

## ABSTRACT

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INTERNATIONAL ORIGINS OF NIXON'S  
WAR ON DRUGS

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This thesis examines how President Richard Nixon's keen interest in foreign policy affected the development of America's modern drug wars. In addition to the Nixon administration years, it also discusses how foreign influences associated with late 19th and early 20th century immigration contributed to phases of American hysteria, which led to the nation's earliest anti-drug legislation.

INTERNATIONAL ORIGINS OF NIXON'S WAR ON DRUGS

By

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## Preface

This thesis is the culmination of a quest to answer questions about the origins of America's war on drugs. In 2012 I deployed with the United States Navy aboard *U.S.S. Elrod (FFG-55)* in support of *Operation Martillo*, a component of the White House strategy to combat transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking. Our Light Airborne Multi-Purpose System (LAMPS) MK III helicopter detachment embarked with the Navy's first Night Airborne Use of Force (N-AUF) qualified crews. This groundbreaking capability required costly aircrew equipment upgrades, aircraft modifications, and months of coordinated training with precision marksmen from the U.S. Coast Guard. The investment in new technology and training justified itself when the *Elrod* and the embarked Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) crew seized approximately 9,630 pounds of 100% pure cocaine and 4,938 pounds of marijuana, with a total wholesale value of more than \$120 million.<sup>1</sup> Many of the interdictions included arrests of drug traffickers, who were detained aboard the ship and then transferred back to the United States for Federal prosecution.

While *Elrod's* 2012 deployment produced tangible results, I often wondered whether or not the actions of one naval warship could really make much of an impact on the transnational flow of illegal drugs. More poignantly, I wondered why the Navy was heavily engaged in law enforcement. When and how did this all start? Then I read historian Paul Gootenberg's *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug*. This book

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<sup>1</sup> The street value of these seizures was exponentially higher. See U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command and U.S. 4<sup>th</sup> Fleet Public Affairs, "USS Elrod, Coast Guard Disrupt Drug Flow in the Caribbean." <http://www.southcom.mil/newsroom/Pages/USS-Elrod,-Coast-Guard-Disrupt-Drug-Flow-in-the-Caribbean.aspx>

informed me about early developments of American anti-drug legislation and how globalization affected transnational illicit trafficking. Gootenberg's monograph also led me to ask questions about the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs.<sup>2</sup>

My interest in the history of America's drug wars swelled when I learned about how the nation's most famous narcotics officer received his coveted Federal Agent badge. This man flew across country, checked into the Washington Hotel under the alias "Jon Burrows," and then hand delivered a six-page letter expressing his motives to a guard standing in front of the White House. He did not wish to be given any title or an appointed position. He wanted more than anything to be a Federal Agent at Large and help The Establishment communicate with America's drug culture, hippie elements, the SDS, Black Panthers, etc. He prepared for service by doing an "in-depth study of drug abuse and Communist brainwashing techniques," and felt "right in the middle of the whole thing" where he could do the most good. He even informed the President of his nomination as one of America's Ten Most Outstanding Men.

Jon Burrows' real name was Elvis Presley. His sincere letter was forwarded to White House deputy assistant to the President on narcotics issues, Bud Krogh, who served as one of Nixon's leaders in the war on drugs and just so happened to be a big Elvis fan. Krogh met the King and was obliged by the Secret Service to accept the guest's gift on behalf of the President, since a chrome-plated WWII commemorative Colt .45 set inside a beautiful wooden case—along with seven silver bullets-- was not allowed in the Oval Office. President Nixon's meeting with the King was cordial. Elvis

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

personally expressed a desire to give back to his country that had given him so much. When told he could receive a Federal Agent at Large badge, Elvis was so overcome with excitement that he bear hugged the Commander-In-Chief.<sup>3</sup> The day Nixon met Elvis was not made public until thirteen months after the meeting took place.

This Elvis episode captivated my attention and motivated me to ponder more significant historical questions about the drug wars. By way of contrast, while the President hugged the King, he deplored the Beatles. During the early 1970's, Nixon's administration denied John Lennon's visa renewal application and threatened to deport him. Lennon's violation of drug possession laws served as a justification for this decision. The leader of the Beatles was also a vocal anti-war supporter and surveillance target of the FBI.

The Elvis-Beatles comparison provides a nice contrast of Nixon's personal perceptions, but other primary source material obtained through the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) contributed more to supporting my thesis arguments. First and foremost, NARA's U.S. State Department records contained dozens of boxes filled with information specifically about narcotics. I have examined files from Record Groups 59 and 273 and discovered detailed accounts about significant drug war events and how they affected various foreign countries. The Digital National Security Archive contained thousands of declassified government documents about the international origins of Nixon's war on drugs and was especially helpful in providing information about the National Security Council and the drug problems in Vietnam. The NARA II building located in College Park, MD offered access to the CIA Records Search

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<sup>3</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, "When Nixon Met Elvis," Nixon Presidential Library and Museum Virtual Library, Online Exhibits. Accessed January 10, 2013: <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/nixon-met-elvis/>

Tool (CREST). This database enabled me to search thousands of declassified documents released by the Central Intelligence Agency. Many of these papers corroborated what I received from the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, which is now located in Yorba Linda, CA. Documents from other various archives also proved helpful and informed my understanding of history about the drug wars. JSTOR contains an ever-increasing amount of scholarly material and greatly supported my research. So too did ProQuest's *Historical Newspapers* database. Together, these primary sources filled in a tapestry, which substantiates the arguments contained in this thesis.

I hope this thesis contributes to history's analysis of the war on drugs. Richard Nixon has long been credited with beginning this so-called war, but this thesis goes beyond the typical narrative and examines why the President felt the need to use such captivating rhetoric. In the process of studying the Nixon administration, I found these years of American history to be most fascinating. This is mainly due to the fact that Richard Nixon was such a perplexing character, but there is also another reason. The Vietnam War inflicted devastating casualties and divided the American people, but it was the war on drugs that escalated during Nixon's presidency and continued long after he was gone. For this reason, I believe it is historically significant to investigate the genesis of the drug wars. There are many facets to the conflict's evolution, but this thesis focuses on international origins. In doing so, I wish to show how drug abuse is not just an American history problem, but part of a greater global interaction and exchange that has involved a long past of transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking.

## Dedication

To Alison and the boys, who tolerated months of hearing me talk about drug wars and Richard Nixon.



## Acknowledgements

I acknowledge Professor David Sicilia for the tremendous amount of time he spent discussing my work and reviewing this thesis. Joseph Slaughter, a fellow alumnus, was instrumental in telling me about Maryland's History Department and helped me navigate my way through the thesis writing process.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

Virtually all historical accounts of President Richard Nixon's anti-drug initiatives have focused on the domestic scene. Dan Baum's *Smoke and Mirrors* and Michael Massing's *The Fix* contain narrowly focused portions about the significance of drug abuse in Vietnam.<sup>4</sup> However, these investigative journalists emphasize how the Nixon administration developed drug abuse treatment and prevention programs in congruence with national anti-drug enforcement legislation. Historian Jeremy Kuzmarov argues reports of an addicted army in Vietnam were a myth and claims drug war scholar David F. Musto neglected the reality that Nixon's drug war was least effective in the international realm.<sup>5</sup>

In this thesis I argue that Nixon's drug war developed as a result of very strong global influences on America's concerns about narcotics abuse. For Nixon, drug abuse and addiction was certainly a domestic problem, but it was just as much, if not more so, a global issue tied closely with foreign policy. Nixon held animosity towards the hippie-drug counterculture and viewed the group as part of a feckless movement manipulated by foreign communist interests. In a backlash, Nixon supported total efforts to reduce both the supply and demand of illegal drugs. This comprehensive approach was the initial strategy early in his administration but then evolved over time as key players changed and the mess of corruption and scandal took its toll leading to the President's resignation in 1974.

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<sup>4</sup> Dan Baum, *Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1996).

Michael Massing, *The Fix* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Jeremy Kuzmarov, *The Myth of the Addicted Army: Vietnam and the Modern War on Drugs* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 120.

Most Americans immediately associate Richard Nixon with Watergate,<sup>6</sup> although many historians grant him credit for some significant progressive domestic programs and for his achievements in foreign policy.<sup>7</sup> However from Nixon's point of view, one of the initiatives that meant most to him in the long run was the global war on drugs and a sincere desire to confront drug abuse. Nixon's later memoirs, including *Beyond Peace* published the year of his death in 1994,<sup>8</sup> provide evidence of his keen interest in America's drug problem. However, one might hardly notice this by simply examining works he published during the years immediately after he left office, when he was still quite bitter about Watergate and his resignation.

Looking back after a significant change over time, one can see that the Nixon Presidency was a catalyst for the modern war on drugs. During the days of his administration efforts to confront drug abuse and illicit trafficking grew substantially and continued to expand well after Richard Nixon left office. In the immediate aftermath of his infamous resignation, most people thought the former president's legacy would be dominated by ignominious details about the Watergate scandal. While America overcame the fallout of Watergate, the remnants of Nixon's drug war remain prominent in today's global fight against substance abuse and drug addiction. All the President's men associated with the Watergate Scandal have now been released from jail or have passed away, yet America perplexingly incarcerates the highest numbers of prisoners in the world, most of whom are in jail because of some kind of drug-related offense.

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<sup>6</sup>Michael Schudson's, *Watergate in American Memory: How We Remember, Forget, and Reconstruct the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> Joan Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered* (New York, Basic Books, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Richard Nixon, *Beyond Peace* (New York: Random House, 1994).

Strategic international partnerships were key in combating foreign influences in the global war on drugs. On June 17, 1971, President Nixon delivered a special message to the United States Congress on drug abuse prevention and control. “To wage an effective war against heroin addiction,” he said, “America must have international cooperation.”<sup>9</sup> This day in history has come to be commonly known as the beginning of America’s so called “War On Drugs.” However, prior to 1971 the Nixon Administration made significant attempts to promote international narcotics control. In Turkey, the Nixon Administration encouraged an opium poppy growing ban along with crop substitution initiatives. Meanwhile in France, officials were urged to cooperate with international efforts to break up heroin smuggling syndicates. Nixon also approved actions to affect illegal Mexican drug trafficking, including the granting of foreign aid in the form of manpower and military equipment and initiatives such as Operation Intercept, which was a short-lived effort to more thoroughly check vehicles crossing the border into the United States. These three strategic international partnerships did not develop easily but rather required tremendous effort and patience on the part of diplomats and key government officials.

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Nixon: "Special Message to the Congress on Drug Abuse Prevention and Control," June 17, 1971. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. Accessed January 10, 2013. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3048>

## Chapter 2: Prelude to War

### Phases of American Hysteria Preceded Nixon's Drug War

Nixon's attitude toward the counterculture was informed by concerns about foreign influences on citizens of the United States. This was not the first time in American history when foreign influences stirred up objective hysteria. In this section I review anti-drug enforcement laws prior to Nixon's inauguration in 1969 to show a series of phases or episodes that were – in every case – animated by concerns over foreign influences. This is not just a domestic story; it is a narrative about American laws animated by American immigrants and anxieties about foreigners.

### Phase I: Chinese-American Immigrants and Opium

The antecedents of America's 1970s anti-drug war trace all the way back to the Opium Wars, when Chinese officials took action against an imperialist instrument of wealth and conflict. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain solved a trade imbalance with Asian partners by producing opium in India and promoting its sale to China. The Chinese were already acquainted with the drug. Opium sold so well in China that, by the 1830s, the British deficit had been replaced by a trade surplus in the form of a large drainage of silver out of China. Alarmed by the financial loss and morally outraged by the rapid spread of opium addiction, the Manchu dynasty, which ruled China at the time, determined to cut off opium imports. In 1839, Imperial Commissioner Lin Tse-hsu burned 20,283 chests of opium belonging to foreign firms in the Canton area, and later captured twenty-three boats used by foreigners to smuggle opium into China. The

seizure and burning of seized commodities belonging to British traders in the Canton region set off the Opium War of 1839-1842.<sup>10</sup>

An environment of chaos and despair developed as a result of the Opium War and pushed many Chinese emigrants, along with their knowledge and affection for opiates, to faraway places like California.<sup>11</sup> Gold rush boomtowns provided countless opportunities for newcomers seeking wage labor and riches. Ambitious Asians quickly gained footing in their evolving communities through the networking and self-policing of influential Chinese associations. These connections proved to be a significant resource for assisting industrious workers and consummate business proprietors, but they also led to suspicion from outsiders. Differences in appearance, speech, and other cultural practices including eating habits fostered growing animosity towards Chinese immigrants.<sup>12</sup>

As ethnic biases grew stronger and opium dens became more and more accessible to Californians, local governments began to act. The Mayor of San Francisco recommended action against opium dens, and on November 15, 1875, the city's Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance to prohibit their operation within town limits.<sup>13</sup> Scholars like Stephen A. Maisto, Mark Galizio, and Gerard Joseph Connors have come to consider this law as America's first anti-drug legislation.<sup>14</sup> The San Francisco Chronicle asserted that the measure was passed to prevent young white men and women of respectable parentage and business avocations from inhaling the fumes from the opium

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<sup>10</sup> Director of Intelligence, "China and International Narcotics Control," *Secret Weekly Summary Special Report, Approved For Release 2007/10/23*, (Langley: CIA, June 23, 1972) 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> H.W. Brands, *The Age of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the New American Dream* (New York: Random House Books, 2002) 62-64.

<sup>12</sup> Brands, *Age of Gold*, 330-334.

<sup>13</sup> "The Opium Dens." (1875, Nov 16). *San Francisco Chronicle (1869-Current File)*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/357194860?accountid=14696>

<sup>14</sup> Stephen A. Maisto, Mark Galizio, Gerard Joseph Connors, *Drug Use and Abuse, Sixth Edition* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2010), 33.



pipes until a state of stupefaction is produced.<sup>15</sup> While the law placated a public majority concerned about protecting the welfare of white men and women, the ordinance was first and foremost a reflection of anti-Chinese hysteria and the disdain for opium den operators.<sup>16</sup>

In the same period, other areas with significant Chinese immigrant populations passed similar laws to those approved in the city of San Francisco. Oakland, Sacramento, Stockton, and Virginia City all passed legislation to curtail the operation of Chinese opium dens. Nevada's 1877 law was the first to actually prohibit opium smoking. Not only were places for illegally using opium prohibited, but selling or dispensing opium without a physician's prescription also became a crime.

Other western states followed suit. In 1881, the California State Legislature enacted a statewide ban of its own by acting to amend a vague, ineffective penal code that had been passed less than a decade before. Under the new law, various opium-associated actions in commercial establishments would be prosecuted as misdemeanors under a section reserved for crimes against religion, conscience, and good morals.<sup>17</sup> Just as other anti-Asian ordinances were passed to target perceived problems associated with immigration, early anti-substance legislation in the United States was by and large a reaction to public hysteria against Chinese immigrants and sought to make this aspect of the lifestyle of the West Coast's Chinese lifestyle "devilishly uncomfortable."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "The Opium Dens." (1875, Nov 16). *San Francisco Chronicle (1869-Current File)*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/357194860?accountid=14696>

<sup>16</sup> See Kathleen Auerhahn, "The Split Labor Market and the Origins of Antidrug Legislation in the United States," *Law and Social Inquiry* 24 (Spring 1999): 411, 417.

<sup>17</sup> For an in-depth look at the creation of opium laws and their close ties to the anti-Chinese movement, see Diana L. Ahmad, *The Opium Debate and Chinese Exclusion Laws in the Nineteenth-Century American West* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2007), 59-62.

<sup>18</sup> Mikelis Beitiks, "Devilishly Uncomfortable: In the Matter of Sic," *California Legal History Journal*, Volume 6, 2011, 238-244. This article was the winning entry in the California Supreme Court Historical

American domestic fears about the effects of foreign opium prompted support for federal anti-drug legislation. While studying a full transnational history of the drug trade must include China's mid-nineteenth century Opium War, subsequent chaos, and its effects on American state laws, the Federal concern about narcotics in the United States originated during the beginning of the twentieth century. On February 9, 1909, the U. S. Congress passed an act (35 Stat. 614) to prohibit the importation of opium except for medicinal use.<sup>19</sup> During the same period when U.S. lawmakers were deliberating on domestic legislation to curb the spread of harmful narcotics, the International Opium Commission convened in Shanghai and recommended a future conference to consider unified controls of the international opium trade. On December 11, 1911, representatives from around the globe assembled at The Hague to hold the first International Opium Convention. The concluding recommendation from this summit included a prohibition on the export of opium to countries that excluded its entry as well as domestic legislation to control the production and use of the narcotic within national boundaries.

The United States was ahead of the rest of the world in anti-drug legislation and has been the leader of global anti-drug efforts ever since. Anxieties about foreign influences on American citizens moved government officials to action. On January 17, 1914 – three years after the first International Opium Convention Congress approved additional laws to regulate opium -- the U.S. Congress passed two pieces of anti-drug legislation. The first act (38 Stat. 275) regulated the importation of opium and banned the exportation of smoking opium. Americans would only be allowed to export opium

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Society's 2011 Student Writing Competition and provides great insight to the California Supreme Court's strike at balancing race, drugs, and government during the 1880s.

<sup>19</sup> Forrest R. Holdcamper, *Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Bureau of Narcotics, Record Group 170* (College Park, MD: National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), 1964), NO-50.

and cocaine to countries who closely regulated the commodities' entry and could control extent of its usage. The second act (38 Stat. 277) authorized sharp increases on duty fees. The opium tax was increased from \$10 to \$300 a pound and raised the bond required of manufacturers from \$5,000 to not less than \$100,000. And in late 1914 Congress passed the Harrison Act (38 Stat. 277). This law became effective on March 1 the following year and placed even more specific constraints on the domestic use of opium, coca, and its derivatives. The act restricted the legal trade of opium to people authorized and registered with the federal government. It also imposed a special annual tax in order to maintain the right to hold such credentials. The most significant part of the new law was that the Commissioner of United States' Internal Revenue Service was delegated responsibility for its enforcement.

Additional government agencies were created to deal with the problems caused by narcotics and illicit drug trafficking. The Treasury Department took ownership of America's earliest narcotics control efforts. Additional resources were granted to the Department when Congress approved an act (46 Stat. 585) on June 14, 1930, to establish the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN). This law transferred the functions and records of two existing agencies. One was the Federal Narcotics and Control Board, which consisted of Secretaries of State, Treasury, and Commerce, who collectively held authority to "make and publish all proper regulations" for the enforcement of the prohibition of the importation and exportation of certain narcotics.<sup>20</sup> The other was the Narcotic Division of the Bureau of Prohibition, which the Commissioner of Internal Revenue had already controlled since the passage of the Harrison Act.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

The FBN would become a zealous organization determined to carry out its chief functions to prevent illicit traffic in drugs and to control the legitimate manufacture and distribution of narcotics for medicinal purposes. Special Agents from the FBN worked closely with the Bureau of Customs, Public Health and Service, the State Department, and several state government officials in order to pursue the agency's activities. From the public nuisance of opium dens in California to Congressionally enacted legislation that promoted international cooperation and new federal agencies, the foreign influence of Chinese immigrants and their perceived connection to narcotics trafficking was the first phase of American hysteria towards dangerous drugs.

*Phase 2: Mexican-American Immigrants and Marijuana*

The second major phase of foreign hysteria in regards to concerns about dangerous drugs occurred during the 1920s-1930s. In this case, again, foreigners were central: Mexican immigrants and the perceived danger of marijuana. Just as the Opium Wars created a situation of turmoil and unrest in China throughout the mid nineteenth century, the 1910-1920 Mexican Revolution fostered similar upheaval and pushed thousands of displaced and downtrodden people North of the border. A significant increase in Mexican immigration to the United States challenged the U.S. status quo, and a strong backlash led to racial discrimination. Most significant for the history of America's interest in anti-drug policies was that the fact that the influx of foreigners during this era contributed to the 1930s movement towards criminalization of marijuana.

The influence of revolutionary and post-revolutionary Mexican immigrants changed American society in many ways. The first was in the realm of labor practices. As Mexican Americans acclimated to their new country, many continued to hold on to

revolutionary ideas and tactics brought from the South. When the Great Depression struck, the political and economic climate of the following decade provided conditions for strikes and rebellion, especially in the U.S. Southwest, where mining, agriculture, and food-processing industries relied upon compliant transient labor. Mexican culture was another facet of U.S. diversification. Despite a depressing decline in job opportunities after 1929 and an environment of competition due to increasing numbers of workers seeking employment, native-born Americans developed an enormous “vogue” for many “things Mexican,” particularly folk performance traditions such as music, costume, and dance; handicrafts and murals; and all kinds of romantic, pastoral representations of rural Mexican life.<sup>21</sup> Political law and social order was a third element influenced by the effects of Mexico’s revolution and ensuing exodus. The growing flood of Mexican immigrants prompted local and state authorities to request additional resources they believed were needed to bolster police authority and enhance border control. State officials also began to discuss new forms of citizenship that would adapt to changes in the traditional American mosaic.

While the effects of Mexican immigration diversified life experiences in the United States, many conservatives feared these changes challenged and eroded traditional American values. Anticommunist and anti-drug rhetoric grew in volume and frequency in order to prevent the Mexican revolution from spreading north. Taken together, Mexican influences amounted to a level of grave concern for conservative authorities who held influential positions within some of the nation’s most powerful government organizations.

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<sup>21</sup> Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relationships between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992), in Curtis Marez, *Drug Wars: The Political Economy of Narcotics*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 106.

*The FBN and Harry Anslinger: America's First Drug Czar*

It was in this environment of Mexican xenophobia that America's first drug czar responded to anxieties held by many U.S. citizens and moved to elevate the prominence and effectiveness of the young Federal Bureau of Narcotics. On August 12, 1930, President Herbert Hoover appointed Harry Jacob Anslinger (May 20, 1892-November 14, 1975) to serve as the FBN's first Chief. At that time his bureau was but a small agency within the U.S. Treasury Department, but over the next three decades Anslinger, more than any other individual before Richard Nixon, exerted great influence over federal drug policy that stretched beyond domestic narcotics enforcement.<sup>22</sup>

Like Nixon, Commissioner Anslinger capitalized on an environment full of growing disdain towards foreign influences and sought to leverage his authority against the country's perceived enemy threats. Mexican xenophobia and worries about the new substance of the day known as cannabis or "marijuana" provided the perfect target for the FBN to expand and gain national attention. Before the Federal Bureau of Narcotics was created in 1930, enforcement efforts had comparatively little effect in curbing illicit traffic. Detecting and preventing unlawful importation of illegal substances was the major enforcement problem then, just as it would become more and more in the future. Commissioner Anslinger realized this and reasoned correctly that the main factors creating an abundant supply for drug addicts in the United States were foreign overproduction and low prices.

Anslinger advocated an international, interstate effort to go after drug syndicates and smuggling activities. Rather than clean up old opium dens in city slums, Anslinger

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<sup>22</sup> John C. McWilliams, *The Protectors: Harry J. Anslinger and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 1930-1962*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990), 45.

let the work of catching individual peddlers and addicts fall upon local police departments. Instead, he led his agents to achieve a high level of proficiency in breaking up international narcotics trafficking rings and drug runners.<sup>23</sup> From 1930 to 1937, he led an intense campaign to outlaw cannabis and enforce the control of marijuana. This crusade gained momentum in large part due to the way marijuana was most commonly associated with indolent Mexican laborers in the southwestern states, perceived as nefarious criminal types by most citizens living in the rest of the nation. Mexican workers were commonly thought of as knife brandishing ruffians with a proclivity for drunkenness and disorderly conduct. Such tales -- greatly exaggerated if not totally erroneous -- fostered the general stereotype of marijuana-smoking Mexicans committing violent acts. Still, many immigrants did in fact bring cannabis with them as they made their way north to cross the Rio Grande and accepted low-paying jobs in the fields from Texas to California. However, the drug was a relatively isolated problem, and the nation was generally indifferent to its existence, except in places like Los Angeles, with its highly concentrated Mexican-American populations.<sup>24</sup>

Hysteria about foreign stereotypes prompted officials in power to act. Labor dispute issues, combined with an increased cultural awareness of Mexican marijuana through Hollywood motion pictures, songs, and dance, continued to fuel suspicions of foreign influences and led to the emergence of cannabis gaining the reputation of being the “killer weed.” Just as high crime rates in Washington, DC, inspired the Nixon Administration to look at the heroin problem during the 1970s, officials from the city of

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<sup>23</sup> Harry J. Anslinger, “Narcotic Agent Lectures Here,” from the *Dickinsonian*, December 15, 1932, Anslinger Papers, box 6, file “Scrapbook 11-B, March 1930-December 1933.” Pattee Library Special Collections Department, Pennsylvania State University.

<sup>24</sup> See Curtis Marez, *Drug Wars*, Chapters 3-5, for a more in-depth discussion about the impact of marijuana on Hollywood and the LAPD.

New Orleans called for federal legislation to address drug-related criminal activities as early as the 1930s. At that time, marijuana drew attention as a crime-producing drug associated with sharp rises in illegal activities.

The anti-crime, anti-drug initiatives were supported by government officials and were spearheaded by expert physicians, as in Nixon's program four decades later. In 1931, Dr. A. E. Fossier delivered a paper titled "The Marijuana Menace" to Louisiana's State Medical Society. His remarks opened with an account about a sect of military and religious assassins in Persia, that in 1090 A.D. "committed secret murders in blind obedience to the chief after becoming intoxicated with hashish."<sup>25</sup> This example would be later connected to physicians' claims that marijuana in large doses produces, "excitement, delusions, hallucinations... with a tendency to willful damage and violence."<sup>26</sup> Word about the dangers of cannabis began to spread across the nation. For instance, the *New York Times* published a story in 1933 about the bust of a "Dope Ring Specialized in Mexican Marijuana." According to the article, the weed is referred to as "hay" in the vernacular and is "highly intoxicating and constitutes an ever recurring problem where there are Mexicans or Spanish-Americans of lower classes."<sup>27</sup> By the mid-1930s the "marijuana menace" was headlining in national newspapers and magazines. The weed was reportedly being grown along roadways, in city backyards and vacant lots, and even in the fields of federal penitentiaries by ingenious inmates.

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<sup>25</sup> A.E. Fossier, "The Marihuanna Menace," *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* 84 (1931): 247.

<sup>26</sup> John C. McWilliams, *The Protectors: Harry J. Anslinger and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 1930-1962*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990), 48.

