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CARIBBEAN COUNTER NARCOTICS OPERATIONS: IS THERE UNITY OF EFFORT  
AMONG THE FEDERAL AGENCIES?

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal view and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature:



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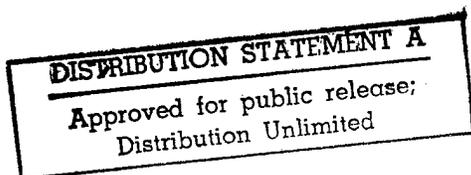


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## ABSTRACT

The armed forces are only one of several weapons the nation is employing against the drug epidemic. The Federal counterdrug effort involves multiple agencies cooperating at all levels of command simultaneously on a variety of fronts. The Federal agencies involved in CD operations are all vying for recognition and view the challenge from different perceptions by the nature of their different experiences, roles, and responsibilities.

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No single agency has the lead in the war on drugs. In the Caribbean, the Customs Service and Coast Guard are lead agencies for interdiction, the State Department for dealings with foreign governments and the DoD for Detection and Monitoring. The question arises are the Federal agencies working together effectively -- is there unity of effort in Caribbean Counternarcotics Operations?

A review of the interagency process and attempts for unity of effort between the myriad of agencies involved in Caribbean Theater counterdrug operations, identifies weaknesses in the application of that principle at the Theater Strategic and Ops/Tactical levels of command. An increase in the unity of effort particularly at the Theater Operational and Tactical levels would lead to even greater success in the Federal effort to stop the flow of narcotics.

## INTRODUCTION

The illicit drug trade presents (in the words of Tom Clancy) a "clear and present danger" to the national security of the United States. However, the armed forces are only one of several weapons the nation employs against the drug epidemic. The Federal counterdrug effort involves multiple agencies cooperating at all levels of command simultaneously on a variety of fronts.

Doctrinal guidance for the DoD's support to counterdrug operations falls under Current Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). MOOTW principles are an extension of warfighting doctrine. One of the underlying principles of MOOTW is **Unity of Effort** which; fundamentally, means that in every operation, all agencies are directed to a common purpose at all levels of command.

No single agency has the lead in the war on drugs. In the Caribbean, the Customs Service and Coast Guard are lead agencies for interdiction, the State Department for dealings with foreign governments and the DoD for Detection and Monitoring -- not to mention the Drug Enforcement Agency and Department of Justice for Law Enforcement.

This paper will review the Federal interagency process and the organizational structure of the DoD's counterdrug organization focusing on the Caribbean Theater. Additionally, it will examine the Unity of Effort between command echelons and military actions to examine the question: are the Federal agencies working together effectively -- is there unity of effort in Caribbean Counternarcotics Operations?

## **BACKGROUND**

In 1986 President Bush issued National Security Directive 221 that declared drug trafficking to be a threat to national security.<sup>1</sup> In that directive, President Bush established the National Drug Policy Board (NDPB) under the leadership of the Attorney General's Office. Its specific responsibilities included the coordination of international and domestic law enforcement and the development of a strategy for counterdrug operations.

The 1988 Anti-Drug Abuse Act eliminated the NDPB and replaced it with the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). The director, known as the "Drug Czar," coordinates national drug control policy and establishes "a coherent National Policy to unify the more than 30 Federal Agencies involved in counterdrug operations."<sup>2</sup> This act directed the executive branch to develop and publish annually a National Drug Control Strategy; specifically, "a comprehensive program of counterdrug actions employing a multinational and multi-agency approach to the problem of illegal drugs."<sup>3</sup>

Military support for counterdrugs was firmly established when Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Act of 1989. That act assigned three major responsibilities to the DoD. Their primary responsibility being "to act as the lead agency for Detection and Monitoring of illegal drugs into the U.S."<sup>4</sup>

## **LEVELS OF EFFORT**

As in all military operations, the counterdrug strategy has three levels of effort; Strategic, Operational and Tactical. These levels describe the different doctrinal perspectives that clarify the links between strategic objectives and tactical actions.<sup>5</sup>

