
International Narcotics Control Update

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The use and trafficking of illicit drugs threaten the national security of the United States just as much as they threaten the health and well-being of the individual drug user. Industrial productivity is lessened when workers take drugs; military readiness is threatened by drug use among servicemen and women; America's image abroad is eroded by reports of American drug use; and money spent on drugs by individual citizens lines the pockets of drug lords whose violent tactics undermine the security of some of our most important friends and allies.

PRODUCTION AND USE

Illicit drugs are produced primarily in the developing world and used primarily by consumers in more affluent nations. Increasingly, however, producing and trafficking countries are confronting growing drug-use problems of their own. In the past, governments have pointed fingers of blame at one another—the consumer blamed the producers, while producer nations claimed that the problem rested with citizens of the developed world who use illicit drugs.

The illicit narcotics problem has assumed such global proportions that virtually no nation is immune. Leaders of nations on both sides of the equator and from across the ideological spectrum have declared an all-out war on drugs. Rhetoric and blame are being replaced by cooperative efforts aimed at breaking the vicious cycle of drug production and consumption.

The Soviet Union, which long denied the existence of a drug problem within its borders, is now engaging in major official and unofficial programs to curb drug use. The Government of Colombia—where most of the world's cocaine is processed—has declared war on drug dealers. Speaking at the UN General Assembly's 1989 session, Colombian President Virgilio Barco called Colombia's drug lords "international fugitives." "They do not have have a home," said President Barco. "Colombia is not their homeland."

President George Bush has declared a policy intended to confront drug consumers, producers, and traffickers alike. He told a meeting of U.S. drug enforcement officials in April 1989: "Let's face it: Americans cannot blame the Andean nations for our voracious appetite for drugs." Rather than blaming other countries, the United States wants to work with them to eliminate both supply and demand for international narcotics, for, in the words of Colombia's President Barco, "the only law that drug traffickers do not violate is the law of supply and demand."

As the lead federal agency responsible for America's international narcotics control efforts, the Department of State is implementing key elements of the 1989 national drug control strategy, in which the Bush Administration outlines a broad list of international priorities that include:

- Disruption and dismantlement of drug-trafficking organizations;
- Reducing cocaine supply by providing law enforcement, military, and economic assistance to Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia to isolate their major coca-producing regions, block delivery of chemicals used in cocaine processing, destroy cocaine labs, and dismantle the drug-running groups. This effort will also target drug transit areas in the Caribbean;

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- Reducing heroin supply through efforts to convince other countries to exert influence on opium growers to reduce heroin processing and distribution;
 - Reducing marijuana supply through strengthened foreign law enforcement and eradication and through efforts to discourage minor producers from becoming major producers; and
 - U.S. encouragement for European Community and other multilateral efforts aimed at source country and transit country production and distribution and at European consumption. European support against international and regional drug organizations will be enlisted.

Other international objectives include:

- Making anti-drug efforts a top priority in U.S. bilateral relations with virtually every other country.
- U.S. ratification of the UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and urging other nations to ratify the UN convention;
- Strictly enforcing existing U.S. laws that make foreign aid contingent on the recipient countries' compliance with anti-narcotics efforts; and
- Strengthening domestic and international efforts against the "laundering" of drug money.

ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION

The global war on drugs is also an element of another key U.S. foreign policy objective—the preservation of the world's environmental resources. Growing and processing drugs causes substantial environmental damage and the loss of valuable natural resources in developing countries. In Peru's Upper Huallaga Valley, now the largest source of coca in the world, farmers use "slash and burn" techniques to clear land, [thereby] destroying forests, causing erosion, and eventually depleting soil resources. Coca leaves are processed by means of strong chemicals, such as kerosene and sulfuric acid, which pollute the valley's water supply.

Fragile ecosystems in South America, Southeast Asia, and other drug-growing areas can survive only when narcotics crops and drug trafficking are eliminated.

THE NARCO-RICH AND THE DRUG ECONOMY

The international drug economy runs on cash—lots of it. Worldwide drug profits, about 80 percent of the total narcotics trade, were estimated to be as high as \$240 billion in 1987. Drug trafficking is profitable because illegal narcotic crops are relatively cheap to cultivate and process, while their ultimate street value is extraordinarily high.

