

Running Head: COMMITTING A BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM TO THE WAR ON DRUGS

Committing a Brigade Combat Team to the War on Drugs

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Diane Williams", written in black ink.

Abstract

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Committing a Brigade Combat Team to the war on drugs will have detrimental effects on our nation and is not needed. There are five major agencies fighting this war and although they cannot stop every illegal drug from being smuggled into our country, they have been successful. Their dedicated commitment to the drug war resulted in the seizure of more than 1.7 million pounds of marijuana in 2007 that was being smuggled across the U.S.-Mexican border (Bowers, 2007). Committing the Army would not only undermine the existence of these agencies, but would also contradict public opinion on the military's involvement in civil law enforcement. Placing such an emphasis on the drug war will make an impact in drug interdiction; however, the results will not be significant. The Army needs to focus on the war on terror and leave the drug war to civilian agencies that specialize in this profession.

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Committing a Brigade Combat Team to the War on Drugs

Illegal drugs have plagued the United States for hundreds of years and have caused a serious epidemic amongst our population. This epidemic originated primarily from the illegal drugs that continue to be smuggled into our country through numerous ports of entry, including land, air, and sea. While there are numerous agencies dedicated to interdict these drugs, the smugglers continue to devise new methods that sometimes evade detection. Their innovative methods are not only expected, but are often anticipated by these professional agencies. Although illegal drug smugglers are occasionally victorious, these law enforcement agencies are highly committed and winning the war on drugs.

Numerous countries, primary in Latin American, have committed their militaries to fighting their drug problem. These Armies often serve as the lead agency for drug interdiction within their country and have shown success. Although successful in other countries, this method will not work in the United States. Our Army is formed by BCTs with the primary mission of fighting and winning in global warfare, not enforcing civil law. The two most severe ramifications for dedicating our Army to the war on drugs relate to the agencies already dedicated to drug interdiction and public opinion. These ramifications will substantiate that the use of an Army BCT to police our borders will not significantly decrease the large quantities of illegal drugs that are smuggled into the United States.

The Dedicated Agencies for Fighting the War on Drugs

There are numerous agencies already dedicated to identifying and preventing illegal drugs from entering the United States. These agencies include the Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Border Patrol, Coast Guard, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the U.S. Customs. Together, these organizations fight a never ending battle where the enemy continues to

devise sophisticated methods for smuggling drugs into the United States. The smuggling can occur by land, air, or sea, which creates a three dimensional fight. Drugs that are smuggled by land can enter our country across the Canadian or Mexican borders. The DEA estimates that more than 65 percent of the cocaine in the United States comes from Mexico and is smuggled by land (Criminal Law Lawyer Source, n.d.). Drugs smuggled by air or sea can enter our country through conventional and unconventional means, which creates a serious challenge for these agencies. Nonetheless, these five agencies are dedicated, funded, and properly equipped to combat this problem.

The United States Coast Guard

The U.S. Coast Guard has been the leading agency for maritime drug interdiction since 1974. Their primary function is to identify and interdict drugs before they reach the United States. Their jurisdiction covers more than six million square miles of open waters, including the Eastern Pacific, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico (Gayman, n.d.). With the amount of open waters they patrol, their challenges are obvious. These challenges include balancing their mission of interdicting drugs with homeland security operations and the vast amount of open waters they are responsible for. While drug smugglers continue to devise methods to remain undetected, the Coast Guard remains highly effective and continues to make record seizures in the drug war. According to a recent study by Meserve & Ahlers, in 2007 "the Coast Guard seized a record 355,000 pounds of cocaine worth an estimated \$4.7 billion - a 2 percent increase over 2006" (para 22).

A BCT is not equipped nor trained to support a maritime mission. The only boats in its inventory are within the engineer units, which are for bridge building. The Army's lack of equipment and training to support this maritime mission would not allow them to contribute to

the war on drugs in open waters. Committing Army forces to police the open sea or augment the Coast Guard would have catastrophic results as it relates to safety and capturing drug smugglers.

The United States Customs

The U.S. Customs Agency maintains a workforce of more than 17,000 and manages 300 ports into the United States. This agency has had an enormous impact on the war on drugs and interdicts drugs being smuggled by land, air, and sea. In 1996, this agency seized more than 390 tons of marihuana and 120 tons of cocaine. In addition, they confiscated numerous vessels, aircraft, vehicles, and cash from drug smugglers (Dreyfuss, 2007). At no surprise, more than two-fifths of its personnel are dedicated to the war on drugs. They are highly funded by our government with \$1.6 billion and possess sophisticated equipment. While the Army's Military Police (MP) are trained in customs operations, there are not enough MPs to support this mission. Committing even a small number of MPs to augment operations at the 300 ports of entry would have detrimental effects on the entire Army. A commitment of this nature would prove catastrophic within law and order and combat operations throughout the Army.

Drug Enforcement Administration

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) was formed in 1973 by President Nixon. The agency's purpose was to establish a cohesive command to fight and manage the drug war. Although the DEA maintains less personnel than the other agencies, they are highly effective in combating drug trafficking. DEA special agents are positioned all over the United States and maintain offices in 63 countries throughout the world. Their primary focus is to coordinate with agencies in the United States and foreign governments to minimize the amount of illegal drugs manufactured and smuggled into our country. The agency has been very successful and in 2007, seized more than 96 tons of cocaine, 356 tons of marihuana, and arrested more than 27,000

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alleged drug traffickers. By nature of the training required by the DEA, an Army BCT would not be able to support their drug interdiction operations. While a small Special Forces element is equipped and trained to serve in a support role, the BCT is too large, ill-equipped, and lacks the training. A BCT would complicate covert and open operations and prove to be ineffective.

