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# Routes of Narcotics Smuggling in the Southeast Asia Region: Case Study in Riau Province Region Border Indonesia and Malaysia

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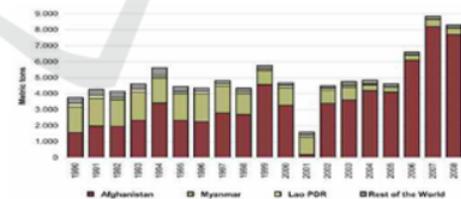
Abstract: This paper describes the route of narcotics smuggling in the Southeast Asia region, especially in the Riau Province, bordering Indonesia and Malaysia. The Southeast Asia region is one of the regions in the world that has an area of around 4.4 million  $km^2$ . Rapid population growth in the Southeast Asia region has a negative impact on the development of narcotics smuggling. Riau Province is one of the gateways to illegally enter narcotics from other countries. This paper uses a qualitative approach with collect data by observation, interview and documentations. The theoretical concepts are used are international security, human security and drug trafficking. The results of this study indicate that narcotics smuggling routes in the border regions of Indonesia and Malaysia are carried out by sea lane along the borderline of Riau Province and Malaysia. Narcotics are neatly wrapped and installed GPS devices are then smuggled at night by utilizing the services of fishermen as couriers. The seawater smuggling route was chosen due to several factors, namely: the distance of the near water area, the number of unofficial or illegal ports, the lack of surveillance patrols along the territorial seas and the professionalism of law enforcement officers in the border region.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This article is a paper describing narcotics smuggling routes in the Southeast Asia region, especially in the Riau Province region, Indonesia and Malaysia borders and will also analyze how narcotics smuggling is carried out by the drug cartel mafia and why the route is used as a narcotics smuggling route in the province Riau borders Indonesia and Malaysia.

One type of transnational organized crime that threatens human security today is the circulation of narcotics which can easily penetrate the borders of the world through neat management networks and sophisticated technology (Broome, 2000). In the development of the international narcotics distribution network, the Southeast Asian region is categorized as the area of production, distribution and consumption known as the "Golden Triangle" or "Golden Triangle" (Othman et al., 2004). The Golden Triangle area is located on the border of Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos and produces 60% of the world's opium and heroin production. Narcotics production in this region is included in the narcotics category and a potential addictive made from poppy plants and papaver somniferum which produce heroin. This Golden Triangle region contributes to the heroin

industry which is worth US \$ 160 billion per year (Othman et al., 2004). The following is a graph of the development of opium growth in the Golden Triangle region according to the UNODC report, namely:



Opium cultivation in the Golden Triangle  
(1998-2007) – UNODC Report.

Figure 1: Graph of Opium Growth in the Golden Triangle region (Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand)

Based on the graph above, Thailand, Myanmar and Laos are included in the category of countries in Southeast Asia which have high rates of opium production. So that the high rate of narcotics production has resulted in countries in the Southeast Asian region becoming a country market of illegal drug smuggling by cartel of narcotics crimes. One of the countries that are the goal of narcotics

smuggling in the Southeast Asia region in Indonesia. Widespread narcotics trafficking in Indonesia is caused by several first things because of the demand from consumers who need the supply of imported narcotics. Both of Indonesia are considered good land for narcotics trafficking with a very strategic geographical condition of Indonesia, the form of a country that is mostly a separate archipelago and there are 10 entry points that make it easier for dealers to include narcotics in Indonesia.

According to data from the Indonesian National Police (Polri), the number of narcotics and illegal drugs cases in Indonesia has continued to increase, since 2010 there were 26,614 narcotics cases, and increased to 26,500 cases in 2011. In 2012, the number of narcotics and drug cases increased illicit drugs are not too significant from 2011, only 0.23 percent or an increase of 61 cases to 26,561 cases. In 2013, the number of narcotics and illegal drugs cases in Indonesia increased again, this time with a significant number of cases, namely 32,470 cases in 2013 and until 2015 cases that occurred in Indonesia were around 44,321 cases (<https://www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/asean-rea-firmed-commitment-towards-drug-free-vision>).

Based on data from the BNN report, Indonesia is the country with the highest ranking in the distribution of narcotics in the Southeast Asian region. According to National Police Headquarters data that several cities in Indonesia such as Bali, Jakarta, Medan, Surabaya, Batam, and Pekanbaru are cities with a high level of narcotics circulation. One of the regions of Indonesia which is the gateway to the entry of narcotics from Southeast Asia by sea is the territory of Riau Province. This is because as a region directly bordering Malaysia and Singapore, Riau Province has high mobility in the flow of goods and people. The geographical location of Riau Province which is strategically adjacent to Malaysia and Singapore has resulted in the network of transnational crime making the Riau Province Region a transit area for narcotics from Malaysia, mainly from the type of shabu-shabu sent illegally or unofficially through unofficial port lines in the Province Riau.

