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## WILL THE SHIFTING UNITED STATES POLITICAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS SECURITY IN THE CARIBBEAN SEA ERODE EFFORTS IN COMBATING THE THREAT OF NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING

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**JCSP 43 DL**

***Exercise Solo Flight***

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EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

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**“Will the shifting United States political attitude towards security in the Caribbean Sea erode efforts in combatting the threat of narcotics trafficking.”**

*The drug trade which is exacerbated by U.S. drug consumption has wrought devastating consequences in many of our partner nations, degrading their civilian police and justice systems, corrupting their institutions, and contributing to a breakdown in citizen safety*

*-General John F. Kelly, Testimony Senate Armed Services Committee*

For many years the United States has considered the Caribbean region as its own “*third border*”.<sup>1</sup> In recognizing the importance of these adjacent island states, the United States has invested in programmes to safeguard against migrant smuggling, financial crime and illegal drug trafficking. The latter issue of illegal drug trafficking poses a significant threat to the security interests of both United States and the Caribbean regions. Drug trafficking in the Caribbean Sea is not a new phenomenon. The finite security resources of the islands in the Caribbean make them vulnerable to corruption by drug trafficking organizations. Whether this corruption is of a minor nature and involves law enforcement and customs officials or on a larger scale involving sponsoring of political campaigns and manipulation of the judicial system the institutional stability of a country is undermined.<sup>2</sup>

At the height of the drug trafficking problem in the 1980’s, the illicit cocaine trade, which was almost exclusively produced in Columbia and controlled by the once powerful Cali and

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<sup>1</sup> The Third Border Initiative was introduced under President G. Bush in 2001 and is a reference to the Caribbean region's adjacent placement to the United States of America.

<sup>2</sup> P. Keefer et al: “The Development Impact of the Illegality of the Drug Trade”. The World Bank Development Research Group. February, 2008. 8p.  
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/6871/wps4543.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>  
 accessed May 26, 2018.

Medellin cartels<sup>3</sup>, exercised un-restricted access to the United States via the Caribbean Sea.<sup>4</sup> From a law enforcement perspective, the anti-drug trafficking engagements led by the United States in the Caribbean at that time yielded some success and trade shifted away via Central American States.<sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding this shift, the threat to the Caribbean island states with their expansive coastlines and relatively under-developed law enforcement systems remained. In the early 2000's, the Caribbean Sea once again saw a resurgence in illicit trafficking. Reports indicated that as early as 2010 the flow of cocaine through the region had steadily increased, with 2013 being the highest in the previous decade.<sup>6</sup> In an attempt to obviate this problem the United States' national strategic policy towards the Caribbean was to engage the island nations through joint policy and foster collaborative security relationships. This was demonstrated by significant military and law enforcement assistance, procurement of necessary equipment to assist in interdiction efforts, specialist training and technical expertise sharing in the region.<sup>7</sup>

This paper will consider the most recent initiatives by the United States and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in the war against trafficking of illegal narcotics, in particular the *Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI)* and CARICOM's Implementing

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<sup>3</sup> "Prior to the Mexican drug trafficking organizations' rise to prominence, Colombian Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs), primarily the Cali and Medellín drug cartels, reigned. Since their height in the late 1980s and early 1990s, several generations of DTOs have followed." C Selke et al : "Latin America and Caribbean: Illicit Drug Trafficking and US Counter Drug Programs". Congressional Research Service (May 2011). 9p. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41215.pdf> accessed 31 May, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> RC Bonner: *The New Cocaine Cowboys; How to Defeat Mexico's Drug Cartels (2010)* <http://www.millerco.com/pdffdocuments/Foreign%20Affairs%20Article%20Final.pdf> accessed 20 May, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Including the Maritime and Overflight Agreement (Shiprider Agreements) between the US, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines and St Lucia.

<sup>6</sup> Insight Crime: Caribbean Profile September 15, 2018. [www.insightcrime.org/caribbean-organized-crime-news/caribbean/#Geography](http://www.insightcrime.org/caribbean-organized-crime-news/caribbean/#Geography) accessed May 23, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> P Myer: "U.S. Foreign Assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean: FY2018 Appropriations." Congress Research Service May 9, 2018. 11p. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R45089.pdf> accessed May 25, 2018.

Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS). It will contend that while it may seem to be in a dependency position, CARICOM's regional security systems have not fully matured to facilitate the region distancing itself from the United States as it attempts to rid itself of the plague that is illegal narcotics and arms and ammunitions trafficking. It will be submitted as well that the changing United States security posture, focusing on homeland security is detrimental to the Caribbean region and will inevitably compromise the human and border security integrity of the region.

*The geopolitical composition of the Caribbean and its significance in drug trafficking.*

The Caribbean Sea is approximately 1,063,000 square miles (2,753,000 square km) in area.<sup>8</sup> The total population of this region is estimated at forty-five million persons occupying sixteen kilometres square.<sup>9</sup> There are twenty-six islands spread throughout the region. Thirteen of these islands are independent states. The remainder are dependencies of the United Kingdom, Netherlands, France and the United States.

The independent states in the Caribbean region along with Belize and Guyana are all member states of CARICOM. As a regional institution, CARICOM was established by the Treaty of Chaguaramas with eight (8) independent states on the August 01<sup>st</sup>, 1973.<sup>10</sup> This organization has grown in the intervening years and now comprises fifteen (15) states within the region. The aim of CARICOM is the coordination of foreign policy and cooperation among its

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<sup>8</sup> JC Ogden and R Menzies: "Caribbean Sea", Encyclopedia Britannica. [www.britannica.com/place/Caribbean-Sea](http://www.britannica.com/place/Caribbean-Sea)

<sup>9</sup> Caribbean Population. (2017-11-14). Retrieved 2018-05-30, from <http://worldpopulationreview.com/continents/caribbean-population/>

<sup>10</sup> CARICOM Community <https://caricom.org/about-caricom/who-we-are/our-governance/the-original-treaty/>

member states. The geographical layout depicting the relative positions of the islands and countries in the Caribbean Sea are depicted at Illustration 1.



Illustration 1.

There are several factors contributing to the Caribbean islands' significance in illicit narcotics transshipment including; the Caribbean Sea being a major hub for transshipment of containerized cargo passing through the Panama Canal;<sup>11</sup> corruption in state run agencies such as law enforcement and the criminal justice system;<sup>12</sup> the all-year round high volume of tourist traffic transiting several tourist destinations in the region.

<sup>11</sup> The Panama Canal transited a total of 13,548 vessels during its FY17. This is a 3.3 percent increase compared to previous years. <http://micanaldepnana.com/expansion/2017/10/panama-canal-sets-record-annual-cargo-tonnage-in-fiscal-year-2017/> accessed May 30,2018.

<sup>12</sup> World Drug Report (2017):"The Drug Problem And Organized Crime, Illicit Financial Flows Corruption And Terrorism". [www.unodc.org/wdr2017/field/Booklet\\_5\\_NEXUS.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/wdr2017/field/Booklet_5_NEXUS.pdf) 32p. Fig.3 accessed May 30,2018.

*CARICOM'S security apparatus: IMPACS.*

As a region CARICOM member states recognized the need for a regional security framework to engage the drug trafficking problem. At the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM in 2006, member states agreed to the proposal to establish IMPACS.<sup>13</sup> This organization's responsibility was the formulation and dissemination of information on crime and anti-drug trafficking strategy for the region. CARICOM –IMPACS comprises two sub-agencies namely; the Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre (RIFC) and the Joint Regional Communications Centre (JRCC). These agencies work with the Regional Security System (RSS) to provide an integrated sustainable approach to crime. The overarching security policy that guides the operations of IMPACS is the *CARICOM Crime and Security Strategy (CCSS)*.<sup>14</sup> The CCSS highlighted the joint threats to the region whilst articulating the security framework for Member states in confronting these challenges.

