

Update 2/2016 Illicit Drug Trafficking in the Caribbean

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This is the second update for 2016 which has been made necessary by the rapid evolution of the illicit trades of the Caribbean driven by the business model of the Mexican TTOs and the continuing failure of Caribbean ruling politicians to accept, understand, articulate and deal effectively with this reality.

Reality 1 ATM Scamming. This entails the spread throughout the Caribbean of a number of different organised crime players involved in ATM scamming, the cloning of bank money cards and the looting of bank accounts. There were three specific reports with two involving groups of nationals of the Peoples Republic of China one in the Commonwealth of Dominica in the Eastern Caribbean and one in Jamaica and the third is a report from Belize of Eastern Europeans specifically Bulgarians. The presence of Chinese nationals in this organised crime activity in the Caribbean is a new phenomenon and is the result of the growing Chinese presence throughout the Caribbean. Eastern European activity in this scam in Belize indicates the extent to which the Caribbean is now integrated into globalised criminal networks as the Eastern Europeans especially Bulgarians and Romanians made their entry into the tourist islands frequented by Europeans now they are tapping into all markets of the Caribbean as the Chinese organised crime networks are doing. The reality of the Dominican Republic (DR) is instructive of this relatively new Caribbean illicit enterprise. A Bulgarian was arrested for looting over 2 million RD\$ from ATMs in Santo Domingo (DR1 Daily News 30 May 2016). The arrested Bulgarian was also implicated in the December 2015 looting of clients' accounts from ATMs in Santo Domingo (DR1 Daily News 7 June 2015). Dominican Police revealed that large groups of non-nationals are operating in the DR especially in the tourist enclaves of Bavaro, Puerto Plata, Veron and Cabarete stealing identities, cloning cards and looting accounts via ATMs. The Police indicated that Bulgarians, Venezuelans, Colombians and Chileans were arrested for these crimes (DR1 Daily News 29 June 2016). There is then a concerted assault on the security of the accounts of customers of the retail banking sector in the Caribbean at present who utilise ATMs and point of sale payment systems whether credit and/or debit cards.

<http://dominicanewsonline.com/news/homepage/news/crime-court-law/chinese-nationals-charged-with-theft/>

<http://dominicanewsonline.com/news/homepage/news/crime-court-law/chinese-nationals-complain-of-conditions-at-stock-farm-prison/>

<http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/latestnews/Three-Chinese-charged-under-anti-gang-legislation>

<http://www.reporter.bz/front-page/two-bulgarians-charged-for-theft-in-debit-card-fraud-scheme/>

See my blog post on this at this link:

<https://drugtrade.wordpress.com/2015/12/30/skimmers-harvesters-and-your-money-cards/>

Reality 2: Expansion of Cocaine Export Points. A seizure at Britain's Gatwick International Airport from Barbados of 18 kilos of liquid cocaine placed in oil filters indicate the existence of organised traffickers operating out of Barbados seeking to place product in Europe. These organised traffickers will utilise all opportunities present in Barbados especially the movement of tourists back to Europe from Barbados. The discovery of just under 7 kilos of cocaine in 9 hollowed out breadfruit in a shipment of 98 boxes of breadfruit and plantains at Gatwick Airport, Britain from St Lucia indicates the operation of an experienced trafficking network in St Lucia moving product to St Lucia and out of St Lucia. The quantity of cocaine mixed into a sizeable shipment of perishable produce concealed in the said produce are all the hallmarks of experienced traffickers. More and more export points in the Eastern Caribbean chain are being switched on to become trafficking export hubs to Europe and other markets especially the US and Canada. Barbados, Grenada, St Lucia, Sint Maarten/Saint Martin, St Kitts, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Antigua and the British Virgin Islands are now the prime targets for expansion as the new growth export hubs. Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Island remain the premier export hubs to the US the impact of this illicit activity on the social orders of these trafficking hubs is now apparent and the case of Barbados is illustrative.

