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International Narcotics Review



June-July 1995

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**International Narcotics
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This Review is prepared by the DCI Crime and Narcotics Center, with contributions from other offices. It assesses narcotics-related developments worldwide. The report leads with a short Perspective on a drug-related issue or trend that we believe is of special importance. The Perspective, which does not represent a coordinated Directorate of Intelligence assessment, is intended to be speculative and to generate discussion. The Perspective is followed by feature articles, and the remainder of the report examines various dimensions of the drug problem by region. Questions and comments are welcome and should be addressed to the authors. [Redacted]





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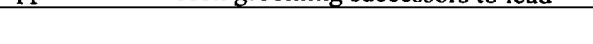
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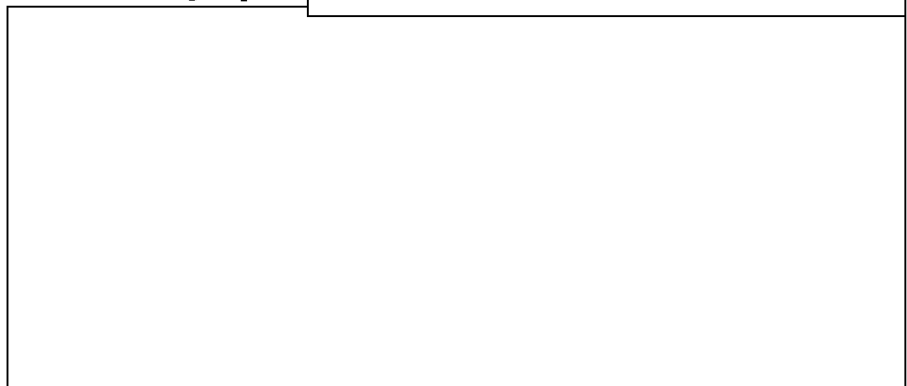
Perspective

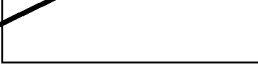
Colombia: The Shape of Trafficking To Come? 


The recent arrests of Cali drug mafia chieftains Gilberto Rodriguez Orejuela and Jose Santacruz Londono, the arrests and surrenders of many of their top security and support personnel, and the escalating pressure being put on remaining kingpins and their associates suggest the traditional trafficking command and control in Cali soon may collapse. If the top drug lords were to be successfully prosecuted and effectively blocked from managing their criminal operations from prison, we believe the cocaine trafficking industry in Colombia would become more dispersed among a larger number of competing organizations. Traffickers in other countries—especially Mexico—may seek to fill the void caused by the dismantling of the Cali mafia leadership structure to increase their involvement in all aspects of the cocaine trade. 


The Cali kingpins' practice of controlling the day-to-day operations of their organizations, delegating responsibility only when necessary, and carefully compartmenting information may effectively preclude successors from taking total charge of existing operations. Assuming that Bogota can deter the jailed kingpins from continuing to oversee their operations, key lieutenants and other subordinates—who are given only enough information and authority to perform their specific roles—will be unlikely to maintain the structure and vitality of the present organizations. As a result, no trafficker seeking to claim the mantle of leadership is likely to achieve the power and resources that the Cali kingpins have commanded. 

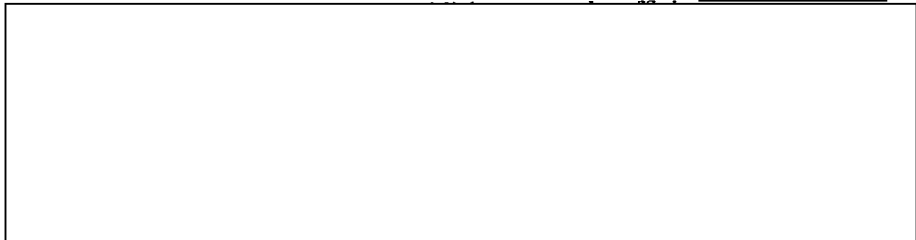
The Cali kingpins do not appear to have been grooming successors to lead their trafficking empires. 

