

“War on Drugs”

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SUBJECT: War on Drugs

1. Thesis Statement. The U.S. Army's role in the war on drugs.
2. Discussion. With the current concerns of how America can win the "War on Drugs" being a priority of most Americans and the President of the United States. The U.S. Army has committed various components and agencies to do its part.
3. Conclusion. In conjunction with state, federal and other military agencies (US Air Force, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Marines) the Army must stay involved and continue to combat drugs in America, regardless of the costs.
4. Counterpoint. The high costs to combat this drug war are a big concern to the American public, due to the small amount of illegal drugs that are seized every year.
5. Haines Award. We (do not) request that the Haines Award Selection Board consider this paper for the General Haines Award for excellence in research.

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Outline

Thesis: The U.S. Army's role in the war on drugs.

I. Background:

Overall Mission

Effectiveness.

II. Joint Task Force North

Structure

Mission

Military Operations

International Counter Drug Missions

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III. Considering Options

Approaches to examine

Rethinking the Counter-drug force

Reconsider Federal DLEA Organization

The U.S. Army's mission in America's longest war "The War on Drugs"

Does the U.S Army's involvement in the "War on Drugs" make any difference in America's overall goal to eradicate illegal drugs from our society?

America has been using the force of criminal law against its citizens to punish them for consuming disfavored drugs for nearly eighty years. The intensity of those efforts has frequently been described as a "war." As such, it is America's longest and most self-destructive war. (Duke 6)

One of the casualties of war is the truth. A prime example of that occurred on September 5, 1989. On that day in his first television speech to the nation as President, George Bush stared into the cameras, and held up a clear plastic package marked "evidence," and solemnly intoned that he was drastically escalating the "war". The President was not speaking of war against another nation or against an evil leader; he was talking about a war against a class of inanimate objects-illicit drugs. (Duke XV).

The U.S. Army has no direct mission statement for its part in the war on drugs; instead the U.S. Army has many agencies participating in the overall mission as directed by the President of the United States.

Since the events of 911, little progress has been made in the war on drugs. In fact most of the involvement on the Army's part has gone largely unnoticed. Even though the war on drugs is still important, profits from the sales of illegal drugs help fund terrorist organizations throughout the world. Therefore the U.S. Army will and must stay involved with this war.

To protect and defend is part of what the U.S. Army must do. Under normal circumstances, halting drug trafficking is a job that falls solely within the realm of civilian law enforcement, but should we accept the current circumstances as normal? The profound damage brought by drug trafficking in Columbia and Mexico is evidence of the devastating nature of the threat. It is time to acknowledge the magnitude of the problems being created by the drug trade at home, and it is time to bring them under control.

While the Department of Defense is just one voice in the government, it should express deep concern over the drug threat to national security and indicate its willingness to become more involved in supporting the drug enforcement agencies. The U.S. Army's involvement in the war on drugs in support of our nation is simply the right thing to do.

Members of the U.S. Army are sworn to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, and thereby the nation, against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Over the years Congress has expanded the role of the military into operations other than war. Both the Senate and the House leaders want greater military involvement in the drug war. The U.S. Army supports the nation's war on drugs through its various agencies.

The DOD missions are supported by joint commands, their service components and the reserve components. The military including the U.S. Army are playing important roles though a modest and carefully delineated one, both overseas and at home.

On the domestic scene, active and reserve component forces, particularly the National Guard, support a wide range of Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (DLEAs).

Operational support involves military units conducting mission-related training such as ground reconnaissance and sensor employment aviation-reconnaissance and support, and transportation ground reconnaissance; for example, it consists of two types of missions. One involves covering large terrain areas to find marijuana-growing sites or to identify smuggling routes and clandestine airfields. In other types of mission, forces occupy listening posts or observation posts on likely smuggling routes. The size of the force assigned these missions can be as small as a squad or as large as several hundred soldiers. They typically avoid civilian contact and rely on night vision devices and daylight long-range vision means to gather information. Operational support missions are coordinated and conducted every year.