Although typical drug trafficking operations have several layers of intermediaries, most of the gains go to a newly formed rich, small elite that has come to wield impressive economic and political power. Some kingpins are believed to have a personal worth that exceeds their country's national debt. They buy land and other assets for investment purposes and control numerous domestic businesses. They also are able to bribe and intimidate local politicians, judges, police, and military, who in turn allow illegal activities to continue in an ever-widening circle of corruption.

Although some traffickers have engaged in token philanthropic projects, the vast amount of their profits do not stay in the countries where narcotics are produced. They are usually transferred abroad and transformed into a more manageable form to conceal their illicit origin. "Laundering" schemes include electronic funds transfers, depositing funds in international tax shelters, or setting up dummy "shell" corporations. Such capital flight rarely benefits the developing countries where most drugs originate.

ENFORCING U.S. INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS POLICY

Effective enforcement of international narcotics control programs involves interdiction, criminal penalties against traffickers, and eradication. As U.S. health and education officials seek to curb drug use at home, the State Department's first priority is to apply pressure against drug smugglers and traffickers through cooperation with other countries.

In August 1988, 30 countries joined in a month-long cocaine-control project under the auspices of the International Drug Enforcement Conference. Thirty countries (from Europe and North, Central, and South America) participated in a cooperative, coordinated, multinational law enforcement operation to improve capabilities to seize cocaine and cash, track down fugitives, and crack down on the "laundering" (or disguising) of drug money. The United States committed National Guard units in four states to work side by side with the U.S. Customs Service in inspecting cargo.

Currently, in South and Central America, the Department of State and the Drug Enforcement Administration work with law enforcement officials in a cooperative effort called "Operation Snowcap" that targets illegal laboratories, processing facilities, and airstrips for destruction. Most Snowcap activity is in Bolivia and Peru. Since this operation began in 1987, results have included the destruction of cocaine laboratories and the seizure of thousands of pounds of cocaine

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The United States cannot assume all the responsibility for the war against drugs, nor can it expect to win the war without support from other countries. A cornerstone of U.S. international drug policy is encouraging other countries to assist the United States in combating drug trafficking while it addresses serious drug-use problems at home. President George Bush will attend a summit meeting on the drug war with his counterparts from Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru in early 1990.

Since most cocaine comes to the United States through the Caribbean, Central America, and Mexico, the U.S. Government is strengthening anti-drug programs in those transit areas. Joint Information Coordination Centers have been established in the Caribbean areas to develop and disseminate information that will result in more arrests. Twenty-six Caribbean countries have improved their ability to communicate with one another, and with U.S. law enforcement agencies through INTERPOL (an international organization that coordinates the work of police forces). In Latin America, the U.S. Government is supporting law enforcement activities through training and technical assistance. Nine of the 11 countries with which the United States has major narcotics control programs are in the Caribbean and Latin America.*

U.S. Government officials aim to achieve international consensus on the drug threat. During the July 1989 economic summit of industrialized nations, Secretary of State James A. Baker, III, urged Canada, France, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and West Germany to take more aggressive actions against the laundering of drug money. The seven summit partners created a

* The United States has major narcotics control programs with The Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Thailand, and Venezuela.

financial action task force, which met during the Fall of 1989 and is to make recommendations by April 1990. A new U.S. financial crimes center will collect, analyze, and disseminate information to law enforcements agencies to combat money laundering.

During the September 1989 meeting in Wyoming with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, Secretary Baker discussed implementation of a U.S.-U.S.S.R. agreement that has been in effect since January 1989. The agreement provides for Soviet-American cooperation in combating illegal narcotics. In meeting with other world leaders such as Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, Secretary Baker offered U.S. support to reduce drug production and trafficking.

An important milestone was reached on December 19, 1988, when an international conference in Vienna adopted the UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Signatories are required to provide assistance in the investigation and prosecution of narcotics cases by other signatories. International cooperation in the war on drugs becomes obligatory; 67 countries have signed the convention, including the United States.

U.S. officials also work with UN agencies and other international organizations on drug-related issues. The UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control, located in Vienna, is the key multinational organization in the global struggle against drugs. The UN General Assembly is planning to convene a special session in 1990 to consider how to improve international cooperation in the war against drugs.