

Narco-Criminality in the Caribbean:

Global Problems in Small Places

BY GARY BRANA-SHUTE

INTRODUCTION

A few recent dispatches from the Caribbean's drug wars:

· Operation Weed Eater, a marijuana eradication exercise, is launched in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines by the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Marine Corps, and police and defense forces of the Eastern Caribbean Regional Security System. Outraged growers, primarily young men, descend on the prime minister's office and protest this attack on their livelihood. Members of the U.S. Coast Guard are pelted with rotten tomatoes in the market.

· Notorious gunman Donald "Zekes" Philips is captured by police in his West Kingston, Jamaica "garrison community" lair and brought to the central police lockup. Within hours, barricades of burning tires and refuse are thrown up in poor neighborhoods, looters gut the central business district, and furious citizens rampage through the city protesting his arrest. High government officials order "Zekes" freed, and the disgraced and angry police release one of the ranking gunmen of Kingston.

· Desi Bouterse, military leader of Suriname in the 1980s, leader of the ruling National Democratic Party, and alleged head of the "Suri-kartel" cocaine conglomerate, is sentenced in absentia by a Dutch court to sixteen years in prison and a fine of several million dollars for narcotics trafficking. Several prominent Surinamers from the private and public sector are convicted with him. Bouterse has declared that he will run for the National Assembly in 2000.

The mid-1980s witnessed the beginning of an explosion in illegal narcotics trafficking and related crimes. As the above-cited incidents indicate, such narco-crime has reached dire proportions in much of the region and constitutes the Caribbean's major security threat.

No locale in the Caribbean—independent or foreign possession, island or mainland—is immune. In Jamaica and the U.S. Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, gang violence is visible and a fact of everyday life. This is perhaps not surprising, given that

both of these islands have access to U.S. markets. The Dutch territories of Aruba and Saint Maarten are penetrated by various organized crime syndicates, including the Colombian cartels and the Sicilian and U.S. Mafias. Because they are part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, these islands serve as a customs-free conduit to the European market. The former Dutch colony of Suriname is another major source of drug trafficking to the Netherlands. Less visible, but equally dangerous, is the pervasive presence of drug-money corruption in the eastern Caribbean and Trinidad and Tobago.

Caribbean governments view this threat seriously. Several countries (notably Saint Lucia, Guyana and Jamaica) are (re)implementing the death penalty. In July 1999, Trinidad and Tobago hanged nine narcotics traffickers and murderers in defiance of protests from human-rights groups and the Privy Council in Britain (the culturally and physically distant postcolonial court of appeals for the anglophone Caribbean). Led largely by Trinidad and Tobago, an effort is under way to establish a Caribbean Supreme Court of Appeals to replace the London-based Privy Council.

The three short case studies that follow illustrate a range of narco-issues at various levels of severity and complexity in each country. This essay does not even begin to address other equally problematic issues. It barely scratches the surface of the crime civil society dynamic. A complete study also would need to address the violence in Puerto Rico and its connection to the U.S. market; the Mafia/organized crime penetration of Aruba, Saint Maarten, and the U.S. Virgin Islands; gun and alien smuggling through Suriname and Guyana; the traditional narco-commerce in the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands; corruption in Antigua; prison riots and murders in Saint Kitts and Nevis; eastern Caribbean "small island" traffic through Martinique to the European market; piracy on the high seas in Trinidad and Tobago's Gulf of Paria and allegations of judicial malfeasance; the newly opened artery in Guyana from Boa Vista in Brazil, through Lethem, and on to Georgetown and points north; the collapse of post-intervention law and order in Haiti; marijuana cultivation in Belize and gangland connections with counterparts in Los Angeles; Colombian cartel stations in San Andres and Providencia; the French connection through the departements d'Outre-mer; and the Dutch connection through the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba.

The degree of complicity of state elites in narcobusiness varies from country to country. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is still a national emporium with regional traffic undertaken by loose, shifting alliances dealing primarily with marijuana—"freebooters," as it were. Jamaica displays a remarkable gang organization, with "posses" deeply rooted in the indigenous sociopolitical structure and connected to overseas communities. Suriname comes close to the model some suggest is emerging: narcodemocracy with state involvement.

