

(b) (1)  
(b) (3)

JBW2748-071003

## Intelligence Report

DCI Crime and Narcotics Center

11 May 2000

### Ecuador: Threat of Colombian Drug Spillover

*Drug traffickers, frequently with the aid of Colombian guerrillas, appear to be increasing operations in northern Ecuador in response to expanding coca cultivation in southern Colombia as well as improved counterdrug efforts in Colombia. [redacted] drug traffickers have increased transshipments through Ecuador, particularly in the north, and may be establishing cocaine laboratories in several of the country's northern provinces. Colombian guerrillas reportedly assist in the transport of precursor chemicals and other drug-related supplies from northern Ecuador to cocaine laboratories in southern Colombia, as well as provide security to narcotics operations in the area. (S NF)*

*Traffickers probably will continue to increase drug transshipments through northern Ecuador in the near term as they seek to support Colombia's growing drug industry. Moreover, the building pressure against narcotics activity in southern Colombia could push traffickers to move more cocaine production, and possibly coca cultivation, across the border into Ecuador despite Quito's ongoing coca eradication efforts. Colombian insurgents likely will continue to support drug activity in northern Ecuador, but may not back possible trafficker attempts to increase drug production in the area if the insurgents perceive the supply routes supporting their guerrilla activities to be at risk from retaliation by Ecuadorian authorities.*

**Increased Trafficking Through Ecuador** [Redacted]

Regional trafficking organizations are increasing their drug transshipments through Ecuador, [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Although many drug traffickers in the past have conducted transshipment operations through Ecuadorian air and maritime routes, [Redacted]

[Redacted] the pace and volume of such activity are rising, especially on the part of Colombian trafficking groups.

- [Redacted]

- The United States Navy in mid-February seized some 6 metric tons of cocaine, one of the largest maritime drug seizures recorded in South America, aboard a fishing boat off the coast of Ecuador, according to press reports.

- [Redacted]

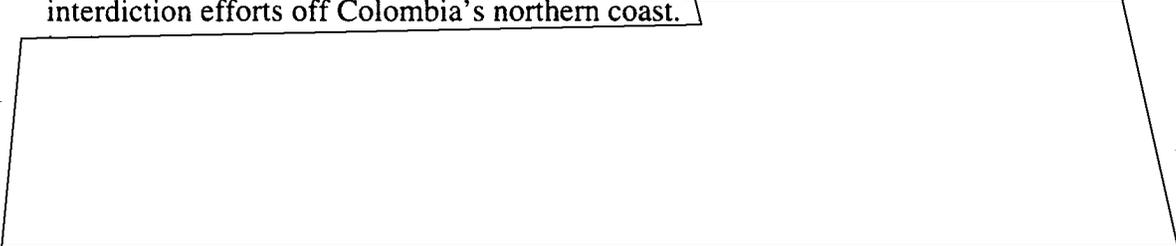
---

This report was prepared by the DCI Crime and Narcotics Center (CNC). Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to [Redacted]

[Redacted]

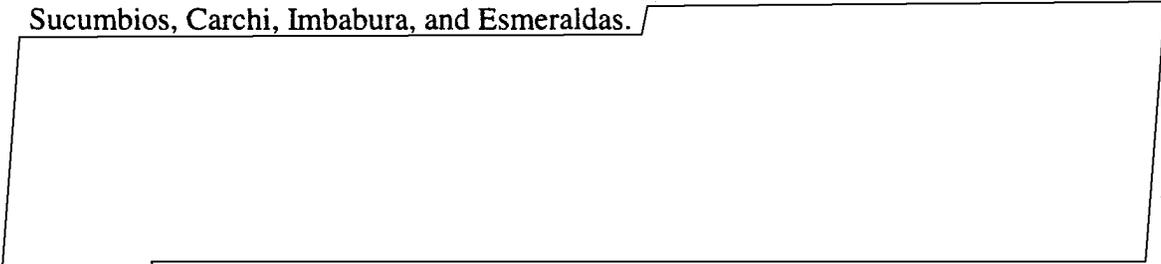


The substantial rise in coca cultivation and cocaine production in southern Colombia is the main factor driving the increase in transshipments through Ecuador. Coca cultivation in the department of Putamayo increased 58 percent from 1997 to 1998, and Putamayo's and Cauqueta's departments share of the Colombian coca crop grew to 65 percent in 1999. Traffickers are also moving more cocaine through Ecuador, destined for transport along eastern Pacific smuggling routes, to avoid increased interdiction efforts off Colombia's northern coast.



**Colombian Spillover into Northern Ecuador** ~~(C)~~

The increase in drug trafficking through Ecuador has been most pronounced through the country's northern frontier with Colombia, specifically the provinces of Sucumbios, Carchi, Imbabura, and Esmeraldas.

