

DEA MUSEUM LECTURE SERIES
PAUL KNIERIM - 11/17/09

MOD: Moderator PK: Paul Knierim

MOD: Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. On behalf of all of us on the museum staff, I want to welcome you this morning as we continue our fall lecture series. This fall we are focusing on cannabis, coca, and poppy, nature's addictive plants. It's to coordinate with the new lobby exhibit that the museum has. Last month we looked at opium, and now this month we look at cocaine. Specifically, we are joined this morning by Special Agent Paul Knierim. Just a little background on Paul before he gets up and speaks to you this morning. Paul has a sociology degree from the University of Utah. He joined DEA as part of basic agent class 79. And for those of you doing the math, you can count back to the number of years that that was. I'm not going to mention the year.

He began by going on board at the Denver Field Division. He served there until 1995, when he was transferred overseas to Quito, Ecuador. Then in 2001 brought back to the United States and served in Miami, specifically as a group supervisor with the HIDA [ph] program, and then in 2005 assigned as the country attaché in Costa Rica. It's actually that time that he served, from 2005 until actually

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just this past July, July of 2009, that will serve as the emphasis of his remarks this morning. But since July of 2009, he has been back here at headquarters doing his time as it were serving as a staff coordinator upstairs in the Office of Public Affairs. Again, today we look at cocaine, a particular emphasis on Costa Rica, but also look at all of Central America and the cocaine trafficking trends there. Please join me in welcoming Staff Coordinator Paul Canirum.

PK: Thank you, Sean. Good morning. It's an honor to be here with you today. And for the guys in my shop, no heckling. And I do promise that after today the poster out in the lobby will be removed. It's been there for long enough. I did have the privilege of serving in Costa Rica for the last four years. Today's actually my four-month anniversary of being in headquarters, not that anybody's paying attention. But it was a privilege to be able to serve overseas in the capacity as country attaché in Costa Rica.

I did want to go to the next slide, please say that the situation in Central America is very dynamic. It's always evolving and always changing, and I like to call it a fluid situation. Next slide, please. There's the fluid situation. Big ocean. This photograph actually illustrates a very significant factor in my mind, because we as agents think

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that these boats are easy to find. We have information, we have intelligence, working with other offices, and it's out there. We know it's out there. Well, there's actually one in there, which is very difficult to see. Next slide, please. And there it is. To just to kind of make the, illustrate the point of how difficult the job is in finding these vessels that are carrying large amounts of cocaine from South America through the Central American corridor into Mexico for further transport into the United States.

They actually were able to spot that because the helo flew over it, blew the tarp off, and made it a little easier to find. Next slide please. This is a Jiata South [ph] slide, sorry it's in Spanish, but my PowerPoint skills aren't that great, so I took this from another presentation. These were projected movements that Jiata South puts out, somewhat different from some numbers that we might have here. But these numbers are based on intel and interdiction statistics. And I think this slide is very poignant in the fact that it does demonstrate clearly the methods, or the routes, excuse me, that are being used to transport the cocaine from South America.

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UNODC estimates that about 88% of the coke that's destined for the United States goes through the Central American corridor, and I believe our statistics are somewhere 90 to 90% of all the cocaine that's entering the United States enters from Mexico. Next slide please. Again, in Spanish, and I apologize for that, but you know it says we have a very mobile and flexible enemy, and that is definitely the case. They're highly motivated, they have unlimited resources, and they do everything they can to avoid detection and monitoring and the ultimate interdiction.

As you can see by this slide, back in 2006, the majority of the vessels were still way off the coast, going down into the Galapagos region to pick up the drugs to bring them further north into Mexico for transport into the US. In 2005, in Costa Rica in particular, and this is going to be a little Costa Rica-centric, due to my last four years, but we'll try to spread it throughout the region as well. But we noticed in December of 2005 we started having Costa Rican fishing vessels that were being interdicted with large amounts of cocaine on board. We also started feeling the presence of the go-fasts and that they were utilizing the littoral routes to transport the drugs from South America, Colombia and Venezuela, in particular, on both

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sides of the isthmus, which is the East Pac, or the Pacific side, and the western Caribbean.

