

Director of Central Intelligence

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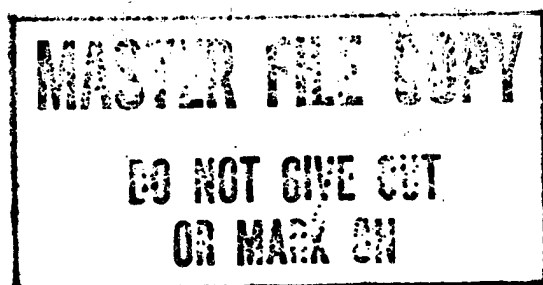
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National Intelligence Estimate

Colombia's Battle Against the Drug Mafia: Implications for the United States

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Key Judgments



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NIE 88-88W
April 1988

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THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and the Treasury, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the US Customs Service, and the US Coast Guard.

Also Participating:

The Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

The Director of Intelligence, Headquarters, Marine Corps

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THE DRUG MAFIA: IMPLICATIONS
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is being published separately
with regular distribution.

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KEY JUDGMENTS

The release from jail of drug kingpin Jorge Ochoa and spiraling violence by major traffickers have demonstrated the inability of President Virgilio Barco's government to implement an effective and sustained counternarcotics strategy. With the powerful drug mafia holding the upper hand, Barco is likely to continue antidrug coordination with the United States, but the odds of his taking sustained and strong action—particularly extraditions—against the major drug organizations are slim. He is also likely to emphasize the need for narcotics consumer countries, particularly the United States, to strengthen internal demand reduction programs. Moreover, we believe Colombian official and public acceptance of trafficker activity will grow as the narcotics situation continues to deteriorate.

The major drug trafficking organizations, fearful of any new Colombian extradition treaty with the United States, are relentlessly increasing their use of corruption, intimidation, and violence against Colombia's judicial system, particularly the seriously threatened Supreme Court; key opinion makers in the media, the schools, and the business community; and counternarcotics personnel in the military and police organizations. The traffickers are winning the war with these tactics while Barco, although alert to the growing threat, is [redacted] unable to eliminate drug-related corruption. Support for President Barco on narcotics issues, moreover, is limited in the government and among influential political, military, and church leaders.

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Since Ochoa's release, Barco has publicly reaffirmed his intent to continue fighting major trafficking organizations and has permitted more active antidrug initiatives by the military. While unlikely in the near term to seriously threaten the power of the major drug organizations, he is likely to emphasize enforcement actions against targets the drug mafia views as replaceable or expendable: chemical stockpiles, marijuana operations, and small-scale cocaine facilities. He will probably continue to be reluctant to systematically target major cocaine laboratories and operations. This is partly to avoid a major confrontation with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Colombia's largest insurgent group, in whose territory coca is grown and cocaine is sometimes produced.

President Barco's inability to adequately address US counternarcotics concerns may complicate a range of diplomatic issues. Prolonged frictions over narcotics control could erode Barco's generally pro-American stance and cause increased Colombian resentment of US

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pressure for extradition. Therefore, Barco is likely to allow further US involvement in his counternarcotics programs only if it is not widely publicized.

Continued US and Colombian efforts to strengthen Bogota's counter-narcotics capabilities could escalate the threat of attacks against US Embassy and law enforcement personnel. Events since Ochoa's release in December 1987 have also increased the likelihood that drug traffickers might carry out a high-visibility attack on official US facilities in Colombia or even in the United States.

Events of the last few months only solidify the conviction that prompted the scheduling of this Estimate: Colombia's illegal narcotics trade will continue to grow. It will be an increasing threat to US interests in Colombia and in the region for the balance of Barco's presidency, due to expire in August 1990, and probably beyond. The United States will continue to be a key target for the traffickers, both as a market and for violent reprisals.

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