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The Strategic Implications of Maritime Security Cooperation among CARICOM States

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Executive Summary

Narco-terrorism, a term once used exclusively to portray the use of drug trafficking to further or fund politically motivated violence, has become the choice phrase in the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) policy circles for describing the growing regional threat posed by drug trafficking, its accompanying illegal arms trade, increases in corruption and domestic insurgency. Analysis of the region's vulnerability to the transnational drug and arms trade indicates that:

- The drug threat has a significant maritime element that follows existing sea lines of communications and geostrategic locales offered by the position of many CARICOM member states,

- The nature and extent of the trade and its impact on regime survival closely reflects the concept of command of the sea, and the role of sea power advocated by naval strategist, Alfred Thayer Mahan, and requires closer study as a part of any regional security plan,
- Extra-regional powers, such as Canada, can play a vital role in assisting CARICOM states in achieving a feasible, applicable and sustainable regional security strategy that accounts for the value of commanding the sea.

A regional security initiative based on maritime cooperation is a key security strategy for coping with the region's narco-terrorist threat. A maritime security initiative enacted and institutionalized within CARICOM offers the best alternative

to existing security strategies, because it offers member states the opportunity to better cope with the limitations of their size and resources which dictate their ability to exercise control over their maritime boundaries. The initiative would consist of three main elements:

1. Recognition of the role of sea power in determining the nature and extent of the illicit drug trade,
2. Regulations and principles for the pooling of (maritime) defence resources under a centralized command entity that facilitates strategic analysis, joint decision-making, and operations planning,
3. Creating a regional security regime based on principles, norms, and institutions for facilitating coordinated action within the area of drug enforcement and trafficking interdiction.

Background

CARICOM is the English speaking Caribbean's apex of regional integration born out of the failed West Indies Federation.

The organization's membership features twelve independent Commonwealth states, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago; one former French colony, Haiti, and one former Dutch colony, Suriname. Montserrat, an overseas British territory, is also a member state of CARICOM.¹ Integration within this politico-economic unit formed in 1973 is based on the close interpersonal ties among the respective heads of governments, strong cultural similarities, and common political socialization.

CARICOM is grounded in the

cooperative management of collective economic affairs, functional cooperation in areas of sustainable development, and the coordination of defence and foreign policies.

CARICOM has a variety of institutions that are responsible for formulating policies and managing cooperation in several key issue areas, such as health, education, environment, justice and policy coordination. However, there is no institution designed to address security issues affecting member states outside of task forces and quasi-cabinet groupings that are focused on crime.

This situation is not common to all CARICOM members as some states have institutionalized their own security regime and collective defence mechanism within the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), and its Regional Security System (RSS). Expansion of the RSS has been posited as plan for regional security by several analysis, and CARICOM Government officials. The issue is nevertheless sidelined by the more developed member states, particularly Jamaica, due to worries about the financial costs, sovereignty infringements, and the undue empowerment of

military forces that might increase the region's vulnerability to coups d'etat.² But the issue of regional security and the need for cooperation has reiterated itself in the contemporary security environment that is defined by the terrorist attacks of September 11th and the resulting global war on terror in which policy makers assert the link between the drug trade and international terrorism. For CARICOM, there is also the issue of newly established Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), which promises opportunities for freer trade, customs, and commodities interactions among CARICOM states.

Drugs: A Regional Security Challenge

CARICOM states are facing what could be described as their biggest security challenge since the Cold War.

The challenge is best understood as a regional security problem that has its roots in the illicit narcotics trade, which functions as a non-traditional threat to national security. The effects of the drug trade: corruption, money laundering, domestic insurgency, and increasing criminal activities, undermine the viability of CARICOM states



CARICOM States Map by UNISEF <www.unisef.org>

¹ Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, and the Turks and Caicos are associate members.

