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Collaborating to Combat Illicit Networks Through Interagency and International Efforts

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Introduction

This paper examines collaborative efforts among U.S. agencies, partner nations, and multilateral organizations to address the hybrid threats posed by illicit networks through the diplomatic, development, and defense lenses of national security in the Western Hemisphere. The resourcefulness, adaptability, impunity, and ability of illicit networks to circumvent countermeasures make them a formidable foe for governments. Since illicit actors have expanded their activities throughout the global commons, in the air, land, sea, and cyberspace domains, nations must devise comprehensive and multidimensional strategies and policies to combat the transnational threats posed by these illicit networks.

The initiatives discussed here focus on programs in the Western Hemisphere to tackle the converging threat of transnational organized crime (TOC) and other illicit networks, undertaken by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Organization of American States (OAS), Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), and U.S. Southern Command's Joint Interagency Task Force–South (JIATF-South). Each of these endeavors represents models for collaborations that require political will, institutional capacity, mechanisms, resources, and measures of effectiveness for success. These instructive examples of interagency and international collaboration in the Americas underscore the continued need to foster communities of interest to comprehend illicit networks and devise more effective strategies to counter them as they further evolve and threaten the national security of the United States and its allies.

Based on analysis of these examples, the following recommendations are offered for consideration by policymakers:

- Promote collaborative models for security and development that include the following critical elements: political will, institutions, mechanisms to assess threats and deliver countermeasures, resources, and measures of effectiveness to ensure success against illicit networks.
- Ensure that international conventions, agreements, and strategies are accompanied with robust action plans and are adequately resourced in order to restrict illicit actors' operations and enablers.
- Encourage greater donor coordination so that all these security and development programs complement rather than duplicate each other. Given the level of political will demonstrated across these organizations, there should be an interest in allocating resources and building capacity in the specific geographic areas most vulnerable to transnational organized crime.

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The Nature of the Threat of Illicit Networks

Throughout history, governments have been responsible for ensuring and promoting security, prosperity, and governance. The unprecedented pace of change in a globalized world has challenged these basic missions of the nation-state. From demographic pressures to an increasingly interconnected global economy, and from the race for resources to information overload, governments are struggling to cope with what Harvard University scholar Joseph Nye calls “the diffusion of power” in the twenty-first century. Governments are faced with a broad spectrum of national security threats that emanate from nonstate actors as well as traditional nation-states. Illicit networks that include transnational crime organizations, drug traffickers, gangs, and terrorist groups are among these nonstate actors. While illicit activities have been with us since ancient times, what is novel today is the pervasive, prolific, and converging nature of illicit networks around the world. These networks threaten the rule of law, government institutions, the economy, and society. In the words of former Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Admiral James Stavridis, “Just as legitimate governments and businesses have embraced the advances of globalization, so too have illicit traffickers harnessed the benefits of globalization to press forward their illicit activities.”¹ Illicit activities such as drug, arms, contraband, and human trafficking are nothing new; however, their velocity, scale, and associated violence as a result of globalization have made these transnational crimes national security concerns.

Illicit Networks Capitalize on Global Supply Chains

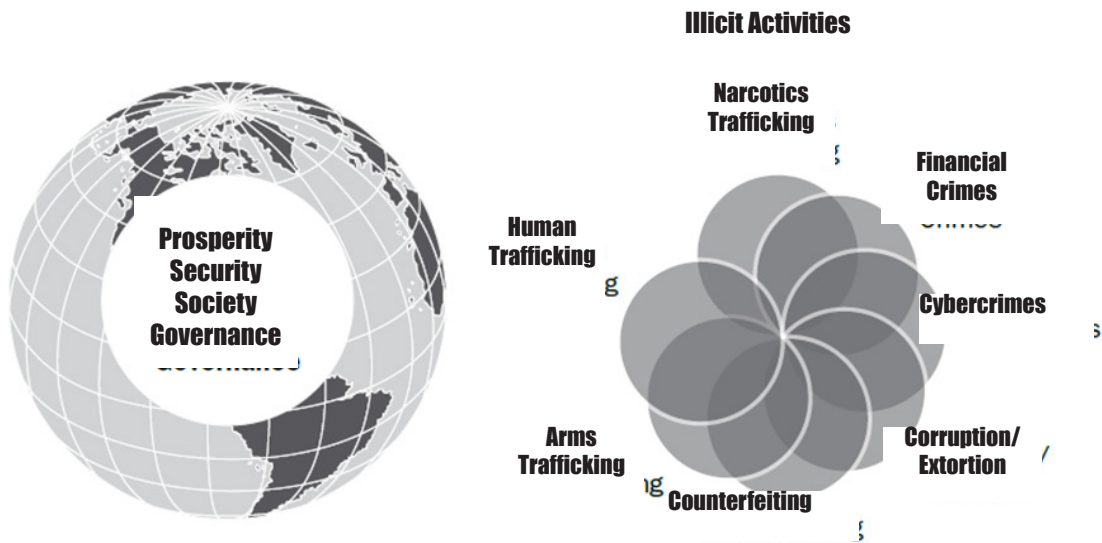
Illicit networks seek to navigate, infiltrate, and/or dominate global supply chains to further their activities and enhance their power. They actually thrive in open societies with the free flow of goods, people, and capital. Just like licit businesses, illicit networks are matching the supply and demand for goods, services, capital, and information for their clients. Illicit actors utilize and even seek to control or co-opt supply chains around the world to facilitate the movement of “bad people and bad things” such as drugs, guns, and counterfeit goods.

Regardless of industry or geography, there are four critical elements of any global supply chain whose integrity must be preserved and protected at all costs:

1. **Materiel:** What is being moved through the supply chain? People, goods, commodities, services, data? Where are those materials coming from and destined for?
2. **Manpower:** Who controls and staffs the supply chain? Who are the key enablers of that supply chain? Who is in control of these mechanisms or modes of conveyance?
3. **Money:** Who is funding the supply chain? What business model is being used to generate revenue? Where is the financing originating from and directed to?
4. **Mechanisms:** What modes of conveyance are used by the supply chain? Are people, goods, and services moving by land, air, sea, or cyberspace? How is the supply chain organized?²

