



Threat of Illicit Narcotics Trafficking in the Northern Coastal Region of West Java

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and analyze the threats of illicit narcotics trafficking in the northern coastal region of West Java using a qualitative approach and descriptive analysis. Data was collected through interviews with law enforcement officers, coastal fishing community leaders, and direct observations in areas suspected to be high-risk zones for narcotics trafficking. The findings indicate that illicit narcotics trafficking in the northern coastal region of West Java has evolved with increasingly sophisticated modus operandi, utilizing social media and a disconnected cell system in narcotics transactions. This region is not merely a transit route but has also become an integral part of the narcotics distribution network. Furthermore, the study highlights that the involvement of certain fishermen in narcotics abuse, along with the ease of utilizing their services, has further increased the risk of narcotics smuggling in this area. Considering the identified threat factors, this study assigns a threat level score of eight, indicating that the likelihood of illicit narcotics trafficking in the northern coastal region of West Java falls into the category of "likely to occur"

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as one of the largest archipelagic countries in the world, has a coastline of 99,093 km², according to Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS, 2023). It is a maritime nation with a total territorial waters area of 6,315,222 km². This vast maritime territory provides various economic potentials, particularly in coastal areas. According to Arianto (2020), at least 11 sectors in the marine economy have the potential for development, including: (1) capture fisheries, (2) aquaculture, (3) fish processing industries, (4) marine biotechnology industries, (5) mining and energy, (6) marine tourism, (7) sea transportation, (8) maritime industries and services, (9) utilization of small island resources, (10) coastal forestry (mangroves), and (11) non-conventional natural resources. With such vast potential, the proper management of coastal areas can significantly contribute to national economic growth.

However, despite the economic benefits that coastal regions offer, they also face serious threats, one of which is illicit narcotics trafficking. According to Marthinus Hukom, the Head of the National Narcotics Agency (BNN), 80% of narcotics smuggling occurs via maritime routes, while the remaining 20% is conducted through traditional border crossings and air cargo shipments. This statement was made during the International Anti-Narcotics Day commemoration in Dumai, Riau Islands Province (BNN, 2024). This data underscores the strategic importance of coastal areas in the illicit narcotics trafficking network. Furthermore, BNN reported that in 2023, the prevalence of narcotics abuse in Indonesia reached 1.77%, equivalent to approximately 3.3 million people affected by drug abuse (BNN, 2024).

In response to this alarming situation, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto has established a national development vision for 2024–2029, known as *Asta Cita*. This vision comprises eight strategic development directions, with the seventh point specifically emphasizing efforts to prevent and combat narcotics trafficking. This commitment reflects the government's seriousness in addressing the detrimental impacts of illicit narcotics trafficking, which increasingly threatens various aspects of life, including public health, social resilience, economic stability, and national security.

To achieve Indonesia's 2024–2029 development vision, BNN has outlined six key strategies, including strengthening collaboration, enhancing intelligence for prevention and eradication, combating narcotics abuse and illicit trafficking (P4GN), reinforcing coastal and border areas, implementing thematic and iconic programs, and strengthening resources and infrastructure (BNN, 2025).

Under its third strategy, BNN places special emphasis on coastal and border areas, as these regions serve as primary entry points for illicit narcotics trafficking into Indonesia. The presence of illegal ports in the Riau Islands and hidden trails in West Kalimantan, which serve as unofficial entry points from Malaysia to Indonesia, has further facilitated drug smuggling activities across the Indonesia-Malaysia border (Sigit Suhartanto, 2023). According to the Indonesia Drugs Report (2024), Figure 1 illustrates the trafficking routes of methamphetamine and ecstasy.



