

The Illicit Drug Situation in Colombia

Drug Intelligence Report

DEA
Intelligence Division



November 1993
DEA-93016



Drug Enforcement Administration

THE ILLICIT DRUG SITUATION IN COLOMBIA

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This report was prepared by the Strategic Intelligence Section, South America Unit. Comments and requests for additional copies are welcome and may be directed to the Publications Unit, Intelligence Division, DEA, on (202) 307-8100.

November 1993

ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE

This report examines drug trafficking in Colombia from the Drug Enforcement Administration's perspective. Colombian drug trafficking organizations are involved in every stage of the illicit drug trafficking process, including cultivation, production, transportation, international wholesale distribution, and money laundering of the resultant profits.

Colombia is the world's leading source of cocaine hydrochloride, responsible for the vast bulk of worldwide production. The production and international wholesale distribution of cocaine are dominated by the Cali and Medellín Cartels. In the past few years, Colombian drug traffickers also have become extensively involved in the heroin trafficking arena. Unless checked, Colombian drug traffickers have the potential to become major players in the global heroin trade in the near future.

It is encouraging, however, that the Colombian Government is tackling the complex drug trafficking problem. While drug Kingpin organizations have suffered significant setbacks in Colombia, sustained efforts will be required by Colombian authorities and the international drug law enforcement community if we are to disrupt and eventually dismantle those organizations.

CONTENTS

iii	Administrator's Message
vii	Executive Assessment
1	Colombia: The Geography of Drug Trafficking
3	Cocaine
3	Coca
3	Cultivation
6	Eradication
7	Cocaine Production and Seizures
11	Cocaine Trafficking
16	Smuggling Methods and Routes
20	Opiates
20	Opium Poppies
23	Heroin Production and Seizures
25	Heroin Trafficking
27	Cannabis
27	Cultivation
28	Eradication
30	Marijuana and Hashish
34	Related Topics
34	Drug Prices
35	Money Laundering
37	Chemical Diversion
38	Colombian Ports and Maritime Smuggling
39	Special Issues
39	Violence in Colombia
40	Insurgent Participation in Drug Trafficking
42	Right-Wing Paramilitary Involvement in Drug Trafficking
43	Drug-Related Corruption
43	Domestic Drug Abuse

44	Government Counter-Drug Organizations
44	Constitutional and Legal Contexts
45	The Executive Branch
46	The Colombian Congress
47	The Judicial System
48	Law Enforcement Agencies
50	Colombian Armed Forces
51	Five-Year Outlook
53	Appendix 1: Acronyms
55	Appendix 2: Conversion Factors
56	Appendix 3: Drug Enforcement Statistics in Colombia: 1990-1992
57	Distribution

EXECUTIVE ASSESSMENT

Colombia is the world's leading source of cocaine hydrochloride, responsible for the vast bulk of worldwide production. Colombian traffickers import cocaine base from Peru and Bolivia, convert it into cocaine hydrochloride at clandestine laboratories in Colombia, and smuggle the finished cocaine abroad for wholesale distribution.

Colombia ranks as the world's third largest producer of coca (after Peru and Bolivia). Colombian farmers grew an estimated 37,100 hectares of coca in 1992. Limited quantities of cocaine base and cocaine hydrochloride are produced from Colombia's domestic coca crop.

Colombia is the world's leading source of cocaine hydrochloride

Clandestine cocaine laboratories have been discovered throughout Colombia. In recent years, the most significant cocaine HCl laboratories seized by Colombian authorities have been in the remote, eastern lowlands or rain forest (Amazonas, Caquetá, Guainía, Guaviare, Putumayo, Vaupés, and Vichada regions), or in trafficker strongholds in the Tolima and Valle del Cauca Departments.

There are numerous drug trafficking organizations in Colombia, the most important of which are the Cali and Medellín Cartels. These cartels dominate the production and international wholesale distribution of cocaine. They smuggle their cocaine into the United States and European countries by means of general aviation aircraft, commercial aircraft, maritime vessel, and couriers.

The Cali Cartel is currently the most powerful cocaine trafficking organization in the world. Intelligence suggests that the Cali Cartel is responsible for a high percentage of the cocaine reaching the United States and the countries of Europe. The Medellín Cartel, which once was the stronger of the cartels, has been weakened by the surrender or death of its top leadership, and it remains under intense pressure from the Colombian Government. Medellín Cartel drug Kingpin Pablo ESCOBAR escaped from Colombia's Envigado Prison in July 1992 and remains a fugitive from justice. The OCHOA-Vasquez brothers are confined at Itagüí Prison in Colombia, though close associates of the OCHOAs continue to run the family's drug trafficking business.

Although the Medellín Cartel has been weakened by recent events, the ESCOBAR and OCHOA organizations continue to smuggle multi-ton quantities of cocaine into the United States and Europe. Even if Pablo ESCOBAR fades from the drug trafficking scene, a restructured Medellín Cartel can be expected to pose a continuing and significant challenge to international drug law enforcement efforts.

Colombian security forces seized 30.8 metric tons of cocaine hydrochloride and 6.7 metric tons of cocaine base in 1992, more than any other Latin American country. The total of 37.5 metric tons seized by Colombia in 1992 is, however, a 54.8 percent drop when compared to the 82.9 metric tons seized in 1991. This decline is due, in part, to the Colombian Government's decision to divert counter-drug assets from cocaine interdiction to opium poppy eradication and the search for Pablo ESCOBAR.

In recent years, Colombian heroin has become a growing threat to the United States. The Colombian National Police and other sources now estimate Colombia's opium poppy cultivation at 10,000 to 20,000 hectares. In January 1992, the Government of Colombia approved aerial spraying of opium poppy fields. Subsequently, Colombian authorities claim to have destroyed 12,759 hectares of opium poppies in 1992. In contrast, the government destroyed only 1,156 hectares of opium poppies in 1991.

The Medellín and Cali Cartels are both engaged in the heroin trade and use air and sea routes to smuggle this drug into the United States. The Cali Cartel appears to participate to a greater extent in heroin trafficking than does the Medellín Cartel. In addition, small, independent, poly-drug trafficking groups from Colombia run heroin distribution networks in several major U.S. cities.

The most dramatic example of a recent cartel smuggling attempt of suspected Colombian heroin was the June 1992 airdrop of a 15-kilogram bale of heroin near Isabella, Puerto Rico. This was the first known airdrop of heroin. Although the trafficking group responsible for this drop has yet to be identified, the delivery had all the earmarks of a cartel operation. Unless checked, Colombian drug traffickers have the potential to become major players in the global heroin trade within the next five years.

**Colombian heroin has
become a growing threat
to the United States**

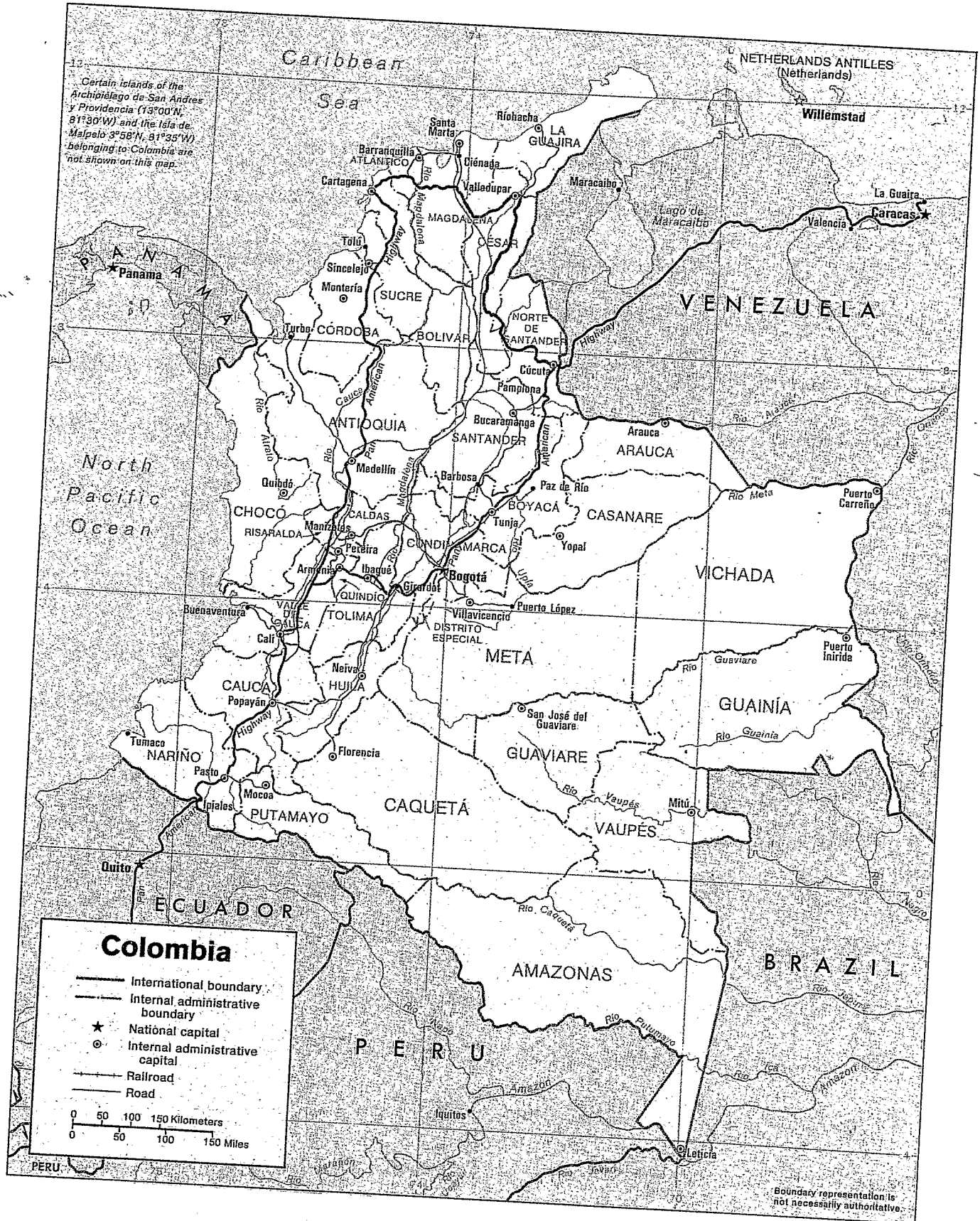
Colombian drug trafficking organizations employ complex international financial mechanisms to launder the massive amounts of money generated by their illicit trade. In the past, most of this drug money was kept in Europe or the United States. But, in response to U.S. and European government efforts to seize drug assets, increasing amounts of "narco-dollars" are now being transferred to Colombia. Colombian traffickers are sending their drug proceeds to Colombia in order to have ready access to those funds.

Recent law enforcement successes notwithstanding, the vast drug-derived wealth flowing into Colombia is making it possible for drug traffickers to gain increased economic, political, and social influence in Colombia. For example, the cartels are buying up previously legitimate financial institutions and other businesses, as well as large amounts of Colombian real estate.

The Government of Colombia is conducting aggressive tactical operations against the Cali and Medellín Cartels. Recent government successes include the arrest of drug Kingpin Jairo Ivan URDINOLA-Grajales, a series of raids against cartel money laundering organizations, large-scale opium poppy eradication, numerous cocaine and heroin laboratory raids, and significant cocaine and marijuana seizures. In spite of these tactical successes, the long-term prospect for a decisive strategic victory against the major drug Kingpin organizations is not promising. Serious domestic problems, which include insurgent violence, a weak and intimidated judiciary, and widespread official corruption, are hindering Colombia's "war" against the narco-traffickers.

Despite certain valorous and successful endeavors undertaken by the Government of Colombia, only limited setbacks have been inflicted upon trafficking organizations. The complexity and breadth of the drug trafficking industry in Colombia have expanded in the past two years as exemplified by the emergence of the heroin industry and the resurgence of cannabis cultivation. Additionally, the ever-present element of corruption, woven into Colombian society, is a constant menace to law enforcement objectives. For example, the escape of the infamous Pablo ESCOBAR-Gaviria tainted many of the initiatives of the Gaviria administration. As public scrutiny and international policy focused on the continued freedom of the most renowned drug Kingpin, impediments confronting the GOC in combatting the illicit industries were brought to worldwide attention.

The Colombian government will continue to face obstacles to the implementation of a comprehensive drug strategy. Nevertheless, drug Kingpin organizations have suffered significant setbacks. Sustained efforts by both Colombian authorities and the international law enforcement community are essential to the successful disruption of the illicit drug trafficking.



COLOMBIA: THE GEOGRAPHY OF DRUG TRAFFICKING

Colombia's geographic location, diverse terrain, and climate are important elements affecting that country's illicit drug industry.

Colombia's central location between Peru and Bolivia (which grow most of the world's coca) and the United States (which consumes most of the world's cocaine) makes it a logical hub for cocaine trafficking. Colombia is also the only South American country with coastlines on the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. Accordingly, a combination of Pacific and Caribbean air and maritime drug smuggling routes are available to Colombian traffickers.

Colombia's domestic transportation infrastructure is crucial to the success of Colombian drug trafficking. Water transportation is, for example, the only practical way to move essential chemicals in the amounts required to produce multiton quantities of cocaine. Traffickers, therefore, exploit Colombia's 29 major rivers and 88 major river ports to move chemicals, equipment, supplies, and drugs. Colombia's rivers total 5,600 miles (9,018 kilometers) in length.

Rivers are the primary means of transportation in southern and eastern Colombia, where a majority of Colombia's coca cultivation and cocaine processing occurs. Colombia also has an extensive road network (in the western half of the country) and hundreds of airstrips, which are exploited by the drug traffickers.

Colombia can be divided into five broad geographic regions of interest from a counter-drug perspective:

- ***The Northern Lowlands (Guajira Peninsula):*** A flat, sparsely populated, semi-desert area, well suited for clandestine cocaine laboratories and illicit airstrips. The Guajira Peninsula is a key air departure point for cocaine-laden aircraft destined for Mexico and the island countries of the Caribbean and Central America.
- ***The Western Lowlands:*** An area of broad rivers, extensive swampland, and nearly impenetrable jungle lying west of the Andean mountain ranges along Colombia's Pacific Coast and border with Panama. The region's oppressive climate and poor drainage are not conducive to significant clandestine airstrip or cocaine laboratory activity.