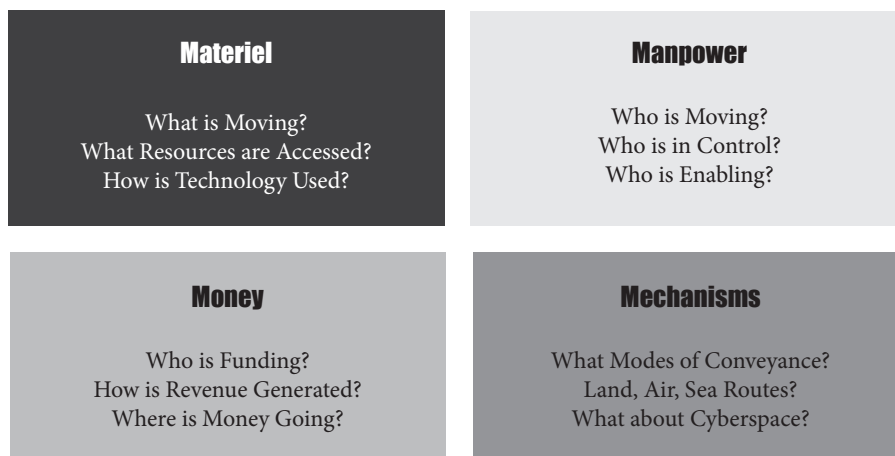
While each of these four critical elements of global supply chains has its unique features, the security of each is vital to safeguarding supply chains. Who is securing these elements? Global competition has led the private sector to identify and adopt the most efficient means of matching supply and demand for goods, services, and information, and to incorporate risk management mechanisms;³ similarly, illicit networks have adopted these best practices. Unfortunately, international safety standards and government control of global supply chains still lag far behind.

**Figure 1. The New Global Security Environment
National Security Threats from Illicit Networks**



Illicit actors are well aware of these weaknesses and exploit them to further their interests; they capitalize on gaps in governance, regulations, and oversight to bolster their enterprises. Illicit networks easily adapt to their changing operating environment. They often operate as service providers for each other. For transnational criminal organizations, maximizing profits is paramount. Their activities distort global markets and pricing, undermine consumer confidence, and even endanger consumers around the world, as in the case of counterfeit drugs. As a result of globalization, the sheer volume and velocity of international trade make it virtually impossible to control and secure global supply chains. Nevertheless, governments must keep abreast of the ways illicit actors are exploiting the increasingly borderless world and identify the vulnerabilities of global supply chains. Accordingly, governments must develop measures to combat illicit networks by leveraging and safeguarding the four critical elements of supply chains: materiel, manpower, money, and mechanisms. New strategies to combat transnational organized crime and illicit networks, including those discussed below, are increasingly addressing these challenges.

**Figure 2. Global Supply Chain Management
Four Critical Elements**



Strategies to Combat Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Networks

Governments at the local, national, regional, and multilateral levels must devise holistic strategies to address the complex, adaptive, and converging transnational security threats from illicit networks. Several efforts are underway to promote interagency and international collaboration to address transnational organized crime and illicit networks and promote security in the Western Hemisphere. These regional efforts will be examined through the lenses of national strategy, diplomacy, development, and defense and security.

The May 2010 *National Security Strategy* aptly acknowledges and describes the convergence of threats posed by illicit networks:

Transnational criminal threats and illicit trafficking networks continue to expand dramatically in size, scope, and influence—posing significant national security challenges for the United States and our partner countries. These threats cross borders and continents and undermine the stability of nations, subverting government institutions through corruption and harming citizens worldwide. Transnational criminal organizations have accumulated unprecedented wealth and power through trafficking and other illicit activities, penetrating legitimate financial systems and destabilizing commercial markets. They extend their reach by forming alliances with government officials and some state security services. The crime-terror nexus is a serious concern as terrorists use criminal networks for logistical support and funding. Increasingly, these networks are involved in cyber crime, which cost consumers billions of dollars annually, while undermining global confidence in the international financial system.⁴

Combating transnational criminal and trafficking networks requires a multi-dimensional strategy that safeguards citizens, breaks the financial strength of criminal and terrorist networks, disrupts illicit trafficking networks, defeats transnational criminal organizations, fights government corruption, strengthens the rule of law, bolsters judicial systems, and improves transparency. While these are major challenges, the United States will be able to devise and execute a collective strategy with other nations facing the same threats.⁵

Recognizing transnational organized crime as a national security threat, in July 2011 the United States issued its most recent Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime, which seeks to build, balance, and integrate the tools of American power to combat transnational organized crime and related threats to U.S. national security. The strategy posits that transnational organized crime threatens U.S. interests by taking advantage of failed states or contested spaces; forging alliances with corrupt foreign government officials and some foreign intelligence services; destabilizing political, financial, and security institutions in fragile states; undermining competition in world strategic markets; using cyber technologies and other methods to perpetrate sophisticated frauds; creating the potential for the transfer of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to terrorists; and expanding narco-trafficking and human and weapons smuggling networks. Terrorists and insurgents increasingly are turning to criminal networks to generate funding and acquire logistical support. TOC also threatens the interconnected trading, transportation, and transactional systems that move people and commerce throughout the global economy and across our borders.⁶

The strategy's key policy objectives are to:

1. protect Americans and our partners from the harm, violence, and exploitation of transnational criminal networks;

2. help partner countries strengthen governance and transparency, break the corruptive power of transnational criminal networks, and sever state-crime alliances;
3. break the economic power of transnational criminal networks and protect strategic markets and the U.S. financial system from TOC penetration and abuse;
4. defeat transnational criminal networks that pose the greatest threat to national security by targeting their infrastructures, depriving them of their enabling means, and preventing the criminal facilitation of terrorist activities; and
5. build international consensus, multilateral cooperation, and public-private partnerships to defeat transnational organized crime.

Key actions of the strategy include:

- reduce the demand for illicit drugs in the United States, thereby denying funding to illicit trafficking organizations;
- continue to attack drug trafficking and distribution networks and their enabling means within the United States to reduce the availability of illicit drugs;
- sever the illicit flow across U.S. borders of people, weapons, currency, and other illicit finance through investigations and prosecutions of key TOC leadership, as well as through targeting enabling means and infrastructure of TOC networks;
- identify and take action against corporate and governmental corruption within the United States;
- work with Congress to secure ratification of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials; and
- seek accession to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Other priority actions seek to: enhance intelligence and information sharing; protect the financial system and strategic markets against transnational organized crime; strengthen interdiction, investigations, and prosecutions; disrupt drug trafficking and its facilitation of other transnational threats; and build international capacity, cooperation, and partnerships.⁷

This new strategy elevates transnational organized crime to a national security threat and focuses attention on the destructive effects of TOC on U.S. interests at home and abroad. In the past, organized crime had been considered and handled as a local law enforcement issue. The new strategy seeks to better organize and coordinate interagency efforts within the U.S. government to address transnational organized crime and promote international cooperation against this global threat.