<sup>27</sup> Special Correspondence, *The New York Times*. (1933, Dec 03). "Dope Ring Specialized in Mexican Marijuana." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/100819749?accountid=14696>



As we will see with Nixon's war on drugs, federal law enforcement agents and government officials remained placated by modest efforts to combat the drug problem until some kind of catalyst pushed the issue to higher priority levels. When marijuana began to spread into the Midwestern and northern regions of the United States and became associated with the nation's young people, public awareness grew and many Americans no longer were willing to ascribe the drug to Mexicans and illegal aliens in the Southwest. Anslinger led his narcotics agents in a national crusade against a drug whose properties had been hyped up with more fear than biological understanding. To them, marijuana was more degenerating and corrupting to a person's character than opium, making it the most dangerous of the commonly abused drugs. Anslinger described the marijuana menace to the Women's National Exposition of Arts and Industry by saying, "Take all of the good in Dr. Jekyll and the worst in Mr. Hyde—the result is opium." This is not so with marijuana, he continued. "Its importance in the Pharmacopeia is not intrinsically indispensable. Marijuana may be considered more harmful in its potentialities for evil than its limited advantages for medical or commercial purposes. It is Mr. Hyde alone."<sup>28</sup> To substantiate Anslinger's claim, one of his agents subsequently publicized the case of a man who decapitated his friend with an ax but was unable to remember the episode just a few hours later.<sup>29</sup> News about such cases perpetuated the fear and stigma associated with the FBN's targeted drug and alarmed the public to the point where more and more people supported federal action.

Commissioner Anslinger never seemed to back down from widely accepted myths about Mexican influences on the marijuana drug problem. During congressional

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>29</sup> Wooster Taylor, "Economy Cut Ties Hands of 'Dope Agents,'" Washington Herald, November 7, 1933, Anslinger Papers, Box 1, file "Articles on Narcotics 1930-1937."

hearings, Anslinger presented horrific true stories to support his case against the influence of ethnic foreigners and minorities. Colorado news editor Floyd Baskette saw the marijuana problem as a Mexican one when he declared, “I wish I could show you what a small marihuana cigarette does to one of our degenerate Spanish speaking residents. That’s why our problem is so great,” he said, adding racist embellishments. “The greatest percentage of our population is composed of Spanish speaking persons, most of whom are low mentally, because of social and racial conditions.”<sup>30</sup> One case in particular that served Anslinger’s agenda well was the marijuana-induced multiple murder case of Victor Licata, a young Mexican charged with slaughtering his family in Florida while under the influence of a marijuana “dream.”<sup>31</sup> Anslinger had a special ability to protect the interests of his agency by charming listeners with astonishing stories that reaffirmed widely accepted myths.

Like Nixon, Commissioner Anslinger masterfully pushed his agenda forward by fervently moving legislation through the law making process. When the 1914 Harrison Act proved to be insufficient for confronting weed drugs like cannabis, Anslinger worked with representatives from the Treasury Department to support the passage of The Marijuana Tax Act. Congress convened weeks of committee hearings and testimony during the spring of 1937, and finally produced a bill ready for President Roosevelt’s signature. Its passage was by and large due to the convincing testimony and behind-the-scenes work of Harry Anslinger and his allies. Although the provisions of the 1937 Marijuana Tax Act were not really designed to raise revenue or even regulate the use of

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<sup>30</sup> Letter to Anslinger from Floyd Baskette, September 4, 1936, Anslinger Papers, Box 6, file “Clippings 1934-1939.”

<sup>31</sup> See Summary of Victor Lata Case, October 17, 1933, Anslinger Papers, Box 5, file “Scrapbook, Vol. 7, 1931-135).

weed drugs, the law provided legal mechanisms for the Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and U.S. government law officials to enforce their prohibition. In these and other ways, Anslinger used the catalyst of social anxieties and cultural conditions brought about by the myths of Mexican immigrants and their pernicious weeds to facilitate Congressional approval for anti-drug laws, while simultaneously strengthening the scope and authority of the FBN.

Harry J. Anslinger was America's first drug czar and served as Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics for an unprecedented thirty-two years until 1962. He then held office two years as US Representative to the United Nations Narcotics Commission. The responsibilities once held by Anslinger would be assumed by special appointees during the Nixon administration and are now largely under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy.

### *Phase 3: Communist Anxieties and Heroin*

After World War II, public opinion and Communist paranoia continued to influence the development of American anti-drug laws. When heroin use rose during the early 1950s, Federal Bureau of Narcotics' Commissioner Harry Anslinger reacted by harnessing public sentiments and advocating for increased penalties to be imposed upon drug law offenders. In 1951, The Boggs Act<sup>32</sup> passed to amend current penalty provisions applicable to any person convicted of violating specific narcotics laws and established mandatory minimum sentences for future criminals.

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<sup>32</sup> Musto, ed, *Drugs in America: A Documentary History*, (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 276-281.

See Also: Cabell Phillips, *Special to The New York Times*, (1951, Jul 08). "Fight Against Narcotics Waged by U.S. and U.N." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/112182922?accountid=14696>

Support for such measures extended beyond narcotics control agents. For example, Anslinger credited prominent Americans like Democrat Congressman Hale Boggs of Louisiana and Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton Wright, for being leaders in the field of national and international narcotics control.<sup>33</sup> After Wright suffered a stroke in 1952, Anslinger told the *New York Times* that, “The pre-eminence and unflagging zeal will make her loss in the fight against narcotic drugs irreplaceable,” and added that, “Mrs. Wright was among those directly responsible for the Boggs Act, recently passed by Congress, which places heavy penalties on anyone found guilty of peddling narcotics.”<sup>34</sup>

Just as Nixon’s drug war would two decades later, 1950’s anti-drug legislation tied domestic issues closely to foreign affairs. After President Truman signed The Boggs Act into effect in 1952, Commissioner Harry Anslinger directed a nation-wide dawn to dusk series of narcotics raids during which United States agents seized nearly 500 suspected drug peddlers known to have targeted juvenile addicts. Anslinger said the crackdown was geared to a drive abroad to close down the large sources for narcotics being sent to the United States, particularly from Italy. The FBN commissioner publicly praised the Italian secret police for doing “a magnificent job” in stopping the flow of heroin to the U.S. and for investigating former vice lord Charles (Lucky) Luciano.<sup>35</sup>

As the Cold War heated up, fear of communist infiltration penetrated nearly every facet of government and society, and the role of narcotics and dangerous drugs played no

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<sup>33</sup> For more information about the life and influence of Mrs. Hamilton Wright, see Ida M. Tarbell’s “Document: Talk with Mrs. Wright on Opium,” *The Documents of Ida M. Tarbell; Correspondence Manuscripts*; Allegheny College, Meadville, PA. Accessed on March 6, 2013: <http://hdl.handle.net/10456/23906>

<sup>34</sup> Special to the *New York Times*, “Mrs. H. Wright Led Fight On Narcotics,” (1952, Feb 14).” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/112365204?accountid=14696>

<sup>35</sup> Paul P. Kennedy, *Special to The New York Times*. (1952, Jan 05). “Nearly 500 seized in narcotics raids across the nation.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/112256981?accountid=14696>

small part. After two decades of building up the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and soliciting domestic and international support, Harry Anslinger began to run into strong opposition. Rumors of corruption within the FBN began to surface, along with objections to questionable polices and organizational practices. Despite draconian penal laws enacted through the Commissioner's guidance, drug use seemed to be on the rise with no reliable tracking methods or reliable statistics to substantiate the Bureau's work. During the same time Anslinger was also losing his ability to direct counter narcotic efforts abroad.

In this defensive climate the Commissioner launched a campaign to re-invigorate the stature of his besieged agency by using social and political hysteria about communism to his advantage. For example, Anslinger used television to educate the public about the dangers of Communist Red China pushing highly pure and potent narcotics into the black market as a means to cut the fabric of strong American values. During an interview just prior to United Nations' international narcotics meetings the *Chronoscope*, a program produced in New York by the Columbia Broadcasting System, featured Anslinger claiming that, "According to all the documents we have been examining today, the major source [of narcotics] is Red Communist China."<sup>36</sup> Anslinger elaborated on the threat of China by postulating the Soviets' interest in illicit trafficking was for repaying debts owed to the Soviet Union in U.S. dollars. Anslinger added that the fact they were also poisoning America's youth seemed to matter little in Mao's regime. What is most striking about the *Chronoscope* interview is the way in which the journalists repeatedly inquire about Communist China's motives in trafficking illegal

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<sup>36</sup> Harry J. Anslinger, in "Chronoscope" (New York, NY Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), 1954 <http://ahiv.alexanderstreet.com/View/777334>

narcotics. Although Anslinger attempts to explain that China's motives are financially driven, the interviewers' persistence reflects conventional wisdom of the early 1950s that Communists were using illegal drugs like a weapon comparable to espionage or military might. Anslinger did not indefatigably disagree, but used the common myth to his advantage by describing how China supports the export of a poison. This is just one of many examples of how Commissioner Anslinger astutely played off of public opinion to support the relevance and stature of his bureau.<sup>37</sup>

Fear of Communist foreign influences continued to fuel America's interest in anti-drug policies. By 1955 the idea of being over-run by communists wielding hypodermic needles rather than rifles had become a major concern to politicians in Washington.<sup>38</sup> Seven members of Congress spoke on the House Chamber floor in 1954 about the evils of communism and either cited Anslinger directly or included articles written by the Commissioner. One of them, Congressman Fred E. Busbey of Illinois, felt that even the long sentences provided for in the Boggs Act were insufficient for communist-supplied dope peddlers who were poisoning America's juvenile population. To get "at the very heart of the whole treacherous narcotics problem" Congressman Busbey introduced House Resolution 8700, which would make the death penalty or life imprisonment mandatory for anyone convicted of selling narcotics to persons under twenty-one years old.<sup>39</sup> While H.R. 8700 failed to reach a vote in 1954, the U.S. Senate did pass a resolution to authorize the first nationwide investigation of the illicit narcotics

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<sup>37</sup> See: "A Curb on Narcotics," (1954, Nov 20). *New York Times (1923-Current File)*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/113034188?accountid=14696>

<sup>38</sup> James A. Inciardi, Editor, *Handbook of Drug Control in the United States*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1990), 42.

<sup>39</sup> Congressman Fred E. Busbey commenting on H.R. 8700, April 2, 1954, *Congressional Record*, 83<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 100: 4540-4541.

traffic, drug addiction, and the treatment of drug addicts, with the objective of improving the Federal Criminal Code and enforcement procedures dealing with marijuana and other harmful drugs.

Five years after the Boggs Bill passed, months of testimony and Senate hearings culminated in a congressional review that led to the passage of the Narcotic Control Act of 1956. This new legislation amended U.S. Federal Internal Revenue Code of 1954 and the Narcotic Drugs Import and Export Act to provide even more effective measures in restricting narcotic drugs and marijuana. The new laws lengthened minimum sentences and allowed imposition of the death penalty on anyone over eighteen years old who provided heroin to underage juveniles. Another section of the act required that all those still legally in possession of heroin, including legitimate distributors like pharmacists, turn their inventory over to authorities. From then on, the American Government considered heroin a national contraband narcotic.<sup>40</sup>

Commissioner Harry Anslinger was a fervent crusader for international narcotics control and contributed more than any other individual to influence America's interest in anti-drug law enforcement prior to the Nixon Administration. In addition to promoting harsh punishment for illegal drug abusers and traffickers, Anslinger worked to expand the size and authority of the Federal Narcotics Bureau. The Narcotic Control Act of 1956 he supported not only doubled maximum fines and mandatory sentencing provided by the Boggs Act, but it also contained provisions which greatly expanded anti-drug law enforcement activities. The bill granted U.S. Customs Bureau and FBN officers authority to carry firearms, service search warrants, and make arrests without judicial approval for

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<sup>40</sup> Musto, *Drugs in America*, 276.

“violations committed in their presence.”<sup>41</sup> Funding to organize a federal agent training school was allocated, and special permission was granted to intercept telephone calls between suspected narcotics traffickers.

Most significantly the new legislation enabled Anslinger to declare an all-out war against heroin, which he said was coming primarily from Communist China, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, France, Italy, and Mexico. In 1959 he reported to Congress that heavier mandatory jail sentences combined with international narcotics control efforts had led to a decline in the number of drug addicts. However, the Commissioner insisted most of the West Coast supply of heroin continues to flow from Communist Red China by way of Hong Kong. By way of illustration, Mr. Anslinger told Congress that the bureau in January of 1959 obtained indictments in San Francisco of thirty people believed to be “part of the Communist conspiracy.” The Commissioner explained, “These fellows that we picked up, the correspondence indicated they were calling each other ‘comrade’ and it undoubtedly was a communist heroin ring. This case involved at least 270 pounds of heroin brought into the United States from Communist China over a period of several years, a very substantial operation.”<sup>42</sup> By continuing to associate communism with international narcotics control, Anslinger proved effective at using public hysteria about foreign influences to promote anti-drug law enforcement interests.

Public hysteria generated by fears of foreign communist influences may have contributed to the passage of strict punishments for anti-narcotics law violators, but such callous measures seem to have had little effect on the overall drug problem. By the time

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<sup>41</sup> “The Control of Illicit Drug Traffic,” *Congressional Record* 102: 7283-84.

<sup>42</sup> North American, Newspaper Alliance, (1959, Mar 22). “Narcotic Addicts Found in Decline.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/114801263?accountid=14696>



Nixon's drug war was in full swing in 1973, no one had been executed under the 1956 Narcotic Control Act. According to a Washington lawyer named Rufus King, who's book *The Drug Hangup* surveys addiction in the twentieth century, several Federal judges refused outright to impose the mandatory sentences dictated by the 1956 statute. Juries often returned "not guilty" verdicts because the punishment did not seem to fit the crime and many courts became clogged, because plea-bargaining was not permitted.<sup>43</sup> In 1962 President Kennedy unobtrusively pardoned dozens who had been sentenced under the 1956 act. This precedent can be argued to have dampened much of the deterrent effect punitive mandatory sentencing laws were intended to have when passed by the Congress.

The policies of John F. Kennedy relieved some of the draconian effects of these laws and led to a decline of Harry Anslinger's influence after three decades of political and popular support. In 1962, Commissioner Anslinger resigned from the FBN and a Conference on Drug Abuse to reevaluate America's drug policies was hosted at the White House. As a result, the Presidential Commission on Narcotic and Drug Abuse was established and an initial report was published the following year. Recommendations included relaxation of mandatory minimum sentences, increased appropriation for drug abuse research, and the dismantling of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics along with a transfer of many of its functions to the Justice and Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) departments. The HEW Department would assume responsibility for legitimate

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<sup>43</sup> One of the first "exemplary" defendants convicted under the 1956 Narcotics Act was Gilbert Zaragoza, a 21-year old epileptic Mexican-American with an I.Q. in the low seventies, who was sentenced to life imprisonment for selling heroin to a 17-year-old addict-informant. See James M. Markham, "Earlier Efforts and Errors in War on Drugs," *New York* (1973, Jan 06), pp. 16. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/119709785?accountid=14696>

distribution and research, while Justice would be given the mission of investigating and reducing illicit traffic.<sup>44</sup>

After resigning as head of the FBN, Anslinger served as United States' Representative to the United Nations Narcotics Commission for two years after which he retired. His days of fighting foreign influences and emphasizing international narcotics control came to a winter's end, and the medical profession emerged as an authoritative voice in saying what constitutes legitimate use of narcotics and treatment of drug abuse in regards to national drug policies.

#### *Phase 4: Backlash to the 1960s Counterculture Movement*

During the late 1960s, a new season of public hysteria commenced with a backlash to the significant counterculture movement. Suspected communist influences on United States' society extended beyond drug peddling to the manipulation of a rising generation of America's youth. Conservatives like Richard Nixon viewed the 1960's counterculture movement, which included peace loving, drug-using hippies and far more radical activist groups, as anti-American. Nixon championed the voice of America's "silent majority," which he believed was united in identifying the counterculture movement as a leading cause for the nation's decay and declining ability to overcome foreign influences like communism.

U.S. Government leaders made attempts to respond to changes in American society throughout the late 1960s, but these measures generally lacked an international focus. Drug Abuse Control Amendments of 1965 passed to protect the public health and safety by changing the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to establish the Bureau of

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<sup>44</sup> David F. Musto, *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotic Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 240-241.

Drug Abuse Control (BDAC) within HEW Department for restricting depressant, stimulant, and counterfeit drugs.<sup>45</sup> In 1966, the Narcotic Addict Rehabilitation Act (NARA) provided that addicts charged with violating Federal laws could opt for treatment under the care of the U.S. Surgeon General, with charges being held in abeyance, to be dropped if improvement was shown within three years of commencing a structured rehabilitation program.<sup>46</sup>

The national narcotic problem was examined again in 1967. Despite a litany of new laws, drug use had become representative of protest and social rebellion during the era's atmosphere of political unrest. On January 14, San Francisco's Golden Gate Park filled with twenty thousand gyrating young raggedly clothed meanderers who flocked together to share poetry, chant mantras, and listen to psychedelic bands like Moby Grape and the Jefferson Airplane.<sup>47</sup> Illegal barbiturates like LSD were distributed and passed around like candy, and the emerging hippie movement was on its way to becoming a precursor to militant anti-war opposition that would derail Lyndon Johnson's ambitions for a second term and nearly destruct Nixon's Vietnam War exit strategy (known as Vietnamization). As a result of the hippie movement, social stigmatization previously associated with drugs lessened and abuse became a more mainstream part of life.

President Johnson reacted to the counterculture movement by calling on the nation's government to act and approve international narcotics control efforts. In a special message sent to Congress on February 6 about crime in the United States,

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<sup>45</sup> This act marks the point in U.S. History when anti-drug law enforcement would no longer be based on the tax power of the federal government but instead derived from the interstate commerce clause of the Constitution. See Musto, *Drugs in America*, 310.

<sup>46</sup> S B Friedman ; G L Horvat ; R B Levinson, "Narcotic Addict Rehabilitation Act - Its Impact on Federal Prisons," *Contemporary Drug Problems, Volume:11 Issue:1* Dated:(Spring 1982) Pages:101-111. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=91675>

<sup>47</sup> Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland* (New York: Scribner, 2008).  
CBS News, "The Emerging Hippie Movement, January 1967."

Johnson devoted a small portion to advocating the control of dangerous drugs. “If we are to succeed in controlling narcotics and dangerous drugs,” he said, “we must work in concert with other nations. Most illicit narcotics –particularly heroin—come from and through other nations to our shores. Drugs, like epidemic diseases, must be controlled effectively everywhere.”<sup>48</sup> Ironically, the emphasis of anti-drug efforts at this time was not on substances known to be widely proliferated among hippie groups like marijuana or LSD, but instead on opium and heroin.

One of the most overlooked and underrated contributions to the origins of Nixon’s drug war was ratification of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. A month after urging congressional support for his anti-crime bill, President Johnson requested the Senate’s approval for United States accession to the UN sponsored treaty. The 1961 Single Convention was designed to accomplish several objectives: combine nine other international agreements on narcotics dating all the way back to 1912, reduce the number of agencies controlling drug traffic, and provide control over the production of raw materials needed in order to produce narcotic drugs. In addition to consolidating earlier agreements, the convention established a single international narcotics control board, with permanent headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The United States was now ready to join fifty-four other countries in ratifying a new international law against drugs, despite spending over seven years debating whether or not to do so.<sup>49</sup> Although the United States

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<sup>48</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson: "Special Message to the Congress on Crime in America.," February 6, 1967. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=28394>  
Special to the New York Times, “Text of President Johnson's Special Message to Congress on Crime in United States.” (1967, Feb 07). *New York Times (1923-Current File)*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/117611137?accountid=14696>

<sup>49</sup> Special to the New York Times, “Approval Urged of Narcotics Pact: Senate Asked to Back ’61 International Convention.” (1967, Mar 09). *New York Times (1923-Current File)*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/118153036?accountid=14696>

instigated the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the Senate finally ratified the measure under Johnson's watch. The International law provided a cornerstone to the international control system by obliging signatory nations to limit certain drug production, eradicate unlicensed cultivation, suppress illicit trafficking, and co-operate with other nations in order to achieve the treaty's aims and objectives.<sup>50</sup> In the spring of 1967 however, little fanfare or publicity was given to final Congressional approval. The New York Times, for instance, did not even find its passage headline worthy for its periodical. Little did publishers know that Richard Nixon's international approach to narcotics control would rely heavily on leverage provided by the UN Single Convention of 1961. Much like the 1914 Harrison Act and the 1937 Marijuana Tax Act passed decades earlier,<sup>51</sup> the new ratification slipped into law without any heightened awareness or expressed interest from the public.

Following the hippies' 1967 summer of love, President Johnson became more concerned about his administration's lack of effectiveness in executing anti-drug law enforcement and made modest attempts to modify the federal government's domestic strategy. Johnson submitted a reorganization plan to Congress on February 7, 1968, that would abolish the Department of Treasury's Bureau of Narcotics, including the office of Commissioner of Narcotics. Since Harry Anslinger's resignation, the FBN had fallen into disarray and succumbed to internal corruption and administrative backbiting. Unless

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Harry Anslinger had originally opposed the Convention, because he supported encouraging stricter adherence to the 1953 Opium Protocol. For more about Anslinger's involvement in the 1961 Single Convention, see:

U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian, "Organization of Foreign Policy; Information Policy; United Nations; Scientific Matters; Narcotics," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume XXV*. Accessed Mar. 15, 2013:

<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v25/ch9>

<sup>50</sup> David R. Bewley-Taylor, *The United States and International Drug Control, 1909-1997*, (London: Pinter, 1999), 6-7.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

Congress voted against the president's proposal within sixty days, the bureau's activities would be reassigned. On April 8, that is exactly what happened. Both the floundering Bureau of Drug Abuse Control (BDAC) and the fledging Bureau of Narcotics were combined to create a new federal agency within the U.S. Department of Justice. It would be officially known as the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD), and agents would be directly responsible to Attorney General Ramsey Clark.<sup>52</sup>

Johnson's administration may have been concerned about the nation's growing drug problem, but domestic challenges to law and order seemed to steer it away from international narcotics control. By the summer of 1968 a string of riots were ravaging across the country, and no end was in sight for the war in Vietnam. The president called a cabinet meeting and demanded to know whether the Communists were behind the protests and violence. Attorney General Ramsey Clark said there simply was not enough evidence to prove Communist instigators were to blame.<sup>53</sup> However, others disagreed.

It was in this tumultuous climate that Richard Nixon emerged from the ashes of political defeat and positioned himself to regain the national spotlight and enter the race for The White House. Whatever the causes, whatever the complexities, politicians and pundits viewed children fleeing traditional middle-class homes to find their way to San Francisco's drug-infested Haight-Ashbury District, the riots and street crime, flag burning and antiwar marches, by a disambiguating name: the law-and-order issue.<sup>54</sup> Like any other nation, the insurgent youth nation had its spectrum of diverse views. With an increasing number of militant activists subscribing to Marxist dogmatism, clashes between New Left factions took on the characteristics of revolutionary cultists.

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<sup>52</sup> For more about FBN corruption charges see: John C. Williams, *The Protectors*, 182-185.

<sup>53</sup> Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 199.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

“Participatory democracy” became the nametag for the New Left ideology. Timothy Leary served as its voice when he coined the phrase, “Turn on, tune in, drop out,” and recommended running away from political participation in government. As Nixonland author Rick Perlstein concludes, “The notion of the ‘Summer of Love’ as some kind of untroubled idyll became impossible for the media to sustain: too many desperate flower children were addicted to hard drugs, turning tricks to survive.”<sup>55</sup>

One of the themes that ran through Nixon’s relationship with hippies and protestors was that he believed they were naïve, spoiled young kids being manipulated by communist party instigators. They were either willing participants or hapless pawns. Activists like “Hanoi Jane” Fonda would become prime examples. Her foray overseas and interlude with Soviet leaders epitomized the exact kind of naiveté Nixon believed was fracturing the solidarity of his great nation. In this sense Nixon’s attitude towards the counterculture was informed by his concerns about international relations.

In his run for the presidency in 1968, Richard Nixon labeled the law and order issue as a graver “national disorder.” In an article published by *Reader’s Digest*, Nixon stated that, “The symptoms are everywhere manifest: in the public attitude toward police, in the mounting traffic in illicit drugs, in the volume of teenage-arrests, in campus disorders and the growth of white collar crime.” “Far from becoming a great society,” he said, “Ours is becoming a lawless society.” The future president was quick to connect this disorder to the nation’s foreign issues, by concluding, “Thus we find that many who oppose the war in Vietnam excuse or ignore or even applaud those who protest that war by disrupting parades, invading government offices, burning draft cards, blocking troop

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 210-213.

trains, or desecrating the American flag.”<sup>56</sup> For Nixon, crime, disregard for federal laws, and drugs all circumscribed the 1960s counterculture movement.

Richard Nixon continued to identify a connection between drug-abusing hippies and Communist foreign influences even a quarter of a century after his first successful presidential campaign. In his final memoir published in 1994, Nixon offers a visit to the past in his comments about the future by stating, “The 1960s counterculture created a moral and spiritual vacuum that weakens the foundations of American society.” He goes on to say, “The glorification of recreational drug use, from which the wealthy and middle class have only recently begun to recoil, has contributed to the emergence of a permanent urban underclass. The self-indulgent notions of no-fault living, the cult of victimization, the futility of work, and the inherent injustice of American society, which the counterculture promoted, have corroded the respect for merit and personal striving, which are the human virtues surest to help individuals grow, develop moral codes, and achieve success.”<sup>57</sup> One could easily mistake this rhetoric for stump speeches that were commonplace during the summer of 1968.

Nixon pledged during his 1968 campaign for president “the real voice of America” would be heard. In his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, Tricky Dick personified the problem of crime and violence in America by declaring his administration would have a new cabinet and a new Attorney General to reestablish law and order for the country.<sup>58</sup> The Republican Party’s nominee backed this pledge up by criticizing the languid domestic focus of President Johnson’s Justice

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Nixon, *Beyond Peace*, 234-237.

<sup>58</sup> Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 304-307.

CBS News, “Nixon Accepts Nomination, 1968.”