As desperate as these cases may sound, let us not lose sight of the fact that throughout the region there are people and organizations working to fight the drug scourge and mend their own societies. Citizens, civil servants, security

forces, elected officials, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) labor to rescue not only their youth at risk but, in some cases, their vulnerable and overwhelmed governments.

The case studies are presented in order of increasing degree of threat to the lawful discharge of governmental duties. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines faces the least threat, Jamaica is more besieged, and, as indicated above, some observers of Suriname feel compelled to employ the term "potential narco-state."

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Marihuana (ganja) and cocaine are still relatively new to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; the latter did not arrive until the mid-1980s. The country now produces more ganja than any of the other small states of the region. As previously mentioned, in late 1998 the U.S. Coast Guard and Marine Corps, in an operation called "Weed Eater," provided delivery systems for Regional Security System troops to cut down, burn, and generally eradicate marijuana in the north and central portions of the island of Saint Vincent. This so inflamed the local growers and Rastafarians that they organized a peaceful march on the prime minister's office in Kingstown to protest the destruction of their livelihood and the criminalization of ganja, which is not looked at with great censure by most Vincentians. Writing in *The Vincentian*, the daily newspaper of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, anthropologist Hymie Rubenstem estimated that about ten percent of the crop was regularly destroyed even prior to the Operation Weed Eater eradication campaign. He projected the annual sales of Vincentian ganja at about US\$40 million, exceeding the corresponding figure for bananas, the main legal export.

Being cheap, available, easy to grow, and not demonized in the minds of many Vincentians, marijuana is the drug of choice. It has been grown commercially for the past fifteen years. About fifteen hundred teenagers and adult men are involved in its cultivation. Ganja is consumed locally by about twelve thousand Vincentians, mostly men and boys—roughly one-fifth of the country's adult population. The country is also a small but active player in the international drug trade, shipping its ganja to Barbados, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia, Martinique, and (to a much lesser extent) the United States and the United Kingdom.

The profile of ganja smokers would reveal a population of poor (as opposed to middle or working class) young (under thirty) males (three-quarters). Until recently, young men in the rural areas would openly smoke marijuana in daylight hours and purchase their ganja at well-known "herb gates" or "ital shacks." Increased enforcement of the Prohibited Drugs Ordinance has since forced smokers to be more circumspect. Also, there are thousands of Vincentians who regularly use ganja as an infusion but would never dream of smoking it. Ganja tea or "herb sip" is used as a "bush medicine" to treat colds, high blood pressure, menstrual cramps, constipation, and intestinal parasites.

Selling ganja is not a full-time job for most producers. The product is sold in the form of "spliffs" (marijuana cigarettes) at one U.S. dollar and bags at ten U.S. dollars each (prices circa 1998). Generally, ganja entrepreneurs organize themselves into fluid, informal coalitions of friends, relatives, and acquaintances rather than gangs.

Writing in 1996 in a series of articles in the Barbados-based Caribbean Week, sociologist Klaus de Albuquerque asserted that cocaine has made inroads into Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, that the number of addicts is unsettling, and that crack users and pushers operate openly. Quoting a police officer, he reported that users and pushers must be caught "red handed" in order to be prosecuted and that on a small island "there are rumors about everybody." Nevertheless, the penalties remain light and "small island big men" get away with a "slap on the wrist."

Writing in *The Vincentian*, anthropologist Hymie Rubenstein was candid about his reluctance to explore trafficking, local sales, and consumption of cocaine. Prowling through the alleys of Paul's Lot, Kingstown's most dangerous neighborhood, might be life threatening. Consider that in the early 1990s noted Trinidadian sociologist Ken Pryce was drowned under mysterious circumstances while investigating Jamaica's drug scene. Rubenstein confined himself to reporting that cocaine is sold by pushers in Paul's Lot to young male consumers in the city and through a marketing network in the countryside.

