

A Trafficker's Paradise

The "War On Drugs" and the New Cold War in Colombia

Lina Britto¹

Abstract

This paper shows how the marijuana boom in the Colombian Caribbean and the military suppression of it under the "Two Peninsulas" campaign ushered in a new era of inter-state and state-society relations between Colombia and the United States. The illegal marijuana export sector thrived in one of the poorest, most isolated regions of the country, the Guajira peninsula and its neighboring Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, a lawless zone strategically located in the heart of the Caribbean basin, but never fully integrated into either Spanish colonial regime or the modern Colombian nation-state. This paper analyses the marijuana boom in two moments: its meteoric ascendance during the second half of the 1970s, which turned the country into the largest supplier of marijuana in the world, and its rapid decline in the early 1980s, which transformed Colombia into the first theater of the "war on drugs" in the Andes. The paper explains these two moments as a confluence of local, national, and global trends that were defined by the struggle over the legitimacy of production, distribution, and consumption practices that took place between the U.S. and Colombian governments, on one side, and marginal groups and frontier communities of both countries, on the other. It argues that geopolitical considerations of the U.S. government meshed with the national security imperatives of the Colombian government, and an aggressive military campaign in the core marijuana region was launched in 1978. The history of the emergence, rise, and fall of the marijuana economy in the Colombian Caribbean allows us to see how the "war on drugs" worked as a tool for strengthening the power of states, imperial and client, and consolidating a new militarism aimed at aligning South American states with the U.S. government's New Cold War strategies.

Keywords: Marijuana traffic, "war on drugs," U.S.-Colombia relations, Colombian Caribbean

Resumen

Este ensayo muestra cómo la bonanza de marihuana del Caribe colombiano y la campaña represiva en su contra, denominada "Las dos penínsulas", dieron a luz una nueva era en las relaciones inter-estatales, y entre Estados y sociedades entre Colombia y Estados Unidos. La economía exportadora de marihuana surgió y se consolidó en una de las regiones más pobres y apartadas de Colombia, la península de la Guajira y su vecina Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Esta zona ha sido históricamente reconocida como una tierra "sin dios ni ley", estratégicamente localizada en el corazón de la cuenca del Caribe, pero nunca completamente integrada ni al Estado colonial español ni al Estado-nación colombiano. Este ensayo analiza la bonanza de la marihuana en dos etapas: su ascenso meteórico en la segunda mitad de los setenta, por lo que en su momento Colombia se convirtió en el mayor exportador de marihuana del mundo, y su rápido declive a comienzos de los ochenta, años durante los cuales Colombia se transformó en el primer teatro de la "guerra contra las drogas" en Los Andes. Este ensayo explica ambos momentos como el resultado de la confluencia de tendencias locales, nacionales y mundiales definidas por una lucha por la legitimidad de ciertas prácticas productivas, comerciales y de consumo, la cual tuvo lugar entre los gobiernos de Colombia y Estados Unidos, de un lado, y grupos marginales y comunidades de fronteras de ambos países, del otro. El argumento central sostiene que consideraciones geopolíticas por parte de Estados Unidos entraron en consonancia con nuevos imperativos del gobierno colombiano respecto a la seguridad nacional, resultando en una agresiva campaña militar lanzada a finales de 1978 en la región productora de marihuana. Esta historia de la emergencia, auge y declive de la economía de la marihuana en el Caribe colombiano nos permite entender cómo la llamada "guerra contra las drogas" operó como un instrumento de control estatal y vehículo para la consolidación de un nuevo militarismo que apuntaba a alinear a los Estados sudamericanos con las estrategias de la "nueva Guerra Fría" liderada por el gobierno estadounidense.

Palabras clave: Tráfico de marihuana, "guerra contra las drogas", relaciones Colombia-Estados Unidos, Caribe colombiano.

1 Lina Britto is a Colombian journalist, and Ph.D. Candidate in Latin American and Caribbean History at New York University. Part of the research for this article was finished by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC).

Intro

In January 1979, *Time Magazine* published a cover story about how a Colombian network of “small-time entrepreneurs” provided “roughly two-thirds of all the pot smoked in the U.S.” at a time when smoking marijuana was the “most widely accepted illegal indulgence since drinking during Prohibition.” According to Peter Bensinger, then head of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Colombian Caribbean provided most of the marijuana smoked in the world at the time, as it was “a trafficker’s paradise.”² In Colombia, Donald Neff’s article stirred up public debate about the causes of the emerging narcotics business, and although the bi-partisan Colombian political establishment of Liberals and Conservatives agreed that the article was intended to harm the country’s reputation, nobody could deny that by the late 1970s, the marijuana trade on the Colombian Caribbean constituted one of the most dynamic economic sectors in the country, as well as one of the most sensitive issues in U.S.-Colombian relations.³

The *Time* article was key to explaining to the U.S. public why the U.S. federal government had intervened in Colombia under the banner of the “war on drugs.” Known as the “Two Peninsulas” campaign, a joint initiative launched in November 1978 by the Carter administration and the new administration of Julio César Turbay aimed to halt traffic both in Guajira and Florida peninsulas, which represented the beginning and the end of the marijuana circuit, respectively. Most of the resources and efforts, however, were concentrated on the Colombian supply side, such that the core marijuana region became a theater of low-intensity warfare. The “Two Peninsulas” campaign was implemented as a virtual state of siege that banned air traffic, restricted the mobility of civilians, transferred local judicial power to the representatives of executive power—in several cases, military officers—occupied the area with a joint force of military, police, and intelligence undercover personnel—including DEA agents—and then, some months later, fumigated the most important ecosystem of the continental coast, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

This paper analyzes U.S.-Colombia relations during the 1970s to early 1980s in order to show how the marijuana boom in the Colombian Caribbean and the repressive “Two Peninsulas” campaign ushered in a new era of inter-state and state-society relations in the Andes. The history of the emergence, rise, and fall of the marijuana economy in the Colombian Caribbean allows us to see how the “war on drugs” worked as a tool for strengthening the power of states, imperial and client, and consolidating a new militarism aimed at aligning South American client states with the U.S. government’s New Cold War strategies.

In the late 1960s, neither the U.S. and international anti-narcotics bureaucracies nor the Colombian government considered the Colombian Caribbean region an important player in the global narcotics economy. The 1971 report of the U.S. delegation to the U.N. Commission on Narcotic Drugs, CND, prepared for its 24th session held in Geneva, stated that “the illicit drugs from outside sources which are of critical importance to the United States continue to be heroin and cocaine,” but Colombia was not listed as relevant source.⁴ During this session, an internal

2 Donald Neff, “The Colombian Connection”, *Time Magazine* (Monday, January 29, 1979); see at <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,912309,00.html>>

3 By the late 1970s, marijuana exports from the Colombian Caribbean represented around 83% of the value of all coffee exports; see Ernesto Samper Pizano et al, *La Legalización de la Marihuana* (Bogotá: Asociación Nacional de Instituciones Financieras, ANIF, 1980), 22.

4 “CND. Agenda Item 6,” NA, RG 59, Box 1, UN Commission on Narcotics Drugs—24th session—Geneva 9/27 – 10/21/71.

telegram of the U.S. Department of State reported that INTERPOL had found that “cannabis trafficking [is] now worldwide,” but again Colombia was not mentioned. Europe was “seriously involved” along with Lebanon, Morocco, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, and some Central African countries.⁵ The telegram also reported that Mexico continued to be the historical cannabis supplier of U.S. markets.⁶ In short, until the early 1970s, U.S. drug control agencies concluded—correctly—that the Colombian Caribbean’s role in the global narcotics trade had remained stable since the end of the Second World War. That is to say, the Caribbean coast of Colombia continued to be perceived as simply a transshipment point for illegal substances from Europe to the United States, and a stopover in the cocaine circuit linking Peruvian and Bolivian product to U.S. consumer markets.

The illegal export sector thrived in one of the poorest, most isolated regions of the country, the Guajira peninsula and its neighboring Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, a lawless zone strategically located in the heart of the Caribbean basin, but never fully integrated into either Spanish colonial regime or the modern Colombian nation-state. Its meteoric ascendance in the global narcotics trade as the largest supplier of marijuana in the world during the second half of the 1970s, and its rapid decline in the early 1980s can be explained as a confluence of local, national, and global trends that were defined by a struggle over the legitimacy of productive, distribution, and consumption practices that took place between the U.S. and Colombian governments, and marginal groups and frontier communities of both countries.

