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The United States Military's Role in Maintaining National Security During the Height of the "War on Drugs"

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Dr. Rodrigues

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Introduction

"Drugs are bad and we're going after them…We've taken down the surrender flag and run up the battle flag. And we're going to win the war on drugs[1]." Those are the words that President Ronald Reagan shared with the American people on October 2, 1982 at Camp David. During his presidency, Reagan attempted to combat the "War on Drugs" domestically, through initiatives like "Just Say No" and harsher sentences for drug-related offenses, as well as internationally - specifically in Latin America.

This paper will seek to answer the question: What understanding of national security justified the use of the United States military in the "War on Drugs," launched by the Reagan administration in 1982? A secondary question that this paper will investigate is whether the definition of "national security" that was used contributed to the protection of American lives and interests. The approach that this paper will take is that the understanding of national security as "defense of the homeland" justified the use of the United States military in the "War on Drugs." Moreover, the involvement of the United States military was ineffective in preventing the flow of drugs into the United States and created a closer relationship between the United States and human rights violators.

This approach will be supplemented by articles from news outlets, as well as academic journals. Furthermore, the author of this paper would like to thank the staffers in the Office of Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), as well as staff in the Office of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs for their assistance and support throughout the research process. Resources from both offices will be referenced throughout this paper.

[1] Ronald Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Federal Drug Policy," address presented in Camp David, MD, October 2, 1982, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum, accessed October 30, 2022, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/radio-address-nation-federal-drug-policy.

Literature Review

1. Defining National Interests

Huntington (1997) argues that a national interest is a public good that is important to the majority of a country's citizens. Furthermore, according to Nuechterlein (1985), the term *national interest* has been defined differently by a variety of scholars. Scholar Charles Beard, for example, focused on the idea of "national economic interest." Beard believed this "national economic interest" was not cohesive. In other words, it was divided along party, geographic, and economic lines. For instance, in the United States, Eastern commercial groups would have opposed western expansion, whereas those in the South and the West would have relished the opportunity to move west so as to weaken the former's power. On the other hand, scholar and theologian Reinhold Niebuhr argued that when deciding upon its national interests, a nation must take into consideration two factors: moral values and power. Another scholar, Arnold Wolfers, asserted that post-World War II, "national interest" and national security became interchangeable.

Nuechterlein (1985) also argues that there needs to be a distinction drawn between the idea of "national interest" and the idea of "public interest". He clarifies that public interest deals with domestic issues, whereas "national interest" deals with issues that are outside a country's territorial boundaries, but still impact its citizens. However, Nuechterlein does acknowledge that "public interest" and "national interest" are not completely separate. There are times when the two intersect, or overlap. "Public interest" can be influenced by international circumstances, such as war, while "national interest" can be influenced by a country's social stability and political unity.

Arnold (1994) further expands, sharing that in 1979, Neuchterlein introduced a National Interest Matrix. This National Interest Matrix identified four national interests that could pertain to a state: defending the homeland, ensuring "economic well-being," maintaining "favorable world order" for the state, and promoting the state's values[2]. Arnold (1994) also points out the "levels of intensity" that Neuchterlein asserted can be aligned with these core four national interests. These "levels of intensity" are: survival issues, vital issues, major issues, and peripheral issues. The intensity level of "survival issues" addresses the concern that a state's existence is in immediate danger, specifically through military attack. "Vital issues," meanwhile, assert that unless a state undertakes certain measures, such as deploying its military, harm will come to the state. "Major issues" arise when the international sphere poses a threat to the state's economic, ideological, and political well-being. Finally, "peripheral issues" mean that the state itself is not directly impacted by the international sphere; however, its citizens or companies abroad face immediate danger.

2. American National Interest and National Identity

Huntington (1997) asserts that in order to determine the United States' national interest(s), its national identity must be understood first. He continues by stating that the two large pieces that make up the American national identity are culture and creed. Huntington believes that American culture has shifted throughout history, initially by the first settlers to the new country, and slowly integrating others of different backgrounds. The second aspect that makes up American national identity is the universal principles Americans hold dear - their creed. These include ideals such as liberty, equality, and democracy.

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[2] Edwin J. Arnold, Jr., "The Use of Military Power in Pursuit of National Interests," *Parameters* 24, no. 1 (April 7, 1994): 4, accessed November 29, 2022, https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.1700.

3. American National Interests in the 1980s

Nuechterlein (1985) asserts that the United States, in the 1980s, had much of its national interests in the Western Hemisphere. Specifically, the United States held many interests in Central America. Nuechterlein (1985) discusses how then-President Reagan stressed the strategic importance of the region. However, as Nuechterlein (1985) points out, Reagan faced some pushback from Democrats. Democrats opposed Reagan's strategy to pump Central America full of military aid. The question that must be asked, then, is when should the military be used in order to protect the national interest.

The United States Constitution, according to the United States Senate (2022), defines the mission of the military in Article I Section 8. It says that the Congress has the right:

> To declare War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water; To raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years; To provide and maintain a Navy; To make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces; To provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions; To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the Militia, and for governing such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively, the Appointment of the Officers, and the Authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress…[3]

[3] U.S. Const. art. I § 8. Accessed December 7, 2022. https://www.senate.gov/civics/constitution_item/constitution.htm#a1.

Since the definition of the military's mission is so limited, this allows for *anyone* to define when it is acceptable to employ the military in defense of the American national interest. In Arnold (1994) the opinions of former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell are divulged. According to Arnold (1994), in a 1984 speech to the Washington Press Club, then-Secretary Weinberger shared his six criteria over which the military could be used. Secretary Weinberger asserted that the military could be used in overseas combat should it be absolutely necessary in defending American national interests or the national interests of American allies; the United States "do so wholeheartedly and with the clear intention of winning;" there exist "clearly defined political and military objectives;" the involvement of the armed forces [be] constantly reassessed, and if necessary, readjusted (in other words, ensuring that the objectives match the resources being used); the use of the military have the support of both the American people and the American Congress; and lastly…the military be used as a "last resort[4]."

Similar to the Weinberger Doctrine, according to Arnold (1994), General Powell also stressed the importance of using the military as a "last resort" effort, as well as having "clear-cut military objective[s][5]." General Powell also argued that the armed forces should only be used if there was reason to believe that the aforementioned military objectives could be achieved. He also stressed the value of using the armed forces in an "overwhelming fashion[6]."

[4] Arnold, The Use of Military Power in Pursuit of National Interests, 5.
[5] Arnold, The Use of Military Power in Pursuit of National Interests," 7.
[6] Arnold, The Use of Military Power in Pursuit of National Interests," 7.

4. **National Security vs. Public Safety**

Morales (1989) expresses that there are two main ways defense specialists have defined the notion of "national security." They define "national security" as both the "protection of a nation's people and territories from physical attack," and "the protection of political and economic interests considered essential by those who exercise political power to the fundamental values and the vitality of the state[7]." So the question that must be asked is whether or not drug trafficking should be considered a national security issue. According to a staffer on the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs (2022), the issue of drugs should not be labeled an *American* national security threat. However, it can be considered one for Latin American countries, who suffer from underfunded and corrupt police departments. These police departments cannot successfully combat the criminal organizations, who are often as strong, or stronger than, the police departments. Therefore, according to the staffer (2022), it is necessary to call in the military in these countries. On the other hand, the United States does not need the military involved in its drug problem because it has police departments that are well-equipped to handle the drug problem. Hence, the staffer (2022) concluded that it is his belief that for the United States, drugs should be an issue of public safety.