Prior to the publication of this strategy, U.S. agencies such as the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, State, and Treasury as well as the law enforcement and intelligence communities had been actively countering, pursuing, and prosecuting transnational criminal organizations for years. From border controls to banking regulations, roles and responsibilities to combat illicit activities have been carved out for these agencies in their respective areas of expertise. Those who investigate and research transnational organized crime and illicit networks, both inside and outside of government, expected bolder language and guidance on how this new strategy would synchronize and coordinate U.S. efforts to combat TOC across the government. However, as of this writing, the U.S. government has not issued an implementation plan for this new strategy. The strategy does not create a new government agency, establish a White House czar position, allocate additional funding, or empower a lead agency.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the implementation of the 2011 Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime is not the adversary of illicit actors, but rather the fiscal state of the United States. Some, including former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, consider the national debt as the greatest threat to U.S. national security.⁸ In this age of fiscal austerity, it is unclear how these agencies charged with combating TOC can match the resources and ingenuity of these illicit actors and “do even more with less.” With a limited and if not diminishing budget, the U.S. interagency community will need to seek more innovative and efficient ways to confront and combat transnational organized crime.

On the Diplomatic Front: United Nations Initiatives

Palermo Convention and Protocols. The United Nations (UN) Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, known as the Palermo Convention, is the main international instrument to counter organized crime and promote coordinated international cooperation. It was adopted in December 2000 in Palermo, Italy, and was complemented by three protocols that target trafficking in persons, especially women and children, smuggling of migrants, and the illicit manufacturing and trafficking of firearms.⁹ The Palermo Convention establishes transnational organized crime as a threat to all UN member nations and sets forth common definitions and language to characterize activities that constitute this phenomenon.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. As the guardian of the Palermo Convention, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) helps countries create the domestic legal framework to investigate criminal offences related to organized crime and prosecute offenders, and adopt new frameworks for extradition, mutual legal assistance, and international law enforcement cooperation.¹⁰ UNODC is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime. Established in 1997 through a merger between the United Nations Drug Control Program and the Center for International Crime Prevention, UNODC is headquartered in Vienna, with 54 field offices covering more than 150 countries around the world. It relies on voluntary contributions, mainly from governments, for 90 percent of its budget.¹¹ UNODC is one of the world’s leading sources of reliable data, analysis, and forensic science services related to illicit drugs and crime. Its publications include the annual *World Drug Report*, *U.N. Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2009*, the 2010 report *Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as Reported by Victims*, and the 2011 *Global Afghan Opium Trade: Threat Assessment*. UNODC also provides practical tools and resources for policymakers, legislators, and criminal justice professionals.¹²

The UNODC work program is supported by three pillars. First, *field-based technical cooperation projects* enhance the capacity of member states to counteract illicit drugs, crime, and terrorism. Second, *research and analytical work* increases knowledge and understanding of drugs and crime issues and expands the evidence base for policy and operational decisions. And third, *normative work* assists states in the ratification and implementation of the relevant international treaties, the development of domestic legislation on drugs, crime, and terrorism, and the provision of secretariat and substantive services to the treaty-based and governing bodies.¹³

UNODC offers specialized assistance and expertise in the following areas:

- ***Organized crime and trafficking:*** UNODC helps governments react to the instability and insecurity caused by crimes such as the smuggling of illicit drugs, weapons, natural resources, counterfeit goods, and human beings between countries and continents. It also addresses emerging forms of crime such as cybercrime, trafficking in cultural artifacts, and environmental crime.

- *Corruption*: Corruption is a major impediment to economic and social development. UNODC partners with the public and private sectors, as well as civil society, to loosen the grip that corrupt individuals have on government, national borders, and trading channels. In recent years, the office has stepped up its efforts to help states recover assets stolen by corrupt officials.
- *Crime prevention and criminal justice reform*: UNODC promotes the use of training manuals and the adoption of codes of conduct and standards and norms that aim to guarantee that the accused, the guilty, and the victims can all rely on a criminal justice system that is fair and grounded on human rights values. A strong rule of law will also instill confidence among citizens in the effectiveness of the courts and the humanness of the prisons.
- *Drug abuse prevention and health*: Through educational campaigns and by basing its approach on scientific findings, UNODC tries to convince young people not to use illicit drugs, drug-dependent people to seek treatment, and governments to see drug use as a health problem, not a crime.
- *Terrorism prevention*: UNODC is moving toward a more programmatic approach that involves developing long-term, customized assistance to entities involved in investigating and adjudicating cases linked to terrorism.¹⁴

UNODC's consolidated budget for drugs and crime for the biennium 2010–2011 amounted to \$468.3 million. Voluntary contributions are budgeted for \$425.7 million, of which 64 percent is for the drugs program and 36 percent for the crime program. The United States was the second largest country contributor after Colombia, contributing \$34.3 million to UNODC funding in 2010.¹⁵

The UNODC 2010 Annual Report “showed how health, security, and justice are the antidotes to drugs, crime and terrorism,” according to UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa. It featured the organization's work on promoting drug treatment and alternative development, improving criminal justice, strengthening integrity, and reducing vulnerability to crime.¹⁶ To combat transnational organized crime, UNODC developed the *Serious Organized Crime Threat Assessment Handbook* to give policymakers tools for assessing immediate threats, the direction of current trends, and likely future challenges so that they can implement effective strategies to combat organized crime. In April 2010, Brazil hosted the Twelfth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to consider comprehensive strategies for addressing global challenges to crime prevention and criminal justice systems, in particular those related to the treatment of prisoners, juvenile justice, the prevention of urban crime, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons, money laundering, terrorism, and cybercrime.

In its anticorruption efforts, state parties to the UN Convention against Corruption met in Doha, Qatar, in November 2009 and agreed to establish a mechanism to review implementation of the Convention against Corruption. Under the new mechanism, all state parties will be reviewed every five years on the fulfillment of their obligations under the convention. On the basis of self-assessments and peer review, the mechanism will help identify gaps in national anticorruption laws and practices. The convention's new monitoring mechanism represented a major breakthrough in the global campaign against corruption. To address human trafficking, UNODC developed, in cooperation with the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, a model law to guide UN member states in preparing national laws against trafficking in persons.¹⁷

In 2009, UNODC launched an international drug treatment and care initiative in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) that is a landmark in the development of a comprehensive, integrated, health-based approach to drug policy. The UNODC-WHO Joint Programme on Drug

Dependence Treatment and Care aims to provide humane and accessible care to greater numbers of people with drug dependence and drug-related diseases (particularly HIV/AIDS) in low- and middle-income countries, resulting in their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.¹⁸

As an example of UNODC's more recent initiatives, on October 1, 2011, UNODC Executive Director Yury Fedotov inaugurated the Center of Excellence for Crime Statistics on Governance, Victims of Crime, Public Security and Justice in Mexico City. The center will develop field surveys, share knowledge in the area of crime statistics, and organize an annual international conference on statistics. Fedotov stated:

As criminal gangs and drug trafficking rings become more sophisticated in their quest to avoid detection and escape justice, we support the Mexican Government in strengthening and sharing data collection methods relating to governance, victims of crime, public security and justice so that it—and other countries—can better respond to these threats.

