

**ILLEGAL DRUGS AND DRUG TRAFFICKING**

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## ILLEGAL DRUGS AND DRUG TRAFFICKING

### INTRODUCTION

Trade in drugs of abuse such as cocaine, heroin and amphetamines (synthetic stimulants) has long been a frustrating feature of the international scene.<sup>(1)</sup> After attempting for years to combat the drug trade on an individual or bilateral basis, nations have belatedly come to realize that coordinated international action is the only effective way to restrain the trade and, in addition, that social and other broad action is the only means to reduce incentives to participate in it.

### THE INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRADE

Drugs have played an important medicinal role in human society, and “harmless” drugs such as caffeine are widely and legally used in all parts of the globe. The international trade in drugs has a long history; imperial Britain, for example, shaped the 19<sup>th</sup>-century opium trade by selling Indian-produced opium to China in exchange for tea and silk, and fought “Opium Wars” to defend its right to do so.<sup>(2)</sup> In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the United States, Britain and other countries began to change their position on drug use, although, as the history of prohibition shows, their concept and acceptance of “dangerous” drugs was not identical to our own.

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- (1) This paper follows the practice of the *National Drug Intelligence Estimate 1994 (NDIE)*, prepared by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), which states: “*In this publication, where it is stated that a particular country produced or supplied quantities of illicit drugs, it is not suggested that the government of that country or its lawful agencies permitted or participated in these illegal activities. These references allude to the illegal activities of individuals or criminal organisations operating within the noted jurisdictions*” (emphasis in original). RCMP, *National Drug Intelligence Estimate 1994*, Ottawa, December 1994, p. 6.
- (2) See Gerald Segal, “The Drug Trade,” in the *World Affairs Companion*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1996, pp. 99-102.

By the 1970s and 1980s, the international drug trade had taken on many of the key features we recognize today, the most notable of which are its pervasiveness and its scale. According to a United Nations survey, the worldwide dollar value of illegal drugs is second only to the amount spent on the arms trade. Estimating the value of an illegal enterprise carried on in dozens of currencies around the world is tremendously difficult, but the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention generally describes the production, trafficking and sales of illicit drugs as a \$400-billion-a-year industry.<sup>(3)</sup> Some of these drugs are produced and consumed domestically, but much of the drug trade takes place between states. Unlike the international trade in arms, however, which largely flows from developed nations that produce arms to less developed nations that use arms, the international drug trade has traditionally flowed from developing to developed nations. At the risk of oversimplification, cocaine production has dominated in Central and South America, while heroin has dominated in both Southeast and Southwest Asia.

## **THE UNITED STATES**

With the largest affected population and the largest budget for combating the problem, the United States has traditionally taken the role of leading “victim nation” of the drug trade. It has long been the most active in combating the trade, both alone and bilaterally with other countries. U.S. action has generally focused on enforcement, with some 60% of anti-drug funds devoted to criminal law enforcement and 30% to treatment. President Richard Nixon declared a “War on Drugs” in 1972, but it was only in the 1980s that the Reagan and (especially) Bush administrations engaged in such a high-profile “War” in earnest. In the 1980s, South American cocaine displaced Southeast Asian heroin as the major drug threat to the United States. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed National Security Directive No. 221, making drug enforcement a national security priority. Between 1980 and 1990, U.S. federal spending on drug control rose (in constant dollars) from \$1.5 billion to \$6.7 billion, and the number of adult arrests for illegal drug sale or manufacture in the United States increased from about 103,000 in 1980 to more than 404,000 in 1989. (Arrests for illegal possession also increased, from about 368,000 to more than

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(3) Quoted in “Stumbling in the Dark,” *The Economist*, 28 July 2001, p. 1 of a 16-page “Survey” on illicit drugs.

