Airports as Risky Facilities for Crimes

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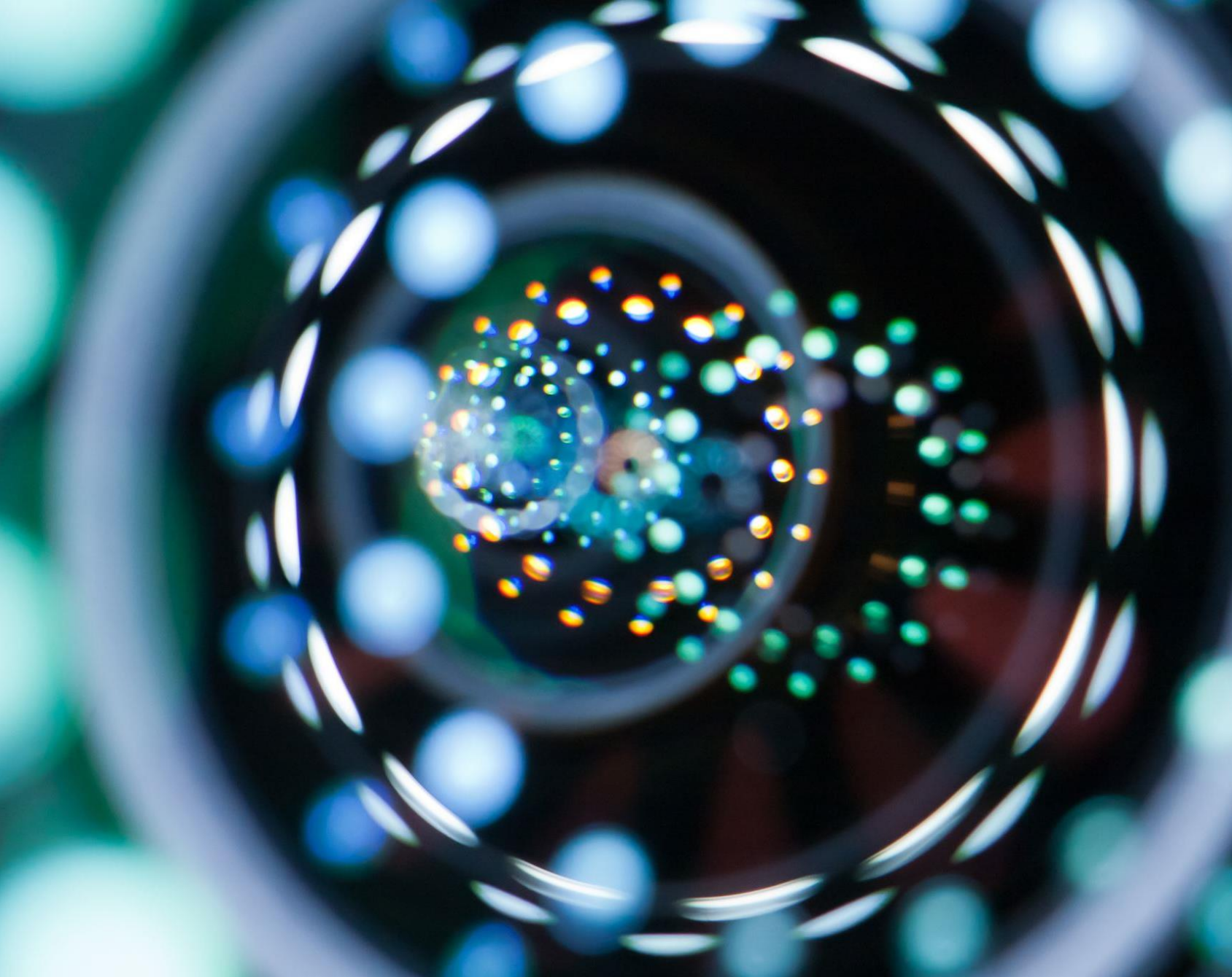
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Overview

- Reasoning out: Are airports risky facilities for crimes? If so, as criminologists, what do we know and what do we need to know to assist with measures to protect the facilities from crimes- especially, the transnational crime-drug trafficking/smuggling

- Data sources
  - 1. Natarajan, Umstdt and Babu (2019)-NYC Court data on drug trafficking;
  - 2. UNODC -IDS data (2011-2016)
  - 3. US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

- Analyses
  - Clarke and Eck's (2007) risky facilities concepts to assess if airports are risky facilities
  - Various Environmental Criminological concepts (crime concentrations, crime scripts), to understand the Modus Operandi of smuggling via airports
  - Clarke and Newman's (2019, 2006) ESEER model to help understand and explain the facilitating conditions that airports provide and to identify SCP measures for dealing with smuggling operations

- Findings

- Limitations of data

- Conclusion: Future research

According to Clarke and Eck (2007)

"Facilities are places with specific public or private functions" and they vary greatly in the crimes they experience.

Airports are facilities

- An airport is defined in the law as any area of land or water used or intended for landing or takeoff of aircraft including appurtenant area used or intended for airport buildings, facilities, as well as rights of way together with the buildings and facilities (US department of transport administration).

- An airport may be both a commercial service and a cargo service airport.