² For a discussion on the expansion of the RSS and its role as a collective security system, see Ivelaw Griffiths, *The Quest for Security in the Caribbean: Problems and Promise in Subordinate States* (New York: M E Sharpe Inc, 1993) Ch. 6; Edmund Dillon, "Regional Security Cooperation: Traditional and Non-traditional Areas," in Ivelaw Griffiths (Ed.), *Caribbean Security in the Age of Terror: Challenges and Change* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishing, Inc., 2004) p. 462-484; and Rudyard Lewis, "Initiatives for Cooperative Regional Security: The Eastern Caribbean Security System," in Joseph S. Tulchin and Robert H. Espach (Eds.), *Security in the Caribbean Basin: The Challenge of Regional Cooperation*, (Boulder; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2000) p. 177-184.

and create unfavourable conditions for regime survival by facilitating conditions of economic, political and social instability.

As small states with minimal development levels, limited resources, small land areas, populations, and high levels of poverty, surviving the effects of the illicit drug trade remains the most salient security issue for CARICOM members. Their national security is therefore defined by an inability to withstand vulnerability to the drug threat, while attempting to exploit increases in interstate cooperation, commerce and communications, which bring the illicit transnational trade as a nested component.

The drug dilemma represents a threat to the national security of CARICOM member states arising from transnational actors. It is an external threat that originates from outside the boundaries of the state and has regional, hemispheric, and global ties. The threat is reliant on the Caribbean's geographic layout and uses the strategic locations of some CARICOM member states as points of holding and transshipment. The region acts as a physical and geopolitical link between the North and South American continents. The area's proximity to South America, the hemisphere's major supply source of cocaine, heroin and marijuana, allows for ease of transshipment to the

North American market and beyond that, to the high demand countries of Europe.

Marijuana is also cultivated in Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. These countries have moved away from massive marijuana cultivation to becoming importers that facilitate an "internal common market rather than export-oriented production."³ As a result, there is still a potential for significant social, economic and political influence across transnational boundaries where organized criminal interests that are native to one state impact other states in the region.

The production problem pales in comparison to the effects of drug smuggling and money laundering on Caribbean states.

Extended and unprotected shorelines and country-sides, archipelagic seaways, locations along airline flight paths, integral commercial shipping ports, and limited maritime interdiction capabilities make CARICOM states excellent transshipment and holding points for narcotics.

According to the 2003 report on Caribbean

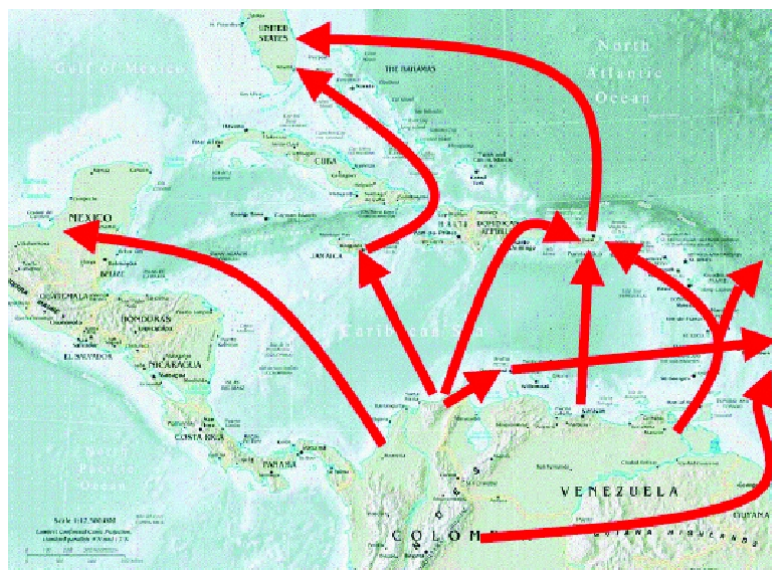
drug seizures compiled by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which considers drug statistics for the central and peripheral Caribbean including CARICOM states,⁴ Belize, Jamaica, and Suriname recorded the highest volume of CARICOM cocaine seizures in 2001 with 3,850, 2,948 and 2,510 kilograms respectively. Belize experienced the highest percentage increase in seizures between 2000 and 2001; Jamaica and the Bahamas had the most sustained number of cocaine seizures over the three-year period. Jamaica is also the biggest interdiction point for marijuana. The country recorded seizures of 74,044 kilograms in 2001. This was 18,174 kilograms more than it netted in 2000, and 51,304 kilograms more than the amount seized in 1999.⁵

Haiti also shows signs of importance along the transshipment route with its recorded marijuana seizures increasing from 31 kilograms in 1999, to 401 kilograms in 2000, and then 1,705 kilograms in 2001. The data also reflects the infiltration of newer, more sophisticated narcotics in the Caribbean transshipment route. Heroin seizures, though small, remain a growing concern for Caribbean

³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Caribbean Drug Trends 2001-2002*, (Prepared by the Caribbean Regional Office: Bridgetown, Barbados, February 2003) p. 10.

