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ABSTRACT

In terms of geographic reach, economic impact, and imperviousness to law enforcement, drug cartels became the dominant form of organized crime in the last two decades of the 20th century. In the 21st century drug cartels have taken advantage of the massive increases in international trade and commerce and have learned from the mistakes of the earlier cartels. The new cartels are more numerous, flexible, chameleonic in their nature, and durable than any we have seen before. This research is a brief overview of the new cartels emerging to dominate today's international traffic in drugs.

Drug Cartels and the International Organization of Drug Trafficking in the 21st Century
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In terms of geographic reach, economic impact, and imperviousness to law enforcement, drug cartels became the dominant form of organized crime in the last two decades of the 20th century. In the 21st century drug cartels have taken advantage of the massive increases in international trade and commerce and have learned from the mistakes of the earlier cartels. The new cartels are more numerous, flexible, chameleonic in their nature, and durable than any we have seen before. This research is a brief overview of the new cartels emerging to dominate today's international traffic in drugs.

Drug cartels are composed of independent drug trafficking organizations that have pooled their resources and elected to cooperate with each other. Drug cartels are often incorrectly perceived as single organized crime groups with thousands of members, wide geographical scope, and vertical control of the drug business from the point of harvest to the point of retail sales on the streets. Nothing could be further from the truth. Drug cartels are merely associations of smaller organized crime groups into a loose confederation of business associates. Some of the syndicates in a cartel may produce raw materials. Others may have well-established modalities for transportation. Still others may have money laundering operations in place, or may have important political and law enforcement connections to facilitate the creation of corrupt relations.

Drug trafficking groups may decide to enter into a cartel relationship for any number of reasons. Most commonly smaller, independent syndicates enter into a franchise relationship with a larger, better organized and more stable syndicate. Another reason for the creation of a drug cartel is to bring together traffickers with differing strengths in the

various aspects of the drug trade. In this arrangement each of the independent syndicates realizes that it has a weakness which is compensated for by other syndicates. An organization with strong connections to the growers of a particular plant may need to align with another organization possessing skilled chemists to convert that plant into a high quality drug. Still other organizations may be skilled in smuggling and yet other criminal networks may have access to buyers in another country. Occasionally independent drug syndicates come together into a cartel because of a need for highly specialized services. For example, opium-growing warlords in the Golden Triangle (Burma, Laos, Thailand) of Southeast Asia established working relationships with various Chinese Triads because they needed to move their product to markets worldwide and because they needed to launder their profits and a financial structure adequate to the task was not available in the Golden Triangle. In these cases drug cartels provide "references" and contacts for the establishment of contractual arrangements related to specific tasks. Finally, a more contemporary form of drug cartel operation involves a simple exchange between independent criminal organizations in which a good or service is exchanged for another. An example of this is the relationship between Colombian cocaine syndicates and drug trafficking organizations in the United States for retail sale.

The Colombian Cocaine Cartels

Colombian Traffickers and the Cocaine Market:

Colombian drug trafficking organizations handle the majority of the world's annual yield of cocaine pro-

duced in Colombia. The cocaine base used to produce cocaine hydrochloride comes from Bolivia, Peru and Colombia itself. In fact, there was a 28 percent increase in the amount of potentially harvestable coca plants in Colombia in 1998, indicating a concerted effort by Colombian traffickers to reduce their dependence on coca grown in more distant areas. Colombian cartels are also still quite active in the wholesale distribution of cocaine world-wide, but Mexican drug cartels have taken over a substantial portion of what used to be the Colombian share of wholesale distribution and even more of the responsibility for transportation and smuggling (Kline, 1995; Schapiro, 1997; Zabludoff, 1998).

Colombia's role as a major cocaine producer is to a large part geographically-determined because it shares borders with Peru and Bolivia, countries where substantial quantities of coca leaves are grown. Colombia's wholesale trafficking role in cocaine is also largely geographically determined. First, it is reasonably close to the United States, about a two-and-a-half hour flight from Miami. Second, Colombia is the only country in South America with both a Caribbean and Pacific Ocean coastline, thereby opening up a variety of options and modalities for both maritime and air smuggling routes.

Coca leaves are transported to Colombia from Peru and Bolivia along a variety of routes, mostly over land, and frequently along remote trails. The leaves are delivered to hundreds of locations where the very rudimentary process of converting them into coca paste is accomplished. The coca paste is then carried over water, land and often by air in light aircraft to concealed cocaine-producing facilities in the Colombian interior. The coca paste is then processed into cocaine hydrochloride, the white crystalline powder, which after being cut, is sold

to cocaine users.

Colombian drug cartels transport the cocaine to the United States in every conceivable manner, sometimes using commercial maritime shipping, private and commercial aircraft, and even on occasion, trains. It is generally conceded that the movement of the drug across large distances is the point of greatest vulnerability in the cocaine trafficking process.

