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International Narcotics and the U.S.  
Supply Reduction Strategy

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## I. United States Interests in International Narcotics Trafficking

United States' interests in international narcotics begin with deep concerns about the domestic drug abuse problem. The common view is that drugs such as heroin, cocaine and marijuana are too readily available and too widely used in the United States. The inevitable bad consequences include crime, social dependency, and wasted youth. The obvious solution is to suppress both the supply and the demand for these drugs.

This view of the drug problem soon takes on international aspects for one crucial reason: much of the domestic supply of these drugs comes from outside the United States. Thus, source countries such as Mexico, Thailand, Turkey, Colombia, and Jamaica soon become the focus of United States efforts to reduce the supply of drugs. If the flow of drugs from these countries can be cut off (or substantially reduced), then drugs will be less available and more expensive in the United States. This, in turn, will discourage adolescents from experimenting, make it harder for experimenters to advance to regular use, and motivate regular users to abandon drug use.

### A. Alternative Approaches to International Drug Trafficking

The United States can confront international narcotics through strategies that are distinguished from one another in terms of their auspices, their proximate targets, and the form of the United States involvement. In terms of auspices, the United States can go at the problem multilaterally (for example, by working with the United Nations to win global ratification of the Psychotropic Convention); or bilaterally (for example, by negotiating extradition treaties with Colombia, or providing technical assistance to Mexico's efforts to eradicate opium crops); or unilaterally (for example, by strengthening its own border control efforts, or conducting covert operations against international traffickers). In terms of proximate targets, the U.S. efforts can be directed at the crops that supply the raw materials for the production of narcotics; or they can be directed at the trafficking organizations and illicit markets that process and distribute the illegal drugs. In terms of the United States role, it can invest heavily in creating indigenous capacities through financial assistance, technical advice, or training; or it can rely on United States capabilities deployed within or outside the foreign source countries.

To a degree, one can think of these approaches as arrayed on a continuum. At one end, are broad political approaches to the problem. Multi-lateralism is emphasized; the focus is on the economic and political development of the source countries so that illicit narcotics are less important and less acceptable; the ultimate objective is the construction of an international regime hostile to narcotics trafficking. At the other extreme are narrower enforcement approaches. Multi-lateralism is rejected as too cumbersome and unreliable in favor of bilateral or even unilateral approaches; the target shifts from the broad political and economic development of a country to the conduct of a small number of illicit traffickers; the ultimate objective is to frustrate and immobilize the current traffickers.

The first approach inevitably has a long time horizon and an uncertain result. Its success depends on the source countries coming to own the international narcotics problem for themselves rather than seeing their efforts as something they do to help the United States.

The second approach is shorter and more direct, but runs the risk of being too narrow and wearing out its welcome long before its objectives are achieved. Its success depends on the source countries coming to tolerate aggressive United States actions pursued for their own purposes.

Whatever way the United States chooses to pursue international supply reduction objectives, new problems come into view. These new problems can be viewed as costs of pursuing supply reduction objectives with source countries; or, they can be viewed as other U.S. objectives that are harmed or compromised by U.S. drug control objectives. In any case, they are effects of U.S. drug control efforts that must be taken into account in designing the policies to minimize the collateral problems, or in estimating the overall value of U.S. drug policies.

#### B. Supply Reduction and Foreign Policy

One such problem is the impact that United States international supply reduction efforts have on other foreign policy objectives of the United States. A decade ago, it was ludicrous to think of drug policies as impinging on larger foreign policy objectives. Then, drugs were neither important enough to the United States, nor to the source countries, to make them important foreign policy issues. They were consigned to the limbo of "transnational issues" handled by professional bureaucracies as technical rather than policy problems. Since then, the situation seems to have changed. Drugs feature much more prominently in international agendas. Partly this is because U.S. interest in the drug problem has increased. But it is also because

the focus of U.S. foreign policy has shifted, and because the nature of the drug problem has changed. Essentially, as the domestic drug problem shifted from heroin to cocaine, and as the foreign policy of the United States shifted from the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Africa to Central and South America, drugs became an important foreign policy issue.

Piling drug control objectives onto foreign policy agendas with other countries inevitably hinders the pursuit of other foreign policy objectives. This effect occurs partly because the opportunities for expressing and advancing U.S. interests with foreign countries are limited. Since time for negotiations is limited, if one issue moves higher on the agenda, others must move lower. Similarly, there is limited operational capacity for overseeing and assisting with the implementation of the agreements that are reached: if the embassy staff is tramping around the fields with crop eradication teams or arranging for spare parts for helicopters, they are doing less on international trade issues. Finally, since there is limited tolerance in the foreign country for U.S. purposes, and eagerness to negotiate with the U.S. for purposes of their own, U.S. interests in achieving supply reduction efforts will be held hostage to the objectives that the foreign countries are pursuing with the United States. Assistance to the United States' supply reduction efforts, or tolerance of unilateral activities in pursuit of this goal, will be traded for some other purposes.