According to Ralph Gonsalves (the prominent leader of the major opposition political party), laundering of drug profits, local consumption, and widespread corruption are the most serious byproducts of narcotics transshipping through the tiny archipelago. The U.S. State Department's annual International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of 1998 endorsed this view by reporting that for the entire eastern Caribbean the stability of the area's traditionally democratic governments is threatened by narcotics trafficking and organized criminal activity.

JAMAICA

"Is three set ah gunman all like me have fi deal wid yu know: gunman, police, and soljah" (People like me live with three forms of violence: the gunmen, police, and soldiers), said Cutty, a young odd-jobber living in Tel Aviv, an impoverished garrison community in Jamaica's capital city, Kingston. (A garrison community is marked by a network of social relations based on violence, drugs, crime, and political clientage.) With their usual quick turn of phrase, many Jamaicans now say that their country is "Idiaminized" (from Idi Amin the former dictator of Uganda) and suffers from severe anarchy and violence. Areas of Kingston are out of the control of state authority.

Politics and cocaine have conflated in Kingston. Ask any Jamaican what comes into his or her head at the mention of "garrison community" and nine times out of ten the answer will be "Tivoli"—the pride and joy of Edward Seaga's opposition Jamaica Labour Party (JLP). Tivoli, along with other garrison communities such as Jones Town and Tel

Aviv, both associated with the ruling People's National Party (PNP), are ministates with their own armies which frequently invade each other to capture political and drug-dealing turf. But only Tivoli had been invulnerable to law enforcement efforts, until a major gun battle between authorities and gunmen erupted there in early May 1997.

A combined security force of heavily armed police and soldiers, accompanied by armored personnel carriers and helicopters equipped with machine guns, was deployed to the neighborhood. In spite of a remarkable display of state firepower, the Tivoli gunmen managed to keep the force at bay for almost eighteen hours. Less spectacular garrison community sweeps take place daily. Jamaica has the highest number per capita of security-force killings of civilians in the Western Hemisphere.

Neighborhoods such as Tivoli were originally created as bulwarks of political support for politicians who sustained the communities through cienteage in exchange for votes. However, the internal power relations of garrison communities have changed over the past ten years, as cocaine has become an important factor in gangland life. Politicians have been replaced as the primary source of economic and lethal resources by "drug dons," known euphemistically as "community leaders." There is a tendency for the gangs ("posses") led by these dons to realign with their former political patrons during election years when political parties need support, votes, and financial contributions, and the gunmen need political protection and insurance for the future. Hence, the drug barons have acquired leverage.

Let us examine the story of one such gang leader, Lester "Jim Brown" Coke. Onetime co-leader of the Shower posse, he was allegedly responsible for sixty-eight homicides and the shooting of thirteen police officers in Jamaica during the first six months of 1990. Coke had been tried fourteen times for murder and had always been acquitted because the witnesses either disappeared or were killed. In July 1990 he and about sixty of his posse were involved in a shootout with police. Armed with two nine millimeter pistols and an Uzi machine gun, "Jim Brown" survived, thanks to a bulletproof vest he was wearing.

While being held for extradition to the United States, where he was wanted on charges of murder, attempted murder, and conspiracy to commit murder, his son and aspiring don Anthony Mark Coke, known locally as "Jah Tee," was gunned down by a rival posse. Violence exploded between the groups. Meanwhile, "Jim Brown" died mysteriously in a jailhouse fire. Coke has three living sons. One is in jail in Jamaica on charges of murder and narcotics trafficking; another, Dudus Coke, has replaced his father as chief of the Tivoli Shower posse; and the third, at the tender age of thirteen, is operating his own gang and claims allegiance to no one.

More significant for our concerns here is the story of prominent don Donald "Zekes" Philips of West Kingston. Within minutes after he was arrested by police officers in September 1998, neighborhoods threw up barricades and launched a wave of vandalism and looting. The crowds demanded his release and when denied they set off on a rampage through the central business district. Despite the presence of heavily armed

police, it was only "Zekes" who could quell the crowd that surrounded the central police station. The prime minister's office intervened and "Zekes" was released, prompting a police officer to remark, "Now the gunmen are more respected than the police."