The problem of narcotics smuggling in the Southeast Asian region is a regional security threat, meaning that every citizen in the Southeast Asian region becomes a victim of illegal and massive narcotics abuse. The Riau Province region which is directly adjacent to Malaysia in the Malacca Strait waters makes Riau one of the entry gates of narcotics through the sea (sea) so that the threat to human security becomes very serious. This argument was analyzed using the perspective of constructivism

which focused on how narcotics smuggling in the Riau Province region borders Indonesia and Malaysia was carried out and why this form of modus operandi was used by perpetrators of narcotics crimes in the Southeast Asia region.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This article uses the perspective of constructivism analyzing route routes and modus operandi of narcotics smuggling in the Southeast Asia case study in the Riau Province region bordering Indonesia and Malaysia. Some basic assumptions from the perspective of constructivism:

- The state does not become the only actor in international politics, there are other actors in international relations such as international organizations, individuals and groups.
- Security issues in international relations are not only war and the military, but there are security issues that are non-military in nature such as transnational organized crime.
- Knowledge and mutual understanding are the results of the construction of ideas by interaction between many actors.
- Material resources; is an empirical fact that is completely separated from the collective knowledge.
- Actors' practices or behavior are actually variables that are influenced by the construction of knowledge that they construct collectively and are very dynamic (Jackson, Robert & Sorensen, Jackson. 2005).

Vignette explained in his writing about International drug trafficking, organized crime, and terrorism in Afghanistan. (McCarthy, 2011) Find out that the development of transnational narcotics crime in Afghanistan is influenced by two factors, namely geographical and economic factors. Geographically, Afghanistan is flanked by two valleys known as Wakhan Corridor connecting with China and the Pamir Knot connects with the Indian Himalayas. Economically, Afghanistan is known as potential mining and producing poppy plants in which is a type of plant source of opium which is processed into heroin and legalized by the Government. This plant is mass-produced in Helmand Province and is the largest opium production beyond opium production in Burma (Myanmar).

Furthermore, Carl Troccki conducted research on drug abuse, entitled The Criminalization of

Drugs. Drugs Before They Were Criminalized (Trocki, C. A. 1999). Explain that the criminalization of narcotics is a prohibition on all forms of narcotics-related activities starting from production, extraction, trade and marketing activities. Since 1725 Opium is an illegal form of narcotics according to the United States, while for allies of the Soviet Union such as Burma, Vietnam, Nicaragua, and Afghanistan the opium trade is a source of foreign exchange. As a transnational crime, the narcotics trade is very profitable, so the prohibition on the circulation and trafficking of narcotics is increasingly encouraging the occurrence of transnational illegal drug trafficking.

According to the writings of Francisco E. Thoumi in his article entitled *The Impact of the Illegal Drug Industry on Colombia* (R. T Naylor, 1995). He found that changes in the economy and politics globally resulted in crimes in the border region. In 1990, Colombian drug traffickers used ships, cargo planes to send cocaine on the international market. The export route is developed in extreme complex coordination through air and sea routes to penetrate the transit country. In 1990 the circulation of narcotics was carried out with a multinational narcotics company model structured in various countries complete with subcontractors and freelancers as well as by way of smuggling, marketing, money laundering. Therefore, these organized transnational narcotics crimes work unconditionally and are known by state governments with high work risks, the threat faced is not only high prices of narcotics but also must understand the coordination and authority of the Government in anticipating transnational crime.

Elfira's writing regarding the existence of regional institutions in dealing with narcotics crimes (Elfira Febira. 2013). To conclude that the existence of regional institutions is carried out by agreeing on the cooperation of each member country through coordination of handling and handling patterns of each country in resolving narcotics problems and making collective agreements especially in the policies of each country that is integrated.

Buzan explained that security is a perception formed by the state in defining a security issue. Whereas Weaver added the need for securitization on security issues. The dynamics of security are seen from various sectors such as military, economic, political, environmental and social. Current issues in the social, political and military sectors are more influenced by the complexity of security at the regional level while economic issues at the global level and environmental issues are summarized in local and global security issues (Buzan et al., 1998;

Kramer et al., 2009; Federico, 1996). The concept of security according to Buzan is seen as a complex problem or known as a security complex. In general, security complexes are defined as a set of states whose major security perceptions and problems are not related or resolved apart from another (Buzan et al., 1998; Ma'sum, 1987).