How much difficulty will be caused by bringing supply reduction objectives into relations with source countries depends crucially on the political links between the interests that are benefitting from the narcotics trafficking, the domestic regime, and United States' interests in supporting the domestic regime. If narcotics traffickers represent an economic and political threat to the current regime, and if the United States is interested in bolstering the current regime, then drug control interests and the foreign policy interests are usefully aligned. Presumably, in this situation, much can be done to advance supply reduction objectives. If, on the other hand, the narcotics traffickers support a shaky domestic regime that the United States is committed to protecting; or, if the narcotics traffickers are usefully threatening a domestic regime that the United States regards as hostile to its interests; then the drug policy objectives conflict with foreign policy objectives. In this situation, drug policy objectives are likely not only to be frustrated, but actually injured by their inclusion in the foreign policy agenda.

#### C. Supply Reduction and Organized Crime Control

The potential conflict between drug and foreign policy objectives is fairly obvious. Somewhat more subtle is the conflict between drug policy objectives, and organized crime control objectives. After all, it seems obvious that if drug policy is directed against international trafficking organizations, then organized crime control objectives are also being pursued, for the international traffickers represent a large proportion of the organized crime problem.

The difficulty with this straightforward reasoning is this. Enforcement efforts against organized criminal groups is generally less than perfectly effective. The consequence of this fact is that there is always some group that is left behind (or soon grows up once enforcement efforts slacken). It is possible that these groups are in some important respects "worse" than the groups that previously existed. Indeed, natural selection virtually guarantees this result. The survivors are likely to be more violent, more corrupting, and wealthier than the groups that were successfully attacked. Indeed, it can even occur that powerful criminal groups use enforcement agencies to help them maintain a significant market advantage by focusing the attention of enforcement agencies on the lesser enterprises. This can happen intentionally through corruption. Or, it can happen innocently (at least on the enforcement side) if the traffickers supply useful tips to enforcement agencies.

The successful incapacitation of drug traffickers generally does mean that the objectives of drug policy have been advanced. In all likelihood, the supply of drugs to the U.S. has been slowed. Moreover, it also does mean that at least some organized criminals have been immobilized and made to pay for their crimes. So the objectives of drug policy and organized crime policy are not fundamentally in conflict. They are in conflict only insofar as supply reduction efforts change the structure of the illicit markets from one composed of widely decentralized, small scale, relatively benign firms, to one composed of large, centralized, violent firms. To the extent they produce this effect, the organized crime aspects of the international narcotics problem will have worsened even though the supply reduction efforts will have been advanced.

In sum, trade-offs arise in the pursuit of efforts to reduce the supply of drugs from foreign countries to illicit markets in the United States. To a degree, one must choose between broad efforts to construct an effective international narcotics control regime, or much more direct efforts to stem the tide of illicit drugs coming to the United States. Depending on this (and other more programmatic or tactical judgments), the United States will pay for its efforts in different currencies. It will find its other foreign policy goals advanced or retarded depending on the political and economic importance of the

trafficking to United States allies. It will find its organized crime objectives facilitated or injured by the character of the illicit system that successfully resists enforcement efforts. And in any case, it will find its budget and organizational resources stretched by the challenges associated with controlling the international supply of drugs.

The central policy issue facing the country is what sort of approaches to what drugs in what countries seem likely to perform well in the sense that they succeed in reducing the supply of drugs at the lowest possible cost (or maximum possible benefit) in terms of other foreign policy interests, organized crime control objectives, and direct expenditures. To get a handle on that issue, it is important that we take a strategic look at the principal instruments used for pursuing international supply reduction objectives.

## II. Supply Reduction Instruments: A Strategic Assessment

America's efforts to reduce the international supply of drugs to the United States can usefully be seen in terms of four operating programs, and two support programs. The programs differ from one another in terms of the organizations that are centrally involved, the basic concept that guides and justifies them, and their operational objectives and activities. The main operating programs are: the international program; the interdiction program; the criminal investigation program; and the street level enforcement program. These operating programs are backed up by an intelligence program, and a science and technology program.

One might think that only some of these programs are appropriate for discussion in a conference on "International Narcotics." The international program and the interdiction program, for example, might seem more central than street level enforcement or intelligence. In fact, many of these other programs play an important role in controlling international narcotics trafficking. The criminal investigation program seeks to immobilize foreign traffickers as well as domestic organizations, and its operations often take place in foreign countries. The intelligence program not only provides the basis for U.S. strategic judgments about the relative importance of source countries, but also establishes the evidence that can be used in negotiations to galvanize the source countries into action. And, as the "pizza connection" case indicates, even street level enforcement plays a role in international control efforts by exposing international trafficking networks that were previously unknown.