The disgruntled police commentator was correct in the sense that the dons provide services that the state cannot—patronage, favors, conflict resolution, and a sort of neighborhood court of appeals, not to mention employment in the narcotics business. (Such patronage has even included neighborhood beauty pageants for teenage girls ["boopsies"], complete with prizes, music, and strobe lights.) The government lacks the resources and political will to take them on. Its inability to control the capital city was made clear once again during the April 1999 gasoline tax hike riots, when harsh police tactics were answered with murderous return gunfire from garrison communities. Arson, mayhem, murder, and pillage resulted in millions of dollars of property damage and undermined public confidence. The so-called gang "peace treaties" of 1999 (a response to the public's demand that the gangland kiUings stop) show clearly that the gangs have taken over the adjudication of state security on their turf. After Prime Minister Percival J. Patterson declared "war on crime in early 1999, the Jamaica Defense Force (JDF) deployed throughout the capital and interrupted grassroots narco-commerce. With violence ebbing as a result of the peace treaties, however, the gangs were able to play upon the antipathy of Kingston's poor toward the police and the JDF (and resentment at the local economic impact of the JDF's inhibition of drug trafficking). Given the seeming lack of justification for its continued presence, the JDF was withdrawn and the gangs reestablished their lucrative trade—all with apparent public acquiescence.

Although dramatic, the stories of the two gang leaders described above are not unusual. They fit the general pattern of young male careers in many of Kingston's bad sections. The posses are homegrown, a mix of politics, ganja, poverty, and the constant "sufferation" of living in some of the worst urban neighborhoods in the Western Hemisphere.

The posses do not exist just in a Jamaican context. They also project power to overseas outposts, largely in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom (where they are known as "yardies"). Posses in the United States ship guns, ammunition, illegal aliens, drugs, and money to and from their counterpart gangs back home.

Consequently, turf wars fought in U.S. cities are played out along the same lines as in Jamaica, and assassinations are ordered in the United States for targets in Jamaica and vice versa.

The structure of a posse is rather like that of a clan. Although such a group may have a name—the Gulley-men, for example—and number in the hundreds, the operational, on-the-ground local Gulley-men posse usually has about twenty to twenty-five members coordinated by a twenty-five to thirty-year-old don. Less structured or hierarchical and more fluid than U.S. street gangs, the posses even feature local apprenticeship programs for youth. Children as young as eleven or twelve, called "fryers" (small chickens), undertake contract work such as robberies and assassinations, as well as the conveying of narcotics as innocent-looking bagmen. Often they operate with "rent-a-guns," which they

return after their missions. If one of them keeps the gun or fumbles the mission, he in turn is eliminated. There is no overarching gang structure; the acephalous nature of authority and leadership probably encourages violent resolution of conflicts as opposed to gangland arbitration.

As early as 1982, U.S. law enforcement officials began to arrest hundreds of Jamaican nationals for possession and sale of marijuana and for drug-related murders. Operating at the grassroots level, principally out of Miami, New York, Baltimore, Washington, and Chicago, the posse men seek small, lucrative drug markets throughout the country. Mercenary in nature, the groups invade and conquer rival gangs in communities and establish a base of operations. The Shower and Spangler posses maintain the largest number of affiliates. An estimated forty posses, with approximately twenty thousand members, operate within the United States. They are most active in the Northeast and Southeast, with the Midwest and Far West being pursued as new drug territories. After capture and punishment by U.S. authorities, posse members are repatriated to Jamaica, where they can ply the deadly skills that they have honed in the United States.

Jamaican posses originally controlled the importation, distribution, and sale of marijuana at the retail level in the United States as early as the late 1970s. They have since enlarged their menu to include cocaine, crack, heroin, carachi, PCP, methamphetamine, and "ice." In addition to narcotics, some posses are involved in the preparation of fraudulent passports, illegal money wire transactions, and bogus life insurance claims.

