Amphetamines Type Stimulant (ATS) Production and Trafficking In Southeast Asia Countries

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the pattern of Amphetamines Type Stimulants (ATS) production and trafficking in Southeast Asia countries. The objective of this article is to investigate organizational form and trafficking network of ATS within the region. Indonesia, Myanmar, and Cambodia will be used as analyzing case of the largest amphetamine producing and trafficking centre in the territory. The poverty, geo-strategic location, unstable sociopolitical situation and systemic corruption in law enforcement agencies are identified as the root of the emergence of multifaceted and transnational drugs trafficking in Southeast Asia. This article also provides suggestion on how to circumvent the impediments faced by the governments.

Key words: amphetamines type stimulants and trafficking

Introduction

Southeast Asia countries are facing a serious threat of their security from drugs trafficking recently. The golden triangle countries consisting of Burma, Thailand and Laos are pointed as the world's second largest opium producer and supplier in the Asia Pacific region. Amphetamines productions are also found throughout most of the Southeast Asia region, in particular Indonesia, Myanmar and Cambodia. The problem requires approaches comprehensive including strength anti-drug trafficking law, good governance in the law enforcement agencies in combating systemic corruption and global cooperation amongst the countries combating the menace. This paper reviews the illicit drugs cultivated and produced, especially for Amphetamines Type Stimulants (ATS) and describes the numerous trafficking and transiting routes between drug productions, dealers and to consumer markets.

A Profile of Drugs Trafficking in Southeast Asia

Myriad researchers on drawing the elusiveness of drug trafficking in Southeast Asia have revealed that many of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nation) countries are responsible for contributing the illicit drugs trafficking within the world. Several countries within this region are posing as producing, supplying and transiting point of illicit drugs.

Gary Reid *et al* address a report of drug production, trafficking and trade in Asia and Pacific Island countries.¹ They estimate that Myanmar is the largest producer of opium around "370 metric tones" in the Asia region, second only to Afghanistan.² Laos and Thailand are also mentioned by the authors as the nations which no longer considered a major source of opiates while they point China and India have sustained the world's largest producers of amphetamines.³

Madonna L. Devaney *et al* review the use of illicit drug in Asia region as well. They found that the figure of people using illegal drugs in Asia has risen over the past decades. They argue prevalence of people who use illicit drugs ranges from "less than 0.01% to

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¹ Gary Reid et al, 2006, *Drug Production, Trafficking and Trade in Asia and Pasific Island Countries*, 25 *Drug and Alcohol Review* [647] http://pdfserve.informaworld.com.ezproxy.uow.edu.au/34607_751316856_762363147.pdf at 20 October 2009.

² Ibid.

³ *Ibid.*

4.6%".4 Cambodia, Hong Kong, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Laos and Malaysia are calculated with prevalence rates higher than 2%.⁵ In the concluding remarks, they state that the calculation of the prevalence of illicit drug use is crucial for the policy maker in supporting the response and measurement of drugs coverage programs.

Sandeep Chawla and Thomas Pietschmann examine the pattern of drugs trafficking network within the world. They classify the regional characteristic of drugs trafficking based on the type of illicit drugs includina cannabis, cocaine, opiates, amphetamines, and ecstasy.⁶ It revealed that Southeast Asia was responsible for "21% of global opium production in 2002", with Myanmar contributes for 18%. Mainly of the opiates which is produced from this region are consumed within this region and the small number are exported to the "Oceania region, North America and Europe".8

Criminal Network Analysis

In the last decade, many researches have discussed about criminal network analysis. Jeffrey Scott McIllwain argues that the power of organized crime is on its network.9 His report is based on the anthropological approach with qualitative method resulted in a concluding remarks of the criminal network that is the members of organization need time to build trust and sense of belonging.¹⁰ He also states that criminal

Using the different method, Carlo Morselli reviews on the analysis of organized criminal networks ranging from brokerage position in drug trafficking and hierarchical organization like Hells Angel in Quebec. 12 He reveals that the inaccuracy of relational data within the network turns out to be challenges of social network analysis.¹³

