Role in Combating Transnational Criminal Networks

- Combating transnational criminal organizations is an endeavor in which the Army could help develop interagency and multinational strategies to more effectively counter these organizations and then assist with planning to implement those strategies.
- Such initiatives would constitute a valuable expansion from the Army's current efforts to build partner capacity, perform network analysis, and support detection and monitoring.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- The U.S. government could bring authorities and policy guidance in line with the strategy to combat transnational organized crime.
- Interagency efforts to combat these networks could be improved, roles could be better defined, and joint doctrine could be developed.
- The Army could take several steps to clarify its role in countering criminal networks, including participating in strategy development, increasing support to network analysis efforts, and working with partner nations and militaries to help them strengthen border control.

