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# CONTRIBUTION OF GHANA-UK COLLABORATION TO THE COMBAT OF DRUG TRAFFICKING IN GHANA

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## Abstract

The study was to explore the contribution of Ghana-UK collaboration to the combat of drug trafficking in Ghana. The study used a qualitative and exploratory design of which respondents from the national security, airport immigration and narcotics were selected purposively. Interview guide was used as a data collection instrument. Furthermore, the interviews recorded were transcribed verbatim, coded and edited, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis and presented in themes based on the research objectives. The study found that cocaine, heroin, India hemp or marijuana, "codeine", and benelin syrup mixed with codeine are the main drugs that are trafficked in and out of the country. Drug peddlers normally trafficked drugs by concealing it in luggage, swallowing, incision in the anus, putting them in some foodstuffs, cargo and others. Poverty, wish to amass wealth or fame, as well as high unemployment rate, were the factors that triggered drug trafficking. Also, the prospects show that none of the two countries could have been able to better address the problem of drug trafficking without this collaboration between them. Financial constraints, equipment, short of staff and skilled workers, an attitude of workers, administrative issues, condition of services, among others, serve as the main challenges confronted in the quest to combat drug trafficking in Ghana. Therefore, the study recommended that the Government of Ghana continue with the agreement or collaboration with the UK since it has advice in combating of drug trafficking. Also, in partnership with the national security, the government of Ghana should improve upon the condition of service and find a better way to motivate the workers for them to give out their best to help combat drug trafficking.

**keywords:** UK, Ghana, Combat, Drug Trafficking, Collaboration

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## INTRODUCTION

National Security has garnered considerable attention and interest in contemporary International Relations among states and scholars. This is because governments are responsible for protecting and securing their territorial boundaries and the human security of their citizens;

this is the ultimate goal of national security. In this context, security can be defined as a protective condition that politicians seek to acquire or maintain to protect the various components of their polities from external or internal threats (Annan, 2000). Until the late twentieth century, the concept of safety was centred on national security. Historically, security threats were frequently viewed as the result of internal threats, more precisely internal military threats (which require an army reaction). However, with the end of the Cold War, the concept of safety took on a broader meaning. It has been increasingly described in terms of transnational safety or threats affecting the human security of the world's individuals.

Proliferation of illicit drugs is a primary factor endangering global security (World Drug Report, 2010). As a result of the far-reaching consequences of drug trafficking, global attention has been focused on the need for specific initiatives to be taken to combat it (Ellis, 2009). It is critical to recognize that distinct actors play distinct roles in the illicit drug trade. While some actors are involved in manufacturing, others in distribution, and still others in consumption (World Drug Report, 2010). Historically, the African continent was a minor player in illicit drug trafficking, but it has gained global prominence in recent years due to its position as a trans-shipment route to Europe and the Americas (Akyeampong, 2005; Aning, 2007).

Indeed, Africa is the world's second-largest producer of cannabis, accounting for approximately 22% of global production (UN, 2008). As Omoleke et al., (2016) noted, the West African subregion has developed into a fertile ground for drug trafficking operations. Ghana is a participant in this arena, which serves as a conduit for drug trafficking. While illicit drug manufacturing and consumption have not reached unprecedented levels in Ghana, the country is increasingly being used as a transit hub (Sumankuuro et al., 2017). Notably, Ghana has designated a significant transit point for pharmaceuticals destined for the United States of America, Europe, and Asia in 2005 (US Department of State, 2005). As Kofi Annan, (2000) noted, "the requirements, we face also reflect a growing consensus that collective security cannot be defined narrowly as the absence of armed conflict between or within states." Gross human rights violations, large-scale civilian displacement, international terrorism, the AIDS pandemic, drug and weapon trafficking, and environmental disasters all pose a direct threat to human security, compelling us to pursue a much more coordinated approach to various issues.

According to the World Health Organization, a drug is any substance that has the potential to improve physical or mental well-being, as well as any chemical agent that alters the biochemical or physiological processes of tissues or organisms (Organization & Dependence, 2018). From this definition, it is clear that drugs play a role in meeting man's physiological requirements or in improving his quality of life. Additionally, it raises the possibility that certain drugs that alter organisms' biochemical processes could be harmful to our health (Chasapis et al., 2012). The Advanced Learners Dictionary defines traffic as "illegal, illicit, or immoral trade."

