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**INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE
CONTROL COMMISSION**

CICAD

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

GROUP OF EXPERTS ON MARITIME NARCOTRAFFICKING
September 25-27, 2018
Miami, FL, United States

OEA/Ser.L/XIV.2.64
CICAD/doc.2414/18
November 20th, 2018
Original: English

FINAL REPORT
GROUP OF EXPERTS ON MARITIME NARCOTRAFFICKING

I. BACKGROUND

The Group of Experts on Maritime Narcotrafficking constitutes a forum for the Western Hemisphere to exchange information and expertise in countering drug trafficking in the maritime domain, fostering regional cooperation and publishing manuals, best practices guidelines, and protocols on the topic. During the sixty-second regular session of CICAD, held in Washington, D.C., December 13-15, 2018, the Commission elected the United States and Colombia to serve as Chair of the Expert Group on Maritime Narcotrafficking for 2018.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Group of Experts on Maritime Narcotrafficking met in Miami, FL, United States of America, September 25-27, 2018. The meeting featured the participation of 81 experts, coming from 20 member States: Bahamas, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States; four (4) OAS Permanent Observers: France, Spain, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom; as well as four (4) international and regional organizations: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre (Narcotics) - MAOC(N), the Regional Security System (RSS) and the Centre Interministériel de Formation Anti-drogue (CIFAD).

As established in the schedule of activities ([MAR/AGE.1/18](#)), the meeting started with a roundtable which provided delegations with an opportunity to identify the main challenges they face to counter maritime narcotrafficking, as well as best practices that their institutions have implemented on the matter. After the roundtable, panels and presentations focused on the following topics:

- Emerging threats and drug trafficking trends in the maritime domain;
- Fostering regional cooperation in countering maritime drug trafficking to North America;
- Measures to control cocaine trafficking to European markets;
- Maritime security and the control of drug trafficking routes in the Caribbean;
- Regional efforts to control illicit drug trafficking through Central America;
- The importance of port security in the control of the illicit drug trade logistical chain.

This final report was approved by the Commission during its sixty-fourth regular session, held in Washington D.C., United States, November 19-21, 2018.

III. MINUTES

INAUGURAL SESSION

09:00-09:30

Opening remarks by:

- **RDML Anthony Vogt**, Assistant Commandant for Response Policy, Coast Guard, U.S.
- **Ambassador Adam E. Namm**, Executive Secretary, Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD/OAS)
- **Giovanni Snidle**, Senior Advisor for Hemispheric Security Policy, Department of State, U.S.

As Chair of the Group of Experts, **Rear Admiral Anthony Vogt** welcomed participants on behalf of the US Coast Guard and encouraged them to take this opportunity to strengthen existing working relationships among different institutions to improve the capacity of member states and international organizations to combat transnational organized crime and illicit drug trafficking in the Western Hemisphere.

Ambassador Adam E. Namm welcomed participants on behalf of the Executive Secretariat of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (ES/CICAD). He mentioned that the Group of Experts on Maritime Narcotrafficking constitutes an important forum for OAS member states, as well as regional and international organizations to exchange information and expertise on maritime drug trafficking trends, and to discuss existing gaps and best practices for countering the flow of illicit narcotics in the maritime domain.

Lastly, **Mr. Giovanni Snidle** stressed that given the pressing transnational threats like maritime narcotrafficking, it is now more essential than ever for the region to develop integrated and interoperable responses to stay one step ahead of criminal networks. He reiterated that the United States is committed to working with all Member States and Observers present, both on a bilateral and regional basis, to seek innovative and integrated solutions to face drug trafficking in the region.