While Colombian cartels did much of their own smuggling in the 1970s and early 1980s, by the late 1980s they had increasingly subcontracted the distribution of cocaine to Mexican drug traffickers. The cocaine was moved from Colombia to Mexico where it was turned over to Mexican criminal organizations for transport to the United States. By the 1990s, most cocaine entering the United States was coming through Mexico. Mexican drug cartels, which had already established routes for smuggling of heroin and marijuana into the United States, simply added cocaine to their polydrug smuggling businesses. Mexican drug organizations also expanded the cocaine market in the United States by adding their own contacts to those previously developed by the Colombian cartels. Originally, the Mexican drug traffickers simply operated on a contract basis with the Colombians, charging a portion of the shipment as payment for their smuggling services. By the end of 1980s, Mexican smugglers were charging as much as 50% of the load for their services. It was at this point that the Mexican cartels began to evolve from mere logisticians in the cocaine trade into large scale cocaine traffickers in their own right.

Common smuggling modalities involve the transportation of cocaine from Columbia through Mexico or Central America by air and then overland or by air to staging sites in northern Mexico. The cocaine is then broken down into smaller loads for smuggling across the U.S.-Mexico border. The primary cocaine importation points in the United States are Arizona, southern California, southern Florida, and Texas. Typically, land vehicles are driven across the Southwest Border. Cocaine is also carried in small, concealed, kilogram quantities across the border by smugglers known as "mules," who enter the United States either legally through ports of entry or illegally through undesignated points along the border. Colombian traffickers have also started using a new concealment method whereby they add chemical compounds to cocaine hydrochloride to produce "black cocaine." The cocaine in this substance is not detected by standard chemical tests or drug-sniffing canines.

In addition to routes through Mexico, cocaine traffickers from Colombia have established a series of smuggling routes throughout the Caribbean, the Bahama Island chain, and South Florida. They often hire traffickers from Mexico or the Dominican Republic to transport the drug. The traffickers use a variety of smuggling techniques to transfer their drug to U.S. markets. These include airdrops of 500-700 kilograms in the Bahama Islands or off the coast of Puerto Rico, mid-ocean boat-to-boat transfers of 500-2,000 kilograms, and the commercial shipment of multi-tons of cocaine through the port of Miami. Bulk cargo ships are also used to smuggle cocaine to staging sites in the western Caribbean Gulf of Mexico area. These vessels are typically 150 to 250-foot coastal freighters that carry an average cocaine load of approximately 2.5 metric tons. Commercial fishing vessels are also used for smuggling operations. In areas with a high volume of recreational traffic,

traffic smugglers use the same types of vessels, such as cigarette boats, as those commonly used by local recreational boaters.

Cocaine Wholesaling Structure

Nonetheless, some Colombian cartels continue to be active in the U.S. Where this is the case the cartels established "cells" in specific geographic areas. Most commonly, these cells are structured around familial relations or long-time, ongoing friendships. This arrangement makes any attempt by law enforcement to infiltrate or penetrate a cell virtually impossible. In addition "cells" are structurally compartmentalized with a well-defined division-of-labor. Each cell specializes in a different aspect of the cocaine trade in the specific geographic location where it is found. Some cells transport drugs. Some cells are simply responsible for hiding cocaine and storing it for future sale. Some cells are engaged exclusively in money laundering and have no contact with the drug itself. Other cells are involved in the actual wholesale trading of cocaine to retail drug networks. On average, cells are made up of 10 employees who have no knowledge about the membership, location, or activities of other cells in the area. If law enforcement activities manage to compromise one cell, none of the others are effected.

In addition, to compartmentalization, cell structure is characterized by a rigid chain-of-command. The head of each cell reports to a regional director for the cartel, and only to that individual. The regional director, in turn, reports to a designated individual in Colombia. Discretionary decisions in the United States are entrusted only to a handful of individuals, carefully insulated from the day-to-day drug operation, who answer directly to the cartel lead-

ership in Colombia.

Colombian cartels are making extensive use of the most sophisticated and up-to-date communications technologies. Particularly important to Colombian cartel operations are state-of-the-art encryption devices, which, for all intents and purposes, considering the relatively short-life of a drug transaction, translate communication into indecipherable codes. If the codes are ever broken, the transaction which they were related to is long over. In the 1970s, one of the best tactics available to law enforcement in dealing with Colombian cartels was wire-tapping of frequent international phone conversations. These modern encryption technologies have made such telephonic communications things of the past. Encryption technology not only hides information about drug transactions but also hides financial information related to money laundering, making the building of criminal cases far more difficult than it was just a few years ago.

The Heroin Trade

One of the reasons the Colombian cartels have passed off so much of their wholesaling business in cocaine to Mexican drug organizations is the increasing Colombian role in the production and sale of heroin. Starting in the late 1980s and steadily increasing in the 1990s, Colombian drug cartels have expanded into the growing and smuggling of high-grade heroin. Using their existing retail sales contacts and their in-place cocaine organizations in the United States have enabled the Colombian cartels to become the dominant force in the U.S. heroin market. The heroin trade has also changed the economics of drug trafficking in South America. Because of climate, soil and other factors, high quality coca has a small and restricted

cultivation area, with the best coca being cultivated outside of Colombia. But the Colombians have found they can grow their own opium, thus eliminating their dependence on suppliers. The opium poppy, unlike the coca bush, grows exceptionally well along the eastern slopes of the Central Andean Mountains ranges in the central part of Colombia. Opium growers in Colombia work under contract to a drug cartel. The cartel supplies the locals with seeds and agricultural supplies, who in turn agree to sell the gum from the opium poppy pods to the cartels. Other growers operate independently, selling the opium gum to brokers who in turn sell it to chemists. The chemists then process the opium gum into morphine base and then into heroin. Chemists then either sell the heroin to trafficking organizations, or operate under ongoing contracts with those organizations. The heroin is smuggled into the United States by the cartels.

