STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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OUR NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL STRATEGY – ARE WE TAKING THE RIGHT APPROACH?

BY

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Our National Drug Control Strategy – Are We Taking the Right Approach?

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ABSTRACT

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The 1999 National Drug Control Strategy is a long term, balanced, comprehensive approach to America's drug problem. The strategy spans the whole spectrum of our nation's drug problem from demand to supply side issues. It is a robust and expensive strategy, coupled with the issues of diminishing resources and the ineffectiveness of some of the anti/counter drug programs. Are we taking the right approach? Are we getting enough bang for our buck? We need to take a more critical look at our Drug Control Strategy and narrow our focus to pay more attention to the programs that work instead of trying to support ineffective political rice bowls.

Conducting an analysis of our National Drug Control Strategy using the U.S. Army War College's ends, ways, means model will determine if our drug control goals and objectives are attainable. A critical look at the focus of the strategy will determine if the right emphasis is placed on the right issues (demand versus supply side initiatives). Additionally, evaluating the role of the military in the current strategy will determine if we are effectively using critical military resources.

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OUR NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL STRATEGY – ARE WE TAKING THE RIGHT APPROACH?

BACKGROUND:

To get a better appreciation of our National Drug Control Strategy one must get a historical perspective of our nation's drug problem. America has been feeling the ill effects of drug use since the 1700's when settlers and native Americans started indulging in alcohol. During the late 19th century opium, morphine, and cocaine started to surface as products for medicinal use. In the 1920's excessive alcohol use led to the 18th Amendment and the Prohibition. In the 1930's marijuana surfaced as the drug of choice. During the late 1960's and 70's psychedelic drugs like LSD in addition to marijuana became rampant. In the 1980's, cocaine became more popular as the government clamped down on suppliers of heroin and LSD. In the late 1980's and early 1990's illegal drug use had emerged as a national problem of epidemic proportions. Today, the cost of illegal drug use can be measured in billions of dollars and thousands of American lives. "Each year abuse of illegal drugs cost our society $67 billion, and 20,000 Americans suffer drug-related deaths."[1]

Historically, our National Drug Control Strategy has reflected the political endeavors of the different Presidential Administrations throughout the years. This has made it difficult for our nation to maintain a long-term effective strategy. National Drug Control strategies have progressed through the whole spectrum of response to our nation's drug problem from the soft approach of addressing demand side issues to the get tough approach of controlling the supply of illegal drugs.

The Kennedy Administration took this soft approach tackling demand side issues. His administration considered the drug problem a mental health issue and favored drug treatment programs and rehabilitation centers as their main emphasis. " In 1963, the Presidents Commission on Narcotics and Drug Abuse (The Prettyman Commission) called for a larger Federal role in the treatment of drug addicts. The commission prescribed a network of treatment and rehabilitative services. The community mental Health Centers Act of 1963 provided the First Federal assistance to non-Federal entities for treatment."[2]

The Johnson Administration continued to emphasize demand side programs as the focal point of its strategy. "Under the Narcotics Addict Rehabilitation Act of 1966, Congress specified that "narcotic addiction" was now a mental illness. In doing so. Congress brought about a major shift that paved the way for Federal support of local drug dependence treatment."[3] Drug abuse problems in America were beginning to increase in alarming numbers in the late 1960's and consequently, drug treatment and rehab centers couldn't keep up with the demand.

As the numbers of drug addicts in America increased, the Johnson Administration started to widen it's focus addressing supply side issues in earnest and going after the manufactures and major traffickers of illicit drugs. "A number of major drug control laws were enacted during the Johnson era. Under the 1965 Drug Control Amendments, the manufacture and distribution of amphetamines and barbiturates

were brought under Federal control."[4] To enforce these newly established laws several governmental and state agencies were established, like the Bureau of Drug Abuse Control.