<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/at-least-3million-worth-cocaine-hidden-on-a-flight-to-gatwick-disguised-as-oil-cylinders-a3302781.html>

<http://stluciatimes.com/2016/08/27/cocaine-discovered-in-produce-shipped-from-saint-lucia-to-the-uk>

<http://www.barbadostoday.bb/2016/09/07/unfortunately-things-have-fallen-apart/>

<http://www.barbadostoday.bb/2016/09/09/dont-get-like-trinidad-or-jamaica-bishop-begs/>

Reality 3: The Volume of Export Trafficking has increased. This is seen in the level of interdictions in receiving markets from traditional export hubs and from the newly created hubs. One indicator is activity out of Curacao illustrated by interdictions in the airports of receiving markets and by arrests in Curacao. The newly created air link between Curacao and Dusseldorf, Germany resulted in a storm of mules and swallowers on these flights as the business model calls for deepening the cocaine markets of Europe by creating new imports points further East than the traditional entry points of Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands. The flights to Dusseldorf spawned a feeding frenzy whilst the traffickers have flooded the airport with a tsunami of mules/swallowers carrying smaller loads of product booked on flights to various markets not only in Europe with the intention of collapsing the security apparatus at the airport. There is in addition the loading of large cargoes of cocaine destined for Europe in single vessels in the Caribbean island chain in this case Curacao and on the mainland washed by the Caribbean Sea in this case Guyana. Which indicates that the traditional loading points for trafficking have now been joined by new nodes again confirming the heightened level of illicit products now entering and leaving the Caribbean.

<http://curacaochronicle.com/judicial/route-dusseldorf-attractive-for-drug-mules/>

<http://curacaochronicle.com/judicial/less-drugs-more-couriers-at-hato-airport/>

<http://curacaochronicle.com/judicial/multiple-convictions-for-drug-trafficking/>

<http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uknews/864-sailors-had-120m-cocaine-hidden-on-yacht>

http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/14555029.Cocaine_found_on_tug_boat_worth_512m_drugs_expert_tells_court/?ref=rss

The same has been the case in Jamaica with mules/swallowers arrested in US east coast airports such as in New York and Baltimore who entered the US on flights that originated in Jamaica especially from Montego Bay. What is noteworthy in

the case of Jamaica and Curacao is the involvement of Canadian citizens with trafficking cocaine on flights bound for Canada from these two countries. The strategy to flood Canada with product via multiple trafficking pipelines is now in operation and includes the Caribbean.

<http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/latestnews/18-y-o-Canadian-woman-on-cocaine-charges>

http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Five-Canadian-women-held-with-liquid-cocaine-in-MoBay_72676

<http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Canadian-woman-held-at-airport-released--4-others-charged-with-cocaine-possession>

<http://curacaochronicle.com/judicial/multiple-convictions-for-drug-trafficking/>

Reality 4: Jamaica Is Unique in Caribbean Trafficking. The Caribbean trafficking model is based on a multi-illicit product mix imported into the island and exported to consumer markets of the North Atlantic with the Dominican Republic (DR) as the prime example of the model. Jamaican transnational organised crime (TOC) has now evolved a new model in the realm of Caribbean trafficking uniquely Jamaican which has two platforms: the importation and export of the illicit product mix as in other Caribbean islands and the cultivation, production and trafficking of organic, high potency ganja and ganja by-products as hashish and ganja oil to markets in the North Atlantic and in the South as Brazil where in this model Jamaicans control the trafficking of their ganja and its by-products in the Caribbean. In the pursuit of this strategy Jamaican TOC has established operational structures throughout the Caribbean including Cuba and in the South American mainland CARICOM states. The enclave in Haiti has engendered the development of the trafficking of ganja from Haiti to the Dominican Republic (DR 1 Daily News 24 February 2015, 26 August 2015, 27 July 2016) for sale in DR markets where the dominant players in this trade in the DR are Haitian. There is also an operational structure in the Eastern Caribbean island chain with the dominant nodes being in Antigua and St Vincent which indicates the presence of Jamaican TOC in the Eastern Caribbean Trafficking Pipeline (ECTP). This is further illustrated by Antiguan and Vincentians being part of the crew along with Jamaicans of interdicted ganja marine trafficking transports. The Jamaican TOC group that dominates this trade is now producing and exporting from Jamaica

hashish made from Jamaican organic high potency ganja which attracts a premium on markets of the North and South as does the oil and this hashish is being moved to markets via Caribbean islands other than Jamaica. Jamaican TOC has then created trafficking networks under their control which can be used to traffic illicit products other than ganja and ganja products which enhances their affiliate relationship with Mexican TTOs. One result of this reality is the increase in the volume of illicit products that is now moving into and out of Jamaica and the changes in the social order that is presently in train especially in Jamaican gangland.