We started raising our hands and saying hey, we really need to start looking at these littoral routes, and as you can see by the graph, that in 2007 the routes started shifting, observably so, more to the littoral routes. And when I'm talking littoral routes, originally it was within a hundred miles, but really, when you look at it very carefully, 2007-2008, as you can observe by that bottom graph, we're talking within 12 miles, which is the territorial waters of the countries. So they were running the coastline and this gives them opportunities to one, run at night, and during the day they can pull into the thousands of kilometers of mangroves of estuaries and other places where they can just hide out during the day time in their boats and wait for the cover of darkness to continue their movement.

The command and control structures are definitely set up in Central America. You have the Colombians and more recently you have a large influx of Mexican DTO's [ph] that are going into the area. I'll discuss it a little bit further in the slide show, but the Colombians are still responsible for the maritime trans [ph] shipment. The Mexicans are now

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starting to take it from Central America through the isthmus and up into Mexico. And in Costa Rica specifically, if it was being transported via air, small aircraft, that was a hundred percent Mexican DTO's that were doing that. Next slide please.

Before I get into this I just wanted to kind of illustrate, and it coincides with the graph that you just saw, and I promise not to give out any more stats after this, but in 2005, Central America seized about 37 metric tons. In 2006, and this is collectively Central America, about 73. In 2007, 110 metric tons collectively. And in 2008, about 102. Like I said, in 2005 we started noticing utilization of the fishing fleet in Costa Rica. These boats, very small, 30, 40 feet. They were going all the way out to the Galapagos. Now I'm sorry, I love fishing, but there's no way you would have got me on one of these things to go all the way to the Galapagos.

The largest seizure that was made from a Costa Rica fishing vessel was eight tons. Next slide, please. These small boats are part of the fleet. They come in and out. They're supposed to file what they call a sarpe [ph], or, is their permission to go out and fish. We found on several

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occasions that the crew members that were listed on the sarpe were not the same crew members that were on the boat at the time that the boat was seized. Next slide, please. These next three slides illustrate the lengths that these guys will go to avoid the evidence being captured by United States' authorities and foreign law enforcement. Next slide.

As you can see, they're very determined to keep the evidence from law enforcement. Next slide. And the evidence goes up in flames. This is something that happens on a frequent basis. And to further illustrate, next slide please, a short video clip.

VIDEO: Okay, this is a fishing vessel OP [ph]. It is on fire.

Position zero three three zero south-

PK: Notice the guys starting to jump overboard from the bow. It then becomes not only evidence collection but a search and rescue mission to pull those guys out of the water.

VIDEO:

PK: You'll see the frigate come into view here, try to put out the fire. And the excess fuel ends up blowing up. The difficulty with this is obviously the safety of the US crew and then the search and rescue efforts and the evidence collection efforts. Next slide please. I think everybody

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remembers this. Back in 2007 in Panama they seized 20 tons from a freighter. At the time it was the largest maritime seizure, and it just illustrates that the whole isthmus is being utilized for the cocaine trafficking. But this brings me to the next point. About 65% we were seeing in Costa Rica of all our seizures were maritime.

But not only did we have the fishing vessels, we also had the ports. In Costa Rica there's a major port on the Caribbean side with about seven to 800,000 containers a year, are coming and going from the port, and all of the countries in Central America have similar situations. Maybe not that kind of volume, but there are ports in all the countries. So we have multiple phases of the trafficking activities that are taking place that we are trying to address with our counterparts who are doing a phenomenal job. Next slide please. Go-fast boats range in various sizes and shapes.

One of the things that you'll notice in most of these slides is the multiple engines. Three-four 200, 250 horsepower motors on them. And those large white square boxes are fuel bladders. Next slide please. Just another example. Next slide please. So you can see they're very

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[unint], and look at all the excess fuel drums that are in the center with the cocaine that's up under the bow. Next slide please. Four 200-horsepower motors. One of the most impressive ones that I saw, we actually got on the Caribbean side. It had 2500 kilos in it. It had three inboard-outboard diesel engines. The engines had less than a hundred hours, or about a hundred hours on them.

