



DEA BULLETIN



(U) Coke Gone Bananas

CONCEALING COCAINE

IN FAKE PLANTAINS/BANANAS: AN APPEALING WAY TO SMUGGLE

(U) This DEA Bulletin is based on preliminary reporting and may be subject to updating as additional information becomes available.

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(U) Event

(U//DSEN) Reporting from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) New York Division (NYD) indicates a recent trend among separate, seemingly unrelated cases, in which cocaine is concealed in fake plantains/bananas. The preferred transportation route is the Dominican Republic (DR) to the New York Metropolitan area, specifically to the Bronx, NY.

(U) Significance

(U//DSEN) It is notable that in a two month span, from January to February 2015, the NYD has encountered multiple examples of a similar concealment method from the same country of origin used by separate drug trafficking organizations (DTOs). The bulk of cocaine is transported to the NYD area of responsibility (AOR) directly from South America or through Mexico and the Caribbean, such as the DR via Puerto Rico and Florida. DTOs utilize numerous concealment methods to transport narcotics. Some typical methods encountered in the NYD AOR include concealed compartments in vehicles, mail/parcel services, body carrier, and the lining of fruit/vegetable cardboard boxes to name a few.

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(U) Details

(U//LES) The New York Drug Enforcement Task Force (NYDTEF) seized 150 grams of packaged cocaine from fake plantains in January 2015. During the seizure, approximately 200 empty plastic plantains coated in cocaine residue were recovered. Agents estimated that each fake plantain was capable of holding 250 grams of cocaine and that a total of 50 kilograms of cocaine was smuggled inside the empty recovered plantains.

(U//DSEN) In February 2015, the NYD received information regarding two other DTOs who utilize this concealment method. One DTO, operating in the Bronx, NY, receives kilogram quantities of cocaine from Santo Domingo via plantain shipments, in which the cocaine is concealed in ceramic plantains and comingled with real plantains in a shipping container. According to reporting, the shipping container, bearing roughly 500 to 1,000 kilograms of cocaine, transits from Santo Domingo to a port in New Jersey, where the cocaine is offloaded and ultimately distributed to DTOs in the Bronx. Similarly, NYD reporting indicated that a DR-based organization is utilizing a fruit shipping business, to ship between 80 and 100 kilograms of cocaine to an unidentified distributor in the Bronx. DEA reporting further indicated the cocaine is concealed within fake bananas and comingled among real bananas in order to thwart detection.

(U//DSEN) Figures 1 and 2. Plastic plantains with cocaine residue.



Source: DEA

(U) This product was prepared by the DEA New York Division. Comments and questions may be addressed to the Chief, Analysis and Production Section at dea.onsi@usdoj.gov.