

The Evolution of the Cocaine Drug Market of FRANCE Impacted  
by the Strategy of the Mexican Transnational Trafficking  
Organisations (MTTOs) 2016

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## The Drug Market of France 2016 in the Image and Likeness of Pax Mexicana!

The “National Report on Drug Issues 2017” prepared by OFDT of France describes in the section “2017 Drug market and crime” the nature of the evolving supply and demand sides of the drug market of France and its nexus with crime. Of specific concern in this analysis are the cocaine and methamphetamine markets of France in 2016 as described in the OFDT report as the realities depicted in the report indicate that the cocaine market of France is well under assault by the Mexican Transnational Trafficking Organisations (MTTOs) on the supply side and the French overseas regions in the Caribbean basin (Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana) are now the new growth areas for the trafficking of cocaine to mainland France. There is a division of trafficking labour within the organisation of illicit drug trafficking in these Caribbean overseas regions rooted in the terrain and realities on the ground which illustrates the operation of an overarching strategic plan which in the Caribbean basin is the hallmark of the MTTOs. Pax Mexicana! There are also reported changes on the supply side of drug markets in mainland France which also indicate the organisational structure and the implementation of the strategic plan of the MTTOs in France. As a result of the operations of the MTTOs in France and the Caribbean overseas regions the changes to the nature of the social order and the impact on gun crime especially violent gun crime and gang wars in mainland France is noted in the report but the same applies to Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana and the impact on the bordering states of these overseas regions.

### Cocaine

The OFDT 2017 report indicated that the traditional trafficking routes for cocaine to France namely the route to Spain then to France and the routes to Rotterdam, Netherlands and Antwerp, Belgium then to France have been complemented in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the rise of the port of Le Havre, France as an entry point for cocaine. According to the said report the rise of Le Havre as a noted national cocaine entry point is directly linked to the rising volume of cocaine entering Le Havre from the French Overseas Caribbean regions especially from Fort-de-France, Martinique. The report states that the Caribbean regions are a growing trafficking point for cocaine trafficked to mainland France and Europe and French Guiana in 2016 is a noted evolving trafficking point for cocaine to both

France and Europe. The 2017 report also reports on the volume of cocaine trafficked through the mail from all of the Caribbean regions. The trafficking methodologies listed in the report are: cargo, containerised cargo, swallowing incorrectly termed muling and via the postal system. Cocaine seized in France in 2010 which was trafficked from the Caribbean regions accounted for 3% of cocaine seized whilst in 2016 it accounted for 14%. The report also described grave changes in the drug market of mainland France which illustrate the application of the strategic plan of the MTTOs and the impact upon the social order that results.

The major change of note on the supply side is the domination of North African organised crime of the cocaine wholesale market of France. What is in fact happening is the North African organised crime groups that dominate the trafficking and sale of hashish (cannabis resin) especially Moroccan organised crime are now dominant cocaine traffickers and wholesalers. This development in the French cocaine market mirrors the reality of other European drug markets therefore illustrating the application of an overarching strategy which is the creature of the MTTOs in Europe. The MTTOs have adopted Moroccan organised crime as affiliates which affords the supply of cocaine to their affiliates and in turn the Moroccan affiliates will operate the retail networks allotted them by the MTTOs. The MTTOs pursue a strategy in Europe as in the rest of the world where they operate to embrace gangland including outlaw motorcycle gangs as their affiliates charged with retailing cocaine and other illicit products. The rise in gangland violence reported in the OFDT 2017 report is as a result of the changes that result in the order of gangland and the social order as a result of the strategy of the MTTOs applied. The 2017 report notes the dominance of the wholesale cocaine market in mainland France by North African organised crime involved in hashish trafficking. But it must be understood that this dominance is as a result of the affiliation of specific North African organised crime groups to the MTTOs and the MTTOs dominate the wholesale market as the means to exert hegemony over the retail market unlike the Colombians. The MTTOs and their partners as Italian organised crime achieve this by only selling cocaine to their affiliates who then only retail. In 2016 the mainland French cocaine market is then in transition to the point of the hegemony of the MTTOs. Which means that the partners as the Ndrangheta and affiliates of the MTTOs are massing at the retail level to change

the nature of the retail cocaine business in France to reflect the retail strategy of the MTTOs and their partners. In this commitment of resources to exert hegemony over the retail market whilst expanding the level of demand and the poly drug mix of product offered for sale will intimately involve gangland France and expansion from the banlieues to mainstream France. This organic growth of the cocaine and cannabis markets will impact organised crime, gangland and the social order of France.

