

# Strategies to Combat Drug Crime under Modern Conditions in Vietnam

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## ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to drug combating issues in modern Vietnam. The author identified a range of reasons that have influenced the state of drug crimes. Current conditions require significant changes in Vietnamese drug prevention policy. At the same time, special attention is paid to creating a new state strategy to combat drug crime. The study purpose is to develop recommendations for determining approaches aimed at ensuring the process of combating drug crime in the future. According to the author, the implementation of such recommendations can improve the effectiveness of drug prevention activities. In this study, the author used a systematic approach, a statistical analysis of practical results, and a dialectical method of cognition. The author concludes that for a successful fight against drug crime it is necessary to implement the measures listed by the author in the article.

**Keywords:** drug crime; drug trafficking; anti-crime strategy; Vietnam; drug crime.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the problem associated with the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs in the world is constantly increasing, which is detrimental to many economic, political, cultural and other social spheres. In addition, this problem is also the reason that allows the commission of other dangerous crimes, which subsequently seriously affect the stability and development of many countries. Therefore, it is convincing to say that the fight against drug crime is one of the most important urgent tasks that confronts not only one state, but also the entire human community, including Vietnam, where the aforementioned problem is currently gaining immense urgency.

The manufacture, production and distribution of narcotic drugs in society creates significant, serious threats to public health, slows down economic development, and adversely affects public safety. In recent years, there has been a steady increase in the number of recorded crimes. This is evidenced by the static data of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). According to which, in 2017, the number of people who use drugs was 5.5% of the total adult civilian population (i.e., about 271 million people). At the same time, there is an increase in the number of people who use opioids (53.4 million people), which is 56% more than in 2016. The consequence is obvious that in 2017, 585,000 deaths for drug use would be recorded, as well as 42 million people (i.e. about 0.85% of the total adult civilian population) suffered from drug-related disorders, including addiction (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019).

Drugs are produced in almost anywhere in the world, including the Golden Crescent (Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan), the Golden Triangle (Laos, Thailand, Myanmar) and the South American states (Colombia, Mexico, etc.), from where they are transported around the world. The largest drug markets are currently North America, then Europe and Southeast Asia. At the same time, I would like to note that the worldwide fight against drug crimes also achieved certain results, i.e. the volume of cocaine seized amounted to 1275 tons, the volume of seizures of methamphetamine was 82

tons and the volume of seizures of tramadol was 125 tons (data in 2017) (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019).

It is worth noting that drug trafficking is a powerful criminal fact that has a significant impact on the criminal situation in the country. Of course, each state is preoccupied with the problems of drug addiction and related crime, depending on its own conditions, takes various measures aimed at suppressing and preventing them. However, such measures could not achieve the desired degree of effectiveness.

Vietnam is also not an exception to the above situation. Crimes related to drug trafficking (manufacture, production, use, etc.) are the most dangerous, because of which they caused especially serious damage not only to public health, but also to society, demographic situation, economic development, law and order, political and social stability (Huyen, 2019).

Recently, the fight against drug trafficking in Vietnam has become fiercer. Organizational groups that have a permanent composition, hierarchical stability, as well as covert support from perverted officials often commit crimes related to drug trafficking. The perpetrators of such crimes are always ready to fight back to law enforcement agencies; they use all means and methods to transport drugs to Vietnam or transit to other countries. This activity is especially evident on the border between Vietnam - Laos (Binh, 2017) and Vietnam - China. According to Vietnamese Ministry of Public Security, more than 23,000 cases related to drug trafficking were recorded in 2019; about 36,000 drug offenders were detained; nearly 1.6 tons of various types of drugs were seized.

As noted above, drug-related crime is a great danger to society as a whole, causing harm to human health, human dignity, undermining family happiness, and causing serious damage to public order and public safety of the state and international security. In order to increase the efficiency of drug trafficking combat, in Vietnam many regulatory legal documents have been adopted, which are the main legal base in the fight against this phenomenon (Luong, Le, Lam, & Ngo, 2019). In addition, Vietnam is a member of various international organizations to combat these crimes and

cooperates with other states. On September 1, 1997, Vietnamese Presidential Decision No. 798 / QĐ-CTN “On participation in the three International Narcotics Control Conventions” entered into force; the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961 as amended by the Protocol on Amendments to Unified Convention on Narcotic Substances 1961 (United Nations, 1961); Psychotropic Substances Convention 1971 (United Nations, 1971); UN Convention against the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances 1988 (United Nations, 1988). In 2000, Law

23/2000 / QH10 of December 9, 2000 “On drug prevention” by the Meeting of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2000) was adopted. Currently, Vietnam is an active participant in various international, regional drug control organizations. However, in recent years the number of crimes related to drug trafficking has not decreased, but on the contrary, new types of drugs have appeared, detention cases of large drug quantities have become more frequent (Luong, 2017).

