Combating Narco-Terrorism

Introduction

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a United Nations office that was established in 1997 as the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention. UNODC was established to assist the UN in better addressing a coordinated, comprehensive response to the interrelated issues of illicit trafficking in and abuse of drugs, crime prevention and criminal justice, international terrorism, and political corruption. These goals are pursued through three primary functions: research, guidance and support to governments in the adoption and implementation of various crime-, drug-, terrorism-, and corruption-related conventions, treaties and protocols, as well as technical/financial assistance to said governments to face their respective situations and challenges in these fields. The World Drug Report is an annual publication done by the UNODC, intended to draw awareness to illicit drug use and drug trading. This report aims to motivate the members of UNODC to improve their ways of recording and reporting information on illegal drugs. While UNODC has an extensive list of priorities and roles, the topics of discussion this year at ACMUN X are:

1. Combating Narco-terrorism
2. Improvements to the International Arrest Warrant system

It is the role of UNODC to form consensus on the most efficient courses of action, and offer suggestions and cooperation with other international bodies in order to achieve their goals.

What is Narco-terrorism?

Narco-terrorism is widely considered to signify two things: terrorism financed by profits from illegal drug trafficking and attempts by illegal drug traffickers to corrupt governments or
influence their actions. Narco-terrorism is largely based on intimidation and narco-terrorists often employ violence to achieve their goals, the most famous example being Pablo Escobar, who led the Medellin drug cartel. Through assassinations, hijackings and bombings. Escobar intimidated the Colombian government and manipulated elections and eventually, Colombia controversially revised its extradition treaty, implying that Escobar succeeded in gaining control of the Colombian government.

Terrorist groups such as the Colombian FARC and the Taliban in Afghanistan, among others, are considered to use narcotic and illicit drugs trafficking as a way to finance their actions. This kind of narco-terrorism suggests that trafficking enables these groups to have the funds to achieve their separate agendas. In reality, trafficking and armed violence by members of drug cartels and narco-terrorist groups can become a separate activity on its own, to which politics is secondary.

In the United States alone (the number one importer of FARC cocaine), the national death toll due to drug use in 2000 was close to 20,000 people – an increase of over 16% from the previous year. Barely ten years later, deaths from drug use claimed over 37,000 lives nationwide in 2009, outnumbering traffic fatalities, and this trend has only continued since. Globally, this number is even greater: In 2010, over half of the countries that submitted reports on drug-related deaths (with African nations and China notably omitting) stated that they had experienced annual drug-related deaths in the millions. Sadly, this number is expected to grow in the coming years, as drug addiction grows exponentially, only fuelled by the influence of narco-terrorism.

Additionally, some groups such as FARC insist on using violent methods, for example murder and kidnapping to achieve their aims. Compounded with the impact of deaths as a result of drug use, this violence only increases the already high death toll that these groups cause. In fact, in 2010, reports revealed that FARC was the main catalyst behind Colombia’s 34% nationwide increase in cases of massacres. This number continued to rise over the following year, in addition to a 10% increase in general violent activity. As for kidnapping totals, the FARC was estimated to have solely committed over 2,500 civilian kidnappings in July 2005 during its four decade reign of terror– the majority of these kidnappings ended with the execution of all hostages being held for ransom.
Case Study

The European Union:

In past years, several attempts to get rid of narco-terrorism and its repercussions have been made.

Current anti-narcoterrorist programs:

- In 2009, the American government released a counternarcotics strategy to stabilize Afghanistan. Not only does it focus on eliminating the drug trade there (mainly dealing with opium poppies) but also tackles counterinsurgency and crop replacement. These steps are necessary to combat Taliban troops and provide relative security to the rural population as well as slowly wean farmers off of growing opium poppies as their main source of income. By emphasizing development, this plan helps separate the Afghan rural population from the Taliban, instead of bringing them together out of solidarity, as most efforts to bankrupt the Taliban end up doing. By improving their strategy, counterinsurgency forces can prevail against the people profiting from the illegal drug trade.

- The Mérida Initiative is a cooperation between the United States and Central American countries (particularly Mexico) to combat the threats of drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime. The four pillars of the Mérida Initiative are as follows:
  1. Disrupt Capacity of Organized Crime to Operate
  2. Institutionalize Capacity to Sustain Rule of Law
  3. Create a 21st Century Border Structure
  4. Build Strong and Resilient Communities

The Initiative plans to combat the threat of drugs with different methods. Tackling Mexican organized criminal groups by halting money laundering and imprisoning the leaders of such groups will reduce the revenues from drug trading as a result. Another step is to enhance security in Mexico and hold leaders more responsible under rule of law. Promoting legitimate business to cut back the flow of illegal drugs will also provide a better infrastructure for commerce in the 21st century. The last aim of Mérida is to educate communities in Mexico to create a culture of legitimacy and moral correctness to weaken the power and influence of drug trafficking organizations.

- Plan Colombia is a similar plan, focusing on combating the drug cartels of Colombia. The country has seen progress since the plan’s conception in 1998.
Past UN Actions

The Terrorism Prevention Branch of the UNODC is assisting its member states to adopt and implement a series of covenants dealing with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism, among other issues.

In addition to this, UNODC created the Global Project on Strengthening the Legal Regime against Terrorism. Since this project was launched in 2003, the Terrorism Prevention Branch has developed strong expertise in this area. This expertise has been supported by the publication of technical assistance tools in the UN’s official languages as well as in some local languages to enable the creation of necessary expertise among national criminal justice officials to effectively prosecute cross-border terrorist cases.

In addition, the Branch has supported the creation of informal networks, which focus attention on efforts to establish national central authorities, in order to help facilitate international cooperation in criminal matters.

Problems that Should be Addressed

1. How would the drug cartels be infiltrated?
2. How would the committee make sure that new narcoterrorist organizations are not created to take the place of the old ones?