Department. During a campaign visit to his boyhood home in California, Nixon blamed the Democrats for their laxity on narcotics control. By way of contrast he pledged to arrest traffic in narcotics by: first seeking out the day after he takes office in January the cooperation and assistance of friendly nations, “which have been made conduits for drugs.” Second, he would establish “multinational commissions with neighboring and other countries to stem the flow of drugs along our common borders and at other points of entry into the United States.” Third, he pledged to triple the number of customs agents from 331 to 1,000, as suggested by Lyndon Johnson’s Presidential Crime Commission. Fourth, Nixon proposed accelerating the “development of tools and weapons to detect narcotics in transit,” to include what he described as a “long-overdue review of the smuggling laws of the United States.” Finally the candidate stated that he favored a more forceful implementation of the Narcotics Addict Rehabilitation Act of 1966. Nixon topped off a description of his narcotics control initiatives by claiming only 305 addicts had been treated out of a national total of 60,000 since the legislation was passed by Congress and signed into law.<sup>59</sup>

Richard Nixon’s deep seeded disdain for the 1960s counterculture movement was influenced by his keen interest in international relations. For the purposes of achieving victory in the 1968 presidential election, Nixon exploited public anxieties expressed by the so-called “silent majority” and offered initiatives that promised to return America to its preeminence. Nixon’s past record of being hard on Communist influences and supporting traditional values reassured the nameless dread that would come to be

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<sup>59</sup> Robert B. Semple Jr., Special to the New York Times, “Narcotics Laxity Alleged by Nixon,” (1968, Sep 17). *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, 1. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/118396407?accountid=14696>

analyzed as government's legitimation crisis.<sup>60</sup> Yet Tricky Dick also used his political acumen and pejorative paranoia to look below social surfaces and find opportunities that would allow the United States to dominate a global balance of power and establish the foundations for a generation of peace. The foreign influences associated with Communism, drug-using hippies, and antiwar protestors mark the American history phase of public hysteria that directly led to Nixon's drug war. Narcotics abuse and the counterculture movement posed frustrating obstacles to his foreign policy strategy, thus requiring immediate action upon his arrival to the Presidency of the United States.

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<sup>60</sup> See Jurgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, transl. by Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 46. "Input crises have the form of a legitimation crisis; the legitimizing system does not succeed in maintaining the requisite level of mass loyalty while steering imperatives taken over from the economic system are carried through. ...The legitimation crisis by contrast, is directly an identity crisis."

## Chapter 3: Nixon's Limited Drug War, 1969-1971

### Nixon's Priorities

Richard Nixon quickly asserted executive powers upon taking office of the President by issuing orders that significantly impacted U.S. foreign relations and international narcotics control. The candidate had promised to listen to nation's "silent majority" and committed to solve big government's legitimacy crisis; now the newly elected president Nixon felt compelled to deliver with his persona as the political leader dedicated to re-establishing law and order in America. Confronting drug abuse became a significant part of this initiative. One can see from the President's Public Papers that, "In enunciating the 'Nixon Doctrine,' in opening serious talks with the Soviet Union, in revitalizing America's alliances, in reviewing our defense posture, and in many other initiatives that are discussed," the Nixon Administration sought systematically and comprehensively to lay the groundwork for "a full generation of peace."<sup>61</sup> Although the electorate had been concerned about domestic issues, Nixon calculated political moves in the international arena would become instrumental in providing a path to world peace and domestic tranquility.

From the first week of his presidency, foreign policy concerned Richard Nixon the most. He devoted the majority of his time to the issue, because Nixon said, "there only the President can make some of the decisions." Beyond foreign policy, however,

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<sup>61</sup> Richard Nixon, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Richard Nixon: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, 1970* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 11.

the president told reporters he viewed the problems of America's cities and economic problems as the next most demanding issues of the day.<sup>62</sup>

Upon arrival to Washington, Richard Nixon was immediately hit with the realities of DC's bitter crime wave. A stark wakeup call about the ringing problem hit close to home after one of the employees at the White House fell victim to a purse snatching during the weekend before President Nixon's first press conference.<sup>63</sup> District of Columbia's situation was not an exception to the rule of law throughout the land. Serious problems of crime, disorder, social progress, and inflation all stood high on the nation's list of concerns as the arriving administration took office. These and many other pressing issues the new president faced were underlined by a more fundamental question: whether the U.S. Government itself was still sufficiently responsive and sufficiently effective to cope with the emerging needs of the 1970's and beyond.<sup>64</sup>

Nixon took emergency measures to deal with domestic problems and then used a similar approach to spark a national campaign against the flow of illegal drugs coming across America's borders. On January 31, 1969, the president announced a list of measures to push back against DC's crime wave. Since addiction to narcotic drugs was linked directly to the commission of criminal activities, one of Nixon's instructions included increasing the role of the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs to increase its role in federal laws.<sup>65</sup> Less than a month later The White House followed up with a memorandum for U.S. Attorney General Mitchell requesting the Department of

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<sup>62</sup> Richard Nixon: "The President's News Conference," January 27, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1942>

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Richard Nixon, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Richard Nixon*, 11.

<sup>65</sup> Richard Nixon: "Statement Outlining Actions and Recommendations for the District of Columbia.," January 31, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2053>

Justice to do even more to study the problem and employ additional personnel in a concentrated effort to look beyond the District of Columbia and find those cities which represent the major sources of supply.<sup>66</sup>

*Nixon Tasked his National Security Council*

Despite Nixon's passion for providing law and order at home, Vietnam remained a taxing burden during the president's first years in office. The conflict in Southeast Asia forced him to focus the majority of his time on crafting a tactical escalation of the war in order to provide a strategic withdrawal of U.S. forces. Unlike his predecessors, Nixon relied heavily on his National Security Advisor, Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, and the National Security Council (NSC) for guidance on foreign policy decisions. Under Kissinger, the NSC greatly increased in size and importance, as the White House became the foreign policy maker.<sup>67</sup>

In his memoirs, Richard Nixon expressed a clear and candid understanding of the dynamics of foreign policy. "It is true that the State Department should execute the game plan," he said, "But the President must reserve the right to call the plays." The former president acknowledged that, "While the White House staff is usually well-advised to stay out of foreign policy operations, a strong National Security Council is indispensable, both to ensure that the President's policy is followed and to coordinate it." Nixon believed foreign affairs were much more than diplomacy ushered by the State

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<sup>66</sup> Richard Nixon: "Memorandum on the Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Traffic in the District of Columbia.," February 22, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2406>

<sup>67</sup> Richard A. Best Jr., Specialist in National Defense, *The National Security Council: An Organizational Assessment* Congressional Research Service, 2010; NARA II Building; College Park, MD.

Department. According to him, “It also involves the activities of the Departments of Treasury, Defense, Commerce, and Justice, and the CIA.”<sup>68</sup>

In addition to emergency measures, executive memorandums, and relying on the National Security Council, President Nixon also empowered even the youngest members of his White House staff to deal with the crime and drugs issue. Egil “Bud” Krogh entered the Nixon camp as Deputy counsel to Richard Nixon during the 1968 transition period and received an assignment in February of 1969 to take the lead on President Nixon’s first drug war initiative. At twenty-nine years of age, Bud had recently completed law school at the University of Washington after completing four years of voluntary service in the U.S. Navy as a communications watch officer aboard *USS Yorktown* (CVS 10).<sup>69</sup> Now he had just been given general responsibility to be “the President’s policy man on law enforcement and narcotics control,”<sup>70</sup> which included working in places across the country and throughout the world along with representatives from the Departments of Justice, Treasury, State, and the intelligence agencies that worked in these areas. 1969 would be a year of learning through trial and error for Bud Krogh and the White House staff concerned with crime and drugs. They discovered early that all heroin consumed in the United States was being manufactured abroad but were not quite sure how to approach the issue internationally. As best they could, Bud and his colleagues spent time becoming aware of the scope of the problem nationally and in the District of Columbia before growing confident about their policy option suggestions to

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<sup>68</sup> Richard Nixon, *In the Arena: A Memoir of Victory, Defeat, and Renewal* (New York: Pocket Books, 1990), 324.

<sup>69</sup> For more information about Bud Krogh’s Navy career, see his memoir *Integrity: Good People, Bad Choices, and Life Lessons From the White House*, Egil “Bud” Krogh with Matthew Krogh, (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), 81-84.

<sup>70</sup>“Exit Interview with Egil M. Krogh on December 18, 1972,” *Nixon Presidential Materials Staff*, (Washington: National Archives and Records Administration, 1985), 2-3. Accessed on March 15, 2013:<http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/exitinterviews/krogh.php?print=yes>

the President. The administration would begin with unilateral efforts with the governments of Mexico, France, and Turkey, which were believed to be the main source areas.<sup>71</sup>

While Krogh's team dedicated themselves to identifying effective policies that could sustain national and international programs against drug abuse, Nixon accepted more evidence to justify immediate action. On June 6, 1969, the Special Presidential Task Force Relating to Narcotics, Marijuana and Dangerous Drugs issued its findings and recommendations. The report was a direct result of Richard Nixon's campaign pledge to the American people made on September 16, 1968, at Anaheim, California when he promised to "move against the source of drugs" and to "accelerate the development of tools and weapons to detect narcotics in transit."<sup>72</sup> Members from several different government agencies convened in March and spent months focusing almost entirely on marijuana and giving special attention to drug smuggling operations from Mexico into the United States. Their conclusions included recommendations to enhance border-crossing restrictions, develop better drug detection methods and devices, and improve border surveillance of aircraft and vessels near American borders. Most of the document remains withheld by the Nixon Library for national security reasons, but the final page of what has been made open to the public reemphasizes the President's belief that, "The consumption in the United States of drugs and narcotics produced abroad has reached such proportion as to be in the highest rank of those matters affecting the vital interests of

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>72</sup> Special Presidential Task Force Relating to Narcotics, Marijuana and Dangerous Drugs, "Task Force Report: Narcotics, Marijuana, and Dangerous Drugs Findings and Recommendations," Operation Intercept Task Force Tab; Egil Krogh, Box 30; Nixon Presidential Materials White House Special Files: Staff Members and Office Files; NARA; Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, CA.

the nation.”<sup>73</sup> White House senior advisor John Ehrlichman summarized the entire thirty-five page report into one sentence for his boss by saying, “The task force recommends that the Mexican government be forced into a program of defoliation of the marijuana plants (using borrowed or leased equipment from the United States) by commencing a campaign of strict enforcement and customs inspection at the border.”<sup>74</sup>

Thus, the first salvo in Nixon’s drug war aimed at Mexico and was justified by the findings of his presidential task force. Three days after the findings and recommendations report was issued, high-level U.S. Government representatives met with their counterparts in Mexico City to consider all aspects of the illegal traffic in narcotics, marijuana, stimulants, and hallucinogenic drugs between the two neighboring countries. Deputy Attorney General Richard Kleindienst attempted to convince the Diaz Ordaz government of the urgent need to crack down on drugs but observed little commitment towards initiating any major programs. As Newsweek reporter Elaine Shannon describes in her 1988 book on the drug war, *Desperados: Latin Drug Lords, U.S. Lawmen, and the War America Can’t Win*, “The Mexican officials were cordial but noncommittal. Kleindienst grew visibly annoyed as he realized that the sessions were, in the words of an aide, ‘just an exercise in hospitality.’”<sup>75</sup> G. Gordon Liddy, one of the infamous convicts from the Watergate break-in, was involved with combating narcotics prior to joining the White House “plumbers unit.” He served as a senior advisor in the Department of Treasury at the time of the American delegation’s visit to Mexico and recalled that, “The Mexicans, using diplomatic language of course, told us to go piss up a

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>74</sup> John Ehrlichman, “White House Memorandum to the President,” White House Central Files: Subject Files; FG 221, Box 5; Nixon Presidential Materials Project; NARA, Yorba Linda, California.

<sup>75</sup> Elaine Shannon, *Desperados: Latin Drug Lords, U.S. Lawmen, and the War America Can’t Win*, (New York: Viking Press, 1988), 47.



rope. The Nixon administration didn't believe in the United States taking crap from any foreign government. Its reply was Operation Intercept.”<sup>76</sup>

### Operation Intercept

Operation Intercept was a deliberate action authorized by President Nixon to effectively persuade the Mexican government to act more aggressively against marijuana and heroin production. After the passive response to Washington from Mexican leaders, Richard Nixon authorized an action task force to perform confidential work whose accomplishments shall only be released by the White House. He ordered government-wide support for the task force and said its work must be given high priority, “because of the alarming increase during the past three years in the consumption of marijuana in particular by our Nation’s youth.” Nixon’s memorandum designated John Ehrlichman, Counsel to the President, with the authority and responsibility to consider and resolve any problems which might arise and requested each Cabinet Officer and Agency head give his Department’s unqualified support to the task force in terms of cooperation, facilities, resources and personnel wherever and however possible.<sup>77</sup> On July 14, 1969, President Nixon sent a special message to Congress, in which he identified drug abuse as “a serious national threat.” The President called for a comprehensive anti-drug policy to be placed at both state and federal levels, citing a dramatic jump in drug-related juvenile arrests and street crime between 1960 and 1967 as his justification (juvenile arrests involving the use

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<sup>76</sup> G. Gordon Liddy, *Will: The Autobiography of G. Gordon Liddy*, (St. Martin Paperbacks, 1998), 185.

<sup>77</sup> Richard Nixon, “White House Memorandum to the President, June 27, 1969;” White House Central Files: Subject Files; FG 221, Box 5; Nixon Presidential Materials Project; National Archives and Records Administration, Yorba Linda, California.

of drugs had risen by almost 800 percent<sup>78</sup>). He made it clear in this message America was going to work hard to deliver on the promises made to citizens of the United States.

At 2:30PM on Sunday, September 21, 1969, President Nixon announced the commencement of an anti-drug measure called Operation Intercept<sup>79</sup>. Under the direction of U.S. Customs Department Commissioner Myles Ambrose, every vehicle crossing the Mexican border would be subject to a three-minute inspection. He commanded his Customs agents by flying down to the border from Los Angeles and commented that, “The first day it was just incredible. The backup was as far as you could see—it was miles and miles.” “After that,” he said, “people realized they couldn’t get across, so they turned around and didn’t bother trying. And there were all kinds of screams. I mean we had screams from congressmen.”<sup>80</sup> The operation lasted two weeks and had tremendous economic repercussions on both sides of the border.

Despite loud objections from shocked Mexican leaders and Americans living near the border, the Nixon Administration declared Operation Intercept a success and proved to the world the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government was serious about narcotics control and its desire to confront drug abuse. When the border crossings backed up and traffic flow came to a screeching halt, those personally affected reacted in shock and horror. Phone calls went out from angry individuals who demanded a remedy to the situation. Mexicans expressed increasing agitation over what they felt was a blatant

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<sup>78</sup> Nixon claimed that New York City alone had records of some 40,000-heroin addicts, and the number was rising between 7000 and 9000 a year. Richard Nixon, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Richard Nixon: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, 1969* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 513-518.

<sup>79</sup> Frontline, “Thirty Years of America’s Drug War: A Chronology,” *Drug Wars, Frontline, PBS WGBH Educational Foundation*. Accessed on March 15, 2013:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/drugs/cron/>

<sup>80</sup>“Interview with Myles Ambrose,” *Drug Wars, Frontline, PBS WGBH Educational Foundation*. Accessed on March 15, 2013:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/drugs/interviews/ambrose.html>

disregard for mutual agreements between the two nations to consult and cooperate with one another on matters of mutual interest. Mexico's foreign minister Carillo Flores resulted to taking an unusual step in diplomatic relations by forwarding a hand written note to the President of the United States requesting his government to correct the "excess" of an action that was proving "negligible in stopping the traffic of marihuana and drugs, but great in harming the economy of both side." In response to the personal note, Henry Kissinger advised Nixon to end the operation and sign a letter expressing warm regards and willingness to meet with the Mexicans on the issue, saying, "I am sure that the bilateral talks which will be held will be able to find ways to achieve the objectives of Operation Intercept with minimum disruption of this kind."<sup>81</sup>

The U.S. President followed diplomatic formalities by shooting off a more candid opinion to John Ehrlichman, in which he stated that the objectives of the operation have been accomplished. Nixon's reputation for consistently thinking strategically is further supported by the way he comments that, "It would appear that this is the time to negotiate since we have proved our point pretty effectively."<sup>82</sup> Without objections from Mexican leaders and Kissinger's recommendation, who knows how long Operation Intercept may have gone on? The measure was terminated by mid-October and replaced by a new anti-drug agreement between the United States and its southern neighbor. "Operation Cooperation" was the new solution in which both countries collaborated and committed

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<sup>81</sup> White House Memorandum From Henry A. Kissinger to President Nixon, "Letter to you from Mexican Foreign Minister on Operation Intercept," Circa October 5, 1969; HE5-1 Narcotics, Box 17 "7/1/69 – 12/31/69;" White House Central Files: Subject Files; Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives and Records Administration, Yorba Linda, CA.

<sup>82</sup> White House Memorandum From President Nixon to John Ehrlichman, "Operation Intercept, has Accomplished its Objectives," Circa October 5, 1969; HE5-1 Narcotics, Box 17 "7/1/69 – 12/31/69;" White House Central Files: Subject Files; Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives and Records Administration, Yorba Linda, CA.

to regularly scheduled meetings that would produce a shared strategy to fight drug abuse and reduce the movement of illegal contraband moving across the border.

Kate Doyle, Senior Analyst of U.S. policy in Latin America assesses Operation Intercept served United States interests in several ways. According to her article “Operation Intercept: The Perils of Unilateralism,” the radical measure was first the fulfillment of a campaign promise by a new Republican president to show that he could be tough on lawlessness, and thus earned Nixon domestic political points in his first year of office. Second, it served as the opening shot in what would rapidly become a global war on drugs—a war that would far outlast the Nixon White House and would occupy successive administrations for decades to come. Finally, it was an exercise in the politics of coercion, whereby Washington used economic and political blackmail to pressure Mexico into moving on an issue that mattered to the United States<sup>83</sup>.

Despite a public relations campaign designed by Nixon aides to promote the operation, press coverage on both sides of the border was derisively critical of the U.S. Government’s unilateral attempt to halt the flow of narcotics into its country. Statistics on the amount of drugs seized and smugglers captured were far lower than expected. G. Gordon Liddy points out in his autobiography, that the goal of Operation Intercept was not, in fact, to freeze the flow of drugs. "For diplomatic reasons the true purpose of the exercise was never revealed. Operation Intercept, with its massive economic and social disruption, could be sustained far longer by the United States than by Mexico. It was an

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<sup>83</sup> Kate Doyle, “Operation Intercept: The Perils of Unilateralism,” The National Security Archive, George Washington University, April 13, 2003. Accessed March 15, 2013: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB86/#usdocs>  
Doyle’s *Electronic Briefing Book on Operation Intercept* provides links to primary source documents and analysis of the Nixon government’s unilateral attempt in 1969 to halt the flow of drugs from Mexico into the United States.

exercise in international extortion, pure, simple, and effective, designed to bend Mexico to our will.”<sup>84</sup>

The outcome of Operation Intercept also demonstrates how Henry Kissinger and the National Security Council served as strategic players in the Nixon administration. The White House required Justice and State Department officials to forward major national security and foreign policy memorandums to Mr. Kissinger for him to review prior to landing on the President’s desk. On September 22, 1969, a day after announcing the commencement of Operation Intercept, President Nixon requested a recommendation on the heroin problem. A week later, Dr. Kissinger issued a subsequent memorandum to follow up with the appropriate department staffs, and in response the Secretary of State and the Attorney General submitted a joint preliminary analysis of the situation. Substantial progress in reaching a permanent solution of this highly complex problem would require according to them, “...not only coordinated efforts with a number of other countries but also parallel efforts with the United States.”<sup>85</sup>

#### *Foreign Cooperation Alternatives*

The analysis for the President presented a three-phase program to ensure effective foreign cooperation with the United States Government. Phase one would be a diplomatic notification period. The principal target nations, France, Turkey, and Mexico were already aware of American concerns with the drug problem, and knew about several measures, which the U.S. had previously proposed to control the traffic in heroin. Phase

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<sup>84</sup> G. Gordon Liddy, *Will: The Autobiography of G. Gordon Liddy*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 133-135.

<sup>85</sup> Confidential Memorandum for the President from Acting Secretary of State, Elliot L. Richardson, and Attorney General John N. Mitchell, October 20, 1969, CIA Research Electronic Search Tool. Approved for release 2008/08/13; National Archives and Records Administration Building; College Park, MD.

two consisted of technical and financial assistance for principle target nations to help facilitate their government's actions against illegal substances. If they did not comply, sanctions would be put in place as part of phase three. The analysis concluded by offering predictions made by the BNDD about global reductions of illegal substances following anticipated implantation of the paper's recommendations. The first year would see 10-20% reductions, the second 20-40%, and the fifth year at 40-60%. The memo was an optimistic plan of attack the President would adopt in the ensuing months as the drug war raged on.

The White House entertained a variety of options in dealing with international narcotics control. Harry H. Schwartz, Chairman of the President's Heroin Task Force, sent another follow-up report to the Executive Office of the President just eleven days after the first for the National Security Advisor's review on October 31, 1969. The confidential report again identified Turkey, Mexico, and Southeast Asia as the global suppliers of the illicit opium market. Turkey and Mexico were highlighted as the sources of about 80% and 15% respectively for the heroin smuggled into the United States each year.<sup>86</sup>

The reports funneled through the National Security Council offered several alternative means of controlling narcotics produced in the interim period before state authorities would prohibit the drug's production. Pre-emptive buying of crude opium was the first suggestion presented, but Nixon's Commissioner of Customs, Myles Ambrose, would eventually debunk this idea. When asked about this recommendation, Ambrose prudently said, "You can grow opium on probably 70% of the earth's surface.

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<sup>86</sup> Confidential Memorandum for Mr. Henry A. Kissinger from Harry H. Schwartz, October 31, 1969, CIA Research Electronic Search Tool, Approved for release 2005/11/23; National Archives and Records Administration; College Park, MD.

And a mile or two square area would supply every heroin addict in the world. I'm in the wrong business if you're going to do this kind of thing."<sup>87</sup> He curtly followed up with a plausible outcome of having to buy out more and more growers each year.

The Nixon administration considered the United Nations as a possible avenue to further support for a global framework of controlling an international monopoly on illegal drugs. This idea relied extensively on cooperation with foreign partners and presupposed effective enforcement of controls, a feat proven less than attainable at the time. Other alternatives presented consisted of a world abolition of opium altogether. This measure proposed relying on synthetic replacements to meet the needs of legitimate medical requirements. The final recommendation was to rely exclusively on domestic production of gum opium. However, the report disclosed there is little reason to believe that this would diminish the illicit supply.

#### *President Nixon's Drug War Legislation had International Ramifications*

President Nixon placed high priority on legislation during 1970 that would contribute to international narcotics control and American drug abuse treatment programs. He was determined to balance the federal budget in 1969 but protected funding for the war on drugs. His administration cut more than \$7 billion out of spending plans in order to produce a surplus in 1970, and in spite of the fact that Congress reduced revenues by \$3 billion, Nixon pledged to recommend a balanced budget for 1971. While determining any budget requires hard decisions, President Nixon told the Congress in his State of the Union address on January 22, 1970 that some spending programs "which would benefit some of the people" would have to be cut "when their net effect would

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<sup>87</sup> Frontline, "Interview with Myles Ambrose," WGBH Educational Foundation, PBS, 1995.

result in price increases for all people.” “It is time to quit putting good money into bad programs,” he said. “Otherwise, we will end up with bad money and bad programs.”<sup>88</sup>

In reference to budget cuts, law enforcement programs were exempt. In fact, President Nixon ordered an increase, rather than a cut, for federal agencies responsible for enforcing the nation’s laws. This fiscal priority reflects Nixon’s desire to place fighting social evils at the top of his priorities. It was an adamant stance against crime that laid the foundations for his war on drugs. Nixon spoke out about crime by saying,

We have heard a great deal of overblown rhetoric during the sixties in which the word “war” has perhaps too often been used—the war on poverty, the war on misery, the war on disease, the war on hunger. But if there is one area where the word “war” is appropriate it is in the fight against crime. We must declare and win the war against the criminal elements, which increasingly threaten our cities, our homes, and our lives.

The president reminded lawmakers that, “Last year this administration sent to the Congress 13 separate pieces of legislation dealing with organized crime, narcotics, crime in the District of Columbia. None of these bills have reached my desk for signature.”<sup>89</sup> Nixon’s address expressed his frustration with a session of Congress that seemed unmoved by his agenda.

In addition to an intransigent Legislative Branch, the president faced additional challenges in executing his fight against international narcotics trafficking and drug abuse. Nixon was challenged in preventing his cabinet secretaries from becoming so protective of their respective bureaucracies, that conflicts of opinion prevented substantial progress from being achieved. The former chief executive surmises in his memoirs, “The one function that a President cannot delegate to anyone else is knocking

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<sup>88</sup> Richard Nixon, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Richard Nixon: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, 1970* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 11.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.



heads together when Cabinet and department heads engage in Washington's favorite game of battling for turf." He spoke from experience, saying, "Waging war in Vietnam abroad was not easy, but waging war at home against drugs... .was even more difficult."<sup>90</sup> Within the Nixon administration, department heads pledged cooperation, but then challenged fellow secretaries to protect their respective institution.

For instance, President Nixon had to sign a White House memorandum to his cabinet resolving differences of opinion in dealing with the responsibility of international narcotics control. After referring the matter to the Advisory Council on Executive organization, President Nixon reviewed their report on February 5, 1970 and approved a few recommendations. The first was that the BNDD should continue to represent the U.S. government in dealing with foreign law enforcement officials on narcotics questions. This excluded the Treasury Department's Customs Bureau from doing so, unless authorized by BNDD. The second was that BNDD should be the sole federal agency to control the narcotics area. Customs should support BNDD's efforts to reduce and eliminate the flow of narcotics into the United States and its intelligence network should be used to assist in overall the overall effort. The third recommendation designated the Attorney General as an authority who would resolve future disagreements on the matter.<sup>91</sup>

This document proves President Nixon relished the role of "knocking heads together," and that he exercised executive leadership to organize his global war on drugs.

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<sup>90</sup> Richard Nixon, *In the Arena: A Memoir of Victory, Defeat, and Renewal* (New York: Pocket Books, 1990), 326.

<sup>91</sup> The White House Memorandum from Richard Nixon to the Honorable William P. Rogers, Secretary of State, February 5, 1970; Box 1214; Subject Numeric File, 1970-1973; General Records of The Department of the State, Economic; Record Group 59; National Archives and Records Administration Building; College Park, MD.

From the early days of his presidency, relatively new institutions like the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs were given more jurisdiction and authority, and key individuals were appointed to become the generals of Nixon's campaign against narcotics abuse and the international illicit drug trade.

The rest of the year proved to be a productive one for the federal government in regards to approving new measures that supported Nixon's agenda. As a follow up to his winter address to Congress and the American people, President Nixon issued a proclamation designating the week beginning May 24, 1970 as Drug Abuse Prevention Week.<sup>92</sup> The Federal Government planned seven days full of activities to stress the importance of educating the American public about the nature and the dangers of drug abuse. The State Department was urged by the White House to take this opportunity to help its employees to become better informed about a subject that the President considered to be a pressing national problem. The hope of the administration was that Drug Abuse Prevention Week would call attention to the extent of the problem and would also encourage Americans throughout the country to support long-term programs to solve it.