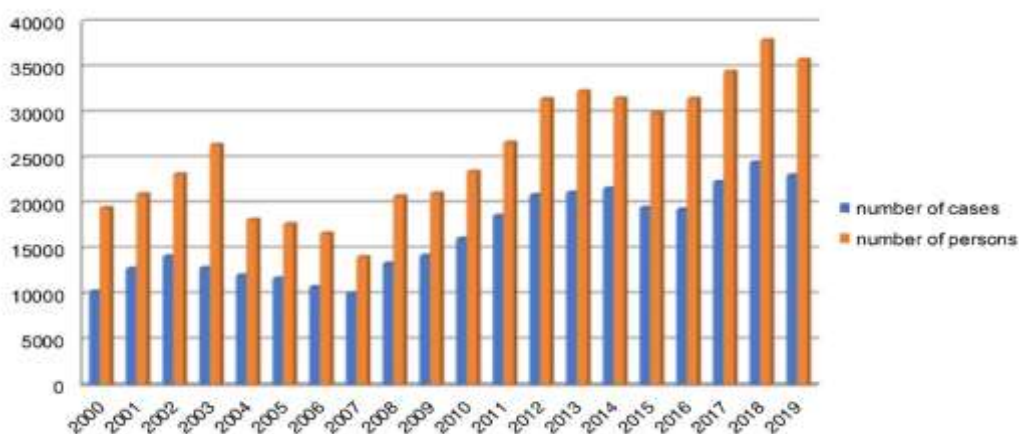


Figure 1: The fight results against drug trafficking in Vietnam (2000-2019) (Minister of International Labor Protection of Vietnam, 2019)

According to the Ministry of Public Security of Vietnam, the process of combating drug trafficking has already achieved certain results, but the problem of drug crimes in Vietnam is still complex and unpredictable. (Figure 1 and Figure 2)

In our opinion, this situation can be explained by several reasons that can be divided into objective and subjective.

The objective reasons are as follows:

1. The first reason is the geographical location of Vietnam. As everyone knows, the territory of Vietnam is located in Southeast Asia, which borders China in the north, Laos and Cambodia in the west. Therefore, Vietnam is directly influenced by criminal activity in the Golden Triangle. Drugs from Thailand and Myanmar are transported through Laos and Cambodia, they enter the country, then diverge in different ways (Minister of International Labor Protection of Vietnam, 2019). In 2018, the cultivation area in Myanmar consisted of more than 37,300 ha. The results of the practical activities of the drug crime prevention authorities shows that in the first quarter of 2019, 1,530 cases related to drug trafficking were detected on the borders with Laos; 2029 persons were detained; 117.82 kg of heroin, 8.46 kg of opium and more than 1490 kg of other types of narcotic drugs were seized.

Vietnam borders Kikai in the north, which is one of the largest drug markets in the world (Chin & Zhang, 2015, p. 135). Criminals often use a drug transportation channel on the land borders between Vietnam and China. According to the Ministry of Public Security of Vietnam, in 2019, 2138 cases of illegal drug transit were detected along this route,

about 3600 people were detained, more than 345 kg of heroin, 99 kg of opium, and a large amount of other types of drugs were seized.

