

**DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION
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22:50:40:27 MS: Daph let me get a couple of quick items out of the way first. First of all this is the kick off for our spring lecture series, we have a month for the next three months and we've been doing this now for the last two years. Special Agent Nina Blemer is going to speak today.

22:50:55:23 Then in April, at the end of April, you all have a schedule, Bob Stutman, retired DEA Agent formerly SAC of the New York Field Division, is going to speak on the heroes of DEA. And then in May retired Special Agent Mike McManus, I'm sure it will be a packed auditorium, "Life After DEA, What a Ride".

22:51:15:00 Also just to mention that the traveling DEA museum exhibit closed in New York over the weekend after much success, over 100,000 visitors saw the exhibit in Times Square. It will reopen next weekend at the new Detroit Science Center in Detroit, Michigan and be there on display until October.

22:51:33:07 So of you know anyone up in Detroit or are traveling to Detroit yourself, please take a moment to... to visit it. Now let me introduce Staff Coordinator Nina

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Blemer. Nina had no idea the transformation that she was in for as she went from a high maintenance city girl to crawling around in the muck of the jungles of Bolivia.

22:51:53:28 A former police officer for the Norfolk Police Department and the Virginia Police Department, she joined DEA in 1987 in Norfolk, Virginia. Her unlikely calling and craving for adventure, led her to join Operation Snow Cap in 1988. She completed four tours in operation Snow Cap from 1988 to 1994 and willingly admits that she misses the hard living in the jungles of South America. We'll see.

22:52:24:13 Her permanent duty stations have included Virginia, California, Texas, Paraguay and DEA Headquarters. Staff Coordinator Blemer holds a bachelor of arts degree from St. Leo University and a master of arts in communication from the University of Oklahoma. Please welcome Staff Coordinator Nina Blemer.

22:52:48:24 NB: Thank you.

22:52:45:25 MS: Good luck.

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22:52:51:13 NB: Thank you it's great to be here, I appreciate everybody coming down. Welcome to the jungle... Operation Snow Cap began in 1987, it followed Operation Blast Furnace... can everybody hear me? Operation Blast Furnace started with a couple of black hawk helicopters and a handful of agents.

22:53:16:22 They explored, went out into the jungles of South America, tried to determine what they could do to conduct interdiction operations on cocaine, one of our biggest threats in our nation. Operation Snow Cap was successful. Operation Snow Cap had strong people and a good strategy.

22:53:34:28 It was to jump start the governments of South America into interdiction operations and investigations. We figured we could go and attack the source of supply in the nations where the cocaine is processed, at its origin. We could provide training to our host nations, give them a boost. We could conduct interdiction operation and we could seek out and destroy clandestine labs, airstrips, identify routes,

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transit routes and sources and to conduct investigations and assist the country offices.

22:54:11:26 We operated in Bolivia, Peru, Columbia, a little bit in Guatemala and Ecuador. On a smaller scale we also started off in Panama, Costa Rica, Argentina, Chile, Brazil and in some extent we almost started in Mexico. The way operation Snow Cap worked is we had 125 to 150 special agents.

22:54:33:25 They came from all walks of life. We had a couple of guys that were former Vietnam veterans, lot of city people who had never seen the inside of a jungle, some couldn't even identify farm animals. We deploy for 90 days at a time from our office, I happened to have been in Los Angeles at the time.

22:54:50:13 And for 90 to 120 days we'd come into headquarters, meet each other and 10 or 15 of us would mount out to a particular country. Close quarters, you were living together... we knew that the success of the operation depended on our training and our preparation. We started off our agents... heavy.

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22:55:17:11 We started off our agents with a PT test, to determine fitness levels. In the jungle you've got a lot of arduous work, you're dealing, you're crawling up mountain sides, you're wallowing in the mud, you're flying, you're repelling out of helicopters, you're doing a lot of different activities.

22:55:33:01 It was important that everybody got a medical physical and they got a... they got a... they were given a PT test. One of the things they checked for when they did the medical besides giving you a whole list of shots, yellow fever, you got rabies shots, you got... hepatitis A, hepatitis B, there was a whole cadre of shots that they gave you.

22:55:54:26 They also checked you for certain allergies. The big allergy down there is bee stings. How many of you are allergic to bee stings? Probably may not want to go to South America and go out to the countryside a whole lot. Bees are prevalent inside the jungle, they're extremely prevalent.

22:56:13:04 Our early training started in Fort Sherman in Panama right next to the Panama Canal. Let me tell you

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something, there's nothing like training where you are going to work. First thing they did was give us a crash course in emergency first aid and in land navigation, using a compass and a map to find your way around.

22:56:32:14 Well they turned around within the first few days of our training, they took us out to the jungle where there were live dangerous animals, all kinds of plants, all kinds of toxic insects, huge snakes and they dropped us off and said find your own way back. And they gave us a deadline to do it.

22:56:54:23 So we found our way back... some of us made a couple of packs with just let me out of here, I promise do anything wrong again. From there we worked on tactical operations in the jungle. We worked on explosives, explosive handling, everything, I'm not real good at throwing grenades but we worked with Dec Corps, we worked with C-4, all different kinds of explosives because we found out we were going to use it down there.