For Nixon, cooperation with Congress and international partners was key to building a successful strategy to combat the drug problem and reduce crime. The spring drive to draw attention to America's drug problem led to legislative success that greatly influenced U.S. foreign and domestic policies. On August 12, 1970, Senator Murphy introduced a bill to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. This legislation would

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<sup>92</sup> The White House letter sent from Charles B. Wilkinson, Special Consultant to the President to The Honorable William P. Rogers, The Secretary of State, May 11, 1970; Folder INCO DRUGS 17 US 1/1/71, Box 1217; Subject Numeric File, 1970-1973; General Records of The Department of the State, Economic, Record Group 59, National Archives Building, College Park, MD.

provide funding for a program to control illegal international traffic in narcotics and withhold United States assistance to nations refusing to cooperate with international organizations like the United Nations in taking appropriate steps to restrict the flow of illicit international drugs.<sup>93</sup>

A stack of three bills made their way to the President's desk two months later that would have global ramifications and provide a solid foundation for Nixon's drug war. The Organized Crime Control Act materialized on October 15, 1970 with two sets of Senate hearings that concluded after twenty years of ongoing testimony and deliberation. Senator John L. McClellan, a Democrat from Arkansas, sponsored the bill, designed to constrain dubious gambling operations and provide federal grand juries with more potent powers to detain unmanageable witnesses. The law also authorized the U.S. Attorney General to protect state and federal witnesses, along with their families. The Witness Security measure, also referred to as the "Witness Protection Program," was a bi-product of this bill and has played a significant role in the successful prosecution of many high profile U.S. and foreign national drug traffickers.

The next significant bill passed by Congress in response to the President's anti crime, anti-drug initiative would have even more of a global reach. The 1970 Bank Secrecy Act was passed on October 26. In response to numerous reports of people bringing bags full of money into the United States from questionable origin and depositing large volumes of currency into American banks, Congress passed Public Law

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<sup>93</sup> National Security Decision Memorandums (NSDM) from Henry Kissinger to National Security Council; Folder 250/7/29/2 Box 14; National Security Decision Memorandums (NSDM), 1969-76; Record Group 273, National Archives and Records Administration Building; College Park, MD.

91-508, often referred to as the BSA.<sup>94</sup> This bill aimed at stopping foreign bank secrecy laws used to conceal illegal activities such as organized crime and drug trafficking. It also gave the Secretary of Treasury broad discretion about defining who was subject to the law and which financial records could be retained, in addition to requiring extensive paper trail records to be filled for currency transactions. Although not passed with much fan fare, this law and its subsequent alterations, has become a useful weapon in the global war on drugs.

The most publicly acclaimed act of 1970 in regards to Nixon's anti-crime initiative was the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act. Under this law passed the day after the Bank Secrecy Act, controlled substances were divided into five schedules (or classes) based upon their potential for abuse, accepted medical use, and accepted safety under medical supervision. This bill would become the legal foundation for Nixon's drug war and the government's fight against the abuse of banned substances. On the day President Nixon signed the act into law he remarked,

Fifteen months ago I sent an urgent request to the Congress for legislation in this field. I requested it because our survey of the problem of drugs indicated that it was a major cause of street crime in the United States. Those who have a drug habit find it necessary to steal, to commit crimes, in order to feed their habit. We found also, and all Americans are aware of this, that drugs are alarmingly on the increase in use among our young people. They are destroying the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people all over America, not just of college age or young people in their twenties, but the great tragedy: The uses start even in junior high school, or even in the late grades. Under these circumstances, this is a national problem. It requires an urgent action on the part of the Federal

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<sup>94</sup> United States Internal Revenue Service, "Part 4 Examining Process, Chapter 26 Bank Secrecy Act, Section 5 Bank Secrecy Act History and Law," *Internal Revenue Manual*. Accessed February 5, 2013: [http://www.irs.gov/irm/part4/irm\\_04-026-005.html#d0e62](http://www.irs.gov/irm/part4/irm_04-026-005.html#d0e62)

Government, and the Congress now has taken that action and, after 15 months, finally the bill will be signed.<sup>95</sup>

For all the praises, Nixon was astutely aware of the bill's limitations. While it called for 300 new federal drug law enforcement officers and extended the jurisdiction of the justice department, Nixon called upon the nation to do more. In particular, the president encouraged fellow Americans to look forward in the field of drug addiction. "This is enormously important," he said. Investigating the treatment of drug addicts was one of the reasons why the Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was represented at the bill's signing. "Because," said Nixon, "...once the individual who gets hooked on drugs is in that condition, he is one that we must have sympathy for."<sup>96</sup> From the beginning of Nixon's Administration, a clear distinction between drug addicts, and drug traffickers was made and reflected in the reactions to the 1970 Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act.

President Nixon considered the problem with narcotics and dangerous drugs to be more than a domestic issues requiring just within the United States. He sought to influence world leaders who could help him control what he perceived as harmful foreign influences upon society. When Congress was debating whether or not to approve Nixon's anti-drug legislation, the President continued to seek support from his national security advisor. After an afternoon conversation with Kissinger, Richard Nixon scribbled down notes of "ACTION for HAK," requesting the due date for his draft version of the President's Annual Review of American Foreign Policy be moved to

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<sup>95</sup> Richard Nixon: "Remarks on Signing the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970," October 27, 1970. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2767>

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

November 15, along with an additional section entitled “New Tasks for Diplomacy: e.g. hijacking, narcotics, pollution, and space.”<sup>97</sup> This personal note signed “RN” further proves the president was interested in utilizing his drug war as a tool in foreign relations.

President Nixon used the UN as a forum to advocate against harmful foreign influences like illegal drugs. In his *Address to the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations* on October 23, 1970, Nixon included a concise but significant portion about curbing narcotics traffic:

Drugs pollute the minds and bodies of our young people, bringing misery, violence, and human and economic waste. This scourge of drugs can be eliminated through international cooperation. I urge all governments to support the recent recommendations of the U.N. Commission on Narcotic Drugs, to take the first step toward giving them substance by establishing a United Nations Fund for Drug Control. And I urge all governments to support a strengthened narcotics treaty that would govern all production by restricting it solely to medical and scientific purposes. The United States has already circulated such a proposal for consideration at the next session of the U.N. Narcotics Commission.<sup>98</sup>

The president’s administration went to great lengths to ensure Nixon’s drug war would be included in official U.S. foreign policy. The National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM No. 102) contained President Nixon’s anticipated annual review of American foreign policy, and portions about narcotics were included. As a result, government departments and agencies included reactionary comments in secret documents that have since been declassified. In Response to NSSM No. 102, the Central

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<sup>97</sup> Richard Nixon, “Memorandum from President Nixon to Henry Kissinger, 1970/09/18 Document 00612,” Digital National Security Archive, George Washington University, Washington, D.C. Accessed Jan. 15, 2013: <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com/marketing/about.jsp>

<sup>98</sup> Richard Nixon, *Address to the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations*, October 23, 1970. Retrieved from: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2754>

Intelligence Agency (CIA) produced *A Review of Major International Developments During 1970*<sup>99</sup>. The document states:

Nineteen-seventy saw the launching of a major innovation in US foreign policy, reflecting the Administration's great concern over the serious impact on American society of rapidly increasing drug abuse and related crime. Convinced that controlling illegal importation and distribution of narcotic drugs was vastly more than a domestic problem, the US initiated a series of moves designed to secure the cooperation of a number of countries involved in or concerned with the production and distribution of opium and its derivative heroin.

The report then outlined specific goals of the United States. First it was to eliminate illegal opium production, second its conversion overseas into heroin, and third its illicit entry into the country. CIA corroborated the State Department's assessment that Turkey was estimated of producing 80 percent of the heroin entering the U.S., via France and Western Europe. Collaboration with French authorities was mentioned as an instrumental breakthrough in tackling the difficult problem of rooting out the clandestine laboratories there that convert Turkish opium into heroin for the drug traffickers supplying the American market. President Ordaz of Mexico was also included in the report. His administration was said to be working closely with US agencies to control the flow of narcotics from Mexico, which was determined to supply some 15 percent of the U.S. market for opium derivatives.

The Secretary of the Treasury was even more explicit in elevating Nixon's drug war to a matter of international relations. In response to NSSM 102, he said, "This Administration has made the drug problem a foreign policy issue and has taken initiatives in eliciting the cooperation of the Governments of Turkey, Mexico, and France." "In the

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<sup>99</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Response to NSSM No. 102: A Review of Major International Developments During 1970," November 1970, *Digital National Security Archive*, Retrieved Jan. 15, 2013: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.882004&res\\_dat=xri:dnsa&rft\\_dat=xri:dnsa:article:CVW00226](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.882004&res_dat=xri:dnsa&rft_dat=xri:dnsa:article:CVW00226)

past,” he continued, “the primary contact with foreign governments in this area had been almost exclusively limited to the enforcement level. Now, through the use of diplomacy, we have made a substantial advance toward our objectives.” These were first to make “processing and producing nations aware of the terror drugs can bring to our societies,” and the second to make, “those nations aware of our sense of urgency so that, even though their own immediate interest in tighter measures of control is less acute than our own, they are moving ahead with measurable progress.”<sup>100</sup> Secretary Kennedy’s remarks emphasized the way in which Nixon’s drug war would coerce other states to yield to America’s will. However, a week later the National Security Council edited the Secretary’s mentioning of Mexico, since they believed it to be “tantamount to saying that we forced their cooperation,” which would therefore “be disastrous in light of our past problems resulting from Operation Intercept and the extreme sensitivity of the Mexicans on this subject.”<sup>101</sup>

#### *Nixon’s Limited Drug War Focused on Turkey, France, and Mexico*

International origins of Nixon’s drug war were initially limited to a few foreign countries. After addressing the United Nations and appealing to dignitaries from around the globe, Nixon supported direct and in-direct engagement with the governments of Turkey, France, and Mexico. Nixon continued to concern himself with the primary objective of getting U.S. forces out of Vietnam and therefore delegated diplomatic

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<sup>100</sup> David M. Kennedy, “Memorandum to the Honorable Henry A. Kissinger,” Nov. 18, 1970, *Digital National Security Archive*, Retrieved Jan. 15, 2013: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.882004&res\\_dat=xri:dnsa&rft\\_dat=xri:dnsa:article:CVW00226](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.882004&res_dat=xri:dnsa&rft_dat=xri:dnsa:article:CVW00226)

<sup>101</sup> Arnold Nachmanoff, “Memorandum for Jeanne W. Davis: Treasury Submission on Narcotics Control for Annual Review,” Nov. 25, 1970, National Security Council, *Digital National Security Archive*, Retrieved Jan. 15, 2013: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.882004&res\\_dat=xri:dnsa&rft\\_dat=xri:dnsa:article:CVW00226](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.882004&res_dat=xri:dnsa&rft_dat=xri:dnsa:article:CVW00226)



messaging about his anti-drug initiatives to key players within the Executive branch.

These individuals worked with international partners throughout the world but achieved early successes in illegal narcotics supply reduction in three places: Turkey, France, and Mexico.

## TURKEY

Nixon's drug war amplified modest efforts made by President Lyndon Johnson to get involved with Turkey's opium exports and magnified U.S. diplomatic relations with its NATO ally in order to restrict the flow of illegal narcotics. From 1965 onwards, the Johnson administration's policy towards Turkey imposed a mix of foreign aid and diplomatic pressure. For instance, the White House authorized a \$3 million loan in 1968 to help Turkey cultivate alternative crops and prevent the diversion of poppy into illicit channels. To counter the incentive with diplomatic pressure, the United States government capped amounts of legal Turkish opiates that could be purchased for America's pharmaceutical industry and committed to increased import quotas from India. As an additional measure, U.S. trade representatives persuaded other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to do the same.<sup>102</sup>

Harvard trained political scientist and investigative journalist Edward Jay Epstein elaborates on Turkey and the *War of the Poppies* in his book *Agency of Fear: Opiates and Political Power in America*. First published in 1977 and then again in 1990, Epstein's work includes a detailed account of U.S. diplomatic relations with Turkey during the Nixon years. He argues Nixon and Kissinger's national security strategy dominated by realpolitik led U.S. officials towards the Mediterranean in their prosecution

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<sup>102</sup> Edward Jay Epstein, *Agency of Fear*, (New York, Putnam Books, 1977), 90.

of the illicit drug trade. Turkey was the one place where the White House could expect dramatic results, which is precisely what President Nixon desired most in regards to his anti-narcotics initiatives. Other countries like Burma, Laos, and Afghanistan lacked a strong enough central government to effect cohesive control over indigenous tribes growing and smuggling opium poppies. Iran was friendly towards U.S. interests at the time, but as Epstein points out, given the realities of oil politics, it was considered impolitic and futile to attempt to restrain the Shah from replanting poppy in his country.<sup>103</sup> Thus Turkey became a high priority during the initial stages of Nixon's war on drugs.

Declassified internal government documents substantiate Edward Epstein's investigative scholarship about the Nixon administration's keen interest in Turkey. The Task Force on Heroin Suppression Memorandum for the President sent to the White House in the late fall of 1969 declared the most effective approach to narcotics control would require pre-emptive buying of the entire poppy crop before any opium crude is produced. According to the memo, the opium poppy culture was already controlled in Turkey. By the exercise of eminent domain, the Turkish Government could appraise each grower's acreage and probable production, plow under, burn or chemically destroy the plants and pay the farmer for his crop. At the same time, the grower could be induced to plant substitute crops or whatever is feasible in alternative land use. In so

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<sup>103</sup> Edward Jay Epstein, "Part III: The Nixon Crusades, 'The War of the Poppies,'" *Agency of Fear*, Retrieved January 2013 from: <http://www.edwardjayepstein.com/agency/chap8.htm>

doing it was believed that the illicit market would be suddenly deprived of its major source of raw material and would be forced to drastic measures in adjustment.<sup>104</sup>

President Nixon soon agreed with the State Department's suggestion that U.S. Ambassador to Turkey William Handley should make a renewed effort to obtain the Turkish Prime Minister's agreement to destroy his nation's poppy crop. To assist in the effort, Dr. Kissinger recommended offering a \$5 million grant-financed commodity import program. If the Turks would not bite on that lucrative offer, the White House was willing to increase legal purchase of the 1970 crop, coupled with an agreement by the foreign partner to stop poppy production the following year. Since pre-emptive purchase activities of drugs would be an interagency effort Mr. Egil Krogh would be requested by the National Security Council to be freed from his Domestic Council assignments under senior advisor John Ehrlichman. His new assignment required him to travel to Turkey and supervise efforts to eliminate Turkey as a source of illegal opium production.<sup>105</sup>

Letters the White House had received from various individuals expressing interest in the matter may have influenced Dr. Kissinger's recommendation.<sup>106</sup> For instance, the president of U.S. Peoples Fund for the United Nations, a non-profit organization supporting the United Nations humanitarian projects, wrote the President on December 23, 1969.<sup>107</sup> He suggested the UN Division of Narcotic Drugs, headquartered in Geneva,

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<sup>104</sup> Confidential Memorandum for Mr. Henry A. Kissinger from Harry H. Schwartz, October 31, 1969, CIA Research Electronic Search Tool, Approved for release 2005/11/23; National Archives and Records Administration; College Park, MD.

<sup>105</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, Declassified Confidential White House Memo from Henry Kissinger to The Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Department of State, "Opium Production in Turkey," January 7, 1970. Folder INCO DRUGS TUR 6/1/70, NARA II, College Park, MD.

<sup>106</sup> Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., Whitehouse Memorandum from Theodore Eliot, Executive Secretary to the President to Mr. Henry A. Kissinger, "Letter of Mr. Evans re Subsidizing Foreign Farmers for not Growing Opium, January 19, 1970, Folder INCO DRUGS TUR 6/1/70, NARA II, College Park, MD.

<sup>107</sup> Dr. Luther H. Evans, Letter from Luther Evans to President Nixon, December 23, 1969, Folder INCO DRUGS TUR 6/1/70, NARA II, College Park, MD.

should expand worldwide efforts to eliminate cash crops from which narcotic drugs are produced at the source. Realizing such an initiative is rather complicated; Mr. Evans beseeched President Nixon to do more to supplement the U.N. Division's meager budget of \$75,000 for its worldwide narcotic crop subsistence program. The point of his letter was to notify the White House of his organization's support and urge the President to enlist support through private donations to the U.N. Division of Narcotic Drugs by issuing a statement to the mass media that would focus public attention to take at least this one logical step towards ending what he called an "international evil." The main justification for paying off poppy farmers was that it seems like the most logical means of getting to the root of the nation's drug problem. "We pay subsidies to gentlemen farmers for not growing certain crops," he said. "Why not a subsidy through the UN to farmers abroad to stop growing narcotic crops?" To him and countless others the United Nations was the logical vehicle appropriate to drive to the success of such a program on a global scale.

The White House eventually realized additional bilateral pressure on Turkey to eliminate all opium production could well be counterproductive. Kissinger was urged by Elliot Richardson to pursue a complete cessation of all opium production anywhere in the world in order to maximize pressure on Turkey to set a good example on the international stage.<sup>108</sup> The U.S. Treasury was prepared to delay or even disapprove Turkish requests for 850,000 tons of wheat, because Turkey had not been sufficiently forthcoming in restricting, or eliminating, opium production. The withholdings idea was recommended by Customs Bureau chief Eugene Rossides, who was irate over the approval of a \$40

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<sup>108</sup> Elliot L Richardson, Memorandum for Dr. Henry A. Kissinger from the Under Secretary of State, "Elimination of Turkish Opium Production," May 19, 1970. Folder INCO DRUGS TUR 6/1/70, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

million program loan for Turkey despite the country remaining insistent upon growing and exporting opium poppies. However, the Secretary of State felt very strongly that any measures the U.S. took that would be considered by Turkey to be punitive in nature would not advance the American goal of stemming the illicit diversion of opium and would do extensive damage to other exceedingly important aspects of U.S. relations with its Turkish friends.<sup>109</sup>

Turkish news reports provided additional proof American bilateralism was becoming counterproductive. A series of articles entitled “Opium Report” were published during 1970 in Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet*. Written by native journalist Ozgen Acar, considerable research appears to have gone into the preparation of the articles that were circulated to over 100,000 readers from July 5 to July 20. The stories are marked by xenophobic flourishes and vicious charges against the United States claiming the Americans’ opium war was resulting in the further impoverishment of the Turkish poppy farmer and a loss of foreign exchange earnings. Acar asserted that Turkey’s loss is other countries’ gain since world need for opium is on the rise. He also speculates that a major factor in U.S. interests in choking off Turkish opium production include the desire for American manufacturers to be able to expand the synthetic narcotics market by eliminating natural competition.<sup>110</sup>

Turkish news reports about the American led initiative to control narcotic drugs preceded multilateral meetings about international narcotics control. While admitting

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<sup>109</sup> Joseph J. Sisco, Draft letter for U.S. Secretary of State, in a memorandum from Joseph J. Sisco to Alexis Johnson, “Treasury Position on Turkish Request for PL 480 Wheat,” June 29, 1970. Folder 150/66/25/6-7, Box 1213; Subject Numeric File, 1970-1973; General Records of The Department of the State, Economic; Record Group 59; NARA.

<sup>110</sup> Ozgen Acar, “Opium Report,” Enclosure attached to Department of State Airgram from American Embassy Ankara, July 31, 1970. 150/66/25/6-7, Box 1213; Subject Numeric File, 1970-1973; General Records of The Department of the State, Economic; Record Group 59; NARA.

some dereliction of its obligations under the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, Turkey remained unwilling by September of 1970 to meet the United States on key issues regarding the control of drugs. Turkish representatives argued at the special session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) that total worldwide elimination of poppy growing is neither a practical nor an adequate solution to drug trafficking.<sup>111</sup> This position presented a heightened hurdle for the U.S. track towards restricting the global exchange of dangerous substances.

President Nixon became personally involved with diplomatic relations when faced with the likely outcome of losing a drug war battle in a place that was supposed to offer the greatest chances for dramatic results. On October 2, 1970, BNDD Director John Ingersoll sent a SECRET telegram to U.S. Attorney General informing him that Turkish Ambassador Kirca, who was Turkey's Permanent Representative in Geneva and chief delegate for the special session Commission Narcotic Drugs had just told him the previous night he considered it very important the BNDD Director carry with him a secret message on an upcoming visit to Turkey. It was a secret letter from President Nixon to Prime Minister Demirel couched in warm personal terms requesting the assistance of Turkish government in strengthening controls over illicit drug production and traffic.

Nixon intervened to personally ensure Turkey would not become a losing battle. Ambassador Kirca was exceedingly cooperative with the United States at the important meeting of commission on narcotic drugs in Geneva. He was first to agree to co-sponsor

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<sup>111</sup> U.S. Department of State, "UN-Turkey: The Turkish Position in Next Week's Meeting in Geneva on Narcotic Drugs," Declassified Bureau of Intelligence and Research SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION Intelligence Note, September 25, 1970, Folder INCO DRUGS TUR 6/1/70, Box 1217, Subject Numeric File, 1970-1973, General Records of The Department of the State, Economic, Record Group 59, NARA.

US resolution for integrated international action program and UN Fund for Drug Control. The Government of Turkey even commissioned him to shepherd through Turkish Parliament in November and December a bill for licensing and control systems in compliance with Turkish Treaty obligations.<sup>112</sup>

The Nixon Administration's focus on Turkey was magnified by increased Congressional inquiries about the narcotics problem. In March 1971, Senator Frank Church alluded to the Turkish government when he said, "A halt in our economic assistance to some foreign governments can be an effective tool in halting the flow of illegal narcotics. The very nations that have failed to stop the illegal traffic of narcotics across their boundaries into the United States are major recipients of our aid."<sup>113</sup> Senator Church found it difficult to understand why the Turkish Government failed to clamp down on illegal drug crop. He believed the underlying reason for the failure was due to a lack of will.<sup>114</sup> Church contrasted Turkish laxity toward drug smugglers with swift law enforcement imposed by neighboring Iran.<sup>115</sup>

Chairman of United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee followed Senator Church's diatribe a few days later with a request for coordinated Executive Branch comments on new legislation. The bill was proposed to amend section 620 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to prohibit countries, which do not act to prevent narcotic drugs

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<sup>112</sup> Declassified Secret U.S. Department of State Telegram from USMISSION Geneva to Secretary of State, "Ingersoll Visit to Turkey: Presidential Letter," Folder 150/66/25/6-7, Box 1213; Subject Numeric File, 1970-1973; General Records of The Department of the State, Economic; Record Group 59; NARA.

<sup>113</sup> U.S. Congressional Record, *Proceedings and Debates of the 92<sup>nd</sup> Congress, First Session*, Washington, March 11, 1971, Vol. 117 No. 33.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Iranian law enforcement officials shot smugglers on sight.

from unlawfully entering the United States.<sup>116</sup> In response, Senator Fulbright was reminded of a previous statement issued by the State Department:

During the course of our efforts to find a solution to this problem and in our discussion with a number of governments on this subject, it has become quite clear this is an international problem, which will require international action to resolve. Therefore, we intend to supplement our intensive bilateral negotiations with an even greater emphasis on improving international machinery aimed at better controls over the production of narcotics and the elimination of the illicit traffic in drugs.<sup>117</sup>

Even the Senate Finance Committee got involved. In response to Chairman Russell B. Long's letter urging the President to take necessary measures to prevent heroin from being imported into the United States, the State Department took the opportunity to bring attention to the significance of the problem. Senator Long was told that the elimination of the illegal international traffic in heroin, other narcotics and other dangerous drugs "is a high priority objective of our foreign policy, to be pursued vigorously through both multilateral and bilateral channels." The remainder of the correspondence favors urgent and expanded international action to meet the problem of drug abuse at the critical points of supply, demand and illicit traffic, in order to stem the spread of drug abuse not only in our own country but also throughout the world.<sup>118</sup>

Despite Turkey's domestic opposition, the Turkish government responded to U.S. pressure since the country depended on American economic support and strong military ties within NATO. President Nixon insisted that Turkey either prevent the diversion of

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<sup>116</sup> J.W. Fulbright, Letter from Senator Fulbright to the Honorable William P. Rogers, March 16, 1971, Folder INCO DRUGS 17 US 1/1/71, Box 1219, Subject Numeric File, 1970-1973; General Records of The Department of the State, Economic; Record Group 59; NARA.

<sup>117</sup> Harrison M. Symmes, Letter from Acting Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations to Chairman Fulbright, April 9, 1971, Folder INCO DRUGS 17 US 1/1/71, Box 1219, Subject Numeric File, 1970-1973; General Records of The Department of the State, Economic; Record Group 59; NARA.

<sup>118</sup> David M. Abshire, Letter from Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations to Russell B. Long, Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, United States Senate, February 17, 1971, Folder INCO DRUGS 17 US 1/1/71, Box 1219, Subject Numeric File, 1970-1973; General Records of The Department of the State, Economic; Record Group 59; NARA.



opium into illicit channels or prohibit poppy cultivation entirely. On March 12, 1971, Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel bowed to the pressure of Turkish armed forces and stepped down from power. Economic concerns coupled with a wave of terrorist attacks committed by radical groups brewed instability to a boiling point, and civil unrest ensued. Backed by the Turkish military, Nihat Erim replaced Demirel and immediately received pressure from President Nixon via the U.S. embassy in Ankara to make rapid and visible progress on the drug problem. On June 29, 1971, the Erim administration announced that the 1971-1972 poppy harvest would be the nation's last.<sup>119</sup> Two days later Secretary of State William Rogers sent a TELEGRAM to the American Embassy in Ankara to say congratulations to all who facilitated the successful outcome of negotiations to bring an end to the illicit flow of opium from Turkey. "You and your staff have done a fine job in working with the Turkish Government to bring a satisfactory solution to this critical problem of suppressing illicit flow of drugs at the source."<sup>120</sup>

Although Turkey's poppy ban was immediately controversial within its own borders, the Nixon administration claimed its first victory in the global war on drugs. The decision incited angry reactions among the Turkish elite and public masses, which both accused the government of crumbling under pressure from Washington. Despite opposition from public opinion and Turkish legislators, the government rigorously enforced the ban and tolerated the ensuing loss of livelihood for an estimated 600,000 Turkish poppy farmers.<sup>121</sup> Some American politicians questioned the effectiveness of the

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<sup>119</sup> Cornelius Friesdorf, *US Foreign Policy and the War on Drugs: Displacing the Cocaine and Heroin Industry* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 46.

<sup>120</sup> Department of State TELEGRAM from Secretary Rogers to American Embassy Ankara, July 2, 1971, Folder INCO DRUGS 17 US 1/1/71, Box 1219, Subject Numeric File, 1970-1973; General Records of The Department of the State, Economic; Record Group 59; NARA.

<sup>121</sup> Friesdorf, *US Foreign Policy and the War on Drugs*, 47.

ban. Nihat Erim subsequently turned over to other leaders, and the government returned to democratic rule in 1973. The ban would be reversed the following year.