The Executive Director also noted:

We must all remember that organized crime has become transnational and borderless; it is no longer a problem of just one country. Therefore, this center of excellence will help to assist in the government's response to crime in Mexico, and its findings will also be crucial to regional and international authorities and organizations fighting transnational organized crime.¹⁹

UNODC's broad spectrum of activities, like the Center of Excellence for Crime Statistics in Mexico City, demonstrates constructive bilateral and multilateral engagements directed against transnational organized crime and illicit networks that should continue as these threats mutate and converge in the new global security environment. Since many of the UNODC programs are dedicated to strengthening institutions to fight drugs and crime around the world, and their results are usually not immediate, it is difficult to evaluate their effectiveness. Moreover, as most programs are executed in partnership with host governments and other multilateral or nongovernmental organizations, determining the return on UNODC investments is challenging. While the mission of UNODC is noble, it would be helpful if the organization could provide more information about its programming and institute measures of effectiveness to better demonstrate the impact against transnational organized crime, and determine better which programs actually worked.

On the Diplomatic Front: Organization of American States Initiatives

The Organization of American States (OAS) has been combating the phenomenon of illicit networks in the Americas at the multilateral level through three vehicles: the Hemispheric Plan of Action against Transnational Organized Crime, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), and the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE). The OAS early on recognized that the threat of illicit activities was transnational in nature and required dynamic political, social, economic, and security initiatives to respond to illicit networks.

OAS Hemispheric Plan of Action against Transnational Organized Crime

The OAS Hemispheric Plan of Action against Transnational Organized Crime was adopted in October 2006 to promote the application by OAS member states of the United Nations Convention against

Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention) and the Protocols thereto: the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children; the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air; and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition. Its general objectives are to:

1. prevent and combat transnational organized crime, in full observance of human rights, using as a frame of reference the Palermo Convention and the three additional protocols;
2. enhance cooperation in the areas of prevention, investigation, prosecution of, and judicial decisions related to, transnational organized crime;
3. encourage coordination among OAS bodies responsible for issues related to combating transnational organized crime and cooperation among those bodies with UNODC; and
4. strengthen national, subregional, and regional capacities and capabilities to deal with transnational organized crime.

The Hemispheric Plan of Action put forth specific actions in the following areas: national strategies against transnational organized crime, legal instruments, law enforcement matters, training, information-sharing, and international cooperation and assistance.²⁰

Despite initial enthusiasm about the Plan of Action, the OAS Technical Group on Transnational Crime has met on only three occasions: Mexico City, in July 2007, Washington, DC, in October 2009, and Trinidad and Tobago, in November 2011.²¹ At the November 2011 meeting, OAS Secretary for Multidimensional Security Adam Blackwell said that international crime is “everyone’s problem, it occurs in developed and developing countries where poverty, inequality, social and political exclusion and governance challenges are both causes and consequences of the problem.” Those at the meeting debated and offered some recommendations on police management in the hemisphere, a fundamental issue in improving security for citizens in the Americas.²² OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza explained that “police forces are tasked with the great responsibility of being the primary representatives of the state in guaranteeing compliance with the rule of law, within a community in a large or small community,” for which he stressed that “the importance of fostering institutional capacity development to ensure effective response by the police in a democratic framework” cannot be overestimated.²³

While the OAS Hemispheric Plan of Action against Transnational Organized Crime is well intentioned, it is not clear what has actually been accomplished, as data regarding its programming are limited. Many of these OAS meetings issue communiqués that sound promising, but actions speak louder than words. To further complicate matters, OAS member states are hard-pressed to fund and staff new initiatives in support of the Plan of Action given the global economic recession and resource constraints.

Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission

To address the challenging issues of narcotics trafficking and drug abuse in the Western Hemisphere, in 1986 the OAS established an agency known as CICAD, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission. It focuses on strengthening the human and institutional capabilities and channeling the collective efforts of its member states to reduce the production, trafficking, and use of illegal drugs.²⁴ CICAD received almost \$3 million of its \$7.8 million total 2010 budget from the United States to counter the trafficking and abuse of illegal drugs, including methamphetamine.²⁵ Its specific activities seek to:

- prevent and treat substance abuse;

- reduce the supply and availability of illicit drugs;
- strengthen national drug control institutions and machinery;
- improve money-laundering control laws and practice;
- develop alternate sources of income for growers of coca, poppy, and marijuana;
- assist member governments in improving their data gathering and analysis on all aspects of the drug issue; and
- help member states and the hemisphere as a whole measure their progress over time in addressing the drug problem.²⁶

For more than 10 years, the OAS/CICAD Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) has strengthened regional and subregional collaboration on all levels, including drug awareness and treatment approaches, information data collection, sharing and harmonizing counternarcotics and crime legislative models, extradition practices, and other control measures. The MEM deploys the expertise of independent peer reviewers from all OAS countries, which has resulted in hundreds of recommendations that individual countries and CICAD are taking concrete and effective measures to implement.²⁷

Carrying out the MEM recommendations is an essential part of the toolkit that allows OAS countries to work as a cohesive force against the dual threats of drugs and crime. The MEM focuses on institution-building, demand reduction, supply reduction, control measures, and international cooperation. Notably, the MEM evaluation country reports, published in 2010, prompted the independent hemispheric experts who draft the reports to make over a third of their recommendations in the area of narcotics control measures. These recommendations for action include establishing and/or refining laws and regulations to control weapons, ammunition, and related material to stem the growing violence posed by illegal drugs and crime.²⁸

On May 3, 2010, a new Hemispheric Drug Strategy was adopted by CICAD in Washington, DC, which updates the Anti-Drug Strategy in the Hemisphere, originally approved by the OAS General Assembly in 1997. Its 52 articles cover five aspects: Institutional Strengthening, Demand Reduction, Supply Reduction, Control Measures, and International Cooperation.²⁹ In May 2011, the OAS adopted the Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs, 2011–2015, to assist member nations in implementing the Hemispheric Drug Strategy³⁰ on the demand and supply sides of the problem.

Among its various programs, CICAD continued to carry out its activities in anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) throughout Latin America and the Caribbean in 2010. CICAD's AML/CFT training programs seek to enhance the knowledge and capabilities of judges, prosecutors, public defenders, law enforcement agents, and financial intelligence unit analysts. CICAD's Anti-Money Laundering Section organized 17 seminars and workshops in 14 countries in 2010, training nearly 700 judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, financial intelligence unit analysts, and forfeited assets administration officers, among other participants. It partnered with UNODC, the Stolen Assets Recovery initiative of the World Bank, the World Bank Institute, Spain's Ministry of Interior, and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs of the Department of State, as well as the OAS's Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE) and the governments of CICAD member states.