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22:57:22:03 We worked helicopter operations, we did a lot of flying, we even got dumped in the ocean, hanging at the bottom of a helicopter from about 50 feet. Then they turned around and they had us force marching, everyday to develop our physical skills. They took us out to Panama and we'd force march all around the base, usually it was luxurious easy-going morning with 40 pounds of sand on your back.

22:57:50:00 From there it got better... it gave us some confidence building. Finally we went to language school. Part of our training was learning about the language in addition to learning about insects and 17 foot anacondas and red and yellow, you're a dead fellow and what was poisonous and what wasn't... you could almost eat anything that moves.

22:58:15:10 Once we were raring and ready to go, once we finished language school, a big... a big plane would come and take us and it would drop us off in our countries. We'd take all the supplies we were going to need for 90 days, that included any food we were going to eat at the base camp. Now we'd get restock operations,

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usually the embassy and thank you DEA air wing would occasionally bring us items that we needed.

22:58:41:12 Operation Snow Cap environment, as you can see it's hostile, it's beautiful, it's dangerous, it's hot. It is hot.

22:59:04:29 As you can tell you can look at the mountainsides, you look at the water. There are piranhas in that water.

22:59:17:03 We took to the land, we took to the air and we took to the rivers. Our living conditions were a little bit on the extreme side to start with. That's a picture of Sama Lucia we used to call it tent city. We were lucky, we had some screens, we had tents, we had concrete floors. Later on things got better, sometimes we were actually based in a hotel in a small village.

22:59:46:01 In Bolivia for example we lived on a base camp and that's where we're going to later on today, we're going to go to the base camp. Conditions were a little arduous, there was no differentiation between the lady's room and the men's room. You had to wait,

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if you were a female, you waited to take a shower 'til the guys were done.

23:00:04:13 But you got used to it. You got used to the environment, you got used to working closely and you got used to pulling your own weight and depending on each other. How's that for an incentive on staying healthy? Is Will de Chazo out here? Will de Chazo's one of our medics, he provided a lot slides and I'd lot to thank him for that.

23:00:29:16 That is where you got treated if you were injured, got sick, developed... an intestinal disorder or you got shot. We were treated for things such as skin diseases which means you can get a fungus from the humidity. We were treated for bites of all kinds, both animal bites and monkeys, those cute little spider monkeys do bite and they bite hard.

23:00:58:04 We were treated for broken bones, we were treated for sprains, we were treated for objects lobbed in your eye... tear gas... you got treated for just about anything. These were our primary guys, we needed

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them. That looks foul, but I'll tell you what, it kept you alive and that's what counts.

23:01:18:13 That's what we worked in. Now as you notice this little dot down here, that was very, very large cow. Up in the upper corner over there, the far corner is an estancia (ph.) or a ranch. A little later today we're going to go a little bit beyond that. It was hot, the work was sweaty, you were in swampy, wet conditions.

23:01:47:26 There were a lot of mosquitoes. You sweat you've never sweat before and you know what, you really didn't care because the guy that was walking down the trail with you, he smelled worse than you did. The only thing that smelled worse were dead animals and the labs, most of the time.

23:02:17:09 We had very, very strong bodies and we got skinny, it was a nice point, but we did a lot of road operations which meant you did a lot of walking in. You park on the side of the road and you might hike in a couple of kilometers or a couple of miles to the jungle. You were looking for targets, you were looking for both

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targets of opportunity and you were looking for targets that you had intelligence.

23:02:40:15 One of our methods of transportation, when it was dry, were trucks. Some operated very well, some didn't. One of the problems we had with the trucks besides getting stuck and even Mr. Braun knows what it's like to get stuck, one of the problems were you had a lot of little ravines to go through.

23:02:56:21 Some were little, some were a little bit deeper. Most of them had bridges, they were wooden bridges. The truck might have been this wide, the bridge was this wide. You knew you drew the short straw when everybody else got out of the truck and they handed you the keys.

23:03:17:29 You got your turn to drive the truck across, most of the guys didn't trust me with that though. But the problem was is that we have a lot rainy season, a lot of rain there, so we were sort of limited on truck operations. We were limited to village operations, conducting raids, looking for drug seizures, roadblocks and some jungle insertion operations.

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23:03:41:02 If there weren't any roads, you used the trails and you drove on the trails. My dentist will confirm you get a lot of cracked teeth going up and down the trails. We also had helicopter operations, those were our chariots. Nothing sounds better when you've been out in the woods for a couple of days and you hear one of those coming to pick you up.

23:04:04:13 Now notice how modern and new they are, Vietnam era. Some of them I swear still had bullet holes from Vietnam in them, but they worked and our pilots were fantastic. They not only were skilled pilots, but they were intuitive. They knew when to fly, they knew when not to fly and they knew how to get down and literally brush the treetops.

23:04:27:18 And that's how we found some of the labs by brushing the treetops, blowing them, and then you'd see a tarp like... a tarp like this. And then most of the time you'd jump out as fast as you could, you'd run in, you'd capture the lab, you'd make arrests if you could. You'd seize the narcotics and you'd seize the equipment.

