

Role of Punjab Police in Control of Narcotics A Comparison with ANF and Customs

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Abstract

Proximity with Afghanistan and the porous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan makes Pakistan vulnerable as trafficking route and market for narcotics. To counter these threats various agencies are working in Pakistan the most important of which are the Provincial Police Forces, Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) and Pakistan Customs. Pakistan Customs and ANF generally remain in limelight and take most of the credit as they deal with high profile targets, foreigners and as a sequel get a high flying media coverage. The provincial police forces despite doing a lot in terms of quantities seized, cases registered and convictions achieved get little attention and credit for their efforts because they deal at local level with small scale drug pushers and drug users. Whereas ANF has the advantage of dedicated and well trained cadre, nationwide jurisdiction and interprovincial/international network with huge finances at their disposal, the Punjab Police have the benefit of huge workforce which can penetrate every nook and corner of the province in the respective jurisdiction of their police stations. If the Punjab Police are given specialised training in this regard and their finances are improved to cater for their needs of purchasing information and giving financial rewards and establishing a dedicated court to deal with such cases, their anti narcotic efforts can be amplified manifold.

Keywords

Drug Trafficking, Drug Abuse, Finances, Training, Investigation, Prosecution, Conviction

Introduction

Whereas geographic location of Pakistan gives it numerous advantages, its proximity with Afghanistan, the world's largest producer of illicit opium, renders it vulnerable to the curse of drug trafficking and drug abuse. Unfortunately, Pakistan has been and still is the primary transit route of trafficking of narcotics produced in Afghanistan. Even more disturbing is the fact that Pakistan is also one of the largest markets of these drugs. Trafficking of opiates into and through Pakistan increased dramatically during the period 2001-2006 corresponding roughly to the increase in opium production in Afghanistan from 185 metric tonnes in 2001 to 6,100 metric tonnes in 2006, which has again come down at 4860 metric tonnes in 2010.¹ The United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 2011 Afghanistan opium Poppy Survey highlights that in 2010, 82 percent of Afghanistan's Poppy was grown in five provinces along the border with Pakistan.²

Apart from Afghanistan the tribal areas of Pakistan have also been big cultivator of poppy. In 1979 the total production of poppy in the tribal belt of Pakistan was at the peak which was responded to by the then Pakistan government by enforcement of Hadood Ordinance 1979.³ Trends have shown that poppy cultivation in Pakistan had dropped to less than 600 hectares by 2000, but had risen up to 3100 hectares in the country's tribal areas in 2004. In the same year, according to the Afghanistan opium survey 2004, opium cultivation reached an unprecedented 131,000 hectares. Afghanistan's output meets 80% of the world's demand today. In 2010 opium cultivation was 123,000 hectares which according to Afghanistan Opium Survey 2011 is going to witness a slight decrease in the current year.⁴

Various Agencies Working to Control Narcotics

Various governments in Pakistan have been trying their best to curb the menace of narcotics and have achieved considerable success in this regard. This was duly recognised by Mr. Antoneo Maria Costa, Executive Director United Nation *Office of Drug and Crime* (UNODC) in 2006 during his visit to Pakistan. In a meeting with the then Interior Minister, he said that *Pakistan victory over poppy cultivation was a real success story but Afghan heroin continued to flood the country.*⁵ In Pakistan there are a number of institutions which are involved in the fight against narcotics.

For example:-

1. Ministry of Narcotics Control
2. Anti-Narcotics Force
3. Narcotics Interdiction Committee
4. Pakistan Coast Guard
5. Airport Security Force
6. Frontier Corps (KP and Baluchistan)
7. Frontier Constabulary
8. Pakistan Rangers (Punjab and Sindh)
9. Provincial Police Forces (Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and KP)
10. Inter-Agency Task Force
11. Federal Investigation Agency
12. Pakistan Customs

Of all these, the ANF, Customs and Provincial Police Forces are the main agencies which make major contribution in the fight against narcotics. Whereas, ANF and Customs take the lion's share of the credit because of their action against high profile targets and foreigners and high-flying media coverage, the services of the provincial police forces generally remain unrecognised despite the fact that the number of cases registered and person arrested and challaned is always higher as compared to ANF and Customs. In the succeeding paragraphs we will examine the contribution of Punjab Police in the fight against narcotics as compared to ANF and Customs, its relative strengths and weaknesses, modus operandi and resource position and make recommendations as to how its performance can be improved in this regard.