CICAD also coordinated with the UNODC Legal Assistance Program for Latin America and the Caribbean, Interpol, and the South American Financial Action Task Force (GAFISUD) in setting up the Asset Recovery Network of GAFISUD as a vehicle for exchanging information about the identification and recovery of assets, products, or instruments of transnational illicit activities. This initiative is based on the guidelines of CARIN (Camden Assets Recovery Inter-Agency Network) in Europe.³¹

In November 2011, CICAD celebrated its 50th session and the 25th anniversary of the commission in Buenos Aires, where OAS Secretary Adam Blackwell said, “Ties between drugs, crime, violence and weapons are evident and demand greater coordination among the countries of the region to be able to face them with a comprehensive and multilateral approach.” Secretary Blackwell added that “drug demand reduction through education” would be one of CICAD’s working pillars. During this meeting, CICAD agreed to expand some of its most innovative programs to other regions, such as Central America and the Caribbean. The project for the establishment of Drug Treatment Courts was highlighted. These courts, which seek to improve the quality of treatment to drug-dependent offenders, received strong support from the member states, several of which requested that OAS implement pilot programs in their territories. The countries also highlighted the use of scientific evidence produced in the Inter-American Drug Observatory as a pillar for the establishment of public policies in the field, and they requested that the CICAD Executive Secretariat continue working toward strengthening national information systems.³²

Inter-American Committee against Terrorism

The OAS also has a separate entity charged with the counterterrorism mission in the Americas. In 2002, CICTE (the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism) established an Executive Secretariat within the OAS General Secretariat after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Its mission is to promote and develop cooperation among member states to prevent, combat, and eliminate terrorism in accordance with the principles of the OAS Charter and the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism. The CICTE Secretariat has developed a full range of technical assistance and capacity-building programs to help OAS member states to prevent, combat, and eliminate terrorism. CICTE oversees 10 programs divided into six broad program areas: border controls, financial controls, critical infrastructure protection, legislative assistance and consultations, crisis management exercises, and policy development and coordination. The latter program is devoted to promoting international cooperation and coordination with other international, regional, and subregional bodies, as well as the private sector.³³

More specifically, CICTE enhances the exchange of terror-related information among member states, including the establishment of an inter-American database on terrorism issues; assists member states in drafting appropriate counterterrorism legislation; compiles bilateral, subregional, regional, and multilateral counterterrorism treaties and agreements signed by member states; promotes universal adherence to international counterterrorism conventions; enhances border cooperation and travel documentation security measures; and develops activities for training and crisis management.

These OAS multilateral security programs to counter the threat of illicit networks (including drug-trafficking organizations and terrorist groups) illustrate the potential but also the inherent challenges of multilateral cooperation. Since many of the strategies and policies to address illicit phenomena including drug, arms, and human trafficking are national, the OAS is hard-pressed to dictate solution sets to sovereign nation-states. Several countries in the region have limited resources to confront drug-trafficking organizations that are often better trained and equipped than government forces. The situation is further complicated by the problematic history of those Latin American countries that have transitioned from military dictatorships to democratic governments responsible for safeguarding the rule of law. There remain deep-seated suspicions of the role of defense and security forces, and trepidation concerning abuses of power and corruption by these forces if they are employed against illicit networks. Therefore, the OAS serves as a forum and catalyst for member states to better understand the threat of transnational organized crime and illicit networks and to share resources and best practices to foster regional security, while incorporating measures of effectiveness to evaluate the real impact of OAS programming.

On the Development Front

Central America has become the unfortunate victim of the aggressive counternarcotics campaigns of the governments of Colombia and Mexico. As illicit actors have perceived more risks in operating in Colombia and Mexico, they have stepped up their activities in Central America. Increasing flows of narcotics through Central America have been contributing to rising levels of violence and the corruption of government officials, which are weakening citizens' support for democratic governance and the rule of law. Violence is particularly intense in the "northern triangle" countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, which have some of the highest homicide rates in the world. Citizens of nearly every Central American nation now rank public insecurity as the top problem facing their countries. Given the transnational character of criminal organizations and their abilities to exploit ungoverned spaces, some analysts assert that insecurity in Central America poses a threat to the United States.³⁴

The Central American Integration System (SICA) is a regional organization with a Secretariat in El Salvador, composed of the governments of Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama. Its Security Commission was created in 1995 to develop and carry out regional security efforts to combat illicit networks among other transnational threats. On April 14, 2011, Secretary General of SICA Juan Daniel Aleman presented the new regional security strategy to the Group of Friends in Support of the Central American Security Strategy, which included ministers and vice ministers of defense, security, and foreign affairs, including Guatemalan Defense Minister Abraham Valenzuela; U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Arturo Valenzuela; Guatemalan Deputy Minister of the Presidency Mauricio Boraschi; Canadian Assistant Deputy Minister for the Americas Jon Allen; and Nicaraguan National Police First Commissioner Aminta Granera.

The four pillars of the regional security strategy are Prevention, Combating Crime, Rehabilitation and Reintegration, and Institutional Strengthening. This strategy is based on the premise that security in Central America is a shared responsibility, and one of the key principles is that it implies an interconnected chain between local, national, and regional actions from a perspective of resource allocations and should take advantage of synergies, according to Aleman.³⁵ SICA's strategy will require close cooperation between Central American countries and the international community to achieve success in the fight against violence and is yet another example of multilateral partnerships to combat the convergence of threats from illicit networks.

The United States recognizes that its efforts in Colombia and Mexico have provided incentives for criminal groups to move into Central America and other areas where they can exploit institutional weaknesses to continue their operations. In response, the Obama administration has made ensuring the safety and security of all citizens one of the four overarching priorities of U.S. policy in Latin America and has sought to develop collaborative partnerships with countries throughout the Hemisphere. These partnerships have taken the form of bilateral security cooperation with countries such as Colombia and Mexico, as well as regional programs such as the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative and the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI).³⁶

Central America Regional Security Initiative

On the diplomatic and development front, the U.S.-sponsored CARSI seeks to promote citizen security and socioeconomic development as a direct response to the growing threat of illicit networks. CARSI was originally created in 2007 as part of the Mexico-focused counterdrug and anticrime assistance package known as the Mérida Initiative.³⁷ CARSI not only provides equipment, training, and technical assistance to support immediate law enforcement and interdiction operations, but also seeks to strengthen the capacities of governmental institutions to address security challenges and the underlying economic and social conditions that contribute to them.³⁸

The five goals of CARSI are to:

1. create safe streets for the citizens in the region;
2. disrupt the movement of criminals and contraband within and between the nations of Central America;
3. support the development of strong, capable, and accountable Central American governments;
4. reestablish effective state presence and security in communities at risk; and
5. foster enhanced levels of security and rule of law coordination and cooperation between the nations of the region.³⁹

