

DOMINICAN DRUG TRAFFICKING DEVELOPMENTS



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
NATIONAL DRUG INTELLIGENCE CENTER
DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Significance of Dominican DTOs in the United States.	3
Areas of Operation	3
Sources of Supply	5
Illicit Finance	7
DTO Operations	8
Intelligence Gaps	8
Outlook	8
Sources	9
Endnotes	11



**U.S. Department of Justice
National Drug Intelligence Center
Drug Enforcement Administration**

Dominican Drug Trafficking Developments

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Executive Summary

(LES) Dominican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs)^a are gradually expanding drug distribution operations in the United States. They distribute significant quantities of cocaine, totaling multiton amounts over time, primarily in Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and upper Midwest states. They also distribute heroin, marijuana and, to a lesser extent, methamphetamine, MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxy-methamphetamine, also known as ecstasy), and controlled prescription drugs.

(LES) Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) analysts estimate that Dominican DTOs will slowly expand their midlevel distribution operations from traditional centers of operation in the Northeast. They will expand their Atlanta operations into a regional distribution hub. Dominican DTOs will continue to distribute primarily cocaine and heroin. However, these organizations are flexible, adaptable, and largely independent of one another. DEA and NDIC assess with moderate confidence that in isolated incidences, individual Dominican groups will increase their distribution of other drugs in response to market demand. DEA and NDIC assess with high confidence that Dominican DTOs will not evolve into a cartel structure with one dominant leader.

a. (U) The term DTO is used here as a general designation. Dominican drug traffickers are generally independent and not rigidly structured like Mexican and Colombian drug trafficking organizations.

(LES) Significant Dominican drug trafficking trends include the following:

- An increasing number of Dominican drug traffickers are expanding beyond their traditional cocaine and heroin sources in New York City, thus diversifying their sources of supply.
 - ◇ Dominican drug distributors are increasingly obtaining significant quantities of cocaine and heroin from Mexican DTOs located along the Southwest Border and in the southeastern United States.
 - ◇ New York-based Dominicans are also obtaining large quantities of cocaine from Mexican suppliers in Atlanta, Georgia, and Houston and Dallas, Texas.
- Atlanta is rapidly becoming a major drug distribution center to Dominican DTOs along the East Coast; these Dominican traffickers rely primarily on Atlanta-based Mexican DTOs as their drug sources of supply.
- Dominican DTOs are increasingly smuggling bulk cash to the Southwest Border to purchase drugs and, to a lesser extent, to the Dominican Republic. The money is subsequently transported to South America or laundered through businesses and construction investments in the Dominican Republic.
- Dominican DTOs are increasing their use of countersurveillance techniques and communication technologies, thus impeding law enforcement's ability to monitor DTO actions.

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Dominican Drug Trafficking Developments

- Recent telephone toll data confirm that typical Dominican DTOs do not operate under a traditional cartel-like structure. Each group functions independently. Some Dominican groups, however, may have formed a support network of independent Dominican DTOs across several states that facilitates drug transportation, distribution, and money laundering activities.

(LES) Dominican Organizational Structure

Dominican DTOs are typically very independent organizations. They generally do not maintain a rigid hierarchical organizational structure like Mexican and Colombian DTOs; rather, their structure is often informal and focuses on individual entrepreneurship. Dominicans involved in drug trafficking activities in a given geographic area are socially familiar with each other, although they may not be working for the same DTO. Thus, competing Dominican DTOs in a specific area often assist each other when drugs are scarce. Investigative reporting indicates that they maintain a fluid organizational arrangement wherein participants are frequently rotated among various functions of the drug trade, from operating cutting mills^b to coordinating drug transportation and distribution, to laundering illicit proceeds.

Recent reporting suggests that several Dominican DTOs have formed a support network across many states that enables Dominican traffickers to facilitate transportation, distribution, and money laundering operations. Limited telephone toll analysis on calls across the New England, Ohio, Philadelphia/Camden, and Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTAs), for example, has revealed a network of telephone numbers commonly called by Dominican DTOs operating within these jurisdictions. Ongoing analysis suggests that these numbers may be linked to a Dominican trafficking support network across the eastern United States.¹