Concepts on the "War on Drugs"

The Evolution of Drug Policy

The official drug policy of the United States has evolved over the years. The opening of the 20th century saw the United States begin to work to combat narcotics problems. In 1909, the

[7] Waltraud Queiser Morales, "The war on drugs: A new US national security doctrine?," *Third World Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (1989): 149, accessed October 3, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436598908420178.

International Opium Commission was formed to "address problems associated with opium[8]." The negative sentiment towards drugs took off in the 1920s, leading to the creation, in 1930, of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics under the Hoover administration[9]. This bureau monitored not only the drug supply, but also drug interdiction efforts and the impact on the United States public[10].

The 1960s and 1970s saw drugs become public enemy number one in the United States[11]. In 1968, then-presidential candidate Richard Nixon officially declared a "war on drugs[12]." Three years later, *President* Nixon would officially declare drug trafficking an issue of "national security," thus "provid[ing] the rationale that future presidents would use to justify expanding the role of United States armed forces[13]." Under President Jimmy Carter, a "harm reduction" approach was introduced. This was meant to focus drug policy on providing resources for recovery for drug addicts, such as medical and psychiatric treatment[14]. However, while the Carter administration tackled drugs as more of an issue of "public health," it still pursued supply-side policies, which effectively blamed the American drug problem solely on the countries that were funneling drugs into the United States[15].

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[8] John A. Tappan, *Military Involvement in the War on Drugs, "Just Say No"* (U.S. Army War College, 1998), 5, accessed October 03, 2022, https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA339218.pdf.
[9] "The Early Years," Drug Enforcement Administration, accessed December 7, 2022, https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2018-05/Early%20Years%20p%2012-29.pdf.
[10] Tappan, *Military Involvement in the War on Drugs, "Just Say No"*, 5-6.
[11] Tappan, *Military Involvement in the War on Drugs, "Just Say No"*, 6.
[12] Peter Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs* (Washington Office on Latin America, 1997), accessed October 2022, https://www.tni.org/files/download/Reluctant%20recruits%20report_0.pdf.
[13] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[14] Michelle Getchell, "Reagan's War on Drugs and Latin America," *Texas National Security Review*, 2022, accessed October 30, 2022, https://tnsr.org/roundtable/policy-roundtable-reagan-and-latin-america/#essay6.
[15] Getchell, "Reagan's War on Drugs and Latin America."

Nixon, Reagan, and the "War on Drugs"

When analyzing Nixon's role in promoting the "War on Drugs," one must also analyze what Nixon believed justified his decision to declare drug trafficking an issue of national security. The answer is not that Nixon feared that drugs posed a threat to American lives and interests. Rather, he had underlying motives. For example, when Nixon declared his "war on drugs" in 1968, he did so in an attempt to appease his voting base, the 'silent majority,' made up of "white, middle class Americans [such as housewives and white-collar workers] who feared the political and social changes that were roiling U.S. society in the late 1960s[16]." Moreover, according to President Nixon's domestic policy chief, John Ehrlichman, the "War on Drugs" was an attempt to "undermine [the President's] political opposition[17]." At the time, Nixon's political opponents were twofold: African-Americans, and the "antiwar left" (aka those who opposed American involvement in the Vietnam War). Ehrlichman, in 1994, asserted that: "We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities[18]." Therefore, President Nixon was disingenuous in his motives to declare drugs a matter of national security.

And while President Nixon was the first to label efforts to combat drugs as a "war," the "war" arguably ramped up under President Ronald Reagan. Reagan saw drugs - heroin, cocaine, and even marijuana - as "a dangerous threat to an entire generation[19]." President Reagan ditched

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[16] Kate Doyle, "Operation Intercept: The perils of unilateralism," National Security Archive, last modified April 13, 2003, accessed November 29, 2022, https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB86/.
[17] German Lopez, "Nixon official: real reason for the drug war was to criminalize black people and hippies," Vox, last modified March 2016, accessed November 29, 2022, https://www.vox.com/2016/3/22/11278760/war-on-drugs-racism-nixon.
[18] Lopez, "Nixon official: real reason for the drug war was to criminalize black people and hippies," Vox.
[19] Getchell, "Reagan's War on Drugs and Latin America."

President Carter's "harm reduction" efforts, while at the same time continuing to use supply-side drug policies. Additionally, Reagan worked to expand the role of the military in the "War on Drugs." In a 1982 address to the nation on federal drug policy at Camp David, he asserted that Washington would "do more than pay lip service" to the American drug problem[20].

The President shared with the nation the success of this new drug abuse and drug trafficking prevention strategy in south Florida. The area, Reagan argued, was "a battlefield for competing drugpushers who were terrorizing Florida's citizens[21]." With then-Vice President Bush, Reagan created a task force to combat the drug issue, which included increasing the presence of judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officials in south Florida, while also ramping up anti-narcotics efforts overseas[22]. Additionally, military radar and intelligence were introduced in order to detect drug traffickers[23]. In the Camp David address, President Reagan asserted that his administration's efforts in south Florida had been successful, stating that "drug-related arrests [were] up over 40 percent, the amount of marijuana seized [was] up about 80 percent, and the amount of cocaine seized [had] more than doubled[24]." Four years later, in 1986, he signed the National Security Decision Directive 221 (NSDD-221), which included directions from President Reagan to "expand the role of military forces in providing support for the counterdrug efforts[25]."

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[20] Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Federal Drug Policy," address, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum.
[21] Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Federal Drug Policy," address, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum.
[22] Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Federal Drug Policy," address, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum.
[23] Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Federal Drug Policy," address, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum.
[24] Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Federal Drug Policy," address, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Museum.
[25] Tappan, *Military Involvement in the War on Drugs, "Just Say No"*, 6.

The Role of the Military in the "War on Drugs"

Senator Bob Graham (D-FL) once said that "There's a tendency to think that drug trafficking and national security are separate issues…The two in fact are synonymous[26]." President Richard Nixon perfectly exemplified Senator Graham's statement, as he declared drug trafficking to be an issue of "national security." This declaration set the precedent for using "national security" as the justification for expanding the role of the American military[27]. This was evident in the 1980s, when the connection was drawn between drug trafficking, guerilla insurgencies, and terrorists, as will be discussed later in further detail. This threat was referenced in 1985, when the Joint Chiefs of Staff "unanimously recommended" that the United States engage in such tactics as "the imposition of naval and air blockades" so as to combat Central American drug trafficking[28].

Legal Authority & Congress on the Warpath

One argument that was used to justify the United States military's involvement in the "War on Drugs" is the legal authority that allows for the use of the military, both domestically and internationally. Some examples of this can be found under the United States Code. Specifically, Title 10 U.S.C. §333 gives the Secretary of Defense the authority to "conduct or support a program or programs to provide training and equipment to the national security forces of one or more foreign countries[29]." A second example is Title 10, Chapter 18 of the United States Code, otherwise known as "Military Cooperation With Civilian Law Enforcement."

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[26] Morales, "The war on drugs: A new US national security doctrine?," 159-160.
[27] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[28] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[29] Cornell Law School, "10 U.S. Code § 333 - Foreign security forces: authority to build capacity," Legal Information Institute, accessed November 12, 2022, https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/333.

According to Harry L. Marsh, Chapter 18 was enacted by Congress due to "the inability of civilian law enforcement agencies to quell the drug problem[30]."