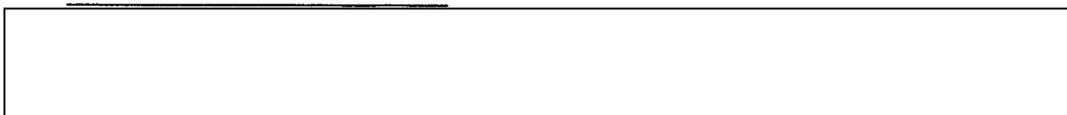
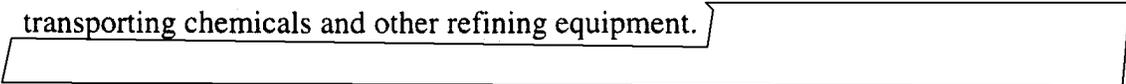


Colombian-based traffickers also reportedly move growing amounts of refined cocaine hydrochloride south through Sucumbios, Carchi, and Esmeraldas Provinces to various Ecuadorian seaports and airports for international shipment.

Colombian traffickers increasingly use Ecuadorian seaports to reduce police suspicions of illicit cargo.



Meanwhile, Colombian drug traffickers may be establishing cocaine laboratories and coca plant nurseries in Ecuador's Sucumbios and Esmeraldas Provinces, possibly to evade Colombian Government interdiction efforts and to reduce the cost of transporting chemicals and other refining equipment.



[redacted] local press reports indicate that drug traffickers run cocaine laboratories in the jungles of Esmeraldas Province, near some of Ecuador's port cities. [redacted]

[redacted] Ecuadorian farmers commonly cultivate coca plants in Sucumbios Province and then transport the plants across the border into Colombia. [redacted]

### Coca Cultivation Spillover [redacted]

Drug traffickers continue to engage in low-level coca cultivation in northern Ecuador, [redacted]

[redacted] northern Ecuador remains especially vulnerable to Colombian spillover because of the region's favorable growing conditions.

- Coca is a very adaptable plant capable of survival in a wide variety of soils.
- Moreover, growing conditions in northern Ecuador are comparable to conditions in neighboring Colombia, including fertile soils, ample drainage, rolling to steep hillsides, and sufficient rainfall. [redacted]

### Colombian Guerrillas Facilitate Border Drug Trade [redacted]

Colombian guerrillas capitalize on the lucrative border drug industry by safeguarding shipments of precursor chemicals to and from Colombian-based narcotics operations and providing armed security and logistical support to drug-related activity in Sucumbios Province. [redacted] Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas can easily traverse the border and penetrate local Ecuadorian communities, in part because of bilateral agreements between Colombia and Ecuador allowing unrestricted passage across the border in some northern provinces. [redacted]



[Redacted] Their ongoing activity in northern Ecuador is likely an outgrowth of their involvement in southern Colombia's drug industry, which reportedly provides an important source of funding for the guerrilla group's insurgent activity [Redacted]

FARC guerrillas reportedly protect cocaine laboratories and widely scattered coca fields in northern Ecuador, as well as tax the cross-border movement of local Ecuadorians working on Colombian coca plantations. [Redacted]

[Redacted] Nonetheless, Colombian insurgent groups may not back higher levels of coca cultivation in the area because they might want to avoid interference from Ecuadorian authorities along their re-supply routes supporting insurgent activity across the border in Colombia. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

In addition, [Redacted]

[Redacted] press reports indicate that Ecuadorian soldiers have discovered several coca nets near FARC base camps in Sucumbios Province. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

**Challenges to Controlling Border** [Redacted]

Senior Ecuadorian officials, increasingly alarmed by the threat of Colombian spillover, have announced plans to strengthen the country's northern border with a large deployment of military troops. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