In short, because the international trafficking problem is a system, it is not easy to throw a boundary around it. The programs that are labelled international pick up only a small portion of the activities that actually impinge on the international trafficking system. For this reason, I will discuss each of the operating programs from the vantage point of their potential impact on the international supply system.

#### A. The International Program

The international program is led principally by the State Department. Its central aim is to strengthen the motivation and capabilities of source countries to assist the United States in its supply reduction efforts, or to increase their tolerance for unilateral U.S. actions. The basic assumption is the more partners the United States has throughout the world in seeking to control international drug trafficking the better.

The principal operational objective of the international program seems to be controlling opium, coca, and marijuana crops. They achieve this result by eradicating illicit crops, encouraging crop substitution, and strengthening regulatory controls over legal crops. This program works through local government agencies, but supplies direct operating support and technical assistance. In addition, the program makes longer term investments through training of personnel, and the encouragement of a climate that is intolerant of drug trafficking.

Although the central focus is crop control, the international program also facilitates enforcement activities against foreign drug traffickers. Their facilitative efforts include close-in support to operations through financial and technical assistance, and broader efforts such as training of enforcement personnel, and the negotiation of extradition treaties.

The principal success of the international program over the last few decades was the successful effort to sharply limit the diversion of opium and heroin from Turkey in the early seventies. Substantially improved performance in the regulation of illicit crops, the suppression of illicit crops, and the immobilization of drug traffickers produce an observable shortage in heroin on the East Coast of the United States that lasted for several years until sources in Mexico and the Far East took up the slack. The shortage was reflected in reduced incidence of new heroin use, and greater demand for treatment of addiction.

The major strength of the international program is its strong domestic political support. This is not surprising since the program has the advantages of fitting intuitive

notions about how the drug problem might best be solved with as little work as possible within the United States. The international program succeeds in making supply from other countries the center of the problem rather than demand within the United States. Since it is hard to see how we could suppress demand within the United States, it is easier to imagine that we could succeed in controlling supplies outside the United States. The domestic political support guarantees a continuing flow of resources for this enterprise, and a continuing pressure to keep drugs high on the list of foreign policy objectives.

This strength is offset by two principal weaknesses. The first and most obvious is that the effectiveness of the program is limited by the interests, capabilities, and tolerances of the source countries. In many important cases, these turn out to be quite weak. The government's interests in controlling drug trafficking is compromised by complicity in the trade, or a reluctance to create internal political and economic problems by attacking a lucrative industry, or mere indifference to a problem that is principally a problem for the United States and not them. The government's capabilities are sometimes weak because they cannot control the areas where the crops are being harvested, or because their organizations are not up to the tasks of crop control or enforcement. And, as the United States applies pressure to increase their motivation and capacities to control the international drug trade, their tolerance frays. There is only so much the United States can ask them to do to help with what is often perceived as a U.S. domestic problem.

The second crippling weakness is that the international program seems to be focused too much on the raw materials from which drugs are made. There is a superficial logic that makes such a focus seem desirable. After all, when we attack crops, it seems we are attacking the fundamental source of supply. But what this logic leaves unanswered is the question of how easy it is to substitute the crops that are being attacked with crops grown elsewhere. The proper logic to use in selecting a target for supply reduction efforts is to identify that factor of production that is in long run short supply relative to the other factors of production, and attack that. That will insure the maximum long term reduction in the supply of drugs.

While it is unclear what that factor is, it seems unlikely that it is raw materials. The amount of raw materials necessary to supply U.S. demand for heroin and cocaine is trivially small by world production standards. It also seems clear that the crops can be grown in many different locations. And, even when we have succeeded in suppressing crops in source countries, the supply system has generally adapted within a few years - a much shorter time than it takes us to re-orient our diplomatic and bureaucratic efforts to the newly emerging source country.



The point of these observations is not to argue that international crop control efforts are useless. When things line up to allow a major intervention in an important source country, then a shortage can be produced, and that shortage will produce the expected and desirable results. The point is that one cannot count on this happening frequently. Nor can one expect the effects to be long lasting.

The conclusion from this quick assessment seems to be this: On occasion, the international program can make an important contribution to supply reduction efforts. The crucial factor is the commitment from the source country's government. When that increases (for whatever reason), a very important opportunity is created. Ordinarily, however, the international program cannot be expected to produce a significant impact. Of necessity, it must rely on other governments. And it is focused on a factor of production that does not seem to be in long run short supply. So, while the international program may gradually create an international regime intolerant of drug use, and while it will occasionally produce important short-run effects, it cannot be relied on to do most of the heavy work in controlling the supply of drugs. The implication of this conclusion is that we should see the international program as something that is preparing the ground for future success, and positioned to discover and exploit opportunities when they arise, but not the main line of attack.