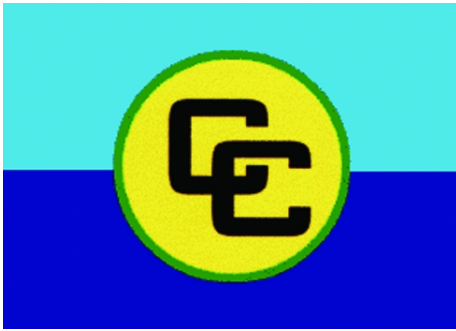
⁴ Countries included in the UNDOC compilation of drug trend statistics are those of the central Caribbean: Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Cuba, Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and British Virgin Islands; and the Caribbean periphery: Belize, Aruba, Netherlands Antilles, all jurisdictions of the eastern Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, French Guiana, Suriname and Bermuda.

⁵ UNODC, *Caribbean Drug Trends 2001-2002*, p. 27-30.



Major drug routes in the Caribbean.

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2003: 9).



CARICOM Standard

states. Ecstasy has also become another narcotic contender with 61,232 tablets seized in Trinidad and Tobago in 2000, and 5,000 tablets seized in Jamaica in 2001.⁶

The transnational drug trade and its organized criminal networks represent significant problems for the political and economic survival of CARICOM states. This is apparent in the potential for domestic insurgency, and sovereignty infringements from organized criminal networks that erode the state's monopoly on the use of force, and the drug trade's potential to outdo all legitimate areas of economic activity. Jamaica's garrison phenomenon is an example of the political and social effects of the narcotics trade, and its contribution to crime and insurgency. Garrisons are poor urban communities that feature high levels of violent crimes and insurgency associated with the narcotics trade, and the community's rejection of the state as a legitimate authority in favour of drug lords who provide economic opportunities and protection.

The 2003 UNODC report also shows the trade's potential for economic destabilization. According to the report, in 2001 the total trade value (exports – imports) in the Caribbean for illegal drugs was US\$ 3.447 billion. The total narcotics gross domestic product (GDP) for the region was US\$ 3.684 billion, or 3.4 percent of the Caribbean's legitimate GDP earn-

ings.⁷ When compared to the national GDP of individual CARICOM countries for the same year, the illicit drug GDP figure was exceeded only by the national GDP of Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. Furthermore, the estimated value of illicit drugs transiting the Caribbean region in 2001, which totalled approximately US\$4.8 billion, surpassed the sum of the top five CARICOM domestic exports in 2000.⁸

Existing Responses

Accounts of the regional drug trade and interdiction efforts suggest that the issue remains one that is tied to CARICOM members' maritime significance and their geopolitical ties to the countries of North America and Europe. Consequently, emphasis is relevantly placed on maritime interdiction as their geostrategic features and geopolitical ties make CARICOM states excellent transshipment and holding points for narcotics.

However, security action within the individual CARICOM states is rigidly dichotomized as domestic and hemispheric policies and operations, with little consideration for regional objectives or interests. The policy approach is represented as increasing emphasis on domestic law enforcement coupled with bilateral security arrangements between individual CARICOM states and Canada, the United States or Britain, and hemispheric policy coordination and dialogue within the Organisation of American States (OAS).

The operational element of Caribbean security initiatives is situated in CARICOM/United States Maritime Counter Narcotics (Shiprider) agreements, and narrowly focused domestic law enforcement operations where military forces are used domestically in anti-crime and law

enforcement modes. There are also bilateral agreements between CARICOM states and other major powers, but there is no operational or policy element constituted at the regional level that could provide for the security of CARICOM states from the narco-terrorist threat.

