THE DRUG PROBLEM IN THE AMERICAS: STUDIES

DRUGS AND SECURITY
THE DRUG PROBLEM IN THE AMERICAS: STUDIES

DRUGS AND SECURITY

Organization of American States
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART 1 INTRODUCTION: STARTING POINTS AND STUMBLING BLOCKS TO ANALYSIS</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART 2 DRUG USE AND SECURITY</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART 3 ILLEGAL DRUG ECONOMY AND SECURITY</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Illegal Drug Economy, Crime and Violence</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Illegal Drug Economy and Organized Crime</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Illegal Drug Economy and Corruption</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART 4 THE STATE’S RESPONSE TO THREATS TO CITIZEN SECURITY</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART 5 EPILOGUE</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

Both security and the drug problem are complex phenomena, drawing in a variety of actors, dynamics, and territorial considerations which vary considerably by country and region.

The hemisphere can no longer ignore the intricate links between drugs, development and conflict. Drug policies have to become more aware of the role they can play in changing the conditions that precipitate drug trade and use, drug control agencies must learn to better look beyond the simple realities of drug production, and take into account the social and economic factors that fuel cultivation and consumption.

The relationship between the drug problem and security can be explained principally by the state’s weakness in performing its law and order functions, property protection and crime prevention. The varying capabilities of different states in the region to guarantee protection for their citizens and effective law enforcement constitute a key variable in understanding why in some countries the drug problem is viewed as a major security threat, while in others its effect is less intense.

While drug use tends to be high among people who have committed crimes, this does not mean that the majority of drug users commit crimes. The relationship between drug use and the occurrence of crime tends to be highest in specific urban spaces, and is generally associated with drug use by socially marginalized groups.

Drug trafficking is an important factor behind the high mortality rates of some countries in the hemisphere. Nevertheless, there is not enough evidence to conclude that recent changes in drug trafficking routes have resulted in a decline in violent deaths, suggesting that other underlying factors may be driving this violence.

The relationship between the drug problem and organized crime works both ways: Illegal drugs provide resources that fuel crime, while organized crime serves as the engine to sustain much of the drug market. From a security perspective, the problem is more about organized crime than drugs.

Illegal firearms trafficking is a major problem throughout the hemisphere, exacerbated by the relationship between illegal drugs and organized crime.

Illegal drugs drive crime, violence, corruption, and impunity. These four factors are key to understanding the interaction among prohibition, criminal organizations, and state institutions. The drug problem accentuates corruption within countries, taking advantage of institutional weaknesses, lack of controls and regulations, and lack of judicial independence.
Institutional responses to address the drug problem may trigger reactions that further aggravate levels of violence and crime. Often times, State attempts to combat criminal factions simultaneously and head-on lead to fragmentation and power vacuums that exacerbate violence.
Foreword

What is the relationship between the drug problem and citizen security? In this chapter, three potential areas of intersection between both phenomena will be explored. The first area links drug users to crime and violence. In this section, rather than viewing drug users as victims of a crime or a health problem, they are viewed as a potential perpetrator of crime and violence as a consequence of drug use. The second area of analysis examines the link between the drug problem as an illegal business (including the phases of cultivation, production, trafficking and marketing) and security. And lastly, we will address the state response to the problem, which sometimes contributes to improving citizen security, but other times can trigger a multiplying effect of insecurity.

The chapter begins with an introductory section and ends with an epilogue. The introductory section discusses the difficulties inherent to analyzing the link between the drug problem and security and explains several different points of departure in addressing the topic. The epilogue outlines the collective efforts of the states of the Americas that are currently underway to confront this problem, as well as suggesting how to possibly make forward strides in the state’s response to threats to citizen security resulting from the drug problem.
Both security and the drug problem are complex phenomena and, as is the case of all phenomena linked to social behavior, the relationships between them are multifaceted, in constant flux and elusive. In order to study the link between security and the drug problem, it is necessary to grasp the complexity of the two phenomena, inasmuch as both of them involve many factors, which interact in a variety of ways depending on context, timing, and dynamics. For one, security may be affected by many different factors, of which the drug problem is just one although possibly the most damaging. Moreover, the drug problem is not a single, cohesive phenomenon, given that there are different types of drugs, and numerous actors and territorial links involved. Nor is it possible to point to a single link or straight line between the two phenomena. The drug problem may manifest itself in outbursts of violence and trigger various types of criminal conduct, although this does not happen all the time or in all places. As with other illegal markets, levels of violence and a surge in other crimes depend on numerous factors, such as the marginalization of socio-economically limited segments of the population and the competition among rival criminal factions that tears the social fabric and weakens the state.

Nonetheless, security and the drug problem are closely connected and their impact can be extremely serious. In light of these complexities, it can be asserted that the drug problem is a threat to the overall physical, material, psychosocial, health, community, and environmental security of the citizens of the Americas. Any time there is a lack of security in any of these six dimensions, it is always preceded by obstacles to access to education, health, formal employment and justice, which by definition constitutes impediments to the exercise of one or more of the human rights, i.e. political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights. Similarly, insecurity linked to drugs, which are subject to supply and demand on the informal market, is always preceded by mass violations of one or more of the 58 human rights enshrined in international conventions, which have been ratified by the states of the region. Accordingly, when people exercise these human rights more frequently, it helps to increase social capital and strengthen the social prevention systems of the citizens of the Americas against insecurity that adversely affects many facets of their lives.

However, this far-reaching insecurity manifests in different ways, depending on the type of illicit product and the actors involved, the legal framework in place, and the coordination capacity of states. At the national level, the challenges posed by drug use in some countries appear to be minor, compared to the extreme violence posed by the transit or illegal sale of drugs in others. However, we cannot dismiss the implications of the widespread use of
psychoactive substances in neighborhoods. Such neighborhoods must grapple with a high incidence of addiction among youth and children and associated criminal acts committed by those who see in the production, distribution and sale of illicit drugs their only opportunity in life. Additionally, the drug problem expresses itself in different ways, depending on the institutional capacity of states to provide a response and the socio-cultural and economic characteristics of the affected populations.

VIEWS ON SECURITY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

The OAS General Secretariat gathered in San Salvador, El Salvador on January 17 and 18, 2013 for a Workshop to collect information and views to serve as input for this Report. Twenty-one officials attended the meeting in an individual capacity, including three Ministers of Security, one Vice Minister of Security, three National Police Directors, one Civilian Police Director, one National Drug Commission Member, high ranking police officers, prosecutorial officials and one member of civil society, all from Central America. One high-ranking officer of the Colombian Police Force also attended as a representative of Ameripol.

In response to the question on the major threat to their country, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala identified their principal threat to security to be the activities of gangs (known as maras), and in general, these countries felt threatened by organized crime activities (above all, drug trafficking, money laundering, human smuggling, and arms trafficking). Nicaragua was an exception; there, the main threats were said to be armed robbery, domestic violence, and traffic accidents.

Looking to the future, the participants felt the most pressing threat was the possibility that transnational organized crime, acting on a number of criminal fronts and in tandem with gangs, could overpower the state’s capacity to maintain control of its territory.

When asked to identify the principal regional concern over the drug problem, they rejected the notion that it stemmed from the social behavior of addicts. The majority identified the relationship between drugs and organized crime as the main problem, even though some believed it was a combination of all these concerns.

All agreed that organized crime currently revolved around the illegal drug trade. There was also strong consensus that in order to fight organized crime, the most pressing need was for stronger institutions. Only one of the participants thought the top priority should be law enforcement.

The participants also agreed that efforts in Central America to strengthen institutions in response to organized crime had been ineffective. When asked what, then, needed to be done most urgently to make institution-building more
effective, most participants cited funding and investment, followed by a state policy, as opposed to a policy of a particular administration, to address these problems.

VIEWS ON SECURITY IN THE CARIBBEAN

In an effort to fulfill the mandate set at the Sixth Summit of the Americas, the OAS and the Ministry of National Security of Trinidad and Tobago hosted a Caribbean Outreach Working Group Meeting held on January 16 to 17, 2013. The meeting brought experts from across the sub-region together to discuss the drug problem in the Americas with the aim of understanding the nature and extent of problem in the Caribbean region, and developing solutions to deal with same. Participants were directed to focus on the five overarching themes of the Analytical Report including the Drug Problem and Public (In) Security. Several representatives taken from local law enforcement agencies including the police, customs, military and defense and national security institutions from across the region formed a working group to discuss this issue. There was also representation from regional agencies such as CARICOM IMPACS, and the Regional Security System (RSS).

The group concluded that the illicit drug trade clearly has an impact on national security and the law enforcement infrastructure as evidenced by recent and growing crimes of homicide committed by criminal gangs that challenge these institutions. The fulfillment of the responsibility to provide protection for communities by police and other law enforcement agencies becomes difficult when resources are spread thin due to an increase in homicides. With increasing crime, law enforcement has difficulties in providing an immediate response and is further challenged with providing protection for an increasing number of witnesses.

The group indicated that there appears to be little organization locally as far as the drug trade is concerned. The international shippers that control supply routes are more organized. In some countries for example there are different rival gangs involved in the drug trade perpetuate violence in the form of murders. These acts then lead to reprisal killings and the cycle of violence continues. Much of the street crimes related to drugs are perpetuated by the lower level players within various countries. The trans-shippers prefer not to draw attention to themselves and keep a lower profile where violent crimes are concerned. They will, however, use violence to protect their commodity.