#### B. The Interdiction Program

The interdiction program relies on the combined operational capabilities of the United States Customs Agency, the Border Patrol of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Coast Guard, the Federal Aviation Authority, and, increasingly, the United States Armed Forces. In addition, to a degree, these organizations are dependent on intelligence information generated by investigative agencies such as the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The basic concept of the program is to prevent drugs from crossing the nation's borders. Its operational focus is seizures of drug shipments headed for the United States. In addition to interdicting the drugs themselves, the program also aims to cripple trafficking organizations. The crippling blows are delivered in two different ways. First, by seizing drugs, cash, boats, planes and other equipment used in narcotics trafficking, the interdiction program attacks the assets that the illegal enterprises need to continue in the trade. Second, by developing evidence through seizures and interrogations, the major traffickers can be made vulnerable to prosecution in the United States or elsewhere.

The paths toward improved performance in this program are essentially three. First, performance can be improved if border patrols could be made more intensive or more efficient: for example, if military radar or remote sensing devices could be used more extensively to disclose unauthorized border crossings; or if staffing levels were increased to sort the cargo and people now passing through ports of entry.

Second, performance could be improved if the patrol effort could be targeted more effectively. One way to improve targeting would be for the patrol forces to analyze their own experience, discover the places and times when drugs are likely to be smuggled, and improve their "profiles" of the itineraries and people that are most likely to be carrying drugs. A second way would be to solicit prior information from tipsters or informants about drug shipments. The first method relies on nothing other than the experience of the patrol force itself. The second draws the interdiction and patrol forces into investigative activities - particularly if informants are relied on extensively.

The third path toward increased effectiveness is enhanced impact on trafficking organizations. This can occur if the interdiction effort improves in terms of its ability to seize assets; or succeeds in generating more investigative leads and evidence from its arrests; or uses prior information and arrests made at the border more effectively through sustained investigative efforts.

The principal successes of interdiction efforts are somewhat difficult to recognize. Often, large seizures are made. But the consequences of such events are unclear. It has been estimated that one-third of the marijuana headed for the United States is seized. But marijuana remains relatively inexpensive and available. The enormous investment in the South Florida Task Force resulted in major cocaine seizures, and did the most of any operation to maximize the investigative impact of interdiction efforts. But the price of cocaine has fallen, not increased. So, the impact of interdiction efforts has been difficult to show.

The principal strength of the interdiction program, like the international program, has been its significant domestic political support. Like the international program, the interdiction program is easy to understand: it stops drugs headed for the United States. Moreover, like the international program, it locates the principal target of drug policy outside the United States. In addition, the interdiction program has two political advantages over the international program. It appeals to the simple notion that the country ought to be able to control its own borders.

And, it is picturesque. There is something enormously reassuring about the notion that the Coast Guard and the United States Navy and Air Force have joined the war against drugs.

In addition to these political strengths, the interdiction program has important operational contributions to make. The most tangible is the seized drugs. These represent not only a direct subtraction of drugs that would otherwise be available in illicit markets, but also a potentially important economic loss for the traffickers.

A second important contribution is the deterrent effects of interdiction. It is not just that some potential smugglers are dissuaded by the threat of interdiction, but also that the reckless people who remain in the business must become more careful. They must hire specialists to hide or off-load drugs. They must hire couriers to carry the drugs. All these transactions slow the rate at which drugs can come to the United States, and make the dealers vulnerable not only to the police but to other criminals.

A third important operational contribution of interdiction is that interdiction efforts produce arrests which can sometimes be turned into important investigative leads. This happens only infrequently. But even so, this is one of the most important sources of leads for continuing investigations.

It is not widely recognized that the operational benefits of interdiction efforts are maximized if the patrol efforts are not guided by prior information, but are instead somewhat random. This is clearly true for the deterrent effects: if the interdiction efforts are targeted by profiles, and if the smugglers learn the profiles, then they will be able to reduce their vulnerability by operating outside the profile. To guard against this possibility, patrol forces should have some random elements.

Randomness may also be a virtue in terms of maximizing the impact of interdiction on investigations. One of the weaknesses of investigation is that it proceeds by making connections between what was already known about drug trafficking and what was just learned. If a defendant says that Mr. X is involved in the shipment, and Mr. X is already known to be a significant dealer, that information will be taken quite seriously and acted upon. If a defendant says Ms. Z is involved, and no one has ever before heard of Ms. Z, then that will be discounted. This system works fine if the investigators have an accurate picture of who is actually involved in drug dealing. It works much less well if they know only a little bit about who is involved, or the drug trafficking situation changes often. In that case, they run the risk of concentrating on known traffickers who are

less significant than others who are less well known, or on traffickers who were once important but are now being eclipsed by a rapidly changing drug market.

