Subject: 16. Testing Recommendations: The War on Drugs

Dear Dr. Atkinson and Dr. Fischhoff:

Your Improving Intelligence Analysis panel might want to look at the compara-
ble track record/failures of the USGOV re people, money, and physical material
crossing US borders in the War on Drugs. I have discussed the opportunity for
rapid learning in the enclosed letter to the NSC of March 12. The DNI's responsi-
bility for $75 billion includes these kinds of assessment and forecasting tasks
where, in a large N of cases, daily, and across several decades, our public
institutions for forecasting and security often fail.

We only have a small N of cases like North Korea or Iraq/Iran, but there is a
large N for scientific analysis in this subset of cases.

One of the great benefits of including these cases is that they point to a new &
useful kind of model - smart, learning, adaptive opponents who are often smarter,
more purposive and committed, and better organized than the US government.
And perhaps to *hubris* as a flaw on the US government side?

There also might be interesting parallels & opportunities for cross-
fertilization/learning comparing several decades of the US War on Drugs - (that

often has been headed by experienced senior military officers in the White House)
& intelligence challenges for policy effectiveness in Afghanistan

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John O. Brennan - Deputy NSC Director
The White House
1600 PA Ave., NW
Washington, DC <u>20500</u>
   and
Honorable Janet Napolitano, Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC <u>20528</u>

Re: <u>Homeland Security: The War on Drugs as a Test for the War on Terrorism</u>

Dear John Brennan and Secretary Napolitano:

I am writing to respond to recent newspaper stories about your review of government programs for homeland security and terrorism.

As a social scientist I have focused on problems of evaluating and improving government problem-solving and learning. I suggest that you use the federal government's War on Drugs as a useful - although very grim - benchmark of our current capacity to stop motivated and illegal human agents, and large quantities of physical products and sums of money, from routinely crossing our borders.[i]

I suggest that you not trust any claim about what Homeland Security is being achieved until the War on Drugs shows much greater progress against motivated and hidden adversaries. You also may want to draw the parallel to President Obama's attention.

I have two suggestions to achieve this progress:

1.) <u>Use the war on drugs as a training ground for high performance teams</u>.
  I suggest that you develop high performance teams for the war against terrorism by rotating them, for training, into the War on Drugs. Right now, they do not have a large enough N of real experience with terrorist infiltration – which they can achieve by testing their methods and their inter-agency/local-state-federal coordination in the War on Drugs.

2.) <u>Assume, in both cases, that the US government can be outsmarted.</u>
  Traditionally, we imagine that governments are in charge and drug smugglers or potential terrorists are often poorly educated, low-life characters in a furtive underworld. This may be true of pawns in the drug war - and the US has achieved the highest rates of incarceration in the world - but the high-level deployment of US military and intelligence assets in a war run directly by the White House since 1993 suggests that the US government is being outsmarted by opponents who run a global industry with a GDP larger than many countries.

  For example, one hypothesis about government ineffectiveness is that the entire US drug enforcement communications network has been infiltrated and wire-tapped for many years, especially at the local level, without detection. (The use of drug money to neutralize law enforcement is a standard cartel strategy in other countries.)

  These parallels may seem only to be an exercise of academic interest. However the recent successes of the Taliban give them access to drug trafficking money and probably, if they chose to use them for counterattack, new infiltration and distribution capabilities extending into the US. (Last June the UN reported that global opium production has doubled since 2005; in Afghanistan, 80% of cultivation now takes place in provinces controlled by the Taliban.)

  Yours truly,

  (Dr.) Lloyd S. Etheredge, Director
  Government Learning Project
  cc: John Holdren, Science Adviser

[i] For anti-terrorist security, the benchmark is not what quantity of illegal drugs is seized, but what quantity gets through. If you are inclined to believe official US government statistics you might want to take a look at the 2007 analysis published by Cornell University Press, Lies, Damned Lies, and Drug War Statistics by Robinson and Scherlen.