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23:04:51:18 The only drawback to the helicopter is it's loud and they can hear you coming. Most of the time you had to sort of park it far away and again... you always depend on your legs to walk in. Those are called mother-ships and no we're not a bunch of aliens. We put crews on those ships and they'd embark up and down the rivers for a couple of weeks at a time.

23:05:16:26 What they do is operate what they call piranha operations. Piranha is a small inflatable boat capable of holding four, five, six guys at a time plus their equipment. They can insert and look for the labs and I'll talk about the labs in a little while, but one of the tricks to finding the lab is generally it's by a water source.

23:05:36:18 Look for the trails, look for the rivers and chances are you're going to find yourself a lab. We had the Coast Guard with us, we also had Border Patrol with us. Village raids, now this is a really nice picture of a village raid here because there's not a bunch of people standing behind them rioting and throwing rocks.

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23:05:58:22 As you can see one of the things we would do and it was difficult, you had to have intelligence, you had to have an element of surprise. Now when you're operating in a country, everybody... where you know there's no phones, everybody's got a portable walkie-talkie or they've got a small radio, a HAM radio in their house.

23:06:15:17 And they go oh, the gringos are coming, the gringos are coming. And the NMDNP which is for example in Bolivia, which is our host counterparts, the National Mobile Drug Narcotics Police or patrol, we would go in and we'd raid these villages. Sometimes people would give us their dope, sometimes they would not.

23:06:35:27 Sometimes they would riot. I'll show you later on where they hide the rocks and the Coke bottles that they throw at you. And sometimes you have to use mace and run for your life to get away. But you don't take these things personally, you don't take the riots personally, you don't take the assaults personally because that same village for example, if this were Sina Haulta (ph.), which is close to our base camp in

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Shimaray (ph.) which we're going to be basing out of today.

23:07:05:14 If we're in Sina Haulta, I might be in charge of going back there later on that afternoon and get the chickens for dinner. And usually you'd sit down and have a soda, talk to people. You'd go back out in civilian clothes, they knew who you were. Don't take it personally, they're not in uniform, so you don't bother them.

23:07:23:24 I even had one lady teach me how to knit. She was the same woman that hit me in the head with a Coke bottle that morning. Cranes were the fastest way to haul narcotics. Aircraft were the taxis because of the waterways, the pistas (ph.) or clandestine airstrips were everywhere. They were scattered all over, most of them were illegal, very few were actually legal.

23:07:54:01 This is a couple of guys now... bear in mind this guy did not dig that hole with his hands. What they're doing is they're dropping in charges. We'd fine the illegal airstrips and we'd blow them up, that was the fun part because when you blow something up, sometimes

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you attract a lot of attention. Sometimes you got trophy shots though.

23:08:20:14 But that was only one portion of the aviation work we did and it could be frustrating. There were times when we would blow things up but it wouldn't work. As soon as you'd put a huge crater, half the size of this room, in the middle of an airstrip or road or river... a river's edge where they'd land the planes.

23:08:39:27 And they'd land anywhere, they'd land in open fields. As soon as that happened, they'd have somebody come in and fill it back up. We eventually resorted using tractors, we'd rent a tractor, bring the tractor out there, drill holes. What we do is we pour the holes and then the pile of dirt we'd mix with concrete.

23:08:59:16 Sometimes we'd put poles, steel poles, concrete poles, anything to keep a plane from landing in that area. And sometimes unfortunately as fast we did it, they'd fill it back in. One of the things we would do though... is we'd get airplane seizures. Nice plane huh? I think this one is... I'm not sure, I think this one is out of Guatemala or Columbian.

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23:09:27:05 What would happen is sometimes we'd go out and we'd have some intelligence that certain drug traffickers were going to pick up a load and they were going to fly into a certain location. Our job was to intercept them. What we'd do is we'd go out and you lay in the jungle's edge by the airstrip and you'd wait for the plane.

23:09:47:01 Once the plane slowed down, stopped, you'd run out in front of the plane and stop it. But as you can see we got some results and we had a lot of fun doing it. But it was again, it was a lot of hard work. How'd you like to lay beside an airstrip for two days in the middle of the jungle with nothing but creepy crawly things all around you?

23:10:13:11 Some of these pilots were outstanding, they could land an airplane anywhere, some were not. Some had a tough time of it. Some tried to get away and couldn't, some decided that they weren't going to land after it was too late and sometimes you lost the pilot and sometimes you lost the drugs and the pilot.

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- 23:10:35:19 These kinds of accidents in South America are common among the traffickers. It's the greed driving that airplane, not the pilot. As you can see that's another type of area where they can land. They could land an airplane right here, people run out from the jungle, drop off the dope in the airplane and the guy would fly away.
- 23:11:00:14 Those areas we would go through also, we just happened to be going into this area today. Again... hot, humid, uncomfortable... mosquitoes, more mosquitoes, bees like you never saw bees before. We're talking bees nests the size of this truck up in the trees and yes they do come after you.
- 23:11:26:28 There was no 7-Eleven nearby, there's no porta-potties, there's no lady's room, there's no Starbucks. There are no amenities, there was more mosquitoes and bats, that was the purpose of getting the rabies... shots, were the bats. Now that was probably the best time in my career. Now I'm one of those city slickers, I'm a city girl, I've got reserved seating at Nordstrom's makeup counter.