In penetrating new territory, posses have had to deal with indigenous criminal elements. Their most successful alliances have been with Los Angeles-based gangs, the Grips and the Bloods. The degree of association varies, but in the Southwest posses and Grips have agreed upon shared market territories in order to avoid confrontation. In Los Angeles, for example, Grips have provided protection for a Jamaican crack house. A Grip was arrested in ayetteville, North Carolina while ferrying cocaine from a posse narcotics epository in New York City to a posse enclave in North Carolina. Close collaboration is alleged between Jamaicans and Nigerians as well, although most U.S. witnesses inevitably get the two groups confused or do not realize that one is attempting to "pass" for the other.

In sum, through a mixture of brute force, financial payoffs, and patronage, the posses have become more influential in some Jamaican communities than the state and its agents. Violence is routine and few Jamaicans believe that their government can do much about it other than kill the posses in turn. Jamaica will not explode in insurgency or coup, but it is at risk of eroding due to the corrosive effects of violence and cocaine.

SURINAME

As of mid-1999, Suriname is in a constitutional crisis. Thousands of protesters regularly take to the streets. A united front of labor, the private sector, and the majority of the National Assembly has been unable to dislodge from office the widely disliked regime of President Jules Wijdenbosch. Apart from a well-connected, ethnically based (East Indian) commercial community, the population is impoverished.

Suriname's onetime authoritarian leader and current de facto strongman, Desi Bouterse, is the alleged mastermind of Suriname's voluminous drug trafficking to the Netherlands via the former colony's vast rain forest interior and porous borders with Brazil, Guyana, and French Guiana. (Dutch customs personnel search every single Surinamer coming into the Netherlands, but this has not stopped the flow of narcotics.) In July 1999, Bouterse was tried and convicted in absentia in the Dutch courts for drug related offenses. Bouterse was sentenced to sixteen years in jail. Several prominent business colleagues in both Suriname and the Netherlands received lesser terms.

The so-called "Suri-kartel," allegedly bankrolled by several wealthy East Indian businesspeople, backed up by predominantly Afro-Surinamese gunmen, and rooted in the cadre of young sergeants who overthrew the government in 1980, runs the cocaine market in Paramaribo, the capital city. The commandant of Suriname's police alleges that criminal organizations from Russia, Turkey, Nigeria, and Colombia are operating in Suriname. U.S. and Dutch government officials are regularly moved to say that corruption is pervasive.

A full grasp of the complexities of Suriname's current predicament requires some awareness of the nation's recent history. Suriname gained its independence from the Netherlands in 1975. The country's parliamentary government (which was marked by an inability to govern competently and an immense appetite for graft) was overthrown by a "sergeants' coup" in 1980. The country's new rulers sent emissaries abroad. One, Henk Herrenberg, went in early 1982 to Colombia, allegedly to conclude a drug deal involving the use of Suriname as a transshipment point. A quintessential entrepreneur, Herrenberg was accused of selling Surinamese passports while ambassador to China in 1999; he is a figure in the current ruling coalition. As early as 1985, Lt. Col. Etienne Boerenveen, close to the military strongman, Desi Bouterse, was arrested by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration in Biscayne Bay near Miami while negotiating a multimillion-dollar deal to smuggle cocaine into the United States on the state-owned Suriname Airways.

In 1986, a civil war broke out between the Jungle Commando (led by Ronnie Brunswijk and made up largely of members of the Maroon ethnic group) and government forces led by then-Commander Desi Bouterse. This conflict continued as an intermittent insurgency until the early 1990s, by which time civilian rule had been restored. Despite an Organization of American States-brokered peace treaty in 1992, much of the interior of Suriname remains chaotic, with former insurgents, freelance highwaymen, and wildcat gold miners operating outside of effective government control.

The military-backed political party won the national elections in 1996 and formed a government in which several high positions were filled by persons allegedly involved in narcotics dealings. Of particular note is Boerenveen, who was promoted to full colonel after his release from prison in the United States and headed military intelligence before his promotion to his current position as senior coordinator of military activities.

