



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on February 27, 2012

## Sinaloa Drug Cartel's New Caribbean Routes Centered in Dominican Republic

The Organization of American States (OAS) calls itself the “world’s oldest regional organization, dating back to the First International Conference of American States, held in Washington, D.C., from October 1889 to 1890.” There were several interim organizations like the “International Union of American Republics” and then the “Pan American Union” before the current OAS organization was formed on April 30, 1948, with the signing of the Charter of the Organization of American States in Bogotá, Columbia, with the organization coming into force in December 1951. There have been subsequent amendments to the protocols of the organization a number of times since then. The membership of the organization has grown as well and currently there are 35 members.



An earlier VOXXI report on January 3 gave this excerpt from [remarks to the committee](#):

As international pressure continues to ramp up against Mexican drug cartels, the response by U.S. officials will almost certainly be to evaluate and reprise Caribbean drug trafficking routes that were popular in the 1980s.

Those drug routes were shut down when law enforcement began to dismantle the Colombian cartels. William Brownfield, Assistant U.S. Secretary of State in charge of international narcotics and law enforcement affairs, said that trafficking activity then shifted to Mexico to “age-old smuggling routes along the porous overland border.”

Increased violence in Mexico, however, has placed U.S. law enforcement pressure squarely on the cartels, which are consequently developing alternate drug-trafficking routes to more southern Latin American countries and — in anticipation of intervention efforts targeting Central America — to the Caribbean.

Brownfield added, “We see this crisis coming. We even have some sense as to when it will arrive.”

The analysts also warned the Senate subcommittee that the Sinaloa Cartel is receiving some state-supported help from countries antagonistic to the United States, such as socialist strongman Hugo Chavez’s Venezuela.

Borderland Beat noted:

[I]n recent months, Dominican officials have blamed the Mexican group for a handful of murders and stealing a corporate jet under the cloak of early-morning darkness from an airport here. The



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jet, which was later recovered in Venezuela, was going to be used to transport cocaine from South America.

During the Dec. 15 hearing, [Sen. Robert Menendez](#) (D-N.J.) spoke of escalating drug traffic in the Sinaloa's new command center, the Dominican Republic, and observed that there seems to be a lack of urgency as violence continues to grow in the Caribbean Basin:

The problem is becoming so dire in the Dominican Republic that a presidential candidate in that country recently warned that his country is close to becoming "a narco-state."

He [the candidate] said that the government is incapable of stopping drug traffickers. I am neither satisfied with the progress being made on the ground nor the news and information I am receiving from the region.

DEA Assistant Administrator Rodney Benson said the presence of the Sinaloa Cartel in the Dominican Republic was confirmed in an operation last year in which the agency helped local officials arrest Luis Fernando Bertolucci Castillo, a member of the Sinaloas who'd been coordinating shipments by air from Venezuela. According to VOXXI, during his interrogation Castillo admitted to having a direct line to reputed Sinaloa boss Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman. Castillo was extradited to the United States late last year to face drug charges.

But the Dominican Republic was unprepared for the ensuing acts of reprisals and violence. Dr. Eduardo Gamarra, with the [Florida International University](#), an expert on the Caribbean region, observed, "The Dominican Republic is becoming the place where numerous drug trafficking transnational organizations are settling their scores." A survey concluded that 60 percent of Dominicans don't feel safe in their own neighborhoods.

In addition, there are increased signs of drug abuse on the island, as the Sinaloa Cartel offers drugs instead of cash to native smugglers as payment for services.

The cartel is also seeking logistical support from Dominicans, including reliance on nationals to provide them with small planes.

Borderland Beat concluded, "Some 10 percent of the cocaine bound for the U.S. passes through the islands, with the vast majority still traveling through Central America and Mexico, according to estimates."

For drug transport, traffickers generally use so-called "cigarette" boats — long, narrow, high-speed craft, each capable of carrying more than 4,000 pounds of cocaine.

A 2011 United Nations report on homicides worldwide reveals that the homicide rate in the Caribbean has increased every year since 2006, and the area is now experiencing some of the highest levels of lethal violence in the world.

Senator Menendez noted that in the Bahamas, 104 murders last year set a new homicide record, breaking the previous record from the year before. "But that pales in comparison to Jamaica, which has become the murder capital of the Caribbean," he reported, with more than 1,400 people murdered there last year. Even U.S.-controlled Puerto Rico is reeling from internal violence.

Critics have bemoaned the fact that U.S. involvement in the Caribbean is inadequate, and that funds earmarked for the region have been decreased. But many have noted that the worldwide "War on Drugs" has been an utter failure. As reported by Michael Tennant in [The New American](#) last November, there is absolutely no constitutional authority for the expenditure of U.S. resources in foreign countries



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in this no-win conflict.

It's clear that more government intervention is not the answer.

*Photo: Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic*



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