- About 90 percent of employees at airports work for private companies, such as airlines, contractors and concessions Most of the remaining 10 percent work directly for the airport as administrators, terminal- and grounds-maintenance personnel and safety crews. [source: Airlines for America].

Background Literature

Very few studies on airports as risky facilities (Martreache,2018)

INTERPOL (2020) REPORT: EU Funded ENACT project

TSA (2020) Insiders Threat Report

NO criminological studies on airport and drug smuggling

Crimes at the airport facilities: Static vs Non static Crimes (Newton, 2004)

- Airports are hot spots for crimes
- Static crimes: Theft, assault, harassment of a passenger etc. are crimes at the airport
- Non static crimes: Trafficking/smuggling of contrabands, such as drugs, weapons – are crimes on the moving- with a starting point, transit point and ending point.

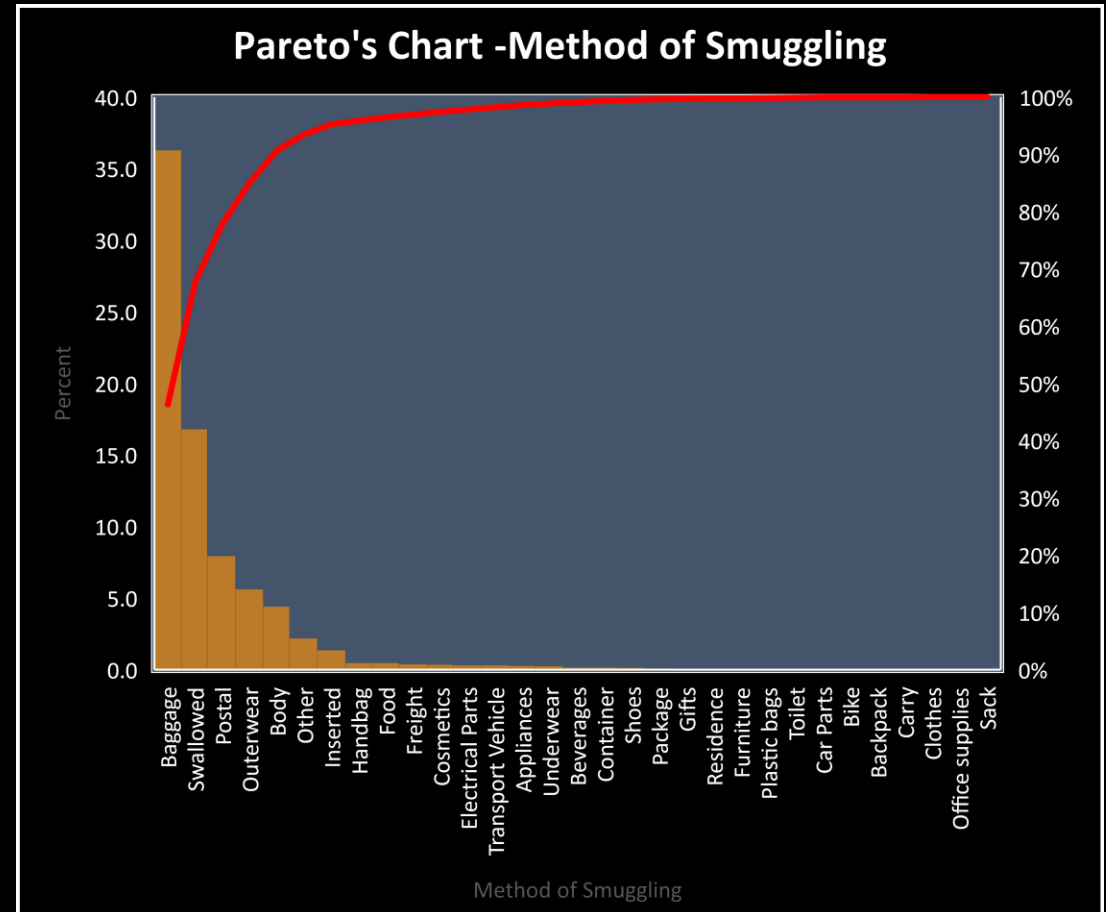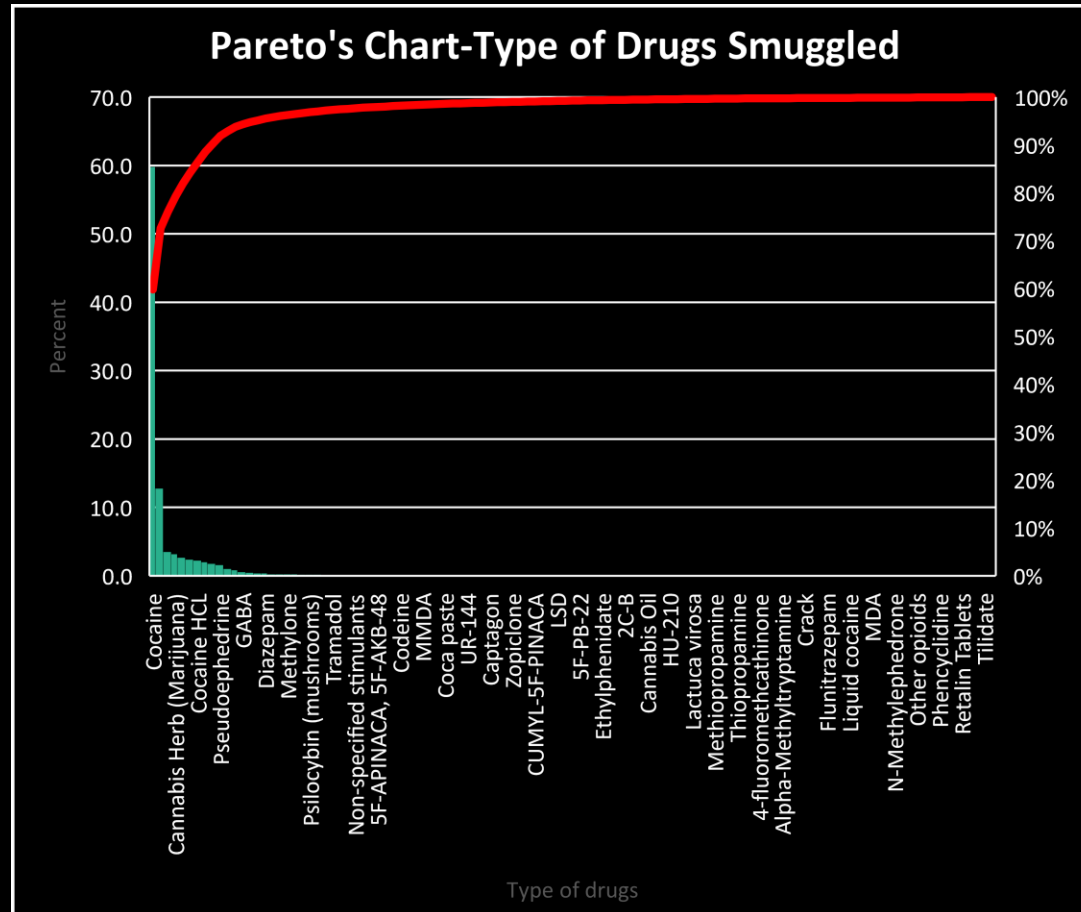# Data set 1: Drug trafficking/ smuggling at Airports

