



| HOME | PRIVACY POLICY | CONTACT US | SITE DIRECTORY |

[\[print friendly page\]](#)

The Drug Trade in Colombia: A Threat Assessment

DEA Intelligence Division

This report was prepared by the South America/Caribbean Strategic Intelligence Unit (NIBC) of the Office of International Intelligence. This report reflects information through December 2001. Comments and requests for copies are welcome and may be directed to the Intelligence Production Unit, Intelligence Division, DEA Headquarters, at (202) 307-8726.



March 2002
DEA-02006

CONTENTS

<p>MESSAGE BY THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR INTELLIGENCE</p> <p>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cocaine Heroin Marijuana Synthetic Drugs Money Laundering Chemical Diversion Insurgents and Illegal "Self-Defense" Groups 	<p>THE HEROIN TRADE IN COLOMBIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction: The Development of the Heroin Trade in Colombia Opium-Poppy Cultivation Opium-Poppy Eradication Opiate Production Opiate Laboratory Operations in 	<p>DRUG PRICES AND DRUG ABUSE IN COLOMBIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drug Prices Drug Abuse <p>DRUG RELATED MONEY LAUNDERING AND CHEMICAL DIVERSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drug-Related Money Laundering Chemical Diversion 	<p>THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Formation of the Modern State of Colombia Colombian Government Institutions Involved in the Counterdrug Arena The Office of the President The Ministry of 	<p>COLOMBIA'S COUNTERDRUG STRATEGY IN A LEGAL CONTEXT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counterdrug Impact of Colombia's 1991 Constitution Extradition Sentencing Codes Money Laundering Laws Asset Seizure and
---	---	---	--	---

<p>COLOMBIA: THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE DRUG TRADE</p> <p>THE COCAINE TRADE IN COLOMBIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction: The Changing Dynamics of the Cocaine Trade in the Andean Region Coca Cultivation Coca Eradication Plan Colombia and Regional "Spill-Over" Cocaine Production in Colombia Colombian Cocaine Trafficking Groups and the Decentralization of the Cocaine Trade Movement of Colombian Cocaine to the United States and Europe Central America and Mexico The Caribbean Europe Colombian Wholesale Cocaine Operations in the United States 	<p>Colombia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heroin Smuggling Heroin Trafficking Groups South American Heroin Availability in the United States <p>THE MARIJUANA TRADE IN COLOMBIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction Cannabis Cultivation Marijuana Production Cannabis Eradication and Marijuana Seizures Marijuana Smuggling Marijuana Trafficking Groups <p>THE SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE IN COLOMBIA</p>	<p>THE INSURGENT AND PARAMILITARY THREAT IN COLOMBIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction Colombian Insurgent Groups The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia The National Liberation Army 19th of April Movement Popular Liberation Army Self-Defense Groups Insurgent Involvement in the Drug Trade Self-Defense Group Involvement in the Drug Trade <p>CRIME AND VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crime and Violence 	<p>Defense</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministry of Justice The National Council on Dangerous Drugs The National Directorate on Dangerous Drugs The National Assembly Colombian Judiciary and the Specialized Judicial System The Office of the Prosecutor General The Office of the Attorney General The Colombian National Police The Department of Administrative Security The Colombian Customs Service The Colombian Military 	<p>Forfeiture Laws</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chemical Diversion Laws Colombia's International Legal Obligations <p>OUTLOOK</p> <p>APPENDIX 1: ACRONYMS</p> <p>APPENDIX 2: DRUG ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS IN COLOMBIA (1991-2000)</p>
---	---	---	---	---

MESSAGE BY THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR INTELLIGENCE

This report examines drug trafficking in Colombia, as well as the Colombian Government's counterdrug strategies, programs, and organizations. In recent years, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has observed dramatic changes in the "geopolitics" of drug cultivation and production. These changing dynamics highlight the adaptability of Colombian cocaine trafficking organizations, and the fact that they continue to dominate the international cocaine trade. However, the decentralization and/or fragmentation of the cocaine trade over the past decade has had a major impact on how drug trafficking groups operate. In addition, Colombian drug traffickers, beginning in the early 1990s, also have become extensively involved in the heroin trade.

From the early 1980s through the mid-1990s, first the Medellín Cartel, and then the Cali Cartel, dominated all aspects of the international cocaine trade, from wholesale production and transportation, to wholesale distribution in the United States and Europe. Dramatic law enforcement successes against the Medellín and Cali Cartels in the early and mid-1990s, allowed experienced traffickers—who had been active for years but worked in the shadows of the Medellín or Cali drug lords—to increase their roles in the cocaine trade. Unlike their cartel predecessors, however, today's Colombian traffickers specialize in only one aspect of the cocaine industry. Today, no single group of traffickers dominates all aspects of the trade.

The DEA strives to aid the Colombian Government in its efforts to prevent international drug traffickers from using the country for money laundering or as a production area for illicit drugs destined for the United States and other international markets. This helps to strengthen Colombia's ability to track, interdict, arrest, and successfully prosecute money laundering and drug smuggling organizations that operate in Colombia.

Steven W. Casteel
 Assistant Administrator
 for Intelligence

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cocaine

Colombian drug traffickers are responsible for most of the world's cocaine base production, cocaine hydrochloride (HCl) production, and wholesale cocaine HCl distribution. While Colombia has long held the dubious honor of being the world's largest producer of cocaine HCl, Colombia's role as the world's largest producer of cocaine base is relatively new. As a result of substantial increases in the size of Colombia's domestic coca crop, Colombia is now the source of nearly 74 percent of the world's cocaine base.

Law enforcement successes against the Medellín and Cali drug lords in the early and mid-1990s accelerated the decentralization of the international cocaine trade. This fragmentation of the cocaine trade notwithstanding, Colombian cocaine trafficking organizations have remained the dominant players in the international cocaine trade. Colombian traffickers continue to control the supply of cocaine at its source; have a firm grip on Caribbean smuggling routes; and dominate the wholesale cocaine markets in the eastern United States and in Europe.

Heroin

As early as 1977, the DEA had received sporadic, anecdotal reports of opium poppy cultivation in Southwest Colombia. By the early 1990s, opium poppy cultivation in Colombia was rapidly expanding and had reached significant levels. The threat posed by Colombian heroin has increased substantially in recent years. Since the early 1990s, opium poppy cultivation and heroin production have become an integral part of the Colombian drug trade—a trade dominated by independent trafficking groups. These groups operate outside the control of the major cocaine cartels. Colombian heroin traffickers have established themselves as major sources of supply in the northeastern United States—the largest heroin market in the United States. Recent reporting and enforcement activity indicates that Colombian heroin brokers or transportation groups may be consolidating their heroin shipments. Recent seizures in New York City, Miami, and Buenaventura, Colombia, netted significantly larger amounts of heroin than generally are seized.

Marijuana

Throughout the 1980s, Colombia was a major supplier of marijuana to the United States. Although marijuana exports to the United States appeared to decline during the 1990s, Colombia remains a foreign source for marijuana available in the United States and, increasingly, in Europe. Unless checked, cannabis cultivation and marijuana production in Colombia will continue to flourish. The threat posed by marijuana trafficking constitutes another challenge for Colombian law enforcement and security services already burdened with competing drug priorities and limited resources.

Synthetic Drugs

Seizures and limited reporting indicate that Colombian trafficking groups have become more involved in the trafficking of synthetic drugs in recent years. In particular, 3,4—methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) has been transshipped from the Netherlands to the United States via Colombia. Furthermore, Colombia has its own small, but expanding, MDMA abuser population.

Money Laundering

Colombian traffickers face enormous problems when attempting to move their drug proceeds from the United States and Europe to Colombia. As a result of scrutiny by law enforcement authorities, traffickers have developed a wide array of money laundering methods to conceal the billions of dollars in drug proceeds moved into Colombia each year. These methods include the black market peso exchange, the smuggling of bulk quantities of cash, and the contraband trade.

Chemical Diversion

While typically not manufactured in Colombia, most of the chemicals required for cocaine and heroin processing are readily available in Colombia. Traffickers are able to obtain vast quantities of essential chemicals from numerous chemical trafficking organizations that have penetrated the legitimate chemical industry throughout South America. The chemicals destined for drug laboratories in Colombia usually enter Colombia legally and are diverted only after shipment to third- or fourth-level distributors—a practice that allows chemical companies to use a “shell game” strategy to hide their illegal activities. Most chemicals enter Colombia by sea from the United States, Europe, Brazil, or China.

Insurgents and Illegal “Self-Defense” Groups

Colombia continues to be plagued by complex crime and national security issues that are, in part, fueled by the drug trade. Today, drug

traffickers, leftist guerrillas, illegal self-defense groups, and common criminals all take their toll on Colombian society. The fact that most of Colombia's new coca cultivation, and much of its cocaine processing, occurs in the eastern lowlands and southern rain forest—areas where the national government exerts limited authority—hinders the Government of Colombia's (GOC) ability to conduct effective counterdrug operations. Force protection for law enforcement counterdrug operations in this region has always been, and remains, a high DEA priority.

Since the 1970s, drug traffickers have made temporary "alliances of convenience" with leftist insurgents in some instances, and with right-wing paramilitary groups in other cases, in order to protect their drug interests. Likewise, some insurgents and paramilitaries have actively extorted money from the drug trade. Some insurgent units apparently have assisted drug trafficking groups in transporting and storing drugs in Colombia and in protecting clandestine airstrips. There is, however, no credible information that any insurgent groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) or the National Liberation Army (ELN) units have established international transportation, wholesale distribution, or drug money laundering networks inside the United States or Europe. Some self-defense groups appear to be directly involved in processing cocaine. At least one of these self-defense groups appears to be involved in exporting cocaine HCl from Colombia.

COLOMBIA: THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE DRUG TRADE

Colombia has a population of approximately 40 million and covers a total area of 1,138,910 square kilometers. Colombia's strategic location makes it the center of the drug trade in South America. Colombia, with over 3,200 kilometers of coastline, is the only South American country with coastlines on the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. Accordingly, traffickers have access to two major maritime transshipment corridors for sending drugs to the United States.

Colombia shares land borders totaling about 6,000 kilometers with Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. Historically, Colombia's porous southern borders with Peru and Brazil were key entry points for Peruvian and Bolivian cocaine base. Since 1997, Colombia has become the leading producer of cocaine base, and has relied less on the importation of Peruvian and Bolivian cocaine base. Should cocaine base production rebound in Peru or Bolivia, this factor would again play a significant role in cocaine base trafficking.

Colombia's domestic transportation infrastructure—and lack thereof—has shaped how traffickers move drugs and essential chemicals within the country. In many areas, for instance, riverine transportation is the only practical method to move essential chemicals in the amount required to produce multiton quantities of cocaine. Colombia has 29 major rivers totaling roughly 5,600 miles in length, and 88 major river ports. Most of Colombia's major road networks and its relatively small rail system are concentrated in the western half of the country. Colombia's major roads connect to Ecuador and Venezuela, but not to Panama, Brazil, or Peru. Travel by road outside of Colombia's major cities is dangerous because of insurgent activity. Colombia has more than 100 airports (including 11 international airports¹) and hundreds of illegal clandestine airstrips scattered throughout the country. According to the GOC, Colombian security forces destroyed 66 clandestine airstrips in 2000.

Colombia's geographic location, diverse terrain, and climate are important elements affecting that country's illicit drug industry. From a counterdrug perspective, Colombia can be divided into the following six broad geographic regions of interest.

The Guajira Peninsula—A flat, sparsely populated, semi-desert area, well suited for illicit airstrips. Traffickers use the Guajira Peninsula as a staging area for cocaine-laden aircraft and go-fast boats destined for the Caribbean or Central America.

The North Coast—A diverse area of broad rivers, open beaches, swamps, and high cliffs. The region is more than a narrow coastline in that it often is defined to include the lowland areas in seven northern departments: Atlántico, Bolívar, Cesar, Córdoba, La Guajira, Magdalena, and Sucre. Drug traffickers often use the important seaports of Cartagena, Barranquilla, and Santa Marta for illicit activities. The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range in Magdalena Department and the Perijá Mountains along the border with Venezuela are traditional cannabis-growing areas.

The Pacific Coast—A diverse area that includes beaches, broad rivers, dense jungles, marshes, and swamps. The Choco, for example, is an area of dense jungle that extends to Colombia's northwest border with Panama. In this region, Buenaventura and Tumaco are important seaports exploited by drug traffickers.

The Andean Mountain Ranges—A region dominated by three distinct chains of the Andean Mountains², that have extremely rugged slopes and peaks that run from north to south and straddle the western half of the country. The rugged terrain of this region hampers the GOC's counterdrug and counterinsurgency operations. Significant opium poppy cultivation is found in the mountains of Huila and Tolima Departments.

The Lowlands (Llanos)—The undeveloped and remote grassy plains that border the northeastern slope of the Andean mountain ranges. Much



of Colombia's coca cultivation and cocaine base processing takes place in this region. Clandestine airstrips used to transport cocaine are common to the area. The isolation of the *Llanos* provides farmers (*campesinos*), cocaine traffickers, and insurgents the freedom from government control that is necessary for major drug or guerilla operations.

The Rain Forest—A large area of sparsely populated dense jungle in the southeastern part of Colombia. Similarity to the *Llanos*, in that the GOC exerts only limited authority in this region, makes the rain forest attractive to both drug traffickers and insurgents. Cross-country movement by land vehicles is impossible in this jungle. Accordingly, cocaine traffickers, insurgents, and government forces must use riverine or air transport. The most important rivers crisscrossing this region are the Caqueta, Putumayo, and Vaupes.

In addition to the six major areas previously listed, Colombia also includes a small archipelago located in the Caribbean Sea approximately 115 nautical miles off the eastern coast of Nicaragua and 380 nautical miles off the coast of Colombia. The archipelago is comprised of the islands of San Andrés and Providencia, as well as a group of keys. Trafficking groups have used the strategic Western Caribbean location of San Andrés, in particular, as a command and control center for their smuggling operations, and as a transshipment point for drugs headed to the United States.