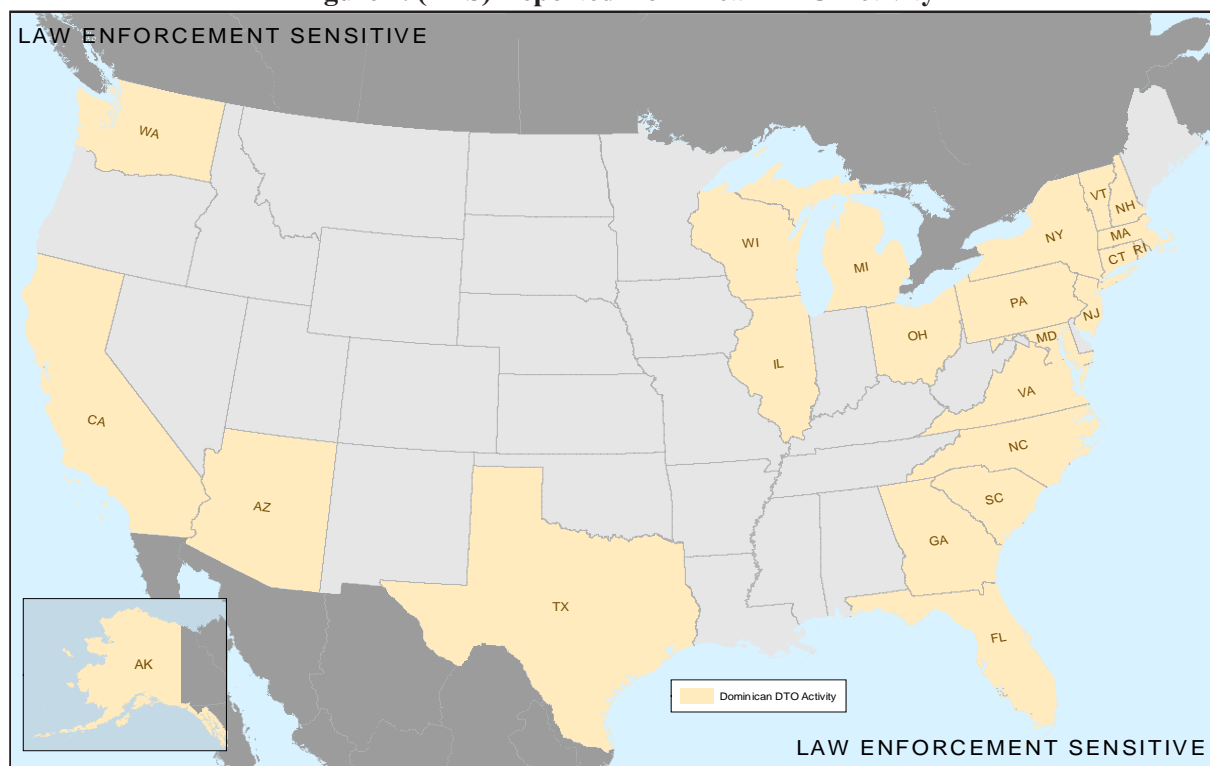
At the highest levels within their organizations, Dominican drug traffickers deal almost exclusively with other Dominican traffickers, preferably family members and those born in the Dominican Republic. Dominican traffickers also establish and maintain the trust of other Dominicans through commonalities in the birthplaces of their parents or children in the Dominican Republic. For example, there is a very large population of Dominicans originating from Bani, Higüey, and Santiago, Dominican Republic, who are involved in drug trafficking throughout Massachusetts.

Dominicans in the United States facing apprehension for illegal immigrant status or for other criminal activity are likely to move to other U.S. cities and adopt aliases to avoid law enforcement pressure, or to flee back to the Dominican Republic rather than risk deportation. Many of those who are deported often attempt to return illegally.

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration and High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Priority Drug Investigations Project.

b. (U) A cutting mill is a location where wholesale quantities of heroin are diluted (“cut”) and repackaged for retail distribution.

Figure 1. (LES) Reported Dominican DTO Activity



Sources: High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Priority Drug Investigations Project; Drug Enforcement Administration.

Significance of Dominican DTOs in the United States

(LES) Dominican DTOs in the United States are generally midlevel cocaine and heroin traffickers; their status as such affords them significant profits and some operational security. Most Dominican DTOs operate as midlevel distributors and are responsible for distributing a significant portion of the cocaine and heroin available in eastern U.S. drug markets. They earn a sizable profit from that distribution. The volume and dollar value of the Dominican drug trafficking business is unknown but has been estimated at several hundred million in U.S. dollars. As midlevel distributors, Dominican DTOs are able to maintain some operational security because of their lower operational profile, making them less visible to law enforcement. They are relatively free from competition and conflict with larger transnational supply

groups and the violent and territorial street gangs operating primarily at the retail level. By staying out of conflict with groups working at both higher and lower levels, Dominican DTOs frequently operate with less law enforcement disruption.

