Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM)

Fighting trans-Caribbean drug trafficking

Research Report

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Fake news

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Introduction

The Caribbean is located southeast of the Gulf of Mexico and the North American mainland, east of Central America, and north of South America.[1] Essentially trans-Caribbean drug trafficking entails the trafficking of drugs within or through the Caribbean. The Caribbean is an appealing area to transport drugs to and to store drugs in, partially due to its proximity to the United States of America (USA) through Florida, Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands (USVI). The smaller countries in the Caribbean have limited border security and are often visited by traffickers to either store or transport goods to other, bigger countries such as Puerto Rico having customs-free access to the USA.[3] A great amount of drugs transported to the Caribbean also get transported to other continents, such as Europe.

The trafficking of drugs causes many complications. First and foremost the introduction of illicit drugs to the USA and its surroundings further adds to addiction and overdoses that occur. Furthermore, the cartel members involved are often armed and dangerous. Many crimes such as homicide are a byproduct of these often heavily guarded trades, with there being a death toll of 360.000 by homicide in Mexico ever since they declared the war on drugs in 2006.[2] Said cartels thus possess great influence over considerable amounts of people. Previously these cartels have been known to bribe or influence the government and have created political instability in countries, one example of this being Venezuela, where in 2015 the government was accused of turning the country into a global cocaine-hub.[4]

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[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caribbean
[2] https://dataunodc.un.org/dp-intentional-homicide-victims
[3] https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Caribbean-Border-Counter-Narcotics-2022Strategy.pdf
[4] https://www.wsj.com/articles/venezuelan-officials-suspected-of-turning-country-into-global-cocaine-hub-1431977784

Definition of Key Terms

Caribbean:
The region that consists of the Caribbean Sea, its islands (including the West Indies), and the surrounding coasts.

Cartel
An association of manufacturers or suppliers with the purpose of maintaining prices at a high level and restricting competition.

International waters
All parts of the sea not included in the territorial sea, internal waters and archipelagic waters of any State.

Trafficking
To deal or trade in something illegal.

Transshipment:
the shipment of goods or containers to an intermediate destination, then to another destination. Sometimes takes place in designated customs areas, thus avoiding the need for customs checks or duties, otherwise a major hindrance for efficient transport.

Transloading:
to change the means of transport during the journey.

General Overview

The drug trades

The drug trades primarily take place in the Transcaribbean area. With cocaine produced mostly in Colombia and various other drugs in non-Latin American countries, and then brought to Mexico, Colombia or Venezuela for distribution purposes. These drugs are then packaged and shipped to their destinations using transshipment in the Caribbean islands. These islands are chosen for their proximity to the aforementioned countries and due to their central location. These shipments can be via planes or boats, sometimes both using transloading to swap vehicles mid-journey. Once these drugs get to the Caribbean, they can be shipped to their next location, which is usually the country where they start being sold. For most drug routes, this is the USA or Europe. Here the ships go to Puerto Rico, Florida or the USVI. Or to the ports of the UK, France or the Netherlands in Europe and then get sold there or move further inland.

Problems that arise

Many countries consider possession of drugs to be a criminal offence. And virtually all consider trading large amounts of drugs without agreements with the countries to be a criminal offence. In the countries where drug use is very looked down on such as in the USA, most citizens who use drugs are forced to go to shady dealers and pay high prices for the drugs, which are not always guaranteed to be pure or even relatively safe to consume. The price of drugs in countries where it is illegal is high enough to cause financial struggles and disputes in addicted individuals and can cause them to quickly lash out on others or themselves causing harm and possibly death. Some heavy users of drugs can die of an overdose. And drugs can cause territorial disputes or financial disputes in dealers that are often armed or gang members. For these reasons there is a lot of violence involved in the drug trades and a lot of deaths can occur caused by drug-related violent crime such as homicides.

Corruption of the Government

In countries with a high amount of drug cartels there is also the possibility that government officials are paid by the richer cartels to look the other way during these drug trades. This can go further and sometimes the government can even become involved in the drug trades. This can cause an increase in violence in the country as the cartels will have the freedom to do what they want since they are backed by the government. Leading to more death and suffering in their country or a very unstable government that the citizens do not trust. This can lead to civil wars, military governments or revolutions. These problems can affect not only the country they take place in but also neighbouring countries or trade partners of the country. Thus having a lot of collateral damage.

Difficulties in combating drug trafficking

The government of the USA spends a lot of money on the war on drugs. However, the cartels are illegal corporations that have a lot of money and are often run by intelligent individuals or groups. They tend to be very loyal to each other and have more than enough resources to evade the enforcement of the law or else fight it. They have experienced smugglers running their trade routes and have thought out plans

on how to evade the constant monitoring of the trade routes. Using transshipment and transloading can distract the government from their smuggling operations or mislead them.

