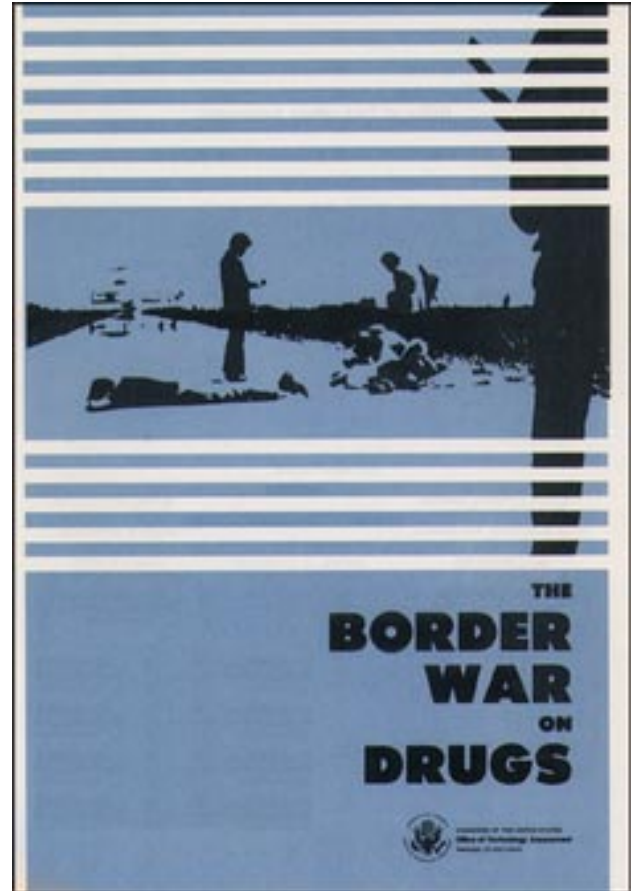


The Border War on Drugs

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Foreword

Smuggling of illegal drugs into the United States is a problem of serious proportions. The three major drugs of foreign source—cocaine, heroin, and marijuana—are the products traded by an enormous criminal enterprise whose retail sales total approximately \$50 billion annually. Federal efforts to stop or deter international narcotics trafficking have met with only limited success.

The Office of Technology Assessment was requested by the Senate Committee on Appropriations to conduct an analysis of Federal drug interdiction efforts and to report on technological opportunities for future improvements. The study characterizes the drug smuggling problem and the interdiction efforts now in place within the responsible Federal agencies. It describes technologies in use, under development, and potentially available for countering smuggling by the various modes—private vessels, private aircraft, land vehicles, commercial carriers, and through official ports of entry. The report also highlights OTA's principal findings, focusing on: the need for comprehensive design of integrated technological systems, the need for long-range planning for employing technologies, the need for integrated strategies, and the need for data and methods to measure effectiveness.

There are many issues that this OTA study did not cover because they were considered either outside the boundary of the congressional request or beyond the scope of the study given the OTA resources devoted to it. Among the issues not examined are: the demand side of the drug problem; international initiatives to control production; investigation and prosecution of drug traffickers; domestic production and distribution of drugs; civil liberty concerns about law enforcement activities; impacts of drug law enforcement on legitimate commerce or private use of border areas. Even though not covered in this study, these issues are important and must be considered when formulating sound public policy.

OTA is grateful for the considerable assistance provided during the conduct of this study by our advisory panel, an agency advisory group, numerous other contacts within the several Federal agencies, and a number of additional consultants or advisors. These individuals have made it possible for OTA to use comprehensive, accurate, and current information in analyzing this complex subject with numerous Federal entities. They have also enabled OTA to examine the problem from a number of important perspectives. We appreciate the help and advice from all these individuals.



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