- Gathered data on drug trafficking organizations prosecuted at NYC SDNY and EDNY courts -45 cases- We found 7 of the cases involved apprehension of people at the airport (Natarajan, Umstadt, Babu 2019).

- Sara Umstadt took these 7 cases and analyzed for her capstone thesis for my ICJ 401 class and justified the hypothesis for further research based on Clarke and Eck's criteria that airports are risky facilities .

Data set 2: UNODC - Individual Drug Seizure Cases (2011-2016) – Crime concertation: "Hot" products and hot mode/nodes/departure and destinations
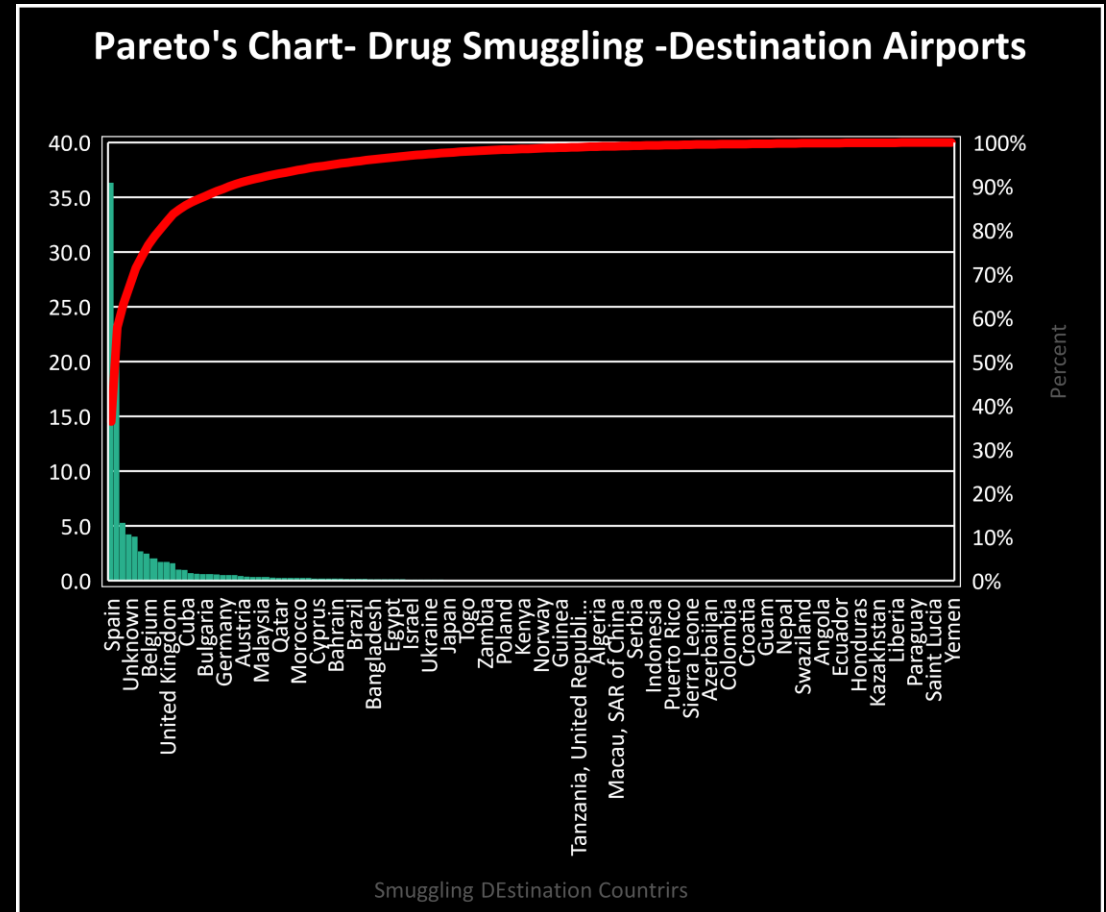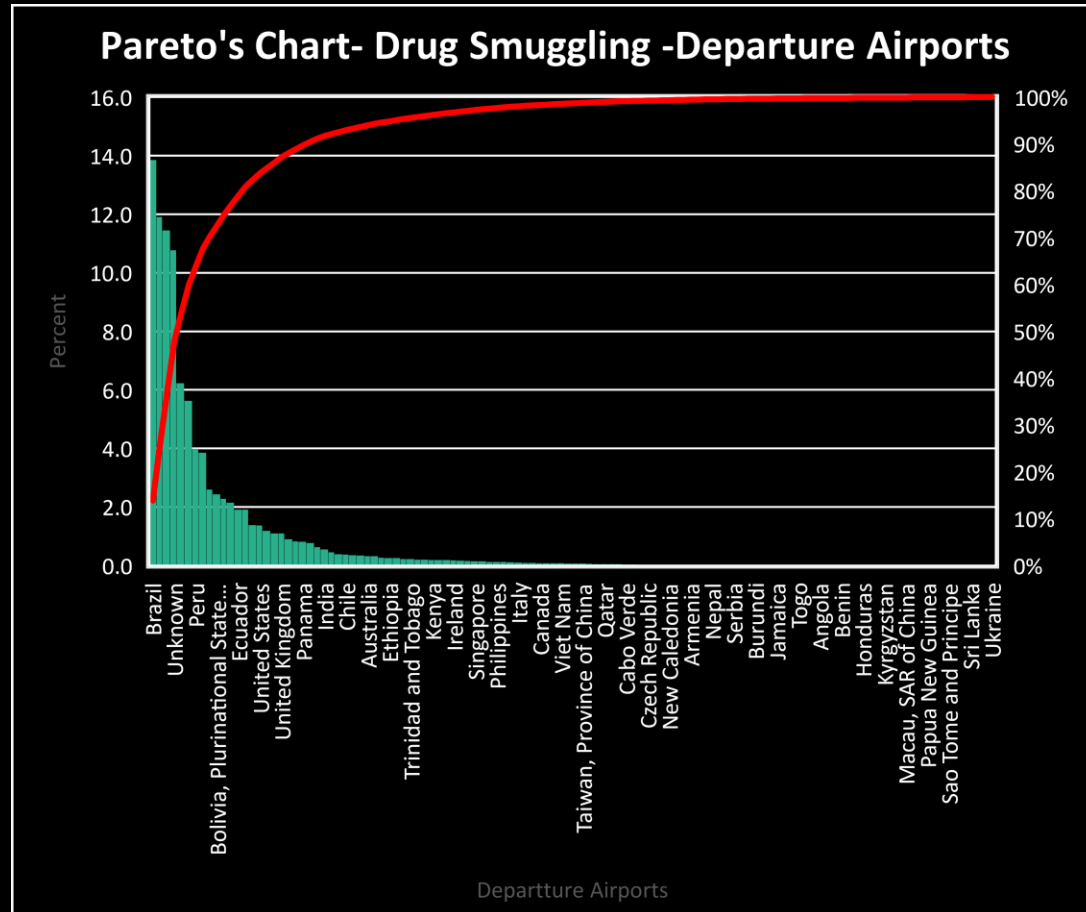
- Of the 11,744 cases- a high majority are via commercial air (96.5%) and the rest air cargo.

- 65% are seized in European airports; 12.8 % at Asia; Americas 11. 3% ; Oceana 8.8% and Africa 1.8.

- The top departure countries Brazil (13.9%) , Pakistan (11.9%)

- The top destination countries- Spain (36.3%) , Italy (5.3%)

- The top two drug producing countries: Afghanistan (9.9%) and Colombia (1.8%)

- The top method- Baggage (36.3%) and swallowed (16.8%)

- Of the 347 airports-25.9% were seized at Madrid airport (international). The next is Auckland airport(7.7%)

- Kilo level (51.6%); Gram level (43.6%)