The OFDT 2017 report has reported on the changes that were already in train in 2016 at the retail level. It is reported that retail operations in the banlieues that previously sold hashish have now added the retail sale of cocaine and are now expanding their retail networks into working class neighbourhoods bordering the banlieues. In Marseille cocaine is offered for sale in all retail points of sale in the northern districts of the city that once specialised in the retail sale of hashish and herbal cannabis. The report speaks to the evolution of retail methodology with the introduction of alternatives to the drug sales point model where distance is placed between the holder of the stash for sale and the point of sale. In this scenario the dealer is contacted and various means used to carry out the point of sale including the use of runners to effect delivery and the sale. The next telling development reported by the OFDT report is the creation and operation of a range of points of sale that offer prospective buyers a sense of their security whilst effecting the purchase of their drug of choice. In the quest to expand their retail market share dealers are then migrating to the mainstream spaces of France especially the public spaces with a high volume of human activity such as public transport terminals, streets etc. Street dealing in the urban spaces of mainstream France is now the premier space where the quest for the hegemony of the MTTOs their partners, affiliates and the affiliates of their partners and affiliates over the retail cocaine drug market will be expressed and an alternate social order created.

The OFDT 2017 report noted the rise in gangland violence amongst drug dealers in cities of France. Marseille in the period experienced a wave of gangland drug trafficking linked killings which were “unprecedented in the past twenty years or so.” In 2015 there were also upsurges of similar violence in Lille and Rennes. The rationale driving the violence is indicated by the rising seizure of guns with drugs and the attacks on individuals which all point to for Europe the displacement that follows the aggressive impact of the strategy of the MTTOs, their partners and

affiliates on drug markets in Europe and elsewhere. Those who are displaced respond with violence, those who are prosecuting hegemony clean up not only those refusing to embrace the new order but those within their organisations who refuse to abide by the rigid discipline demanded by the MTTOs. And the lower levels of the market actors squeezed out of the market or have had their operating space considerably reduced thereby starving them of income and resources resort to banditry driven by intense anger seeking out weak targets of opportunity as the aged, women, the infirm, children, small businesses etc. and this degrades the quality of life of the communities they operate in and heighten the crisis of public safety.

The recent use of Libya as a transition zone for hashish destined for Europe including France as stated in the OFDT 2017 report must be understood in the context of the trans Sahel/Sahara drug pipeline moving cocaine through Libya to Europe and the affiliate status of North African organised crime involved with hashish trafficking to Europe with the MTTOs. The MTTOs and its Italian organised crime partners pioneered the trans Sahel/Sahara cocaine pipeline to move cocaine to Italy. The trafficking of hashish through Libya to Europe therefore results in loads of cocaine, hashish and illegal migrants flowing to Europe thereby maximising profit. West African organised crime affiliates especially Nigerian and Ghanaian of the MTTOs move cocaine and humans into the Sahel portion of the pipeline where the load is handed over to affiliates for the run through the Sahara to Libya. One expects that methamphetamine manufactured in West Africa is also moving to Europe via this pipeline.

The price and purity level of cocaine per gram sold at the retail level in France according to the OFDT 2017 report shows a purity level ranging from 51% to 68% at an average cost of 68 Euro per gram. The cost per gram and the range of purity levels show the impact of the agenda of the MTTOs on the French cocaine market through the flood of product that enables the application of the marketing strategy of the MTTOs. This strategy calls for retail purity levels in the 60% per cent range at a price point below what it's at present. This is then a task awaiting completion seen especially in the stabilising of purity levels at a price point that ensures the drug is now widely affordable ideally 60% purity at 30 to 40 Euro per gram. France can therefore expect this marketing strategy to impact drug markets as the globalised enterprise of the MTTOs impact and eventually exert hegemony

over the cocaine market with the resulting blow back from this hegemonic position.

### Methamphetamine/Meth

The OFDT 2017 report indicates that the market for meth in France is extremely underdeveloped for lack of adequate supply as a result it is presently a cult drug. The MTTOs are adept at producing industrial grade meth at sites around the world including West Africa and their West African affiliates particularly Nigerian organised crime are operationally active in Europe. The MTTOs are intent on creating a mass meth market in Europe and in France the networks handling cocaine for the MTTOs will add meth to their product mix. In France hashish, herbal cannabis, cocaine and meth will be offered on retail markets as they have vastly different price points in a bid to expand the depth of the clientele in a given catchment area population. The premier product of choice of the MTTOs is meth as it's a synthetic drug that allows the flexibility of manufacturing at the point of most valuable sale unlike plant based products as cocaine enabling a rate of profit maximisation not afforded by cocaine. Given the receptiveness of the French consuming public to meth this will be the wild ride.

### Albanian organised crime

The OFDT 2017 report indicates that Albanian organised crime has a dominant role in the heroin market of France and is increasingly present in the herbal cannabis market of France. What must be noted is that in Europe the signs of Albanian organised crime groups now enjoying affiliate status with the MTTOs and its partners are now apparent. Seen in the entry of Albanian organised crime groups into the cocaine markets of Europe. It's expected that this trend will appear in France shortly or it has already appeared.