Methodology

This paper is primarily an analytical comparison of three main agencies, namely ANF, Customs and Punjab Police, working in Pakistan to fight against narcotics. The primary research methods used are archival research, interviews with the officials of these agencies and internet search. In addition I have also drawn on my own experience of 13 years as a police officer. Whereas interviewing the officials was not much of the problem, however, obtaining data was really a problem. To my surprise, in Punjab Police Headquarters all the relevant data was found in systematic form and was made available readily. The regional directorate of ANF was also very cooperative and which prepared the data according to the requirement of this paper in a few days. However data from the Customs Department came with much difficulty and indeed figures for cases decided and convictions could not be obtained at all. Unstructured interviews of police officers, judges and officials of ANF and Customs department were conducted to know their relative strengths and weaknesses, their problems, limitations and how the things could be improved.

Statistical Comparison of Relative Performance of Punjab Police, Customs and ANF for Last 5 Years

Below is given a year-wise statistical comparison of recoveries effected by Punjab Police, Custom and ANF in the last 05 years (Table I). Only 03 major categories of narcotics which are more commonly trafficked through or into Pakistan are included in the comparison. Similarly, in the Table II and III, there is a comparison of three departments regarding registration of cases, number of accused arrested, challaned and convicted.

Table I: Comparison of Seizures by Punjab Police, ANF & Customs

Year	Opium (Kg)			Heroin (Kg)			Hashish (Kg)		
	Punjab Police	Customs	ANF	Punjab Police	Customs	ANF	Punjab Police	Customs	ANF
2006	412.29	103	110.000	438.35	322	130.000	16499.00	19468.00	2910.500
2007	484.48	136	97.330	961.88	227	177.817	15267.00	24335.00	2516.285
2008	344.66	35	99.940	1125.60	218	162.060	16080.00	7528.00	2563.178
2009	272.76	75	1154.570	660.10	208	88.737	8213.10	20456.00	4413.860
2010	301.60	351	187.505	728.87	372	144.070	13879.00	16924.55	6525.710
Total	1815.79	700	1649.200	3914.60	1347	702.500	69938.10	88711.50	18929.400

Table II: Cases Registered, Person Arrested, Cases Decided and Convictions

Year	Cases Registered			Person Arrested			Cases Decided		Conviction	
	Punjab Police	Customs	ANF	Punjab Police	Customs	ANF	Punjab Police	ANF	Punjab Police	ANF
2006	44513	230	102	44481	125	198	15322	141	11951	133
2007	50065	204	177	50077	138	306	19783	166	15299	153
2008	48377	198	184	48034	131	305	23951	154	19450	139
2009	47168	123	143	47873	73	250	26900	108	23430	94
2010	49648	143	165	51055	82	249	24323	96	20938	74
Total	209771	898	771	241520	549	1308	110279	665	91068	593

N.B: The data of cases decided and convictions for Customs is not available.

Table III: Comparative Percentage of Convictions

Year	Conviction %		
	Punjab Police	Custom	ANF
2006	78	NA	94.33
2007	77	"	92.28
2008	81	"	90.39
2009	87	"	87.04
2010	68	"	77.08

The data of convictions in case of Pakistan customs was not available

Source: Punjab Police Headquarters (CPO), Statistical Wing of Punjab Investigation Dept.
Regional Directorate of ANF, Lahore⁶
Regional Directorate of Customs

Successes and Failures of Punjab Police

It is evident from the statistics that the Punjab Police has performed exceedingly well as compared to other two departments not only in seizures of various categories of drugs but also in the number of cases registered and persons arrested. However, the conviction percentage of Anti Narcotics Force is higher than the Customs and the Punjab Police. If we go into the details, the relative performance of various departments can be evaluated on the basis of following criteria.