Gordon Stovin and Chris Davies claim that academician and practitioner has a gap in countering organized crime since lack of communication and available case studies is blamed for this uncoordinated action.¹⁴ They argue that social network mapping has a limitation on explaining the nature of organized crime. This article derived from practitioner's perspective on how to tackle criminal network using hotspot matrix method by Ratcliffe.¹⁵

The Use of ATS within the South East Asian Region

Amphetamine is a family of related synthetic drugs called stimulants.¹⁶ Stimulants mimic the activity of a natural bodily hormone known as adrenalin to enhance the central nervous system activity.¹⁷ This includes "amphetamine sulphate, amphetamine hydrochloride, methamphetamine phenethylamines" 18 Phenethylamines include methylenedioxymethylamphetamine MDMA, commonly referred to as ecstasy. 19 The first original usages of amphetamines in 1920s

network is a gradual process that finally entails with more organized action.¹¹

Madonna L Devaney et all, 2007, Prevalence of Illicit Drug Use in Asia and the Pasific, 26 Drug and Alcohol http://pdfserve.informaworld.com.ezproxy.uow.edu.a u/740538_751316856_769836625.pdf> at 20 October

^{2009.} ⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Sandeep Chawla and Thomas Pietschmann, 2005, *Drug* Trafficking as a Transnational Crime, in PL Reichel (Ed), Handbook of Transnational Crime and Justice, 160, 170.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Jeffrey Scott McIllwain, 1999, Organized Crime: A Social Network Approach, 32(4) Crime, Law and Social [301] http://www.proquest.com.ezproxy.uow.edu.au/ 25 September 2009.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Carlo Morselli, 2009, *Inside Criminal Network*.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Gordon Stovin and Chris Davies, 2008, *Beyond the* Network: A Crime Science Approach to Organized Crime, 2(4) Oxford Law Journal-Policing [497] http://policing.oxfordjournals.org.ezproxy.uow.edu.au /> at 25 September 2009. ¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ NDARC, 2007, *Amphetamines* ,<http://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/NDARCWeb.nsf/resou rces/NDARCFact_Drugs5/\$file/Amphetamine+fact+she et.pdf> at 21 October 2009.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Australia Department of Health, *National Amphetamine* Stimulant Strategy *2008-2011*(2008) http://www.health.gov.au/internet/drugstrategy/Publi shing.nsf/content/2D1717263A2129CACA2574C50010A 827/\$File/ats-strategy08.pdf> at 21 October 2009. 19 Ibid.

were for medical against congestion, obesity and depression.²⁰ During the World War II, in both Korean Wars and Vietnam Wars, soldiers amphetamine against sleepiness. lethargy and hunger.²¹

According to Rebecca McKetin et al, in the Southeast Asian islands and specifically in Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia, the trend Methamphetamine usages Amphetamine Type Stimulant (ATS) pill as well as crystalline methamphetamine smoking.²² The ecstasy pills seem commoner than methamphetamine pills regardless of the fact that they being controversial. In terms of methamphetamine production, there has been an increase in the finding of large-scale covert methamphetamine industries and laboratories in Indonesia and Malaysia.²³ One industry founded in Jakarta owned by Ang Kim Soei was capable of producing almost 1.5 million ecstasy pills per week, and it was believed as the biggest ecstasy factory in Southeast Asia.²⁴

Indonesia Amphetamine Trafficking Network

Indonesia In recent years, has emerged as a major drugs supplier and consumer within the Southeast Asia region. The limited and inaccuracy figure of the drugs dealers and users turn out to be the greatest challenges in drawing the complexity of drug trafficking within this country. Indonesian Police Department reveals that there are 3.354 suspects of drug dealers between March-May 2009 in Indonesia.²⁵