843,000 per year over this period.)<sup>(4)</sup> The United States also increased its anti-drug cooperation with other governments, sending drug enforcement and other agents to countries in Latin America to concentrate on the cocaine trade, and to Thailand, France and elsewhere to combat the heroin threat. While the casual (or non-addicting) use of drugs declined as a result of these increased measures, hard-core drug users, who account for some 80% of drug users in the United States, continued to use drugs at much the same rate.<sup>(5)</sup> In the words of Lee P. Brown, then Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (and widely referred to as America's "Drug Czar"), "in the United States we have made great progress in reducing casual, or non-addictive, drug use. Now, chronic, addictive drug use is our greatest concern." In Brown's opinion, nations must take an integrated approach to fighting the international drug problem. This would involve law enforcement, education, treatment and economic development.<sup>(6)</sup>

The Clinton administration initially reduced the funds devoted to the office of the "Drug Czar" and put more emphasis on reducing the domestic demand for drugs. By 1996, an increase in the rate of drug abuse among teenagers and others, however, allowed Republicans to charge during the election campaign that President Clinton was "soft on drugs." In fact, when Clinton named widely respected Army General Barry McCaffrey to replace Lee Brown as Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy in the fall of 1995, he gave the office cabinet rank for the first time and substantially increased its staff.<sup>(7)</sup> In the spring of 1996, Clinton had also announced a new National Drug Control Strategy, the first priority of which was "to get young people to reject drugs."<sup>(8)</sup> As *The Economist* has pointed out, drug abuse seems to move in natural cycles, like the economy; the Clinton administration's mistake had probably been failure to anticipate the turn of the cycle and work adequately against it.

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(4) James Adams, *The New Spies: Exploring the Frontiers of Intelligence*, Hutchinson, London, 1994, p. 297.

(5) "Drugs Policy: The Enemy Within," *The Economist*, 15 May 1993, p. 31.

(6) Lee P. Brown, "The International Drug Problem: Law Enforcement, Education, Treatment and Economic Development," speech delivered before the First Latin American Drug Experts Conference, Caracas, Venezuela, 21 March 1994, reproduced in *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Vol. LX #16, 1 June 1994, p. 491.

(7) "All The President's Fault?" *The Economist*, 14 September 1996, pp. 26-27.

(8) Jeffrey Stilkind, "Clinton Outlines New Strategy to Combat Illegal Drug Use," United States Information Agency, 29 April 1996.

In its quest “to stem the flow of drugs to the U.S.,” the American government continues to provide financial assistance to countries that make an attempt at crop eradication and the like. Notably, in 2000, it signed a comprehensive \$1.3-billion assistance package in support of Plan Colombia and the Colombian government’s efforts to “address the array of challenges it faces – its efforts to fight the illicit drug trade, to increase the rule of law, to protect human rights, to expand economic development, to institute judicial reform, and to foster peace.”<sup>(9)</sup> Moreover, in 2001, the United States proposed to fund also the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI), a program intended to expand counter-narcotics programs begun under Plan Colombia and to help support law enforcement and alternative development in countries of the Andean region threatened by drug trafficking.

In February 2002, President George W. Bush unveiled a new National Drug Control Strategy, based on three core principles:

- stopping drug use before it starts;
- healing America’s drug users; and
- disrupting the market [for illegal drugs].

This latest strategy is intended to “emphasize a balance between supply and demand reduction efforts.” It represents attempts at prevention and treatment, and thereby at reducing the demand for drugs. Much emphasis, however, remains on reducing the supply of drugs, that is, stemming their flow into the United States from outside, and apprehending and punishing dealers and users. Finally, underlining the United States’ determination to pursue the fight against drugs (and drug trafficking), as much as \$19.2 billion was set aside in the 2003 budget for “drug control.”<sup>(10)</sup> At the same time, according to *The Economist*, “the official estimate of retail drug sales in the United States is \$60 billion, making America easily the world’s most valuable market.”<sup>(11)</sup> For

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(9) *Policy and Program Developments; Overview for 2001*; part of the *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report* released by the U.S. Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Washington, March 2002, p. 2; available on the Internet at the following address:  
<http://www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2001/rpt/>.

(10) *Fact Sheet: The President’s National Drug Control Strategy*, The White House, Washington, 12 February 2002, p. 2.

