

NUKES AND NARCOS: WHAT CAN NARCO-TRAFFICKING TEACH US ABOUT WMD ILLICIT PROCUREMENT NETWORKS AND MEANS TO COUNTER?

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ABSTRACT:

States pursuing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capabilities have traditionally relied, at least in part, on the international marketplace to procure dual use materials and components to advance their programs. Attempts to derive conceptual insights regarding this illicit activity, in terms of how the networks operate and adapt, have largely relied on case studies of illicit procurement. Although important, use of this case study approach is limiting, and has failed to garner significant new insights. Therefore, we propose a twelve month project that seeks to refresh the conceptual underpinnings of illicit WMD procurement by integrating lessons learned from other types of illicit transnational activities—namely narcotics-trafficking networks—and efforts to counter them. In other words, in what ways are narcotics-trafficking networks and WMD procurement networks similar, in what ways are they different, and how can U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies leverage lessons learned from counter-narcotics efforts to counter WMD procurement networks?

While this effort has clear implications for U.S. C-WMD efforts, it also promotes a broader understanding and greater potential for collaboration and outreach with private sector actors. Interestingly, although WMD illicit procurement and narcotics-trafficking networks share many similarities, U.S. approaches have remained “siloed” by agency and policy objectives. Our research, however, has the potential to highlight overlapping areas, as well as develop new and innovative outreach and capacity-building efforts.

Research in Progress describes ongoing PASCC research. For more information please contact INSS@usafa.edu.