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**INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE
CONTROL COMMISSION**

CICAD

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

GROUP OF EXPERTS ON MARITIME NARCOTRAFFICKING
September 11-12, 2019
Nassau, The Bahamas

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DRAFT FINAL REPORT
GROUP OF EXPERTS ON MARITIME NARCOTRAFFICKING

DRAFT

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-fourth regular session of CICAD, held in Washington, D.C., November 19-21, 2018, the Commission elected The Bahamas to serve as Chair of the Expert Group for the period 2018-2019.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Group of Experts on Maritime Narcotrafficking met in Nassau, The Bahamas, on September 11-12, 2019. The meeting featured the participation of 58 experts, from 16 member states: The Bahamas, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States; four (4) permanent observers: France, The Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom; and two (2) International Organizations: CARICOM IMPACS and UNODC.

As established in the schedule of activities ([MAR/AGE.1/19](#)), the meeting started with a roundtable which provided delegations with an opportunity to identify the challenges their countries/institutions face to counter maritime narcotrafficking, as well as the legal/policy/operational measures undertaken by their institutions to address the issue. After the roundtable, panels and presentations focused on the following topics:

- Dynamics of regional maritime drug trafficking;
- The importance of multilateral operations in the maritime domain;
- Experiences and best practices in maritime drug interdiction in the Caribbean Basin;
- Maritime Domain Awareness in the Caribbean Basin – the role of CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS);
- Maritime Interdiction Case Scenarios;
- Overview and status of implementation of the Agreement Concerning Co-operation in Suppressing Illicit Maritime and Air Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in the Caribbean (San Jose Treaty, 2003);
- Other initiatives to promote and strengthen counterdrug maritime interdiction cooperation in the region.

This final report will be submitted for approval by the Commission during its sixty-sixth regular session, to be held in Miami, United States, November 19-21, 2019.

III. MINUTES

Wednesday, September 11

Welcome remarks:

- **Phyllis Baron**, Representative, OAS Office in The Bahamas
- **Angela Crowdy**, Assistant Executive Secretary, Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (OAS/CICAD)
- **Tellis Bethel**, Commodore of the Royal Bahamas Defense Force, The Bahamas

Keynote address: **Eugene Poitier**, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of National Security, The Bahamas

Roundtable on evolving and emerging drug maritime threats and challenges:

The meeting began with a roundtable, during which delegates had the opportunity to introduce themselves and briefly comment on the challenges their countries/institutions face to counter maritime narcotrafficking. The main trends and challenges mentioned by delegates were mainly related to the exploitation of borders with low maritime control; challenges related to changes of transportation methods, and challenges associated to the growing complexity of transnational drug trafficking organizations, as follows:

- Continuous and dynamic change in drug trafficking routes in order to avoid detection and interdiction;
- The increasing use of major ports in the region as a key component of the drug supply chain;
- Significant lack of maritime domain awareness due to vast maritime borders and limited resources to patrol those borders in the Caribbean basin;
- Due to their strategic geographical location in the cocaine route, “transit countries” are increasingly being used for the refinement of cocaine;
- Fast boats continue to be a primary method of illicit drugs smuggling in the Caribbean region;
- Increasing use of non-conventional vessels such as semi-submersibles;
- Surge in the use of merchant or cargo vessels to transport “tons” of cocaine;
- Use of technics such as “torpedo” in merchant or cargo vessels;
- “Rip-off” technique in container vessels;
- Use of new technologies such as drones by drug trafficking organizations;
- Increasing presence of transnational criminal organizations and alliances with local criminal groups in different countries and territories of the Caribbean;
- The continue lack of interagency timely and coordinated cooperation and collaboration among counterdrug law enforcement agencies in the region;
- Lack of adequate and efficient legal frameworks to counter drug trafficking in the maritime domain.

Presentation/discussion: Dynamics of regional maritime drug trafficking

- **Captain Hector A. Castañeda Beltran**, Director, Drug Trafficking Maritime Analysis Center (CIMCON)

During his presentation, the CIMCON Director shared the current regional situation on maritime drug trafficking, including data on the following topics: seizures by substance; the amount of events reported on the modalities used for trafficking by country, noting that the most commonly used was containers, followed by go-fast boats; as well as the number of arrests. Additionally, Captain Castañeda commented on the increasing diversification of maritime routes being used by criminal organizations, and highlighted the increase of “parasite” and “torpedo” modalities to smuggle illicit substances through the maritime domain to take advantage of the lack of underwater detection capacity by countries in the region.