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23:12:01:00 I loved it. I really do love it. I'm still passionate enough to stand here and tell you about it today. My mother keeps begging me to tell her where she went wrong. We lived in a base camp, base camp had a couple of concrete buildings if you were lucky. The amenities weren't bad, you had beds with mattresses.. mattresses this thick.

23:12:27:17 But your rural police were very good. These guys were hard working, most of them. They lived there. If you kept your eyes and ears open, that's how you're going to get your intelligence. These guys can teach you so much and tell you so many things, just like people in the community here. It was amazing.

23:12:48:24 Our average day, we'd wake up about 5AM, grab some coffee, maybe a little bread, a piece of bread or something like that, you didn't really have a breakfast. Maybe you'd get a shower. By 5:30 you were out with the birds and you'd jump on the helicopter and go or you'd jump in your vehicle.

23:13:05:00 Sometimes you were out all night doing operations. Remember we operated 24 hours a day, seven days a

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week. For the most part we do night ops periodically. What you wanted to do was have... don't be scheduled, don't be regular because remember everybody's got that radio. They know every single time a truck leaves the base.

23:13:24:23 They see a helicopter leave the base, you'd go out this way, they'd radio you're coming towards Santa Ana. You'd cover back around and go into Terra Methama. Last night we got some information from an informant, walked in, told us about a lab. This informant's been to see us before, we've gotten some good lab strikes.

23:13:47:28 Just about all the time we got lab strikes. Some weren't very big, sometimes we'd hit a roadblock, but we always came home with something, we always came home with something and that was the important thing. Most of us refused to come back to the base at night until we got something.

23:14:05:14 So we'd jump in our vintage Huey's, we'd have maybe one or two Americans and we're going to fit all of you in a Huey, so use your imagination. We put a couple

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of them (unint.) in there with us, great guys. We'd fly, sometimes we'd fly high 1000, 2000 feet, other times we'd fly low over the jungle.

23:14:25:23 Sometimes we'd fly over the Savannah regions, nothing was better then on a beautiful day and it was cooler because the doors were open and the guns were out, we had these M-16 machine guns at the doors. But it was nice and comfortable. You could see all of Bolivia. There were flocks of parrots, there were these big pig things called capybaras (ph.).

23:14:46:29 They were actually the world's largest guinea pigs, they were about 50 pounds a piece, 40 to 50 pounds. So let's go... we're going to take to the air today and we're going to go look for those labs. So everybody's had their helicopter briefing and they're ready to go, let's go ahead and mount up and divide into helicopters, use your imagination blop, blop, blop, blop.

23:15:12:06 You do get shot at, that's one reason why we leave the guns out. Alright... we've mapped... we've got the general location of where the informants said the lab

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is. We've got our maps, we've marked off some geocoordinants, given those to the pilot. We tell them where we're going once we're in the helicopter and we've taken off.

23:15:29:24 We... a lot of times we don't tell anybody what we're doing. People are happier that way, they don't want to know. They don't want people coming up and asking them where are you going today so they can run back and get on the radios.

23:15:42:15 One of the guys in the other helicopter thinks he saw the lab, so we're all going to go over there. Now remember what I said about helicopter operations, we're going to have to walk a couple of clicks, uh kilometers. So we're going to park it, we're going to walk in. If there are traffickers in the lab, they think we're over somewhere else so they keep working, they keep making the cocaine.

23:16:12:08 We've approached the lab now, we're going to sneak up on the lab cause we're going to see if we can try to catch some guys. But let's take a little education walk, let's see where they're going to go first. We

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want to watch them make the cocaine before we catch them.

23:16:26:28 Now normally you can either hear or smell the lab long before you get to it. When you're in a triple canopy jungle, you can't see very far in front of you, 20, 25, 35, 40 feet max. Sometimes your distance, if it's at dusk or dawn, is a lot less than that especially if you've been laying in overnight.

23:16:44:04 By the way I hope you guys have your MREs and your water... cause I'm going to tell you a story about being caught out in a lab overnight. Sometimes the weather will go bad on you. One time that happened and there were some radio communications that went something like... hey base, we're at the lab now.

23:17:04:11 Base responds... hey the helicopters can't come back in to get you, the cloud ceiling has dropped and the weather's bad, they'll have to pick you up in the morning, do you guys have enough food and water? Yeah... yeah but... but... but... yeah but what? Well um we found a grave out here.

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23:17:22:26 You're the police... the police are there. They know what they have to do. Okay guys you know what you have to do. Yeah but... but... but you mean we're going to have stay here overnight? Yeah, you're going to have to stay here overnight. Oh, well you know what today is? Do you know what today is?

23:17:39:05 Oh yeah, it was like Wednesday or Thursday or something like that. This was back in 1991, I have to go look at the calendar. Well that's what happened, after we hung up or disconnected the radio, we went and looked at the calendar, it was Halloween night. Alright, so what do we have here?

23:17:54:23 We've got structures, now this is fairly rudimentary, you'd be surprised what they can product in these structures. We've got some living conditions here, we've got chemicals, we've got some posoes (ph.), maceration (ph.) pits where they stomp on the leaves or the posoes.

