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Drug Intelligence Brief

THE DRUG SITUATION IN PERU May 2001

COCA CULTIVATION AND COCAINE PRODUCTION

Coca cultivation in Peru has dropped 70 percent in the last five years from 115,300 hectares in 1995 to 34,100 hectares in 2000. Accordingly, Peru’s estimated potential cocaine production has decreased by 68 percent in recent years, from 460 metric tons in 1995 to 145 metric tons in 2000.

Peru’s air interdiction program—which contributed to a drop in coca prices and encouraged farmers to abandon some coca fields—along with an aggressive coca eradication program in 1999 were key factors that led to the decline in potential cocaine base production. However, recent reporting suggests that prices for Peruvian coca leaf have increased and that some Peruvian coca farmers are replanting previously abandoned fields. If these trends continue, the counterdrug successes achieved in Peru will be at risk.

DEA’s Operation Breakthrough has determined that Peruvian cocaine base “cooks” require 400 kilograms of dry coca leaf to produce 1 kilogram of cocaine base. Operation Breakthrough studies also confirm that cocaine HCl cooks in Peru are able to convert 1 kilogram of cocaine base into an equal amount of finished cocaine HCl.¹



Peru Statistics

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Coca						

Net Cultivation (ha)	115,300	94,400	68,800	51,000	38,700	34,100
Eradication (ha)	0	1,259	3,462	7,825	13,800	6,200
Cultivation (ha)	115,300	95,659	72,262	58,825	52,500	40,200
Leaf (Potential Harvest)(ha)	183,600	174,700	130,600	95,600	69,200	60,975
HCl (Potential)(mt)	460	435	325	240	175	145
Seizures						
Coca Leaf (mt)	33.4	99.1	146.8	132.9	164.3	55.0
Coca Paste (mt)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cocaine HCl (mt)	7.65	1.01	2.30	1.70	3.59	2.70
Cocaine Base (mt)	15.00	18.68	8.80	19.70	6.65	9.01
Total Cocaine (mt)	22.65	19.69	11.0	21.40	10.24	11.70
Aircraft (items)	22	7	11	-	-	2

ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS

The decentralization or fragmentation of the cocaine trade over the past decade has had a major impact on how drug trafficking groups operate. Dramatic law enforcement successes against the Medellin 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 Medellin or Cali drug lords, to increase their roles in the cocaine trade. Unlike their cartel predecessors, however, today's Colombian traffickers specialize in one aspect of the cocaine industry. No one group of traffickers today dominates all aspects of the drug trade. Decentralization of the cocaine trade, however, is not a phenomenon limited only to Colombia. In recent years, independent Peruvian trafficking groups increasingly have produced cocaine HCl. Peruvian cocaine also transits Bolivia en route to Brazil and other countries.

In terms of drug interdiction, Peruvian authorities seized a total of 11.7 metric tons of cocaine in 2000 that consisted of 2.7 metric tons of cocaine HCl and just over 9 metric tons of cocaine base. The Peruvian Government also eradicated 6,200 hectares of coca under cultivation and destroyed several cocaine hydrochloride laboratories. In addition, Peruvian authorities cooperated with the DEA and Chilean authorities in a 9 ton seizure of cocaine from a maritime shipment in the Chilean seaport of Arica.

There was a significant increase in the amount of opium latex seized by the Peruvian Government during 2000. The Peruvian National Police (PNP) seized 428 kilograms of opium latex in 2000 compared to only 105 kilograms of opium latex seized in 1999. In addition, Peruvian law enforcement destroyed 2.4 million opium poppy plants in 2000 compared to 34,000 opium poppy plants eradicated in 1999. Opium poppy cultivation is illegal, and the PNP take prompt action to destroy opium poppy fields; however, information on the extent of opium poppy cultivation throughout Peru is limited. The opium trade in Peru appears to be directed by Colombian trafficking groups.

The PNP Chemical Control Unit conducted over 1,000 regulatory and criminal investigations of suspected chemical companies in 2000, making 41 arrests, seizing over 158 metric tons of controlled essential chemicals, and closing 6 chemical companies. The Government of Peru (GOP) passed legislation in 1999 which enhanced the PNP's ability to regulate chemical companies, and increased the number of chemicals regulated. However, the law needs to be amended and strengthened to include criminal penalties for violators.

¹ Operation Breakthrough is a DEA initiative to provide US Government policy makers and the counterdrug intelligence community with the scientific data required to more accurately estimate potential cocaine and heroin production in the Andean Region. The major components of the program include confidential source interviews, scientific field surveys, and laboratory analyses.

This report was prepared by the DEA Intelligence Division, Office of Investigative Intelligence, Worldwide Investigative Intelligence Section, Financial Investigative Intelligence Unit. This report reflects information received prior to January 2003. Comments and requests for copies are welcome and may be faxed to the Intelligence Production Unit, Intelligence Division, DEA Headquarters, at (202) 307-8726.

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