Because heroin is smuggled in small quantities, the methods for smuggling are limited only by a smuggler's imagination. Some smuggle heroin in hollowed out shoes, some hide it in other shipments of commercial goods, some sew it into the lining of their clothes, and others simply swallow it after wrapping it in condoms.

The heroin trade from Colombians is primarily dominated by a series of new, smaller, drug cartels and syndicates. But the attractiveness of using already established smuggling and distribution channels dominated by the large cartels would seem to make increasing centralization of the heroin trade inevitable. Colombian traffickers have made such a huge impact on the U.S. for one simple reason: they sell higher grade heroin than their competitors and

they sell it at cheaper wholesale prices. Some Colombians introduce their new product line by simply including free samples in their cocaine shipments. By the end of the 1990s, Colombian trafficking groups in New York and Philadelphia had been so successful that their product brand names, "No Way Out" and "Death Wish," became the most sought-after heroin on the retail market, encouraging more and more retail syndicates to handle the products. At least on the East Coast of the United States, the Colombians have been able to create high name recognition for their products and intense customer loyalty, which has resulted in virtual domination of the market. As of 1998, DEA was estimating that 65% of the heroin sold on the streets of the United States was grown and processed in Colombia.

The Medellin Cartel

The first great Colombian drug cartels surfaced in the mid-1970s. As the use of cocaine hydrochloride grew in the United States and law enforcement officers made more and more trafficking arrests it became increasingly apparent that trafficking networks in the United States were operating in a common manner, using stash houses, laundering money and developing trafficking networks in similar ways. It also became increasingly apparent that the actual smuggling for cocaine was being controlled from Colombia itself. The first cartel to be identified, and the one which law enforcement alleges dominated the cocaine trade in both New York and Miami, was probably the largest Colombian trafficking syndicate operating in the United States. It should be understood however, that the name "Medellin Cartel" is somewhat misleading. The Medellin Cartel was never a single drug trafficking organization, but rather a loose or-

ganizational confederation of many drug syndicates operating out of Medellin.

It was Carlos Lehder, a fanatically devoted follower of Adolf Hitler and a leading force behind Colombia's fascist political party who originally got the idea that cocaine could be smuggled to the United States in the same way that marijuana was being smuggled. Instead of continuing the traditional smuggling methods of hiding small quantities of cocaine in luggage on commercial flights, Lehder thought that cocaine could be moved on small, private aircraft in much larger quantities. In order to use light aircraft he needed to establish a transshipment point, so, in 1976, Lehder bought a sizeable portion of the Bahamian island of Norman's Cay, only 225 miles southeast of Miami. On Norman's Cay he built an airstrip as a refueling spot for the light aircraft he would use to fly cocaine from Colombia and then on to the United States. Lehder's idea worked spectacularly and was replicated in other locations throughout the Caribbean and Mexico.

It was Lehder's inclination to turn to violence as the primary tool of dispute settlement that eventually led to his downfall. Lehder was responsible for the 1984 assassination of Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, Colombia's Minister of Justice. In large part because of this assassination and a subsequent attack on the Colombian Supreme Court, the Colombian government agreed to extradite Lehder to the United States in February, 1987. He was convicted of cocaine trafficking and sentenced to 135 years in a federal prison, a sentence that was subsequently reduced in return for his cooperation in the prosecution of Panamanian dictator Manuel Noreiga.

If violence caused Carlos Lehder to attract too much official attention, Pablo Escobar failed to heed the warn-

ing. Escobar was responsible for a 1989 bombing of an Avianca commercial airliner which killed 110 people. Allegedly the bombing was cover for Escobar's real intent which was to murder two people he suspected of being police informants who were passengers on the plane.

Escobar also placed bounties of between \$1,000 and \$3,000 on police officers in Colombia. In Medellin itself, as many as 2,000 police officers and civilians were murdered each year. In June 1991, Escobar turned himself in to Colombian authorities. But after only a year in confinement, he escaped in July, 1992. From July, 1992 to December, 1993, Pablo Escobar was subject of a massive manhunt. He was finally shot to death by Colombian National Police at a private residence in Medellin.

The Cali Cartel

With the slow process of incarcerating or killing the highly visible, extremely violent, leaders of the Medellin Cartel proceeding in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Drug trafficking groups based in Cali began to gain more and more control of the cocaine market. Cali is a city about 200 miles south of Medellin. Like the Medellin Cartel, the Cali Cartel was in reality not a single organizational entity, but rather a confederation of drug trafficking syndicates sharing resources and cooperating with each other. Unlike the leaders of the Medellin Cartel, Cali Cartel members shunned publicity, avoided violence as much as possible, and posed as ostensibly legitimate businessmen.

