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The threat of illegal imports related to narcotics and cosmetics smuggling in the border area of Tarakan: A review from the perspective of national resilience

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the threat of illegal importation, especially the smuggling of narcotics and cosmetics, in the border area of Tarakan, Indonesia. This study adopted a qualitative approach with a case study method, focusing on the operations of Customs during the 2022-2023 period. The analysis of the literature and empirical data obtained through this study revealed that illegal imports pose a number of potential threats that have a significant impact on national security and social and community stability. The vulnerability of unofficial routes and the persistence of illegal activities despite ongoing enforcement measures are the main factors contributing to the success of smugglers' activities. Behavioral analysis of modus operandi reveals that one of the factors that support the successful ssuggling is the cooperation between sggler networks and local communities in border areas. In addition, this study identified several strategic approaches to strengthen surveillance of illegal snugglers, including the use of digital communication tools and new operational strategies, to provide insights for adaptive law enforcement measures. The research provides actionable recommendations for enhancing border security strategies, strengthening inter-agency coordination, and developing targeted policies to mitigate the impact of illegal imported activities on national safety and public welfare.

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INTRODUCTION

Vast, unguarded, and porous borders provide unfettered access for foreign elements to enter the country and even pose some vulnerabilities (Ogbonna et al., 2023). Geopolitically and geostrategically, borders that have a wide geographical scope and are difficult to monitor are a big challenge for the country in maintaining security. Unsecured borders can be exploited by organized crime networks to carry out various illegal activities such as smuggling and human trafficking and can be used to evade taxes. These vulnerable borders make it easier for prohibited goods to enter a country (Boswell & Besse, 2023).

Threats related to the geopolitical context in the presence of a number of countries are of particular concern by entering into formal agreements for real cooperation, coordination and synergy on the ground. The findings of the research of Dorfman et al. (2021) show that although there has been a formal agreement for cooperation in border areas, differences in priorities and national frameworks between the countries of Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, and Uruguay can hinder the integration of regional border management. For example, in border areas such as the Itaipu Artificial Lake in South America, located on the border between Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, and Uruguay, which was formed by the construction of the Itaipu Hydroelectric Power Plant, this waterway is a vulnerable point for smuggling goods, drugs, and weapons. With the many dark harbors forming around the lake, the distribution of contraband was quickly distributed to the metropolitan market.

Potential vulnerabilities in border areas are not only an issue in countries such as Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, and Uruguay, but also in Indonesia. In the identification carried out by Lay & Astrina (2020) in their research in Batam, the same vulnerability shows that although the border in Batam has been closely monitored by various agencies, illegal importation practices still continue to occur.

Tarakan, as Indonesia's border area directly adjacent to Malaysia, is a vulnerable point for illegal import activities. Its strategic location makes Tarakan the main route for the smuggling of illegal goods, including the smuggling of narcotics and illegal consumer goods, from neighboring countries. Weaknesses in surveillance and law enforcement at the border, as well as the local economy's dependence on goods from abroad, exacerbate this situation. This condition requires special attention from the authorities, namely the government, to strengthen control and prevent the entry of illegal goods that can harm the economy and national security (Wire, 2023).

Minister of Trade Zulkifli Hasan at the Trade Activity Supervision Coordination Forum at the Aryaduta Menteng Hotel, Jakarta, on Wednesday, August 21, 2024, said that 30-40% of imported products were not recorded or recorded by the relevant authorities, highlighting significant challenges in managing illegal imports in Indonesia. These inaccuracies in recording can exacerbate threats to the economy and national security, given that unregistered products are often substandard items or are the result of smuggling activities. Improved supervision and a better record-keeping system are needed to strengthen national resilience and maintain the integrity of the trade system (Ayuningrum, 2024).

The novelty of this study is to identify and analyze the threat of illegal importation, especially the smuggling of narcotics and cosmetics in the border area of Tarakan, namely to identify potential threats arising from the smuggling of narcotics and cosmetics, identify various unofficial routes that are vulnerable to becoming a place for loading and unloading illegal goods, and identify and analyze why illegal imports still occur even though they have been carried out supervision by various law enforcement officials, one of which is Customs. Thus, the purpose of this study is to understand the challenges faced by Customs in dealing with these threats and their impact on national resilience.

The research contributes to the field of national security and border management by providing a comprehensive analysis of the challenges associated with illegal importation, particularly the smuggling of narcotics and cosmetics, in the Tarakan border area. It identifies potential threats, unofficial routes vulnerable to smuggling activities, and the factors enabling continued illegal imports despite active law enforcement efforts. This study offers valuable insights into the operational challenges faced by Customs and the broader implications for national resilience. By addressing gaps in understanding smuggling dynamics and enforcement limitations, the research provides actionable recommendations for enhancing border security strategies, strengthening inter-agency coordination, and developing targeted policies to mitigate the impact of smuggling on national security and public welfare.

METHOD

This research adopted a qualitative approach with a case study method, focusing on the operations of Tarakan Customs during the 2022–2023 period. This method was selected to provide an in-depth understanding of the threats posed by narcotics and cosmetics smuggling, including the identification of unofficial routes often exploited for the illegal loading and unloading of goods. Data for the study were gathered from various sources, including academic databases, library materials, news outlets, and internal records from the Tarakan Customs office, as well as other credible references. These data were analyzed to identify patterns and themes related to smuggling threats, vulnerabilities in unofficial routes, and the persistence of illegal activities despite Customs' monitoring efforts.