Beginning in 1981, when President Reagan first took office, the Department of Defense began to play an important role in the efforts to combat drugs, by providing, amongst other services, "radar surveillance, transportation, and communication support to federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies engaged in counternarcotics activities[31]." As anti-drug sentiment spread in the United States, Congress went on the warpath, seeking to expand the military's role in the "War on Drugs". This began in 1981 with the reform of the *Posse Comitatus Act of 1897*, which "restricts United States armed forces personnel from participating in law enforcement activities[32]." The Act was originally implemented during the Reconstruction Era, amidst concerns about the military's role, and prohibited the Army from "execut[ing] laws[33]." The 1981 amendment expanded the military's role by allowing its provision of "equipment, information, training, and advice to law enforcement agencies…[although] it retain[ed] the prohibition on military participation in search, seizure, and arrests[34]."

Other notable pieces of legislation passed by Congress were the Anti-Drug Abuse Acts of 1986 and 1988. The 1986 version of the act "established the annual process by which the President must 'certify' which countries are cooperating fully with United States anti-drug efforts[35]." Meanwhile, the 1988 version strengthened sanctions for countries that had been

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[30] Harry L. Marsh, "Law Enforcement, the Military, and the War on Drugs: Is the Military Involvement in the War on Drugs Ethical?," *American Journal of Police* 10, no. 2 (1991): 67-68, accessed October 3, 2022, https://www.google.com/url?q=https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle%3Dhein.journals/ajpol10%26id%3D173%26collection%3Djournals%26index%3D&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1668481157848925&usg=AOvVaw0dzkcabZ99nZA-fgvhg-_h.
[31] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[32] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[33] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[34] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[35] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.

"decertified," which included cutting off United States aid "not directly related to anti narcotics efforts (with the exception of humanitarian aid); 'no' votes on loans by the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank; and possible sanctions[36]." Additionally, in May 1988, Congress, ignoring the opposition vocalized by officials at the Pentagon, voted "to give the military anti-drug trafficking powers[37]." Susan Mackey-Kallis and Dan Hahn assert that an April 1988 poll by the *New York Times* may have influenced Congress' decision to vote the way that it did. In the poll, a majority of Americans expressed that they perceived the issue of drugs to be "a more important foreign policy issue than terrorism and Central America[38]."

The Executive and the "War on Drugs"

The military's role in the "War on Drugs" was also impacted by executive action by President Reagan. Peter Zirnite argues that "No one wants to be seen as 'soft' on drugs[39]." This can be said as true of President Reagan, who, as previously mentioned, issued in April 1986 a National Security Decision Directive (NSDD-221). NSDD-221 officially proclaimed drug trafficking to pose a major threat to the United States. John Tappan asserted that the goal of NSDD-221 was to "evaluate the threat [that drugs posed] to U.S. security and direct specific actions to counter the threat[40]." Furthermore, this official declaration, according to Zirnite, "[set] the stage for a rapid expansion of United States military participation in drug interdiction at United States borders and abroad[41]." The directive allowed for the use of United States military

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[36] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[37] Susan Mackey-Kallis and Dan Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'" *Communication Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 6, accessed October 3, 2022, https://holycross.idm.oclc.org/login?auth=cas&url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/whos-blame-americas-drug-problem-search/docview/216477685/se-2.
[38] Mackey-Kallis and Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'" 6.
[39] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[40] Tappan, *Military Involvement in the War on Drugs, "Just Say No"*, 6.
[41] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.

forces in overseas interdiction efforts; however, in order for that to occur, the forces had to have been invited by the country that the interdiction efforts were taking place in; "directed by United States agencies; and limited to a support function[42]." Congress eagerly backed the NSDD-221, as shown by its decision to increase the Department of Defense's drug budget to $379 million for Fiscal Year 1987[43].

Operation Blast Furnace

NSDD-221 set into motion, in July 1986, a Department of Defense mission known as Operation Blast Furnace, the "first publicized employment of United States Army combat forces on the sovereign soil of another country to conduct joint anti-drug efforts[44]." Under Operation Blast Furnace, the Department of Defense sent six Army helicopters and 150 troops[45] in support of the Bolivian and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) forces in their effort to "wipe out the coca growing operations and cocaine…production laboratories[46]" in Bolivia. The operation was considered a failure, just one example as to why a heightened military role in the "War on Drugs" was unnecessary. While Operation Blast Furnace was successful in its effort to eradicate Bolivian cocaine laboratories and coca growing operations, its success was short-lived. Although Operation Blast Furnace temporarily paused drug activity in Bolivia, "the destroyed labs were quickly replaced once the mission ended in November[47]." It was like putting a bandaid over a crack in a dam, rather than fixing the crack.

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[42] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[43] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[44] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[45] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[46] Morales, "The war on drugs: A new US national security doctrine?," 157-158.
[47] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.

The US Military: "Reluctant Recruits & Scapegoats to An Insurmountable Issue"

Peter Zirnite argues that military leaders were reluctantly recruited to participate in the "War on Drugs." According to then-Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, "Reliance on military forces to accomplish civilian tasks is detrimental to both military readiness and the democratic process[48]." Secretary Weinberger's comments align with Zirnite's argument that members of the United States military believed that anti-drug efforts should be left to civilian forces, as they found it had no relation to the "traditional role" of the military[49]. Moreover, Pentagon officials believed that by bringing the military into the drug war, Congress was making the military its "whipping boy"[50]. In other words, they were of the opinion that Congress was making the military its scapegoat. Since Congress had failed to solve the American drug problem itself, by pushing it onto the armed forces instead, someone else could take the fall and face the scourge of the American public.

Communism, Narcoterrorism, & the Role of the US Military in the "War on Drugs"

Communism

Communism's "Reign of Terror" in the United States

The introduction of the "War on Drugs" came about as the anti-communist attitude became increasingly ineffective. During a large part of the 20th century, communism was the ultimate enemy. The Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States caused extreme hysteria over "the perceived threat posed by Communists in the U.S.," that they might be working as undercover operatives and could therefore threaten the national security of the United

[48] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[49] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[50] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.

States[51]. This was widely known as the Red Scare. Individuals like Senator Joseph R. McCarthy (R-WI) fueled the anti-communist fire. Senator McCarthy, remembered for his "McCarthyism," accused anyone who opposed his political views of being disloyal to the United States[52]. Global events, such as the successful 1949 nuclear bomb test by the communist Soviet Union and the communist overtake of China, intensified many Americans' fears that communism would spread to their nation as well[53]. The United States also fought to combat communism abroad, as evidenced by its military's presence in the Korean War, which "engaged U.S. troops in combat against the communist-supported forces of North Korea[54]."

A New Perceived Threat

Eventually, however, communism lost its "fear factor". Americans were no longer scared. In fact, an 'Americans Talk Security' opinion survey from 1988 found that only 18 percent saw the threat of Soviet military strength as "extremely serious[55]." This raised a problem for American officials. Without a strong anticommunism sentiment amongst Americans, there was nothing to legitimize the "national security" policies they were putting forth. In other words, "How could the USA remain the gang leader of the Western bloc against the Soviets and the instability they inspired in the Third World if the threat of intervention might no longer be believed[56]?" Therefore, officials needed a new, persuasive national security doctrine to replace the "War on Communism"[57]. Thus, the "War on Drugs" was born. However, according to Waltraud Queiser Morales, in places like Colombia, Peru, and Honduras, "prosecution of the

[51] History.com Editors, "Red Scare," History.com, last modified February 28, 2020, accessed November 12, 2022, https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/red-scare.
[52] History.com Editors, "Red Scare," History.com.
[53] History.com Editors, "Red Scare," History.com.
[54] History.com Editors, "Red Scare," History.com.
[55] Morales, "The war on drugs: A new US national security doctrine?,"148-149.
[56] Morales, "The war on drugs: A new US national security doctrine?," 147-148.
[57] Morales, "The war on drugs: A new US national security doctrine?," 148.

drug war often remained in the background and was manipulated to win congressional and public support while fighting the 'real' war on communism[58]." In other words, in many cases, the "War on Drugs" was a front to legitimize American intervention in Latin America.