FIRST PLENARY SESSION

10:00-10:15

Introductory note by the Executive Secretariat of CICAD

- **Mr. Rafael Parada**, Chief, Supply Reduction Unit, CICAD/OAS

Mr. Rafael Parada highlighted the assistance provided by CICAD's Counterdrug Capacity-Building Program to support OAS member states to implement comprehensive measures to counter drug trafficking. This includes technical assistance to increase the knowledge, skills and operational capacity of maritime authorities, law enforcement, customs and other agencies working in the maritime/port domain to investigate, detect and interdict maritime drug trafficking, including intelligence gathering, risk-based targeting, documentation analysis, and interagency cooperation. Finally, Mr. Parada reiterated the commitment of the Unit to continue supporting member states' secure trade in the region, targeting the supply of illicit drugs by fostering cooperation between the public and private sectors; and securing the movement of cargo by enhancing supply chain controls.

10:15-11:15

Roundtable: main efforts/challenges in maritime narcotrafficking control

- **Moderator: Ana Alvarez**, Project Manager, Supply Reduction Unit, CICAD/OAS

The meeting began with a roundtable where delegates had the opportunity to introduce themselves, express their countries' main challenges in the control of maritime narcotrafficking, and briefly comment on the legal, policy and operational measures undertaken by their institutions to strengthen the control of maritime narcotrafficking, including:

1. Challenges related to the *modus operandi* of criminal organizations:
 - The rapid mutation of the means and modalities used by criminal organizations. In this way, delegates recommended that counterdrug law enforcement agencies are kept up-to-date with the constant diversification of routes, fuel supply points at high sea and concealment methods, among others.
 - Delegates also expressed their concern about the challenge posed by the possible infiltration of criminal organizations in many of the ports in the region.
2. Challenges related to the lack of information exchange and cooperation at the national, regional and international levels:
 - Member states identified the need to join efforts in the fight against illicit drug trafficking by sea through increased cooperation mechanisms between agencies at the national level, as well as at the regional and international levels.
 - The lack of information and intelligence sharing in a fluid, safe, and timely system at an operational and tactical level was also highlighted.
 - This includes the lack of information that allows for preventive and reactive actions to counter this phenomenon.
 - Likewise, the need to improve coordination with judicial authorities, both with prosecutors and judges, was identified.
3. Legal and procedural differences in relation to criminal prosecutions related to maritime narcotrafficking
4. Challenges related to human resources capacities:
 - Likewise, delegates mentioned limitations related to the need of specialized training for personnel involved in drug trafficking control, in order to improve the effectiveness of investigations and interdiction operations, as well as criminal prosecutions related to drug trafficking by sea.
5. Challenges related to material resources and operational capacities of counter-drug law enforcement agencies:
 - Linked to the lack of financial resources, is the challenge posed by limitations related to the lack of equipment and technology, since several agencies made reference to the fact that, among other factors, their fleets are obsolete and / or insufficient.
 - In relation to the lack of operational capabilities, delegates mentioned the need to carry out interdiction operations more quickly, in order to improve reaction capacity;
 - The lack of air support for maritime interdictions;
 - The need to increase patrols in sensitive areas, which are often found in border areas;
 - The difficulty in controlling the movements of small vessels; as well as
 - Tracking of containers from countries of origin to destination countries.

6. Other challenges:

Other challenges mentioned include difficulties presented by the lack of protocols and action guidelines on the subject matter; socioeconomic situation of some countries, which create vulnerabilities that contribute to the increase of criminal activities; the connectivity of drug trafficking with related crimes such as illegal fishing, crimes against the environment, and human trafficking.