The analysis process involved organizing and categorizing the collected data, identifying recurring patterns, and critically evaluating the factors enabling smuggling activities. This approach aimed to uncover the challenges faced by Tarakan Customs in addressing these threats and the broader implications of such activities for national security. The study’s findings provided insights into the nature of smuggling threats, the vulnerabilities of unofficial routes, and the persistent factors contributing to illegal imports despite ongoing enforcement measures. These findings were intended to inform strategies for improving border management and enhancing the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Vulnerability of the Tarakan Border Area to Illegal Imports

Context of the Tarakan Border Area

A border area is a part of a country that borders directly with other countries. As the starting point for the entry of goods from abroad, this area is a strategic area that is prone to illegal import activities. Therefore, strict surveillance at the border is essential to prevent the entry of illegal goods into the country (Hendy & Zaki, 2021). Security officers in border areas have the task of monitoring the flow of goods and people entering the country, as well as detecting and preventing the smuggling of illegal goods (Chalendard et al., 2022).

Border areas have various potential vulnerabilities, including smuggling activities that are part of illegal imports. Illegal import is the activity of importing goods into a country without complying with applicable rules and regulations, such as taxes, import duties, or other regulatory standards (Al Wazzan et al., 2023).

The problem of illegal imports is still a significant issue in Indonesia's border areas, including in Tarakan, an area that is geographically separate from Kalimantan Island and is located on Tarakan Island. Tarakan is one of Indonesia's leading border areas that borders Malaysian waters. According to research conducted by Setyabudi et al. (2024), Tarakan faces various threats, one of which is to become the main channel for drug trafficking controlled by international networks in Indonesia.

Geopolitically, Tarakan is considered vulnerable due to several factors such as its strategic location, which makes Tarakan vulnerable to illegal activities, such as drug smuggling involving routes from the Philippines and Malaysia. In addition, the border community's economy relies on goods from Sabah, Malaysia, with about 70% of Sebatik's needs supplied from Tawau. This dependence opens up opportunities for drug smuggling from Sabah to Indonesia through North Kalimantan (Setyabudi et al., 2024).

Geostrategically, Tarakan is in a quite vulnerable position. First, Tarakan is one of the four main areas in North Kalimantan that are hotspots for drug smuggling, along with Sebatik Island, Amal Island in Tarakan City, Bunyu Island, and several areas in Malinau Regency. Second, ship loading and unloading activities are often carried out in small unofficial ports or "rat ports," which are not regularly supervised by Customs officers, and other officials, both for daily necessities from Malaysia and products from Sebatik sent to Tawau. Third, the existence of efficient water transportation, such as speedboats and boats, facilitates the smuggling of illegal goods. Research by Kusuma & Kavin (2019) even found that drug dealers use fishermen as couriers to send drugs to the mainland, which are then distributed to the city of Tarakan or other areas.

The Role and Challenges of Customs in Surveillance in Border Areas

Facing geopolitical and geostrategic vulnerabilities, Tarakan Customs, as one of the agencies responsible for supervising the traffic of goods in the border area of North Kalimantan, especially Tarakan and Bulungan Regency, has a crucial role. The main role of Customs at the border includes: (1) facilitating trade by ensuring the smooth flow of imported goods through ports, (2) enforcing trade laws by protecting consumers, businesses, and collecting revenue from import duties, (3) ensuring import security to prevent the entry of weapons of mass destruction, illegal drugs, and other contraband, and (4) detecting and preventing the entry of illegal goods, including the smuggling of narcotics and goods that infringe on intellectual property rights (Jones & Rosenblum, 2013). For this reason, referring to the rules of Law Number 17 of 2006 concerning amendments to Law Number 10 of 1995 concerning Customs which is then regulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Finance Number 34/PMK.04/2021 concerning the Entry and Exit of Goods to and from Areas that have been Designated as Free Trade Zones and Free Ports, which are then regulated in the Regulation of the Director General of Customs and Excise Number PER-22/BC/2023 concerning Revenue and Removal of Goods to and from Areas that Have Been Designated as Free Trade Zones and Free Ports Through Goods Carried by Passengers and Crew of Transport Facilities, Customs may conduct a thorough physical inspection of persons, animals, plants, goods, and cargo entering a country, including inspection of international passengers and their baggage, imported cargo, international parcel letters, and international means of transport to search for illegal drugs, weapons, and commercial goods that enter illegally (Direktorat Jenderal Bea dan Cukai, 2023).

As a result of the inspection mandated by the Law, the Tarakan Customs Office succeeded in thwarting illegal imports throughout 2022 and 2023. Data from Table 1 shows that the threat faced at one of Indonesia's borders, namely in Tarakan is very large. However, BC Tarakan's reach and ability to make efforts to thwart illegal imports is limited. As shown by the following data, the seized goods do not represent the amount of illegal imports that occur due to the wide space for smugglers to move considering the relatively limited vulnerability points that can be reached by BC Tarakan Here is the data.