The reason that it came in to Costa Rica waters was because if you look the way the isthmus is, they can go straight from Panama or Venezuela to Nicaragua or Honduras without coming in to Costa Rica because of the way that the isthmus is built. The center and starboard motor, the linkage between the propellers broke, and they crashed into one another, the propellers, damaging the propellers, so they had to bring it in. Next slide please. The small ones on here, just makes another illustration. What we started observing, aside from the multiple horsepower engines, was one smaller 70, 80, 90 horsepower engine.

Those are more typically observed within the littorals in all of these countries, and they're what we call the artesian fisherman, or the local fisherman. And so the traffickers were trying to adopt this method to avoid

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detection. You see one with four 250's on the back, you know what it's doing. It's not out fishing. Maybe square grouper, but that's about it. So they started to try to employ different methods and different types of vessels in order to avoid detection. Next slide, please. This further illustrates that point, but there's a couple of things I want to discuss with this slide.

First of all, you see the excess fuel bladders. In Costa Rica, it was not illegal to carry excess fuel. I recently learned that that law has changed, and so now people can be prosecuted for carrying excess fuel. But at the time I was there, there was no prosecution of excess fuel. They were seizing the excess fuel, but the fishermen couldn't be prosecuted for it. You're going, you might have one of these vessels that uses gasoline taking diesel out to a fishing boat or vice versa, and there was no legal means to stop that. We worked very diligently on them to try to change that, and I was very grateful to talk to the new country attaché a couple weeks ago and he said that that has been enacted.

Another thing that was very difficult for us at the time was the government in Costa Rica in particular provides

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subsidized fuel to the local fishermen. What does that mean? They're paying about half the price for gallons of gas. How convenient was that? Not only are they able to transport the fuel without penalty, they're getting it subsidized basically because of their position within the local fishing industry by the government. We're still working on that one. You'll see there's holes in the center and in the back by the Coast Guard officer there.

The other thing we started noticing, instead of bales they were actually putting the cocaine into the hulls of these little boats. We first started noticing that. We had a seizure of a boat. No dope was found on the boat. The boat was moored up against some rocks. A storm came in. The boat started smashing against the rocks. And it started to create some holes in the flooring in the hull, and there was cocaine that had been secreted in the hull of the ship. So after that we started paying closer attention and actually looking at the cavities within these small vessels, and that is another method that they're using in order to transport the cocaine without being detected.

Next slide, please. Just another example of a different type of vessel. Next slide. This is what's referred to as a

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matreda [SP, ph]. This is actually more of what you see in the rivers in Colombia. This boat was actually off the Costa Rican waters, and what makes this particular boat unique is it had 3,840 kilos of marijuana, 220 kilos of coke, and almost seven kilos of heroine. So it was a poly-drug load in one vessel. And you notice the shape is very different from the shape of the other boats, the Edwardonia [ph] type or the go-fast type boats. But that was a very unique load for us to have the poly-drug nature of that particular shipment.

Next slide, please. Just another illustration of the lengths they go to to avoid detection, and we'll follow that up with a short video.

VIDEO

PK: Again, notice the fuel drums and then they're lighting it on fire. We actually had one that was prosecuted in Costa Rica where we were able to count over 140 bales that were being jettisoned as they were, as the interdiction activity was taking place. That creates another situation, because now we have to try to identify where the bale field is, and based on the availability of getting assets to the area, currents and all that stuff to try to recover the evidence that they've jettisoned from those boats. Next slide.

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SPSS's. This is the first SPSS that was caught off the coast of Costa Rica.

Very rudimentary in its construction. We actually brought it into port in Costa Rica. It was lead, it had a lead lining on the outside. It was painted gray. Very low profile. There's no way you'd have caught me in this thing. I wouldn't even get on it when it was at the dock. I mean, it was just such a poorly built vessel. Again, interesting makeup of the crew. One of the crew members was from Sri Lanka, which we thought was kind of unusual at the time. Next slide. They've become more sophisticated. This was the second one that was interdicted off the coast of Costa Rica, and when it first started coming into port, I was looking at it saying, Man, that looks like a sailboat they just cut the top off.

And I think that's what's been determined afterwards with this particular boat. They had several hundred pounds, if not thousands of pounds of lead weight along the whole length of the hull of this to weight it down. Very low profile. Very well done. This one was definitely more high tech than the previous one, so again, illustrates the determined efforts, the unlimited resources, and the

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technology that these trafficking organizations are employing to try to get their merchandise to the United States. Next slide, please.