11:15-13:00

Panel/discussion: emerging threats and drug trafficking trends in the maritime domain

- **Commander Alvaro Eduardo Díaz Rivera**, Director, International Drug Trafficking Maritime Analysis Center (CIMCON), Colombia ([MAR/DOC.1.1/18](#))
- **Ian Ralby**, Consultant, Global Maritime Crime Program, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- **Lieutenant Colonel (ret'd) Jeffrey Forde**, Director of Operations and Plans, Regional Security System (RSS), Barbados ([MAR/DOC.1.3/18](#))

Moderator: Captain Norman Cabrera, Director, Counterdrug Division, Navy, Colombia

The first panel gave a broad introduction on emerging threats and drug trafficking trends in the maritime domain that OAS member states are currently facing. It was mentioned that narcotrafficking is a transnational threat, and in order to counter it, all actors of the international community should be involved. One of the main challenges mentioned by panelists was the vast maritime space that counterdrug authorities have to control, with limited human and financial resources. Also, presenters stated the lack of national and regional maritime coordinated strategies, while drug trafficking organizations adapt and evolve quicker than control authorities do. Panelists also mentioned the primary means used by criminals for maritime narcotrafficking such as: go-fasts, fishing vessels, and recreational yachts.

Following the presentations, participants agreed that in order to respond effectively to those challenges, it is necessary to increase collaboration, coordination and trust between states. Participants also highlighted the ongoing threat of “parasitic” devices, given the difficulty to detect them (labor intense and costly for law enforcement), as well as challenges posed by semi and fully submersible technology, which continues to develop, requiring the need for innovative strategies, including legislation, to effectively control them.

SECOND PLENARY SESSION

14:30-15:45

Panel/discussion: fostering regional cooperation in countering maritime drug trafficking to North America

- **Commander Michael Cintron**, Legal Brief, District Seven, Coast Guard, U.S.
- **Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Ajamian**, Chief, Strategic Initiatives Group, Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S), U.S.
- **Norberto Rosales Martinez**, Analyst, National Drug Policy Bureau, Office of the General Prosecutor (PGR), Mexico
- **George Landsberger**, Intelligence Analyst, Marine Security

Operations Centre, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Canada

Moderator: Commander Pat Culver, Office of Law Enforcement, Coast Guard, U.S.

The second panel was assigned to discuss the main regional efforts that are being undertaken in order to counter maritime drug trafficking to North America. Panelists noted that within the Western Hemisphere, the greatest threat to regional security is presented by transnational criminal organizations. Additionally, it was mentioned that in recent years, North American states have experienced a growing threat related to the transportation by sea of chemical precursors from Asia, which increases the need to exchange information and intelligence not only on illicit drugs, but also on the precursor chemicals used in their manufacture.

After the presentations, the discussions focused on how countries from North America are cooperating with other countries in the Hemisphere in order to, not only intercept illicit drugs in the sea, but also to disrupt the drug trafficking networks operating in the region.

16:00-17:15

Panel/discussion: measures to control cocaine trafficking to European markets

- **Luis Felipe Montesso**, Customs Officer, Federal Revenue Agency, Brazil
- **Sargent Moises Cifuentes Lopez**, Officer, Judicial Police Counterdrug Technical Unit, Civil Guard, Spain
- **Jose Ferreira**, Head of Operations, Joint Operations Coordination Centre (JOCC), Maritime Analysis and Operation Centre (Narcotics), MAOC (N), Portugal ([MAR/DOC.3.3/18](#))

Moderator: Jose Benito Carrasco Leon, Chief, Department of Counternarcotic Intelligence and Organized Crime, Investigations Police (PDI), Chile

The third panel focused on the existing measures to control cocaine trafficking to European markets. Panelists shared that cocaine is the second most consumed drug in the European Union after cannabis, and that shipping containers are the main method of introducing the substance into Europe. In this sense, governments have improved their control measures, increasing the volume of cocaine seizures in the region in recent years. Origin countries from South America have also developed new control measures, for example, in the port of Santos, Brazil. In destination countries, such as Spain, the government has created interagency investigation groups in ports, which has improved the collaboration between customs agents and shipping companies.

Once the presentations concluded, participants discussed how criminal organizations, in response to the increased pressure by law enforcement, are using African countries as transit points on the way to Europe with the intention of avoiding more rigid controls. Lastly, participants highlighted the importance of the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre (MAOC N), which is a regional initiative within the framework of the European Union to support Europe's measures against drug trafficking in the Atlantic and Mediterranean maritime domain. They also encouraged OAS member states to join efforts with the MAOC to strengthen coordination among both continents.