The marijuana boom has two clearly distinguishable moments. At first, the onset of the marijuana boom was intimately related to the emergence of a youth culture defined by political dissent, irreverence toward authority, and novel understandings of legitimate behavior, as well as the weakening of Mexico, the historical supplier of the U.S. market, as a result of fumigation campaigns there, and the disappearance of Cuba as the continental linchpin of the narcotics trade in the western hemisphere after 1959.⁷ Then, during the decline of the marijuana boom, U.S. geopolitical considerations—related to New Cold War necessities of tightening U.S. control over the Caribbean basin—meshed with the national security imperatives of the Colombian government, as an aggressive military campaign in the core marijuana region was launched in 1978; the opening chapter of the U.S.-led “war on drugs” in the Andes.

Explanations for the emergence of the narcotics industry in the Americas are varied and legion. During the 1980s and 1990s, a specialized literature agreed on four basic explanatory features of the explosion of narcotics production in Colombia and the Andes more generally:

5 “Telegram. Dept of State, 12 October 71,” *ibid.*

6 Around 80% of Mexican marijuana was consumed in the U.S.; see *ibid.*

7 From the 1920s to the 1960s, Cuba was the main axis of the narcotics trade in the Americas. Its political instability during the first half of the century, along with the close ties with the U.S. established under the Platt Amendment, created the ideal political, logistical, and financial conditions for this role. Fidel Castro’s consolidation of power in 1959 marked a watershed. While the fidelistas’ moralizing revolutionary nationalism, their yearning for a “New Cuba,” defined the regime’s zero-tolerance policy, and pushed Castro to ratify the 1961 U.N. Single Convention of Narcotics before other Latin American countries, the U.S. government insisted on using anti-narcotics propaganda as a constitutive element of anti-communism. Between 1962 and 1965, Washington—assisted by the U.S. media—transformed Fidel Castro into the new “king of cocaine.” The combined effect of the narcotization of the U.S. foreign policy towards Cuba, the fidelistas’ anti-drugs campaigns, and, last but not least, the initiative and creativity of illegal entrepreneurs seeking ways to profit from it, led to the collapse of the “Cuban Connection,” leaving a space in the illicit market for new competitors; see Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, *La conexión cubana: Narcotráfico, contrabando y juego en Cuba entre los años 20 y comienzos de la Revolución* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2005).

widespread rural poverty, open agricultural frontiers, permanent internal migration, and a geostrategic position in relation to consumption markets.⁸ Recently, economists and historians have reshaped these frameworks by studying the political conditions of the countries in which these illegal economies emerged since illicit economies flourish in political systems characterized by impunity and high levels of inequality, and during political conjunctures that favor these illegal business practices.⁹ The new literature on drugs in the Americas also helps us understand the resilience of illicit narcotics organizations, networks, and circuits as a logical result of their constant adaptation to criminalization, prohibition, and repression.¹⁰

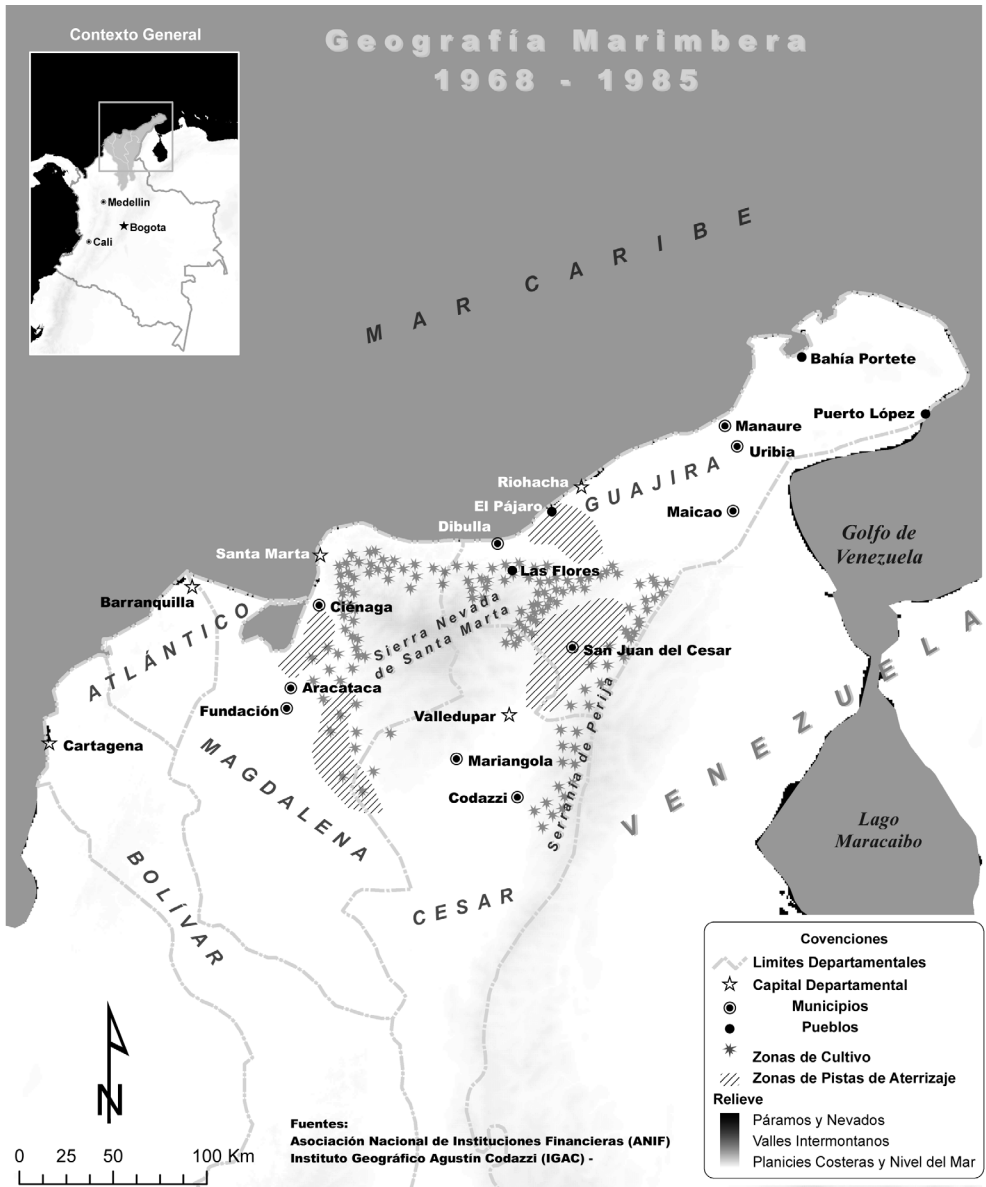
Building on these findings, the argument advanced in this paper is as follows. The “Two Peninsulas” campaign recapitulates Cold War initiatives and goals related to the reemergence of the strategy of containment in U.S. foreign policy in the late 1970s. It functioned as a laboratory for testing how militarized anti-narcotics operations could assist states in controlling geographical areas marked by historical inequalities, inconsistent state presence, and potentially insurgent projects. While I focus on state repression, I also analyze this particular set of anti-narcotics policies as another aspect of the circuit of production, distribution, and consumption.¹¹ Although cocaine traffic thrived in Colombia during this era, this paper focuses solely on the marijuana trade because the first regional narcotics boom took place around marijuana networks, rather than concurrent cocaine ones, which made them the first targets of the U.S.-led “war on drugs” in the Andean basin.