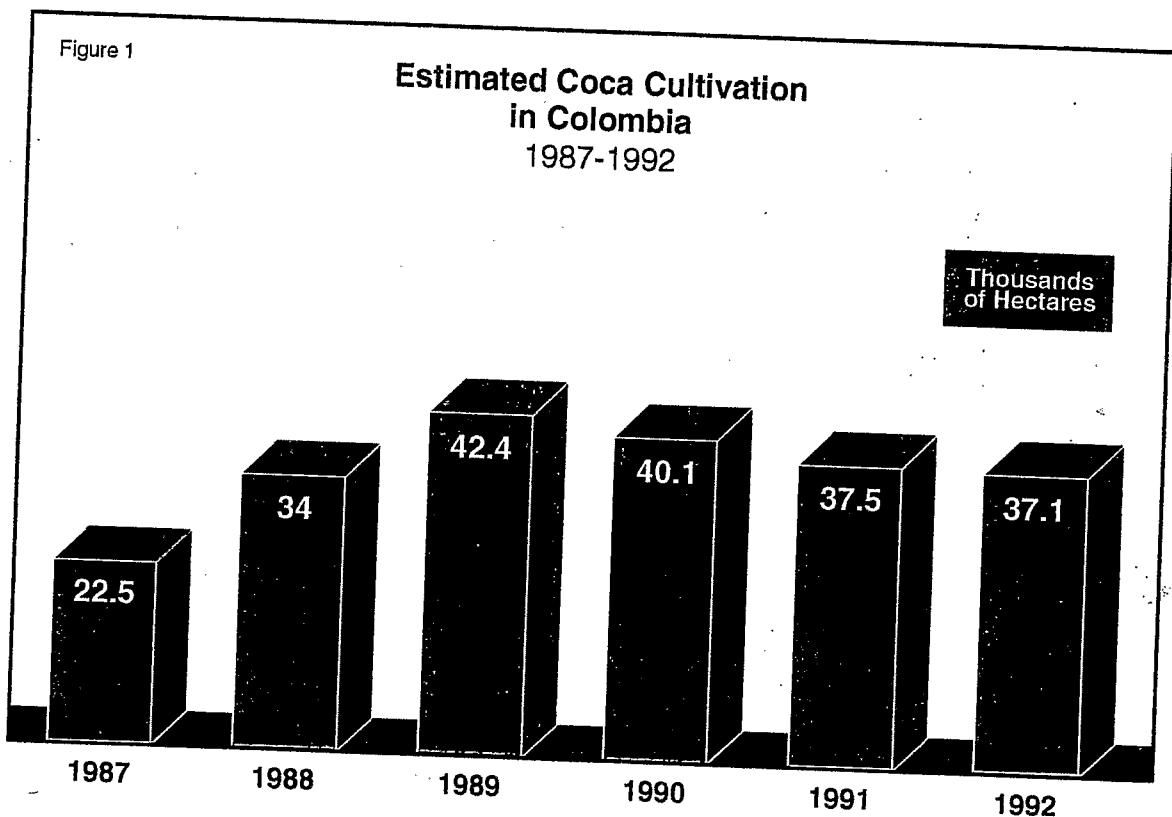
- ***The Andean Mountain Ranges:*** A region dominated by three mountain chains with extremely rugged slopes and peaks that run from north to south and straddle the western half of the country. Two major rivers, the Cauca and the Magdalena, flow north to the sea. The Cauca Valley is the stronghold of the Cali Cartel. The Magdalena Valley is the Medellín Cartel's home base. This region's rugged terrain makes counter-drug operations difficult to conduct.
- ***The Eastern Lowlands:*** An area of undeveloped and remote grassy *llanos* (plains) that border the northeastern slope of the Andean mountain ranges. The terrain and climate in this region are favorable for coca cultivation, cocaine processing, and drug shipment via clandestine airstrips. The major rivers in this area are the Guaviare, Inírida, Meta, and Vichada, all four of which flow eastward across the *llanos* to join the Orinocó.
- ***The Eastern Rain Forest:*** A large area of sparsely populated, dense *selva* (jungle) in the southeastern part of Colombia. This eastern rain forest provides cocaine traffickers with the physical isolation from civilization desirable for extensive coca cultivation and cocaine processing. Cross-country movement by land vehicle is impossible in this jungle. Accordingly, both cocaine traffickers and Government of Colombia counter-drug forces must use river and air transportation. The major rivers in the eastern rain forest are the Caquetá, Putumayo, and Vaupés. Well-armed insurgent groups have de facto control over many river choke points in the eastern rain forest.

COCAINE

COCA

Cultivation

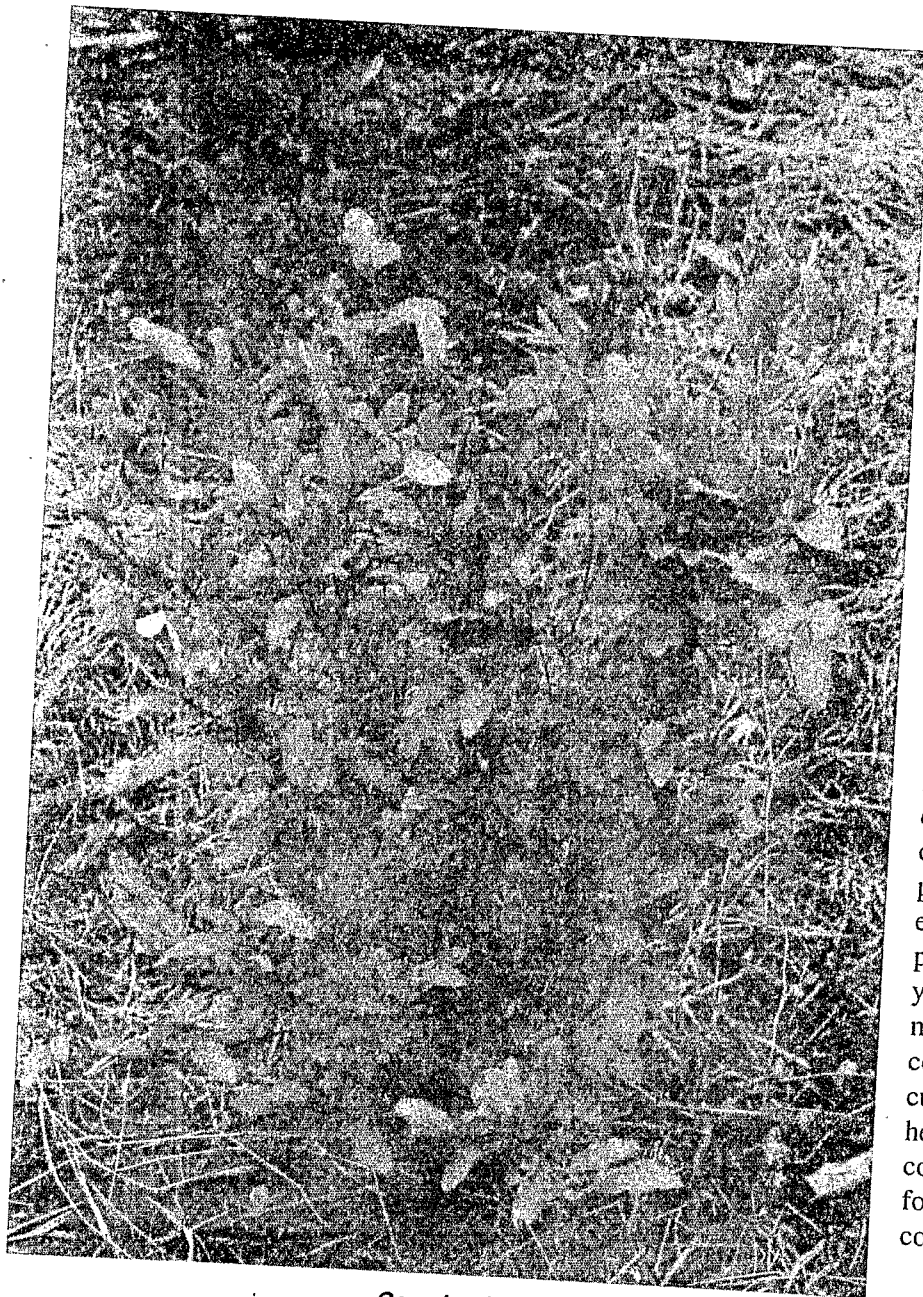
Colombia is the world's third largest producer of coca, ranking behind Peru and Bolivia.¹ Colombia had approximately 37,100 hectares of coca under cultivation in 1992. Although nearly 90 percent of Colombian territory has the proper climate and terrain for coca cultivation, most coca farming takes place in the eastern lowlands or rain forest (Guaviare and Vaupés Commissariats, Putumayo Intendency, and Caquetá Department). Significant coca cultivation has also been identified in Bolívar Department (north central Colombia). Figure 1 below shows Colombia's estimated coca cultivation between 1987 and 1992.



¹For a technical overview of coca cultivation and cocaine processing in South America, see *Coca Cultivation and Cocaine Processing: An Overview*, Drug Enforcement Administration, Office of Intelligence, Washington, D.C., February 1991.

Colombian coca is usually planted apart from licit crops in small, irregularly-shaped fields hastily cleared of jungle vegetation. The coca plant is a perennial bush, which must be tended continuously and which can yield up to six harvests per year. One hectare of coca in the eastern lowlands region of Colombia can yield a potential 800 kilograms of dry coca leaf per year according to the 1992 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR). Colombia's coca has a relatively low alkaloid content (0.32 percent), which is

about one-half of the alkaloid content found in Bolivia's or Peru's coca.



Coca bush.

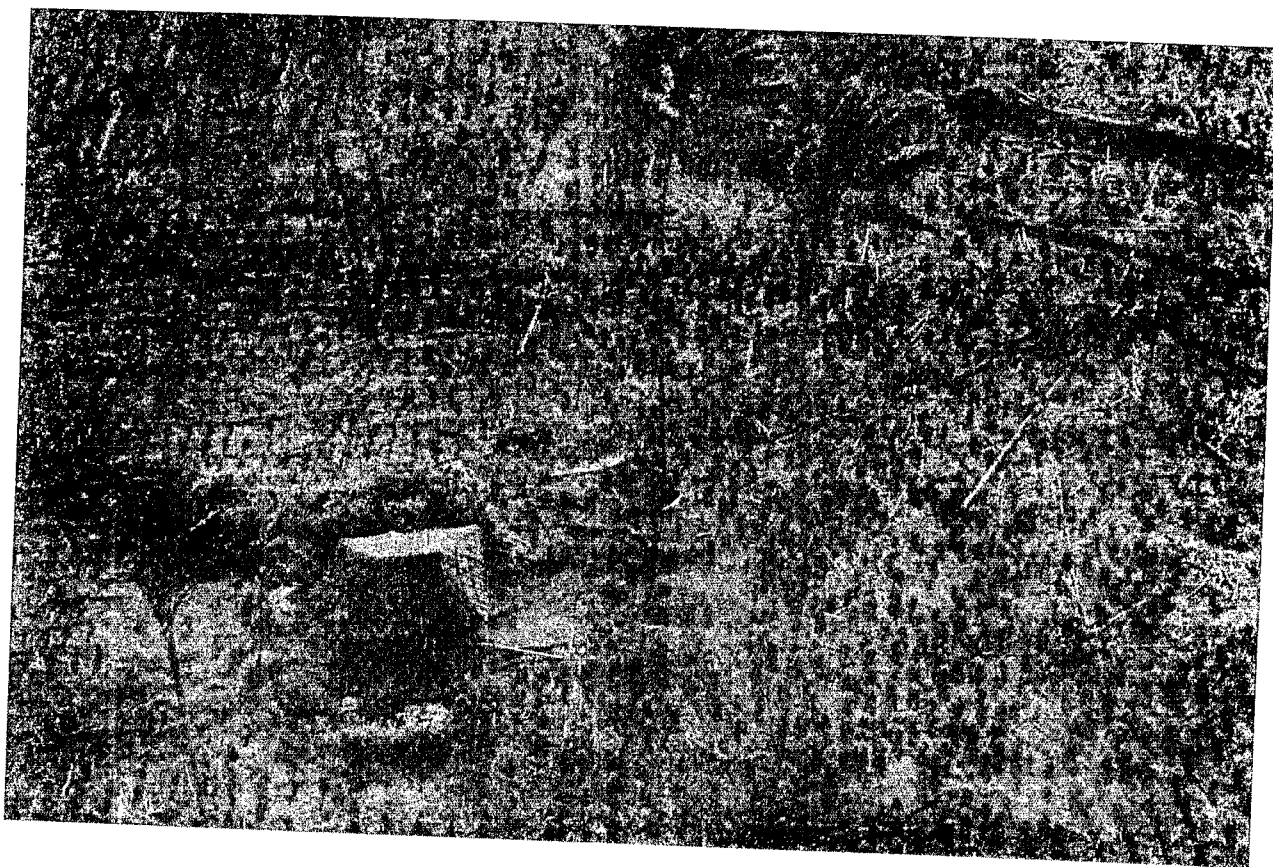
If all of Colombia's 1992 coca leaf were harvested and converted to cocaine, theoretically the year's crop would have been capable of yielding about 30,000 metric tons of dry leaf, which, in turn, could have yielded up to 60 metric tons of cocaine. This cocaine production estimate is predicated on a yield of 0.8 metric tons of coca leaf (net cultivation) per hectare and a conversion ratio for coca leaf to cocaine of 500:1.



*Coca cultivation in the Andean region.
(Colombia ranks third in total area under cultivation.)*

Eradication

In 1992, Colombian police and security forces destroyed 941 hectares of coca. Colombian authorities destroyed 992 hectares of coca in 1991 and eradicated 900 hectares of coca in 1990.



Cocaine base laboratory in hut surrounded by coca field.

COCAINE PRODUCTION AND SEIZURES

Production

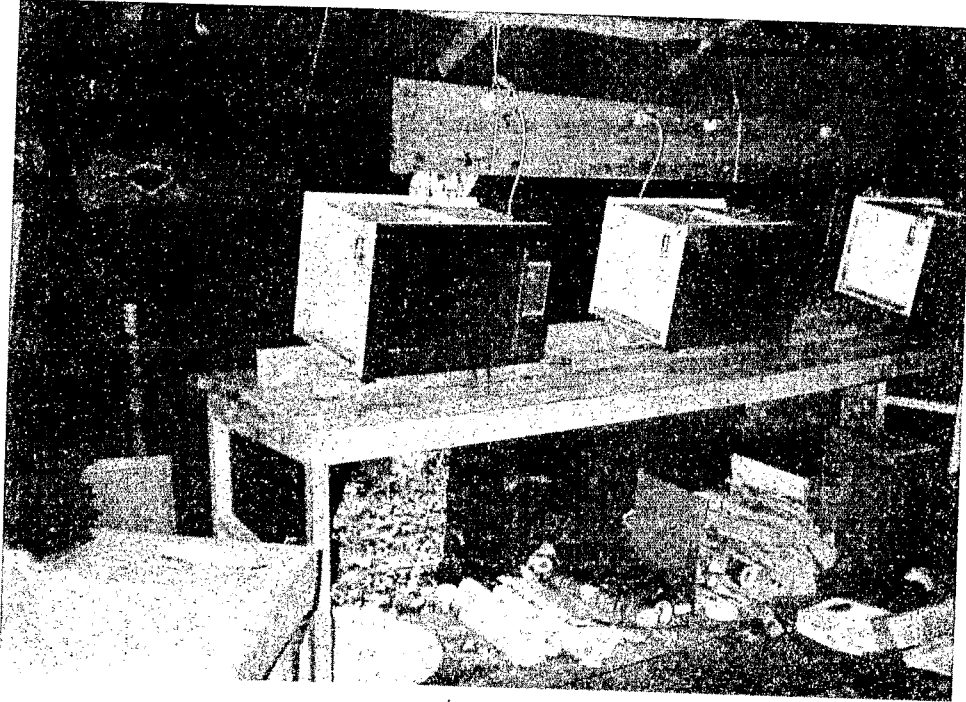
Colombia is the world's leading producer of cocaine, responsible for the vast bulk of worldwide production. Colombian traffickers import cocaine base from Peru and Bolivia, convert it to cocaine hydrochloride (cocaine HCl—commonly called cocaine) at clandestine laboratories in Colombia, and smuggle the finished cocaine abroad for wholesale distribution.

Clandestine cocaine base and cocaine HCl laboratories have been discovered throughout Colombia. These laboratories range in complexity from small "family" operations to large, modern, industrial facilities, which employ several hundred workers. In recent years, the most significant cocaine HCl laboratories seized by Colombian authorities have been in the remote eastern lowlands or rain forest (Amazonas, Caquetá, Guainía, Guaviare, Putumayo, Vaupés, and Vichada regions) or in trafficker strongholds in the Tolima and Valle del Cauca Departments. DEA defines a "significant" Colombian cocaine HCl laboratory as one with the capability to produce more than 250 kilograms of cocaine per week.

Cocaine traffickers are always seeking new methods and technologies for improving the efficiency and cost effectiveness of their laboratory operations. Their implementation of chemical recycling and recovery technology and their use of chemical substitutes are two significant examples of trafficker innovation.



Cocaine base laboratory.



Microwave ovens used to dry cocaine hydrochloride.