The term "transnational crime" was introduced to explain the complex links that exist between organized crime, white-collar crime, and corruption, which are serious problems that arise as a result of "crime as a business". Arrangement of crime activities extends beyond national borders and has an impact on violations of various countries' laws, has become the most dangerous characteristic of crime groups that operate at the international level. In its development, the form of crime termed has often been associated with the context of globalization (which is a representation of current social, economic and cultural conditions). Therefore, frequent debates are centered on the opportunity to commit various crimes or the legitimate actions given by a world that develops without borders, to a variety of actors commonly defined as transnational organized groups, transnational organizations, and transnational networks.

According to Albanese, the growth of organized crime in various countries cannot be separated from its supporting factors. There are five supporting factors including economic conditions, government regulations, the effectiveness of law enforcement, the level of demand for goods or services, and the formation of new markets for goods and services through social and technological changes (<http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-political-security-community/item/asean-declaration-on-transnational-crime-manila-20-december-1997>). Therefore, transnational crime carried out in an organized manner is referred to as transnational Organized Crime (TOC). In general, transnational crime can be formulated as a form of crime that "provides goods or services illegally to gain profit". Transnational crime is a threat to the national security of a country or a region, considering that this crime is organized and oriented to power and money.

Conceptually, narcotics comes from Greek, from the word *Narke*, which means frozen, paralyzed, and stupid (Alifia, 2008; Edwards and Gill, 2004), whereas according to the definition of medical Pharmacology, narcotics are drugs that can eliminate (especially) pain originating from the area Visceral and can cause stupor effects (dumbfound still conscious but still need to be bullied) and addiction.

The terminology that is widely used to refer to drugs is drugs, drugs, and Madat (Alifia, 2008; Tobing, 2002). According to the effect of its use (effect), due to overdose (overdose) and symptoms of free influence (Withdrawal Syndrome) and the medical community, drugs are often misused.

### 3 RESEARCH METHODS

The research approach used in this study is a qualitative approach. But this study also uses some quantitative data such as statistical data tables, graphs and quantitative diagrams regarding the development of numerical scales of an empirical phenomenon. This research is a case study using a qualitative approach. The data in this paper come from field research and library research. This paper is field research (field research) and library research (library research). Therefore, several data collection techniques in this study were conducted by in-depth interviews with research informants namely the Directorate General of ASEAN Cooperation Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, ASEAN National Secretariat in Jakarta, ASEAN NARCO, National Narcotics Agency, Directorate of Investigation and Narcotics and smuggling criminals narcotics.

### 4 THINKING FRAMEWORK

The thinking framework is one subsection that cannot be separated from writing. Therefore, as for the framework of thinking in writing about narcotics smuggling routes in the Southeast Asia region (Case study in the Riau Province region bordering Indonesia and Malaysia), namely:

### 5 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

One form of the real threat today to human security is the illegal trade and abuse of narcotics. The prevalence of drug abuse in the world from 2006 to 2018 has increased. Although the curve looks sloping, the total amount is quite high. The amount of prevalence of abuse in the world is estimated at 4.9% or 208 million users in 2006 and then experienced a slight decline in 2008 and 2009 to 4.6% and 4.8%. But then it increased again to 5.2% in 2011 and remained stable until 2013. In absolute terms, it is estimated that there are around 167 to 315 million

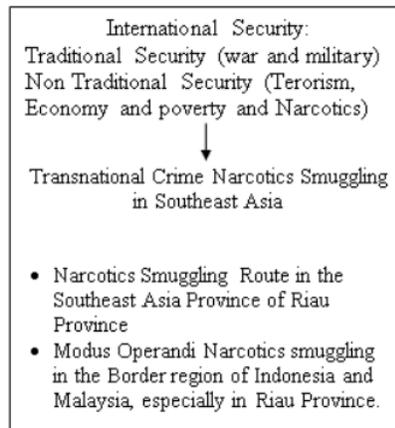


Figure 2: Research Thinking Framework  
Source: Research Processed Data. 2019

abusers from the world population aged 15-64 years who use drugs at least once a year since 2013 (UNODC. 2015).