Although U.S.-Latin American relations are a fundamental aspect of the global Cold War, we know almost nothing about how these relations were narcotized through the so-called “war on drugs.” Extending Greg Grandin’s suggestive metaphor about how Latin America is like “the camel not in the Koran,” insofar as it is at once familiar and invisible in U.S. historical consciousness and imagination, I propose that the narcotization of bilateral relations is perhaps the most obscure instrument in the toolkit of the U.S. empire’s workshop.¹² But contrary to Grandin’s call to move “off the beach” in order to examine Latin American Cold War beyond U.S.-Cuban relations, I argue that in this case, our analytical focus must remain in the Caribbean basin.¹³ In the first part of the paper, I use local oral history as well as documentary evidence

-
- 8 Paul Gootenberg, “Scholars on Drugs: Some Qualitative Trends,” *Qualitative Sociology* 28:4 (Winter 2000).
- 9 Darío Betancourt and Martha Luz García, *Contrabandistas, marimberos y mafiosos: Historia social de la mafia colombiana, 1965-1992* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1994); Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, “La prehistoria del narcotráfico en Colombia,” *Innovar: Revista de Ciencias Administrativas y Sociales* 8 (Jul.-Dec., 1996); Mary Roldán, “Cocaine and the ‘Miracle’ of Modernity in Medellín” in Paul Gootenberg (ed.) *Cocaine: Global Histories* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999); Francisco Thoumi, *Illegal Drugs: Economy and Society in the Andes* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Paul Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008).
- 10 Michael Kenney, *From Pablo to Osama: Trafficking and Terrorist Networks, Government Bureaucracies, and Competitive Adaptation* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007).
- 11 Itty Abraham and Willem van Schendel, “Introduction. The Making of Illicitness” in Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham (eds.), *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005). This paper forms part of a chapter of my dissertation (The Marijuana Axis: The First Narcotics Boom and the “War on Drugs” in Colombia, 1955-1985), in which I examine the entire marijuana circuit in its different phases.
- 12 Greg Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of New Imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 2.
- 13 Greg Grandin, “Off the Beach: The United States, Latin America, and the Cold War” in Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (eds.), *A Companion to Post-1945 America* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 427.

produced by the United Nations' anti-narcotics organisms in order to explain the emergence of the marijuana boom in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Then I examine the annual reports, and internal correspondence of Colombian presidents Alfonso López Michelsen (1974-1978) and Julio César Turbay (1978-1982), and declassified documents of the U.S. administrations of Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter in order to understand the military campaign against marijuana trade networks.

The marijuana geography: landing strips and plantations
By Bennet Campoverde¹⁴



14 Colombian geographer.

A Peacetime War

Although *Time's* controversial article was correct in that marijuana provided as much revenue as coffee in Colombia, and that Colombia had filled the gap of the U.S.'s main supplier, Mexico, as a result of fumigations, veteran reporter Donald Neff downplayed a key factor without which the rapid emergence and success of this "connection" would have been impossible: the role of "small-time entrepreneurs" from the U.S.¹⁵ While rumor has it that former Peace Corps volunteers who stayed in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta organized the first marijuana export loads, and historiography has reproduced this version in spite of the lack of documentary evidence to support it,¹⁶ after doing fieldwork in the former marijuana region, my conclusion is that the initiative that young Americans and Colombians took to import small quantities of the Colombian strain of marijuana to the U.S. created a series of spontaneous transactions and business relationships that rapidly turned into a new and safe supply route, which became the bedrock on which the marijuana export economy then flourished.

Previously produced along the Andean coffee axis in the western cordillera, and in the area around the United Fruit Company plantations on the southeastern foothills of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombian marijuana crops were not intended for export.¹⁷ Historian Eduardo Sáenz Rovner has found that since the 1950s, sailors and other mobile workers had been exporting Colombian marijuana to the U.S. and other neighboring countries in small quantities, therefore the steady growth of marijuana cultivation during the 1950s and 1960s did not respond to the export business, however, but to the expansion of the local consumption markets. By the mid-1960s, when the Peace Corps program began—and the Colombian chapter was the first one launched in South America— young Americans came to Colombian rural areas with dreams of political change, eager to escape home, and carrying new habits of consumption, marijuana consumption and production were well-established as parts of Colombia's internal market.¹⁸ According to one environmental activist who has lived in the Sierra Nevada since the late 1960s following some years studying in universities of the U.S. West Coast, young Americans and young Colombians shared values and counter-cultural life-styles, which provided the ideal space for these first illegal transactions:

At the time [mid to late 1960s] we didn't have any marijuana. There was marijuana in Colombia, but the marijuana export business did not exist yet... Out of the blue a lot of small ships from the U.S. started to arrive. Those people brought LSD to exchange for marijuana. But we did not have marijuana crops. *Red Point* was cultivated in the Andean region [coffee axis] and *Colombian Gold* did not exist yet.

15 Operation Condor was the name of the aerial fumigations with *paraquat* in Mexico that targeted both marijuana and poppy fields, thereby opening the door to a takeoff in Colombian marijuana production; see Paul Stares, *Global Habit: The Drug Problem in a Borderless World* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1996), 28-9.

16 D. Betancourt and M. García, *Contrabandistas, marimberos y mafiosos*; José Cervantes Angulo, *La noche de las luciérnagas* (Bogotá: Plaza y Janes, 1980); Roberto Junguito and Carlos Caballero, "La otra economía," *Coyuntura Económica* 8:4 (1978).

17 For the origins of cannabis crops in Colombia, see Eduardo Sáenz Rovner, "La prehistoria de la marijuana en Colombia: Consumo y cultivos entre los años 30 y 60", *Cuadernos de Economía* XXVI:47 (Bogotá, 2007); Mario Arango and Jorge Child, *Narcotráfico: Imperio de la cocaína* (Medellín: Editorial Percepción, 1987); and interview, "Pepe," June 25, 2006, Taganga, Magdalena.

18 E. Sáenz Rovner, "La prehistoria de la marijuana en Colombia."

So they traveled to the Andean region to buy it, and then brought it to the coast in order to export it from here. It was the easiest way. Some of them arrived in sailing boats, and some in small airplanes. All of them looked like hippies. They were not businessmen, they were not looking for big quantities, but they were many, and many more... Then it was a boom.¹⁹

By the late 1960s variegated clandestine networks for production in the Andean region established routes through the natural ports of the Caribbean Guajira peninsula.²⁰ These represented short-term, ad-hoc alliances between Americans and Colombians to transport it from the coffee axis in the Andean interior in order to export it from the coast. It was then introduced to the U.S. territory in sailing boats and small aircraft operated by veterans of the Cold War in Southeast Asia.²¹ K. “Hawkeye” Gross, one of those young American pilots with experience in counter-insurgency, explains why his generation was so quick to get involved in the business:

It hit me like a smack in the mouth: smuggling was what I'd been trained to do. The jet training, the survival schools teaching me crash survival and torture resistance, the battle experience in Vietnam, the flying in and out of dirt roads in Cambodia, the ragtag charter flying for Exec Air. Shit, I hadn't been training to be an airline pilot, I had been training to be in the smuggling business.²²

The first period of marijuana traffic in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and the Guajira peninsula, which took place from the late 1960s until around 1972, operated along the same lines as marijuana/hashish trafficking within Europe, and from Europe to the U.S., which INTERPOL signaled as a growing tendency: “large increase in LSD traffic, closely tied to cannabis traffic.”²³ This spontaneous traffic resulting from the growing demands of North Atlantic consumers, and from the initiative of marijuana consumers who became dealers in order to support their habits and make a small profit, increased so rapidly that international drug control organisms, such as the U.N. Commission of Narcotics Drugs considered the region, during the 24th session of 1971, as one of “two additional areas of particular concern because of the potential for increased trafficking.”²⁴ In its Plan for Concerted Action Against Drug Abuse, the U.N. Fund for Drug Abuse Control, FDAC, noted that these amateur traffickers were “not, initially, professional criminals. Some of them are trying to supply themselves or their friends. Large proportion are young people, some of them ‘hippies’ or others in a state of protest against society, others more conventional tourists.”²⁵

19 Interview, “José Villa,” March 30, 2005, Santa Marta, Magdalena.

20 Interview, Rodrigo Echeverri, March 15, 2010, Carmen de Viboral, Antioquia.

21 Robert Sabbag, *Loaded: A misadventure on the Marijuana Trail* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2002); and K. “Hawkeye” Gross, *Reefer Warrior: How My Friends and I Found Adventure, Wealth, and Romance Smuggling Marijuana—Until We All Went to Jail* (Boulder, Colorado: Paladin Press, 1998).