Overland trafficking. So we go from the maritime to the overland, but they mix, or I should say they're married, because what we started seeing was they were bringing the cocaine in to Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama. Now they're using these countries as storage and staging areas. Command and control in each one of these countries. So they're bringing the cocaine in through maritime means, storing it and staging it and transporting it, again, out by maritime, or overland. The borders in Central America are extremely porous. The border between Costa Rica and Panama, for example, you can walk into a duty-free zone store in the Costa Rica side and walk out on the Panama side, and there's no checks.

There are, there's a gas station in the middle of the road about a kilometer to the west. If you drive into the gas station from Costa Rica, you can drive out the other side of the gas station and you're in Panama. At the northern border with Nicaragua, there is a formal checkpoint. The US government has spent a lot of money to construct a facility

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there. It is extremely well maintained and it's well manned and it's very successful in the interdiction efforts, but once you get past that checkpoint, the five northern countries, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize, all have a customs agreement where it's basically free customs access.

So there's really no checkpoints once you get into Nicaragua, all the way to get to Guatemala and then into Mexico. So it does make things a lot more difficult for us. The Guatemalan organizations are heavily involved in the overland transportation routes. And they employ semi tractor trailers, smaller vehicles. Next slide, please. And a myriad of techniques to try to discourage law enforcement from being able to detect these cocaine loads. The difficulty with these particular methods, and you have the scrap metal here, is I can tell you, one, it's very difficult to offload this, and if you don't find anything, getting all of it back on is almost impossible, because it doesn't stack the same way twice.

So they know this, and they're making it as difficult as they can for us. We had one case that they brought the cocaine in from maritime, because when we seized it, it

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still had the packaging and the rubber and sand on some of the bales, 3,000 kilos that they brought in maritime means, stored it until they were able to put it in tractor trailers, and they were actually going to take that to the Caribbean coast and put it in a container and ship it to Europe. Another organization, well actually that same one with the 3,000, they had brought in a load and had, were doing some guns for drugs. There was a law enforcement officer at that particular moment that came upon them on the beach.

He was very fortunate, because one of the bad guys was trying to put the wrong kind of magazine in his gun and it wasn't able to fire. We also in that same case there was some corrupt law enforcement officers that were protecting part of the load. So it was a very complicated and very successful case, but it did show the level of sophistication, very tight, very well organized Colombian organization that was controlling that. Next slide, please. And again, this is just an illustration of where the drugs were underneath all that scrap metal, actually hidden in a false flooring on the bottom so you have to offload the whole thing. Next. 849 kilos seized from underneath that load of scrap metal. Next please.

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And again, they'll use any method they can. If you look at the top, it was buried in the front. They had a false wall in the front of the container. Next slide. And this one, extremely dangerous. It was over 800 kilos hidden in this tanker of ammonia. So you can imagine that the difficulty that one, if you weren't conducting an investigation, of identifying this type of conveyance. But two, the difficulty, the expertise, the danger of trying to find that cocaine inside that container. Extremely, extremely poisonous. And so you have to have people that are available to help you offload the product that's in the container so that you don't get anybody hurt. Next slide.

This is another example of a truck loaded with scrap metal. And this is what the cocaine was in underneath that scrap metal. So they use any method of concealment. Very difficult to offload, not just the scrap metal, but the ammonia or any other product. If it's a frozen container, again, the risk of having the cover load go bad, if you don't find anything inside. So it's just a very complicated and extremely challenging situation for us. Next slide, please. As I mentioned, you have the air trafficking as well. This is a jiata slide, jeata south slide that

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illustrates air tracks. And as you can see, they have basically two main routes.

One's going to Hispaniola, which is the Dominican Republic and Haiti, the other one going into Guatemala and Honduras. Next slide, please. And in Guatemala and Honduras, they're not necessarily landing these planes to use them again. They'll crash them. they'll lead them there. You see the plane is just being gutted by local people in the area. So they are very willing to just—I call them like Gillette razors. They're disposable, okay. This was actually one that was seized in Costa Rica. The interesting thing about this plane, and Mike will know what I'm talking about, it had a stole [ph], which is a short takeoff and landing packing.