Federal Bureau of Investigation

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has a wide range of responsibilities, with one being to identify, disrupt, and dismantle drug trafficking operations. Prior to the attacks on September 11, 2001 (9/11), the FBI had more than 2,400 special agents dedicated to the war on drugs. These agents were strategically positioned in and outside of the United States and focused on major drug traffickers. After 9/11, the FBI diverted 400 agents assigned to drug investigations to their terrorism task force. Although the FBI was forced to downsize their counter drug operation, they continue to remain effective and seize large amounts of drugs. In 2003, the FBI seized more than one ton of cocaine and 1,350 tons of marijuana (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006). The Army's Criminal Investigations Command (CID) is the only agency within the Army who is trained and equipped to perform operations similar to the FBI. However, Special Agents within CID are not assigned to a BCT and cannot be aligned under the unit's command. By nature of the task organization of a BCT, support in this capacity is not feasible.

U.S. Border Patrol

The U.S. Border Patrol is a component of the Department of Homeland Security. The agency employs more than 16,000 agents and although their primary mission is immigration control, they are highly engaged in the drug war. The agency was created in 1924 to prevent immigrants from entering the United States. The Border Patrol is dedicated to more than 19,000 miles of land and sea (Hall, 2005). The agency is overwhelmed by the amount of border they are

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required to police, so they rely on the use of sophisticated technology. This technology includes cameras and underground sensors that assist in detecting possible drug smugglers who enter the United States. During 2008, this agency confiscated 821 tons of marihuana and 5 tons of cocaine (Demskey, 2008). While the BCT possesses the equipment and personnel to support border patrol operations, there are challenges that the Army would be required to overcome. The most challenging issue the Army would face is the language barrier that exists on the U.S.-Mexico border. In order to be successful, the BCT would need to be fitted with Soldiers who are bilingual and speak Spanish. This requirement would prove to be impossible for the Army and makes the BCT ill-prepared to support border patrol operations.

Public Opinion on Using the Military for Law Enforcement Operations

Public opinion on utilizing the military for civil law enforcement, specifically drug trafficking, varies widely. The general population either agrees with militarizing drug enforcement or is highly opposed to such enforcement. Opposing views on the subject are often associated with violent enforcement and the expansion of military operations within the United States. A substantial segment of our population associates failed operations at Ruby Ridge and Waco with the military (Kopel, n.d.).

Operations at Ruby Ridge and Waco

The Ruby Ridge incident involved a man named Randy Weaver, who was allegedly a member of the Aryan Nation and suspected of possessing a large cache of illegal weapons (Bovard, 1995). When federal agents attempted to arrest Weaver, he resisted and a firefight ensued. This incident lasted 12 days, and resulted in the death of two of Weaver's family members and one federal marshal. Due to Weaver's military experience and the amount of weapons he was suspected of possessing, the Army supported the operation with military

equipment. The Waco incident involved David Koresh at a ranch northeast of Waco, Texas (Ross, 1999). Federal agents were executing an arrest warrant on Koresh for weapon charges when a 51 day stand-off ensued. A firefight ensued and the stand-off ended when the compound was destroyed by fire, killing 76 people. The Army also supported this operation with military equipment. While the military did not lead either operation, the Army loaned equipment that was utilized for surveillance, reconnaissance, and transportation. The military's association with these two highly publicized civil law enforcement operations left a negative view with many Americans about the military's involvement in civil law enforcement.

Kent State University Incident

Another incident that turned public opinion against using the military for civil law enforcement operations is the killings at Kent State University. On May 4, 1970, students were protesting the Vietnam War and the National Guard deployed to break-up the protest. After responding, 28 Soldiers from that unit fired on students, leaving four dead, one paralyzed, and eight wounded. Society was shocked and outraged by the Army's reaction and again portrayed the military as overly aggressive when dealing with civil matters.

United States Army's Mission

The Army's mission is to deter war and when deterrence fails, fight and win in global combat. Based off incidents similar to the ones listed in this paper, the American public does not support civil law enforcement operations. History offers more incidents where the military was used in civil law enforcement that ended in disaster. In 1899, the Army was used to end a miner's strike in Idaho. The Army apprehended all adult males in the area without probable cause. Some of the men were imprisoned for several weeks without official charges. Another abuse was President Truman's seizure of steel mills in 1952. The President thought the strike

posed a threat to the economy and ordered the Army to seize the steel mill production facilities. Although he kept the current management, the majority criticized his actions and a senior court found his decision unconstitutional. These incidents together show a pattern that has convinced many Americans that the military should not be involved in civil law enforcement operations. This public opinion does not represent the entire population, but a significant segment does share this view.

Conclusion

Committing an Army Brigade Combat Team to the war on drugs is ill-advised and would have severe consequences. These ramifications include undermining the agencies already committed to the war on drugs and public opinion. A decision of this nature would demoralize the agencies committed to interdicting illegal drugs by confusing an ongoing successful campaign. Although a significant amount of drugs are smuggled into the United States undetected, these agencies are highly effective and do not need the support of a BCT. In addition, large portions of our population perceive the military as overly aggressive when dealing with civil matters and would not support the use of a BCT to police our borders. The United States Army needs to remain focused on the war on terror while the five federal agencies continue to identify, locate, and arrest those attempting to smuggle illegal drugs into the United States.

NO THESIS

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