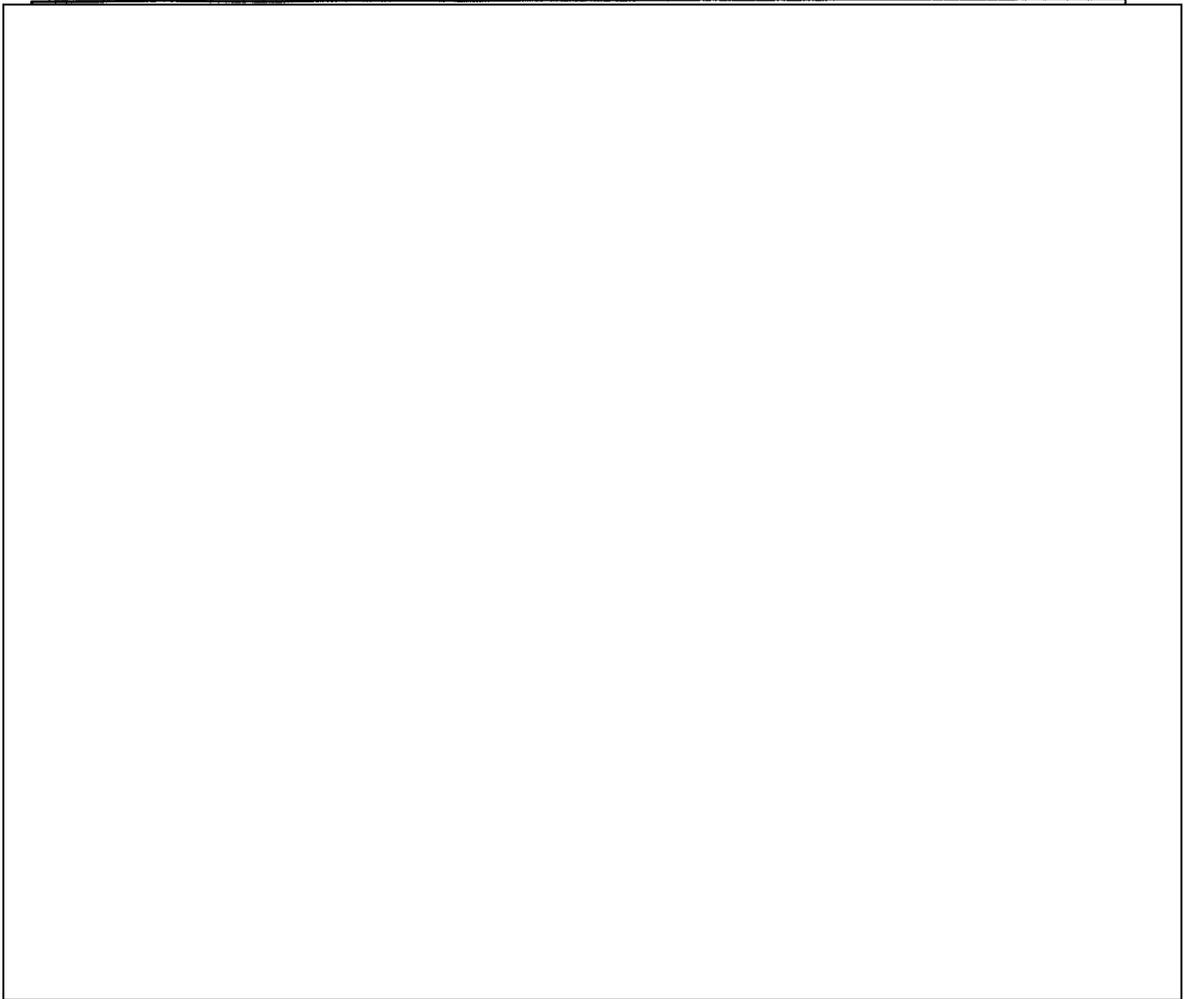
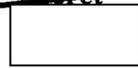
[Redacted]

[Redacted]