Suriname's currency collapsed in May 1999, in part due to a major cocaine bust at Schiphol Airport in the Netherlands that set off a run on black-market dollars to pay off the drug supplier (because the 700 kilograms of cocaine, with a street value of about US\$35 million, had been seized by the Dutch authorities). The currency collapse triggered massive protests demanding the government's resignation, with participation by the private sector, labor unions, opposition political parties, NGOs, and schoolchildren. Despite the public outcry, however, the National Assembly was unable to muster the votes to remove the president and vice president (members of Bouterse's National Democratic Party); in fact, it did not even have a quorum. Bouterse's influence, money, and intimidating persona fragmented the opposition. Newspaper headlines blared, "Once again everything turns around Bouterse." The "Boss" remains the final arbiter of what passes for democracy in Suriname, more important than the twenty-eight bickering political parties.

The explosion of narcotics, money, and crime has transformed the country. Immense, palatial estates owned primarily by East Indians have sprung up around Paramaribo, while BMW automobile ownership has grown at an astonishing rate among young black men. Cocaine can be purchased virtually anywhere in the capital.

Remarkably, the burglary and theft rate in Paramaribo has declined as young men, seeing more money in narcotics trafficking and narcotics retail sales, refer to petty crime in English as "shiken fit" (chicken shit). Not surprisingly, cocaine crime is high and has grown excessively violent. Unexplained gangland-like murders of visiting Brazilians, police, errant soldiers, and others take place periodically.

The rise of narcotics trafficking in Suriname has had an especially significant impact on three ethnic groups: Creoles (coastal blacks), Maroons (blacks of the interior, descended from rebel slaves, who consider themselves ethnically distinct from the Creoles), and East Indians.

Young, generally poor Creole men are the drug retailers in Paramaribo. Flashy and daring, princes of the streets, they know the neighborhoods, the rum shops, the drug dens, and the "sugar gardens" (cocaine markets). They do not run in gangs or have an organization like that of the posses, but they affiliate with a patron, who in turn is linked to his patron, and so on. In fact, one of the organizing principles of Surinamese society is a vertically arranged, overlapping series of patron-client relations articulating economic, political, and criminal spheres of activity. An extension of this Creole population resides in and near Amsterdam, particularly in a segregated high-rise housing project called the Bijlmermeer.

Young Maroons, whose lives were disrupted by the civil war, have changed their ways as well. During the war, there was a wholesale evacuation of parts of the country's interior to the "big city" of Paramaribo and across the river to French Guiana. The power of the Granman (tribal chief) and his council of elders was disrupted, the old gods and oracles lost their grip, and young Maroons entered a hitherto unimaginable life of opportunity. Knowing the interior, they have become, in the bush as well as the city, the interlocutors of narco-commerce and, like their Creole counterparts, maintain a mobile population within Suriname. Young Maroons invest profits wisely in gold-mining technology, which they then subcontract to prospectors.

East Indian businesspeople, along with their Lebanese counterparts, have been major players in the commercial sector since World War II. International connections, accumulated capital, talent, and a general disinterest in the public sector merge to give the two groups prominence in the import-export sector. Although immense amounts of money were made from the parallel financial exchange rates in the 1980s and 1990s, serious money is earned through money laundering, pyramid banking schemes, and facilitating narcotics transport. In a mutually reinforcing, interlocking relationship, East Indian capital supports Creole state control and vice versa.

Bereft of independent, strong institutions such as a functioning National Assembly and an impartial judiciary, Suriname is on a precarious course that pits an increasingly impoverished and disenfranchised public against the Suri-kartel. The inevitable outcome will be confrontation and violence, and it is not at all certain who will emerge victorious.

Suriname is in great danger of becoming a narcostate.

Jagernath Lachmon, venerable head of the East Indian-affiliated opposition Progressive Reform Party (VHF), claimed in an interview with the Dutch press that if Suriname cannot manage its narco-crime problems and the country is in danger of collapse, serious Surinamers will call upon the Netherlands, the United States, and the Organization of American States to intervene and rescue them.

