

Differences between drug related and organized crime in america



The Differences Between Drug Related and Organized Crime in America

Abstract

What are the differences between a drug related crime and organized crime?

Defining the terms exposes the conflicts and differences between the two separate but intertwined issues. The issues pertaining to drugs and organized crime is an international battle that directly effects the United States. Crimes committed because of the use, sale, or distribution of drugs are different from organized crime, yet, derive from the international and intranational effects of organized crime. It is important to know the contrast between the two issues to know the correlation and what efforts law enforcement agencies throughout the United States are taking in combination with international efforts, in the war on drugs.

The Differences Between Drug Related Crime and Organized Crime

The history of America has been filled with some form of organized or drug related crime that dates to the time of the early settlers in the 1600s. Most drugs that are considered illegal and destructive to society today have been misunderstood by the public and interpreted in the medical field as having some sort of medical or healing purpose in early American history. " In 1914, the federal government passed the Harrison Narcotics Act, which made the sale or use of certain drugs illegal" (Hess, Orthmann, & Cho, 2017. Pg. 581). Drug related crimes and organized crimes can be directly associated with each other yet are completely different in a sense of what and how criminal activities are committed and by whom they are committed. The differences between a drug related crime and organized crime are established through <https://assignbuster.com/differences-between-drug-related-and-organized-crime-in-america/>

understanding the definition of each term, the differences of crimes committed and the effects of drugs in relation to organized crime, and what the different issues law enforcement consider in their approach to combat these two issues.

What is drug related crime? The United States Department of Justice has defined drug related crime as, “ A crime to use, possess, manufacture, or distribute drugs classified as having a potential for abuse” (U. S. Department of Justice, 1994, p. 1). Some examples of drugs possessed and related to crime are powdered cocaine and crack, heroin, marijuana, methamphetamines, club drugs, prescription drugs, inhalants, and even some over the counter drugs that are to be used in an illegal manner. Drugs are directly in relation to the smuggling and trafficking organizations that bring narcotics and opiates into the United States from other countries and within the United States itself. Drug related crime today has been a constant battle for law enforcement and require the expertise of multiple agencies ranging from multijurisdictional big government intervention like the F. B. I. and the Department of Homeland Security to local and state municipalities, for example, city police or the Drug Enforcement Agency. Examples of drug related crimes are smoking marijuana or snorting cocaine, manufacturing methamphetamines or growing marijuana, selling or distributing any type of drug like ecstasy or prescription medication whether it was legally or illegally obtained. Large scale smuggling and trafficking of drugs, weapons, and even humans into and throughout the United States from other countries has steadily increased over the last decade. Violence and murder are directly associated with the drug trade and leads to massive human rights violations.

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What is organized crime? Federico Varese states the definition as, “ namely that organized crime involves the pursuit of profit through illegal activities by an organized hierarchy that show continuity over time. Among the means discussed, the use of violence and corruption is recurrent” (Varese, 2010, pg. 28). The FBI definition of organized crime is the same. Organized crime enterprises in the United States first started with their focus mainly on illegal gambling institutions and prostitution rings. Today drug trafficking is now a common practice and has been one of the biggest sources of revenue for organized crime syndicates. What is the difference between an ordinary criminal and an organized criminal? As explained by Thomas Schelling, “ The basic distinction between ordinary and organized criminals: the former is wholly predatory, and the latter offer a return to the respectable members of society. Nobody will miss the burglars if they suddenly disappear. But if the confederation of employed in illicit businesses were suddenly abolished, it would be sorely missed because it performs services for which there is a great public demand” (Schelling, 1984, pg. 180). Money laundering, human trafficking, drugs, pornography, gambling, loan-sharking, fraud, and infiltration of legitimate business are some examples of the so-called victimless crimes that happen in organized crime networks.

The differences between drug related and organized crimes committed vary considerably but some can say they are intertwined and correlated with each other. Drug crimes usually start at the base of society in which an individual consumes drugs on a regular basis and deals drugs to support his or her own addiction or gets addicted to the product my means of sampling the product over time to make sure of the purity they receive to sell. The results of drug

use and addiction usually lead the addict to perpetuate other crimes that directly affect society to support the habit of the offender and can include robbery, burglary, theft and numerous other violent offenses. The average non drug using American does not perpetuate such crimes. Individuals with an addiction can be associated with these crimes and the level of the offense can be associated by their habitual use.

According to a research report by Bernard Gropper, he explains the correlation of drug use as it pertains to criminal activity in Harlem, New York. It states, " The results show how the intensity of the criminal behavior- especially property crime- of such addicts tends to be related to their current drug use status. During a nine-year period at risk, their crime rates dropped to relatively low levels during periods when they had little to no narcotic use. While they were actively addicted, however, their criminality was about four to six times higher. Overall, they averaged two thousand crime days (defined as any day in which they committed one or more crimes) per addict. For those who has several periods of addiction and reduction or cessation of narcotics use, the levels of criminality clearly tended to rise and fall with drug use" (Gropper, 1985, pg. 2). The average drug addict can become a career criminal or one who consistently commits violent offenses, robbery, burglary, and/or theft in order to support or supplement their use. Drug crimes associated with addiction and peddling can be the difference in an individual maintaining a career criminal status or moving into the more technical sides of crime, like smuggling and trafficking, associated with gangs or more organized crime syndicates.