Panel/discussion: The importance of multilateral operations in the maritime domain

- **Superintendent Prince Charlton**, Royal Bahamas Police Force, The Bahamas ([MAR/DOC.4/19](#))
- **Captain Juan Carlos Jiménez Howard**, Director, Counterdrug Division, Navy, Colombia

Superintendent Charlton presented the OPBAT maritime interdiction operation, which was initiated in 1983 as a multi-agency, international drug interdiction effort focused on stopping the flow of illegal drugs from South America to The Bahamas, Turks & Caicos and the United States. Located in the United States Embassy in Nassau, OPBAT is responsible for initiating and prosecuting law enforcement cases in the Bahamian “Area of Responsibility”, and it is estimated that the operation has reduced the flow of cocaine through The Bahamas by 70 percent. During his presentation, the panelist stressed the importance of the exchange of real time intelligence for the success of carrying out effective multilateral interdiction operations, and mentioned that OPBAT is considered one of the most successful counter drug enforcement initiatives in the region.

Captain Jimenez presented the ORION counterdrug maritime interdiction operation, which is led by the Colombian Navy. This initiative is currently in its fourth phase and has eighteen participating countries. As the speaker stressed, the focus of ORION is to intercept illicit drugs – mostly cocaine and marihuana – in the Caribbean Sea and the Eastern Pacific routes. This counterdrug operation has generated best practices in how multilateral operations should be conducted, emphasizing the principle of shared responsibility among the different stakeholders, based on each country’s capacity to bring assets to the operation in an effort to maximize existing resources.

Panel/discussion: Experiences and best practices in maritime drug interdiction in the Caribbean Basin

- **Lt. Com. Aldon Jasper**, Coast Guard, Trinidad and Tobago ([MAR/DOC.5/19](#))
- **Rolerick Sobers**, Regional Maritime Officer, Regional Security System (RSS), Barbados ([MAR/DOC.6/19](#))
- **Jose David Rojas de la Rosa**, Director of Strategic Intelligence, National Directorate for Drug Control (DNCD), Dominican Republic ([MAR/DOC.7/19](#))

Mr. Jasper started his presentation explaining the mission of the Trinidad and Tobago Navy, which belongs to the country’s Defence Force (TTDF) and is responsible for guaranteeing the security and safety of the country by protecting its extensive maritime boundaries. Such mission is carried out employing a system of coastal surveillance radars, which are capable of detecting “semi-submersible” vessels that are

used by drug traffickers to evade detection by patrol boats. Also, the speaker mentioned the main maritime drug threats and challenges that his country is facing, highlighting that narcotrafficking organizations are taking advantage of current political instability in neighboring countries to move illicit drugs in the region, using Trinidad and Tobago as a transshipment.

Mr. Sobers presented the main emerging trends in maritime narcotrafficking in the Eastern Caribbean sub-region, which covers Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and The Grenadines. The speaker explained the main routes used by criminal organizations to traffic illicit drugs, emphasizing that the primary maritime security threat of RSS member states is the smuggling of illicit goods. In relation to interdiction results, the presenter highlighted relevant seizures of cocaine and marijuana, the arrest and successful prosecution of drug traffickers, and the confiscation of their ill-gotten assets from the drug trade. In terms of possible solutions to address existing challenges, Mr. Sobers mentioned the need to increase domain awareness in the Caribbean and enhance cooperation with international partners, as well as the importance of developing and implementing national and regional maritime security strategies to counter drug trafficking and other related crimes.

Mr. Rojas presented on the current situation of maritime drug trafficking affecting the Dominican Republic, and countermeasures implemented by the Government to address this challenge. According to the panelist, due to its strategic location, the Dominican Republic is one of the principal transit points for cocaine shipments from source countries headed to the United States and Europe, with maritime trafficking—mainly go-fast boats and commercial containers—as the primary methods of smuggling drugs to and from the island. In addition, Mr. Rojas indicated that the country is increasing public-private port security partnerships in their principal ports, in an effort to maximize existing resources to avoid contamination of the cargo. Finally, the panelist expressed the willingness of the Dominican Republic to increase collaboration with CARICOM and other strategic partners in joint initiatives that aim to strengthen maritime security in the Caribbean basin.