Scapegoating in the "War on Drugs"

Scapegoating is part of war rhetoric. War rhetoric is essential to the war effort, because it is used to rally the domestic population in support of the effort. According to Susan Mackey-Kallis and Dan Hahn, scapegoating an external enemy is often how domestic support is achieved[59]. The enemy is "the embodiment of [a real or perceived] threat;" they are "the reason for [the] war being waged," the "source of the problem," and the scapegoat[60]. An example Mackey-Kallis and Hahn employ is the Civil War, in which Americans diverted their guilt over the existence of slavery in their country by "blaming the Confederacy for sustaining the institution of slavery[61]." In other words, those on the side of the Union attempted to rally those in the North to support their cause by placing all the blame for the issue of slavery, as well as the turmoil facing the United States, on the slaveholding South[62].

In the case of the Reagan administration, it justified its treatment of drug trafficking as a "national security threat" by blaming foreign drug cartels[63]. The administration found its perfect enemy in Carlos Lehder Rivas. Rivas, otherwise known as "Crazy Charlie," a leader in the

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[58] Morales, "The war on drugs: A new US national security doctrine?," 155-156.
[59] Mackey-Kallis and Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'"4.
[60] Mackey-Kallis and Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'" 4.
[61] Mackey-Kallis and Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'" 4.
[62] Mackey-Kallis and Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'" 4.
[63] Mackey-Kallis and Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'" 5-6.

Medellín drug cartel, was captured in 1987[64]. "Crazy Charlie" provided the perfect fuel for the "War on Drugs" fire, stoking fear into the hearts of Americans through his rhetoric. He spoke in interviews about cocaine, labeling it as the "Achilles heel of American imperialism," and the "'Latin American atom bomb' aimed at the United States[65]."

The irony of turning Latin American drug cartels into the scapegoats of the "War on Drugs" is that the drug problem the United States faced was, in fact, "created by domestic consumption[66]." Some may argue that this demand for drugs could not exist without a supply to begin with, while others say that a "supply without demand is…meaningless[67]." No matter how it was viewed, during the Reagan years it became increasingly beneficial for politicians to jump on the bandwagon of the anti-drug crusade. Moreover, thanks to the "victimage rhetoric" of the "War on Drugs," politicians "could be seen as simultaneously dealing aggressively with the problem [of drugs] while removing themselves from responsibility for its existence," because they had already created an "other" - Latin American drug cartels - to take the blame[68].

Narcoterrorism

The involvement of the United States military in the "War on Drugs" in the Latin American region was justified by the notion of "narcoterrorism." "Narcoterrorism" linked drug trafficking, terrorism, and the guerillas together. For example, the Reagan administration used "narcoterrorism" to accuse Cuba and Nicaragua, "two avowedly Marxist-Leninist regimes in

[64] Mackey-Kallis and Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'" 6.
[65] Mackey-Kallis and Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'" 6.
[66] Mackey-Kallis and Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'" 10.
[67] Mackey-Kallis and Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'" 10.
[68] Mackey-Kallis and Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'" 11.

Latin America, of smuggling drugs into the United States to destabilize American society[69].” The administration further accused the Cubans and Nicaraguans of then using their profits from their drug trade to fund Marxist revolutions in the Americas[70]. In creating this linkage between “drug trafficking and leftist insurgency,” the Reagan administration was able to justify the support it was sending to Latin American countries, “even in the restricted atmosphere of the post-Vietnam era, when Congress and the American public were wary of being sucked into another Third World quagmire[71].” Americans may have no longer feared communism, but they were fearful of a domestic drug crisis, which President Reagan manipulated in order to create support for his continued military funding and activities for Latin America. If his actions had support, they could be justified.

Findings

This paper argues that the role of the United States military in the “War on Drugs” was unjustified. Primarily, there was no real reason to involve the United States military in the “War on Drugs” in Latin America. Latin American countries did not attack the United States; the country was not invaded. Moreover, American citizens were not forced to take drugs. They took drugs of their own volition[72]. The military’s involvement was also unjustified because it drew the United States closer to human rights violators, and was ineffective.

[69] Getchell, "Reagan's War on Drugs and Latin America."
[70] Getchell, "Reagan's War on Drugs and Latin America."
[71] Getchell, "Reagan's War on Drugs and Latin America."
[72] Marsh, "Law Enforcement, the Military, and the War on Drugs: Is the Military Involvement in the War on Drugs Ethical?,"68.

Drawing the United States Closer to Human Rights Violators

One thousand, three hundred fifty. That number represents the percent increase, between 1980 and 1995, of "[h]omicide rates for males aged 14-44 years" in Colombia[73]. In that time span, the homicide rate for men of that demographic increased from 29 homicides per 100,000 persons to 384 per 100,000[74]. During the height of the "War on Drugs," Colombia was one of the most dangerous places in the world. Aside from the aforementioned homicide statistics, an average of 3,000 kidnappings took place annually, while daily, "fourteen people [were] victims of political violence or death in combat[75]."

This is because drugs reigned supreme in Colombia. According to John Barry, "the trilogy of human rights violators" in Colombia - the guerillas, military, and paramilitaries - were all actively involved in the Colombian drug trade[76]. In the early years of the Colombian "coca boom," the guerillas and the drug lords had a positive working relationship, as the guerillas "controlled many of the coca growing regions while the cartels managed much of the cocaine production and trafficking[77]." However, as the drug cartels became more and more wealthy, they became everything the guerillas despised - landowning elites. Suddenly, the initially positive relationship between the two groups soured, and these "narco-landowners" brought in

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[73] John Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," *Transnational Law & Contemporary Problems* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 175, accessed December 12, 2022, https://www.google.com/url?q=https://heinonline-org.holycross.idm.oclc.org/HOL/Page?handle%3Dhein.journals/tlcp12%26div%3D15%26collection%3Djournals&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1670946818725317&usg=AOvVaw0l5OXsNw4hGW3P1k-t79Wf.

[74] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 175.

[75] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 175.

[76] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 176.

[77] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 170.

paramilitary groups to “fight the guerrillas and the various groups they viewed as guerilla sympathizers[78].” Moreover, the fracturing of this relationship between the guerilla groups and the drug cartels, pushed the military - the Colombian Armed Forces - to align itself with the paramilitary groups in order to combat the guerillas[79].

Each of these groups had a role to play in the Colombian drug trade - and a profit to reap. In the areas under their control, the guerillas continued to be largely responsible for protecting the drug crops and drug laboratories, for which they were well paid. For example, one group known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) began to implement, in 1982, a tax policy that included “levying a 10 percent per kilogram tax on coca base, a raw form of cocaine produced from coca leaves and chemicals that is later turned into powder cocaine in jungle laboratories[80].” In turn, the guerillas - such as FARC - would use their profits to “fund their war against the Colombian state[81],” which they saw as a “violent ‘false democracy’ that lack[ed] complete legitimacy[82].” Paramilitary groups were effectively created for the purpose of narcotrafficking, meant to be guardians of narcotraffickers’ lands, as previously alluded to. Furthermore, generally speaking, corruption and bribery ran rampant in Colombia, with narcotraffickers even holding seats at the highest levels of government[83].

