



# 1990–1994



**D**uring the late 1980s and early 1990s, Americans considered the drug issue a major concern, and public awareness about drug trafficking and illicit drug use increased significantly. The media provided the American people with critical information about the damage caused by drugs.

Upon his election, President George H.W. Bush immediately focused national efforts on a comprehensive drug enforcement strategy that targeted both supply and demand reduction. His strategy called for DEA and other federal agencies to work with their domestic and overseas counterparts to reduce the supply of drugs in the country. At the same time, complementary efforts were directed at reducing the demand for drugs through prevention, education, and treatment, including a comprehensive advertising program launched by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America.

Cocaine and crack remained the primary drug-related challenge facing law enforcement, and Colombian cartels and their cells were firmly entrenched in virtually every U.S. city and many countries around the globe. Both the Medellín Cartel and the Cali mafia had a devastating impact on U.S. communities. In the northeast, especially New York, the Cali mafia had quietly established a network of cells to carry out various tasks involving the shipment of cocaine, its storage, communications between Colombia and the United States, and the return of profits to Colombia. The Cali mafia sent armies of surrogates into the United States to ensure the smooth and profitable operation of the cocaine business.

In 1992, DEA instituted the Kingpin Strategy to attack drug organizations at their most vulnerable areas—the chemicals needed to process illicit drugs, their finances, and transportation, communications, and leadership infrastructure in the United States. The Kingpin program essentially controlled investigations from DEA Headquarters, which selected a finite number of targets for intensive investigative activity.

Because extradition of Colombian nationals to the United States was prohibited by Colombia's 1991 constitution, it was essential that Colombian drug lords were arrested, prosecuted, and incarcerated in their own country. With the help of law enforcement counterparts overseas and at home, most notably the CNP, one by one Medellín leaders were toppled. By the time Pablo Escobar, the cartel's most notorious and murderous drug lord, was killed by the CNP on a Colombian rooftop in 1993, the Medellín cartel had already been severely damaged. But there would be no rest for DEA agents and law enforcement partners; waiting to emerge on the world scene was the Cali mafia, which over the years had been less visible, but no less formidable, than its Medellín counterpart.



Robert C. Bonner is sworn in as DEA's fifth Administrator, August 1990. Attending the ceremony at Headquarters were (from left): Administrator Bonner, Mrs. Bonner, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, and Attorney General Dick Thornburgh.

## Decline of the Medellín Cartel, Rise of the Cali Mafia

In the early 1990s, the Medellín Cartel waged a campaign of terror and bribery against the Colombian government to prohibit the extradition of native Colombians. Pablo Escobar and several other Medellín leaders, called “The Extraditables,” took increasingly violent measures to force the government to accept legislation that would protect them from extradition. The cartel was responsible for the assassinations of dozens of government officials (and the bribery of many more). When, in July 1991, the Colombian congress adopted a new constitution that prohibited the extradition of Colombian natives, it was a major victory for the Medellín Cartel.

However, the many law enforcement efforts to topple the cartel resulted in numerous surrenders and arrests that eventually dismantled it. For example, in December 1990, cartel leader Fabio Ochoa Vásquez surrendered to authorities near Medellín. Shortly after, in January 1991, Fabio's brother, Jorge Luis, also turned himself into the CNP. The brothers, along with Escobar, had been the

cartel's top leaders. Also, in January 1991, the CNP killed David Ricardo Prisco Lopera, Escobar's top assassin, along with his younger brother, Armando Alberto Prisco. The Priscos were wanted for ordering the murders of 50 Medellín police officers, several terrorist bombings, and 9 assassinations, including a Colombian justice minister in 1984. In February 1991, a third Ochoa brother, Juan David, surrendered.

Law enforcement efforts were increasingly directed at Escobar, the cartel's kingpin. In June 1991, Escobar surrendered to authorities and was sent to Envigado prison. However, during his surrender negotiations, the Colombian government agreed that the prison's security would be the responsibility of Army guards and Escobar's own hand-picked bodyguards. In reality, Envigado prison protected, rather than incarcerated, him. Escobar's time at the prison was his “Golden Age,” when he ran his drug empire without fear of being hunted by the Colombian Government or assassinated by his rivals.

In July 1992, Escobar “escaped” from Envigado prison to avoid being transferred to a more secure Bogotá jail after it was confirmed he ordered the murder of 22 of his own drug mafia associates. One or two of Escobar's victims were even tortured, killed, and buried on the grounds of Envigado prison. Escobar was clearly warned of the transfer, and 28 guards were later charged with aiding and abetting his “break out.” For 17 months, Escobar was the target of the largest manhunt in Colombian history. In December 1993, the CNP killed Escobar in a firefight at a private residence in downtown Medellín. Escobar's death, along with the surrender and arrest of the Ochoa brothers, marked the decline of the Medellín cartel.