## FRANCE

The French Government was much more accommodating to cooperation than Turkey in Nixon's Drug War and proved to be an effective ally in the global fight against illegal narcotics trafficking. However, officials in France initially required motivation from Washington. In August 1969 Daniel Patrick Moynihan traveled to Paris where he met with the American minister and told him about Nixon's decision to make the international drug traffic a matter of highest priority in foreign affairs. This pronouncement, according to Moynihan, elicited genuine puzzlement. The minister knew almost nothing of the subject and certainly had no inkling that his government back home was concerned about it.<sup>122</sup>

French authorities were surprised by American zeal towards combating the drug trade. Much progress had been achieved in combating the French Connection during the early 1960s, and French police seemed satisfied with the current status quo. By 1969 U.S. Ambassador Shriver reported coordination between the U.S. and French on narcotics matters had reached "an all-time high."<sup>123</sup> In early October, however, Shriver called on French Minister of Interior Marcellin to convey to him U.S. concerns about the illegal production of heroin in France. The French Minister appeared skeptical when told that 80% of all heroin reaching American shores comes from France, but then said that he

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<sup>122</sup> Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Letter from Daniel Moynihan to Henry Kissinger, in Edward Jay Epstein's Agency of Fear. Retrieved on January 16, 2013: <http://www.edwardjayepstein.com/agency/chap6.htm>

<sup>123</sup> Deputy Director of Intelligence, "03 November 1969 DDI Comments on Draft Memorandum for the President entitled 'A Plan of Action on the Heroin Problem,'" April 2, 2013, CIA-RDP80B01495R000900080026-0, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

understood and wanted to be responsive to President Nixon's concern over this problem. In fact, French President Pompidou was also concerned and encouraged his colleagues to cooperate fully and openly with U.S. authorities in this matter.<sup>124</sup>

The crass approach taken by the Nixon administration towards Mexico leading up to *Operation Intercept* was simultaneously used in France during 1969. Just two weeks after the congenial Shriver-Marcellin talks, a story broke in France's media circuit that was completely unexpected by French officials. Widespread coverage was given to an *Associated Press* report that Nixon's Assistant Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst had made off-the-record comments saying, "The Nixon Administration is widening the war on narcotics by putting pressure on France to clamp down on clandestine drug factories," and that "diplomatic relations may be altered considerably if France does not respond."<sup>125</sup> French narcotics authorities said they were both "astounded" and "discouraged" that such a statement should be made at precisely a moment when cooperation was close between the U.S. and France. After expressing their private concern, the French Central Narcotics Bureau conferred with the Minister of Interior, and then issued a public response which charged that the "idea that France remains the keystone for the shipment of heroin to the U.S. is out of date." The French Bureau went on to defend efforts made by its national police forces in dealing with the flow of drugs. U.S. narcotics officials within the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs noted that

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Associated Press, "Nixon Seeks French Aid in War on Drugs," *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, October 18, 1969, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1881-1989), 11.

after the statement, relations with the French service appeared to be returning to “normal,” i.e. poor.<sup>126</sup>

## TURKISH-FRENCH CONNECTION

Despite French claims that their nation had no drug problem, the United States pushed to dismantle the French-Turkish connection and completely restrict the movement of opium or morphine base from Turkey to France. According to an official statement made by retired Marine Corps General Lewis W. Walt, Director of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security Task Force Investigation on World Drug Situation, there were two major routes by which heroin entered the United States during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The first was the already mentioned “Turkish-French connection;” the second route was referred to as the “Far East Connection.”<sup>127</sup>

The “Turkish-French connection” involved opium grown in Turkey that was subsequently processed into morphine base and then moved to Marseilles, France. Here it was converted into heroin and prepared for shipment to U.S. black markets. From Marseilles, the heroin traveled to the United States via a number of routes, direct and indirect. A good deal of it came directly to New York by individual smugglers who either carried the dope on their person or had it concealed in double bottomed trunks or tucked away in specially built compartments on vehicles. These methods and the non-fictional account of a thrilling international narcotics case that unfolded in New York

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<sup>126</sup> Deputy Director of Intelligence, “03 November 1969 DDI Comments on Draft Memorandum for the President entitled ‘A Plan of Action on the Heroin Problem,’” April 2, 2013, CIA-RDP80B01495R000900080026-0, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

<sup>127</sup> Lewis W. Walt, Director, U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security Task Force Investigation on World Drug Situation, “Statement of Gen. Lewis W. Walt before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws, on 18 September 1972,” April 2, 2013, CIA-RDP75B00380R000300070001-5, CREST, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

City were famously revealed in Robin Moore's *The French Connection*. Published in 1969, the book was immediately adapted into a screenplay by Ernest Tidyman and went on to become a blockbuster hit in Hollywood.

Timing of the theatrical release of *The French Connection* was impeccable for Nixon's drug war. The book was first published just as the Nixon administration began its calls for attention to America's crime and drug problem. Motion picture director William Friedkin put so much energy and enthusiasm into making the film that it was a smashing success and received recognition for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Adapted Screenplay, and Best Film Editing during the 1972 Academy Awards. More relevant than dominating the Oscars, the movie brought desired attention to France's role in the international illicit drug trade and served as a causal factor in convincing government authorities to do more to control the transnational flow of narcotics.

Nixon's direct engagement with French President Pompidou was the main factor in fostering greater foreign cooperation. The President attached the highest importance to the narcotics problem and continued to make special efforts with the Government of France, particularly to eliminate the manufacture of heroin in illicit laboratories. Over the winter following the 1969 fall cooling of U.S.-French relations, the White House gave much greater emphasis to the undertaking of breaking the Turkish-French connection. Nixon replaced Shriver in 1970 with Arthur K. Watson, who resigned his positions as chairman of the board of IBM World Trade and vice chairman and director of IBM, to become U.S. Ambassador to France. He moved to Paris and worked closely with Mr. Egil Krogh, Nixon's deputy counsel on matters pertaining to international narcotics

control. They had several meetings with senior French officials specifically on the narcotics issue. A joint task force of the United States and French representatives began meeting every quarter to review their respective efforts and to decide what additional steps should be instituted. These programs included the assignment of additional French police and narcotics agents to the campaign to eliminate all illicit laboratories. The Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs undertook a special training program for French foreign nationals and assisted in the procurement of special and general equipment for use in the fight against the heroin-producing labs. In March President Nixon hosted French President Pompidou and a state delegation in Washington. Cooperative efforts between nations were discussed, and both governments reaffirmed their determination to deal successfully with the drug problem.<sup>128</sup>

Nixon and Pompidou's mutual resolution intensified bilateral law enforcement cooperation. Action taken after the French president's visit to Washington resulted in increased numbers of officers assigned to narcotics enforcement and led to the signing of an agreement negotiated between Attorney General Mitchell and Interior Minister Marcellin to permit even more American law enforcement personnel to operate in France. In 1969, only eight officers had worked for Marseille's anti-narcotics unit. Within two years, their number increased to seventy-seven.<sup>129</sup> At a public ceremony in Paris on July 24, Bud Krogh joined BNDD Director Jack Ingersoll to extend President Nixon's gratitude for France's cooperation. This collaboration, according to Ingersoll, had been

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<sup>128</sup> William E. Timmons, Letter from William Timmons, Assistant to the President in response to Congressman Edward A. Garmatz, April 28, 1970. NARA, College Park, MD. Similar content can be found in other documents, which suggests a form letter within the Executive Office of the President was used to respond to several Congressional inquires.

<sup>129</sup> Directorate of Intelligence, "France: Words and Action on International Narcotics," CIA SECRET Weekly Summary, 6 Aug. 1971, April 2, 2013, CIA-RDP79-00927A009000020001-2, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

manifested in the successful conclusion of several joint investigations conducted by French police and BNDD agents. The latest, according to State Department records, had resulted in a seizure of 156 kilograms of morphine base in the Marseille area, and at Milan with the cooperation of Italian police. Six international traffickers with Near Eastern backgrounds were also arrested as a part of the investigation.<sup>130</sup> Without the initiative from Nixon's Administration, the French connection may have continued for years. Beginning in 1970 however, unprecedented international law enforcement pressure ended the impunity of nefarious European drug traffickers operating out of Marseilles.

## MEXICO

President Nixon gave stopping the flow of hard drugs into the United States the highest priority as early as 1969. In addition to Turkey and France, cooperation from Mexico was essential. During a closed-door meeting that was called on October 18 to answer questions for congressmen concerned about repercussion from Operation Intercept, the Nixon Administration repeated its contention that much of the supply of hard drugs smuggled into the United States through Mexico comes from illicit drug processors in France. Representative Richard White, a Texan Democrat, set up the meeting between members of Congress and supported continuous engagement with top-level U.S. and Mexican officials in Mexico City. He and many others received the impression that the attorney general's office, and to some extent the Administration, got a

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<sup>130</sup> Department of State TELEGRAM from American Embassy Paris to Washington, "Narcotics Cooperation with France," 23 July, 1970, NARA, College Park, MD.

little bruised over the fallout from Operation Intercept.<sup>131</sup> The border searches by U.S. officials brought out-cry from both sides of the border but especially in Mexico where tourist business was curtailed.

Such strong reactions may be why Mexican officials were quick to respond to any hint the United States would resume the unilateral act. On June 17, 1970, Nixon's Treasury Secretary Kennedy told an audience of U.S. mayors that the Administration would renew war on narcotics smugglers, in spite of possible irritation to legitimate travelers. Such action was prompted, because he said, "the drug problem has become a drug crisis." An English language news article in Mexico quoted the secretary and reported that, "There are indications that Washington may resume Operation Intercept," which it reminded readers, "brought relations to their lowest point in decades."<sup>132</sup> The editorial concludes that Operation Cooperation should be continued.

### Operation Cooperation

In response to American concerns about Mexico's sincerity in support for Nixon's drug war, Mexican officials publicized the results of Operation Cooperation. The same day Secretary Kennedy was quoted by the media, Mexico's semi-official *Nacional* carried a front-page article quoting their country's attorney general. Sanchez Vargas issued a statement saying that, "Since beginning of Operation Cooperation, Mexican authorities have seized 297 Kilos (173 tons) of marijuana, over 40 Kilos of marijuana seed, over 19 Kilos of opium, 11 Kilos of cocaine, 2 Kilos of morphine, and 11 Kilos of

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<sup>131</sup> Associated Press, "Nixon Seeks French Aid in War on Drugs," *Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File)*, October 18, 1969, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1881-1989), 11.

<sup>132</sup> Department of State TELEGRAM from American Embassy in Mexico to Secretary of State in Washington, "Two Perspectives on US, Mexican Anti-Narcotics Efforts," 17 June, 1970. FOLDER INCO DRUGS 17 US-MEX 4/1/70, Entry 1613, Economic Box 1220, General Records of the Department of the State, Subject Numeric File, 1970-1973, Record Group 59, National Archives II Building, College Park, MD.



heroin.” “In addition,” he said, “authorities have made 1,294 arrests that included 187 Americans, 2 Canadians, 1 German, 3 Colombians, and 1 Arab.” The American Embassy in Mexico commented to Washington that it was not at all unlikely that Sanchez Vargas’ scorecard was given in direct response to Kennedy’s remarks.<sup>133</sup>

Long after Operation Intercept had been replaced with Operation Cooperation, the Mexican Press continued to publish angry articles about U.S. counter narcotic activities. On June 19, 1971, El Heraldito deplored the serious impairment to tourism and commerce caused by Operation Intercept and urged the Mexican government to appeal to Washington. Other Mexican news groups featured similar reports. On June 22, El Mexicano headlined stories about a renewal of “Operacion Intercepcion.” The news agency featured complaints from the president of Mexico’s National Chamber of Tourism in Tijuana about serious economic losses in revenue from 20 to 25 percent. Hector Lutteroth was quoted as saying, “In the last eleven years, only during Operation Intercept have we seen a situation similar to the one we are experiencing now.” The Chambers of Tourism, Commerce and Industry and their sister chambers in San Diego reacted by petitioning the highest authorities of Mexico and the United States to find an immediate solution to the problem which was causing such ill-will between the two countries.

Another Mexican newspaper, Noticias, also quoted Lutteroth and claimed that the San Diego Chamber of Commerce and the San Diego Tourist and Convention Bureau have asked U.S. Congressman Bob Wilson to investigate the matter in Washington in order to publicly criticize “...the procedures of the American Immigration authorities at

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

the international border.”<sup>134</sup> Official documents from the U.S. Department of State indicate that it is was obvious Mexico’s local press did not give much credence to District Director of US Customs Vernon Hahn’s explanation that the delays at border crossings were temporary; that they were due to lack of funds for overtime pay; and that the situation would ease on July 1, 1971, when new funds would become available.<sup>135</sup>

Despite the calamity that manifested itself during Operation Intercept, the Mexican government counted on United States’ support throughout the history of America’s Global War on Drugs. Mexican Ambassador Oscar Rabasa was an active agent in anti-drug efforts and worked closely with famed drug warrior Harry Anslinger since 1949. Rabasa is just one example of many Mexicans who spent decades laboring to cultivate the narcotics cooperation between both countries and the world well before the problem became a full-blown crisis in the 1970s. Rabasa witnessed substantial progress over the years that led up to President Nixon’s well-publicized international campaign. Ambassador Oscar Rabasa was also one of the participants in several summit meetings between U.S. and Mexican government officials.

By the insistence of the Nixon administration, cabinet level consultations resumed between officials of the United States and Mexico on the control of narcotics, marijuana, and other dangerous drugs. Deputy Attorney General Kleindienst traveled to Mexico City in 1970 to lead a U.S. delegation in narcotics control meetings from September 21-23. During a plenary session he presented remarks that summarized U.S.-Mexican

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<sup>134</sup> Aurelio Garcia II, “Informes a Mexico por la “Operacion Intercepcion,” (Tijuana: El Herald, Jun. 19, 1971), 1; Miguel Lanz Perez, “Ya es Otra Operacion Intercepcion,” (Tijuana: El Mexicano, Jun 22, 1971), 1; “La Camara de Turismo Estudiara los Danos de la “Operation Intercepcion,” *Noticias*, (Tijuana: Noticias, Jun. 22, 1971), p. 1;

<sup>135</sup> *Department of State Airgram from American Consul in Tijuana to Washington*, Jun. 22, 1971; Folder INCO DRUGS 17 US-MEX 4/1/70, Entry 1613, Box 1220; Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Economic; General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives Building, College Park, MD.

relations since the Nixon administration took office of the Presidency. He said that the Nixon administration was not faced simply with a serious problem but rather with a crisis. He referred to Nixon's pledge to the voters to do something about that crisis. There was in this recognition that it was not simply a problem in the United States but a more general problem throughout the world.

Kleindest described what had been accomplished by Mexico and the U.S. in the past year and a half as unprecedented in relations between two countries. He noted that an important part of this progress was the joint recognition of the problem and the need to do something about it. He said that the two nations have demonstrated that we can work together without any implication that one country is trying to dictate to the other and that we have reached a point where each government feels free to call for joint consultations whenever the situation warrants. He felt that some self-congratulation was in order but was sure that no one wanted to give the impression that the task was accomplished.

Kleindest praised his Mexican counterpart Franco Rodriguez for his energetic role in the anti-drug campaign and then described a few things that the U.S. Government has been doing in this field. He mentioned that the budget of the BNDD had been increased from 14 million dollars to 35 million dollars since Nixon came into office. He expressed the President's hope that legislation would soon come out of Congress permitting the U.S. government to control more effectively dangerous substances, particularly the dangerous drugs, that are of concern to Mexico. He said that 900 to 1,000 additional customs agents are being added to the rolls and that they will permit more effective inspections with a minimum of frictions and interference.

He expressed the belief that as the result of a widespread public campaign the American people are now firmly behind the government in its anti-drug efforts. He concluded his remarks by saying that the real problem facing the governments of Mexico and the U.S. is the preservation the two nations' cultures.<sup>136</sup>

In response to the Deputy Attorney General's remarks, Franco Rodriguez delivered the principal statement for the Mexican delegation. He began by expressing great joy and words of praise for the comments expressed by Kleindienst and reassured the audience that the Mexican government intends to strengthen and improve its efforts. Then he referenced the past by reminding everyone that the day he was speaking marked the anniversary of the start of Operation Intercept, which in the words of Diaz Ordaz, "...created a wall of suspicion between the two countries." However, as a result of Operation Cooperation and the great understanding on the part of top officials in the two governments this setback in the relations between the two governments had been overcome. He emphasized that present endeavors are marked by enthusiasm, good faith and determination. Here he threw in a special word of praise for the Mexican army and attributed a great part of the credit for Mexico's increased activity to President Diaz Ordaz who he described as dedicated to the task. Since January 1, 1970, he said, 94.3 tons of marijuana has been burned. In July of the same year, five helicopters and three airplanes were turned over from the U.S. to the Mexican government.<sup>137</sup> Attorney General Franco Rodriguez expressed his most profound gratitude for this act and the ceremony in which it was carried out. He concluded his remarks by taking satisfaction in

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<sup>136</sup> *Department of State Airgram from US Embassy Mexico City to Washington*, Oct. 2, 1970; Folder INCO DRUGS 17 US-MEX 4/1/70, Entry 1613, Box 1220; Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Economic; General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives Building, College Park, MD.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

the joint drug efforts as they have given him and other Mexicans an opportunity to develop close and lasting friendships with their American counterparts.

Mexico was a significant battlefield and provided international origins to Nixon's war on drugs. In September 1970, President Diaz Ordaz commented on Operations Intercept and Cooperation in his official "Report to the Nation." In summing up he stated that Mexico faced the problems caused by Operation Intercept with "firmness and equanimity, and the United States Government, after the first few days of unilateral action, also sought, as we did, to reach an administrative agreement which was signed on October 10, 1969." The president added, "Through it, Operation Intercept was replaced by Operation Cooperation, and we both agreed to continue, in our mutual interest, our fight against the illegal production, traffic and use of narcotics." He concluded the report by reminding his people that, "The U.S. government promised to modify its inspection procedures and Mexico reaffirmed its intention of intensifying its own fight against those criminal activities that cause so much harm to humanity, and in recent years, to our youth."<sup>138</sup>

The Nixon administration claimed its diplomacy with Mexico to be effective in that it incited government leaders into committing more resources to a concerted drug eradication and enforcement policy. Operation Intercept was replaced with Operation Cooperation and eventually led to Operation Condor a few years later, which included a defoliation campaign using the toxic "Paraquat" herbicide. Thus, Nixon's limited drug war resulted in limited success, but it would lead to a much more elaborate effort on both the national and international level.

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<sup>138</sup> Department of State AIRGRAM, from American Embassy Mexico City to Washington, "President Diaz Ordaz Report to the Nation—Operation Intercept," 09 September, 1970.

It should be noted that the problem relating to the illicit traffic in heroin and other drugs is the unifying theme that each facet of illicit drug traffic provides vast profits for each successive criminal involved. That universal fact is so obvious that it is often overlooked, but as cabinet secretary Elliot Richardson noted in his April 2, 1970 speech to the Philadelphia Bar Association, drug profits are astronomical. At the time Nixon's administration began investigating current trends, 1 kilogram (2.2 pounds) of morphine base was worth about \$350 in Turkey. After conversion into heroin in France it's worth increased ten times that much. When it arrived to New York via Mexico and other smuggling routes, street value jumped up to \$25,000 and by the time heroin was diluted and reached the pusher the original amount of narcotic could amount to as much as one quarter of a million dollars.<sup>139</sup> With so much potential for drug traffickers to rake in cash due to incredible profit margins, the White House would have to look beyond Turkey, France, and Mexico to effectively stop the flow of illegal narcotics into the United States.

#### *Nixon's Anti-Drug Diplomacy Extended to Other Nations*

The Nixon administration identified Turkey, France, and Mexico to be top priorities during the origins of the war on drugs, but there were also other nations prior to 1971 who were persuaded to join the fight against illegal narcotics trafficking. As pressure mounted against France to crack down on the smuggling of illegal substances, neighboring Germany became an alternative route. Thousands of American military service members stationed in Germany provided another factor in making the drug problem more of a threat as increasing numbers of troops became infatuated with

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<sup>139</sup> David M. Abshire, Letter from David Abshire, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, to the Honorable Claude Pepper, Chairman, Select Committee on Crime, April 28, 1970. NARA, College Park, MD.

narcotics and dangerous drugs. Shortly after returning from talks in the United States, Germany's Interior Minister Genechar announced on July 19, 1970 that leaders reached an agreement on the exchange of personnel and that the two nations would cooperate in efforts to control drug abuse. Nine days later Germany made public the details of a program of intensified efforts to control the misuse of drugs within the country.<sup>140</sup>

Iran was another nation affected by the Turkish-French connection. Any study of international problems of drug abuse, production controls, and illicit trafficking must include awareness of the importance of Iranian narcotics production and markets. During the 1970s, Iran was one of the limited numbers of nations licitly producing opium. At that time there were approximately 350,000 opium users and addicts, which made Iran the largest world market and net importer (about 250 tons annually) of illicit opium. Iran actually surpassed the United States with an estimated 50,000 people within their borders addicted to heroin. When Iran banned poppy cultivation entirely in 1969, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Pakistan became the main sources for fulfilling Iran's continued demand for opium. During 1970 when the Turkish government significantly restricted the number of farmers growing opium poppy, the percentage of raw opium smuggled in from Afghanistan jumped from 45% to 90%.<sup>141</sup>

Iran's narcotics situation was directly impacted by Nixon's foreign policies and Turkey's decision to join the fight against drugs. The Nixon administration fostered ties with the Iranian shah by discussing global anti-narcotics initiatives while remaining

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<sup>140</sup> Department of State TELEGRAM, from American Embassy Bonn to Secretary of State in Washington, "Pass White House for Moynihan; SUBJ: Narcotics," 31 July 1970, National Archives and Records Administration Building II, College Park, MD.

<sup>141</sup> Declassified CONFIDENTIAL State Department AIRGRAM from American Embassy Tehran to Department of State Washington, February 2, 1971, "Narcotics in Iran," NARA Building, College Park, MD.

sensitive Iran's lucrative oil interests. Fortunately for Nixon, a new Iranian narcotics law went into effect in 1969 and contained stiff penalties for those apprehended while smuggling hard narcotics and thus dampened the enthusiasm of Turkish and Iranian smugglers. At the same time Turkish authorities yielded to American demands and increased law enforcement measures as part of their U.S.-backed anti-narcotics program. A similar case did not occur in Afghanistan. In addition, the Turkish-Iranian border surveillance accord was signed in 1970 and led to greater cooperation between the two countries, thus increasing the hazards of smuggling from Turkey into Iran.

The Nixon administration did not have to focus on Iran as much as Turkey, because the Shah turned out to be much more self-motivated and aggressive in response to restricting illegal drug trafficking. On February 16, 1970, Iranian authorities seized a total of 876 Kilos of opium from two separate groups of Afghan smugglers. In one group, two members were arrested while the other ten fled after a firefight. Two days later Iranian armed forces mounted an attack on a suspected smuggling camp in Myami-Heights near the Afghan border. The engagement became a gun battle that lasted all night long. By the morning seven Afghan-nationals had been killed and eight wounded. Fifteen smugglers managed to escape across the border, but left behind their horses, weapons, and 1,300 Kilos of opium. Only one member of the Iranian Gendarmerie was reported to be in critical condition as result of wounds suffered during the battle. Another Iranian narcotics offender was shot dead after conviction by military tribunal reportedly for possession of more than 1,000 Kilos of opium smuggled from Afghanistan. According to the U.S. Embassy, this particular incident brought the total to sixteen people



executed under the new anti-drug law had passed almost one year earlier.<sup>142</sup> Although Iran did legally cultivate opium poppy, the Nixon administration was not as concerned because the country tightly controlled cultivation and blocked any leakage into illicit international channels.<sup>143</sup>

Officers from the U.S. embassy and BNDD visited Rangoon, Burma to extend President Nixon's desire for their cooperation in the U.S. Government's campaign to reduce mounting drug abuse and to inhibit the illicit international drug traffic. Shortly after the meeting Burmese news articles ran stories to make it appear like the government was taking action to step in line with international sentiments on the subject of drug trafficking. Burma would prove to be a challenge for those interested in fighting the illicit drug trade. It would not be until June 1974 when the Southeast Asian country would sign a bilateral drug control agreement with the United States. Once reached, however, the State Department delivered twenty-five helicopters and five transport aircraft to help the Burmese military destroy poppy fields, attack drug refineries, and disrupt opium caravans. Whether or not these arrangements worked as planned to reduce the amount of exported contraband remains the subject of vociferous debate.

What remains certain is that international origins of Nixon's drug war developed from the earliest days of his presidency. Candidate Richard Nixon had promised to address the issue of narcotics and dangerous drugs as part of tackling America's crime problem. The president backed up his campaign rhetoric with action, precisely because he realized that in order to project American interests abroad, the nation needed to

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<sup>142</sup> Department of State TELEGRAM, from American Embassy Tehran to Secretary of State, Washington, 22 February 1970, "Narcotic Smuggling Incidents Involving Afghans," NARA Building, College Park, MD.

<sup>143</sup> Department of State TELEGRAM, from American Embassy Tehran to Secretary of State, Washington, 21 June 1971, "President's Message on Narcotics," NARA Building, College Park, MD.

resolve its challenges at home. Thus, foreign policy and domestic concerns were intricately intertwined. Nixon's keen interest in foreign affairs extended to the initiatives he supported to address international narcotics control. Beginning in 1969, the administration was very pro-active in combating narcotics abuse and illicit drug trafficking. The National Security Council was tasked to devise new policies to curb the drug trade, and the White House accepted a wide array of recommendations. The problems associated with unilateral action manifested itself in Mexico during Operation Intercept, but the drastic measure proved Nixon was serious about making the drug issue a high priority. Congress subsequently realized the White House really wanted to achieve substantial anti-drug law reform, and 1970 proved to be a legislative success for all parties. Operation Intercept immediately ushered in foreign cooperation alternatives, and bilateral actions with France, Turkey, and Mexico can be marked as three battlefields, which offered initial victories during Nixon's limited drug war from 1969-1971.

## Chapter 4: Nixon's Total War on Drugs, 1971-1973

President Richard Nixon declared total war on drugs after being criticized by the media and members of Congress for not doing enough to combat reported narcotics abuse among U.S. troops deployed overseas. In other words, Americans' anxieties about their boys becoming addicted drug junkies while fighting in Vietnam became the catalyst that propelled a domestic nuisance back home into a global crisis that required a large national and international response. On June 17, 1971, the President held a White House press conference immediately following his *Special Message to the Congress on Drug Abuse Prevention and Control*. Nixon declared to the nation, "America's public enemy number one in the United States is drug abuse. In order to fight and defeat this enemy," he said, "It is necessary to wage a new, all-out offensive."<sup>144</sup>

Nixon escalated his anti-drug initiatives to the administration's highest priorities and adopted a public policy that relied upon a strategy with many parts: First, international supply reduction of the narcotics and dangerous drugs that made their way to America; second, law enforcement enhancement in order to reduce crime associated with drug use; third, prevention of non-users from becoming future drug abusers and addicts; fourth, treatment and rehabilitation of those individuals who became addicts. President Nixon termed drug abuse as "our most vicious and debilitating social problem"

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<sup>144</sup> Richard Nixon: "Remarks About an Intensified Program for Drug Abuse Prevention and Control." June 17, 1971. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. Accessed March 9, 2013. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3047>

and designed a massive federal program in order to destroy the issue in the United States as quickly as possible.<sup>145</sup>

Virtually all-historical accounts of Nixon's drug control policy emphasize its narcotics abuse treatment, prevention, and law enforcement programs. I argue in this section that the farthest-reaching component of the president's strategy was international supply reduction. On all the issues Nixon fought, he was most capable in the foreign policy arena, and since the catalyst for America's new all-out offensive on drug abuse had germinated overseas, foreign affairs most affected its evolution.