CARICOM-IMPACS introduced the Caribbean Counter Illicit Trafficking Strategy (CCITS) to address the issue of counternarcotic operations. The aim of the CCITS was “to deny illicit traffickers the ability to exploit the Caribbean as a route for the movement of illicit commodities and to promote security within the Caribbean.”<sup>15</sup> The objectives of this strategy required an integrated approach to trans-border intelligence and information distribution; the establishment of appropriate legal frameworks; strengthening the respective Member states security apparatus whilst at the same time developing their capacity to detect, interdict and prosecute traffickers; targeting of criminal assets and the prevention of criminal facilitation; and

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<sup>13</sup> The establishment of IMPACS was agreed to by The Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM at 27th Meeting, July 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Adopted at the Twenty -Fourth Inter-Sessional meeting of The Conference of Heads of Government of Caricom, 18-19 February 2013, Port-Au-Prince, Republic of Haiti.

<sup>15</sup> CARICOM-IMPACS -Counter Trafficking Strategy: [https://caricom.org/documents/13956-counter\\_trafficking\\_strategy.pdf](https://caricom.org/documents/13956-counter_trafficking_strategy.pdf) accessed May 25, 2018.

the reduction of demand for these illicit narcotics.<sup>16</sup> The strategic outcome of this plan was expected to be “complete maritime domain awareness of all traffic movement across our region by air, land and sea, interdict those who are engaged in illicit trafficking and in that process hopefully be able to seize assets, to include maritime assets, which will go back to the security forces to be used against the traffickers in the future”.<sup>17</sup>

At the operational level CARICOM-IMPACS utilizes four mechanisms to deliver its mandate. The first is the JRCC which provides to the Member states passenger information using Advance Passenger Information System (APIS). The second mechanism is the RIFC whose responsibility is border and regional intelligence support. Additionally, this agency’s responsibility extends to the Advance Cargo Information System (ACIS) and the Regional Integrated Ballistics Information System. The third mechanism is the CARICOM Intelligence Sharing Network (CISNET) which provides real time actionable intelligence. The fourth mechanism is the Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre which is intended to disseminate information to Member states by acting as a conduit between the United States SOUTHCOM and Joint Inter Agency Task Force –South and the region.

There is very little documented evidence to specifically show the results of this CARICOM headed initiative however evidence does point to the fact that trafficking has continued, and it has done so at increasing levels less than a mere decade into its existence.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> “Talking Drugs, Guns and Hope with the Director of CARICOM IMPACS”: Dialogo Military Magazine. 12 February, 2013 <https://dialogo-americas.com/en/articles/talking-drugs-guns-and-hope-director-caricom-impacs> accessed May 25, 2018.

*The Caribbean Basin Security Initiative: its influence on the anti-drug trafficking landscape.*

Launched in 2010, the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) is a United States driven security strategy focused on bolstering Caribbean's security response to the plague of illegal narcotics trafficking.<sup>18</sup> The membership of the CBSI is drawn exclusively from member states of the CARICOM, the Dominican Republic and the United States itself. The CBSI was initially characterized as a "multiyear, multifaceted effort by the U.S. Government and Caribbean partners to develop a joint regional citizen safety strategy to tackle the full range of security and criminal threats to the Caribbean Basin."<sup>19</sup> This programme was intended to mirror the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) (another United States overseas strategy) operationalized in Central America.<sup>20</sup> In approving the CBSI, the US House Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere although viewing the initiative as beneficial to the entire region expressed concern "that if we [the United States] do not act quickly to bolster our friends in the Caribbean, the positive impact of the Merida Initiative in Mexico and Central America would push the drug trade further into the Caribbean and increase the already alarming rates of violence."<sup>21</sup>

The principal aim of the CBSI was therefore to substantially reduce the trafficking of narcotics and illegal arms and ammunition. The approved aid programme would be utilized in providing assistance in support of the professionalization of regional law enforcement agencies

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<sup>18</sup> President Barack Obama made this commitment on behalf of the United States to deepen regional security cooperation at the Fifth Summit of the Americas, held in Port of Spain, Trinidad, in April 2009.