- Of the 119 item types seized Cocaine (59.8%) and Heroin (12.8) are the "hot" products
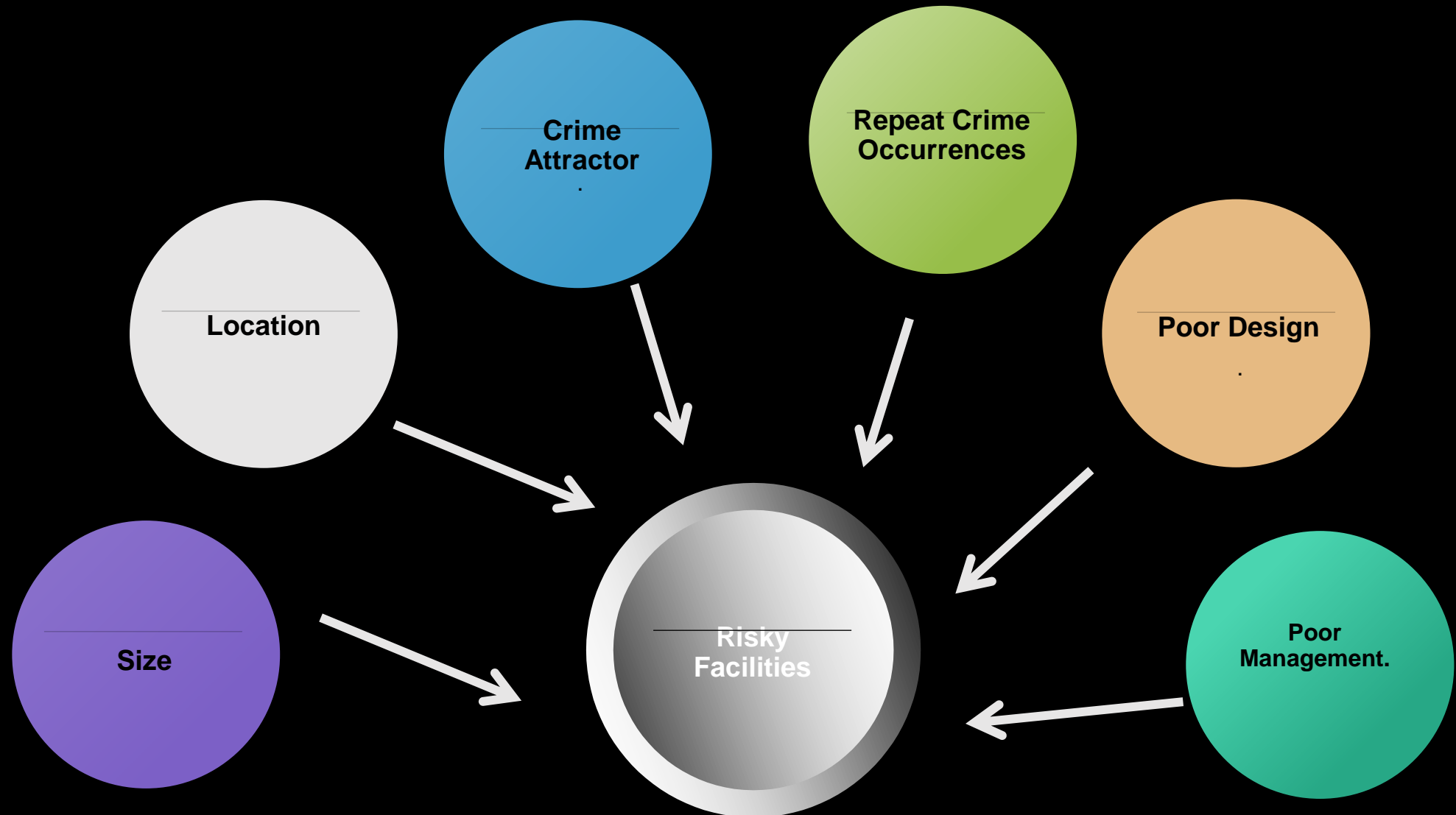
Drug Smuggling: J curve theory/ Pareto's distribution

Pareto's Chart-Type of Drugs Smuggled

Pareto's Chart -Method of Smuggling

Drug Smuggling: J curve theory/ Pareto's distribution

Clarke and Eck (2007) – Elements to describe Risky facilities

What makes airports risky for DT/DS?

