

A New “War on Drugs” in West Africa? Think Tank Report Says West Africa is a Drug Trafficking Hub

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Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

In a report recently conducted by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies by Senior Diplomatic Advisor David E. Brown called “The Challenge of Drug Trafficking to Democratic Governance and Human Security in West Africa” wrote that “*West Africa is under attack from international criminal networks that are using the sub-region as a key global hub for the distribution, wholesale, and increased production of illicit drugs*”. Is the United States Government expanding the so called “War on Drugs” to West Africa?

Is it a convenient excuse to further penetrate the African continent with US government agencies such as the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)?


Brown further wrote that

“While West African states have made remarkable progress in democratic and economic development over the past decade, the insidious effects of narcotics trafficking have the potential to reverse many of these gains,” said the report. *“The proceeds of drug trafficking, by far the most lucrative transnational criminal activity in illicit economies, are fueling a dramatic increase in narco-corruption in the region, allowing drug traffickers to stage coups d’état, hijack elections, and co-opt or buy political power.”*

The Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) claims that drug dealers are staging coup d’états and are stealing elections. According to www.africom.mil newsroom report, the Western African nation of Guinea-Bissau will be the main center of operation for the DEA with the possibility of re-opening the U.S. Embassy that was closed on June 14th, 1998 due to a civil war between former President João Bernardo “Nino” Vieira and his supporters and the military-led junta:

In order to address this challenge, Brown argues that the U.S. government should expand its partnerships and physical presence in the sub-region. Specifically, the report recommends re-opening the U.S. Embassy in Guinea-Bissau and enhancing the presence of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency in key countries throughout the region.

David E. Brown outlines the key actors in relation to West Africa’s drug trafficking network:

 *The most important of these international criminal networks are from Latin America—primarily from Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico—partnering with West African criminals. These criminals, particularly Nigerians and Ghanaians, have been involved in the global drug trade for several decades, first with cannabis and later with heroin. There is also*

increasingly strong evidence linking terrorist organizations or state sponsors of terrorism to the West Africa drug trade, including Colombia's Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Hezbollah (allied with elements in the Lebanese diaspora), Venezuela, and Iran. These criminal and terrorist groups are also a threat to U.S. national security, because the illicit profits earned by Latin American drug cartels operating in West Africa strengthen the same criminal elements that traffic drugs to North America, and the same North African and Middle Eastern terrorist groups and nations that target the United States.

Brown says that Venezuela, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Hezbollah in Lebanon and even Iran are involved in Narcotics trafficking. The drugs that are a major concern for Brown are cocaine, cannabis, heroin and amphetamines. An interesting fact on the production of heroin is that before the US invasion of Afghanistan, the Taliban government implemented a drug eradication program with the United Nations in 2000 which led to over a 90 percent decline. After the US led invasion, the production of heroin increased back to its levels before the eradication program. Even the New York Times reported in 2010 that U.S. and NATO forces are against eradicating opium crops. The report was titled 'U.S. Turns a blind eye to Opium in Afghan Town.' It stated that *"the effort to win over Afghans on former Taliban turf in Marja has put American and NATO commanders in the unusual position of arguing against opium eradication, pitting them against some Afghan officials who are pushing to destroy the harvest."* If drug trafficking concerns the U.S. and its NATO allies, then eradicating the poppy fields should not be a problem. Not surprisingly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime agrees with American and NATO forces stand on opium production:

United Nations drug officials agree with the Americans, though they acknowledge the conundrum. Pictures of NATO and other allied soldiers "walking next to the opium fields won't go well with domestic audiences, but the approach of postponing eradicating in this particular case is a sensible one," said Jean-Luc Lemahieu, who is in charge of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime here.

Why do they see postponing the eradication initiative of opium as a sensible decision? *"American military officials and United Nations drug officials see it the other way around. Opium cultivation has been largely wiped out in 20 provinces where security has been improved, and in the seven most insecure provinces, poppy is still farmed"* according to the report. Obviously, the U.S. and NATO effort to stop drug trafficking has been a failure to say the least.

The Africa Center for Strategic Studies assessment on West Africa's drug trafficking problem is an indication that the US and its NATO allies want to further their global war agenda using the drug problem in West Africa to advance their operation in Guinea-Bissau. Guinea-Bissau is in close proximity to Mali, Nigeria and Niger. These African countries have enormous resources that would only benefit Western corporations.

The War on Drugs is another excuse to have a larger US presence in the region. Not only is Brown's report targeting West Africa; it demonizes other political enemies of the United States such as Venezuela, Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

America's global war on drugs is an addition to its global war on terror because both

agendas only expand its footprint in the continent of Africa and to the rest of the world. If American and NATO forces were seriously concerned about drug trafficking in Western Africa and elsewhere, then they would pay attention to Afghanistan. But then again, the West is against eradicating the opium fields in Afghanistan that will only add fuel to the war on drugs in Western Africa for years to come.

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