Figure 1. Illustrates the Trafficking Routes of Methamphetamine and Ecstasy

Methamphetamine is transported by sea from the Middle East, passing through the Sumatran coast before reaching Java, whereas ecstasy is smuggled from Europe directly to Bali. The confiscated narcotics evidence from cases uncovered during the 2022–2024 period can be seen in the table below:

Figure 2. Narcotics Evidence Data

No	Tahun	Sabu	Ekstasi
1	2022	11.743 Kg	872.843 item
2	2023	8.560 Kg	1.609.522 item
3	2024	9.278 Kg	2.063.156 item

Indonesia Drugs Report 2022-2024

The data above indicates an increase in the volume of confiscated narcotics, specifically methamphetamine and ecstasy. The rising quantity of seized narcotics evidence suggests that illicit drug trafficking in Indonesia remains a serious threat. While there are fluctuations in the amount of methamphetamine confiscated, the quantity of ecstasy seized shows a consistent upward trend, indicating an increase in both supply and distribution, particularly of ecstasy, within society.

The ships used for smuggling illegal narcotics typically pass through the Java Sea, which is one of Indonesia's three primary maritime zones, playing a crucial role in both national and international trade routes. The other two major maritime zones are the Flores Sea and the Banda Sea (M. Djulianti Suroyo et al., 2021). Along the northern coast of Java, several major ports facilitate trade and transportation activities, including Tanjung Priok Port in Jakarta, Tanjung Mas Port in Semarang, and Tanjung Perak Port in Surabaya (Kemenhub, 2024). The

presence of these ports makes the Java Sea a strategic route for commercial shipping, both domestically and internationally. Moreover, the Java Sea directly borders several major cities, including Jakarta, Semarang, and Surabaya, which serve as centers of trade, transportation, residential areas, and key industrial zones in Indonesia (Wikipedia, 2024).

A combination of strategic geographic location, high economic activity, and well-established port infrastructure makes the Java Sea not only a vital trade route but also a vulnerable point for illicit narcotics trafficking. Smuggling networks frequently exploit this route to evade strict inspections at official ports, using small boats to transfer narcotics to coastal areas before further distribution via land routes. According to BNN's Deputy for Eradication at the time, Arman Depari, a "ship-to-ship" smuggling method is one of the common tactics employed in illicit narcotics trafficking (BNN, 2019). In this scheme, drug traffickers hire fishing vessels to transfer narcotics from larger ships located in open waters. The narcotics are then transported to coastal areas, where the fishing boats dock to unload the illegal goods.

Research conducted by Benessaiah and Sayles (2014) and Belhabib et al. (2020), which analyzed narcotics smuggling cases between 2010 and 2017, found that coastal areas with small fishing boats are often exploited as effective means for drug trafficking and other illicit trade activities. Another study on illicit narcotics trafficking through smuggling, conducted by Prayunda et al. (2020), examined narcotics smuggling from Malaysia to Riau Province. This study explained that Riau's strategic location, directly bordering Malaysia, facilitates drug smuggling, as the province has numerous coastal areas with unofficial ports. Moreover, drug traffickers frequently employ fishermen as couriers for narcotics distribution.

Based on these explanations and research findings, coastal cities in northern West Java have significant potential as strategic targets for illicit narcotics trafficking. One of the key regions examined in this study exhibits distinct characteristics, including a busy port with active loading and unloading operations involving various commodities, ranging from essential goods to coal. This region is also strategically located between two major ports on Java Island, namely Tanjung Priok Port in Jakarta and Tanjung Mas Port in Semarang, and features a seven-kilometer-long coastal administrative boundary, making it a critical trade route. Furthermore, the local fishing community in this coastal area is known for shrimp as its primary fishery product, and the region has evolved into one of the major economic centers in West Java, with key sectors such as ports, trade, industry, culture, and tourism (Adeng et al., 1998). According to Handayani et al. (2021), the region's geographic proximity to Central Java provides a distinct advantage, particularly in terms of interregional connectivity. The Cipali Toll Road, which connects major cities, plays a crucial role in driving economic growth, enhancing the mobility of goods and people, and accelerating trade flows.