22 K. Hawkeye Gross, *Reefer Warrior*, 59.

23 “Telegram 12 OCT 71,” NA, RG 59, Box 1, UN Commission on Narcotics Drugs—24th session—Geneva to UNFDAC—July–Dec 1972.

24 “CND, Agenda Item 6,” NA.

25 “Plan for Concerted Action Against Drug Abuse—Part I,” NA, RG 59, Box 2, UNFDAC, Jan–June 1972 to INCB 1972.

By 1972, the potential of the Caribbean Colombian to supply U.S. markets was exploited much more thoroughly and systematically. Although marijuana crops existed in the southeastern foothill of the Sierra Nevada since the 1930s, because of their quality they were rarely exported. Financed and technically assisted by U.S. and Colombian investors alike, the first local crops produced exclusively for export appeared in the arid soil of the Guajira side of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta on the western and northeastern foothills.²⁶ While investors and cultivators came from outside the region—the later were peasants from the Andean region expelled by the so-called “la violencia” of the mid-twentieth century—the intermediaries were locals, mostly men from the Guajira peninsula used to smuggling, since contraband was the centuries-old mainstay of the Guajira’s economy.²⁷

The planting and harvesting of the first local crops represented the beginning of what I call the marijuana boom’s second stage, characterized by a qualitative leap in the transformation of production and distribution, as the commodity was technically upgraded and distribution networks were expanded.²⁸ The creation of *Colombian Golden* or *Santa Marta Gold*, an improved-seed strain characterized by its delicate flavor and soft effect, not only introduced a new, fashionable variety of marijuana into the U.S. countercultural markets, but supported the consolidation of a new regional economy in the northernmost part of the Colombian Caribbean. According to Rodrigo Echeverri, a forestry engineer who coordinated a multidisciplinary research group that produced an unpublished monograph on the marijuana boom, these local crops “made viable an unviable agricultural economy” because they not only helped to open the agricultural frontier, but provided guaranteed markets to its production.²⁹ “Marijuana became the source of a job and income for everybody here,” a former marijuana transporter from a Guajira southern town explained.³⁰ “The state did not go after it, and there was no marijuana consumer culture, either.”³¹ Growing and selling marijuana was considered a legitimate agricultural pursuit, little different from growing and selling food or other cash crops, except for the extent to which it minimized risk for direct producers.³²

These qualitative innovations converted the Colombian Caribbean from one region among many into the largest supplier of marijuana in the world at the time and linked the Guajira and the Florida peninsulas in a single, highly profitable circuit that peaked between 1972 and

26 Interview, Rodrigo Echeverri. See also Anne Marie Losonczy, “De cimarrones a colonos y contrabandistas” in Claudia Mosquera, Mauricio Pardo y Odile Hoffmann (eds.), *Afrodendientes en las Américas* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia e Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, ICANH, 2002).

27 Lance Grahn, *The Political Economy of Smuggling: Regional Informal Economies in Early Bourbon New Granada* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997).

28 “Vilma,” one of the founders of a hippie commune in the late 1960s that lived with the Kogui people in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, “we saw gringos giving marijuana seeds to peasants, they tried to convince us to join, they said that if we harvest I don’t remember how much pounds, they will pay us I don’t remember how much money;” interview, “Vilma”, March 30, 2005, Buritaca, Magdalena. In the late 1970s, journalist José Cervantes Angulo found a textbook on how to grow marijuana that was edited in Florida and written in Spanish; see J. Cervantes Angulo, *La noche de las luciérnagas*, 237.

29 Interview, Rodrigo Echeverri.

30 Interview, “Joaquín,” January 17, 2005, San Juan del Cesar, Guajira.

31 Interview (A), Roger Bermúdez, March 9, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira.

32 Interview, “Gonzalo,” January 17, 2005, San Juan del Cesar, Guajira.

1978.³³ The worldwide tendency identified in 1971 by the U.N. Commission of Narcotics Drugs –namely, that “large bulk shipments of drugs include concealment in transshipped vehicles and renegade pilots who fly drugs in small aircraft”– developed as the standard pattern for exports once local marijuana fields began to produce at full capacity.³⁴ The spontaneous transactions among consumers, or novices and small-time entrepreneurs that characterized the cycle of origins had ended. According to a former Guajiro marijuana intermediary, whose trajectory made him a stereotypical case of marijuana boom’s *nouveau riche*, once there were local crops, importers started not only to proliferate but to arrive in larger aircraft and ships. Thus by the second half of the 1970s, “the lowest weight you could have in order to make a marijuana shipment profitable [was] around 300 *quintales* [near 135,000 kilos or 297,000 pounds].”³⁵ Each load employed nearly forty people in transport and loading alone, and required the work of weeks on the part of at least two marijuana intermediaries –popularly known as “marimberos”– in order to buy the harvests from cultivators.³⁶

Although these networks operated without serious interference from law enforcement until late 1978, once the “Two Peninsulas” campaign was launched, the third and final phase –decline– began. The boom’s peak in the mid-1970s forced Colombian national authorities to admit its political relevance. The hectic mercantile activity in the Caribbean region and the exorbitant profits absorbed by the national banking system, as reflected in the balance of payments, forced Colombian political elites to take a public secret, known to all, and turn it into a public debate. The narcotics trade as a topic of public discussion –beyond the narrow realm of experts and technocrats– appeared for the first time during Alfonso López Michelsen’s presidency (1974–1978). After his inauguration in August 1974, López was pushed by the United States to commit his government in the fight against the drug trade together with the U.S. government. As Richard Nixon’s Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, suggested in a telegram to the American Embassy in Bogota in 1974: “the rapid growing importance of Colombia in the traffic signals the need for fast and effective reaction on the part of USG [U.S. Government]”.³⁷ The Embassy in Bogota answered that the country “is not Canada, Germany or France and unless we successfully ‘upgrade the GOC [Government of Colombia] narcotics interdiction effort’ we have no base on which to rest our coordination efforts.” Therefore, the primary goal of the U.S. government at the end of the Nixon years was to improve the operational capacity of the Colombian government.³⁸

López Michelsen’s political career relied on his family origins –as the son of the “Roosevelt of the Andes,” one of the most popular Colombian presidents in the twentieth century– and on his leadership of the Revolutionary Liberal Movement, MRL, a dissident wing of the Liberal Party formed during the National Front (1958–74). His ability to portray himself as an alternative to the *status quo*, even while serving as a leading member of the oligarchy,

33 By the mid-1970s the trade amounted for \$1,400 millions of dollars, which represented the 39% of the value of all Colombian exports; see Samper Pizano, *La legalización de la marihuana*, 22.

34 “CND, Agenda Item 6,” NA.

35 Interview (A), “Orlando,” March 9, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira.

36 E. Samper Pizano, *La legalización de la marihuana*.

37 “Telegram from Sec. of State to Embassy,” NA, RG 50, Box 5, Colombia-January –July 1975 to Untitled [Ecuador].

38 “Telegram from Embassy to Sec. of State, Oct 74,” NA, RG 59, Box 5, Colombia-January –July 1975 to Untitled [Ecuador].

stemmed in large measure from his intellectual and rhetorical skills. These proved effective as López reduced regionally diversified, illegal practices, differentiated by commodity, to one simple, scandalous headline: “the mafia wars.”³⁹ Under this rubric, he merged organized mafia activities, rural and urban guerrilla warfare, and boom-and-bust economies in peripheral regions into one single phenomenon of crime and insecurity. A day before his first official trip to the United States, López added a new element to the brew: foreign mafias. Asked about the narcotics trade in a press conference, he explained:

Colombia is victim of its privileged geographic location, which permits American citizens –with American capital investment flying airplanes with American registration numbers that take off from American airports– to turn us into a platform for the drug trade ... It is not the inability of the Colombian government to control its people that is the main cause of this state of the matter, but the American impotence to prevent its criminals from aspiring to convert our country, in the course of exploits not seen before since the opium wars, when the corruption of the Asian peoples had its origins in the greed of western capitalists, and drug traffickers.⁴⁰

During his visit with President Ford, López’s double game was revealed clearly. While on the Colombian public scene he shrewdly appeared more nationalist, radical, and confrontational than he actually was, in the United States and in confidential internal correspondence, he was highly cooperative. During his visit he talked about how “minor exports” –others than coffee– had increased in the last five years, but he avoided mentioning narcotics as one of them. During the final press conference during his visit, López argued that committing Colombia to the struggle against drug trade lead by the United States was consistent with his point of view, because “if the mafias that traffic with drugs are organized at the multinational level, obviously we have to fight them at the multinational level.”⁴¹

Trying to preserve political capital based on his dissident nationalist liberalism, López maintained a delicate balance between rhetorical confrontation and practical cooperation, producing a subtle but decisive transformation in the way the Colombian state understood and implemented its anti-narcotics role. Once in office he appointed General José Joaquín Matallana to the head of the Administrative Department of Security, DAS, the equivalent of the CIA and the FBI, then he appointed Julio César Turbay Ayala, president of Congress, as Colombian ambassador in Washington. Both Matallana and Turbay were distinguished by their moral and political conservatism.

