

AIRGRAM

Soc 11-5 Col

ARA-10

RS/R	REP	AF	ARA
1			
EUR	FE	NEA	CU
INR	E	P	IO
6	4	2	5
L	FBO	AID	SYRS
	9MM	15	1
	1		New
BDDO	505	9	H
1	4	1	1
AGR	COM	FRB	INT
	10		
LAB	TAR	TR	XMB
		4	
AIR	ARMY	NAVY	OSD
5	3	7	34
USIA	NSA	CIA	HSC
10	3	16	6

Original to be Filed in _____ Decentralized Files.

FILE DESIGNATION

UNCLASSIFIED

A-57

HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO: AmConsulates Cali, Medellin (by pouch)

RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MAR 27 5 38 PM '73

RS/AN
ANALYSIS BRANCH

DATE: March 14, 1973

FROM : AmEmbassy BOGOTA

SUBJECT : Press Review on the Drug Scene in Colombia --
January and February

REF :

The Embassy Narcotics Control Action Plan describes one of its major goals in its campaign to stop the flow of narcotics to the United States as "the development of an awareness of the dangers of narcotics and dangerous drugs in Colombia."

During the past several months we have reported steady progress in the creation of such an awareness.

A USIS program of heavy media output and personal contacts with media leaders to tell them of strong U.S. concern for the growing amount of drug traffic passing through Colombia and what we see as an increasing problem of drug abuse has been highly successful. Combined with other Embassy activities, growing official concern and a barrage of reporting from international news agencies the USIS campaign has made drug abuse and drug trafficking inescapable topics in the Colombian media.

Previous reports have noted increasing media coverage of drug-related events and some editorial pressure for stronger action by the government to combat a growing trend. During this reporting period there has been a quantum increase in reporting and a sustained editorial effort on the part of many major newspapers to alert their readers to the dangers of drugs. Coverage of drug related matters has increased at least five-fold during the January-February reporting period, and editorial comment has become both more vocal and more insistent in pointing out the problems and demanding solutions.

SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION

PM 5 45

O-PER

POST-ROUTING

TO:	Action	Info.	Initials
ADM	X		
DCS		X	
POL		X	
ECON			
CONS	X		
ADM			
AID		X	
USIS	X		
FILE			

Action Taken:

Date:

Initials:

FORM 10-64 DS 323

UNCLASSIFIED

For Department Use Only

Drafted by:

USIS: CLoventide:dma

Drafting Date:

3-14-73

Phone No.:

306

Contents and Classification Approved by

USIS: Robert Chatten

Clearances:

CONS: VMcAninch

UNCLASSIFIED

Bogota A-57

Page 2

Colombian Government Policy

The January visit by Congressmen Morgan Murphy and Robert Steele (CODEL MURPHY) spurred the Colombian government to publicly define its policy on drug trafficking. Following a meeting with Codea Murphy, President Misael Pastrana announced the government's decision to seriously enter into the fight against drug trafficking and drug abuse. President Pastrana announced the appointment of the Minister of Justice, Miguel Escobar Mendez, as coordinator of all government anti-drug activities and pledged that Colombia would utilize all its resources to combat drug trafficking. The presidential message was widely covered and praised editorially in most major newspapers. El Colombiano of Medellin solemnly stated, "this fight does not depend entirely on the authorities. The definite and sincere cooperation of all the people is indispensable for the campaign. If not, the silence will be to the advantage of the trafficker. We must act before it is too late." Cali's El Pais said, "undoubtedly this is a transcendental campaign aimed at liberating society and especially youth from a growing menace."

A second important government measure was the introduction of new and stronger legislation to combat drug trafficking. President Pastrana had privately announced his intention to seek new legislation but the introduction of the bill during the special session of Congress was evidence of the high priority the government places on drug matters. The legislation has been passed by the House of Representatives but will probably not be approved by the Senate before the session is adjourned in mid-March.

The government's position was reiterated by the Minister of Justice during a graduation ceremony for 97 Colombian law enforcement officials attending a special BNDD narcotics investigation course. Minister Escobar cited the President's message, announced that the law enforcement coordinating committees had been created, and that the government had instructed law enforcement agencies to take the necessary steps to insure effective action against the growing menace.

International Reputation

The capture of more Colombians in New York, Miami, New Orleans, Puerto Rico, Peru, Venezuela, and in Colombia has stimulated editorial comment on Colombia's decaying international reputation. An El Pais editorial said, "everything indicates that Colombia is today a major nucleus in international drug marketing." Bogota's Conservative La Republica

UNCLASSIFIED

reported that during the first fifty days of 1973 \$65 million worth of Colombian marihuana had been captured in the United States, making marihuana Colombia's second largest export crop. La Republica called for tighter controls to stop the "export" of dangerous drugs.

El Siglo called it "a shameful record" and demanded more official action to control the production and trafficking of illegal drugs.

An important aspect of growing public awareness is the realization that drug abuse is a genuine local problem and one that is growing rapidly. An El Pais editorial talking of the dangers for youth said, "it is doing terrible damage to thousands of our school age youth . . . we must immediately realize that and declare war without quarter against this devastating menace."

El Siglo said, "obviously we are not refering to the export of narcotics, in itself vituperative, but which in the end doesn't prejudice Colombians. We are worried about internal consumption which is growing at an alarming rate."

Related Activities

Public awareness of the problem is also reflected in the activities of organizations that until very recently were only marginally involved in any drug related activities. The Ministry of Health is now chairing a government level coordinating committee for non-law-enforcement activities, and is drafting plans for a more effective program to treat drug abusers. The Ministry is also preparing Spanish material on drug abuse for general distribution. The Risaralda Regional Office of the Ministry of Health has also prepared and published a pamphlet on drug abuse which has been widely circulated in schools and youth groups. The Centro Colombo Americano in Bogota sponsored a three-day seminar on drug abuse which included presentations by the National Police, leading psychologists, psychiatrists, and former addicts. The seminar was well attended and heavily publicized in all news media.

Law Enforcement Activities

The news media is pleased with an apparent increase in police activity aimed at stopping drug trafficking. While figures are not available for comparison, it looks as if the police have been more active. There have been several arrests, seizures of large quantities of marijuana, at least half a dozen seizures of cocaine and the discovery of one major laboratory in the Cauca area.

UNCLASSIFIED

The comparison has not been made in the press but the number of Colombians arrested abroad and the amount of drugs decommissioned in other countries is disproportionately higher than similar seizures in Colombia.

The judiciary has been under attack in the press for its failure to convict drug traffickers. An El Occidente story reporting the seizure of a cocaine laboratory and 10 kilos of cocaine ended with the hope that "justice will do its job, that the same thing won't happen as has happened to so many traffickers. . . they don't remain in jail."

Another story in El Tiempo reported that of 292 persons arrested in 1972 on charges of drug trafficking, not one of them remains in jail today.

Summary

There exists a high degree of public awareness of the role Colombia is playing in drug trafficking and of the dangers that traffic represents for Colombia. More and more organizations are becoming involved in anti-drug efforts. Pressure on the government for stronger and more efficient measures should continue to mount.

El Colombiano, the leading voice in the anti-drug campaign, has declared drugs the most important social problem facing Colombia and unflaggingly keeps up its battle. In El Colombiano's words: "There is no alternative: either drugs or life; courage or cowardice; defeat or triumph."

SACCIO

UNCLASSIFIED