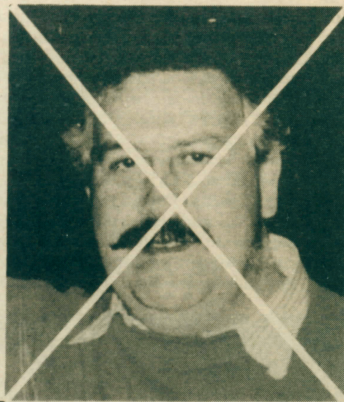
Gilberto Rodríguez-Orejuela and José Santacruz-Londoño formed the Cali mafia in the early 1970s, and it rose quietly alongside its violent rival, the Medellín Cartel. But while the latter gained an international reputation for brutality and murder, Cali traffickers posed as legitimate businessmen. This unique criminal enterprise initially focused on counterfeiting and kidnapping, but it gradually expanded into smuggling cocaine base from Peru and Bolivia to Colombia for conversion into powder cocaine.

SEPARATA *EL NUEVO SIGLO*

EL NUEVO SIGLO

VIERNES 3 DE DICIEMBRE DE 1993

17A

**SE BUSCA****PABLO EMILIO ESCOBAR GAVIRIA****SOLICITADO POR LA JUSTICIA**

A quién suministre información que permita su captura, se le ofrece como recompensa

**\$ 2.700'000.000.00**  
**DOS MIL SETECIENTOS**  
**MILLONES DE PESOS.**



JHON JAIRO  
VELASQUEZ  
VASQUEZ  
(Alias POPEYE)



LUIS CARLOS  
AGUILAR  
GALLEGO  
(Alias EL MUGRE)



OTONIEL DE JESUS  
GONZALEZ  
FRANCO  
(Alias OTTO)



BRANCE  
MUÑOZ  
MOSQUERA  
(Alias TYSON)

y por cada uno de estos prófugos la suma de

**\$ 100'000.000.00**  
**(CIEN MILLONES DE PESOS)**

Pablo Escobar "Wanted" poster. The crossed-out faces signify that Escobar and members of his entourage were killed while bars represent a capture.



On December 2, 1993, Escobar's exact location was determined using electronic, directional-finding equipment. With authorities closing in, a firefight with Escobar and his bodyguard ensued. The two fugitives attempted to escape by running across the roofs adjoining houses to reach a back street, but both were shot and killed by Colombian National Police.

Through the early 1990s, the Medellín Cartel dominated the drug trade, but its reign of relentless public terror against the Colombian government drove Colombian authorities to take serious action to defeat them. One by one the Medellín drug lords were either killed or incarcerated. Having observed the fate of that brutal and violent cartel, Cali leaders passed themselves off as law-abiding businessmen, investing in their country's future, earning public respect and taking economic control of the Cali region. Because they operated in a less violent manner, the Colombian government did not aggressively pursue them, allowing Cali leaders to grow in wealth and power with virtual impunity.

Globally, the cartels expanded their markets to Europe. After the Soviet Union fell in 1990, they quickly moved

into Eastern Europe, taking advantage of the political and economic chaos by using newly-created democracies as the "back door" to transport cocaine to Western Europe. For example, in 1992, large loads of cocaine were seized in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary. In 1993, Russian authorities seized 1.1 tons of cocaine hidden in cans of corned beef hash. This shipment originated in Cali and was destined for the Netherlands, via St. Petersburg, Russia.

In the new, post-Cold War Europe, without border controls and an eastern border sealed against communism, Colombian drug cartels threatened international businesses and world governments.

In the early 1990s, DEA estimated these cartels collectively produced and exported from Colombia between 500 and 800 tons of cocaine a year. The organizations were

structured and operated much like major international corporations. They had enormous financial resources to buy the best legal minds, most sophisticated technology, and most skilled financial experts.

Among the major Cali drug lords, the Rodriguez-Orejuela brothers were transportation specialists who moved cocaine out of Colombia into the United States and other countries. Gilberto was responsible for the strategic, long-term planning of the organization. Miguel was a hands-on manager who ran day-to-day operations. Their associate, Santacruz-Londoño, established distribution cells in the United States.

These Cali leaders ran an incredibly sophisticated, highly structured, and tightly controlled drug trafficking organization. Each day, details of loads and money shipments were electronically dictated to heads of cocaine cells in the United States. Cali drug lords knew the how, when, and where of every cocaine shipment, down to the markings on packages. They set production targets for cocaine sold and were intimately involved in every phase of the business—production, transportation, financing, and communications.

Each organization had its own hierarchy of leaders, distribution networks, and customers in nations around the world. Operations were divided into separate cells, each run by a cell director—always a Colombian national—who reported to drug lords in Colombia. These efficient international organizations were designed to accumulate huge profits. The massive scale of their trafficking operations dwarfed law enforcement efforts in Colombia, the United States, and the transit nations between them.

## Heroin

During the 1980s, global illicit opium production doubled and Southeast Asia emerged as the world's major source of heroin. In Burma, self-styled rebels, like drug lord Khun Sa, financed private armies. His operation generated an estimated \$200 million gross profits per year from heroin and opium enterprises. This wealth made him so powerful that the Burmese government allowed him to operate with impunity, and he controlled most of the Shan State of Burma.