Table 1. Arrest of Illegal Importation of Tarakan Customs for the 2022-2023 Period

No.	Types of Goods	Year 2022		Year 2023	
		Total	***Estimated Value of Goods in Rupiah (Rp)***	***Total***	***Estimated Value of Goods in Rupiah (Rp)***
1.	Onion	-	-	254 Package	5.000.000
2.	Meat	130 Package	208.000.000	246 Package	244.296.405
3.	Ecstasy (MDMA)	2,094 Grains	840.741.000	-	-
4.	Selayang Fish	43 Package	250.250.000	-	-

5.	Cosmetics	559 Package	217.229.000	-	-
6.	Food and Beverage	-	-	145 Package	105.759.253
7.	Methamphetamine	32.580 Gram	48.870.000.000	48.830 Gram	77.939.638.275
8.	Used Clothes	1.978 Package	7.912.000.000	32 Package	128.000.000
9.	Trihexyphenidyl	50 Grains	500.000	350 Grains	3.500.000
TOTAL			IDR 58,298,720,000		IDR 78,426,193,933

The data displayed in Table 1 shows how great the threat is in the border area, especially in Tarakan, where from one border area alone significant potential was found in the number and value of illegal imported goods for two years, namely 2022 and 2023. For example, in 2022, Tarakan Customs managed to confiscate 32,580 grams of methamphetamine with an estimated value of IDR 48,870,000,000. Meanwhile, in 2023, the amount of methamphetamine seized increased to 48,830 grams with an estimated value of IDR 77,939,638,275. This data indicates a significant increase in the number and value of illegal imported goods, especially narcotics smuggling that has been successfully uncovered during the period.

One of the interesting data as can be observed from the table is that there is no data on the arrest of cosmetics smuggling by BC Tarakan in the 2023 period. This is unlikely to happen when compared to data in 2024, which is shown by a Radar Tarakan report that shows cosmetics smuggling from Malaysia. According to a report from Radar Tarakan (2024), on September 11, 2024, as many as 30 illegal cosmetic collies smuggled from Malaysia were successfully thwarted by the Second Fleet Quick Response (SFQ) Team of Satrol Lantamal XIII Tarakan. The arrest data in 2024 indicates that smuggling is taking place, although in 2023 there will be no arrests. This indicates that smuggling is taking place, if there is no arrest, it does not mean that there is no smuggling. The key question is why can this happen? As mentioned in the section above, the existence of various unofficial routes and limited personnel in guarding the border, are factors that play a role in the smuggling of narcotics and cosmetics which still occur even though comprehensive supervision has been carried out by Tarakan Customs in maintaining border security from the entry of illegal goods.

In order to comprehensively compile an analysis of the threat of illegal imports, especially the smuggling of narcotics and cosmetics in the Tarakan border area to national security, it is important to understand the threats in depth in order to identify potential threats related to illegal imports. In addition, vulnerability analysis also needs to be carried out to assess weaknesses in the surveillance system. Threat analysis focuses on identifying potential threats arising from illegal imports, while vulnerability analysis aims to evaluate weaknesses in the surveillance system that can be exploited by outsiders (Prunckun, 2010).

Potential Threats from Illegal Imports Related to Narcotics and Cosmetics Smuggling

Based on the analysis of the literature and empirical data obtained through this study, illegal importation, especially the smuggling of narcotics and cosmetics in the Tarakan border area, poses a number of potential threats that have a significant impact on national security and social and community stability. The main potential threats associated with smuggling activities in the region include several aspects.

National Security Threats

1) Threats to Physical and Mental Health: Drug smuggling in the Tarakan region has a devastating impact on the physical and mental health of individuals. Illegally entered narcotic substances have addictive properties that can cause heavy dependence and have the potential to interfere with the physical and psychological health of users. According to the Ministry of Defense (2018), narcotics can change the structure and function of the brain, which has an impact on decreasing cognitive function, memory, and emotional control. This leads to an increased risk of aggressive behavior and mental disorders such as depression, paranoia, and hallucinations.

   This threat is even greater when narcotics are circulating among young people, who are more susceptible to the negative effects of addictive substances. Narcotics abuse at productive age has the potential to damage the quality of human resources in Indonesia, especially in border areas such as Tarakan which have high access to illegal goods. This adverse impact on physical and mental health also weakens people's resilience, reduces productivity, and burdens health facilities. This condition is a big challenge for the government in maintaining public health and social stability in areas prone to narcotics trafficking.

The threat to physical and mental health is not only felt by the general public but also directly burdens the Customs officers in Tarakan. In carrying out tasks that involve high preparedness, limited number of employees, limited number of operations, wide coverage of the supervision area, and uncertain working hours, especially when there are indications or intelligence information related to potential smuggling attempts from abroad into the Tarakan area, Customs officers are often faced with conditions that require excellent physical and mental readiness. Operational demands in the field often force officers to be ready to carry out enforcement operations at uncertain times, the duration and intensity of which are difficult to predict. In an interview, Andhika and Alwy, two Tarakan Customs officers, told about their daily activities and also their experience in carrying out supervision while serving at Tarakan Customs.

Andhika, explained that his duties do not end only during regular working hours from 07.30 to 17.00 WITA. In supervision activities, he often has to carry out supervision activities outside of working hours, such as intelligence information collection activities, maintenance of operational facilities, and carrying out enforcement operations. With approximately five years of experience working at Tarakan Customs, Andhika explained that smuggling is often carried out at vulnerable times such as midnight or early morning. Therefore, excellent physical and mental health is critical in carrying out these tasks, as onshore surveillance requires precision and agility to identify potential smuggling lanes and ensure every corner of the area is well monitored.

On the other hand, Alwy, shared one of his experiences in an enforcement operation at sea based on intelligence information. In this activity, Tarakan Customs officers were divided into two teams. Alwy and the team are on duty at sea, Andhika and the team are on duty on land. The sea team, referred to as Alwy, patrolled the Tarakan waters from 20.00 WITA until midnight by being on standby around the location that was suspected to be the entry point of the smuggler speedboat. Then, in the middle of the operation, the marine team detected the existence of a speedboat suspected of carrying contraband speeding towards the Takan waters area. When the action was about to be carried out, the smugglers realized the presence of the officers and immediately tried to flee to Sebatik, Malaysia. An intense pursuit was ensued, with Alwy and the team attempting to maintain contact with the ground team, where Andhika was stationed, to coordinate coordination between the teams.