The only way to guard against this possibility is to sometimes look in places where one does not expect to find anything significant. That is why armies put out patrols - particularly in places where they do not expect anyone to be: they do not want to be surprised. That is the role that randomness plays in the link between interdiction and investigation: random interdiction efforts prevent investigative efforts from becoming too narrowly focused by turning up evidence of trafficking networks that were previously unsuspected by investigators.

The interdiction program has four principal weaknesses. First, although the objective of sealing the nation's borders against drugs is simple to state and understand, the size of the task is overwhelming. The nation has over 25,000 miles of coast to be patrolled. Hundreds of millions of tons of cargo, and millions of people pass through ports of entry. Keeping watch on the border, and sorting through the people and material that are coming through, in search of relatively small quantities and volumes of drugs is a great deal like searching for a needle in the haystack.

The first problem leads to a second. Because it is easy to hide small volumes of drugs in the enormous volume of other material, the drugs that are likely to be found are those that come in large volumes. For the most part, that means marijuana. Heroin and cocaine are small enough to be smuggled into the United States through many means. Marijuana also comes in in small quantities. But marijuana also comes in in shiploads and planeloads. Those are easier to interdict than the infiltrated heroin. In fact, the interdiction effort tends to be focused on marijuana. It is much less effective in dealing with the supply of heroin and cocaine.

The third weakness is that the interdiction effort's focus on the drugs themselves may be misguided. Again, there is a superficial logic indicating that there is value in seizing drugs headed for the United States: if we didn't catch them, they would end up on the nation's streets. But the real problem may be the trafficking organizations that continue to make the deals that keep the drugs coming to the United States. After all, if we were thinking about stopping General Motors from producing cars, no one would think much had been accomplished if we seized a shipment, or even its entire inventory. It would be set back. But its own capital, its credit with banks, its equipment, its knowledge of how to produce cars, and the entrepreneurial talents of its managers would soon have the organization back in business. Similarly, when Tylenol had to be removed from the market,

Johnson and Johnson was badly hurt. But no one thought that the enterprise would stop. Shipments and inventories of finished drugs may be less important to overall supply capacity than it first appears.

The fourth problem arises if the interdiction effort seeks to increase its impact by going beyond drug seizures to the immobilization of trafficking organizations. As noted above, this can occur by developing leads from arrests made during interdiction efforts, or by soliciting prior information from tipsters and informants. The difficulty with these approaches is that they essentially change the interdiction effort into a criminal investigative effort. That is not necessarily bad if criminal investigation is a better way of immobilizing trafficking networks. It is only bad if, in the pursuit of investigations, the interdiction effort itself weakens; or if the agencies that do interdiction are less skilled in investigations than others; or, if the investigations get tangled up with one another.

In sum, the interdiction program has an important role to play in supply reduction efforts. It is right for the country to think in terms of its territorial integrity, and to exploit its right to make special searches and investigations at the border. Drug seizures prevent drugs from reaching illicit markets, and economically injure drug trafficking organizations. Arrests made within the interdiction program furnish offer investigative leads by revealing drug trafficking operations that were previously unsuspected. All this is quite valuable. On the other hand, interdiction seems to have few independent, demonstrated successes; and it has significant inherent limitations. Thus, it is probably best to see the interdiction program not as a powerful, independent program that can solve the international trafficking problem, but instead as an important complement to investigative efforts. Moreover, it is important to see that its potential as a complement to investigative efforts is maximized when its efforts are relatively random rather than guided by prior information, for it is in these conditions that the independent, deterrent effects of interdiction are maximized, and the greatest contribution made to investigative efforts.

### C. Criminal Investigation

The third operating program within the nation's supply reduction efforts emphasizes criminal investigation. The principal organizations include the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The basic aim of the program is to immobilize trafficking networks. Operating objectives include the investigation, arrest, prosecution and imprisonment of narcotics

traffickers. In addition, to insure the effective immobilization of trafficking networks, operating objectives include the seizure of assets, the rooting out of the network of associates, and the close supervision of defendants within prisons to prevent continued operations.

The major activities include criminal investigations relying on electronic and other forms of covert surveillance, the recruitment of informants, long term undercover operations, and financial investigations. These operations are sometimes usefully complemented by intelligence analyses which not only guide the investigations, but also lay the evidentiary base for conspiracy cases.

The principal strength of the program is that it is targeted on what seems to be the factor of production that is in long run short supply in the international trafficking system: namely, the capacity to complete large scale transactions efficiently in a world that is marked by betrayal and threats of criminal prosecution. As noted above, it is not obvious which of all the problems that must be overcome to deliver drugs to illicit markets in the United States is the most demanding. Some think it is raw materials. Some think it is technological know how. Some think it is capital.