During the Nixon Administration legislators embarked on tougher policies and laws aimed at addressing supply side issues. " Instead of focusing on the moral breakdown of the country and crafting a holistic societal strategy, legislators took a legalistic and regulatory approach designed to reduce the supply of drugs. New laws in 1970 focused on the leaders of illegal drug enterprises and added forfeiture of their profits to the possible sanctions."[5] These new laws and policies made the drug problem more of a law enforcement fight at the national, state, and local levels. This new emphasis gave birth to the Drug Enforcement Administration in 1973 and a shift in focus to the trafficking of illicit drugs outside the U.S. borders.

Initially, the focus was directed to Mexico because it was a major source of marijuana and its close proximity made it a transit zone for other illegal drugs like cocaine. The sealing off our southwestern border with Mexico to drug traffickers and illegal aliens who where used by drug traffickers to carry their marijuana to the United States became a priority. With the support of the military, the strategy of sealing off our southern border with Mexico was successful in slowing down the flow of marijuana. However, it provided an opportunity for other Latin American countries to enter into the lucrative drug business.

The success the Nixon Administration had in controlling the flow of illegal drugs been a double-edged sword. "In the short term, Nixon's foreign strategy experienced some tactical success. Seizures of heroin rose, the number of acres of poppy cultivation fell, and the amount of heroin on the American streets dwindled."[6] It gave the country a false hope of success in winning the war on drugs. There was a lesser supply for illicit drugs but the demands for drugs were increasing. This made the street value of drugs more expensive which inadvertently increased the number of drug related crime.

Emphasis on supply side strategy continued during the Reagan and Bush administrations with the increase of cocaine use and the South American countries of Bolivia, Peru, and Colombia, major producers of coca getting the majority of the attention. Latin American and Caribbean drug organizations were getting more sophisticated in trafficking drugs through the transit zone. Drug related killings and crime on America's streets were becoming more brutal and indiscriminately involving innocent bystanders. More funding was spent on law enforcement and eradication operations overseas. "The gap between the funding of the demand side strategy and supply side strategy was increasing. Law enforcement received over 70% of the drug control budget in 1986 while drug treatment had fallen to little more than 20% of the budget (or less than 1/3 of the law enforcement figure)."[7]

The Clinton Administration has taken a more balanced approach to our nation's drug problem addressing both demand and supply related issues. The administration's strategy established goals in anti-drug education, making America's streets safer from drug-related crime, reducing health and medical costs caused by illegal drug use, drug interdiction, and crop eradication. However, the majority of the budget is still spent on hemispheric interdiction efforts.

The 1999 National Drug Control Strategy is part of a comprehensive ten-year plan that was initiated in 1998 to reduce the illicit drug use in our nation by 50%. The National Control Strategy proposes a ten-year conceptual framework to reduce illegal drug use and availability 50 percent by the year 2007. If this goal is ever achieved our nation would have a dramatic decrease to the lowest level of drug use in our history. The strategy has five goals:

Goal 1: Educate and enable America's youth to reject illegal drugs as well as alcohol and tobacco.

Goal 2: Increase the safety of America's citizens by substantially reducing drug related crime and violence.

Goal 3: Reduce health and social costs to the public of illegal drug use.

Goal 4: Shield America's air, land, and sea frontiers from the drug threat.

Goal 5: Break foreign and domestic drug sources of supply.[8]

Legislators and politicians claim this robust and expensive strategy addresses the necessary components to be successful: education, prevention, and enforcement. The cost to the American taxpayers is $17.8 billion, which is the largest counter-drug budget ever presented to congress. However, how is this budget going to be split out among the different goals and objectives?

$195 million for The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign.

$590 million for Safe and Drug-Free Schools.

$1.275 billion for a 21st Century Policing Initiative.

$22 million increase for Drug Enforcement Agency.

$50 million increase for the Southwest Border Patrol.

$29 million increase for International Programs.

$100 million in new funds to help states and localities to drug test, treat, and sanction prisoners, parolees and probationers.