Presentation/discussion: Maritime Domain Awareness in the Caribbean Basin – the role of CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS)

- **Chesley Ollivierre**, Chief Analyst, Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre (RIFC), CARICOM-IMPACS ([MAR/DOC.8/19](#))

Mr. Ollivierre started his presentation mentioning the common security threats for the Caribbean region, highlighting that drug trafficking is categorized as one of the “main current and present dangers”. He stressed the value of regional frameworks to identify, prioritize and address risks and threats, as well as to operationalize international cooperation instruments. The presenter gave an overview of the CARICOM Crime and Security Strategy (CCSS) and its strategic value, including in the development of other regional and national crime and security plans. Additionally, the delegate noted the work that has been carried out within the framework of the Caribbean Basin Security Strategy (CBSI) under the leadership of CARICOM IMPACS and RSS in order to develop a maritime security strategy for the Caribbean region. For instance, he mentioned the work of the CBSI Maritime Technical Working Group on Maritime Operations, which created a road map establishing short, medium and long term priority actions to strengthen regional maritime law enforcement cooperation and coordination among Caribbean states. Lastly, Mr. Ollivierre mentioned existing legal and procedural regional cooperation security instruments, such as the RSS treaty, the Treaty on Security Assistance, and the San Jose Treaty along with their importance for CARICOM member states.

Thursday, September 12

Table Top Exercise: Maritime Interdiction Case Scenarios

- **Ian Ralby**, Consultant, Global Maritime Crime Program, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

This exercise drew on the operational and legal experiences of the participants. As a group, all those present worked together to address a series of fact-based scenarios. These scenarios were based on actual incidents and current trends in the Caribbean Basin, as well as likely eventualities derived from global criminal dynamics. The increased legal sophistication and business savvy of drug cartels necessitate more expansive thinking in how best to counter the maritime movement of narcotics. This exercise teased out the extent to which interagency processes at the national level and cooperative security mechanisms at the regional level may be leveraged as tools to help find gaps in the reliance and continuity structures of criminal cartels. Furthermore, it helped to identify additional tools that may be needed for the region to become more adept at stemming the flow of narcotics through the maritime domain.

Presentation/discussion: Overview and status of implementation of the Agreement Concerning Cooperation in Suppressing Illicit Maritime and Air Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in the Caribbean (San Jose Treaty, 2003)

- **Carlos Alvarado Valverde**, Legal Advisor, National Coastguard Service, Costa Rica ([MAR/DOC.9/19](#))

This presentation was as an overview of the San Jose Treaty, which aims to increase collaboration among signatory countries to ensure that suspect vessels and aircraft are detected, identified, continuously monitored, and where evidence of involvement in illicit traffic is found, suspect vessels are detained for appropriate law enforcement action by the responsible authorities. Mr. Alvarado presented the historical background of the Agreement and the status of its adoption, signing, ratification and implementation by participating countries. The delegation of Costa Rica, as depository of the Treaty, encouraged countries to ratify it, and noted its significance as a regional tool to counter drug trafficking by air and sea in the Caribbean Basin, in accordance with the Law of the Sea and other maritime legal tools. The text of the San Jose Treaty will be accessible to member states through the CICAD web page.

Panel/discussion: Other initiatives to promote and strengthen counterdrug maritime interdiction cooperation in the region

- **Brian Sullivan**, Program Manager, Maritime Security Program, Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (OAS/CICTE) ([MAR/DOC.10/19](#))
- **Benoit Coeuru**, Deputy French Customs Attaché for the United-States, France

Mr. Sullivan presented the Eastern Caribbean National and Regional Maritime Security Strategies Development Initiative, which aims to facilitate the development of national maritime security strategies in seven countries in the Eastern Caribbean (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), as well as an overarching Eastern Caribbean regional maritime security strategy under the auspices of the Regional Security System. As explained by the speaker, the parallel processes to initiate and support the development of individual national strategies within each of the aforementioned States, as well as the

companion regional strategy, is envisioned as being undertaken in a series of four phases: a project sensitization and initiation phase; an assessment and planning phase; a strategy development and technical assistance phase; and a strategy revision and finalization phase. Those activities will be planned and executed by OAS/CICTE, RSS and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), in collaboration with OAS/CICAD and other strategic partners that also operate in the Caribbean region.