It also had a fuel, it had been modified to carry excess fuel. We actually had a maintenance mechanic come over from the local airport there who was an FAA certified mechanic. He said that the fuel system that had been put into this aircraft in order for it to carry excess fuel bladders was so well done that if it weren't illegal, he would have certified the work. Okay? So these guys are very good. Next slide, please. This helicopter was actually being purchased by a Mexican drug trafficking organization. It was going

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through its purchase at the time of its—next slide—demise, it actually crashed with 395 kilograms of cocaine on board. They were moving it. Again, the cocaine had come in from the south, through the maritime methods, and was being transported to a hotel area that the Mexican organization had purchased in order for them to conduct their activities.

And the pilot misjudged the weight, misjudged the terrain, misjudged the climate, and it took several days for rescue workers just to be able to reach this crash site. And they discovered 395 kilos. Next slide.

VIDEO:

PK: Very capable. I mean, they're so exact they almost hit the guy with one of the bales. That was actually taken from Haiti, but I wanted to show it to you to illustrate the capability of these traffickers and what they're able to accomplish, and the lengths that they'll take, or the lengths that they'll go to, to try to get the cocaine shipped to the United States. Next slide. All right, this is not a plug for Costa Rican coffee, although I do like Costa Rican coffee, doca peaberry's [ph] probably the favorite. But I just wanted to throw this up as an illustration of again the complexity. We've got all these major trafficking organizations doing multi-hundred, multi-

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ton loads, and yet at the airport on a weekly basis, we have these organizations that are shipping this stuff out through couriers, whether they're trying to take it up in products or in souvenirs, hammocks.

They're using DHL, FEDEX, any method they can, in order for them to get the drugs going to the United States or to Europe. So that's, again, it just adds to the complexity of everything that's trying to be accomplished in trying to keep these narcotics from hitting the streets of the United States and ending up in the schools. And last but not least is the money. This is why they're doing it. It can be a very significant destabilizing factor in the region. And a pretty good looking character over there. Next slide, please. And again, as the money, or as the drugs go north, the money goes south. We had one particular investigation where we seized over four tons of cocaine and \$2 million from the same organization, and this was their method of transportation, semi tractor trailers.

The guy was so into semi tractor trailers he even raced them. So very significant amounts of money, but not just overland. They're also bringing it in by courier through the airports, in small vehicles, and even overland. We had

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a couple guys trying to cross the border with over a million dollars on foot, at another border checkpoint further to the east where there's even more limited resources and manpower to go after the drug traffickers and the money couriers. Next slide, please. Before I ask for questions, I just wanted to talk about a couple other things. The FARC. Definitely in Costa Rica we had two high-level FARC members that were arrested.

We also had another situation that was, that came to fruition after the discovery of the computer from Raul Raiz. They notified the Costa Ricans of the couple that had been, I don't know how to say it, they were sympathizers with the FARC. They had several hundred thousand dollars of money that they had been holding for quite some time. When they seized the money, it was so old that they couldn't even count it. It was just falling apart. Okay, so that's 400,000, 500,000 less for them. The violence is increasing. We're starting to see—we saw one decapitation, Mexican style. The guy floating out in the ocean with his hands and his legs tied together. We're starting to see what in Spanish they call a *hosta e cuentas* [ph], or retribution killings for loads that are being lost.

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And so this is a very significant issue that's affecting all of the isthmus and it's affecting how we're able to go after these guys, because they're very sophisticated. The, another underlying factor, or I should say a result of the significance of the trafficking that's taking place, is that it has created a crack problem in a lot of these countries. The trafficking organizations are paying for the shipment in products instead of cash, and it's really creating a significant crack problem in a lot of these countries, and Costa Rica is not immune from that. A very significant crack issue. One that I was quite frankly shocked to learn about, and it's something that they are battling on a day to day basis.

Money laundering that goes along with this, it's a difficult situation because of all the loopholes in the law. The banks are very good at compliance. They have compliance officers. They file CTR's. They file suspicious activity reports. But when it comes to controlling non-financial institutions, or non-banking institutions, car dealerships, real estate, casinos, things like that, there's limited or no control. So it creates difficulties in investigating those things. And I really did want to point out the honor it was for me to work with the agents

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and administrative staff overseas. We have some very dedicated agents all over the world, as you guys are very familiar with.

