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Drug Related Police Corruption around the world: A global look at a major corruption in
the world's police and law enforcement agencies.

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Sunday, July 19, 2009

Abstract

This paper is about drug related police corruption. It looks at the problem both here in the United States and several other global locations. It also informs on what may lead to drug related police corruption and attempts to inform about the possible solutions or preventative measures that can be done to help stop most or all of the problem. The goal of this paper is to better educate the public about drugs and police corruption.

In the following paper I intend to inform you on drug related corruption in policing. To do this I have selected four articles relating to the subject that cover not only policing in the United States but also from different parts of the world. All of these articles discuss the problems associated with drug related police corruption but also the problems that may lead and the possible causes of the corruption. Drug related police corruption is a problem but could be prevented by proactive steps and watching of the actions or lifestyles of these police officers.

Corruption like many other things in this world comes in many forms to start this paper we must all get on the same page and have a singular definition of corruption. Corruption as defined by Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary is “an impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principle, inducement to wrong by improper or unlawful means, and a departure from the original or from what is pure or correct.” For the use of this paper drug related police corruption will be any act by a sworn police officer that is the sale, manufacture, distribution or supporting of drug activities for the personnel gain of the officer.

A study by Dennis J. Stevens found that annually we spend seventy five billion on drug enforcement which leads nowhere expect to jail or for further drug use once released. Whereas spending only eight billion dollars a year would be enough to get every drug offender the proper treatment for his problem. On top of that fifty percent of the United States Judicial system trials are over the use or transportation of drugs causing over four hundred thousand officers to be tied up in the trial process instead of on the streets. Even with all this money and court actions illegal drugs are more plentiful today than they ever have been in the history of the United States (Stevens, 1999). The question

now is do we as a nation want to fix the problem or just make the appearance that we are band aiding a growing problem. The illusion of drug control is all that is being preformed under the current system.

In the study preformed by Dennis Stevens he also found that between 1982 and 1992 arrest for the people using the drugs increased over 200 percent and arrest of dealers rose over 150 percent. Still even with these increases in arrest the drug trade has continued to grow in the United States and across the world. Looking at yearly sales of different drugs in the United States it was found that cocaine brings in \$38 billion annually, heroin a mere \$10 billion, and weed brings in about \$3 billion dollars (Stevens, 1999). To look at these numbers you can see how it is easy for a low paid frustrated police officer to go to corruption and help with the sale, transport, or manufacturing of illegal substances. They can see it as even with all these efforts and over \$75 billion a year in enforcement little if any true progress is being made, they are barely even denting the surface of the drug problem.

In the 1980s the American government in an attempt to limit the drugs that were making it into the United States they began to lock down the Caribbean and heavily enforced against the drug trade. However as the drug dealers began to realize that this way of transportation was closing they moved to the next prime target just to the west of the Caribbean. Mexico was the next obvious stop and the drug dealers found a nation that is thirsting for money and jobs and where corruption in the past has been known to be the way of government. Mexico has attempted with pressure from the United States to enforce the stopping of the drug trade. They have gave the effort to the Mexican Military

which has about a third of its yearly budget devoted to that and approximately 25,000 soldiers (Andreas, 1998).

Another study performed by Peter Andreas found that it is believed that illegal drug trade brings in an estimated \$7 billion a year to Mexico's economy and in 1994 it is estimated that drug revenue in Mexico was an estimated \$30 billion. It is also estimated that approximately 200,000 people are employed in Mexico to help produce, grow, transport and protect the movement of drugs from other countries to the United States (Andreas, 1998). While Mexico is increasing and has increased their enforcement of drug regulations in their nation it is similar to the United States where they are making only a small dent in the total problem. Also the question arises by many Americans including myself does Mexico really want to stop the drug trade or are they just giving the appearance to appear the northern neighbor. In a struggling country like that of Mexico you have to wonder if they would ever truly want to eliminate a \$7 billion piece of their economic puzzle that employs so many of their citizens. Also the question comes into their police and military pay and how extremely low it is. This may cause even more corruption that may also be allowing more and more drug trade instead of stopping it like they are assigned.

It was found by the Autonomous National University in Mexico City that illegal drug traffickers spent around \$500 million a year in bribery to allow the drug trade to continue. The yearly budget for the Mexican attorney general is around \$250 million. These drug traffickers are serious about moving drugs and with profits in the billions a few hundred million dollars is just pocket change that can easily be spent. It is found in Mexico that when the government intensifies drug enforcement efforts the amount of money given

for bribes rises to allow people to pass. It's even been found that some officials will stop certain groups that are not paying the bribes or that are competing with others that paid the bribe to show the public that they are attempting to stop the drug trade (Andreas, 1998).