There is a link between transshipment of drugs and firearms such that in recent times there has been an exchange of drugs for guns, whereas previously the guns merely came with the drugs. The drug trade therefore results in a large number of firearms entering the Caribbean region. Recent estimates from one country suggest that up to 70% of murders are currently being committed with the use of firearms.
Another consequence of the drug trade relates to prison overcrowding. The Prison populations in many countries across the region far outnumber the capacity of the prisons in which they are housed, and several persons convicted of drug-related offences contribute significantly to these numbers.

In addition, police officers and other law enforcement officials can become vulnerable to bribes and corruption without support, particularly those who feel that they are not being adequately compensated for their efforts. Even more troubling is the possibility that law enforcement staff may be vulnerable themselves to substance abuse.

One of the significant observations is that the transit countries do not benefit from the transactions, but they experience the fallout.

The group felt, among other things, that: a.) there is a need for policymakers to be more consistent between administrations; b.) there is a need for an effective implementation of the Proceeds of Crime Act and its equivalents in the various jurisdictions; and c.) there is a need for the equitable management of confiscated asset funds.

Unfortunately, there is insufficient reliable and comparable information available to examine the connection between security and the drug problem. This is perhaps the most serious problem in exploring this connection. Both the available information on security in Latin America (crime, victimization and risk perception) and existing information on the drug problem (production, use, transit and sale) are fraught with shortcomings. The quality and coverage of official statistics vary from country to country, while the information produced by nongovernmental organizations, valuable though it may be, tends to be spotty and limited in scope.

LACK OF RELIABLE AND COMPARABLE DATA

The countries of the hemisphere and their national and multilateral institutions have made uneven progress in developing information systems capable of providing reliable and up-to-date information regarding security. There are still significant gaps in the production of statistics and disagreements over the definition of offenses, which poses major difficulties in terms of analysis. Because countries’ data gathering, processing, and reporting capacities, and even the methodologies and conceptual basis they work on, are so disparate, it becomes difficult to compare crime data across countries. Being that official statistics are based mainly on complaints by citizens, they often do not necessarily reflect the extent of the problems, because in a context of high levels of impunity and mistrust of institutions, citizens may prefer not to turn to government agencies.

Statistics on the drug problem pose even greater difficulties. Information
can be found about criminal organizations, but it may fall far short of a complete account of their actions, geographical whereabouts, variables for monitoring them, and the scale of their production, sales, and profits. Moreover, there are a series of crimes alleged to be linked to the drug problem but whose perpetrators have not been identified by the competent institutions, which makes it risky to assert causal relationships. Furthermore, the information available on production, illegal flows, and sales are just rough estimates. As a result, assessments based on official figures and disparate statistics have serious limitations.

Through regional information-sharing mechanisms and the establishment of standardized indicators and procedures, the region is taking significant steps to improve information. Particularly important, in this regard, is the work being done by the OAS Observatory on Citizen Security; CICAD’s Inter-American Observatory on Drugs; and the Regional System of Standardized Indicators in Peaceful Coexistence and Citizen Security of the Inter-American Development Bank.

The drug problem is frequently viewed as a matter related to law, order and security. Rarely seen are its socioeconomic implications. This needs to be changed. Currently, it is imperative that there is an analysis and a more informed debate about the links between development, conflict and drug trafficking. These links are evident in many countries of the hemisphere. It is a vicious cycle: the lack of development fuels the conflict, which fuels the drug trade, which fuels further conflict, which in turn leads to more poverty. Like most vicious cycles, it is very difficult to break. The links between security and the drug problem do not occur in a void but arise in a region marked by the most inequitable income distribution in the world, grave social integration problems that hit youth and women hardest, high levels of urban sprawl, and serious issues of public mistrust of police and judicial institutions, accompanied by high doses of impunity. Known in epidemiological terms as “associated risk factors,” these blights are much more robust determinants of violence and crime than the drug problem. In fact, the drug problem acts simply as a catalyst, multiplying the social conditions that tend to generate crime and violence. To fully understand security issues, then, it is essential to have an equally comprehensive grasp of social exclusion and vulnerability. Likewise, it is difficult to eradicate violence and crime without substantial progress toward achieving social inclusion and overcoming such problems as poverty, inequality, lack of education, a dearth of opportunities, an informal economy, and institutional shortcomings of the state. That, in turn, presupposes launching a process involving not just the state and the socially excluded, but the “socially included” as well, who will have many responsibilities as part of that process: paying taxes, abiding by the rules of the game, staying in the formal sector, and respecting collective decisions and institutions.

The hemisphere can no longer ignore the intricate links between drugs, development and conflict. Drug policies have to become more aware of the role they can play in changing the conditions that precipitate drug trade and use,
drug control agencies must learn to better look beyond the simple realities of drug production, and take into account the social and economic factors that fuel cultivation and consumption. In general, there is a need for more targeted and complex approaches to one of the phenomena that generates the greatest challenges to security, peaceful co-existence, the health and well-being of our citizens, and consequently, to the human development of the region.

*The problem of drugs and insecurity is also a matter of perception. For citizens—to varying degrees in different countries—the drug trade is not the principal threat to their security.* Security does not just have an “objective” dimension, reflected in official and unofficial indicators and statistics; it also has a “subjective” dimension, which has more to do with what citizens perceive and their levels of fear. Overall, citizens do not identify the drug trade as the most serious threat to their security; for them, ordinary crime or street crime affects them more on a daily basis. According to a regional survey, most people in Latin America identify “non-organized crime” (probably common crime) as the most frequent crime, with 42 percent of mentions, while “drug trafficking” ranks only in third place, with 13 percent.¹ According to a study conducted in 2009-2010, only 6.1 percent of citizens state that the drug trade is the principal cause of insecurity/crime in their country, while unemployment (20.8 percent) and lack of educational opportunities (18 percent) are cited the most.²

While the drug problem associated with crime and violence manifests itself mainly in “vulnerable” areas or territories—largely poor urban districts—fear of crime is mainly present in “richer” neighborhoods. This is no trivial matter, because it has a direct impact on private sector engagement in citizen security and the tendency to resort to private means to encroach on the state’s responsibilities in that area. In an exchange on this subject, held in connection with the preparation of this report, a former police chief of a Caribbean country pointed out that, although crime and violence had not increased substantially in his country and could not therefore really be described as a “social problem,” the use of private security guards had increased significantly. A senior official in the OAS Secretariat for Multidimensional Security commented, for his part, that the chief complaint of gang members (“mareros”) in a recent dialogue was that certain private sector groups were “exploiting” security issues, with security firms artificially “inflating” the problem in order to make money off of people’s fear.

*Most importantly, the relationship between the drug problem and security can be explained principally by the state’s weakness in performing its law and order functions, property protection and crime prevention.* The varying capabilities of different states in the region to guarantee protection for their citizens and effective law enforcement constitute a key variable in understanding why in some countries the drug problem is viewed as a major security threat, while in others its effect is less intense.

¹ Latinobarómetro 2011.
² “Estudio de Opinión sobre Gobernabilidad y Convivencia” FLACSO/IPSOS, 2010
In many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, institutions are spread too thin, too poorly structured and coordinated, and too short on financial and human resources and accurate information to formulate and implement effective security policies. Exacerbating those problems is a lack of a process for achieving a political and social consensus to legitimize and make feasible the implementation of preventive and punitive policies. This lack of consensus between the state and the society decreases levels of trust in institutions because their fragility and corruption that can be so extensive that it generates a pervasive sense of impunity. This mistrust can breed a culture of disdain for the state, in a vicious cycle in which the community is unsuccessful at gaining access to prevention training institutions, health care services and the formal job market and, in turn, opts not to rely on institutions (crimes are not reported, disputes are settled privately, people take justice into their own hands) because the police do not pursue criminals, the courts do not hand down judgments, and prisons not only fail to rehabilitate but often serve as shelters from which criminals continue to operate. The situation is well summarized in the joint UNDP-OAS report entitled “Our Democracy,” which notes that “not enough State explains why we have the world’s highest homicide rate, why drug cartels rule whole territories and influence public decision-making, why there are large areas that are not ruled by law.”

This can be exacerbated by discontinuous policies, which are tied to transitory governments concerned with short-term needs rather than state-based policies to ensure long term stability (and, at times, even by a string of disjointed policies under the same government), thus rendering crime prevention programs unsustainable. In the field of multidimensional security, as in other fields, firm political leadership and the forging of agreements are needed to build legitimacy and ensure adoption of a long-term approach to problem-solving.

3 FCE, PNUD, OEA, 2010, p. 145
PART 2
DRUG USE AND SECURITY

The day-to-day experience of millions of citizens of the Americas, amplified by the media, suggests a clear link between the drug problem and insecurity. But in the context of that connection, how significant are the crimes and acts of violence committed by drug users? Evidence suggests that drug use explains some of the crimes, namely those perpetrated by users seeking to obtain the funds to satisfy their addiction. Do such crimes account for a significant portion of all crimes committed in the region? It cannot be denied either that a considerable number of criminals take drugs, but is that drug use the cause of their crimes? There is no question either that drug use—including, of course, illicit drug use—can lead to pathological social behavior, which may culminate in violence. How broad is the impact of that kind of violence on the overall toll of damage and death experienced in the region? There are no precise answers to any of these questions due to a lack of strong and reliable data. Nonetheless, we strive to make progress in this regard on the basis of whatever evidence is available.