In the early 1990s, American communities faced a resurgence of heroin. As the decade progressed, heroin became purer and cheaper. New traffickers and sources for the drug contributed to increased use. In South America, Colombian cocaine cartels diversified into the production and distribution of heroin. Colombian heroin seizures in the United States rose. It was estimated that Colombian cartels had financed the cultivation of up to 25,000 hectares of opium poppies, making Colombia one of the largest cultivators of illicit opium (behind Burma and Laos but ahead of traditional opium-producing nations, like Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Lebanon). In February 1992, the first heroin lab was seized and destroyed in Colombia, and in that year, the CNP eradicated more than 10,000 hectares of opium poppies.

More heroin was available in the United States than ever before, driving prices down and purity up. In 1993, the national average purity level of an ounce of heroin sold on U.S. streets was 66 percent—compared to less than 5 percent in the early 1980s. In some cases, DEA seized 95-percent-pure heroin. Aggressive international heroin traffickers emerged in new countries, like Nigeria, to join traditional organizations based in China, Turkey, and the Middle East.

In 1991, DEA made the largest seizure of heroin in U.S. history: 1,000 pounds of Southeast Asian white heroin, with an estimated wholesale value of more than \$1 billion, just outside San Francisco. Local agents and peers from Sacramento and New York monitored a controlled delivery of the heroin 24-hours-a-day for nearly a month before the arrest of five suspects. The drug was found in 59 of 1,360 cartons of plastic produce bags imported from Taiwan. Each of the 59 cartons contained 2 cylinders of heroin coated in white wax or wrapped in “happy birthday” paper. By 1993, Southeast Asian heroin, which both China- and Nigeria/West Africa-based traffickers smuggled, permeated the U.S. illicit drug market. At that time, roughly 68 percent of heroin seized in the United States came from Southeast Asia's Golden Triangle—Burma, Laos, and Thailand. China-based traffickers controlled sophisticated international networks that smuggled

multi-hundred-kilogram quantities of heroin in commercial cargo on a regular basis.

## Marijuana

With the explosion of crack, cocaine, and heroin use the decade before, public concern about marijuana diminished in the 1990s (even though marijuana continued to be the most commonly used illegal drug in the United States). According to the 1991 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 13 percent of young adults, aged 18 to 25, were regular users of marijuana. Additionally, 4 percent of youth, aged 12-17, and 10 percent of older adults, aged 26 to 34, reported using marijuana regularly.

Early-1990s marijuana was entirely different from what was available in the 1960s or 1970s. Due to modern sophisticated cultivation techniques, U.S.-grown marijuana became one of the most potent and highly-prized cannabis products in the world. While marijuana's THC content averaged 1.5 percent in 1970, by the 1990s it was 7.6 percent. The sinsemilla (seedless) variety ranged from 8 to 19 percent, and marijuana seizures in Alaska registered nearly 30 percent THC potency.

Marijuana growers continued to encroach on national forests and parks and threatened the environment with harmful pesticides. With the wholesale price of high-quality sinsemilla averaging between \$3,000 and \$8,000 a pound, marijuana cultivation became big business. It was estimated that domestically grown marijuana constituted 25 percent of the drug's U.S. supply.

In response, all 50 states actively participated in the Domestic Cannabis Eradication and Suppression Program in the 1990s. With the growing marijuana market, the program searched for more efficient ways to eradicate the plant. Along with the traditional “whack and stack” method, DEA added herbicidal eradication. One of the first herbicidal eradication efforts, Operation Wipe Out in Hawaii, was an overwhelming success. In the summer of 1990, almost 90 percent of Hawaii's cannabis crop was eradicated. Spot herbicidal spraying destroyed half of the crop, a new and more efficient eradication technique that had little, if any, environmental impact.

Nationwide eradication efforts like Wipe Out pressured growers. Many abandoned their outdoor cultivation on public and private land for the safety of indoor cultivation. Marijuana cultivated indoors created new concerns for law enforcement; it was of such high quality and potency that American marijuana became the most sought-after cannabis in the world.

But law enforcement had new, effective tools. Thermal imagery, developed in the late 1980s, could identify indoor marijuana operations. Because of this heat-seeking technology, seizure records for indoor grows jumped from 951 in 1985 to 3,849 in 1992.

Throughout the early 1990s, DEA closed down thousands of indoor marijuana grows. For example, in August 1993 at the Advance Mine site in northern California, investigators found sinsemilla plants that, ounce for ounce, could produce extremely high-grade marijuana. The mine, which had been an operational gold mine during the late 1800s and early 1900s, contained everything to grow more than 3,000 marijuana plants. The eight-section complex included five growing rooms and a pumping system that continually supplied water and nutrients to the plants.

The total estimated value of the plants found inside the mine was between \$6 and \$9 million. Four people were arrested. It took 40 DEA, U.S. Forest Service, and county law enforcement personnel two days to remove more than five tons of marijuana cultivation equipment from inside the mine.