With its various strategic potentials, the region has not only developed as a trade and transportation hub but also faces serious security challenges, including the threat of illicit narcotics trafficking in coastal areas. Based on the

researcher's review, no prior studies have specifically identified and analyzed the threat of illicit narcotics trafficking in the northern coastal region of West Java. Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap using the method developed by Gregory Allen and Rachel Derr in their book *Threat Assessment and Risk Analysis*. The research problem of this study is: "What is the level of threat posed by illicit narcotics trafficking in the northern coastal region of West Java?" To address this research problem, the study employs the Threat Factor Rating Matrix approach.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Threat of Illicit Narcotics Trafficking

In their book *Threat Assessment and Risk Analysis*, Gregory Allen and Rachel Derr (2016) discuss the concept of threats. A threat is defined as anything that can exploit vulnerabilities and cause damage or disruption to an asset. An asset refers to anything of value that requires protection, such as human resources, infrastructure, and national resilience. Vulnerability refers to a condition in which a location, individual, population, or system has weaknesses that may lead to damage or loss when faced with a threat or hazard. The degree of vulnerability directly affects a system's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from threats and disasters (Cutter et al., 2009).

According to Gregory Allen and Rachel Derr, threats are categorized into two types of hazards: 1) Man-made hazards, 2) Natural hazards. Illicit narcotics trafficking can be classified as a man-made hazard, as this crime is intentionally orchestrated by organized groups and has harmful consequences for individuals, society, and national security. According to Law No. 35 of 2009, illicit narcotics trafficking and precursors are defined as any activity or series of activities conducted unlawfully and classified as narcotics-related criminal offenses. According to Supratman and Runturambi (2022), narcotics-related crimes pose a serious threat to Indonesia's national resilience, particularly in terms of security and state stability. As a transnational crime, narcotics trafficking not only involves individuals or local groups but also international syndicates with vast resources, global distribution networks, and increasingly sophisticated modus operandi. Furthermore, narcotics trafficking has the potential to be used as part of a proxy war strategy, meaning that a country or group can systematically weaken another nation without direct military confrontation.

Nugroho et al. (2022) categorize narcotics crimes as a threat to national resilience, particularly in the context of non-military threats that impact various aspects of society. The two main aspects most affected by this crime are: Socio-cultural aspects, Economic aspects. Based on this, illicit narcotics trafficking can be concluded as a form of man-made crime with extensive impacts on national security, social stability, and the economy. This crime involves highly organized international networks and increasingly advanced smuggling methods. In the context of national defense, narcotics trafficking can serve as a form of proxy war, which indirectly weakens the productive generation and undermines national resilience.

The threat assessment approach developed by Gregory Allen and Rachel Derr in Threat Assessment and Risk Analysis emphasizes the importance of identifying and assessing threats, particularly man-made hazards such as illicit narcotics trafficking. This method evaluates threats based on five key factors: a) Threat Existence, b) Threat History, c) Threat Intentions, d) Threat Capability, e) Target Selection. The first step in threat identification involves gathering information, which is conducted through interviews and direct observations in the northern coastal region of West Java.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach, aiming to explore and understand the meanings constructed by individuals or groups regarding a social or humanitarian issue (Creswell, as cited in Wibowo, J. A., & Puspitasari, M., 2021). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply investigate the phenomenon of illicit narcotics trafficking in coastal areas. The research relies on two primary data sources: primary data and secondary data.

Primary Data

Primary Data was Obtained Through in-Depth Interviews and Field Observations

In-Depth Interviews, The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, allowing the researcher to flexibly explore the informants' perspectives. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their relevance and knowledge of the research topic. The key informants in this study included: Law enforcement officials, specifically the Narcotics Unit of the Police Resort and the Eradication Team of the National Narcotics Board (BNN) of the city, who possess data and experience in handling narcotics trafficking cases in the region. Fishermen community leaders, who understand the social and economic conditions of coastal communities and have insights into potential illicit narcotics trafficking routes in their area.

Field observations were conducted at various strategic locations in coastal areas to: Verify information obtained from interviews. Observe community activity patterns that may be related to illicit narcotics trafficking. Identify high-risk locations that could serve as narcotics smuggling routes, such as small ports, traditional docks, and remote coastal areas. By combining interviews and observations, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive picture of the narcotics trafficking threat in coastal regions.