Drug use tends to be higher among people who have committed crimes, but that does not mean that most drug users commit crimes. As would be expected, available evidence of this link is associated with cases of crimes actually perpetrated. Based on studies of crimes and those incarcerated for committing them, drug use levels among the prison population are noticeably higher than national prevalence rates. Studies based on biological testing of detainees have found frequent drug use and show that the probability of committing a crime and of repeat offenses is greater among regular drug users. Nevertheless, the fact that these individuals are regular users does not prove that the crimes were committed under the influence of a drug or were motivated by the need to consume a drug.

The relationship between drug use and crimes varies according to the type of drug. Some drugs correlate more strongly with the occurrence of crimes; however, their use does not typically lead to violence. There is an ongoing public debate about the effects of certain drugs and their links to violence. While marijuana appears to lower aggressiveness, cocaine may exacerbate it. Heroin, meanwhile, is associated more with crimes against property than with violence on the part of those who use it. Studies show that drug-induced violence is rare and is more often associated with alcohol than illegal drugs, though in both cases the drugs weaken the mechanisms that have an inhibiting effect on an individual’s conduct—especially if that person is armed or in a setting that encourages the use of violence. The state of a person’s addiction is a key variable: some studies show that the occurrence of crime is more closely correlated to drug use when the addiction is intense. When there is less
dependence, the occurrence of crime diminishes, which suggests that an early response to addiction may reduce the number of crimes related to drug use.

The total number of deaths resulting from drug-induced pathological behavior is significant but accounts for only a small share of total violent deaths in the region. As of 2004 (based on the latest official data available, which is quite scant, as explained above), the Pan American Health Organization reported that drug-induced behavior accounted for 27,899 deaths in Latin America and the Caribbean. These included deaths caused by trauma (mainly traffic accidents), suicides, or HIV contracted from infected syringes used by addicts. Those figures can be compared with the information provided in the OAS Report on Citizen Security in the Americas, which revealed that in that same year, deaths from suicide alone in Latin America and the Caribbean totaled 28,432, while deaths from traffic accidents alone in Latin America in 2009 totaled 102,940. It is likely that, with increased drug use in some Latin American countries, the number of deaths associated with drug use has marginally increased. However, the number will continue to represent a small share of all similar violent or lethal incidents in the region.
The drug problem is also a problem of an illegal economy. Society’s decision to declare certain substances illicit automatically outlaws all activities connected to the different stages of making them accessible to citizens for whom the use thereof has as been made illegal: cultivation, production, trafficking, and marketing. The main feature of this “business” is its illegality. History has shown that as long as there is a demand for goods and services that are banned, there will be incentives to supply them. Such economic activities are criminal in and of themselves, and frequently linked to organized crime. There is thus a direct and automatic relationship between drugs and security. Because this illegal economy generates markets that are also illegal, such markets cannot be governed by regulations or standards; nor are they subject to the normal processes of competition. The rules and regulations that apply to them are set by the criminals themselves, and the only way the business can compete in order to turn a profit and grow is through violence.

1. Illegal Drug Economy, Crime and Violence

The illegal drug economy can be broken down into a three-stage process: 1. Cultivation and production, 2. Distribution or transit and 3. Consumption or use. Different parts of this illicit economy trigger different degrees of competition and violence.

Analysis based on case studies and homicide data suggests that the illicit drug economy is a major factor spurring violence in the countries of Latin America. The information that is available, largely through the media, indicates that massacres, attacks carried out by hired assassins, and torture occur, allegedly in connection with the organizations engaged in the drug trade. The Mexican government has estimated that the total number of drug trafficker-on-drug trafficker homicides, plus the total number of drug traffickers killed by the police or other law enforcement agents, plus the total number of police or other law enforcement agents killed by drug traffickers, and other victims who lose their lives as “collateral damage” in these confrontations, adds up to 150,000 deaths per year in Latin America and the Caribbean, which works out to a rate of 17 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants in 2010. Other experts claim that it is difficult to calculate deaths related to drug trafficking – in Mexico, Central American and other countries of the region – cannot be properly documented in the judicial system, inasmuch as most of these deaths are unsolved cases, and have not been settled in the courts.
In the cases of Colombia, Mexico, and the countries of the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras) and the Tri-Border Area of South America (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay), several studies suggest that a significant portion of homicides are likely to be associated with struggle for control of transit routes, where state presence is usually limited. Not only drugs, but also all kinds of illegal merchandise flow through these areas. In such cases, the violence is better explained by fights to control the routes than by the presence of illegal drugs. At the same time, the dearth of reliable data pertaining to the percentage of homicides perpetrated by drug trafficking-linked groups complicates any rigorous analysis.

With respect to micro-trafficking, competition for these local markets helps explain the high levels of violence in such places as the shantytowns (favelas) of Rio de Janeiro, some urban areas in Colombia and Jamaica and certain parts of Mexico. There is also increasing evidence of involvement by Central American maras in the retail drug trade. Data constraints, however, preclude estimating how much violence can be attributed to competition for local markets. Geographically, in the so-called “hotspots,” the concurrent presence of a host of illegal activities—the black market in weapons, sales of stolen goods, prostitution, trade in counterfeit goods—makes it difficult to assert that the drug trade is the principal cause of the violence in such places.

There is also evidence of increased homicides in drug production areas. A recent study suggests that drug production-related activities in Colombia lead to 4,600 to 7,000 deaths each year, or up to 40 percent of the 17,700 homicides recorded in 2010.5

In Peru, acts of violence in coca-growing areas have been linked to the presence of the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) group. In Bolivia, there are no consolidated data available on acts of violence in unregulated coca-growing and cocaine-processing areas. Meanwhile, no information is available to confirm a potential relationship between violence and the production of other kinds of drugs (such as synthetic drugs).

The drug trade may help explain high homicide rates found in some countries in the region. Nevertheless, there is not enough evidence to support the argument that changes in drug trafficking routes have led to lower violent death rates. Persistent violence may instead reflect other underlying factors. Most countries with high homicide rates in the hemisphere have been greatly affected by the trafficking of drugs through their territories. This is the case of the Northern Triangle countries (Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala) as well as Venezuela. The recent escalation of the drug trade in those countries, with increased influence of Mexican transnational criminal organizations (in the case of Central America) and Colombian organizations (in the case of Venezuela), has been cited as a key factor that helps explains the intensity of the violence.

Nevertheless, there is no consensus as to the cause of these increases. In Guatemala, it should be noted, the homicide rate has not increased over the past four years. In the case of El Salvador, in connection with the truce among gangs, the number of homicides has been declining steadily toward what will end up being a much lower rate in 2012—a development that does not correlate with changes in the drug market. In Venezuela, the drug trade might explain a significant portion of homicides; however, studies do not identify any major link between drug movements and the high homicide rate in Caracas. In Honduras, the hardest-hit country in terms of violence, there is no single causal explanation for the high homicide rates, as multiple legal and illegal actors are responsible for triggering and reproducing the violence.

One finding that casts doubt on the notion that homicide rates go up when the drug trade intensifies is the fact that in some countries of the Caribbean, according to a study based on volume of drug seizures, *Global Study on Homicide* de UNODC (2011), drug trafficking—with the exception of the Dominican Republic—decreased without a parallel reduction in homicide rates. (In some countries, they even went up.) This information is certainly questionable because of the indicator used (seizures as a measure of trafficking), but it does provide reasonable grounds for doubt.

One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that the prevalence of crime and violence associated with the illegal drug economy generates a momentum that continues to drive homicide and crime even after there have been changes in trafficking routes or markets.

*The illegal drug economy and its links to insecurity are not just a national or local matter. Their impact on violence and crime crosses borders, conveyed through channels driven by illicit drug consumption.* As pointed out earlier, levels of violence in the principal drug-consuming countries—including in Europe—are relatively low, compared to those in transit countries (including Colombia, which is also a producer country). However, even though drug use in the developed countries does not trigger a large number of homicides, it is precisely that demand that feeds the violence in the rest of the chain. What is happening in Mexico, Central America, the Andean countries, and the Caribbean cannot be understood without that relationship being seen for what it is. In the case of Colombia, it has been estimated that a 10 percent increase in the international market value of cocaine triggers an increase in the homicide rate of between 1.2 and 2 percent.7

Clearly, then, circumstances affecting one country tend to be reflected in others. That means responsibility for solving the problem should be shared, and all the countries involved need to tackle the problem simultaneously. Each country and each state must address its own circumstances and those of its neighboring countries, as well as the global situation.

---

Central America is the most violent region of Latin America and the world. Even though more than twenty years have elapsed since the end of the Central American conflict, homicide rates have risen in Honduras to 82.1 for every 100,000 inhabitants and in El Salvador to 76.3, while in Guatemala it has dropped to 38.6.

A study published by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in San Salvador, El Salvador (2012), attempts to shed light on the enigma of violence in the region through empirical analysis and by drawing a comparison between poverty and inequality rates, GINI coefficient, and Human Development Indexes in Central America.