1. Organisation
2. Training
3. Network Area
4. Resources
5. External Interference
6. Prosecution and Trial Court

1. Organisation

Anti Narcotic Force is the primary agency in Pakistan to deal with the issue of narcotics. It has dedicated cadre which includes both the army and civilian officers. In comparison, the other two departments despite playing a significant role, particularly the Punjab Police, are not as such specialized agencies to fight against drugs. Whereas, the ANF people are specialists in dealing with drugs and drug related issues, for the Punjab Police narcotics are only one of a long list of things done by them everyday. However, the Punjab Police has got the advantage of huge manpower as compared to ANF i.e. the former consist of a little more than 1,70,000 officers as compared to 1237 officers of the latter.⁷

2. Training

As the Anti Narcotic Force is dedicated and specialized cadre, its training curriculum, methods and techniques are also designed accordingly. In an interview Mr. Shahid Afzal, the Director ANF Lahore Region, told that ANF officers get a specialized training in intelligence gathering, carrier interception, apprehension of drug traffickers, investigation of drug cases and also tracking of illegal assets. The police on the other hand do not get any special training on these counts. Narcotics cases are dealt with just as ordinary offences. Moreover, they induct serving army officers who are already trained to launch special operation.⁸

3. Network Area

Whereas the Punjab Police have an intensive network within the province consisting of 613 police stations as compared to only 06 police stations of ANF, the latter has the advantage of an extensive network which transcends the provincial boundaries but also has its reach inside the neighbouring countries as well, particularly in Afghanistan.⁹ It is because of their huge network that ANF people are able to detect and intercept all the links starting from the origin to the destination of any shipment. They also enjoy the freedom from provincial jurisdictional issues which encumber the provincial police forces. For example, the ANF people can go after their accused in any part of the country anytime and do not need any permission from the respective provincial government required by the provincial police forces when they have to apprehend the accused in the jurisdiction of some other province. The provincial police forces suffer a further disadvantage in terms of jurisdiction as they are divided into police stations and police can operate only in the jurisdiction of their own police station. According to Abdul Razzaq Cheema, the Senior Superintendent of Police (Investigation) Lahore, if they have to operate in the jurisdiction of police station other than their own they have to intimate the local police of the respective police station. This simply limits the capacity of police to deal with traffickers who operate in the jurisdiction of multiple police stations on legal and administrative grounds. Moreover, prior intimations generally result in leakage of information ultimately leading to the failure of operations.¹⁰

4. Resources

As discussed above as far as the human resources are concerned, the Punjab Police have a clear advantage in terms of overall number but the ANF personnel are better placed in regard to knowledge, skill, training and logistics. ANF is a well funded organisation and neither the Punjab Police nor the Pakistan Customs are any match to them in this regard. Anti Narcotic Force not only receives funds from the government of Pakistan but also receives aid and grants from their international partners and donor agencies. The last five years budget position of ANF (for Regional Directorate of Punjab) is given in Table IV.¹¹

Table IV: Fund Allocation for ANF from Various Sources in Pak-Rupees

S. No.	Head of Accounts	FY 2006 - 07	FY 2007 - 08	FY 2008 - 09	FY 2009 - 10	FY 2010 - 11
1	NAS	4237000	54540000	1800000	4273200	5295160
2	GOP	58838000	74123000	80302000	101581000	132406000

On the other hand, the provincial police forces and customs do not get any special fund allocation to fight against trafficking of drugs or their use.

