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MEASURING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE IN COUNTERNARCOTICS OPERATIONS

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL RAYMOND T. BURDEN
United States Army

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This study provides an analysis of the issue of measuring DoD's performance in counternarcotics operations and offers some insights with which to work toward answering these pressing questions. Since the late 1980's the Department of Defense has been directly involved in supporting the Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (DLEA) in counternarcotics operations. Congress mandated that the Department of Defense take a lead role in monitoring the air and sea trafficking of illegal drugs entering the United States. DoD has received increasing demands from Congress to become more involved in the war on drugs along with the increasing annual budget appropriations. The Secretary of Defense has issued broad guidance to the services to stress the high priority he has given the counternarcotics mission. With the emphasis that is now being placed on the counternarcotics challenge, there should be an assessment mechanism in place in order to ascertain the impact of the military's involvement on the drug war. The measurement of DoD's involvement poses some challenging questions given its support role to the Drug Law Enforcement Agencies. What performance criteria are

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MEASURING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE IN COUNTERNARCOTICS OPERATIONS

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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ABSTRACT

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This study provides an analysis of the issue of measuring DOD's performance in counternarcotics operations and offers some insights with which to work toward answering these pressing questions. Since the late 1980's the Department of Defense has been directly involved in supporting the Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (DLEA) in counternarcotics operations. Congress mandated that the Department of Defense take a lead role in monitoring the air and sea trafficking of illegal drugs entering the United States. DOD has received increasing demands from Congress to become more involved in the war on drugs along with increasing annual budget appropriations. The Secretary of Defense has issued broad guidance to the services to stress the high priority he has given the counternarcotics mission. With the emphasis that is now being placed on the counternarcotics challenge, there should be an assessment mechanism in place in order to ascertain the impact of the military's involvement on the drug war. The measurement of DOD's involvement poses some challenging questions given its support role to the Drug Law Enforcement Agencies. What performance criteria are used, when and how they are measured, and who is responsible for measuring performance are all tough questions for which there are no clear answers. The study concludes by suggesting that the military be measured against the achievement of their own objectives as found in their plans and operations orders for supporting the war on drugs.

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Defense (DOD) has significantly increased its involvement in counternarcotics operations over the past decade. The early eighties saw the military limited to sharing information gained while on military operations with law enforcement officials from all levels, making facilities and equipment available, and in some cases providing personal assistance to them in the conduct of certain operations. These efforts were, for the most part, voluntary and came after the Congress amended the Posse Comitatus Act in 1981 for the first time since its original enactment.

As the drug issue became more and more publicized in the news media, and as the associated violence increased, there were many initiatives at the national level that resulted in the military's increased involvement in counternarcotics. President Reagan officially declared a war on drugs in September 1986.[1] Congress once again amended the Posse Comitatus Act, this time making it legal to provide military assistance to foreign law enforcement officials.[2] Members of Congress strongly pushed for the military to get more directly involved in the "war on drugs," as evidenced by the passing of the FY 1989 National Defense Authorization Act. The FY 1989 Authorization Act directed more vigorous supportive involvement in counternarcotics missions by the armed forces. The Department of Defense was directed to serve as the single lead agency of the federal government for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the United States. Additionally, the legislation required DOD to be responsible for integrating all of the command, control, communications and technical intelligence assets of the country that were dedicated to interdiction of illegal drugs. Lastly,

it enhanced the role of the National Guard, under the direction of state governors, to support state drug interdiction and law enforcement operations.[3]

National expectations for the Department of Defense to be directly involved in the war on drugs in a significant way were further reinforced with the issuance of the National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS) on 5 September 1989. In the National Drug Control Strategy, President Bush called for a collective effort on the part of individuals, private and public agencies, and institutions to combat the drug problem.[4] Of particular significance with his policy was the increased role the military would have in reducing the supply of cocaine from three Andean cocaine producing countries. The strategy would later expand the military's role to support border control agencies in the Southwest United States. On September 18, 1989, the Secretary of Defense forwarded to the Unified and Specified Commanders general guidance for implementation of the President's National Drug Control Strategy. In his guidance he outlined in broad terms the Department's plan to attack the problem of illegal drug trafficking into the United States. The point that was made very firmly was the fact that the detection and countering of the production, trafficking, and use of illegal drugs was a high priority national security mission of the Department of Defense.[5]

Clearly there has been increased interest on the part of many to get the military involved in fighting the war on drugs. However, it is not the purpose of this study to address whether the Department of Defense should or should not be performing counternarcotics missions. That decision has been made and the military services are proceeding with the necessary steps to successfully accomplish their legislated mission areas in support of the National Drug Control Strategy.