23:18:12:21 We've got some areas for eating, sleeping, working... some other view... now sometimes what they'll do is, they'll shift the lab as they go around. They'll do a

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little production here, they might move the lab. They'll move it to another area because the smell and the saturation of chemicals.

23:18:31:07 Sometimes just to... they'll move it 30, 40 feet, sometimes they'll move it a mile, a couple of miles away. We're going to watch them first, we're going to sneak in. Now you notice how they conceal these, see the blue tarp? But they've got leaves up there. Some of those leaves fall from the trees, some if it was placed up there intentionally.

23:18:50:29 These little tables here have cloth under that, that's used in the chemical processing of cocaine. We're going to start over and just imagine that we've caught a bunch of people in the lab, really use your imagination. And they've agreed to show us how they process the cocaine.

23:19:15:14 First of all cocaine grows out... or cocoa leaves grow on bushes, little small bushes like this, this is a typical capacina (ph.) who is growing the cocaine, notice the... growing the cocoa leaves and she's harvesting them. Notice the skirt, those big loose

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skirts that they wear that come down to about knee length have a lot of pockets.

23:19:35:28 That's where they hide rocks, money, their lipstick, you know things like that. By the way let's look at this picture carefully, we're going to break the stereotypes. Drug dealers are not greasy pilots with sunglasses that are flying the airplane loads. A lot of your base stealers and your pay stealers in the Japari (ph.) Valley and around Shimaray were women.

23:20:00:15 And those women could get very, very aggressive when you were taking their dope from them. Takes approximately a metric ton in Columbia, a fresh leaf, to produce one kilo of cocaine. She's going to be plucking a lot of leaves, but you can get anywhere from two to six harvest per year, depending on the area, the plants, the type of leaf and the chemical processing.

23:20:31:06 The leaves normally have to be dried and they're packed into for example in Peru and Bolivia, into a roboz (ph.), that's about 50 pounds a piece, it takes about 35 of those to make a kilo of cocaine, hydro-

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chloride. The needs to drive... when you fly all over Bolivia in the helicopters, this is a very common sight because remember, chewing on cocoa leaves is not illegal.

23:20:56:17 But does that look personal quantity? My guys have decided to stomp on the leaves. These are guys operating in a maceration pit or what we call posos. What they do is they pour water and a little bit of sulfuric acid in the pits. They put the dried leaves in there and they'll do this a couple of times.

23:21:17:05 In some countries they'll do it twice or three times, other times as much as four or five times. What they're trying to do is extract the chemicals from the leaves. Then what they'll do, they'll take the leaves out and they'll toss those aside and take the water or the cocoa juice and transfer it.

23:21:39:15 They'll put in a chikero (ph.) and they'll add lime, kerosene, diesel fuel depending, each country's different. It's sort of like you're grandmother's recipe you know for eggplant parmesan. It's going to

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taste different, in this case it's going to be different.

23:22:00:13 Then they strain and skim and separate it to make aqua rica (ph.). (Unint.) potassium permanganate and it's purple stuff and a little hard to see, you can have the stain. These purple stuff will stick to everything and it's all over the place.

23:22:24:04 It's a reddish, reddish dark purple. Add a little sodium bicarb and that what they'll do is they'll add a little ammonia on a sample and what they want to do is see if it crystallizes a little bit. Then they'll add ammonia and HTO, they'll strain it... skim it, what they want to do is, they want to basically... when they're done with that, what they want to do is they want to take it, take the sediment, ring it out.

23:22:52:11 And what they do is they have those little tables that you saw. They'll start to drain it. They'll let it drain, they will catch the liquid, sometimes they'll pour the liquid in the river. Sometimes they'll recycle some of the liquids and that gets very sophisticated on some of the... on some of these labs.

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23:23:14:26 What they then do is they wrap it up in sort of like a sheet and they torque it down and twist it. And that makes filtered cocaine, that's your cocaine base. This place really smells and it ain't the guy that's standing next to me. The leaves have deteriorated, the chemicals have been poured into the ground.

23:23:41:03 It is nasty. It is filthy and it is dirty. There's no plumbing... and there's mosquitoes. Now we're going to quickly go through the rest of this because we do not want to get stranded, we know there's a rain storm moving in and I don't think you guys you want to spend the night out here tonight, do you?

23:24:04:03 Now we could do two things. We could take the cocaine base and dry it like on this drying table. Or what we can do is we could transfer it, take it, dry it, transfer it to another lab. Take it on the black market and sell it. Take it to a village and sell it or what we... or trade it.

23:24:23:29 Then what we... or what we could do is we could... excuse me... or what we could do is we could turn around and

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process cocaine hydrochloride. Easy enough to do that. A lot of these labs are huge, we hit one that was... in Bolivia that was almost a mile long. It had dormitories, a couple of them, that slept 25 people at a time. That shows you how big these labs are.

23:24:52:10 They had kitchens, they had all the different areas for processing, from right down from the leaves all the way through and it would stretch all the way through. They'd hide the chemicals in one spot because remember, they know we're out there. So they'd hide the chemicals in one spot, they'd bury the dope in another until they have a load big enough they could transfer it somewhere where they could transport it easy either by aircraft, canoe or road.