Cali Cartel activities in the United States surfaced with the seizure of the largest clandestine cocaine laboratory ever discovered in the United States, on April 11, 1985 in the rural, upstate town of Minden, New York. The

discovery of the laboratory was entirely accidental and occurred only because of a fire on the 10-acre farm. Evidence at the scene linked the labs operations to Jose Santacruz-Londono, one of the leaders of the Cali Cartel. The cocaine laboratory in Minden was capable of producing \$700 million worth of cocaine a year.

The Cali Cartel's operation generated billions of dollars in cocaine-related revenue each year. The Cali Cartel used sophisticated business techniques to manage their operations and avoid interference by law enforcement. In the United States the cartel established a system of highly compartmentalized, insulated cells in major metropolitan areas. The Cali Cartel used thousands of contract employees as surrogates to handle the actual business of cocaine trafficking. Every aspect of the business was insulated from every other aspect of the business. Cells which actually handled drugs were separate from cells that arranged car rentals. Other cells specialized in pager and cell phone purchases and disposal (the cartel allowed cellular phones to be used only once before being destroyed, making traces or taps impossible); drug storage and safe houses; and accountancy and bookkeeping. Cali Cartel managers back in Cali accumulated extensive information about the families and relatives of employees operating in the United States that could be used to coerce the employee into silence if they were arrested. Such information and the potential threats to family also, obviously, kept employees from stealing or departing from Cali Cartel protocols in the conduct of the cocaine business.

In the early 1990s the leaders of the Cali Cartel included the Rodriguez-Orejuela brothers, Jose Santacruz-Londono,

Helmer "Pacho" Herrera-Buitrago, and Victor Julio Patino-Fomeque. While U.S. law enforcement agents had developed sufficient information to indict some of these individuals the Colombian Constitution of 1991 outlawed extradition to the United States. Under pressure from the Clinton administration, however, the Colombian National Police agreed to use information developed by U.S. investigations to indict the Cali Cartel's leadership in Colombia. During 1995-1996, the five major leaders of the Cali Cartel were arrested. Jose Santacruz-Londono died in March, 1996. But his death did not end cocaine trafficking in Colombia, nor did it necessarily end the activities of Cartel members.

Colombian Drug Trafficking Organizations at the Millennium

At the turn of the century the Cali Cartel no longer has the market dominance over cocaine it had in the last decade, but elements of the Cali Cartel are still very active in the cocaine trade and play an important role in the wholesale cocaine market.

Ironically, successful law enforcement efforts against the Medellin and Cali Cartels has had the effect of decentralizing the cocaine trade in Colombia, making it harder than ever to control. A number of veteran drug traffickers who had operated under the aegis of the Cali Cartel have now become significant powers in their own right.

Today much of the cocaine traffic in Colombia is centered in the northern Valle del Cauca region, of which Cali is the capital city, located on Colombia's southeast coast and on the Caribbean North Coast. Cocaine traffickers in

regions have not repeated the mistakes of the Medellin and Cali cartels. They operate more independently of each other and they have passed some of the major responsibilities for cocaine smuggling and wholesaling on to drug trafficking syndicates in Mexico.

Arcangel de Jesus Henao-Montoya operates his cocaine trafficking syndicate in the Northern Valle del Cauca region. The Henao-Montoya syndicate appears to be the largest and most powerful of several independent trafficking groups that comprise the North Valle drug cartel. Until Arcangel's brother, Jose Orlando, surrendered to Colombian police to face money laundering charges in September 1997, he led the syndicate. In November 1998, Jose Orlando was shot and killed in the maximum-security wing of Bogota's Modelo Prison. The Henao-Montoya syndicate is closely allied with neo-fascist right-wing death squads and paramilitary units in the region under the control of by Carlos Castano.

Diego Montoya-Sanchez came out of the Henao-Montoya syndicate to establish another of the major drug trafficking syndicates in the North Valle region. Montoya Sanchez is responsible for multi-ton shipments of cocaine to Mexican drug syndicates, who then smuggle the cocaine into the United States. Montoya-Sanchez was the major supplier for Alejandro Bernal-Madrigal, aka Juvenal, and his Bogota-based drug organizations (see below). Montoya-Sanchez operates large-scale cocaine processing facilities in southern Colombia and acquires the coca paste for his processing facilities directly from Peru.

Another of the major North Valle del Cauca drug syndicates is headed by Jairo Ivan Urdinola-Grajales and his

Julio Fabio Urdinola-Grajales. The Urdinolas are related to the Henao-Montoya family by marriage. Colombian officials arrested Jairo Ivan in April 1992 and later sentenced him to four-and-a-half years in prison on drug trafficking charges. Julio Fabio surrendered to Colombian authorities in March 1994. In October 1997, a Colombian judge dismissed murder charges against Jairo Ivan Urdinola. However, the Prosecutor General's Office has filed additional drug trafficking charges against him. The Urdinola-Grajales brothers continue to run their drug syndicate from prison.

Victor Patino-Fomeque, the Cali Cartel leader who surrendered to Colombian authorities in June 1995, continues to direct a drug trafficking syndicate from prison. Patino-Fomeque operated out of Buenaventura, Colombia, where he supervised maritime smuggling operations for the Cali Cartel. Despite a 12-year prison sentence handed down in May 1996, it is very likely that Patino-Fomeque will be out of prison soon.