With the level of interest on the part of the National Command Authority and the Congress in the military being engaged in the war on drugs, this study seeks to examine the measurement of the military's input into the war on drugs. Given the resources that are being devoted to the counternarcotics challenge, it is reasonable that there should be assessment mechanisms in place in order to ascertain whether there is a discernible impact being made as a result of the military's involvement. However, the measurement of DOD's involvement poses some challenging questions given its predominantly support role for Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (DLEA). For example, what performance measure is used, when is it measured, how is it measured, and who is responsible for measuring it are all tough questions for which there are no clear answers to date. This study will endeavor to provide an analysis of the issue and offer some insights with which to work toward answers to some of these pressing questions.

The methodology used in pursuit of the study of these and other questions related to measuring DOD's counternarcotics performance consisted of on-sight visits to the Counternarcotics Division, Forces Command, the Counternarcotics Operations Division, J-3/Joint Staff, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Drug Enforcement Policy. Discussions were held with principle staffers involved in various counternarcotics activities to develop a perspective for their mission requirements, how they were organized and functioning to carry them out, and some of the issues they were working to resolve.

The DOD organizations visited had significantly stepped up its involvement in counternarcotics activities. The staffs were in the throws of finding solutions and answers to many operational issues as they were working to simultaneously respond to requests for support from the law enforcement

community. The measure of performance issue appeared to be of important interest to them since there were many unanswered questions on the subject. Everyone provided some interesting and useful insights that will be incorporated as appropriate in an attempt to adequately cover some of the challenges and perhaps concerns that surround this important issue.

BACKGROUND AND ORIGIN OF THE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT QUESTIONS

Key to an understanding of some of the issues surrounding performance measurement of the Department of Defense involvement in counternarcotics is the fact that it is performing a support role. The FY 89 Defense Authorization Act, although designating the Defense Department as the lead agent for detection and monitoring of drug trafficking into the United States, does not authorize the military to make searches or arrests of drug offenders because of restrictions placed on them by the Posse Comitatus Act. In the role of supporters, the military services are conducting activities such as airborne surveillance using Navy and Air Force aircraft. The Air Force is also operating aerostat radars that provide look-down capability against low flying aircraft. The Marines provide aircraft to track drug smuggler speed boats. There is also a substantial level of support being provided on the ground. Army and Marine personnel are involved in ground radar surveillance and antipersonnel intrusion and detection along the Southwest border. Equipment is being provided and training is being conducted on its use. However, even with all these efforts it is important to remember that interdiction involves the sorting of potential target information, interception, tracking, and hand-off of suspected traffickers to one of the Drug Law Enforcement Agencies. This support may result in search, seizure, and arrest if warranted.

The military services have aggressively initiated programs to fulfill the legislative mandates received from Congress to get involved in the disruption of drug trafficking. They have organized, in a relatively short period of time, an elaborate structure with which to carry out its counternarcotics support mission. There are two Joint Task Forces specifically focused on the detection and monitoring missions. Another task force was formed to concentrate its efforts on supporting law enforcement agencies in the Southwest United States. Overall DOD detection and monitoring activity, in air flying hours and ship steaming days, has increased from 39,989 flying hours and 2,081 ship steaming days in 1989 to over 100,000 flying hours and 3600 ship steaming days in FY 1990, increases of over 150 percent and 70 percent respectively.[6] The Joint Staff and some of the unified and specified commands have restructured their staffs to organize elements that will specifically concentrate on counternarcotics missions. The National Guard has become a key player in supporting the DLEA's in interdiction and narcotics eradication programs within their respective states. Lastly, the funding for DOD involvement in counternarcotics has increased as well. The budget has increased from $300 million in FY 1989, $450 million in FY 1990 to $1.084 billion for FY 1991.[7]

With time and resources being devoted to supporting the counternarcotics mission, one would reasonably expect that there is a requirement for those in leadership positions to provide an accounting and assessment of whether the expenditure of these vast resources is achieving results. The dilemma for DOD in its support roles is a determination of what gets assessed, what are the standards, and perhaps even who should conduct the evaluation. Most would agree that some form of performance measurement is necessary to insure that

objectives are met, or more importantly in a time of resource constraints, to make adjustments in a program or plan to insure its accomplishment without waste of time or resources.