The Advance Mine was one of the largest marijuana growing operations discovered in California. DEA special agents removed 2,394 cannabis plants from the former gold mine in 1993.

## Steroids

Steroid use, particularly by young athletes, increased during this period. Trafficking in steroids became more common, and, as the market expanded, younger and younger populations used the drugs. Steroid sources included doctors, trainers, and foreign suppliers. A Government Accounting Office (GAO) study of the problem, published in 1989, reported that more than 6 percent of male high school seniors, mostly athletes, used or had used steroids. Another survey indicated that 20 percent of athletes in 5 colleges surveyed used steroids. It also reported on the significant side effects of steroid use. GAO supported federal and state efforts to exercise greater control over steroid distribution and use. A 1990 study by the Inspector General of Health and Human Services reported that over a quarter of a million adolescents used steroids.

Congress responded by passing the Anabolic Steroid Enforcement Act of 1990, which placed certain anabolic steroids in Schedule III of the CSA. Previously, only state and local laws controlled steroids, which were unscheduled. The new act brought anabolic steroids under the CSA's record-keeping, reporting, security, prescribing, and import and export controls. Furthermore, all steroid manufacturers and distributors were required to register with DEA.

This legislation, combined with an aggressive enforcement effort, virtually eliminated domestic sources of illicit steroid use and provided the legal authority to attack foreign steroid smuggling. To heighten international awareness, DEA sponsored a conference attended by steroid-producing nations and others concerned with steroid use. Scientific experts in the field of steroids and representatives of the U.S. and the International Olympic Committees also participated.

## Operation Man (1990)

Through the 1980s and early 1990s, the forfeiture of traffickers' assets became an important and effective tool for law enforcement. In 1991, President Bush signed a bill expanding DEA's authority to administratively forfeit

assets from \$100,000 to an unlimited amount with respect to financial instruments (including cash), CDs, and bonds; and \$100,000 to \$500,000 on all other items except real estate. One of DEA's most successful financial cases was Operation Man, where agents tracked and forfeited drug assets laundered through banks based in the British Isle of Man, off England's west coast. Assets seized from this operation included a \$9.5 million bank account and the Bicycle Club, a gambling establishment in Bell Gardens, California, valued at \$150 million. In April 1990, after a club partner was convicted of smuggling marijuana, the U.S. Government seized the club, believed to be the world's largest card casino, assumed 30 percent ownership in the club, and received almost \$600,000 a month in profits.

## Operation REDRUM (1991)

The REDRUM program had been established in the 1980s to create a multi-agency operational force to pursue investigations that demonstrated an association between drug trafficking and the violence it fostered. The program's primary goals were the identification of major drug traffickers and organizations; the seizure of drugs and assets; and the analysis of strategic intelligence provided by informants.

On January 1, 1991, a Metropolitan Area Drug Enforcement Task Force (MATF) was formed as a pilot project under Operation REDRUM that addressed the influx of illegal drugs and accompanying violence associated with drug trafficking in Northern Virginia; Washington, DC; and contiguous suburban Maryland counties. MATF was divided into several operational units that focused on different



DEA agents make an arrest during Operation REDRUM.

aspects of the drug problem. This 90-day project investigated individuals based in New York City who were responsible for drug-related homicides in the DC area. In addition to 15 state and local agencies working to reduce violent drug-related crime, participating federal agencies included DEA, FBI, INS, and the U.S. Marshals Service. According to Attorney General Richard Thornburgh in April 1991, “The urgency of the nation’s war on drugs has intensified the need for information on innovative programs and approaches to counter illicit drug trafficking and its related violence. This project will test and evaluate a promising cooperative enforcement initiative that can be replicated by state and local law enforcement agencies nationwide.”

Due to the operation’s success (and other REDRUM pilot projects), Administrator Bonner in April 1992 expanded Operation REDRUM to include drug-related homicide investigative units or task forces in Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, and New Orleans. REDRUM, based at DEA Headquarters, provided divisional task forces with funding for their investigations. In 1990, the program was initially funded with \$48,000. Funds progressively increased to a high in 1993 of \$189,000.

### LSD Conference (1991)

The early 1990s saw a resurgence of the popular 1960s and 1970s drug, LSD. While most other illegal drug use had declined, LSD use was on the rise and particularly popular among teenagers, as evidenced by rising emergency-room mentions for LSD as well as LSD-related arrests and violence. For example, in 1991, LSD led to violence in Fairfax County, Virginia, where a high school student who allegedly had taken six or more doses of LSD shot a police officer, wounding her seriously. In San Marcos, Texas, a college student used a rifle to kill two acquaintances and wound his girlfriend after taking several doses of LSD.

To call attention to the drug’s increased use and emphasize the need for stronger cooperative law enforcement and a widespread commitment to reduce demand, Administrator Bonner held an LSD conference in San Francisco in December 1991. California was a major

source for LSD production, and demand reduction experts from across the nation as well as law enforcement representatives from local, state, and federal levels attended the conference.