(11) “Stumbling in the Dark” (2001), p. 1.

its part, the U.S. Congressional Research Service further estimates that more than 13 million Americans still buy illicit drugs on a regular basis (that is, more than once a month) and that the economic costs associated with drug abuse in the United States could well add up to as much as \$110 billion.<sup>(12)</sup> Meanwhile, arrests (and sentencing) for drug violations continue to grow almost unabated; the Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that between 1984 and 1999, the annual number of defendants charged with a drug offence in Federal Courts increased from 11,854 to 29,306.<sup>(13)</sup> Other sources, moreover, estimate that between 1970 and 1999, adult drug arrests more than quadrupled, from 322,300 to 1,337,600, while juvenile arrests doubled, from 93,300 to 194,600.<sup>(14)</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Since the scope of the drug abuse problem varies from country to country, states have traditionally addressed the issue individually. In the words of *The Economist*, “The attitude of most electorates and governments is to deplore the problems that the illegal drug trade brings, view the whole matter with distaste, and sit on the status quo – a policy of sweeping prohibition.”<sup>(15)</sup> A number of politicians in Latin America and elsewhere have argued that close international cooperation to address the drug trade would endanger national “sovereignty.” Because Europeans have long claimed that most drugs were only “passing through,” stopping the traffic was given a low priority.

The United States took the lead both in addressing the drug trade itself and in signing bilateral agreements with other nations to combat it; however, real international cooperation began only with the 1961 UN *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs*, which banned a wide range of drugs. This convention was amended and strengthened by a protocol in 1972. In addition, the UN agreed to the *Vienna Convention on Psychotropic Substances* in 1971 in order to control trade in hallucinogens and amphetamines (psychotropic substances had not been included in the 1961 Convention). Between them, “these three Conventions regulate the legal production, distribution

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(12) Lee Rensselaer and Raphael Perl, *Drug Control: International Policy and Options*, Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, Washington, 18 March 2002, p. 1.

(13) John Scalia, *Federal Drug Offenders, 1999 – with Trends 1984-99*, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Justice Statistics Program, Washington, August 2001, p. 1.

(14) Erich Goode, “Drug Arrests at the Millennium,” *Society*, July-August 2002, p. 42.

(15) “Bring Drugs Within the Law,” *The Economist*, 15 May 1993, p. 13.



and supply of controlled substances for medical and scientific purposes and make illegal all other such activities.”<sup>(16)</sup> Also in 1971, the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC) was established; the United States, Germany, Sweden and Norway have been leading supporters of this body. In 1984, the UN General Assembly unanimously requested the preparation of a draft convention to complement the 1961 *Single Convention* (as amended) and the 1971 *Psychotropic Substances Convention*. A UN *Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances* was adopted and prepared for signature in late 1988. This convention reiterates that it is concerned with reinforcing and supplementing the earlier conventions, and “strengthening and enhancing effective legal means for international co-operation in criminal matters for suppressing the international criminal activities of illicit traffic.”<sup>(17)</sup> As of May 2002, 166 countries and the European Union had become parties to the Convention.

The UN has continued to address the drug trade issue at the broadest level. In December 1995, the General Assembly adopted a seven-part resolution calling upon states to intensify actions to promote effective cooperation in this area.<sup>(18)</sup> In April 1996, the 53-member Commission on Narcotic Drugs, established by the UN in February 1946, recommended a special session of the UN General Assembly in 1998 on new strategies to combat the international drug trade and its effects.<sup>(19)</sup> The importance of that issue to the global community was underscored when the proposed Special Session on the World Drug Problem was held in New York in June 1998. At that time, 185 member states adopted – and signed – a *Political Declaration (on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction)*, which begins by stating that:

Drugs destroy lives and communities, undermine sustainable human development and generate crime. Drugs affect all sectors of society in all countries; in particular, drug abuse affects the freedom and development of young people, the world’s most valuable asset. Drugs are a grave threat to the health and well-being of all mankind, the independence of States, democracy, the stability of nations, the structure of all societies, and the dignity and hope of millions of people and their families.<sup>(20)</sup>

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(16) Russell Fox and Ian Matthews, *Drugs Policy: Fact, Fiction and the Future*, The Federation Press, Sydney, 1992, p. 75.

(17) *Ibid.*, p. 75.

(18) “Assembly Calls for Intensified Cooperation among States to Combat Drug Abuse,” *UN Chronicle*, Spring 1996, p. 63.