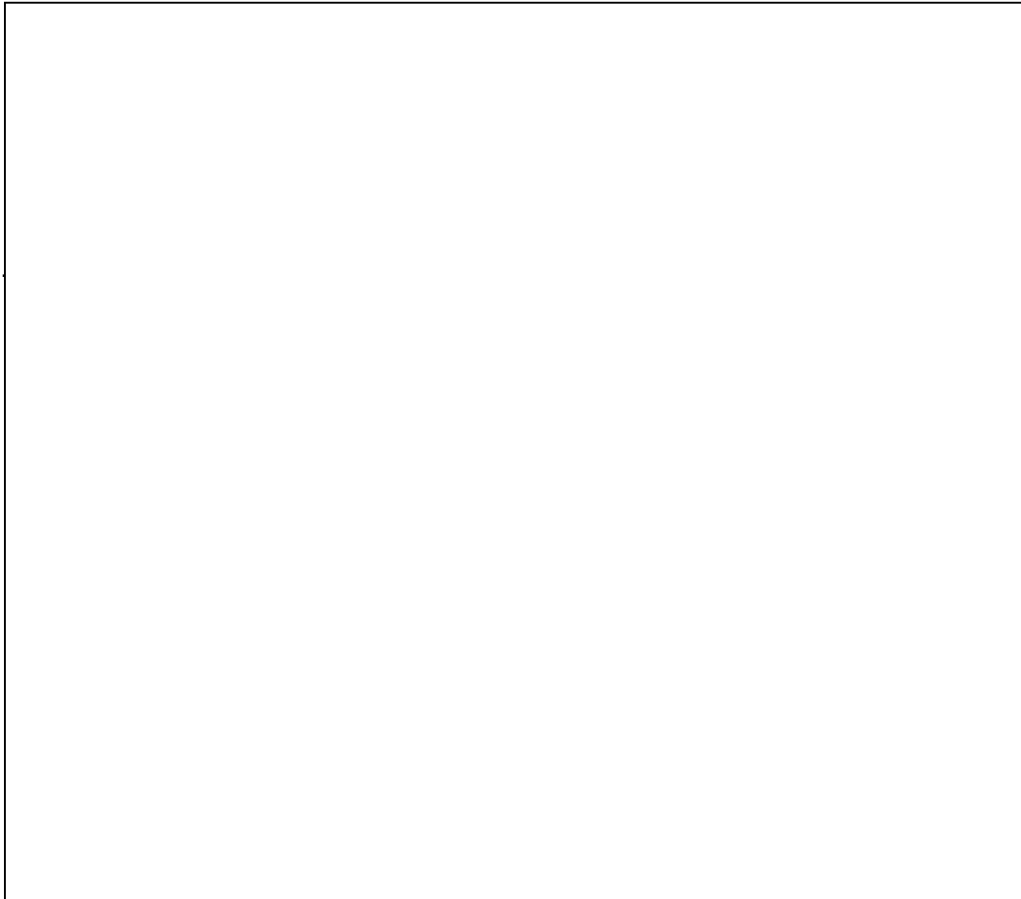
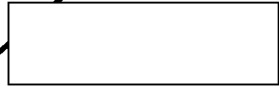





Second-tier leaders in the existing Cali mafia organizations probably will try to increase their standing and power if the kingpins can no longer exercise control over their organizations, but they would appear handicapped by not having a complete knowledge of the trafficking operation, let alone the ability to control it. They would lack the kingpins' tremendous influence and vast technical and financial resources, and many would face security, financial, and logistic problems. Although these new trafficking leaders maintain a localized power base, they would need to further expand their own operational networks, reliable contacts in the government and security services, and connections for international distribution to gain the power and influence of Gilberto and Miguel Rodriguez Orejuela, Jose Santacruz Londono, and Pacho Herrera Buitrago. 

It is unlikely that any of the traffickers now poised to grab a larger share of the drug trade if the Cali mafia trafficking structure is dismembered would dominate the Colombian drug trade as the Cali kingpins have. 