Findings of the Indonesian national survey of 2003 suggest that the usage of methamphetamine was more common than heroin, only 15%, by the 6% of the survey drug-users.26 participants that were Methamphetamine accounted for 42% of drug related arrests in 2005 and 34% of drug related arrests in 2006.27

Based on the Indonesian National Police Head Quarter report, it has been found hundreds of ecstasy plant during the investigation from 2002 to 2009. The finding of ecstasy plant in Tangerang (which was believed as the biggest ecstasy plant in Southeast Asia; 2002), the finding of four ecstasy plants in Jakarta; 2004, the finding of five ecstasy industries in Jakarta linked to the international drug trafficking including Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia; 2005, and 6 shabu-shabu factories founded in Jakarta, Batam and Tangerang during the revelation from 2006 to recent.28

In this country, the use of amphetamines is rising in the majority of the capital city and is more common among young adult males. Cities like Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, Batam and Bali are identified as the largest consumer of amphetamines Indonesia. However, there are continuing problems underlie the police investigation in order to crush the cell of drug trafficking. The "transnational character" of drug trafficking and the use of anonymity within their network which covers a highly complex matter of its overseas link turn out to be the crucial challenges in combating this crime.

There are some variations in the route of ATS trading network among cities in the country. The most common means of ATS trafficking is smuggling the drugs that might be carried out easily by the same criminals along the same road with minor barrier by authorities or permeable border and custom control.

²⁰ NSW Department of Health, 2005, Amphetamine, Ecstasy and Cocaine A Prevention and Treatment Plan 2005-2009.

http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2005/pdf/amph_ ecstasy plan.pdf> at 21 October 2009. ²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Rebecca McKetin et al, 2008, *The Rise of* Methamphetamine in Southeast and East Asia, Drug Alcohol Review [225] http://pdfserve.informaworld.com.ezproxy.uow.edu.a u/181606_751316856_713780513.pdf> at 21 October 2009.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Harian Umum Pelita, 2009, Akankah Pemilik Pabrik Ang Kim Soei Dihukum Mati?, http://www.hupelita.com/baca.php?id=6560 at 21 October 2009.

²⁵ Republika Online, 2009, *Ada Pergeseran Modus* peredaran Narkoba di Indonesia. http://www.republika.co.id/berita/63166/Ada_Pergese

ran Modus Peredaran Narkoba di Indonesia> at 20 October 2009.

²⁶ Rebecca McKetin et al *above* n 225.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

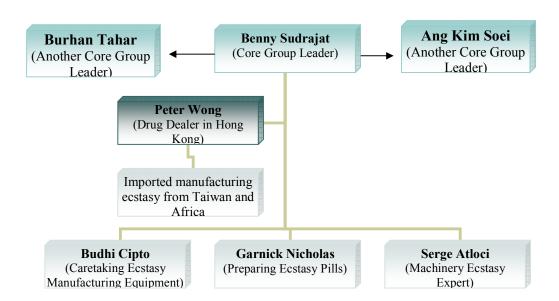
²⁸ GEPENTA, 2009, Waspadalah!!! Pabrik Narkoba ada di Linakunaan http://www.gepenta.com/sekilasinfo_des08.php at 22 October 2009.

Recently, in Indonesian region, the flight route between Afghanistan-India-Jakarta, Hong Kong-China-Jakarta, and Africa (Nigeria)-Jakarta were some of the well-travelled in smuggling of raw material by the drug dealer. After accepting the raw material successfully, they established the ecstasy plants and factories in Jakarta which are covered by legitimate businesses like textile factory and car retail.²⁹

The case of Benny Sudrajat proved that there was an international drug trafficking network assisting his action in establishing ecstasy plant in Jakarta. He could easily import the raw material of ecstasy and shabu-shabu and deal with machinery experts of drug producing from Hong Kong, China and