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[78] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 170.
[79] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 170-171.
[80] John Otis, "The FARC and Colombia's Illegal DrugTrade," Wilson Center, last modified November 2014, 3, accessed December 12, 2022, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/the-farc-and-colombias-illegal-drug-trade.
[81] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 176-177.
[82] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 170.
[83] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 177.

The conflict between the Colombian Armed Forces, the guerillas, and the paramilitary groups is considered to be the "primary internal motor of violence and human rights abuses" in Colombia[84]. *How, then, does this relate to the United States?* First, according to John Barry, American drug consumers are "indirectly involved in the human rights crisis by inadvertently funding the guerilla and paramilitary groups engaging in human rights abuses." For example, as of 2002, Colombia exported about eighty percent of the world's cocaine supply and was making up an increasingly prominent source of heroin and "other opium derivatives;" similarly, the United States was "the largest consumer of these illicit drugs produced in Colombia[85]." In other words, American drug consumption maintained the immense power these human rights abusers had within Colombia.

On the other hand, Barry asserts, the United States government was directly involved in the human rights crisis that emerged out of Colombia because "it provid[ed] training and military hardware for Colombian military forces and, by logical extension, for their paramilitary allies[86]." In other words, the United States government's policies towards Colombia directly resulted in human rights atrocities, and what is more, were *complicit* in these atrocities. For example, under the *Plan Colombia*, an American policy that came out of the "War on Drugs" (supported by President Bill Clinton in 2000[87]), the United States "provid[ed] explicit support for the Colombian Armed Forces and *knowingly* provid[ed] support indirectly to paramilitary forces[88]."

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[84] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 170-171.
[85] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 173.
[86] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 177-178.
[87] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 173.
[88] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 181.

In regards to the question of *What is more important: drug supply control, or standing up to human rights violations?*, former United States Drug Czar General Barry McCaffrey stated the American stance towards human rights atrocities best: "[y]ou don't hold up the major objective to achieve the minor[89]." In other words, the United States was not going to "sweat" over human rights abuses when its priority was controlling the drug supply.

Ineffective

The United States military's involvement in the "War on Drugs" in Latin America, along with drawing the United States closer to human rights violators, was also incredibly ineffective. For example, in 1986, despite boarding 1,009 ships, the Coast Guard found only 39 "drug violations[90]." Additionally, studies conducted to analyze the success of the military's involvement in interdiction efforts found little success, and effectively were "flushing money down the drain." A 1988 study by Peter Reuter "determined that federal drug interdiction was not cost effective, and had…little…impact on the quantity, quality, or price of drugs[91]." Meanwhile, the RAND Corporation labeled Navy and Coast Guard involvement as having little results and being "costly"[92]. There also existed the "balloon effect," which "meant that alternate sources of supply kept popping up[93]." Essentially, the drug supply will exist as long as there is a desire to obtain and partake in drugs.

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[89] Barry, "From Drug War to Dirty War: Plan Colombia and the U.S. Role in Human Rights Violations in Colombia," 181.
[90] Marsh, "Law Enforcement, the Military, and the War on Drugs: Is the Military Involvement in the War on Drugs Ethical?," 70.
[91] Marsh, "Law Enforcement, the Military, and the War on Drugs: Is the Military Involvement in the War on Drugs Ethical?," 70.
[92] Marsh, "Law Enforcement, the Military, and the War on Drugs: Is the Military Involvement in the War on Drugs Ethical?," 70.
[93] Getchell, "Reagan's War on Drugs and Latin America."

Additionally, Peter Zirnite noted that, as of 1997, the United States had spent "$20 billion over the past decade on international drug control and interdiction efforts[94]." Moreover, between 1988 (the backend of the Reagan administration) and 1995, the United States had successfully seized "thousands of metric tons of cocaine," as well as eradicated "more than 55,000 hectares of coca plants[95]." And yet, despite this outpouring of money and successful missions, the "War on Drugs" failed to stop the flow of illegal drugs into the United States. Instead between those same years, the "area under coca cultivation" increased 15 percent, while opium cultivation increased 25 percent[96]. Moreover, these interdiction efforts only caused Latin American drug cartels to become more clever. One military planner likened the issue to poison ivy. The United States military could seize X amount of supply, but it would only be a temporary success, and would actually worsen and spread the problem as drug cartels "diversif[ied] routes and improve[d] their methods of shipment[97]." Therefore, despite numerous successful seizures, military interdiction failed to make a dent in the supply of illegal drugs to the United States.

Furthermore, in September 1993, the Clinton administration conducted a drug policy review, which found that Defense Department interdiction efforts had failed[98]. The National Security Council agreed, arguing that the efforts had "wasted hundred of millions of dollars," while Attorney General Janet Reno asserted that "General interdiction, which has been very costly, does not work[99]." Susan Mackey-Kallis and Dan Hahn, additionally, conclude that while the "War on Drugs" was unsuccessful in countering the flow of drugs into the United States, it

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[94] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[95] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[96] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[97] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.
[98] Mackey-Kallis and Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'" 1.
[99] Mackey-Kallis and Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'" 1.

was still successful in one aspect: scapegoating. The pair assert that the war was successful in its use of victimage rhetoric. Specifically, it was successful at its "(mis)placing blame for the drug problem [rather] than at finding solutions for it[100]."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Lasting Prejudice

While the United States military's role in the 'War on Drugs' was legally authorized, the military should not have been involved. Its involvement was ineffective in preventing the flow of drugs into the United States and created a closer relationship between the United States and human rights violators. First, the "War on Drugs" started off with disingenuous intentions under President Nixon - as a way to target his political opposition, which, as aforementioned, was those who opposed the Vietnam War and African-Americans. This rhetoric has had domestic consequences, as today there is racial prejudice when dealing with the topic of drugs. For example, according to the US Sentencing Commission's 2012 report, "when black people are convicted of drug charges, they generally face longer prison sentences for the same crimes" than their counterparts of different racial backgrounds[101]. Moreover, although African-Americans do not have a higher likelihood to interact with drugs (e.g. use or sell), they *do* have a higher likelihood of being arrested on drug charges than those of other races[102]. A 2017 CATO Institute

[100] Mackey-Kallis and Hahn, "Who's to blame for America's drug problem?: The search for scapegoats in the 'war on drugs,'" 1.
[101] Lopez, "Nixon official: real reason for the drug war was to criminalize black people and hippies," Vox.
[102] Lopez, "Nixon official: real reason for the drug war was to criminalize black people and hippies," Vox.

report demonstrated that while only making up twelve percent of the American population, they make up "62% of the drug offenders sent to state prisons[103]."

Additionally, under President Reagan, Latin Americans were scapegoated as the cause of the American drug problem, rather than the United States government acknowledge its failure to curb its drug problem. This negative rhetoric towards Latin Americans has carried into the present. During his presidential campaign, former President Donald Trump referred to Mexicans as "bringing drugs, and bringing crime, and [they're] rapists[104]." One immigrant to the United States said in 2020 that: "You see a lot of people more comfortable being discriminatory, being more hostile…in part because of President Trump…He set an example, with his speeches, and how he acts[105]." A Latino man, Esteban Guzman, was filmed being berated by a white woman in California, who yelled at him and his mother to "go back to Mexico," and called Mexicans like him "rapists…animals…drug dealers[106]." Donald Trump's rhetoric, although repugnant, was not original. It had to start somewhere, and that somewhere was the "War on Drugs".