Another prime example of active corruption in the country of Mexico is the use of off-duty police officers as drug transportation security. There as been many incidents of federal police and off-duty military and police or even local police getting in gun battles with each other because one of them is illegally protecting the transportation of drugs. It has been found that some police positions are bought and the closer you are to a drug trade route the more expensive the cost it is to attain the position. However bribery must go to multiple levels of the police department from a low level police officer all the way to the police chief with the higher the level the higher the payment received to allow the trade (Andreas, 1998). With Mexican police in on the scandal it is extremely hard to prevent the drugs from making it to the United States border where we already have enough problems from restricting people from making it in.

The Columbians are the major drug trafficker bringing the drugs through the nation of Mexico to the United States. The Mexican's and the Columbian's understand that they need each other to continue to make money so they work together but the Columbian's have learned to work in the Mexican's way. This means that if in times of high enforcement drug traffickers may have to allow some of their product to be seized to appease the Mexican and especially the American Government but still allowing major trade to continue. With the continuation of agreements been the Mexican and American governments to make trade easier between the two nations it is also making it easy to

move drugs between the two nations and then distributing it to the entire United States. Mexico will continue to be a hot bed of drug trade and drug related police corruption as long as the nation of Mexico allows their own federal officers to be bribed by the drug traffickers. Many factors may be attributed to this but the major factor is always going to be money and greed by the officers of the Mexican police and government. We as a nation in the United States cannot rely on such a nation to help stop drug trade, and we should stop giving them monetary assistance for programs that are just being shown to appease but not to actually stop the drug trade (Andreas, 1998).

The next area of the world that I would like to talk about is the nation of Thailand and the golden triangle. The location of this nation makes it the perfect location to grow opium and obviously this opium can and does make the trip to the United States for the distribution. The nation actually has the complete heroin production system all in one nation, it's a one stop shop from grown to complete product in the nation. Opium fields, inexpensive labor, labs, and security are the major needs for the production of opium to heroin. Also the advanced transportation systems that are already in Thailand also make it easy to move and transport the chemicals needed for the production of the drug (Cheurprakobkit, 1998).

When the ease of production is right there it is hard to stop the citizens of the nation from producing the crop. Plus the much needed income is normally higher than legal means that can be preformed.

The Government of the nation of Thailand is making several attempts to slow or stop the production of opium and heroin. They have made many attempts to change locals to legal drugs and assist in converting their fields and facilities to producing legal crops. It has

also made changes to laws regarding the production of illegal drugs including the prospect of the death penalty for frequent flyers, also with the signing of an agreement with the United States they have agreed to extradite prisoners to the United States regarding drug trade. Thailand is making progress with increased drug related arrests but the fear of police corruption is growing as some police believe that they are making little if no effect on the drug trade (Cheurprakobkit, 1998). These officers just like officers from around the world are seeing their jobs as being never ending and never making any headway in their eventual goal making them feel useless or even want a cut of all the money that is being passed around.

Many studies have been done and have shown the drug users have a higher probability of performing another illegal act. Police must work with each other and studies to better understand this relationship to build ways to help people out of this hole instead of digging a bigger one. Attitudes dominate an officer's view and production of his duties. If an officer's attitude is negative then he will have poor performance and/or poor reviews from fellow officers and the public. However if a police officer has a positive attitude and doesn't allow the fact that he/she feels that they are making no progress they generally receive happier better reviews by both fellow officers and the public. Drug corruption is born out of police attitudes because if an officer is lacking the right attitude then corruption can become a mainstay for that officer (Cheurprakobkit, 1998). For example if any officer believes that the enforcement of drug laws is a waste of their time and that they are underpaid they may accept a bribe from a drug trafficker to allow the trade. This places a little more money in their pocket and allows them not to worry about enforcing a law that they may not agree with.

The United States including both the Bush and Clinton administration have pressured allies to enforce illegal drug trade laws if they want continued cooperation with the United States. This may force many nations like Mexico and Thailand to show a face of enforcement but the actual enforcement is questionable. Even in the United States the seriousness of the use of illegal drugs is still a major debate. As police officers are human just like the rest of the world they will have opinions and attitudes reflecting the use of illegal drugs, this may lead to corruption if the police do not believe the laws are correct. Also many officers view drugs as a victimless crime and do not feel that these crimes need to be enforced causing negative feelings to arise when being forced to enforce the law they do not agree with (Cheurprakobkit, 1998).