THE COCAINE TRADE IN COLOMBIA

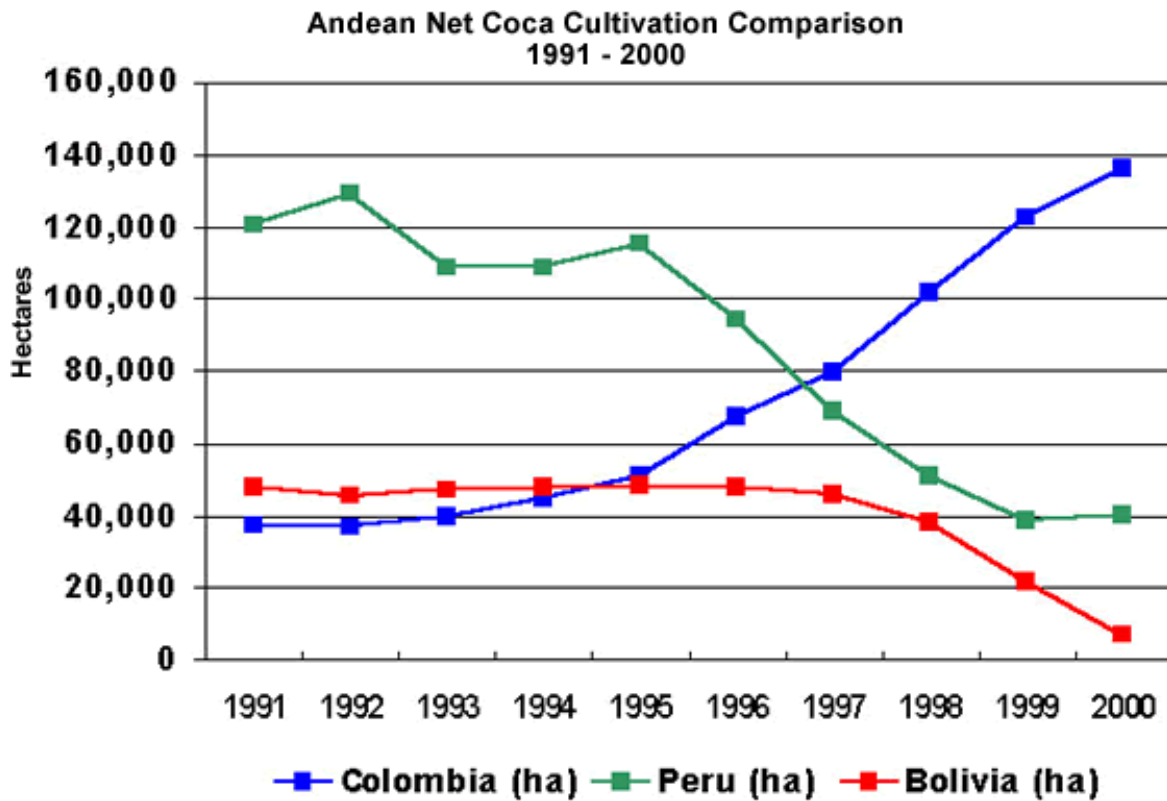
Introduction: The Changing Dynamics of the Cocaine Trade in the Andean Region

In recent years, the DEA has observed dramatic changes in the "geopolitics" of coca cultivation and cocaine production. These changing dynamics highlight the adaptability of Colombian cocaine trafficking organizations that continue to dominate the international cocaine trade. Colombia has always been, and remains, the world's number one producer of finished cocaine HCl. As recently as 1995, however, Colombia only produced about 25 percent of the world's cocaine base. Colombian traffickers were dependent on Peruvian and Bolivian sources for two-thirds of their cocaine base. Each year, hundreds of tons of cocaine base were smuggled by aircraft from Peru and Bolivia. Today, however, Colombia produces about 74 percent of the world's cocaine base. Accordingly, Colombian traffickers are far less dependent on Peruvian or Bolivian cocaine base sources of supply.

Coca Cultivation

Coca cultivation occurs in the Andean Region of South America, primarily in Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. Since 1995, net coca cultivation in Colombia has more than doubled from 50,000 hectares in 1995 to 136,200 hectares in 2000, while cultivation in Peru and Bolivia has declined. This increase marks the eighth consecutive year of net growth in Colombia's coca crop.

In Colombia, *campesinos* cultivate coca plants from coca seeds, small seedlings, or cuttings from other coca plants. Depending on the method and variety of coca used, coca plants may take up to 2 years to mature fully. However, *campesinos* often pick coca leaves prior to the plant's full maturity.



Source: International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), U.S. State Department, March 2001.

Most of Colombia's coca is cultivated in the eastern lowlands or southern rainforest areas (Guaviare, Caqueta, and Putumayo Departments), where the GOC exerts limited authority. There are, however, small but increasing areas under cultivation in the northern parts of Colombia, specifically in the San Lucas area of southern Bolivar Department, and the Departments of Arauca and Norte de Santander.

Coca Eradication

The U.S. State Department Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) at the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá coordinates the overall coca and opium poppy aerial eradication programs in Colombia. The Colombian National Police (CNP) oversees the eradication field operations. Since April 1994, the CNP has used aerial chemical spraying to eradicate coca and opium poppy fields. The aircraft used for spraying are maintained by NAS, and piloted by either NAS contractors employed by DYNCORP³ or CNP personnel. Insurgents in the coca-growing areas continued to pose a serious threat to CNP aircraft involved in spray operations. CNP helicopter gunships and U.S. State Department-owned search and rescue aircraft also fly in support of the spraying missions.

The Colombian military has no direct role in the actual spraying operations. However, elements of the Colombia military, such as the U.S.-trained and-supported counternarcotics battalions now operating in southern Colombia, are tasked with providing force protection for the spraying operations. The military forces secure the areas to be sprayed so that CNP and NAS personnel can carry out eradication missions in relative safety.

According to the U.S. State Department's International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) for the 2000 calendar year, the GOC eradicated 47,000 hectares of coca. It should be noted that this figure refers to gross eradication as opposed to effective eradication. Gross eradication figures only provide an estimate of the number of hectares sprayed, which is primarily based on the amount of herbicide used. Effective eradication figures, on the other hand, provide an estimate of hectares of coca actually killed by the herbicide and is based on flight data, overhead imagery, and "ground-truthing."

Colombia's *Plan Nacional para Desarrollo Alternativo* (National Plan for Alternative Development or PNDA) is a GOC program seeking to promote cultivation of legitimate crops in areas devoted to illicit cultivation. The PNDA's efforts are concentrated on roughly 96 municipalities and 11 departments, and are aimed at small-scale producers who are involved in cultivation as a means of subsistence.

map - general coca cultivation areas in Colombia

Plan Colombia and Regional "Spill-Over"

In July 2000, the U.S. Government (USG) enacted a comprehensive \$1.3 billion assistance package in support of the GOC's Plan Colombia—an integrated strategy focusing on Colombia's peace process, economy, counterdrug strategy, justice reform, human rights protection, democratization, and social development. Under the Plan Colombia assistance package, which supplements ongoing U.S. counterdrug assistance, the USG is supporting Colombia's overall development strategy. On the counterdrug front, the USG is providing equipment, training, and technical assistance to the CNP and the Colombian military to increase their capability for eradication of coca leaf and opium poppy, and to conduct interdiction operations.

If the Colombian Government significantly expands and sustains aerial coca eradication operations into southern Colombia as part of Plan Colombia, the DEA anticipates that the initial "spillover" effect in coca cultivation will be limited to Colombia. The DEA would expect to see a shift in coca cultivation back into the traditional growing areas of central Colombia (the Guaviare), as well as expanded new cultivation in northern Colombia (Norte de Santander and San Lucas).

USG coca surveys for 2000 indicate that some tactical shifts in Colombian coca cultivation have already occurred—even prior to the late December-2000 start of intense coca eradication operations in southern Colombia. While net cultivation in the Putumayo increased by only about 3 percent (from 45,900 hectares in 1999 to 47,200 hectares in 2000), net coca cultivation in the Guaviare rose by 29 percent (from 28,000 hectares in 1999 to 36,100 hectares in 2000). Likewise, although net coca cultivation in Norte de Santander remained relatively unchanged

(increasing from 8,000 hectares in 1999 to 8,400 hectares in 2000), the coca crop in San Lucas increased by 98 percent (from 4,100 hectares in 1999 to 8,100 hectares in 2000).

If the Colombian Government is able to expand and sustain coca eradication operations in central and northern Colombia—while maintaining pressure on southern Colombia—the DEA expects to see some of Colombia's coca cultivation and cocaine base processing operations driven into Ecuador and Venezuela. Traffickers would also be expected to encourage expanded coca cultivation and cocaine base production in Peru and Bolivia—two countries that collectively produced about two-thirds of the world's cocaine base as recently as 1995.

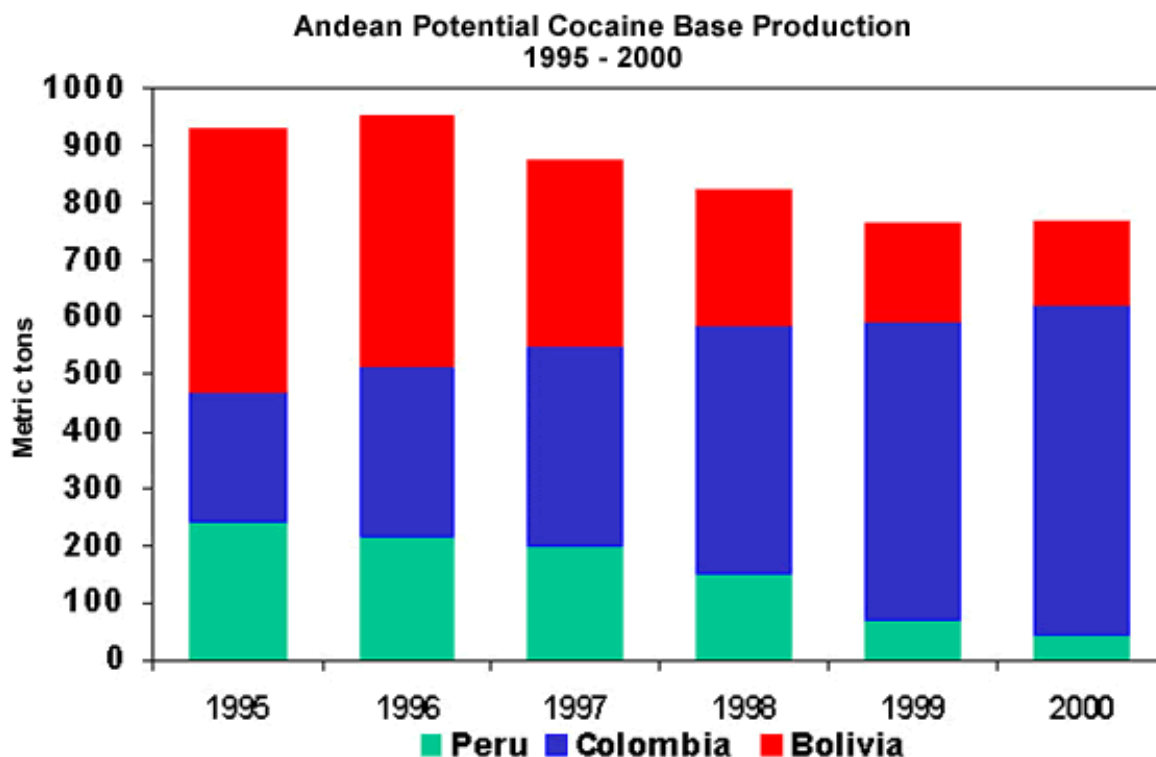
The DEA has already documented some spill-over from Colombia into Ecuador. Limited reporting indicates that some Colombian traffickers are transporting cocaine base out of Colombia's Putumayo Department through northern Ecuador and into Colombia's Nariño Department in an effort to avoid insurgent interference and taxation. Some Colombian traffickers reportedly also use the reverse route—from Nariño to Putumayo via northern Ecuador—to smuggle the essential chemicals used to produce cocaine.

Cocaine Production in Colombia

Cocaine is produced using two distinctive laboratory conversion stages: coca leaf to cocaine base, and cocaine base to cocaine HCl. While Colombia has long been the world's largest producer of cocaine HCl, Colombia's role as the world's largest producer of cocaine base is relatively new. Historically, hundreds of tons of cocaine base were imported from Peru and Bolivia to Colombia every year, where it was further refined into cocaine HCl and then exported to foreign illicit drug markets, primarily in the United States and Europe. However, as the world's largest grower of coca, Colombian traffickers accordingly have produced more of the world's cocaine base.

Scientific fieldwork carried out by DEA in Colombia from early 1999 through mid-2000 has had a dramatic impact on the USG's perception of the Colombian cocaine threat. Two key findings of the studies were that varieties of coca, with higher cocaine alkaloid yields than previously identified, were being grown in Colombia, and that cocaine base laboratory operators were more efficient than previously believed. These findings, coupled with increased cultivation figures, showed that since 1995, Colombia's potential cocaine base production has increased by 152 percent, from 230 metric tons in 1995 to 580 metric tons in 2000.

The explosion in Colombia's potential cocaine production notwithstanding, total Andean Region potential cocaine base production has actually declined by 17 percent in recent years, from 930 metric tons in 1995 to 768 metric tons in 2000. This net decrease is due to unprecedented coca eradication and successful law enforcement operations targeting essential chemicals in Bolivia and Peru. Bolivia's potential cocaine base production has decreased by 82 percent, from 240 metric tons in 1995 to 43 metric tons in 2000. DEA field reporting and laboratory analysis indicate that the purity of Bolivian cocaine has dropped significantly while local base prices have risen—an indication of reduced availability. Much of Bolivia's cocaine is believed to be either consumed in Brazil or shipped through Brazil to Europe.



Source: INCSR, U.S. State Department, March 2001.

Peru's estimated potential cocaine base production has decreased by 68 percent, from 460 metric tons in 1995 to 145 metric tons in 2000.

Peru's air interdiction program—which in 1997 and 1998 contributed to a drop in coca prices that encouraged farmers to abandon some coca fields—and an aggressive coca eradication program in 1999, were key factors that led to the decline in potential cocaine base production. Since 1998, however, prices for Peruvian coca leaf appear to have rebounded and some Peruvian coca farmers are replanting previously abandoned fields. If these trends continue, the counterdrug successes achieved in Peru will be at risk of reversal.

Scientific fieldwork has determined that Colombian cocaine base cooks require approximately 1 metric ton of fresh leaf (the equivalent of 260 kilograms of dry leaf) to produce 1 kilogram of 100-percent-pure cocaine base. By contrast, Bolivian cooks require 386 kilograms of dry leaf to produce 1 kilogram of cocaine base and Peruvian cooks require 400 kilograms of dry leaf. Scientific fieldwork also confirmed that cocaine HCl cooks in Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia are able to convert 1 kilogram of cocaine base into an equal amount of finished cocaine HCl.