(19) “1998 Special Session on Drugs Recommended,” *UN Chronicle*, No. 2, 1996, p. 77.

(20) *Political Declaration* adopted by the UN General Assembly, 10 June 1998, Resolution No. A/RES/S-20/2.

After identifying weaknesses in six main areas (controls on precursor chemicals, amphetamine-type stimulants, judicial cooperation, money laundering controls, demand reduction, and alternative development), signatories to the 1998 Declaration pledged to significantly reduce both the demand for, and the supply of, illicit drugs by the year 2008. They also agreed to three main objectives:

- All participants agreed to develop national strategies on illegal drugs, to be put in place by 2003;
- All participants agreed to work for “significant and measurable results” in reducing illegal drugs consumption by 2008, with a 50% reduction informally taken as an indicative target;
- States where illegal production has taken place committed themselves to a total elimination of production, also by 2008. Alternative development was acknowledged as the only long-term solution to the problem of illicit narcotic cultivation.<sup>(21)</sup>

More recently, in December 2000, UN member states met in Palermo, Italy, to adopt yet another convention, the *United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*. The “Palermo Convention” is accompanied by two protocols, one on the trafficking of persons, the other on the smuggling of migrants. It is meant to promote international cooperation in order to “significantly reduce illegal and exploitive transborder activities” and will, it is hoped, also serve as a valuable tool in the fight against transborder drug trafficking.

## **THE UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONTROL PROGRAMME**

In 1991, the UN International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) was established to coordinate UN drug control activities and to serve as the focal point for the UN Decade against Drug Abuse (1991-2000). The UNDCP subsequently continued its activities, expanded the scope of its efforts and increased the number of projects it oversees. While international cooperation has traditionally focused on enforcement, some move toward complementary action has taken place. In March 1993, delegates at the 36<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs adopted a resolution calling on governments to give priority to preventing drug abuse and to treating and

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(21) *World Drug Report, 2000*, United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, New York, 2000, p. 5.

reintegrating drug abusers in society. This new focus on reducing demand was seen by many countries as a complement to the traditional focus on enforcement, and as an important part of a balanced strategy to combat drug abuse.<sup>(22)</sup>

The UNDCP's budget is now about US\$160 million a year – slightly less than in the late 1990s – and a substantive portion of that budget goes towards reducing the supply of drugs through alternative development. Apart from the general decline in regular budget resources that is affecting all parts of the UN, 90% of the UNDCP's funds come from voluntary contributions by seven governments and the European Union. This raises questions about both the nature of future expertise and the international “ownership” of the UNDCP.

## **RECENT CHANGES IN THE INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRADE**

The end of the Cold War brought several important changes in the international drug trade, as the collapse of the Soviet Union and its empire in Eastern Europe caused an increased flow of people and goods from these areas to the West. According to the RCMP,

The emergence of new trafficking/smuggling groups is often a function of global political and economic imperatives. Many Eastern European and former Soviet bloc nations have reached a state of virtual collapse. The desperate plight of their citizens renders them particularly vulnerable to exploitation by both domestic and foreign drug trafficking groups. Incidents of this type involving former Soviet/East bloc nationals are likely to increase, particularly where the subjects involved have jobs which involve international travel.<sup>(23)</sup>

Three significant new threats were identified with the end of the Cold War: 1) the shipment of Colombian cocaine to Eastern Europe and then on to the West; 2) the increased cultivation of opium poppies in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, their manufacture into heroin and shipment overland or through the Baltic ports into Europe; and 3) the production of amphetamines in Central and Eastern European states such as Poland, and their distribution to the West.<sup>(24)</sup> While these new threats are serious, the end of the Cold War also opened up the possibility of combating the drug

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(22) “Commission Sets Priorities: Prevention, Treatment and Social Integration,” *UN Chronicle*, September 1993, p. 70.

(23) RCMP (1994), p. 13.