## **Strategic**

The Strategic level of the U.S. counterdrug effort is headed by the President and the Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), General Barry R. McCaffrey, USA (retired). The director is a cabinet rank member of the Executive office of the President and charged by law to provide drug program oversight and interagency coordination. A member of the Principals Committee on Counter Narcotics, the director places the National Drug Control Strategy into action by; 1) his Presidential backing, 2) the development of a coherent strategy, 3) the budget certification process, and 4) interagency coordination among the Departments of the Federal Government. He has no direct control over Federal agency forces involved in counterdrug operations nor does he have authority to direct other Federal agencies to place counternarcotics operations high on their list of prioritized objectives.

The President appointed the Commandant of the Coast Guard to be the U.S. Interdiction Coordinator (USIC) to assist the Director, ONDCP. The USIC is responsible for monitoring and overseeing the interdiction program near U.S. borders, in narco-trafficking transit zones, and in host countries (with permission). To further assist the USIC, the Director, ONDCP directed the formation of a Drug Interdiction Committee (DIC). It consists of the lead agencies for interdiction (U.S. Customs Service and U.S. Coast Guard) and the lead agency for detection and monitoring (DoD) along with other supporting agencies. The committee advises the Commandant on programs to enhance interdiction efforts and coordinate interdiction efforts in support of strategic goals.

In 1994 the President approved the National Interdiction Command and Control Plan. That plan provided for three geographically oriented counterdrug Joint Interagency Task Forces (JIATF's) and the Domestic Air Interdiction Coordination Center (a U.S. Customs Unit). The USIC provides oversight and regional planning guidance for counterdrug coordination centers which are JIATF South in Panama, JIATF East in Key West, Fla., and JIATF West in Alameda, California.

However, no operational authority over the Federal agencies or the JIATFs is vested in the USIC or the DIC.<sup>6</sup> Their efforts are purely policy-making.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict (ASD SO/LIC) serves as the DoD Coordinator for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support (DEP&S). The Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) has stated that "as the DoD coordinator, DEP&S is the single focal point for the DoD's counterdrug efforts."<sup>7</sup> The ASD SO/LIC advises the SECDEF on policy, requirements, priorities, systems, resources, and programs and serves as the DoD liaison to ONCDP. As DoD coordinator, the Assistant Secretary chairs quarterly meetings with the Joint Staff, the four military Services and other principle decision makers to insure the success of the Department's counterdrug programs<sup>8</sup>

The focal point within the Joint Chiefs of Staff for DoD strategic strategy is the J3 Operations Directorate, Counter Narcotics Division (CND). CND formulates the strategic, policy, and budgetary matters associated with military support to the National Drug Control Strategy. CND monitors military, political and intelligence situations and develops courses of action to support counterdrug initiatives.<sup>9</sup>

## **Operational**

The five US Combatant Commands support the National Drug Control Strategy in response to their specific regional counterdrug threat situation, missions and concepts of operations. At the Theater Strategic/Theater Operational level in the Caribbean Theater, US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) enforces the National Strategy by: 1) providing support to U.S. Ambassadors and their country teams, 2) assisting Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA's) in the execution of their missions, and 3) directing military commands in support of the National Drug Control Strategy.

SOUTHCOM's CD strategy is integrated into its theater military mission. The principle objective of SOUTHCOM's strategy and campaign plan is, in conjunction with other Federal agencies, to eliminate and/or prevent the transshipment of illegal drugs into the United States.<sup>10</sup> SOUTHCOM views the D&M mission as a part of supply reduction initiatives aimed at interdicting drug shipments between source countries and U.S. borders.