$50 million to expand innovative drug courts.

$65 million for residential drug treatment for prisoners with serious drug problems.

$85 million to increase drug treatment.[9]

ANALYSIS:

In analyzing each of the five goals of the 1999 National Drug Control Strategy the U.S. Army War College's ends, ways, means model was used:

Goal 1: Educate and enable America's youth to reject illegal drugs as well as alcohol and tobacco. (11.8% of budget)

Although overall drug use in our country has decreased by almost 50% in the last ten years there is an increase in the tolerance for drugs among America's youth. American children are getting introduced to illegal drugs at an earlier age. "Two trends among our youth should underscore the need for a comprehensive counter-drug strategy: the 10-year trend of drug use at earlier ages; and the six-year trend of greater tolerance by young Americans of drug use."[10]

The primary goal is preventing drug abuse by America's youth. The objective is to give students (K-12) the tools through education prevention programs to stay away from illegal drugs as well as alcohol and tobacco, to educate parents, teachers, clergy, businesses and communities to help youths in rejecting drugs. Additionally, this calls for the need for more research to assist in anti drug education.

The education of America's youth is a top priority of this strategy as it has been in past national drug control strategies. The Clinton Administration plans to educate America's youth against drugs in several federally funded programs. The flagship of this initiative is the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program. This program is designed to reduce drug, alcohol and tobacco use, and violence, through a series of on school education and prevention activities. Another is The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. This program educates millions of young people, parents, and teachers about the dangers of drugs using mass media.

This goal is vital to any National Drug Control Strategy. It places the focus on what many Americans value as a national interest. The well being of America's youth is a non-negotiable issue among Americans and constituents. These programs have been effective in the past and will continue to be a major player throughout the tenure of the plan.

Goal 2: Increase the safety of America's citizens by substantially reducing drug related crime and violence. (39.4% of budget)

The focal point of this goal is to strengthen law enforcement at the federal, state, and local levels to combat drug related violence and crime, disrupt drug operations, and to prosecute illegal drug traffickers. Illicit drug traffickers and criminal organizations are getting more sophisticated and technology has made the drug trade more violent. Money laundering operations and networking through the use of automation has made it more difficult for law enforcement agencies to disrupt and break the drug organizations.

Wire tapping operations by federal agencies and the gathering and sharing of intelligence have become critical in breaking drug organizations. "At the heart of this goal is the *$1.275 billion 21st Century Policing Initiative* that will help communities hire, redeploy, and retain up to 50,000 law enforcement officers to target crime and drug "hot spots"."[11] Additionally, "the *$22 million Increase for the Drug Enforcement Agency*, including $13 million to assist the DEA with its efforts to automate and improve access to critical law enforcement and intelligence information, and $9 million to support investigations to dismantle drug trafficking organizations"[12]will also help tremendously.

Recently, law enforcement officials throughout the country have been successful in regaining communities lost to drug traffickers and criminals; New York City is a prime example. Community involvement is growing with the help of federally funded programs. Improvements are visible to the public as communities are being cleaned up and reinvigorated. This is real measured success that will still be applicable throughout the duration of this ten-year plan.

Goal 3: Reduce health and social costs to the public of illegal drug use. (21.9% of budget)

Annually, approximately 20,000 American deaths are drug related. There are approximately 4 million chronic drug users in our country. One of the key elements of the 1999 strategy is to close the gap between those requiring drug dependency treatment and available spaces in drug treatment programs across the nation. "*The President's budget provides $85 million to increase drug treatment,* including: an additional $55 million in Targeted Capacity Grants to expand the availability of drug treatment to meet emerging needs, and $30 million more for the Substance Abuse Block–the backbone of federal efforts to help states and localities reduce the gap between those seeking treatment and the capacity of the public treatment system."[13]

This goal addresses the fundamental domestic weakness of past drug control strategies. It brings our nation back to the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations when drug abuse was considered a mental health problem. Our nation is beginning to place more emphasis on demand side issues.