(24) Adams (1994), p. 304.

trade through increased coordinated use of intelligence resources formerly devoted to the Cold War. Most intelligence agencies attempted to redefine their role in the wake of the Cold War, and included the international drug trade as a new priority, along with terrorism and nuclear proliferation.<sup>(25)</sup>

A further development singled out by the 1996 *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report* is the “astonishing spread of synthetic drugs, especially methamphetamine, on the illicit world drug market.” Since synthetic drugs are produced in laboratories, they allow trafficking organizations to control the whole process from manufacture to sale, and decrease reliance on potentially vulnerable crops such as coca or opium.

Increasingly, sophisticated money laundering has become a key element of the international drug trade, which may now account for half of all money laundered. Since experts have concluded that it may be an important weakness of international drug smugglers, money laundering has become the focus of increased international cooperation. When agreeing to the 1988 *Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances*, governments added measures to detect and punish money-laundering activities. At a G-7 Summit held in Paris in 1989, the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering was formed to coordinate international action to counter money laundering. At a meeting held in June 1996 the 28 member states, which include the major financial nations, updated the 40 principles that form a common standard for combating money laundering. During the early 1990s, the international community had more success in countering drug-money laundering than in reducing demand or drug interdiction; increased international cooperation resulted in quadrupling the cost of money laundering (from 6% of the total amount involved to 26%).<sup>(26)</sup>

The role of organized crime remains pivotal in the international drug trade. This includes ethnic criminal gangs that can benefit from their international links and intimidation of immigrant populations. According to reports, ethnic Chinese triad and other gangs are increasing their involvement in the international drug trade, as are Russian *Mafiya* groups, Japanese *Yakuza* and others. In some cases, this may simply mean that more experienced traffickers are using ethnic gangs in some locations. In other cases, however, the situation might be more complicated; for example, a reported agreement between Russian *Mafiya* and Italian organized crime groups sets out

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(25) *Ibid.*

(26) David A. Andelman, “The Drug Money Maze,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 1994, p. 108.

respective spheres of influence in Europe, and aims to formalize cooperation in drug sales and money laundering.<sup>(27)</sup> At the same time, the increasing sophistication of the drug trade raises problems on many deeper levels. According to a 1996 UN report,

The link between crime and drugs is increasingly affecting societies. Trafficking begets other criminal activity, such as violence between groups competing for market share at the wholesale and retail levels. At the same time, the sums involved give criminals substantial resources with which to organise themselves efficiently, with little or no regard for the fiscal regulatory and legal constraints on normal businesses. Their capital resources are increasingly being used to finance diversification into legitimate business activity. Such intermingling of illicit and legitimate activities poses a serious threat to tackling the drugs problem.<sup>(28)</sup>

While drug trafficking remains a pressing issue, the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention issued a reminder in its *World Drug Report, 2000* that “the history of addictive drugs is not one of a steady and inexorable deterioration. Rather ... [one of] fluctuating trends.”<sup>(29)</sup> At the same time, the UNODCCP points out that the fight against drug trafficking has met with some successes in recent years – largely because of the combined efforts of the international community:

- Large-scale cultivation of opium poppy was successfully prevented in the 1990s in the countries of Central Asia. As a consequence, production is increasingly concentrated in an ever-smaller number of countries. Afghanistan and Myanmar together accounted for about 90% of global illicit opium production in recent years (almost 95% in 1999).
- The three Andean countries – Colombia, Peru and Bolivia – account for almost all coca leaf production. In 1999, Colombia alone was responsible for two-thirds of global coca leaf production, and for an even higher share in global cocaine manufacture (around 80%).

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(27) Dr. Mark Galeotti, “MAFIYA: Organized Crime in Russia,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review Special Report No. 10*, June 1996.

(28) *International Cooperation against the Illicit Production, Sale, Demand, Traffic and Distribution of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances and Related Activities*, Report to the Secretary-General, United Nations Economic and Social Council, 4 June 1996, E/1996/57, p. 5.

(29) *World Drug Report, 2000*, published by the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, New York, 2000, p. 2; available on the Internet at the following address:  
[http://www.undcp.org/odccp/world\\_drug\\_report.html](http://www.undcp.org/odccp/world_drug_report.html).