SOUTHCOM's area of responsibility has recently expanded to include portions of the Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea and its island nations, and the Gulf of Mexico, formerly assigned to U.S. Atlantic Command. This recent change to the Department of Defense Unified Command Plan aligns the Caribbean and all of Latin America south of Mexico under one Unified Command. The realignment also provides for centralized command and control of U.S. military assets assigned to the region and enhances Southern Command's interaction with the navies of Central and South America. It is also intended to improve integration of U.S. counterdrug efforts by giving one Commander responsibility for both the source and transit zones of the drug trade.<sup>11</sup>

## **Tactical**

SOUTHCOM exercises Combatant Command of JIATFs East and South. JIATF South, currently based in Panama, coordinates missions for enforcement of US policy in the Andean Countries who are responsible for drug production and shipment. JIATF East has the mission to "plan, conduct, and direct interagency detection, monitoring and sorting operations of air and maritime drug smuggling activities until hand off completion to the actual national apprehending authorities or international law enforcement agencies."<sup>12</sup>

JIATF East coordinates with assigned Departments of Defense, Transportation, Treasury and participating international assets within the transit zone area of responsibility of the Atlantic, Caribbean and Eastern Pacific to maximize the disruption of drug transshipment."<sup>13</sup>

Additionally JIATF East is to "serve as the focal point for deconfliction of all Detection and Monitoring counterdrug activities within the transit Zone."<sup>14</sup>

Simply stated, JIATF East's mission is to coordinate the interagency assets and to assist Law Enforcement Agencies in reducing the flow of drugs from Latin America and Mexico in the Caribbean and Atlantic Transit Zones. Support provided to the D&M process is accomplished by using airborne radar, anti-air warfare capable ships, and ground mobile radar sites to detect suspects as they leave source countries. The suspects are then monitored until they can be passed to the LEA assigned by the interdiction plan for interception and apprehension.

## UNITY OF EFFORT

### Strategic

The U.S. role in counterdrug initiatives has evolved from independent duplicate actions to one of joint military and civilian cooperation. At the National Strategic level, it is the Director, ONDCP as a cabinet level official, who reports to the president and implements his direction.

The President's Drug Control Council supports the Director, ONDCP. Working at the Deputy Committee level, the council meets quarterly to coordinate the involvement of an immense span of interagency players. These include:

- Department of Justice which oversees the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), FBI, and Immigration Service (INS);
- Department of the Treasury which oversees the US Customs Service; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) and Internal Revenue Service (IRS);
- Department of Transportation which provides U.S. Coast Guard and FAA Support;
- Department of State for International Policy/Country coordination support, and
- Department of Defense.

The Counter Narcotics Interagency Working Group (CN-IWG) develops National counterdrug Policy guidance over a broad range of counterdrug (CD) issues. Chaired by a National Security Council member or an Assistant Secretary, the committee brings together the principal officers of the government agencies involved in CD operations and develops strategic objectives and policy recommendations for Presidential decision making.<sup>15</sup>

All major agencies are involved in the CN-IWG and contribute to the strategic objectives. Additionally, each Federal agency has lower level working groups to assist CN-IWG agency members in determining that agency's perspective.

### **Operational**

A great deal of effort is required to coordinate the various Federal agencies and allied units in the Caribbean theater involved in CD operations. Narcotics traffickers operate without regard to specified theater boundaries or operational jurisdictions; indeed their guerrilla tactics and fluid timelines make D&M and interdiction a genuine challenge. Therefore, the requirement for close cooperation and direct liaison between DoD forces involved in D&M, and LEAs responsible for interdiction, is essential.

To enable the interagency process to work at the Theater Strategic/Theater Operational Level, SOUTHCOM sponsors interagency planning conferences to increase the cooperation between Federal agencies conducting CD operations. These conferences convene quarterly to develop regional plans for each upcoming quarter and to conduct planning for future quarters. SOUTHCOM planners indicate that they follow the guidance stated in Joint Pub 3.07.4 that delineates eleven issues, at a minimum, military planners need to consider during multi-agency operations. Topics include Law Enforcement Agency requirements, terminology differences and communications compatibility.

The level of interdiction success achieved has been noteworthy and primarily attributable to the coordinating roles displayed by SOUTHCOM and JIATF East. JOINT PUB 3-07.4 makes it clear that "the agency in charge of an operation is ultimately

responsible for the success or failure of that operation's **planning** efforts" (emphasis added).<sup>16</sup> Note that the key word here is planning. Joint pub 3.07.4 is written as guidance for the military planner for operations planned at the operational level and is strictly a DoD document. Among the agencies responsible for interdiction, none appear to have a similar planning document.