### The Caribbean regions of France

The OFDT 2017 report devotes noteworthy space to treating with the trafficking of cocaine from Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana to mainland France and Europe primarily because this route has evolved to the point in 2016 where it's now the third major trafficking route by which cocaine enters France. This route is part of the Eastern Caribbean Trafficking Pipeline (ECTP) established by the MTTOs and their Caribbean affiliates for the following reasons: to facilitate

trafficking of cocaine and heroin to Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands then to the eastern seaboard of the USA. To traffick cocaine to Martinique, Guadeloupe and the French collectivity of St Martin then to France and Europe. To traffick cocaine and heroin to the USA from the other islands of the eastern Caribbean, cocaine to Canada and to Europe. To traffick cocaine to the UK, the Netherlands and Europe via islands of the eastern Caribbean linked to the UK and the Netherlands. There are multiple routes both direct and indirect moving cocaine to Martinique and Guadeloupe utilising the ocean, the air and human couriers. As both islands are the subject of a trafficking assault utilising multiple trafficking methods simultaneously. It's apparent that the export of cocaine from Martinique to France and the importation of hashish into Martinique reflects the operational strengths of the MTTOs and their affiliate Moroccan organised crime in France.

The flow of hashish into Martinique and French Guiana where it's being exchanged for cocaine on the drug markets of both territories according to the OFDT 2017 report has impacted the ganja wars of the Eastern Caribbean island chain especially in the case of St Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines. Given the value of high quality Moroccan hashish this is a commodity where on the ganja markets of the Caribbean island chain demand way outstrips supply especially seen in the price demanded for this illicit commodity on ganja markets. It's then an illicit commodity to kill and die for unlike cocaine kilo bricks where there is no shortage of supply the issue is access. An idea of the volumes of hashish in play and its trafficking through the Eastern Caribbean island chain is seen in the 2016 interdiction of a bale of hashish found floating in Half Moon Bay, St Kitts with the consequent impact on hashish markets and the gun violence that results. The pipeline moving hashish from France/Europe to Martinique and French Guiana is a potent reason for migration to these territories in the quest to share in the bonanza. Whilst the pipeline indicates the operational presence of transnational organised crime groups operating and securing their organisational interests in these territories in conjunction with their affiliates and partners from Caribbean gangland.

French Guiana presents an entirely different trafficking reality created by the geographic location of this overseas region in the trafficking geography of South America and the comparatively underdeveloped and inadequate state security apparatus of French Guiana. Cocaine and heroin is exported from Venezuela,

Guyana and Suriname to the USA, cocaine to Canada and West Africa and the Caribbean island chain. But the major task of these three export points is to move volumes of product to Brazil which is the major export point of the western hemisphere today. French Guiana is then evolving as a multi destination export point with emphasis on Brazil, France and Europe. With respect to France multiple trafficking methods are utilised with an emphasis on the use of swallowers utilising flights to France and Europe. The swarm of swallowers leaving French Guiana illustrates the depth and extent of trafficking that has enveloped the social order and the limitations posed by the comparatively underdeveloped economy. The frenzied trafficking illustrates the volume of cocaine available on the market with the wholesale price per kilo and its purity level potentially illustrating the stage of evolution of the drug market of French Guiana. The OFDT 2017 report stated that in French Guiana a kilo of cocaine of at least 70% purity can be purchased for 5,000 Euro. A purity level of 70% means that the industry standard kilo of 90%+ purity has been stepped on which indicates that it's not a traditional wholesale market but one that is facing supply exclusivity. In that those excluded from the nexus with the MTTOs and their partners and affiliates must settle for stepped on kilos at a higher price than that afforded to affiliates who receive industry standard kilos. This is a drug market reality presently common throughout the Caribbean basin. The description of the French Guiana drug market in the OFDT 2017 report is in keeping with the hegemonic reality of the supply side of drug markets presently in the Caribbean basin under Pax Mexicana. There is no drug market for affiliates and partners of the MTTOs there are simply inter organisational/enterprise transactions. The existence of the cocaine drug market and its competitive pricing per kilo for stepped on cocaine indicates the frenzied trafficking activity in the territory. And the quantum of investment being made by the MTTOs to rapidly evolve French Guiana into a major trafficking hub to Europe and France. This strategy seeks to maximise the strengths and minimises the weaknesses of the states of Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana towards creating a trafficking hub which includes Brazil on the western shore of the Atlantic basin thereby linking the trafficking hub of the eastern shore in Africa to the western shore. This linkage will encompass Africa, Europe and Asia joined via a trafficking pipeline that has a dual flow from west to the north and the east and from east to the north and to the west. French Guiana is the current target of the western shore in play towards realising this strategy. The next stage in the

strategy of the MTTOs is the creation of drug labs in French Guiana where trafficked coca paste will feed the production of cocaine hydro chloride for export and with this the cocaine drug market of French Guiana will further evolve. The investment in the production of cocaine hydrochloride can also be combined with the production of synthetic drugs as methamphetamine.

<https://en.ofdt.fr/publications/national-report-emcdda/>

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