



Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Fact Sheet:

Venezuela's Fight against Drug Trafficking

Venezuela is an active and committed partner in the global fight against the production, consumption and trafficking of illegal drugs. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the following:

1. The report issued by the State Department on February 27th revealed the inertia of U.S. bureaucracy. Discrediting of Venezuela in the fight against drugs is a political maneuver initiated by the Bush Administration. Moreover, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) was used as a political instrument by the Bush administration.
2. Venezuela's anti-drug strategy is based on a comprehensive strategy that includes prevention, drug seizures, arrests and extraditions of criminals, destruction of clandestine airstrips, and the monitoring of possible drug routes.
3. Venezuela has cooperative anti-drug accords with 37 countries, including France, Spain and Portugal.
4. Venezuela's fight against drugs has been recognized and lauded by the Organization of American States (OAS) and even by the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol).

Anti-drug Strategy

Drug Seizures

Drug seizures between 2005 and 2007, after Venezuela suspended cooperation with the DEA, were higher than they were between 2002 and 2004, when the cooperation agreement was in effect. Contrary to false claims made by U.S. officials, the average amount of drugs seized by Venezuela has not decreased since the end of the cooperation agreement with the DEA. In 2008, Venezuela seized at least 29.2 tons of cocaine.¹

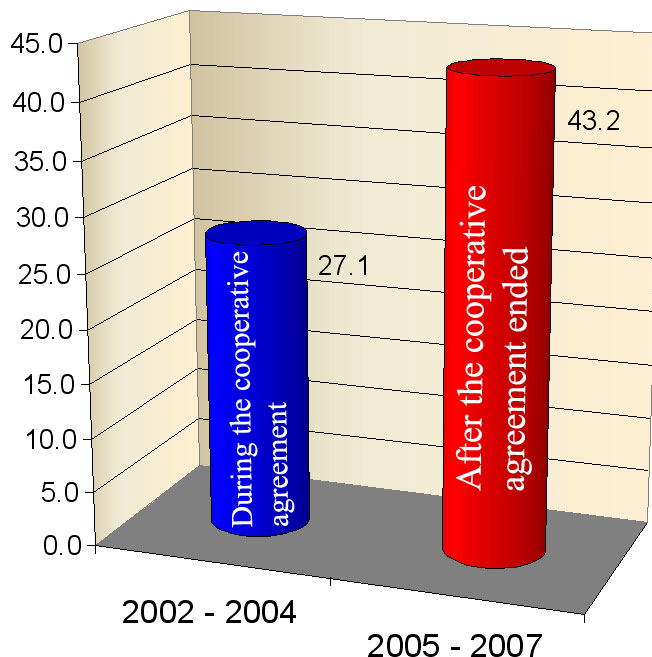
According to the U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Venezuela ranks fourth in the world in total seizures of cocaine.² It

is also important to note that cocaine is not produced in Venezuela.

Furthermore, while U.S. officials have criticized Venezuela for not seizing more of the cocaine being trafficked through its territory, it is well known that **interdictions of this sort are rarely able to stop a majority of the drugs moving** through a country. According to the Drug Policy Alliance, **U.S. authorities successfully interdict only 10% to 15% of all heroin and 30% of all cocaine being trafficked into the U.S.**³

The 2008 U.N. World Drug Report states that 78% of the 610 tons of cocaine produced in Colombia were transported by sea in 2006.⁴ This leaves only 22%, or 134.2 tons, that could have been transported by land or air.⁵ It is unlikely that all 134.2 tons could have been trafficked through Venezuela, because this assumes that cocaine is not trafficked by land or air through any other country. Therefore, **Venezuelan authorities, who seized 39 tons of cocaine in 2006, interdicted at least 29% of the cocaine flowing through the country at the time. This figure, calculated using official U.N. data, is in line with the percentage of cocaine seized by the United States.**

Average Cocaine Seizures





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Arrests and Extraditions

As of September 1st, **over 4,000 people are in jail for drug trafficking in Venezuela**, and so far this year there have been over 4,600 people charged with this crime.⁶

On March 8, 2008, Venezuelan authorities arrested a suspected drug lord and arms smuggler with paramilitary links wanted in the U.S.⁷ Furthermore, **in the second week of September 2008, 3 more suspected drug traffickers were arrested**. Two were sent to Colombian authorities on September 11th.⁸ The third was wanted by Interpol and French authorities, and will be handed over to them.⁹

Monitoring of Possible Drug Routes

By November 2008, Venezuela had installed ten Chinese-made radar stations to track and intercept planes carrying illegal drugs.