Opinions and expectations vary regarding what the measure of performance should be for assessing DOD's performance in counternarcotics. In the view of some, any effort to develop measures of performance without talking to the congressmen on the hill who are directing the military's involvement in counternarcotics may be a futile exercise. Their expectations would be the most important part of any analysis of the issue. There are frequent inquiries made of DOD by Congress pertaining to the counternarcotics mission and what is being accomplished.[8] The measure of performance in the view of Congress is an emphasis on commitment by DOD to fully and effectively use funds provided for counternarcotics to ensure the maximum contribution of the military to the national effort.[9]

Mr. Stephen Duncan, DOD Coordinator for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support, believes DOD should be judged in terms of its ability to perform the limited missions assigned to it. One performance measurement that he cited during his testimony before the House Appropriations Committee in March of 1990 was "quality of support to law enforcement agencies and the other parts of the government in the implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy." He further stated that it would be inappropriate and unreasonable to judge the performance or productivity of DOD by artificial "body count standards" and statistics as the price of cocoa leaf in an Andean market, the price of cocaine in a particular U.S. city, the number of arrests made during a particular period of time, the number of pounds of marijuana confiscated or destroyed, or by any other similar measures.[10]

For some of the military people who are directly involved in the planning and coordination of counternarcotics, the measure of performance is viewed from another perspective. Members of the counternarcotics staffs at Forces Command and the Joint Chiefs of Staff saw things such as timeliness, responsiveness, and efficiency as the relevant measures. This concern went beyond just meeting established timetables for accomplishing staff actions. It was to foster confidence in the eyes of the law enforcement agencies they were charged with supporting that their requested support would be provided in a timely fashion.[11] If a Drug Law Enforcement Agency needs an Army helicopter to transport agents to a location where major illegal drug transactions are taking place during a specified time period, not having the aircraft there jeopardizes the potential seizure and arrest of the traffickers.

THE EFFORT, EFFICIENCY, OR EFFECTIVENESS QUESTION

Measurement of DOD's performance in counternarcotics operations can be a complex undertaking in view of the variety of tasks that are accomplished by the military services to support the drug war. The multiplicity and variety of tasks makes it difficult to establish standardized performance measurements for all services. The issue of evaluating the performance of DOD in counternarcotics activities is challenging enough, but it is further complicated by the use of different terms for the measure of performance. It is perceived that there is no consensus on measure of performance terminology within the DOD chain of command and the external groups that are monitoring DOD's involvement in counternarcotics.

People involved with DOD's counternarcotics operations seem to view the performance measurement issue from different perspectives based on the level or position from which they are operating. For example, it was suggested that the measurement OSD was using was a measure of effort rather than a measure of effectiveness.[12] At Forces Command, the preferred measures seemed to be efficiency and effort.

Measuring effort and efficiency seems fairly tangible for the services, effort being somewhat easier than efficiency. However, the concept of measuring the effectiveness of the military's involvement in counternarcotics is clouded by the "support" role issue addressed previously in the paper.

Effectiveness, simply defined, emphasizes the actual production of a desired result. In the military the desired result is usually termed as successful mission accomplishment. From the operational level of DOD's counternarcotics mission, there are numerous examples of where a specific mission is given to be accomplished. A Navy cruiser is given the mission to go on patrol of a sector of the Atlantic Ocean with Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachments (LEDET) on board to search and seize suspected drug smugglers. They go on patrol for a month and return to their port, mission accomplished. An Army helicopter crew receives a mission to pick up a team of Drug Enforcement Administration Agents and fly them to a specified location. They do so successfully, mission accomplished. In these two examples, the desired result was to patrol a sector of the Atlantic to permit seizure of suspected drug smugglers and to fly DEA agents. The desired results were achieved, therefore we can conclude that the crews, units, and leaders were effective because the mission was accomplished in both cases. Because the missions were accomplished, it could be argued that all levels of the chain of command were effective because the requests originated somewhere, were

staffed, coordinated, and approved in order to provide support for law enforcement agencies. Each level of the chain of command had a specific mission to carry out and did. When applying the effectiveness measure from the perspective of the military's ability to accomplish a specific mission, there is usually not a problem in evaluating the performance. The mission is or is not accomplished.