And I really, truly hold my hat off to these agents and these administrative staff, not just overseas but domestically as well, because I've been accused of being on a crusade. I think that the work that we're doing is so vital and so important to the future of not just the United States but the world in general, and I just wanted to tip my hat off to everybody that on a day to day basis is furthering the cause. Any questions? Sir.

Q: [inaud] to West Africa. We know this has been happening. We know there's been a migrant, there's been a movement of traffic from the western hemisphere route up to North America moving over to the South Atlantic and then up to the European market, which is lucrative for a number of new reasons. We know that part of that is due to your extraordinary progress and efforts in the area where you're working and I know we're all grateful for that here. Besides seeing that effect of the work that's being done in Central America by us, how is this change or this reaction in the supplier/trafficker business effecting your outlook and effecting what you're doing down there, or have to do?

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A: Well, obviously, we had the one case that I mentioned earlier with the 3,000 kilos that was going to Europe. That's one of the concerns that I had. We're trying to address the port on the Caribbean side, because we know the vulnerabilities and the opportunities for the cocaine to go to Europe. It's worth a lot more. And I know that once it hits some places, west Africa and some other areas, the controls again are issues that I know we're over there in those countries assisting those countries to address those issues.

Euros, I think they just came out with a 500-Euro note. So it's very, it's a lot easier for them to transport millions of Euros than it is for millions of dollars just from a bulk size, and so I think they're looking at those other venues and those areas because of some of the facilities that they have to get their product into those markets. I don't know if that answers your question, but I know it is something that obviously we're focusing on what's coming here, but it is something that when those investigations do arise, we are looking at those. And we work with our counterparts in Europe that are in Central America to investigate some of those cases as well.

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Q: As far as the maritime waters, the international waters, what flags are they flying? And what are the jurisdictional aspects. Are they stateless vehicles with no flags, or—how do you conduct the seizures when you're in the international waters?

A: International waters, it depends on the country. If they are flying a flag, then we, the procedure would be to notify the country and ask for permission to board. And again, depending on the country, the outcome, Costa Rica, if it was a Costa Rican flag vessel with Costa Rican crew, the boat and the crew was coming in to Costa Rica, different countries have different agreements and different policies on that. But if it's in international waters, obviously you know the US Coast Guard knows how to go about that with those different countries, but we've seen flags from a lot of countries down south.

We even have one case where we thought they might be changing the flag as the boat went north, to assimilate into the territory waters of those countries. So it is something that we have seen multiple flags, Panama, Costa Rica, things of that nature. But in international waters, our Coast Guard definitely knows how to work through those

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issues and they do notify the countries and get permission in most circumstances.

Q: Hi. When you showed those ships that are being burnt when all those kilos are burned, when those people get off and run, do they run home, or are they on the run forever?

A: No, they're trying to run home. They're trying to get back to Colombia.

Q: Okay, so they really don't get punished or?

A: Well, it depends. It's kind of the hand in the cookie jar situation in a lot of these countries, where the legal system permits them to be prosecuted if they basically get caught with their hand in the cookie jar. A lot of instances, they do get arrested. They're there illegally. They've come in without any documentation or anything like that, and they get deported back to Colombia.

Q: Thank you.

Q: Do you think according to your experience over there that it has been, well, we first we have Plan Colombia, you know, and Plan Colombia [unint] caused all the violence and all the drug cartels moved to Mexico. And after the maritime initiative, I know that it started just last year, but do you think it's producing the same effect? And then, because there is more money and more equipment allocated to Mexico. So do you think Central America is now suffering

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like what we call sandwich effect and that all the violence is going to move there and the situation is going to be that Central America is going to end up like Mexico?

A: I know that's a concern. And because of what's going on in Mexico and Colombia, it's the effect, like you say, the sandwich effect, or the balloon effect, and that is one of the concerns and one of the reasons why Plan Merida takes the Central American countries and puts them in a regional program with Mexico so that from a regional perspective that can be addressed. So the programs that are being implemented, not just in Mexico but throughout Central America, are to work regionally and develop programs regionally, not just individual countries, but all these countries working together to try to address the problem and to try to be able to attack the problem from a regional perspective.