A study of Thailand police officers in relation to drug related police corruption was conducted by Sutham Cheurprakobkit to better understand the causes, reasons, and demographics of the officers that were and were not turned to corruption. The overwhelming majority of the officers studied believed that drug trade and crime were interrelated and were more prone to want to enforce laws against drug trade than that of drug abuse. Also the majority of officers believed that drug problems were a major social issue but not the biggest social issue. With the majority believing the drugs are the major factor causing police corruption this study shows that drugs and the drug trade can lead to corruption even fellow officers recognize the problem. In relation to the drug seriousness Thailand officers may not perceive the drug problem as bad as in the United States because United States police officers on average have more arrests than Thai officers (Cheurprakobkit, 1998).

Many police officers in Thailand agree that drug related corruption is a problem however most officers would not admit that corruption was a problem in their police department. They agree that drugs may lead to corruption however very few would admit to ever witnessing any type of corruption in their department or by any officer. Some officers are corrupted by the money but others are corrupted by personal drug use problems. The education of the officer was the only major background factor that contributed to differing attitudes with the use of drugs. It was found that officers with an education were less inclined to be corrupted into the drug trade (Cheurprakobkit, 1998). A study by David Biles, Tracey Green, Seumas Miller, and Jerry H. Ratcliffe looked at Drug-related complaints against the police in New South Wales. They looked at the procedures and the costs of filing, tracking and solving complaints against the police department in relation to drugs. The New South Wales Police Service or NSWPS is the largest and oldest police force in Australia located in its capital of Sydney. The New South Wales Police Services has around 17,000 employees with over 13,000 sworn officers serving the city and the surrounding areas. From 1995 to 1997 the Supreme Court Justice James Wood studied the complaints against the department and found a significant amount in relation to drug trade and drug related complaints. Allegations by the public were pushed as more and more evidence was discovered by the Wood study that showed that drug related police corruption was a major issue in the department and the media began to pay closer attention and continued coverage of the continuing scandals (Ratcliffe, 2005).

Studies found that as many as 30 percent of the officers in Australia have used some type of illegal substance. However the actual identification of officers that use

illegal drugs off-duty is extremely hard bordering almost on impossible to find and then prove. The study performed by David Biles, Tracey Green, Seumas Miller, and Jerry H. Ratcliffe used 39,797 separate complaints to show the drug related problems in Australia. Of the 39,797 complaints 1,463 of those were complaints relating only to drugs and the vast majority was not for the production but the supplying of drugs. The vast majority are complaints that the drugs were planted on the offender by the officers and small number 208 incidents are complaints from another officer about officer's actions. Drug related police complaints have a lower percentage of indentifying the officer, there is no understands to why this is other then that complaints fail to indentify all the officers involved in a drug related arrest. However the identified rate of officers was over 80 percent, which is still considerably good. It was also found that constables had the highest complaints off all the ranks in the department, however it must be understand that constables are the majority of the officers that work, they would be what in the United States we just call police officers. The study also found that from the 1st year to the 10th year officers have a higher chance of receiving a drug related allegation then any other amount of time in the department. Also gender played the last role with the majority being against male officers at 984 compared to only 77 female officer complaints (Ratcliffe, 2005).

It must be understood that though a large number of complaints are filed many of them may never be proven, and that just like in the regular justice system all officers are innocent until proven guilty by a court of law and charges are only pressed after an investigation finds that a law has been broken. The media, especially for the NSWPS has been highly critical and judgmental of officers that are accused which cause many

problems with the investigation and morale of the overall department. The outcome of the complaints according to the study found that the higher your rank the more likely your actions were to be cleared. This is most likely because of the increased knowledge and discretion of a seasoned officer will normally cause less chance of corruption or an illegal act of taking place. With all things the longer you do something the better and more efficient you get at it, with that the majority of those complaints filed are answered with the officer was in the right and did nothing against illegal against or witnessed by the person that filed the complaint (Ratcliffe, 2005).

Now let's turn our focus to the United States and the drug related corruption that occurs there. A study done by Dennis Stevens defined corruption as any immoral or unethical conduct that includes bribery, thievery, misuse of government owned property and/or equipment, fraud, exploitation of anyone, misuse of the position that a person holds, brutality, and denial of constitutional rights. Narcotic officers including the ones in this study from North Carolina have been seeing a rise in the number of arrest in relation to drug crimes both trade and use. The inadequate communication between divisions and departments and also the lack of proper equipment and budget may and can cause narcotic officers to feel alienated from the rest of the police society. With the idea that many officers feel that most drug offenders are back on the street before the officer even finishes the report makes them feel even more alone and that their work means nothing. Also often narcotics officers' position and authority is challenged on a daily basis by those they interact with both the offenders and the public that they serve (Stevens, 1999). The study performed by Dennis Stevens included officers from the state of North Carolina that served on a narcotics team. About 75 percent of the officers questioned said

they do not trust the findings in investigations of another narcotics officer, over half questioned the integrity of other officers, and over 30 percent questioned the integrity of their top officials. The majority of the officers felt that the punishment for the drug offender was not severe enough and that once released the offenders almost always returned to the life of drug trade again. They also felt that time was wasted on arresting the small fish and not going after the big distribution leaders. Over 60 percent of those in the study reported that they or they witnessed other narcotics officers use more force than necessary to make a drug related arrest. Also over a quarter of those questioned reported that they heard or witnessed fellow officers using an illegal substance. Also over 80 percent of officers questioned reported witnessing officers violate the rights of the offender be it due process or other constitutional rights (Stevens, 1999).

