

Organization Data Sheet: Curacao DTO

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A. When the organization was formed + brief history

- On April 28, 2009, seventeen people were arrested in Curacao for involvement in a drug trafficking organization. The origins and duration of the organization are not known.
- Most news articles claim that the authorities intercepted a total of 2000 kg of cocaine in two shipments.
- However, the NIS-News Bulletin claims that the group trafficked 2000 kg per year, and that several smaller drug busts were made: "In this investigation, launched at the beginning of 2008, containers with cocaine were intercepted earlier in Rotterdam (300 kilos), the Spanish city of Valencia (20 kilos) and the Belgian city of Antwerp (140 kilos)."¹ The US State Department also states that the 2000 kg was a yearly estimate, and that law enforcement made several smaller drug busts.²
- Prosecutors retracted their original statements of the group's involvement with Hezbollah: "any assumptions that large sums of money from the drug trade became available in Lebanon through underground banking were unfounded, a public prosecutor said."³
- "Four of the 18 criminals were sentenced to 10-18 month prison terms at the Court of First Instance. 13 others received sentences ranging from 4-7 years while one suspect was acquitted in December 2009."⁴ Sources did not say when the 18th man was arrested.
- However, in March 2011, "a server crash at the Public Prosecutors Office in Curacao reportedly caused the loss of pivotal 'Hezbollah Case' data, including information gathered via wiretaps," leaving the "convicted criminals...a good chance to win their appeal cases."⁵

B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,

a. In general

- Drug and weapons trafficking, money laundering

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

- The group reportedly facilitated "requests from Lebanon for arms to be shipped from South America."⁶
- The group exported "Colombian cocaine...obtained from smugglers who transported the drugs to Curacao using speedboats and ocean-going cargo ships that embarked from Venezuela."⁷
- The group "imported arms, ammunition and hashish from the Netherlands to Curacao."⁸
- The DTO used boats to ship cocaine directly from Venezuela and Colombia to West Africa.⁹ From there the drugs were sent to Europe.

C. Scope and Size

a. Estimated size of network and membership

- It is unknown if the entire ring was captured, but authorities believe that the gang has been dismantled.

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

- "Curacao, Colombia, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and Lebanon,"¹⁰ West Africa, Belgium, Spain, Jordan, and the Netherlands.¹¹

D. Leader Characteristics

a. Who is/are the leader(s)

- Information not found

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

b.	Leadership timeline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found
c.	Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found
E. Organizational Structure	
a.	Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found
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?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found
c.	Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found
F. Resources	
a.	Financial
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unknown, but substantial enough to purchase speedboats, several properties, and large quantities of cocaine despite intercepted shipments. The group was able to continue to purchase cocaine despite the intercept of multiple large shipments.
b.	Human
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group appears to have been small but comprised of a variety of nationalities.
c.	Logistical
	<p>i. Forgery, safe-houses, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group possessed several properties in many “Curacao, Colombia, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and Lebanon,”¹² though the specific purposes of these properties have not been stated. In Curacao, the group used front companies.¹³ <p>ii. Key routes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The traffickers used cargo ships and speed boats to import the drugs from Colombia and Venezuela for shipment to Africa and beyond to Europe, according to Curacao authorities.”¹⁴ The DTO was capable of directly trafficking drugs from Venezuela to West Africa or using Curacao as a transshipment point “The group shipped containers with cocaine from Curacao to the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Jordan...From Venezuela, containers with drugs went to West Africa and then to the Netherlands, Lebanon and Spain. Carriers smuggled the cocaine as airline passengers from Curacao and Aruba into the Netherlands.”¹⁵
d.	Transportation
	<p>i. Land</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found <p>ii. Sea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cargo boats and speed boats <p>iii. Air</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Airline passenger mules from the Caribbean to the Netherlands.¹⁶ <p>iv. Intermodal container</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found
G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities	
a.	Corruption