CARSI's collaborative efforts to combat illicit networks in Central America include programming in the narcotics interdiction, law enforcement support, institutional capacity-building, and prevention arenas. In addition to traditional "train and equip" programs, U.S. assistance provided through CARSI also supports specialized law enforcement units that are vetted by, and work with, U.S. personnel to investigate and disrupt the operations of transnational gangs and trafficking networks. Led by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Transnational Anti-Gang (TAG) units, which were first created in El Salvador in 2007, are now expanding to Guatemala and Honduras with CARSI support. Similarly, Drug Enforcement Administration, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the State Department's INL also have vetted unit programs throughout Central America. Among other activities, they conduct complex investigations into money laundering, bulk cash smuggling, and the trafficking of narcotics, firearms, and persons.⁴⁰

In Central America through the CARSI program, the International Law Enforcement Training Academy in El Salvador trained approximately 450 law enforcement officers from the seven CARSI countries in 2010. In just three months of 2010, the TAG unit in El Salvador handled 141 investigative leads and disseminated information to domestic and international law enforcement agencies. Customs and Border Protection, working with CARSI national border forces, conducted assessments of more than 30 land, sea, and air entry points throughout the region and has provided training using nonintrusive inspection equipment provided by the State Department.⁴¹

State Department/INL and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) community-policing programs are designed to build institutional capacity and local confidence in police forces by converting them into more community-based, service-oriented organizations. One such program, the *Villa Nueva* model precinct in Guatemala, is being replicated with CARSI funding as a result of its success in establishing popular trust and reducing violence. To improve the investigative capacity of Central American nations, CARSI has supported assessments of forensic laboratories, the implementation of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives' eTrace system to track firearms, and the expansion of the FBI's Central America Fingerprint Exchange, which assists partner nations in developing fingerprint and biometric capabilities. CARSI also seeks to reduce impunity by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Central American judicial systems.⁴²

In 2010, USAID continued its efforts in crime and violence prevention, working with local and national governments, civil society, and community leaders to build comprehensive prevention approaches and provide opportunities for youth who are at risk of becoming involved in the narcotics trade and substance abuse. Through its management of CARSI funds in the Economic and Social Development Fund for Central America, USAID supports prevention programs by providing educational, recreational, and vocational opportunities for at-risk youth. In El Salvador, for example, USAID's Community-Based Crime and Violence Prevention Project works in 12 municipalities to strengthen the capacities of local governments, civil organizations, community leaders, and youth to address the problems of crime and violence.⁴³ These comprehensive political, judicial, economic, and social pro-

grams under CARSI are intended to reinforce the rule of law, economic development, and democratic institutions. They are aimed at addressing the complex threats posed by illicit networks by working with different segments of the society.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges for this important mission in Central America is U.S. funding in an age of fiscal austerity and the rate at which the programs are being implemented. Since fiscal year (FY) 2008, the United States has provided Central America with \$361.5 million through Mérida/CARSI, and the Obama administration has requested an additional \$100 million for CARSI in FY2012.⁴⁴ The Department of State has not released any information since March 2011, at which point 88 percent of the funds appropriated between FY2008 and FY2010 had been obligated and 19 percent had been expended.⁴⁵

At the June 2011 SICA conference, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that U.S. funding for the Central America Citizen Security Partnership would exceed \$290 million in FY2011.⁴⁶ The \$290 million pledge includes the \$101.5 million being provided through CARSI as well as all other bilateral and regional U.S. assistance being provided to support security efforts in the region in FY2011. Many experts on Central America are concerned that this will be insufficient to help Central American nations to realize rule of law, prosperity, and democracy in the face of the formidable illicit networks operating in the region. Not only do Central American countries lack financial resources; they also require human resources and capacity to implement these security and development programs.

On the Defense and Security Front

In the Western Hemisphere, narcotics trafficking and its associated violence represent the gravest threat from illicit networks and pose a formidable challenge for government, defense, and security forces. For decades, Washington has invested significant resources in both the demand and the supply side of counternarcotics efforts known as the “war on drugs.” The United States and its partner nations have made significant strides in interdicting illicit drug trafficking in the Americas, but the international drug trade continues to flourish. In June 2011, the Global Commission on Drug Policy, whose members include former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, three former Latin American presidents (of Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia), former Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker, former U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz, Virgin Group Founder Richard Branson, and Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou declared that the global war on drugs has failed after 40 years.⁴⁷

USSOUTHCOM’s Counter Illicit Trafficking Mandate

The United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), located in Miami, FL, is one of nine joint unified combatant commands in the Department of Defense. It is responsible for providing contingency planning, operations, and security cooperation for Central and South America, the Caribbean (except U.S. commonwealths, territories, and possessions), and Cuba, as well as force protection of U.S. military resources at these locations. It is also responsible for ensuring the defense of the Panama Canal and canal area. According to the “2020 Command Strategy: Partnership for the Americas,” issued in July 2010, USSOUTHCOM’s strategic objectives are to defend the United States and its interests, foster regional security, and be an enduring partner of choice in support of a peaceful and prosperous region. Its areas of focus are Counter Illicit Trafficking (CIT), Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief, and Peacekeeping Operations.

The primary mission of USSOUTHCOM’s CIT efforts is to support the interdiction of drug trafficking. USSOUTHCOM collaborates with other agencies and nations to support interdiction of transnational criminal organizations through detection and monitoring, information-sharing, and partner nation capacity-building. All efforts are focused to achieve U.S. National Drug Control Strategy interdiction goals.

The Department of Defense is the lead federal agency in efforts to detect and monitor aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs toward the United States. Joint Interagency Task Force–South (JIATF-South) is the national task force that serves as the catalyst for integrated and synchronized interagency counter-illicit trafficking operations. It is responsible for the detection and monitoring of suspect air and maritime drug activity in the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and the eastern Pacific. JIATF-South also collects, processes, and disseminates counter-drug information for interagency and partner nation operations. Using information gathered by JIATF-South–coordinated operations, U.S. law enforcement agencies and partner nations take the lead in interdicting drug runners. U.S. military interdiction involvement, if any, is in support of those law enforcement agencies. Typically, U.S. military personnel are involved in supporting an interdiction during maritime operations in international waters, where U.S. Navy ships and helicopters patrol and intercept suspected traffickers. The actual interdictions—boarding, search, seizures, and arrests—are led and conducted by embarked U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachments or partner nation drug law enforcement agencies.

