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COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S
REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

UNITED STATES EFFORTS TO INCREASE
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN CONTROLLING
NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING
Department of State B-176625

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WHY THE SURVEY WAS MADE

Drug abuse is a national emergency. Narcotics addiction is a major contributor to crime in the United States. Heroin addiction is recognized as the most socially destructive form of addiction in America, where the number of heroin addicts--estimated at over 500,000--exceeds that of any other nation in the world.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) made the survey because of the expressed interest and concern of the Congress on drug abuse and the international control of narcotics and because of the Comptroller General's vital concern about these problems.

GAO looked into the U.S. Government's organizational framework established to curtail the illegal flow of narcotics from foreign countries; discussed programs and problems relating to the production and flow of narcotics with U.S. Government officials in 10 countries of major interest; examined, in Washington, D.C., programs and problems in numerous other countries throughout the world; and reviewed many of the U.S.-prepared drug control plans for over 50 countries. (See p. 13.)

The classified report goes into considerably more detail than this unclassified digest. The reader--with a SECRET clearance--is urged to read it.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Intensive activity on several fronts is taking place in response to the menace of drug abuse.

In August 1971 the President established the Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control and charged it with responsibility for formulating and coordinating all policies of the Federal Government relating to the goal of curtailing the illegal flow of narcotics into the United States. (See p. 9.)

Nearly \$50 million has been included in the fiscal year 1973 budget for overseas drug control measures. Cooperative drug control plans have been approved for over 50 countries. Multilateral actions through U.N. bodies have been vigorously pursued. Programs of crop substitution are being

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introduced in some countries, and law enforcement capabilities have been strengthened in others. (See pp. 9, 10, 20, 139, and 151.)

In 1971 the equivalent of 6 tons of heroin valued at \$3 billion was seized worldwide. This apparently had little or no effect in the United States, although heroin quality may have decreased in some areas. (See pp. 139 and 140.)

The rate of increase in New York heroin-related deaths dropped in 1971, indicating that increased drug seizures may be having an effect. (However, the number of heroin deaths increased to 1,259.) Although this decrease is heartening, the continuing large number of drug-related deaths--the largest cause of death among young people--is reason for deep concern rather than encouragement. (See p. 140.)

A significant impact on the supply of narcotics in the United States is yet to come. The physical craving for heroin is so great that it guarantees a captive market in which price is no object. Where the supply is cut down, the potential for even more enormous profits would tend to offset increased risks for illicit traffickers. (See p. 140.)

Legislation requires the suspension of economic and military assistance to countries determined by the President to be noncooperative in controlling narcotics trafficking. No such determination had been made as of June 30, 1972. (See p. 133.)

Narcotics have been illegally carried into the United States by persons with diplomatic passports. A diplomat's luggage is inspected only if U.S. officials have received prior information that the diplomat is carrying narcotics or if such is strongly suspected. U.S. officials are studying applicable laws and international conventions to determine if present practices should be tightened up. (See p. 138.)

The military postal system in Southeast Asia has been used for illegal narcotics trafficking as a result of ineffective examination and inspection procedures. Steps have been taken to improve these procedures. (See pp. 135 to 137.)

United Nations

A United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control was established in March 1971 with an expected level of contributions of \$5 million for each of the first few years. Only \$2.6 million was contributed during the first year, of which the United States provided \$2 million. (See p. 22.)

A U.N. conference of 97 nations met in Geneva from March 6 to 24, 1972, and voted overwhelmingly to strengthen the international narcotics control machinery. It gave the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board new powers to curb the illicit cultivation, production, manufacture, trafficking, and consumption of opium and other dangerous narcotics.

A proposal by the United States to provide the Board with power to impose a drug embargo on any country for flagrant violation of international drug treaties was not pursued because it was previously determined to have very little chance of acceptance. (See pp. 24 to 26.)

Near East, South Asia, and Europe

The announced ban on all poppy cultivation in Turkey after the 1972 harvest--an action supported by the United States with a \$35 million grant--may shift traffickers' interest to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. India is the world's largest producer of legal opium (1,200 metric tons in the 1970-71 crop year) and could become a major source of illicit opium if growers are given proper inducements and if Indian Government controls do not prove adequate. (See ch. 3.)

