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Trends. Trafficking in Drug Trafficking: The United States Government Searches for New Military Operating Locations and Basing Sites in South America

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Very few responsible advocates in the discourse on illegal and illicit drug trafficking believe that these drugs "are good" for people--except in specific cases of legitimate medical need. Instead, controversies arise over how to handle the bad and whether approaches to handling the bad make the bad "badder."

One interesting take on interdiction approaches to counter drug trafficking is that interdiction authorities have a vested interest in interdiction's failure or at best a partial success. With total success would come the disestablishment of interdiction's empire of power and assets.

This approach to the interdiction approach finds supporting data in the United States Government's (USG) attempts--with the loss of access to military bases via the Panama Canal Treaty--to find alternative military operating locations and basing sites in South America. Although the function of drug interdiction is advanced as the core purpose for military staging, USG talks with potential national hosts have not come to fruition because of the former's insistence that non-drug military operations be allowed as well.

In fact the USG military's role in drug interdiction intensified with the implosion of the Soviet Bloc and the seeming need to find new missions to protect military assets. In essence, the USG can be seen to be trafficking in drug trafficking. The story then becomes not the quasi-paranoid screed of USG engagement in drug trafficking to fund authorized and rogue military and political operations, but the use of others' drug trafficking as a stalking horse for USG political, military, and security interests. And the tainted image of the Colossus to the North continues to live on through the "bad effects" of drugs. (See Bagley, W., & Gossweiler, R.S. (1996). Drug trafficking in the Americas. *Social Sciences Quarterly*, 77(4); Fitch, J.S. (1993). The decline of US military influence in Latin America. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 35(2); Martin, J.M., & Romano, A.T. (1994). Multinational crimes: Terrorism, espionage, drug and arms trafficking. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 34(2); McCaffrey, B. (1997). Hemispheric drug control-Fighting drug production and trafficking. *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 62(14); Myers, S.L. (December 2, 1998). U.S. seeking new bases to offset Panama loss. *The New York Times*, p. A7.) (Keywords: Drug Trafficking, South America, United States Government.)