The U.S. military commits a variety of forces in the region to support detection and monitoring efforts:

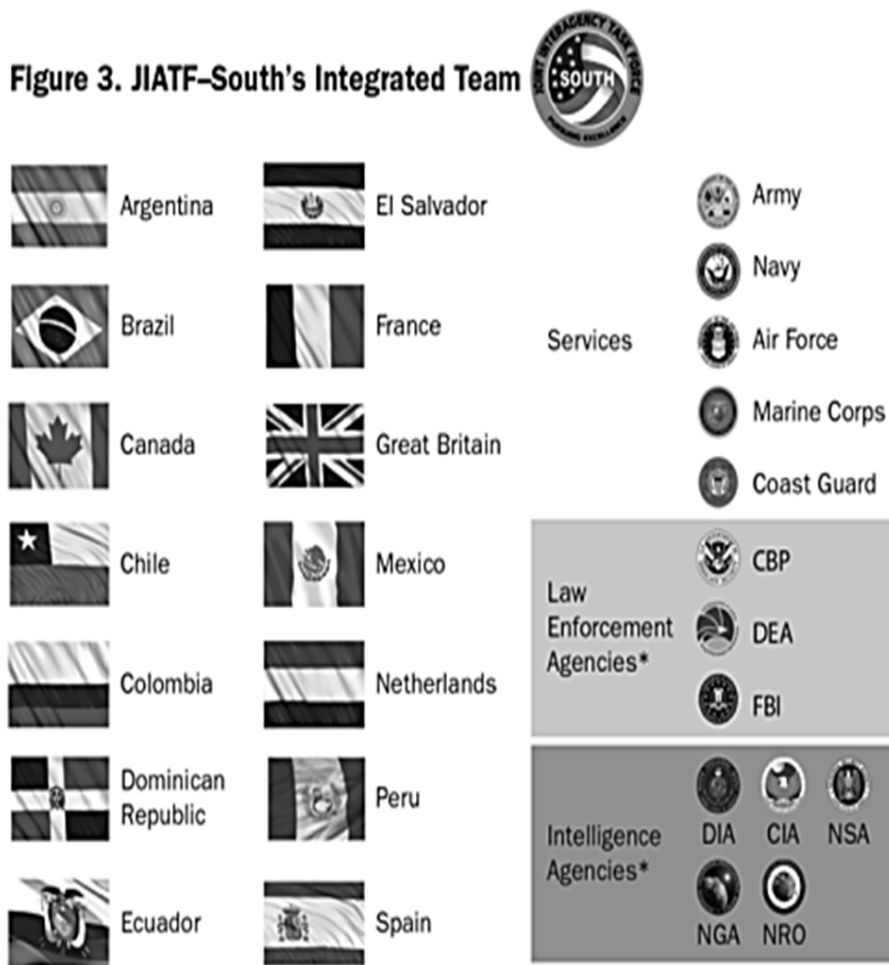
- *Maritime*: Normally, U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, and partner nation (British, French, Dutch, Canadian, and Colombian) ships patrol the waters in the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and the eastern Pacific on a year-round basis. Embarked on U.S. and at times allied nation naval vessels are Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachments who take the lead during operations to board suspected vessels, seize illegal drugs, and apprehend suspects.
- *Air*: JIATF-South utilizes U.S. military, interagency, and partner nation aircraft that are strategically located throughout the region and at two Cooperative Security Locations in Comalapa, El Salvador, and in Curacao and Aruba, formerly part of the Netherlands Antilles. These aircraft, in cooperation with partner nations and U.S. agencies, fly persistent missions to monitor areas with a history of illicit trafficking. The U.S. aircraft offer unique surveillance capabilities that complement the counter-illicit trafficking efforts of U.S. and partner nation law enforcement agencies.
- *Other*: USSOUTHCOM also provides support to partner nations through training, information-sharing, and technological and resource assistance.

JIATF-South: Structure and Operations

Focused on countering illicit trafficking, JIATF-South exemplifies perhaps the best model of interagency and international efforts to combat the convergence of illicit networks, with a proven 20-year track record. JIATF-South is a combined military-civilian task force charged with the mission to combat illicit trafficking in Latin America and the Caribbean. While JIATF-South reports to USSOUTHCOM, it pursues its four-pronged mission of detection, monitoring, interdiction, and apprehension with international partners.⁴⁸ Over the past 20 years, JIATF-South has arrested some 4,600 traffickers, captured nearly 1,100 vessels, and deprived drug cartels of an estimated \$190 billion in profits.⁴⁹ Former US-SOUTHCOM Commander and current Supreme Allied Commander Europe Admiral James Stavridis considers JIATF-South “a national treasure” and the “crown jewel of Southcom”⁵⁰ that demonstrates a whole-of-government approach to converging transnational threats such as illicit networks.

JIATF-South is a joint, interagency, international, combined, and allied team comprised of professionals from all four services of the U.S. military, nine U.S. agencies (including intelligence and law enforcement), and 13 partner nations including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Spain, and the United Kingdom.⁵¹

JIATF-South's area of responsibility covers nearly 42 million square miles. Using information from law enforcement agencies, JIATF-South detects and monitors suspect aircraft and maritime vessels in the Caribbean Basin and eastern Pacific and then provides this information to international and interagency partners who have the authority to interdict illicit shipments and arrest members of transnational criminal organizations. In 2010, JIATF-South and international and interagency partners were directly responsible for interdicting 142 metric tons of cocaine and 3,419 pounds of marijuana and making 309 arrests, denying transnational criminal organizations an estimated \$2.8 billion in revenue.⁵²



*Not all participating law enforcement and intelligence organizations are represented here.

According to the 2011 publication *Joint Interagency Task Force-South: The Best Known, Least Understood Interagency Success*, the accomplishments of JIATF-South over the past two decades can be attributed to the following lessons learned:

- *Get a mandate from higher authority.* The mission and team had sufficient legitimacy with a clear mandate from senior civilian and military authorities.
- *Tailor a holistic solution set to a discrete problem.* The mission was discrete and clearly identified (stop drug trafficking from entering the United States) with measurable outcomes (i.e., number of arrests, interdictions, vessels boarded, and drug confiscations).
- *Know your partners.* A better understanding of partners, their interests, capabilities, and

limitations fostered true collaboration and cooperation and unity of effort.

- *Get resources.*
- *Build networks.*

The report also noted several mistakes to avoid:

- Don't command the presence of interagency personnel on your team.
- Don't segregate interagency staff in separate buildings.
- Don't disrespect smaller partners; they can make big contributions.
- Don't demand binding agreements on cooperation (at least initially).
- Don't ignore any partner's need to feel they make a contribution.
- Don't make binding decisions without substantial vetting and support.
- Don't forget to build a culture of trust and empowerment.
- Don't take credit for collaborative success.⁵³

JIATF-South is considered one of the best models of interagency and international cooperation to counter transnational threats. It is a team that blends experience, professionalism, and knowledge that is greater than the sum of its individual parts, according to Admiral Stavridis.⁵⁴ JIATF-South has executed successful interdiction operations that illustrate how a culture of collaboration that incorporates military, intelligence, and law enforcement capabilities can combat the convergence of threats posed by illicit networks. However, it is not apparent how easily this model with over 20 years of experience can be replicated in terms of human and financial resources as well as collaborative culture.

Fostering Collaborative Models to Combat Illicit Networks

Illicit networks that include criminals, terrorists, and facilitators have brokered strategic alliances to promote their interests, threatening the rule of law, global supply chains, and free and fair markets around the world. To counter the convergence of these threats, governments need to develop interagency and international strategies that leverage the diplomatic, development, intelligence, military, and law enforcement instruments of national power. To this end, collaborative models for security and development require the following critical elements: political will, institutions, mechanisms to assess threats and deliver countermeasures, resources, and measures of effectiveness to ensure success against illicit networks.