In addition to monitoring airspace, Venezuelan authorities are taking action against illicit landing strips in isolated areas used by small planes carrying drugs. **Over 223 of these landing strips were destroyed in 2008.**¹⁰

International Cooperation

In August and September of 2008, Venezuela engaged in joint exercises with the militaries of Brazil and the Netherlands to improve monitoring of airspace and the Caribbean.¹¹

Moreover, **Venezuela has anti-drug cooperation accords with 37 countries**, including Spain, France and Portugal. It also cooperates with regional partners and takes part in the OAS's Inter-American Commission for the Control of Drug Abuse (CICAD).

International Praise

Through CICAD, the OAS has recognized Venezuela's efforts in implementing the 2002-2007 National Anti-Drug Plan.¹² Interpol has also praised Venezuela's actions in the fight against drugs.¹³

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 discredited Venezuela in the fight against drugs after the suspension of the agreement.

In a July 2008 meeting with U.S. Ambassador Patrick Duddy, President Chávez indicated **that Venezuela and the United States have to cooperate again "to fight against drug trafficking and international crime."**¹⁴ However, U.S. officials continued making inflammatory comments about Venezuela. Drug czar **John Walters and Ambassador Duddy both made unfounded criticisms of Venezuela's effort in fighting drug trafficking** over the Labor Day weekend.¹⁵ These comments failed to acknowledge the problem of demand and the role of the United States in fueling the drug trade, and misrepresented Venezuela's position and efforts in the fight against drugs.

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 hopes** for consistent engagement in the fight against this scourge.

February 27, 2009.

For more detailed information about Venezuela's fight against drug trafficking, please read our context paper at:
<http://www.embavenez-us.org/>

¹The figure for 2008 does not include all seizures; it is based on data up to December 5, 2008.

²2008 World Drug Report, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

http://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2008/SEIZURE_Tables.pdf (Accessed February 27, 2009)



Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

³Drug Policy Alliance Network

<http://www.drugpolicy.org/global/drugpolicyby/latinamerica/>

⁴ 2008 World Drug Report, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, .

https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2008/WDR_2008_eng_web.pdf

⁵ “ONA: Venezuela is one of the countries with the biggest number of cocaine seizures,” September 3, 2008,

<http://www.embavenez-us.org/news.php?nid=4473>

⁶ “ONA: Venezuela is one of the countries with the biggest number of cocaine seizures,” September 3, 2008,

<http://www.embavenez-us.org/news.php?nid=4473>

⁷ “Authorities arrest suspected drug lord.” *The Washington Times*, March 8, 2008.

<http://washingtontimes.com/news/2008/mar/10/world-scene-33595043/?page=2>

⁸“ Marcos Orozco and Aldo Alvarez will be deported to Colombia tomorrow,” September 10, 2008,

<http://www.embavenez-us.org/news.php?nid=4494>

⁹“Drug lord wanted by French authorities is captured,” September 9, 2008, <http://www.embavenez-us.org/news.php?nid=4491>

¹⁰ “Venezuela destruyó 223 pistas clandestinas en su combate al narcotráfico,” *AFP* ,September 11, 2008,

<http://www.vanguardia.com/mundo/america/81-america/7092-venezuela-destruyo-223-pistas-clandestinas-en-su-combate-al-narcotrafico->

¹¹“ Venezuelan and Dutch Navies hold joint anti-drug exercises,” September 8, 2008, <http://www.embavenez-us.org/news.php?nid=4485>

¹²Venezuela: Evaluation of Progress in Drug Control 2005-2006,

<http://www.cicad.oas.org/MEM/ENG/Reports/Fourth%20Round%20Full/Venezuela%20-%20Fourth%20Round%20-%20ENG.pdf>

¹³ “INTERPOL lauds Venezuelan capture of suspected Colombian drug lord and accomplice,” September 8, 2008,

<http://www.interpol.int/Public/ICPO/PressReleases/PR2008/PR200845.asp>

¹⁴ “Chávez dice que está dispuesto a entenderse con EE.UU. y la DEA,”

<http://www.noticias24.com/actualidad/?p=15795>

¹⁵ Ian James, “US, Venezuela increasingly at odds on drugs” *The Associated Press*, September 2, 2008,

http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5gCSLq3F-9ZC-NibiWlvDe_jbt4UQD92U99M80