

Organization Attributes Sheet: Air Holland Money Laundering Ring

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A. When the organization was formed + brief history

- The conspiracy to launder drug money from Suriname through Air Holland to the Netherlands, Luxemburg, and Britain developed in the spring of 2000, after Air Holland got into financial trouble.¹ The project lasted until 2004, when Air Holland went bankrupt.² The former director of the company, and the Chief Financial Officer, were convicted of money laundering in 2006.³ The broader network, in which Air Holland played a small part, involved trafficking drugs between Suriname, Brazil, and the Netherlands. The main leaders of these activities were Shyam Gupta, members of the Parmessar family, and members of the Gulzar family.⁴

B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,

a. In general

- Drug trafficking, money laundering
- The managers of Air Holland would take large amounts of cash from the Gulzars in Suriname, and then launder it through Standard Finance International in Luxemburg and London. Part of the money would then be reinvested into Air Holland.⁵

b. Specific detail: types of illicit trafficking activities engaged in

- Members of the Gulzar family were arrested in Brazil for trafficking tens of thousands of ecstasy pills.
- The Guptars would traffic drugs into Europe hidden in food shipments.

C. Scope and Size

a. Estimated size of network and membership

- Information not found.

b. Countries / regions group is known to have operated in. (i.e. the group's operating area)

- Suriname, Brazil, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, Britain, Iberian Peninsula

D. Leader Characteristics

a. Who is/are the leader(s)

- **Air Holland Management:** Erik de Vleigler owned Air Holland.⁶ Cees van Dormael was the CEO of the company.⁷ Paul Gruythuysen was the CFO.⁸ Gruythuysen and Cees van Dormael were acquitted in 2008.⁹
- **Gulzar Family:** The Air Holland agents were directly connected with the Gulzar family from Suriname,¹⁰ which owned currency exchange businesses in Paramaribo and was involved in trafficking ecstasy between Europe and Latin America.¹¹ The Gulzars also laundered money through real estate and other businesses, including a respected security firm called Secuprof.¹² One of the Gulzar brothers was arrested in Brazil in 2004, with 50,000 ecstasy pills.¹³ The others were entangled in the Air Holland money laundering case, and ended up giving information connecting the case to the larger Parmessar organization.¹⁴
- **Shyam Gupta:** Owned an import/export business, which he used to smuggle cocaine into Europe, hiding the drugs in shipments of rice, fish, and other goods.¹⁵ He was implicated in a Dutch/Surinamese investigation called Operation Ficus.¹⁶ He was brought up on charges in Suriname because he could not be extradited from the country due to his native citizenship.¹⁷
- **Parmessar Family:** Bidjai Parmessar was the head of the Yokohama Group, which was at the center of the Operation Ficus investigation. The Yokohama Group was a

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

collection of companies operating casinos, currency exchanges, money transfer offices, car sales, and liquor stores in Suriname.¹⁸ The businesses were used as fronts for trafficking Colombian cocaine into Europe, and then laundering the proceeds. In 2008, Bidjai was convicted in the Netherlands of money laundering, but not of drug trafficking.¹⁹ Bidjai's cousin, Rabinder Parmessar, is a prominent leader of Desi Bouterse's NDP,²⁰ and was also accused of involvement in money laundering.²¹ The Parmessars were reportedly working with Shyam Guptar.²²

b. Leadership timeline

- Information not found.

c. Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)

- Information not found.

E. Organizational Structure

a. Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)

- It looks like a relatively loose network of business relations among different groups. There might be more hierarchical structures within the separate groups or between the groups - for instance, it appears that the management of Air Holland took orders directly from the Gulzars.²³

b. Membership – is there formal or informal membership in the organization or network? What role do informal or nonmembers play in trafficking and other criminal activities?

- The only available information relates to principals in the network who have been arrested, and in some cases charged and convicted. All the businesses laundering money or trafficking drugs were owned by the principals. There is no information about “nonmembers” playing a role.

c. Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)

- Information not found.

F. Resources

a. Financial

- The network included a number of businesses conducive to money laundering, like currency exchanges and wire transfer offices.²⁴

b. Human

- Business professionals and investors

c. Logistical

i. Forgery, safe-houses, etc.