09:00-11:00

Panel/discussion: maritime security and the control of drug trafficking routes in the Caribbean

- **Commander Zin-Mark King**, Coast Guard, Trinidad and Tobago
- **Commander John Finley Leonce**, Royal Police Force, Police Marine Unit, St. Lucia
- **Bruno Francerie**, Deputy Director / **Pierre Salducci**, Head of Operations, Centre Interministériel de Formation Anti-drogue (CIFAD), Martinique ([MAR/DOC.4.3/18](#))
- **Captain Aramis A. Cespedes**, Director, Naval Operations M-3, Navy, Dominican Republic ([MAR/DOC.4.4/18](#))

Moderator: Lieutenant Commander Derrick Ferguson, Security Intelligence Officer, Royal Bahamas Defence Force, The Bahamas ([MAR/DOC.4.0/18](#))

The panel focused on the maritime security and drug trafficking control measures implemented in the Caribbean basin. Panelists explained that, due to their strategic geographical locations, Caribbean countries are major transshipment points along the maritime drug trafficking routes. During their presentations, panelists indicated that approximately 30% of the drug flow from South America to North America transits through the Caribbean sea. This phenomenon constitutes a mayor challenge to Caribbean states, especially when comparing the size of the islands to the large amount of maritime domain that they have to control.

The discussions also focused on the main transportation means of illicit drugs used by criminal organizations and experts agreed that the use of fishing boats is a growing concern. According to the panelists, these small vessels do not necessarily go through customs, which means that they can transit over territorial waters, anchor, and deliver the illicit substances that they might be carrying, while avoiding inspections and other control measures.

11:15-12:30

Panel/discussion: regional efforts to control illicit drug trafficking through Central America

- **Jhonathan Ali**, Deputy Director, National Intelligence Directorate, National Air Service (SENAN), Panama
- **Captain Jose Nery Barrientos**, Commanding Officer, Special Marine Force, Ministry of Defense, Guatemala ([MAR/DOC.5.2/18](#))
- **Mario de Jesus Molina Moncada**, National Director, Counterdrug Police, Honduras

Moderator: Ian Ralby, Consultant, Global Maritime Crime Program, UNODC

The panel discussed regional efforts to control illicit drug trafficking through Central America. During the presentations, it was evident that the region is very vulnerable given that it constitutes a point of entry of illicit drugs by sea, air and land. It was also mentioned that the Central American countries are being constantly used as bridge or transit platform for drug storage, transshipment and refueling.

Participants pointed out that criminal networks are exporting, expanding and changing the methods used to produce illicit drugs. For instance, different kinds of clandestine laboratories were identified in the region for the illicit production of cocaine and methamphetamine. It was also indicated that governments and law enforcement agencies are monitoring remote areas, where they have found and destroyed small poppy and coca plantations.

FOURTH PLENARY SESSION

14:00-15:15

Panel/discussion: the importance of port security in the control of the illicit drug trade logistical chain

- **Luis Enrique Diaz Valencia**, Chief, Counter Drug and Organized Crime Brigade, San Antonio Port, Investigations Police (PDI), Chile ([MAR/DOC.6.1/18](#))
- **Major Victor Rolando Morales Aquayo**, Counterdrug Division, National Police, Peru
- **Captain Norman Cabrera**, Director, Counterdrug Division, Navy, Colombia

Moderator: Commander Boris Brito, Navy, Ecuador

The panel focused on how ports have become more strategic in the logistical chain of drug trafficking in the region. Panelists shared that there are multiple methodologies by which drug traffickers are smuggling illicit drugs through ports and containers. The main methods of hiding illicit drugs that have been detected by authorities, including the “rip-off” techniques, and the use “torpedoes” attached to the bottom of larger ships. Panelists also mentioned that on occasion narcotrafficking organizations have hacked the security systems of ports in order to avoid controls, making these facilities extremely vulnerable.