Taiwan.³⁰ The case was beginning when Benny Sudrajat, an Indonesian, who was assisted by Peter Wong (a Hong Kong citizen), established the ecstasy plant in Jakarta in order to gain capital for their coal business. After forming his plant, Benny Sudrajat was dealing with numerous people from other countries like Max (Dutch), Garnick Nicholas (Dutch), Serge Atloci (French) in order to run their illegitimate business i.e. ecstasy trading. It is estimated that the plant was capable of turning out a million ecstasy pills a month which was in turn, barely weeks after the operation the police had busted the factory. Benny Sudrajat's drug trafficking network can be illustrated as in the figure bellow:

Figure 1
Benny Sudrajat's Network



Puskominfo Bid Humas Polda Metro Jaya, 2009, Polisi Memburu Dua Tersangka Kasus Narkoba ke Luar Negeri, http://humaspoldametrojaya.blogspot.com/20 09/05/polisi-memburu-dua-tersangka-kasus.html> at 22 October 2009.

³⁰ Tempo, 2009, *Tracking Down the Drug Mafia Network,* http://www.tempointeractive.com/majalah/free/law-4.html at 22 October 2009.

From the figure, it assumes that an individual might have several affiliations with drug dealers from other countries in order to support their drug business. Benny Sudrajat was affiliating with international drug network from Netherland, France, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China and Africa to obtain the raw materials and machinery ecstasy equipments from abroad. Besides, he also recruited five Chinese to maintain the producing process of the ecstasy and shabu-shabu in their factory. Some locals only worked as a security guard and administration staff including Benny's son; Arden Christian.

It was also believed that Benny's network affiliated with other tycoons of drug dealer such as Burhan Tahar and Ang Kim Soei who was busted by Police in April 2002 alleged as the owner of ecstasy factory in Tangerang which was capable of turning out 12,000 ecstasy pills a day. Unfortunately, the rules of mafia drug of the existence of a broken cell system apply within these core group leaders so that Burhan Tahar and Peter Wong are still hunted by police.

Based on the Kennev's network theory, 31 Benny's case can be classified as a wheel network consisting of several cell workers where the core group leader (that is Benny Sudraiat) controls decision making authority including trading and distributing where the drug runs. In some cases, the core group leader remains anonymity and does not affiliate with their cell workers. On the other hand, in Benny's case, the core group leader (i.e. Benny Sudrajat) and cell managers like Budhi Cipto, Garnick Nicholas and Serge Atloci involve themselves in the most daily matters of everyday operations. Consequently, several weeks of running the factory, the police successfully raided and arrested the perpetrator within the network.

Amphetamine Trade between Myanmar-Thailand

In the recent decades, there is multidirectional evolution of drug trafficking between Myanmar and Thailand.³² Large amounts of drugs are suspected to be moved well-concealed or in small quantities by a multitude of transporters not cognizant of the responsible hierarchy.³³ It is believed that there are several/overlapping networks of the transporters, each in small clusters. Ko Lin Chin and Sheldon X Zhang have termed these transporters as 'mules' and 'ants'.34

According to Chin report, heroin use is declining slowly and steadily over few years within this region. On the other hand, production of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) like ice and ketamine is rising in recent vears and has recuperated the addicts' needs in the Golden Triangle region (i.e. Myanmar, Thailand and Laos). Widespread availability of ATS has been reported in the Golden Triangle region with ATS of Burmese origin being the costliest where Thailand; Myanmar's front line state; suffers the most because of extensive use of *Ya Ba* (refers to amphetamine called crazy medicine) among the Thai youth.³⁶ Myanmar has recently become a main source of ATS in Asia, with an annual production of "hundreds of millions of methamphetamine tablets" where The Shan State in Myanmar is considered as the major opium- and ATSproducing area.37

The figure below will describe about the pattern of Myanmar drug trafficking network:

³¹ Michael Kenney, 2007, *The Architecture of Drug* Trafficking: Network Form of Organization in the Colombia Cocain Trade, 8(3) Global Crime [242] http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17440570701507794> 23 October 2009.