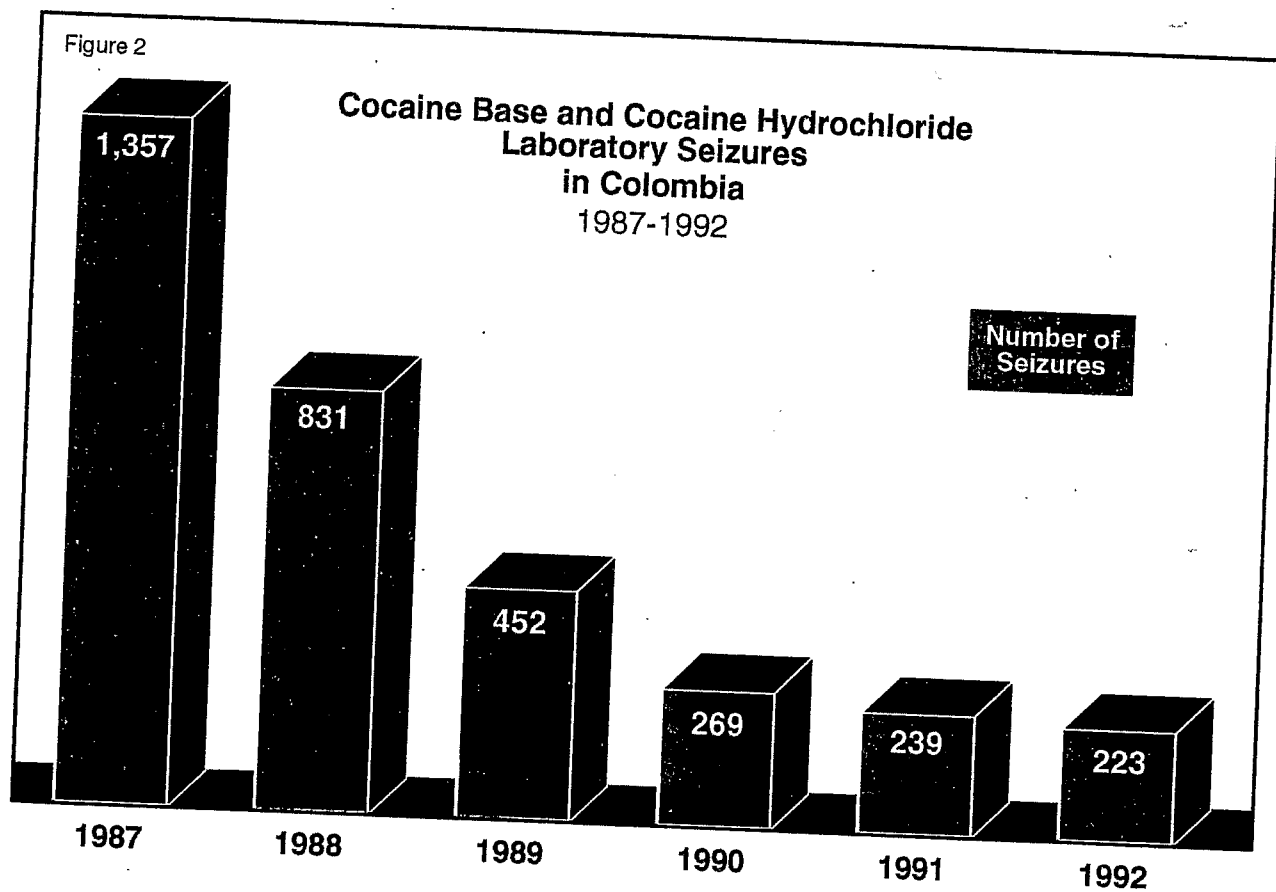
Recovery systems allow traffickers to reuse the expensive chemicals (such as ether and acetone) required for cocaine processing. Recycling-recovery equipment has been discovered by Colombian authorities during numerous laboratory raids. In January 1991, the Colombian National Police destroyed one of the most advanced clandestine chemical storage and recycling facilities found in Colombia to date. This complex, located in the Amazonas jungle, consisted of approximately 20 buildings. A hydraulic pumping system and three-story-high distillers were employed to clean previously used solvents. This entire complex apparently served as the chemical storage and recycling center for several large cocaine HCl laboratories within a 32-kilometer radius.

Traffickers also have sought alternative or substitute chemicals for the common essential chemicals used in cocaine production.² Methyl ethyl ketone (MEK), methylene chloride, toluene, and ethyl acetate are reported to be used as substitute solvents for ether and acetone.

²The common chemicals used in cocaine processing include kerosene, sodium bicarbonate and sulfuric acid (for the coca leaf to coca paste stage); ammonium hydroxide, potassium permanganate, and sulfuric acid (for the coca paste to cocaine base stage); and acetone, ethyl ether, and hydrochloric acid (for the cocaine base to cocaine hydrochloride stage).

Seizures

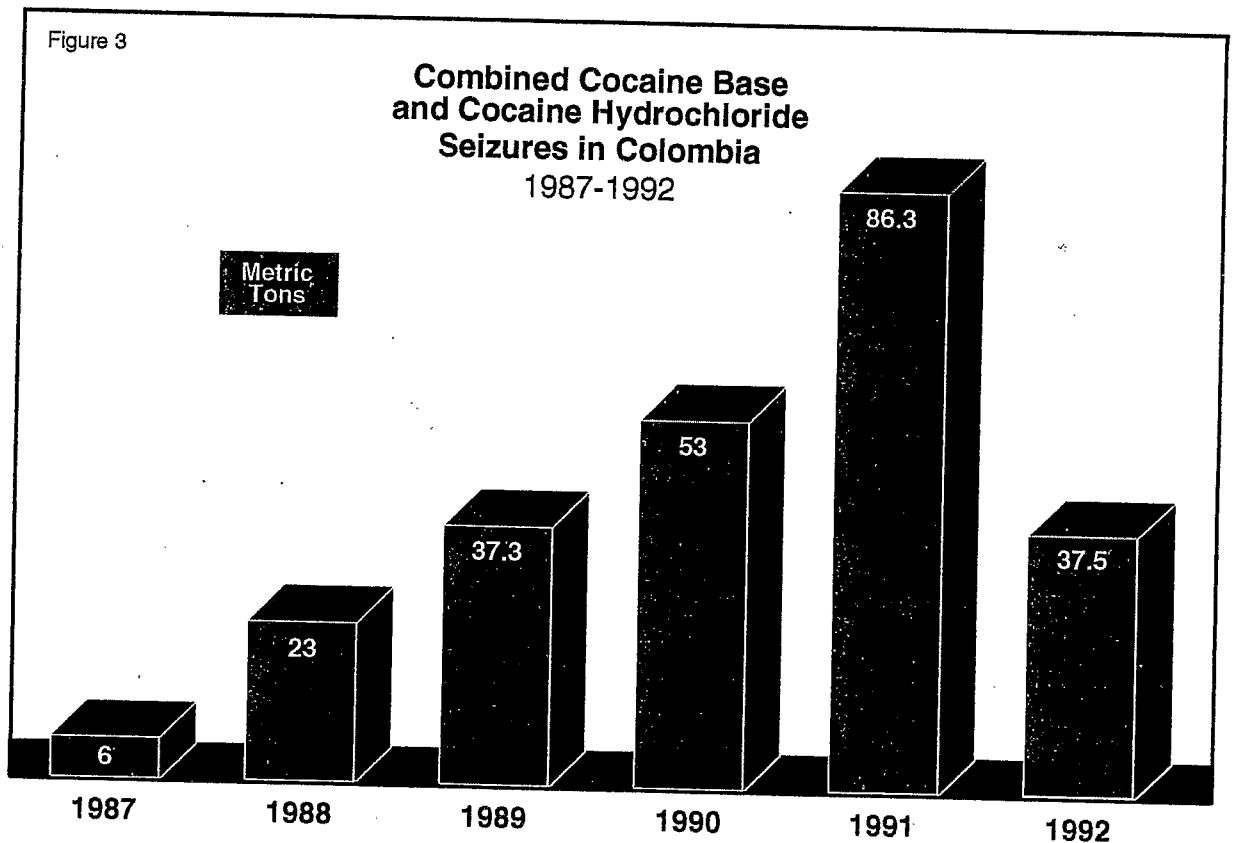
Colombian National Police and Colombian military forces seized and destroyed 223 cocaine base and cocaine HCl laboratories in 1992 and 239 laboratories in 1991.³ These statistics reflect a significant drop-off from the annual number of laboratories seized by the Government of Colombia in the late 1980s. Figure 2 illustrates the dramatic decline in cocaine laboratory seizures between 1987 and 1992.



³Colombian Police officials do not always make the distinction between cocaine hydrochloride and cocaine base laboratories in their reports.

According to Colombian officials, the decline in cocaine laboratory seizures can be attributed to three major factors. First, law enforcement and military assets that, in the past, could have been targeted against cocaine laboratories were committed in 1992 to opium poppy eradication, the hunt for the fugitive Pablo ESCOBAR, and renewed insurgent violence. Second, Colombian security forces were concentrating their limited resources on seizing a smaller number of significant, "industrial-size" laboratories rather than a larger number of smaller, but less significant laboratories. Third, cocaine traffickers moved their laboratories to more remote areas of the country. Accordingly, Colombian authorities were forced to mount more costly and complex counter-drug operations in order to raid laboratories that were located deep in the Colombian jungle.

Colombian security and law enforcement forces seized 30.8 metric tons of cocaine HCl and 6.7 metric tons of cocaine base in 1992, more than any other South American country. But this total of 37.5 metric tons represents a significant decline when compared to the 82.9 metric tons of cocaine HCl and cocaine base seized in Colombia during 1991. As previously discussed, this drop in cocaine seizures may be, in part, a result of the Colombian Government's decision to divert counter-drug assets from cocaine interdiction to opium poppy eradication and the search for Pablo ESCOBAR. Figure 3 shows combined cocaine HCl and cocaine base seizures in Colombia from 1987 to 1992.



COCAINE TRAFFICKING

Intelligence indicates that numerous Colombian criminal organizations engage in cocaine trafficking, the most important of which are the Cali and Medellín Cartels.⁴ The Cali and Medellín Cartels, in fact, dominate the world's wholesale cocaine market. Cocaine trafficking and transportation groups, which operate from Colombia's North Coast, provide crucial services to both cartels.

The Cali Cartel

The Cali Cartel recently has emerged as the world's most powerful cocaine trafficking organization. Intelligence suggests that the Cali Cartel is responsible for a high percentage of the cocaine that reaches the United States and Europe. Within the United States, the Cali Cartel dominates wholesale trafficking in New York City and conducts extensive trafficking operations in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, and other major cities.

The Cali Cartel recently has emerged as the world's most powerful cocaine trafficking organization

The Cali Cartel also has established wholesale cocaine distribution networks throughout Western Europe, and it is now exploiting Eastern Europe's difficult transition from Communism in an attempt to establish new

transshipment routes for its cocaine. Major cocaine seizures have been made in Russia, Poland, and the former Czechoslovakia. In February 1993, for example, Russian authorities made an historic 1.1 metric-ton cocaine seizure at the Finnish-Russian border. It is believed that almost all of the cocaine transported through Eastern Europe is destined for Western Europe. A significant consumer market for cocaine has not yet emerged in the former Communist bloc.

⁴Although the term, "drug cartel," has gained widespread acceptance, it should be noted that the Cali and Medellín Cartels are not "cartels" in the true microeconomic sense. A viable economic cartel must be able to control prices, production, and division of the market. The wholesale market for illicit drugs is highly competitive and thus does not lend itself to control by a cartel. It is more accurate to think of each cartel as being comprised of several distinct and separate international drug organizations that may share certain resources, such as drug processing laboratories or transportation assets, when they perceive it to be in their mutual interest.

The Cali Cartel is comprised of many separate and distinct criminal enterprises, which operate out of the Valle del Cauca region of Colombia. Gilberto RODRIGUEZ-Orejuela and his younger brother, Miguel, control what is widely considered to be the most powerful of the Cali Cartel drug Kingpin organizations.⁵ In November 1992, the Prosecutor General of Colombia filed formal criminal charges against Gilberto and Miguel RODRIGUEZ-Orejuela, which accused them of illegal enrichment, drug trafficking, and money laundering.

The organization run by drug Kingpin Jose SANTACRUZ-Londono is another important component of the Cali Cartel. The SANTACRUZ organization is responsible for smuggling multiton quantities of cocaine from Colombia into the United States and Europe through Central America. SANTACRUZ's trafficking network in the United States operates in Chicago, Houston, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, and San Francisco.

Drug Kingpin Helmer HERRERA-Buitrago (aka Pacho HERRERA) is another high-ranking associate of the Cali Cartel. HERRERA is a major source of supply for cocaine in the New York City and Miami areas. He also heads one of the most profitable money-laundering operations in New York City for the cartel.

In April 1992, the Colombian National Police won a victory against the Cali Cartel with the arrest of drug Kingpin Jairo Ivan URDINOLA-Grajales. URDINOLA heads an independent trafficking group with close ties to the Cali Cartel, and he has been linked to the cartel's heroin operations. The URDINOLA organization also has smuggled tons of cocaine into the United States. In December 1992, URDINOLA was sentenced to 210 months in prison, but may serve no more than 55 months due to his "plea-bargain" arrangement with the Colombian Government.

The Medellín Cartel

Until recently, drug Kingpin Pablo ESCOBAR-Gaviria was one of the most powerful—if not the most powerful—drug traffickers in the world. The ESCOBAR organization was one of the first cocaine trafficking groups to structure itself along the lines of a multinational corporation. Regional cocaine distribution networks operated by mid-level "managers" transported multiton quantities of cocaine into the United States and Europe by air, land, and sea. The Medellín Cartel also established complex international financial networks to launder drug profits.

⁵DEA defines a "Kingpin" as a specific head of an international drug trafficking organization, or as part of a drug trafficking consortium, in a source country, who is responsible for directing all phases of unlawful production, transportation, and wholesale distribution of bulk quantities of illegal drugs or who is responsible for directing the financial operations of such an organization. To qualify as a Kingpin, the individual's role in all aspects of that organization's drug trafficking is such that the neutralization of the Kingpin and his leadership would result in the collapse and dismantling of the organization's infrastructure, resulting in a significant impact on the drug traffic in the United States. Since the Kingpin is so closely identified with the organization, the term, Kingpin, is often used interchangeably to refer to both the individual and the organization.

SE BUSCA



PABLO EMILIO ESCOBAR GAVIRIA

SOLICITADO POR LA JUSTICIA

A quién suministre información que permita su captura, se le ofrece como recompensa

\$ 2.700'000.000.00
DOS MIL SETECIENTOS
MILLONES DE PESOS.



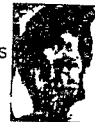
JHON JAIRO
VELASQUEZ
VASQUEZ
(Alias POPEYE)



LUIS CARLOS
AGUILAR
GALLEGO
(Alias EL MUGRE)



OTONIEL DE JESUS
GONZALEZ
FRANCO
(Alias OTTO)



BRANCE
MUÑOZ
MOSQUERA
(Alias TYSON)

y por cada uno de estos prófugos la suma de

\$ 100'000.000.00
(CIEN MILLONES DE PESOS)

**LLAME
YA**


SANTAFE
DE BOGOTA
222 - 5012

LINEA ROJA
SANTAFE DE BOGOTA
91 - 287 - 2908
91 - 287 - 2986

GRATIS DESDE
CUALQUIER CIUDAD
9800 - 10600
LINEA DIRECTA A MEDELLIN
4611111 - 4611112

SE GARANTIZA ABSOLUTA RESERVA

**POR PARTE DEL GOBIERNO DE COLOMBIA Y DE LOS
EE.UU. POSIBILIDAD DE REUBICACION EN EL EXTERIOR.**

Colombian poster offering approximately \$4 million (U.S.) reward for information leading to the capture of Pablo ESCOBAR

For more than a decade, ESCOBAR has maintained control over his drug empire through his private army of *sicarios* (assassins). ESCOBAR has been implicated in numerous assassinations and attempted assassinations in Colombia and abroad. He is widely believed to have ordered the assassination of many Colombian officials (including Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara-Bonilla and presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galan), rival Cali Cartel traffickers, and even his own associates (including Gerardo MONCADA and Fernando GALEANO, two of his top aides).

ESCOBAR surrendered to Colombian authorities in June 1991, following the decision by the Colombian Congress to ban extradition of Colombian citizens. Ironically, various sources indicate that ESCOBAR's time at Envigado Prison was his "Golden Age," during which, he ran his drug empire without fear of being hunted by the Colombian Government or assassinated by his enemies.

On July 22, 1992, Pablo ESCOBAR escaped from Envigado Prison and remains a target of the largest manhunt in Colombian history. Colombian authorities have carried out more than 2,000 raids in an effort to recapture him. The level of violence directed against the Government of Colombia has increased significantly since ESCOBAR's escape from prison. Reporting from Colombia suggests that ESCOBAR was responsible for a nationwide campaign of car bombings and assassinations that swept Colombia in late 1992. More than 50 Colombian police officers may have been murdered by ESCOBAR's *sicarios* in the last six months of 1992.

The OCHOA-Vasquez brothers (Jorge Luis, Fabio, and Juan David) head what is perhaps the second most powerful drug Kingpin organization associated with the Medellín Cartel. In late 1990 and early 1991, the OCHOAs surrendered to Colombian authorities and remain confined at Itagüí prison. The surrender of the OCHOAs notwithstanding, close associates continue to run the family's drug trafficking business.