The results only shed light on the enigma of the violence reported in these countries. Two major findings emerged from this study. Firstly, it disproves the commonly held belief that current rates of violence stem from the perpetuation of the violence of the civil wars. If there were a causal relationship between the two, then Nicaragua would have the highest levels of violence in the region, due to the fact that this country underwent two civil wars. In the same vein, the current levels of violence in Honduras would not correlate, as this country did not experience any civil war. Secondly, the study results suggest that poverty and inequality in the region of Central America is not always the cause of violence. For example, a comparison between homicide rates and the GINI coefficient and GDP revealed that the homicide rate in El Salvador in 2011 was 70.79 and, in Nicaragua, 12.57; while in El Salvador the GINI coefficient is 0.49, and in Nicaragua it is 0.53. So, it would not be valid to claim that there was a direct correlation between violence levels and socioeconomic conditions.

So, what accounts for the violence in these countries? Some causes may be: the inability of the state to perform its law and order functions, protection of public and private property and prevention in the area of health, providing education services and creating jobs. It would be fair to say that this inability is rooted in the failure of the state to institute enough representative democracy and to reach compromises that yield public policies, which are widely accepted by society and political stakeholders.

On its own, the rule of law, the number of laws or the punitive power thereof, the number of police officers or law enforcement agents deployed is all irrelevant, if laws are just not enforced or are only enforced for some people.

*The illegal drug economy triggers different situations of violence in each country of the hemisphere.*
Every phase of the value chain in the cultivation, production, distribution and sale of the drugs prohibited by international conventions is illegal and it is a crime to engage in any one of them. All together though, they constitute an economic activity or “business” making the criminals involved in it a particular type of businessmen, whose sole purpose and driving force is, in short, to make money. Money drives their decisions and actions and, consequently, accounts for their decision to use violence and vicious brutality at all stages of the value chain created by this illegal drug economy.

The sale phase of the illegal drug economy is when the most value is added to this illegal enterprise and, presumably, when the most money can be made. It is not, however, the phase that triggers the most violence; the destination countries of the international drug trade flow are mostly not plagued by the situations of extreme criminal violence associated with drug trafficking. Most of the violence and the highest number of victims is found at the transit or transshipment stage of this illegal economy and it takes a heavy toll on these transit countries.

In order to find an explanation for this apparent paradox, we must look to the countries themselves where the phenomenon occurs, as it cannot be explained by the illegal economy itself. A close look yields indisputable evidence: generally speaking, the State apparatus in destination countries tends to be solid, as oppose to those in transit countries.

Varying degrees of criminal violence among our countries can be explained, in short, by the varying capacity of States to provide for the protection of their citizens and, most importantly, effectively enforce laws.

In many countries of our hemisphere, but particularly in those characterized as transit countries of illicit drugs, institutions are spread too thin, too poorly structured and coordinated, too short on financial and human resources and on accurate information to formulate and implement effective security policies. Exacerbating those problems is the low level of trust in institutions, which because of their fragility, can breed such rampant corruption that it generates a pervasive sense of impunity.

This fragility of the State, compounded by the corrupting practices of the criminal organizations themselves, makes these countries a fertile breeding ground for the use of violence as the main way of doing “business.” Consequently, violence becomes the only means to settle scores with competing organizations and gain a stronghold over the community and, in many instances, even over the State itself.
2. Illegal Drug Economy and Organized Crime

The illegal drug market is an important source of funding for organized crime. However, the unequal distribution of profits from the drug trade suggests the need to look at the role of other illicit activities in local markets. It is impossible to know exactly how much revenue is generated by the illegal drug economy. Even the criminals engaged in this activity probably have no idea. Presumably, though, in Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole, the proceeds from the illegal drug market exceed those from other illicit activities. In 2008, UNODC estimated that the cocaine trade from South America to the United States was worth approximately US$38 billion, while trade to Europe was worth about US$34 billion, yielding a total market value of approximately US$72 billion.\(^8\) These figures were more than twice the estimated revenue from trafficking in women abducted to Europe or from smuggling migrants from Mexico into the United States.

The information gap is just as wide for other illegal markets, including trade in counterfeit products, contraband, human trafficking, and the migrant smuggling. Some degree of certainty exists regarding the uneven distribution of profits, not just between countries, but also between groups. So it is conceivable that, at the local level, proceeds from other illegal activities (kidnapping, extortion, smuggling of migrants, illegal mining, and a host of other activities) may compete with the resources generated by the market for illegal drugs.

The volume of profits and the degree of dependence on the resources generated in the drug market vary for each of the criminal organizations involved in the business. While some criminal factions focus more on marijuana, others revolve around the cocaine economy or dabble simultaneously in several markets. It is important to bear these differences in mind so as to not labor under the false notion that any changes in the market for a particular drug will have an across-the-board effect on all organized crime.

The illicit drug market is just one of the many diverse activities in which national and transnational organized crime is engaged. These activities are practiced by a wide variety of criminal organizations (cartels, bands, gangs, commandos, and paramilitary units), each with its own dynamic. Apart from the illicit drug trade, according to examination of the proceedings of numerous court cases published in several studies, these organizations engage simultaneously in 23 different illicit activities, which include all types of internet fraud and other cybercrimes, human trafficking, diamond and precious metal and stone smuggling, document and passport forgery, cigarette smuggling, trafficking in automobile parts and stolen vehicles, money laundering; arms manufacture and trafficking, armed robbery; trafficking in fuel and counterfeit goods, forgery, natural resource trafficking, extortion,

---

\(^8\) “Crime and instability. Case studies of transnational threats” UNODC, 2008
kidnapping, trafficking in antiques and archeological remains. On the domestic front, in addition to the production and sale of illicit drugs, activities carried out by organized crime include the illegal sale of weapons, the counterfeit and contraband trade, control and exploitation of prostitution, robbery and the sale of stolen goods, illegal mining, kidnapping, and extortion, including the victimization of migrants.

One unifying characteristic of the most powerful criminal structures (in terms of resources and influence) is that they operate on several fronts simultaneously. That is the case with the so-called Mexican cartels, the criminal bands emerging in Colombia, the Commandos in Brazil, and the maras in Central America, all of which have different ties to the drug market, but do not depend on it exclusively.

**The region has a serious problem with illegal arms trafficking, exacerbated by the relationship between illicit drugs and organized crime.** Lethal violence perpetrated with firearms in Latin America and the Caribbean far exceeds the world average of 42 percent of all homicides. According to the 2012 OAS Report on Citizen Security,⁹ in the Caribbean, 68 percent of homicides are committed using firearms, compared to 78 percent in Central America, 55 percent in North America, and 83 percent in South America. These high rates of firearms-related deaths are directly tied to organized crime and, within that category, to drug trafficking—so much so that the UNODC Commission on Narcotic Drugs issued a resolution voicing its concern at the extent to which the links between the drug trade and illegal arms trading networks are growing, sometimes making it possible for criminal organizations to have as much or more firepower than the authorities themselves (Resolution 51/11).

**ILLICIT TRAFFICKING IN FIREARMS**

Region-wide data are limited and mainly focused on seizures of pistols and revolvers. The statistics on the availability of machine guns and assault rifles are scarcely even a sample of the total inventory of illegal weapons. In Mexico, between December 1, 2006, and December 19, 2011, the Office of the Attorney General (PGR) seized 134,639 firearms from organized crime: 53,929 small arms and 80,710 rifles. In the same period, the PGR confiscated submachine guns, assault rifles, grenade launchers, rocket launchers, and other unspecified weaponry: 83,297 items in all. They came from the United States, Spain, Italy, China, and Romania, and 35 other countries, including Belgium and Brazil.¹⁰ A report conducted by Colby Goodman and Michel Marizco for the Mexico Institute and the Trans-Border Institute¹¹ emphasizes that most of

---


¹⁰ Daily newspaper Diario Milenio, February 28, 2012

¹¹ Colby Goodman and Michel Marizco, U.S. Firearms Trafficking to México: New Data and Insights Illuminate Key Trends and Challenges
the arms seized by Mexican authorities were purchased in the United States and most were military-style firearms. The study found that the two weapons most frequently purchased in the United States and recovered in Mexico were, in descending order, semi-automatic AK 47-type rifles and clones of AR-15 assault rifles.

According to the Arias Foundation of Costa Rica, in 2000 there were 509,826 registered firearms in Central America, and the estimated number of illegal arms is believed to be far higher: in El Salvador it is 244,000; while, for Guatemala, possibly over one million, and in Nicaragua, illegal weapons are believed to be twice as numerous as they were in 2006. Altogether, there are an estimated 2.3 million illegal firearms in Central America. As for Colombia, the organization Fundación Ideas para la Paz estimates that for every legal weapon there are four illegal firearms. In 2011 alone, the National Police seized 37,987 firearms, 26,137 of which were illegal.

In the case of Brazil, one study conducted by Viva Rio in conjunction with the Subcommittee on Weapons of the National Congress, PRONASCI and the Ministry of Justice, (released in December 2010) revealed that almost half of all firearms circulating in the country are illegal (7.6 million out of a total 16 million firearms). One telltale statistic is that for every ten arms seized, eight are manufactured in Brazil. Of those imported from abroad, 59.2 percent come from the United States. 16.7 percent from Argentina, 6.9 percent from Spain, 6.4 percent from Germany, and 4.1 percent from Belgium.