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2007), drug trafficking is a global illicit trade that involves the cultivation, manufacture, distribution, and sale of substances prohibited by law. Globalization, market liberalization, and border control have facilitated the growth of drug trafficking (Petcu, 2017). Satellite communications and other technological advancements have provided trafficking networks with new and effective tools for adapting to and utilizing the international system. Analysts have long established a link between globalization and the growth of transnational forms of crime, most notably drug trafficking (Passas, 2003).

Globalisation facilitated the movement, communication, and free flow of assets across international borders, increasing global drug trafficking (Passas, 2003). The advancement of the internet has resulted in an increase in global drug demand and access by expediting drug-related communications, coordination, and virtual transactions. This facilitates easy access to previously unavailable drugs in a geographical location (Shehu & Akintoye, 2009). The catastrophic consequences of drug trafficking on human and national security are intolerable. Drug trafficking has a detrimental effect on the social, political, and economic fabric of societies. West Africa is rapidly developing into a hub for drug trafficking (Aning, 2007). Between 2001 and 2007, annual cocaine seizures in West Africa increased from approximately 273 kilos to about 47,000 kilos. The preceding, and numerous other risks associated with drug trafficking, necessitate increased collaboration between and among nations, particularly transit points and destinations, on how to collaborate to help stem the tide of illicit drug trafficking.

Drug trafficking's emergence and proliferation in West Africa have grown quickly (Bybee, 2012). There is growing recognition that drug trafficking is a transnational phenomenon that requires the development of synergies between countries/states to combat. The primary security threat posed by the increasing prevalence of trafficking into West Africa is political and public official corruption, weak institutions, porous borders, and a lack of financial muscle to confront the challenges head-on. These developments have enabled criminal networks and other drug cartels to infiltrate security and government organisations to reorient officers' sense of responsibility and patriotism toward the benefits of drugs, thereby jeopardizing their allegiance to the state and public good (Failler et al., 2014).

Ghana has gained global attention as a major drug trafficking hub since the 1980s (Akyeampong, 2005). Since drug trafficking is a transnational activity involving numerous players, each with a distinct role, various approaches to combating the menace have been employed. Ghana and other countries have collaborated on strategies to combat the drug menace. Ghana has united with the United Kingdom due to growing concerns about drug trafficking in and out of the country, with the former serving as a destination point. The cooperation, dubbed "Operation West Bridge," began in November 2006 and allows British custom officers to work

alongside their Ghanaian counterparts at the airport to share intelligence techniques and mentor on anti-narcotics detection.

The programme facilitated the installation of sophisticated gadgets and other drug detection devices at the airport. It provided refresher training to Ghana's lead state agency for combating drug trafficking, the Narcotic Control Board (NACOB). Adu et al., (2014) Despite the collaborative efforts, there is a need to re-examine the nature or state of drug trafficking in Ghana, as well as the prospects and challenges of collaboration, in light of a 2017 World Drug Report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which indicates that Ghana is the second-largest transit point for cocaine trafficking in Africa and the 14th largest cocaine consumer nation in the world. While the implementation of Operation West Bridge resulted in several arrests and seizures, the growing prevalence of drug trafficking in Ghana necessitates a re-examination of the collaborative arrangement. In light of this, this piece sought to ascertain the nature or state of drug trafficking in Ghana, to examine the prospects for Ghana-UK cooperation in combating drug trafficking; and to explore the challenges associated with Ghana-UK cooperation in combating drug trafficking.

### **METHODS**

The study used a qualitative and exploratory design of which participants from the national security, airport immigration and narcotics were targeted. Also, purposive sampling was adopted to select 3 national security experts who were in the better position to contribute to the objectives set for the study. Interview guide was used for data collection. Credibility was ensured through trustworthiness, audit trail, triangulation, member-checking, dependability, and confirmability. Furthermore, the interviews recorded were transcribed verbatim, coded and edited, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis with the aid of Nvivo software and presented in themes based on the research objectives. Also, direct quotations were used to support the results.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

This section presents background information about the respondents' sex, age, marital status, position and number of years in service of the respondents. Three men in the national security, airport, narcotics were interviewed. They were all married and were 42, 45 and 35 years respectively. Two were Christians while a participant was a Moslem. All of them have worked in the security services for more than 8 years and therefore were aware of this agreement between Ghana and UK and its related matters.