Secondary Data

Secondary data was obtained through literature review and institutional reports, including: Scientific literature, such as books, academic journals, and research reports relevant to illicit narcotics trafficking in coastal areas.

Reports from relevant institutions, including annual reports from BNN and the National Police (Polri) on narcotics distribution in coastal regions, crime statistics, and investigative reports from mass media.

Data Analysis Techniques

Once the data was collected, the researcher conducted qualitative descriptive analysis, as explained by Yoesgiantoro (as cited in Wibowo, J. A., & Puspitasari, M., 2021). This analysis follows several key stages: Data Reduction –

Selection, classification, and simplification of relevant data. Data Presentation – Organizing data in descriptive narratives, tables, graphs, and diagrams to clarify key findings. Conclusion Drawing and Threat Assessment – The researcher assesses the threat level of illicit narcotics trafficking in coastal regions using five predetermined threat indicators. The results of this analysis aim to provide an overview of the threat level posed by illicit narcotics trafficking in coastal areas.

Figure 3. Five Potential threat Element threat Factor Matrix

Factor	Value
Existence	Yes = 1 No = 0
History	Yes = 1 No = 0
Intentions	Yes = 2 No = 0
Capability	Yes = 2 No = 0
Targeting	Yes = 4 No = 0

Figure 4. Hazard Value

Likelihood to Occur in Next 12 Months	Value
Will occur	10
Likely to occur	7-9
Might occur	4-6
Unlikely to occur	1-3
Will not occur	0
Hazard Value	-

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Threat Existence

This factor assesses whether a threat truly exists and operates within a given jurisdiction. It determines whether a particular threat is already present or has the potential to emerge in a specific area. In the context of illicit narcotics trafficking, threat existence refers to the presence of active or developing narcotics networks in coastal regions.

Based on the findings of this study, there is strong evidence indicating that narcotics networks operated in coastal areas throughout 2024. Law enforcement data recorded 23 suspects, including dealers, couriers, and drug users residing in coastal regions. These findings suggest that coastal areas are not only transit routes but also have the potential to become narcotics distribution hubs. Several factors contribute to the growth of these networks, including organized criminal operations. The presence of 23 narcotics-related suspects in coastal areas indicates an established cooperation pattern between traffickers, couriers, and local dealers in drug distribution within the region.

Interviews with key informants revealed that drug trafficking networks are employing increasingly sophisticated methods, particularly by leveraging digital technology and social media. Traffickers use platforms such as Instagram with anonymous accounts to interact with potential buyers via direct messaging. Once an agreement is reached regarding the quantity, price, and type of narcotics, payments are made using digital wallet applications, making transactions harder to track. The purchased narcotics are not delivered directly but instead placed at a pre-arranged location, with the buyer receiving a photo showing the exact drop-off point.

This modus operandi is known as the disconnected cell system, a transaction method in which buyers and traffickers never meet in person. Instead, the narcotics are placed at a predetermined location, allowing transactions to occur without direct physical contact, thereby minimizing the risk of detection by law enforcement (Pranata, Y. W., 2022).

The presence of twenty three narcotics-related suspects operating in coastal areas of Cirebon City indicates that this region has become a major drug distribution center that requires serious attention. The increasing use of advanced digital technology and disconnected cell systems complicates law enforcement efforts to combat narcotics trafficking.

2. Threat History

This factor involves evaluating past occurrences of similar threats, as historical data provides insights into patterns and trends that may reoccur in the future. One of the major cases in this region occurred in March 2016, when authorities seized 40 kilograms of methamphetamine and 200,000 ecstasy pills smuggled through a logistics vessel at a port in the area. The narcotics originated from international smuggling routes, specifically from Malaysia–Riau—a port on the northern coast of West Java. This case involved a transnational network, in which Malaysian nationals collaborated with inmates at Cipinang Prison to coordinate narcotics distribution across Indonesia.