The proliferation of new groups to fill the void left by the Cali kingpins' being taken out of action is likely to further increase competition among trafficking interests and heighten the prospect for greater levels of violence between rivals. Some trafficking organizations are likely to work together on a relatively equal basis in cocaine production, transshipment, and distribution through temporary affiliations and contractual agreements. Others, however, may prefer to disperse, rather than consolidate, their operations inside Colombia for fear of attracting the attention of counternarcotics forces. Indeed, lacking the broad penetration of the government and security forces and the financial and technological resources of the Cali kingpins, many of these organizations may prove more vulnerable to counternarcotics surveillance and operations. 



[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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[Redacted] Peruvian and Bolivian traffickers, who have traditionally sold coca derivatives to the powerful Cali traffickers for processing into cocaine, may take advantage of the situation to increase their own cocaine production for export to markets. Unlike the Mexicans, however, Peruvian and Bolivian traffickers could not make that transition as quickly because their infrastructure and networks are not as expansive. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Peru-Colombia: Disrupting the Airbridge []

Increased interdiction efforts in both Colombia and Peru since March 1995 appear to have disrupted the flow of cocaine along the airbridge, for years the main conduit of coca derivatives moving from Peru to Colombia. Intensified law enforcement pressure—including the arrests of major Colombian and Peruvian narcotics traffickers—is forcing cocaine smugglers to alter methods of operation, including routes and modes of transportation. These changes have led to significant fluctuations in the price and supplies of coca, at least in some areas. There also are indications that some trafficking groups in Peru are in disarray and may be stepping up attempts to bribe counternarcotics personnel to ignore illicit shipments. []

Importance of the Airbridge

Drug traffickers have long preferred air routes to move semirefined cocaine base to Colombia for final processing. The airbridge has provided them security from interdiction by ground-based police units and also from possible harassment or theft of narcotics by bandits and guerrillas. Air transportation also has allowed traffickers to make a speedier return on their investment, reduced possible spoilage of semirefined narcotics because of hot and humid conditions prevalent in drug areas, and permitted the use of staging areas with poor road access—thus decreasing the chance of drug operations being disrupted by authorities. []

Principally for these reasons, the airbridge is the most important chokepoint available to Peruvian and Colombian security forces trying to stem the flow of narcotics between the two countries. Lima and Bogota have sought to exploit this key trafficker vulnerability since 1992. Early efforts—focused mainly on attempting to deny traffickers the use of airfields by deploying security forces to municipal airports

and by blocking runways of rudimentary airstrips—succeeded in disrupting many drug flights from traditional growing areas in the Upper Huallaga Valley, but traffickers soon dispersed their activities to other areas of Peru, particularly in the Aguaytia, Apurimac, and Pachitea river valleys. In 1993 and 1994, Peru pursued an aggressive aerial interdiction effort to force down trafficker aircraft that was set back when the United States suspended intelligence and radar tracking support—which have been critical to the effective use of Andean air assets—in May 1994, allowing traffickers to resume direct flights without concern for their safety. Changes in US law and the Andean governments' willingness to ensure full compliance with international norms regarding shootdowns allowed US intelligence support to resume last December; however, the Peru-Ecuador border war earlier this year effectively delayed implementation until March. []

Renewed Targeting of the Airbridge

The resumption of US intelligence support has allowed recent Colombian and Peruvian interdiction operations to disrupt the airbridge more effectively. US detection and monitoring airplanes and ground-based radar have helped both countries seize, destroy on the ground, or force down numerous illegal drug trafficking planes. [] Lima alone has seized or destroyed nine drug smuggling planes since April 1995. These successes have bolstered the confidence of interdiction aircrews and increased their sense of "ownership" of domestic antidrug programs. []

Peru has been the most assertive in denying its national airspace to trafficker flights. []

command—the VI Territorial Air Region (VIRAT)—which was given responsibility for monitoring and controlling the airways. [redacted] Force assigned two US [redacted]

by helicopter the following day. After troops drew fire from traffickers, the Colombian Air Force used ground-attack aircraft to strafe portions of the airfield. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Impact on Traffickers