There were only minor changes in 1971 in narcotics trafficking routes from the Middle East to the United States and Western Europe. (See p. 52.)

East Asia

Burma, Laos, and Thailand account for more than half of the world's illicit production of opium. East Asia is expected to become more attractive to drug traffickers as Middle East sources are closed off. It has been the priority area for U.S. attention since June 1971. Drug control in this part of the world has been particularly poor. (See p. 71.)

U.S. Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs agents are assisting Thai police forces to interdict the flow of narcotics in Thailand. The United Nations and the Thai Government have started a program to progressively eliminate poppy cultivation, reduce addiction, and suppress illegal drug traffic. (See pp. 85 to 89.)

Several U.S. programs have been initiated in Vietnam to cope with the drug problem among the U.S. military and to assist the Vietnamese Government in combating drug abuse and narcotics trafficking directed at U.S. forces. (See pp. 90 to 95.)

On November 15, 1971, the Lao Government implemented a narcotics law which--for the first time in Lao history--prohibited the growing, processing, trading, and use of opium and derivatives. The ability of the Lao Government to enforce this law, even in areas under its control, remains to be tested. (See pp. 81 to 84.)

Latin America

Various Latin American countries are producers, consumers, and transshippers of narcotics and dangerous drugs, including heroin, cocaine, and marihuana. South America is reported to be the source of all the illicit cocaine entering the United States. (See p. 106.)

U.S. officials estimate that 20 percent of all heroin reaching the United States originates in or passes through Mexico. The United States has provided \$1 million to Mexican authorities to expand control of drug trafficking and illegal narcotics production. (See pp. 109 and 111.)

Bolivia, an important source of cocaine, has agreed to a U.N. program to ultimately eliminate the production of coca leaves. (See p. 118.)

Africa

Although Africa is not now believed to be important to narcotics trafficking, talks have been held with government officials in North African countries where potential drug problems are considered to be the greatest. These officials have indicated a willingness to cooperate with the United States. (See p. 131.)

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A year-long study by a private group offers several observations on the economics of heroin.

- Past reliance on law enforcement measures has not stopped an epidemic growth of the heroin addict population.
- U.S. national policy, by resorting almost exclusively to criminal sanctions to eliminate addiction, has bred a thriving illegal market that can be sustained only by criminal activity.
- The amount of opium needed to supply the demand for heroin in the United States is only a minute portion of total world production.
- It is probably impossible to curb all opium production, licit and illicit, everywhere in the world.
- The profits earned in domestic distribution are so great that it is unlikely that the risks can be raised high enough to force dealers out of business.
- The illegality of heroin is the sole reason for its high cost in this country; in England the pharmacy cost of heroin is \$0.04 per grain compared with a U.S. street price of from \$30 to \$90 per grain.

The study concludes that more effort and greater resources must be spent to curb the demand for heroin, that more addicts must be treated and rehabilitated, that education to prevent drug abuse must be expanded and made more meaningful, and that the environmental factors which breed and sustain addiction must be more successfully attacked.

An effective drug control policy must combine efforts to suppress supply and inhibit demand. This involves close scrutiny of the economics,

attention to all parts of the problem, and careful consideration of the relative benefits and cost of various alternatives. (See pp. 141 and 142.)

RECOMMENDATIONS OR SUGGESTIONS

The escalation of international efforts to curb trafficking and production of illicit drugs began only about 1 year ago. Not enough time has elapsed to achieve significant results or to allow a comprehensive evaluation of the overall effort and its effect on the U.S. drug problem. GAO plans to provide the Congress with additional reports dealing with various aspects of the drug problem. (See pp. 12 and 139.)

AGENCY ACTIONS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES

GAO discussed the report with Department of State officials and made certain suggested changes. Formal written comments, normally obtained by GAO, were not requested.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE CONGRESS

This report informs the Congress of the increasing amounts of resources being applied, domestically and internationally, in a determined effort to combat the problem of drug abuse.