Intelligence suggests that two groups have assumed control of the Medellín Cartel operations of the late Jose Gonzalo RODRIGUEZ-Gacha (who was killed by Colombian authorities in December 1989). RODRIGUEZ-Gacha was a leading member of the Medellín Cartel until his death. The first group, led by drug Kingpin Leonidas VARGAS-Vargas, provides transportation services and cocaine base to other elements of the Medellín Cartel. (VARGAS was arrested by the Colombian National Police in early January 1993.) A second group is allegedly headed by a nephew of the late RODRIGUEZ-Gacha.

Although the Medellín Cartel has been weakened by recent events, the ESCOBAR and OCHOA organizations continue to smuggle multiton quantities of cocaine into the United States and Europe. Even if Pablo ESCOBAR fades from the drug trafficking scene, a restructured Medellín Cartel will continue to pose a significant challenge to international drug law enforcement.

North Coast Trafficking Groups

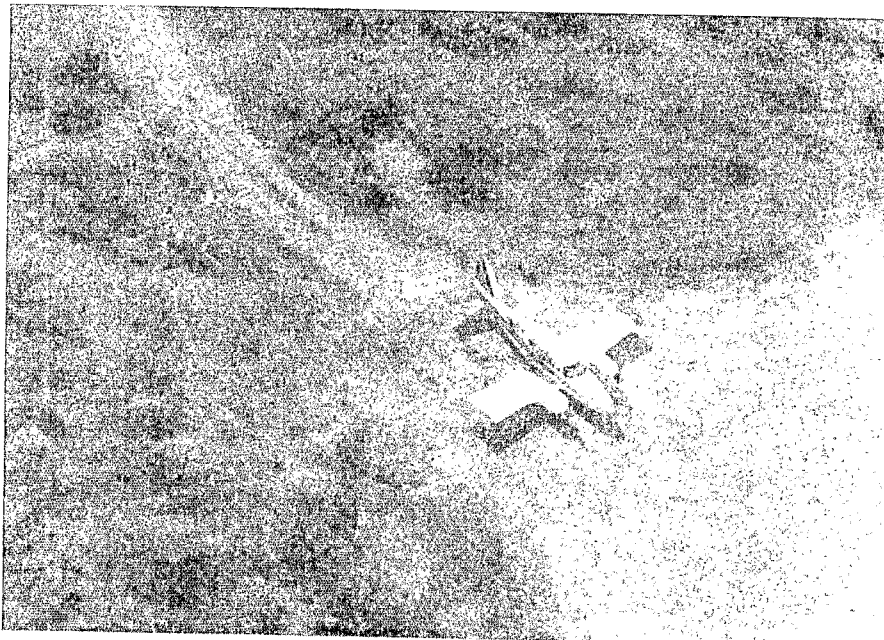
Most of the cocaine smuggled out of the North Coast of Colombia is under the control of either the Medellín or Cali Cartels. North Coast trafficking groups acquire cocaine from both the Cali and Medellín Cartels, which enlist them for transportation services.

Although the North Coast trafficking groups have demonstrated a significant degree of independence from the major cartels, there remains a basic dependence on Cali or Medellín sources of supply, which prevents the North Coast groups from operating as autonomous organizations. Although separate and distinct from each other, the various North Coast transportation groups are believed to cooperate among themselves in the areas of communications and intelligence concerning law enforcement operations.

SMUGGLING METHODS AND ROUTES

Colombian drug traffickers have demonstrated that they can and do shift smuggling modes and routes rapidly in response to actual or perceived law enforcement efforts. Colombian traffickers appear to require, on the average, some 10 to 14 days to adjust to law enforcement interdiction of a specific cocaine delivery "pipeline" by establishing other smuggling routes. The most significant smuggling methods and routes used by Colombian traffickers to move cocaine base into Colombia and cocaine hydrochloride out of Colombia are outlined below.⁶

Colombian traffickers move most of their cocaine base from Peru and Bolivia to Colombia by twin-engine, general aviation aircraft. The smugglers often fly at low altitudes to avoid radar detection and fly at night in order to take advantage of the limited ability of the region's air forces to conduct night operations. Each aircraft typically can carry from 500 to 800 kilograms of cocaine base. The most common air corridor used for smuggling cocaine base into Colombia lies between Peru's Upper Huallaga Valley and the Valle del Cauca or southwestern areas of Colombia where the cocaine processing laboratories are located.



***Trafficker aircraft waiting to pick up a drug shipment
at a clandestine airstrip.***

⁶For a detailed examination of cocaine smuggling routes and methods, see the *Interagency Assessment of Cocaine Movement*, Office of National Drug Control Policy, Washington, D.C., October, 1992 (CONFIDENTIAL); and the *Worldwide Cocaine Situation Report*, Drug Enforcement Administration, Office of Intelligence, Washington, D.C., September 1992 (DEA SENSITIVE).

Brazil, Ecuador, Suriname, and Venezuela have emerged as important transit areas for smuggling finished cocaine out of Colombia on its way to world markets. The cocaine is smuggled into Brazil from Colombia along air and water routes and is smuggled through Ecuador primarily by land to seaports for further shipment to the United States or Europe. Cocaine trafficking through these transit countries is expected to increase.

Colombian traffickers take advantage of Suriname's historical and ethnic ties with the Netherlands Antilles and the Netherlands to ship large quantities of cocaine through Dutch seaports to Western Europe. There is a growing concern that Suriname could become a major transit country for cocaine destined for the United States.

Colombian cocaine is transported to Venezuela principally in motor vehicles or is flown into southwestern and central Venezuela from the Guajira and Cúcuta (Norte de Santander) areas of Colombia. Colombian traffickers have used Venezuela's cultural ties with Italy to forge links with Traditional Organized Crime groups in that country that are involved in the distribution of cocaine in Europe.

Smuggling Methods and Routes to North America

A high percentage of the cocaine destined for the United States drug market is smuggled out of Colombia on board general aviation aircraft. Gulfstream Aero Commander, Beechcraft King Air 300, Cessna Conquest II, and Piper Cheyenne aircraft are preferred by traffickers.

In addition to the routine use of general aviation aircraft, recent intelligence indicates that several Colombian trafficking organizations have acquired a limited number of large, multiengine aircraft to transport multiton shipments of cocaine directly from Colombia to North America. In November 1992, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police seized a Convair 580 aircraft loaded with 4.3 metric tons of cocaine. This failed smuggling operation has been linked to the Cali Cartel.

Air smugglers often depart from the Cali area and the Guajira Peninsula. Much of their cocaine cargo is flown to clandestine airstrips in Central America or southern Mexico for transport by land vehicle into the United States. In Central America, the Colombian cartels use Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama as transshipment areas for their cocaine.

Bales of cocaine are airdropped in the Caribbean (often in the vicinity of The Bahamas), or in waters off Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands for retrieval by boat. The Dominican Republic and Haiti also have become significant transshipment points for cocaine.

San Andrés Island⁷ recently has emerged as a significant transit point for air and maritime shipments of cocaine from the Colombian mainland to the Caribbean, Central America, Mexico, and the United States. Intelligence indicates that multihundred-kilogram shipments of cocaine are smuggled from Colombia on board commercial vessels destined for San Andrés Island. These vessels either may continue their journey from San Andrés to Central America or the United States or conduct at-sea transfers of the cocaine to fishing vessels or high-speed boats waiting off San Andrés.

Intelligence also suggests that traffickers use commercial aircraft to transport cocaine from the Colombian mainland to Central America, Mexico, or the United States via San Andrés. General aviation aircraft have used San Andrés Island as a navigation point, a false destination, and a refueling site to support cocaine airdrops off the Central American coast.

Individual couriers on commercial air flights from Cali and Bogotá are frequently arrested while smuggling small amounts of cocaine into the United States. Although the amounts carried by each individual courier ("mule") is small (usually kilogram quantities or less), the aggregate amount of cocaine is significant. In 1992, U.S. authorities seized in excess of 521 kilograms of cocaine from Colombian drug couriers on commercial flights according to the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC). Smuggling methods detected at Miami International Airport include hidden compartments in luggage, external body carry, and internal body carry (ingested balloons or condoms containing cocaine).

Air cargo from South America is often used to conceal up to 500-kilogram shipments of cocaine being smuggled into the United States. This cocaine is often concealed in consignments of cut flowers and other perishable products. In some cases, airline ground crews have conspired to smuggle cocaine as undeclared cargo or onto aircraft that have been parked in service areas.

⁷San Andrés Island is part of an archipelago in the Caribbean Sea consisting of San Andrés Island, Providencia Island, and a group of keys. The islands and keys, all of which are Colombian territory, are located approximately 115 nautical miles (211 kilometers) off the east coast of Nicaragua and 380 nautical miles (699 kilometers) northwest of the Colombian mainland.

DEA reporting indicates that the smuggling of cocaine into the United States in containerized marine cargo has emerged as a significant threat. Colombian ports identified by DEA between 1988 and 1991 as embarkation points for bulk cocaine shipments destined for the United States include: Buenaventura, Cartagena, and Puerto Estrella. (In this context, bulk shipments are defined as shipments in excess of 100 kilograms of cocaine.) Intelligence suggests that traffickers also may be using the following Colombian ports from which to smuggle cocaine in containerized cargo: Bahía de Portete, Coveñas, Manaure, Providencia, Río Hacha, San Andrés, Tolú, Tumaco, and Turbo. A further discussion of Colombian ports is presented below under "Related Topics."

Smuggling Methods and Routes to Europe

Commercial and private sea freight is the primary means by which cocaine is smuggled into Europe from Colombia and other South American countries. Between 1988 and 1991, European cocaine seizures of more than 100 kilograms increased by 213 percent according to the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). In 71 percent of these cases, commercial or private sea vessels were the mode of transport being used at the time of seizure.

DEA reporting suggests that Europe is facing a growing threat from drug smuggling via containerized marine cargo. Colombian ports identified by DEA between 1988 and 1991 as embarkation points for bulk cocaine shipments destined for Europe include Barranquilla, Buenaventura, Cartagena, and Santa Marta.

OPIATES

OPIUM POPPIES

Cultivation

In recent years, the threat to the United States posed by heroin manufactured in Colombia has become increasingly significant. Opium poppy cultivation has given Colombian drug traffickers the potential to become major players in the global heroin trade within the next five years.⁸

Opium poppy cultivation in Colombia was estimated at 2,500 hectares in the 1992 INCSR. Recent reporting, however, indicates that this estimate was too conservative. The Colombian National Police and other sources now estimate that Colombia's opium poppy cultivation may range between 10,000 and 20,000 hectares.

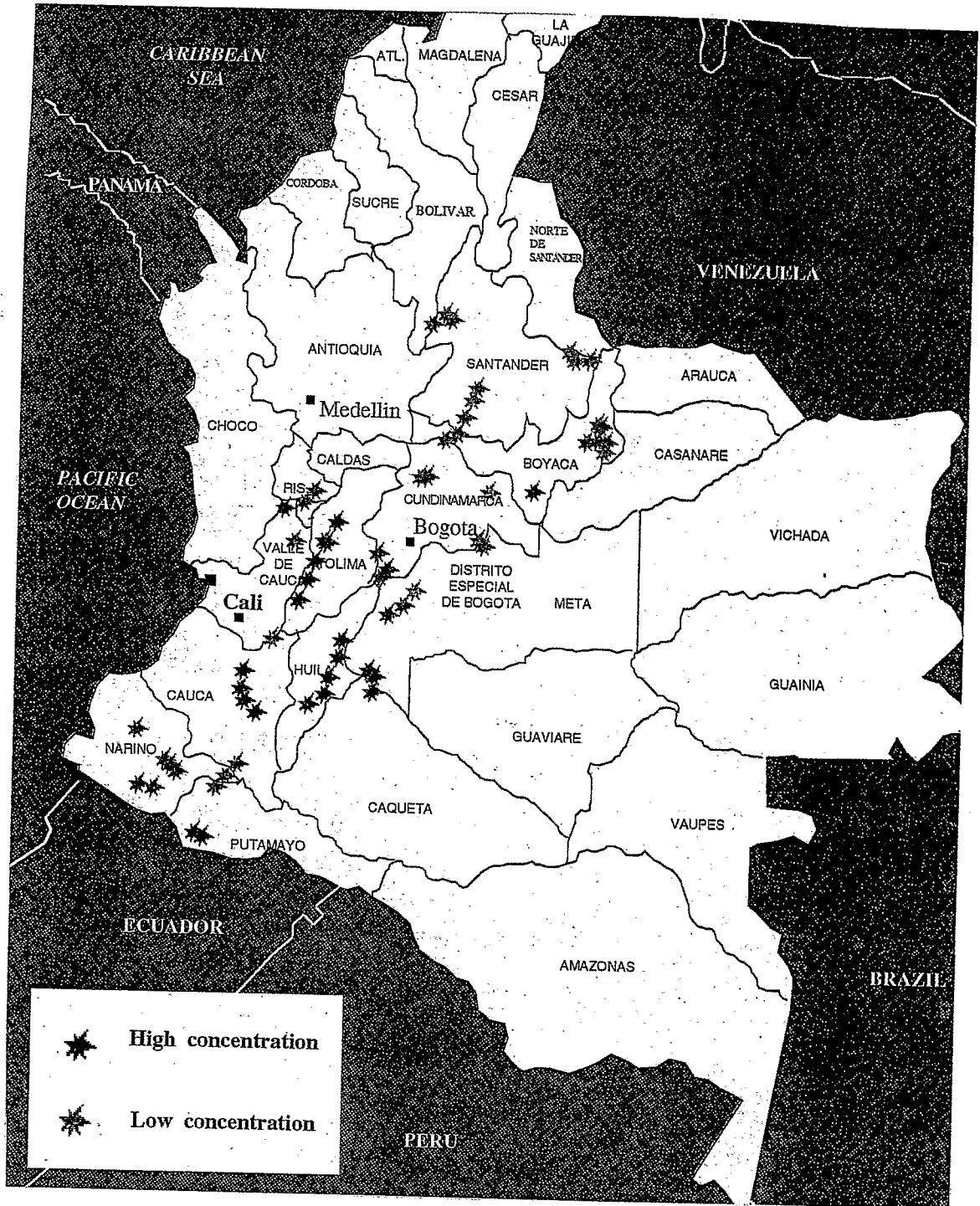
Opium poppy farming has been reported in more than a dozen departments in Colombia. The most significant areas of poppy cultivation are in Cauca, Cundinamarca, Huila, Meta, Santander, and Tolima. An historical trend analysis of Colombian opium poppy cultivation is not possible due to a lack of systematic reporting on such cultivation prior to 1990.

Excellent growing conditions exist for opium poppies (*Papaver somniferum*) at higher elevations (6,000 to 9,000 feet) on the remote mountain slopes of Colombian mountain ranges. This rugged terrain not only provides ideal growing conditions for opium poppies, it also hampers detection and access by counter-drug forces.

Opium poppy fields in Colombia often range in size from 10 to 15 hectares although the Colombian National Police occasionally have encountered plots as large as 40 to 120 hectares.

The intermixing of opium poppy with corn and other licit crops has been reported in the past. Intelligence gained from recent Colombian eradication efforts suggests, however, that many opium poppy fields are now being cultivated without any effort at concealment.

⁸For an in-depth analysis of opium poppy cultivation and heroin trafficking in Colombia, see *Colombian Opiate Situation Report*, Drug Enforcement Administration, Office of Intelligence, Washington, D.C., April 1992 (DEA SENSITIVE); and *Colombian Opiate Situation Report Update*, Drug Enforcement Administration, Office of Intelligence, Washington, D.C., September 1992 (CONFIDENTIAL).



Areas of opium poppy cultivation in Colombia.

Opium poppy cultivation is believed to take place year-round in Colombia, resulting in a potential for three harvests every 15 months. Limited reporting suggests that Colombian opium poppy farmers are achieving low opium gum yields. Insufficient data are available at this time, however, to estimate opium gum yields in Colombia with any degree of accuracy.

The *campesino's* skill in scoring poppy pods is also crucial in determining opium gum yields. If the pods are cut too deeply, the opium will flow out too quickly and drip to the ground. If the incisions are too shallow, the flow will be too slow and the opium will harden in the pods. Colombian *campesinos*, as a group, probably are not as skilled at scoring poppies as their counterparts in Asia and the Middle East. The *campesinos* can be expected, however, to become more proficient over time.