And so it is a concern. It is something that we are very much aware of and very much working with our counterparts in these countries to address and to try to keep or be able to control as best we can those types of things, which is why the concerns with the violence and the crime rates and those things that are a byproduct of the drug trade are something that is really, really in my mind one of the

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factors that keeps us focused on what we're doing to try to keep those things from escalating even more. And the governments, at least in my experience in Costa Rica, are buying into that they share part of the responsibility.

So you know they do work with us very, very collaboratively, and we do have some fantastic partners in all of these countries.

Q: At the southcom regional security symposium last year, several of the general officers from the Caribbean and Central America and Mexico particularly were concerned about, they're concerned about the flow of drugs through their countries, but they're more concerned about the weapons coming into their countries that are going to the DTO's. Is there anything that DEA is involved with to stop that flow? Because that contributes to the crime and violence and the militaries and the police forces in these countries being overwhelmed.

A: Well, as I mentioned earlier, we did have one case where guns and drugs were involved. We are going after the drug trafficking organizations at the highest level, and anytime that there are weapons involved, obviously that's part of the investigation. But we are focusing on the narcotics. But often times we did see the guns paralleling those

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things, and so it was part of the investigation that we were conducting to come up with those weapons and we were fortunate to be able to do so, keep those from going further south.

Q: Hello, sir. During your experience, did you observe a concerted effort by any of the cartels there to infiltrate and kind of create some of the corruption within the military themselves there, or US facilities as well? And do you think that enough effort is being done on our part to kind of prevent that from happening?

A: Yeah, we work, on the prevention side we're working very closely with our counterparts. Costa Rica doesn't have a military. They do have a Coast Guard. We did see some corruption within the Coast Guard and the law enforcement. Not with the narcotics officers. I was proud to say that especially and specifically in Costa Rica, we didn't have any cases of corruption with the narcotics investigators. Where we did see it was within the uniformed police, the tourist police. There was 11 or 12 of those officers that were arrested a couple of months ago, basically escorting the boats as they were coming on the shore, and escorting the [unint] further north.

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Tremendous investigation was able to arrest those officers and disrupt that trafficking organization. US facilities, no. Again, we're working with our counterparts to help them, to professionalize them, and to try to assist them in conducting these investigations. Obviously we kind of keep aware of that possibility, but through our investigative efforts I think have done a pretty good job of being able to, at least in Costa Rica, to avoid a lot of that, or at least stop those organizations when those tactics were being employed.

Q: Morning. I just came off of a tour in Puerto Rico, where I was in the [unint] between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. We were primarily doing counternarcotics and alien migration, but we were receiving basically manifestos from several DTO's in that area, saying protect the load, more violence toward LE assets and LE officers. I know there were DEA concerns there. Is that also happening in Central American countries like Costa Rica? Is there, I guess with the crackdown in Colombia, and the supply and demand issue, it seems like the DTO's are becoming more violent towards LE officers. Is that a Mexican cartel thing, or is that just in general? Are you seeing that in Costa Rica?

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A: We didn't. I haven't seen any manifestos or any specific violent acts toward law enforcement during the interdiction. There has been some incidents and some shootings, as you can imagine, but I haven't seen an increase or what I would specifically say the cartels have been told go after the law enforcement when they're trying to do it. It does happen, but I don't, I haven't seen what you're describing as far as the manifesto and that kind of thing's concerned. We did see from time to time on some of the boats they're armed and that kind of thing, so we're always very much concerned for the safety of the boarding team, no question. Thank you very much. [applause]

MOD: Thank you very much to Paul. On behalf of the museum staff, we have a small token of our appreciation. Just two quick notes. Our third and final in the fall series will take place back here in the auditorium on December 2nd, where we look at cannabis and eradication efforts in California. And then second, for anyone who has not yet had an opportunity to sign the book of condolences that is out in the lobby in front of the Wall of Honor, this was put up to be given to the families of the three agents killed in Afghanistan several weeks ago. That book will be up through the end of this week.

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So again, if you haven't had a chance to sign it, please do so, and a copy will be going to all three families. Again, thank you all very much for joining us. Have a good afternoon.

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