The performance measure becomes less clear when the military's counternarcotics operations are assessed in terms of impact on the success of the agencies supported. One of President Bush's goals outlined in his National Drug Control Strategy is to reduce, through expanded interdiction efforts, by ten percent in 1991 the estimated amounts of cocaine, heroine, marijuana, and other dangerous drugs entering the United States.[13] Given the added thrust of the military in interdiction efforts over the past year, what does failure to attain the ten percent reduction portend for the Department of Defense in terms of its effectiveness in counternarcotics operations? Conversely, if the goal is attained, was DOD's input effective; were the Drug Law Enforcement Agencies effective, or were the collective efforts of all agencies involved in interdiction effective?

Time is also a determining factor for deciding the criteria to assess DOD counternarcotics performance. For example, when Forces Command established JTF-6 to coordinate the detection and monitoring mission on the Southwest border in mid-1990, it clearly would have been unrealistic for the Commanding General of Forces Command to evaluate the task force on the basis of effectiveness at any level after a few months in existence. Given the guidance provided to the JTF-6 commander, one might reasonably expect to measure the amount of effort he had put into getting organized and establishing his objectives and goals to accomplish his mission in support of

the DLEA's. Another example of time being an important factor in measuring performance along with a focus on effort occurred in June of 1989. Some members of Congress could reasonably be described as disgruntled with the Department of Defense for only having spent $51 million of the appropriated $300 million received for counternarcotics missions half way through the fiscal year. Senator Pete Wilson, a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, stated, "The Defense Department is AWOL when it comes to aggressively mobilizing its resources against drug traffickers."[14] Representative Larry Hopkins reportedly said to the Secretary of Defense, "We are serious about your active role in this war on drugs, even if it means we have to drag you kicking and screaming every step of the way."[15]

Measuring effort, from a practical perspective, would provide DOD a performance yardstick applicable to all levels within the organization. Something either is or is not done. As an illustration, each CINC responsible for counternarcotics operations, after receiving guidance from the Secretary of Defense, had a requirement to provide a plan on how they were going to accomplish the missions given to them. One can assume that their plans outlined objectives and the magnitude of their efforts to get the missions done. Once the Secretary of Defense approved the plan, it essentially became a yardstick by which the command's counternarcotics operations could be evaluated. The command either accomplishes what it planned or it does not.

This basic premise of using a plan to outline effort in the form of objectives to be used for evaluation has applicability down the entire chain of command. Expansion of this premise could facilitate clarification of the measure of performance issue for DOD.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND MEASURING SUCCESS

The Secretary of Defense has taken the right steps to underscore the priority that the military should give to the counternarcotics mission. For some of the unified and specified commanders, he gave them some specific guidance such as the directive to the Commander in Chief, Atlantic, to deploy a Caribbean Counternarcotics Task Force to combat the flow of drugs from Latin America.[16] The next step that must be taken, now that the initial DOD guidance is being executed, is for the Secretary of Defense to provide the CINCs with more specific guidance as to what is expected of their commands in the area of counternarcotics operations.

What is proposed is a Counternarcotics Plan that is provided from the Secretary of Defense through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the respective CINCs. The plan should be based on coordination with the Office of National Drug Control Strategy and outline specific objectives for the CINCs to achieve within their area of responsibility. These objectives would then become the measure of performance that would be used during an annual assessment to be conducted by the DOD Coordinator for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support.

The commanders of the specified and unified commands would base their counternarcotics planning and execution on the specific objective outlined for their area of responsibility in the DOD Counternarcotics Plan. Specific objectives and tasks would be outlined in a command counternarcotics plan for each task force or service component commander to accomplish in order to facilitate meeting the command's overall goal successfully. Again, the objectives and tasks facilitate the assessment of performance toward this end.