In the last five years, the trend of the type of ecstasy has been indicated to decline by around 15% in various countries, while the use of Amphetamine has been reported to be stable. However, there has been a dramatic increase (158%) in the last five years, namely the consumption of amphetamine. In addition, several types of synthetic drugs have emerged and developed in the drug trade, even more and more countries are reporting each year. In 2014, new types of drugs were reported in more than 90 countries, the number of countries reporting new types of drugs increased by about 1.5 times compared to 2009. This type of synthetic drugs became a "legal highs" commodity and replaced drugs such as cocaine and ecstasy. This synthetic drug is sold on the internet and online and has special shops. Cannabis use also increases in most countries. Cannabis abuse is the most abuse group that requires special treatment for users. The use of ATS also increases globally. This might be because ATS is used as a drug to treat opiate use disorders (UNODC. 2015).

Geographically, Riau Province has a very strategic position, which is directly adjacent to Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand; face to face with the Malacca Strait which is the crossing point of world trade. In addition, the Sumatra regional region of Riau Province is in the central part of the island of Sumatra on a cross-regional movement trajectory that provides an opportunity to build high access to goods, people, information and capital traffic. Riau Province has a long coastline stretching from the Panipahan region

of Rokan Hilir Regency to the Kijang Island area of Indragiri Hilir Regency, which is around 370 Mil or equivalent to 685.24 km with 139 islands in Riau Province with details of an island called 73 islands and nameless island 66 islands. In addition, Riau Province also has several regions or islands with the status of the leading islands, namely:

- Jemur Island is located in the Kuching Stone area about 45 miles (83.34 km) Malaysia
- Tokong Island is bordered by Batu Kuching Malaysia
- Sinaboi Island is bordered by Port Dickson Malaysia
- Tanjung Medang is bordered by Tanjung Rachado Malaysia
- Tanjung Parit is bordered by Tanjung Tohor Malaysia
- Tanjung Kedabu is bordered by Pulau Pisang

Riau Province is directly adjacent to the northern part of the Straits of Malacca and only 83 km from Batu Kuching Malaysia. In the waters, there are 3,214 large and small islands that are spread strategically. Because part of it is in the Malacca Strait and the South China Sea which is one of the main sea/shipping routes in the world of global trade. With this strategic position, Riau Province is one of the gateways to enter narcotics smuggling in the Southeast Asia region. Narcotics smuggled into Riau Province by sea or water from a transit country, namely Malaysia. Several factors have encouraged the development of the narcotics business in Southeast Asia, especially the smuggling of narcotics smuggled through the Riau Province, namely:

- A very significant difference in selling prices among Southeast Asian countries
- The unemployment rate is very high in several Southeast Asian countries, especially Indonesia
- Poverty conditions in several Southeast Asian countries have caused the process of recruiting and courier recruitment costs to be quite cheap
- The number of current drug users, especially in Indonesia, has exceeded 5 million (interview with the Director of the Riau Police Narcotics on 21 March 2018).

The following is an entry point for narcotics from Malaysia through ports along the coast in the Riau Province region, namely:

Based on the map above, there are five regencies/cities in Riau Province which are directly



Figure 3: Map of Narcotics Entrance in the Province of Riau  
Source: Directorate of Narcotics Investigation of the National Police of the Republic of Indonesia in Riau.  
In 2017.

adjacent to Malaysia, such as Rokan Hilir Regency, Dumai City, Bengkalis Regency, Kepulauan Meranti Regency, and Indragiri Hilir Regency. The narcotics smuggling route in the Riau Province region borders Indonesia and Malaysia sent through production countries namely China and Taiwan. Furthermore, narcotics sent through the Malaysian transit line will be smuggled through unofficial ports located along the coastline of Sumatra Island in the Riau Province.

Several narcotics smuggling routes sent from Malaysia, entering through the port area of Riau Province and ready to be sent to several major cities in Indonesia can be described in the following explanation that the shipment of narcotics sent from Malaysia is smuggled through Port Klang Port which will then be smuggled to the port in the area of Bagan Siapi-Api (Penipahan and Pulau Jemur), the narcotics package will be sent to the North Sumatra Province, especially Medan City. As for the Port Dickson Port area, it will be smuggled through the waters of Rupat and Dumai Islands and the narcotics package will then be sent from Bengkalis Regency to Pekanbaru City. While narcotics smuggled from Malaka and Muar Ports will be sent to Bengkalis and Siak waters through Buton Port to be sent to Pekanbaru City and Jambi Province while narcotics smuggled from Malaysia's Batu Pahat Port will enter the Long Strait Port of Meranti Islands and Tembilahan Regency of Indragiri Hilir Regency and will be sent to consume narcotics in the City of Padang, Palembang, Bandar Lampung, and Jakarta. Therefore the smuggling of narcotics from the international network of the Southeast Asia region is a very strategic and rational pathway for narcotics mafia to smuggle narcotics and be distributed in major cities in Indonesia.

