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The Other Illicit Drug Trafficking

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Psychological effects of psychoactive substances can have deleterious consequences for segments of a nation's population--the human infrastructure of security. Money earned through the various steps of the illicit drug trafficking cycle--especially selling--can be used to traffic in yet other proscribed products such as the technologies and components of weapons of mass destruction, as well as conventional weapons. Money from trafficking also can be used to inappropriately influence governmental decision-making and induce gross distortions in local, regional, national, and international economies. As well, real and imagined threats from illicit drug trafficking often lead to the development and growth of huge criminal justice and law enforcement complexes supported with funds that could be applied to other matters of human health, education, and welfare.

Much less commonly, illicit drug trafficking can also refer to the "humanitarian" provision of medicines by pharmaceutical companies to various governmental and nongovernmental aid organizations attempting to attenuate the misery of human catastrophes and tragedies--war, drought, pestilence, natural disaster--throughout the world. Why is this illicit trafficking? Because the pharmaceutical companies--at times in conjunction with aid organizations, various national and local governments, and local hospitals--may knowingly violate prescribed guidelines for medicines that are shipped. For example, the medicines may be shipped near the end of their shelf life, even after it, or even if adulterated or contaminated. And the medicines may be inappropriate for the health problems faced by the people who allegedly are to be helped.

This type of illicit drug trafficking can be positively reinforcing to all who have had a hand in it. The pharmaceutical companies can get tax write-offs and are relieved of the often expensive responsibility of destroying drugs that have outlived their shelf life. Aid organizations can trumpet the amount and value of medicines provided to those in need--even if those in need are not in need of the medicines in question. Aid organizations, local hospitals, and even some governmental agencies and representatives can even sell donated medicines--regardless of efficacy and appropriateness--to the very people in need or to wholesalers, retailers, and other consumers.

There are security implications for the "other" illicit drug trafficking as well. As medical problems go untreated or treated less efficaciously and in a less timely manner, repercussions from domestic political instability and vulnerability to various foreign threats become more likely. Tendencies towards a rule of law and an ambience of moral and ethical decency become attenuated and can increase probabilities for further human emergencies and the noxious consequences of these emergencies. In addition, the logistics supporting the sequence of steps from the identification of medicines through the provision of them may be appropriated for other illicit purposes leading to all the noxious consequences of the more common variant of illicit drug trafficking.

Both variants of illicit drug trafficking present formidable--if not intractable--challenges to policymakers from the security, criminal justice, and law enforcement worlds. There is much debate about appropriate points for intervention--before, during, and/or after transport. Lastly, both also present examples wherein the cure may be worse than the disease--in the latter's case, a significant reduction of

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humanitarian medical aid. Psychologists might ponder where--in a welter of reinforcement, punishment, and still other ongoing contingencies--policymakers might best profit in combating the sequelae of illicit profit. (See Abelson, R. (August 16, 1999). Report outlines problems with donated drugs sent overseas. *The New York Times*, p. 7; Natarajan, M., & Belanger, M. (1998). Varieties of drug trafficking organizations: A typology of cases prosecuted in New York City. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 28(4); Saleem, O. (1996). Killing the proverbial two birds with one stone: Using environmental statutes and nuisance to combat the crime of illegal drug trafficking. *Dickinson Law Review*, 100(4); Shereda, J. P. (1997). The internationalization of the war on drugs and its potential for successfully addressing drug trafficking and related crimes in South Africa. *The George Washington Journal of International Law and Economics*, 31(2).) (Keywords: Corruption, Illicit Drug Trafficking, Policy.)