Mr. Coeuru shared the counterdrug efforts that French Customs is undertaking in the Caribbean, more specifically to disrupt the trafficking of cocaine towards Europe. The speaker provided an overview of the French Customs presence in OAS member states, highlighting their intelligence assets in the Caribbean branch and various successful operations against drug trafficking organizations which operate in the maritime domain, including Operation Apache in 2018. Such initiatives are supported by the Maritime Intelligence and Analysis Center (*Centre d'Analyse du Renseignement Maritime aux Antilles -CARMA*), which was created in 2012 to generate and share real time intelligence and operational analysis to support investigations and operations to counter illicit flows.

The way forward: Conclusions, commitments and recommendations

The Group of Experts on Maritime Narcotrafficking, during its meeting held in Nassau, The Bahamas, September 11-12, 2019:

1. Requests that, based upon the technical, investigative, and counterdrug maritime cooperation challenges in the region, the ES-CICAD continue to provide technical assistance and training to member states, in accordance with international conventions and agreements on the issue, including UNGASS 2016, the CICAD Hemispheric Drug Strategy 2010 and its Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs 2016-2020;
2. Requests that such technical assistance and training is carried out in coordination with strategic partners that operate in the region, such as the Regional Security System (RSS), UNODC, and CARICOM IMPACS, among others, with the goal of maximizing available resources and avoiding duplication of efforts;
3. Requests that the ES-CICAD continue contributing to the development of a Maritime Security Strategy for the Caribbean, considering the strategies and good practices implemented by other regions; as well as encourages member states to increase resources/assets in the region, so they can effectively face existing challenges, and strengthen information-sharing;
4. Requests that the ES-CICAD continue to support and participate in the different national, regional and international fora related to countering maritime narcotrafficking in order to find synergies and coordinate efforts on this subject;
5. Requests that the ES-CICAD coordinate with the Colombian Navy and any other country/institution that wishes to share their maritime security strategies, or any other documents that may serve as input for the development of a Maritime Security Strategy for the Caribbean; as well as requests that the ES-CICAD promote multilateral counterdrug operations such as "ORION" among OAS member states, including from the Caribbean Basin;

6. Acknowledges the importance of the analytical work/research undertaken by the Drug Trafficking Maritime Analysis Center (CIMCON, for its Spanish acronym), and requests the ES-CICAD to support their participation at international technical fora related to their mission, as well as to publish their information bulletins/ analysis about maritime narcotrafficking. CIMCON will continue sharing with the ES-CICAD updated analysis on the phenomena, which will enrich the training modules and technical assistance that is provided by the Supply Reduction Unit;
7. Acknowledges the importance of the Agreement Concerning Co-operation in Suppressing Illicit Maritime and Air Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in the Caribbean (San Jose Treaty, 2003) and requests the ES-CICAD to promote its ratification by OAS member states. As part of those efforts, the ES-CICAD will disseminate the agreement between participants, in different languages, and will publish it in its webpage, along with the manual developed by Costa Rica to support the signing and ratification of the Treaty;
8. Encourages the ES-CICAD to establish an archive of good practices and lessons learned about maritime counterdrug interdiction in the region;
9. Requests the ES-CICAD to create a data base of point of contacts from each member state for matters related to counterdrug maritime interdiction;
10. Calls on member states to identify specific needs for training, as well as any training opportunities that member states or other international partners may offer, and encourages coordination among states in order to maximize impact from such training opportunities;
11. Encourages member states to increase information exchange and strengthen existing operational procedures to counter maritime narcotrafficking;
12. Calls on member states to consider developing a methodology that allows to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made by the Group of Experts in each country, including the identification of individuals that are responsible for reporting progress;
13. Recommends that the Expert Group meet annually, or every two years, with the aim of sharing updated information, knowledge and good practices, as well as strengthening cooperation among agencies in charge of countering maritime narcotrafficking in the region.