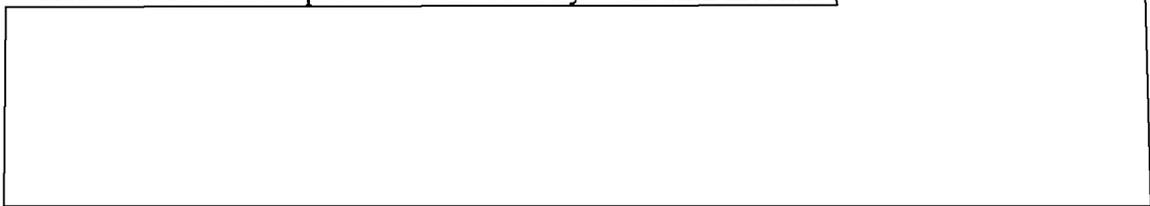


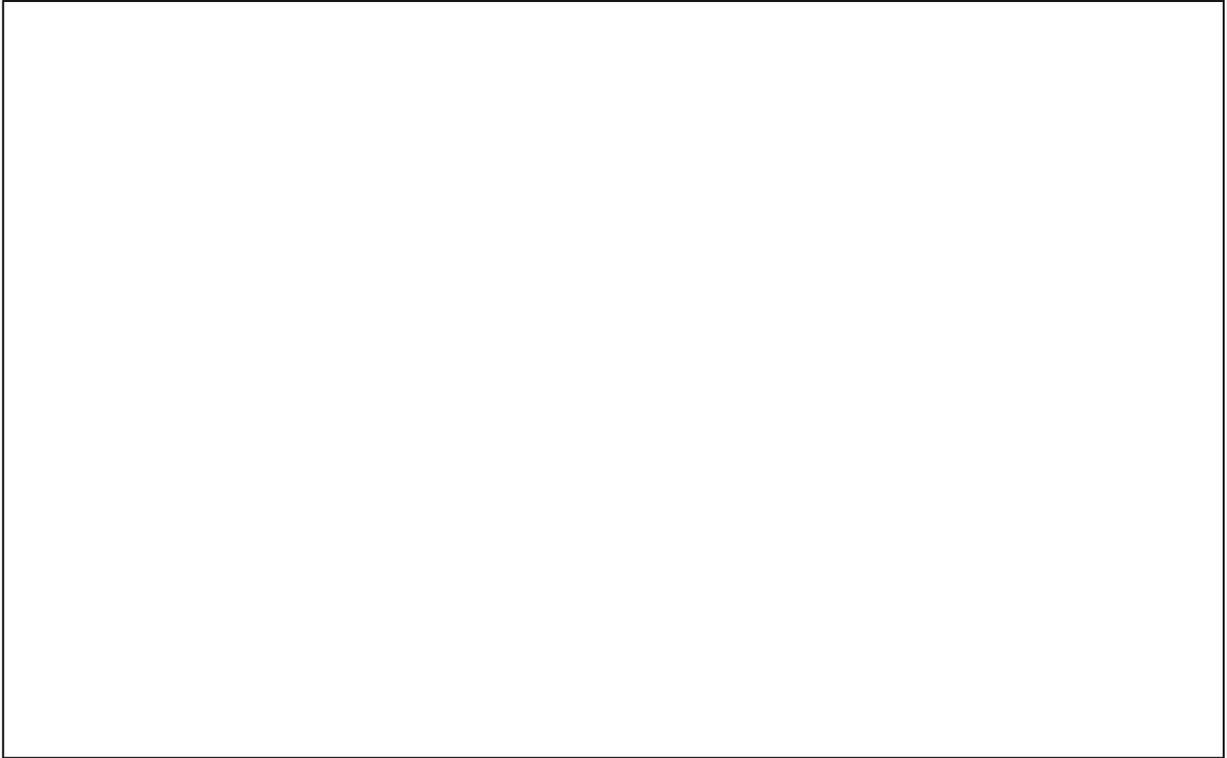
Quito is reportedly turning to the United States for increased aid to counter the spillover threat. For example, press reports indicate that the Ecuadorian Army General Juan Ramon Jimenez traveled to Washington in February to seek approval for \$47 million in aid—to be included in the US aid package to Colombia—to fight drug trafficking.



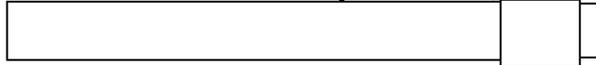


Some military and civilian officials may be reluctant to improve counterdrug measures in the northern region because they are afraid of provoking Colombian guerrillas to retaliate against local residents or against Ecuador's valuable oil industry, which accounts for 30 percent of the country's national income.



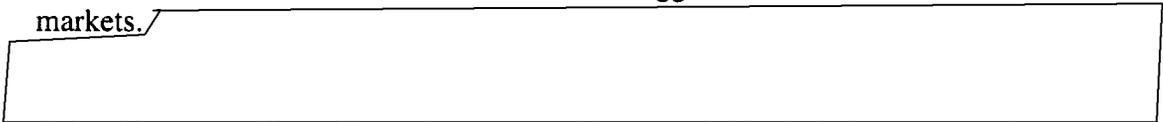


- The large number of secondary roads, trails, and connecting rivers in northern Ecuador limits police ability to combat drug trafficking.

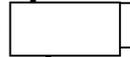


**Near-Term Outlook (U)**

Drug transshipments will continue to increase through northern Ecuador as traffickers work to support the surge in coca cultivation and cocaine production in southern Colombia. The ongoing interdiction efforts by antidrug authorities in traditional smuggling routes out of Colombia also will increase transshipments through the area as traffickers search for alternative routes to smuggle finished cocaine to international markets.



Colombian guerrillas will continue to provide essential logistical support to drug trafficking operations in northern Ecuador. However, they could lessen their support if it puts their more important supply routes supporting guerrilla activity in Colombia at the risk of retaliation from Ecuadorian antidrug forces.



For the moment, Quito's counterdrug efforts are tempering expansion of coca cultivation and drug production in northern Ecuador, but are facing difficulty in countering the region's increasing drug transshipments because of resource shortfalls.



**Implications for the United States**



The threat of Colombian spillover has focused greater attention by the Andean governments on the United States' motives and commitments to the region, particularly in light of recent moves by Washington to substantially increase counterdrug aid to Bogota. Quito, like other area governments concerned with regional spillover, could criticize the US if new counterdrug measures in southern Colombia increase drug and insurgent activity in northern Ecuador.