The bulk of Colombian base laboratories are located in the eastern lowlands and southern rain forest—Colombia's primary coca cultivation areas. Most coca farmers in Colombia process their own leaf into cocaine base, doing so at laboratories located near their own coca fields. The co-location of the base laboratories with the coca fields is not surprising, considering that approximately 1 metric ton of fresh coca leaf is required to produce 1 kilogram of cocaine base. Accordingly, cocaine base usually is not marketed as a separate commodity in Colombia. When sold, coca leaf in Colombia is usually sold in *arrobas* (with one *arroba* equal to 12.5 kilograms).⁴

Cocaine HCl laboratories have been discovered throughout Colombia. The most significant laboratory seizures in recent years have been located in eastern and southern Colombia. Few, if any, of these laboratories operate continuously. Rather, cocaine HCl production is characterized by short periods of intense production activity alternating with extended downtime used to replenish stocks of cocaine base and essential chemicals.

There are no hard estimates regarding the number of active cocaine base or cocaine HCl laboratories in Colombia. However, the DEA roughly estimates that there are thousands of cocaine base laboratories and hundreds of cocaine HCl laboratories in Colombia.

Colombian Cocaine Trafficking Groups and the Decentralization of the Cocaine Trade

Colombian drug traffickers are responsible for most of the world's cocaine base production, cocaine HCl production, and wholesale cocaine HCl distribution. The billions of dollars in drug money flowing into Colombia have made it possible for drug traffickers to gain unprecedented power and influence in Colombia. However, the decentralization or fragmentation of the cocaine trade over the past decade has altered how drug trafficking groups operate and reduced the ability of traffickers to influence the political process.

From the late 1980s through the mid-1990s, first the Medellín Cartel, and then the Cali Cartel, dominated all aspects of the international cocaine trade, from wholesale production to wholesale distribution in the United States and Europe. In the late 1980s, the Ochoa brothers (Juan David, Jorge Luis, and Fabio) ran the most powerful of the organizations within the Medellín Cartel. Taking advantage of Colombia's lenient sentencing guidelines, the Ochoa brothers voluntarily surrendered to the Colombian Government in late 1990 and early 1991. Following their surrender, and the violent deaths of Jose Rodriguez-Gacha (December 1989) and Pablo Escobar (December 1993), the Medellín Cartel broke up and gradually lost its secure lock on the international cocaine market.

By the early 1990s, a loose association of five independent drug trafficking groups, collectively known as the Cali Cartel, succeeded the Medellín Cartel in dominating the international cocaine market. However, the subsequent demise of the Cali Cartel—including the capture of the Rodriguez-Orejuela brothers in 1995, the death of Jose Santacruz-Londono in March 1996, and the surrender of Helmer "Pacho" Herrera in September 1996—accelerated the decentralization of the drug trade. Experienced traffickers who had been active for years—but worked in the shadows of the Medellín or Cali drug lords—increased their roles in the cocaine trade.

Furthermore, with the reintroduction of extradition in Colombia in December 1997⁵, the major Colombian traffickers are increasingly willing to allow their foreign criminal associates (in particular, Mexican and Dominican transportation groups) an expanded international role in the cocaine trade. The strategic objective of these Colombian drug lords is to further conceal their own overt criminal acts in the United States or Europe that would be the basis for extradition requests.

Unlike their cartel predecessors, today's Colombian traffickers typically specialize in one aspect of the cocaine industry. No one group of traffickers today dominates all aspects of the trade. The classic example of today's Colombian trafficker is Alejandro Bernal Madrigal (aka *Juvenal*)—the primary target of Operation MILLENNIUM. In mid-October 1999, Juvenal and 30 of his top criminal associates (including Fabio Ochoa from the old Medellín Cartel) were arrested by the CNP and are undergoing extradition to the United States.⁶ Juvenal specialized in one aspect of the cocaine trade—transportation from Colombia to the United States by way of Mexico. Each month Juvenal—working closely with the Mexican Juarez Cartel—transported multiton quantities of cocaine on behalf of Colombia's major traffickers.

Decentralization of the cocaine trade, however, is not a phenomenon limited only to Colombia. In recent years, independent Peruvian trafficking groups have increasingly produced cocaine HCl. Peruvian cocaine also transits Bolivia en route to Brazil. Most of Bolivia's cocaine is probably consumed in Brazil or sent to Europe by way of Brazil or the Southern Cone countries. Accordingly, Brazil and the Southern Cone countries can no longer be considered to be on the periphery of the drug trade.

The fragmentation of the cocaine trade notwithstanding, the DEA anticipates that Colombian cocaine trafficking organizations will remain the dominant players in the international cocaine trade well into the 21st century. Colombian traffickers are increasingly more self-sufficient in cocaine base production; have a firm grip on Caribbean smuggling routes; and dominate the wholesale cocaine markets in the eastern United States and in Europe.

Movement of Colombian Cocaine to the United States and Europe

Even with the decentralization of the cocaine trade, Colombia continues to produce the bulk of the world's cocaine HCl—more than 70 percent. USG cocaine flow data indicates that, on average, about 60 percent of all U.S.-bound cocaine HCl departs South America (in particular, from Colombia's North or Pacific coasts) towards Central America or Mexico via eastern Pacific or western Caribbean routes. Generally, cocaine arriving in Central America is transshipped to Mexico. From Mexico, cocaine typically is transported into the United States via the U.S. southwestern land border with Mexico. The remaining 40 percent of U.S.-bound cocaine HCl either transits various Caribbean islands (in particular Jamaica, Haiti, and Puerto Rico) or transits directly from South America to the mainland United States without any stops in between.

Central America and Mexico

Maritime vessels, in particular fishing vessels and go-fast boats, are the primary means used by traffickers to smuggle cocaine from South America into Central America and Mexico via eastern Pacific or western Caribbean routes. In recent years, several multiton cocaine seizures destined for Mexico have been made from fishing vessels in the eastern Pacific.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, small- and medium-sized general aviation aircraft were the primary conveyances used to transport cocaine from Colombia to Mexico. Although still a relatively frequent method of moving drugs from Colombia to Central America, traffickers have not used this method as frequently for moving drugs directly from Colombia to Mexico. Traffickers that do continue to use this method either land at clandestine airstrips or air drop their cargo to waiting vehicles or maritime vessels.

Since the mid-1990s, some Mexican drug transportation groups have received up to 50 percent of the Colombian cocaine they move to the United States as payment for a successful smuggling operation. The major Mexican drug trafficking groups increasingly have capitalized on this "payment-in-product" arrangement to expand their own wholesale cocaine distribution networks in the United States. In fact, Mexican trafficking groups now dominate the wholesale distribution of cocaine in the United States' West and Midwest. Colombian traffickers, however, continue to control the supply of cocaine at its source and dominate the wholesale cocaine markets in the eastern United States and in Europe.

The Caribbean

The Caribbean is a major smuggling corridor for Colombian-owned cocaine destined for the United States. Cocaine is transported through the region to the United States using a wide variety of routes and methods. The key cocaine trafficking routes are through Jamaica and Haiti, and to a lesser degree through Puerto Rico, The Bahamas, and the Dominican Republic. Cocaine moving through the Eastern Caribbean usually is en route to either Puerto Rico or Europe. The primary method for smuggling large quantities of cocaine through the Caribbean is via maritime vessel. Go-fasts, bulk cargo freighters, and containerized cargo vessels remain the most common conveyances for moving multihundred-kilogram quantities of cocaine through the region.

Narco-Subs: A Case Study in Innovation. On September 7, 2000, the CNP seized a partially constructed, steel-hulled submarine from a warehouse outside Bogotá, Colombia. All available information suggests the submarine—if completed—could have been used to transport up to 10 metric tons of illicit drugs from Colombia to remote off-load sites in Latin America and the Caribbean. While this apparently hi-tech submarine has grabbed the public's interest, the strategic significance of the vessel from a counterdrug perspective should not be overlooked. This incident again demonstrates trafficker resources and ingenuity. Colombian cocaine trafficking groups generate billions of dollars in revenues each year, resources that increasingly have been used to purchase the best talent and technology available on the world market. On the other hand, the DEA does not believe that drug submarines are the "wave of the future." Until traditional drug smuggling operations are stressed far beyond current levels, trafficker experiments with submarines will remain a limited threat to interdiction forces.

Traffickers also routinely transport multihundred-kilogram quantities of cocaine from Colombia to the Caribbean by single- or twin-engine aircraft to clandestine landing strips, or airdrop cocaine loads to waiting land vehicles or maritime vessels. Couriers generally transport smaller quantities of cocaine on commercial flights from Colombia to the United States via the Caribbean. Couriers conceal multikilogram quantities of cocaine on themselves or in their luggage. Couriers can also carry up to a kilogram of cocaine internally.

Caribbean drug trafficking groups primarily are involved in drug transportation and money laundering. However, some Dominican cocaine transportation groups have been known to receive a percentage of each load they move for Colombian traffickers, as payment for a successful smuggling operation. Similar to their Mexican counterparts, this payment-in-product arrangement has allowed Dominican traffickers to expand their own cocaine distribution operations in the United States and the Caribbean. As a result, Dominican groups dominate drug trafficking in and

around the Caribbean, to include Puerto Rico. DEA investigations show that Dominican traffickers participate in nearly all facets of drug trafficking, to include wholesale transportation, wholesale distribution, and street-level distribution. Payment in product also has led to increased distribution and consumption of cocaine within the Caribbean.

Europe

Since the early 1990s, Colombian trafficking organizations have aggressively expanded their drug operations in Western Europe. Due to the higher wholesale price for cocaine in Europe than the United States, Colombian traffickers have been able to realize a relatively higher profit margin for cocaine in Europe.⁷

The Iberian Peninsula continues to be the principal gateway for cocaine entering Europe, given its cultural, linguistic, and ethnic ties to South American countries. Accordingly, Colombian trafficking groups appear more active in Spain, than in any other European country. Colombian trafficking groups have also established drug trafficking operations in the Netherlands, another important European gateway country for cocaine.

The primary method for smuggling large quantities of cocaine to Europe is via containerized cargo. Cocaine is hidden among legitimate cargo or within the container structure itself. Other methods of moving cocaine from Colombia to Europe include other types of commercial maritime vessels, fishing vessels, and couriers and air freight on commercial aircraft.

Colombian Wholesale Cocaine Operations in the United States

Colombian cocaine trafficking groups in the United States continue to be organized in "cells" operating in a given geographic area. Some cells specialize in a particular facet of the drug trade, such as cocaine transport, storage, wholesale distribution, or money laundering. Each cell, which may be comprised of between 10 and 25 or more employees, operates with little or no knowledge about the membership in, or drug operations of, other cells.

The head of each cell reports to a regional director who is responsible for the overall management of several cells. The regional director, in turn, reports directly to one of the drug lords or their designate based in Colombia. A rigid top-down command and control structure is characteristic of these groups. Trusted lieutenants of the organization in the United States have discretion in the day-to-day operations, but ultimate authority rests with the leadership in Colombia.

Upper-echelon-management levels of these cells are frequently comprised of family members or long-time close associates who can be trusted by the Colombian drug lords to handle their day-to-day drug operations in the United States. They report back to Colombia using either cell phone or fax and other communication methods, including the Internet. Colombian drug traffickers employ a wide variety of countersurveillance techniques and other tactics. These techniques include staging fake drug transactions, using telephones they suspect are monitored, limited-time use of cloned cellular telephones (frequently a week or less), limited-time use of pagers (from 2 to 4 weeks), and the use of calling cards. Colombian organized crime groups continue to show an active interest in acquiring secure communications capabilities.

Colombian cell members are normally recruited for assignments in the United States from the criminal pool of talent available in the syndicate strongholds of Cali, Medellín and Bogotá. Individuals from other areas of Colombia and other nationalities, such as Cubans and Dominicans, also have been recruited as cell members.

Colombian traffickers in the United States are focused on the wholesale cocaine market and are not involved in drug trafficking at the retail level. Diverse assortments of criminals from varying ethnic groups are responsible for most of the domestic street trade in cocaine and crack cocaine. In major U.S. cities, organized groups of Cuban, Jamaican, and Mexican criminals, as well as African-American and Dominican gangs dominate the retail market. The Crips, Bloods, Dominican gangs, and Jamaican posses are responsible for much of the cocaine- and crack cocaine-related violence in the United States.

THE HEROIN TRADE IN COLOMBIA

Introduction: The Development of the Heroin Trade in Colombia

As early as 1977, the DEA had received sporadic, anecdotal reports of opium-poppy cultivation in the Valle del Cauca Department in southwestern Colombia. Prior to 1984, however, reports of opium-poppy cultivation in Colombia had remained unconfirmed. In May 1984, the CNP located and destroyed 35,000 opium-poppy plants at seven sites north of Villavicencio in Meta Department. In August 1988, the CNP and the Department of Administrative Security (DAS) located and destroyed 450,000 opium poppy plants in Tolima Department. Although the discovery of these opium fields in Colombia was significant, the estimated size of Colombia's potential opium production paled in comparison to important opium-growing areas such as Southeast and Southwest Asia.

By the early 1990s, opium-poppy cultivation in Colombia was rapidly expanding and had reached significant levels. As a result of expanding

Colombian opium-poppy cultivation, heroin production has become an integral part of the Colombian drug trade. Independent trafficking groups who operate outside the control of the major cocaine cartels dominate the Colombian heroin trade. Recent reporting and enforcement activity indicate that Colombian heroin brokers or transportation groups may be consolidating their heroin shipments. Recent seizures in New York City, Miami, and Buenaventura, Colombia, netted significantly larger amounts of heroin than generally are seized elsewhere.

Opium-Poppy Cultivation

Net (potentially harvestable) opium-poppy cultivation in Colombia has remained relatively stable in recent years, in large part due to CNP aerial eradication efforts. The USG estimated Colombia's 1999 net harvestable annual-opium poppy cultivation at 7,500 hectares.⁸ Since the opium poppy plant in Colombia matures in 90 to 140 days, it is possible to harvest two to three consecutive crops per hectare per year.⁹ Accordingly, a little over 2,500 hectares of opium poppy were potentially harvestable at any one time in 1999.

The most significant areas of opium-poppy cultivation in Colombia are found along the eastern slopes of the central Andean Mountains located in Huila and Tolima Departments. In fact, opium-poppy cultivation along the eastern slopes of the central Andes accounted for the majority of Colombia's total cultivation. Opium-poppy fields are most commonly found at high elevations (1,500 to 3,500 meters) on isolated and rugged mountain ranges. Opium-poppy cultivation also has been spotted in the Serrania de Perijá Mountains, and in the Departments of Antioquia, Cauca, Nariño, and Valle de Cauca.