1. The second reason related to the objective group is the profit for the drug trade. The specified type of trade brings superprofits, as a rule, 350 grams of heroin in Laos it costs 4,500 USD, and if successful transit to Vietnam, then its cost can increase by 12,000 USD (170%), in China it costs 20,000 USD, i.e. 4 times more than in Laos. Profits for drug trafficking cause the majority of people to commit a crime. In addition, Vietnam is still in the group of developing low-income per capita (in 2019 about 3000USD per person per year.). Despite certain economic achievements in the country, a market economy also brings negative consequences that serve as a condition for committing crimes (including drug crimes).
1. The third reason is that the small peoples in Vietnam who live in mountainous regions have a long-standing habit of growing poppy and using opium, the number of people who use opium in these areas is very large. Living in remote areas of Vietnam is too complicated, and the profits from growing opium poppy are many times higher than other plants. Various criminal organizations, using the limited worldview of small nations, invest in the cultivation of drug-containing plants and make huge profits. Recently, due to the proper application of various policies, the situation of growing opium poppies in Vietnam has shown a more degree of weakening, but has not stopped. As an example, we can carry out a case identified in the

province of Dienbie on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020. About 1000 poppies located on an area of 300 m<sup>2</sup> were discovered by a law enforcement agency in this place. It is worth noting that the place of poppy cultivation is located deep in the forest, the terrain of which is rugged, inaccessible. As a result, the investigation process could not yet find the guilty person.

The subjective reasons are as follows:

1. Firstly, the Vietnamese legislation system imperfection. The level of new types of narcotic drugs consumption has recently increased in Vietnam, however, many new types of drugs are still not included in the List of Narcotic Drugs to be Controlled in Vietnam, which creates difficulties for the authorized bodies.
2. Secondly, the system of law enforcement agencies for the prevention and combating drug crimes does not meet modern requirements, and many consultative organizations are acting inappropriately. Institutions and organizations at the local level are slowly implementing the State Target Program on Drug Prevention and Combating Drug Crime (National Committee on Aids, Drugs and Prostitute Control of Vietnam, 2011).
3. Thirdly, the high degree of drug use in Vietnam. In addition to the role of drug transit, Vietnam is also a large market for drug abuse. According to Vietnam Ministry of Public Security, in 2019, the number of people who use drugs was 225,099 (i.e. 60-70% of people abuse synthetic drugs). It is alarming that the drug-related situation in schools has recently tended to increase. The number of drug addicts under the age of 18 was 5% in total in the year of 2019.
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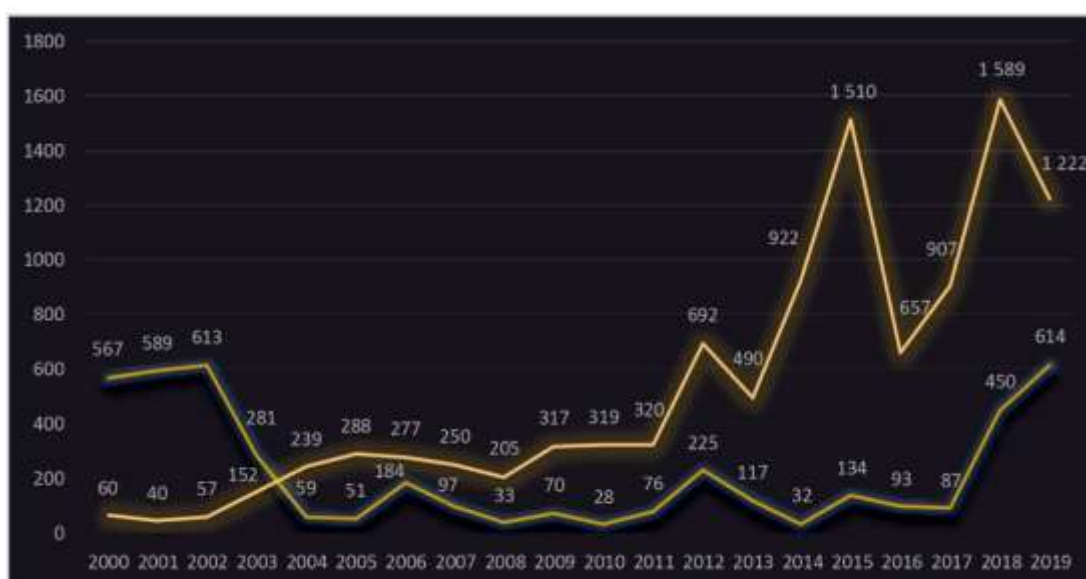


Figure 2: The volume of opium and heroin seized in Vietnam (a period of 2000-2019) (Minister of International Labor Protection of Vietnam, 2019)