- The global area under opium poppy cultivation is at its lowest level since 1988, some 17% smaller in 1999 than 1990; similarly, the area under coca cultivation is at its lowest level since 1987, about 14% less in 1999 than in 1990.
- The profile of illegal drugs in the economies of the main producing countries has posted a decisive trend of decline. Even in countries where production levels have remained stubbornly high, the share of GDP has been falling, with drugs contributing some 2.5% of Colombia's economic output, down from a mid-1980s high of around 7%.
- During the 1990s, consumption trends of the main problem drugs in the developed countries have been stable or declining; the abuse of cocaine fell in North America as compared to a decade earlier and heroin abuse was stable in Western Europe.<sup>(30)</sup>

## CANADA AND THE INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRADE

Generally speaking, Canada has followed the U.S. approach to the international drug trade, although it has been less strident in its “War on Drugs” and has devoted more resources to treatment than to enforcement. Canada's National Drug Strategy, launched in 1987 and renewed in 1992 and 1998, emphasizes reducing demand and increasing the number of effective treatment programs. It focuses on the abuse of alcohol and pharmaceuticals as well as street drugs. At the same time, Canada cooperates fully with the international community to counter the drug trade, participating in such anti-drug forums as the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering, the UNDCP, and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) of the Organization of American States.

Canada is party to a number of international instruments, including the 1961 *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs* and the 1971 *Convention on Psychotropic Substances*. In 1990, shortly after it ratified the 1988 *UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances*, Canada undertook a major revision of its legislation regarding drugs and narcotics – in part to better fulfil its international obligations under the above conventions. After several abortive attempts, the Government of Canada finally adopted new legislation, Bill C-8, the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, on 20 June 1996. Bill C-8 formed part of Canada's National Drug Strategy and was intended “to provide a framework for the control of import, production, export, distribution and use of mind-altering substances.”<sup>(31)</sup>

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(30) The above five observations are reproduced from *World Drug Report, 2000*, p. 2, and/or the *Highlights* to that report, also on p. 2.

(31) Jane Allain and Peter Niemczak, *Bill C-8, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, Legislative Summary 240E, Parliamentary Research Branch, Library of Parliament, Ottawa, May 1997, p. 3.

Money laundering has proven a significant problem in Canada, with an estimated \$10 to 12 billion annually in drug-related proceeds passing through Canadian financial institutions. New regulations and measures designed to counter money laundering in Canada were adopted in the 1980s and 1990s, and special anti-drug-money laundering teams made up of RCMP officers, full-time prosecutors, administrative staff and local police officers became fully operational in 1993.<sup>(32)</sup> In June 2000, new legislation considerably bolstered Canada's anti-laundering efforts and made it mandatory for financial agencies to report data relating to certain types of transaction (Bill C-22, *An Act to Facilitate Combatting the Laundering of Proceeds of Crime...*).<sup>(33)</sup>

In December 2001, the Government of Canada adopted Bill C-24, *An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (Organized Crime and Law Enforcement)*. Ushered in as "strong anti-gang legislation," Bill C-24 was intended to provide law enforcement officials with the tools necessary to combat organized criminal groups effectively and to help, among other things, to make inroads against drug trafficking and the various social problems that normally accompany it. The magnitude of those problems is indicated by the sums of money involved: illegal drug sales in Canada have reached an estimated \$7 or \$18 billion a year,<sup>(34)</sup> and their economic costs (including costs to the health care system, lost productivity, enforcement, property crimes committed by addicts, etc.) as much as \$5 billion a year.<sup>(35)</sup>

While cannabis derivatives such as marijuana and hashish are the major illicit drugs of choice in Canada, cocaine (including crack) is also quite popular, with the number of cocaine users estimated at over 250,000. Cocaine use has largely stabilized in Canada, and is centred mostly in major cities in central Canada such as Toronto and Montréal.<sup>(36)</sup> "Crack" cocaine remains readily available in eastern and central Canada, particularly the heavily urbanized Windsor-Toronto corridor. Most cocaine in Canada comes from Colombia, Venezuela and Brazil. A variety of

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(32) *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, 1994*, pp. 139-141.

(33) Geoffrey Kieley, *Bill C-22, An Act to Facilitate Combatting the Laundering of Proceeds of Crime ...*, Legislative Summary 355E, Parliamentary Research Branch, Library of Parliament, Ottawa, May 2000.