General Matallana was an ideologically committed anti-communist with vast experience in counterinsurgency against the rural guerrilla movement in the southern part of the country.⁴² His reputation brought López the sympathy and good will he needed with Washington’s hardliners as he also was a high rank officer of the Batallón Colombia that fought in the Korean War. As a senior decorated official about to retire, Matallana took his leadership of the Colombian intelligence apparatus as a final opportunity to consolidate the Armed Forces as the ultimate guarantor of state

39 A. López Michelsen, *El Gobierno del Mandato Claro* Tomo III, 184-5.

40 Ibid., 96.

41 Ibid., 122.

42 Francisco Leal, *La inseguridad de la seguridad. Colombia, 1958-2005* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2006).

control over rural and urban populations. He envisioned DAS and its novel anti-narcotics tasks as the vanguard of the anti-subversive approach to socio-economic and political conflict. Matallana cemented ties with other intelligence agencies in the country, such as the Police's F2, with the Armed Forces, and the DEA.⁴³ In the United States, Matallana's appointment as director of DAS was taken as a clear sign of López's commitment to anti-narcotics repression, insofar "DAS will indeed assume a much more aggressive position than in the past."⁴⁴ In Colombia, on the other hand, the appointment was understood as an effort to militarize DAS, which Colombian legislation had defined as a civil service. Looking for a balance between cooperation and confrontation, López's administration was the first to push the Armed Forces and Intelligence agencies to perform anti-narcotics functions formerly carried out by Customs and Police.⁴⁵

López's moves towards a new approach to drug control and repression partially satisfied the Ford administration. In his Special Message to the Congress on Drug Abuse on April 27, 1976, Ford mentioned López, along with President Echeverría from Mexico and Prime Minister Demirel of Turkey, as one of the most cooperative heads of state in the fight against narcotics trafficking. López's recent official trip to the United States had helped to create the "genuine and healthy air of mutual concern and cooperation," which, as Ford explained to Congress, was key factor in bringing about "a real reduction in drug trafficking into the United States."⁴⁶ Nevertheless, after López's visit, the U. S. ambassador in Bogota advised President Ford not to provide any further military hardware, such as helicopters for interdiction, until the administration had completed its overhaul of the anti-narcotics apparatus.⁴⁷ In those years, antimilitarism in the United States was at its height, and in Congress the Democratic majority was determined to strengthen its oversight of the executive branch, rein in the intelligence community, and even cut military aid to important Cold War allies such as Turkey and Chile.⁴⁸ Apparently, the combined effect of this legislative opposition to increase American military involvement abroad, and the advice given by the American Ambassador in Bogota, made Ford break his promises.

President Carter's "refreshing" (southern) style, publicly regarded by López as one of the most important ingredients brought by the new U.S. administration to the relationship with Latin America, worked wonders for the future of the "war on drugs" in South America. During Carter's first years in office, domestic tolerance of drug use became widespread, and White House

43 "Memorandum by Ambassador, Bogotá, OCT 18 1974," NA, RG 59, Box 5, Colombia-January -July 1975 to Untitled [Ecuador].

44 Matallana's appointment was "read in the context of an apparent GOC [Government of Colombia] re-thinking of narcotics program responsibilities and priorities;" see "Telegram de AMB a Sec. of Sate, NOV 75," NA, RG 59, Box 4, Bolivia-1973 and 1974 to Colombia -Aug-Dec 1975. A year earlier: "The new Lopez admin, which took office on aug 7/74 has indicated by certain actions, as well as word, that it will give a high priority to the narcotics problem"; see "Telegram Bogota OCT 74," NA, RG 59, Box 5, Colombia-January -July 1975 to Untitled [Ecuador].

45 "DAS has not yet developed an active campaign towards narcotics suppression, and its efforts are lagging far behind both the National Police, and Customs"; see "Termination Phase-Out Study. Public Safety Project. Colombia, April 1974," National Security Archive (NSA), Colombia, Agency for International Development (Office of Public Safety).

46 Gerald R. Ford, *Special Message to the Congress on Drug Abuse*. April 27, 1976 at <<http://www.ford.utexas.edu/LIBRARY/SPEECHES/760368.htm>>.

47 "Memorandum," NA, RG 59, Box 4, Bolivia-1973 and 1974 to Colombia -Aug-Dec 1975.

48 G. Grandin, *Empire's Workshop*, 62-3.

intervention in drug control and interdiction relaxed as well.⁴⁹ According to López, the way Carter dealt with the marijuana boom on the Colombian Caribbean was irrefutable proof of his “natural good manners, spontaneity, and refreshing style.”⁵⁰ Overwhelmed by the estimated costs of eradication of marijuana crops in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, and interdiction of trade in the Guajira peninsula, López called Carter to request help, and instead of getting an “academic answer designed by experts,” Carter “sent a commission to calculate the size of the crops, to give us technical support, and to assist us in whatever we considered necessary. This followed the experiences of Mexico and Turkey in eradicating illicit crops, providing us with new methods in order to make operations faster and cheaper.”⁵¹

The results of the inspection would become visible a year later, under a completely different constellation of political forces within the Carter administration, which related to a general collapse of the centrist position, and a resurgence of militarism and accommodation to Cold War demands.⁵² In 1978, the counter-rebellion frequently referred to as the Parents’ Movement launched its crusade against drug use. Rapidly gaining ascendancy, the movement targeted physician Peter Bourne, Carter’s special assistant for health issues and chief advisor on drugs –and his most liberal collaborator by far– by accusing him of having used cocaine at a party given by the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, NORML, and signing a prescription for sedatives to a White House colleague under a false name. By the end of the scandal, orchestrated by a newly insurgent Republican Party, Carter stopped pushing Congress to legalize marijuana and “America’s public willingness to tolerate any drug use at all began to decline.”⁵³ Furthermore, those advocates of greater U.S. military involvement in the “war on drugs” began to multiply and ranged across the political spectrum from conservative Republicans to liberal Democrats.⁵⁴

In this context, López finished his term and the new Colombian president, López’s former Ambassador to Washington, Julio César Turbay, took office. While López’s discursive alchemy narcotics traffic became part and parcel of other kinds of crimes –such as extortion and kidnapping, which were increasingly widespread– it was Julio César Turbay’s “great crusade” that turned it into the core of a worldwide moral problem. While López discretely involved the Armed Forces in anti-narcotics activities, Turbay openly called them into action to usurp police functions. In his inaugural speech in August 1978, Turbay explained the rationale for his unconstitutional move:

49 David E. Smith (ed.), *The New Social Drug: Cultural, Medical, and Legal Perspectives on Marijuana* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1970); David Musto and Pamela Korsmeyer, *Quest for Drug Control: Politics and Federal Policy in a Period of Increasing Substance Abuse, 1963-1981* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Tatiana Matthiesen, *El arte político de conciliar: El tema de las drogas en las relaciones entre Colombia y Estados Unidos, 1986-1994* (Bogotá: Fedesarrollo, FESCOL, CEREC, 2000).

50 A. López Michelsen, *El Gobierno del Mandato Claro* Tomo VI (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, Nov 1980), 291.

51 Ibid, 292-3.

52 Jerry W. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Politics of Containment* (Boston: Sound End Press, 1983), 235-41.