In writing about the development of Jamaica's national security strategy, leaders of the National Security Steering Group noted that the country's strategic vision constituted the advancement of a secure and democratic environment that could stand up to threats such as narco-terrorism, while enjoying the progress of deeper CARICOM regionalism that facilitated a single market and freer movement of people and commodities.⁹

The resulting 2006 national security strategy Green Paper cited narcotics trafficking, the illegal arms trade, the potential for terrorism, and political instability as significant national security threats. The Green Paper noted the country's response capacity, and the need to ensure resource capabilities to fully monitor and control its exclusive economic zone and airspace. The strategy paper also stated the goal of increasing the country's contribution to regional and international security cooperation. However, it made no mention of how such cooperation would be achieved beyond technocrats and quasi-cabinet committees that were narrowly focused on the effects of crime in

⁶ UNODC, p. 27-30.

⁷ GDP earnings for illicit drugs were calculated by adding the estimated total internal demand for drugs in the region to the total trade balance.

⁸ UNODC, p. 7.

⁹ Peter Brady and Richard Sadler, "The Development of Jamaica's National Security Strategy," *ALERT*, Issue 21 (June 2004), p. 3-4.

Jamaica. There was also no feasible assessment of how the country would overcome its resource limitations in order to achieve its security aims.

A Regional Maritime Defence Force in Context

The regional drug trade and existing interdiction responses suggest that drug dilemma is a regional security threat that exposes CARICOM's inability to exercise control over its maritime boundaries. The countries' locations and access to sea lanes makes them enablers of the illegal narcotics trade. The application of aspects of strategic studies, such as the role of sea power, lends an understanding of the transnational drug trade, and available coping options that can be found in maritime security cooperation.

An understanding of the need for regional maritime cooperation comes from consideration of the members' geostrategic location, and the islands' former value in the naval strategies of Britain and the United States. In the 1860s, the British War Office saw Jamaica, Bermuda, Antigua and St Lucia as main stations for the Royal Navy, because of their strategically central position to control the main approaches to the region, and their use as offshore coaling stations for naval ships protecting British commerce. American interest in the area increased with the observations of American naval strategist, Alfred Thayer Mahan, who likened the

region to the Mediterranean and placed a number of geographic locations, such as Jamaica, within the context of rising American power.¹⁰

The geography of the islands that border the Caribbean Sea and the curvature of the Central American landmass allowed for the region's consideration in American political and military strategies in terms of sea power. The Caribbean's value to British and American strategy relied on its mercantile value, its role as a geopolitical extension of European powers, and as a geographical link between the northern and southern hemispheres. However, it was Mahan who articulated the geopolitical, economic and strategic value of controlling maritime approaches as a theory on sea power.

Mahan's theory on the influence of sea power was based on the principle of command of the sea, which he felt was the basis of national power. Command of the sea is defined as naval superiority, a combination of maritime overseas possessions, and privileged access to foreign markets that contributed to national wealth and greatness, as well as the possession of production, shipping and markets. Command of the sea was essentially the ability to either drive the enemy's navy from the sea or prevent their

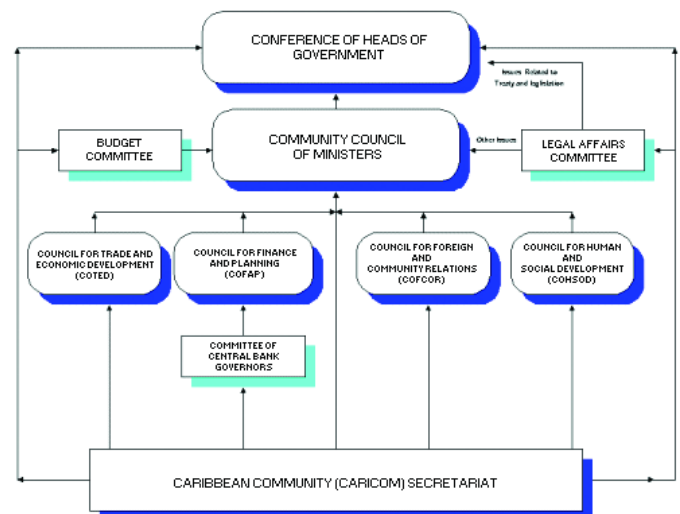
access by blockade. Mahan's theory also placed value on commerce raiding and depriving the enemy of commerce access and trade.

Sea power factors prominently in the transnational drug trade.