General Opium Cultivation Areas in Colombia

Opium poppy fields in Colombia are usually about 0.3 hectares in size, and are intensively managed. Growers use traditional slash-and-burn methods for clearing forests. Some farmers reportedly apply crop rotation and irrigation practices and use lime, fertilizers, fungicides, and herbicides to protect their crop. Growers score their opium poppy by making three horizontal cuts: one cut each around the top, middle, and bottom of the capsule. The opium latex that oozes out onto the surface of the capsule is then collected.

Opium-poppy farmers in Colombia collect raw opium latex from mature poppy capsules and transport it by land vehicle or on foot to opiate "brokers." In June 2001, brokers were paying farmers approximately US\$500 per kilogram of opium latex. The frequency of these transactions varies greatly, and depends on the needs of the specific broker. The brokers, in turn, sell the opium latex to chemists involved in morphine base/heroin production. The dynamics of the broker-chemist business relationship are not well understood. It should also be noted that some opium-poppy farmers process their opium latex into morphine base before selling it.

Some growers appear to work under contract to specific traffickers. Under this contract arrangement, the trafficker provides the farmer with the seeds and agricultural supplies needed to grow opium poppies. The supplies used by the farmer may include fertilizer, insecticide, and hand-held chemical sprayers. The trafficker, for each gram of opium harvested, pays the farmer a pre-set fee.

Estimated Opium Poppy Eradication in Colombia 1995 - 2000 (in hectares)

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
3,760	6,028	6,972	0	0	9,254

Opium-Poppy Eradication

In 2000, the CNP reportedly eradicated almost 9,254 hectares of opium poppy. As detailed in the coca eradication section of this assessment, this figure again refers to gross eradication as opposed to effective eradication. In 2001, spray operations have focused on the high-density growing areas in Tolima, Narino, Cauca, and Huila. In reaction to these eradication efforts, Colombian farmers reportedly have started planting smaller and better-concealed opium poppy fields. Competing counterdrug priorities, safety and security concerns, and attacks against CNP aircraft have hindered the CNP eradication efforts.

Opiate Production

The USG roughly estimated Colombia's opium production in 1999 at 75 metric tons. This estimate, however, assumed that Colombian farmers were able to collect 10 kilograms of opium latex from each hectare of opium poppy under cultivation. The USG estimated Colombia's heroin production in 1999 at nearly 8 metric tons. This estimate assumed that Colombian heroin chemists were able to convert opium latex into heroin at a 10:1 ratio—10 kilograms of opium latex being required to produce one kilogram of heroin. These estimates have not been confirmed by on-site observations.

Opiate Laboratory Operations in Colombia

The DEA has limited reporting of morphine base laboratories being housed in crude huts located close to opium-poppy fields. The extent to which morphine base production occurs at these field sites is unknown. Most opium latex to morphine base processing, however, appears to take place in towns outside the immediate growing areas. Private vehicles and public transportation are used to transport morphine base to "kitchen-type" heroin laboratories operated in private homes in such cities as Bogotá and Pereira. In particular, the city of Pereira in west central Colombia has been identified as one of the more important hubs for heroin trafficking activities.

In 2000, the CNP seized 10 opiate laboratories. The heroin laboratories seized in Colombia to date have not been equipped to produce heroin in bulk. Despite the fact that Colombian heroin chemists do not appear to be adept at producing large quantities of heroin, they are producing a high-quality product. DEA laboratory analysis of South American heroin samples seized in the United States often indicate purity levels above 90 percent at the wholesale (kilogram) level.

Opiate laboratory operators often work on commission for the trafficking group that will smuggle the heroin into the United States. The chemicals used in Colombia to convert opium latex into heroin include ammonium hydroxide, ethyl acetate, methylene chloride, and methanol for the opium latex to morphine base stage; and acetic anhydride, benzene, sodium carbonate, and ethyl acetate for the morphine base to heroin hydrochloride stage.

It appears that heroin often is transported via private vehicle from the laboratory to a private residence in Colombia that serves as a "packaging center." At the packaging center, the product is prepared in a manner suitable for smuggling operations to the United States or Europe.

In 1999, Colombian authorities reportedly seized 183 kilograms of opium latex and in 2000 they seized 572 kilograms of morphine base/heroin.¹⁰ Since 1995, Colombian authorities have seized nearly 2.3 metric tons of morphine base/heroin and 517 kilograms of opium latex. Opiate seizures in Colombia have fluctuated greatly from year to year.

Heroin Smuggling

Much of the Colombian heroin destined for the U.S. market is smuggled out of Colombia through the international airports in Bogotá and Cali. In the early 1990s, the bulk of South American heroin smuggled into the United States apparently was transported via couriers on direct commercial flights from Colombia to international airports in Miami and New York City. Most couriers arrested in Miami were en route to New York City. Ingestion of small quantities of heroin (1 kilogram or less) wrapped in latex was the most common smuggling method used by these couriers. Heroin also was concealed inside hollowed-out shoes, luggage, and in the lining of clothes.

Since the mid-1990s, Colombian heroin traffickers have diversified their methods of operation. Couriers still come into Miami, New York City, San Juan, and other U.S. cities on direct commercial flights from Colombia. Increasingly, however, Colombian traffickers are smuggling heroin from Colombia into the United States through the island of Aruba and such countries as Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic,

Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Colombian heroin organizations that use “mules” to transport heroin are increasingly relying on travel through Southern Cone countries, like Argentina and Uruguay, because their citizens are not required to obtain a visa to travel to the United States.

Recent reporting also indicates that Colombian heroin organizations are sending larger quantities of heroin to the United States in a variety of methods, with less dependence on mules who internally body carry heroin. In order to smuggle larger quantities of heroin to the United States, Colombian drug traffickers use suitcases packed with the heroin sewn into clothing, or heroin soaked into clothing. This method of smuggling allows organizations to smuggle between 5 and 10 kilograms of heroin per suitcase.

Colombian heroin organizations also are using cargo planes, container ships, and go-fast vessels to send large quantities of heroin to the United States. In May 2001, authorities in New York seized 54 kilograms of heroin from a container ship. In June 2001, the Aruba Customs Service seized 9 kilograms of heroin and arrested two Colombians and one Dominican aboard the *M/V Kare-N* in Oranjestad, Aruba. In June 2001, 17.5 kilograms of heroin were seized in Miami from a cargo plane arriving from Bogotá.

Opiate Seizures in Colombia 1995 - 2000 (in kilograms)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Opium Latex	78	36	120	100	183	-*
Heroin/Morphine Base	419	183	261	317	504	572

The DEA has documented several cases in which cocaine and heroin were smuggled together. In June 2001, Colombian authorities seized 300 kilograms of cocaine and 67 kilograms of heroin in Buenaventura. In February 2001, Mexican federal authorities seized 841 grams of suspected Colombian heroin and a small amount of cocaine in Guanajuato (State), Mexico. Colombian heroin trafficking organizations have focused on heroin markets in the northeastern United States and Puerto Rico. Colombian heroin, however, has been found in such diverse cities as Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Ft. Lauderdale, Miami, New Orleans, Phoenix, and Washington, D.C. Dominican traffickers are heavily involved in the retail distribution of Colombian heroin in New York City, Philadelphia, and other northeastern U.S. cities.

The large heroin seizures previously mentioned suggest an emerging trend that some heroin shipments are being consolidated into larger loads. However, it is unknown at what stage in the heroin smuggling process this consolidation occurs. Identifying the stage at which the consolidation occurs, represents a significant intelligence gap. One possible explanation is that more powerful brokers are emerging that are capable of organizing large heroin loads. Another explanation is that some significant heroin transportation groups are emerging and consolidating heroin shipments for multiple brokers.

While Miami and New York City remain the principal U.S. “gateways” for Colombian heroin, Colombian heroin increasingly is being smuggled across the U.S. Southwest border. In January 2001, U.S. Customs Service authorities seized 1.3 kilograms of suspected Colombian heroin from an Ecuadorian citizen at Houston’s international airport. Also in January 2001, Mexican federal police officers seized 4 kilograms of suspected Colombian heroin and arrested two individuals at Tijuana’s international airport. In late March 2001, California authorities seized a kilogram of suspected Colombian heroin and arrested one person at a traffic stop in Riverside, California.

DEA reporting also indicates that small amounts of Colombian heroin are smuggled from South America to Western Europe via commercial air. In late 2000, Argentine authorities seized over 3.5 kilograms of suspected Colombian heroin on a flight en route to Barcelona, Spain, at Ezeiza International Airport in Buenos Aires. In June 1998, 2 kilograms of suspected Colombian heroin were seized from a courier arriving in Amsterdam on a commercial flight from Caracas, Venezuela.

Heroin Trafficking Groups

Despite recent trends of larger heroin shipments, there is no dominant heroin kingpin in Colombia. The Colombian heroin trade is fragmented among various independent trafficking groups. These groups operate outside of the control of the major cocaine cartels. This is not to say, however, that no linkage exists between cocaine and heroin trafficking organizations.

South American Heroin Availability in the United States

The DEA’s Heroin Signature Program (HSP)¹¹ data for 1999, the most recent data available, reveals that 60 percent of the heroin analyzed was South American; 10 percent was Southeast Asian; 6 percent was Southwest Asian; and 24 percent was Mexican in origin. The high proportion of South American heroin shown in the HSP partially reflects the arrests of numerous Colombian couriers transporting small quantities—generally 1 to 2 kilograms or less. Most of these couriers traveled on commercial airlines primarily bound for Miami and New York

City.

Colombian traffickers were able to solidify and expand their position in the U.S. heroin market by distributing high-quality heroin and by initially undercutting the price of their competitors. All intelligence and investigative reporting indicates that South American heroin now dominates the New York City heroin market. In the last quarter of 2000, DEA's New York Field Division reported heroin prices ranged between US\$60,000 and US\$70,000. To date, the presence of South American heroin at the retail level has been most noticeable in the northeastern United States. South American heroin is also distributed, however, in Atlanta, Miami, New Orleans, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

THE MARIJUANA TRADE IN COLOMBIA

Introduction

Throughout the 1980s, Colombia was a major supplier of marijuana to the United States. Although marijuana exports to the United States appear to have declined during the 1990s, Colombia remains a foreign source for marijuana available in the United States and, increasingly, in Europe. Unless checked, cannabis cultivation and marijuana production in Colombia will continue to flourish. The threat posed by marijuana trafficking constitutes another challenge for Colombian law enforcement and security services already burdened with competing drug priorities and limited resources.

Cannabis Cultivation

The USG does not produce cannabis cultivation and marijuana production estimates for Colombia. In recent years, cannabis cultivation in Colombia's traditional growing areas—the Sierra Nevada Mountains (in Magdalena Department) and Perijá Mountains (along the border between Colombia and Venezuela)—has been conservatively estimated at 5,000 hectares. Cannabis likely is grown throughout Colombia, particularly in the North Coast Region and in southwestern Colombia.

Cannabis fields in Colombia vary in size, measuring from 1 to 15 hectares, and usually are planted on steep mountain slopes near a natural water source. Slash-and-burn techniques are used for clearing land, a practice that has long-term adverse ecological impacts. Cannabis frequently is interspersed with corn or other legitimate crops. Although weather patterns in the North Coast Region limit cannabis cultivation to one annual growing season, there may be two distinct growing seasons in southwestern Colombia.

Marijuana Production

Cannabis is harvested manually by field workers using machetes to cut the plants. After harvesting, cannabis leaves and buds are laid out to dry and then compacted by a hydraulic or manual press into bales of marijuana that weigh from 10 to 60 kilograms. The bales are wrapped in burlap sacks, plastic bags, or cardboard boxes, depending on the mode of transportation used. Marijuana usually is hauled by mule to storage sites and then transported either by truck or boat to coastal areas for later shipment by sea. The U.S. State Department roughly estimates that Colombia's cannabis crop could have yielded 4,150 metric tons of marijuana in 2000. This yield estimate, however, is unconfirmed.

Although several hashish and hash oil laboratories were discovered in remote sections of Colombia's North Coast since the late 1980s, recent DEA reporting does not indicate any significant amount of hashish or hash oil production or trafficking in Colombia.

Cannabis Eradication and Marijuana Seizures

The GOC has not carried out any widespread cannabis eradication in recent years. Cannabis eradication is a low priority compared to coca and opium poppy eradication. Although marijuana has not recently been seized in the enormous quantities seen in the 1980s and early 1990s, multiton marijuana seizures remain relatively common in Colombia.¹² Colombian authorities reportedly seized 46 metric tons of marijuana in 2000, compared to the 65 metric tons seized in 1999.

Marijuana Smuggling

Large quantities of Colombian marijuana are smuggled by maritime vessels from South America to the United States via the Caribbean. Colombian marijuana is also transported from Colombia to Mexico via maritime vessel. Once in Mexico, marijuana typically is smuggled across the Southwest border into the United States.

Recently, Colombia has become a major supplier of marijuana to the European market. Multiton shipments of Colombian marijuana often are sent to Europe via commercial maritime vessels.

Marijuana Trafficking Groups

Colombia's marijuana trade is fragmented between various polydrug trafficking groups, to include relatively small independent organizations as

well as the major traffickers. Independent North Coast drug transportation organizations under contract to other polydrug trafficking groups also smuggle marijuana and cocaine by boat from Colombia to the United States. The potential profits to be made in the Colombian marijuana trade are substantial. According to CNP statistics, 1 kilogram of marijuana sells for about US\$40 in Colombia.

THE SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE IN COLOMBIA

The trafficking of 3, 4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine¹³ (MDMA, also commonly referred to as Ecstasy) is a relatively new phenomenon in Latin America. MDMA reportedly has been transshipped from the Netherlands to the United States via Colombia. However, there have also been reports of MDMA imported from both the Netherlands and the United States into Colombia for distribution in nightclubs in major Colombian cities. Colombia currently has a small, but expanding MDMA market.

MDMA manufacture in Colombia appears to be limited. In February 1999, the DAS in Cali seized Colombia's first known MDMA laboratory. The trafficking organization responsible for this laboratory reportedly had a distribution network throughout Colombia, as well as in Mexico and Miami, Florida. According to DAS, this trafficking organization was able to manufacture 3,000 tablets every 8 days and sell each tablet on the black market for the equivalent of US\$23.