**The link between the “maras” and the illegal drug economy.** At the above-cited Workshop conducted in Central America by the OAS General Secretariat, participating high level security officials emphasized growing ties between gangs (“maras”) and the illegal drug economy. It was said that these gangs are criminal organizations and they are directly linked to the sale of drugs within the countries where they operate (the “Northern Triangle”). Cases were cited in which the owners or managers of certain businesses (particularly discotheques and similar establishments) provided gang access to their premises in order to sell drugs in exchange for not being extorted.

It is possible that the main activity of these organizations is still focused on predatory crimes, particularly robbery, kidnapping and extortion. Despite the growing involvement of the “maras” in the drug market, the main actors in that market are still the large transnational organizations. Lastly, it is likely that their efforts are focused on local trade and illegal drug use by young people. Nonetheless, the fact of their growing involvement in this business and the potential for expansion in light of their international connections, make the link between the “maras” and the illegal drug economy an essential aspect to be taken into account in any analysis of the problem over time.

---

The illegal economy of drugs requires concealing the illicit origin of assets and resources in order to mainstream them into the legal economic system. Even though experts do not agree on the total monetary value of all resources laundered, there is a consensus on the corrupting and distorting force of these resources. The resources generated in the illegal drug economy enter the legal economy through the process of laundering, which encompasses a variety of activities both inside and outside the financial system, aimed at legitimizing the proceeds of crime. Because of the number of actors involved, the opacity of the transactions and the incessant emergence of new modalities of money laundering, the magnitude of the problem is difficult to gauge. It is also important to mention that while the illegal drug economy is one of the principal sources of laundered money, a host of complex illicit activities are also involved in this practice, which include corruption of public officials and tax evasion. From the security standpoint, money laundering facilitates penetration of criminal organizations into different spheres of society, in addition to providing a huge potential for corrupting public officials and private business owners. Even though we cannot accurately know the scope of the problem, there is a consensus as to the negative impact of this activity.

Money laundering drags “legal” economic actors into illegal undertakings. Money laundering fosters and paves the way for direct and indirect relationships between a variety of actors, creating a gray area in which seemingly legal actors get involved in clearly illegal endeavors.

Traditionally, the financial sector, especially banks, has been used to launder assets. The nature and diversity of the services offered by this sector make it possible to orchestrate schemes to move funds generated by criminal activities and conceal their origin swiftly and securely. Even though progress has been made in implementing prevention systems in this sector, the organizations involved in laundering have diversified their methods, procedures and movements by using other sectors of the economy.

As a result of cases detected throughout the world, prevention systems have expanded into several important sectors, such as the insurance industry, stock brokerage, foreign exchange houses, remittance businesses, gambling casinos, precious metal and stone traders, real estate and independent professionals as notaries, accountants and attorneys-at-law.

The effects of money laundering from the illegal drug trade have an impact on the economy, social development and democratic governance. Even though money laundering is a criminal activity that usually goes undetected, its consequences run deep and go way beyond economic effects.

Money laundering goes beyond drug trafficking, as it involves resources from corruption, tax evasion and other illicit activities. It is important to stress that the discussion on money laundering does not end with the problem of illegal drugs. Even if we were successful at reducing the proceeds of the illegal drug economy, the mechanisms and ways to conceal the illicit provenance of assets from other sources, such as the flow of money from corruption of public officials, tax evasion and other illicit activities – extortion, human trafficking,
illegal arms trade, migrant smuggling, illegal mining, among others, would remain in place.

**Weakness of anti-money laundering legislation.** All evidence suggests that money launderers are very good at staying one step ahead of any laws designed to combat them and, consequently, anti-money laundering laws must be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis. In order to make inroads in this area, the State must boost its capacity to intervene, both with regard to investigations and punitive measures, even though it may be a nuisance to the financial sector and even to emigrants, who routinely send remittances back to their home countries. It is equally important, taking into account the transnational dimension of the problem to update and adapt the legal tools and framework on an ongoing basis to help effectively combat this activity. It is also of the utmost urgency to standardize or harmonize counterpart anti-money laundering laws between different countries, as the lack of consistency in this area is glaringly obvious and this can completely render useless the investigative and punitive capacity of developed states with more advanced legislation. It would very much be worthwhile to look into possibly creating an international legal body to deal at least with this problem.

The information related to money laundering will be addressed in greater detail in the chapter about the Illicit Economy of Drugs.

### 3. Illegal Drug Economy and Corruption

*The illegal drug economy is corruption-based.* Evidence indicates that the problem of illegal drugs has been accompanied by corruption of public officials at different levels. In a context of prohibition, the illegal drug economy requires bribery, collusion, and failure of public servants to protect their operations and ensure impunity for their actions. At the same time, criminal organizations choose to employ violence or make a credible threat of its use to resolve internal disputes, respond to the actions of the state, and ensure compliance with business agreements.

Latin America faces a regional challenge – though not exactly the same one in each country – in the form of high levels of corruption. According to Transparency International, which uses a scale of perceived corruption ranging from 1 to 100 (100 being the most transparent) in 176 countries and territories, only three countries in Latin America and the Caribbean scored above fifty points: Costa Rica, which took 48th place scoring 54 points and Uruguay and Chile, which shared 20th place with 72 points for transparency. The remaining countries of the region, including Cuba, placed among the half with the highest levels of perceived corruption.

Corruption fed by drugs can occur at different levels. Organized crime can penetrate, co-opt, and reconfigure state institutions. No other illegal business in the region has an equivalent capacity to erode institutions. Corruption caused by the illegal drug problem can compromise junior officers as well as senior
officials and civil servants in positions of great responsibility, including police and army commanders. It is relevant to mention that corruption can also flow in the reverse direction, that is, from the initiative or actions of public officials. Police officers or members of the military may demand financial compensation from criminal organizations in exchange for tolerating their illegal activities. In other cases, they themselves commit crimes.

In the worst, most intense case, corruption by criminal organizations can overpower or reshape state institutions. This situation can take place at the local level as well as at the central or national level.

Corruption thrives on weak institutions, a lack of controls and regulations, lack of judicial autonomy and independence, and a lack of participation of a civil society that does not operate as a network. Evidence suggests that the countries, regions and municipalities where the lowest levels of corruption are found are those where institutions are efficient, surrounded by control mechanisms and levels of autonomy backed by resources.
PART 4
THE STATE’S RESPONSE TO THREATS TO CITIZEN SECURITY

State responses to threats to citizen security posed by the drug problem have been many and varied. Each state has pursued its own, generally complex, strategies, combining different elements based on its assessment of problems and needs. What follows is a description of the principal factors taken into consideration in the implementation of those strategies, focusing exclusively on their coercive or law enforcement dimensions. This approach, though appropriate in a chapter devoted to examining the relationship between the drug problem and violence and crime, in no way suggests that the problem should be analyzed and addressed by the state only from a law enforcement standpoint. The state’s handling of this problem needs to be comprehensive, and its responses should include the implementation of measures addressing health, prevention, socioeconomic development, and institution-building concerns, understanding that the overarching objective of achieving security under the rule of law is the protection of citizens.

From a security perspective, institutional responses to the drug problem vary according to the specific problems identified. As has been noted above, the law enforcement and oversight measures adopted by states are complex and typically encompass the various dimensions involved in confronting the drug issue. That complex way of approaching the task, however, requires an emphasis on any or several of those dimensions in terms of how each State identifies the principal problem that it is facing at each point in time. In this regard, when we speak of implementation of public prevention policies and combating criminal associations, the OAS Secretariat for Multidimensional Security has tested, through its different experiences in the hemisphere, four dimensions of public policy must be implemented simultaneously and must extend in time beyond the current party in power (beyond a single administration) in order to even begin to contain and, in some instances, reduce the growth of the most varied economic crimes listed above.13

The first dimension of public policy is comprehensive judicial reform, including “The set of rules and principles, institutions and individuals-whether from public or private-formal and informal relationships and practices-formal or informal-again, for all the resolution of the conflicts between the state and its

citizens or those between individuals,\(^\text{14}\) and must enjoy broad political support among all forces represented in a democracy. Such comprehensive reform must successfully be translated into improved quality of court decisions, greater respect for the human rights of victims and defendants, decreased delays in the disposition of criminal proceedings, and expanded access to justice, which includes components of modernization, closer oversight of court decisions and control of judicial corruption and improved interinstitutional coordination between police, prosecutors, judiciaries and prison systems.

These comprehensive reforms have been implemented under broad political consensus only in a few countries of the region and with mixed results. Chile and Colombia—though weak in some of these areas—are two examples of judicial systems that have been moving toward a more comprehensive reform under democratic rule of law.