As we begin to make progress in our war against drugs the need for more drug treatment centers will decrease. However, now and in several years to come the gap between those in need and the capabilities to treat them is still there. This goal will still be relevant as our nation begins to develop the second ten-year plan for countering drugs.

Goal 4: Shield America's air, land, and sea frontiers from the drug threat. (9.8% of budget)

This is one of the more difficult goals of this strategy. "Last year, more than 60 million passengers entered the US on 551,000 commercial aircraft and 125,000 private planes. Some 370 million people, 5 million containers, and more than 116 million vehicles crossed our land borders. More than 6 million people and more than 4 million containers entered the US on 91,000 ships and more than 157,00 private boats."[14] To completely seal off our national borders from drug traffickers would be an impossible undertaking. Realistically, all we can expect to accomplish is to slowdown the flow of illegal drugs.

In this endeavor the US military has played a major role in recent years. Regular Army and National Guard units have been key in training foreign and domestic law enforcement personnel. CONUS based Military Police Dog Teams have been providing K-9 narcotic and explosive detector support to federal agencies in operations on our Southwestern border and in the transit zone. Air Force and Air National Guard units have been supporting the Drug War with air reconnaissance assets. The

Navy has been the key in providing air and ground based detection and monitoring assets in the transit zone. The Marines along with the Navy are also supporting Coast Guard and Drug Enforcement Administration operations in the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and the eastern Pacific. Some facts on the military's support in the drug war:

"The National Guard currently has more counter-narcotics officers than the DEA has special agents on duty. Each day it is involved in 1,300 counterdrug operations and has 4,000 troops on duty. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of police departments have paramilitary units, and 46% have been trained by active duty armed forces. The most common use of paramilitary units is serving drug-related search warrants (usually no-knock entries into private homes). Twenty percent (20%) of police departments use paramilitary units to patrol urban areas.[15]

To support the 1999 National Drug Control Strategy the FY99 Department of Defense (DoD) budget had increased by approximately $35.1 million from FY98. This was an increase of over eight-percent from the preceding year. DoD support in the interdict mission will continue to increase as Drug Traffickers find new ways to bring illegal drugs into the country.

There are some in our country that claim interdiction is only effective in making the drug trade more lucrative for the drug traffickers. Interdiction has not stopped the flow of drugs into our country. "Despite the increased involvement of the U.S. military and the use of our equipment, illegal shipments of drugs are more available in the United States, drugs are more cheaper and easier to get in our country today than they were when we started this; and that anyone who thinks that interdiction, no matter how much we spend on it, is going to solve this problem, is fundamentally mistaken."[16] "Despite this militarization and the massive funding for Washington's drug war, illegal drugs still flood the United States. In fact, illegal drugs are more readily available now, at a higher purity and lower cost, than they were when the drug war was launched."[17] Interdiction operations alone are ineffective. However, integrated with a series of demand side and other supply side programs interdiction is an effective measure in controlling illegal drug trade.

The shielding of America's air, land, and sea frontiers from the drug threat will be a goal that is essential now and in future national drug control strategies. It should be the focal point in addressing supply side issues along with the detection, disruption and destruction of domestic drug suppliers. As long as this is a goal and objective for our national drug strategy there will be a need for an increasing role of our nation's military forces.

Goal 5: Break foreign and domestic drug sources of supply. (17.2% of budget)

This goal is the most controversial of all the goals and objectives of the National Drug Control Strategy. Controlling drug sources from within our borders is a worthwhile and viable objective with our law enforcement agencies both at the federal, state, and local levels making significant progress. However, once the focus extend to beyond our national borders our national strategy is not clear.