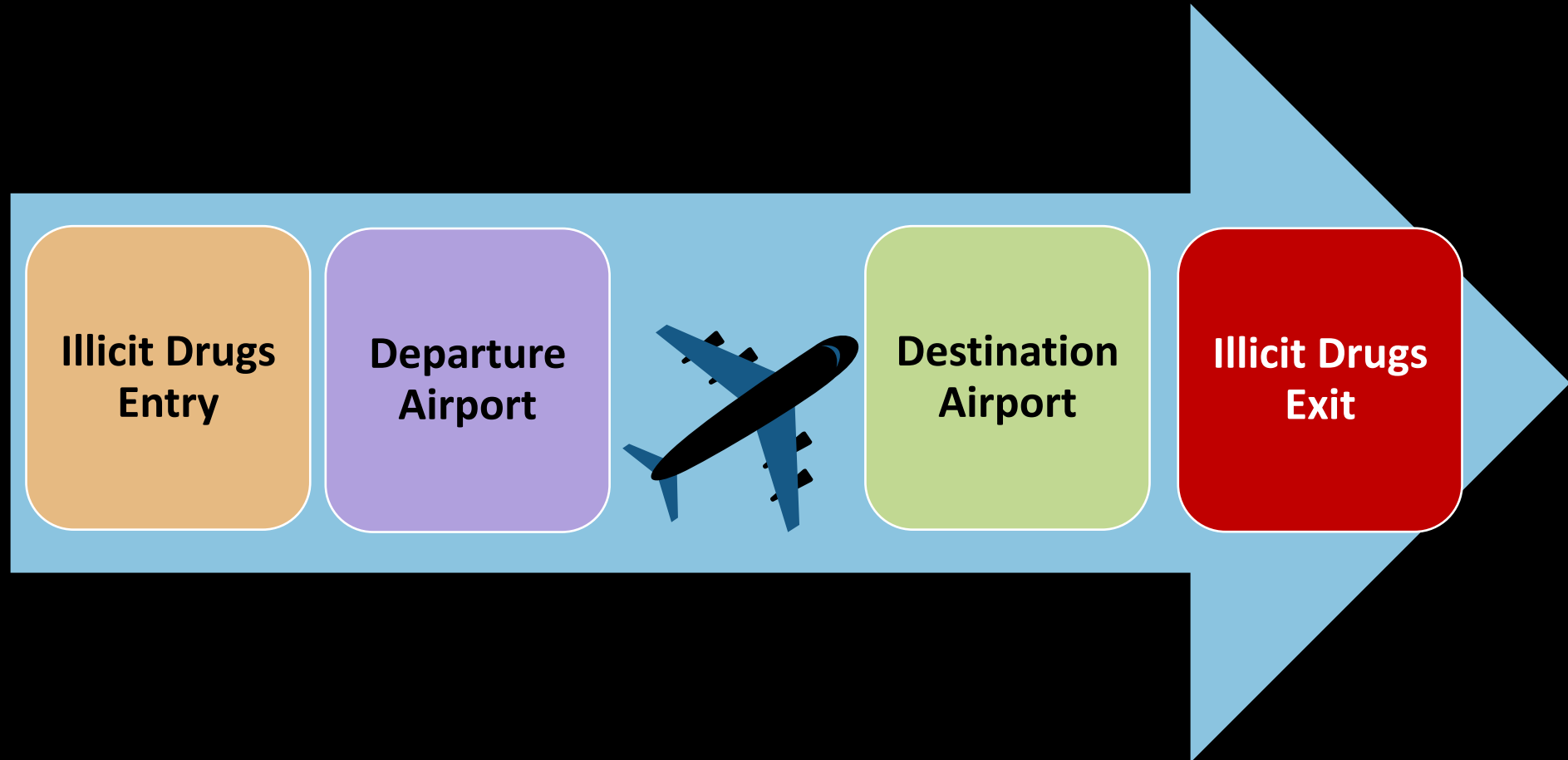What factors facilitate drug smuggling / trafficking?