The second dimension where an offensive and prevention effort against organized crime has been successful in countries that have been able to rein in its transnational economic crime rates is an anti-corruption and prevention program at the highest political, administrative and judicial level, in keeping with the standards set forth in the United Nations Convention against Corruption\(^\text{15}\) and the Inter-American Convention against Corruption.\(^\text{16}\)

The third dimension to combating transnational criminal groups and preventing them from growing is the forming of closer international and inter-institutional coordination between intelligence agencies, financial institutions, police, prosecutors and the judiciary in order to dismantle the real property and financial assets of the criminals.\(^\text{17}\)

And the fourth dimension of public policy, which has widely been proven effective and without which it would be impossible to bring down the incidence of the above listed economic crimes, is social prevention programs designed to provide access on a daily basis to basic public services, such as justice, education, job training and employment, public health services, etc. This would, by definition, serve to put into effect the 58 human rights alluded to before. It is also fitting to recall that one of the four pillars of all transnational criminal groups is to hold society captive, that is say, to weave its way into the social fabric by providing services that the State has failed to provide and has left a void to fill. There are numerous examples of this practice where criminal groups, such as the *Comando Vermelho* in Brazil, the FARC in Colombia, or the Sinaloa organization and *La Familia in Michoacan* in Mexico, have set up at the local level dispute resolution mechanisms—imposing “sanctions” that violate

\(^{14}\) It should be clarified that there is no uniform definition of the judicial system because of disagreement about the set of institutions that compose it, however the Justice Studies Center of the Americas (CEJA), proposes this definition. http://www.cejamericas.org/index.php/en/


\(^{16}\) INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION http://www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/tratados/b-58.html

human rights on segments of the marginalized rural or urban population, who are unable to find any other path to gain access to justice. Consequently, it is crucial for states to formulate specific social prevention policies aimed at reclaiming the social fabric with regional or urban strategies through prevention policies that include greater access to education, justice, health, jobs, environmental protection, by entering into operational alliances or partnerships between civil society and the state at the local level.18

The findings of some studies19 suggest that countries who successfully forge political compromises between the political forces represented in their body politic in order to implement these four dimensions of public policy simultaneously, are successful at containing and significantly reducing the rates of these economic crimes, including, drug trafficking.

“WE ARE ALL JUÁREZ”

Located in the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua, on the border between Mexico and the United States, Ciudad Juárez is a strategic point for trade between the two countries. Huge quantities of merchandise flow over the border every day in both directions, making it an area of paramount importance for both the legal and illegal economies.

Over decades, Ciudad Juárez developed a thriving offshore processing (maquiladora) industry, which triggered rapid economic growth but without the social infrastructure needed to make it sustainable. The city’s population grew (partly due to migration from other parts of Mexico), but it still did not develop the basic social infrastructure, housing, education, and health services needed to support that growth. At the same time, Ciudad Juárez became a strategic zone for the exchange of drugs and illegal merchandise between Mexico and the United States, largely under the control of the Juárez Cartel.

In the context of the overall rise in crime in Mexico detected as of 2008, Ciudad Juárez topped the list with just over 3,300 intentional homicides (249 for every 100,000 inhabitants) in 2010 alone (approximately 20 percent of the Mexican total for that year alone).

The causes of this surge were, most likely, the social exclusion generated by sprawling growth, the downturn in the economy, and the subsequent global financial crisis, which hit the offshore processing industry particularly hard, along with a violent turf war between rival criminal organizations for territorial control of the city (the Juárez Cartel versus the Pacific Cartel).

It was under those circumstances that, in February 2010, the “We Are All...
Juárez” strategy was launched. Under that strategy, the federal government, in coordination with the state and municipal governments, selected and carried out 160 concrete, comprehensive actions in different spheres of public policy: security, the economy, employment, education, health, and social development, all geared toward reducing and preventing crime and the violence associated with it. They were followed, in 2011, by an additional 118 actions complementing the earlier ones.

A core principle of “We Are All Juárez” was citizen participation. To draw up the list of actions to be carried out under the strategy, working groups were formed for each public policy sphere, comprising government authorities, civic leaders, academics, representatives of nongovernmental organizations, and others. Later on, the working groups turned into official “roundtables” or civic councils, charged with monitoring implementation of the actions selected.

One specific example was the “roundtable on security,” made up of citizens of Ciudad Juárez (academics, entrepreneurs, NGOs) and authorities of all three levels of government, who organized periodic meetings to audit and monitor compliance with the steps taken in the area of public security. Having citizen representatives sit down at the same table with government authorities triggered a lively, flexible momentum and dialogue, which, in addition to generating mutual trust, made it possible to tweak the strategy where necessary. Similar roundtables or councils were established for other areas, such as social development, education, and health.

To implement the strategy, the federal government invested nearly 3.32 billion pesos (approximately US$260 million) in 2010 alone, in 160 concrete actions. They included the following:

- All public (and some private) primary schools were brought into a program called “Safe School,” aimed at fostering school environments free from violence and addictions, by using prevention strategies, finding better qualified management personnel and teaching staff in those schools, and organizing well-run “Social Participation Councils for Schools.”

- School hours were lengthened in primary schools in areas deemed vulnerable. That way, children spent more time at school, learning in a safe environment.

- A massive vehicle registration campaign was carried out. That reduced the number of vehicles circulating without license plates that could be used to commit crimes.

- A local police training and screening program was implemented through recruitment, selection, training, and certification processes.

- The “Recovery of Public Spaces” program rehabilitated run-down areas and converted them into community facilities (sports facilities, parks, libraries) in the most marginalized, violent, and unsafe areas.
• “Community Development Centers” were constructed for activities aimed at preventing crime, such as children’s orchestras, music lessons, vocational courses for future carpenters or blacksmiths, and some health care services.

• Early treatment and intervention was offered for people with addictions, through “New Life Centers.”

• Health services in the city were expanded until universal health care coverage was achieved.

The “We Are All Juárez” strategy helped strengthen the social fabric, reduce social exclusion, and enhance trust between authorities and citizens. It also helped reduce and prevent crime. According to official statistics of the Attorney General’s Office of the State of Chihuahua (with reference to the so-called “Northern Zone” of the state, 90 percent of whose population is concentrated in Ciudad Juárez), between 2010 and 2012, the number of intentional homicides fell from 3,315 to 843, a decline of almost 75 percent. Thefts of vehicles fell by 56 percent in the same period, and burglaries of businesses and homes fell by 28 percent and 6 percent, respectively.

Decisions and actions taken by institutions in response to the drug problem may trigger reactions that exacerbate the levels of violence and crime. Inflicting damage on illegal drug markets in terms of the dimensions described above can produce leadership gaps in criminal organizations, causing splits in their structures and affecting the supply of inputs and the use of certain routes. Under those circumstances, criminal organizations may react violently in an attempt to protect their illegal markets and their control over certain territories by means of mass infiltration of the institutions of states that are confronting criminal groups with weak judiciaries, prosecutorial bodies and law enforcement. Thus, weakness of state institutions lies at the heart of extreme violence perpetrated by criminal groups. Increased violence may also spread and have a contagious effect on other types of crime.

Under certain circumstances, such as those set forth above, the impact of law enforcement measures may even exacerbate the security plight of citizens. Thus, an offensive directed at large criminal structures may split them in a way that weakens the capacities of criminal organizations at the national level while leading to a dispersal of criminal factions and thus of crime. Moreover, fragmentation may spur competition for territory, making local disputes even more intense. Consolidation processes are also generally accompanied by efforts to subdue lower-level structures through increased violence. The key factor is the power vacuum produced by offensives against criminal organizations, which when not accompanied by a permanent presence on the part of law enforcement and judicial institutions, may cause disputes to flare up.
State responses may have the effect of leading criminal organizations to expand their territory or move toward other kinds of crime. Criminal networks may shift from one neighborhood to another within cities, or from one city, state, or region to others in the same country, or to another country, in search of places that are safer (for the criminals) and have less capable state authorities. Evidence shows that those new areas may undergo sharp increases in levels of violence, even though there may not always be a decline in violence in the areas abandoned by the criminal organization.

In addition to producing territorial displacements, state responses can also prompt a diversification of criminal activity toward new crimes. This is already happening in several countries in the region in which, after large criminal organizations have fragmented, groups emerge with less power and fewer resources. Realizing that they are not in a position to conduct international drug trafficking operations, these organizations devote their resources and knowledge of violence to committing other kinds of crime, such as kidnapping, extortion, or car theft.

State responses focusing on a stronger territorial presence afford opportunities for new lines of communication between the authorities and communities. This interaction can yield insights into local needs and can have a positive effect on public perceptions and willingness to cooperate with law enforcement.

RIO DE JANEIRO: SECURITY, CITIZENSHIP, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The “Pacifying Police Units”—also known by their acronym, UPP—were established by the Rio de Janeiro State Secretariat for Public Security in 2008. Their main objective is to reclaim or win back the city’s poorer districts for the state and to dismantle the criminal gangs that are based there. UPPs apply a “community policing” philosophy, according to which the police force is trained not only to carry out prevention and surveillance functions, but also to seek out opportunities for participation and mutual assistance with the community. Social activities conducted directly by the police include football, swimming, guitar, capoeira, and aerobics for senior citizens, and percussion lessons, along with health-related activities.

UPP activities, however, are part of a much broader program of civic involvement. Once the territory has been occupied by the security forces, the Mayor’s Office of the City of Rio de Janeiro embarks on an intense effort to deliver city services aimed at conservation, clean up, garbage collection, and public lighting. This stage, also known as “UPP Social” or UPPS, marks the beginning of a dialogue with residents and leaders about the community’s needs and priorities. After community policing has arrived, the UPP Social formalizes its program in the area by establishing a forum that brings together community leaders, nongovernmental organizations, religious leaders, school directors, and leaders of other local institutions, as well as representatives of
The Drug Problem in the Americas: Studies

This process leads to the preparation of work plans designed to promote overall access to essential public goods and services, with standards comparable to those provided in other parts of the city. In this process, the UPP Social coordinates actions of both the government and civil society and encourages implementation of initiatives, always with a commitment to ensure that they are integrated with and complement one another. The UPP Social also supports local organizations and projects, sports, cultural activities, and the creation of opportunities for education, employment, and business for those who live in the communities.