General support is the augmentation of law enforcement agencies and military-specific skills, training, transportation, canine support, communications, and technology.

Rapid support is the immediate response to actionable intelligence. The Rapid Support Unit (RSU) is composed of an Army Special Forces Team (company headquarters) employing several Special Forces Teams. About three-quarters of RSU missions are ground reconnaissance; the rest are mobile training teams. Intelligence support consists of providing specialists who can assist DLEAs with training and analysis processes. These missions include photo imagery interpretation, translator and linguistic support, and analysis support. Intelligence support also includes trained military intelligence analysts, translators, and linguists to provide DLEAs with enhanced case analysis and language capabilities.

The National Guard was an early advocate of the military support to counter drug activities and is an eager and valuable participant. Today the Guard's domestic interdiction program is the largest in the DOD. Many states, including Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, New Mexico, Tennessee, and Texas have long been involved in supporting drug law enforcement and have developed considerable expertise in combating the drug trafficker. Virtually all states now have significant counter-drug programs to reduce both demand and supply. On a typical day the National Guard is engaged in about 1300 ongoing counter-drug missions and has about 4000 personnel on duty to perform them. Guard members on active duty can be found at every major DLEA headquarters performing their part for the U.S. Army's role in the war on drugs.

The Active Army is also lending large amounts of support to the drug war. In fact, drug interdiction was adopted as one of the Active Army's major missions since 1990. In a publication issued by the Army Chief of Staff in 1990, the Army's two strategic roles of utmost importance are as follows: Maintain combat-ready ground forces in the Continental United States for deployment worldwide; Participate in disaster relief, emergency assistance, interdiction of illegal drug traffic and eradication of domestically produced illegal drugs.

In March 1992 U.S. Military representatives stated that the "War on Drugs" campaign is proceeding well, but cautioned that international drug traffickers will not be defeated anytime soon. In the military's support role in counter-drug activities Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) is to the war what central command was in the Persian Gulf.

Organized drug traffickers are immensely wealthy and well armed. They use their money to weaken the resolve of the institutions. Traffickers often corrupt and intimidate government officials, judges, police, and the military throughout many countries.

In its support role, the U.S. military operates each of the four "fronts." As much as possible, the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines incorporate various counter-drug activities into normal peacetime operations. In most cases they do not have a sole interdiction-support mission.

Units of Soldiers located at surveillance sites hidden north of the Mexican border, supports law-enforcement interdiction while receiving reconnaissance training. National Guard exercises in state and federal parks help to scare away marijuana growers; Soldiers also teach park rangers how to deal with the hidden booby traps guarding the fields.

You get double your money's worth of taxpayer support of the military. The troops are getting training, and they are helping interdict drugs.

Civilian and military leaders need to expect an increase in domestic deployments of US military forces. They need to recognize that each instance of use is accompanied by new and possibly unprecedented challenges. America's leaders should recognize that the relationship between America's Army and the American people is strong but may be compromised. Public confidence in the military can best be maintained by strict adherence to the legal underpinnings governing domestic operations of the armed forces. Applying the lessons learned from the early 1990s will maintain the excellent relationship between the people and the military well into the next century. One of the largest military organizations involved with the interdiction on drugs is Joint Task Force North.

History of the U.S. Army's Joint Task Force North.

The international drug trade poses significant health and national security risks for our country. The United States military was charged with the mission of drug interdiction efforts during the early 1980's by a sequence of congressional mandates. These mandates expanded the military's role to include not only drug control but borderland security as well. The government also gave the military the authority to legally act on its behalf on United States soil. The congressional amendment to the "Posse Comitatus" Act in 1981 theoretically allowed the United States military to assist in law enforcement activities as long as military readiness is not harmed.

In 1988, Congress further expanded the military's role by giving them the powers to search, seize, and arrest outside the continental area of the United States. The United States military was also given four objectives in combating the "war on drugs." The objectives stated are as follows; eradication of drug crops, interdiction of drug smuggling; investigation and prosecution of drug traffickers, and reduction of demand by increased penalization of drug users. (Miranda 92) JTF Six was originally established on November 13, 1989, in response to President George H. Bush's declaration to fight the nations "War on Drugs". JTF Six was established to serve as the planning and coordinating operational headquarters to support local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies within the Southwest border region to counter the flow of illegal drugs entering the United States.