#### **The nature or state of drug trafficking in Ghana**

On the kinds of drugs that are trafficked in Ghana, the data gathered reveal that drugs such as cocaine, heroin, India hemp or marijuana, "codeine", and benelin syrup mixed with codeine. They claimed that cocaine and heroin is the first-class drugs and the most drugs that are peddled or trafficked in Ghana. However, a participant from the narcotics indicated that there is a new drug known as benelin that people are now focusing on it too. These were confirmed in the following except:

*"normally, drugs that are trafficked included heroin, cocaine, marijuana and others" (IDI – 45 year old male).*

This was corroborated by an officer that:

*"drug peddlers normally deal with cocaine, heroin, India hemp and others" (IDI – 35 year old male).*

An officer added his voice that:

*"with drugs, they highly trafficked with cocaine, "wee" or marijuana, and currently, they deal with baseline syrup mixed with codeine." (IDI – 42 year old male).*

With regards to how drugs are trafficked, it came to limelight that most of the drugs are trafficked by concealing it in luggage, swallowing, incision in the anus, putting them in some foodstuffs, cargo and others. Also, it was indicated by them that drugs are trafficked both to the country and out of the country. These were confirmed in the following except:

*"As for the drugs, they are both trafficked into the country and out of the country by these same drug peddlers" some put it in vegetables or foodstuff, some people even go to factories to be put into the rubber or container before they seal it. Some also swallow it, they do it like a tablet form and swallow it (IDI – 35 year old male).*

*"Drugs are concealed in luggage, some are swallowed, some are also incision in the anal. Some also cut and scrotum or open some foodstuffs such as plantain, tuber' of yam, garden eggs among others and use super glue to cover it nicely so you wouldn't know. Recently, liquid schnapps were used by them, the screen to see that the substance was there. Even "alata" soap, they used it" (IDI – 45 year old male).*

This is supported by an except from an officer:

*"hmmmmmmmm, the drug peddlers are very smart and dynamic in their dealing and trafficking of drugs. Today, is through the anus, tomorrow, they swallow it, and the next day, they will put it into some foodstuffs. So there are a lot of ways they traffic their substance depending on their own intelligence and smartness" (IDI – 42 year old male).*

With regards to conditions or factors that are responsible for drug trafficking in Ghana, all the participants said it was all because of money which is the root of all evil. A participant added that it was also because of fame and support from worthy people in the society. Others added poverty and unemployment as some major factors that cause people to peddle drugs. These were in harmony with the following except:

*"Money, it is all because of money. In most the cases, they are doing it for money. They normally get it (cocaine) from North America, Brazil and others trafficked it into Ghana." (IDI – 42 year old male).*

An officer added his voice by saying that:

*"some of these factors include poverty. Also, we have high rate of unemployment as well as sponsoring of travelling expenses by these big businessmen in the country." (IDI – 45 year old male).*

This was corroborated by an officer that:

*"Ghana is trafficking point for a lot of drug dealers or peddlers due to poverty and unemployment issues" (IDI – 35 year old male).*

### **Strategies put in place by the Ghana-UK collaboration in combating drug trafficking in Ghana**

On strategies employed, data gathered revealed that most of the strategies included the use of dogs, monitoring system, scanners, Passenger Name Records, experience, information and skills, immigration, itemizer, "manifest" as well as "intel" (information about the traveller). The "manifest" look at the total number of passengers on the flight, list of passengers' names on the flight and traveling information about these passengers. These were confirmed in the following except:

*" In Ghana, we have an agreement with the British, and they work hand in hand with us. The British are called West bridge and they work with narcotics control. Eco and West bridge are to cut down drug trafficking either coming in or going out of the country. We have our scanners, we pick randomly. We look at where they are going if found anything suspicious, they are engage with the narcotics and next is prepared to court. Those coming to Ghana, there is manifest, it help us to do our analysis. We normally look at the traveling history or them or the nationality, for instance, Nigerians are risk-takers, Ghanaians, East Africans and Kenyans. We can also do urine test and another test to detect whatever they have swallow and even the food they eat early before board and onboard. We also have scanners that we can use to see whatever is in your stomach. We also scan bags and luggage. The scanning strategies is very effective though others also help since the scanner is expensive to use (IDI – 35 year old male).*

This was corroborated by an officer that:

*"There are a lot of strategies we employed in dealing with drug trafficking. We have the PNR, thus, Passenger Name Records, that we have it from the airline. It helps us to know the details of the passengers. It tells us who you are, where you bought the ticket, the food you ate on the flight, who bought your ticket and how did you buy your ticket, among others that help us in our further analysis. Sometimes, if we see the agent who bought your ticket for you, we can also go on social media to search for more information about such agent.*

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*Also, we have the itemizer that we use to pick samples from your shirt, your hands or your body because ones you deal with drugs, you will use your hand to pick it, it can stick on your hands, shirts and body so we use that machine to detect that and we take it from there. Moreover, we use special dogs (kiner) trained to snuff all the bags to detect if there is any hidden drugs, especially cocaine, heroin and marijuana. These dogs help a lot since they can detect the slickest sample of drug in various luggage. Some do open and insert it into bags, dresses, canned foods among others, those are scanned by special scanners to detect any substance." (IDI – 45 year old male)*

This is supported by an except from an officer:

*"mostly, we rely on information, information is key when it comes to drug trafficking. Sometimes, some countries and Ghana even also do that, can send you information about particular people or flight due to inadequate checking or monitoring system for further investigation to detect these drug peddlers. I think there have been one or two incidence in even Ghana where we were not done with thoroughly investigation about some passengers on flight but due to some reasons the plane have to leave here, we communicate it to the other end and they were able to detect some drug peddlers when they arrived there. Sometimes, based on our experience and the passenger name records, we can suspect some passengers and therefore, delay them since they are mostly worked within time so when you delay them, they become frustrated and would react differently or suspiciously, then we will take it from there. Most at times, we can apply either two or three strategies to investigate them." The methods or strategies complement each other, and they are all effective especially the use of a special scanner is the best strategy since it can detect anything within you or your luggage. The scanning method is very effective and next is the special dogs and the use of manifest or passenger name records." (IDI – 42 year old male)*

### **Prospects of the Ghana-UK collaboration in combating drug trafficking**

With regard to this objective, the study sought to know whether one country could have combat the drug trafficking without the help of the other; what are the major gains made in combating drug trafficking as a result of the Ghana-UK collaboration; as well as examining the performance of Ghana relative to drug trafficking combat before and after the collaboration with UK.

Data gathered on the prospects shows that none of the two countries have been able to better address the problem of drug trafficking without the collaboration. This may be due to the fact that drug trafficking is a global challenge, and therefore, it cannot be single-handedly by a particular country alone. And this may also be due to the fact that drug peddlers transact business across countries, within countries and across continents and therefore very complex to be dealt with.

## Contribution of Ghana-UK Collaboration to The Combat of Drug Trafficking in Ghana

On the major gains of the collaboration between Ghana and the UK, all the participants confirmed that Ghana has really benefited from this collaboration in many ways such as training or workshops and equipment. This were confirmed in the following except:

*"Ghana has benefited in many ways from this collaboration. They are assisting us in the equipment and training. Recently, they have bought us a new machine at terminal three (3). This is the same machine used in UK for scanning. Without them, we cannot advance in doing some certain things. Also, they provided us with those dogs who search and smell to detect drugs. Moreover, they bring people with special skills and experience on the job to train us more."* (IDI – 45 year old male)

This was corroborated by an officer that:

*"In Ghana, UK and Ghana collaboration has been useful to the human resource. The UNODC always organise training for narcotics. British high commissioner organise workshops and training for narcotics and normally bring experts from UK to Ghana to inform us about new trends of the drug peddlers, tell us what is happening there and also what is going on globally."* (IDI – 35 yearold male)

An officer added his voice that:

*"UK brought us some scanning machine. They trained some of our people and brought them back to Ghana. Sometimes, we go to their embassy to work with them. Sometimes too, they also come here to stay with us for some months to study our work and send information to their country in order to strengthen their security. These experts also help us here to understand the new trends of the drug peddlers and others in order for us to be in the known and alert for those people." We need each other because they need us that is why they are interested in our security here. They would not have invested so huge in our equipment and training. Once a flight is moved from one place to the other, we need to collaborate because for instance if we leave the passengers here without checking them and they moved out to Britain, the work load will be high for them and they might not be able to detect all and others. We may have our challenges, and they too have their. Therefore, we have to work hand in hand for effectiveness and efficiency in combating drug trafficking (IDI – 42 year old male).*

With regards to the impact of this collaboration between Ghana and the UK, all the participants agreed that Ghana has benefited a lot from it and has really improve upon the security of Ghana when it comes to drug trafficking. This were confirmed in the following except:

*"Before the collaboration, we were not doing much, and we did not even understand the work properly. And after the collaboration, we get to understand them in and out of the*



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*work and also were supplied with equipment to help us in dealing with our work." (IDI – 35 year old male).*

An officer added his voice by saying that:

*"All that I can say is that this collaboration has helped us to improve upon our work and skills for the work. Before this, we were lacking a lot of things, including information, equipment and alerts to strengthen our security. But now, with the help of the UK, most of the things have been improved, especially with the equipment, intermittent training, traveling outside for training and workshops, among others. Also, we understand our job better and therefore, could execute our core mandate easily without anything." (IDI – 45 year old male)*

### **Challenges of the Ghana-UK collaboration in combating drug trafficking**

The last objective sought to identify challenges emanated from the Ghana-UK collaboration in combating drug trafficking in Ghana. Based on this, whether new problems have come up due to the Ghana-UK collaboration in combating drug trafficking and whether Ghana is ready to solve such problems or not. Data gathered from the participants shows that financial constraints, language barrier or issues, equipment, short of staff and skilled workers, attitude of workers, administrative issues, condition of services among others, serve as the main challenges confronted in the quest to combat drug trafficking in Ghana. The following quotations support this assertion:

*"dear, is all about money, financial issue is the only thing that is worrying our work. To organise training and workshops and also securing special equipment is not easy. Sometimes we have little problem with the language especially when the training is organize by all white people or British" (IDI – 35 year old male).*

This was corroborated by an immigration officer;

*"I can say that there are a lot of problems, but the paramount among them include financial constrain, lack of equipment, inadequate training, short of staff and skilled workers, administrative issues, attitude of some workers, poor condition of service and others." You know since is a human institution, sometimes these politicians and other people with high profile and name in the country always try to sabotage the system and also sometimes family and friends or relationships may loosen our strength to work effectively and efficiently." (IDI – 45 year old male).*

This is also that an officer added up as a challenge:

*"one of the things is that in Ghana, we don't want the truth, sometimes, doing the right thing, some people will say that you are trying to defame your country. Sometimes, when we made some arrest and we announce it, people say "heeeiii" why this?, why that? So this break our spirit for working for the country." (IDI – 42 year old male).*

On whether Ghana should continue with this collaboration or now, all the participants said that Ghana should continue since it was a good collaboration in fighting

or combating drug trafficking of which by so doing, it has helped to reduce such acts between those countries.

*"Yes, I would encourage it" (IDI – 45 year old male).*

This is supported by a quote from an officer that:

*"Yes, we have a lot from this collaboration between Ghana and UK. And I wish the training aspect should be improved especially workers here should travel to UK to learn more skills in the occupation to come down to help us here to effectively and efficiently execute our duties and responsibilities" (IDI – 42 year old male).*

On the kinds of drugs that are trafficked in Ghana, the data gathered reveal that drugs such as cocaine, heroin, India hemp or marijuana, "codeine", and benelin syrup mixed with codeine. They claimed that cocaine and heroin is the first-class drugs and the most drugs that are peddled or trafficked in Ghana. However, a participant from the narcotics indicated that there is a new drug known as benelin that people are now focusing on it too. With regards to how drugs are trafficked, it came to limelight that most of the drugs are trafficked by concealing it in luggage, swallowing, incision in the anus, putting them in some foodstuffs, cargo and others. Also, it was indicated by them that drugs are trafficked both to the country and out of the country.