The first UPP was set up in Favela Santa Marta, in the heart of the Southern Zone of the city. Other units were later established in Ciudad de Dios, Batan, Pavão-Pavãozinho, and Morro dos Macacos, as well as other communities. Today, 30 low-income communities already have their UPPS units, in the southern, central, northern, and western parts of the city. That amounts to 207 “territories” retaken by the state, covering an area of nearly 10 million square meters, with a beneficiary population of 450,000. Working in those communities are more than 28,000 trained police officers, with specialized training in community policing. Ten more units are scheduled to be installed by 2014.

In a period in which national homicide rates leveled off, the decline in homicide rates in Rio de Janeiro state accelerated as of 2009, with the drop in rates for the metropolitan region far more pronounced than in the rest of the state. That phenomenon may well correlate with the installation of the UPPs.

In 2011, the number of homicide victims declined by another 10.2 percent over 2010. In 2012, the homicide rate for Rio de Janeiro state was the lowest in 21 years. Between 2010 and 2011, street robberies fell by 16.8 percent and there was a 24.4 percent reduction in robberies resulting in death; a 6.4 percent decline in vehicle thefts; 21.2 percent fewer robberies on board buses; 13.7 percent fewer robberies of passers-by; and 20.1 percent fewer home burglaries, according to data provided in 2012 by the Rio de Janeiro state government. UNICEF has pointed to a notable reduction in the adolescent homicide rate (from 38 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2008 to 31 per 100,000 in 2010).

In 2011 and 2012, urban districts still dominated by drug traffickers or militias had a homicide rate that was 1,900 percent higher than the districts in zones that had pacified their favelas. According to the state government’s Institute of Public Safety, between May 2011 and April 2012, the homicide rate in the Northern Zone of the capital was 47.9 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, compared with just 2.4 per 100,000 inhabitants in Copacabana and Leme, in the Southern Zone. This means that for a resident of Pavuna, in the Northern Zone where there is no UPP, the risk of being violently murdered is almost 20 times higher than for a resident of Copacabana in the Southern Zone, where
three such units have been set up.

The success of the program, as reflected in the above figures, has led to it being adopted by the state of Bahia, which has created the Basis for a Safe Community program for low-income communities in the city of Salvador, and by the state of Paraná, which has created the Safe Paraná Unit to serve the communities of Curitiba. The city government of Rio de Janeiro has also launched a similar project, known as Outstanding Companies, to serve certain communities in the city. Their format is identical to that of the UPPS.

The use of an enforcement approach has led to a substantial increase in the inmate population, exacerbating the problem of overcrowded prisons faced by the region. In this report, we cannot sidestep the fact that an enforcement approach – especially one that punishes users – has contributed to the rise in the number of individuals detained for drug-related offenses. According to OAS statistical data, during the period of 2007-2009, 210,000 people were convicted for drug possession and/or trafficking in the hemisphere (which averages out to 70,000 persons per year). This means that around 194 people per day in the region enter the ranks of the inmate population. That rise has not coincided with an improvement in the prison system and, consequently, the plight of inmates has grown worse and their human rights have become compromised.

Studies on the inmate population in Mexico suggest an exponential increase in the number of detainees for misdemeanors such as drug possession or use as of the time that tougher policies were implemented against drug-linked offenses. The table below shows that arrests for the offenses of possession and use in that country have risen the most from 2004 to 2010 out of all individuals arrested for crimes against health.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AÑO</th>
<th>PRODUCCION</th>
<th>TRANSPORTE</th>
<th>TRÁFICO</th>
<th>COMERCIO</th>
<th>SUMINISTRO</th>
<th>POSESIÓN 1/</th>
<th>CONSUMO</th>
<th>OTROS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>1015</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>2955</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>19795</td>
<td>3404</td>
<td>4044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>4280</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>29131</td>
<td>6284</td>
<td>3821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>6746</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>49255</td>
<td>27629</td>
<td>1131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>7221</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>71511</td>
<td>44170</td>
<td>1847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>5660</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>47535</td>
<td>26475</td>
<td>19255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>4713</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>43148</td>
<td>24095</td>
<td>14092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>3255</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>38160</td>
<td>14577</td>
<td>10978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>4698</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>34830</td>
<td>1649</td>
<td>298,555</td>
<td>146634</td>
<td>55168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for Brazil, when Law 11.343/06 was in force, crime prosecuted in the judicial system rose considerably and increased the total number of inmates. In 2006, 47,472 individuals were arrested for drug trafficking, which accounted for 14% of arrests for all crimes. In 2010, the total number of inmates in jail for trafficking was 106,491, or a 124% increase over 2006, and represents 21% of all inmates in the system and almost half of all detainees for crimes against property.

**MEDELLÍN: SUCCESS AND RELAPSE**

Conflict between drug trafficking cartels, and between these groups and the state, took the homicide rate in Colombia from 30 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1983 to almost 80 per 100,000 in 1993. At the heart of this phenomenon stood the city of Medellín, in the north-eastern part of the country, home to the Medellin Cartel, headed by Pablo Escobar. By 1986, homicide had become the leading overall cause of death in Medellín, and its share in total deaths continued increasing to a point at which, by 1991, homicides accounted for 42 percent of all deaths in the city.

The government’s response during that decade, known as the “War on Drug Trafficking,” was one of outright repression. Under that policy, in 1992, the government established the “Search Squad” (Bloque de Búsqueda), composed of special units of the National Police devoted exclusively to hunting down and capturing Pablo Escobar and his associates. Parallel to that, in 1993, a paramilitary group was formed and financed by drug traffickers and leaders of paramilitary groups claiming to be persecuted by Escobar. That group, which called itself “Los Pepes” (“Persecuted by Pablo Escobar”), managed to destroy properties belonging to the cartel kingpin and kill important leaders of the groups of hired assassins at his command.

On December 2, 1993, Pablo Escobar died at the hands of the Search Squad. That event did not, however, lead to a significant, or at least not to a lasting, reduction in the levels of violence, much less to a drop in drug-related crime. The hired assassins who survived the police assault and the “Pepes” regrouped or joined some of the illegal armed groups in Colombia, especially the so-called United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), as a result of which levels of crime and violence in the country generally remained high.

A change of policy began to emerge with what became known as the “Agreement of Santa Fe de Ralito,” signed by the AUC and the national government in July 2003, which led on November 25 of that year to the demobilization of 868 people in the so-called “Cacique Nutibara Bloc” of the AUC, in the framework of the Peace and Reconciliation Program. While backed by the national government, the program was taken over entirely by the municipal government of Medellín.

The shift in policy was reinforced with the arrival of a new mayor in Medellín in 2004. During his four-year term a plan was developed that included...
certification of the professional qualifications of all members of the municipal government, along with complete transparency vis-à-vis citizens with respect to commitments that had been made and how they were fulfilled. A key feature of this municipal government was its strengthening of social participation and the watchdog system, as ways to promote participatory democracy. A culture of civic-mindedness, based on the principles of peaceful coexistence, was also implemented. Likewise, major investments were made in education improvements, safe transportation, and participatory or community security. Finally, the Mayor’s Office revamped many of the public spaces in which violence had previously been rampant, thereby giving Medellín an opportunity to transform itself into an agreeable, safe, and aesthetically pleasing city.

This mix of factors resulted in steady declines in violence, so much so that from 2002 to 2003 the city’s homicide rate fell by almost half. However, by 2008, homicides had increased again, following the extradition in May of that year of 13 paramilitary leaders. According to the city authorities, that development triggered a series of clashes for control of the illegal economy and of several urban zones. By 2010, the homicide rate was back up to nearly 100 per 100,000 inhabitants.

Drug enforcement and anti-organized crime efforts have been coupled with the use of the armed forces for public security-related tasks. It is impossible to sidestep in this report the issue of the involvement of the armed forces in public security tasks in the Americas. According to a paper drafted by the Inter-American Defense Board at the request of the OAS Secretariat for Multidimensional Security, ‘Survey on the involvement of the armed forces of the Americas in public security activities,’ of the 26 countries that have armed forces in the region, 100% of them use these forces in public security activities (including natural disasters operations). Generally speaking, the air forces are used under emergency decrees, with each country’s notion varying with regard to the circumstances that warrant the use thereof. According to the Board, 100% of the instances in which the armed forces are involved in public security are temporary and, in 57% of these instances, the decision to use them resides in the president (in some of the countries of the Caribbean, this function is performed by the Governor General).

One of the central arguments for the use of the armed forces in public security tasks and their involvement in the response to the drug problem, as laid out in the Board’s paper, is that the security and justice systems are overburdened by the rise in crime in the region. The armed forces have actively taken part in Plan Colombia, the Merida Initiative, the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative and the Central American Security Initiative, with significant appropriation of funding —around US$9 billion of the approximately US$12 billion that was allocated to these plans from 2000 to 2011.
The proliferation of private security companies, a growing trend in the region. It is impossible to ignore the response of society to crime, particularly, in the use of private security firms. The boom of this industry is a reality that the entire region is undergoing and it chips away at the monopoly that the State should have in the field of security and the use of force.