Unfortunately for CD efforts, real world situations seldom permit the formulation of an ideal military plan, or the optimum use of assets available, even when unity of command is present and all subordinates try to be cooperative. Even U.S. joint military specific operations and training exercises are often confronted with honest disagreement as to goals, methodology, and execution.

Joint Pub 3-07.4 admits "Unity of Effort is achieved by persuasion and cooperation rather than direct exercise of authority"<sup>17</sup> which is the case in most military operations. Just as in NATO operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where individual agendas of different countries force a compromise in the nature of operations, government agencies reach decisions through consensus. The same interservice rivalry that the military is attempting to overcome exists within the Federal bureaucracy and is felt throughout the government. Atlantic Command (ACOM) planners, who were working the problem prior to the reorganization in Summer 1997 and their SOUTHCOM counterparts now working the problem, indicate there is still a great deal of parochialism when it comes down to the planning an operation at the Theater Operational level and the execution of a specific mission at the tactical level. This parochialism is not just DoD specific, but is often found among agencies tasked with law enforcement.

## **Tactical**

At the Ops/tactical level, JIATF East has the responsibility to coordinate DoD and LEA assets assigned to the D&M mission. The interdiction side of the equation is coordinated by the U.S. Coast Guard or U.S. Customs Service along with the DEA. JIATF East's efforts have made the execution of multi-agency operations generally successful. JIATF East publishes a quarterly threat assessment and hosts a regional tactical planning conference, attended by DEA and Coast Guard planners, where a concept of operations for the next month is developed.

Furthermore, due to the very transitory nature of units involved (90 days or less) and the constant shuffle of agency personnel, issues such as hand-off procedures, who has jurisdiction, continually must be addressed in addition to inconsistencies in training, communications hardware and platform variants. Furthermore, disconnects occur when JIATF assets prosecuting a contact are joined by additional LEA assets conducting a separate interdiction operation on the same contact. Duplication, rivalry and safety issues then ensue.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

One glaring deficiency is that the interagency process, an integral component of the counterdrug mission, operates primarily at the national strategic level. This process determines the national interest and promotes agency involvement in the development of a National Strategy. Other than the coordination meetings held by SOUTHCOM and JIATF East, there are no definable procedures (e.g., Joint Pub 3-07.4) for interagency coordination

at the Operational or Tactical Level for any agency other than the DoD--a supporting agency for all missions except Detection and Monitoring.

Clear and definite levels of command are identified for the DoD. However, it is not clear how much latitude U.S. Southern Command has to implement its counterdrug theater campaign plan without hands on manipulation at the National Strategic level. The Director, ONDCP, stated recently that "the ONCDP is leading (an) interagency effort to develop an overarching counterdrug **campaign plan** for meeting the goals and objectives of the National Drug Control Strategy in the **Caribbean** (Emphasis added)."<sup>18</sup> That is the role of the Theater Strategic Commander. The national strategic level should develop an overall strategy that provides a vision and a clear definition of success to allow theater strategic/theater operational planners to design a campaign to fight drug traffickers. The theater campaign plan should be developed by the theater commander and not at the national strategic level.

Standardized training for all counterdrug forces must be improved. The National Interagency Counterdrug Institute (NICI) trains representatives of law enforcement agencies and military organizations in planning and coordinating **domestic** joint counterdrug operations. There should be a variant of NICI for agencies involved in overseas operations. NICI's training is conducted by instructors from a variety of law enforcement agencies and the military services. During the course, students learn about agency responsibilities and capabilities, the capabilities of the military organizations and about planning and conducting joint operations. Furthermore, DoD participants in D&M would do well to undergo training either through NICI or a similar DoD institute developed and funded through ONDCP.