All of the international and interagency initiatives examined in this chapter demonstrate the political will to combat illicit networks. In 2000, the United Nations formally recognized the threat from illicit networks with the adoption of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and has engaged in many activities to combat drug trafficking and organized crime through the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. On the U.S. front, the 2011 *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime* represents a significant development in acknowledging the national security threat and advocating interagency collaboration and international cooperation to counter global crime. However, an implementation plan with specific undertakings for the U.S. interagency and measures of effectiveness has yet to be published as of this writing. Publicly realizing the threat from illicit networks to the peace and prosperity of nation-states and global markets is not enough. These international conventions, agreements, and strategies must be accompanied with action plans and be adequately resourced in order to restrict illicit actors' operating environment and enablers.

Figure 4. To Combat Illicit Networks Foster Collaboration and Communities of Interest at the National, Regional, and International Levels

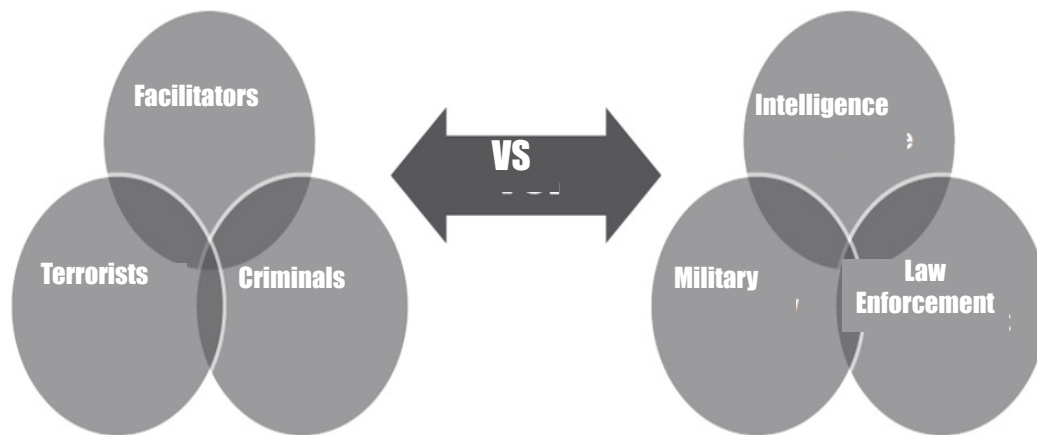
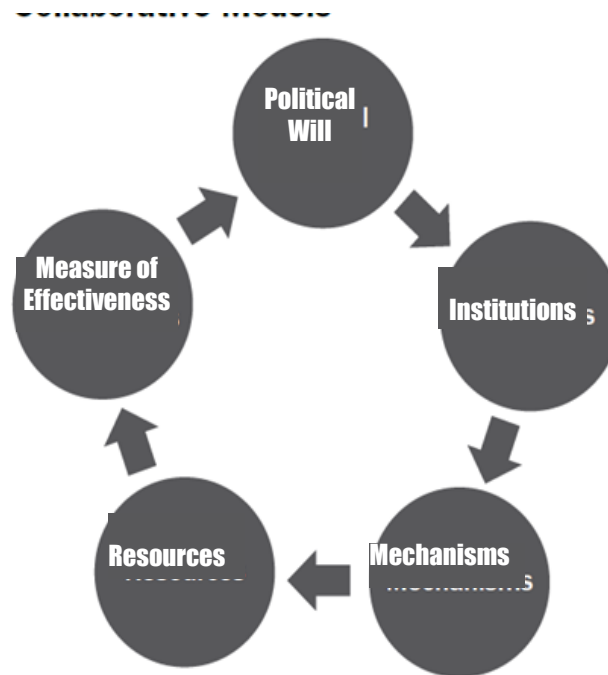


Figure 5. Critical Elements for Effective Collaborative Models



In the Western Hemisphere, diplomatic, development, and defense initiatives to combat illicit networks are under way through the UN, OAS, CARSI, and USSOUTHCOM's JIATF-South, as described above. These collaborative models focus on the operational and preventive countermeasures to confront illicit actors and promote security and development. Current efforts under the auspices of multilateral institutions such as UNODC and OAS are noteworthy and laudable, but they lack measures of effectiveness that make it difficult to determine their real countercrime impact and their ability to establish rule of law and socioeconomic opportunities. Meanwhile, CARSI will require more financial and human resources to carry out law enforcement and socioeconomic development programs

to combat transnational criminal organizations. In contrast, JIATF-South has enjoyed a 20-year track record of progress against illicit trafficking. It has all the critical elements of a collaborative model: commitment, institutions, mechanisms, resources, and metrics, as well as a strong interagency and international culture that has developed over its lifetime. All of these initiatives to combat illicit networks in the Americas are ongoing but appear to be executed in parallel. In this resource-constrained environment, greater donor coordination would ensure that all these security and development programs complement rather than duplicate each other. Given the level of political will demonstrated across these organizations, there should be an interest in allocating resources and building capacity in the specific geographic areas most vulnerable to transnational organized crime.

Table 1. Critical Elements for Effective Collaborative Models in the Western Hemisphere

Collaborative Model	Political Will	Institutions	Mechanisms	Resources	Measures of Success
U.S. Counter-Transnational Organized Crime	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Some
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unclear
Organization of American States	Yes	Yes	Some	Some	Unclear
Central America Regional Security Initiative	Yes	Yes	Limited	Insufficient	Unclear
Joint Interagency Task Force-South	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Globalization has benefited the private, public, and civic sectors of society over the past few decades. We have witnessed extraordinary rates of economic growth with significant advances in international trade, capital markets, science, and technology. Meanwhile, illicit networks have leveraged the processes and new opportunities arising from globalization and capitalized on weak institutions and gaps in governance around the world to expand their enterprises. In the Western Hemisphere, illicit networks have been increasingly engaged in drug, arms, counterfeiting, and human-trafficking activities that have been accompanied by unprecedented levels of violence. Consequently, the threat of transnational organized crime and illicit networks has become a national security concern to the United States and its allies.

Since illicit networks threaten citizen safety and economic security, governments must engage the public, private, and civic sectors to diminish and defeat the power and influence of transnational organized crime and illicit actors. As John Aquilla, at the Naval Postgraduate School, explains, “It takes a network to defeat a network.” In that vein, governments around the world must build networks that promote interagency and international collaboration to combat the convergence of illicit networks and the national security threats they pose to the international community. To ensure success, the initiatives undertaken to combat illicit networks must be supported by political commitment, institutions, mechanisms, financial and human resources, and measures of effectiveness to promote security and development.

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