Areas of Operation

(LES) Dominican DTOs operate primarily in the eastern half of the country but are active in at least 23 states and the District of Columbia. The Washington Heights area of Manhattan (New York City) remains a central hub of Dominican drug trafficking operations. From New York City, Dominican traffickers distribute cocaine and heroin in the New England states and in areas as far south as Miami, Florida. (See Figure 1.) Dominican DTOs are increasing their influence and control in the distribution of heroin and cocaine in New Jersey. These DTOs are prevalent

Dominican Drug Trafficking Developments

throughout New England and are the predominant distributors of multikilogram quantities of cocaine and heroin, using the Boston area as their distribution hub. Law enforcement reporting indicates that Dominicans traffic significant quantities of cocaine and heroin in New York City and Boston, as well as from Atlanta. To a lesser extent, they are also active in Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; Detroit, Michigan; Houston, Texas; Los Angeles, California; Miami, Florida; Newark, New Jersey; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Phoenix, Arizona; and Washington, D.C. (See Table 1.) Further, Dominican activity has been reported in Alaska; Connecticut; Baltimore, Maryland; New Hampshire; Camden and Passaic, New Jersey; Charlotte, North Carolina; Columbus, Ohio; Allentown, Lancaster, and Reading,

Pennsylvania; Rhode Island; South Carolina; Vermont; Virginia; Washington State; and Wisconsin.

(LES) Atlanta is quickly becoming a major drug distribution center to Dominican DTOs along the East Coast; Dominican traffickers rely primarily on Atlanta-based Mexican DTOs as their drug sources of supply. There has been a recent influx of Dominicans into the Atlanta area from Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island. Law enforcement reporting indicates that some of these Dominicans are working with local Mexican DTOs to traffic multikilogram amounts of cocaine and up to multithousand-pound quantities of marijuana.

Table 1. (LES) Primary Areas of Dominican Drug Trafficking Activity in the United States

Location	Retail Distribution	Midlevel Distribution	Wholesale Distribution	Primary Source of Supply	Form of Transport	Vehicle Traps
Atlanta	X	X	X	SWB	Vehicle	Yes
Boston		X		MX/Atlanta/SWB	Vehicle CommAir	Yes
Chicago/Milwaukee		X		NYC	Vehicle	Yes
Dallas		X		MX	Vehicle	Yes
Detroit			X	DR/MX		
Houston			X	MX	Vehicle	
Los Angeles		X	X	MX	USPS Vehicle	Yes
Miami				DR/MX	Maritime Vehicle	
Newark	X	X		MX	Vehicle	Yes
New York City	X	X	X	MX/SWB/CB	Vehicle CommAir	Yes
Philadelphia		X	X	SWB	Vehicle	Yes
Phoenix		X	X	MX/SWB	Vehicle	Yes
Washington, D.C.		X	X	NYC/Atlanta/SWB	Vehicle	Yes

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration reporting, 2009.

CB—Colombia, DR—Dominican Republic, MX—Mexico, NYC—New York City, SWB—Southwest Border, USPS—U.S. Postal Service

Recent reporting further indicates that Atlanta-based Dominican DTOs are acting as wholesale suppliers for other Dominican groups. Mexican DTOs are the primary sources of supply for Dominican traffickers operating in the region, according to DEA officials in Atlanta. For example:

- In December 2008, DEA authorities seized some 30 kilograms of cocaine supplied by Atlanta-based Mexican traffickers; the cocaine was destined for Dominican DTOs based in New York.
- The Atlanta HIDTA Task Force reported a December 2009 investigation that resulted in the seizure of 3,200 pounds of marijuana and the arrest of four Dominican and Mexican traffickers based in Lawrence, Massachusetts.
- DEA officials in Philadelphia report that Dominicans are working hand in hand with Mexican trafficking organizations; their major drug suppliers are Mexicans operating in Atlanta who are supplied via the Southwest Border.

