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The Army's role in the war on drugs

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Thesis: The OPTEMPO resulting from the Global War on Terror has crippled the ability of the U.S. Army to positively impact the U.S. War on Drugs.

I. Military unique capabilities

A. Army's continued support

1. Specific guidelines
2. Manpower/Equipment availability
3. Resources
4. Joint support

B. Assumption of entire mission

1. Federal agencies designated for mission
2. Increase organization size

II. The military must continue to support the war on drugs.

A. Illegal drug funding and support of terrorism (external threat)

1. Direct/Indirect funding
2. Sanctuary and mutual support between drug cartels and terrorists

B. Internal threat to our nation

1. Military exists to protect our nation
2. Link to violent crime

III. Conclusion and recommendations

A. Recommendations for continued support

B. Conclusion

### Abstract

This section of the document addresses the specific guidance pertaining to direct military support in counterdrug operations. It contains the argument of the current investment the Department of Defense currently has in Southwest Asia and what the United States stands to lose if counterdrug operations persist.

## The Army's Role in the War on Drugs

Regional Combatant Commanders receive specific missions that pertain solely to that area of responsibility. The combatant commanders also receive the additional mission of Counter Drug Commanders (CD) designated by the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF). They are held responsible for assisting in the protection of the U.S. from intrusion of illegal drugs. These specific regional commands are: US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), US Atlantic and Pacific Command (USAPAC), and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORTHCOM). The mission support is outlined in the Joint Counterdrug Operations Publication 3-07.4 dated 7 February 1998. In 1989 the SECDEF reported to the Department of Defense (DOD) that drug trafficking is a national security problem.

The Army is approximately at 515,000 strong to include National Guard and Army Reserve forces. With nearly 270,000 Soldiers total, deployed world wide in support of the Global War on Terror and other missions the manpower available to support the war on drugs, is insignificant. All Combatant Commanders must determine where to provide Soldiers based on priority. Units have been rotating between Iraq and Afghanistan systematically for the past six years. If Commanders are prioritizing dwell time, assignments and family time, one can only assume that Soldiers will continue to leave active duty to pursue other career options that allow them to be at home. The commanders must also determine what equipment if any can and will be provided to support our countries efforts with the War on Drugs. What equipment is necessary to sustain the fighting force in preparation for deployment to OIF or OEF? Units are limited with what equipment can be spared and provided. Training is a necessity prior to any deployment. In order for training to be effective and battle focused, the necessary equipment must be provided. Each occupational specialty has an inventory of weapons, equipment and resources that has been

deemed a requirement for all Soldiers to be trained and familiar with. This limits a commanders ability to properly respond to mission support by providing equipment to LEAs or HNs. The DOD has budgeted for engineer support. This support encompasses road improvement, lights, fences, training facilities and operations bases. The engineers provide the manpower support for the construction and emplacement of all this provided support. LEAs can request DOD resources, and the service members involved get sustainment training to enhance combat readiness. A large percent of the tasks involved directly relate to the Soldiers wartime mission.

Along with operational support the DOD provides nonoperational joint support to LEAs and or HNs such as training in formal schools, loan or lease of equipment without operators and use of facilities. The National Guard establishes and operates up to five schools known as National Guard counterdrug schools to federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies. They even train community and private organizations dedicated to the nation's drug war. These schools include the National Interagency Civil-Military Institute, Multi-Jurisdictional Counterdrug Task Force Training Center, Midwest and Regional Training Academy, and the Northeast Regional Counterdrug Training Center. The Secretary of Defense must report to Congress in February each year on all the counterdrug schools activities from the previous year.

We can raise the argument that the military support given to the law enforcement agencies detracts from readiness to defend the United States. The preparedness of the military is actually being enhanced by carrying out the support mission. Since the Army and their reserve components are legally restricted from enforcing laws within the country's borders, domestic military support to civilian law enforcement agencies must be provided by the National Guard, which is not limited by the statutory restraints of other federal troops. With adequate monetary

allocations, proper training, and national support, the National Guard can supply the military support needed to law enforcement agencies within our borders.