Eradication

In January 1992, the Colombian Government approved the aerial eradication of opium poppy fields. Aerial eradication operations, using the herbicide glyphosate, were initiated in February 1992. Colombian authorities claim to have destroyed 12,759 hectares of opium poppies in 1992. In contrast, authorities destroyed only 1,156 hectares of opium poppies in 1991. Approximately 70 percent of the opium poppies eradicated in 1992 was destroyed by aerial spraying. The remaining 30 percent was destroyed by manual means.



The manual eradication of poppy plants.

Colombia's *campesinos* have adopted countermeasures to combat aerial eradication. For example, intelligence suggests that *campesinos* are replanting their poppy fields soon after spraying operations are completed. *Campesinos* in Huila Department also have attempted to counter aerial spraying by applying a protective coating of a sugar processing by-product to their opium poppies according to one reliable DEA source. This source also claims that *campesinos* in Huila receive timely warnings of impending glyphosate spraying operations and therefore can attempt to protect targeted fields. A lack of firsthand information makes it impossible, at this time, to offer a credible evaluation regarding the effectiveness of these countermeasures.

HEROIN PRODUCTION AND SEIZURES

Production

Reports of operational heroin laboratories in Colombia rose in 1992. Urban areas in Antioquia, Cauca, Cundinamarca, Tolima, and Valle del Cauca Departments were most frequently identified as suspect locations for heroin laboratories.

In past years, Colombian heroin chemists lacked the expertise either to complete the conversion process or to produce high-purity heroin consistently. Colombian trafficking organizations have been searching for solutions to these problems. Chemists from traditional heroin source regions (Southwest Asia, Southeast Asia, and Mexico) are known to have been recruited to process heroin in Colombia and to have taught professional heroin processing techniques to Colombian chemists.

As a result, it appears that native Colombian chemists now understand and can perform the heroin conversion process. Insufficient firsthand information exists at this time, however, to allow for a credible estimate of actual opium gum to heroin conversion efficiencies in Colombia.⁹

The majority of suspected Colombian heroin samples analyzed by DEA have been of a very high purity, often in the 90-percent or higher range. The high purity of this heroin suggests that Colombian traffickers want to break into the fiercely competitive retail heroin markets in Boston, Newark, New York, and Philadelphia, where street-level purities average above 50 percent. The higher the purity, the more times the heroin can be diluted or "cut." Also, high-purity heroin appeals to some drug users in that it may be administered through intranasal means (snorting) as opposed to intravenous injection. Snorting heroin avoids the use of tainted needles, which can lead to the spread of AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) and other highly infectious diseases.

⁹Opium harvested in each of the three major source areas (Southeast Asia, Southwest Asia, and Mexico) is generally converted into morphine base at an average yield of one kilogram of morphine base from 10 kilograms of opium. Morphine base is converted into heroin at a 1:1 ratio. Colombian heroin chemists probably have not yet reached the high conversion efficiencies achieved by experienced chemists in traditional source regions.

Although Colombian drug trafficking organizations have made progress in domestic heroin production, it would appear that they have yet to overcome their production problems. Two observations support this premise. First, the heroin laboratories seized in Colombia to date were not equipped to produce heroin in bulk. Second, Colombian dealers in negotiations with undercover DEA agents have yet to prove themselves capable of supplying multi-kilogram quantities of heroin on a regular basis.

Heroin Laboratory Seizures

In 1992, Colombian authorities seized five heroin laboratories and two morphine base laboratories. In January 1992, the Colombian National Police (CNP) seized a morphine base laboratory in the city of Neiva, Huila Department. A small amount of opium gum residue, opium poppy seeds, and unidentified chemicals were found in a residence there. In November 1992, the CNP seized a second morphine base laboratory in Neiva and confiscated 810 grams of morphine base.

In February 1992, the CNP made their first heroin laboratory seizure in Colombia. A small operational heroin laboratory was discovered in a residence in the city of Rivera, Huila Department. In July 1992, the CNP seized a heroin laboratory in Bosa (a suburb of Bogotá). This heroin laboratory also was located in a private residence.

In October 1992, the CNP seized a heroin laboratory operating in the city of Cali. Approximately 100 grams of suspected heroin and small amounts of precursors and processing materials were seized.

In November 1992, the CNP seized an operational heroin laboratory at a Bogotá residence and found 60 grams of heroin, 182 grams of morphine base, eight kilograms of opium gum, and small amounts of acetic anhydride, benzene, and other chemicals associated with heroin production. This laboratory had been producing five kilograms of heroin per week according to one source.

On December 1, 1992, the CNP raided another Bogotá residence and seized an operational heroin laboratory. They discovered two kilograms of heroin, 73 grams of opium and morphine base, five liters of acetic anhydride, 27.5 liters of benzol (benzene), and 76 liters of other solvents. It is estimated that this laboratory was capable of producing 14 kilograms of heroin per week.

Unverified reports suggest that a small amount of Colombian heroin is being produced in university or pharmaceutical laboratories. In addition, it has been reported that Cali Cartel traffickers have hired professors at a major Colombian university to conduct quality control tests on their finished heroin.

Opiate Seizures

Colombian authorities seized 47.5 kilograms of heroin and 107 kilograms of raw opium gum in 1992. In 1991, authorities seized only 30 kilograms of raw opium gum and seven kilograms of morphine base, and did not seize any heroin. No opium gum, morphine base, or heroin are known to have been seized by the Colombian Government in 1990. Prior to 1990, there was no systematic reporting of Colombian opiate seizures.

HEROIN TRAFFICKING

DEA reporting indicates that both the Cali and Medellín Cartels are engaged in heroin trafficking. Intelligence suggests that the Cali Cartel is more involved in heroin trafficking than the Medellín Cartel. The Cali Cartel has been linked to heroin trafficking in Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York City.

In addition to the cartels, small, independent, poly-drug trafficking groups from Colombia continue to operate heroin distribution networks in several major U.S. metropolitan areas. These traffickers most likely employ pre-existing cocaine distribution methods, such as the use of "swallowers" who ingest heroin contained in balloons or condoms, to transport their heroin.

The Medellín and Cali Cartels are believed to smuggle heroin into the United States along the usual air and sea routes, and it is believed that multikilogram quantities of cartel-owned heroin may be transported together with shipments of cocaine. These heroin-cocaine shipments may enter the United States from Colombia via The Bahamas, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and other transit countries.

DEA has received reports that suggest that a Colombian trafficking organization is smuggling heroin from Colombia to the United States by way of The Bahamas. This heroin, transported on aircraft and marine vessels, is allegedly concealed inside larger cocaine shipments. The pilots and boat crews involved in these operations may not always be aware that they are transporting heroin. If true, the pilots and boat crews involved are being cheated since transportation fees are usually determined by the shipment's market value. DEA reporting indicates that a trafficking organization linked to the Medellín Cartel has smuggled multikilogram quantities of heroin inside container cargo from San Andrés Island via Costa Rica to Miami.

The most dramatic example to date of a classic cartel attempt to smuggle suspected Colombian heroin was a June 1992 airdrop near Isabella, Puerto Rico. A 15-kilogram bale of heroin was discovered by the U.S. Customs Service after the drop was made onto a beach. The DEA Southeast Laboratory in Miami determined that this heroin was 91-percent pure. This was the first known airdrop of heroin and, although the trafficking group responsible for this airdrop has yet to be identified, the drop had all the earmarks of a cartel operation.

In the past two years, there has been a significant increase in the smuggling of heroin into the United States from Colombia. EPIC reports that the number of heroin seizures involving Colombians who smuggled the drug into the United States on commercial airlines, increased from 41 in 1991 to 263 in 1992. Most of the heroin seizures at the Miami and New York City airports involved drug couriers (so-called "swallowers") who arrived on commercial flights from Colombia. The great majority of these couriers were Colombian nationals, although recent arrest statistics show that U.S. citizens of Hispanic origin also are being used as couriers.

Most of the suspected Colombian heroin that is carried by couriers on commercial air flights from Colombia to the United States is probably owned by independent Colombian heroin traffickers. The Colombian cartels have traditionally used more reliable means of transporting significant quantities of drugs (e.g., maritime container cargo, mother ship operations, airdrops, and air and sea shipments through transit countries).

Ingestion of small quantities (one kilogram or less) of heroin is the preferred method of concealment used by the independent traffickers. In addition, small quantities of heroin (ranging from several hundred grams to several kilograms) have been discovered in clothing, shoes, shampoo bottles, and suitcases.

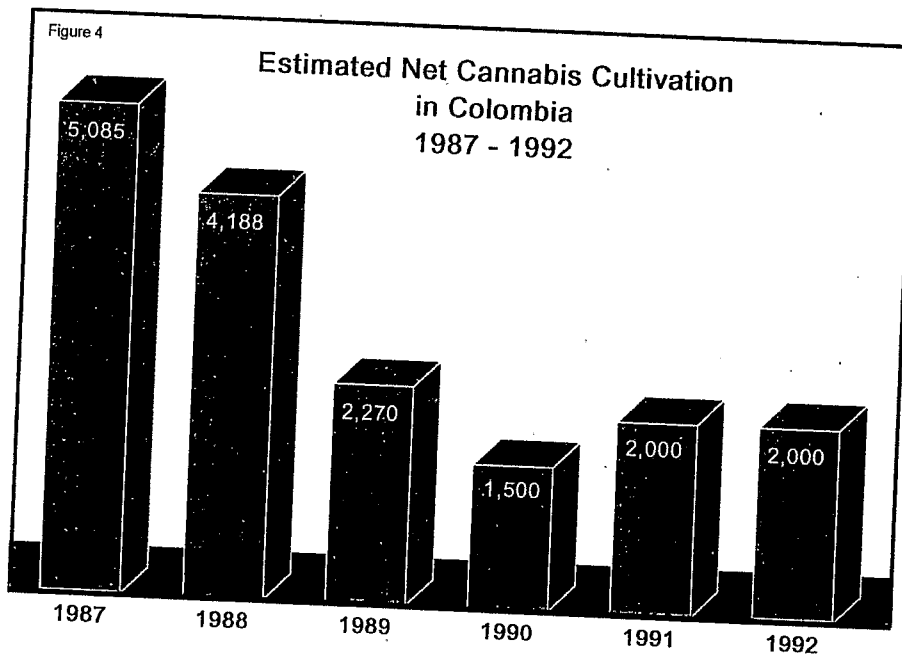
There is limited information that the Medellín Cartel may, at times, also use couriers to smuggle heroin. In mid-1991, the DEA New York Field Division reported that the Medellín Cartel used couriers, who flew on direct commercial air flights from Colombia, to smuggle heroin into New York City. These "mules" would either swallow or manually insert (into body cavities) from 500 grams to one kilogram for a fee of \$15 to \$20 per gram.

It is important to note that not all heroin smuggled into the United States from Colombia is actually produced in Colombia. DEA reporting indicates that some Southeast Asian and Southwest Asian heroin has been known to transit Colombia on its way to the United States. Colombian traffickers are known to exchange cocaine for heroin in Europe. (This heroin is provided either by Lebanese or Italian Traditional Organized Crime groups.)

CANNABIS

CULTIVATION

Until recently, cannabis cultivation in Colombia had dropped dramatically from that seen in the late 1980s. In 1987, Colombia's net cannabis cultivation (after eradication) was estimated to be 5,085 hectares. By 1992, the country's estimated cannabis cultivation fell to 2,000 hectares. Figure 4 below illustrates the drop in Colombia's cannabis cultivation between the years 1987 and 1992. Colombian authorities attributed this decline in cannabis cultivation to their dedicated eradication efforts in the late 1980s.



Recent DEA reporting, however, suggests a significant resurgence of cannabis cultivation and marijuana trafficking in Colombia. Cooperating Individuals (CIs) in Colombia report that substantial cannabis cultivation has reappeared in areas of Colombia previously thought to be inactive. Furthermore, Colombian drug law enforcement agencies report an increase in marijuana seizures during the first quarter of calendar year 1993.

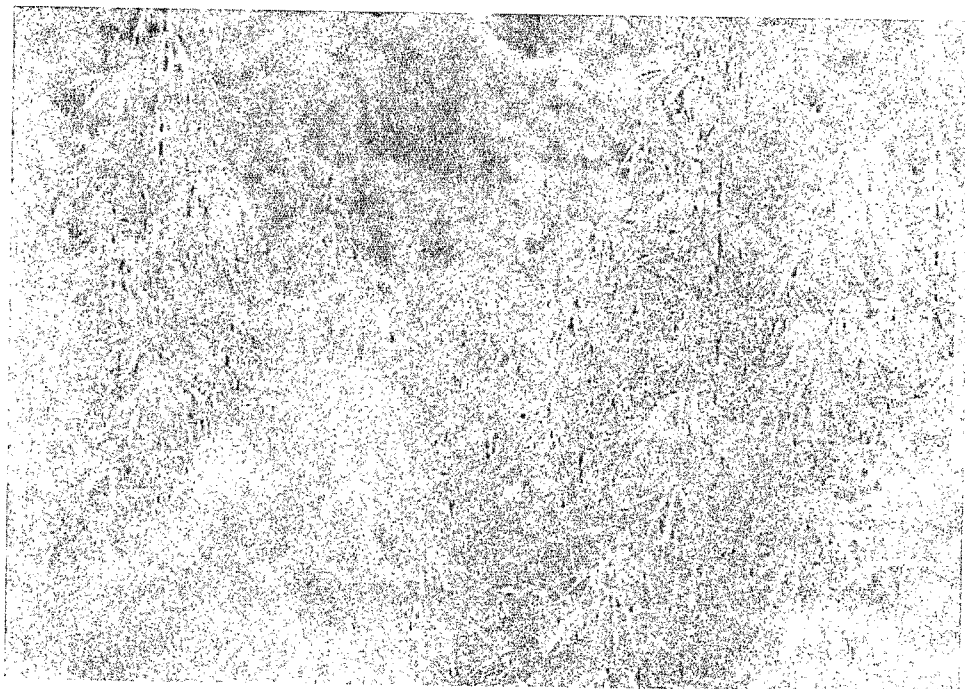
The traditional cannabis growing areas in Colombia include the Sierra Nevada Mountains in Magdalena Department and the Perijá Mountains along the border between Colombia and Venezuela. Recent reporting suggests that new cannabis fields may have been planted along the southeast steppes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and along the Colombian side of the Perijá Mountains. This resurgence in cultivation may be attributed to the Colombian Government's suspension of glyphosate spraying of cannabis fields and an increase in marijuana prices. In addition to the above areas, limited amounts of cannabis also are grown in the northern Departments of Atlántico, Bolívar, César, and La Guajira.

Colombian cannabis fields are usually small, measuring perhaps 1.5 hectares in area. Cannabis in Colombia is commonly cultivated on steep mountain slopes near a natural water source. Slash and burn techniques are often used for clearing land, a practice that has long-term adverse ecological results. In the past, cannabis was grown together with soybeans, yucca, bananas, or corn.