### Medical Use of Marijuana Denied (1992)

In 1989, former Administrator Lawn had officially denied the petition of the National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) to reschedule marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule II of the CSA. When NORML appealed that decision, Administrator Bonner reviewed the issue and assessed whether or not marijuana had any medicinal value. To develop a concrete, objective means of determining if marijuana should be rescheduled, Administrator Bonner relied on a five-point test based somewhat on criteria Congress had used to decide if certain drugs should be rescheduled. If the drug failed to meet just one of the five criteria, it could not be rescheduled, the Administrator asserted. Marijuana failed to meet all five. The criteria were:

1. The drug’s chemistry must be known and reproducible.
2. Adequate safety studies must have been performed on the drug.
3. There must have been adequate and well-controlled studies proving the drug’s efficacy.
4. The drug’s medicinal value must be accepted by qualified experts.
5. The scientific evidence of the drug’s safety and efficacy must be widely available.

Administrator Bonner ruled that marijuana had no currently accepted medical use on March 26, 1992.

### DEA Special Agent Promotion Program

In 1992, DEA implemented the Special Agent Promotion Program (SAPP), a bias-free system for testing and promoting special agents. It was based on an objective identification of the most qualified candidates, regardless of



Philadelphia Division ASAC Lewis Rice (right), Philadelphia Police Commissioner Willie L. Williams (center), and President George H.W. Bush (left) discuss the division's strategy to dismantle neighborhood drug gangs and street organizations, May 1992. Courtesy, George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum

their race or gender. The SAPP resulted in important gains for female, African American, and Hispanic employees.

### Operation Green Ice (1992)

By the late 1980s, DEA's financial investigative skills had evolved so much that the agency set up its own bank to lure drug traffickers looking to launder their profits. In 1989, the investigative team created Trans America Ventures Associates (TAVA) and established its credentials in the financial community. The result was so convincing that Hispanic Business Weekly listed TAVA as one of the top 500 Hispanic Corporations in America. Undercover agents posed as money launderers and offered to pick up funds anywhere in the world. They used informants to identify drug money brokers from Colombia who acted as middlemen between Cali mafia kingpins and money laundering operations in the United States.

Beginning in San Diego and Los Angeles, the investigations took undercover agents to Houston, Ft. Lauderdale, Miami, Chicago, and New York to pick up money and establish "fronts," like leather goods shops, in the cities. During the investigation, DEA agents laundered more than \$20 million for the Colombia-based cartels. As the investigation developed, cartel operatives asked the undercover agents

to provide money laundering services in Europe, Canada, and the Caribbean. Consequently, Operation Green Ice expanded into a coordinated international law enforcement effort involving Canada, the Cayman Islands, Colombia, Costa Rica, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

In September 1992, undercover agents arranged a meeting with top-ranking Cali financial managers at locations in the United States, Italy, Spain, and Costa Rica. The drug lords arrived, expecting to discuss plans for their criminal business but instead were arrested. Operation Green Ice was an unprecedented collaboration of talent and financial expertise that successfully formed the first international task force to attack the Cali mafia's monetary networks. Operation Green Ice led to the seizure of more than \$50 million in assets worldwide and the arrest of 7 top-ranking Cali financial managers and 177 others, including 44 in the United States.

### Creation of the Intelligence Division (1992)

For most of its first 20 years, DEA Headquarters' intelligence function and the responsibility for managing the agency's intelligence program was located in the Operations Division. DEA was responsible for managing a National

Narcotics Intelligence System with federal, state, local, and foreign officials and coordinating the collection, analysis, and dissemination of drug intelligence. However, as drug trafficking around the world increased and more law enforcement, intelligence, and military entities joined antidrug efforts, it became clear that DEA had to focus additional resources and attention on drug intelligence. In August 1992, the Office of Intelligence became the Intelligence Division. Primarily, the change would bring together all of DEA's intelligence functions, enhance the profile of DEA's entire intelligence program, place increased emphasis on DEA's intelligence mission, and improve the span of senior management's control.

Federal drug control efforts and the demands of law enforcement, intelligence, and defense communities were growing in rapid, sometimes uncoordinated, ways. Their demands on DEA's intelligence program were increasing dramatically at a time when the agency could barely meet its own intelligence needs. The information collected by DEA special agents around the world constitutes one of the richest sources of federal drug information. New programs were needed to ensure information was properly shared and that other agencies dedicated resources to add to that information for law enforcement purposes. More and better analysis had to be conducted to link seemingly unrelated cases and support the development of successful prosecutions.

By creating the Intelligence Division, DEA sought to achieve a uniformity of purpose among federal drug intelligence efforts, establish intelligence program and policy functions, and provide a more proactive direction for the agency's intelligence program. Expanded intelligence management resources guaranteed that interagency intelligence programs addressed DEA's tactical, operational, and strategic needs.