Controversy spans the effectiveness of eradication in controlling the flow of illegal drugs into our country to the corruption of the foreign governments that our nation supports. "Although United States international narcotics control efforts have borne little fruit to date, Congress and the Clinton administration have dramatically increased security assistance to Latin America in the last two years in the name of fighting drugs."[18]

Like interdiction, eradication programs in producer countries proved to be ineffective because of the vastness of the cultivation areas and the relative ease of cultivating cash crops like coca and poppy. Additionally, Drug Cartels are finding new innovative ways to hide their cash crops in difficult to locate remote areas. Since the drug trade is so lucrative, often times when drug organizations are shut down there are several more other organizations to take their place. A case in point: The successes we had with Mexico in eradicating marijuana during the Nixon Administration brought the rise of Peru and Colombia as major drug producer countries.

Cash crop substitution is also not a viable option since the only ones being hurt are the poor peasant farmers, whose livelihood depends on the income from illegal drugs. Many legitimate farmers are being driven out by major drug organizations. Some being bought out and some threatened with violence or death by thugs working for the cartels if they cooperated in government sanctioned crop substitution programs. The bottom line, food crops like rice and corn cannot compete with coca and poppy in cash value.

Another concern is the militarization of the drug war in Latin America. As drug organizations like the Cali Cartel are put out of business, new organizations with ties to Marxist guerrilla groups have come into power. Guerrilla groups like the Fuerazas Armandas Revolucionarias Colombianas (FARC) and Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN) are sometimes used as protection against other rival drug organizations and government law enforcement forces. The attraction for these guerrilla groups is a source of revenue and resources and for the drug cartels an effective paramilitary force.

This places leftist guerrilla groups in producer countries like Colombia and Peru facing elite counter drug units. Military and law enforcement forces trained by U.S. military, funded and equipped with foreign and military aid under the National Drug Control Policy. Often times these are the same corrupt organizations that are implicated in human rights violations and are in the drug business themselves. Now the issue becomes – are we supporting counter narcotics operations or are we funding counterinsurgency operations in Latin America with drug control assets, against mandated policy. "The militarization of counternarcotics efforts in Latin America not only undermines efforts to promote human rights and democracy, it also threatens regional security. In Colombia, where the line between fighting drug trafficking and combating insurgents is blurred, Washington risks becoming mired in the hemisphere's longest – running guerrilla war, possibly widening that conflict into neighboring countries."[19]

This where our National Drug Control Strategy is flawed. Too much effort and resources are being spent on Latin American countries that are corrupt and ineffective in fighting the drug war. Our nation needs to concentrate its counter drug efforts closer to home addressing domestic demand and supply

problems instead of getting involved with generation old issues abroad. "The total FY1999 drug budget includes an increase of $75.4 million to support counter drug activities in the Andean Ridge region ($60.8 million), operations in the Caribbean ($8.5 million), training of Mexican counter drug forces ($4.0 million) "[20] The resources earmarked for the drug effort in Latin America and the Caribbean, could be better used to fund other aspects of our national drug control policy.

The Clinton Administration needs to revisit this goal and adjust it to focus the effort domestically. Current, eradication policies and programs in supplier countries are not effective measures to controlling the flow of illegal drugs. Valuable resources, especially military resources could be better used effectively in other parts of the strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

More drug rehab treatment centers could be built around the country to decrease the ratio of drug addicts requiring treatment and those getting it. Although, the current national strategy has budgeted over $145 million for treatment centers more effort could be directed in this area. Additionally, more resources could be redirected towards anti-drug education and community policing programs, programs that have been highly successful and have made a difference in our communities.

To increase effectiveness in our interdiction efforts more resources needs to be directed in the investment of new state of the art, leap ahead equipment and systems, especially in the area of detection, communications, and intelligence. Drug lords are becoming more sophisticated in their operations and have the funding to buying state of the art technology that will place them leaps and bounds ahead of our federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. Even our military organizations in support of the drug war are relying on cold war vintage equipment.