Some cartels have also manipulated or bribed government officials to help them in the drug trade or look the other way. This way the government is misled by their own employees or aren't being told critical information to fight these drug trades. The cartels are often not morally bound to human rights acts and torture, threaten and blackmail government informants for valuable information to gain the upper hand and be a few steps ahead.

Not all governments have the same laws on how they should treat drug cartels.And not all governments trust each other enough to receive help in fighting these cartels. For example, the Venezuela government suspected the DEA of spying on them and then discontinued their cooperation against the cartels. There is also the issue of whether the government of one country is still viable to arrest drug traffickers once they enter another country's waters.

Drug cartels often utilise an array of smuggling methods. Stretching from swapping cargo loads halfway to their destination to hiding illicit drugs in normal everyday objects or sometimes even going as far as hiding them in their smugglers' orifices. Places where the law enforcement would never search without very good reason of suspicion.

Major Parties Involved

Colombia
Colombia is the greatest exporter of cocaine and coca leaves. It is also connected by sea to the Caribbean islands and by land border to Venezuela. Most of its exports are to the USA and Mexico. Meaning they have to go through the Caribbean.

Mexico
While Colombia is the largest exporter of cocaine in the world. Mexican cartels are responsible for distributing Colombian cocaine to the USA and other countries. Mexico officially declared a war on drug cartels in 2006 and is now one of the more active members in the combating of drug trafficking.

United Kingdom (UK)
Aside from having many former colonies still under their rule in the Caribbean, many of the drugships from Latin America go through the Caribbean to get to Europe's ports. It is not uncommon for these ships to port in the UK and sell their drugs there.

United States of America (USA)
With the large amount of illicit drugs being trafficked into the USA through Florida, Puerto Rico and the USVI, and with most of these drugs being transported on ships going through the Caribbean. The USA has also declared war on drugs as early as 1971. And is still the leading nation in the international war on drugs.

Venezuela

In 2005, Venezuela severed their ties with the DEA, and Colombia increased their connections with the DEA. This led to Venezuela becoming a lot more attractive to drug traffickers. In 2015 33% of all cocaine in Latin America came from Venezuela. Government officials have been accused of being involved in the drug trades.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
10.12.1982	The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was adopted
xx.08.2005	Venezuela accused the DEA of spying and rescinded their rights to operate on Venezuelan territory, territorial airspace or territorial waters
11.12.2006	Mexico declared war on drug cartels
04.07.2008	CARICOM maritime security agreement
Date	Event and description
Date	Event and description

Past Attempts To Solve The Issue

National Drug Control Strategy Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy (USA):

> Reduce the supply of illicit drugs smuggled across the Caribbean Border and into the United States that contribute to addiction and overdose as well as fuel crime and violence. This will be done by strengthening interdiction and law enforcement capabilities, countering criminal networks, leveraging illicit finance efforts, and targeting drug transportation routes and modalities to aggressively reduce illicit drugs crossing the Caribbean Border.

Antigua and Barbuda National Anti-Drug Strategy Plan 2019-2023 (Antigua and Barbuda):

> Aims to reduce the availability of, and the demand for drugs, strengthen cooperation between key stakeholders, improve data collection and availability, delay the onset of substance use / abuse and improve implementation ability of the National Drug Council

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982-present.

  4 July 2008, UNCLOS bulletin no. 68 was created. In this bulletin the CARICOM Maritime and Airspace Security Cooperation Agreement was made. In which a variety of topics were discussed, including fighting drug trafficking in the Caribbean area.

Possible Solutions

The main reason for the majority of drugs being smuggled through the Caribbean is because of their central location and proximity to the Latin American countries, but also the Caribbean has had problems with border security and management. The Caribbean region is characterised by a very fluid internal migration pattern and with as many people migrating in between countries as there are now, it is not difficult for drug traffickers to go in and out of the Caribbean. One way to solve this would be to find a way to strengthen these borders or increase law enforcement in the Caribbean.

The Caribbean countries could also strive to reduce the migration in between countries. This way frequent visitors will stand out more and the Caribbean will become a less attractive region to visit for the purpose of drug trafficking. It would also lead to less resources being necessary to manage the sea- or airports and increase the attention for potential drug smugglers. Since the Caribbean countries could use the leftover money to invest in more thorough security measures.

Taking out the source of the problems would be effective. But it will prove to be very difficult. With many countries already having declared a war on the illegal drug trade without completely being able to stop it and the corruption of government officials

Bibliography

All citations should be in MLA format. You may use www.noodletools.com or www.easybib.com to create your bibliography. Please ensure that all entries in the bibliography section are 'left-justified' – as this paragraph is set out. Also, any websites cited must be in hyperlinks (you must be able to click on them in this document to refer to the website). Aim to be using at least 15 sources for the entire report.

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