Sources of Supply

(LES) An increasing number of Dominican drug traffickers are expanding beyond their traditional cocaine and heroin sources in New York City, thus diversifying their sources of supply in case future shortages or price fluctuations occur. Traditionally, Dominican DTOs along the East Coast relied on a steady supply of cocaine and heroin from their sources in New York City—usually other Dominican DTOs or Colombian DTOs. Such activity still occurs; however, Dominican DTOs are increasingly being supplied directly by Mexican or Caribbean cocaine sources. Some Dominican traffickers are being supplied by Mexican DTOs in drug wholesale distribution centers along the U.S. Southwest Border and in the Southeast, primarily Atlanta. Other Dominican drug distributors have begun to obtain drugs directly from sources in the Dominican Republic. (See Figure 2 on page 6.) Examples of Dominican DTOs recently diversifying their sources of supply include the following:

(LES) Dominican Street Gangs

There are two primary Dominican street gangs in the United States—the Trinitarios and Dominicans Don't Play (DDP). Like Dominican DTOs, these street gangs are independent organizations with cells that can be large and well-organized or small and ad-hoc. Aside from traditional street crime, the gangs are usually involved in retail drug distribution and are supplied by Dominican, Mexican, and Colombian distributors. There are no known organizational connections between the gangs and their drug suppliers beyond the buyer and supplier relationship. Both gangs are violent, and sometimes these gangs demonstrate extreme violence such as battery, kidnapping, and murder. Gang members often use firearms in committing acts of violence; however, many prefer to carry and use machetes. In fact, these Dominican gangs are well known for their use of machetes as weapons. In areas where both gangs are active, most often they are rivals. Trinitarios and DDP are active in New York City, particularly in the Washington Heights and Bronx areas. In recent years, however, both groups have been active in Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.

Source: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Drug Enforcement Administration; Fairfax County, Virginia, Police Department; Middlesex County, New Jersey, Violent Gang Task Force; National Gang Intelligence Center; New York City Police Department.

- Prior to 2005, midlevel Dominican heroin traffickers in Milwaukee traditionally had much of their heroin supplied by Dominicans in New York City and Boston; however, their sources of supply are now primarily Mexican DTOs in Chicago, where availability is higher and prices are lower.
- In the Washington, D.C., and Baltimore areas, Dominican drug distributors may be obtaining cocaine directly from sources in the Caribbean, including criminal groups operating in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, instead of from traditional sources primarily in New York City.
- Some Dominican drug distributors now receive shipments of South American heroin directly from foreign suppliers, often Colombian DTOs located in Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela.²

Illicit Finance

(LES) Dominican DTOs are increasingly smuggling bulk cash to the Southwest Border to purchase drugs. Dominican DTOs have begun transporting significant amounts of bulk cash to pay Mexican drug suppliers along the Southwest Border and in distribution hubs in the United States. This shift in cash flow is the result of the new relationships Dominican DTOs have with Mexican sources of supply and the preference of those sources for bulk cash as payment for drugs.

(LES) Caribbean authorities indicate that Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic have emerged as significant transit points for Dominican drug proceeds en route to South America. Analysis of money seizures and investigative reporting indicates that Dominican DTOs are increasingly moving their drug proceeds via commercial aviation or maritime transport through Puerto Rico to the Dominican Republic for subsequent shipment

to sources of supply in Colombia and Venezuela. The Santo Domingo-Mayagüez ferry and the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport (LMMIA) in San Juan, Puerto Rico, have become major transit points for the movement of bulk cash from Puerto Rico to the Dominican Republic.³ In fiscal year 2008, more than \$1.8 million was seized at LMMIA from inbound flights, principally from New York, Philadelphia, and Hartford, Connecticut, including \$475,000 divided among seven parcels.⁴ A significant portion of the bulk cash was seized from flights arriving from New York.

(LES) Anticorruption Initiatives by the Government of the Dominican Republic

Anticorruption initiatives by Dominican President Leonel Fernández have resulted in the firing or retirement of more than 800 police and military officers since February 2009 and the forced resignation of several government officials on allegations of corruption. Officials from both the United States and the Dominican Republic suspect that much of the corruption is being funded by drug proceeds. In February 2009, for example, the Dominican Northwest Regional Police Commanding General was fired following an investigation involving 27 police officers suspected of drug trafficking and related activities; the Puerto Plata Investigation Unit Commander and 21 other officers were fired based on accusations that they carried out murders for drug traffickers; and the Dominican National Drug Control Agency (DNCD) arrested three assistant district attorneys suspected of accepting bribes from drug traffickers. Moreover, 30 DNCD employees were fired in December 2009 over corruption in Punta Cana. It is unknown, however, whether these and other efforts will have any long-term effect on drug trafficking through the Dominican Republic.