In the area of detection, there is a need to improve the sensitivity and capabilities of air and surface detection assets currently being used. Systems like the APS-137 radar used by the U.S. Coast Guard on their airborne platforms that can detect smaller and faster vessels especially made for smuggling operations. Or developing and improving systems that will improve the visibility of the patrolling resource during inclement weather conditions. In addition, any new systems developed needs to be produced in sufficient quantities to be place aboard adequate numbers of air and surface platforms to saturate the transit zone.

Detection of explosives and/or narcotics at the different ports of entry into the United States is another area that could be enhanced by technology and military assistance. Currently, DoD military working dogs are used to support the detection of explosives and narcotics at several key ports of entry, especially at our southwestern border. However, this process is time consuming and places personnel and assets at high risks. There is a need to develop nonintrusive detection technology that can supplement military and law enforcement personnel and K9 assets to enhance effectiveness at our borders.

Enhancing the communications capability is another effective way in improving the interdiction effort. Because of the many agencies and countries involved in interdiction operations, especially in the Caribbean region interoperability of communications is a large problem. Additionally, the range and capabilities of current communications equipment is lacking. Funding needs to be directed to programs or projects to develop secure, ultra high frequency, redundant systems that has common hardware that can be used by all entities involved in the anti-drug fight.

New technology has also brought the collecting and sharing of criminal intelligence into a new era. As drug lords become more sophisticated in their operations, timely intelligence becomes more critical. "Efficient information and intelligence sharing remain the key to effective drug interdiction. They are the blood supply for anti-drug cooperation and coordination."[21] A key player in this area would be the military and the procurement and improvement of equipment and systems currently being used, systems and equipment that have a military and law enforcement utility. Additionally, efforts and funding needs to be increased to enhance intelligence sharing, especially among federal, state, and local agencies. The development of several Joint Regional Intelligence Centers would play a major role in coordinating the dissemination of critical intelligence.

CONCLUSION:

The 1999 National Drug Control Strategy is a clear and concise document adequately identifying specific goals and objectives. It provides a road map to meet the intent of President Clinton's National Security Strategy. The strategy also strikes a closer balance of addressing the center of gravity of our nation's drug problem: the demand for drugs. It is robust enough that with minor changes it will be applicable through 2010 and beyond.

The 1999 version of the strategy is the second of a ten-year plan to reduce the illicit drug use in our country by 50 percent. The key is the goal of reducing illegal drug use rather than the elimination of our drug problem. A more realistic and attainable goal because of the many factors both foreign and domestic that contribute to the problem.

However, improvements can be made to the 1999 National Drug Control Strategy to make it more effective. First, is to revisit the goal of *breaking foreign and domestic drug sources of supply.* The objectives need to be readjusted to emphasize the domestic sources rather than foreign producer countries like Colombia and Mexico. These countries for years have a history of having corrupt government and law enforcement agencies as the focus of their counter narcotics efforts.

Even with the minimum success of our eradication efforts in these countries there is an ends, ways, means disconnect. Closer scrutiny needs to be paid to producer countries to insure that counter narcotics funding is not misused and we our not supporting governments involved in humanitarian rights violations. Our nation has had a history of supporting puppet governments who are involved in practices in contrary to our national values. We can't continue to waste valuable resources on the wrong war.

With the readjustment of the goals to a more domestic approach military assets could be redirected to emphasize special needs. With new technology improving drug organization capabilities to traffic illegal drugs through our borders more military resources could be used in detection, monitoring, and interdiction efforts. Also, other military assets could be used to train more law enforcement personnel at the state and local levels.

Our National Drug Control Strategy has come a long way from the early years of the Kennedy Administration. We have seen a shift from the emphasis of the battle being addressing the problem as a mental health issue to taking a harder stance in treating the problem as a crime. We have also seen a shift from domestic to foreign side issues. Currently, we have a more balanced, flexible and robust strategy, which addresses the spectrum of our nation's drug problem. As we move into the next millennium and to continue making progress on our "War on Drugs" our government needs to continue to be proactive in the fight and adjust the strategy as the need dictates.

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