³² Zarina Othman, 2004, *Myanmar, Illicit Drug Trafficking* and Security Implications, 65 Akademika [37] http://pkukmweb.ukm.my/~penerbit/akademika/ACR OBATAKADEMIKA65/akademika65%5B02%5D.pdf> at 22 October 2009.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ko Lin Chin and Sheldon X Zhang, 2007, *The Chinese* Connection: Cross Border Drug Trafficking between Myanmar and China, School of Criminal Justice Rutgers University

http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/218254.pdf > at 22 October 2009.

³⁵ Chin and Zhang *above* n 4.

³⁶ Inventory of Conflict and Environment (ICE), 2001, Amphetamine Trade between Burma and Thailand, http://www1.american.edu/ted/ice/amphetamine.htm > at 22 October 2009.

³⁷ Ibid.

Supplier B

Trafficker A

Trafficker B

Trafficker C

Vendor B

Vendor B

Other Network

Other Network

Figure 2.
The Myanmar Drug Dealer Pattern³⁸

A majority of people associated with drug trafficking and distribution in Myanmar are poor in education, employment and other opportunities matchable to a life aspired by them.³⁹ People associated with drug trafficking cannot be attributed to involvement in crime or terrorism groups per se. Most of them bear a risk-taking attitude in affiliation with family and friends. 40 Strategic and disguise are among important parts of their plan. It is a surprise that the drug trafficking business is well-adaptive to the law and alterations. People associated with trafficking and distribution have expertised in concealment and transportation. Hence, more of them are noticed by informants than by law enforced inspections.⁴¹

Based on Kenney's theory,⁴² the figure 2 of Myanmar drug trafficking network can be categorized as the chain network which every chain organizes several core groups. The one-on-one transaction⁴³ underlies the drug transaction amongst the dealer. Even though the core members of a trafficking group have ultimate decision in giving instruction, the hierarchal command can not be found within this network. The standard rule of Mafia

applies in this network; that is the existence of a broken cell/chain system. Everyone is only responsible of the stage which they play the role so that the trafficker does not know one another when maintaining transaction. The traffickers have no clue how to obtain the drugs from suppliers and where the drug is ended in the next stage of the vendors. ⁴⁴ As a result it will be difficult to crush their links in the investigation process.

Cambodia Amphetamines Trafficking Network

The Cambodia Kingdom has population of 13 million people that estimated annual population of growth rate of 1.8%.45 During the late 1990s, ATS consumption becomes crucial challenges faced Cambodian society. This condition was closely related to the extensive use of Yaa Baa in Thailand since they exporting amphetamine called Yaa Baa into Cambodian region.46 Compared with Thailand, poverty does not the emergence of phenomenon in Cambodia. A social condition

³⁸ Adapted with a modification from Ko Lin Chin and Sheldon X Zhang *above* n 100.

³⁹ Chin and Zhang *above* n 5.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Kenney *above* n 242.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Thid

Aschel Humeniuk et al, 2004, Substance Use and Treatment Options in Cambodia, 23 Drug and Alcohol Review [365]

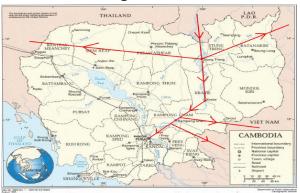
http://pdfserve.informaworld.com.ezproxy.uow.edu.a u/> at 22 October 2009.

⁴⁶ Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy and Joel Meissonier, 2004, Yaa Baa: Production, Traffic, and Consumption of Methamphetamine In Mainland Southeast Asia.

supporting the consumption of ATS drugs where thousands of woman working in brothels prefer to inject amphetamines rather than heroin.⁴⁷ The reports reveal that amphetamine is the most prevalent drug and the biggest cause of addiction which estimates that there is more than 50 000 drug addicted in this country.⁴⁸

This country is not well-known as producing centre, but its airport and border provinces are used to transit and ship amphetamine to Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore. The border province such as Koh Kong, Battambang, Banteay Meanchey and Preah Vihear are recognized as the main gate of amphetamine smuggling which comes from Myanmar.⁴⁹ The routes of illicit drugs trafficking through Cambodia can be seen as in the figure below:

Figure 3 **Estimated Amphetamine Trafficking** Routes through Eastern Cambodia⁵⁰



Based on UNODC report, it reveals that in every month thousands of amphetamine tablets are "transported from southern Laos into Stung Treng province in north-eastern

Cambodia". 51 The sea routes are used by the trafficker in transferring drugs from Stung Treng province into Ratanakiri province and then into central Vietnam and beyond.⁵² The small speed boat and river boat transport the drugs along the River Mekong to Kompong Cham province and Phnom Penh. From Kompong Cham, it is transported by road into Vietnam. 53

Furthermore, the traffickers also carry drugs through flight routes from Pochentong Airport, Phnom Penh, to Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.⁵⁴ It is also believed that most of the drugs transiting in Cambodia derives from the Golden Triangle and that the final destination for the drugs is North America, Australia and Southeast Asia countries as well. Through air routes, the means of amphetamine smuggling includes "normal packing, body pack and swallowing".55 The Cambodia official authority also reveals that amphetamine is concealed through "mails, sport and music equipment, and food container".56

The Impediments

Based on the discussion above, it concludes that Southeast Asia countries face an immense threat in drugs trafficking in recent. The poverty, geo-strategic location, unstable sociopolitical situation and systemic corruption in law enforcement agencies are pointed as several roots of drugs trafficking within this region. To mention a few of them, unstable sociopolitical situation as it happens in Myanmar and systemic corruption in Indonesia will describe in the paragraph below.

Recently, the international community condemns Myanmar for abusing its human rights and for general political repression of arresting Nobel Price Aung San Suu Kyi.57 Furthermore, insurgent groups still emerge

⁴⁷ *Ibid*.

⁴⁸ Charles McDermid and Cheang Sokha, 2006, *Losing* Battle and against Illegal Drugs, Phnom Penh Post http://www.cambodiapolitic.org/news_06/phnompenh post_2006/060224-0309_ppp_2.pdf> at 22 October 2009.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2002, Summary Report of the Illicit Drug Situation in <http://www.haarp-Cambodia online.org/resources/document/2002%20UNODC%20S ummary%20Report%20of%20the%20Illicit%20Drug% 20Situation%20in%20Cambodia%20ENG.pdf > at 22 October 2009.

⁵¹ *Ibid*.

⁵² *Ibid*.

⁵³ *Ibid*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵⁵ Interior Government of Cambodia, Country Report of The Kingdom of Cambodia, Paper Presented at the 8th Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 16-20 June 2008.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Othman *above* n 38.

which include Karen National Union and All-Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) in this country.⁵⁸ The economic sanctions which have been imposed by Europe Union and the US result in the emergence of black market of drug smuggling. Hence, it can be concluded that unstable socio-politic condition happening in Myanmar leads to the ineffective efforts of the current situation in handling drugs trafficking.

In addition, the Indonesian anti-drugs efforts are also dealing with serious internal coordination problems and systemic corruption.⁵⁹ It has been believed that the drug trafficking is organized by the trafficker inside the prison. This can be noticed by the ease of smuggling drugs into prison which has been used by several prisoners during their imprisonment.60 The corrupt officers in the internal department of prison combine with the poor governance within the entities exacerbate the unsuccessful of anti-drugs strategy. Thus, improving good governance and combating corruption are crucial challenges in supporting its strategy.

Conclusion

Recently, amphetamine is considered as a major threat of security within the Southeast Asia countries. Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia are only few countries that suffer from amphetamine menace. The impact of amphetamine in the rising number of HIV cases has to be monitored carefully by each country. Therefore, the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nation) plays prominent roles in combating illicit drug trafficking in Southeast Asian region. The willingness of preventing drug abuses can be done by regulating strength anti-drugs law, improving

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enforcement capacity and reducing the root of societal challenge i.e. poverty, homeless, and unemployment along drug trafficking routes.

⁵⁸ Othman *above* n 38.

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