Failure to Comply

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[103] Christopher J. Coyne and Abigail R. Hall, "Four Decades and Counting: The Continued Failure of the War on Drugs," *Policy Analysis*, no. 811 (April 12, 2017): 12, accessed December 14, 2022, https://deliverypdf.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=801118100100120086091116123094028118097047072050071009098004067067072122011024031106118049038127005002035070125073016074102008122047032083023121075083068074087102007022037053021071089113015119121118007005006069094007127069022116111068094031121071030000&EXT=pdf&INDEX=TRUE.

[104] Adam Gabbatt, "Donald Trump's tirade on Mexico's 'drugs and rapists' outrages US Latinos," The Guardian, last modified June 16, 2015, accessed December 13, 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jun/16/donald-trump-mexico-presidential-speech-latino-hispanic.

[105] Ben Fox, "Trump leaves mark on immigration policy, some of it lasting," AP, last modified December 30, 2020, accessed December 13, 2022, https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-donald-trump-politics-immigration-united-states-a5bfcbea280a468b431a02e82c15a150.

[106] Adam Gabbatt, "'Rapists, animals, drug dealers': woman abuses US Latino man in echo of Trump," *The Guardian*, last modified June 25, 2018, accessed December 13, 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jun/25/citing-trump-woman-in-video-calls-latino-man-rapist-animal-drug-dealer.

As previously stated, the "War on Drugs" was ineffective. It was justified as defending the homeland, and yet failed to do so. Drugs still continue to flow into the United States. Moreover, the "War on Drugs" failed to meet many of the criteria for involving the United States military in conflicts that were proposed by former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell. For example, one of the criteria that was put forth was Secretary Weinberger's assertion that troops should only be used when there is a "clear intention of winning[107]." Related to this is General Powell's argument that "Military force should be used only when we can measure that the military objective has been achieved[108]." The claimed reasoning for using military force for the "War on Drugs" was to stop the flow of drugs into the United States. However, as John Tappan asserts, this task of "defending the homeland" was always going to be virtually impossible, simply due to the sheer size of the United States: "a 2,000 mile border with Mexico, 5,500 mile [border] with Canada and a 12,000 mile U.S. coastal border[109]." Simply put, that is an immense amount of territory to cover, and only so many resources to go around.

Moreover, drug interdiction continues to be a national security focus for the United States today. Under the condition of anonymity, a staffer for the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs asserted that drug interdiction continues, to this day, to be a national security focus for the United States. In fact, it is a priority for *any* administration[110]. The impact of the expansion of the military's role in the "War on Drugs" can still be seen in the present-day United States military operations in the Western Hemisphere. In a March 2021 United States Senate Committee on Armed Services briefing on SOUTHCOM & NORTHCOM,

[107] Arnold, The Use of Military Power in Pursuit of National Interests," 5.
[108] Arnold, The Use of Military Power in Pursuit of National Interests," 7.
[109] Tappan, *Military Involvement in the War on Drugs, "Just Say No"*, 12.
[110] U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Staffer, interview by the author, Russell Senate Office Building; Washington, D.C., USA, November 7, 2022.

Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) described the traditional mission of SOUTHCOM to be "focused on countering the scourge of narcotics and the threat from transnational criminal organizations[111]." As Senator Reed's comments reflect, the military still has a counternarcotics presence. The continued counternarcotics presence of the United States military demonstrates how, during the "War on Drugs," American officials failed to succeed in achieving the "objective" of the "war." The "War on Drugs," arguably, is still in effect today, with no end in sight.

The continued presence of the United States military in counternarcotics relates to a second criteria, put forth by Secretary Weinberger and General Powell, in which they argue that American forces should only be put forth when, in Secretary Weinberger's words, there are "clearly defined political and military objectives[112]." Arguably, the "War on Drugs" did not meet this criteria. The "War on Drugs" was launched under false pretenses, as previously stated. It was a political ploy to villainize African-Americans and anti war advocates. It was an excuse for American intervention in Latin America when fighting communism was no longer a palatable excuse for the American public. It was a tactic that manipulated the American public's fears that addiction would spread into their homes. It was an attempt to blame the government's failure to contain the domestic drug crisis on the armed forces and outside actors.

A third criteria the "War on Drugs" failed to meet was Secretary Weinberger's position that there should be a constant "reassess[ment] and adjust[ment]" of the United States' objectives and the forces it is using[113]. Arguably, the United States failed to do so. From the cases of human rights abuses coming out of Colombia to the numerous statistics demonstrating the ineffective

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[111] *UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND AND UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND: Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services*, 117th Cong. 1-111 (2021). Accessed October 24, 2022. https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/21-12_03-16-2021.pdf.
[112] Arnold, The Use of Military Power in Pursuit of National Interests," 5.
[113] Arnold, The Use of Military Power in Pursuit of National Interests,"5.

nature of the American armed forces in interdiction efforts, American officials should have taken a step back, and examined whether the American taxpayers' money that they were funneling into this futile war was necessary. As previously mentioned, over $20 billion had been spent in the decade leading up to 1997 for interdiction efforts[114]. And yet, the reports back were less than glowing. Money was flushed down the drain. Soldiers' lives were risked. Latin Americans died because of the Americans' inability to reflect on the effectiveness of their efforts.

Recommendations

Rather than treat the issue of drugs as one that necessitates the use of the military, the United States should treat drugs as an issue of public safety. As previously mentioned, the issue of drugs is not a threat to American national security. Instead, it is a threat to public safety. Hence, the military is not needed to implement anti-narcotics initiatives, but rather police departments. Therefore, the question that must be asked is what will make the work of these police departments more effective in combating the American drug problem.

Police in the Community

One way in which the work of police departments can be made more effective in combating the American drug problem is by making police officers integral to the communities they serve. When then-Senator (now current President) and Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and Senate International Narcotics Control Caucus Joseph R. Biden Jr. released a report entitled: "COMBATING DRUGS IN AMERICA - Putting the Drug Strategy into Action," America was ensnared by what was known as the "crack epidemic." Local law enforcement was involved in the attempt to end the epidemic - "br[eaking] down doors…ma[king] sweeps and

[114] Zirnite, *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military and the War on Drugs*.

carr[ying] out raids, and…ma[king] arrests" for drug law violations[115]." These efforts were ineffective. It did not matter how many arrests were made - new drug pushers would enter the scene[116].

Police officers should instead have a more present role in the communities they serve. This means "becom[ing] allies with the community, rather than an occupying force[117]." In order to become allies with their communities, police officers must be able to build trust with the members of their community. If there is trust between law enforcement officials and the community they serve, this trust can lead to community members coming forward with information regarding "crimes and drug dealers[118]." However, events in recent years - such as the unjust murder of George Floyd - have created a distrust of law enforcement officers. Rather than being seen as protectors, officers have become viewed as adversaries. *How then, can trust be rebuilt so that officers can best serve their communities?* One way is making officers active in their communities. For example, as was initially suggested by then-Senator Biden, police officers should live in the communities they serve. As Senator Biden suggested, this "invest[s] them in the livelihood of their neighborhoods and mak[es] their neighbors feel safe[119]."