However, in the implementation of the operation, due to the limited means of operation and limited communication signals at sea, it is difficult for the sea team to pursue and convey information related to the smuggler's position in a timely manner to the land team. As a result, when the smuggler speedboat ran out of fuel and ran aground around a residential area, the ground team had difficulty tracking down the smugglers who had fled to the mainland. This situation highlights the operational complexity faced by Customs officers, who are required not only to have high physical and mental readiness, but also to be able to adapt to technical constraints and a changing environment.

By carrying out intelligence information collection activities, maintenance of operational facilities and enforcement activities that take place outside working hours until the early hours of the morning, the physical and mental condition of the officers is often affected, especially when this operation is continued with administrative tasks from the results of enforcement operations and also carrying out routine duties in the office the next day. The duration of enforcement activities, which sometimes last for days without a break from daily duties, further increases the threat to the physical and mental health of officers, which can ultimately reduce the effectiveness and accuracy of supervision in the field.

Therefore, the threat to physical and mental health faced by officers indicates the need to implement planned and comprehensive risk management, which is not only risk management related to enforcement activities, but also related to the physical and mental condition of officers. In addition, synergy and collaboration between agencies are also needed to support operational optimization. With stronger coordination, the burden of supervision can be distributed more effectively without having to rely on just one agency. Cross-agency cooperation, such as with the Water Police, the National Narcotics Agency or the Indonesian Navy, allows for early detection and faster response to potential smuggling, so that intelligence information can be used more optimally.

The implementation of risk management, which includes cross-agency collaboration, is expected to be able to maintain the health and welfare of Customs officers in Tarakan. In addition, this operational synergy can also strengthen the resilience of surveillance in border areas and support the effectiveness of smuggling prevention efforts in the long term.

2) Threat to Increased Crime and Expansion of Narcotics Trafficking: Narcotics smuggling in the Tarakan region not only impacts the health of individuals but also creates a domino effect on the increase in crime rates. Widespread narcotics trafficking is closely related to the activities of organized crime networks, which operate in a systematic and structured manner. These networks often involve local people as couriers, dealers, or informants. Research by Setyabudi et al. (2024) shows that the existence of local actors involved in narcotics distribution expands the distribution network, thereby facilitating access to narcotics in the community. This condition encourages an increase in narcotics-related crimes, including theft, robbery, and violence, which are carried out to support narcotics consumption or distribution activities.

   This high crime rate has an impact on social stability, because it creates insecurity among the community and causes social instability that interferes with daily life. Furthermore, the high crime rate in the Tarakan region as a border area also increases vulnerability to the infiltration of cross-border criminal networks, which can ultimately threaten national security. The impact of this criminality shows the need for stricter supervision in strategic areas that are the main routes of narcotics smuggling.

3) Threats to Law Enforcement: One of the significant impacts of narcotics smuggling is the increased complexity in law enforcement. The border region of Tarakan has a limited number of law enforcement personnel tasked with monitoring various unofficial routes that are often used as smuggling routes. As a result, there is an imbalance between the number of crimes reported (total crime) and the number of cases successfully solved (total clearance), which indicates a lack of effectiveness in handling crime cases. According to the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (2022), the breadth of the supervision area and the limited number of personnel cause supervision of smuggling activities to be less than optimal.

   This complexity is compounded by the existence of organized criminal networks that often involve cross-border perpetrators, which makes the process of identification and apprehension more difficult. In addition, coordination between law enforcement agencies, such as Customs, BNN, and Polair, often experiences obstacles, both in terms of operational procedures and the flow of intelligence data required for joint operations (CNN Indonesia, 2023). These obstacles show that without strong synergy between agencies, law enforcement in border areas becomes increasingly complex and ineffective in preventing narcotics trafficking.

4) Threats to National Security: Narcotics smuggling in the Tarakan region has a far-reaching impact on national security. The involvement of international criminal networks in narcotics trafficking shows that the threat to Indonesia is not only local but also transnational. The proceeds from the narcotics trade can be used to finance other criminal activities, including human trafficking, arms smuggling, and even terrorism activities. Research by Ogbonna et al. (2023) reveals that organized crime in border regions often involves cross-border networks, which increases complexity and threats to national stability and security.

   Furthermore, this condition encourages the dependence of border communities on illegal activities, such as smuggling, to sustain their daily economic needs. This economic dependence strengthens the root of the smuggling problem and weakens the social structure in the border region (Kusuma & Kavin, 2019). If not addressed, this situation could weaken Indonesia's national resilience due to the weakening of the legal order and reduced state control over strategic border areas. This impact also affects Indonesia's international image, which is seen as a country that is vulnerable to the infiltration of illegal activities and is unable to manage its borders effectively.

   Overall, the smuggling of narcotics and cosmetics in the Tarakan border area poses a serious threat to Indonesia's national security. These threats start from the direct impact on an individual's physical and mental health, which then develops into complex crime and law enforcement issues. To a higher extent, this smuggling worsens national stability by supporting other illegal activities of a cross-border nature. To deal with this threat, a stricter surveillance strategy, increased coordination between agencies, and efforts to empower local communities so that they are not trapped in smuggling networks are needed. Thus, the government is expected to maintain the integrity and stability of Indonesia's border areas and strengthen national resilience as a whole.