In the Report on Security in the Americas, the OAS Hemispheric Observatory on Security summarized in the graph below the ratio of private security guards to police officers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Latest available year</th>
<th>Total Private Security Guards</th>
<th>Total Police Officers</th>
<th>Ratio of Private Security Guards to Police Officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>77,055</td>
<td>1.9:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1,455</td>
<td>1,414</td>
<td>1.0:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1,180</td>
<td>1,162</td>
<td>1.0:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1,675,415</td>
<td>345,932</td>
<td>4.9:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>52,164</td>
<td>31,825</td>
<td>3.0:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>148,000</td>
<td>149,544</td>
<td>1.4:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>26,143</td>
<td>13,845</td>
<td>1.9:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>0.4:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>40,168</td>
<td>36,475</td>
<td>1.1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>21,146</td>
<td>18,322</td>
<td>1.2:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>0.8:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>18,513</td>
<td>6.7:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>5,995</td>
<td>2,908</td>
<td>1.8:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>15,718</td>
<td>11,152</td>
<td>1.4:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>1.3:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>75,860</td>
<td>0.7:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Kitts and Nevis</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1.0:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Lucia</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>1,059</td>
<td>0.3:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>0.3:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>6,405</td>
<td>0.8:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1,084,000</td>
<td>786,569</td>
<td>1.5:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The industry is steadily growing and the already huge profits it yields are growing exponentially. In and of itself, it is not a problem; however, the negligible and, in some instances, non-existent levels of regulation, oversight and evaluation of private security firms is. Less than half of the personnel hired by the private security industry in the region has been legally engaged, meets the general labor and insurance requirements and the specific qualifications for workers to perform this kind of duty. While the presence of a plethora of small and medium sized firms is one constant among the diverse countries of the region, the presence of multinational companies with control over specialized segments of the market is also noteworthy (transportation of valuables, armored vehicles, high-level personal protection).

As was cited earlier in this chapter, it is likely that the private security industry does not help very much to improve the perception of security for reasons of supply and demand. Nonetheless, credit must be given where credit is due to private security which, without question, contributes to improving the climate of security prevailing the States, particularly in those sectors of society that can afford it. Moreover, very little cooperation and coordination occurs...
between this sector and the public sector, not to mention the lack of regulations governing this sector and, particularly, the failure of the State to exercise greater control over it through a strong regulatory entity.

**Evaluating security systems**

In this chapter, mention was made above to the inability or weakness of the State to fulfill its functions in response to a host of sophisticated and transnational threats. In order to improve institutional infrastructure, new policy approaches and designs are needed to update the public security system, the role of the institutions and the mechanisms of interaction and action in the territory (local, national, global). Not only must intervention strategies be rethought, but also the ways to address them, so problems are not viewed in an isolated way but in a systemic and interdependent way. Fresh, evidence-based diagnostic assessments are needed along with observatories or oversight bodies for the particular problems being faced, that lead to problem-solving based on the needs of nations and regions and implemented in coordination with all relevant actors entrusted with providing citizen security.

In order to address the drug problem, it is necessary to press for a multidimensional and multisectoral approach to ensure long-term problem solving.

The hemisphere is facing a multilateral, transnational, nimble and smart enemy, an enemy that is capable of swift decision-making and implementation of its decisions, which in many instances, the international community is incapable of doing. An updated brand of multilateralism is called for at this time in order to guide strategies in terms of the concept of “smart security.” This means that it is unavoidable to reinforce the capacity of States in the area of evaluation, prevention and response to threats to the security of their citizens, as well as working from a platform of “smart security,” which should be understood as: a) objective evidence-based identification of the issues that are to be the subject of cooperation, b) proposals based on national or regional needs and capacity, c) proposals based on positive experiences and in partnership with relevant actors, d) a multidimensional approach that ensures a systemic response to problems and e) evaluation of results.
PART 5  
EPILOGUE

The states of the Americas have not been idle in the face of threats to the security of their citizens stemming from the drug problem and organized crime activities. In recent years, they have developed conceptual and methodological tools, as well as institutions, organizations, and action plans to enable them to confront this challenge on the basis of an impressive hemispheric network of collective actions, cooperation, and solidarity.

Since 2003, the Countries of the Americas have had at their disposal a conceptual framework enabling them to respond collectively to the challenges posed by the drug problem and the threats posed by transnational organized crime. In 2003, at the Special Conference on Security, held in Mexico City, the countries redefined their vision of regional security and established the concept of “multidimensional security” as a general guideline for their day-to-day activities in this field. (See Declaration on Security in the Americas, October 2003). The new concept, a regional reflection of the “human security” notion being developed at the international level, established the importance and need to tend to what were called the “new threats, concerns, and other challenges” facing the hemisphere. Prominent among the new threats was the challenge posed by the drug problem and transnational organized crime.

More recently, the states of the hemisphere agreed on the Plan of Action against Transnational Organized Crime and a Plan of Action to implement the Declaration of San Salvador on Citizen Security in the Americas. In October 2006, the OAS member states adopted the Hemispheric Plan of Action against Transnational Organized Crime, the chief purpose of which is to promote implementation in the Americas of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention) and its three protocols. In 2012, a work plan was likewise adopted for its implementation. On June 7, 2011, the 41st OAS General Assembly adopted the Declaration of San Salvador on Citizen Security in the Americas, which provided important general guidelines for collective action on security matters to the states of the hemisphere. In May 2012, the OAS Permanent Council approved a Plan of Action for implementing the Declaration of San Salvador, which was ratified at that year’s General Assembly session.

Currently there is an extensive network of political and technical forums that lay the foundation for collective action to address the drug problem and transnational organized crime. As the western hemisphere’s premier regional organization, the OAS is the headquarters, technical secretariat, or coordinator of the region’s leading political and technical forums on security matters. They include the Mechanism for Follow-Up of Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption; the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials; the Hemispheric Plan of Action against Transnational...
The Drug Problem in the Americas: Studies

Organized Crime; the CICAD Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism; the Working Group to Prepare a Regional Strategy to Promote Inter-American Cooperation in Dealing with Criminal Gangs; the Meeting of National Authorities on Trafficking in Persons; the Meeting of Officials Responsible for Penitentiary and Prison Policies; the Meeting of Forensic Specialists of the Americas; and the Groups of Experts on Drug Demand Reduction, Money Laundering, Maritime Trafficking and Chemical Precursors.

The Meetings of Ministers of Justice or other Ministers or Attorneys General of the Americas (REMJA) and of Ministers Responsible for Public Security in the Americas (MISPA) are standing bodies for hemispheric debate and collective agreements. They enable the highest-ranking authorities responsible for law enforcement and public security management to identify the root causes of crime and violence in the region and to achieve consensus and coordinated actions to address them. In that context, the Justice Studies Center of the Americas (CEJA), established by the REMJA, has done major work on assessment of criminal justice reform processes, the improvement of legal defense standards, the identification of best practices in the investigation of complex crimes, and the creation of indices measuring the accessibility of relevant judicial information via the Internet. The Group on Assistance in Criminal Matters and Extradition has drawn up a model law, guidelines to best practices, and a model form for assistance in criminal matters. The Criminal Matters Network is a set of electronic tools to facilitate and achieve more efficient cooperation and information sharing among central and international legal cooperation authorities and other government experts in the OAS member states with responsibilities relating to mutual assistance in criminal matters and extradition. The Group on Cybercrime conducts regional training workshops to provide instruction to authorities on techniques for preventing and detecting cybercrime, as well as for enhancing the institutional and legal framework for investigating and punishing it. The Meeting of Authorities Responsible for Penitentiary and Prison Policies has issued important recommendations regarding recognition of international instruments on rights applicable to persons deprived of their liberty.

Being that the drug problem is a transnational threat to security and is multidimensional in nature, the approach to this problem must also be multidimensional and collective. The drug problem hits all countries of the region hard: transit, production, money laundering and consumption countries alike. However, this problem has an impact of extreme violence on societies and states with weaker control over their own institutions. It can be gleaned from this chapter that to wipe out the transit of illicit drugs in one country would most likely lead to it moving to other countries where enforcement is not as effective; this is one of many reasons why combating the problem must be a joint and cooperative effort.

As part of the effort to combat the drug problem, each State of the hemisphere must accept its responsibility to incorporate the provisions of the international conventions ratified by them into their laws and take actions on a regular basis to implement and enforce them by promoting a culture of rule of law and legitimacy of state institutions; drug transit countries must combat that transit, but countries where there is the highest demand for drugs must
prevent this demand. The same could be asked with regard to other transnational organized crime activities, such as firearms trafficking and migrant smuggling. We cannot make countries where firearms are used illegally bear the brunt of combating crime, when in other countries, selling those arms is a legal act, which in many instances is not adequately regulated by states. We cannot hold responsible for combating migrant smuggling the countries from where people are expelled because they are poor or have no opportunities, without offering those same countries aid to overcome their problems of poverty and inequality.

The major challenge in the region to effectively confront the drug problem is to make the exercise of the complex and multidimensional set of human rights provided for in the United Nations conventions an everyday reality for its inhabitants. Once this occurs more often, the threats to integrated human security in the region will be confronted and prevented through cooperation in a joint and coordinated fashion.