The Ochoa brothers, Fabio, Juan David, and Jorge Luis, among the most notorious members of the Medellin Cartel, are back in the cocaine business. During 1990 and 1992, the Ochoa brothers voluntarily surrendered to Colombian authorities. In July, 1996 Juan David and Jorge Luis were released from prison, and in September 1996, Fabio was released.

In March 1996, Juan Carlos Ramirez-Abadia (aka "Chupeta") surrendered to Colombian authorities. In December 1996, Chupeta was sentenced to 24 years in prison, but will actually serve only seven-and-a-half

years. While Chupeta is in prison Jorge Orlando Rodriguez, aka "El Mono," took over management responsibilities for the Chupeta drug syndicate. Ramirez-Abadia, however, continues to make the major decisions about the syndicate's activities from prison. Chupeta's net worth is estimated to be in the neighborhood of \$2.6 billion.

Aljandro Benal-Madrigal (aka "Juvenal") is a Bogota-based transportation coordinator for Mexico-and Colombia-based traffickers. He was responsible for multi-ton shipments of cocaine from Colombia to Mexico. He was arrested in October 1999 by Colombian authorities.

Hugo Herrera-Vasquez heads a Cali-based trafficking organization that moves large quantities of cocaine from Colombia to the United States via Central America and Mexico. The Herrera organization also launders drug money destined for Colombia. Cash, wire transfers, and monetary instruments are used to move drug proceeds from the U.S. Southwest Border area to Colombia through Mexico and Panama.

Mexican Drug Syndicates

While Mexican criminal syndicates have been involved in drug trafficking for decades, primarily marijuana and heroin, only recently have they made an important appearance in the cocaine market, first as surrogates for, and then as partners of Colombian drug syndicates. Mexico's 2,000-mile long border with the United States, much of which is in isolated rural areas, with rugged terrain, makes it an obvious transshipment site for drugs. Its extensive coastal and inland mountain systems create perfect havens for growing

marijuana and opium poppies (Eskridge, 1998; Macko, 1997; Schaffer, 1996).

In addition there is an enormous flow of legitimate commerce across the Mexican border every day. The number of commercial trucks legally making the border crossing has increased by 70% since 1993. Railway traffic has increased 60% in the same period. In 1999 295 million people, 88 million automobiles, and 4.5 million trucks and rail cars entered the United States legally through the 38 established points of entry. Every year Mexico does \$100 billion worth of legitimate commercial trade with the U.S. The opportunities for smuggling and concealment of drugs in that volume of traffic is obvious.

Finally, Mexico is an attractive haven for drug trafficking because of widespread corruption in its law enforcement and judicial systems and the relative lack of resources available to Mexican police.

Early Mexican drug trafficking groups were primarily transshipment agents for larger drug organizations. In the 1980s, the Mexican drug organizations provided cross-border smuggling services, charging between \$1,000 and \$2,000 a kilogram for cocaine. Once the cocaine was safely inside the United States it would once again be turned over to Colombian traffickers for wholesale distribution.

By the end of the 1980s Mexican drug traffickers were demanding ever-larger remuneration for moving Colombian drugs. Now the Mexican drug syndicates wanted payment-in-kind, a share of the cocaine being transported, up to

50% of the load, for their smuggling services. This new arrangement offered Mexican drug syndicates an opportunity to get into the wholesale cocaine trafficking business themselves, thereby vastly increasing their profits. Eventually this new arrangement with the Colombians not only resulted in dividing much of the United States as well. As the arrangement evolved over time the Colombians not only resulted in dividing the cocaine shipments down the middle, but in dividing much of the United States as well. As the arrangement evolved over time the Colombians retained the wholesale market in the Midwest and West. By 1995, the Mexican syndicates had established themselves as major cocaine traffickers in their own right. Today that arrangement continues to evolve. Dominican traffickers have challenged Colombian hegemony in the east, particularly in New York and New Jersey, and Mexican syndicates have begun establishing cocaine trafficking operations in New York, as well.

The structure and operations of Mexican drug syndicates are compartmentalized, but exhibit a stronger chain of command from their Mexican bases than other drug syndicates. Mexican drug cartels have representatives or surrogates located throughout the United States who are responsible for managing the day-to-day activities of the syndicate. But, unlike many other drug syndicates who have insulated their home country operations by granting greater autonomy to cells operating in foreign countries, the Mexican syndicates still retain a system whereby Mexican-based syndicate leaders provide specific instructions to their foreign-based syndicates on such issues as warehousing drugs, who to use for transportation services, and how

to launder drug money. Despite the use of encrypted faxes, computer, pagers, and cellular telephones, this arrangement still leaves a longer trail of communications for law enforcement to follow and is considerably riskier than allowing foreign-based cells to operate with autonomy.