Flunitrazepam¹⁴ (more commonly known by the trade name of Rohypnol), another synthetic drug, is legally manufactured in Colombia in 1-milligram tablets. Although Colombian authorities restrict the export of Rohypnol into the United States, the drug is smuggled into the United States from Colombia primarily via international mail and couriers.

DRUG PRICES AND DRUG ABUSE IN COLOMBIA

Drug Prices

The most recent price data available for major drugs of abuse found in Colombia are as reported by DEA Bogotá in the chart below.

**Drug Prices in Colombia (in U.S. dollars)
July 2001**

Drug	Price per kilogram
Cocaine Base	\$750.00 - \$1,100.00
Cocaine HCl	\$1,750.00
Opium Latex	\$480.00 - \$500.00
Morphine Base	\$8,900.00
Heroin	\$9,000.00 - \$11,000.00
Marijuana	\$40.00
MDMA	\$6.00 - \$18.00 per tablet

Drug Abuse

In May 1994, Colombia's Constitutional Court issued a controversial ruling that legalized the possession of cocaine, marijuana, and hallucinogenic drugs for personal use. The Court rationalized this decision on the basis that Article 16 of Colombia's Constitution guarantees individuals the right to "freely develop their own personality." Colombian citizens may legally possess up to 20 grams of marijuana, 5 grams of hashish, and 1 gram of cocaine for personal use.

In 1994, then President Cesar Gaviria issued a presidential decree that placed administrative and civil restrictions on the conditions under which Colombian citizens may legally exercise their right to achieve a higher state of "personal development" through drug use. For example, minors, pregnant women, prison inmates, transportation workers, and medical professionals may not legally consume drugs at any time.

In October 1998, President Andrés Pastrana created a drug abuse prevention and demand reduction program known as RUMBOS¹⁵, as a

response to the growing problem of drug use in Colombia. RUMBOS works in conjunction with relevant GOC agencies, and has several functions that include: designing GOC policies to promote drug abuse prevention and treatment; raising public awareness; coordinating and evaluating projects from public institutions and international agencies; and participating in the negotiation and development of international agreements on drug abuse prevention and treatment. According to the Inter-American Drug Abuse Commission (CICAD), there are approximately 350 institutions providing drug treatment, rehabilitation, and social reintegration in Colombia. Most of these 350 institutions are operated by nongovernmental organizations.

There is little reliable information available on drug abuse in Colombia. The GOC conducted household surveys in 1992 and 1996, but the accuracy of the surveys was limited because the sample population did not include people in prison, the homeless, or those who live outside the law (such as insurgent and illegal self-defense group members). A drug-abuse study conducted by RUMBOS from 1999 through 2000 partially addressed the issue by increasing the survey sample population (over 300,000 individuals in 29 cities), and attempting to include members of the homeless population in its sample.

Based on the various surveys conducted by the GOC, marijuana, cocaine, and *basuco* (a form of cocaine base) are believed to be the major illicit drugs of abuse in Colombia, in that order. Heroin and MDMA use appear to be relatively limited, but have increased in recent years. Increased abuse of tranquilizers and inhalants has also been reported. Rohypnol, which is legally manufactured in Colombia, reportedly is also readily available.

The GOC studies indicate increased use of marijuana and cocaine. The number of deaths caused by drug use had increased, as well as the number of arrests for drug possession, the number of drug distribution centers, and the number of women addicted to drugs. The studies also indicated that cocaine abuse was the leading cause of death by drug use, and that marijuana abuse accounts for the largest number of arrests and criminal charges in Colombia. In January 2001, the GOC reported that the number of Colombians who use illicit drugs totals about 1 million, with 170,000 new cases of drug use reported in recent years. Approximately 80 percent of Colombian drug users are between the ages of 14 and 30.

DRUG RELATED MONEY LAUNDERING AND CHEMICAL DIVERSION

Drug-Related Money Laundering

Colombian traffickers face enormous problems when attempting to move their drug proceeds from the United States and Europe to Colombia. As a result of scrutiny by law enforcement authorities, traffickers have developed a wide array of money laundering methods to conceal the estimated billions of dollars in drug proceeds moved into Colombia each year.

The black market peso exchange is a commonly used, trade-based money laundering system that exploits the legitimate commercial traffic between the United States and Colombia to launder drug proceeds. While the black market peso exchange takes many forms, its essential characteristic is the surreptitious exchange of Colombian pesos for other currency. In a typical scenario, traffickers in the United States deliver drug proceeds in U.S. currency to a Colombian black market peso broker's agent located in the United States. The peso broker in Colombia then deposits an equivalent amount of Colombian pesos (minus commission) into the drug trafficker's account in Colombia. The broker and his agent then assume the risk of placing the U.S. currency back into the legitimate U.S. financial system, through a wide variety of methods. Colombian businesses, that need U.S. dollars for the purchase of goods and services from companies in the United States, and who attempt to evade Colombia's restrictions, tariffs, and taxes, contract the black market peso broker in Colombia to pay their bills in the United States. Using this method, U.S. currency technically never leaves the United States.

Some traffickers, seeking to avoid the high risks associated with direct deposits in U.S. or European banks, have returned to the simplest of money laundering methods—the bulk movement of cash. Each year, millions of dollars in drug proceeds are smuggled from the United States to South America inside maritime and air cargo. Some money launderers charge up to a 15-percent commission to arrange bulk shipments of currency from the United States to Colombia.

Money launderers continue to launder drug-related revenue through lucrative contraband trade—the smuggling of legal products into Colombia without declaration of their origin. The Colon Free Trade Zone in Panama is one of the most important centers for Colombian trafficker money laundering operations. Trafficker-owned “front companies” export these “legitimate” goods to Colombia and sell them at a discount.

Chemical Diversion

While typically not manufactured in Colombia, essential chemicals required for cocaine and heroin processing generally are readily available in Colombia. Traffickers are able to obtain vast quantities of essential chemicals throughout South America from numerous chemical trafficking organizations that have penetrated the legitimate chemical industry. In Colombia alone, about 4,500 companies are registered to handle essential chemicals.

Chemicals destined for drug laboratories in Colombia usually enter Colombia legally and are diverted only after shipment to third or fourth-level distributors—a practice that allows chemical companies to use a “shell game” strategy to hide their illegal activities. Most chemicals enter

Colombia by sea from the United States, Europe (particularly Germany and the Netherlands), or China. Many chemicals also enter Colombia at seaports such as Barranquilla, Cartagena, and Buenaventura. Chemicals also enter Colombia from Ecuador, Venezuela, and Brazil. In particular, the highway between San Antonio (Venezuela) and Cúcuta (Colombia) is a major chemical transportation route into Colombia. Chemicals also enter Colombia from Venezuela via the Orinoco River and from Brazil via the Amazon River tributaries.

Law enforcement successes have at times led to shortages in processing chemicals. There have been several recent instances of traffickers attempting to manufacture their own essential chemicals. In 2000, for instance, three clandestine potassium permanganate laboratories were seized in Colombia. In addition, traffickers routinely recycle many of the chemicals used in processing cocaine, and to a much lesser extent, heroin.

Colombian chemical companies that have lost their chemical permits for trafficking in controlled chemicals will often become involved in the purchase and distribution of non-controlled chemicals, such as n-propyl acetate, that can be diverted for use in cocaine processing.

In 2000, Colombian security forces reportedly seized over 570 metric tons of solid essential chemicals and over 688,000 gallons of liquid essential chemicals.

THE INSURGENT AND PARAMILITARY THREAT IN COLOMBIA

Introduction

Colombia continues to be plagued by complex crime and national security issues that are, in part, fueled by the drug trade. Today, drug traffickers, leftist guerrillas, illegal self-defense groups, and common criminals all take their toll on Colombian society. The fact that most of Colombia's new coca cultivation, and much of its cocaine processing, occurs in the eastern lowlands and southern rain forest—areas where the national government exerts limited authority—hinders the GOC's ability to conduct effective counterdrug operations. Force protection for law enforcement counterdrug operations in this region has always been, and remains, a high DEA priority.

Since the 1970s, drug traffickers have made temporary alliances of convenience with leftist guerrillas, in some instances, and with right-wing paramilitary groups, in other cases, to protect their drug interests. While individual members of the FARC, such as 16th Front Commander Tomas Molina, are involved in some aspects of the Colombian drug trade, there is no credible information that the FARC as an institution has evolved into a drug trafficking organization. In any case, neither insurgents nor paramilitary groups are the glue that holds the drug trade together. The links between Colombia's insurgents, paramilitary forces, and drug traffickers are examined in this section.

Colombian Insurgent Groups

Left-wing guerrilla groups emerged in Colombia as early as 1964. The FARC and the *Ejercito de Liberacion* (National Liberation Army or ELN) are Colombia's two major insurgent groups. The FARC and ELN are both procommunist groups that want to replace the current Colombian Government with a leftist, anti-U.S. regime. The armed strength of the FARC and ELN combined has been roughly estimated at around 12,000 to 18,000 combatants (9,000 to 12,000 in the FARC and 3,000 to 6,000 in the ELN). Other notable left-wing groups, such as the *Movimiento de 19 de Abril* (19th of April Movement or M-19) and the *Ejército Popular de Liberación* (Popular Liberation Army or EPL), have had an impact on Colombia's recent political history, although almost entirely defunct as insurgent groups today.

Insurgent groups generally do not coordinate their operations or plan strategy together. However, during rare periods, insurgent groups have cooperated with one another to achieve common goals. One of the most notable periods of cooperation was in 1987 when the FARC, ELN, M-19, and EPL formed the *Coordinadora Nacional Guerrillero Simón Bolívar* (Simón Bolívar National Guerrilla Coordinating Board or CNGSB) to develop comprehensive military and political strategies for their struggle against the GOC. In June 1992, peace negotiations with the GOC collapsed and guerilla violence subsequently intensified. The FARC and ELN occasionally have continued to act in the name of the CNGSB.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

In 1966, members of the Marxist-Leninist-based *Partido Comunista Colombiano* (Colombian Communist Party or PCC) established the FARC as the PCC military wing.¹⁶ Today, the FARC is considered the largest, best-trained and equipped, and most effective insurgent group in Colombia. The FARC is governed by a secretariat, led by Manuel Marulanda-Vélez (aka *Tirofijo*) and six others, including senior military commander Jorge Briceño-Suárez (aka *Mono Jojoy*). The FARC generally is composed of numerous front organizations of varying size that operate throughout Colombia, and urban cells that operate in Colombia's major cities. The FARC has generally drawn its support from the rural areas of Colombia. The *Unión Patriótica* (UP), formed in 1985, is the political arm of the FARC and the CNGSB.

The FARC employs a wide variety of tactics to meet its goals, and has greatly emphasized its military capability. Over the past two decades, 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 base processing regions in the country. However, the FARC also engages in traditional terrorism and criminal activities such as kidnapping, extortion, assassination, and bombing oil pipelines.

Recent developments may radically change the dynamics of Colombia's 40-year-old insurgent group. In an effort to promote peace negotiations with the FARC, the Pastrana Administration agreed in September 1998 to temporarily withdraw the Colombian Army from five municipalities located in the Departments of Meta and Caqueta. The so-called *Despeje*, or demilitarized zone (DMZ), covers a 42,139-square-kilometer area (an area the size of Switzerland) and contains approximately 98,000 inhabitants. It must be noted that the area is a DMZ in name only, as FARC elements in the area have not disarmed. Rather, the area is more an "exclusion zone," meaning it is off limits to Colombian security forces.

The National Liberation Army

On July 4, 1964, urban intellectuals formed the Castroite based ELN, which today is considered Colombia's second largest insurgent group. The ELN operates primarily along Colombia's northeastern border with Venezuela and in central and northwestern Colombia. The territories under ELN influence include some of Colombia's traditional cannabis and opium-poppy-growing areas. The ELN typically has drawn its support from the intellectual elite and urban centers, although it also has some rural support.

The ELN has tended to employ traditional terrorist tactics, such as bombing of strategic assets (oil pipelines and electrical systems) to disrupt Colombia's economic infrastructure and foreign economic presence, as opposed to directly confronting Colombian security forces as does the FARC. The ELN has focused its terrorism/extortion efforts on oil drilling and mining companies, and on the families of kidnap victims, primarily foreigners. According to the Colombian press, the ELN were responsible for most of the kidnappings in Colombia from January through September 2001, with at least 683 accomplished.

The GOC recently has been involved in peace talks with the ELN. In late 2000, President Pastrana agreed to grant a small DMZ to the ELN, similar, yet smaller, to what had been granted to the FARC. Following the withdrawal of the Colombian military from the proposed DMZ in Bolivar Department, however, illegal self-defense groups moved into the area to prevent ELN occupation. By early August 2001, GOC peace talks with the ELN had broken down.

19th of April Movement

In 1973, insurgents partially comprised of a FARC splinter group formed the Marxist/Maoist-based 19th of April Movement (M-19). The M-19 drew most of its support from radical students and urban centers. Although never attaining the size of the FARC or ELN, the M-19 at one time may have totaled over 1,000 members. The M-19 concentrated on insurgent and terrorist operations in Colombia's major cities and 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 counterattack 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. In March 1990, the M-19 signed a peace accord with the GOC and by 1991 was integrated into the legitimate political system as the *Alianza Democrática* (ADM-19). Several small splinter groups of M-19, who refused to lay down their arms, continue to conduct kidnappings and bombings on a very small scale.

Popular Liberation Army

In 1967, insurgents primarily comprised of a FARC splinter group formed the Maoist-based Popular Liberation Army (EPL). The EPL operated primarily in rural areas and concentrated on criminal/terrorist activities such as bombings, kidnappings, and bank robberies. Although never attaining the size of the FARC or ELN, the EPL at one time may have totaled 1,400 members. In early 1991, most of the EPL laid down their arms and joined the legitimate political process as the *Partido de Esperanza, Paz y Libertad*. However, a small, dissident faction of the EPL has continued its armed struggle against the GOC, primarily around the Uraba Region near Panama.

Self-Defense Groups

In 1964, the GOC passed a civil defense law that permitted the Colombian military to organize and provide arms to groups of civilians called self-defense units, so that they could defend themselves against illegal armed groups operating in rural areas. Based on this law, modern self-defense groups (commonly known as paramilitaries or *autodefensas*) emerged in Colombia during the 1980s in response to insurgent violence. By mid-1989, the GOC outlawed civilian self-defense groups after it was revealed that some of these private militias, although ostensibly established to protect Colombian citizens, had evolved into little more than right-wing death squads.