(34) Estimates vary so widely because such profits are extremely difficult to ascertain; they are illegal, hidden and for the most part go unreported.

(35) *Speaking Notes for the Hon. Lawrence MacAuley, Solicitor General of Canada, to the World Forum on Drugs and Dependencies, Montréal, Quebec, 23 September 2002*, p. 1.

(36) *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, 1994*, p. 139.

participants dominate the Canadian cocaine trade, including Asian, Italian and South American trafficking organizations, outlaw motorcycle gangs and “generic” Canadian organizations.<sup>(37)</sup> Most cocaine enters Canada by sea, with smaller amounts entering by land and air.

The RCMP estimates the demand for heroin in Canada as “far less” than that for cannabis and cocaine, but heroin trafficking “still constitutes a very lucrative activity.” Heroin use is centred in the major cities of Vancouver, Montréal and Toronto. There are an estimated 35,000-40,000 heroin users in Canada. Most of the heroin they consume comes from Southeast and Southwest Asia, as well as – to a smaller degree – Lebanon and Latin America. Shipment by air (mainly couriers on board commercial aircraft) is estimated to account for most of the heroin smuggled into Canada. According to the RCMP, “Criminal groups with connections to Asian source countries will continue to be largely responsible for importing and trafficking in Canada.”<sup>(38)</sup> In recent years, drug cartels have increasingly viewed Canada’s west coast as an easy entry point into North America. This is partly a factor of geography and the weather conditions on the west coast, and partly a result of the so-called “balloon effect,” whereby drug traffickers have turned increasingly to Canada because the United States has strengthened its enforcement efforts. The RCMP also believes that South American drug organizations are making use of the easier movement of people and goods under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to increase their activities.

Finally, although they have long been part of the Canadian illicit drug culture, only in recent years have synthetic or chemical substances begun to pose a major threat (compared to heroin, cocaine, and cannabis products). Because increased trafficking in ecstasy and other synthetic drugs has significantly raised the level of that threat, the Government of Canada is looking at ways of better regulating or controlling the purchase and sale of so-called precursor chemicals, as a means of reducing domestic clandestine lab activity. In addition, the government has established a new office, the RCMP National Precursor Chemical Diversion Program, and it intends to strengthen still further its collaboration with law enforcement authorities from other jurisdictions to control trafficking in synthetic drugs.<sup>(39)</sup>

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(37) RCMP (1994), p. 7.

(38) *Ibid.*, p. 9.

(39) *Drug Situation in Canada, 2000*, report published by the Criminal Intelligence Directorate of the RCMP, Ottawa, June 2001; available on the Internet at the following address:  
[http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/crim\\_int/drugs\\_2000\\_e.htm](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/crim_int/drugs_2000_e.htm).



## CONCLUSION

In the past decade, it has become evident that the traditional view of the drug trade as a northern, and particularly American, problem is too simplistic. As former Colombian Minister of Justice Rodrigo Lara Bonilla pointed out, countries that begin by producing and trafficking in drugs end up by consuming them.<sup>(40)</sup> The main beneficiaries of the international drug trade may be a relatively small number of sophisticated trafficking organizations, but the victims include countless drug addicts around the world and innocent victims of crimes committed to support drug habits. Moreover, it has also become increasingly evident that the illicit drug trade has a substantial negative impact on all aspects of development.

Important success has been achieved in the past two decades through countries' individual action and through bilateral and multilateral cooperation on enforcement measures, and work is continuing along these lines. At the same time, it is essential to recognize the deep social roots of the international drug problem and the need for cooperation on a much broader basis than simple enforcement. According to Canada's former Solicitor General, Herb Gray,

The drug trade is dependent on demand and only by developing preventative strategies that strike at the underlying factors that lead people to use drugs in the first place can we curb drug abuse and trafficking.

These factors, or root causes, such as sexual abuse, broken homes, illiteracy, physical abuse, and lack of parental guidance are more social problems than they are problems of crime.<sup>(41)</sup>

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(40) Cited in Brown (1994), p. 490.

(41) "Message From the Solicitor General," RCMP (1994), p. 2.