23:25:19:18 Now what they do is you take the base and you mix it with a solvent and usually the solvent was ether. Now remember these are real combustible, labs are not safe. They take the ether... now they'd heat this stuff up and usually it was a bimial (ph.) Maria like this one. What they do is they'd heat it up, they had a fire underneath.

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23:25:38:23 It would heat up the chemicals... then from there they'd carefully mix in acetone and hydra chloride acid. Then they'd set it, cool it, crystallize it a little bit, usually leave it sometimes 30 minutes to an hour. They'd gently filter it and remember those tables we saw, the big squares with... minus the cloth cause they change or wash the cloth?

23:26:01:21 They let it drain out, they want to get the chemicals back out and they're going to scrape it all down to the metal. Now I'm not going to carefully do the same thing they did with the base, they'd wring it. Cocaine, hydra chloride. Once they had it somewhat in a... little dryer, like a crumbly form... what they do is they press it into a mold.

23:26:30:20 Far corner over here and later on when we... when we get done people can take a look, we've got some presses. They press it into a mold... these presses... now these... you don't want to get your hand on anything else caught in any of those things. They pack it down. Now if you were a sophisticated lab owner, you'd have microwave ovens.

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23:26:54:29 And you process the cocaine in a microwave oven. That one lab that we hit that was a mile long had... two banks of I believe it was 22 microwave ovens in each bank. Now you're in the middle of the jungle, where is the electricity coming from? Same place you get the diesel fuel, you have generators.

23:27:12:28 That's why you can sometimes here the labs coming up on them, you could hear the generators. Sometimes they buy the generators underground and just leave an exhaust pipe sticking up to deaden the sound, especially if it's in a more popular... populated area. So as you can see, we have all the creature comforts of home here.

23:27:30:25 How's that? Notice the recycling equipment, you can recycle the acid, you can recycle ether, sometimes you could recycle the kerosene and the diesel fuel. And they used a lot of chemicals. That's nothing, that's not a lot of chemical cause they'd use the chemicals second or third time.

23:27:49:18 Now it may effect the quality of your product on the second or third time. Some would... were not so

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sophisticated and they used drying tables where the put the cocaine out there, put in the rock... and then they'd try to press it into a mold or they'd put it in a bundle.

23:28:10:17 Looking at the equipment and this is what we had to do, it was part of a job, because remember before you guys leave here tonight, you're going to have to do paperwork. You're going to assess, look at the lab and you would assess what the lab is capable of producing per day, per week or per month.

23:28:28:01 You'd look at the chemicals used, you look at the number of tables, you look at the dimensions of the posos, you'd look for wrappers, you'd look for notes, just like hitting a house here in the US. Sometimes you'd find that kind of evidence. You could determine how many people, how many shifts were running.

23:28:45:07 Some labs could produce hundreds, hundreds of kilos a week, going from one end right to the other end of the spectrum. This is what our work did to keep us... to keep from coming to the United States. Now this is a

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picture in Guatemala. But that's the kind... that's exactly the product that we've prevented.

23:29:08:24 Once it would have left the lab, it was sent elsewhere, it traded hands a couple of times, maybe only once. Maybe the owner was also the distributor, it varied, that's where the investigative technique comes in. That's where your investigations come in, that's where the country office, your tactical training team, everybody else, helps you put the intelligence together.

23:29:28:29 Cause without intelligence you aren't going to be able to do this kind of work.

23:29:42:09 Now what we're going to do is, we're going to photograph... we're going to take notes, we're going to map out, we're going to diagram the entire lab. We're going to do our paperwork, we're going to have several rolls of film, four, five, six rolls of film or digital camera with a couple of disks.

23:30:02:05 Then we're going to destroy the lab. We'll take the dope and it'll be confiscated as well as some of the

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equipment. You cannot leave anything out in the jungle, you've got to take it with you or you've got to rid of it. We could burn it, but if that big bee's nest is there, which has happened, and you can't survive 25 big stings at once and keep working.

23:30:27:11 My favorite was to blow it up and I just happen to have role of deck cord under here. So we're going to blow it up, we're going to get lots of dope and then we're going to call home... let them know what we've got cause that storm's brewing, you've always got somebody there.

23:30:42:27 By the way, the sky is not that short and squat, that's a distortion of the picture. Okay, we get back, we take a shower, it's about 6PM, we have a little something to eat, we've done a couple of these today. Everybody exhausted right? Wrong, we're going out on a short roadblock operation.

23:31:01:07 We're going down to Bulla-Bulla which is about an hour, an hour and a half on the other side of the base camp. We're going to work with the guys that night and we're going to get home about 11 o'clock. But we

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were successful, we got about 55 kilos that were in pineapples. Now it took a lot of effort for somebody to carve out those pineapples.

23:31:20:08 Put the dope in there, you know, a quarter kilo, half a kilo per pineapple depending on the size of the pineapple and the weight cause they'd hollow them out really good. Then they would sew the pineapple tops back on and while they were still fresh, they'd throw them in a truck or on a bus, anywhere you could do a roadblock operation, you could probably get some dope and that's what we'd do.