JTF Six's original area of operations consisted of four border states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas – a land mass of more than 580,000 square miles. In February 1995, JTF Six's area of responsibility expanded to include the entire Continental United States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. In June 1997, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands were transferred to United States Southern Command.

JTF Six has completed over 5,800 missions in support of more than 430 local, state, and federal counter-drug task enforcement agencies in the past 15 years. They have seized over \$2 billion dollars worth of illegal drugs that would have otherwise found their way into the hands of our American citizens. (Carrasco 04)

#### Mission of JTF North

Joint Task Force North (JTF North), based at Biggs Army Airfield Fort Bliss, Texas is a joint service command comprised of active duty and reserve component Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marine and Department of Defense civilian employees and contracted support personnel.

JTF North formerly known as JTF Six is the Department of Defense organization tasked to support our nation's federal law enforcement agencies in the interdiction of suspected transnational threats within and along the approaches to the Continental United States.

Transnational threats are those activities conducted by individuals or groups that involve international terrorism, narco-trafficking, weapons of mass destruction, and the delivery systems for such weapons that threaten the national security of the United States.

JTF North has taken on an additional tasking of providing security for Homeland Defense. The new homeland defense mission closely aligns with USANORTHCOM assets.

The tactics, techniques, and procedures that the command developed throughout its existence on the "War on Drugs" contribute immeasurably to JTF North's broader new mission of combating transnational threats.

#### Structure of JTF North

JTF North relies primarily on volunteer active duty and Reserve Component units and individual service members from all four branches of the Department of Defense for the execution of its drug interdiction and Homeland Defense support missions.

The commander of JTF North has no authority to task military units for support. However, while executing a JTF North mission, military units and individuals are under the direct tactical and operational control of the commander.

JTF North has a continuous need for virtually every type of unit that the military forces have to offer. Of particular interest is aviation, engineer, medical and Special Operating Forces. Volunteer units typically train in 90% of their wartime mission tasks

### Military Operations of JTF North and US military

The objectives given to the United States armed forces assisting in drug interdiction efforts are a military strategist's nightmare to say the least. Most military operations have clear, measurable and attainable goals but the "war on drugs" goals are vague, ever changing and never ending.

There are two major constraints that negatively impact military operations. The first is the military's downsizing in personnel and force structure. The military has taken on several new missions in addition to drug interdiction; however it is facing the reality of having fewer resources rather than more. Fiscal limitations also negatively affect the success of the counter-drug efforts. United States led militarization of drug control has expanded the roles of the United States military and has also produced significant effects on Columbia and Mexico's police and military forces. This commitment of additional resources and personnel to the drug war has not achieved United States drug-control strategy objectives.

### International Counter Drug Missions

Columbian Missions – Columbia accounts for over 80 to 90 percent of the world's cocaine production and a growing share of its heroin. Acknowledging the production and distribution of Illegal substances as a national security issue, the Bush administration identified the Andean cocaine producing countries of Columbia, Bolivia, and Peru as the first front on its war on drugs. In concert with the leaders of these countries, President

Bush stepped up efforts to curb cocaine supply at its source. Latin America is the primary producer of cocaine consumed in the United States, most US counter narcotics efforts are directed towards this region.