53 D. Musto and P. Korsmeyer, *The Quest for Drug Control*, xxi; and Tatiana Matthiesen, *El arte político de conciliar*, 86-89.

54 Bruce M. Bagley, “Myths of Militarization: Enlisting Armed Forces in the War on Drugs” in Peter H. Smith, *Drug Policy in the Americas* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1992), 129. For a comprehensive account of Bourne’s trajectory in the White House and Carter’s Office of Drug Abuse Policy (ODAP), see D. Musto and P. Korsmeyer, *The Quest for Drug Control*, 185-233.

the contaminating wave of social decomposition and immorality that knocks on the doors of the majority of countries has made the contemporary world unsafe, and forced all nations to take care of the important problem of restoring ethical values, and security in cities and countryside, as my government will do. Its restoration is indispensable for civilized coexistence, and it is a requirement of development.⁵⁵

Once in office, Turbay issued three decrees, known as the Security Statutes, that laid the foundation for his regime. The first and third articles targeted rural and urban insurgents, who had begun to proliferate under López, while the second, decree 2144 of 1978, set up controls over the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and the Guajira peninsula in order to repress marijuana production and transport. The campaign was launched on November 1, 1978, and Battalion Number 2, headquartered in Barranquilla, administered it under the supervision of the Colombian Ministry of Defense. Colonel Rafael Padilla Vergara, head of the Department of Information at the Ministry of Defense, explained that “this is a kind of work that nobody in the Army wants to do.” The reason was that if the Armed Forces were forced to confront peasants and indigenous peoples, like the Wayuu, it might generate instability, as narcotraffickers would assist them in resisting anti-narcotics tasks, and instability favored the communist insurgency.⁵⁶

In addition to the reluctance of the Armed Forces to get involved in this type of warfare—as opposed to anti-communist counter-insurgency—the campaign also created two new problems. First, it pushed government agencies and other organisms of drugs control into what I call a war of statistics. The data on seizures, area fumigated, arrests, and so forth, became an element of political football on which U.S. military and police aid to Colombia depended.⁵⁷ Second, it created a judicial and humanitarian problem for Colombian and U.S. authorities once the number of Americans and Colombians arrested and sent to jail increased dramatically (as did the number of U.S. airplanes and ships confiscated).⁵⁸ Since 1975, the American Embassy in Bogota had formed a Prisoners’ Welfare Committee to deal with the humanitarian and judicial needs of imprisoned American citizens, and to respond to several congressional inquiries in that regard.⁵⁹ However, “with the Guajira interdiction campaign [the number of U.S. prisoners] has begun to

55 Julio César Turbay Ayala, *Memorias de un cuatrenio, 1978-1982* Tomo V (Bogotá: Editorial Presencia), 6-7.

56 J. Cervantes Angulo, *La noche de las luciérnagas*, 225. A declassified document of the U.S. Department of State affirmed that “opposition also exists within the Colombian military which is uncomfortable with its expanded role policing illegal drugs activities... Disagreements over the Army’s role in suppressing narcotics traffic were partly responsible for the resignation of the Army commander last August”; see “Colombia: An Overview of the Drug Problem,” NSA, Colombia, ca. 1979.

57 Some of the numbers for the first eight months of the campaign: Colombian citizens detained (1.127), foreigners detained (188), long-reach weapons (152), short-reach weapons (477), ammunition (19.226), vehicles (268), aircrafts (75), ships (74), kilos of marijuana (2.610.338) crops destroyed (10.217 hectáreas); see J. C. Turbay Ayala, *Memorias de un cuatrenio, 1978-1982* Tomo V (Bogotá: Editorial Presencia), 33

58 During the first two months of the “Two Peninsulas” campaign, 27 American-owned aircraft, 3 U.S.-registered boats were seized, and 37 American citizens were detained; see “Unclassified memorandum from American Embassy in Bogota to the Secretary of State in Washington, December 1978,” NSA, Colombia.

59 “Memorandum to several agencies, including DEA from Narcotics Coordinator Shurtleff,” NA, RG 59, Box 4, Bolivia-1973 and 1974 to Colombia –Aug-Dec 1975. Also: “Over the past four to five months, this embassy has received a rash of complaints from American tourists regarding body searches for drugs at Bogota and other Colombia international airports. These complaints have resulted in several congressional inquiries, the latest from senator Hiram Fong of Hawaii;” see “Telegram Dec 75,” NA, RG 59, Box 4, Bolivia-1973 and 1974 to Colombia –Aug-Dec 1975.

rise again,” although many of those newly arrested were “only subject to administrative fines and will not be imprisoned unless they fail to raise the money within the given period of time.”⁶⁰

Seeking solutions to these new problems, Turbay triggered a new transformation in the Colombian approach to narcotics control. In order to deal with “high-rank military officers’ reasoning around the need to separate the rank-and-file of the Armed Forces from these [anti-narcotics] activities that go against their nature,” in 1980, Turbay created the first anti-narcotics special unit that would be under “military discipline but will not be part of the Armed Forces.”⁶¹ Later that same year, he signed the first extradition agreement and Mutual Assistance Treaty with the United States in order to address the problem of Americans and Colombians arrested or imprisoned for narcotics production, possession, trade or consumption by both U.S. and Colombian judicial authorities. Along the way, Turbay waged a war of statistics, insofar as the flow of aid depended on the volume of the flow of drugs.⁶² Numbers on paper became the battlefield in which the narcotics “threat” was created, along with the complex of expensive bureaucracies to fight it. The battle of data, the extradition treaty, and the creation of special squads not only marked the beginning of a new phase in Colombian anti-narcotics politics, but also provided the framework in which the subsequent war between the Colombian state and the Medellín and Cali cartels took place throughout the 1980s and early 1990s.

Carter’s born-again militarism and the general rightward shift in the U.S. politics provided the international framework for Turbay’s crusade. Faced with the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, and deep divisions within the ranks of the Establishment between those who supported *détente* and those who wished a return to containment, Carter looked for a formula to satisfy both.⁶³ Eager to silence his critics, Carter gave birth to the New Cold War, and went full circle from being an enthusiast of interdependence and cooperation to formulating a doctrine of confrontation and militarization of foreign relations. The Colombian Caribbean became a perfect setting in which Carter could prove the sincerity of his conversion for two reasons. First, Turbay’s moralizing perspective on drugs production, trade, and consumption made things easier for Carter. Second, potential threats to the U.S.-dominated order had arisen in the Caribbean basin as a result of the decolonization of former European islands. The discovery of oil and gas fields in the mid-1970s, rapid demographic growth coupled with slowly growing economics and strife-ridden polities that generate massive flows of migration to the United States, the military imbalance between Cuba and other Basin countries, and its location as the vital arteries of U.S shipping both commercial and military to every area of the globe made the Caribbean basin a crucial geostrategic area for the New Cold War. Thus the profitable illegal activities in the Colombian Caribbean had to be addressed.⁶⁴

It was precisely the realization that Colombia had entered into a new era of narcotics control policy, one driven by the priorities of the U.S. government in the New Cold War, that

60 “Unclassified memorandum from American Embassy in Bogota to Secretary of State in Washington, February 1979,” NSA, Colombia.

61 J. C. Turbay Ayala, *Memorias de un Cuatrenio* Tomo V, 64.

62 Paul Gootenberg, “Talking Like a State: Drugs, Borders, and the Language of Control” in W. Van Schendel and I. Abraham (eds.), *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things*.