*The Southeast Asian Drug Connection Was Initially a Low Priority*

Nixon devoted the majority of his time during the early years of his presidency to managing an honorable withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam.<sup>146</sup> Paradoxically, the White House initially placed Southeast Asia as a lower priority than France and Mexico when the Nixon administration first identified global sources of America's drug problem. Alexander Haig's 1969 memo about heroin assessed 80% of the narcotic entering the U.S. annually to come from France, 15% from Mexico, and 5% from Bangkok and Hong Kong.<sup>147</sup> Approximately one year later, Haig (who later served as Nixon's White House Chief of Staff during the Watergate Investigations and Reagan's first Secretary of State) drafted a sensitive TOP SECRET report, which identified drug

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<sup>145</sup> Egil "Bud" Krogh, Remarks of Egil Krogh, Jr. for the International Narcotics Control Conference, Washington Department of State, Sep, 17, 1972, p. 1; Folder 150/67/1/1; Subject-Numeric File, Narcotics 1970-1973, Box 3028; General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives Building, College Park, MD.

<sup>146</sup> Richard Nixon, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Richard Nixon: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, 1969* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971) v.

<sup>147</sup> Alexander M. Haig, "White House Memo, October 24, 1969," January 13, 2013, CIA-RDP80B01495R000900080030-5, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

abuse among American forces in Vietnam to be pervasive. “The problem,” he wrote, “should be susceptible to positive command action and not become a factor in troop level decisions.”<sup>148</sup> The document cites a sharp increase in the proportion of troops who arrived to Vietnam with some previous drug experience: 12% in 1968, 27% in 1969, and 50% in 1970. Government officials simply ignored increasing trends of drug exposure to U.S. troops and recognized statistics as a reflection of the shifting national norm.<sup>149</sup>

U.S. policy-makers also ignored the growing GI drug problem because they viewed fighting Communism a higher priority than stopping the Asian drug trade. The Executive branch had long tolerated South Vietnamese officials’ deep involvement in drug trafficking, because it relied on these stable regimes to cooperate with larger national interests. America’s prime concern during the Cold War was to defeat Communism by supporting cooperative regimes; yet Washington failed to control all questionable activities of its allies, especially those in Southeast Asia. It is ironic that while Nixon attempted to control the spread of socialism and global drug trafficking, CIA officers cultivated relationships with anti-Communist forces that happened to also be intricately involved in the transnational illicit-narcotics trade. Alfred McCoy, J.R.W. Professor of history at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, has written extensively about CIA involvement in the drug trade. He argues that the Central Intelligence Agency’s ties to drug trafficking were not a result of corruption. Unlike other national intelligence services, the CIA did not involve itself directly in the heroin trade to finance

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<sup>148</sup> Alexander M. Haig, United States Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, “Trip Report: Visit to Cambodia and Vietnam: 13-18 December 1970,” p. 3; Nixon Presidential Materials Staff, National Security Council Files; NSC Series, Alexander M. Haig Special File, Box 1011, December 1970 Haig’s Southeast Asia Trip, National Archives. Retrieved from: [http://gateway.proquest.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&res\\_dat=xri:dnsa&rft\\_dat=xri:dnsa:article:CVW00230](http://gateway.proquest.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:dnsa&rft_dat=xri:dnsa:article:CVW00230)

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 11.

its covert operations. Rather, the CIA's role was an inadvertent but almost inevitable consequence of Cold War tactics.<sup>150</sup>

The CIA's clandestine resistance against America's enemies depended on air logistic routes between Laos and South Vietnam. In return for cooperation, U.S. officials turned a blind eye towards corrupt leaders engaged in nefarious contraband running schemes. The agency held prime responsibility for the Laotian war front and publicly denied any knowledge of complicit drug traffic. However, the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics identified Laos's General Ouane Rathikone-- Army chief of staff and a valuable asset in the fight against Communism-- as a factory owner of some local heroin refineries. The CIA allowed tribal commanders to use planes and helicopters that belonged to Air America, a CIA-operated airline, to collect opium from highland villages and fly it to drug labs and black markets in Laos and South Vietnam.<sup>151</sup>

Large quantities of cheap, high quality heroin flooded into Saigon beginning in May 1970, and South Vietnam soon after became a central target for rapidly increased hard drug usage among American GIs.<sup>152</sup> Alexander Haig's report stated, "It appears that no serious attention was given to the drug problem in Vietnam until July, 1970, and we are now at a stage where the magnitude of the problem is still being defined."<sup>153</sup> During the Christmas season, U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) launched its first Drug Abuse Suppression Program. In January 1971 MACV and the U.S. BNDD sponsored a joint conference with Vietnam officials to develop control

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<sup>150</sup> Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991), 20.

<sup>151</sup> Flora Lewis, "Facts Surface on the Heroin War," *Washington Post*, July 11, 1971, January 13, 2013, CIA-RDP73B00296R000300070033-6, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

<sup>152</sup> U.S. Department of State, Washington Conference on International Narcotics Control, SOC 11-5: 9/20/1972; Entry 1613 Box 3028; RG 59 General Records of the Department of State; NARC, MD.

<sup>153</sup> Haig, "Trip Report: Visit to Cambodia and Vietnam: 13-18 December 1970," p. 12.

programs. As a result, American advisors were able to assist on every level to effectively take over direct supervision of the Vietnamese narcotics control effort. National police achieved many narcotics confiscations and arrests over the course of a three-month suppression campaign, but drug usage by U.S. military forces showed no significant decline.<sup>154</sup>

Historian Jeremy Kuzmarov argues in his book, *The Myth of the Addicted Army*, that reports about drug abuse among U.S. soldiers deployed overseas were exaggerated and hyped for political gain. However, Kuzmarov acknowledges that McCoy's study should rightfully be considered a classic in the field of international narcotic control. A mountain of evidence has corroborated his work over time.<sup>155</sup> In 1972, an internal CIA study expressed "concern" that "local officials [with] whom we are in contact have been or may still be involved in one way or another in the drug business." The report concluded, "What to do about these people is a particularly troublesome problem in view of its implications for some of our operations, particularly in Laos."<sup>156</sup>

McCoy's research-- conducted as a Yale graduate student in the early 1970s-- informed members of Congress and the media about Vietnam's heroin connection. When international criminal syndicates responded to increased law enforcement efforts in Europe and the Middle East, they shifted major sources of narcotics to Southeast Asia. The opium poppy fields of the region's "Golden Triangle" became the new supply

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<sup>154</sup> U.S. Department of State, Washington Conference on International Narcotics Control, SOC 11-5: 9/20/1972; Entry 1613 Box 3028; RG 59 General Records of the Department of State; NARC, MD.

<sup>155</sup> William Weir, *In the Shadow of the Dope Fiend: America's War On Drugs* (New York: Archon Books, 1995), 208; cited in Jeremy Kuzmarov, *The Myth of the Addicted Army: Vietnam and the Modern War on Drugs* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 85.

<sup>156</sup> Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with respect to Intelligence Activities, *Final Report* (1974), 57, 229-231. For more corroborative evidence of McCoy's study about American ignorance toward illicit drug trafficking by its allies, see Kuzmarov, *The Myth of the Addicted Army*, Ch. 4.

of raw materials for secret heroin labs in Hong Kong and the Tri-border area where Burma, Thailand, and Laos converge.<sup>157</sup> BNDD Director John Ingersoll reported that his intelligence sources indicated much of the massive flow of narcotics that moved through Latin America into the United States came from Southeast Asia. McCoy testified of the evolving commodity chain before a U.S. Senate Subcommittee and added that the country's Southeast Asian allies profited greatly from this "heroin bonanza."<sup>158</sup>

*Drug Abuse in Vietnam was a Catalyst for New Presidential Action*

Shrewd FBN director Harry Anslinger utilized 1950's hysteria over the belief Communist states had masterminded drug trafficking into American cities as a weapon to weaken its Western foes. Now a new generation of drug warriors relied upon anti-Communist sentiments to justify the activities of their respective branches of government. National defense leaders General William C. Westmoreland, Victor "Brute" Kulak, and CIA operative Edward Lansdale asserted Communist agents in North Vietnam and China imported narcotics and then pushed the contraband as covert acts of sabotage via guerilla insurgents to American forces stationed overseas. Their motives were not to simply make money, but more to discredit opposing forces and use the GI drug problem for propaganda purposes.<sup>159</sup>

Although many journalists based their speculations on public claims, the Nixon administration privately rejected assertions about illicit exports from Communist China.

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<sup>157</sup> Alfred W. McCoy, "The Heroin Traffic in Southeast Asia: Statement by Alfred W. McCoy before the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, U.S. Senate, June 2, 1972," February 15, 2013. Approved For Release 2006/10/10 CIA-RDP74B00415R000400020016-5, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>159</sup> Jonathan Nashel, *Edward Lansdale's Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 164-65. Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Harper, 1986).



Secretary of State William Rogers sent a confidential AIRGRAM to the American Embassy in Rangoon that confirmed the accuracy of intelligence sources. “Washington,” he concluded, “sees no confirmed evidence that Communist China is illicitly exporting opium or its derivatives across her borders. Despite occasional reports indicating cross-border movement of opiates between Communist China and Southeast Asia, the relatively rigid governmental controls existent in mainland China would seem to preclude any significant illicit cross-border movements.”<sup>160</sup>

Media depictions of surreptitious Asians peddling highly toxic substances to virtuous American youth stoked the bothersome myth of an addicted army. While the clandestine CIA connection to anti-communist groups remained a critical component to drug smuggling in Southeast Asia, a barrage of news articles and special reports highlighted the corrupting influence of war and drugs on brave American youth. *New York Times* writer Gloria Emerson informed readers about the popularity of “Scag,” a highly purified form of heroin that could be smoked. “It is so easy to buy heroin from peddlers in Vietnam wherever there are American troops or convoys,” she reported, “that a tiny plastic vial can be purchased for \$3 outside the headquarters of an American general.”<sup>161</sup> Proliferation of the narcotic was linked to corrupt foreign vendors, and on May 16, the *Times* ran a screaming front-page expose, “GI Heroin Addiction Epidemic in Vietnam.”<sup>162</sup> The news conveyed alarm at the ease with which heroin circulated through

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<sup>160</sup> William Rogers, AIRGRAM from Department of State, to American Embassy Rangoon, “Opium Cultivation and Illicit Export, Communist China,” September 30, 1971, Folder INCO DRUGS Burma XR-SOC 11-5 Burma; Subject Numeric File, 1970-1973, Box 1215; Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of the State, Economic, NARC, MD.

<sup>161</sup> Gloria Emerson, “G. I.’s in Vietnam Get Heroin Easily.” Special to *The New York Times*. (1971, Feb 25). *New York Times (1923-Current File)*. 39. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/119357907?accountid=14696>

<sup>162</sup> Alvin M. Shuster, “G.I. Heroin Addiction Epidemic in Vietnam,” Special to *The New York Times*. (1971, May 16). *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, 1. Retrieved from

the Army's ranks and the prospect of thousands of addicts returning home with cravings for drugs that were exponentially more costly in the U.S. than overseas.

Shocking depictions of drug use fit into an orientalist discourse similar to what America had experienced in the late nineteenth century. Perceived backward qualities of East Asian culture reflected the corrupting foreign influences on virtuous American youth.<sup>163</sup> *Newsweek* put an emaciated veteran junkie on its cover under the headline, "The Heroin Plague: What Can be Done?" The lead story was about the spread of addiction from "the back alleys of Long Binh and Saigon" to "Middle-American towns and neighborhoods." The authors insinuated, "Heroin has exploded on us like an atom bomb. Ten years ago, even three years ago, heroin was a loser's drug, an aberration afflicting the blacks and longhaired minorities. Now all this has changed. Nice Jewish boys are coming out of the woodwork as well as Mormon kids, Japanese Americans and all other exemplars of hard-working middle-class ideals."<sup>164</sup>

Constituents alarmed by the impressions they received about America's addicted army flooded their representatives' offices with phone calls and mail. Senators and congressmen then sent letters of inquiry to the White House, State Department, and Pentagon.<sup>165</sup> Everybody wanted to know if the reports were true, and if so, how long had the Defense Department known, and what was being done to solve the crisis. These letters exemplified the heightened public alarm that was shaped in large part by the tone of mass media. The perception that drug abuse represented a vital threat to America's

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<http://search.proquest.com/docview/119336323?accountid=14696>

<sup>163</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

<sup>164</sup> Stewart Alsop, "The GI's Other Enemy: Heroin." *Newsweek*, May 24, 1971, 26; see also Kuzmarov, *Myth of the Addicted Army*, 44.

<sup>165</sup> For more examples of Congressional correspondence about the drug problem, see Kuzmarov's *Myth of the Addicted Army*, 47-48.

national security inundated all those following the news and led them to believe the greater hazard to health and safety of their children was not military combat, but becoming addicted to hardcore drugs.<sup>166</sup>

News reports of addiction among U.S. troops did more than arouse public interest. Media and government attention to rampant drug abuse in Vietnam instilled a sense of urgency within the Nixon administration to combat the heroin epidemic. In April 1971, two congressmen, Robert Steele, a Republican from Connecticut, and Morgan Murphy, a Democrat from Illinois traveled to South Vietnam on behalf of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Upon their return, Steele, a former CIA man, visited the White House to brief Bud Krogh and Alexander Haig. The representative said he believed ten to fifteen percent of all GIs in Vietnam were addicted to Heroin, and that it was not just the war effort that was at stake. He expressed concerns about the tens of thousands of withdrawing troops who would bring home drug habits and cause a surge in demand to satisfy their cravings, which would undoubtedly lead to another uncontrollable national crime wave.<sup>167</sup> Nixon dispatched Robert H. Finch and Donald Rumsfeld, counselors to the President, on a twenty-three day trip to Europe and North Africa to discuss drug abuse prevention and control with foreign officials. The two held a news briefing on the trip on May 21 and essentially re-affirmed what the other congressmen had said.<sup>168</sup>

*The World Heroin Problem* was the spark that ignited political controversy and instigated Nixon's response to wage total war on drug abuse. Composed by Chairman Murphy and Congressman Steele, this forty-six-page document submitted on May 27,

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Massing, *The Fix*, 107.

<sup>168</sup> Richard Nixon, "The President's News Conference," June 1, 1971. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=3031>

1971 to the House Foreign Affairs Committee estimated that between 25,000 and 37,000 (15%) of GIs had become addicted to heroin. The number was later revised to around 5 percent, but the congressmen made their point to colleagues and fellow Americans: drugs were crippling America's ability to effectively wage and win war in Vietnam. The report's wording was blunt. "Bribery and corruption at the highest official levels in Southeast Asia left little room for hoping that the heroin traffic could be halted in the near future." The congressmen declared that an effort had to be made to stop the traffic but concluded, "If these efforts fail, the only solution is to withdraw American servicemen from drug Southeast Asia."<sup>169</sup>

The White House was annoyed by inflated rhetoric and misinformation contained in the report and the sustained media attention it received. Murphy and Steele included outlandish claims there was an organized effort by black veterans to flood the country with heroin.<sup>170</sup> On the week of the special study mission's release, the *New York Times* featured Steele in a blown-up photograph with a vial of heroin in his left hand, which was intended to broadcast the easy availability of the substance and the seminal threat that it represented to Americans.<sup>171</sup> The Pentagon fired back at Congressional accusations before the White House even had a chance to coordinate an elaborate response. Television's evening news was filled with coverage of Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard's directive to military leaders that they immediately come up with a solution to the heroin problem in the Services, because it is obvious the White House did

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<sup>169</sup> Felix Belair Jr., "House Unit Cites Rise in G. I. Drug Use," Special to The New York Times. (1971, May 26). *New York Times (1923-Current File)*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/119319648?accountid=14696>

<sup>170</sup> Morgan F. Murphy, Robert Steele, *World Heroin Problem: Report of Special Study Mission* (Washington, DC: GPO, 27, May, 1971), 45.

<sup>171</sup> Michael Getler, "U.S. Vows Crackdown on Heroin Flow to GIs," *Washington Post*, May 28, 1971, A14; Also, "Worse than My Lai"; Felix Belair, "House Team Asks Army to Cure Addicts," *New York Times*, May 28, 1971; cited in Kuzmarov, *The Myth of the Addicted Army*, 52.

not have any way to deal with the issue. Annoyed, Nixon's domestic policy advisor John Erlichman called Henry Kissinger and complained that "Packard has galloped into the arena and is going to solve it." The National Security Advisor offered to "shut him up," and said, "I don't know the details, but the President has to get credit for that and you can't go out preempting it." Kissinger was successful in hushing the Pentagon and reported back to Erlichman that, "Dave is a decent guy. All these other guys are barracudas but Dave does not mean any harm."<sup>172</sup>

The Nixon administration sought to quell criticism about the drug problem by coordinating buildup to a stupendous announcement about a new White House strategy. Bud Krogh rushed to obtain final review of the *1971 World Opium Situation Report*, put together by White House Interagency Working Group Task Force on Heroin. This report countered the Murphy-Steele special mission study and became a valuable resource document for official use within the Executive Branch, the Congress, and Foreign Services. The study estimated world illicit production, consumption and trade in opium and its derivatives, to characterize the organization of the illicit traffic and to define in general terms the problems involved in controlling these activities. Prepared jointly by the BNDD and the CIA from available information (The CIA requested to state the report was prepared jointly by both BNDD and CIA), the scope and quality of the information provided mostly tentative estimates and findings.

Nevertheless, the White House Task Force believed the time was right for its wider distribution as a resource document within the executive and legislative branches. The study represented a first attempt to view problems of opium-based drug abuse on a

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<sup>172</sup> TELCON between John Erlichman and Henry Kissinger, May 29, 1971; 10:40 a.m. Reproduced from the open files of the Nixon Presidential Materials Staff; NARC, MD.

comprehensive scale and from an international point of view. Chairman of the Interagency Working Group, Harvey R. Wellman, hoped this report would stimulate the kind of critical and informed comment that would promote refinement and updates as time went on. Krogh used the study after its dissemination to justify \$150 million of the federal budget for Jerome Jaffe's Methadone program.<sup>173</sup>

Nixon presented a formal response to the Murphy-Steele study and pledged to give the drug problem his highest priority. On June 1 the president promised to undertake a "national offensive" to counter the problem of drug addiction among young Americans, including servicemen who have become addicted while in South Vietnam. "We are going to give it the highest-priority attention at all levels," he said."<sup>174</sup> For Nixon, the issue of addiction among returning combat veterans was only part of the overall problem. Now that Congress had grown a desire to support government steps towards helping drug addicts recover, the White House could successfully push forward a four-front national program the president described as the following:

First, the front of getting at the sources. This means working with foreign governments where the drugs come from, including the Government of South Vietnam, where they have, of course, a special responsibility. It means, also, prosecuting those who are the pushers. It means, in addition to that, a program of treating the addicts, and that, incidentally, insofar as veterans are concerned, means treating them where they are addicted to heroin or hard drugs before releasing them, giving them the opportunity. And, finally, it requires a massive

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<sup>173</sup> Department of State Memorandum, from Mel Levitsky to Henry Kissinger, "World Opium Situation Report, May 28, 1971," Folder 150/66/25/6-7; Subject Numeric File, 1970-1973 Box 1214, Record Group 59 General Records of the Department of the State, Economic, NARC, MD. What is interesting about this particular document is that a very specific paragraph was lined out, "In the United States, methadone programs for treating heroin addicts have an uncertain future not only because medical efficacy has yet to be confirmed but also because public support for broad scale coverage is as yet to be determined." The question is by whom? It would make sense Krogh supported the deletion, since he was a proponent of methadone treatment. Plus, this document is headlined with the annotation, "Mr. Krogh is having the report published. Mel Levitsky 6/11/71."

<sup>174</sup> James M. Naughton, Special to The New York Times. "President gives 'highest priority' to drug problem, (1971, Jun 02)." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, 1. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/119365761?accountid=14696>

program of information for the American people with regard to how the drug habit begins and how we eventually end up with so many being addicted to heroin, the hard drug, which virtually is a point of no return for many.<sup>175</sup>

Following his remarks, the president subsequently met that same week with the Secretary of Defense, the three Service Secretaries, the three heads of the armed services, in order to receive direct reports on the programs they had initiated at the administration's suggestion. U.S. ambassadors serving in Turkey, France, Mexico, and other countries associated with international illicit narcotics trade traveled back to Washington to discuss the development of a new comprehensive drug control policy. Nixon insisted that he considered drug abuse the highest priority, and promised to ensure the issue would receive attention at all levels, not just with regard to veterans, where it was a special problem, but nationally, where it concerned everyone.

#### *June 17, 1971—Nixon Declared America's War on Drugs*

I have argued that international origins of Nixon's drug war formed long before the thirty-seventh president entered the White House. His administration began pushing forward anti-drug initiatives immediately upon taking office. In May 1971, Bud Krogh assessed their efforts up to that point in a memo to his boss and said:

The President, on many occasions, has declared that solutions to problems of drug abuse have no higher priority in his Administration. But the reality is that much more needs to be done to bring about substantively effective programs in rehabilitation, prevention and research. Law enforcement and diplomatic overtures to other countries—Turkey, France, and Mexico—have all been effective, but more here needs to be done.<sup>176</sup>

Nixon astutely timed the announcement of his new counter drug offensive. The

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<sup>175</sup> Richard Nixon, "The President's News Conference," June 1, 1971. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=3031>

<sup>176</sup> Egil "Bud" Krogh, "White House memo from Bud Krogh to John Erlichman, May 14, 1971," *Epstein Papers*; cited in Massing's, *The Fix*, 108.

middle of June, 1971 marked two momentous events that left a fateful mark on the Nixon White House legacy: Mr. and Mrs. Nixon gave their daughter Tricia's hand in marriage; and the next day news about the leaked *Pentagon Papers* instigated the President's obsessive interest in the matter.<sup>177</sup> When attention surrounding the Murphy-Steele Report and *Pentagon Papers* leak threatened the administration's Vietnam policy and made Nixon seem obtuse about the drug problem, Nixon desperately sought something to change the course of his dismal summer.

In the middle of all the commotion, President Nixon made a major progressive announcement. On June 17, 1971 he met with a bipartisan delegation at the White House to present his *Special Message to the Congress on Drug Abuse Prevention and Control*. "The laws of supply and demand function in the illegal drug business as in any other," he said. "We are taking steps under the Comprehensive Drug Act to deal with the supply side of the equation and I am recommending additional steps to be taken now. But we must also deal with demand. We must rehabilitate the drug user if we are to eliminate drug abuse and all the antisocial activities that flow from drug abuse."<sup>178</sup> This new approach to rehabilitation addressed the magnitude of the problem, the national and international implications of the problem, and the limited capacities of States and cities to deal with the problem, which all combined to reinforce his conclusion that coordination of the government's efforts had to take place at the highest levels of the Federal Government. Nixon related the drug epidemic to dimensions of a national emergency and asked Congress for an amendment to the 1972 budget in order to provide an

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<sup>177</sup> Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), 508.

<sup>178</sup> Richard Nixon: "Special Message to the Congress on Drug Abuse Prevention and Control.," June 17, 1971. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.  
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3048>



additional \$200 million to take steps away from drug abuse. Once passed, the federal budget allocated \$371 million for programs to control drug abuse in America.<sup>179</sup> Part of these funds paid for the establishment of a new central authority with overall responsibility for all major Federal drug abuse prevention, education, treatment, rehabilitation, training, and research programs in all Federal agencies. Nixon urged the Congress to give his proposal the highest priority. Nevertheless, due to need for immediate action, he issued an Executive Order [11599] to establish within the Executive Office of the President a Special Action Office of Drug Abuse Prevention (SAODAP).

President Nixon appointed Dr. Jerome Jaffe to be the nation's first head of SAODAP and act immediately as America's drug czar. Unlike former FBN Commissioner Harry Anslinger, Jaffe focused on combating America's demand for drugs and coordinated the activities of nine federal agencies concerned with rehabilitation, education and research. SAODAP also directed compulsory urinalysis screening of all veterans that returned from Vietnam and organized a compulsory detoxification and treatment program for those found to have taken drugs. Under presidential order, discovered addicts deployed with the military overseas were held for as much as thirty days beyond their normal discharge date.<sup>180</sup> Michael Massing's *The Fix* provides an in-depth look of SAODAP and Dr. Jaffe's great nation-wide experiment with methadone treatment for heroin addiction.<sup>181</sup> For Jaffe, Nixon's remarks in the White House press room on June 17, 1971 introduced the young thirty-seven year old professor of psychiatry

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Special to the New York Times, "Drug Abuse Fighter: Jerome Herbert Jaffe," *New York Times* (1923-Current File), June 18, 1971, Retrieved from ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The New York Times* (1851-2009) with Index (1851-1993), 22.

<sup>181</sup> For more information about the drug abuse treatment and prevention component of Nixon's drug war strategy, see Massing's *The Fix*, Ch. 9-10.

from the University of Chicago to the public spotlight and effectively made him the general responsible for protecting America's domestic front in the ensuing war on drugs.

President Nixon's new all out offensive in the war on drugs also provided more resources for additional needs on the law enforcement front. The White House asked Congress to provide legislation, which permitted the United States Government to utilize information obtained by foreign police, provided that such information was obtained in compliance with the laws of that country. Other new legislation requested permitted a chemist to submit written findings of his analysis in drug cases and thereby sped up the process of criminal justice.

\$2 million of the drug war budget went to the research and development (R&D) of new equipment and technologies for the detection of illegal drugs and drug traffic, while another \$2 million was allotted to the Department of Agriculture for R&D of herbicides used to destroy growths of narcotics-producing plants without adverse ecological effects. John Ingersoll's Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs received 325 additional positions, which increased capacity to apprehend those engaged in narcotics trafficking within U.S. borders and abroad. Finally, Nixon asked the Congress to provide supplemental appropriation of \$25.6 million for the Treasury Department to reach a total of \$45 million. This measure enhanced customs and border protection by simply doubling the amount of funds available to use for drug abuse control.<sup>182</sup>

Nixon's requests eventually led to Executive order [11641], which established the Office for Drug Abuse Law Enforcement (ODALE). The new initiative marshaled a wide range of government resources—granted by the Organized Crime Control Act of

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<sup>182</sup> Special to the *New York Times*, "Excerpts From President's Message on Drug Abuse Control," *New York Times* (1923-Current File), Jun 18, 1971. Retrieved from ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The New York Times* (1851-2009) with Index (1851-1993), 22.