A single agency needs to be responsible for both Interdiction and D&M. Numerous planning avenues exist for interagency coordination yet, at the Theater Operational and Tactical levels, duplication of effort still occurs. Goal four of the 1997 National Drug Control Strategy is "shield America's air, land and sea frontiers from the drug threat."<sup>19</sup> Interdiction operations, bolstered by capable detection and monitoring assets, directly support that goal.

The DoD and two civilian LEA's have overlapping leadership and support roles in the interdiction process. The National Drug Control Strategy designated the U.S. Customs Service and U.S. Coast Guard as the lead agencies for air and maritime interdiction. Therefore they are **supported** agencies for air and maritime interdiction with the DoD **supporting**. However, the DoD is the **supported** agency for the D&M mission, an integral part of the US Custom Service and the U.S. Coast Guard overall interdiction plan. Recognizing a single lead agency for D&M and Interdiction would enable that agency to develop appropriate measures of effectiveness enabling a goal-oriented planning process at the operational and ops/tactical levels.

The Federal government needs to revamp the interagency process and develop a "Goldwater-Nichols" type act requiring the Federal agencies to develop procedures that direct interagency coordination and cross-training. Presently, only the DoD has published procedures that provide guidance to military planners on interagency coordination.<sup>20</sup> Benefits include distinctive command relationships, reduced duplication of effort, reinforced staff functions and procedures, synchronized communications and connectivity, and improved counterdrug operations.

## CONCLUSION

The complexity of the national counterdrug effort is as diverse as the organizations involved. A review of the interagency process and attempts for unity of effort between the myriad of agencies involved in Caribbean Theater counterdrug operations, identifies weaknesses in the application of that principle at the theater strategic and ops/tactical levels of command.

One clear observation is that interagency coordination at all levels is an ongoing concern. A tremendous amount of effort exists at the national strategic level. However, even with the dedicated efforts of SOUTHCOM and JIATF East at the Theater Operational and Operational/Tactical levels, continual shifts in agency assets and capabilities combined with agency parochialism has lead to uncoordinated planning, missed execution and lack of similar communications equipment -- hampering the execution of successful missions.

Agencies involved in CD operations are all vying for recognition and view the challenge from different perceptions by the nature of their different experiences, roles, and responsibilities. A single lead agency with operational and budgetary authority would lead to even greater success in the Federal effort to stop the flow of narcotics.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Counter Drug Operations, (Joint Pub 3-07.4) (Washington, D.C.: August 9, 1994), I-1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., I-2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., I-3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., I-10.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Dept. Of Defense, Joint Doctrine Capstone and Keystone Primer, (Washington D.C.: 1995). 2

<sup>6</sup> William V. Mendel and Murl D. Munger, "Strategic Planning and the Drug Threat", The Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College and The Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, August 1997 26.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Directive Number 5149.1, DoD Coordinator for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support, Washington, 26 Jan 1990.

<sup>8</sup> William V. Mendel and Murl D. Munger, "Strategic Planning and the Drug Threat", The Strategic Studies institute, US Army War College and The Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, August 1997 33.

<sup>9</sup> The Joint Staff, J3, "CND Roles and Missions," Briefing Slide, <J3/CND/INDOC.PPT>, Mar 20, 1996.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Counter Drug Operations Joint Pub 3-07.4 (Washington D.C.: 1994), VI-2.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Southern Command to assume responsibility for U.S. Forces activities in Caribbean area on June 1, DefenseLINK News, Ref. # 274-97.

<sup>12</sup> JIATF East, J33/LNO, "JIATF East Mission," Briefing Slide, <J33LNOJIATF 5\INDOC.PPT>, October 30, 1997.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> William V. Mendel and Murl D. Munger, "Strategic Planning and the Drug Threat", The Strategic Studies institute, US Army War College and The Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, August 1997 26.

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<sup>16</sup>U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Counter Drug Operations Joint Pub 3-07.4 (Washington D.C.: 1994), V-4.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Barry R. McCaffrey, "How ONDCP is Responding to This Problem", Statement before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 23 July, 1997  
<<http://www.health.org/pubs/mcstate/5.htm>> (10 December, 1997)

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> See Joint Pubs 3-07 (Series) and 3-08 Vols. I and II.

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