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found
<p>b. Concealment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airline passenger mules • Cargo boats presumably concealed their illicit goods.
<p>c. Deception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found
<p>d. Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speedboats are presumably used to avoid coastal police.
<p>H. Prior / Existing Relationships</p> <p>a. Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unidentified Colombian cocaine suppliers. • Unidentified Dutch weapons and hashish suppliers. • Unidentified South American weapons suppliers. • Purchasers of drugs in West Africa and Europe. • Purchasers of weapons in Lebanon. <p>b. Corrupt politicians, law enforcement , political parties and other state entities, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group is claimed to be affiliated with Hezbollah, which is a recognized political party in Lebanon. <p>c. <i>Specific detail: Any alliances / past dealings with terrorist groups.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitated weapons transactions between unidentified buyers in Lebanon and weapons suppliers in South America.¹⁷ • While the group was initially believed to have given money to Hezbollah, subsequent statements by a public prosecutor retracted previous claims that the DTO helped finance Hezbollah.
<p>I. Ideological / Ethnic / Familial Orientation (if any)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four arrestees were Lebanese, while others were from Curacao, Cuba, Venezuela and Colombia.¹⁸
<p>J. Technical Sophistication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient technical capabilities to perform transatlantic shipments
<p>K. Penchant for Innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little evidence of innovation
<p>L. Activities in United States</p> <p>a. Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group does not appear to have been active in the United States. <p>b. <i>Specific detail: trafficking activities ; logistical activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources do not say if the group was active in the United States <p>c. Linkages with US groups</p> <p>i. Market/transaction links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not appear to have had transaction links with US groups <p>ii. Stable supplier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources do not say if the group was active in the United States <p>iii. Franchise arrangement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group bought properties in various countries, such as Curacao, Colombia, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and Lebanon, but there is no evidence of the creation of franchises. <p>iv. HQ and Branch office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HQ appears to have been located in Curacao

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M. Evaluations

a. Strengths

- Widespread trafficking network.
- Was capable of making large shipments.
- Multiple convictions may be overturned due to lost evidence.

b. Weaknesses and vulnerabilities

- If the group was truly dismantled by the initial arrests, it may be difficult for the group to restart its operation.
- Several large shipments of cocaine have been intercepted by various law enforcement agencies.

c. Additional insights

- While the group may not have been active in the United States, the group appears to have had the logistical capabilities to ship large quantities of cocaine to the American mainland if the group had desired to expand its network.

Other Notes

- If the convicts win their appeals, the group may be able to restart its operation. However, the group's suppliers are unlikely to be happy that the group lost several hundred kilograms of cocaine.

1 "Big Cocaine Gang Allied to Hezbollah Rounded up." *NIS-News Bulletin*, April 30, 2009.

http://www.nisnews.nl/public/300409_2.htm

2 "News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending October 30, 2010." *US State Department*, October 30, 2010. http://photos.state.gov/libraries/curacao/5/2010/WEEKLY_News_103010.pdf

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 "News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending March 26, 2011," *US State Department*, March 26, 2011. photos.state.gov/libraries/curacao/215422/2011/WEEKLY_News_032611.pdf

6 Associated Press. "17 Arrested on Caribbean Island for Involvement in Hezbollah-linked Drug Trafficking," *The Guardian*, April 29, 2009. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/apr/29/curacao-caribbean-drug-ring-hezbollah>

7 Ibid.

8 Zambelis, Chris. "Mystery Surrounds Alleged Hezbollah Links to Drug Arrests in Curacao," *The Jamestown Foundation*, June 25, 2009.

http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Bwords%5D=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews%5Bany_of_the_words%5D=curacao&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35183&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=eb9c8788d3ddd30bd61f68f5721c56a5

9 "Caribbean: 17 Arrested In Curacao For Drug Trafficking, Hezbollah Connection," *STRATFOR*, April 29, 2009.

http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/137035/sitrep/20090429_caribbean_17_arrested_curacao_drug_trafficking_hezbollah_connection

10 Zambelis.

11 "Netherlands: Police crack down on Curacao drugs ring with ties to Hezbollah," *Iloubnan.info*. April 29, 2009.

<http://www.iloubnan.info/politics/actualite/id/34129/lebanon/Netherlands:-Police-crack-down-on-Curacao-drugs-ring-with-ties-to-Hezbollah>

12 Zambelis.

13 Ibid.

14 Associated Press. "17 Arrested on Caribbean ..."

15 "Netherlands: Police crack down..."

16 Ibid.

17 Associated Press. "17 Arrested on Caribbean ..."

18 Ibid.

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