1970—in a concentrated assault on the street level pusher. Myles Ambrose had overcome the controversial fallout he left after commanding Operation Intercept and was chosen by Nixon to be ODALE’s first man in charge. Under his direction, the new agency worked through nine regional offices to pool new information concerning drug traffickers for use by Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies. ODALE drew from the Departments of Justice and Treasury to assist American communities detect, arrest, and prosecute heroin traffickers.<sup>183</sup>

President Nixon’s biggest front in the new all-out offensive in the war on drugs was international supply reduction. “To wage an effective war against heroin addiction,” he said, “we must have international cooperation.”<sup>184</sup> In order to secure such cooperation, the President of the United States initiated a worldwide escalation in existing narcotics traffic control programs and proposed a number of new steps for this purpose. The first step was to recall U.S. Ambassadors to Turkey, France, Mexico, Luxembourg, Thailand, the Republic of Vietnam, and the United Nations for consultations on how to better cooperate with other nations in the effort to regulate substantial world opium output and narcotics trafficking. Nixon sought to make it equally clear that he considered the heroin addiction of American citizens an international problem of grave concern to their nation and instructed Ambassadors to make his message clear to their respective host governments.<sup>185</sup>

Nixon’s second step consisted of a meeting in Bangkok, Thailand for all U.S.

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<sup>183</sup> Richard Nixon: "Statement on Establishing the Office for Drug Abuse Law Enforcement," January 28, 1972. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=3552&st=drug+abuse&st1=law>

<sup>184</sup> Richard Nixon: "Special Message to the Congress on Drug Abuse Prevention and Control.," June 17, 1971. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3048>

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

Ambassadors to East Asian governments, where they reviewed the increasing narcotics problem in the region, with a particular concern for the effects of drug abuse on American servicemen in Southeast Asia. Third, the president proposed an international goal to end production of opium and the growing of poppies worldwide. Since opium is legitimate source of income to many producing nations, and morphine and codeine both have legitimate medicinal applications, this step seemed insurmountable. Still, Nixon hoped the development of effective substitutes for medical derivatives would eliminate any valid reason for opium production.

The president requested \$1 million as the fourth step in the international front to be used by BNDD for training foreign narcotics enforcement officers. This increase of global interaction and exchange enhanced foreign relations and developed partnerships to help combat transnational illicit trafficking. As a fifth step, Nixon asked the Congress to amend and approve the International Security Assistance Act of 1971 and the International Development and Humanitarian Assistance Act of 1971. Both permitted assistance to proscribed nations in their efforts to end drug trafficking. “The drug problem crosses ideological boundaries and surmounts national differences,” he stated. “If we are barred in any way in our effort to deal with this matter, our efforts will be crippled, and our will subject to question.” The president intended to leave no room for other nations to question America’s commitment to this matter.<sup>186</sup>

Sixth, Nixon declared the United States must recognize that cooperation in control of dangerous drugs works both ways. While the sources of America’s chief narcotics problem are foreign, the U.S. was also a source of illegal psychotropic drugs, which afflicted other nations. Nixon explained that, “If we expect other governments to help

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

stop the flow of heroin to our shores, we must act with equal vigor to prevent equally dangerous substances from going into their nations from our own.”<sup>187</sup> Accordingly, he submitted to the Senate for its advice and consent the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, a UN treaty recently signed by the United States and 22 other nations. In addition, Congress was warned any legislation made necessary by the Convention including the complete licensing, inspection, and control of the manufacture, distribution, and trade in dangerous synthetic drugs would be submitted.

Seventh, the President followed up on a \$2 million pledge to a special fund created on April 1, 1971 by the Secretary General of the United Nations aimed at planning and executing a concerted UN effort against the world drug problem. Nixon maintained the United States would continue its strong backing of UN drug-control efforts and encouraged other countries to contribute. Finally, Nixon urged multilateral support for amendments to the Single Convention on Narcotics, which enabled the International Narcotics Control Board to achieve a global consensus on the restriction of opium growing and prohibition of other dangerous substances.

For Nixon, narcotics addiction was a problem that afflicts both the body and soul of the nation. He believed it was a problem, which baffled and frightened many Americans. “For those who become victims of narcotics and dangerous drugs,” he said, “It is a problem which demands compassion and not simply condemnation.”<sup>188</sup> Beginning in the days of the 1968 presidential campaign, Richard Nixon promised to do more to combat America’s drug problem. While in office, the thirty-seventh president succumbed to many faults and blunders but managed to deliver on addressing the

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

narcotics and crime issue. Ironically, Nixon supported international narcotics control all along, but it was the political controversy and hysteria brought on by reported heroin addiction within America's military that became a catalyst for the consummate politician to be able to launch a new all out offensive against drug abuse.

*The International Community Responded to Nixon's War*

President Nixon's mid-June press conference announced his new all-out offensive against drug abuse and identified heroin as public enemy number one. The international community realized America was serious about narcotics control and many countries decided to publicly join Nixon's war. Iranian leadership shared the president's deep concern for eradicating illicit drug trafficking. Like the United States, Iran viewed itself as a narcotic drug victim during the years of Nixon's drug war and took many similar steps to combat drug abuse (i.e. Strong anti-smuggling laws, rehabilitation programs, upgraded training for narcotics law enforcement officers). Although Iran did legally cultivated opium poppy, the Shah reassured Washington its program was tightly controlled. The American Embassy in Tehran did not see any leakage of Iranian production into illicit international channels.<sup>189</sup> In return for good relations, the U.S. State Department facilitated an exchange of five UH-1 "Huey" helicopters to enhance the Iranian Government's helicopter narcotics control program that were then used to control the remote Eastern frontier with Afghanistan over which large quantities of illegal open

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<sup>189</sup> Department of State TELEGRAM, from American Embassy Tehran to Secretary of State, "President's Message on Narcotics, June 21, 1971," Folder SOC 11-5 INCO DRUGS IRAN, Record Group 59, NARC, MD.

were being smuggled into Iran.<sup>190</sup>

Mexico continued to berate the effects of Operation Intercept but still promised to consider carefully any suggestions Nixon administration officials had for improved performance by its Latin partners. Foreign Secretary Rabasa asked the U.S. Ambassador if his president had raised any particular problems about U.S.-Mexican cooperation in the drug question.<sup>191</sup> The answer was no, but the administration did inquire about the possibility of holding a public delivery ceremony of three helicopters to Mexico later that summer. On August 11, 1971, the first of many turnover ceremonies was held after U.S. pilots flew three helicopters into Ciudad Juarez and transferred custody over to the Mexican government. Following the ceremony, officials from both countries witnessed the burning of two tons of marijuana.<sup>192</sup> In addition to rotorcraft, Mexico's Federal Judicial Police requested an long wish list of items it could use affectively in its anti-drug efforts to include: ground transport equipment, additional fixed wing and rotary aircraft, communications gear, and weapons and ammunition.<sup>193</sup>

Nixon's drug war also extended to Africa. On July 12, 1971, Ghana's government launched a government campaign against the use of two dangerous drugs that posed a particular concern to its nation: cannabis and amphetamines. New publications like Ghana's Health Digest discussed the background to the production of Indian hemp, which was popularly known in the West African country as "wee." The

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<sup>190</sup> Department of State TELEGRAM, from American Embassy Tehran to Secretary of State, "Narcotics: Sale of USG Helicopters to Iran, August 26, 1971," Folder SOC 11-5 INCO DRUGS IRAN, Record Group 59, NARC, MD.

<sup>191</sup> Department of State TELEGRAM, from American Embassy Mexico to Secretary of State, Jun 25, 1971, Folder SOC 11-5 INCO DRUGS 17 US-MEX, Record Group 59, NARC, MD.

<sup>192</sup> Department of State TELEGRAM, from American Embassy Mexico to Secretary of State, "Helicopter Delivery Ceremony, August 06, 1971," Folder INCO DRUGS 17 US-MEX, Record Group 59, NARC.

<sup>193</sup> Department of State TELEGRAM, from American Embassy Mexico to Secretary of State, "Narcotics Cooperation-Material Assistance, August 03, 1971," Folder INCO DRUGS 17 US-MEX, Record Group 59, NARC.

article also outlined the extent of Indian hemp ingestion, the background of consumers and their motivations, and the legal, social, and preventative aspects of the problem. Ghana's Minister of Health appealed to his countrymen to report cases of drug use to the police or hospitals and called on judges to impose heavier penalties on hemp smokers and dealers.<sup>194</sup>

*Nixon Created the Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control*

Nixon was the first president to elevate America's drug problem to the foreign policy level and take personal initiatives to solicit the cooperation of other governments. His diplomatic efforts aimed to persuade each nation to do its share and meet its responsibilities in the worldwide war against drug abuse.<sup>195</sup> The president called for an accelerated attack on the international aspects of the narcotics trade in his message to the Congress on June 17, 1971, when he stated, "No serious attack on our national drug problem can ignore the international implications of such an effort, nor can the domestic effort succeed without tackling the problem on an international plane."<sup>196</sup> Nixon's call resulted in the establishment of the Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control (CCINC) on August 17, 1971. Members were announced at the White House three weeks later on September 7 and included: Secretary of State William Rogers, Attorney General John Mitchell, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, Secretary of

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<sup>194</sup> Department of State AIRGRAM, from American Embassy ACCRA to Washington, "National Campaign Against Drug Abuse, July 15, 1971," Folder INCO-DRUG GHANA, Record Group 59, NARC, MD.

<sup>195</sup> Eugene Rossides, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury (Enforcement, Tariff, and Trade Affairs, and Operations), "Hearings before Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws," September 18, 1972 (Washington U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 281.

<sup>196</sup> Nelson Gross, "World Drug Traffic and its Impact on U.S. Security, September 18, 1972" "Hearings before Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws," September 18, 1972 (Washington U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 253.



Treasury John Connelly, Jr., CIA Director Richard Helms, and US Representative to the UN George Bush. Nixon added Secretary of Agriculture Clifford Hardin on October 1 after the president became interested in potential parasites and other herbicides he was told could potentially destroy drug crops at their source.<sup>197</sup> The CCINC was responsible for the formulation and coordination of all U.S. Government policies that related to the goal of curtailing and eventually eliminating the flow of illegal narcotics and dangerous drugs into the United States.<sup>198</sup> The Committee was specifically charged with developing comprehensive plans and programs for international drug control; assuring the coordination of all diplomatic, intelligence, and Federal law enforcement programs and activities of international scope; evaluating all such programs and activities and their implementation; making recommendations to the Office of Management and Budget on proposed findings; and providing periodic progress reports to the President.<sup>199</sup>

Although the full committee did not meet often, its working group provided high-level personnel from each of the member agencies plus the Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention. CCINC Executive Director “Bud” Krogh of the White House staff worked diligently as the working group chairman and coordinated with State Department’s Nelson Gross, Senior Adviser to the Secretary and Coordinator for International Narcotics Matters. Together these two directed the preparation of Narcotics Control Action Plans for fifty-nine countries considered to have a current or potential

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<sup>197</sup> Richard Nixon, White House Memorandum from President Nixon to Clifford Hardin, Secretary of Agriculture, “Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control,” October 1, 1971, Folder [EX] FG 330 Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control [1971-1972]; Box 1; White House Central Files: FG 330; Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, CA.

<sup>198</sup> Richard Nixon: “Memorandum Establishing the Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control,” September 7, 1971. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3139>

<sup>199</sup> Letter from David Abshire, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations to Secretary of State Rogers, November 8, 1971, INCO DRUGS 17 US, Record Group 59, NACP, MD.

involvement in the production, processing, consumption, or transshipment of illicit hard drugs.

A bureaucratic army of Foreign Service employees provided Krogh and Gross with the troops needed in to effectively accomplish the CCINC's mission to attack the global front of Nixon's drug war. Personnel from various government agencies including BNDD, Customs, CIA, Agency for International Development (AID), and State were assigned to embassies around the world. To complement the mobilizing resources from Washington, narcotics control coordinators were designated at virtually all-foreign posts. Regional teams collaborated to focus on illicit commodity chains connected to their respective areas of interest.<sup>200</sup> France was the European hub, because intelligence indicated that country was where most of the world's heroin refining was done. Thailand was the Asian hub, and Iran served as the regional marshal for the Middle East. South America's center was in Paraguay, since the CCINC found it to be where narcotics were historically most often smuggled in and out. Each embassy also submitted its own action plan to restrict narcotics destined for American black markets or U.S. personnel abroad. The action plans included a description of the drug situation in the country in question, a statement of goals, and a strategy to achieve such goals, estimated costs, priorities, and a general timetable for implementation. After review and approval in Washington, the action plans were forwarded to Foreign Service posts to serve as a basis for opening discussions with host governments for the negotiation of bilateral narcotics control

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<sup>200</sup> Nelson Gross, "World Drug Traffic and its Impact on U.S. Security, September 18, 1972" "Hearings before Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws," September 18, 1972 (Washington U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 254.

agreements or programs.<sup>201</sup>

Nixon directly charged each American Ambassador with the ultimate responsibility of developing, implementing, and monitoring CCINC approved action plans. Their credibility was enhanced with personal letters from the White House Nixon sent out to the chiefs of counter narcotics missions in sixty-nine countries. “A successful fight against drug abuse will require the cooperation of all nations,” he said. “For this reason I have made effective narcotics control a primary foreign policy objective of the United States.”<sup>202</sup> As the State Department’s senior adviser and coordinator for international narcotics matters, Nelson Gross led other administration officials in the attempt to convey to foreign governments and to overseas diplomatic missions the determination of the United States to take the necessary steps in cooperation with others to bring narcotics and other dangerous drugs under effective control.

Krogh magnified his duties as CCINC Executive Director, although some representatives from DoD, CIA, and Treasury lacked his same amount of enthusiasm. For example, the White House fired off multiple memos to the Pentagon expressing frustration about the extremely “unimaginative” and “parochial” attitude of the Defense representatives. Krogh reiterated that, “The Cabinet Committee Working Group is a policy setting body which requires a DOD spokesman who can commit the Department. Ben Foreman does not have the requisite drive or authority.” In another paragraph he wrote, “The Coordinating Subcommittee must be an aggressive, enthusiastic group capable of reconciling interagency differences, making policy recommendations, and

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<sup>201</sup> Egil M. Krogh Exit Interview, conducted with Terry W. Good and John R. Nesbitt, December 18, 1972, Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, CA, 10. Retrieved from:

<http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/exitinterviews/krogh.php>

<sup>202</sup> Gross, “World Drug Traffic and its Impact on U.S. Security,” 254.

supervising the Government-wide anti-drug effort. As a GS-14 (Government Service Employee pay grade level 14) expert on European military sales, Mr. Leo Carl possesses neither the attitude nor the stature necessary to be an effective Defense representative.<sup>203</sup>

1972: A Year of International Narcotics Control Success

Despite interagency personnel challenges, the Nixon administration claimed the Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control was an effective use of the new resources that were allocated to fight the global war on drugs. Substantial agreements to enhance international narcotics control and restrict global supplies of illegal drugs were achieved between the United States Government many other countries. In addition to Turkey, France, Mexico, Germany, Iran and Ghana, leaders of Japan, South Korea, India, New Zealand all cooperated with Nixon's global narcotics control initiatives.<sup>204</sup> The president specifically mentioned the Cabinet Committee for International Narcotics Control during his 1972 State of the Union Address<sup>205</sup> and shared success stories with the public throughout the year. No doubt he had duplicitous intentions. Success stories were not only popular with the press, but they also boosted his public approval ratings leading up to the November elections.

France served as the perfect kind of victory Nixon desired. The president attended a CCINC meeting at the White House on March 18, 1972 and shared SECRET information that just two days earlier French authorities had affected the world's largest

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<sup>203</sup> Egil M. Krogh, Memo from Bud Krogh for General James Hughes, "Cabinet Committee On International Narcotics Control," October 18, 1971, Folder [EX] FG 330 Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control [1971-1972]; Box 1; White House Central Files: FG 330; Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, CA.

<sup>204</sup> The CIA produced in-depth "Narcotics Country Papers" that assessed the progress of anti-drug programs in every region of the world. See "Narcotics Country Papers," CREST, NACP, MD.

<sup>205</sup> Richard Nixon: "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union.," January 20, 1972. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3407>

heroin seizure (937 pounds) on a shrimp boat in Marseilles.<sup>206</sup> This news arrived shortly after France seized five heroin labs during a major drug racket crackdown. Then on April 10, Philip D'Antoni's *The French Connection* swept five Oscars at the Academy Awards in Hollywood.<sup>207</sup>

*Panic in Needle Park*<sup>208</sup> was another movie released in 1971 about the drug problem but received hardly the same recognition. Al Pacino's stark portrayal of life among a group of heroin addicts who hang out in "Needle Park" in New York City did not demand the same record breaking number of ticket sales as Gene Hackman's raw performance of a NYPD detective willing to chase international drug runners and "frogmen" past the point of recklessness. This cultural contrast also reflects the reality that Nixon's international component of the drug war was more compelling and popular with the general public than the domestic component.

The White House ensured drug warriors successful in France also received personal acknowledgment of their achievements. Mr. Paul Knight represented BNDD at the American Embassy in Paris and received a personal letter of appreciation signed by Richard Nixon. "The Regional Office in France of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs has been playing a central role in the global war against heroin, and your leadership in this effort has been outstanding." Nixon added, "On behalf of every American who is deeply concerned about the menace of drug abuse, I welcome this opportunity to express my appreciation for all you and your colleagues are doing." The

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<sup>206</sup> Memorandum for the President, "Meeting with Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control, March 20, 1972, Folder [EX] FG 330 Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control [1971-1972]; Box 1; White House Central Files: FG 330; Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, CA.

<sup>207</sup> The 44<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards (1972) Nominees and Winners. Accessed March 8, 2013, <http://www.oscars.org/awards/academyawards/legacy/ceremony/44th-winners.html>

<sup>208</sup> Jerry Schatzberg, dir., *Panic In Needle Park*, 1971. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0067549/>

White House distributed many similar thank you notes throughout the year.<sup>209</sup>

Nixon enjoyed other countries' success stories during 1972. The Turkish ban on opium cultivation was implemented resolutely, though Turkish officials faced sharp domestic criticism. Mexico's \$51.3 million wish list for material and training was approved. Thailand burned twenty-six tons of opium on March 7 and then arrested the notorious ex-GI heroin trafficker, Lawrence W. Jackson. The CCINC achieved a milestone when authorities successfully extradited and convicted key drug kingpin Auguste Ricord.<sup>210</sup> Nelson Gross traveled down to Paraguay and dealt with the head of state in a way that justified a lot of diplomacy and a great deal of money in order to persuade the government to turn him over to U.S. custody. The extradition of Ricord was significant. First, it put all drug conspirators on notice that the United States was relentless in tracking down those who trafficked in drugs. Second, it was a signal to governments around the world that America wanted co-operation with its allies.<sup>211</sup>

### *Critique of Nixon's Drug War Strategy*

Despite the administration's positive rhetoric and captivating case studies, Nixon's drug war was not without criticism. America's attention turned back again to Southeast Asia during the summer of 1972 when Alfred McCoy testified before a Senate Subcommittee about the Federal government's involvement in the Southeast Asia narcotics trade. He concluded:

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<sup>209</sup> Richard Nixon, White House letter from the President to Mr. Paul Knight, September 14, 1972, Folder SOC 11-5; Record Group 59, NARC, MD.

<sup>210</sup> Nelson Gross, "World Drug Traffic and its Impact on U.S. Security, September 18, 1972" "Hearings before Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws," September 18, 1972 (Washington U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 255-257.

<sup>211</sup> "Victory Soon in Fight Against Drug Traffic? Interview with Top Authority Nelson Gross," *U.S. News & World Report*, Washington, DC, September 25, 1972, 50-60.

After spending eighteen months researching, travelling and conducting hundreds of interviews, I have reached one firm conclusion—if we are going to deal seriously with the heroin problem in this country we will have to reorder our priorities and commitments in Southeast Asia. President Nixon has told us that we cannot solve the drug problem unless we deal with it at its source and eliminate illicit opium production. The source is now Southeast Asia, and that area accounts for some 70% of the world's illicit opium supply.<sup>212</sup>

Nelson Gross offered a counter testimony and said, “All officials concerned with the drug problem acknowledge that the United States agencies, under personal prodding from President Nixon, have begun an intensive effort to stem the international narcotics traffic.” The *New York Times* published a column by Seymour Hersh containing references to CONFIDENTIAL CIA reports that concluded, “Contrary to the Nixon Administration's public optimism, there is no prospect of stemming the smuggling of narcotics by air and sea in Southeast Asia.”<sup>213</sup> McCoy and Congressman Steele were the two leading critics of Nixon's drug war strategy and alleged the Government to be lax in its prosecution of corruption. The cabinet level report referred to was prepared for the CCINC and recommended the suppression of illicit traffic by Thai trawlers appeared “both feasible and highly rewarding; it should clearly command highest priority.” The seizure of one trawler would have been a real victory, because in one form or another, a trawler load represented an estimated 6% of annual U.S. heroin consumption.<sup>214</sup> Policy makers responded to the report and by the time McCoy published his book in July 1972, the Southeast Asia situation had changed. Current information from the Office of the

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<sup>212</sup> Alfred W. McCoy, “The Heroin Traffic in Southeast Asia: Statement by Alfred W. McCoy before the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, U.S. Senate, June 2, 1972,” February 15, 2013. Approved For Release 2006/10/10 CIA-RDP74B00415R000400020016-5, CREST; NACP, MD.

<sup>213</sup> Seymour M. Hersh, Special to the *New York Times*, “Report to U.S. Sees No Hope of Halting Asian Drug Traffic,” *New York Times*, Monday, July 24, 1972, CREST, NACP, MD.

<sup>214</sup> Frederick W. Flott, Chairman, Task Force on Air and Sea Smuggling of the CCINC, “Report of the CCINC Task Force on Air and Sea Smuggling, February 21, 1972, Department of State, CREST; NACP, MD, 2.

CIA Deputy Director/ Intelligence remarked, “Much has occurred since the 21 February report in the way of taking or stimulating concrete actions against the weaknesses described in the report of 21 February.”<sup>215</sup>

President Nixon responded to criticism of his global war strategy and continued to warn other nations not to assist drug traffickers move dangerous drugs into the United States. All along the campaign trail, Nixon defended his administration’s achievements in the fight against narcotics and drug abuse. Senator McGovern echoed the McCoy-Steele allegations and said, “We have allied ourselves with corrupt governments that are complicit in the drug trade and this fact is coming home to haunt us.”<sup>216</sup> Without mentioning his political opponent’s name, the President underscored his Administration’s commitment to the campaign against drug abuse and explained how he detested drugs being pushed into the country. “I consider keeping dangerous drugs out of the United States as important as keeping armed enemy forces from landing in the United States.”<sup>217</sup> Ten days before the Presidential election, Nixon released a campaign statement about crime and drug abuse to remind voters the issue remained one of his administration’s highest priorities. “As a result of our total war on drug abuse,” he claimed, “the rate of growth in new heroin addiction has declined dramatically since 1969.” Nixon concluded, “By winning the war on crime and drugs, we can restore the social climate of order and justice which will assure our society of the freedom it must have to build and grow.”<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Current Information Memorandum, Office of the DD/I, “Today’s *NY Times* Story on Narcotics,” July 24, 1972, CREST; NACP, MD.

<sup>216</sup> Richard Reston, *New York Times* Staff Writer, “Nixon Warns Other Nations Not to Assist Drug Traffickers,” *Los Angeles Times* (1923-Current File); Sep. 19, 1972; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *Los Angeles Times* (1881-1989), A1.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>218</sup> Richard Nixon: “Campaign Statement About Crime and Drug Abuse.,” October 28, 1972. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=366>



President Nixon voiced a new call to action in the global war on drugs when he attended the Washington Conference on International Narcotics Control. This three-day event was the first worldwide meeting of senior U.S. narcotics control officials. Fifty-nine representatives from fifty-four American embassies abroad plus the country's diplomatic mission to Geneva traveled from their respective posts located across the globe to convene at the U.S. State Department building.

Nixon considered the Conference as important as any other he ever attended. For him, winning the battle against drug abuse was the most important and most urgent issue of the day. "As President of the United States," he reminded the audience, "I feel that I bear no more solemn trust than to help to win this battle, and as public officials, everybody in this room, people who represent America in this country and all over the world, you could not be engaged in a finer humanitarian cause than in winning this battle against drug abuse."<sup>219</sup>

The President used inciting rhetoric to rally support and enthusiasm for his anti-drug initiatives. In rousing fashion, Nixon concluded remarks to narcotics control officials by saying:

We are living in an age, as we all know, in the era of diplomacy, when there are times that a great nation must engage in what is called a limited war. I have rejected that principle in declaring total war against dangerous drugs. Our goal is the unconditional surrender of the merchants of death who traffic in heroin. Our goal is the total banishment of drug abuse from American life. Our children's lives are what we are fighting for. Our children's future is the reason we must succeed. We are going to fight this evil with every weapon at our command, and, with your help and the support of millions of concerned Americans, we are going to win.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Richard Nixon: "Remarks to the Washington Conference on International Narcotics Control.," September 18, 1972. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3578>

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

The Washington Conference highlighted key players in Nixon's drug war and validated the work of the Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control. Secretary of State and CCINC Chairman William Rogers, Nelson Gross, and Bud Krogh preceded the President's keynote address. The balance of the conference was conducted in closed session that allowed experts to share self-assessments and deliberate constructive criticism. Conferees heard reports from Washington program officials and participated in individual regional workshop meetings, where they discussed situations in Latin America, Europe, Africa, the Near East and South Asia, and East Asia and the Pacific. The final day was devoted to conclusions and conference recommendations for improving the effectiveness of international narcotics control.

### *The Golden Triangle*

After the Washington Conference, Southeast Asia's Golden Triangle became a new target in the U.S. drive to halt drug traffic. Poppy fields of Burma, Thailand, and Laos were the world's largest single source of illicit opium during Nixon's war. The region produced about 700 tons a year. Of this, about 600 tons were used in Southeast Asia, while the remaining 100 tons—enough when refined into heroin to supply U.S. addicts for a year—moved into international drug traffic.

