



Context Paper
VENEZUELA'S FIGHT AGAINST DRUGS
Advances Continue Throughout 2011

While the U.S. government has accused Venezuela – for political reasons – of not cooperating in the fight against drug trafficking, the evidence clearly demonstrates the opposite.

- Venezuela has continued increasing its seizures of drugs, relative to past years. In 2010, 63 tons of drugs were seized, bringing to 584 the number of tons seized since President Hugo Chávez took office.
- In 2010, 12,627 people were arrested on drug charges, 17 drug kingpins wanted by Interpol were captured.
- Just between January and September 2010, five individuals detained for drug trafficking were deported to the U.S. These efforts were recognized by the U.S. Embassy in Caracas in July 2010.
- The break in cooperation between the DEA and Venezuela was based on accusations that agents were involved in espionage in Venezuela and were linked to drug trafficking rings. Regardless, efforts to fight drug trafficking continue, including with the U.S., and Venezuela maintains active cooperation with many countries throughout the world.
- Drug seizures in recent years have increased 40 percent relative to the level of seizures during the final years of cooperation between Venezuela and the DEA.

DRUG SEIZURES

Throughout 2011, Venezuelan security agencies seized 63 tons of illegal drugs. This follows a trend of increasing seizures relative to years prior. In 2009, 60 tons of drugs were seized, an 11 percent increase from the year prior.

According to a 2010 report of the U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Venezuela ranks second in South America, behind only Colombia, in drug seizures.¹

ARRESTS AND DEPORTATIONS

Throughout 2010, 12,627 people were arrested on drug charges in Venezuela. Of those, 17 were internationally wanted drug kingpins. Five of those detained were deported to the U.S. and three to Colombia.²

After the July deportation of the three Colombian drug kingpins wanted by the U.S. (Carlos “Beto” Rentería, Luis Tello, and Carlos Ojeda), even the U.S. Embassy in Caracas recognized the work of Venezuela’s security agencies and qualified the deportations “positive.”³

Between January and September 2010, 6,917 people have been detained for crimes related to drug trafficking. In 2009, a total of 8,727 people were detained for such crimes.

MONITORING OF DRUG ROUTES

Through 2008 and 2009 Venezuela completed the installation of 10 Chinese-made radar stations to track and intercept planes carrying illegal drugs.⁴ The investment in the radars totaled \$260 million.

In January 2010, two U.S. planes used for drug trafficking were seized by Venezuelan authorities.⁵ **In February, authorities seized 28 more planes used for the trafficking of drugs.**⁶ During the first months of 2009, 25 planes were seized.⁷

USE OF DRUG INCINERATORS

In July 2009 the Venezuelan government began using special drug incinerators to dispose of seized drugs. The incinerators employ advanced technology to limit the production of toxic fumes caused by the burning of illegal drugs and have been approved for use by the World Health Organization (WHO).⁸

Each incinerator has the capacity to destroy 125 kilograms (approximately 275 pounds) of drugs per hour. Seven of the 10 planned incinerators are currently in use.



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BORDER AREAS

Given that Colombia produces the majority of the world's cocaine and shares a long border with Venezuela, the Venezuelan government has focused efforts on combating cultivation and production along the border.

During the first week of July 2010, 1,800 officials of all the branches of the Venezuelan Armed Forces participated in Operation Sierra, during which they inspected about 25,000 km² along the shared border between Colombia and Venezuela. Starting and finishing with the border town of Río de Oro, it was confirmed that for the fifth consecutive year, no illegal cocaine cultivations existed on Venezuela's side of the shared border.⁹

COMPREHENSIVE EFFORTS

Venezuela believes in a comprehensive approach to fighting drugs, one which emphasizes not just interdiction but also prevention and treatment for those that become addicted to illegal drugs. This vision is reflected in the National Anti-Drug Plan signed by President Hugo Chávez in June 2009.

In 2009, Venezuela's National Anti-Drug Office (ONA) supervised hundreds of workshops with the goal of preventing the use of drugs. **By 2013, it is estimated that five million Venezuelans will have been trained as prevention advisors.**

As part of Venezuela's comprehensive anti-drug efforts, in September 2009 the ONA announced the creation of a National Anti-Drug Fund to help finance drug prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and social integration programs throughout Venezuela.¹⁰ The fund became active in January 2010.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & PRAISE

During a July 2010 visit to Venezuela, Abdessalam Ali Treki, the president of the UN General Assembly, recognized Venezuela's efforts in the fight against drugs. "Last week there was a meeting at the UN in which was discussed the issue of combating drug trafficking and organized crime. Positive results have been presented. Drugs have become

a threat in the world. The world must unite to eradicate this problem. I welcome the efforts being undertaken by Venezuela in the fight against this problem," he said.¹¹

Venezuela has 59 agreements with 38 different countries, including Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Portugal. It also cooperates with other regional partners and takes part in the OAS's Inter-American Commission for the Control of Drug Abuse (CICAD).