23:31:40:21 And we'd find all the concealment methods that everybody constantly reads in the epic magazines. It was hot work but it was fun work and it was rewarding. Um... everybody again had to pull their own weight or you were never asked to come back again. You depended on each other and they were dependent on you to do your job.

23:32:09:03 I don't think there'd be too many guys... anybody in here from Snow Cap? I don't think there are too many guys that'll disagree with me of the lessons that we

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learned, the experience we got and the legacy that DEA got from our experience down in South America and our experience doing jungle work.

23:32:28:11 For me it had a lasting impact on my life for a variety of reasons. I came up with 50 of them, I'm just going to give you guys a couple, who knows, there maybe something you can apply to your work here. First of all, you know I'm not to brag.. because these guys and if you're going to brag, don't go home and brag because these guys have heard it all before.

23:32:52:25 These guys are probably getting \$30 a month, they do this day in and day out. Actually that's a physical training exercise they're doing here but they're having fun. These guys were a lot of fun, they were a great team to work with, we enjoyed their company.

23:33:13:07 You develop a sense of courage and you develop a sense of graciousness. You'd faced a lot of adversity.. you'd faced danger.. hard times, good times, bad times.. you learned to accept the good with the bad. Sometimes you had to face death. You faced injuries,

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you faced guys with, your buddies, that had problems at home and couldn't get home.

23:33:44:00 Most important, you developed a mindset. There is not a Snow Capper that did not walk away with a mindset of survival. You saw this, this is pretty heavy... there is no weapons in that and there is no ammo in that. That's a light one and I thank a guy named Mike for giving me that cause it was better then the one I had before.

23:34:12:27 I've had that since 1988. You learn to develop a sense of mind over matter. Your endurance is going to keep you alive and it's going to keep your buddies alive whether your buddies are Bolivians or Americans or Peruvians or Columbians. You're out there in the woods together alone, you have an M-16 and a side arm.

23:34:37:05 They're a little bit more limited, they have old M-16s and very few rounds. Two hundred and ten rounds is your average, what you average... what your take is, that's what you take out every single day, 210 rounds of M-16 ammunition. As I said, you can survive bee stings and keep working, you might whine a little..

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23:35:02:23 I'll admit it, I was the first person to whine a lot, but I'm stung, it hurts. You kept going and you learned to keep going. You get some black palm, it's a tree in Panama and some of the other countries, have these big spikes, it was like glass, it would break off and cause infections.

23:35:23:00 You were drenched all the time, you were sopping wet, you were hot, you were miserable, you were tired and as I said you were sometimes hungry and you would eat anything you thought you could, if you could find it and catch it. You learned to appreciate nature, that was another lesson. I'm a city girl, I grew up in concrete.

23:35:45:04 It was incredible, parrots, our base camp had an ocelot as a pet. It was wonderful, you learned... now this animal had been brought in injured so obviously it couldn't go back out to the wild. But you learned that what is wild should stay wild. You learned about flowers that grow where a monkey just died and how things go back into the earth and come back out as something beautiful.

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- 23:36:07:25 You learned to appreciate rain, you learned what a real jungle and real rain smells like. There's no electricity in some places. At night you could see the constellation, you could actually see satellites moving through space at night when there's no artificial light.
- 23:36:30:16 It was incredible, here you are, pumping through the mountains, you are absolutely miserable but you learned to take in nature and you learned to appreciate it. And the sounds... the jungle is never quiet, it is noisy. Crickets would sound like they're eight feet tall.
- 23:36:50:02 Mosquitoes, over your mosquito netting, would get right by your ear and they sounded like a 747. You learned that laughter heals all wounds or most of them. You learned to make fun of yourself first and you learned to have a good time. I had a couple of (unint.) guys, I worked with on a regular basis, tell me I was ugly because I look like a floater.

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23:37:15:04 They weren't used to seeing somebody with pale skin, pale eyes and blond hair, they thought I'd been floating around in a river dead for a few days. They also told me I was too skinny and I could... and they could not understand why I kept profusely thanking them.

23:37:34:21 You learn teamwork and this is a real big one everybody. When we were down there, yeah we might have been agents in the forefront, you could not get by without your comms (ph.) guys. You could not get by without medics (ph.). The Intel analysts sitting at... somewhere else in another office would fax us information regarding a riot, they're going to try to over... they're going to overpower your base this afternoon.

23:37:59:25 We'd get that information. Literally the night they'd call us with information, first thing in the morning you'd get a hold of us, hey you guys may need to evacuate, they saved our lives. They made our cases, I can't stress that enough. We had border patrol, we had Coast Guard, we had Department of Defense, everything from the big airplanes that we... military

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airlift command, MAC flights, that came into pick us up and drop us off, right down to the pilots and the mobile training teams that used to come in and help us with training.

23:38:35:02 We had the secretaries that were in our home offices, we had people here in personnel that would help us when we had tragedies. We had trauma teams that assisted us. We had people that took care in the AP Air that took care of our mail. You had people that took care of sending you cookies.