63 J. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis*, 241.

64 Although the RAND Corporation document was prepared in 1983, the concerns and trends it explains had begun to surface at the time of the Two Peninsulas campaign; see Joseph H. Stodder, and Kevin F. McCarthy, *Profiles of the Caribbean Basin, 1960–1980: Changing Geopolitical and Geostrategic Dimensions* (Santa Monica, CA.: RAND Corporation, 1983).

triggered the curiosity of Colombian intellectual elites.⁶⁵ The National Association of Financial Institutions, ANIF, the leading organization in the financial sector and one of the country's most prestigious business organizations, assumed the leadership of public debate. In the midst of the "Two Peninsulas" campaign, ANIF created a multidisciplinary research group to conduct fieldwork in the Sierra Nevada and the Guajira, and produce a monograph about the marijuana export business as a national phenomenon. This group defined "the marijuana problem" in three dimensions: a matter of public health, legislation, and foreign relations with the U.S. It concluded that Colombia was the "dependent variable of the equation" insofar as the dynamics that generated and sustained the marijuana boom had their roots elsewhere.⁶⁶ The only viable solution, according to ANIF, was the legalization of the production, trade, and use of the plant both in Colombia and the United States.⁶⁷

Presented during ANIF's prestigious annual conference, "The Legalization of Marijuana" upset the bi-partisan Colombian political establishment. Politicians of all stripes visited ANIF's headquarters in Bogotá in order to persuade them to work on "what is really important for the country, such as the problem of living wages, of agricultural supplies, and trade unionism, for example."⁶⁸ Ernesto Samper Pizano, president of ANIF and a rising young politician in the Liberal Party, who later became president of Colombia (1994-1998), used his political capital to cushion the blow of the Colombian elites determined to render the marijuana trade invisible, or to frame it as a problem of industrialized countries exporting their social decay to developing ones. Samper's polemical defense of a political and legislative solution, rather than a military one, had reverberations in U.S. public opinion. ANIF's conclusions turned "The Colombian Connection" article inside out, revealing that, as *Time's* reporter Donald Neff argued, "the connection is still operated mainly by Colombians" on the ground, the country was getting only "20% of profits, and 100% of bad reputation."⁶⁹

The most convincing interpretation of the Colombian Caribbean marijuana boom of the 1970s lies somewhere in between Samper's and Neff's accounts. The Colombian Caribbean marijuana boom thrived on the basis of the decades-long illegal production, trade, and consumption, and traditions of smuggling inherited from the colonial era. It took place in three phases I have defined as origins (from late 1960s to 1972 approximately), peak or pinnacle (1972-1978), and decline (1978 to around 1985). It started as an illegal commerce of Andean marijuana crops through the

65 "Significant opposition to the antidrug program remains. Many Colombians claim the program has put an unfair burden on Bogotá. They alleged that in view of its resources, Washington has not been contributing its share"; see "Colombian: An Overview of the Drug problem," NSA, Colombia.

66 Interview, Hernando Ruiz, general coordinator ANIF's multidisciplinary research group, February 16, 2010, Bogota, Colombia.

67 Although the cocaine business thrived parallel to the marijuana trade, ANIF never considered the former as a subject of study because the marijuana export economy "was the vehicle of historical transformation in terms of macropolitics, macroeconomics, and macro-social changes." ANIF understood that marijuana production and traffic, rather than cocaine traffic, generated the first narcotics-driven regional economic boom in Colombia because it accomplished two things. While it was consistent with "Colombian productive idiosyncrasy of exporting agricultural products without value added," it was also helping to consolidate a regional export sector outside the coffee heartlands in the Andes. It also helped to strengthen ties between Colombia and the United States at the level of repressive state apparatuses, providing a new framework for interstate relations; interview, Hernando Ruiz.

68 Ibidem.

69 E. Samper Pizano, *La legalización de la marijuana*.

peripheral northernmost part of the Caribbean coast, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and its neighboring Guajira peninsula, thanks to the initiative of U.S. consumers looking for new sources of supply—since Mexican cannabis was being fumigated at the time—, and small-time Colombian contraband entrepreneurs.⁷⁰ With the creation of the first local strain for exportation in the early 1970s (*Colombia Golden* or *Santa Marta Gold*), the size of export loads and profits increased enormously, as the boom peaked. The growth of investment went hand in hand with the growth of demand and the technical improvement of the quality of Colombian strains, turning Colombia into the world's main supplier of marijuana. Potential geo-strategic threats, along with Cold War national security concerns and foreign policy considerations on the Colombian side led the two governments to work together in repressing the marijuana trade. Operating as a *de facto* state of siege, this bilateral campaign succeeded in making marijuana production and transport a risky, expensive activity, which contributed to the sharp decline of the trade in the mid-1980s.⁷¹

Conclusion

The dialectical relation between prohibitionist policies and bureaucracies on the one hand, and traffickers' tireless creativity in pursuit of profit, on the other—initially driven by the initiative of consumers seeking to expand their range of choices—provided the conditions that transformed the Colombian Caribbean into the marijuana Mecca of the counter-culture movement. The military campaign launched against the region in the late 1970s and early 1980s under the banner of the “war on drugs” taught American and Colombian Cold Warriors powerful lessons.

First, the military campaign against marijuana in Colombia helped hardliners in both countries to articulate a discourse around drug trafficking and drug consumption as a major threat to national security, a form of foreign invasion that warranted nothing less than the full-scale mobilization of political, economic, bureaucratic, and military resources.⁷² Second, Carter and Turbay's “great crusade” converted drug trafficking into one of a range of nonspecific threats that enabled expanded roles and subsequent reorientation of the military bureaucracies towards fighting drugs and organized crime.⁷³ The “Two Peninsulas” campaign showed how anti-narcotics interventions could represent a new horizon of activities and a novel front of investment for the military-industrial sector, on which Cold War political economy had become increasingly dependent. Third, it allowed

70 These young people introduced a substantive change in the way marijuana production and trade had operated for decades. The cannabis harvested in the world was no longer consumed near the areas of production as before, but transported through an intricate pattern of routes to the growing consumer markets of the United States, producing exorbitant profits outside of state control; see “Plan for Concerted Action Against Drug Abuse-Part I,” July 1971, NA, RG 59, Box 2, UNFDAC (UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control) Jan-June 1972 to INCB 1972, 7.

71 Official statistics claimed that in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, marijuana crops decreased from 4,100-7,500 meters to 1,300-1,800 mt between 1984 and 1985; see “Unclassified memorandum from American Embassy in Bogota to Secretary of State in Washington, December 1985,” NSA, Colombia.

72 Since the escalation of the Vietnam War during Lyndon Johnson's administration, anti-militarism and political dissent were closely associated with consumption of illicit substances, principally marijuana. Although Johnson pioneered this approach, Richard Nixon's “war on drugs” fleshed it out and made it official government policy. Nixon's attack on “drugs” was based on the belief that “a relationship existed between drug use and criminal behavior—and additionally between drug use and counterculture lifestyle and political opinion”; see D. Musto and P. Korsmeyer, *The Quest for Drug Control*, xvii-xviii.

73 Winifred Tate, “Existential Threats and Institutional Imperatives: Drug War Politics and US Colombia Policy in the Post Cold War,” Lecture at the Tamiment Library, NYU, February 2010.

hardliners to develop a politics of fighting drugs that was supplementary to anti-communism and counterinsurgency, given that official discourses and practices about fighting drugs and communism contended that the best way to respond to a threat was to eradicate the “root causes” of instability at the source, that is to say, at the level of peasant economy and society. Fourth, it diversified the late Cold War in Latin America by projecting longstanding U.S. domestic fears outward, exporting not only American financial, political, and military know-how, but also ideological and moral conceptions of proper behavior. In short, the Cold War's global reign of secrecy operated as the general framework in which illegal activities flourished.

In Colombia, the military campaign against marijuana permitted a client state to align itself with the New Cold War strategies in ways that increased the flow of U.S. military aid and training. Although Alfonso López Michelsen's dissident liberalism and nationalist public performances made him appear resistant to U.S. meddling in Colombian domestic affairs, López's decisions laid the groundwork for the frontal assault waged by his ambassador to Washington and successor, Julio César Turbay.⁷⁴ Both López's and Turbay's anti-narcotics policies aimed to reproduce U.S. schemes by reorganizing the bureaucratic apparatus of drug control in Colombia, turning what had been a police problem of public order, public health, and taxation into a military and intelligence issue. Turbay's more ambitious anti-narcotics campaign, designed as a merciless military attack on narcotics production, distribution, and consumption, rather than undermining the Colombian state, strengthened its repressive capacity.⁷⁵ Both presidents contributed to making the divide between licit and illicit economies a powerful ideological axis around which U.S. constructions of its role in the hemisphere were established during the late Cold War and beyond.