In the international context, Venezuela believes in shared responsibility in the fight against illegal drugs. **As different countries play different roles – Colombia as a producer country and the U.S. as a consumer – each country needs to work with the others to craft a comprehensive and effective international anti-drug strategy.**

In late September 2009, Venezuela hosted the XIX Summit of the Heads of National Law Enforcement Agencies, which was attended by 120 delegates from 40 countries. During that summit a representative from the UN's Commission on Narcotic Drugs recognized Venezuela as one of the leading countries in drug seizures in Latin America.¹²

COOPERATION WITH THE U.S.

In 2005, Venezuela suspended cooperation with the U.S. over accusations that DEA agents engaged in espionage and had been compromised by drug rings. Despite evidence that Venezuela has been successfully fighting drug trafficking, the **Bush administration started to discredit Venezuela in the fight against drugs after the suspension of the agreement. Unfortunately, the Obama administration has opted to continue the Bush administration's politicization of the fight against drugs.**

Contrary to U.S. government claims, drug seizures increased after a 2005 decision to suspend cooperation with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), after agents were accused of participating in espionage and having links to drug trafficking rings. During 2002-2004, 125 tons of drugs were seized, while 172.8 were seized



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during 2006-2008, an increase of 47.8 tons, or 38.2 percent.

In a July 2008 meeting with U.S. Ambassador Patrick Duddy to Venezuela, President Chávez indicated that Venezuela and the United States have to cooperate again “to fight against drug trafficking and international crime.”¹³ President Chávez has communicated this message many times to members of the U.S. House of Representatives that have visited the country and met with him in the last years. However, this is not possible while U.S. officials continue inflammatory comments and unfounded accusations against Venezuela.

Venezuela will continue its strategy in the fight against drugs, which is focused on strengthening national anti-drug capacity and includes cooperation with the international community. Moreover, the government of Venezuela still hopes for consistent U.S. engagement in the fight against this scourge.

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Press and Communications Office

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¹ “Reporte Mundial de las Drogas de la Oficina de las Naciones Unidas contra la Droga y el Delito (2010)”, 166. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2010.html>

² Informe de la Oficina Nacional Antidrogas. “Balance de la Lucha Antidrogas” Enero Septiembre 2010.

³ “Embajada de EEUU evalúa como positiva deportación de narcotraficantes desde Venezuela”, Globovisión, 13 de julio de 2010. <http://www.globovision.com/news.php?nid=154835>

⁴ “No es cualquier cosa lo que hemos logrado en materia de lucha antidrogas”, Agencia Bolivariana de Noticias, 21 de julio de 2009, <http://www.abn.info.ve/noticia.php?articulo=191752&lee=1>

⁵ “Gobierno incautó dos aeronaves estadounidenses dedicadas al tráfico ilícito de drogas”, Últimas Noticias, 11 de enero de 2010.

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⁶ “Venezuela Finds Dozens of Suspected Drug Planes,” *The New York Times*, February 14, 2010.

http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2010/02/14/world/AP-LT-Venezuela-Drug-Planes.html?_r=1

⁷ Políticas y estrategias soberanas en la lucha contra el Tráfico de Drogas, Cuadro vigilancia del espacio aéreo, ONA, Agosto 2009

⁸ “ONA: Hornos incineradores de drogas son de alta tecnología, ecológicos y pirolíticos”, Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Relaciones Interiores, 01 de Agosto de 2009.

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http://www.ona.gov.ve/Noticias/10092009_1.htm

⁹ “Venezuela Free of Cocaine Cultivation for Fifth Year,” Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, July 7, 2010. <http://venezuela-us.org/2010/07/07/venezuela-free-of-cocaine-cultivation-for-the-fifth-consecutive-year/>

¹⁰ “Venezuela es el primer país del mundo con un fondo nacional antidrogas”, Oficina Nacional Antidrogas, 9 de Septiembre de 2009, http://www.ona.gov.ve/Noticias/10092009_1.htm

¹¹ “UN Highlights Venezuela’s Progress in Fighting Drug Trafficking,” Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, June 25, 2010. <http://venezuela-us.org/2010/06/25/un-highlights-venezuela-s-progress-in-fighting-drug-trafficking/#more-11897>

¹² “Comisión de Estupefacientes de la ONU reconoce lucha antidrogas de Venezuela,” VTV, 28 de septiembre de 2009. <http://www.vtv.gov.ve/noticias-internacionales/24198>

¹³ “Chávez dice que está dispuesto a entenderse con EE.UU. y la DEA,” <http://www.noticias24.com/actualidad/?p=15795>