Improved air interdiction efforts have forced traffickers to reduce their use of the airbridge. [redacted]

[redacted]

Peruvian forces adhere to internationally recognized rules of engagement¹ for potentially lethal actions against aircraft; these include the declaration of restricted flight zones, radio and visual warning signals, and the firing of warning shots. In late June, a Peruvian Air Force aircraft based at Tarapoto intercepted a single-engine Cessna north of Yurimaguas that was heading toward Colombia. The Air Force plane tracked the Cessna for nearly two hours, during which it ignored radio and visual warnings as well as warning shots. The [redacted] commander authorized the interceptor to fire on the Cessna, which disintegrated and crashed in the jungle some 56 kilometers south of the Colombian border. [redacted]

Many traffickers appear to be stockpiling drug supplies until pressures ease. [redacted]

[redacted]

The overabundance of coca derivatives probably is the cause for waning prices in many areas; [redacted]

Colombia also has been aggressive in targeting drug planes. On numerous occasions this year, Colombian [redacted] gunships have used US-provided tracking data to follow suspected narcotics-carrying aircraft. On at least five occasions, Air Force planes later strafed suspected drug planes while on the ground. [redacted]

some traffickers have lowered their price of coca base by as much as 50 percent. [redacted]

Such prices probably approach the break-even point and may force some producers to lay off workers or suspend production soon if prices remain depressed. [redacted]

[redacted] After several of these incidents, Air Force helicopters reportedly airlifted security teams to the airfields to seize any aircraft that remained at the site. [redacted]