The above study continues to go into the officer's personal life and sees that the majority of the narcotics officers in the study were jaded in one way or another. Many of them feel that they are fighting a losing battle and that they are limited in doing what they think is the right thing to do that could help stop the drug trade more effectively. Also the vast majority rated their family as being more important than police so in a tight spot officers may need to lean towards corruption and sell or deal drugs to help make ends meet. Also the vast majority reported that they believe in the saying better to be judged by 12 than to be carried by six. With this type of mentality excessive force and corruption will continue to be a major problem in any narcotic division of a police department until you can better train and equip your narcotics officers to do their job (Stevens, 1999).

I believe that the majority of people that apply to be police officers are going on intending to be a good officer and perform the duties that they are intended to be done.

However after being paid low wages and seeing that no matter how hard they try little progress may be done, especially in relation to drug related crimes corruption may become a factor. The use of excessive force may occur when officers become frustrated or feel that every offender deserves a little street justice since the judges won't and don't punish them appropriately. Then regarding the low pay distribution of drugs or assisting certain groups with protecting distribution, either by enforcing on competitors or looking the other way allows officers to add a little more money to their wallet.

Stopping corruption is always going to be a hard project to complete. Simply raising the pay rate is not going to solve the problem the problem can only be solved by watching officer's progress, keeping pay rates good, keeping up to date equipment and attempting to show officers the good that they are performing. In today's society we are surrounded by the negative views shown by the media and of others about the way the world is progressing. However to keep police officers motivated and away from corruption you must show them that even the simplest arrest or enforcement of laws that they may not fully agree with will cause the betterment of the society that they are serving and protecting.

References

Andreas, P. (1998). The Political Economy of Narco-Corruption in Mexico. *Current History*, 97(618), 160-165. Retrieved June 6, 2009, from <https://server/exchange/dkennelly/Inbox/No%20Subject-115.EML/drug%203.pdf/C58EA28C-18C0-4a97-9AF2-036E93DDAFB3/drug%203.pdf?attach=1>

This article discusses drugs and government and political officials that allow them to control their policies and practices in the country of Mexico. It talks about the effects that this drug problem has on developing countries and the complexities it is causing in the country of Mexico.

Cheurprakobkit, S., Kuntze, P., & Vauhg, M. (1998). Drugs in Thailand: Assessing Police Attitudes. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 42(81), 81 - 100. Retrieved June 6, 2009, from <https://server/exchange/dkennelly/Inbox/No%20Subject-115.EML/Drug%202.pdf/C58EA28C-18C0-4a97-9AF2-036E93DDAFB3/Drug%202.pdf?attach=1>

This article discusses drugs and corruption together and the relationship that they have in the attitudes of the police officers in Thailand. It discusses several factors including policy incentives, drug corruption, connections with crimes, and the actual drug problem. The authors study will show what a large number of Thailand police think cause crime and their attitudes towards drugs and crime.

Ratcliffe, H., David, B., Tracey, G., & Seumas, M. (2005). Drug-related complaints against police: Some findings from a New South Wales study. *Policing: An*

International Journal of Police Strategies and Management, 28(1), 69-83.

Retrieved June 6, 2009, from <http://www.citeulike.org/article/136889>

This article discusses the relationship of civilian complaints against the officers and its correlation with drug related issues in South Whales Australia. The author's study looks at the findings of the complaints and what the most common complaint is related to drugs. This article is to show what effect drugs has on police and police complaints.

Stevens, D. (1999). Corruption Among Narcotic Officers: A Study of Innocence and Integrity. *Journal of police and criminal psychology* , 14(2), 1-10. Retrieved June 6, 2009, from <https://server/exchange/dkennelly/Inbox/No%20Subject-115.EML/drug%204.pdf/C58EA28C-18C0-4a97-9AF2-036E93DDAFB3/drug%204.pdf?attach=1>

This article looks at the relationship between narcotic's officers and corruption among its units. The study looks at the high stress, high emotion, and low income of the job pushes many narcotic officers into corruption. The article also explains the relationship between why narcotics officers go corrupt and if there are any predictive signals.

(Ratcliffe, 2005)