While arrest statistics are often a very misleading indicator of criminal activity, often reflecting law enforcement priorities rather than the actual condition of the illicit market, DEA arrest numbers seem to reflect a rapaciously growing Mexican involvement in U.S. drug trafficking. For example, from 1994 to 1998, the number of Mexican citizens arrested at the border for drug smuggling increased by 800%. In addition, between 1993 and 1996 the number of Mexican nationals arrested within the United States by DEA increased by 65%. More striking is the fact that these arrests were not confined to border areas or the Southwest states bordering Mexico. A majority of these arrests occurred in four cities far removed from the border: Des Moines, Iowa; Greensboro, North Carolina; Yakima, Washington; and New Rochelle, New York.

About two-thirds of the cocaine sold in the United States is transshipped over the Mexican border. Typically, large loads of cocaine come into Mexico from Colombia by air or boat. The cocaine is transported across land, usually in trucks, to a number of repository cities like Juarez or Guadalajara. From these warehousing sites cocaine loads are usually driven across the U.S. Border to repository sites in the United States, most commonly Los Angeles, Chicago and Phoenix. Mexican trafficking syndicate representatives in those cities have contractual arrangements, usually with otherwise legitimate trucking companies to move the cocaine across the country to smaller warehousing facilities closer to the point

of sale. Individuals working in these "stash houses" guard the supplies and make arrangement for its distribution by cocaine wholesalers.

The size of Mexican cocaine operations is illustrated by a DEA investigation aimed the U.S. operations of the Amado Carrillo-Fuentes organization which resulted in the seizure of 11.5 metric tons of cocaine, over \$18 million in U.S. currency, almost 14,000 pounds of marijuana and the arrest of 101 defendants. This particular investigation also illustrated the point made earlier that upper echelon communications to local operatives in the drug market can be quite hazardous. It was through the interception and decoding of these communications these arrests were made.

In addition to their recently expanded role in cocaine trafficking, Mexican drug syndicates continue to play a large role in the U.S. methamphetamine market. Mexican drug syndicates are now engaged in the large-scale production of methamphetamine. The meth market was revitalized as consumers shifted in the drug markets of the 1990s. The traditional control of the methamphetamine market by outlaw motorcycle gangs was broken by Mexican drug organizations operating in both Mexico and California.

Methamphetamine has a huge advantage over cocaine, heroin and marijuana as a drug to be trafficked. Unlike the others it is not dependent at all on agricultural production. Methamphetamine is manufactured directly from precursor chemicals, and those chemicals are easily available to Mexican syndicates from chemical companies in India, China and the United States. Mexican drug syndicates operate clandestine laboratories in Mexican and California

capable of producing hundreds of pounds of the drug. From the labs, the meth is moved to traffickers across the United States for sale.

From the 1930's, and certainly from the late 1940s and early 1950s when Mickey Cohen struck a deal with the LAPD to allow him to traffic in Mexican heroin, the cultivation and refining of opium poppies has been an important source for the U.S. heroin market. Today about 29% of the heroin on the U. S. market comes from Mexico. Mexican drug syndicates produce about 6 metric tons of heroin a year for resale in the U.S. Because of crude refining methods used in manufacturing the heroin, Mexican heroin is frequently dark in color ("black ") and sticky or gummy (like "tar "), resulting in its name of "black-tar " heroin. Black tar heroin is widely distributed through the Southwest, Northwest and Midwest of the United States.

Mexico is the largest source of imported marijuana to the United States. At one time, in the 1930 through the 1960s, Mexico supplied as much as 95 percent of the marijuana consumed in the United States. Domestic U.S. production has cut that figure a least in half as of the 1990s, from Mexico retains its positions as the largest foreign source for marijuana. That importing dominance was enhanced by the withdrawal of Colombian syndicates from the marijuana market in the 1970s. The Colombians simply decided that marijuana was too bulky a commodity to be safely transported. In addition, the profit margin for cocaine vastly exceeds that of marijuana. 742 metric tons of marijuana from Mexico was seized entering the United States in 1998.

In 1997, a group of people from Zacatecas, Mexico, were arrested in Idaho, cultivating 100,000 marijuana plants, weighing almost 20 tons.

Like most criminal organizations in the early stages of establishing their control of a market share in prohibited substances, Mexican syndicates still cling to the excessive use of violence as a means of control. Like their centralized chain-of-command, this makes them particularly vulnerable, at least for the moment, to law enforcement intervention. Examples of this reliance on violence abound. For example, 1998 killings of 22 people in Baja California Norte carried out by rival drug traffickers; or, the 300 people murdered in Tijuana in 1998, 75 percent of which were attributable to drug trafficking disputes.

Mexican drug trafficking organizations are still very much in the developmental stages. Their insistence on the heavy use of violence and centralized control from headquarters in Mexico makes them more vulnerable than other drug organizations. But, like the Colombian cartels, we can expect that these organizations will learn with time and restructure their operations accordingly. Today a variety of Mexican organizations operating from many major cities in Mexico, dominate the Mexican drug trade.

The Arellano-Felix Brothers organization is based in Tijuana, and is one of the most aggressive of the Mexican trafficking groups. They move multi-ton quantities of cocaine and marijuana, and smaller, but still significant amount of heroin and methamphetamine. Benjamin Arellano-Felix heads up this syndicate which operates in Tijuana, Baja California, and parts of the States of Sinaloa,

Sonora, Jalisco, and Tamaulipas. Syndicate activities are coordinated through Benjamin's brothers Ramon, Eduardo, and Javier. Ramon Arellano-Felix coordinates security operations for the syndicate and has a well-deserved reputation for the use of violence.