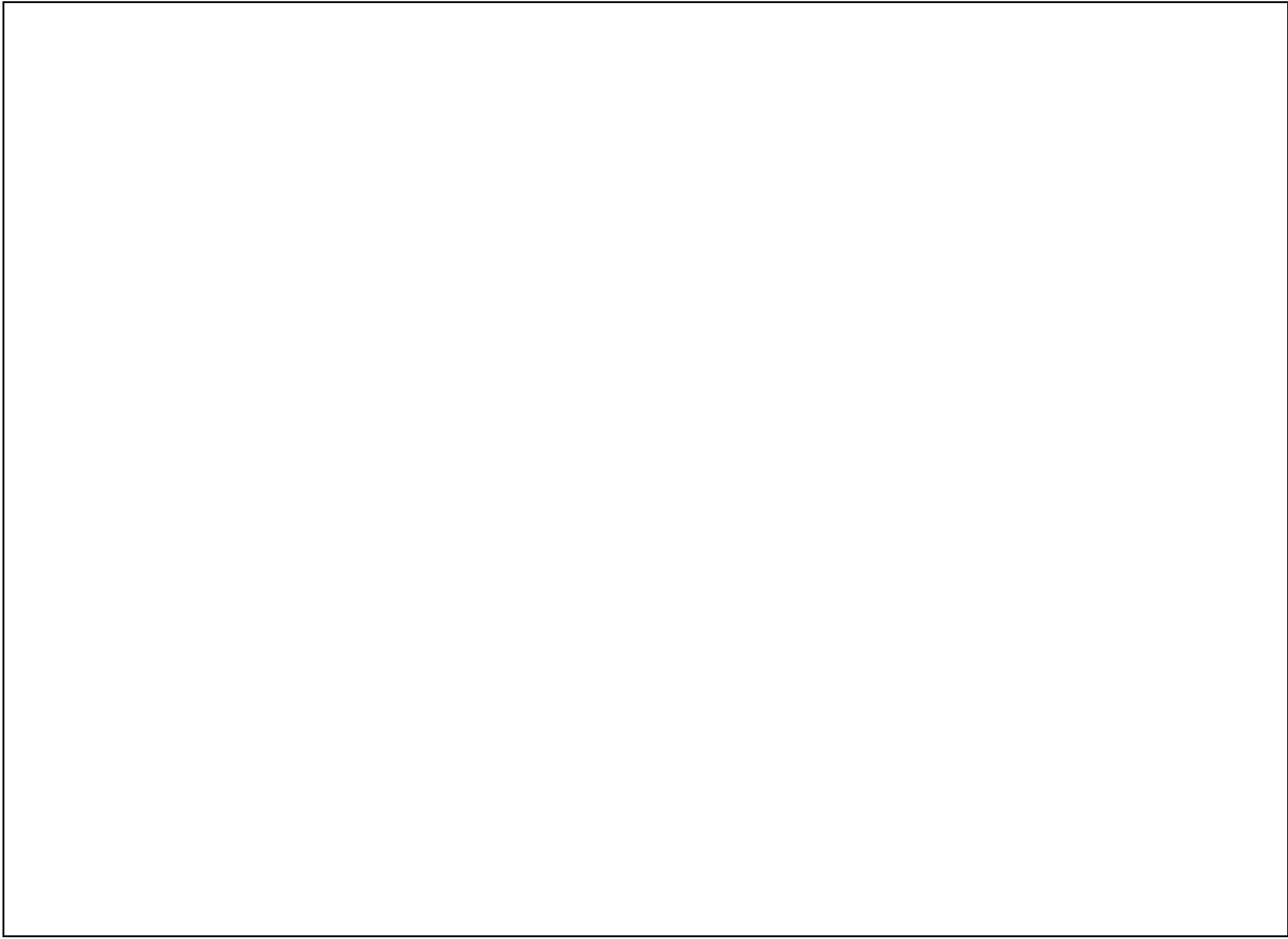
Trying To Find Ways Around the Problem

Airbridge interdiction efforts are compelling traffickers to change their methods of operation. [redacted]

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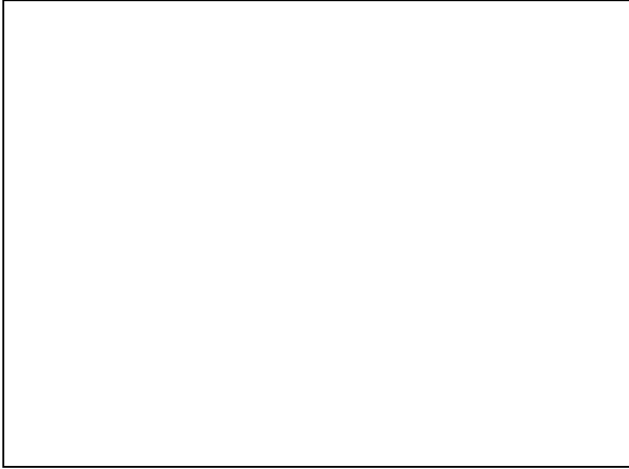
[redacted] in late June, for example, a suspected narcotics-carrying aircraft was detected in southern Colombia. After being informed of its landing site, Colombian interdiction forces arrived at the airstrip

¹ These procedures are identified by a 1947 international convention on civil aviation (Chicago Convention) and by subsequent international law. [redacted]



Some traffickers are trying to retain access to the air-bridge by suborning Peruvian Air Force personnel.





Outlook and Implications

Already off to a good start, aerial interdiction efforts have the potential to cause more serious, systemic problems for traffickers over the long haul. If pressures are continued, traffickers are likely to become more desperate in their attempts to circumvent interdiction forces. Many, for instance, are likely to step up efforts to buy off key military personnel by offering enormous sums for their cooperation. Should these attempts fail, some traffickers could be expected to try to coerce security personnel through violence and intimidation. Eventually, trafficker threats to US detection and monitoring personnel—while at present minimal—could increase as traffickers conclude that the gains from relieving the pressure outweigh the risk that such violence might intensify international antidrug resolve. [redacted]

the wealth of the traffickers combined with low military salaries make lower ranking personnel—including those knowledgeable of aircraft readiness levels and procedures—vulnerable to traffickers' tempting offers. [redacted]



At least some traffickers may be poised to avoid the airbridge entirely by using riverine or land routes to transport coca, [redacted] Traffickers undoubtedly will make greater use of Peru's rivers to try to minimize disruptions to their operations, [redacted]