My hunch is that the most difficult problem is that one must execute large stakes transactions with dangerous strangers in a world where no laws enforce contracts. Drug dealers are extremely vulnerable. They own a valuable commodity. But its value can only be captured by selling it. Selling it exposes them to risks of imprisonment. Relying on agents exposes them to risks of betrayal. And, like anyone else, they are vulnerable to armed robbery. These facts make the establishment of relatively trustworthy working relations extremely valuable. Indeed, this idea is captured by a key word in the drug trafficking world: the idea of a "connection." When one has a "connection" (that is, a working relationship with a supplier), one is in business. When one lacks a "connection," he is out of luck.

If establishing and maintaining a "connection" is a key ingredient of success for drug dealers, then the total number of such connections and the ease of establishing them must be important in determining the aggregate supply of drugs to illicit markets. This, in turn, implies that if there is an inexpensive way of making the establishment of connections even more problematic, then that would be a good way of minimizing the supply of drugs.

The criminal investigation program works principally on just these problems. By engaging in covert surveillance, the negotiations and transactions that keep the drugs in motion

become much more difficult. By recruiting informants and infiltrating undercover investigators, drug dealers are forced to distrust any customer that appears, and to engage in expensive tests of the person's trustworthiness. Since these programs are targeted on existing connections, and make the re-establishment of connections once broken much more difficult; and since reliable connections may be the most precious resource in distributing illicit drugs to the United States; the criminal investigation program may be the program that accounts for the largest portion of the observed price and availability differential between the current situation, and the situation that would obtain if drugs were legalized, or enforcement efforts were to slacken. This program may also be the route toward short and long run improvements in the success of the supply reduction strategy.

Note that this program does not have to eliminate all the illicit traffickers to contribute to the supply reduction effort. Note also that its effects are not limited to the immobilization of the traffickers that are arrested and successfully prosecuted. Like any other criminal enforcement activity, the drug enforcement activity produces results not only by incapacitating current offenders, but also by deterring and disrupting the activities of others who are not caught. Obviously, it is better to immobilize more traffickers rather than fewer. But the point is that the benefits of enforcement are not limited to the people who are arrested. Everyone else must behave more cautiously. And more cautious behavior means that, in aggregate, lesser quantities of drugs reach the United States, and those that do are more expensive.

When one searches for the principal successes of the criminal investigation program, one finds oneself in the same position as when one looked for successes of the interdiction program. There are frequent spectacular arrests, but the long term consequences of those arrests remains unclear. There is an important price differential between the prices of drugs in illicit wholesale markets and those that would obtain in a legal market, but one doesn't know whether to attribute that differential to the efforts of criminal investigation, or the scarcity of raw materials, or the threat to smugglers created by interdiction. Perhaps the single strongest evidence of an impact of criminal investigation is the breaking of the Turkish French connection in the early seventies. But that effort was enormously aided by the international program's contributions to crop control in Turkey and effective enforcement in France and Italy. So, the impact remains uncertain.

There are three principal weaknesses in the criminal investigation program. The first is that many of the most

important targets are overseas. In this respect, the criminal investigation program has the weaknesses of, and depends on important relationships with, the international program.

The second is simply that it is difficult to make successful cases against wary drug dealers. It is hard to know where and how to place one's covert surveillance (to say nothing of the difficulty of maintaining enough language capability within enforcement agencies to maintain appropriate wiretaps). It is hard to develop and protect informants who are afraid of reprisals, and often forced to testify in criminal cases. It is expensive and dangerous to sustain long term undercover investigations. And it is tedious to sort through old investigative case files in search of intelligence that can guide the development of a current investigation, or lay the basis for a conspiracy case on the basis of past observations. Moreover, there is always the risk that a major investment will come to nought: the defendant may flee to a safe haven overseas; the case may be lost on a technicality; the defendant may still be able to operate his business from within prison. So, the effort is expensive, demanding, and uncertain in its result.

Third, the political support for this kind of effort is relatively weak. It necessarily involves the government in suspect activities. No one likes the deception and coercion that are necessary to make successful narcotics cases. No one likes the close associations that must be established between the traffickers and the enforcement agencies. And there are enough examples of abuses and corruption occurring to re-fuel the continuing suspicion of these investigative tactics. At the same time, the benefits are hard to observe. There is not enough visible activity to offer immediate assurances that something significant is occurring. The arrests, when they are made, are so trumped up that it is hard to distinguish when something really important has happened, and when the success has been more modest. And the systems for accounting for activity and performance have never gained much credibility with legislative or media overseers. In short, the political mandate for this activity is harder to sustain than for interdiction or the international program.

In sum, it is a reasonable bet that we owe much of the current success of supply reduction efforts to the criminal investigation program, but this is by no means proven. What does seem clear is that the program's value lies in its ability to disrupt "connections" and slow the rate at which transactions can be made. It also has the advantages of seeming to advance some organized crime control objectives insofar as it arrests and prosecutes some who make money in illicit trafficking. It has the weaknesses of being expensive, difficult, and uncertain in its result. Partly as



a result, the political mandate for this program is weak and inconsistent.