<sup>19</sup> United States Department of State "Function 150 & Other International Programs" (2011). <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/135888.pdf> accessed 25 May, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> The states of Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

<sup>21</sup> House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere "New Direction or Old Path? Caribbean Basin Security Initiative". December 9, 2009. [https://archive.org/stream/gov.gpo.fdsys.CHRG-111hhr53990/CHRG-111hhr53990\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/gov.gpo.fdsys.CHRG-111hhr53990/CHRG-111hhr53990_djvu.txt) accessed May 26, 2018.

using a two pronged approach. First, the provision of technical assistance and training to regional law enforcement agencies and their respective militaries. Second, the provision of legislative and technical assistance to the local judicial systems. Additionally, the initiative aimed to promote crime prevention activities in targeted communities and provide anti- corruption programs.<sup>22</sup>

Funding for CBSI was exclusively undertaken by the Development Assistance, Economic Support Fund and the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement programmes. The budgetary allocation for the CBSI from fiscal year 2010 through to fiscal year 2017 amounted to approximately five hundred million dollars.

For the corresponding period, United States law enforcement agencies have witnessed increased traffic flow in the region. In fact the Caribbean Border Counter Narcotic Strategy Report (2015) found that “the documented cocaine flow from the source zone to the United States via the Caribbean including Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Eastern Caribbean countries had more than doubled in the preceding years, from thirty-eight (38) metric tons (MT) in 2011, to fifty-nine (59) MT in 2012, and ninety-one (91) MT in 2013”.<sup>23</sup> Analogously, in 2017 law enforcement efforts have resulted in seizures totaling two hundred and twenty-seven (227) MT.<sup>24</sup>

Despite these positive results, in fiscal year 2018 the Trump Administration recommended a thirty-six percent (36%) decrease from fifty-seven point seven million (\$57.7 million) to thirty-

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<sup>22</sup> Caribbean Basin Security Initiative: US Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/p/wha/rt/cbsi/> accessed 25 May, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Caribbean Border Counternarcotic Strategy (2015): <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/policy-and-research/caribbeanstrategy5.pdf> accessed May 25, 2018

<sup>24</sup> CWO2 C Taylor: “Coast Guard Breaks Record for Seizures”: Coast Guard Compass. 4 October, 2017. <http://coastguard.dodlive.mil/2017/10/coast-guard-breaks-record-for-cocaine-seizures/> accessed on May 26, 2018.

six point two million (\$36.2 million) in the amount of aid provided in the region.<sup>25</sup> Myer (2018) has argued that the level of funding for several projects will affect these small island states in the coming years. “In particular, it could accelerate U.S. efforts to transition countries in the region away from traditional development assistance and toward other forms of bilateral engagement.”<sup>26</sup> In addition to this reduction in funding, there has also been several divergent arrangements which, despite their positive aims, can serve to work against the overarching objectives of the CBSI and IMPACS. The first divergence concerns the United States’ own attitudes towards regional security. As an example of this, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the United States signed in September, 2016 a bilateral agreement entitled the Customs Mutual Administrative Agreement (CMAA) outside of the CBSI.<sup>27</sup> One can argue that focusing on bilateral agreements with individual states will undermine these regional initiatives. On the one hand as posited by Bernall (2017) United States’ policy in the region “has not been holistic and consistently applied, with an overall rationale fragmented by a bilateral issue-focused approach for Haiti, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and the fifteen country Caribbean Community (CARICOM)”.<sup>28</sup>

Analogously, limited research into and knowledge of specific regional security challenges and the resulting lack of prioritization of CARICOM as a security threat to the US could also negatively impact on potential successes. This perspective is supported by the testimony before the Senate Arms Committee in 2015, of General J. Kelly (then Commander SOUTHCOM). In

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<sup>25</sup> M Sullivan: “Latin America and the Caribbean: Issues in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress”: Congressional Research Service <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R45120.pdf> p. 29-30 accessed May 25, 2018.

<sup>26</sup> P Myer: “U.S. Foreign Assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean: FY2018 Appropriations.” Congress Research Service May 9, 2018. 11-12p. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R45089.pdf> accessed May 25, 2018.