Bibliography

- Abraham, Itty and Willem van Schendel. “Introduction: The Making of Illicitness.” In Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham (eds.). *Illicit flows and Criminal things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005.
- Arango, Mario and Jorge Child. *Narcotráfico: Imperio de la cocaína*. Medellín: Editorial Percepción, 1987.
- Bagley, Bruce M. “Myths of Militarization: Enlisting Armed Forces in the War on Drugs.” In Peter H. Smith. *Drug Policy in the Americas*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1992.
- Betancourt, Darío and Martha Luz García. *Contrabandistas, marimberos y mafiosos: Historia social de la mafia colombiana, 1965-1992*. Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1994.
- Cervantes Angulo, José. *La noche de las luciérnagas*. Bogotá: Plaza y Janes, 1980.
- Craig, Richard B. “Colombian Narcotics and United States-Colombian Relations.” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 23: 3 (August 1981).
- Ford, Gerald R. *Special Message to the Congress on Drug Abuse* (April 27, 1976) at <<http://www.ford.utexas.edu/LIBRARY/SPEECHES/760368.htm>>.
- Gootenberg, Paul. “Scholars on Drugs: Some Qualitative Trends.” *Qualitative Sociology* 28: 4 (Winter 2000).
- _____. “Talking Like a State: Drugs, Borders, and the Language of Control.” In Willem Van Schendel and Itty Abraham (eds.). *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005.

74 R. Craig, “Colombian Narcotics and United States-Colombian Relations.”

75 For a general account on how anti-narcotics policies add to state capacity, see P. Gootenberg, “Talking Like a State.”

- _____. "The 'Pre-Colombian' Era of Drug Trafficking in the Americas: Cocaine, 1945-1965." Montreal, Canada: Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, LASA, September 5-8, 2007.
- _____. *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina press, 2008.
- Grahn, Lance. *The Political Economy of Smuggling: Regional Informal Economies in Early Bourbon New Granada*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997.
- Grandin, Greg. "Off the Beach: The United States, Latin America, and the Cold War." In Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (eds.). *A Companion to Post-1945 America*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002.
- _____. *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of New Imperialism*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006.
- Gross, K. "Hawkeye." *Reefer Warrior: How My Friends and I Found Adventure, Wealth, and Romance Smuggling Marijuana – Until We All Went to Jail*. Boulder, Colorado: Paladin Press, 1998.
- Junguito, Roberto and Carlos Caballero. "La otra economía." *Coyuntura Económica* 8: 4 (1978).
- Leal, Francisco. *La inseguridad de la seguridad: Colombia, 1958-2005*. Bogotá: Planeta, 2006.
- López Michelsen, Alfonso. *El Gobierno del Mandato Claro* Tomo III. Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1976.
- _____. *El Gobierno del Mandato Claro* Tomo VI. Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1980.
- Losonczy, Anne Marie. "De cimarrones a colonos y contrabandistas." In Claudia Mosquera, Mauricio Pardo y Odile Hoffmann (eds.). *Afrodescendientes en las Américas*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia e Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, ICANH, 2002.
- Matthiesen, Tatiana. *El arte político de conciliar: El tema de las drogas en las relaciones entre Colombia y Estados Unidos, 1986-1994*. Bogotá: Fedesarrollo, FESCOL, CEREC, 2000.
- Musto, David and Pamela Korsmeyer. *The Quest for Drug Control: Politics and Federal Policy in a Period of Increasing Substance Abuse, 1963-1981*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
- Neff, Donald. "The Colombian Connection." *Time Magazine* (January 29, 1979).
- Roldán, Mary. "Cocaine and the 'Miracle' of Modernity in Medellín." In Paul Gootenberg (ed.). *Cocaine: Global histories*. London; New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Sabbag, Robert. *Loaded: A misadventure on the Marijuana Trail*. New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2002.
- Sáenz Rovner, Eduardo. "La prehistoria del narcotráfico en Colombia." *Innovar: Revista de Ciencias Administrativas y Sociales* 8 (Jul.-Dec., 1996).
- _____. *La conexión cubana: Narcotráfico, contrabando y juego en Cuba entre los años 20 y comienzos de la Revolución*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2005.
- _____. "La prehistoria de la marihuana en Colombia: Consumo y cultivos entre los años 30 y 60." *Cuadernos de Economía* XXVI: 47 (Bogotá, 2007).
- Samper Pizano, Ernesto et al. *La Legalización de la Marihuana*. Bogotá: Asociación Nacional de Instituciones Financieras, ANIF, 1980.
- Sanders, Jerry W. *Peddlers of Crisis: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Politics of Containment*. Boston: Sound End Press, 1983.
- Smith, David E. (ed.). *The New Social Drug: Cultural, Medical, and Legal Perspectives on Marijuana*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1970.
- Stares, Paul. *Global Habit: The Drug Problem in a Borderless World*. Washington: Brookings Institution, 1996.
- Stodder, Joseph H. and Kevin F. McCarthy. *Profiles of the Caribbean Basin, 1960-1980: Changing Geopolitical and Geostrategic Dimensions*. Santa Monica, CA.: RAND Corporation, 1983.
- Tate, Winifred. "Existential Threats and Institutional Imperatives: Drug War Politics and US Colombia Policy in the Post Cold War." Lecture at the Tamiment Library, NYU, February 2010.
- Thoumi, Francisco. *Illegal Drugs, Economy and Society in the Andes*. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, and Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.
- Turbay Ayala, Julio César. *Memorias de un Cuatrenio, 1978-1982* Tomo V. Bogotá: Editorial Presencia.

Archives

U.S. National Archives (NA) at College Park, RG 59:

- Box 1, UN Commission on Narcotics Drugs—24th session—Geneva 9/27 – 10/21/71, “CND. Agenda Item 6.”
- Box 1, UN Commission on Narcotics Drugs—24th session—Geneva 9/27 – 10/21/71, “Telegram. Dept of State, 12 October 71.”
- Box 2, UNFDAC (UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control), Jan-June 1972 to INCB 1972, “Plan for Concerted Action Against Drug Abuse-Part I.”
- Box 4, Bolivia-1973 and 1974 to Colombia –Aug-Dec 1975, “Telegram de AMB a Sec. of Sate, NOV 75.”
- Box 4, Bolivia-1973 and 1974 to Colombia –Aug-Dec 1975, “Memorandum.”
- Box 4, Bolivia-1973 and 1974 to Colombia –Aug-Dec 1975, “Memorandum to several agencies, including DEA from Narcotics Coordinator Shurtleff.”
- Box 4, Bolivia-1973 and 1974 to Colombia –Aug-Dec 1975, “Telegram Dec 75.”
- Box 5, Colombia-January –July 1975 to Untitled [Ecuador], “Telegram from Sec. of State to Embassy.”
- Box 5, Colombia-January –July 1975 to Untitled [Ecuador], “Telegram from Embassy to Sec. of State, Oct 74.”
- Box 5, Colombia-January –July 1975 to Untitled [Ecuador], “Memorandum by Ambassador, Bogotá, OCT 18 1974.”
- Box 5, Colombia-January –July 1975 to Untitled [Ecuador], “Telegram Bogota OCT 74.”

National Security Archive (NSA) at Washington D.C.:

- Colombia, Agency for International Development (Office of Public Safety)
- “Termination Phase-Out Study. Public Safety Project. Colombia, April 1974.”
- “Colombia: An Overview of the Drug Problem,” ca. 1979.
- “Unclassified memorandum from American Embassy in Bogota to the Secretary of State in Washington, December 1978.”
- “Unclassified memorandum from American Embassy in Bogota to Secretary of State in Washington, February 1979.”
- “Unclassified memorandum from American Embassy in Bogota to Secretary of State in Washington, December 1985.”

Interviews

- Roger Bermúdez, March 9, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira.
- Rodrigo Echeverri, March 15, 2010, Carmen de Viboral, Antioquia.
- “Gonzalo,” January 17, 2005, San Juan del Cesar, Guajira.
- “Joaquín,” January 17, 2005, San Juan del Cesar, Guajira.
- “Orlando,” March 9, 2005, Riohacha, Guajira.
- “Pepe,” June 25, 2006, Taganga, Magdalena.
- Hernando Ruiz, February 16, 2010, Bogota, Colombia.
- “José Villa,” March 30, 2005, Santa Marta, Magdalena
- “Vilma,” March 30, 2005, Buritaca, Magdalena.