- A network of licit businesses provided logistical support for illicit activities.

ii. Key routes

- Ships were used to transport drugs into Europe via the Iberian Peninsula and the Low Countries.²⁵
- Air Holland was used to ship cash into Europe via Luxemburg, Britain and Netherlands.²⁶

d. Transportation

i. Land

- Cash was transported by car and ferry between Luxemburg, Netherlands, and London.²⁷

ii. Sea

- Shyar Guptar's import/export business made use of shipping to smuggle cocaine into Europe.²⁸

iii. Air

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Holland was used to ship cash into Europe, and possibly drugs.
iv. Intermodal container
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drugs were shipped into Rotterdam in intermodal containers.²⁹
G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities
a. Corruption
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely corruption in Suriname, as indicated by the implication of NDP member Rabindar Parmessar. The only other information suggesting political corruption was a memo from the Transportation Minister in the Netherlands, which seemed to suggest that the Ministry was aware of drugs being trafficked on Air Holland, but looked the other way.³⁰
b. Concealment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drugs were hidden in shipments of fish and other goods, as well as in hidden compartments.³¹ • Bulk cash was transported in luggage and the trunks of small cars.
c. Deception
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.
d. Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.
H. Prior / Existing Relationships
a. Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is likely that this group has some connection with the Suri-Cartel, given that the Parmessar's are so closely connected with Bouterse and the NDP.
b. Corrupt politicians, law enforcement , political parties and other state entities, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rabinder Parmessar of the NDP.
c. <i>Specific detail: Any alliances / past dealings with terrorist groups.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.
I. Ideological / Ethnic / Familial Orientation (if any)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several families were involved in the businesses
J. Technical Sophistication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.
K. Penchant for Innovation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.
L. Activities in United States
a. Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.
b. <i>Specific detail: trafficking activities ; logistical activities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.
c. Linkages with US groups
i. Market/transaction links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.
ii. Stable supplier
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.
iii. Franchise arrangement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.
iv. HQ and Branch office
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.

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M. Evaluations

a. Strengths

- A network of legitimate businesses with which to mask drug trafficking and money laundering activities.

b. Weaknesses and vulnerabilities

- Most of the players have been arrested at least once before, so it would be increasingly difficult for them to operate under the radar of law enforcement.

c. Additional insights

- The Parmessar family's close links to Bouterse and the NDP makes it possible that this network is another part of the Suri-Cartel, representing the Suriname-Europe side of the business, (where the template dealing with the Suri-Cartel proper represents the Suriname-Colombia-Brazil side of the business). However, there is no clear evidence connecting the two, and there is no evidence of weapons trafficking being involved with any of the groups connected to the Air Holland case.

Other Notes

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² "Voormalige top Air Holland voor rechter," *Amigoe*, March 14, 2006. <http://www.korps-politie-suriname.com/nieuws/nieuwsbronnen%20internationaal/archief%20nieuwsbronnen%20internationaal/2006/2006-03-nieuwsbronnen-internationaal/2006-03-nieuwsbronnen%20internationaal.htm>.

³ "Celstraffen voor ex-top Air Holland," *NOS.nl*, December 07, 2006. <http://nos.nl/artikel/59459-celstraffen-voor-extop-air-holland.html>.

⁴ Stil, Herman. "Smokkelzaak Air Holland voor rechter," *Parool*, March 13, 2006. <http://www.korps-politie-suriname.com/nieuws/nieuwsbronnen%20internationaal/archief%20nieuwsbronnen%20internationaal/2006/2006-03-nieuwsbronnen-internationaal/2006-03-nieuwsbronnen%20internationaal.htm>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Netherlands State Secretary To Testify in Air Holland Laundering Affair," *NRC Handelsblad*, April 27, 2005, OSC: EUP20050428024001.

⁷ "Proces Air Holland opnieuw op lange baan," *Reuters*, March 04, 2006. <http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2686/Binnenland/article/detail/817921/2006/04/03/Proces-Air-Holland-opnieuw-op-lange-baan.dhtml>.

⁸ Den Boer, Edwin. "'Air Holland-bende pleegde moord'," *Quote*, March 30, 2006. <http://www.quotenet.nl/lifestyle/air-hollandbende-pleegde-moord.php>.

⁹ "Ex-topmannen Air Holland vrijgesproken," *DePers.nl*, March 12, 2008. <http://www.depers.nl/economie/181356/Ex-top-Air-Holland-vrijgesproken.html>.

¹⁰ Den Boer, Edwin. "'Air Holland-bende pleegde moord'," *Quote*, March 30, 2006. <http://www.quotenet.nl/lifestyle/air-hollandbende-pleegde-moord.php>.

¹¹ Joao Alves, Maria. "Justiça Federal interroga traficante holandês," *Tribuna do Norte*, March 16, 2006. <http://tribunadonorte.com.br/noticia/justica-federal-interroga-trafficante-holandes/4707>.

¹² "Drug Trafficker Invests in Netherlands High-Level Personal Security Firm," *NRC Handelsbad*, March 12, 2005, OSC: EUP20050314000069.

¹³ "Netherlands State Secretary To Testify in Air Holland Laundering Affair," *NRC Handelsblad*, April 27, 2005, OSC: EUP20050428024001.

¹⁴ Cairo, Ivan. "Rechtbank hoort politiemannen in Air Holland-zaak," *De Ware Tijd*, March 21, 2006. <http://www.korps-politie-suriname.com/nieuws/nieuwsbronnen%20nationaal/archief%20nieuwsbronnen%20nationaal/2006/2006-03-nieuwsbronnen/2006-03-nieuwsbronnen.htm>.

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