The Intelligence Division included three entities: EPIC, the Office of Investigative Support, and the Office of Intelligence Policy and Liaison. EPIC continued to expand support to law enforcement officers nationwide with its Pipeline and Jetway Programs and the Watch's timely provision of information. The Office of Investigative Support, collocated with its enforcement counterparts, provided

intelligence support to the Kingpin Strategy. Functions of the Office of Intelligence Policy and Liaison included establishing programs and policies to ensure support from the interagency community; strategic intelligence; planning, policy analysis, and program development; and the Special Field Intelligence Program (SFIP). Although a separate entity, the Intelligence Division's functions and programs remained focused on supporting DEA's enforcement mission.

### The Kingpin Strategy (1992)

DEA instituted the Kingpin Strategy in 1992 to focus investigative and enforcement efforts on specific drug trafficking organizations. Such groups could be disabled by attacking their most vulnerable areas—the chemicals needed to process drugs and organizations' finances, communications, transportation, and leadership structure.

The Kingpin Strategy held that disrupting, weakening, and destroying major drug organizations had the greatest impact on the drug trade. It focused enforcement efforts and resources against the highest-level traffickers and provided a systematic way to attack their vulnerabilities. The strategy aimed to destroy the entire organization and its capacity to finance, produce, and distribute massive amounts of illegal drugs. Each blow weakened the organization and improved law enforcement's prospects for arresting and prosecuting its leaders and managers.

The Kingpin Strategy evolved from DEA's domestic and overseas intelligence gathering and investigations. It encompassed the agency's enforcement actions in the United States, transit nations in the Caribbean, Mexico and Central America, and in the Andes' source countries. DEA also expanded Operation BAT in the Caribbean to include Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, and the Lesser Antilles.

Eventually, the Kingpin Strategy was revised, although DEA retained the emphasis on targeting the international drug trade's top level. When Thomas Constantine became the Administrator, the SACs of DEA's field divisions requested greater flexibility within their areas of command to target major drug trafficking figures who significantly affected their regions. Under

the original Kingpin Strategy, DEA Headquarters often dictated the selection of Kingpin targets. In response to the SACs' concerns, Administrator Constantine agreed to allow them more latitude in target selection. In conjunction with this decision, he established the Special Operations Division at Newington, Virginia, in 1994 to coordinate multi-jurisdictional investigations against major drug trafficking organizations responsible for moving drugs into the United States.

In November 1991, DEA destroyed two major distribution cells of Cali Kingpin Helmer "Pacho" Herrera in New York City. Herrera was the primary supplier of cocaine to the New York market, and his organization was shut down through a massive wiretap effort using about 100 simultaneous, court-authorized wiretaps on cellular phones. Almost 100 traffickers were arrested, more than \$20 million in cash and assets were seized, and 2.7 tons of cocaine were taken off the streets. In addition, computerized transaction and personnel records were seized, providing valuable insight into Cali distribution cell operations and indicating that Cali drug lords were becoming more dependent on computer systems.

In November and December 1991, DEA teamed up with the CNP to conduct the first-ever major raids against Cali mafia in Cali, Colombia. As a result, DEA seized important financial records that permitted it to freeze trafficker bank accounts in Colombia, Miami, and London. During one of these successful raids, CNP arrested Iván Urdinola Grajales, one of the most violent of the Cali kingpins.

At the close of 1991, collective law enforcement efforts against the cartels resulted in more than 300 metric tons of cocaine seized worldwide. Almost two-thirds was seized in the Andes and transit nations, such as Mexico and Guatemala.

In another investigation, DEA, working with the U.S. Customs Service, exposed one of the Cali mafia's principal means of smuggling cocaine into the country. In December 1991, more than 15 tons of cocaine hidden in cement fence posts shipped from Venezuela were seized in Miami and Texas, and 5 Cali distributors based in the United States were arrested.

As a follow-up to that investigation, DEA and the U.S. Customs Service seized 7.5 tons of cocaine concealed in shipments of broccoli and okra. Ten members of the organization were arrested in Miami, including one of the Cali mafia's top managers in the United States. Federal agents also seized \$1.6 million in cartel bank accounts located in Florida, California, New York, and New Jersey.

Finally, in July 1992, Panamanian police and DEA raided a warehouse in Panama, seizing 5.3 tons of cocaine concealed in boxes of hollowed-out ceramic tiles.

### **Brooklyn Clandestine Cocaine Lab Seizures (1992)**

The Mid-Hudson Drug Enforcement Task Force, which consisted of three DEA special agents, six New York state troopers, and seven local police officers, conducted an intensive investigation of the Santacruz-Londoño trafficking organization. The cooperative, year-long operation required multiple wiretaps and sophisticated video surveillance, which was installed inside the warehouse lab and captured several individuals going through cocaine processing procedures. On June 15, 1992, the Task Force seized two major clandestine cocaine laboratories in Brooklyn, New York. Agents found 100 pounds of cocaine base chemically altered into ceramic floor tiles for smuggling into the United States. It was believed that each lab could produce 50 to 100 kilograms of cocaine HCl a day, making the seizures two of the largest of their kind.