Findings from this study indicate that this was not the first time narcotics smuggling had occurred at the port. The trafficked drugs were not only intended for local distribution but also for further distribution to Jakarta and other major cities across Java. Several strategic factors contributed to the selection of this port as an entry point for drug smuggling: a) Limited law enforcement supervision – The insufficient number of personnel overseeing port activities creates opportunities for illicit transactions. b) Strategic connectivity – This region has direct access to multiple land transportation routes, including toll roads connecting Jakarta, Semarang, and Surabaya, facilitating drug distribution across various regions. c) High logistics and cargo handling activities – The port is one of the primary shipping hubs on the northern coast of West Java, handling a large volume of loading and unloading operations. Narcotics are often concealed within cargo shipments to evade detection.

The recurrence of past narcotics smuggling cases suggests that this region remains vulnerable to future drug trafficking operations. Furthermore, given the increased law enforcement efforts in maritime routes, traffickers may develop new smuggling strategies to make detection even more challenging.

3. Threat Intentions

This factor focuses on the perpetrators' intent in carrying out the threat. In the context of illicit narcotics trafficking, it relates to the extent to which drug syndicates aim to expand their distribution networks in a particular region. One way to assess threat intent is by identifying potential hazardous actions planned by narcotics networks.

Based on interviews with law enforcement officials and community leaders, this region holds a strategic position as a narcotics transit route via land, with the primary route being Sumatra-Jakarta-Semarang-Surabaya. The information gathered suggests that drug traffickers continually seek to expand their market, not only to sustain their business operations but also to increase the number of new drug users. This market expansion serves as a primary motive for narcotics syndicates, which constantly search for weaknesses in surveillance systems to maintain and expand their distribution networks.

Additionally, from a maritime smuggling perspective, data indicates that previously used smuggling tactics are likely to reoccur. Mapping conducted by law enforcement agencies and field observations by researchers identified small docks that are vulnerable to illegal narcotics trafficking, particularly in coastal areas. This indication is further supported by the presence of multiple fishing vessels that could be exploited for illegal loading and unloading activities due to low surveillance levels. These conditions demonstrate that the threat intent of illicit narcotics trafficking in this region is highly evident, both via land and maritime routes.

4. Threat Capability

This factor evaluates the perpetrators' ability to execute their actions, including aspects such as logistical capacity, human resources, and technology utilization.

One significant technological advancement in illicit narcotics trafficking in Indonesia is the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) devices to support illegal drug distribution. According to Prayuda (2020), narcotics syndicates have integrated GPS tracking into their smuggling operations to ensure that trafficked drugs are successfully delivered and received within their network.

One of the primary routes frequently exploited for smuggling is the Indonesia-Malaysia border, particularly in the waters of Riau Province. A common modus operandi involves: Carefully packaging the narcotics, Installing a GPS tracker to monitor the shipment, Transporting the drugs at night, using fishermen as couriers.

Interviews conducted during this study also revealed that fishermen in coastal areas possess the ability to sail as far as Jakarta's offshore waters. Many offer maritime tourism services and nighttime fishing trips, which can be booked through messaging apps like WhatsApp or by phone. This flexibility allows traffickers to exploit fishermen's services, making it easier to conceal drug smuggling activities within legitimate fishing operations, making detection by security forces more challenging.

However, according to law enforcement agencies, there is currently no confirmed intelligence regarding the exact technology used in drug smuggling

operations within the region's maritime sector. Nevertheless, considering the existing vulnerabilities, such as limited surveillance in coastal waters, the extensive range of fishermen's activities, and the ease of communication through digital technology, narcotics smuggling can potentially occur at any time.

5. Targeting

This factor focuses on identifying the primary targets of the threat and assessing who or what is most vulnerable to illicit narcotics trafficking. Based on interviews conducted during this study, the main distribution targets for illicit narcotics include small docks, which have the potential to be used as docking points for vessels carrying narcotics. Additionally, drug traffickers also target local communities, particularly certain fishermen who may engage in drug abuse.