<sup>27</sup> MEDIA RELEASE MINISTRY OF FINANCE: <https://www.finance.gov.tt/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Media-Release-Signing-of-Customs-Mutual-Administrative-Agreement.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> R.Bernal: “A Caribbean Policy for the Trump Administration”: Center for Strategic and International Studies (13 April 2017). [www.csis.org/analysis/caribbean-policy-trump-administration](http://www.csis.org/analysis/caribbean-policy-trump-administration) accessed May 28, 2018.

General Kelly's Posture Statement he testified to the United States' inadequacy for the security of the Caribbean where he expressed:

I am concerned with the long-term consequences of our limited awareness and lack of insight into security challenges in the region. While we recognize that global defense priorities must be adequately sourced, limited tactical ISR allocation and national technical focus is impairing virtually our assigned missions and exposing the United States to significant risk. When it comes to sourcing, we are already the lowest priority Geographic Combatant Command, and sequestration will likely eviscerate our already limited ISR capacity.<sup>29</sup>

Admiral K. Tidd (General Kelly's successor in SOUTHCOM) also expressed concern before the Senate Arms Committee in 2017, where he expressed that based on the "inextricable linkage" between Latin America and Caribbean to the United States "security challenges in the region are likely to become security challenges to the U.S. homeland".<sup>30</sup>

A second divergence affecting operational success is the lack of resources to support interdiction efforts. According to the incumbent Commander SOUTHCOM, "although JIATF South detected a record amount of cocaine moving in the maritime domain last year, they were unable to target 75% of validated events due to a shortage of forces."<sup>31</sup> Citing the lack of dedicated US Navy platforms to conduct interdiction operations in the region, the US Coast Guard assets have sought to augment this deficiency in operational platforms. Admiral Tidd suggested that in countering the threat "we need two types of tools: interoperable, multi-domain, tools that help us understand the environment, capture weak signals, and anticipate change (all-

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<sup>29</sup> Posture Statement Of General John F. Kelly, United States Marine Corps Commander, United States Southern Command Before The 114<sup>th</sup> Congress (2015). 26 p. [https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Kelly\\_03-12-15.pdf](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Kelly_03-12-15.pdf) accessed May 24, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Posture Statement Of Admiral K. Tidd, United States Navy Commander, United States Southern Command Before The 114<sup>th</sup> Congress (2017). 3p. [https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Tidd\\_04-06-17.pdf](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Tidd_04-06-17.pdf) accessed May 24, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid at 30p.

source intelligence capabilities and analysis); and tools that help us conduct sustained engagement and build capacity.”<sup>32</sup>

At the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress’ Senate Arms Committee hearing earlier this year, Admiral K. Tidd (SOUTHCOM) added authority to this when he testified that the “combined impacts of defense spending caps, nine years of continuing resolutions, and insufficient spending in the diplomacy and development arenas make it increasingly difficult to sustain this regional network. The net result is the perception among our friends that we no longer stand by our commitments, that we are relinquishing our strategic position and that we don’t take the challenges in this region seriously.”<sup>33</sup>

In addition to the US’s own divergent attitudes and positions towards the region, there are also limitations inherent to the Caribbean’s own region security infrastructure. The maritime law enforcement capacity of most of the CARICOM states is severely inadequate with only three (3) of the islands possessing some medium range assets to conduct maritime interdiction operations.<sup>34</sup> Regarding maritime surveillance capacity five (5) islands including; Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, St. Vincent, St. Lucia and Grenada possess some radar detection capacity to monitor vessels traffic within their respective territorial approaches. Additionally, the CARICOM’s- IMPACS and RIFC’s ability to facilitate information sharing is severely hampered by capacity gaps in some islands within the region (and extends to deficiencies in maritime assets and other equipment to stem the flows of drugs and trained personnel to conduct

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid at 32p.