Organized crime in contrast to drug related crime is focused more around the basis of larger scale smuggling and trafficking of humans, drugs, weapons, and a variety of other victimless crimes that take advantage of the fabric of society for the advantage of the organized crime groups. Murder, rape, assault, extortion, kidnapping, and crimes as such are also correlated with the practice of smuggling and trafficking. It is a practice that can lead to the enslavement of the individuals that are trying to be smuggled into the country. The difference being that if an individual cannot pay the person or group smuggling them into the country the individual becomes a victim of trafficking. The freedom of choice is no longer present, and exploitation ensues. Weapons and human trafficking are other main sources for organized crime organizations and have a drastic impact on society both in the United States and abroad. The biggest issue with organized crime is the extortion of government officials to accentuate and protect the crime group in the name of money or threats of their family being kidnapped or murdered. Corrupt officials and law enforcement can corrode society around them having a direct effect on the innocent.

According to Felipe Calderon, " Transnational organized crime erodes the rule of law and that the damaging consequences of this situation go beyond the high crime rates. Organized crime not only deteriorates social order and individual liberties, but it is also a threat to democracy and the state itself, as it tends to displace and substitute law enforcement agencies and institutions. Once it overtakes the government, it extracts the rents of society through violence and the threat of it. Once the state has lost control of its own institutions, reality eclipses Hollywood stories of extortion,

kidnapping, and killing. The response to this threat must be global through international cooperation mechanisms, and it must definitely involve national and sub national actions" (Calderon, 2015, Para. 3).

A crime which is described as an illegal activity in which all people involved are willing participants can be considered victimless. Illegal gambling and book making rings tend to corrupt society and take advantage of individuals with addictive traits or financial issues. Loan sharking takes advantage of individuals and businesses at an exorbitant interest rate and is supported by gambling operations. Pornography can lead to the person involved to becoming a victim of human trafficking and forced to perform prostitution acts against their will for the profit of others. Money laundering involves the intrusion of legitimate businesses to launder the illegally obtained money and turn it into a reputedly perceived income essentially taking over the business for the benefit of the organized crime group. The main organized crime groups that commit these crimes are varied from small to large gangs, for example MS-13, and Mafia type organizations. One of the first and most famous in the United States being the Italian Mafia. International crime groups like the Russian, Asian, and Latin American groups have made a huge increase in American organized crime in the recent decade. This problem not only makes it a problem for law enforcement agencies in the United States but an international issue requiring transnational agencies all around the world to work together.

What are the different techniques that have been implemented by law enforcement to combat the issues involving drug related crimes and

organized crime? On July 17th, 1971, President Richard Nixon declared the “War on Drugs” in America to combat the spreading issue of drug smugglers, consumers, and distributors among our American society. This effort to combat drugs was the start of a multibillion-dollar war and recognized the drug trade as an essential supplement to organized crime groups. International agencies have been developed and strengthened to fight the onslaught of drugs pouring into America from all around the world. The largest suppliers of drugs coming from Mexico and other Latin American countries.

Law enforcement has been proactive the fight against the drug trade and its affiliated organized crime groups. Some techniques to combat drug and organized crime involve, “Organized crime investigations in the United States increasingly involve agencies from other countries, as such criminal organizations rarely restrict their illegal activities to the jurisdiction of one nation. Proactive community policing and problem-solving approaches. Intra-agency cooperation is also needed because most organized crime activities cross jurisdictions. Surveillance and undercover operations are also sometime indicated. One strategy that is essential to combating international organized crime (IOC) is the formation of interagency analytical teams to systematically collect, synthesize, and disseminate intelligence information on selected IOC targets as well as emerging IOC threats and trends. Another source for combating organized crime is the local citizenry” (Hess, et al et al, 2017, Pg. 614). Some investigative aids in the war on drugs and organized crime involve electronic surveillance, pen registers, trap and trace devices, wiretapping, multijurisdictional intelligence sharing

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systems, asset forfeiture, and traditional surveillance techniques. Although there are differences between drug related crimes and organized crime, the efforts put forth by law enforcement to combat these issues are intertwined due to the correlation of drugs and its relation organized crime.

Understanding the various distinctions between a drug related crime and organized crime is established through understanding the definition of each term, the differences of crimes committed and the effects of drugs in relation to organized crime, and what the different issues law enforcement consider in their approach to combat these two issues. Crime in the perspective of the small-time drug dealer to the most advanced organized crime groups is an international issue that will continue to find its foothold in American culture and society. Despite agencies from all around the world working together to continue this war on drugs, drug and organized crime will always continue to evolve plaguing law enforcement with the necessity to evolve their tactics to improve investigative techniques, legislation, policies to fight back.

Strengthening the international cooperation with other countries to decrease the abilities of the crime groups abroad from being able to cross borders is equally important to law enforcement agencies in America. The fight against poverty, restructuring the educational system, and creating new opportunities to keep our youth off the streets to have a chance at a better future is a good start.

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