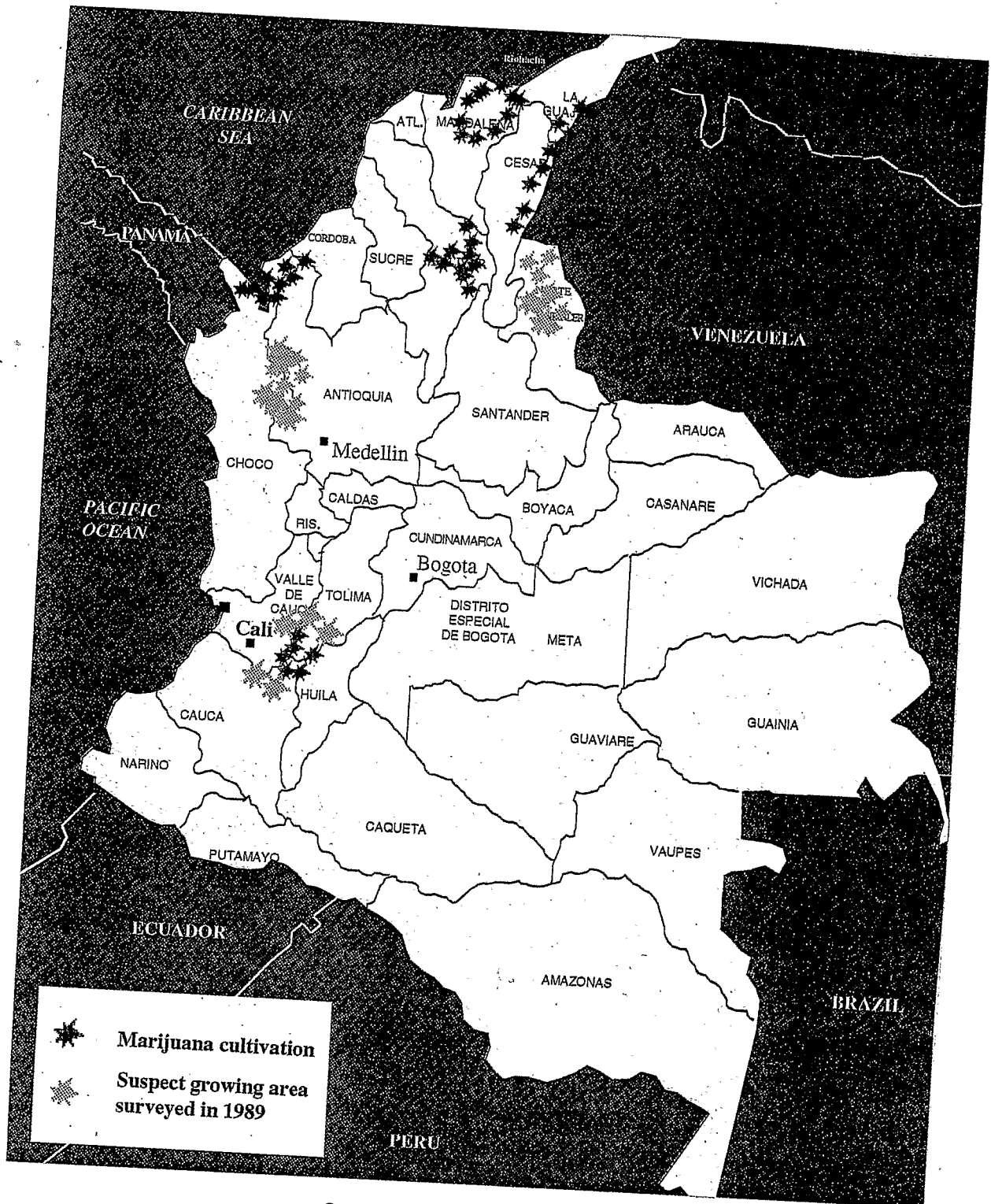
There are usually two cannabis growing seasons per year in Colombia. The first growing season lasts from March through June, and the second spans June through October. Cannabis is manually harvested by field workers, who use machetes to cut the plants.

Eradication

Colombian police and security forces destroyed 100 hectares of cannabis in 1992. Colombia did not carry out any cannabis eradication in 1991 according to the 1992 INCSR.



Cannabis plants.



Cannabis-growing areas in Colombia.

MARIJUANA AND HASHISH

Marijuana Processing

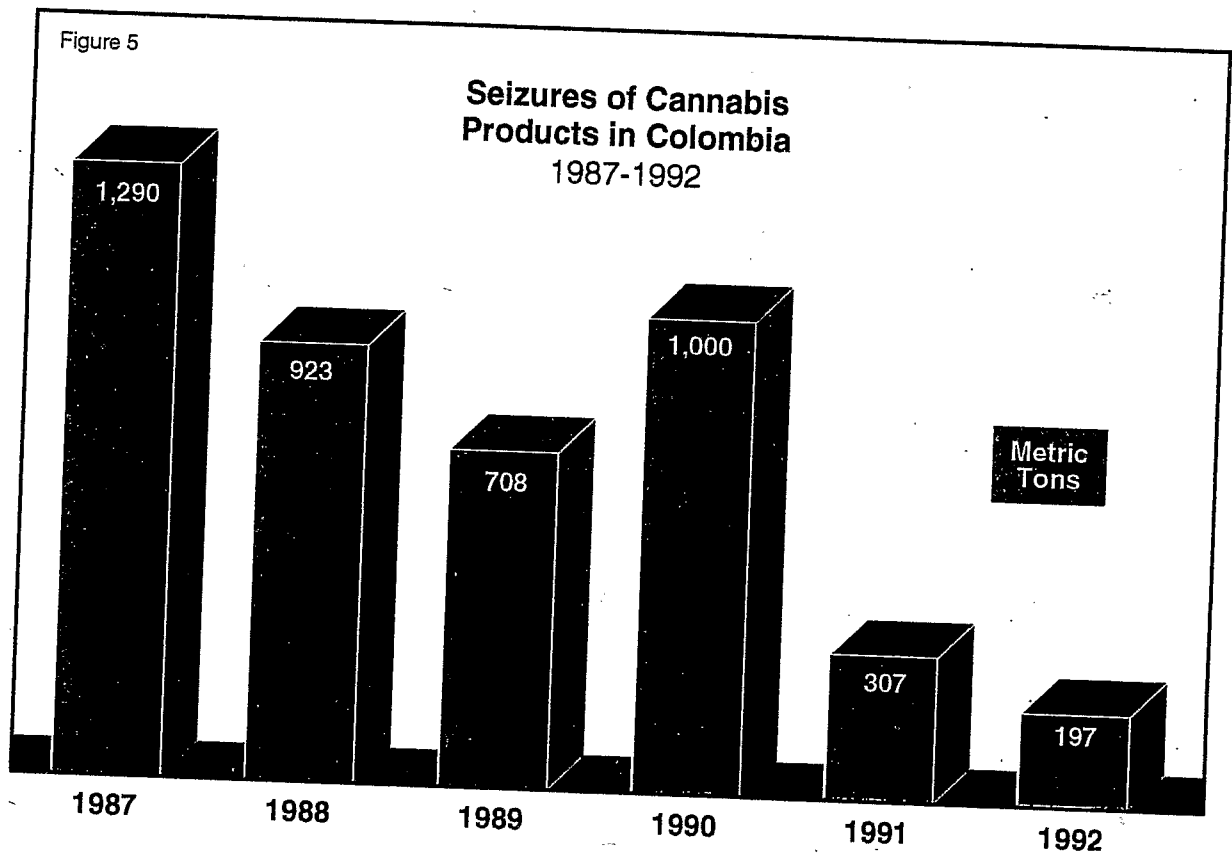
After harvesting, cannabis plants are laid out to dry and then compacted by hydraulic or manual presses into bales of marijuana that weigh between 10 and 60 kilograms. The bales are wrapped in burlap sacks, plastic bags, or cardboard cigarette boxes, depending on the mode of transportation to be used. The marijuana is usually hauled by mule to storage sites and then transported either by truck or by boat to coastal areas for later shipment by sea.

Hashish Oil Processing

The discovery of several North Coast hashish and hashish oil laboratories in the late 1980s implied that Colombian North Coast marijuana traffickers had the necessary skills to produce and distribute large quantities of those drugs. The DEA Bogota Country Office reported in 1989 that Colombian North Coast hashish and hashish oil were being processed at remote laboratories adjacent to cannabis fields.

One popular method used on the Colombian North Coast for making hashish oil employs a wire basket filled with ground or chopped cannabis. The basket is suspended inside a 55-gallon metal barrel or a cooking pot over an open fire. The cooking pot or barrel contains a solvent such as alcohol, ether, acetone, or chloroform. One gallon of solvent is needed to produce one gallon of hashish oil. The solvents may be reused.

Glass tubing, through which cold water is circulated, is placed on top of the barrel or cooking pot. Then the cooking pot and solvent are heated and vapors rise to the top where they are condensed and fall into the basket of cannabis. As the solvent seeps through the cannabis, the tetrahydrocannabinol (THC, the main psycho-active ingredient) and solvents are stabilized, and the solution drops back to the bottom of the container. Under continuous heating, which may last up to three days, the process is repeated until the solution becomes sufficiently potent. Recent reporting suggests that traffickers may use between 23 kilograms and 55 kilograms of cannabis to produce one liter of hashish oil depending on the desired quality of the final product.



Marijuana and Hashish Seizures

Colombian police and security forces seized 197 metric tons of marijuana in 1992, a 36 percent drop compared to the 307 metric tons seized in 1991. This was, in turn, a 69 percent drop from the 1,000 metric tons seized by authorities in 1990. Colombian National Police (CNP) reports indicate that much of the marijuana seized in Colombia in recent years was in transit across Colombia from Venezuela. The marijuana was en route to Colombia's North Coast for transport by sea to the United States. A summary of seizures of Colombian cannabis products between 1987 and 1992 is provided in figure 5.

On April 19, 1993, the Colombian National Police (CNP) seized 200 metric tons of marijuana from 10 "stash sites" in an area of Santa Marta known as "Don Diego." This is reportedly the second largest marijuana seizure in Colombian history. (In the mid-1980s, the CNP seized 242 metric tons of marijuana at a single location.) This 200-metric-ton marijuana seizure is consistent with other recent drug seizure and intelligence reports that indicate a resurgence in Colombian cannabis cultivation and marijuana production. The CNP seized 197 metric tons of marijuana in 1992. In the first six months of 1993, however, Colombian authorities seized more than 373 metric tons of marijuana.

In addition, CNP units are continuing to target large underground *caletas* (storage sites). These *caletas* are usually located in remote rural mountain areas, primarily along the Colombian-Venezuelan border in the Perijá Mountain Range.

Colombian authorities have not seized any significant quantities of hashish or hashish oil in recent years. In 1992, authorities seized 176 kilograms of hashish. Colombian police have seized two hashish laboratories since 1987 according to INCSR reporting.



Marijuana mule train.

Marijuana and Hashish Trafficking

Throughout the 1980s, Colombia was a major supplier of marijuana to the U.S. market. Today, Colombia ranks a distant second behind Mexico as a foreign source of marijuana. In 1990 and 1991, Colombia accounted for less than nine percent of the world's estimated marijuana production. DEA intelligence indicates that the importance of marijuana as a primary money-making product for Colombian drug traffickers continues to decline and has long since been replaced by cocaine.

Colombia was a major supplier of marijuana to the United States

In spite of its reduced importance, multiton quantities of marijuana continue to be transported—albeit on a less frequent schedule—by ocean vessels from Colombia's North Coast to the United States. Recent DEA reporting does not indicate any significant amount of hashish production or trafficking in Colombia.

RELATED TOPICS

DRUG PRICES

The wide range in Colombian drug prices cited below reflects the complex market variables affecting the drug trade, including buyer-seller relationships, quantity purchased, frequency of purchase, drug purity, and transportation costs.

Cocaine: In 1992, prices for cocaine base were reported to be approximately \$650 to \$1,000 per kilogram. During 1992, cocaine hydrochloride prices at laboratory sites ranged from \$925 to \$1,200 per kilogram, depending on the quality of the product. The price for cocaine delivered to Colombia's North Coast ranged from \$1,200 to \$2,650 per kilogram.

Opium Gum: In 1992, prices for opium gum in Colombia ranged from \$380 to \$430 per kilogram.

Morphine Base and Heroin: In 1992, morphine base in Colombia sold for \$12,000 to \$15,000 per kilogram. Reporting in early 1993 indicated that heroin was selling from \$34,000 to \$45,000 per kilogram.

Marijuana: In midyear 1993, marijuana was selling for \$10 to \$15 per kilogram at the cultivation site. Marijuana ready for export from the North Coast was selling for \$20 to \$70 per kilogram.

Hashish: In early 1993, Colombian hashish oil sold for approximately \$1,300 per kilogram.

MONEY LAUNDERING

Money laundering, per se, is not a crime in Colombia. Accordingly, it is not illegal for Colombians to receive, transfer, or conceal money or other assets derived from drug trafficking. This fact notwithstanding, Colombia has made recent progress in its efforts to curb drug money laundering.¹⁰

Colombia adopted financial regulations in early 1992 designed to prevent drug traffickers from exploiting the country's financial institutions. Since February 1992, Colombia has required financial institutions that are licensed to deal in foreign exchange to maintain Currency Transaction Reports (Declaraciones de Transacciones Monetarias or DTMs) for five years.

In May 1992, Colombia's Central Bank passed new regulations for currency exchange houses. Exchange houses must now fill out DTMs for clients who exchange the equivalent of \$7,000. In addition, exchange houses must fill out a DTM any time an individual's account exceeds the equivalent of \$7,000 during a single year.

In 1991 and 1992, Colombian authorities conducted a series of raids in Barranquilla, Bogotá, and Cali, which targeted the business offices of several Cali and Medellín Cartels' money-laundering organizations. The main targets of these raids were money launderers linked to the RODRIGUEZ-Orejuela organization.¹¹ The raids resulted in the seizure of approximately 250,000 documents and numerous computer files.

Analysis of the records seized in the Colombian raids uncovered important information on the structure of cartel drug and money-laundering organizations, cartel money-laundering techniques, the names of cartel associates, and the location of cartel bank accounts. The raids have had a significant impact on both the Medellín and Cali Cartels' worldwide financial operations. The cartels have responded by attempting to transfer millions of dollars out of the United States and Europe and into Colombia. The Colombian Central Bank estimates that \$400 million in drug money entered Colombia during 1991 according to a May 1992 article in the Colombian publication *El Nuevo Siglo*. It is estimated that at least \$700 million entered Colombia during 1992.

¹⁰ For additional information on money laundering in Colombia, see *Drug Money Laundering: Colombia*, Drug Enforcement Administration, Office of Intelligence, Washington, D.C., August 1991 (DEA SENSITIVE).

¹¹ See *Colombian Raids: Impact on Kingpin Organizations*, Drug Enforcement Administration, Office of Intelligence, Washington, D.C., July 1992 (CONFIDENTIAL/NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION).

International drug law enforcement agencies have achieved important successes against the cartels' money-laundering apparatus. In September 1992, Operation GREEN ICE, a two-year international money-laundering enforcement operation led by the DEA, concluded with over 167 arrests and the seizure of more than \$54 million in cash and property, worldwide. Law enforcement agencies from Canada, the Cayman Islands, Colombia, Costa Rica, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States participated in Operation GREEN ICE.

The cartels are buying up previously legitimate Colombian financial institutions

Intelligence indicates that Operation GREEN ICE caused a serious, if temporary, disruption of Medellín and Cali Cartel financial operations in Asia, Europe, and the United States. GREEN ICE operations mounted by the Colombian Government

included raids on numerous cartel financial organizations (noted above). For example, the Colombian National Police carried out 19 raids in Medellín against financial offices linked to Pablo ESCOBAR. A large quantity of documents and computer disks were seized in those raids, which are expected to provide valuable intelligence on the cartel's money-laundering operations. Colombian authorities froze over 500 bank accounts as a result of Operation GREEN ICE according to Bogotá press reports.

Recent law enforcement successes notwithstanding, the vast drug-derived wealth flowing into Colombia is making it possible for drug traffickers to gain increased economic, political, and social influence in that country. For example, the cartels are buying up previously legitimate Colombian financial institutions and other businesses as well as real estate in that country. They also are using their drug proceeds as "seed money" to open additional businesses. In both instances, drug money is often commingled with otherwise legitimate funds in an attempt to hide the true source of their drug-generated proceeds. The newly acquired businesses are used not only to launder drug proceeds but often to facilitate drug trafficking as well.

CHEMICAL DIVERSION

Most of the essential chemicals used to manufacture illicit drugs are imported into Colombia by sea from Europe or the United States. Western Europe, especially Germany, has emerged as the primary source for chemicals in Colombia. Reporting suggests that increasing quantities of chemicals may be arriving first in Venezuela for later shipment to Colombia on aircraft, small boats, and tanker trucks. DEA reporting suggests that most of the essential chemicals destined for cocaine laboratories in Colombia enter that country legally and are diverted only after shipment to wholesalers or retailers. The primary ports of entry are believed to be Barranquilla, Cartagena, Santa Marta, and Turbo.

Existing Colombian controls on essential chemicals are relatively ineffective. The scope of the chemical diversion problem makes it difficult for the Colombian Government to track chemicals after they have entered the country. It is believed that, between 1990 and 1991, upwards of 50 percent of all the legal imports of essential chemicals may have been diverted for use in cocaine processing.

The Colombian trafficker Jaime RODRIGUEZ-Zamora is considered to be the most important supplier of essential chemicals in Colombia. RODRIGUEZ is an independent operator who may supply chemicals to both the Cali and Medellín Cartels.