The Caro-Quintero syndicate is based in Sonora, Mexico, and specializes on trafficking in cocaine and marijuana. The syndicate was founded by Rafael Caro-Quintero who has been incarcerated in Mexico since 1985 for his involvement in the murder of DEA Special Agent Enrique Camarena. Since Rafael's incarceration, his brother, Miguel has taken over day-to-day management responsibilities. Miguel is under indictment in the United States. He was arrested in 1992 but a Mexican federal judge in Hermosillo dropped all criminal charges and ordered his release from custody.

The Juarez Cartel was headed by Amado Carrillo-Fuentes until his July 4, 1997 death during surgery in Mexico City. The Juarez cartel is still heavily involved in the trafficking of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana. Following Amado's death, a power struggle broke out that resulted in 60 murders in the Juarez area between August 1997 and September 1998. Apparently that outbreak of violence was resolved with Vicente Carrillo-Fuentes, Amado's brother, taking control of the organization.

The Amezcua-Contreras organization, is based in Guadalajara, and is managed by three brothers: Luis, Jesus, and Adan Amezcua-Contreras. It is a massive methamphetamine trafficking syndicate, and a major supplier of precursor chemicals to other methamphetamine

syndicates. The syndicate controls much of the legitimate trade in chemicals in Mexico as well. Jesus and Luis were arrested in June 1998, but all criminal charges were dropped by a Guadalajara judge. In May 1999, Adan, who had been arrested in November 1997 on weapons charges and then re-arrested in March 1999 for money laundering violations, was released from prison.

Dominican Drug Trafficking Organizations

The Dominican Republic is one of the poorest countries in the world. Dominican drug trafficking organizations started out as retail cocaine dealers in immigrant communities in the United States. Perhaps the most famous of these communities was the Washington Heights area of Manhattan, in New York City. Starting in the mid-1970s, Dominican immigrants moved into this community and began handling Colombian-supplied cocaine. Soon their trafficking activities had spread into New Jersey, Connecticut, and some of the affluent suburbs of New York. (Jackall, 1997; Pellerano and Jorge, 1997.)

Dominican drug traffickers were mostly retail operators until the 1990s. It was at that point that many Colombian drug syndicates began to divest themselves of wholesale operations, passing them on to Mexican drug syndicates. The Mexicans were charging a transport fee of 50% of the drug shipment. Traffickers from the Dominican Republic saw this as an opportunity to get into the wholesale cocaine business. The Dominican Republic is closer to New York City than Mexico, emigrant Dominican communities had already been established in New York, and drug distribution systems had already been established in those communities. The Dominican trafficking syndicates made the Colombians an offer they

couldn't refuse. For transportation for wholesale cocaine shipments to the New York City area, they would charge only 25% of the shipment as a fee, thereby undercutting the Mexican syndicates.

As a result of this business arrangement with Colombian cocaine traffickers two major Dominican drug syndicates emerged. One syndicate, operating out of the Dominican Republic itself, provides stash sites for cocaine shipments from Colombia. This cocaine is transported into the Dominican in small boats or by air drops. Traffickers from the Dominican Republic take it from there, smuggling the drugs into Puerto Rico in boats, repackaging the drugs, and shipping them to the continental United States by way of containerized maritime cargo ships or routine commercial air flights.

Once in New York City, the drugs are distributed by ethnic Colombian wholesalers, or increasingly, by a second syndicate of ethnic Dominicans, which now operates up and down the East Coast. Dominican drug syndicates also operate in smaller cities on the east coast including Fall River, Massachusetts, and Lewiston, Maine. Many of these smaller cities have brought Dominican immigrants in to work in low-wage, labor-intensive industries, such as garment manufacturing. Operations in these smaller cities have several advantages for Dominican syndicates. First, it expands their customer base. Second, they face virtually no competition from other established drug trafficking organizations.

Dominican syndicates rotate members in the United

States. Typically, they move operatives in for a two-year stay and then retire them to the island. Once back on Dominican soil, drug traffickers are protected by restrictive extradition laws to the United States.

Like many newly formed trafficking syndicates, the Dominicans still make heavy use of violence as a means of establishing their reputation and protecting their turf. One Dominican syndicate in New York City has been directly linked to seven murders including the shooting of a police officer who had been ambushed after responding to a fake 911 call. Another example is found in Lowell, Massachusetts, where, in 1990, six people were found hogtied and choked to death as a result of a dispute with Dominican traffickers. In 1992, 146 houses in Lawrence, Massachusetts were subjected to arsons in a turf battle between several émigré Dominican gangs.

Southeast Asia

In the 1990s many of the countries of Southeast Asia benefited from a sizeable economic boom in the region. Lines of demarcation between legitimate business, law enforcement, politics and organized crime have always been blurred at best in this region. But the economic surge of the 1990s created new bastions of wealth and political power that have benefited criminal organizations. In countries like Thailand and Singapore, governmental programs designed to stimulate economic growth and improve the economic infrastructure strengthened the upper-world economy. But those very same businessmen who accumulated wealth and power in response to these programs also used that new wealth and power to establish growing and highly profitable criminal enterprises ancillary to their legitimate holdings (Lintner,

1996; Renard, 1996; Thai democracy: pass the baht. 1996; Thayer, 1995).