Taken in the contemporary context, an analogy can be drawn between the South American drug supply routes, their foreign market access through available sea lines of communications, and the use of key CARICOM territories as transshipment and holding points. The concept also holds relevance for CARICOM states who can interpret commerce raiding, blockading, control of market access, and commercial trade routes as elements of their national power to be exercised as functions of their territorial sovereignty, and as a means of countering the drug threat.

Maritime interdiction, exercised as sea power and the command of the sea has utility within the wider context of a national security strategy, which should coordinate the instruments of national power with efforts to defend a state's national objective. As a minimum, a national security

¹⁰ For a discussion of the Caribbean's geostrategic importance to the United States and Britain, see Cedric Josephs, "The Strategic Importance of the British West Indies, 1882-1932," *Journal of Caribbean History*, 7: 23-67. Also see Joseph Tulchin and Robert Espach's introduction in *Security in the Caribbean Basin: The Challenge of Regional Cooperation*, (Boulder; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2000). For more on the theory of sea power and the influence of Mahan, see Phillip Crawl, Alfred Thayer Mahan: the Naval Historian, in Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (Eds.), *Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 444-477.



Functional Relationship of the Organs and Bodies of the Caribbean Community Chart by <<http://www.caricom.org>>



Coast Guard Fast Coastal Interceptor
Jamaica Defence Force photos <www.jdfmil.org>



King Air 100 Fixed Wing Airplane

strategy demands a clearly identified national objective and knowledge of the means of achieving it. Maritime security, surveillance and interdiction consequently become an impetus for strategic interaction among CARICOM states that must cooperate in order to overcome the resource limitations that cause their means-ends disconnection.

Cooperation already occurs at a bilateral level where CARICOM states have become reliant on American-led counter narcotics operation to provide for their maritime defence against the drug threat. The result is a condition of security dependence that is operationalized as the Maritime Counter Narcotics Cooperation (Shiprider) agreements, which function as a modern articulation of the dictum of American sea power that has been adapted to the regional climate of the Caribbean in the twenty-first century.

The Shiprider agreements are bilateral arrangements between the United States and individual Caribbean states, which permit the United States coast guard maritime over-flight, and permission to pursue, board and search vessels in an agreeing country's territorial waters. It is a critical component of American counter-narcotics operations, and reinforces the geopolitical ties between the United States and its Caribbean allies. In return, agreeing states receive some form of technological assistance for their defence and coast guard

capabilities and are allowed to have one of their own coast guard officers on board American vessels that interdict in their territorial waters.

A CARICOM level naval defence system is in keeping with an appreciation of the strategic role of sea power in guaranteeing collective security, and achieving the region's security objectives. The idea is in accordance with some of Mahan's principles that use geographical position, physical conformity, and extent of territory as the major components in determining the prevailing security strategy. Monitoring and managing these threats on a regional level offers the context for small state interest in maritime strategy, which has traditionally presented itself as the CARICOM—United States Shiprider agreements, and offers the opportunity for CARICOM states to maximize their defence resources in order to achieve their national security objectives.

A regional security regime that is focused on obtaining command of the sea would also help to remove focus from narrow and parochial activities for treating the effects of the narcotics trade individually, and help to create regional consensus on the monitoring, enforcement, and regulatory needs to combat the spin-offs of narco-terrorism. In this way, a regional security regime and collective security arrangement among CARICOM states that concentrates

on enhancing regional sea power, factors as a major contributor to regional security. Institutionalizing such a regime follows Mahan's theory on sea power and its relevance for national power and national security while providing the means of overcoming the vulnerabilities associated with the location of CARICOM states, and their limited resources.

A regional maritime interdiction force that includes all CARICOM states would be an alternate means of securing the region from the transnational drug trade.

It presents members with the opportunity to overcome resource limitations, and the problems of geography by allowing for a pooling of national resources to create a regional interdiction capability that empowers individual CARICOM states in exercising control of the sea. A maritime interdiction force adds needed range to the interdiction, control, and surveillance capacities of member states, while allowing for a more coordinated approach to identifying, analyzing, and defining regional and national security priorities as they are determined by CARICOM members.