#### D. Street-Level Drug Enforcement

The fourth operating program contributing to the objective of limiting supplies to illicit markets is one which attacks drugs when they become visible: on the nation's streets, and within the nation's workplaces. The principle organizations involved are the several thousand state and local police departments. It is tempting to think that it is only or principally the narcotics units within these organizations that are involved, but the fact of the matter is that the more general patrol and investigative units within these departments also contribute to narcotics enforcement objectives.

The basic concept of the program is to disrupt retail markets for drugs by preventing the establishment of areas where drugs are known to be sold. If drug dealing can be forced off streets and away from schools, not only will it be difficult for higher level dealers to distribute drugs in quantity, but the demand will be suppressed as the users find it increasingly inconvenient (and expensive) to score. The basic activities of the program include observation sale arrests, "buy and bust" operations, arrests of customers arriving to buy drugs, and aggressive enforcement of city ordinances in drug dealing areas.

In the recent past, street level drug enforcement has been disparaged as a costly and ineffective method of drug control. The argument has been that the street level dealers were too easily replaced, and that nothing permanent was accomplished. The drug markets were simply shifted around. In addition, street level enforcement created opportunities for police corruption. Finally, the job was not professionally challenging or satisfying. As a result, most local enforcement agencies sought to imitate the strategies of federal enforcement agencies: they planned long term investigations targeted on Mr. Big.

Recently, street level drug enforcement seems to be coming back into vogue. There seem to be several reasons for this - not all of them linked to the imperatives of drug policy. One important change involves a shift in the basic strategy of policing at the local level.

Over the last three decades, the police have pursued a strategy of policing that could be called "professionalized crime-fighting." The aim of this strategy was to minimize

corruption by keeping the attention of the police focused on patrol, rapid response to calls for assistance, and retrospective investigation of crimes. In this strategy, street level drug enforcement was an anomaly. It was too vulnerable to corruption, and seemed to neglect the serious criminal offenders in its pursuit of fringe characters.

In the last few years, police administrators have begun to rethink this basic strategy. They have discovered that the "professional crime fighting" strategy cut them off from the communities they patrolled, and thereby actually weakened their ability to deal with violent crime. As they have sought to re-establish their links to local communities through consultative mechanisms, however, they discovered that communities were less concerned about victimization in serious crimes, than they were about the conditions that reduced the quality of life in their communities and made them feel afraid. Prominent among these conditions was open drug dealing. Thus, local police have been drawn back into street level drug enforcement to meet community demands, and still community fears. The trend toward "quality of life policing," or "problem-solving policing," or "community-based strategic policing" will naturally increase the level of street level enforcement.

A second factor promoting street level drug enforcement is some evidence indicating that it can be successful in reducing street crime such as robberies and burglaries. An evaluation of a street level heroin enforcement program in Lynn, Massachusetts revealed that the program cut armed robberies by 18%, and burglaries by 37%. Similarly, street level drug enforcement in New York City reduced armed robberies by 40%, and burglaries by 27%. On the other hand, an effort in Lawrence, Massachusetts has produced no important effects yet. And an effort in Philadelphia not only failed to reduce crime, but also ruined relations with the community and the rest of the criminal justice system due to poor planning and communication. The best that can be said, then, is that some street level enforcement programs work sometimes in some places to control street crime. The conditions under which they can be expected to be successful is a suitable subject for research.

The apparent advantages of street level drug enforcement in improving the quality of urban life, stilling citizens' fears, and reducing robbery and burglary have prompted a reconsideration of the role of street level enforcement in the context of more specific supply reduction efforts. Here, also, street level enforcement has been discovered to have some virtues.

Probably the most important effects of street level enforcement are the impact that it has on the sheer inconvenience and risk associated with buying drugs. The

impact of higher level strategies such as crop control, interdiction, and sustained criminal investigations against major trafficking organizations produce results principally by increasing the dollar price of drugs in the United States. Street level enforcement, on the other hand, produces an effect not on the dollar price, but on the difficulty of "scoring." This may not be particularly important for committed drug users, but it could be quite important for young experimenters. If one can increase the amount of time it takes to score drugs from several minutes to several hours, one might well succeed in discouraging youthful experimentation. Moreover, the daily grind of having to buy drugs under such inconvenient conditions may eventually have an impact on more experienced and committed users. They may reduce their own consumption, seek treatment, or even voluntarily abstain.