Based on the author's observation in the field of the results of mapping the route of narcotics smuggling routes in the Riau Province originating from Malaysia, the narcotics smuggling activities are carried out by narcotics dealers smuggling narcotics at night and using fishermen as narcotics

couriers. Narcotics smuggled by narcotics dealers from Malaysia were sent by couriers from Malaysia and the narcotics transactions were carried out in the middle of the sea in the Indonesian border region such as in the waters of Rokan Hilir, Bengkalis, Indragiri Hilir, and Meranti which would then be taken by fishermen to the mainland. The smuggled narcotics package is wrapped in thick plastic so it is not translucent and sometimes GPS is given as a signal tracker.

According to the Director of the Riau Police Narcotics Unit, that after transactions in the middle of the sea during the night, the narcotics packages carried by the fishermen were placed by fishermen's boat or sometimes placed hanging in the sea under a fishing boat. This was done to trick the patrol of the Aquatic Police Unit and AL Patrol in the event of raids carried out by the authorities. It is not uncommon for a ship inspection by officers in the narcotics package to be submerged in the seafloor with a GPS device and after the patrol of the border area is over, the fishermen will dive in the sea to trace GPS signals from the narcotics package that was drowned. Furthermore, the fishermen will bring the narcotics package to the mainland to be carried by the land courier to the destination of the narcotics package sent.

Therefore, it can be briefly analyzed that the circulation or smuggling of narcotics from Malaysia to Indonesia, especially the Riau Province, according to the Director of the Riau Regional Police Narcotics Investigation in its modus operandi is also done by using official ports to disguise contents, enter through small ports or illegal ports with use ships. In addition, the other modus operandi is that narcotics are swallowed in the stomach or inserted into the anus, disguised in a Suitcase / Travel Bag and in food packaging, then using a package delivery service company as well as shipping a ship to ship.

The Riau Province region consisting of regencies located in coastal areas such as Rokan Hilir Regency, Dumai City, Bengkalis Regency, Siak Regency, Meranti Regency, and Indragiri Hilir Regency was chosen to be one of the gates to the entry of contraband narcotics due to several factors. The main factor that caused this smuggling to occur was due to the law of supply and demand for narcotics. This means that currently the demand for narcotics is quite high in Indonesia and Riau Province is one of the provinces included in the top five provinces in Indonesia which have massive drug trafficking after Medan, Southeast Sulawesi, Jakarta, and Surabaya. So from that, the magnitude of the demand for narcotics and the large profits from this sale has

resulted in the Riau region becoming one of the potential alternative choices in narcotics smuggling.

In addition to the illegal business profit factors, the factor of the proximity of the region between Riau Province and Malaysia has resulted in sea or water routes being a potential alternative to smuggling narcotics. This is because the sea lanes in the Riau Province area are still very wide and the number of ports - people's or illegal ports in the border areas of Riau and Malaysia has resulted in criminals being able to smuggle narcotics freely through these unofficial ports. Furthermore, the factor of weak law enforcement and escorting government institutions is a factor why the drug trade business in the Southeast Asia region is very easy to develop (Bambang Cipto, 2007. p. 223). The lack of routine patrol or supervision in Riau and Malaysia's area of warfare has also become an obstacle in handling illegal narcotics smuggling and the professionalism of security forces in carrying out routine patrols, according to Riau Police Drug Director that until now there are still many police officers involved in the narcotics business illegally due to being tempted by multiple profits from the sale of narcotics.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the explanation of the results, it can be concluded that narcotics smuggling in Southeast Asia is growing very rapidly with the production and distribution of narcotics smuggling. Narcotics smuggling in the borders of Indonesia and Malaysia, especially in the region of Riau province carried out by using the waters of Malacca Strait in Riau border which directly borders the region.

This route was chosen by the mafia narcotics cartel due to the geographical fact of Riau Province which is very close to Malaysia so that narcotics can be quickly smuggled, besides that there are many illegal ports along the coastline of the border areas of Riau Province and Malaysia so that narcotics couriers are free to enter without close supervision from the officers, the next factor is the dualism of the work of fishermen in the border region who also have jobs as narcotics couriers from the middle of the sea to land. The law enforcement factor by Indonesian law enforcement officials is also a factor in Riau being one of the areas where narcotics smuggling means that the lack of routine surveillance patrols by officers and the professionalism of border area security officers is also a driving factor in the increase in narcotics smuggling rates.

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