The Andean initiative is a strategy designed to work with Latin American governments to disrupt and destroy the growing, processing, and transportation of coca and coca products within the countries, in order to reduce the supply of cocaine entering our country. Of course this doesn't come without a cost. The United States has spent over \$ 7.5 billion dollars on this mission alone. (Fryer 93)

In 2001, the United States started a Columbian anti-drug campaign called "Plan Columbia." The US has funded and supplied the Columbian government with aircraft and herbicide designed to implement the aerial spraying of coca fields. Since the inception of this program, there has been considerable controversy as to whether or not the herbicide is harmful to animals and man. Several farmers have claimed that their families have experienced severe vomiting and gastrointestinal distress and that they have lost livestock several days after being sprayed by Monsanto, the manufacturer of the herbicide claims that it is perfectly safe. (Wilson 01)

Mexican Missions – Mexico produces 60 to 70 percent of the marijuana imported into the United States, and supplies approximately 23 percent of United States heroin imports. Although not a producer of coca, Mexico's vast territory provides many alternatives for transshipment of cocaine via air, land and sea routes. United States officials estimate that

Mexico is a transshipment country of over 50 to 70 percent of all cocaine entering the country. (CSDP 04)

JTF North and the Mexican government have worked collectively on several drug interdiction programs such as the counter drug aerial eradication program and stricter enforcement procedures at US-Mexican border control points.

Mexican drug control efforts have undergone a transformation over the past several years due to increased corruption within its own federal law enforcement and military organizations.

A series of drug related shootings has highlighted the power of the Mexican drug lords and the inability of the Mexican government to eliminate the widespread narco-violence that exists today.

#### Homeland Defense

JTF North homeland defense support is based on support requests and threat assessments. Military support is designed to assist federal law enforcement agencies in the interdiction of suspected transnational terrorist threats within and along the borders of the United States. JTF North serves as a force multiplier to federal law enforcement agencies by enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness. However, the question remains, are our efforts and resources winning the war on drugs or are they simply prolonging the problem?

### Considering the Options

Drug trafficking, use, abuse, and the accompanying violence and crime are eroding the very fabric of American society. Our children are being targeted. What other approaches might we examine? Should DOD cut back its support, continue apace, or even offer increased assistance?

Are there any new concepts that could be considered?

It is indisputable that drug abuse and drug trafficking are doing considerable damage to our people and our social institutions, and that the current level of effort is failing to curtail drug trafficking. Given the dimensions of the drug threat, it seems unlikely that DOD or the services would seek to eliminate or drastically reduce their counter-drug programs. More difficult is deciding whether to maintain the status quo with regard to military counter-drug activity or to develop a more active posture with new concepts for support (Allen 12).

Continuing current programs with expenditures of about \$800 million a year allows for a range of necessary programs, but it is not sufficient to do much in depth. Law enforcement officials at the tactical and operational levels are quick to provide off-the-record evaluations of military counter-drug support: any help they receive is appreciated and valuable, but it can be slow to arrive, is often not available to all who request it, and is generally insufficient to make any lasting change in local drug situations. Our overseas counter-drug support is important and contributory, but thin. For example, the counter-

drug strategy is designed to attack drugs at their source, yet only three percent of the National Drug Control Strategy budget, and 20 percent of DOD funding, goes to overseas efforts. In times of austere budgeting, only small increases to the counter-drug budget can be expected, but there are other initiatives that could be considered.

Rethinking the Counter-drug Force. Without significant reductions in either the demand for drugs or their supply, the drug problem will continue to plague the United States. Some shifts in emphasis or increase in effort seem appropriate, but can the military establishment step up to the challenge? A reassessment of our current support concepts and organizational design suggests that an increase in the tempo of counter-drug operations by both the active and reserve components is warranted.

#### Concepts for consideration

Enhance the policy and resource integration clout of the DOD Coordinator for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support. This position deserves assistant secretary status in its own right to increase its authority and signal DOD's interest and support for the President's National Drug Control Strategy.

Establish a Counter-drug Joint Task Force (CDJTF). Just as we specially organized our counter terrorism effort, we could also form a CDJTF to act as the executive agent for drug enforcement policy and support, primarily to improve unity of effort. As a functional sub unified command (perhaps under US Atlantic Command), the CDJTF would be responsible for translating DOD counter-drug policy into counter-drug support.

The drug scourge has proven to be a more immediate threat than terrorism; the counter-drug effort deserves a place in the front rank of military priorities (O'Brien 25).

