

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD'S WESTERN HEMIPHERE STRATEGY
2014
APRIL 20, 2019

Summary

- The United States Coast Guard Western Hemisphere Strategy accurately describes how the Coast Guard plans to adapt over the next decade as the tactics of transnational criminals evolve.
- The strategy successfully demonstrates that understanding and targeting illicit networks in the western hemisphere is crucial to effectively combatting transnational criminal organization.
- The strategy adequately discusses securing of borders
- The strategy sufficiently describes the need of protecting commerce

Understanding Networks, Borders, and Commerce

- This strategy acknowledges that the distinction between transnational criminal organizations and terrorist groups is blurred; therefore, it is crucial for the Coast Guard to understand the organizational and operational impacts this convergence has on transnational crime groups (Picarelli 2012).
- The strategy also appropriately outlines the importance of understanding the environment and social structure of each state in the western hemisphere.
 - The environment that a group exists in can impact how they operate and achieve their goals, therefore by understanding the unique factors of each state the Coast Guard can more accurately implement their strategy (Gill 2017).
- This strategy recognizes that transnational criminal organizations search out countries weak governments in order to manipulate state corruption to be able to secretly cultivate (Wainwright 2016).
- This strategy states that Coast Guard must begin taking an offensive position by identifying, understanding, and targeting transnational criminal organizations.
 - By understanding that transnational criminal organizations rely on personal relationships to create strong networks, the Coast Guard can recognize these relationships and be better equipped to dismantle these groups (Malm, Bichler, and Van de Walle, 2008).
- The strategy correctly states that it is crucial to increase human intelligence capabilities to properly assess networks.
 - By understanding the culture of the criminal networks, the Coast Guard can effectively learn the signaling cues recruiters look for and derail recruitment attempts (Densley 2012).
- This strategy appropriately lists targeting networks as a priority, but it fails to mention the difficulty of penetrating such groups.

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- Transnational criminal organizations demand sacrifice and provide social service in order to maintain and isolate their members, therefore the Coast Guard will greatly benefit if they focus on these two factors when infiltrating groups (Berman 2009).
- This strategy recognizes that globalization has increased the amount and type of goods that are smuggled into United States at the border by allowing transnational criminal organizations to enter new markets (Wainwright 2016).
- The second priority focuses on securing borders against incoming threat but fails to mention the need to halt the flow of illicit materials.
 - By understanding that as the reach of the crime and conflict nexus expands, illicit materials, such as drugs and weapons, are now financing terrorist activities allows the Coast Guard to further protect national security (Sanderson 2004).
- This strategy discusses the importance of safeguarding commerce but fails to mention the effects that technological advances have on commerce.
 - As the internet and global connectedness continue to expand, some drug traffickers have begun to move operations online to e-commerce (Wainwright 2016).

Background

- This strategy lists adaptive adversaries, climate change, globalization, and technological advancements as the greatest threats to maritime safety.
- The goal of the strategy is to address and prepare for the evolving threats to the maritime safety facing the United States in the coming decade.
- This strategy was written in 2014, under the Obama Administration with the guidance of other government security strategies including: the National Security Strategy, National Military and Maritime Security Strategies, the Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime, National Strategies for Homeland Security and Maritime Domain Awareness, the National Ocean Policy, and the Quadrennial Defense, Diplomatic, and Homeland Security Reviews.