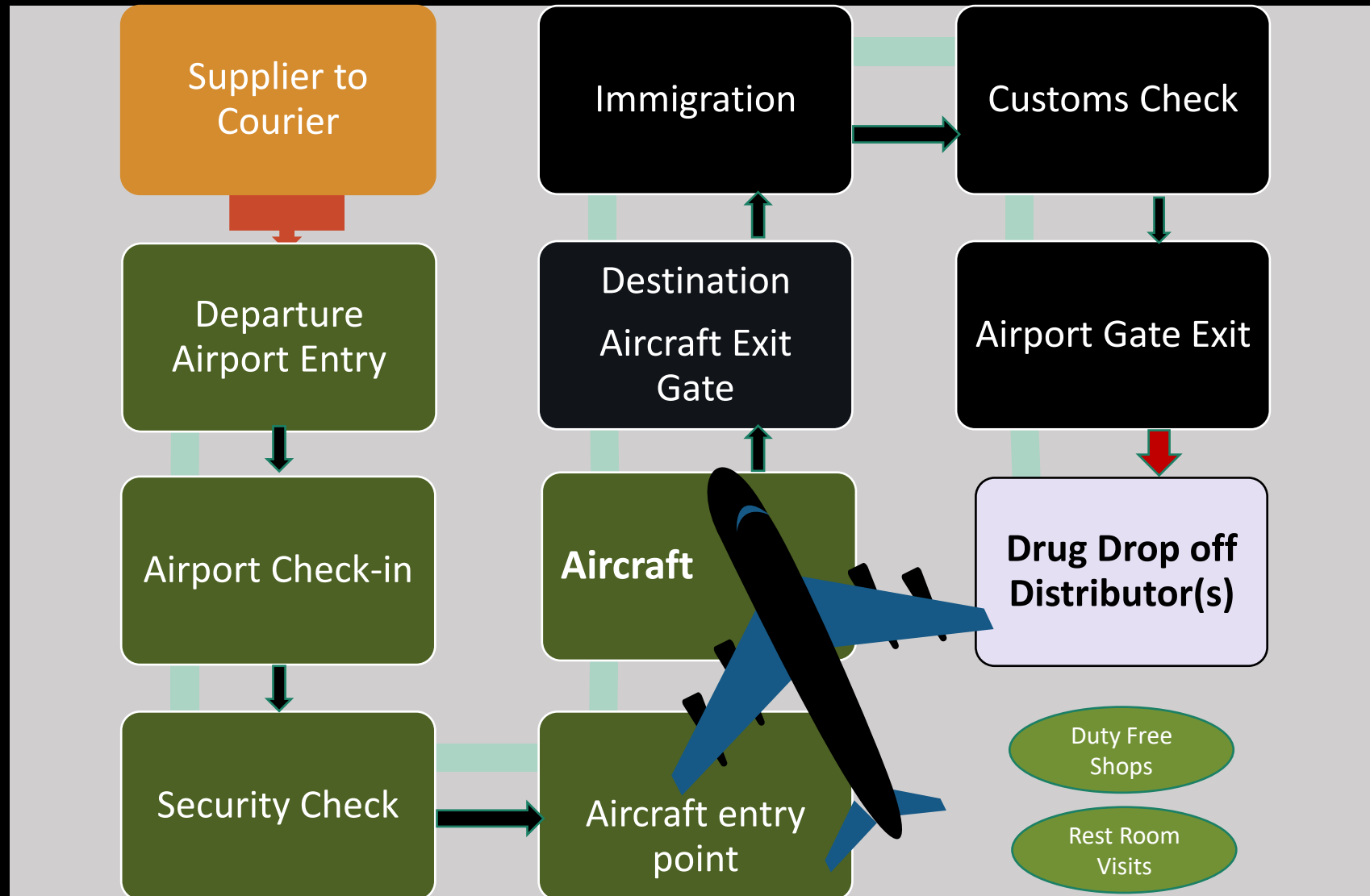# Data Set 3: Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Cases (n=19)