<sup>33</sup> Posture Statement Of Admiral K.Tidd, United States Navy Commander, United States Southern Command Before The 115<sup>th</sup> Congress (2018). 3p.  
[http://www.southcom.mil/Portals/7/Documents/Posture%20Statements/SOUTHCOM\\_2018\\_Posture\\_Statement\\_FINAL.PDF?ver=2018-02-15-090330-243](http://www.southcom.mil/Portals/7/Documents/Posture%20Statements/SOUTHCOM_2018_Posture_Statement_FINAL.PDF?ver=2018-02-15-090330-243) accessed May 26, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> The CARICOM states of Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago have acquired DAMEN Class vessels as part of their anti-drug trafficking operations.

counternarcotic / counter-terrorist operations). Despite the challenges posed by the limitations of some member states, CARICOM's- IMPACS continues to develop into a capable regional institution in the war on illicit drug trafficking.<sup>35</sup>

*Conclusion: A workable strategy to neutralize the threat of narcotics*

The major limitation of IMPACS as the CARICOM's lead is that unlike the United States they are unable to provide funding to weaker individual member states to assist in realizing a cohesive security strategy. Otherwise, there is little data to be found by way of assessment of IMPACS as a regional initiative. However, based on the data available and given that it was instituted in 2006, the fact that there was a reported increase in illegal trafficking activity in as early as 2010, an argument can be made that its impact in the area of reducing the flow of drugs through the region has been limited.

Inter-regional policies such as the CBSI made between the United States and the respective governments of the Caribbean states though positive should not be readily adopted with an attitude of deference. The Caribbean states should have an equal say in any proposal affecting them as the negative impacts of crime are felt daily in these island states. In addition, CARICOM's knowledge of its own regional challenges should be taken into consideration in drafting and collaboratively putting forward initiatives which secure the borders shared with the US. Unfortunately the CBSI, like so many policies before, is a low priority within the wider context of the United States' overarching security strategy.

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<sup>35</sup> Posture Statements of Admiral K. Tidd United States Navy Commander, United States Southern Command Before The 115<sup>th</sup> Congress (2018). 11p.  
[http://www.southcom.mil/Portals/7/Documents/Posture%20Statements/SOUTHCOM\\_2018\\_Posture\\_Statement\\_FINAL.PDF?ver=2018-02-15-090330-243](http://www.southcom.mil/Portals/7/Documents/Posture%20Statements/SOUTHCOM_2018_Posture_Statement_FINAL.PDF?ver=2018-02-15-090330-243) accessed May 26, 2018.

At the same time, the United States' engagement with the region on a broad counternarcotic strategy suffers from an obvious disconnect between the arms of the Department of State. One arm speaks to the United States as a partner in regional security and consequent to this relationship offers the region funding, intelligence, law enforcement capacity building exercises and judicial/ legislative developmental programmes. The other arm continuously undermines these gains by facilitating bilateral agreements with individual states on the same issues of counter narcotics which tend to work against the overarching CBSI objectives.

Furthermore, with the projected budget cuts in overseas defense spending by the United States in the Caribbean region, the gains made in the region risk being eroded. Since significant strides have been made in institutional and intelligence sharing with IMPACS in the detection, monitoring, interdiction and building capacity in regional law enforcement apparatus and at the operational level, the physical assets to conduct interdiction efforts, these successes should not be left to fall by the wayside.

The respective island communities have recognized that the primary responsibility for securing the porous maritime borders lie with the individual states themselves. However, the problem of narcotic transshipment is regional and required states acting in concert under the banner of CARICOM. Intra-regionally CARICOM's adoption of IMPACS and its two sub-agencies RIFC and JRCC demonstrates that strategically the region is committed to engaging the challenges posed by drug trafficking head-on. IMPACS has emerged with foreign assistance support as the lead in counter narcotic co-ordination bolstered by the continued relationship with the United States' SOUTHCOM and liaison with the JIATF-South. The security policy CCSS managed by IMPACS provides a unified, cohesive policy on security for CARICOM member

states. The CCITS as a counter narcotic is a step in the right direction in terms of counter narcotic operations.

In the final analysis the issues facing the Caribbean region in the war on trafficking of illicit drugs are not unique. However, it definitely requires an overarching strategy that is unique to the region and is supported by all states. Regrettably, if a collaborative approach underpinned by sharing of knowledge and resources is not achieved, a feasible solution influenced by all parties in the region will not be implemented to effectively resolve this issue in the immediate to medium term.

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