In 1994, the GOC reinstated the concept of rural self-defense groups by creating over 900 legal "security cooperatives" (known as *convivirs*) that were authorized to protect their rural communities from insurgent attacks. The civilian *convivirs* also passed information on to the Colombian military regarding insurgent activities. *Convivirs* usually were only armed with shotguns and side arms, and were forbidden by law to engage in offensive operations against guerrillas. By 1998, the GOC ended the program and began dismantling most of the existing *convivirs*. Some *convivirs* did not disband and remained active as illegal self-defense groups. Today, hundreds of illegal self-defense groups—financed by wealthy cattle ranchers, emerald miners, coffee plantation owners, drug traffickers, etc.—conduct paramilitary operations throughout Colombia. The Catholic Church and other respected human rights organizations in Latin America have reported serious human rights abuses by illegal self-

defense groups.

In 1997, many of the major illegal self-defense groups joined together in a loose confederation known as the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia or AUC). Self-defense groups of varying size that comprise the AUC are known as Blocs. The AUC has grown rapidly in recent years and by early 2001 had an estimated strength of 8,000 combatants. AUC forces are strongest in the north and northwest sections of Colombia; however, the AUC has expanded operations into northeastern and southwestern Colombia and to a limited extent in the *Llanos*.

One of the most visible AUC leaders has been Carlos Castaño-Gil, who commanded one of the largest paramilitary Blocs—the *Autodefensas Campesinas de Cordoba y Uraba* (Peasant Self-Defense Groups of Cordoba and Uraba or ACCU). He, along with his brother Fidel, organized the ACCU in the 1980s after their father was kidnapped and killed by FARC soldiers. In 1995, Fidel Castaño-Gil disappeared, and reportedly is deceased. In May 2001, Carlos Castaño-Gil reportedly resigned as the AUC Commander-in-Chief and assumed a position as one of the top AUC political representatives.

Salvatore Mancuso-Gomez appears to have replaced Castaño-Gil as Commander of the ACCU.

Insurgent Involvement in the Drug Trade

The FARC-controlled DMZ—which is geographically situated between two of Colombia's largest coca cultivation areas—is not considered a major area for coca cultivation or drug trafficking. Coca cultivation in the DMZ increased from 6,000 hectares in 1999 to 7,900 hectares in 2000. Although this change translates into a 32-percent increase in cultivation, the 7,900 hectares of coca inside the DMZ comprises only 6 percent of Colombia's total coca cultivation. DEA cocaine base processing studies have determined that it requires 1 metric ton of fresh Colombian coca leaf to produce 1 kilogram of cocaine. Accordingly, cocaine base processing must take place near these coca fields located in the DMZ.

Many insurgent units raise funds through extortion or by protecting laboratory operations. In return for cash payments, or possibly in exchange for weapons, insurgents protect cocaine laboratories in southern Colombia. Probably, some FARC and ELN units are independently involved in limited cocaine laboratory operations. In addition, some insurgent units apparently have assisted drug trafficking groups in transporting and storing cocaine and marijuana within Colombia. In particular, some insurgent units protect clandestine airstrips in southern Colombia.

Recent DEA reporting indicates that elements of some FARC units in southern Colombia are directly involved in drug trafficking activities, such as controlling local cocaine base markets. At least one FARC front, the 16th Front, has served as a cocaine source of supply for at least one international drug trafficking organization.

There is no credible information that any FARC or ELN units have established international transportation, wholesale distribution, or drug money laundering networks inside the United States or Europe. It does appear, however, that at least one FARC leader, 16th Front Commander Tomas Molina, has arranged for cocaine shipments to countries bordering Colombia.

Recent DEA Reporting on the FARC 16th Front. Over the past year, 16th Front FARC Commander Tomas Molina (aka *Negro Acacio*) has been involved in various aspects of the cocaine trade—most notably serving as a cocaine source of supply for the Brazilian Luis Fernando Da Costa trafficking organization.

In military operations that took place in February through April 2001, the Colombian Army was successful in expelling the 16th Front from the town of Barranco Minas, located in Colombia's Guainia Department. Tomas Molina and Luis Fernando Da Costa both narrowly escaped capture by Colombian troops during the initial assault. Although Molina remains a fugitive from Colombian authorities, Da Costa, was captured by Colombian authorities and deported from Colombia to Brazil on April 24 to face drug trafficking charges. According to Colombian military authorities, results of the operation included the destruction of 26 FARC camps, 5 cocaine HCl laboratories, 62 cocaine base laboratories, 309 kilograms of cocaine, and 1,391 hectares of coca. The DEA has not independently corroborated these seizure figures.

Again, while individual members of the FARC, such as Tomas Molina, are involved in aspects of the drug trade, there is no corroborated information that the FARC as an organization has evolved into a drug trafficking group.

Self-Defense Group Involvement in the Drug Trade

Colombia's illegal self-defense groups do not appear to be directly involved in any significant coca, opium poppy, or cannabis cultivation. Paramilitary leader Carlos Castaño-Gil has admitted in press interviews, however, that his group receives payments from coca growers in southern Colombia to protect them from guerrillas.

Several illegal self-defense groups also raise funds through extortion, or by protecting laboratory operations in northern and central Colombia. The Carlos Castaño organization, and possibly other paramilitary groups, appear to be directly involved in processing cocaine. In addition, the DEA has a credible body of information that the Castaño organization is also involved in exporting cocaine HCl from Colombia. In recent years, the DEA has characterized Carlos Castaño as a significant drug trafficker in his own right.

As early as the mid-1980s, drug trafficking organizations have been able to co-opt some self-defense groups to further their own operations. The so-called self-defense militia of Magdalena Medio, for example, was closely allied with the Medellín Cartel's Jose Rodriguez-Gacha organization.

Death Squads—the Private Armies of the Cartels. On several occasions, drug traffickers formed their own private armies, commonly known as death squads. In December 1981, the Medellín Cartel formed death squads known as *Muerte a Secuestradores* (Death to Kidnappers or MAS), in response to the M-19 kidnapping of the youngest sister of the Ochoa brothers. The MAS squads killed over 100 M-19 members before the Ochoa sister was released in February 1982. Likewise, in September 1992, the 6th Front of the FARC kidnapped a sister of Cali Cartel kingpin Jose Santacruz-Londono and demanded a \$12-million ransom. Santacruz allegedly refused to pay any ransom and retaliated by forming a death squad that kidnapped or killed some 20 individuals associated with the FARC. In January 1993, the FARC 6th Front released Cristina Santacruz unharmed.

Observers have sometimes confused the cartels' private armies with the illegal self-defense groups. Although the distinctions are subtle, the illegal self-defense groups generally have operated with autonomy—cooperating with drug traffickers at times to form a mutually beneficial alliance, extorting money from drug traffickers, or operating as drug traffickers themselves. The cartels' private armies, on the other hand, typically have been under the direct control of the drug trafficking organization that formed them. Since the mid-1990s, as the large cartels have disappeared, so too have their large private armies.

CRIME AND VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA

Crime and Violence

Colombia is one of the most dangerous countries in the world. According to the U.S. State Department and GOC statistics, Colombia had a 1999 per capita murder rate of 77.5 murders per 100,000 inhabitants, about 13 times higher than that of the United States. Murders in Colombia increased from 24,358 in 1999 to 26,250 in 2000. Insurgent groups routinely have conducted bombings in and around major Colombian cities. Although drug-related and insurgent-related violence accounts for a significant portion of the murders in Colombia, common criminals are responsible for an estimated 75 percent of the reported murders.

In addition, Colombia is the kidnapping capital of the world, with an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 people kidnapped each year. According to the U.S. State Department, from 1980 to 2000, nearly 120 U.S. citizens were kidnapped, primarily by leftist insurgent groups. Insurgent groups frequently establish roadblocks in order to rob and/or kidnap travelers. Colombian law mandates that individuals must coordinate their efforts to resolve kidnapping cases with the *Ministerio de Defensa/Programa Para la Defensa de la Libertad Personal* (Office of the Anti-Kidnapping Director).

There have been numerous instances in Colombia of criminals drugging and robbing individuals. According to the U.S. State Department, criminals in Colombia sometimes use scopolamine¹⁷ to incapacitate tourists in order to rob them. The drug is administered in various methods including drinks, cigarettes, and gum. The drug disorients the victim and can cause prolonged unconsciousness and serious medical problems.

THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT

The Formation of the Modern State of Colombia

Before the arrival of Columbus and the Spanish, Amerindian cultures existed in scattered pockets in the Andean Region and on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of what is now known as Colombia. The modern state of Colombia began to take shape in the early 16th century when Spain conquered the local Amerindian cultures and declared the area its colony. In 1544, Spain incorporated most of present-day Colombia into the viceroyalty of Peru. In 1739, Santafé de Bogotá became the capital of the Viceroyalty of New Granada (comprising the territories of what are today Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama).

In 1819, Simón Bolívar and his army led New Granada in a successful rebellion against Spanish rule. Gran Colombia (Greater Colombia) emerged from the victory with Bolívar as its first president. Ecuador and Venezuela withdrew from Gran Colombia in 1830. In 1863, Gran Colombia became known as Colombia. Panama remained part of Colombia until its successful rebellion in 1903.

Since the early 19th century, the *Partido Liberal* (Liberal Party) and the *Partido Conservador* (Conservative Party) have dominated Colombian

politics. The rivalry between the two parties was bitter and escalated into civil war on numerous occasions. In 1948, the assassination of popular Liberal politician Jorge Eliécer Gaitán caused an outbreak of unrest known as *La Violencia* (the Violence), which lasted until 1966. An estimated 200,000 to 300,000 people died as a result of the unrest.

The Colombian military seized power from 1953 to 1957, in an attempt to control the unrest. In 1957, the two parties established the National Front agreement in an attempt to put an end to *La Violencia* and restore civilian rule. The National Front was a bipartisan power sharing agreement that provided for a rotating four-year presidency and an equal division of cabinet positions. In 1974, the National Front ended and gave way to competitive legislative elections, although the *Partido Liberal* and the *Partido Conservador* continued to dominate Colombian politics and divide cabinet posts. Although the National Front helped reduce political violence, it effectively caused the exclusion of other political movements, thus helping set the stage for Colombia's current insurgency problem.

Colombian Government Institutions Involved in the Counterdrug Arena

Constitutional responsibilities for the formulation and execution of Colombia's counterdrug strategies and programs are divided among various offices and agencies of the GOC. This section outlines principal GOC institutions involved in the counterdrug arena.

The Office of the President

The President of Colombia holds a significant amount of power and influence due to the President's combined roles as head of government, head of state, and supreme commander of the armed forces. However, the President's ability to carry out long-term policy initiatives is limited by Colombia's constitution, which restricts the President to serving one 4-year term. Colombia's current President, Andrés Pastrana, took office on August 7, 1998. Colombia is scheduled to hold its next presidential elections beginning in May 2002, and the new president will take office in August 2002.¹⁸

The president's authority to take unilateral action in times of crisis has been an important factor in the counterdrug arena. The president, with the approval of all of his cabinet ministers, 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 the normal democratic process. First, a state of internal disturbance or state of emergency may last for 180 days, unless the Senate approves a 90-day extension. Second, the Colombian National Assembly may repeal, amend, or add to 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.

The 1991 constitution provided for the position of vice president, who is elected on the same ticket as the president. By law, the vice-president is next in succession in the event of the president's resignation, illness, or death.

The Ministry of Defense

The Defense Ministry has operational and budgetary authority over Colombia's military and police forces. Accordingly, the Minister of Defense, a civilian nominated by the president and approved by the National Assembly, is a central figure in the counterdrug arena.

The Ministry of Justice

The Justice Ministry is responsible for the formulation and execution of the executive branch's judicial policies and programs. Colombia's prison system falls under the Justice Ministry, as does the *Dirección Nacional de Nacional de Estupefacientes* (National Directorate on Dangerous Drugs or DNE).

The National Council on Dangerous Drugs (CNE)

Until July 1999, the *Consejo Nacional de Estupefacientes* (National Council on Dangerous Drugs or CNE) was the key cabinet level body responsible for the GOC's drug policies. With the Pastrana Administration's decision to transfer responsibility for defining GOC policy in the war on drugs to the Justice Ministry, however, the role of the CNE remains unclear. The CNE 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 Prosecutor General and the heads of the National Police, Customs, and Department of Administrative Security are also members of the CNE.

The National Directorate on Dangerous Drugs (DNE)

The DNE was created in 1990 and is the lead agency for executing and coordinating the counterdrug plans and policies of the GOC. The DNE falls under the Ministry of Justice, but, with its own budget since 1992, has some autonomy. The DNE has the difficult task of coordinating the

activities of various executive agencies involved in counterdrug activities. The DNE also administers various drug abuse and education programs. In addition to its policy coordination and demand reduction roles, the DNE is also responsible for the regulation of controlled substances and essential chemicals.

A CNP chemical control unit acts as the DNE's enforcement arm in chemical trafficking investigations. In January 1998, the GOC adopted new regulations that allows the DNE to conduct its own investigations and revoke the flight certificates of Colombian-registered general aviation aircraft that are linked to drug trafficking. In the past, the DNE was required to turn investigations over to *Aerocivil* before any civil and criminal actions could be taken against an aviation company.¹⁹ The CNP Aviation Control Group, with support from DEA Bogota, investigates aviation companies suspected of involvement in drug trafficking.

The National Assembly

The Colombian legislature, known as the National Assembly, consists of a nationally elected upper chamber of 102 members known as the *Senado* (or Senate) and a regionally elected lower body of 163 members known as the *Camara de Representantes* (or Chamber of Deputies). Members of both houses are elected to 4-year terms, with no limit on the number of terms served for either house. Although the executive branch remains the principal government organ responsible for counterdrug policy, the National Assembly also has an important counterdrug role. The National Assembly's most important counterdrug function is its lawmaking powers regarding such drug-related issues as extradition, money laundering, asset forfeiture, and the criminal and civil penalties for drug trafficking. The National Assembly meets twice per year, but the president has the authority to call it into special session.

Colombian Judiciary and the Specialized Judicial System

Colombia has four approximately equal supreme judicial bodies. They include the Colombian Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, Council of State, and the Superior Judicial Council. They often deliver conflicting verdicts and accuse each other of jurisdictional infringements. There exists no judicial entity within Colombia to resolve the conflicting decisions rendered by these courts.