http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Stiff-sentences-for-11-drug-traffickers-in-Cuba_68911

<http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Six-including-3-Costa-Ricans-arrested-after-ganja-find>

<http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Jamaica-gun-drug-smuggling-suspect-killed-in-Haiti>

Police seize large quantity of Hashish: July 18 2016

<http://www.thestkittsnevisobserver.com/>

<https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/ice-caribbean-corridor-strike-force-partners-seize-60-million-worth-cocaine-marijuana>

<http://dominicanewsonline.com/news/homepage/news/crime-court-law/jamaican-vincentians-remanded-on-drug-charges/>

Reality 5: The Eastern Caribbean is the new trafficking hotspot. The US and British Virgin Islands are now trafficking hubs where drug markets have been established creating a secondary trade in cocaine which is a beacon for small players seeking to get into the drug trade at the entry non-affiliate level. Tortola of the British Virgin Islands, St Croix and St Thomas of the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico are part of this nexus as product is sourced in Tortola for sale in the US Virgin Islands and/or Puerto Rico and in the US Virgin Islands for sale in Puerto Rico. This trafficking node is part of a series of drug markets which are now thriving in the ECTP such as Antigua, Sint Maarten/St Martin, the Commonwealth of Dominica, St Lucia, Martinique and Guadeloupe. This reality is illustrated by the interdiction of a go-fast boat with a cargo of cocaine headed for Sint Maarten moving along

the pipeline. What has also been illustrated in the US Virgin Islands is the impact drug trafficking is having on the integrity of personnel of the state security agencies they are recruited as traffickers raising the issue of a compromised state under assault by the Mexican TTOs in a US territory.

<http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=2418063&CategoryId=14092>

<http://stthomassource.com/content/news/police/2016/08/31/cocaine-sentence-gets-puerto-rico-man-126-months>

<http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=2420189&CategoryId=14092>

<http://stthomassource.com/content/news/local-news/2016/09/06/member-mapps-security-detail-appears-court-drug-cash-charges>

<https://www.thedailyherald.sx/islands/58850-dutch-vessel-seizes-128-kilos-of-cocaine>

Reality 6: The Trafficking Methodology Evolves. Several instances of this fact are: The Haitian traffickers continue to move cocaine into the Bahamas via cargo freighters but now much better designed trafficking vessels seen in their expertly designed and fabricated secret compartments to conceal cocaine are moving product from Haiti to Florida, USA which indicates the investment being made to traffic product from the Caribbean to US territory and such freighters will arrive at Florida ports from multiple points in the Caribbean. It is back to the 1990s but with greater investment levels and resolve. Haiti is now a multi illicit product trafficking node where all means to move product to the US will be and are being utilised. For years the ganja for guns' trade between Jamaican ganja suppliers and Haitian gun suppliers raised the issue of the source of the guns in Haiti now an explanation is in the public domain: gun smuggling from the US to Haiti. Haiti has now evolved into a full-fledged import/export node of the Caribbean illicit trades.

<http://www.thenassauguardian.com/news/64801-18-mil-worth-of-cocaine-seized>

<http://www.thenassauguardian.com/news/64845-six-haitians-arraigned-for-cocaine-bust>

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/downtown-miami/article81170292.html>

<http://sentinel.ht/2016/06/01/800-bricks-out-of-haiti-seized-in-miami/>

<http://www.haitilibre.com/en/news-18569-haiti-flash-worrying-seizure-of-weapons-from-the-usa.html>

The tsunami of illicit product continues to batter the Puerto Rican social order at a time of acute economic dislocation and an exodus of Puerto Ricans to the US mainland in search of a better life with a future. What is now confirmed is the trafficking of heroin by mules and swallows via the air links between Puerto Rico and the DR. Which illustrates the trafficking of heroin through the Caribbean for entry into US territories. Trinidad and Tobago is one such trafficking point for the receipt of heroin which is then moved to US territory. According to the Newsday of August 31, 2016 the US Department of Justice has filed an extradition request for an individual of Venezuelan nationality for trafficking heroin from T&T to the US in the courts of T&T. The individual was charged by T&T for trafficking hashish and heroin. Then there was the interdiction in Canada of cocaine concealed in a shipment of peppers sent via air freight to Canada from Trinidad. In all Caribbean territories where heroin is now being moved through it is expected that heroin use will increase and the heroin wars will commence if not already started as this is a most valuable drug on US drug markets.