Community-based Prevention

Another way to make police work more effective is community-based prevention. As Senator Biden wrote: "In the long run…if we are to achieve last success in reducing illegal drugs

[115] COMBATING DRUGS IN AMERICA - Putting the Drug Strategy into Action, S. Rep. No. 103-153968, 2d Sess., at 126 (1994). Accessed December 14, 2022. https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/153968NCJRS.pdf.
[116] COMBATING DRUGS IN AMERICA - Putting the Drug Strategy into Action, S. Rep. No. 103-153968, 2d Sess., at 126 (1994). Accessed December 14, 2022. https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/153968NCJRS.pdf.
[117] COMBATING DRUGS IN AMERICA - Putting the Drug Strategy into Action, S. Rep. No. 103-153968, 2d Sess., at 126 (1994). Accessed December 14, 2022. https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/153968NCJRS.pdf.
[118] COMBATING DRUGS IN AMERICA - Putting the Drug Strategy into Action, S. Rep. No. 103-153968, 2d Sess., at 126 (1994). Accessed December 14, 2022. https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/153968NCJRS.pdf.
[119] COMBATING DRUGS IN AMERICA - Putting the Drug Strategy into Action, S. Rep. No. 103-153968, 2d Sess., at 126 (1994). Accessed December 14, 2022. https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/153968NCJRS.pdf.

and crime, we must not wait to intervene until someone has already started down [the] road to addiction, to dealing, to crime, to violence[120].” Community-based prevention would target at-risk children, and steer them away from a life of crime and/or drugs. Community-based prevention can come in many forms, such as “safe haven” programs, which “provide academic and recreational programs to children after school, over the summer and during holidays[121].” This could include implementing “supervised sports programs,” or enrolling children in programs through the Boys & Girls Club. In 1992, during the midst of this “crack epidemic,” the Boys & Girls Club found success, leading to “13% fewer juvenile crimes; 22% less drug activity; and 25% less crack presence than [housing] projects without clubs[122].” Moreover, “supervised sports programs” may provide the opportunity for police departments and individual officers to build trust within the communities that they serve. Senator Biden, in his “COMBATING DRUGS IN AMERICA - Putting the Drug Strategy into Action” report referenced a program entitled “PAT” in Birmingham, Alabama in which the Birmingham Police Department used athletic teams as a “crime prevention tool[123].” These teams were also used to incentivize youth to remain in good academic standing, a strategy that reportedly reduced juvenile crime by thirty percent in the neighborhoods it served[124].

End the Stigma

[120] COMBATING DRUGS IN AMERICA - Putting the Drug Strategy into Action, S. Rep. No. 103-153968, 2d Sess., at 126 (1994). Accessed December 14, 2022. https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/153968NCJRS.pdf.
[121] COMBATING DRUGS IN AMERICA - Putting the Drug Strategy into Action, S. Rep. No. 103-153968, 2d Sess., at 126 (1994). Accessed December 14, 2022. https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/153968NCJRS.pdf.
[122] COMBATING DRUGS IN AMERICA - Putting the Drug Strategy into Action, S. Rep. No. 103-153968, 2d Sess., at 126 (1994). Accessed December 14, 2022. https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/153968NCJRS.pdf.
[123] COMBATING DRUGS IN AMERICA - Putting the Drug Strategy into Action, S. Rep. No. 103-153968, 2d Sess., at 126 (1994). Accessed December 14, 2022. https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/153968NCJRS.pdf.
[124] COMBATING DRUGS IN AMERICA - Putting the Drug Strategy into Action, S. Rep. No. 103-153968, 2d Sess., at 126 (1994). Accessed December 14, 2022. https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/153968NCJRS.pdf.

Another way that the American drug problem can be countered is by looking at it through a public health lens. This has widespread support in the country, demonstrated by a Pew Research Center report from 2014, in which "67 percent of respondents thought that [the] government should implement policies focused on treatment[125]." The first step in doing so that the country needs to take is in ending the stigma around drugs. The Director of the National Institutes of Health's National Institute on Drug Abuse, Dr. Nora Volkow, argues because of the stigma surrounding addiction, despite the fact that healthcare has tools in place that could prevent deaths that are a result of addiction, "they are not being utilized widely enough, and many people who could benefit do not even seek them out[126]." One of the reasons stigma continues to be so pervasive in society, according to Dr. Volkow, is that addiction is still largely viewed as "a result of moral weakness and flawed character,"despite the fact that is has been proven that addiction is a "complex brain disorder with behavioral components[127]." Moreover, this perception of addiction has seeped into healthcare, where oftentimes those suffering from addiction are turned away from emergency rooms by healthcare providers who are terrified of those persons' behavior, or falsely assume those persons have only come to the emergency room in search of more drugs[128]. Dr. Volknow concludes that this stigma is then internalized by those individuals seeking help, and actually causes them to refuse seeking treatment again due to the shame that they feel[129].

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[125] Coyne and Hall, "Four Decades and Counting: The Continued Failure of the War on Drugs," 18.
[126] Nora Volkow, M.D., "Addressing the Stigma that Surrounds Addiction," National Institute on Drug Abuse, last modified April 22, 2020, accessed December 12, 2022, https://nida.nih.gov/about-nida/noras-blog/2020/04/addressing-stigma-surrounds-addiction.
[127] Volkow, "Addressing the Stigma that Surrounds Addiction," National Institute on Drug Abuse.
[128] Volkow, "Addressing the Stigma that Surrounds Addiction," National Institute on Drug Abuse.
[129] Volkow, "Addressing the Stigma that Surrounds Addiction," National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Not only does stigma dissuade individuals from seeking treatment, it has been shown that stigma "may actually enhance or reinstate drug use[130]." A research project done by the National Institute on Drug Abuse's Marco Venniro studied whether heroin and methamphetamine-dependent rodents would choose social interaction or drug self-administration. Venniro found that when allowed, the rodents chose social interaction, "but when the social choice [was] punished, the animals revert[ed] to the drug[131]." Dr. Volknow asserted that this project can be applicable to the human-experience. Therefore, ending the stigma around drug abuse, as well as seeking treatment for drug abuse, can have a positive impact on the recovery process, and therefore the drug usage that is currently being seen.

Decriminalization vs. Legalization

Another recommendation regards the issue of decriminalization versus legalization. This paper does not recommend legalization. Take for example, marijuana, which has already been legalized in numerous American states. While the author of this paper is not opposed to marijuana legalization, as it is not an addictive drug, there is a necessary caution in that there is still a market for illegal marijuana. There is still a strong demand for illegal marijuana, particularly for those who cannot afford to pay high prices for legal marijuana. This is because illegal marijuana is cheaper than marijuana from dispensaries[132]. Moreover, the illegal market gives better access to marijuana for those who are underage, and so therefore, cannot legally obtain marijuana[133]. If this is the situation that exists with marijuana, a nonaddictive drug, one can only imagine what the situation would be with an addictive drug such as heroin.

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[130] Volkow, "Addressing the Stigma that Surrounds Addiction," National Institute on Drug Abuse.
[131] Volkow, "Addressing the Stigma that Surrounds Addiction," National Institute on Drug Abuse.
[132] U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Staffer, interview by the author.
[133] U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Staffer, interview by the author.