Social and Public Health Threats

1) Threats to Social Stability and Community Security: Narcotics smuggling in the Tarakan region directly increases threats to social stability and community security. Based on research by Setyabudi et al. (2024), narcotics trafficking often involves local actors who are employed as couriers, dealers, or informants for criminal networks. The involvement of local communities in this smuggling chain expands the reach of narcotics trafficking and triggers an increase in criminal activities, such as

theft and violence related to narcotics distribution. This condition creates social instability, reduces the sense of security in the community, and worsens relationships between community members due to the influence of criminal networks that are increasingly widespread in the region (Setyabudi et al., 2024).

Threats to community safety are increasing because narcotics-related criminality is often accompanied by acts of intimidation or violence, which create fear and discomfort among the public. This weakens social cohesion, makes the social environment less conducive, and ultimately disrupts public order. This adverse impact highlights the need for more effective surveillance and interagency synergy to address the threat posed by narcotics networks in border areas (Ogbonna et al., 2023).

2) Threats to the Public Health System: Illegal narcotics and cosmetics smuggling poses a significant threat to the public health system in the Tarakan region. Illegal cosmetic products that enter without a distribution permit often contain harmful ingredients such as mercury and hydroquinone, which can cause serious health effects. According to the Food and Drug Supervisory Center (BPOM) in Tarakan, these illegal cosmetics have a high risk of endangering public health such as causing skin cancer, damage and thinning of the skin layer, which requires special medical treatment (Badan Pengawas Obat dan Makanan, 2023b).

   This threat is exacerbated by the increasing need for medical care due to high narcotics addiction in the region. The rehabilitation and treatment programs needed by individuals experiencing drug dependence add to the burden on the health system, which is limited in resources and capacity. The demand for health services to overcome the impact of illegal goods also has an impact on the allocation of medical resources for other public health services, thus affecting people's access to health services that they should be able to obtain (Antara News Kaltara, 2022).

3) Threats to the Mudia Generation: The young generation is the most vulnerable group to the negative impacts of illegal cosmetics and narcotics smuggling. Illegal cosmetic products offered freely in border areas attract the attention of teenagers and young adults who are less aware of the health risks of using products without a distribution permit. Based on a report by BPOM Tarakan, illegal cosmetics smuggled from Malaysia and the Philippines contain harmful substances that not only cause irritation and allergic reactions to the skin, but also have the potential to cause serious health complications in the long term (Badan Pengawas Obat dan Makanan, 2023a).

   The threat of narcotics to the young generation in Tarakan is even more serious. According to JDIH Sukoharjo (2023), narcotics abuse at a young age not only risks causing physical and mental health problems, but also hinders the development of individual potential. The influence of narcotics on this age group worsens the quality of human resources, resulting in a decrease in productivity, and triggers greater social problems in the future. This threat to the younger generation shows the importance of prevention and public education efforts that focus on the dangers of illegal narcotics and cosmetics.

4) Threats to Family Structure and Social Relationships: The use of illegal narcotics and cosmetics also threatens family structures and social relationships in society. Dependence on narcotics often leads to drastic behavioral changes in individuals, such as increased aggressiveness and decreased productivity, which creates conflict within the household. Families that have members who experience drug dependence are not only burdened by the high cost of rehabilitation, but also face emotional distress that results in breakdowns and dysfunctions in family relationships.

   Furthermore, the health impacts of using illegal cosmetics, such as skin irritation or disorders that require long-term medical care, also add to the psychological and financial burden on families. Conflicts caused by this health burden have the potential to damage the social structure in society, as affected families often experience social isolation and economic hardship. This instability in family relationships, if it occurs on a large scale, can result in the weakening of the social order of the community in the border area of Tarakan.

Overall, the smuggling of illegal narcotics and cosmetics in the border region of Tarakan poses not only a threat to directly exposed individuals, but also to social stability, public health, and family structures in the community. This threat demonstrates the need for a comprehensive approach involving synergy between government agencies, increased surveillance, and public education to reduce the impact of the circulation of illicit goods and strengthen social resilience in border areas.

Economic Threats

1) Decline in State Revenue: One of the biggest economic impacts of smuggling illegal goods is the loss of potential state revenue. Any goods smuggled are not officially recorded and are therefore not subject to taxes or import duties. This condition has resulted in a reduction in state revenue from

the tax and customs sectors that should be used to finance public services and infrastructure development. According to Ayuningrum (2024), around 30-40% of imported products in Indonesia are not recorded by the relevant authorities, most of which are the result of smuggling. Thus, the smuggling of cosmetics and narcotics through the Tarakan border causes a loss of potential revenue for the government and weakens the country's fiscal resilience.

In the Takan region, smuggling activities have a particular impact on the local economy as the border is often used as an entry point for illegal goods from Malaysia and the Philippines, especially narcotics and cosmetics. In the Tarakan Customs report, it was recorded that the confiscated illegal cosmetics have a significant value in the market, so that the loss of potential taxes from this sector increases the threat to national and regional economic stability (Antara News Kaltara, 2022).

2) Impact on Local Industries: The smuggling of illegal cosmetics from abroad, such as products originating from Malaysia and the Philippines, has a direct impact on the local cosmetics industry in Indonesia. These smuggled products are often sold at a lower price because they do not pay import duties or taxes, which allows for lower selling prices than legal products produced domestically. This impact creates unfair competition, because illegal products at lower prices are more attractive to consumers, even though the quality and safety of the products are not guaranteed.