<https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/ice-caribbean-corridor-strike-force-partners-seize-60-million-worth-cocaine-marijuana>

<http://www.dominicantoday.com/dr/local/2016/8/15/60313/Puerto-Rico-agents-nab-heroin-smuggler-on-Dominican-flight>

<http://www.newsday.co.tt/politics/0,232623.html>

<http://globalnews.ca/news/2812600/hot-peppers-cant-conceal-20-kg-of-cocaine-on-trinidad-flight-at-toronto-airport-cbsa/>

Reports out of Guyana of seizures of heroin, hashish, ecstasy and crystal meth/Ice now indicate that the premier illicit product mix of the Mexican TTOs for US drug markets especially those of the north east US is present in the Caribbean as it's being trafficked through the Caribbean to US territories in the Caribbean and the US mainland. This premier product mix has already changed the order of trafficking in the Caribbean and is impacting the sustainability of Caribbean states

unlike the order of trafficking that obtained under the three previous orders in the Caribbean.

<http://www.kaieteurnewsonline.com/2016/08/18/surinamese-found-with-large-quantity-of-illegal-drugs/>

The position of Guyana as a supplier of illicit drugs to Brazilian drug markets was illustrated with the Brazilian news report which stated that vehicles stolen in Brazil are exchanged for drugs in Lethem, Guyana.

<http://guyanachronicle.com/stolen-vehicles-being-exchanged-for-drugs/>

Caribbean Gangland: T&T, Puerto Rico

The posting of a T&T gangland video on social media invoked a series of attempts to explain this action in the media some of which entered the discourse of T&T politicians. This is a reality not unique to Gangland T&T as illustrated by an indictment of two members of Los Lobos of Puerto Rico who were arrested in Texas, USA by the USA. Clause 20 of the indictment states: “20. It was further part of the manners and means of the conspiracy that the defendants and their co-conspirators would use social media to post pictures of co-conspirators in possession of firearms, to maintain contact with each other, to promote their drug trafficking activities, and to threat other persons.” To those in T&T you have your explanation for posting these videos and pictures, deal with it.

<http://www.breitbart.com/texas/2016/05/24/members-dangerous-puerto-rican-gang-arrested-texas-border/>

The International Repercussions. The volume of illicit drugs transiting the trafficking transition zones of the Caribbean and Brazil has now raised the volume of product smuggled into West Africa and by extension Asia. These transition zones are then impacting the drug markets of North America, Europe, West Africa and Asia constituting the most valuable illicit trafficking basin in the world today.

<http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=2414693&CategoryId=14090>

<http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=2415021&CategoryId=14090>

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/developing-countries-fuel-west-africa-cocaine-hub-192049643.html?ref=gs>

<http://www.nst.com.my/news/2016/09/171428/police-crack-three-international-drug-syndicates-seize-rm3m-cocaine-and-meth>

The demand side of the equation in the north east USA is illustrated by the scale of a heroin retail operation dismantled in New York city which graphically indicates why heroin is being moved through the Caribbean to the north east USA. Click and learn: <https://www.dea.gov/divisions/nyc/2016/nyc070116.shtml>

Then there is an indication of the scale of cocaine smuggling from multiple supply points to New York city:

<https://www.dea.gov/divisions/nyc/2016/nyc070716.shtml>

The supply side of the equation has established the poppy industry in Honduras from which heroin is derived which flows along a trafficking pipeline out of Honduras which comprises heroin, cocaine, meth and smuggled humans. This pipeline links Honduras and Costa Rica to Jamaica and Honduras and Guatemala to Belize.

http://dialogo-americas.com/en_GB/articles/rmisa/features/2016/05/09/feature-07

<https://dialogo-americas.com/en/articles/honduras-destroys-15-narco-airstrips-only-six-months>

The question then is if poppies are under cultivation in Caribbean islands at present?