Canada's Role

One major aspect of promoting interstate cooperation in any issue area is a preference among states, particularly dominant ones, for cooperation, as well as a degree of interest from the participating states that must see the costs of independent action as being greater than the benefits of cooperation. Although CARICOM possesses its own range of dominant states – Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago – it is clear that extra-regional powers have a signifi-

cant input in defence, and security strategies adopted by CARICOM states. Military aid ties, the provision of development funding, policy advice, and economic partnerships give countries like Canada, the United States, and Great Britain the ability to 'shape' CARICOM's security posture.

Canada stands out as an extra-regional power that maintains an interest in CARICOM states, and their collective action.

Among other development projects conducted individually in CARICOM member states, Canada provides military aid and training assistance, retains a monitoring force in post-coup Haiti, and promotes intra-CARICOM military training through the Caribbean Junior Command and Staff College and the 'Train the Trainer' programmes. Discussion is also underway to establish a military flight training academy for CARICOM.

Through its military aid ties, Canada is poised to play an integral role in assisting CARICOM states.

Canada could help the dominant states of the region that have the capacity to promote further regionalization within CARICOM, and to undertake consideration of a collective maritime security strategy that responds to the drug trade.

Canada's role in encouraging CARICOM states to

maximize their capacities for command of the sea can be achieved by:

- Re-orienting military assistance and training programmes offered to CARICOM states towards coastal defence and interdiction operations, surveillance, and intelligence gathering,
- Assist CARICOM states with the technical and policy expertise needed to examine and review regional and national security plans by promoting an interest in security and strategic studies,
- Promote cooperative security strategies within CARICOM forums by encouraging the creation of a regional security regime,
- Assist individual states in acquiring the resources necessary for monitoring and managing offshore interests and major drug routes.

These additional undertakings in Canada—CARICOM diplomatic relations would not only help to establish a more stable and secure region, but they would also assist CARICOM states in exercising ownership of their security challenges while promoting more efficient use of available resources. CARICOM members would therefore have opportunities for maximizing

regional and hemispheric cooperation while facilitating the promotion of regional security as a critical aspect of the individual members' national security. These undertakings would also assist in the creation of behavioural standards and norms for responding to the effects of the drug trade.

Conclusion

A regional security regime against the transnational drug threat remains a distant concept for CARICOM states. This report nevertheless underscores the value of assessing security needs and objectives within a context that considers intra and extra-regional ties, common security perceptions, geography, and resource constraints. Accounts of CARICOM's security problem shows that there is a need to consider the pooling of tangible and intangible military, political, diplomatic, academic, and social forces towards the development of security strategies for the region.

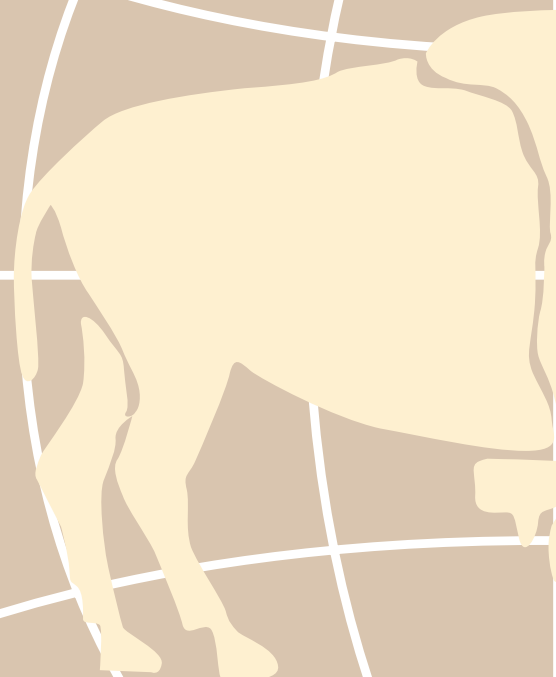
The problem also highlights the need for member states to think differently about security, and their options for coping with the drug threat.

The role of the academy in contributing to the creation of meaningful and applicable foreign and domestic policies cannot be discounted as it is clear that historical, theoretical, and philosophical views are relevant in supplementing military and political appreciations of policy problems and so can contribute tremendously to strategic planning.



Bell 412 Helicopter Jamaica Defence Force photo <www.jdfmil.org>

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