   According to the Ministry of Trade (2024), the entry of illegal products into the local market hinders the growth of the domestic industry and weakens the competitiveness of local products in the domestic market. This has an impact on the reduction of labor in the national cosmetics industry, as local manufacturers lose significant market share due to the influx of low-cost illegal cosmetics. As a result, the sustainability of the domestic industry is threatened, which ultimately weakens the local economy and national economic resilience.

3) Market Distortion: Market distortion is one of the important economic threats resulting from the influx of illegal goods such as cosmetics and narcotics. These illegal products are often sold in markets without quality and safety controls, reducing the incentive for consumers to buy more expensive legal products. The widespread sale of illegal products in the domestic market causes an imbalance between supply and demand that not only impacts the market price but also the overall quality of the products in the market. This creates risks for consumers who choose illegal products that do not meet the set quality standards, as well as affecting consumer perception of similar products that are legal and of high quality.

   In addition, reports from BPOM show that illegal cosmetics circulating in the local market often contain harmful ingredients such as mercury and hydroquinone, which risk causing serious side effects on health. The existence of these illegal goods in the market not only harms consumers but also causes great losses to authorized manufacturers who comply with regulations and product safety standards (Badan Pengawas Obat dan Makanan, 2023a). This market distortion ultimately harms the local economy because it reduces consumer confidence in local products and limits the growth of the legal industrial sector.

4) Increased Cost of Surveillance and Law Enforcement: Narcotics and cosmetics smuggling activities at the Tarakan border have led to increased costs for the government in terms of surveillance and law enforcement. Efforts to prevent and deal with these illegal goods require large budget allocations for patrol operations, inter-agency coordination, and the use of monitoring technology and intelligence gathering in the field. Whenever illegal goods are successfully seized, the government needs to bear the costs of storage, legal process, and destruction of contraband, which requires additional resources.

   According to data from the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (2023), increasing capacity and resources for surveillance in border areas is a sustainable priority, but it also requires a considerable budget allocation. This budget should have been used to support infrastructure development or public services in border areas, but it was eventually depleted for handling smuggling cases. This additional cost shows the magnitude of the economic impact of smuggling activities involving illegal narcotics and cosmetics in border areas.

Overall, the smuggling of illegal narcotics and cosmetics in the Tarakan border area poses a substantial economic threat. These impacts include the loss of potential state revenue, pressure on local industries, market distortions, and increased surveillance costs. This complex economic threat requires a comprehensive and coordinated response, both through close surveillance and public education to reduce demand for illegal products. This action is needed so that the local economy can develop sustainably and national economic stability can be maintained.

Surveillance Vulnerabilities in Border Areas: Open Water Challenges and Long Coastlines

The waters around Tarakan, especially in Juata Laut and Bulungan Regency, have major challenges in terms of supervision due to the many unofficial access routes that take advantage of open waters and the length of the coastline. This geographical factor creates loopholes that smugglers use to transport illegal goods such as narcotics and cosmetics, which are difficult for law enforcement officials to identify. Although surveillance at official entry points has been tightened, limited infrastructure and resources on unofficial routes make the region vulnerable to smuggling activities.

Vulnerability in the Fishing Grounds Around the Sea

Juata Laut waters are one of the favorite locations for smuggling illegal goods due to various geographical and economic factors. First, these waters are located close to Nunukan and Malaysia, making logistics and fuel costs more efficient for smugglers. Second, the large amount of land around Juata Laut provides a strategic location for small ships to dock at high tide, allowing for undetected loading and unloading activities. Third, the waters around Juata Laut have direct access to the rivers in North Tarakan, which can be used by smugglers to bring goods to the mainland more easily, especially to pond and residential areas along the riverside

For example, in one of the waters of Tarakan, namely the waters of Juata Laut, on Sunday, January 4, 2023 in the waters of Juata Laut, an examination and search was carried out on a man with the initials MY and found 1 bag containing a cardboard box in which there were 5 packs suspected of containing methamphetamine narcotics and there was also 1 small package of methamphetamine narcotics stored in cigarettes in a black bag, This disclosure was made by the Kaltara Regional Police Directorate, precisely the Siintelair unit when patrolling and monitoring around the waters of Juata Laut Tarakan City (Antara News, 2023b). Then, according to a report from Radar Tarakan (2024), the Kaltara Regional Police Directorate succeeded in thwarting the smuggling of 5,000 grams of methamphetamine secured by personnel in the waters in front of Juata Laut on December 25, 2023. Shortly before being secured, the perpetrator was found to have just handed over 5,000 grams of methamphetamine from two crew members from Malaysia.

Vulnerability in the Waters Around Bulungan Regency

The waters around Bulungan Regency are also prone to smuggling due to the wide coverage and lack of routine patrol activities. These waters have a path that connects directly to rivers in inland areas, making it easier to access illegal goods to areas farther from the scope of the authorities' supervision. In addition, this location is often used for "ship-to-ship" activities or transfers between ships, which are carried out in the middle of the sea so that it is difficult to detect.

One example is the enforcement carried out by the Lantamal XIII Joint Team in collaboration with BNN Tarakan and Tarakan Customs on September 21, 2023. The chronology begins with information that ship-to-ship activities will be carried out for methamphetamine-type narcotics from Tawau, Malaysia. The activity was carried out in the waters around Kecik Island, Bulungan Regency. The Joint Team succeeded in thwarting the smuggling of 15,300 grams of methamphetamine from Tawau, Malaysia (Antara News, 2023a). Joint officers from BNNP Kaltara, the Indonesian Navy, and Tarakan Customs arrested 2 foreign nationals (WNA) from the Philippines who were carrying 23,000 grams of methamphetamine in the waters of Pangkalan Tias, Bulungan Regency. Due to the vastness of the waters around Bulungan and the lack of regular patrol and surveillance activities in these waters, Bulungan waters are often a location for smuggling illegal imported goods, especially narcotics (Detik.com, 2023).