	Year	Airport Location	Drug Type	Human Facilitators
1	2008	Houston	C	Southwest Airlines employee
2	2009	Miami	C	AA employee
3	2011	Stamford, CT	Oxycodone	Law enforcement officer and TSA
4	2012	Connecticut	Oxycodone	TSA officers
5	2012	Raleigh	C	Individual
6	2013	Nashville	C,H and A	Deputy sherif
7	2014	San Diego	C	Baggage handlers
8	2014	Atlanta	Pills	Border Patrol officer
9	2014	LA	C and Meth	TSA screener
10	2014	San Juan	C	American Airlines employee
11	2014	Las vegas	C	Airport employee
12	2015	Anchorage	C	Airline employee
13	2015	Anchorage	Oxycodone	Individual
14	2015	Anchorage	M and H	Individual
15	2016	LA	C and H	Employee of Aero Port Services
16	2017	LA	C	Flight attendant
17	2017	LA	C	Former baggage handler
18	2017	San Fransisco	C	TSA-security screener
19	2019	Connecticut	M	Individuals in Private aircraft

C: Cocaine; H-Heroin; M-Marijuana

Drug Smuggling Journey via Air

Illicit Drugs Entry → **Departure Airport** → **Destination Airport** → **Illicit Drugs Exit**

Airport Environment: Drug Smuggling by Couriers- Script

Drug Smuggling Via Air Script Typology

**Couriers on their own
No help by insiders**

1

**Courier with the help
of insiders**

2

**All the way
through by
insiders**

3

INSIDERS ROLE

Criminal networks use airport facilities

Smuggling Network Operators- Case studies- Snap Shots (DEA cases)

- **Insiders**: Transport Security Administration (TSA) employees, TSA screener, Airline employees, Baggage handlers

- **Case studies- DEA 's cases:**

  - 1."Las Vegas to Anchorage :X, an airline employee working at the airport, was recruited by conspirators to help them bypass security with the cocaine. On a regular basis, co-conspirators provided X with bags containing multiple kilograms of cocaine. X then used his airport employee credentials to bring the drugs into the airport without having to pass through security screening. Once in the secured area of the airport, X then returned the un-scanned bags of cocaine to his co-conspirators who then boarded Alaska-bound flights"

  - 2."X" recruited and organized a group of individuals to package, transport and deliver suitcases loaded with kilograms of cocaine to the American Airlines cargo area at the Luis Muñoz Marin International Airport (Puerto Rico). X recruited and organized a group of American Airlines employees to ensure that those suitcases were smuggled into American Airlines flights destined to Miami and Orlando"

  - .

Smuggling Network Operators-NYC Court case

- *States v. Christie* : Smuggling and distributing drugs –Colombia, Jamaica& the Bronx through flights coming into JFK & Newark airports for five years.
  - 1. Involved multi-kilo amounts of drugs beneath toilets on the airplanes, and then a co-conspirator who had already cleared customs would board the plane and place the drugs in a carry-on luggage
  - 2. Multi-kilo amounts of drugs would be placed into the cargo panel by a co-conspirator working at the airport, and another co-conspirator would remove the drugs upon the plane landing

Clarke and Newman's **four pillars of opportunity and Situational Crime Prevention (SCP)**

- Clarke and Newman's four pillars of opportunity (terrorism) : Targets, Weapons, Tools and Facilitating Conditions. They provide templates/types for researchers to test:
  - EVIL DONE {Exposed, Vital, Iconic, Legitimate, Destructible, Occupied, Near, and Easy).
  - MURDEROUS {Multipurpose, Undetectable, Removable, Destructive, Enjoyable, Reliable, Obtainable, Uncomplicated, and Safe).
  - ESEER-{Easy, Safe, Excusable, Enticing, and Rewarding})

- ESEER captures - The social and physical arrangements that provide crime opportunities as facilitating conditions.

- No studies yet-subjected the ESEER template to an empirical examination.