Such results are consistent with the fact that street level enforcement reduces street crime, for we know that drug users account for a large proportion of street crime, and that their criminal activity is linked to levels of drug use. It stands to reason, then, that if street crime is reduced by street level drug enforcement, that that effect may be at least partly due to reduced drug consumption by active users. So, street level enforcement's impact on the "effective price" of drugs may contribute to drug policy objectives by discouraging new users from experimenting, and motivating older users to seek treatment or voluntarily abandon their drug consumption.

The second important contribution that street level enforcement can make to drug policy objectives is analogous to the contribution that interdiction efforts can make to the sustained criminal investigation program. Like interdiction, street level enforcement produces arrests. The defendants who are arrested are potentially an important source of information about higher level drug dealing. While this happens relatively rarely, it remains one of the important ways that leads are developed for more significant criminal investigations. These leads are important when they lead to people that the investigative efforts have already identified as important traffickers. But, as in the case of interdiction, they are even more important if they expose a previously unknown trafficking network. Then, they correct the tendency of investigative efforts to focus on what is already known, and ignore evidence of newly emerging activities.

As in the case of interdiction, what makes street level enforcement useful in this activity is its relatively indiscriminating approach to enforcement. It is important that street level enforcement efforts be targeted at what it is directly in front of them. It is that straightforward focus (as distinct from a more discriminating effort to

target individual trafficking networks) that makes the street level enforcement effort a useful complement to sustained criminal investigation. If street level enforcement efforts were targeted to assist criminal investigation alone, not only would it fail to maximize its own important independent effects on the "effective price" of drugs to consumers, it would fail to make its maximum contribution to the criminal investigation program.

The principal weaknesses of the street level enforcement are what they have always been. The effects are transient. The treatment must be continually re-applied. It is more like fighting a guerilla war than a large fixed force battle. In addition, street level enforcement is an invitation to corruption. And it does have the potential to disrupt rather than consolidate police community relations. For all these reasons, the benefits of street level enforcement may depend a great deal on some of the details in the management of the program.

### III. Towards Effective Supply Reduction Strategies

The strategic assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the principal supply reduction programs indicates that each approach has strengths and weaknesses, and none is a clear panacea. Moreover, the political and bureaucratic facts of life are that all of these programs will continue to operate in the near and long term future, for each has its justification, its band of well-positioned supporters, and its accumulated bureaucratic capabilities. It is probably best, then, to think of supply reduction efforts as a portfolio of activities within which the balance might occasionally be adjusted to respond to new information about the environment to which the portfolio is the intended response.

Indeed, viewing the supply reduction strategy as a portfolio of responses has greater virtues than its accommodation of a political and bureaucratic reality. Viewing the nation's efforts in these terms emphasizes the fact that we are now, and will remain, quite uncertain about the most effective line of attack on the supply of narcotics. This is regrettable. But the proper response to this kind of uncertainty is to hedge one's bets. We should not act as though we were sure about what will be effective if we are only guessing. And the right response to being unsure is to invest in a variety of different approaches.

Seeing the strategy as a portfolio also emphasizes the complementary relationships among the various programs. Specifically, it emphasizes that the criminal investigation program cannot be successful without the contributions of

the international program. And it indicates that the criminal investigation program could be enormously strengthened by co-ordination with the interdiction and street-level enforcement activities. Because the portfolio deals with uncertainty about which approaches will be effective, and because it exploits complementary relationships among the various programs, the portfolio is actually a superior response to any single line of attack.

Still, it is possible to look at the overall portfolio and assess the appropriateness of the balance among the different elements. This assessment can indicate where, on the margin, changes should be made in the overall pattern of investment. When I look at the current balance of the portfolio, I come to the following conclusions. The current portfolio places too much emphasis on foreign countries, and too much emphasis on the drugs themselves. The portfolio could be improved if its emphasis on attacking trafficking organizations could be enhanced. This means: 1) shifting the focus of the international program away from crop controls to more sustained efforts to deny drug traffickers safe havens anywhere in the world; 2) strengthening criminal investigative efforts through greater use of electronic surveillance and intelligence analysis; 3) resisting pressures to shift more or less random interdiction patrols to quasi-investigative efforts to solicit and respond to prior information about drug shipments; 4) encouraging the intelligent use of street level enforcement programs; and 5) insuring effective operational co-ordination between the criminal investigation program on the one hand, and the independent interdiction and street level enforcement programs on the other to insure that leads generated by these other enforcement efforts are properly developed, and that the investigative efforts respond to new information about emerging trafficking networks that were previously unknown.

I cannot be sure that such shifts would strengthen the nation's response to the problem of international narcotics trafficking, but it is where I would place my bets. The reasons are that I think this approach is targeted on the factor that is in long-run short supply in supplying drugs to the United States, and it responds to the inherent limitations of operating in a world where much of the supply of narcotics comes from foreign source countries. The hopes of eradicating illicit overseas crops, or sealing the nation's borders against drug shipments seem illusory and distracting to me.