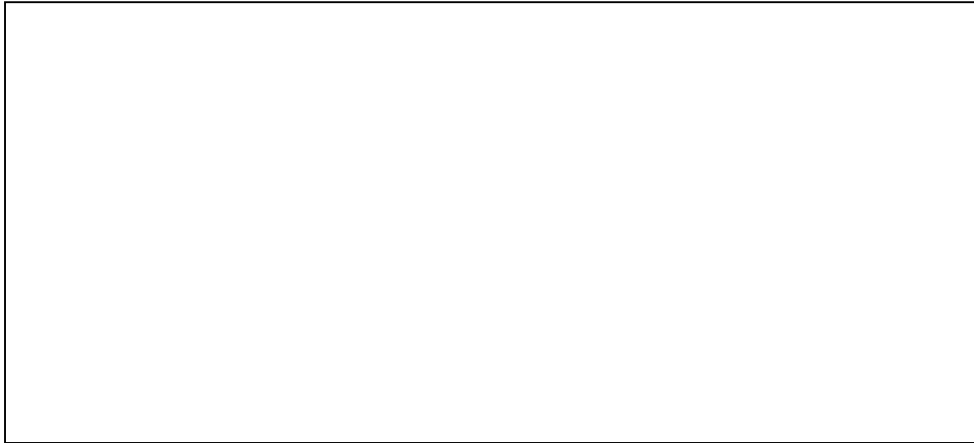
[redacted] most major narcotics producing areas have easy access to the navigable headwaters of the Amazon River; these tributaries flow northward—toward Colombia—and are suitable for carrying even large loads of narcotics. Some of these same rivers are already being used by traffickers to bring in precursor and essential chemicals to jungle laboratories, [redacted] and to move at least some narcotics to staging airfields. Traffickers have avoided riverine transfers because they are slow, but they are likely to see the rivers as an increasingly attractive alternative if aerial interdiction pressures are sustained. [redacted]

A serious attempt by Peru and Colombia to improve their riverine and road interdiction efforts—simultaneous with the airbridge program—would have a more pronounced impact in curbing trafficking. At present, Peru's fluvial highways provide a usable, if inconvenient, backdoor to efforts to control the airways. Without them and the few extant roads in the drug areas, traffickers would have to rely on far less efficient means of transport, including human and animal pack trains. Such clumsy transportation practices would further reduce profits and put traffickers' valuable drug cargoes at greater risk of theft or loss. [redacted]

Over time, intensified and sustained aerial interdiction, complemented by operations to disrupt other avenues of moving coca derivatives to processing laboratories in Colombia, could erode the profitability of many traffickers' operations, substantially reducing their incentive to continue producing and trafficking in cocaine. Those traffickers that remain in the drug business probably would become fiercely

competitive—possibly spurring confrontations between groups, which would further stress the illicit trade. The troubles faced by the Cali mafia—a result of the recent arrests and surrenders of key leaders and security personnel—combined with an effective airbridge program could accelerate a trend toward processing finished cocaine in Peru by other Colombian groups and by Peruvian drug traffickers. Some Peruvian groups already have sold finished cocaine directly to traffickers from other countries—especially Mexico—who appear increasingly reluctant to pay high middleman prices for Colombian-produced narcotics. Cocaine carried overland and exported through Peruvian ports would, as it is now, be invulnerable to aerial interdiction efforts.

This article is Secret



Peru: Opium Poppy Cultivation Continues To Be a Concern



Large areas of Peru are suitable for opium production, and the potential for a rapid change over from experimental plots to large-scale cultivation is great. Opium poppy prefers locations where nights are cool and humidity is high. The Huallaga Valley, where coca cultivation has declined over the last two years, is particularly well suited to poppy cultivation, and farmers there may be seeking an alternative cash crop to coca. Lima has declared war against opium production and heroin trafficking in Peru and has vowed to destroy all poppy cultivation, but the government will have difficulty coping with the problem because the crop is dispersed in remote locations and government antidrug resources are already stretched thin. Frequent aerial reconnaissance missions to identify poppy fields and the transport of eradication teams to destroy small isolated plots would be costly and difficult.