A standing CDJTF could maintain the skills and experience to deal with some 50-plus National Drug Control Program agencies, private organizations, the states and territories, the military services, the National Guard Bureau, and the unified commands. It would have operational and drug law enforcement support responsibilities for the United States and its territories. For matters within host nations, the CDJTF would take on a support and coordination role, helping the regional commanders-in-chief while coordinating with key US government bureaus and agencies. It would also integrate the efforts of the JIATFs and coordinate with the US Customs DAICC.

Designate the Commander CDJTF as the US interdiction coordinator and let him assume the responsibilities outlined in the National Interdiction Command and Control Plan. If having a US interdiction coordinator is important, then we should consider giving the job to an operational commander. Presently it is an additional duty of the Commandant of the Coast Guard; this key job should be the sole responsibility of whomever it is given to. Use JTF North and elements of the joint staff's Counter-narcotics Division to provide the building blocks for a CDJTF operations center that could assume a comprehensive counter-drug support mission. Invite liaison officers from other drug control program agencies (e.g., US Customs, Drug Enforcement Administration, Border Patrol, and so on) to join the team.

Expand participation in the national counter-drug effort. In coordination with the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the State Department, and the federal drug law enforcement agencies, explore ways for new or increased military support. Concepts worthy of evaluation include assisting the US Border Patrol in monitoring the US-Mexican border by providing additional aerial platforms, ground surveillance, and engineer and communications support; providing greater foreign drug intelligence support; and augmenting US Customs Service inspectors with more National Guard personnel to assist at the various ports of entry nationwide. As potential areas for increased military support are identified, we should seek the funding and force structure augmentation required. Even in this time of constrained budgets, the chances are good that Congress would support a well-conceived interagency counter-drug initiative.

As national security experts continue to evaluate the global environment, strategic assessments will likely include the issues concerning transnational threats such as drug trafficking, terrorism, international organized crime, and failed or failing nations. The drug threat will loom large in any such assessment. This is a good time to consider moving away from a joint force mostly organized around regional domains (in the style of World War II theaters) in favor of small functional joint commands that can rapidly deal with the interagency and transnational aspects of these threats. A Counter-drug Joint Task Force seems an appropriate match to an imminent threat.

Reconsider Federal DLEA Organization. It may make little sense to reorder military resources under a CDJTF to improve support for drug law enforcement agency missions,

unless the DLEAs can ensure focused and coherent counter-drug action. Certainly, it is neither possible nor desirable to restructure state and local law enforcement organizations; besides, they are making progress through participation in various multi-agency counter-drug task forces formed at regional and local levels. However, the federal law enforcement effort needs some retooling if military support and other national resources are to be used effectively.

Just as the President would not permit the Army, Navy, and Air Force to go off to war without unified direction, he should not allow the Border Patrol, Customs Service, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and others involved in counter--drug efforts to operate in close proximity without regard for a regional strategy and campaign plan. What is needed at the regional level is unified action of the DLEAs under a single civilian leader.

Priority should be given to bringing order to our efforts along the southwest border where the greatest drug trafficking now occurs. A "joint" law enforcement headquarters is needed there, one with the requisite command authority and operating budget to integrate the efforts of the many federal agencies involved. Operation Alliance could be transformed into a new interagency headquarters with an operational mission (Mendel 21).

Federal DLEAs could be "sending agencies" that provide the specialized teams needed in the counter-drug effort. Each agency guards its special roles and missions, but

counter-drug efforts need to be integrated according to a coherent plan under a single director. For regional efforts such as along the southwest border, it is time to move the operational direction out of Washington and into the hands of a single civilian field director.

It is arguable that our overseas counter-drug effort needs a more unified focus too. But the coordination among ambassadors' country teams and the regional commanders-in-chief has achieved a modicum of unity of effort, making this requirement secondary to our need for greater unity of effort at home.

In conclusion, our current interdiction strategy has proven to be ineffective. Less than 35% of available, in-transit drugs are being seized. We are losing the war on drugs. To win, we must turn interdiction over to the military and create a new unified command charged with this responsibility. We must tighten our borders and stop the flow of narcotics to our citizens and our children; it is a vital national interest.

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