In the near future, due to the influence of regional and global conditions, the situation related to drug crime in Vietnam will continue to be difficult and intricate. Perpetrators of drug crimes often change their methods, tricks and location, and it is also related to other types of dangerous crimes like corruption crimes, money laundering, arms trafficking, etc. In this context, the task of developing a national strategy to combat drug crime is necessary. In particular, the immediate need includes the creation of programs, groups of action areas that are long-term and strategic in nature. The implementation of which allows to achieve high-value achievements in the fight against drug crime in Vietnam.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological basis of the study is the theoretical and empirical research results on problems related to drug crime and ways to prevent them, as well as information provided in official publications and other sources (including the web). In this work, we used a systematic approach, the statistical studies results, a set of dialectical cognition methods, applied through general scientific methods like induction, deduction,

observation, comparison, analysis, synthesis, generalization of theoretical and practical materials, as well as other scientific special research methods.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on a range of reasons that affect the situation with drug crime in Vietnam, as well as the analysis of the guiding opinions, short-term and long-term goals set by the Communist Party, the Government of Vietnam, and the current potentials of our country, the author proposes to develop the following comprehensive set of solutions for the strategy to combat drug crime in Vietnam under modern conditions.

1. Implementation of legislation and public policy group.
  - a) Gradually improve the system of legal acts regulating the prevention and control of drug trafficking. In particular, it is necessary to observe the principle of uniformity in the system of legislation.
  - b) Formulate regimes and specific government policies for people involved in drug crime prevention. Timely take measures to reward for achievements, as well as to

bring to justice in cases of state policy violation on the prevention of drug crime.

- c) Improve state policies to support drug addicts during and after detoxification, or after serving a sentence for drug offenses committed by them.
2. Socio-Political Decision Groups
    - a) The role and responsibility of government authorities on drug prevention at all levels needs to be strengthened. Ensure compliance with the Politburo Directive No. 36-CT / TW dated August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019 “On strengthening and improving the effectiveness of drug prevention and control”, and other legal acts in this area.
    - b) Actively mobilize intersectoral coordination between the forces of society for the prevention of drug addiction and the fight against drug crime.
    - c) Focus on the creation and development of specific movements and patterns of drug prevention in society.
  3. Advocacy on the dangers of drugs group, state and public policies for drug abuse prevention group.
    - a) To increase the role and responsibility of information, communication and socio-political organizations system for the public policy promotion in the fight against drug crime.
    - b) Media use in order to educate about the dangers of drug addiction. Constantly change the methods of propaganda, which are suitable for each region. Particular attention should be paid to a group of people at high risk, such as students, national minorities, etc.
    - c) Strengthen the organization of various cultural, tourist and recreational activities related to drug prevention.
  4. Solution Group for Strengthening International Cooperation in the Field of Drug Prevention and Combating Drug Crime.
    - a) Extensive coordination with the functional forces of other countries bordering land and sea, with the goal of implementing common pre-agreed plans to combat crimes related to drug trafficking. Timely and sufficient to comply with international obligations and agreements on the prevention of drug crime.
    - b) Develop a mechanism for exchanging information, coordinating actions against the illicit drug trade.
    - c) Use the assistance of other countries and international, regional organizations in the fight against drug crime.
    - d) To promote cooperation and exchange of experience with other states and international, regional organizations in the field of training and retraining of personnel, ensuring scientific research and the application of technology in the fight against drug crime (Tuyen, 2017).

The above groups of solutions should be implemented synchronously, on time and gradually, in accordance with the practical requirements and potential of the country in order to achieve maximum efficiency in their application.

## CONCLUSION

Summarizing the results of our study on the drug crime combat strategy in Vietnam, we can draw the following conclusion:

1. The current state of drug crime in Vietnam is very difficult and unpredictable. This situation is the result of various reasons (objective and subjective). Identification and fixing of such reasons give us a complete picture of drug crime situation in Vietnam.
2. The fight against crimes related to drug trafficking is a long-term, ongoing process that requires a combination of different resources and forces. At the same time, a special place is occupied by a long-term national strategy, which defines the goals, objectives, means and methods for combating drug crimes in Vietnam.
3. In the national strategy to combat drug crime, an important role is played by the preparation and application of approaches aimed at resolving various problems. Based on a practical study of the state of drug-related crime in Vietnam in recent years, the author proposes to develop four key groups of solutions that will play a leading role in the success of the fight against drug-related crimes in Vietnam in the future.

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