Strict Supervision by Tarakan Customs Does Not Guarantee the Cessation of Illegal Imports

One of the main focuses of this study is the analysis of why illegal importation activities continue to occur despite strict supervision by Tarakan Customs. Tarakan Customs has implemented a number of efforts to suppress illegal import activities, including increasing patrol frequencies, utilizing technology such as radar and remote monitoring systems, as well as collaboration with other law enforcement officers (APH) such as the TNI-AL, Polairud, and BNN. The Head of the Tarakan Customs Office, Johan Pandores, emphasized on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, as an area prone to smuggling, Tarakan Customs continues to carry out continuous supervision to prevent the entry of illegal goods. Various efforts have been made, such as mapping players, routes, independent or joint sea patrols with the Kalbagtim Customs Regional Office, PSO Pantoloan Customs, Lantamal XIII, and Polairud of the North Kalimantan Police, coordination with the local government, as well as other law enforcement officials to coordination with other central and regional Customs supervision units (Antara News, 2023a). However, research data shows that despite the increase in surveillance efforts, the impact on the reduction in smuggling rates is still not significant. Based on the data obtained, there are several main factors that contribute to the continuity of smuggling activities in the Tarakan area, including the following.

Limitations of Coordination between Institutions

One of the main problems is coordination between related institutions, such as Customs and other law enforcement officials (APH) such as Polair, AL, and BNN. Coordination between these agencies is still temporary, so border surveillance becomes less effective. The main causes of this problem are differences in operational procedures, lack of an integrated information sharing system, and overlapping authority in the field. Each institution has different operational procedures according to their respective duties and functions. For example, Customs focuses on monitoring the traffic of goods and the imposition of import duties, the Police handles law enforcement related to criminal acts, while BNN focuses more specifically on law enforcement related to narcotics. As a result, there is often a missynchronization in the implementation of tasks because each institution tends to prioritize its own tasks without an integrated procedure for collaboration.

In addition, each institution does not always share important information quickly and thoroughly. This results in many violations at the border, such as smuggling, going undetected or properly addressed due to the lack of a smooth flow of information. For example, intelligence data related to illegal activities is late or does not reach the authorities for action. Furthermore, the authority of these institutions often overlaps, especially in law enforcement. For example, Customs and Police both have the authority to inspect goods, but different approaches and priorities of their respective duties can lead to conflicts or repetitive actions. This creates confusion on the ground and slows down the response to threats or breaches. In summary, the lack of good coordination and communication between these institutions leads to less than optimal surveillance and law enforcement at the border, slows the response to violations and weakens efforts to prevent problems such as smuggling.

One example of limited coordination between law enforcement officials is the revelation of the accumulation of smuggling of 105,000 grams of narcotics from Malaysia into Sulawesi through Tarakan. According to a report from Detik (2024), the amount of 105,000 grams of methamphetamine is an accumulation of evidence after the revelation of a number of couriers carrying methamphetamine in Central Sulawesi (Central Sulawesi) and South Sulawesi (South Sulawesi) from January to May 2024 from Tarakan. The Police revealed that the smuggled methamphetamine was brought by couriers from Tarakan City in various modes, including: (1) the smuggling was by sea using the PT Pelni KM Sabuk Nusantara ship by combining it with other luggage such as snacks; (2) carrying 30 kilograms of methamphetamine at Awerange Port, Barru packed in boxes containing snacks; (3) evidence of methamphetamine-type narcotics packaged in red plastic packaging with Chinese writing; (4) goods suspected to be methamphetamine-type narcotics were smuggled in white plastic packages by 4 passengers at Juwata Airport, Tarakan to Makassar which were stored in the thighs with each carrying 1,000 grams of methamphetamine.

Another example is the action carried out on Wednesday, September 11, 2024 by Lantama XIII against 30 cosmetic collies without a distribution permit from Malaysia in the waters of Juata Laut, Tarakan City (Radar Tarakan, 2024) and the action carried out on Sunday, January 4, 2023 in the waters of Juata Laut by the Ditpolairud against 5 packages suspected of containing methamphetamine-type narcotics and there was also 1 small package of methamphetamine-type narcotics stored in cigarettes in a black bag (Antara News, 2023a). The enforcement in the waters around Juata Laut involves goods suspected of coming from abroad, namely Malaysia. As an officer on the front line of the country's borders on the import of goods from other countries, this is one of the main duties of Customs in enforcing and preventing illegal importation, but due to the limitation of personnel who cannot always patrol all the time and sensitivity to the time of smuggling, the thwart effort is carried out directly by law enforcement officials, namely each Lantamal XIII, and youth was carried out by the Kaltara Regional Police Directorate. Because if you have to wait for coordination with BBN and Tarakan Customs officers, it will take time, while smugglers do take advantage of the time when the officers are careless, so that the effort to thwart smuggling at the first opportunity was immediately thwarted by Lantamal XIII and also the Directorate of Police, which then from the arrest, the development was carried out together by coordinating and synergizing between law enforcement officers to find motorcycles or the main actors of smuggling aforementioned.

Cooperation Between Infiltrator Networks and Local Communities:

This study found that one of the factors that supports the success of smuggling is the cooperation between smuggler networks and local communities in border areas. Local communities are often involved in the smuggling process, both as informants who inform about the existence of patrols, and as parties who provide hiding places or other facilities that support these illegal activities. This situation creates a great challenge for Customs officials to identify and arrest the smugglers.