Interviews with key informants revealed strong indications of involvement by some fishermen in narcotics abuse. This suspicion was reinforced by cases uncovered by law enforcement authorities, where drug paraphernalia, including methamphetamine pipes and other drug-related equipment, were found in the home of a fisherman, suggesting drug use among this group. Further reports from other informants indicate that some fishermen have also been involved in the misuse of prescription drugs, such as Tramadol. According to Prasetyo & Hilmi (2022), Tramadol abuse can induce euphoria and, when taken in high doses, may impact fertility, cause sperm abnormalities, and lead to erectile dysfunction.

Additionally, data from rehabilitation centers in 2024 showed that 16 individuals were undergoing recovery treatment, with 10 of them originating from coastal areas, aged between 17 and 45 years. Health and Socioeconomic Impact on Coastal Communities This phenomenon poses significant risks, both in terms of health and socioeconomic conditions. Health Risks: Drug and prescription medication dependence can lead to reduced concentration, weakened immune systems, and decreased physical abilities among fishermen. These factors ultimately affect their productivity at sea, leading to economic instability.

Contributing Factors to Drug Abuse Among Fishermen: High Workload and Economic Pressure: The uncertainty of fishing livelihoods, particularly fluctuating catch yields, creates financial instability. In difficult circumstances, some fishermen may turn to narcotics as a coping mechanism to relieve stress or boost stamina while working at sea. **Lack of Supervision and Education:** Coastal areas often lack adequate law enforcement surveillance and access to educational programs on drug abuse. As a result, fishermen become more susceptible to negative environmental influences.

Easy Access to Narcotics and Prescription Drugs: Fishermen's ability to travel long distances, including to major cities like Jakarta, allows them to obtain and consume narcotics while at sea. **Coastal Region Vulnerabilities in Narcotics Smuggling** Chandyta (2022) identified several vulnerabilities related to narcotics smuggling in coastal areas, including: **Lack of public education on the dangers of narcotics** High unemployment rates, making individuals more susceptible to becoming drug couriers The presence of illegal docks, which facilitate smuggling

routes Limited patrols and weak law enforcement oversight given these vulnerabilities, narcotics trafficking through coastal areas continues to be an escalating threat that requires urgent intervention.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that illicit narcotics trafficking in the northern coastal region of West Java represents a tangible threat that has the potential to disrupt security, social stability, and national resilience. Its strategic geographical position, directly bordering the Java Sea, along with extensive access to land, sea, and trade routes, makes this region not only a transit route but also a narcotics distribution hub.

Among the various identified threat factors, one of the most significant is the presence of active narcotics networks. Additionally, the region's maritime areas have a history of drug smuggling via sea routes, with a high potential for recurrence using increasingly sophisticated and difficult-to-detect modus operandi. Beyond geographical factors, the intent and motives of narcotics traffickers to expand their distribution networks through Cirebon City have been a key driver of this escalating threat. Drug syndicates continually seek new, less-monitored routes and areas with broad distribution access to major cities such as Jakarta, Semarang, and Surabaya.

The rising number of drug users in productive age groups, particularly in coastal communities, strengthens concerns that coastal areas could transform into drug hotspots, making intervention efforts more complex. While concrete evidence regarding traffickers' technological capabilities in smuggling operations remains limited, the coastal area holds strong potential as an entry point for drug smuggling via maritime routes.

Figure 5. Research Findings

Factor	Score
Threat Existence	1
Threat History	1
Threat Intentions	2
Threat Capability	0
Target Selection	4
Total Score	8

The final threat assessment score of "Eight" indicates that the level of illicit narcotics trafficking threat in this region falls into the "likely to occur" category. Therefore, strengthening the resilience of fishing communities is crucial to mitigating this threat.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has delays, so it is necessary to conduct further research related to the topic Threat of Illicit Narcotics Trafficking in the Northern Coastal Region of West Java to improve this research and add insights for readers

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