23:38:55:21 Your families, support groups... people who would write you a letter every now and then. People who would send you stuff in the mail which by the way, you were required to share, especially if it was cookies. And we had pilots, like I said, nothing sounds better, you're out there, you're hot, you're tired, you're running out of food and you've run out of water and you hear that helicopter coming into pick you up and take you home, to your base camp, at night.

23:39:26:05 You learned to challenge yourself, you will not grow, you will not expand unless you challenge yourself.

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Every single day do something different. When I say step out of the box, I'm not saying take a leap of faith and go jumping off of a cliff, I'm saying take a small step, assess your risk, take a small step, do something, do something, anything.

23:39:49:17 Volunteer, do some volunteer work... every single Snow Cap person is a volunteer. Every person in country, no matter what your job was, no matter your pay grade or your description, was a volunteer, every single American that helped was a volunteer. Some of UMAPA were not.

23:40:17:13 You built confidence, that's something we learn, that's something we used everyday on the street. That's something that gets me up here in front of all of you, is developing confidence and developing a passion about what you're doing everyday. If you have to, go back to school, take a course, it's not going to hurt you.

23:40:33:29 If you fail, you fail, but don't get that mindset. Remember the survivalist mindset, you can do it. There's nothing you can't do. Get a hobby, turn a

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hobby into it, turn it into your passion. You're not living if you don't step out there and grow. Do not let your fears restrict your heart of what you want to do.

23:41:01:15 Finally, we learned to respect cultures. Anybody know what the okay sign is? Somebody show it to me, what's okay? Don't use this, no. That means you're... saying something derogatory to the person you're pointing to. This is okay, you learn that in cultures. I learned I wasn't supposed to put my purse on the floor in a restaurant in some of these countries because that would mean I was for rent.

23:41:35:18 But more important you learn things like chewing cocoa is a tradition. Growing crops, including coca to some extent, is a tradition. Poverty is not an indicator of courage, it's not an indicator of intelligence. It's also not an indicator of common sense, graciousness. Very poor Bolivian people were very, very humble, they'd offer you anything they had, even it was little bit of rice and that rice as moving.

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23:42:06:12 They would offer you chee-cha (ph.), anybody know what chee-cha is, don't drink it. You take corn and you chew it up, then you spit it out in a bucket and that's what a lot of the Bolivian women did, it was extra money, it was like pin money. You spit it out, stick it under something, put a lid on it, let it ferment until it became alcoholic.

23:42:30:21 Don't be squeamish and don't be vain, everyday is a bad hair day in the jungle. You learn to treat everything from gunshot wounds to gangrene and I'm very thankful for the medic training because I had to triage a gunshot wound of another agent. Tarantulas, like my friend down here, are big and hairy and they crunch.

23:42:57:04 Sometimes you faced different rules in mortality, parrots can outlive humans and a deadly snake can outrun a human. Again I talk about volunteering, everybody's a volunteer. People that were standing out there today making money, were volunteers. People that assisted 9/11 are volunteers.

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- 23:43:20:26 The US military is a volunteer. People who greet you at the door of your church or your temple are also volunteers. Sometimes volunteering means holding a hand of a guy next to you who's having a personal problem at home, commiserating and admitting your own shortcomings, that's all it is.
- 23:43:37:29 Finally and last... learn to recognize and appreciate those who have helped you. Again, we stand here, we're out here, people see us, we're not the ones doing all the work. People like Mark Hopper and Will de Chazo help provide these slides... I lost my slide here...
- 23:44:22:25 Pardon... yes... but last of all but not least, thank each other, everybody who's here has done a wonderful job. Everybody here participates in all the programs. Make sure you recognize and thank your families and your friends and all the people that baked the cookies, all the people that told you to keep your chin up.
- 23:44:45:03 I personally thank Robert McGuire and his late wife Roselle, they told me to screw up my face like a turtle's butt and keep going and that's what I did.

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And most of all let's be thankful for those who made the ultimate sacrifice, those who believed in the program, believed in DEA and never came home. Thank you. [APPLAUSE]

23:45:14:24 Any questions? Yes.

23:45:23:20 Q: (Inaudible)

23:45:32:02 A: He's asking a question do we ever run into any resistance from terrorists out there? Not in Bolivia, I never... I never personally did. Now in the early '80s, mid-'80s, late '80s, you sometimes had like the Cineruminoso (ph.), you were a target of opportunity.

23:45:49:21 Whether they were protecting or something or not, I don't know. Some of the Intel folks here maybe able to help you with that.

23:46:00:05 Q:

23:46:07:27 A: Oh you mean like shooting at you, yeah... we got threatened. Every now and then there'd be a threat,

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sometimes there'd be a threat to a base, somebody... they'd riot, the Cocalauras (ph.) would riot and they'd try to end up with 5000 of them out there at the front gate.

23:46:22:19 And you had a plane ready just in case you needed to evacuate. Any other questions, yes sir.

23:46:31:03 Q:

23:46:33:29 A: With any what?

23:46:35:19 Q:

23:46:37:10 A: Frank White started the program, I believe. I was recruited by Frank White, Frank White was a firm believer in having a diversity of personnel in the program and that included middle-aged women like me. Any other questions? Everybody have a good lunch, thank you again, I appreciate it. [APPLAUSE]

END OF TAPE