One example that highlights the serious challenges in monitoring the distribution of goods in Tarakan is the case of illegal cosmetics smuggling involving two Post Office Heads in North Kalimantan. Based on a report by CNN Indonesia (2023), the Tarakan Police managed to arrest two branch heads of PT Pos Indonesia, namely TB (Head of the Tarakan Post Office) and CH (Head of the Sungai Mosquito Branch Post Office,

Nunukan), who were involved in the circulation of illegal cosmetics from the Philippines. In addition to the two suspects, a courier with the initials J alias N was also arrested. Another suspect, M, who is the owner of an illegal cosmetics supplier through an online store in Nunukan Regency, is still in pursuit and has been included in the Person Wanted List (DPO). M is suspected of bringing goods from Malaysia to Indonesia. The chronology of the incident began when suspect J picked up M's cosmetics that arrived at the Mosquito River, Nunukan. He then delivered the cosmetics without a distribution permit to the Sungai Mosquito Branch Post Office for further delivery. CH's task as the Branch Head is to collect data and input data to the Post Office system, as well as deliver the illegal cosmetics to the Mosquito River Port to be sent to Tarakan City through SDF Port. Tarakan Police Chief, AKBP Ronaldo Maradona TPP Siregar, explained that the shipment in February 2023 showed nine tons of illegal cosmetics without a distribution permit from the Mosquito River to Tarakan, then sent to various regions in Indonesia. The suspects are threatened with criminal charges based on Article 197 junto Article 106 paragraphs (1) and (2) of Law Number 36 of 2009 concerning Health, with a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison.

Smugglers Continue to Innovate in Developing New Modus of Operandi

One of the main reasons why surveillance has not achieved optimal results is that smugglers continue to innovate in developing new modus operandi to evade detection. In addition, the strength of the established smuggler network, as well as the involvement of local actors who understand the geographical conditions of the border area well, make surveillance efforts even more difficult. Here are some findings of the modus operandi of smugglers in the Tarakan border area:

Table 2. The Modus Operandi of Smugglers in the Tarakan Border Area

Types of Goods	Modus Operandi
Drugs	a. Packaging narcotics in Chinese tea packets and mixing ballasts such as iron pipes to be thrown into the sea when caught (Radar Tarakan, 2024) b. Smuggling narcotics with luggage such as snacks (Detik.com, 2024) c. Carrying narcotics in red plastic packages with Chinese characters written on them (Detik.com, 2024) d. Hiding narcotics in the thighs of airplane passengers with white plastic packaging (Detik.com, 2024) e. Smuggling narcotics mixed with fish in fish storage boxes (Patrol News, 2022)
Cosmetics	a. Smuggling illegal cosmetics in the mode of consignment through the Deposit Service Company (PJT) and PT. Pos Indonesia (Antara News Kaltara, 2022) b. Smuggling illegal cosmetics with the modus operandi of carrying out and distributing and sending illegal cosmetics using Expedition services without using delivery receipts (Antara News, 2023a) c. Smuggling illegal cosmetics using a squat boat through an unofficial entrance route (Polres Tarakan, 2023)

Several evidences revealed in 2024 about the arrest of narcotics and cosmetics smuggling show that the smuggling of illegal goods still continues to occur and is even growing both in number and intensity in the Tarakan border area. As reported by Detik (2024), from January to May 2024, as many as 105,000 grams of methamphetamine narcotics have been found smuggled from Malaysia to Tarakan, which is then smuggled into one of Indonesia's regions, namely Sulawesi. Then also according to a report from Radar Tarakan (2024), on September 11, 2024, as many as 30 illegal cosmetic collies smuggled from Malaysia were successfully thwarted by the Second Fleet Quick Response (SFQ) Team of Satrol Lantamal XIII Tarakan.

Since there are still ongoing efforts to smuggle narcotics and cosmetics, further and more in-depth research is needed to try to reduce or even prevent efforts to smuggle illegal imports, especially narcotics and cosmetics in Indonesia's border areas, especially Tarakan.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical relationship between threats, vulnerabilities, and the modus operandi in narcotics and cosmetics smuggling within the Tarakan border area, revealing significant implications for national security and economic stability. Weak border surveillance, particularly along unofficial routes, enables smugglers to exploit gaps in monitoring, leveraging open waters and difficult-to-reach coastlines to innovate their smuggling tactics. Despite the presence of multiple law enforcement agencies, coordination remains fragmented, with inadequate resource allocation and information-sharing undermining effective oversight. The strategic location of Tarakan, especially with its proximity to the upcoming Nusantara Capital City (IKN),

amplifies its importance as a gateway requiring robust policy changes, enhanced inter-agency collaboration, and technological integration to mitigate these challenges.

Future research could focus on exploring advanced surveillance technologies such as AI-based monitoring, drones, and geospatial mapping for more efficient border control, while also examining community-led intelligence gathering models to enhance local engagement. Cross-border collaboration frameworks should be studied to strengthen international partnerships in combating smuggling. Additionally, research could analyze the psychosocial and operational challenges faced by border officers to improve their well-being and performance. Policy reforms and their economic impacts on smuggling-affected regions, sustainable infrastructure solutions like mobile watchposts, and evolving smugglers' tactics, including digital tools, should also be key areas for investigation. These insights can provide a holistic understanding and actionable strategies to enhance border security and combat smuggling effectively.

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