Colombia's civil judiciary is a separate and independent branch of government. It is divided into four jurisdictions, which are Civilian, Administrative, Constitutional, and Special Judicial Systems. The Specialized Judicial System pursues cases involving such crimes as drug trafficking, terrorism, paramilitary activity, kidnapping, torture, money laundering, and illicit enrichment. With certain limitations, the Specialized Justice System protects the identities of witnesses and prosecutors. However, in contrast to the Regional Justice System, the identities of judges are not protected.

Under the system, the Prosecutor General, with the prior approval of the Attorney General, has the discretion to protect a prosecutor's identity during the preliminary and investigative phases of a case, only if grave circumstances exist to threaten the life of the prosecutor. However, during the trial phase, the prosecutor's identity is not protected. Also, the law authorizes the protection of witnesses' identities only in cases in which the witnesses' lives are perceived to be in danger. However, the testimony of such witnesses cannot serve as the basis for an indictment or conviction.

In April 2000, however, the Colombian Constitutional Court declared the essential provisions of the Specialized Justice System to be unconstitutional including protecting the anonymity of witnesses and prosecutors, citing the defendant's right to know the identity of his/her accuser. The Constitutional Court's decision fundamentally weakens the civilian judiciary's ability to investigate, prosecute, and try Colombia's most serious crimes.

The Office of the Prosecutor General

The Office of the Prosecutor General, or *Fiscalia*, investigates crimes and brings charges against criminal defendants before the courts. Investigations ordered by the prosecutor general are carried out by the *Cuerpo Tecnico* (Technical Judicial Police), a unit of career detectives who work exclusively on judicially ordered criminal investigations.

The Prosecutor General's Office is an autonomous judicial body, which, under the Colombian Constitution, does not answer to the Executive Branch. Accordingly, the president cannot fire the prosecutor general. Only the Colombian Supreme Court can remove a prosecutor general from office prior to end of his 4-year term. The prosecutor general is elected for a single 4-year term by the Supreme Court from a list of three candidates submitted by the president.

The Office of the Attorney General

The *Procurador General* (Attorney General) has the responsibilities of overseeing the preliminary investigations of the Technical Judicial Police Corps, protecting the rights of criminal suspects, and ensuring that the conduct of the Prosecutor General's Office and the courts conforms to the law. The Senate selects the attorney general for a 4-year term from a list of three candidates submitted by the President, the Supreme Court, and the Council of State.

The Colombian National Police

The *Policía Nacional de Colombia* (Colombian National Police or CNP), a professional force of about 105,000 personnel under the Ministry of Defense, is the lead drug law enforcement agency in Colombia. In June 2000, General Luis Gilbert Vargas succeeded General Jose Rosso Serrano as director of the CNP. For years, DEA Bogotá has enjoyed a close cooperative relationship with the CNP.

The CNP has been on the front lines of Colombia's fight against drug trafficking. Two elements of the CNP have special counterdrug missions, the *Dirección Anti-Narcóticos* (Directorate of Anti-Narcotics or DANTI) and the *Dirección de Policía Judicial e Investigaciones* (Directorate of Judicial and Investigative Police or DIJIN).

The DANTI is comprised of 23 interdiction companies (each consisting of about 120 men) supported by 15 intelligence groups. These interdiction companies and intelligence cells are located throughout Colombia. Their sole mission is counterdrug activity. DANTI interdiction companies are organized and equipped along the lines of a U.S. light infantry company minus a weapons platoon. They conduct roadblocks, motorized and foot patrols, and airmobile assaults. Typical counterdrug missions include destroying clandestine cocaine laboratories, neutralizing airstrips used by traffickers, and eradicating coca or opium poppy fields. DANTI intelligence groups operate in small 5- to 10-man cells scattered throughout the country. They employ wiretaps, radio intercepts, and confidential informants in support of counterdrug efforts.

The DANTI also includes two special operations units and the *División de Servicio Aéreo de la Policía* (Police Aviation Service Division or DISAP). DISAP operates fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft in support of counterdrug operations. Aerial eradication of coca and opium poppy fields has emerged as one of the unit's top priorities. Held in high esteem, DISAP is considered to be one of the best air interdiction units in Latin America.

The 6,500 man DIJIN conducts criminal investigations and maintains a computer database of criminal files and active arrest warrants. DIJIN agents are responsible for investigating most crimes committed in Colombia. The DIJIN's Anti-Narcotics Unit works closely with DEA Bogotá.

The CNP Intelligence Division (CIP) has an important role in the counterdrug arena. For example, a \$20 million state-of-the-art CNP intelligence center located outside of Bogotá analyzes intercepted trafficker communications for the CNP and the DEA.

In recent years the CNP and DEA Bogotá have made progress on several joint counterdrug enforcement initiatives in Colombia. The most important of these include:

- *The Sensitive Investigative Unit (SIU)*: These teams of DEA-trained and vetted CNP investigators work closely with DEA Bogotá to conduct sensitive investigations.
- *The Civil Aviation Control Program*: In June 1997, the GOC approved the creation of the Aviation Control Program. All Colombian-registered aircraft now are subject to CNP search and inspection. The CNP systematically identifies all Colombian aircraft by utilizing tamper-resistant stickers that are placed throughout the aircraft. Each sticker has a bar code that, when read, allows the CNP to check the sticker information with a database of all parts and serial numbers registered with that aircraft. Each aircraft is subject to search every 6 months for illegal alterations to the aircraft and/or illicit drug residue.

The Department of Administrative Security (DAS)

The *Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad* (Department of Administrative Security or DAS) is an investigative and security element that reports directly to the President of Colombia. The DAS provides security for GOC officials and judges and monitors Colombian trafficker activities abroad. The DAS also serves as the GOC's representative to the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). DAS agents work closely with the DEA on international cases and on the expulsion of non-Colombian citizens.

The Colombian Customs Service

The Colombian Customs Service is responsible for inspecting all merchandise entering Colombia by air, sea, and ports-of-entry.

The Colombian Military

The *Ejército Nacional* (Colombian Army) performs special counterdrug operations in guerrilla-controlled areas of Colombia. The army continues to destroy clandestine cocaine processing laboratories, trafficker airstrips, and cultivation sites discovered during security operations.

The *Fuerza Aérea de Colombia* (Colombian Air Force or FAC) is the GOC's lead agency for air detection and monitoring. The FAC also operates C-130 heavy-lift cargo aircraft in support of army operations.

The *Armada Nacional* (Colombian Navy) operates in the Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean to search Colombian ships suspected of drug

smuggling. In February 1997, the GOC and the USG signed an important maritime shipboarding agreement that enhances the Colombian Navy's ability to cooperate with U.S. forces in seizing drugs on the open seas.

The Marine Infantry, which falls under the Colombian Navy, has the lead for controlling waterways. Rivers serve as the primary means of transportation in Colombia's eastern lowlands and jungles. The Colombian Marines continue to make a contribution in the counterdrug arena through their riverine operations to stem the flow of essential chemicals and cocaine. The Colombian Coast Guard, also under the Colombian Navy, controls territorial waters and ports. To date, however, the Colombian Coast Guard's role in drug interdiction has been limited.

In March 1997, the GOC created the 5,000-man Southern Joint Task Force (JTF-S) comprised of personnel currently assigned to the Colombian Army, Air Force, Marine, and National Police Anti-Narcotics units. The JTF-S was created after the Colombian Army suffered serious losses at the hands of the FARC. The JTF-S is headquartered at the Tres Esquinas Air Force Base in the Caqueta Department.

COLOMBIA'S COUNTERDRUG STRATEGY IN A LEGAL CONTEXT

Counterdrug Impact of Colombia's 1991 Constitution

Colombia's 1991 Constitution, which replaced the 1886 Constitution, contains several provisions that affect the country's counterdrug policies and operations. Article 35, which until December 1997, prohibited the extradition of native-born Colombians, was 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. Other constitutional provisions, such as the *tutela*, also have affected the GOC's counterdrug strategy. *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 a *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 courts with petitions.

Extradition

Colombia signed an extradition treaty with the United States in 1979, and it subsequently entered into force in 1982. As mentioned previously, Colombia's 1991 Constitution prohibited the extradition of native-born Colombians. In December 1997, Colombia's Constitution was amended to allow for the extradition of Colombian nationals under limited conditions. The non-retroactive nature of the extradition amendment, however, ensures that jailed Cali drug lords, and other Colombian drug traffickers, will not face extradition for crimes committed prior to the date that the new law took effect (December 17, 1997). Rulings by Colombia's high courts in 1998, with one exception, further weakened the already flawed non-retroactive extradition law adopted by the National Assembly in December 1997. These significant high court rulings included the following:

- In April 1998, Colombia's Constitutional Court ruled that Colombian citizens who voluntarily surrender to the GOC may not be extradited.
- In mid-April 1998, the Colombian Supreme Court ruled the new extradition amendment does not prohibit the extradition of foreign nationals for crimes committed before December 1997 effective date of the constitutional amendment. Until this ruling, DEA had serious concerns that the non-retroactivity provision of the extradition amendment would be applied to non-Colombian nationals, allowing U.S. fugitives captured in Colombia to avoid extradition for crimes committed prior to December 17, 1997.
- In August 1998, the Constitutional Court ruled that it has the right to review all treaties and their implementing legislation, regardless of whether or not the treaty has already entered into effect. In short, the court ruled that any Colombian citizen can challenge any treaty at any time.
- In October 1998, the Constitutional Court upheld the National Assembly's non-retroactive extradition amendment.

Despite the adverse rulings, in November 1999, the GOC extradited Colombian heroin trafficker Jaime Orlando Lara Nausa to the United States. Lara was the first Colombian national to be extradited to the United States under the extradition provision of the Colombian penal code, and the first Colombian national to be extradited to the United States since 1990. From November 1999 through November 2001, the GOC extradited 30 Colombian nationals to the United States.

Sentencing Codes

The maximum potential sentence in Colombia for drug trafficking is either 4 to 8 years or 8 to 30 years and is based on graduated drug thresholds.²⁰ For instance, a drug trafficker theoretically faces 4 to 8 years in prison for trafficking up to 1 kilogram of cocaine or up to 500 grams of heroin. The same drug trafficker faces an 8- to 30-year sentence for higher threshold amounts. These maximum sentences, however, reflect maximum potential sentences—not net or actual sentences. Colombia's lenient sentencing codes remain largely intact.

In November 1993, the National Assembly adopted a Criminal Procedures Code (CPC) that increased the legal benefits for drug traffickers and other criminals who surrender to the government, confess to their crimes, and provide evidence against their criminal associates. Criminal suspects are eligible for possible lenient treatment in the form of:

- Suspended prison sentences in cases where the minimum potential penalty is 5 years or less of incarceration.
- A 75 percent reduction in actual time served in cases where the minimum potential penalty is from 5 to 8 years (The remainder of the original sentence could be served on parole.)
- A 66 percent reduction in time served in cases where the potential penalty is 8 or more years of incarceration.

The CPC also allows the judiciary to substitute social and community service for a prison sentence; offer a gradual reduction in prison time for study and/or work while incarcerated; and place a defendant under house arrest in lieu of a prison sentence.

These and other lenient sentencing codes continue to allow most drug traffickers to serve prison sentences that are low by international standards. For example, Cali drug lord Miguel Rodriguez-Orejuela, originally sentenced concurrently to 11 and 23 years, is expected to serve less than 13 years in prison. Gilberto Rodriguez-Orejuela, originally sentenced to 10.5 years in prison, may be released in the near future.

Fears were raised in late 1997 that the jailed Cali drug lords might benefit from a penal reform law passed by the National Assembly in December 1997. This law allows some Colombian prisoners who have served 80 percent of their sentences to spend up to 60 days a year on unsupervised leave from prison. In April 1998, however, the Council of State ruled that drug traffickers, kidnappers, and several other categories of jailed criminals are not entitled to unsupervised leave from prison.

Money Laundering Laws

In May 1995, the GOC criminalized money laundering. The predicate offenses for money laundering have been expanded to include drug trafficking and other serious crimes, such as arms trafficking, rebellion, and kidnapping with extortion. In February 1997, the GOC enacted a comprehensive money laundering law that increased penalties (a minimum of 6 to 15 years in prison) for individuals convicted of laundering illicit proceeds. The law also allows the government to prosecute bank employees and other financial professionals who fail to file currency transaction reports. In addition, Colombian banks have implemented "know your customer" regulations designed to monitor suspicious financial transactions. In September 1997, the Bank Superintendency (the GOC body that regulates banking institutions) announced that it would impose tougher sanctions on banks that violate its reporting and tracking requirements.

The GOC requires financial institutions and wire remitters in Colombia to file suspicious activity reports and large transaction reports for currency transactions and cross-border movements of currency in excess of US\$10,000. Furthermore, wire remitters must pay withdrawals over US\$3,000 by check. The GOC also requires currency exchange houses (*casas de cambios*) to file currency reports for transactions of US\$700 or more.

In 1999, Colombia established a Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) within the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit. The FIU receives and analyzes suspicious activity and large transaction reports from Colombian financial institutions. The FIU also has authority to access and analyze financial information from public and private entities in Colombia. In 2000, Colombia's FIU joined the Egmont Group.²¹

Asset Seizure and Forfeiture Laws

In December 1996, the GOC adopted an asset forfeiture law. In August 1997, Colombia's Constitutional Court ruled that the retroactive provision of Colombia's asset forfeiture law was constitutional. This law, adopted by the National Assembly in December 1996, allows for the possible forfeiture of assets illegally acquired back to the date when the associated illicit activity was made a crime. Drug trafficking, for example, was made a crime in 1976. Accordingly, assets acquired from drug trafficking at any time since 1976 are subject to forfeiture. Assets acquired from money laundering are subject to forfeiture if the money laundering activity in question occurred after May 1995.

In July 1999, the Colombian asset forfeiture system was radically restructured. Under the old system, the responsibility for asset forfeiture cases was shared between the DNE and the *Fiscalia*. Under the new system, the *Fiscalia* has sole responsibility for the asset forfeiture system. Before the reforms, the GOC completed only one asset forfeiture case in 3 years (with five more cases pending final sentence).

Colombian authorities have seized millions of dollars in assets from the Ochoa family, Ivan Urdinola, and the estates of deceased traffickers Pablo Escobar and Jose Santacruz-Londono. Frequently, however, judicial authorities have ordered the government to return trafficker assets due to the high burden of proof placed on the state to justify the permanent forfeiture of assets. In 2000, Colombian security forces reportedly seized 646 vehicles, 447 boats, 61 aircraft, and 382 weapons.