Burma was the “real source of production,” when it put out about 500 tons of opium annually. The state was controlled at that time by tribal groups the Burmese government was unable to discipline. Burma refused to let U.S. narcotics agents into the country to combat opium production and traffic until finally an agreement was reached in 1974. Thailand was mainly a transit country. The Government cooperated closely with the United States, and allowed American agents to train foreign partners how to interdict

drug flow out of Burma, particularly from Tachilek, major processing center. Laos also cooperated with the United States to block transshipment of opium and heroin from producing and processing centers in Burma.

South Vietnam was the biggest market for heroin, but as the numbers of U.S. servicemen declined, so did demand for drugs. With an overwhelming supply and lack of demand, pushers had to find new markets to sell their black market commodities. Bangkok, Singapore, Saigon, Hong Kong, and Manila all became narcotic dispensing centers, and some dealers figured out how to ship their product all the way overseas directly into the United States.<sup>221</sup>

The Nixon Administration realized, after spending its first two years focusing on Mexico, Turkey, and France, that the drug problem was not something that could be handled on a limited basis. Potential profits from the illegal sale of narcotics were so high, that even if victories were achieved in one area, traffic moved some place else. Bud Krogh attributed this phenomenon to the “balloon effect.” When the government squeezed pressure on one side, the balloon bulged out on the other.<sup>222</sup>

In 1972 the CCINC worked to develop a worldwide control infrastructure, recognizing that it took time before countries could become proficient at narcotics law enforcement. International drug control officers believed the trafficking patterns that emerged in Southeast Asia would sink to the same level they had witnessed in Europe but only after a sustained period of persistent involvement in the region. With most of America’s forces removed from Vietnam, authorities zeroed in on the attacking the

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<sup>221</sup> “The Illicit Opium Network of Southeast Asia,” *U.S. News & World Report*, Washington, DC, September 25, 1972, 51.

<sup>222</sup> Egil M. Krogh Exit Interview, conducted with Terry W. Good and John R. Nesbitt, December 18, 1972, Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, CA, 10. Retrieved from: <http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/exitinterviews/krogh.php>

Golden Triangle.

*Nixon's Final Message to Congress on Law Enforcement and Drug Abuse Prevention*

President Nixon devoted his final message to the Congress on the state of the Union to reviewing the progress he felt his administration had made on law enforcement and drug abuse. No single law enforcement problem occupied more time, effort and money in the years of Nixon's presidency than that of drug abuse and drug addiction. Nixon repeatedly stated that he regarded drugs as "public enemy number one," because he believed they destroyed the nation's most precious resource--its young people--and bred lawlessness, violence and death.<sup>223</sup>

When the Administration assumed Office in 1969, only \$82 million was budgeted by the Federal Government for law enforcement, prevention, and rehabilitation in the field of drug abuse. By 1974 that figure had increased to \$785 million--nearly 10 times as much. Nixon put a positive spin on the change when he said, "Narcotics production has been disrupted, more traffickers and distributors have been put out of business, and addicts and abusers have been treated and started on the road to rehabilitation."<sup>224</sup>

According to official statistics, heroin supplies on the East Coast did in fact substantially decrease. The scarcity of heroin in America's big Eastern cities drove up the price of an average "fix" from \$4.31 to \$9.88, while at the same time its purity dropped from 6.5 to 3.7 percent. Nixon claimed this trend encouraged more addicts to seek medical treatment

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<sup>223</sup> Richard Nixon: "State of the Union Message to the Congress on Law Enforcement and Drug Abuse Prevention," March 14, 1973. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4140>

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

and use the methadone facilities his administration helped to create.<sup>225</sup>

Through the Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control, Nixon argued Embassy action plans helped fifty-nine foreign countries develop and carry out their own national control programs. These efforts, linked with those of the Bureau of Customs and the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, produced heartening results for the Administration.<sup>226</sup> Prime Minister Erim decided in 1971 to prohibit all cultivation of opium within Turkey's borders. Worldwide narcotics seizures almost tripled in 1972 over the previous year, and seizures by U.S. anti-narcotics allies abroad reached an all-time high by 1973.

Among the many reports about the drug war shared with Congress and the American people, Nixon most touted those related to international affairs as evidence of his successful strategy. This included the half-ton of heroin on a shrimp boat headed for the United States that was seized in 1972 by French authorities. Argentine, Brazilian and Venezuelan agents also seized 285 pounds of heroin in three raids the same year. Twenty arrests crippled the French-Latin American connection. Paraguay Ringleader Auguste Ricord was extradited to the U.S. by Paraguay and sentenced to 20-years in Federal prison. Thailand's Special Narcotics Organization seized a total of almost eleven tons of opium along the Burmese border, as well as a half-ton of morphine and heroin. Iran scored the largest opium seizure on record--over 12 tons taken from smugglers along the Afghanistan border. These results were all the more gratifying for Nixon in light of the fact that heroin was wholly a foreign import to the United States. We do not grow opium or produce heroin here, he said. "Yet we have the largest addict population in the world.

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

Clearly we will end our problem faster with continued foreign assistance.”<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 5: Nixon's Drug War Changes, 1973-1974

President Nixon overwhelmingly defeated Senator George McGovern in the 1972 Presidential election. The campaign victory was like a touchdown produced in part from the all-out offensive strategy against drug abuse that he initiated in June 1971. However, once re-elected, the President's national drug control policy began to change and emphasized the need for more support of law enforcement measures.

### *Rockefeller's Drug Laws Emphasized Harsh Punishments*

New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller's mandatory sentencing laws profoundly affected President Nixon's drug war. During the early years of the Nixon administration, Rockefeller championed White House sponsored drug prevention programs and rehabilitation policies. Late in 1972 however, he unexpectedly did an about face after studying Japan's war on drugs and the effectiveness of its zero-tolerance policy. "For drug pushing," he said, "life sentence, no parole, no probation!"<sup>228</sup> Joseph Persico, one of Rockefeller's closest aides, said Rockefeller suddenly decided that more progressive approaches to drug addiction had simply failed.<sup>229</sup> During a press conference in January, the governor launched his new campaign to toughen New York's laws. He called for mandatory prison sentences of fifteen years to life for drug dealers and addicts—even

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<sup>228</sup> Brian Mann, "The Drug Laws that Changed How We Punish," *Morning Edition*, February 14, 2013, *National Public Radio*, accessed March 18, 2013. <http://www.npr.org/2013/02/14/171822608/the-drug-laws-that-changed-how-we-punish>.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

those caught with small amounts. “I have one goal and one objective,” he stated, “and that is to stop the pushing of drugs and to protect the innocent victim.”<sup>230</sup>

The Rockefeller drug laws served as a model for the nation. His new initiative was so popular in New York that the state legislature was quick to come on board. The idea of getting tough spread across America and soon many states joined New York by adopting their own mandatory minimum sentences and three-strike rules. Rockefeller’s draconian drug laws contributed to an explosion in the prison population from 330,000 in 1973 to a peak of 2.3 million. Hundreds of new state and federal prisons had to be built to house the influx of inmates.<sup>231</sup>

The federal government took notice of New York’s Rockefeller drug laws and also contributed to rises in the prison population. Richard Nixon relied on Nelson Rockefeller’s support during the 1972 Presidential election. The Governor even headed a New York State Committee to Reelect the President.<sup>232</sup> In return, President Nixon visited the Empire State many times and observed the impact Rockefeller’s drug laws had on the drug war.<sup>233</sup> On March 14, 1973, Nixon’s State of the union message to the Congress laid out a request for harsh mandatory sentencing laws. These measures elevated Governor Rockefeller’s initiatives to a federal level. President Nixon believed federal sentencing practices were so inadequate and intolerable, that he proposed legislation to

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<sup>230</sup> Special to *The New York Times*. (1973, Jan 04). “Excerpts from the message by Governor Rockefeller on the State of the State.” *New York Times* (1923-Current File). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/119723044?accountid=14696>

<sup>231</sup> Mann, “The Drug Laws that Changed How We Punish.”

<sup>232</sup> For more information about Rockefeller’s involvement in the 1972 Presidential campaign, see:, Nelson A. Rockefeller Papers, Series 12. New York State Committee to Reelect the President, 1972-1973; Record Group 15, Nelson A. Rockefeller Gubernatorial Records; Rockefeller Family Archives. <http://www.rockarch.org/collections/family/nar/gubmain.php>

<sup>233</sup> Richard Nixon: "Remarks at a "Victory '72" Dinner in New York City.," September 26, 1972. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3601>



increase punishments for heroin and morphine offenses. To be sure judges applied these tough sentences, Nixon mandated no penalties could be lessened nor probation granted. Nor did he allow those trafficking in heroin or morphine to be released before their trials. Nixon acknowledged that these were harsh measures, but insisted that circumstances warranted such provisions.<sup>234</sup>

The media questioned President Nixon's policy change. Two days after his State of the Union message, the President held a press conference at the White House Rose Garden. A reporter wanted to know why the President supported restoration of mandatory prison terms for narcotics traffickers. Just three years prior, the Chief Executive signed a bill into law that removed mandatory prison terms from narcotics convictions. Now he had done a complete turnaround on this policy issue. In response, Nixon pointed out mandatory sentences only applied to crimes associated with hard narcotics, not soft drugs like marijuana. During the sixties, the United States went far down the road of the permissive approach to those charged with a crime. Nixon argued that America reaped a terrible harvest, which he described as the greatest increase in crime that the country had ever seen, explosive to the point where law and order became a great concern in the 1968 elections and again in 1972. Under these circumstances, Nixon believed that it was essential not to use a permissive approach, but one where the penalties deterred the crimes. President Nixon opposed the legalization of marijuana, yet he also advocated an equitable punishment to fit the offense.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Richard Nixon: "State of the Union Message to the Congress on Law Enforcement and Drug Abuse Prevention," March 14, 1973. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=4140&st=drugs&st1=narcotics>

<sup>235</sup> Richard Nixon: "The President's News Conference," March 15, 1973. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4142>

The principal shift toward a heavy law enforcement strategy occurred when the White House transmitted *Reorganization Plan Number Two of 1973*. On March 28, 1973, Nixon asked the Congress to create a single, comprehensive Federal agency within the Department of Justice to streamline the Federal drug law enforcement effort and lead the war against illicit drug trafficking. Funding for this effort had increased sevenfold during the previous five years, from \$36 million in fiscal year 1969 to \$257 million in fiscal year 1974--more money was not the most pressing enforcement need. Nor was there a primary need for more manpower. Under the Nixon administration, Federal drug enforcement agencies (BNDD, ODALE, Customs Bureau) received a total of over 2,100 new agents-- an increase of more than 250 percent above 1969 levels.<sup>236</sup>

The enforcement work could benefit significantly, however, from consolidation of America's anti-drug forces under a single unified command. In 1973, the Federal Government fought the war on drug abuse under a distinct handicap, for its efforts were those of a loosely confederated alliance facing a resourceful, elusive, worldwide enemy. Nixon said Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan described this handicap precisely when the master naval strategist wrote, "Granting the same aggregate of force, it is never as great in two hands as in one, because it is not perfectly concentrated."<sup>237</sup> In other words, the President sought to consolidate power and grant all significant drug war prosecution authority to one agency under the watchful eye of the Justice Department.

Nixon issued *Executive Order 11727*, which established the Drug Enforcement Administration and authorized the U.S. Attorney General to coordinate all activities of

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<sup>236</sup> Richard Nixon: "Message to the Congress Transmitting Reorganization Plan 2 of 1973 Establishing the Drug Enforcement Administration.," March 28, 1973. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4159>

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

the executive branch departments and agencies directly related to the enforcement laws respecting narcotics and dangerous drugs.<sup>238</sup> The DEA endured Nixon's drug war and emerged as one of its lasting legacies.

### *Nixon Created a New Federal Drug Team*

Nixon's war changed when he created a new Federal drug team after his initial generals in charge left their positions. On February 2, 1973 Bud Krogh turned over his duties as Executive Director of the Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control and became Undersecretary of Transportation. Following Nixon's successful re-election, Bud felt a great desire to leave the White House and serve in one of the departments far removed from law enforcement, narcotics control, or clandestine activity.<sup>239</sup> Three months later he resigned his post and claimed full responsibility for coordinating the break-in to the offices of Dr. Lewis J. Fielding (Daniel Ellsberg's Psychiatrist). On November 30, 1973, Egil "Bud" Krogh pled guilty to a single charge in violation of 18 U.S.C. 241, conspiracy to violate civil rights. In January, the following year, a Federal judge sentenced him to a prison term of two to six years with all but six months suspended.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Richard Nixon: "Executive Order 11727--Drug law enforcement," July 6, 1973. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=59117>

<sup>239</sup> Egil "Bud" Krogh, with Matthew Krogh, *Integrity: Good People, Bad Choices, and Life Lessons from the White House* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), 123.

<sup>240</sup> Krogh was later exonerated and re-instated to the Washington State Bar. He currently serves as Senior Fellow on Leadership, Ethics, and Integrity at the Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress: <http://www.thepresidency.org/publications/presidential-fellows-works/4-advisors-and-fellows/80-egil-qbudq-krogh>

Egil Krogh, Biographical Note, Textual Materials, White House Special Files; Nixon Presidential Library and Museum. Accessed April 11, 2013.

<http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forresearchers/find/textual/special/smf/krogh.php>

The State Department also experienced turnover. Ambassador to Turkey William J. Handley left his Embassy post on April 19, 1973. He returned to Washington and replaced Nelson Gross as Senior Adviser to the Secretary of State and Coordinator for International Narcotics Matters.<sup>241</sup> Handley had been in the forefront of the international narcotics control program from its inception and played a key role in the negotiations that led to Turkey's ban on opium cultivation.<sup>242</sup>

Nelson Gross left the Nixon Administration in May 1973 after being indicted on five-tax fraud and perjury counts. These charges stemmed from his activities as chairman of William T. Cahill's 1969 New Jersey gubernatorial campaign.<sup>243</sup> Like Bud Krogh, Nelson Gross was released from Federal prison early after serving just over six months of what originally had been a two-year sentence for campaign-finance abuses.<sup>244</sup> Gross left politics and became a wealthy owner of a converted ferryboat restaurant in New Jersey. The millionaire vanished in 1997 after withdrawing \$20,000 from a bank near the restaurant and his law office. Nelson Gross was last seen driving off with two men in his 1990 grey BMW sedan. Police found his body one week later slashed and bludgeoned on the east bank of the Hudson River. As a sad twist of fate, they made the discovery only

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<sup>241</sup> William Jules Handley (1918-1979), Foreign Service Officer, U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, Accessed April 11, 2013. <http://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/handley-william-jules>

<sup>242</sup> William Rogers, Letter from Secretary of State, Washington, to the Honorable George Schultz, Secretary of the Treasury, May 3, 1973, [EX] FG 330 Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control [1971-1972]; Box 1; White House Central Files: FG 330; Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, CA.

<sup>243</sup> Joseph F. Sullivan, "Gross Is convicted of All Five Charges In Campaign Fraud," *The New York Times*, March 30, 1974. Retrieved from:

<http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F70613FB3D541A7493C2AA1788D85F408785F9>

<sup>244</sup> *New York Times*, "Gross Will Be Paroled on Dec. 10," Retrieved from:

<http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F0091FFC3A5E157B93C2AB178BD95F428785F9>

after an antidrug unit in Washington Heights, Manhattan received an informer's tip that led to the capture of the murder suspects.<sup>245</sup>

Dr. Jerome Jaffe's resignation also changed Nixon's drug war strategy. Jaffe was the main figure who developed the Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention. By its definition, SAODAP's purpose was to prevent drug use and treat addicts. Methadone clinics were built all over the country under Jaffe's tenure, but when the emphasis shifted to law enforcement, SAODAP's role declined. The physician grew frustrated and was constantly at odds with other members of the administration who wanted him to be a better team player and supporter of the burgeoning Drug Enforcement Administration. Jaffe resisted, and submitted his letter of resignation to the President on May 29, 1973. Two weeks later he stepped down as the nation's drug czar, and Dr. Robert DuPont took his place. SAODAP phased out and was replaced with its successor, the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA). Unlike Jaffe's SAODAP that was located two hundred steps from the White House, NIDA moved to DC's suburbs in Rockville, MD, buried deep within the Health, Education, and Welfare Department building. While Congress did not cut the Federal treatment budget, few NIDA initiatives were undertaken. Robert DuPont confessed, "We lost our momentum. The priority and focus of the issue declined, and so the game became holding on, rather than expanding."<sup>246</sup>

Krogh's staff director, Walter Minnick, attempted to infuse some of his predecessor's enthusiasm into Nixon's new Federal drug team. He requested the President meet individuals recently appointed to head three major components of the

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<sup>245</sup> Dan Barry, "Youths Accused of Killing New Jersey Millionaire," *The New York Times*, September 25, 1997. Retrieved from:

<http://www.nytimes.com/1997/09/25/nyregion/youths-accused-of-killing-new-jersey-millionaire.html>

<sup>246</sup> Massing, *The Fix*, 130-134.

national drug control effort.<sup>247</sup> The appointment was brief, to the point, and held just before Nixon introduced the three experts to an audience assembled in the White House East Room for the Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime Conference.<sup>248</sup> Ambassador William J. Handley explained the international component, Dr. Robert DuPont discussed new dynamics of drug treatment, and John Bartels presented himself as first nominee to head the newly created DEA.

### *International Partners Changed Policies*

The new triad enjoyed immediate success. In August 1973, the Nixon Administration celebrated the capture of Lo Hsing-Han, one of the most infamous drug traffickers in the world at the time. His arrest represented a major step in the fight against an increasing influx of heroin into the U.S. from Southeast Asia. Burmese officials proved their willingness and ability to move against narcotics trafficking insurgents who previously roamed freely throughout the countryside. Secretary of State Rogers boasted about the international narcotics control program when he said, "Though it utilizes less than ten percent of the Federal drug funds, it has been a major factor in inducing the current shortage of heroin on the East Coast."<sup>249</sup> Ambassador Handley then traveled to

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<sup>247</sup> Walter Minnick, E.O.P., "Schedule Proposal for the President," September 7, 1973, [EX] FG 330 Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control [1971-1972]; Box 1; White House Central Files: FG 330; Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, CA.

<sup>248</sup> Nixon's diary shows the meeting only lasted three minutes and that his remarks took twelve minutes. The President then returned to the Oval Office and spent the remainder of the day with his aides and close advisers. See: President Richard Nixon's Daily Diary, Nixon Presidential Library, 36-37. <http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/PDD/1973/070%20September%201973.pdf> Richard Nixon: "Remarks at the First National Treatment Alternatives to Street Crime Conference," September 11, 1973. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3958>.

<sup>249</sup> Elliot Richardson, Letter from Office of the Attorney General to Secretary of State, August 10, 1973, Folder SOC 11-5 BURMA; XR INCO-DRUGS; Records of the Department of State, RG 59, NACP, MD. William Rogers, Letter from William Rogers to Secretary of the Treasury, The Honorable George Schultz, September 11, 1973, Folder, SOC-11-5 Burma, Records of the Department of the State

Burma in the middle of winter January 1974 and motivated the Government to cooperate internationally within the limits of its non-aligned policy.<sup>250</sup>

Meanwhile, just as Nixon's drug war gained ground in Burma, battles were lost elsewhere. On July 1, 1974, Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit's coalition cabinet voted to rescind the ban on cultivation of opium poppy, which had been imposed by a military-backed government three years earlier. Turkey was formerly the main source of illegal heroin for the U.S. market. In lifting the ban, Ankara disregarded warnings that the US Congress might cut off aid. Prime Minister Ecevit had been motivated by domestic pressures to lift the ban. During campaign season the previous October, both parties that formed the governing coalition promised such action, and since then most other major party leaders had also come out against the ban. With new elections on the horizon, support of peasants in the poppy-growing areas seemed necessary for the delicate balance that presently existed among Turkey's political parties. Turkey's poppy repeal was a hard blow for the administration, which by then had become completely covered in clouds of controversy associated with the Watergate scandal. Congress demanded a firm response. The President worked through his National Security Council and conveyed all foreign aid money to Turkey cease due to their non-compliance to international narcotics control agreements.

### *The Watergate Drain*

By far, Watergate was the largest drain on Nixon's drug war, because it involved key players and distracted the administration's focus. On July 15, 1971, John Erlichman assigned Bud Krogh to handle a matter that "had been deemed of the highest national

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<sup>250</sup> Department of State, Confidential Memo, "Narcotics Visit of Ambassador Handley" January 29, 1974

security importance by the president,” and it did not have a thing to do with narcotics control.<sup>251</sup> Bud was tasked with finding out who leaked the sensitive *Pentagon Papers* and to prevent any further disclosures of national security from occurring. He began coordinating the White House Special Investigations Unit (SIU), or “Plumbers” as it came to be known. G. Gordon Liddy and Howard Hunt had contributed to the war on drugs but were then tasked to support Krogh in his special assignment. Certainly these “special” activities deterred from productive service in executing the President’s national drug control policy.

Nixon’s new emphasis on zealous law enforcement coincided with controversy over Watergate. In July 1973, he concluded a press conference in the White House Rose Garden by defending his tenacity and said,

Well, now, just so we set that to rest, I am going to use a phrase that my Ohio father used to use. Any suggestion that this President is ever going to slow down while he is President or is ever going to leave his office until he continues to do the job and finishes the job he was elected to do, anyone who suggests that, that is just plain poppycock. We are going to stay on this job until we get the job done.

Nixon then offered a long list of causes he believed his administration was elected to do. Protecting young people from dangerous drugs was one those causes. “And what we were elected to do, we are going to do,” he huffed, “and let others wallow in Watergate, we are going to do our job.”<sup>252</sup> Unfortunately for Nixon, he had to face the reality of his situation. No matter how badly he wanted to keep going, the job he started did not get done. On August 9, 1974,<sup>253</sup> Richard M. Nixon resigned from the office of

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<sup>251</sup> Krogh, *Integrity*, 17.

<sup>252</sup> Richard Nixon: "Remarks to Members of the White House Staff on Returning From Bethesda Naval Hospital.," July 20, 1973. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley.

<sup>253</sup> “Passing of an Era,” Eyewitness: American Originals from the National Archives. Retrieved from: <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/eyewitness/html.php?section=12>



the President of the United States. As the disgraced leader boarded his helicopter and flew away, so too did passion and enthusiasm for an all-out, total war on drugs.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that Richard Nixon perceived the drug problem in the United States as not just a domestic issue, but also an international issue. His reaction to narcotics and drug abuse stemmed from a backlash against the counterculture movement of the late 1960s. For Nixon, most of these young people were naïve youngsters caught up in the hippie-drug scenes and anti-war protests of the day. Some however, were victims of harmful foreign influences—mainly instigated by communists.

Nixon's motives to fight drugs were consistent with other historical phases of hysteria the country experienced throughout its past. California was the first state in the Union to enact anti-drug laws. These measures were in direct response to Chinese-American immigrants and the opium dens they operated. Opium abuse contributed to the first national drug control laws. The 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act regulated labeling of products containing certain drugs, which included cocaine and heroin. The 1914 Harrison Narcotics Tax Act was much more direct in its regulatory language. This same law led to the creation of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics. Headed by ardent drug warrior Harry J. Anslinger, the FBN led the charge against Mexican-American immigrants and their perceived marijuana madness. Due to convincing testimony by Commissioner Anslinger and his allies, Congress passed the 1937 Marijuana Tax Act. During the 1950s Anslinger played off of fears about communism and supported the harsh 1956 Narcotic Control Acts. He also became heavily involved in U.S. interests by working with the United Nations. The 1961 Convention on Narcotics was not a perfect drug control treaty, but it did affect the flow of marijuana.

Upon taking office, President Nixon pro-actively sought to combat narcotics abuse and illegal drug trafficking. He tasked the National Security Council with devising policy options that addressed the drug problem. He also delegated authority to young-capable staff assistants he could place trust in to help lead new initiatives. These advisors offered foreign cooperation alternatives, which led to direct involvement with the governments of Turkey, France, and Mexico. Nixon's staff also assisted him to marshal high priority legislation through the stifling halls of the United States Senate and House of Representatives.

Nixon declared a new all-out offensive against drug abuse after he received criticism for not doing enough to address the narcotics problem and treat the addicted army in Vietnam. I have argued that reported widespread drug abuse in Southeast Asia was the catalyst that launched Nixon's declaration of war against drug abuse and heroin on June 17, 1971. The White House devised a national drug control strategy that consisted of many parts. Dr. Jerome Jaffe's Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention took on the domestic fight against demand for narcotics. His methadone clinics provided a network needed to provide hardcore addicts with increased access to prescribed treatment. Federal Law Enforcement was another main part of the President's national strategy. Myles Ambrose led this charge with the Office of Drug Abuse Law Enforcement. Abuse. The Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control rounded out the strategy and was Nixon's most extensive component. Secretary of State William Rogers chaired the CCINC, but Bud Krogh operated as Executive Director. This body oversaw the intricacies of Nixon's drug war and devised policies that were sent out around the globe. Due to a full concerted effort, 1972 proved to be the most successful

year for international narcotics control and benefited Nixon's presidential re-election campaign.

Nixon's drug war changed over time. Beginning in 1973, Nixon's total war shifted to a heavy emphasis on drug law enforcement. One can clearly see the change over time by reviewing two separate meetings, which represent opposite ends of the treatment vs. enforcement scale. During his remarks at the 1969 Opening Session of the Governors' Conference, Nixon told all the states' Governors in attendance with their families that he thought what they were about to hear would be the most effective presentation on narcotics and dangerous drugs they had ever heard. When it was time to conclude, Nixon stood and said:

I have learned a lot in these presentations. I must say that when they first started, I thought the answer was more penalties. I thought that the answer was simply enforce the law and that will stop people from the use of drugs. But it is not that. When you are talking about 13-year-olds and 14-year-olds and 15-year-olds, the answer is not more penalties. The answer is information. The answer is understanding.<sup>254</sup>

Four years later, under the pressures of performing a job in the face of scandalous allegations and ceaseless investigations, Nixon's emphasis on the need for information and understanding had changed. The President it seems, reverted back to calling for more laws and harsher punishments. New penalties for narcotics trafficking in 1974 provided minimum three to fifteen year Federal sentences for a first offense, and ten to thirty years for the second offense. This proposal enabled judges to deny bail and

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<sup>254</sup> Richard Nixon: "Remarks at the Opening Session of the Governors' Conference at the Department of State.," December 3, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2353>

require the defendant to be brought to trial within sixty days.<sup>255</sup>

Despite Richard Nixon's change over time and self-inflicted downfall, I maintain that the most significant and most extensive part of the President's drug war was its international component. His administration ventured all over the world and strived zealously to assess the drug problem, devise and implement the most suitable policies deemed practical, and then reassess and adapt to changes. For this reason, I argue Nixon's drug war belongs in the arena of his foreign policy achievements.

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<sup>255</sup> Richard Nixon: "Special Message to the Congress Proposing Legislation To Control Drug Trafficking," February 21, 1974. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4361>

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