Uniquely, the labs used Dupont gun-cleaning solvent in the extraction process and an "extractor," equipment that condensed airborne vapors with dry ice. This device enabled the lab to function in a densely populated area without emitting strong chemical odors typical of clandestine labs. One lab had been abandoned following an unrelated New York City Police raid of a nearby building.

Because of these seizures, an additional 70 pounds of cocaine were seized on March 3, 1993, when one of the cooperating Brooklyn lab defendants led the task force to a crack cocaine laboratory in Liberty, New York. Additionally, the chemist responsible for the tile smuggling method was arrested, and one of the Brooklyn arrestees was later

charged in the conspiracy to kill an editor of *El Diario*, a Spanish-language newspaper published in New York City. The drug lords from Colombia had threatened the editor's life when the newspaper ran several articles condemning their activities. At the conclusion of these investigations, the labs were traced to the Santacruz-Londoño trafficking organization and 30 of its members were brought to justice.



Hudson Task Force officers display some crushed cocaine tiles recovered from a clandestine lab in Liberty, New York.

### Rules of the Game (1993)

For years after DEA began operating in Mexico, special agents worked there, as in most countries of the world, without formal regulations other than their own agency's guidelines. This changed in April 1990 when a physician, Dr. Humberto Álvarez Machaín, was kidnaped in Guadalajara by four men who identified as members of the Mexican Judicial Police. Machaín was driven to a neighboring state, held overnight in a hotel, and forced to board a plane that took him to the United States.

U.S. authorities maintained that the Guadalajara gynecologist had injected DEA Special Agent Enrique Camarena with stimulants to keep him conscious during the final interrogation before his murder in 1985, and they were frustrated by Mexico's failure to arrest Machaín after an earlier indictment in Los Angeles. Subsequently, American officials paid Mexican bounty hunters to kidnap Machaín and take him to El Paso, Texas. This fact aroused Mexican furor, and even more so when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in June 1992 that the abduction did not violate American law. In 1992, Mexico's government imposed the first written regulations that DEA had faced anywhere in the world. The rules capped the number of DEA agents in Mexico, designated a half-dozen cities in which



SA Claude Powers, San Diego Division Narcotics Task Force, poses with the 1948 Tucker automobile seized from a major methamphetamine trafficker in 1992.

they must live, prohibited them from traveling without the Mexican government’s written permission, denied them diplomatic immunity from prosecution, and stipulated that all useful intelligence information “must be immediately transmitted to the competent Mexican authorities.” They also prohibited weapons. Dr. Machaín was ultimately released in December 1992 due to a directed verdict of acquittal.

## Aviation

In late 1991, the chief pilot position was moved out of Headquarters and sent to Addison to run operations. By this time, DEA’s Aviation Section had grown to 115 special agent/pilots, 110 DEA-owned aircraft, 152 contractor maintenance technicians, and an operating budget of \$23 million. In the 1990s, about 85 percent of the air fleet came from asset forfeiture and the remainder was from military surplus or newly-purchased aircraft.

In June 1992, ground was broken for the new Aviation Operation Center at the Alliance Airport, which was four times larger than the Addison facility. The three-story hanger included large bays with an overhead crane for working on every kind of aircraft from small fixed-wing, single-engine planes to large turbine-powered transports and helicopters. The facilities provided for machine repairs, engine shops, avionics, spare parts, modification work, metal work, and hydraulic repairs.

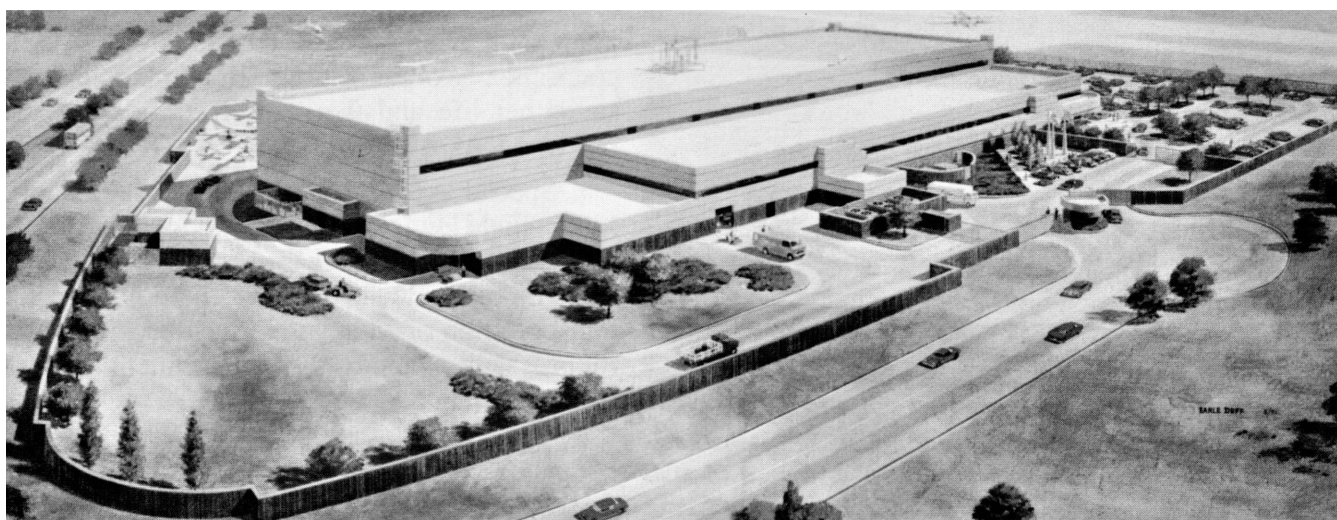
Air intelligence, photo labs, maintenance, and the operations center and office space were also housed in the new facility. In the connected two-story office building were workstations, training rooms, conference areas, and computer systems.