THE INADEQUACY OF CONVENTIONAL ANALYSIS

The Western Hemisphere's law enforcement and intelligence institutions have a solid grasp of the widening dimensions of the narcotics danger. It is not the author's role as an anthropologist to comment on or add to that. These officials seem to understand that what was once a national-level problem has now become a regional security threat.

What is less well understood is how this narco-activity plays out on the ground, in backyards and on street corners throughout the region, and among young men whose life chances are circumscribed, in what Jamaicans call the "dungle," and who seek fulfillment through narcotics consumption and trafficking for meager highs and financial rewards, and risk death doing it. Throughout the Caribbean region, drug barons, dons, "small

island big," and international entrepreneurs alike have connections with governments, commercial houses, and political bosses. Overlapping, vertically integrated chains of patron-client relationships ripple throughout society, connecting top to bottom, reaching down to the unemployed, disaffected youth who hustle and each other.

Ken Pryce died trying to enhance the world's understanding of this phenomenon, but his research on the impact of narcotics did help expose the flaws of policy-driven thinking. Conventional analysis lacks an understanding of how youths construct their lifestyles and survive in an increasingly unforgiving economic environment, how and group formation are created in the slow slide to criminal behavior, how impoverished households grow dependent on drug-supplied income, and how gunmen become national heroes as the power of the state is eroded.

As an old anthropological classic once put it, "if you want to know what goes on on the factory floor, ask the workers." Similarly, if you want to understand drug culture, ask the producers, suppliers, and users.

WHAT NEXT?

What events can observers reasonably expect in the future? The list that follows is not exhaustive and does not apply to every Caribbean country. However, it highlights trends that are likely to characterize a growing number of countries and territories.

Let us pose some questions:

- Will the services that governments are able to provide become increasingly limited and ineffective? Perhaps the loss of critical support or neutrality of certain sectors of society will damage governability and result in deterioration. Faltering governmental self-confidence may encourage abdication or collapse, or may simply be neutralized and withdraw.

- Will growing damage to civic governance through organized crime and narcotics trafficking be exacerbated by the recruitment and organization of junior gunmen; the training of existing gang structures, particularly by deportees sent back home from the United States; the acquisition of highly sophisticated arms and explosives; an increased incidence of kidnappings, robberies, protection rackets, and assassinations; the appearance of outside support from international crime syndicates; and, most threatening, the penetration of legitimate institutions such as courts, legislatures, and security forces?

- Sociologically, can we anticipate a progressive withdrawal of domestic support for government and a growing perception of regime illegitimacy, with criminals viewed as leading nationalists and "Robin Hoods"?

- Could diplomatic isolation of alleged rogue states lead to the progressive withdrawal of foreign investment, foreign aid, donor institution support, and trade as the overhead of doing legitimate business there becomes too dear?

· Could there be significant expansion of territory under the control of syndicated crime in the absence of state authority? Lawlessness in certain areas of Kingston and the rain forest of Suriname suggests that state authority nation and its borders may not always be sustainable.

· Finally, is it conceivable that state security forces may not have the capability to assure protection for the citizenry, to gather intelligence needed to fight local, regional, and international crime, or to defend land and sea? Could the judiciary lose the capacity to punish criminals and protect the innocent in an efficient, , and democratic way?

In sum, two potential weaknesses of Caribbean governments are ineffective delivery of government services and inability to broker and defuse conflict and dissent. Weak institutions leave the public marginalized, with their fears by soaring crime, strong-arm law enforcement, and expanding impoverishment. Ironically, in many, the government services that do regularly reach the grassroots level are often of the most draconian sort and represent the raw power of the state-the forces of law and order.

For the region as a whole, and in particular for the three countries discussed in detail above, a period of political and economic instability accompanied by increased narco-commerce appears likely in the short- and medium-term future. This assessment is not meant to reflect badly on the character or courage of Caribbean. Rather, it is meant to suggest that chronic institutional weakness is making the region ever more vulnerable.