A specific counternarcotics plan has been suggested as the means to outline the objectives for the specified and unified commands. However, there are current mechanisms established such as the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP) that could also be considered as a means to outline specific counternarcotics objectives for all the CINCs. The key is to provide the clear-cut objectives regardless of the method of transmission.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many demands on the Department of Defense in maintaining the security of the United States and its global interests. With the advent of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, things have not been made easier. Once these operations terminate there will be other challenges to address such as the planned downsizing of the armed forces. Through this and other challenges, it is likely that the counternarcotics mission given to the Department of Defense will continue in the future. Congress may have perceived some lethargy on the part of DOD to make counternarcotics a priority mission initially. However, such claims cannot legitimately be made now. The entire DOD chain of command is well into the planning and execution of the counternarcotics mission.

The threat of drug trafficking in the United States is a formidable one. There are reports in the news media frequently about drug related violence. It sometimes is difficult to really know if the efforts that law enforcement agencies are putting into fighting the war on drugs are being successful. Seemingly, they have started making headway in disrupting the flow of crack cocaine from South America, yet there is evidence that heroine from Asia potentially will be entering the United States to meet an even larger demand.[17]

The potential for the Department of Defense to be involved in counternarcotics on a larger scale after Desert Storm is very high. First, because of the threat of drug trafficking increasing. The second reason may be as a result of a resurgence of the "peace dividend" thinking that was prevalent prior to the invasion of Kuwait. The DOD leadership, in an effort to preserve force structure below unacceptable levels, may use the counternarcotics mission as a justification to maintain it, particularly in view of the fact that Congress has been the main thrust behind the military's involvement. Accordingly, the Department of Defense will need useful information on the military's performance in meeting its legislated mandates in supporting the National Drug Control Strategy.

Up to this point in time the military services have been working to put systems and procedures together to facilitate the accomplishment of their important support role. If the staffs I had the opportunity to visit and interact with are an indication of the people and efforts in other places involved with counternarcotics, then the military is clearly going to have a substantial impact on the drug war. However, given more time and dollars devoted to counternarcotics, the degree of effort put into the mission will be important, but not as important as some reasonable articulation of outcome or benefit derived from it. Given the projected environment of competition for dollars, Congress will not only want to know if the dollars are being spent, but will require DOD to show how well they are being spent.

In its lead role for detection and monitoring of the aerial and maritime drug trafficking routes, the Department of Defense must be the key player in evaluating its operational effectiveness. Appropriate measures of performance should be formulated by the Department of Defense before others in authority

or with substantial influence have some imposed on it or the services that are not within their capability to influence or measure. At the strategic level, the effectiveness of the military's counternarcotics involvement with respect to its impact on the war on drugs must be made by the agency responsible for coordination and oversight of the national drug control strategy.

Measuring the effectiveness of DOD's counternarcotics support to the National Drug Control Strategy is not an easy undertaking. However, it is imperative that OSD and the military services be able to clearly articulate the value of their contribution. This can best be accomplished by the development of clear and specific goals and objectives at every level of the chain of command and using them to continually assess performance.

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4. Executive Summary, National Drug Control Strategy, September 1989.

5. Cheney, Richard B. "Department of Defense Guidance for Implementation of the President's National Drug Control Strategy," Letter, 18 September 1989, pp. 1.

6. Cheney, Richard B., Annual Defense Report to the President and Congress. January 1991.

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8. Interview with Pentagon staffer in the Office of the DOD Coordinator for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support, 13 November 1990.

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11. Interviews with staff officers of the Counternarcotics Division, Forces Command, 3 November 1990, and the Counternarcotics Operations Div, J3, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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13. Biden, Joseph R. Jr. "Fighting Drug Abuse: A National Strategy," The Senate Judiciary Committee and the International Narcotics Control Caucus, Jan 1990.

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15. Isenberg, David, "Military Options in the War on Drugs," USA Today, 1 July 1990, p. 24.

16. Cheney, Dick, Memorandum for the Commander in Chief Atlantic, Subject: Carribean Counternarcotics Task Force, September 18, 1989, Washington, D.C.

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