The Government of Colombia has taken positive steps to address the chemical diversion issue. Under Colombian law, individuals convicted of illegally possessing controlled chemicals may be imprisoned from two to five years. In March 1992, Colombia established seven chemical action groups to work on diversion investigations. Each group is comprised of 13 Colombian National Police officers, one chemist, and one accountant.

In December 1992, the Colombian Government imposed controls on the importation, distribution, and use of acetic anhydride and toluene. Acetic anhydride is an essential chemical used in the production of heroin while toluene is a solvent used in the cocaine conversion process. Toluene can also be used in heroin processing operations.

COLOMBIAN PORTS AND MARITIME SMUGGLING

Approximately 95 percent of Colombia's maritime container traffic passes through the port facilities of Buenaventura, Cartagena, Barranquilla, and Santa Marta. Drug and chemical smuggling through Colombia's major ports is a major law enforcement challenge. Buenaventura, Colombia's major Pacific port and key containerized-cargo facility, is perhaps the most important port used by traffickers to export cocaine and to import essential chemicals.

The threat posed by cocaine smuggling through Colombian ports is expected to increase due to the government's 1991 decision to privatize the government-owned Colombian Port Agency (Agencia Colombiana de Puertos or COLPUERTOS) by the end of 1993. COLPUERTOS will be replaced by a new Superintendency of Ports, which will report to the Ministry of Transportation. The government's plan calls for investors to form regional and local "port societies," which will assume control of port operations. Oversight will be provided by the Superintendency.

Port privatization is expected to have a negative effect on Colombian maritime drug enforcement and interdiction efforts. According to current plans, port security will be transferred to private security firms. DEA anticipates that these firms will be more vulnerable to corruption than the Colombian Port Police.

SPECIAL ISSUES

VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA

Colombia is one of the most crime-plagued countries in the world. Colombian authorities reported 1,136 kidnappings, 1,100 acts of terrorism, 351 bank robberies, and the murder of 620 police officers in 1992. Violence has been endemic to Colombian society for generations. Between 1948 and 1956, approximately 200,000 to 300,000 people died in Colombia's civil war. The civil war, known in Colombia simply as La Violencia (The Violence), concluded with a power-sharing pact between the Conservative and Liberal Parties. The pact brought political stability, but stifled local participation in the political process and thus sowed the seeds for future conflict.

Since the 1970s, drug traffickers have made temporary "alliances of convenience" with leftist guerrillas, in some instances, and with right-wing paramilitary groups in others, in order to protect their drug empires. The suspected links between Colombia's leftist insurgents, right-wing paramilitary forces, and drug traffickers are examined below.

The Medellín Cartel is the most violent of the Colombian cocaine trafficking organizations. Pablo ESCOBAR's *sicarios* have killed hundreds of politicians, judges, law enforcement officers, journalists, and rival drug traffickers. Although the intensity of overt drug-related terrorism in Colombia decreased with Pablo ESCOBAR's June 1991 surrender to authorities, his July 1992 escape from Envigado Prison led to renewed violence.

INSURGENT PARTICIPATION IN DRUG TRAFFICKING

Two major insurgent groups are currently active in Colombia, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia or FARC) and the National Liberation Army (the Ejército de Liberación Nacional or ELN). There were approximately 8,000 to 10,000 active leftist guerrillas operating in Colombia during the late 1980's according to published sources. Both the FARC and the ELN are leftist groups that combine insurgent and terrorist operations with participation in the legitimate political process. The political objective of both groups is to replace the current government with a leftist and anti-U.S. regime.

Two major insurgent groups are currently active in Colombia

The FARC is the largest, best-trained and equipped, and most effective insurgent group in Colombia. Over the past 20 years, the FARC has controlled large areas of Colombia's eastern lowlands and rain forest, which, as previously noted, are the primary coca cultivation and cocaine processing regions in the country.

The ELN operates primarily along Colombia's north and northeastern border with Venezuela. Territory under ELN control includes Colombia's traditional cannabis cultivation areas. Colombia's oil and gas pipelines in the northeast are a favorite ELN target. In a renewed insurgent offensive in late 1992, the ELN carried out dozens of bombing attacks against oil pipelines.

Prior to March 1990, another group, the 19th of April Movement (Movimiento de 19 de Abril or M-19) carried out insurgent and terrorist operations throughout Colombia. The M-19 was responsible for one of the most infamous acts of terrorism in Colombian history. In November 1985, M-19 terrorists seized the Palace of Justice in Bogotá and took almost 500 hostages, including members of the Colombian Supreme Court and Council of State. A counter-attack by Colombian security forces led to the death of all the terrorists, 50 of the 500 hostages (including 11 Supreme Court justices), and 11 members of the security forces. The remaining hostages were freed.

In March 1990, the M-19 signed a peace accord with the Colombian Government and was integrated into the legitimate political system. In December 1990, a coalition led by the M-19 won 19 of 70 seats in the Colombian Constituent Assembly. The M-19 lost considerable influence in Congress, however, after the 1991 elections.

In May 1992, several Colombian Public Order Court judges issued arrest warrants for 26 leaders of the M-19 on charges of ordering the November 1985 occupation of the Palace of Justice. This judicial action threatened to unravel the peace agreement negotiated between the government and the M-19. President Gaviria took the position that rebel leaders covered under the amnesty agreement could not be prosecuted for crimes which took place prior to that time. In June 1992, the Colombian Senate and House of Representatives adopted legislation pardoning M-19 members for the Palace of Justice attack. President Gavaria signed the bill in July 1992.

In 1987, the FARC, ELN, M-19, and Popular Liberation Army (the Ejército Popular de Liberación or EPL) formed the Simon Bolivar National Guerrilla Coordinating Board (Coordinadora Nacional Guerrillero Simon Bolívar or CNGSB) to develop comprehensive military and political strategies for their "struggle" against the Colombian Government. But, in March 1991, the EPL ended their armed struggle, surrendered their weapons, and joined the legitimate political process. A small, dissident EPL faction, known as the Francisco Caraballo Group, has continued its armed struggle.

Guerrilla violence in Colombia has intensified since the June 1992 collapse of peace negotiations between the CNGSB and the Colombian Government. Some elements (fronts) of the FARC and ELN continue to extort "revolutionary taxes" from narco-traffickers operating in areas under their control. Colombian guerrilla groups traditionally have supported their movements through extortion and kidnapping. In many cases, however, this extortion is, in effect, payment by the traffickers for services rendered. Credible reporting indicates that certain FARC and ELN elements provide security at illicit crop sites, cocaine laboratories, and clandestine airstrips.

Colombian security forces frequently have claimed that elements of the FARC are directly involved in coca cultivation and laboratory operations. In March 1991, for example, the Colombian Army claimed to have destroyed a cocaine processing laboratory in Arauca Intendancy owned by the 45th FARC Front. DEA intelligence has not corroborated those claims.

Recent reporting suggests that several FARC fronts in Huila Department extract a "tax" from *campesinos* involved in opium poppy cultivation. According to one credible source, the FARC demands that the *campesinos* pay a 20-percent tax on every kilogram of opium gum sold. The FARC allegedly regulates the sale of morphine base to drug traffickers in Huila and assures the quality of the product.

DEA reporting in August 1991 indicated that the 4th FARC Front near Manaure, La Guajira, provided protection for cannabis cultivation sites and marijuana storage facilities. In February 1992, the Bogota Country Office reported that cannabis cultivation in the Perijá Mountains was controlled by the 30th and 41st FARC Fronts.

DEA has no evidence that either the FARC or ELN is, or has been, involved in the distribution or marketing of illicit drugs in the United States or Europe. Furthermore, it is doubtful that either insurgent group has the necessary logistical infrastructure to establish drug distribution networks in the United States or Europe.

This is not meant to imply that individuals linked to Colombian insurgent groups have not on occasion become involved in drug trafficking for personal gain. There is no credible evidence, however, that the national leadership of either the FARC or ELN has directed, as a matter of policy, that their respective organizations directly engage in drug production or distribution.

RIGHT-WING PARAMILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN DRUG TRAFFICKING

An April 1992 article in the Bogotá newspaper *El Tiempo*, allegedly based on a Colombian intelligence report, claimed that 28 paramilitary groups operate in Colombia. These 28 groups, which in total may have 7,000 men under arms, operate in relative isolation from each other according to the article.

Modern "self-defense groups" emerged in Colombia during the 1980's in response to leftist guerrilla violence. Many of these groups are reported to have close links to the Colombian military. These paramilitary units have become an important element in Colombia's cycle of violence.

The Catholic Church and respected human rights organizations in Latin America continue to report serious human rights abuses by right-wing "death squads." The Patriotic Union (Unión Patriótica or UP), which has been associated with both the FARC and the Colombian Communist Party (Partido Comunista de Colombia or PCC), has been a special target of paramilitary groups and drug traffickers. Over 1,500 UP members have been murdered in recent years.

Intelligence indicates that some of Colombia's private paramilitary groups have been co-opted by cocaine trafficking organizations. Throughout the 1980's, the Self-Defense Militia of Magdalena Medio (Autodefensas del Magdalena Medio), one of the most important of these groups, had close ties with the Medellín Cartel's Jose Gonzalo RODRIGUEZ-Gacha organization. By 1990, for reasons that are still unclear, the Autodefensas del Magdalena Medio and the Medellín Cartel emerged as bitter foes. In November 1991, the Autodefensas del Magdalena Medio officially disbanded although it is suspected that a small, covert cell of the original group still exists.

Drug traffickers were known, on at least one occasion, to have formed their own paramilitary group to defend their interests. The Medellín Cartel's "Death to Kidnappers" (Muerte a Secuestradores or MAS) paramilitary strike force was formed in 1981 in response to the M-19's kidnapping of the OCHOA brothers' youngest sister. Within two months, the MAS killed more than 100 M-19 members and, within three months, the OCHOAs' sister was released.

DRUG-RELATED CORRUPTION

Widespread drug-related corruption has been reported for many years in practically every Colombian Government institution, including the Congress, the courts, the Colombian National Police, and the armed forces. The large profits generated by drug trafficking provide the drug cartels with the resources to buy influence in almost all of the important centers of power in Colombia. Institutional corruption does not appear, however, to be a serious problem at the very highest levels of the Colombian Government.

Widespread drug-related corruption has been reported for many years

DOMESTIC DRUG ABUSE

The Colombian Government lacks sufficient data to determine the full extent of Colombia's domestic drug abuse problem. Drug addiction appears to be increasing, particularly among the urban poor and the young. Reporting from Bogota has noted a significant increase in drug abuse in the Colombian armed forces.

Basuco (a form of cocaine base similar to "crack") and marijuana appear to be the major drugs of abuse in Colombia. Some reports suggest that one million residents of Bogotá may use *basuco*.¹² In October 1992, a leading Colombian newspaper reported that Bogotá alone has some 300 open-air drug markets selling *basuco*. Cocaine is used primarily by Colombia's middle and upper classes. A May 1992 study by the Andes University of Bogotá concluded, however, that the use of *basuco* and cocaine by pre-teenage Colombian students is on the increase.

A recent study by the Colombian National Directorate on Dangerous Drugs warned that opiate abuse is on the rise, particularly in Bogotá and other urban areas. The study also revealed a growing problem with drug addicts who abuse both opiates and cocaine. DEA is working with the Colombian National Police in Atlántico Department to implement a demand reduction program directed at street-level users. The CNP has produced and distributed drug education materials and conducted drug prevention seminars.

¹² Possession of less than 3.5 ounces (100 grams) of *basuco* is not a crime under Colombian law.

GOVERNMENT COUNTER-DRUG ORGANIZATIONS

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL CONTEXTS

Colombia's 1991 Constitution contains several provisions that affect that country's counter-drug policies and operations. Article 35, which prohibits the extradition of native-born Colombians, is the most important of these provisions. Ratification of Article 35 was a major victory for Pablo ESCOBAR and the other *extraditables*, who waged a campaign of terror and bribery to win this concession.

Article 35 does, however, allow the Government of Colombia to prosecute Colombians for crimes committed abroad. In March 1992, for the first time, a Colombian national was convicted and sentenced in Colombia for a drug crime committed in the United States. This case also was unique in that it marked the first time that a case was based on evidence furnished by the U.S. Government. The defendant, Gonzalo RINCON-Peret, was sentenced to 44 months imprisonment and fined the equivalent of \$1,200 for distribution of cocaine in New York City.

Tutela (protection), a legal right established under Article 86 of the 1991 Constitution, has complicated prosecution of drug traffickers. *Tutela* refers to the right of a Colombian citizen "at any time and any place" to petition the courts to protect his or her basic constitutional rights. Judges must give the *tutela* appeal priority over all other matters before the court. The right of *tutela* has been used extensively by Colombian drug traffickers to delay prosecution by clogging up the judicial system with *tutela* petitions.

In January 1992, President Gaviria attempted to limit the scope of *tutela* by issuing executive orders to prohibit *tutela* claims in labor, environmental, and hypothetical cases. He also decreed that *tutela* cannot be used as a substitute for habeas corpus or after a final verdict is rendered by a court.

By June 1992, a legal deadlock emerged between Colombia's highest courts on whether *tutela* could be used against final verdicts.¹³ Colombia's Supreme Court, on the one hand, had ruled that *tutela* could *not* be used against final verdicts. Colombia's Constitutional Court, on the other hand, had ruled that *tutela* relief could be granted against final verdicts handed down by other courts. In October 1992, the Constitutional Court reversed itself and ruled that *tutela* could *not* be used against final verdicts.

¹³ A legal stalemate is possible in the Colombian judicial system since there is not one, but three high courts of appeal. The Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, and the Council of State may all rule on cases that deal with the same constitutional issues.

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The president of Colombia wields great power and influence over government counter-drug policy due to his combined roles as the head of government, head of state, and supreme commander of the armed forces. The president's ability to carry out long-term policy initiatives is, however, limited by Colombia's Constitution, which restricts the president to serving one four-year term. President César Gaviria's term of office ends on August 7, 1994.

The Colombian president has a powerful tool in the counter-drug arena in his authority to issue presidential decrees in times of "emergency." For example, Presidential Decrees 2047 and 3030 of 1990, induced Pablo ESCOBAR, the OCHOA brothers, and other Colombian drug traffickers to surrender to government authorities. Under a de facto "plea bargain" agreement, the traffickers agreed to confess to a single crime in exchange for substantially reduced prison sentences and a guarantee that they would not be extradited to the United States.

The Colombian president, with the approval of all of the ministers of the administrative departments, may declare a "state of internal disturbance" or a "state of emergency" throughout the country or in specified parts of the country. During this time, the president has broad powers to issue decrees that have the force of law.

The Colombian Constitution provides several important "checks and balances" on the president's power to suspend normal democratic processes. First, a "state of internal disturbance" or "state of emergency" may last only for 180 days unless the Senate approves a 90-day extension. Second, the Colombian Congress may repeal, amend, or add to the presidential decrees during the year following the declaration of an emergency. Third, the executive branch must submit all legislative decrees, on the day after they are issued, to the Constitutional Court for a ruling on their constitutionality.

In July 1992, President Gavaria declared a state of internal disturbance and issued a decree, which suspended a new criminal procedures code that required the government to release prisoners who had not been indicted within 180 days of their arrest. Nearly 700 prisoners including Juan David OCHOA-Vasquez and 16 other high ranking Medellín Cartel members had applied for release under the new law. The Colombian Supreme Court later ruled that the code of criminal procedures covered common crimes, not the crimes within the jurisdiction of the Special Public Order Courts set up in 1990. As a result, the court ruled that narco-traffickers were not entitled to be released under this provision.

The two executive-level organizations most responsible for counter-drug policy in Colombia are the National Council on Dangerous Drugs (Consejo Nacional de Estupefacientes or CNE) and the National Directorate on Dangerous Drugs (Dirección Nacional de Estupefacientes or DNE). The CNE is the key cabinet-level body responsible for the government's drug policy. It is comprised of the Minister of Justice (who acts as chairman of the council) and the Ministers of Health, National Education, Agriculture, National Defense, and Communications. The Attorney General and the heads of the National Police, Customs, and Administrative Department of Security are also members of the CNE. The DNE reports to the Minister of Justice and is responsible for coordinating government-wide counter-drug activities once the CNE sets official policy.

Colombia's counter-drug policies are also influenced by the country's international and bilateral legal obligations. Colombia is a party to the 1961 United Nations Single Convention on Drugs and the 1971 United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances.