Therefore, this paper is a proponent of decriminalization, as Portugal did in 2001. Portugal's decision to decriminalize "the consumption of all drugs," the first country to do so, arguably has had a positive impact on the drug situation in the nation[134]. Prior to its move to decriminalize drug consumption, Portugal was deep in the throes of heroin addiction, with "An estimated 1% of the population - bankers, students, socialites - …hooked on heroin and [the country having] the highest rate of HIV infection in the entire European Union[135]." Since decriminalizing drug consumption, as of 2018, Portugal's "drug-induced death rate has plummeted to five times lower than the E.U. average[136]." In comparison, that was "one-fiftieth of the United States'," which is in the throes of an opioid epidemic[137]. In the time since the decriminalization effort, Portugal has seen a decline in drug use in the most at-risk population demographic for drug use: those between the ages of 15 and 24[138].

Moreover, the Portuguese found that by treating drug consumption as a public health issue, rather than a criminal issue, it freed up government funding. By "treat[ing] drug addicts as patients who needed help," this enabled law enforcement to focus on going after drug dealers and drug traffickers, which then allowed the government to invest in efforts to promote treatment and harm reduction[139]. Furthermore, a report provided by the Drug Policy Alliance found that since enacting this policy of treatment over incarceration, Portugal saw a decrease from 44% in 1999 to 24% in 2013 in "the percentage of people in prison…for drug law violations[140]." The Portuguese policy also emphasizes ending stigma around seeking help for drug addiction. When

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[134] Naina Bajekal, "Want to Win the War on Drugs? Portugal Might Have the Answer," *TIME*, last modified August 1, 2018, accessed December 12, 2022, https://time.com/longform/portugal-drug-use-decriminalization/.
[135] Bajekal, "Want to Win the War on Drugs? Portugal Might Have the Answer," *TIME*.
[136] Bajekal, "Want to Win the War on Drugs? Portugal Might Have the Answer," *TIME*.
[137] Bajekal, "Want to Win the War on Drugs? Portugal Might Have the Answer," *TIME*.
[138] Bajekal, "Want to Win the War on Drugs? Portugal Might Have the Answer," *TIME*.
[139] Bajekal, "Want to Win the War on Drugs? Portugal Might Have the Answer," *TIME*.
[140] Bajekal, "Want to Win the War on Drugs? Portugal Might Have the Answer," *TIME*.

an individual is found with “less than a 10-day supply of any drug” they are sent to what is known as a “local commission,” in which a doctor, lawyer, and social worker teach the individual about “treatment and available medical services[141].”

Portugal’s efforts are ones the United States should learn from. The United States, as aforementioned in Dr. Volkow’s commentary, is plagued by the issue of stigma, which in turn exacerbates the issue of drug abuse. In comparison, Portugal has seen a 60% increase in the amount of people who have sought and entered into drug treatment (between 1998 and 2011)[142]. If the United States simulated Portugal’s approach, the United States could very well a) lower the incarceration rate for drug-related offenses in the country; b) reduce stigma and encourage Americans to seek treatment; and c) free up more funding so that law enforcement goes after traffickers and dealers, and provide for more treatment access. It is time for the United States to take a page out of Portugal’s book.

Supervised Injection Sites

A third recommendation for the United States is supervised injection sites. Canada has been seen as the “success story” for supervised injection sites (SISs). Services provided at SISs include supporting drug users in their efforts to overcome addiction (e.g. through counseling and treatment), as well as overdose emergency response and exchanging needles[143]. Its first facility, in which “heroin can be used under supervision,” opened in 2003 in Vancouver[144]. Many SISs

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[141] Bajekal, "Want to Win the War on Drugs? Portugal Might Have the Answer," *TIME*.
[142] Bajekal, "Want to Win the War on Drugs? Portugal Might Have the Answer," *TIME*.
[143] Jennifer Ng, Christy Sutherland, MD CCFP DipABAM, and Michael R. Kolber, MD CCFP MSc, "Does evidence support supervised injection sites?," *Canadian Family Physician* 63, no. 11 (November 2017): 866, accessed December 12, 2022, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5685449/.
[144]J. David Goodman, "Opioid Crisis Compels New York to Look North for Answers," *The New York Times*, last modified May 21, 2018, accessed December 12, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/21/nyregion/opioid-crisis-compels-new-york-to-look-north-for-answers.html.

allow users to inject drugs, while others have introduced the option to snort or swallow drugs. As of 2018, no Canadian SISs allowed for drugs to be smoked[145].

A 2017 study, conducted by Jennifer Ng, a medical student in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Alberta in Edmonton; Christy Sutherland, MD CCFP DipABAM, the Medical Director of the Portland Hotel Society in Vancouver, BC; and Michael R. Kolber, MD CCFP MSc, an Associate Professor in the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Alberta looked into the effectiveness of supervised injection sites[146]. The study found that "SISs are associated with lower overdose mortality (88 fewer overdose deaths per 100,000 person-years [PYs]), 67% fewer ambulance calls for treating overdoses, and a decrease in HIV infections[147]." Clearly, the data speaks for itself. Supervised injection sites can work. American cities and states have begun to take notice. Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Seattle "have taken steps toward supervised injection[148]," and in 2021 the state of Rhode Island "approved a pilot for supervised consumption[149]." One place that has gone a step further is New York City, which, in November 2021, opened two SISs in the Manhattan neighborhoods of East Harlem and Washington Heights[150].

Final Thoughts

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[145] Goodman, "Opioid Crisis Compels New York to Look North for Answers," *The New York Times*.
[146] Ng, Sutherland, and Kolber, "Does evidence support supervised injection sites?," 866.
[147] Ng, Sutherland, and Kolber, "Does evidence support supervised injection sites?," 866.
[148] Jeffery C. Mays and Andy Newman, "Nation's First Supervised Drug-Injection Sites Open in New York," *The New York Times*, last modified November 30, 2021, accessed December 12, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/30/nyregion/supervised-injection-sites-nyc.html.
[149] Caroline Lewis, "Supervised injection sites in NYC have saved lives. But officials won't provide funds," npr, last modified June 4, 2022, accessed December 12, 2022, https://www.npr.org/2022/06/04/1103114131/supervised-injection-sites-in-nyc-have-saved-lives-but-officials-wont-provide-fu.
[150] Mays and Newman, "Nation's First Supervised Drug-Injection Sites Open in New York," *The New York Times*.

"Drug addiction is something that will always exist," says Gonçalo Fonseca, a Portuguese man who has witnessed the effort to decriminalize drugs in the country[151]. This is to say that no effort to combat drugs will ever be perfect. There will always be opponents, such as those who argue that SISs actually encourage drug abuse. However, like drug addiction itself, reform is ugly. It is imperfect, and there are many different reform ideas. At the end of the day, what is most important, no matter what the policy implemented is, is that those suffering from addiction are giving the humane treatment they deserve.

To root out drug addiction, the drug supply must also be rooted out. However, as Admiral Craig S. Faller, USN, the Commander of SOUTHCOM noted: "We cannot interdict our way out of the narcotics problem[152]." Resolving the American drug problem means treating drugs as an issue of public safety, by directly involving police departments in their communities. This means building trust between officers and the people they serve, as well as enlisting preventative measures so that the cycle of drugs ends. If communities work together, the drug crisis can end.

[151] Bajekal, "Want to Win the War on Drugs? Portugal Might Have the Answer," *TIME*.
[152] *UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND AND UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND: Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services*, 117th Cong. 1-111 (2021). Accessed October 24, 2022. https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/21-12_03-16-2021.pdf.

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