Source: Cable News Network; *Dominican Today*.

Dominican Drug Trafficking Developments

DTO Operations

(LES) Dominican DTOs are increasing their use of state-of-the-art countersurveillance techniques and communication technologies, degrading law enforcement's ability to monitor their actions. Dominican DTOs are increasingly using countersurveillance technology such as rear-view cameras in vehicles, closed-circuit television equipment around vital locations, and global positioning system devices that can be secretly placed within drug loads to track travel routes or on police vehicles to monitor police movement. Some groups are communicating via Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) or Internet telephone service instead of telephone landlines. VoIP, while still vulnerable to Title III monitoring, nonetheless reflects the willingness of Dominican DTOs to embrace current technology, further challenging law enforcement.⁵ Dominican DTOs also use social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and YouTube to communicate domestically and possibly with international sources of supply. The ease with which such sites can be established and moved on short notice makes monitoring by law enforcement problematic.⁶ Further, many Dominican traffickers use the most advanced cell phones, essentially handheld computers, to conduct their operations.

Intelligence Gaps

- (LES) Perspective on the sources of supply, quantities, and profits derived from cocaine, heroin, marijuana, MDMA, methamphetamine, and pharmaceuticals trafficked by Dominican DTOs.
- (LES) Nature and extent of alliances or relationships between Dominican and Mexican DTOs.
- (LES) Businesses and methods used by Dominican DTOs to wire or launder money.

- (LES) Further information on the possible Dominican drug trafficking support network identified in the United States.
- (LES) The extent to which government of the Dominican Republic anticorruption initiatives will curtail drug trafficking in the Caribbean.
- (LES) Effect of the 2010 earthquakes in Haiti on drug trafficking through Hispaniola.

Outlook

- (LES) Dominican DTOs will slowly expand their midlevel distribution operations in the United States.
- (LES) As the Dominican population grows in the Atlanta area, Dominican trafficking groups will consolidate their drug distribution operations in coordination with Atlanta-based Mexican drug sources.
- (LES) Dominican DTOs will primarily distribute cocaine and heroin. However, because of the flexible and adaptable nature of Dominican DTOs, isolated cases may occur wherein individual Dominican groups will increase their distribution of other drugs in response to market demand.
- (LES) Dominican DTOs will continue to operate independently of each other. It is unlikely that Dominican DTOs will evolve into a cartel-like structure presided over by one individual.

Sources

Federal

Executive Office of the President

Office of National Drug Control Policy

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas

Atlanta

Milwaukee

New England

Philadelphia/Camden

Washington/Baltimore

Priority Drug Investigations Project

U.S. Department of Justice

Criminal Division

Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force

Other

CNN International

Dominican Today

Dominican Drug Trafficking Developments

Endnotes

1. (LES) Reporting derived from the Priority Drug Investigations Project (PDIP), a coordinated law enforcement intelligence collection project of the Atlanta, Milwaukee, New England, New York/New Jersey, Ohio, Philadelphia/Camden, and Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTAs), in conjunction with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC).
2. (U) NDIC, *Philadelphia/Camden High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Drug Market Analysis 2009*.
(U) NDIC, *Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Drug Market Analysis 2009*.
(U) Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Case File NE-RI-97, "Money Surprise."
(U) OCDETF case file NE-NH-056.
(U) NDIC, *Milwaukee High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Drug Market Analysis 2009*.
(U) NDIC, *New England High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Drug Market Analysis 2009*.
3. (U) DEA Caribbean Division, *Trends in the Traffic Report*, July–September 2008.
4. (U) DEA Caribbean Division, *Trends in the Traffic Report*, January–June 2009.
5. (U) New York Drug Enforcement Task Force, presentation made at the July 8, 2009, PDIP meeting.
(U) NDIC, reporting from Field Intelligence Officers (FIOs) from multiple jurisdictions in response to collection query and statements by participants in the PDIP conference from the Philadelphia/Camden, New York/New Jersey, Washington/Baltimore, and Milwaukee HIDTAs.
6. (U) New York Drug Enforcement Task Force, presentation made at the July 8, 2009, PDIP meeting.
(U) NDIC, reporting from FIOs from multiple jurisdictions in response to collection query and statements by participants in the PDIP conference from the Philadelphia/Camden, New York/New Jersey, Washington/Baltimore, and Milwaukee HIDTAs.

Dominican Drug Trafficking Developments

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