15:30-16:00

Conclusions, commitments and recommendations

- **Mr. Rafael Parada**, Chief, Supply Reduction Unit, CICAD/OAS

The Executive Secretariat of CICAD presented the conclusions, commitments and recommendations agreed by the Group during the meeting, as follows:

The CICAD Group of Experts on Maritime Narcotrafficking:

- 1) Requests the ES/CICAD to continue supporting member states to strengthen their maritime technical, investigative and cooperation capacities based on international commitments and agreements on the matter, including UNGASS 2016, CICAD's 2010 Hemispheric Drug Strategy and its Hemispheric Plan of Action 2016-2020;
- 2) Recommends exploring the possibility of supporting Caribbean member states, in coordination with the Regional Security System (RSS) and other strategic partners, to develop a model Maritime Anti-Drug Cooperation Strategy, taking into account models and strategies used by other regions;
- 3) Recommends that the SE/CICAD continue the delivery of the Legal-Operational Seminars on

Counterdrug Maritime Cooperation in collaboration with the Colombian National Navy, in order to promote the exchange of best practices and tools that help the region to strengthen its capacity to detect, investigate, interdict and prosecute the movement of illicit drugs in the maritime domain;

- 4) Requests the ES/CICAD to support member states to strengthen their collaboration with the private sector in order to implement effective measures to prevent the transportation of illicit drugs by sea, including fentanyl and its analogues, as well as the chemical precursors used in their manufacturing, by increasing controls in the export logistical chain, as well as promoting collaboration between exporting and recipient countries;
- 5) Recommends that the Executive Secretariat of CICAD work with strategic partners, such as the Inter-Ministerial Center for Anti-Drug Training (CIFAD) to offer joint modules and specialized training on countering maritime drug trafficking;
- 6) Requests the ES/CICAD to promote horizontal cooperation and support the dissemination of training opportunities in the Hemisphere offered, for instance, by the United States Coast Guard;
- 7) Requests the ES/CICAD to support the dissemination of publications related to maritime narcotrafficking, such as information bulletins and analysis prepared, among others, by the International Drug Trafficking Maritime Analysis Center (CIMCON);
- 8) Requests the ES/CICAD to promote the participation of OAS member states in the research activities carried out by CIMCON;
- 9) Requests the ES/CICAD to promote the initiative of the Orion counterdrug maritime operation among OAS member states;
- 10) Request the ES/CICAD to identify existing foreign registry and concurrence procedures;
- 11) Examine possibilities of synergies among national, sub-regional, and regional meetings on combating maritime narcotrafficking;
- 12) Consider opportunities for regional coordination to respond to new and emerging trends in maritime narcotrafficking as a result of instability and associated humanitarian concerns in the Hemisphere;
- 13) Invite ES/CICAD to compile a list documenting existing bilateral and regional maritime cooperation agreements in the Hemisphere, to be made available to relevant national authorities upon request;
- 14) Recommends that the Group of Experts on Maritime Narcotrafficking meet in 2019, in order to continue facilitating the exchange of updated information, knowledge, and best practices, as well as strengthening collaboration among agencies responsible for combating maritime narcotrafficking in the region;

15) The Group of Experts recommends The Bahamas to assume the Chair of the group in 2019.

The Executive Secretariat of CICAD thanked participants and indicated the final report of the meeting will be presented for approval to CICAD during the sixty-fourth regular session of the Commission to be held in Washington, D.C., November 19-21, 2018.

Thursday, September 27

09:00-12:30

Site visit: US Coast Guard District Seven Demonstration

- Welcome remarks, RADM Peter Brown, District Seven Commander
- D7 Missions Overview
- Command Center Tour
- Station Miami Tour
- Fast Response Cutter (FRC) Tour
- TACLET static demo