In June 1993, the Colombian Congress ratified the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (popularly known as the Vienna Convention). The Government of Colombia attached several unilateral reservations to the Vienna Convention. The most important reservation states that Colombia will not honor that article of the treaty that requires extradition for drug-related crimes. The Colombian Government has taken the position that the extradition clause of the Vienna Convention would violate Article 35 of the 1991 Colombian Constitution, which outlawed extradition of native-born Colombians.

THE COLOMBIAN CONGRESS

The Colombian legislature consists of a nationally elected upper chamber or Senate and a regionally elected lower chamber or House of Representatives. Although the executive branch dominates counter-drug policy and operations in Colombia, the Colombian Congress also has important roles in the adoption of legislation, such as the ban on extradition, and in the ratification of treaties, such as the Vienna Convention.

The Congress is subject, however, to the considerable influence of the drug cartels. The Medellín Cartel, in particular, has routinely used bribery and intimidation to affect Congressional decisions.

THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Colombia's judicial system has been in the forefront of the government's struggle against drug traffickers. President Gaviria has pressed a broad strategy designed to revitalize Colombia's weak and intimidated justice system and to create effective mechanisms with which to bring the country's drug-related violence and corruption under control. In January 1991, the government created independent Public Order Courts. These courts, now called Regional Courts, hear cases involving drug trafficking, terrorism, extortion, and kidnapping.

The government has attempted to keep secret the identities of Regional Court judges responsible for specific cases in order to protect them from drug trafficker intimidation and violence. (Approximately 200 regular Colombian judges have been murdered by traffickers in recent years.) But, on at least one recent occasion, traffickers were able to penetrate the veil of secrecy around Regional Court judges. In September 1992, the "faceless" Colombian judge working on a murder case linked to Pablo ESCOBAR was assassinated while driving to work.

Colombia's Regional Courts completed 137 drug cases in the first four months of 1992 and achieved an impressive 74-percent conviction rate. In contrast, Colombia's former criminal justice system had an average conviction rate of only 12 percent.

In July 1992, the government established the Office of Prosecutor General (Fiscalía General). This was seen as an important step in Colombia's transition from an inquisitorial justice system toward one that is more accusatorial in nature. The primary duty of the Prosecutor General is to investigate crimes and bring charges against suspects before the courts. Investigations are carried out by the Technical Judicial Police Corps, a unit of career detectives who work exclusively on judicially ordered criminal investigations.

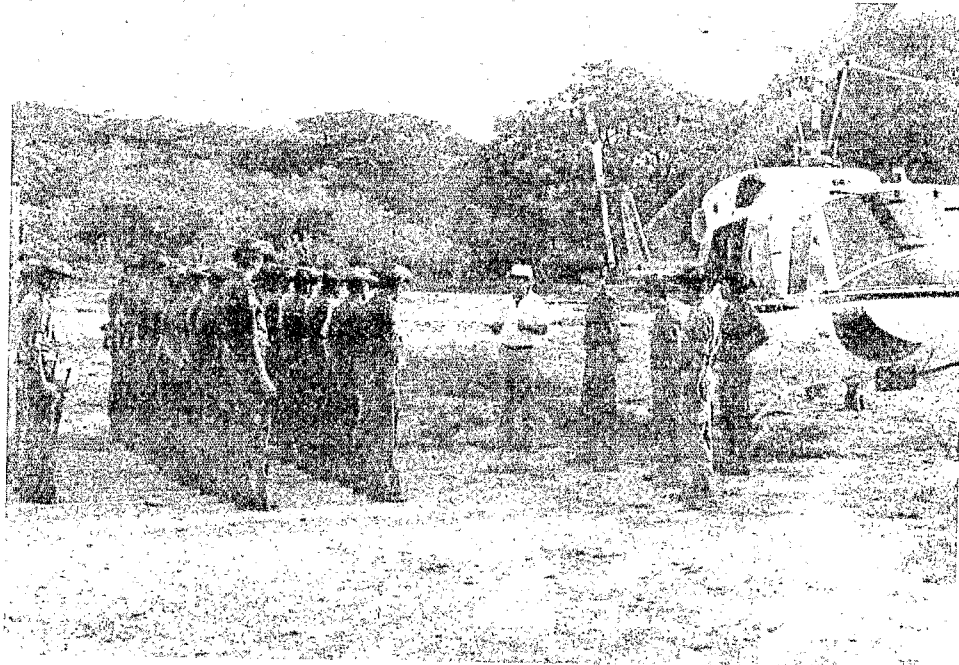
In another positive development, the United States and Colombia signed a four-year, \$36-million agreement in September 1992 to strengthen Colombia's judicial system. This assistance will be used to support the Fiscalía General and other judicial institutions.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

The Colombian National Police (Policía Nacional de Colombia or CNP), an 86,000-member force under the Ministry of Defense, is the lead drug enforcement agency in Colombia. Two elements of the CNP have special counter-drug missions, the Directorate of Anti-Narcotics (Dirección Anti-Narcóticos or DAN) and the Directorate of Judicial Police and Investigations (Dirección de Policía Judicial e Investigaciones or DIJIN).

The DAN is comprised of 2,500 personnel organized into 15 interdiction companies and 15 intelligence cells. These units are located throughout Colombia. The DAN also includes two special operations units and the Police Aviation Service Division (División Servicio Aéreo de Policía or DISAP), previously known as the National Police Air Service (Servicio Aéreo de la Policía or SAPOL).

DISAP operates fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft in support of counter-drug operations. Aerial eradication of opium poppy fields has emerged as one of the unit's top priorities. DISAP is widely considered to be one of the best counter-drug air interdiction units in Latin America.



A CNP unit is briefed prior to deployment.

Each DAN interdiction company has approximately 100 personnel assigned and falls under the operational control of one of four zone commanders. DAN companies are paramilitary troops organized and equipped along the lines of a U.S. light infantry company minus a weapons platoon. Their only mission is counter-drug operations. They conduct roadblocks, motorized and foot patrols, and airmobile assaults. Typical counter-drug missions include destroying clandestine cocaine laboratories, neutralizing airstrips used by traffickers, and eradicating coca and opium poppy fields. DAN intelligence groups operate in small 5- to 10-man cells, which are scattered throughout the country. They employ wiretaps, radio intercepts, and confidential informants in support of their counter-drug efforts.

In August 1992, the Colombian Government authorized the creation of six new DAN units, which were to have the authority to investigate drug cases and present them to the courts for prosecution. Prior to that time, the DAN had no investigative authority and thus had to turn prosecutable cases over to the Directorate of Judicial Police and Investigations (DIJIN).

The 5,000-man DIJIN conducts criminal investigations and maintains a computer data base of criminal files and active arrest warrants. DIJIN agents are responsible for investigating most crimes committed in Colombia.

The Colombian National Police (CNP), especially the DAN, continues to be Colombia's "first line of defense" in the drug law enforcement arena. In 1992, the CNP was responsible for approximately 88 percent of the cocaine, 92 percent of the cocaine base, 96 percent of the marijuana, and 78 percent of the heroin seized in Colombia. The CNP also was responsible for 40 percent of the clandestine cocaine laboratories destroyed in Colombia during 1992. CNP operations have carried a high price in human life. According to Colombian Government statistics, 620 members of the CNP were killed in the line of duty in 1992. The CNP believes that Pablo ESCOBAR ordered the assassination of more than 40 police officers in retaliation for police efforts to recapture him after his escape from Envigado Prison.

The Department of Administrative Security (Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad or DAS) is an investigative and security element that reports directly to the President of Colombia. The DAS provides security for judges and other government officials and also monitors Colombian trafficker activities abroad. The DAS also serves as the government's representative to INTERPOL.

DAS agents work closely with DEA agents on international cases. The DAS is attempting to establish itself as the lead government agency for money-laundering investigations and asset seizures.

COLOMBIAN ARMED FORCES

The Colombian Army conducts special counter-drug operations, such as airborne assaults, in guerrilla-controlled areas of Colombia. The Army has destroyed clandestine cocaine processing laboratories, trafficker airstrips, and cultivation sites discovered during security operations. In 1992, the Colombian Army was responsible for approximately 43 percent of the clandestine cocaine laboratories destroyed in Colombia.

The Colombian Navy operates on the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean and detects, boards, and searches Colombian ships suspected of drug smuggling. The Marine Infantry has the lead for controlling inland waterways. In 1992, the Colombian Marines destroyed 34 cocaine laboratories (15 percent of all the laboratories destroyed in that year).

As previously noted, rivers serve as the primary means of transportation in Colombia's eastern lowlands and jungles. The government recently created a coast guard element within the navy to control territorial waters and ports.

The Colombian Air Force (Fuerza Aérea de Colombia or FAC) is the lead agency for air detection and monitoring. The FAC also operates C-130 heavy-duty cargo aircraft in support of Army operations. In spite of this kind of support, institutional rivalries have limited counter-drug cooperation and coordination between the Colombian military services and the police as well as among the different services within the armed forces.

FIVE-YEAR OUTLOOK

Colombia will remain the world's leading source of cocaine for the foreseeable future, responsible for the vast bulk of worldwide production. Colombian cocaine traffickers will continue to expand their smuggling operations through neighboring countries, especially Venezuela, Suriname, and Brazil. The innovative use of front companies, bulk cargo, and commercial containerized shipments of legitimate commodities to conceal shipments of cocaine will continue to pose new challenges to international drug law enforcement agencies.

Colombia will remain the world's leading source of cocaine

It is anticipated that the Cali Cartel will continue to increase its share of the illicit international drug market relative to the Medellín Cartel. This increase notwithstanding, the Medellín Cartel also will continue to pose a significant challenge to international drug law enforcement authorities. Even if Pablo ESCOBAR fades from the drug trafficking scene, a

restructured Medellín Cartel will continue to smuggle multiton quantities of cocaine into the United States and Europe.

The rapidly evolving Colombian heroin situation warrants serious concern and attention. Unless checked, Colombian drug traffickers have the potential to become major players in the international heroin trade within the next five years. It is anticipated that the Cali Cartel will attempt to exert control over opium poppy cultivation and heroin production within Colombia as well as over the international wholesale distribution of heroin from Colombia.

Traffickers who export Colombian-produced heroin will continue to carve a specific market niche on the East Coast of the United States but will not challenge Southeast Asian heroin traffickers for dominance in the near term. Colombian traffickers may, in time, capture a wider market share given their vast resources, control over trafficking routes, and access to a large cocaine clientele in the United States.

Recent DEA reporting suggests that, unless checked, cannabis cultivation and marijuana production in Colombia may continue to increase during the next five years. Colombian trafficking organizations are expected to continue their efforts to smuggle multiton quantities of marijuana from Colombia's North Coast to the United States.

Recent actions by the Government of Colombia under President Gaviria have included the arrest of drug Kingpin Jairo Ivan URDINOLA-Grajales, a series of raids against cartel money-laundering organizations, widespread opium poppy eradication, numerous cocaine and heroin laboratory raids, and significant cocaine and marijuana seizures. The government is expected to continue to conduct aggressive counter-drug operations against the Cali and Medellín Cartels.

From a strategic counter-drug perspective, the long-term prospect of a decisive government victory against the major drug Kingpin organizations is not promising. Serious domestic problems, which include insurgent violence, a weak and intimidated judiciary, and widespread official corruption, continue to hinder Colombia's "war" against traffickers.

It is encouraging to note, however, that the Colombian Government vigorously continues to tackle their complex drug trafficking problems. Although the drug Kingpin organizations have suffered significant setbacks in Colombia, sustained efforts by Colombian authorities and the international drug law enforcement community will be required if we are eventually to dismantle Colombia's drug Kingpin organizations and to stop the flow of drugs from Colombia.

APPENDIX 3

DRUG ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS IN COLOMBIA: 1990-1992

Enforcement Actions	1990	1991	1992
Arrests	3,607	6,150	1,156
Drugs Seized			
Cocaine Hydrochloride	47.3 M.T.	77.1 M.T.	30.8 M.T.
Cocaine Base	9.3 M.T.	5.8 M.T.	6.7 M.T.
<i>Basuco</i>	394 kg.	1,235 kg.	626 kg.
Coca Leaves	340 M.T.	140 M.T.	116 M.T.
Cannabis	1,000 M.T.	307 M.T.	197 M.T.
Opium Gum	0	30 kg.	107 kg.
Morphine Base	0	7 kg.	9 kg.
Heroin	0	0	47.5 kg.
Crop Eradication			
Coca	900 hectares	972 hectares	941 hectares
Cannabis	500 hectares	0	100 hectares
Opium Poppy	0	1,156 hectares	12,759 hectares
Cocaine Laboratories Destroyed	269	239	223
Chemicals Destroyed			
Acetone	307,712 gal.	225,690 gal.	207,674 gal.
Ether	300,075 gal.	277,064 gal.	134,899 gal.
Hydrochloric Acid	9,240 gal.	75,225 gal.	33,807 gal.
Methyl Ethyl Ketone (MEK)	139,266 gal.	70,079 gal.	50,700 gal.
Potassium Permanganate	23,271 kg.	14,112 kg.	43,506 kg.
Sulfuric Acid	53,184 gal.	33,517 gal.	127,856 gal.
Asset Seizures			
Aircraft	36	27	37
Airstrips	129	91	126
Residences	384	103	203
Vehicles	311	115	322
Vessels	35	44	26

Source: DEA and 1992 INCSR

DISTRIBUTION

The White House
National Security Council
Office of National Drug Control Policy

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Federal Bureau of Investigation/DIU
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Immigration and Naturalization Service
INTERPOL/USNCB
Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces
U.S. Marshals Service

Department of the Treasury
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
Internal Revenue Service
U.S. Customs Service
U.S. Secret Service

Department of Defense
Defense Intelligence Agency
National Security Agency

Central Intelligence Agency/CNC

Department of State

U.S. Coast Guard

DEA Headquarters
DEA Field Offices
DEA Laboratories

El Paso Intelligence Center
Financial Crimes Enforcement Network
National Drug Intelligence Center

International Association of Chiefs of Police (Narcotics Committee)
National Alliance of State Drug Enforcement Agencies
National Sheriffs' Association



APPENDIX 1

ACRONYMS

Acronym	Spanish	English
BCO		(DEA) Bogota Country Office
BQRO		(DEA) Barranquilla Resident Office
CI		Cooperating Individual
CNE	Consejo Nacional de Estupefacientes	National Council on Dangerous Drugs
CNGSB	Coordinadora Nacional Guerrillero Simon Bolívar	Simon Bolivar National Guerrilla Coordinating Board
CNP	Policía Nacional de Colombia	Colombian National Police
Cocaine HCl		Cocaine Hydrochloride
COLPUERTOS	Agencia Colombiana de Puertos	Colombian Port Agency
DAN	Dirección Anti-Narcóticos	Directorate of Anti-Narcotics
DAS	Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad	Department of Administrative Security
DEA		Drug Enforcement Administration
DIJIN	Dirección de Policía Judicial e Investigaciones	Directorate of Judicial Police and Investigations
DISAP	División de Servicio Aéreo de la Policía	Police Aviation Service Division
DNE	Dirección Nacional de Estupefacientes	National Directorate on Dangerous Drugs
DTM	Declaraciones de Transacciones Monetarias	Currency Transaction Report

Acronym	Spanish	English
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional	National Liberation Army
EPIC		El Paso Intelligence Center
FAC	Fuerza Aérea de Colombia	Colombian Air Force
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
GOC		Government of Colombia
HSP		(DEA) Heroin Signature Program
INSCR		International Narcotics Control Strategy Report
INTERPOL		International Criminal Police Organization
M-19	Movimiento de 19 de Abril	19th of April Movement
MAS	Muerte a Secuestradores	Death to Kidnappers
PCC	Partido Comunista de Colombia	Communist Party of Colombia
RCMP		Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SAPOL	Servicio Aéreo de la Policía	National Police Air Service
TOC		Traditional Organized Crime
THC		Tetrahydrocannabinol
UP	Unión Patriótica	Patriotic Union
USCS		United States Customs Service

APPENDIX 2
CONVERSION FACTORS

U.S.	Metric
1 acre	0.4047 hectares
1 foot	0.3048 meters
1 mile	1.609 kilometers
1 pound	0.4536 kilograms
1 ton (short)	907.1847 kilograms

Metric	U.S.
1 hectare	2.471 acres
1 kilogram	2.205 pounds
1 kilometer	0.6214 miles
1 meter	3.281 feet
1 metric ton	1.1023 tons (short)