With current Operational Tempo (OPTEMPO) in support of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) this mission cannot be assumed strictly by LEAs therefore the Department of Defense with our Army must provide support where needed. We will continue to provide personnel and equipment to those agencies that need it. The Customs, DEA, Border Patrol and FBI are among the federal agencies calling on the DOD for assistance. By the mid nineties, our mission expanded to provide support across the United States, and the islands of the Caribbean. The establishment of Homeland Security and our focus on terrorist threats the ability to increase our federal agencies involved in counterdrug actions has been severely limited. Although funding has been increased by over a billion dollars annually, the agents and support staff have increased by only 10% in five years. Equality of effort falls to the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA) and DOD. The nature of all counter drug operations should be joint, and interagency. Our National Security depends on the ability to detect narcotics entering the U.S. The nation's top priority is countering terrorist attacks and narcotics trafficking. Joint strategies need to be developed to meet these threats, and the development of detection technology is a necessity. Soldier deployments for combating terrorism and the interruption of narcotics shipments are commonplace in the Army today. Drug trafficking is a common occurrence across the southern border and one shipment can have more of an impact than a terrorist act. Customs, DOD, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), work continually to coordinate the enforcement research and development in our government. They work together in to provide technical assistance in countering the drug traffic. The U.S. Customs provides one vehicle x-ray system at the Mexico border for the detection of controlled substances and foresees a large

purchase in the future depending on funding. The technology is not new, however expensive and placing drug detection devices at our ports of entry will be extensive. Our military bases have implemented the use of similar x-ray systems at our entry points. The plans for our ports of entry and using mobile devices hasn't been decided. The United Kingdom and France, have begun to deploy similar systems for early detection of both controlled substances and explosives across their borders.

The Customs service along with import locations and smuggling ability have changed dramatically over time due to open borders and the ability to remain flexible. Florida's coastal region was the premier import location for air and water entry into the country with illegal drugs. This changed with the increase of Federal agencies intervening which resulted in more importation along the Southwest border. This let the smugglers use private vehicles and mobile containers to bring the narcotics into the country. Statistical data reveals that over 50 percent of illegal substances enter through the Mexican border. The U.S. has devoted its primary effort to this region and our narcotics strategy. With nearly 2,000 miles of border the responsibility of interdiction along Mexico is enormous. Both countries have and equal share in this fight. The ports of entry currently have an average of roughly ¼ million vehicular traffic entering daily along with over ½ million people on foot. With the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) the flow of trade between our two countries was expected to increase. This rise in trade caused the Customs and DEA workload to increase as well in this area. Cargo inspection technologies became a priority due to the amount of trailers that entered the America through these ports of entry. Our federal agencies currently inspect a miniscule amount of these trailers. At present, we do not have enough agents on the ground to handle this mission.

Agencies working on drug enforcement could be used to work counter terrorism. Since the late 80s the drug trafficking has done nothing but increase in quantity. If we are going to war we can no longer afford the war on drugs. Interpol and the UN have reported that the main source of funding come from drug trafficking. Drugs maintain approximately \$400 billion dollars annually. The production and trafficking takes place in many countries that foster terrorism. Our efforts should focus on Afghanistan's drug production as well as South America. Due to our prohibition the drug market empowers criminal cartels allowing them to breed terrorism. There is tension that continues to escalate between our objectives in Afghanistan. Most importantly the eradication of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, but America along with our coalition partners emphasizes the destruction of the Afghani drug trade. If the U.S. continues our focus on antidrug forces, we may hinder the more important mission to eradicate terrorism. This may pose a serious risk to the president of Afghanistan if we pursue anti drug programs. Those warlords in the region who have been valuable assets derive huge monetary profits from the drug trade. This money is used to pay the militia that protects them and keeps them in power. The U.S. would lose this asset in the fight against Al Qaeda and Taliban forces. It could end up driving these allies into campaigns working with our adversaries.

The coordination of efforts with those federal agencies may reduce the amount of drugs entering our country and simultaneously impact terrorism. Educating the younger generations on the impact of drug abuse and use can positively impact the society and decrease the profits made from the drug trade. Army support how relatively small it may be in the anti drug campaign plays an integral part with our war on drugs. The military exists to protect our nation and our citizens. Using all our available assets with the war on drugs as well as the war on terror may or



may not positively impact the outcome over time. Our countries armed forces are deployed worldwide. They fight terror, conduct peacekeeping missions, and stability operations. Asking Soldiers to continue with this war on drugs is expected. Soldiers volunteer to serve and protect our nation. Soldiers answer the nation's call, and do what everything asked wherever they may be asked to do it.

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