Chemical Diversion Laws

Colombia's chemical control laws meet the provisions of the 1988 UN Convention. However, poor implementation and lack of effective oversight have weakened these laws. Under Colombian law, chemical diversion per se is treated as a civil—as opposed to a criminal—offense. Accordingly, violators do not face the prospect of imprisonment for their activities unless those activities are connected to clandestine laboratory operations. Civil fines are simply a cost of doing business for chemical traffickers.

In recent years, U.S. chemical control laws have been tightened for chemical shipments from the United States to Colombia. In 1996, under the U.S. Controlled Substance Import/ Export Act, DEA began requiring advance documentation for shipments of certain precursor and essential chemicals exported from the United States to Colombia. In addition, a heightened review process was instituted for such exports and transshipments.

Colombia's International Legal Obligations

Colombia has signed the major international antidrug agreements, including the 1961 UN Single Convention and its 1972 Protocol, the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1988 UN Drug Convention.²² In September 1994, the GOC ratified the 1988 UN Drug Convention but attached several unilateral reservations detailing specific clauses of the treaty that Colombia would not honor. The most important of these reservations involved extradition, maritime cooperation, money laundering, and asset seizure and forfeiture. In December 1997, the GOC dropped its reservation on extradition. In 1990, Colombia signed an asset seizure and forfeiture agreement with the United States. In 1998, Colombia also signed an asset sharing agreement with the United States.

Colombia participates in CICAD—the Organization of American States' body on money laundering, chemical controls, and drug abuse prevention. The GOC has signed the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, but has not formally changed its laws to institute full compliance.²³ In 1980, Colombia signed a mutual legal assistance treaty (MLAT) with the United States; however, it has not entered into force.²⁴ Colombia also signed, in 1997, a maritime drug law with the United States.

OUTLOOK

Despite the fragmentation of the cocaine trade, the DEA anticipates that Colombian cocaine trafficking organizations will remain the dominant players in the international cocaine trade well into the 21st century. Colombian traffickers are increasingly more self-sufficient in cocaine base production; have a firm grip on Caribbean smuggling routes; and dominate the wholesale cocaine markets in the eastern United States and in Europe.

If the Colombian Government significantly expands and sustains aerial coca eradication operations into southern Colombia as part of Plan Colombia, the DEA anticipates that the initial spillover effect in coca cultivation will be limited to Colombia. The DEA would expect to see a shift in coca cultivation back to the traditional growing area of central Colombia (the Guaviare) as well as expanded new cultivation in northern Colombia (Norte de Santander and San Lucas Departments).

If the Colombian Government is able to expand and sustain coca eradication operations in central and northern Colombia—while maintaining pressure on southern Colombia—the DEA would expect some of Colombia's coca cultivation and cocaine processing operations to be driven into Ecuador and Venezuela. Traffickers would also be expected to encourage expanded coca cultivation and cocaine production in Peru and Bolivia—two countries that collectively produced about two-thirds of the world's cocaine base as recently as 1995.

The DEA anticipates that some major cocaine trafficking groups will eventually diversify their product line to include heroin and synthetic drugs. Should this occur, the threat posed by Colombian heroin and synthetic drugs would increase due to the trafficking resources available to the major cocaine trafficking organizations. These traffickers would be expected to use the transportation and wholesale cocaine distribution networks they have established over the last decade to expand their involvement in the U.S. heroin and synthetic drugs market.

As independent Colombian heroin trafficking groups strengthen their trafficking infrastructure and become more successful, it is likely that these groups will merge to some extent. This will result in more powerful heroin trafficking groups using more sophisticated heroin smuggling methods to move larger heroin loads. Recent large heroin seizures in Buenaventura, New York City, Miami, and Aruba suggest that some consolidation may already be taking place.

The DEA anticipates that the GOC will continue extraditing Colombian nationals, who are under indictment in the United States for drug trafficking. Since December 1997, when Colombia's extradition law went into effect, the GOC has extradited 30 Colombians to the United States. Included in this number are 16 Colombians arrested as part of DEA/CNP's Operation MILLENNIUM. The DEA anticipates that all of the remaining Colombians arrested during Operation MILLENNIUM will be extradited to the United States.

Appendix 1

ACRONYMS

ACCU	<i>Autodefensas Campesinas de Cordoba y Uraba</i>	Peasant Self-Defense Groups of Cordoba and Uraba
------	---	--

ADM-19	<i>Alianza Democrática</i>	Democratic Alliance
AUC	<i>Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia</i>	United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia
CICAD		Inter-American Drug Abuse Commission
CIP		CNP Intelligence Division
CNE	<i>Consejo Nacional de Estupefacientes</i>	National Council on Dangerous Drugs
CNGSB	<i>Coordinadora Nacional Guerrillero Simón Bolívar</i>	Simón Bolívar National Guerrilla Coordinating Board
CNP	<i>Policía Nacional de Colombia</i>	Colombian National Police
CPC		Criminal Procedures Code
DANTI	<i>Dirección Anti-Narcotícós</i>	Directorate of Anti-Narcotics
DAS	<i>Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad</i>	Department of Administrative Security
DEA		Drug Enforcement Administration
DIJIN	<i>Dirección de Policía Judicial e Investigaciones</i>	Directorate of Judicial Police and Investigations
DISAP	<i>División de Servicio Aéreo de la Policía</i>	Police Aviation Service Division
DMZ	<i>Despeje</i>	Demilitarized Zone
DNE	<i>Dirección Nacional de Estupefacientes</i>	National Directorate on Dangerous Drugs
ELN	<i>Ejército de Liberación Nacional</i>	National Liberation Army
EPL	<i>Ejército Popular de Liberación</i>	Popular Liberation Army
FAC	<i>Fuerza Aérea de Colombia</i>	Colombian Air Force
FARC	<i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia</i>	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FIU		Financial Intelligence Unit
GOC		Government of Colombia
HCI		Hydrochloride
HSP		(DEA) Heroin Signature Program
INCSR		International Narcotics Control Strategy Report
INTERPOL		International Criminal Police Organization
JTF-S		Southern Joint Task Force
M-19	<i>Movimiento de 19 de Abril</i>	19th of April Movement
MAS	<i>Muerte a Secuestradores</i>	Death to Kidnappers
MDMA		3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (referred to as Ecstasy)
MLAT		Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty
NAS		(State Department) Narcotics Affairs Section
PCC	<i>Partido Comunista Colombiano</i>	Colombian Communist Party
PNDA	<i>Plan Nacional para Desarrollo Alternativo</i>	National Plan for Alternative Development
RUMBOS		GOC drug abuse prevention and demand reduction program
SIU		Sensitive Investigative Unit
UN		United Nations

UP	<i>Unión Patriótica</i>	Patriotic Union
USG		U.S. Government

Appendix 2
Drug Enforcement Statistics in Colombia
1991 - 2000²⁵

	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991
COCA										
Gross Cultivation (ha)	183,200	-	-	98,500	72,800	59,650	49,610	40,493	38,059	38,472
Eradication (ha)	47,000	43,246	-	19,000	5,600	8,750	4,910	793	959	972
Net Cultivation	136,200	122,500	101,800	79,500	67,200	50,900	44,700	39,700	37,100	37,500
OPIUM²⁶										
Gross Cultivation (ha)	-	-	-	13,572	12,328	10,300	23,906	29,821	32,858	2,500
Eradication (ha)	9,254	-	-	6,972	6,028	3,760	3,906	9,821	12,858	1,156
Net Cultivation	-	7,500	6,100	6,600	6,300	6,540	20,000	20,000	20,000	1,344
CANNABIS²⁷										
Gross Cultivation (ha)	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,050	2,049	2,000
Eradication (ha)	-	-	-	-	-	20	14	50	49	0
Net Cultivation	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	4,980	4,986	5,000	2,000	2,000
SEIZURES²⁸										
Heroin/Morphine (mt)	0.572	0.504	0.137	0.261	0.183	0.419	0.181	0.261	0.05	-
Opium (mt)	-	0.183	0.100	0.120	0.036	0.078	0.128	0.261	0.43	-
Cannabis (mt)	46	65	69	136	235	166	200	549	206	329
Base/Basuco (mt)	-	9.00	29.30	10.00	17.50	19.50	32.00	10.40	5.81	9.28
Cocaine HCl (mt)	-	22.73	54.70	34.00	23.50	21.50	30.00	21.76	31.92	77.07
Total HCl/Base (mt)	69.00 ²⁹	31.73	84.00	44.00	41.00	41.00	62.00	32.16	37.73	86.35
Total Arrests	8,600	-	1,961	1,546	1,561	1,745	2,154	2,562	1,700	1,170

¹Barranquilla, Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Cali, Cartagena, Cúcuta, Leticia, Medellín, Pereira, San Andrés, and Santa Marta

²The Cordillera Occidental (the western range), Cordillera Central (the central range), and the Cordillera Oriental (the eastern range).

³DYNCORP is a private contracting company based in Reston, Virginia.

⁴In sharp contrast to Colombian coca farmers, Peruvian and Bolivian coca farmers sell sun-dried coca leaf to local cocaine base processors. In Bolivia, coca leaf is sold in cargas (with one carga equal to 45.5 kilograms). In Peru, coca leaf is sold in arrobas. An arroba in Peru is not the same unit of weight as its Colombian counterpart—an arroba in Peru being equal to 11.34 kilograms.

⁵Extradition in Colombia is explained in detail in the section "Colombia's Counterdrug Strategy in a Legal Context."

⁶As of early November 2001, 16 Operation Millennium defendants have been extradited to the United States.

⁷In 1999, the most recent DEA statistics available, national wholesale cocaine prices in the United States ranged from \$9,000 to \$40,000 per kilogram. In contrast, DEA and Interpol statistics from 1999 and 2000 indicated wholesale cocaine prices in Europe ranged from \$20,000 to \$65,000 per kilogram.

⁸Previous estimates assumed that Colombia has three opium harvests per year. These estimates currently are under review.

⁹In comparison, only one opium poppy crop can be harvested per year in Southeast Asia and Southwest Asia. Multiple annual opium poppy crops are possible in parts of Mexico.

¹⁰At the time of publication, the INCSR did not publish the amount of opium latex seized in Colombia in 2000.

¹¹The HSP identifies and quantifies the chemical characteristics and secondary constituents of all heroin seized at U.S. ports of entry as well as random samples of domestic purchases and seizures. From the resultant data, heroin exhibits are classified according to the process by which they were manufactured, which in turn enables the association of exhibits with specific geographic source regions. Although intelligence and investigative reporting indicate that practically all of the heroin from South America comes from Colombia, the HSP process per se does not allow DEA chemists to link the South American process to a specific source country. Accordingly, for HSP purposes, all heroin from Colombia is characterized as being South American in origin. DEA first identified a signature for South American heroin in July 1993.

¹²Colombia's two largest marijuana seizures both took place near Santa Marta. In the mid-1980s, Colombian authorities seized 242 metric tons of marijuana at a single location. In April 1993, the CNP seized 200 metric tons of marijuana from 10 stash sites reportedly belonging to a single organization.

¹³MDMA is a Schedule I synthetic, psychoactive drug that possesses both stimulant and mild hallucinogenic properties. MDMA is taken orally, usually in tablet or capsule form. DEA reporting indicates widespread MDMA abuse within virtually every major U.S. city, especially among teenagers and young professionals.

¹⁴Flunitrazepam is a Schedule III synthetic depressant belonging to the benzodiazepine (central nervous system depressant) class of drugs. Flunitrazepam's pharmacological effects include sedation, muscle relaxation, anxiety reduction, and prevention of convulsions. Flunitrazepam gained notoriety beginning in the early 1990s due to its use in rendering victims unconscious and facilitating sexual assaults. Flunitrazepam has never been approved for medical use in the United States.

¹⁵According to the GOC, RUMBOS means routes, options, search of possibilities, roads to freedom, choosing, and exploring.

¹⁶The FARC had operated unofficially since at least 1964.

¹⁷Scopolamine is a poisonous alkaloid found in the roots of various plants of the nightshade family. It disrupts the central nervous system, and can cause hallucinations and deep sleep. Historically, scopolamine has been used in conjunction with morphine as a sedative in surgery.

¹⁸The initial round of elections is scheduled to take place on May 26, 2002. The top two candidates from the initial round then advance to a runoff election that is scheduled to take place on June 16, 2002.

¹⁹*Aerocivil* is Colombia's equivalent to the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration.

²⁰In February 1997, the Colombian National Assembly adopted legislation that increases the potential maximum sentence for a crime from 24 years to 60 years. This legislation does not apply to drug trafficking. The 60-year sentence only applies to kidnapping and has yet to be handed down by any Colombian court.

²¹The Egmont Group, created in 1995, is an international group of FIUs that meets yearly to exchange information and expertise about financial crimes. According to the Egmont Group, FIUs are centralized agencies that, at a minimum, receive, analyze, and disclose to competent authorities information provided by financial institutions (and other mandated entities) concerning possible money laundering and other financial crimes.

²²The 1961 UN Convention codified internationally applicable control measures in order to ensure the availability of drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes, and to prevent their diversion into illicit channels. It also included general provisions on illicit trafficking and drug abuse. The 1971 UN Convention established an international control system for psychotropic substances. The Convention was in response to the diversification and expansion of the spectrum of drugs of abuse and introduced controls over a number of synthetic drugs. The 1988 UN Convention (also known as the Vienna Convention) established comprehensive measures against drug trafficking, including provisions against money laundering and the diversion of chemicals used in illicit drug production. It helped establish international cooperation through extradition of drug traffickers, controlled deliveries, and transfer of proceedings.

²³The Inter-American Convention against Corruption requires signatory countries to criminalize solicitation or acceptance of bribes and other corrupt acts, and to eliminate bank secrecy or political grounds as a basis for refusal to cooperate in criminal investigations. Signatories also are encouraged to take important preventive measures to reduce their vulnerability to corruption. The Convention is limited to members of CICAD.

²⁴MLATs allow generally for the exchange of evidence and information in criminal investigations.

²⁵Data for table derived from the U.S. State Department's *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report* as reported by the host nation. Figures are in hectares (ha) and metric tons (mt).

²⁶The USG's opium production estimates for Colombia currently are under review. Refinements in methodology make it impossible to compare opium production estimates from the early 1990s to those of the late 1990's.

²⁷Reported cannabis cultivation has not been confirmed by USG survey.

²⁸Seizure data shows combined CNP and Colombian military figures.

²⁹In 2000, reported cocaine base and HCl seizure totals were combined. These totals include 24 metric tons of cocaine seized in maritime operations.