With regards to conditions or factors that are responsible for drug trafficking in Ghana, all the participants said it was all because of money which is the root of all evil. A participant added that it was also because of fame and support from worthy people in the society. Others added poverty and unemployment as some major factors that cause people to peddle drugs. This finding is similar to that of Bell-Sakyi & Attoui, (2013) who concluded that cocaine, heroin and marijuana were the main drugs that are trafficked in Ghana. With regards to how drugs are trafficked, it came to limelight that most of the drugs are trafficked by concealing it in luggage, swallowing, incision in the anus, putting them in some foodstuffs, cargo and others. Also, it was indicated by them that drugs are trafficked both to the country and out of the country.

On strategies employed, data gathered revealed that most of the strategies included the use of dogs, monitoring system, scanners, Passenger Name Records, experience, information and skills, immigration, "manifest" as well as "intel". The "manifest" look at the total number of passengers on the flight, list of passengers' names on the flight and traveling information about these passengers.

The prospects shows that none of the two countries could have been able to better address the problem of drug trafficking without this collaboration between them (Ghana and UK). All the participants confirmed that Ghana has really benefited from this collaboration in many ways such as training or workshops and equipment. With regards to the impact of this collaboration between Ghana and the UK, all the participants agreed

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that Ghana has benefited a lot from it and has really improve upon the security of Ghana when it comes to drug trafficking.

The participants shows that financial constraints, language problem, equipment, short of staff and skilled workers, attitude of workers, administrative issues, condition of services among others serve as the main challenges confronted in quest to combat drug trafficking in Ghana. On whether Ghana should continue with this collaboration or now, all the participants said that Ghana should continue since it was a good collaboration in fighting or combating drug trafficking of which by so doing, it has helped to reduce such acts between those countries. With regards to the impact of this collaboration between Ghana and the UK, all the participants agreed that Ghana has benefited a lot from it and has really improve upon the security of Ghana when it comes to drug trafficking.

This study confirms that of Trafficking & Office, (2012), who found that challenges of the collaboration between Ghana and UK included language barrier, inadequate training and financial constrain. However, this study added on that poor condition of service, administrative issues, and lack of equipment were additional challenges of combating drug trafficking.

## **CONCLUSION**

Cocaine, heroin, India hemp or marijuana, "codeine", and benelin syrup mixed with codeine are the main drugs that are trafficked in and out of the country. Drug peddlers normally trafficked drugs by concealing it in luggage, swallowing, incision in the anus, putting them in some foodstuffs, cargo and others. Factors that are responsible for drug trafficking in Ghana, is poverty, wish to amass wealth or fame, as well as high unemployment rate.

Strategies put in place by the Ghana-UK collaboration in combating drug trafficking in Ghana include the use of dogs, monitoring system, scanners, Passenger Name Records, experience, information and skills, immigration, "manifest" as well as "intel".

Ghana and the UK have collaborated to address the problem of drug trafficking, with Ghana benefiting from training, workshops, and equipment. All participants agreed that the collaboration has improved the security of Ghana when it comes to drug trafficking. Though, there were no identified problem with regards to the collaboration between Ghana and UK with the exception of language barrier which seldom occurs. However, financial constraints, equipment, short of staff and skilled workers, attitude of workers, administrative issues, condition of services among others, serve as the main challenges confronted in the quest to combat drug trafficking in Ghana. Nevertheless, all the participants said that Ghana should continue since it was a good collaboration in combating drug trafficking of which by so doing, it has helped to reduce such acts between those countries. With regards to the impact of this collaboration between Ghana and the UK, the participants agreed that Ghana has benefited a lot from it and has really improve

upon the security of Ghana when it comes to drug trafficking. It is, therefore, recommended that the Government of Ghana should continue with the collaboration with UK. Also, the government of Ghana, in collaboration with the national security should improve upon the condition of service and find a better way to motivate the workers in order for them to give out their best to help combat drug trafficking. Lastly, the UK government should continue to supply the national security with the needed equipment and training to help strengthen the security of Ghana and to combat against drug trafficking.

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