- As Clarke and Newman said- identifying the specific opportunities available for drug smugglers is the first step, followed by identifying and protecting potential targets and collecting intelligence for applying interventions that aim at making life harder for smugglers.

Clarke and Newman's ESEER

EASIER: Group members can make crime **easier** by supplying tools, providing transportation, sharing information, and taking on some of the work. A crime that one person cannot do, may be feasible with a group.

SAFER: Groups can make it **safer** (fewer risks) by mutual protection and sharing information about possible risks. Identifying suspects may become harder if witnesses cannot distinguish among several confederates.

EXCUSABLE: Groups also make crime **excusable** for their members by justifying the behavior and providing stories as to why the crime is "really necessary."

ENTICING: Groups make crime **enticing** to their members through peer pressure, and by providing examples to follow.

REWARDING: Groups make crime **rewarding** by giving individual members a sense of belonging, providing an audience to celebrate successful crimes, and other intangible, but important, psychological rewards, in addition to the more familiar tangible rewards of crime.

Turning Outsmarting Terrorists message for - Outsmarting Traffickers

Clarke and Newman's ESEER template for understanding facilitating conditions. Easy, Safe, Excusable, Enticing, and Rewarding

Features of the immediate environment signal the individual as to whether a particular set of actions will be useful or counterproductive. The individual then makes a choice. This environment includes the physical setting and the social arrangements.

Using DEA's cases and NYC cases I tested the ESEER: Preliminary analysis of the cases is that understanding the drug trafficking network operations to help better understand the influence of groups.

Application of ESEER-Drug Trafficking

Smuggling Opportunities	Facilitating Conditions	DEA/NYC Data Cases
Easier	**Easier as team**	**Numbers and chain of operators in the smuggling process**
Safer	**Fewer risks**	**Employee status, exit/entry points (gates), lack of supervision in loading areas, involvement of people in authority, security areas, other facilities inside the airport, cash transactions**
Excusable	**Justifying behavior**	**Escaped detection and arrest, rationalization, corruption culture**
Enticing	**Network pressure**	**Friends/relatives network; Affiliations with traffickers' networks**
Rewarding	**Intrinsic and extrinsic**	**Monetary benefits, sense of helping relatives**

23

ESEER and Situational Crime Prevention (SCP)

Influence of Group	Choice Criteria for SCP
Makes Crime Easier	Increase Effort
Makes Crime Safer	Increase Risks
Makes Crime Excusable	Remove Excuses
Makes Crime Enticing	Reduce Provocation
Makes Crime Rewarding	Reduce Rewards

Limitations of Data

None of the data used are perfect

But supports the risky facility theory, the facilitating conditions- criminal networks especially the insiders at the airport for drug smuggling

The FINDINGS

- Drug trafficking/smuggling is a non static crime which is complex because of the stages and convergences of various elements: actors, stages of operations, locations and connections.

- Using both quantitative and qualitative data (with their limitations) this study confirms
  - Airports are risky facilities for smuggling drugs- Fits the features of Clarke and Eck 's risky facilities .
  - Pareto/80/20 concepts (crime concentrations) helped in diagnosing the problem of smuggling via airports –the hot products, hot departure and destination airports.
  - Though airports are crime generators, airports attract criminal networks-Brantinghams' crime attractors
  - Cornish's crime scripts is useful in reviewing and understanding the smuggling script process, the actors and their characteristics (especially the insiders' role and the threat to airport security)
  - The typology of drug trafficking via air reveals the Insider's role as a threat and is alarming .
  - Clarke and Newman's ESEER model is applicable in understanding the facilitating conditions -drug trafficking networks/groups influence

- Understanding the group dynamics will help in identifying crime opportunities; intelligence analysis and prevention solutions.

Conclusions

- Airports are risky facilities for smuggling illicit goods (both animate and inanimate objects).

- Airport environment provides crime opportunity structure for "opportunist" criminals to exploit.

- Airports are transport nodes for many people around the world, at the same time they attract many criminal networks .

- Drug trafficking via air is nothing new- it is a recurring phenomenon. Much evidence -that the drug trafficking networks facilitate moving drugs from supply side to demand end and the airport security design and management structure do have a role in facilitating the smuggling.

- Any research on drug trafficking will have a diffusion of benefit for understanding other smuggling goods such as weapons, wildlife.

Conclusions

- For prevention: A program of research analyzing the airport facilities especially the stages at which (how) the contraband (entry and exit) moves through the airport facilities is needed. This requires studying the couriers' movements as well as the airport employees especially baggage handlers, ex baggage handlers who assist the couriers and the drug suppliers' network.

- Also, a systematic safety audits of all airports specifically the hotspots- international departure and destination airports could help!

- Many agencies/stakeholders need to work together in dealing with airport crimes that are threat to safety and security of people and the "airport". Transport security administration is aware of the insiders' threat- and making its own efforts- but trafficking continues !!!!.

- Gather systematic data to apply ESEER model for identifying the smuggling opportunity structures at the airports (of course using the crime triangle elements . Airports are places where people travel to and from –also they are vulnerable/suitable targets for criminal networks.

- Criminologists can help provide evidence-based research in making smuggling difficult, riskier, less rewarding.

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Thank you