

'Dope, Inc.' sets up new drug routes

by Dennis Small

The Colombian drug cartels "have decided to move their [cocaine] laboratories to Brazil and Ecuador, mainly the first, and to use different routes . . . to send the drug" to the United States and Europe, according to a report recently issued by Interpol, the international law enforcement agency. The Interpol study, as cited in early December by the Colombian daily *El Espectador*, explained that this shift was "part of a new strategy" of the Colombian cartels, to diversify—and expand—their activities.

Interpol's estimation has been confirmed by a number of diplomatic, journalistic, and U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) sources consulted by *EIR*; but the reorganization masterminded by the international drug multinational, "Dope, Inc.," appears to go way beyond simply shifting cocaine laboratories out of Colombia.

A European diplomat with access to thinking among U.S. and South American anti-drug officials, told *EIR* that one of the principal reasons behind the dope cartels' willingness to hand over their Colombian laboratories to the authorities, is that they have *already* transferred the bulk of their processing operations and clandestine air strips into the Brazilian Amazon jungle and to across the border into Ecuador and Peru (see map). Since, in exchange for supposedly "coming clean," the narco-traffickers will be virtually legalized and granted power-sharing status in the country, Colombia is slated to become a kind of "command and control" headquarters for the reorganized trade. "Reformed" narco-traffickers will freely walk the streets of Bogotá—and the halls of Congress. The dirtiest aspects of the drug business will no longer occur within Colombia's borders: They will just be run from there.

A setback for the drug mafia? Hardly.

"Cocaine production by the Medellín and Cali cocaine cartels appears to have risen as the traffickers decentralize and expand their operations to neighboring countries," the *Washington Post* reported May 13. Citing as evidence gigantic new busts of 16, 12, and 6 tons of pure cocaine in a jungle area near the Peruvian and Ecuadorian borders, the *Post* reported that U.S. anti-drug officials have concluded that "large numbers of Colombians have now moved to the Peruvian side of . . . the border and . . . the Cruzeiro do Sul region of western Brazil." An article in the Sept. 17 *Chicago Tribune* also reported on Brazil's growing role in the drug trade, since "with gigantic jungle areas bordering Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Venezuela, Brazil is perfectly situated to

serve as a giant clearinghouse for its neighbors' drug exports, some officials warn."

Another advantage of Brazil for the drug lords is that, unlike Colombia, it produces many of the industrial chemicals, such as ether and acetone, which are used in processing the coca leaf into cocaine. Roberto Percioso, a Brazilian narcotics agent cited in the Nov. 4 *Miami Herald*, put it succinctly: International traffickers increasingly view Brazil "as a paradise."

In this emerging new division of labor of Dope, Inc., Venezuela is slated to play an enhanced role as a money-laundering center for the cartels. The recently promulgated foreign investment and banking reforms there are designed to facilitate the takeover of the country's entire banking sector by the large Wall Street banks, and will encourage "hot money" flows related to the drug trade. In fact, Venezuela's then-Supervisor of Foreign Investments, Edison Perozo, warned on Feb. 21 that the new foreign investment and banking laws could lead to "the establishment of a narco-economy" in Venezuela, and facilitate "the infiltration of the infamous mechanisms of money laundering." Perozo subsequently resigned his post in protest.

Panama's role in the drug trade is also increasing as a result of this reorganization—and the U.S. invasion of a year ago. As most major U.S. newspapers have come to admit over the last few months, drug trafficking in Panama has *increased* since American troops overthrew the legitimate government in that country, toppled Gen. Manuel Noriega, and installed a puppet regime with proven links to drug money-laundering banks.

New routes, new markets . . .

Another essential feature in the reorganization is the targeting of Europe, East and West, for a vast expansion of cocaine sales. As this magazine reported in its feature story on Nov. 9, 1990, "Dope, Inc. is now engaged in a vast expansion of its markets in Europe and Japan which, if not checked, will do to their youth, their cities, and their economies what has already been done to ours in America."

The *Wall Street Journal* reached the same conclusion one week later, reporting on Nov. 16 that "illegal exports of Latin American cocaine to Europe have jumped sharply this year, and some experts estimate they are running at almost twice their 1989 level." The article noted that, "according to U.S. narcotics officials and Latin Americans familiar with the cocaine trade . . . [there is] a major export drive to Europe. . . . 'The Europeans are where we were 10 years ago,' said a DEA official. 'They are facing a cocaine epidemic.'"

Brazil is particularly useful as a jumping-off point for cocaine bound for the European market, principally via Spain. As the mentioned *Washington Post* article noted, "Brazil is also believed to be a key shipping point to Europe, a market the cartels are seeking to expand with an eye towards 1993, the year that border controls between European Com-

The 'decentralization' of the Colombian cocaine cartel

- KEY
- International borders
 - Rivers
 - Drug trafficking routes



munity members are due to be eliminated.” Since the distance between South America and Europe is too great for the drug cartels’ small planes to handle, they “are switching from the use of small aircraft to container ships to get their product out,” according to U.S. and Colombian officials cited by the *Post*. Experts report that, at the European end, only about 10% of all incoming containers can be inspected for drugs, given the authorities’ limited resources.

DEA officials have confirmed this pattern to *EIR*, observing that certain countries in Africa, in particular Nigeria and Morocco, are rapidly emerging as important stepping stones and warehousing centers for the South America-to-Europe trade. Simultaneously, the former Dutch colony of Surinam is becoming an important transshipment point in South America, given its excellent shipping and other links to the giant Dutch ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam.

. . . and new drugs

But perhaps most ominous of all is the news that the Colombian cocaine cartel may have begun to transform itself into the Colombian cocaine and heroin cartel. Various newspapers have reported that the Colombian mafia has reached an agreement with their Asian counterparts, and have begun to plant imported opium seedlings in a number of remote

areas of South America. They also seem to have imported Asian chemists to help them process the product, and for the first time Colombian trafficking networks in the U.S. have begun to wholesale heroin with purities as high as 90%, and with the exact chemical composition of the notorious, high-quality “China white” heroin.

Why the new “product line?” Some DEA experts believe that the U.S. is approaching a kind of saturation level of cocaine and “crack” consumption, and suspect that Dope, Inc. is therefore planning to expand the sale of these drugs in Europe and Japan, while using the well-established Colombian marketing networks in the U.S. to push a vast expansion of heroin here. As the Dec. 9 *Washington Post* reported, “some law enforcement officials fear that heroin is becoming so cheap and available that it will eventually start attracting a new clientele, particularly among crack smokers who are unable to sustain the frenetic lifestyles and frequent binges associated with their crack cocaine habits.” It should be noted that the vast expansion of cocaine consumption in the U.S. over the course of the 1980s was fueled by a similarly deliberate sharp reduction in its price.

It is this reorganization and frightening expansion of Dope, Inc.’s activities, that Presidents Bush and Gavrira have signed their names to.