## Training

When Administrator Robert C. Bonner began his tenure in August 1990, one of the first challenges facing him was overcrowding at the FBI Training Center in Quantico, Virginia. FBI’s training needs had grown to such an extent that there was no space to accommodate DEA’s training functions, which were likewise expanding. As a result, DEA received notice to find another place to conduct its training.

The Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, Georgia, offered to provide DEA some space, but after evaluating several facilities in other states, Administrator Bonner decided it was in DEA’s interest to retain a training facility at Quantico. He confirmed the U.S. Marine Corps’ offer of land to DEA and sought funding for a new DEA training center.

In 1992, with the approval of Attorney General Dick Thornburgh, Administrator Bonner successfully obtained \$7 million for architectural plans and an engineering study. However, it was not until FY 1997 that sufficient funds were appropriated to build and complete the DEA Training Center at Quantico.



A model of the new Aviation Operations Center at Alliance Airport, ca. 1992.

## Office of Investigative Agency Policies (1993)

On November 18, 1993, the Attorney General established the Office of Investigative Agency Policies (OIAP) at the Department of Justice. This new office, reporting directly to the Attorney General, was created to improve the Justice Department's efficiency by coordinating specified activities of its criminal investigative components that warranted uniform treatment or coordination. Agencies that fell under this program included DEA, FBI, U.S. Marshals Service, and INS. Office-resolved issues that affected DEA included drug intelligence (February 1994), wireless communications (April 1994), criminal investigations overseas (May 1994), aviation policy (September 1994), armor piercing ammunition (October 1994), Interagency Laboratory Working Group (June 1995), post-shooting incidents (October 1995), law enforcement training (December 1995), and confidential informants and cooperating witnesses (May 1996).

## Technology

Given the evolving sophistication of criminal drug organizations in the 1990s, DEA was challenged to keep pace, particularly technologically. With the cartels' extensive wealth, these international criminal organizations purchased state-of-the-art technology to control every phase of their drug business—production, transportation, financing, and communications. Technology linked them to their managers and dealers in the United States and around the world, allowing leaders to operate from safe havens abroad.

Criminal surrogates in the United States engaged in complicated efforts to avoid legal wiretaps of their telephone communications. They bought cell phones in lots of 10 to 20, which were used for a few weeks or even days before being discarded and replaced. This strategy attempted to evade wiretaps by moving from phone to phone faster than law enforcement could keep up.

Digital pagers also created new problems for investigators. Traffickers sent messages, often coded, to set up deliveries, cancel meetings, or warn each other. Law enforcement had limited capabilities to intercept these

transmissions. DEA primarily cloned pagers used by suspected traffickers. However, to set up a clone, specific information was needed from the company providing the paging service. Suspects were often tipped by their services that they were under investigation. In response—and with the cooperation of the cellular and paging industries—DEA developed equipment to intercept these services.

Traffickers also used debit cards to avoid detection by law enforcement. From convenience stores, like 7-Eleven, traffickers bought telephone debit cards that were difficult to trace. Like telephone credit cards, the debit cards were not billed to any specific person or telephone number.

Encrypted communications became a major problem for law enforcement in the 1990s. To counter criminal organizations exchanging encrypted messages with impunity, Congress approved the Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act in 1994. It required telephone companies to ensure their systems and networks could accommodate federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies' court-approved intercepts as technology changed.

New carriers, such as cable television companies and electric companies, also entered the telephone business. Whereas a pair of wires once carried only one analog signal conversation, these communications traveled in pulses of digital information over wires or fiber-optic cables, allowing for multiple, simultaneous voice and data transmissions, known as multiplexing. As a result, telephone calls were forwarded to different locations without detection by law enforcement intercept equipment.

## Laboratories

DEA's laboratory system marked its 25th anniversary in August 1993. From the original staff of 6 chemists at the Washington, DC, BNDD laboratory, authorized staff had grown to a nationwide force of 159 bench chemists, 12 latent fingerprint specialists, 36 laboratory managers and supervisors, 4 Headquarters upper managers, 12 Headquarters program managers, 2 hazardous waste specialists, 2 diversion investigators, and numerous support personnel.