5. External Interference

As the police have to operate at local levels where the drug pushers and users are generally the local people who have strong links with local community as well as the political and non-political pockets of influence, their capacity to operate is considerably restricted because of these linkages. Whereas the local politicians interfere with the police actions to maintain their vote bank, other people of influence like media men or lawyers may extend their back hand support to the drug pushers to meet their own ends. The ANF or Customs personnel are not constrained by such factors and have the benefit of operating in relatively interference free environment, claimed Brig. Shahid Afzal, the Director of ANF Lahore Region.¹²

6. Prosecution and Trial Court

As we have seen of all the three departments under discussion, ANF has secured the highest percentage of conviction. The credit for this achievement, according to Sadiq Masood-Additional Registrar Lahore High Court, goes to two factors i.e. strong prosecution wing and a dedicated trial court.¹³ On the other hand in the province of Punjab, the prosecution has been separated from police and works as an independent department now. Unfortunately, the competency and performance of this department has yet to come up to the mark. Moreover, the cases by the local police go in the local courts which are not dedicated to deal with these cases of special nature resulting in treatment of these cases in a very ordinary way involving long delays and frequent adjournments leading to poor disposal rates.¹⁴

Recommendations

Establishment of separate narcotics wing in every police station will be of immense significance, not only to deal with cases of narcotics but also to help in treatment and rehabilitation of the addicts. These officers must be given specialized training in this regards and provided all the equipments like Walkie Talkies, GPS, mobile phone trackers etc. Such wings need to be established immediately and with full commitment and resources.

The officers posted in these specialized units must be rotated periodically to minimize their chances of mixing up with the drug traffickers. It may also help in ensuring that the same officers are not continuously exposed to the hazards of the job including threats to their life.

In order to prevent the officers from indulging in corruption and to maintain their level of motivation a system of financial rewards must be introduced on the pattern of ANF.

A strong police intelligence network transcending at least the provincial boundaries is the need of the hour to bring a measure of success in the anti narcotics efforts of the police.

Separate and dedicated courts in every district to deal with the cases of narcotics can go a long way in reducing unnecessary delays and improving disposal as well as conviction rates.

In order to translate all the above mentioned suggestions into reality a separate fund for drugs must be introduced in the police to meet the financial requirements for purchasing intelligence, financial rewards and investigation cost.

Uniform laws and procedures must be introduced in the country so that all the agencies can operate with better understanding and coordination. As drug trafficking is an organised transnational crime many countries like EU are harmonising their laws and procedures to deal with them effectively. In Pakistan, we should remove at least the interprovincial procedural restrictions to facilitate our agencies in their war against narcotics and other forms of organised crime. This will help the police to go after the drug traffickers free from any jurisdictional restraints.

Involvement of NGOs at grass root level in demand reduction efforts and treatment of addicts can go a long way in improving the performance of the Punjab Police in their fight against drugs.

Conclusion

To conclude, drug trafficking is an organised crime and is as such difficult to deal with. Various agencies are fighting against this menace with different set of resources, methods, techniques and varying objectives. Moreover, every department has its own strengths and weaknesses which determine its capacity and way of working. In a comparison with ANF and Customs, the Punjab Police clearly excel in terms of quantities seized, cases registered and accused arrested. However, their capacity is limited with respect to their jurisdiction and reach of their network which remains localized to the boundary of their police station. Paucity of financial resources also limits their capacity to deal with informers with sufficient price for their service and also provide financial incentives to the police officers to keep their motivation up. In short, if police are also provided with the same level of financial and logistical resources they can use their comparative advantage of intensive local network and huge manpower as a powerful lever to eliminate drug pushing at local level and also contribute a lot in treatment and rehabilitation of drug users in collaboration with NGOs, jail and health authorities.

End Notes

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¹⁴ for a more detailed description and comparatively analysis of the role of various agencies, see Fasihuddin (2010). Drug Problems in Peshawar, Pakistan. pp97-132, in Gary Cordner and Dilip K. Das (ed). Urbanization, Policing, and Security: Global Perspective. CRC Press, USA.