Many of these new criminal enterprises centered around arms trafficking, prostitution, illegal gambling and contraband smuggling. But the vast majority of these expanded criminal enterprises continued to specialize in the cornerstone of Southeast Asia 's illicit economy, drugs. In Burma, for example major drug traffickers became heavy investors in infrastructure development, both as a means of a profit-making enterprise in and of itself, and as a means to facilitate drug smuggling and money laundering.

The opium growing regions of Burma and Laos have made Southeast Asia the second-largest source region for the world 's supply of heroin. Cultivating and harvesting the opium poppy is still the economic mainstay of the many hill tribes living in isolated, rural, impoverished areas of the Southeast Asia. Poor weather patterns and climatic conditions negatively impacted opium cultivation from 1997 to 2000. Despite that, Burma alone accounted for 50% of the world 's opium crop in 2000. But inefficiency in production and infrastructure problems resulted in Burma producing only 21 percent of the world 's supply of opium, despite its high rate of cultivation. Laos accounted for about 4% of the world 's opium production in 2000.

Ready recruits for drug trafficking organizations can be found in both urban ghettos and impoverished rural areas of Southeast Asia. Heroin is often smuggled on fishing boats down the Gulf of Thailand and then transferred to the major international maritime shipping centers of Singapore and Hong Kong.

Massive criminal organizations, virtually immune from law enforcement interference because of widespread corruption in the governments and business communities of Southeast Asia, have been able to work in close collusion with police, the military politicians and otherwise legitimate businessmen to spawn a massive drug and sex trade empire in the region. The reality is that drug trade profits are the source for most new commercial and business investment in the region. Outside investors, including Russian criminal organizations have been enticed to invest in the prostitution and sex tourism industries, particularly in Thailand.

In addition to Thailand, Cambodia is now being increasingly utilized as a transshipment route for heroin. Cambodian government investments in economic development have greatly benefited the drug trade. For example, Teng Boonma, a major Cambodian shipping magnate and entrepreneur is also a large-scale drug trafficker. He owns most of Kampong Saom, Cambodia's most important port city, and the key transit point for drugs.

Heroin and methamphetamine production in Southeast Asia is dominated by ethnic drug-trafficking armies operating mostly in Burma's remote opium-producing region. The drug trafficking armies had begun as insurgent groups, often supported by the CIA and still have an ethnically-based political agenda. But, over the years the biggest of these clandestine armies have primarily engaged in the production and trafficking of heroin and methamphetamine and in other illicit and lucrative economic activities-including gem smuggling and illegal logging and timber smuggling. As a result of its

continuing political repression directed at pro-democracy political groups which began in 1988, the military regime in Burma has negotiated treaties with most of these ethnic armies in remote regions which have allowed the regime to fight any social or political changes in the country. In return, of course, the Burmese government grants carte blanche to drug traffickers.

The arrest and subsequent retirement of heroin kingpin Khun Sa, for years a U.S. funded client warlord in the region, resulted in his Mong Tai Army being broken up into smaller units. As a result the United Wa State Army (UWSA) has become the largest drug producer in Southeast Asia. The UWSA is the largest regional producer of heroin, and a major producer of methamphetamine, most of which is sold in Thailand.

Ethnic Chinese criminal organization and some Thai criminal networks act as brokers, financial backers, and transporters in the Southeast Asian heroin trade. Operating out of major regional commercial centers like Bangkok, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan, and using a wide array of interchangeable front companies and legitimate businesses, Chinese and Thai criminal networks also arrange financing and transportation of drugs, routing drugs through many different ports-largely by commercial shipping-to their final destination.

Afghanistan and Drug Trafficking

DEA estimates indicate that opium production in Afghanistan has increased 800% since 1990. Afghanistan now accounts for 72 percent of illicit worldwide global opium production. The Moslem fundamentalist government of Af

ghanistan, the Taliban, placed in power largely as a result of U.S. intervention in an Afghani civil war during the Reagan administration, allows international drug traffickers to operate without interference in the country. Despite the Taliban's public condemnation of sin and particularly narcotics, including a vicious campaign of repression and murder directed at women, the illicit heroin industry continues unabated. In fact, virtually all of Afghanistan's opium poppy cultivation and morphine base and heroin processing laboratories are located in Taliban-controlled territory. The Taliban profits from the Afghan drug trade by taxing opium production and drug movements (Rashid, 1995).

Iran is the major transshipment site for Afghan drug markets in Western Europe. Traffickers use ancient trade routes to move drugs, as well as other contraband, from Southwest Asia through Iran to Turkey, or to Iranian Persian Gulf coast seaports and harbors for shipment to the Arabian Peninsula. Pakistan and India are also key for smuggling. Karachi, Pakistan is a major transshipment route for Afghan-produced opiates. India's well developed transportation infrastructure, long coastline, and increased volumes of international trade have also made the Indian seaports of Mumbai, Goa, Chennai (Madras), and Calcutta prime locations for heroin smuggling.

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