

CLASSIFICATION: **UNCLASSIFIED**
AY 2016-2017
PROSPECTIVE RESEARCH TOPIC NOMINATION

*CLASSIFICATION:	Unclassified
*RESEARCH TOPIC TITLE:	"Leadership Decapitation" of Transnational Criminal and Drug Trafficking Organizations
*TOPIC DESCRIPTION	Is "leadership decapitation" a viable strategy against drug trafficking transnational criminal organizations? Why or why not? Under what conditions is it most or least likely to be effective? How should the U.S. government operationalize your findings?
*DATE SUBMITTED (YYYY-MM-DD)	2016-06-17
*EXTENDED TOPIC DESCRIPTION	Terrorism experts have produced a wealth of analysis on the effectiveness of "leadership decapitation" – the removal of senior leaders of terrorist organization through death or arrest and imprisonment. Their findings suggest that removing senior leaders may be highly effective against some types of terrorist organizations and ineffective or even counter-productive against others. (See comments section for useful references.) However, the effects of leadership decapitation on drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) are under-studied. Understanding if and when removing DTO/TCO leaders is most effective, when it is ineffective, and when it is counter-productive would provide important insights regarding where and how to direct counter transnational organized crime efforts and resources.
*DESIRED OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH	More effective U.S. government strategy to counter drug trafficking and transnational criminal organizations.
*REQUESTING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION:	Joint Task Force North (JTFN)
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DESIRED RESEARCH COMPLETION DATE (YYYY-MM-DD):	Standing topic – not time sensitive.
AVAILABLE FUNDING, IF ANY:	Case-by-case Basis, Contact: n-nc.peterson.n-ncj7.mbx.j72-education-team-omb@mail.mil
COMMENTS	As examples of studies of the effectiveness of leadership decapitation of terrorist organizations, see Jenna Jordan, "When Heads Roll" Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation, <i>Security Studies</i> 18, no. 4 (2009): 719-755; Jenna Jordan, "Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark: Why Terrorist Groups Survive Decapitation Strikes," <i>International Security</i> 38, no. 4 (2014): 7-38; Bryan C. Price, "Targeting Top Terrorists: How Leadership Decapitation Contributes to Counterterrorism," <i>International Security</i> 36, no. 4 (2012): 9-46; Paul Staniland, <i>Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse</i> (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014). As one (rare) exception to the claim that leadership decapitation of drug trafficking organizations is under-studied, see Brian J. Phillips, "How Does Leadership Decapitation Affect Violence? The Case of Drug Trafficking Organizations in Mexico," <i>The Journal of Politics</i> 77, No. 2 (2015): 324-336.

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