

Organization Attributes Sheet: The “Rolo” and “Topo” Organization

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A. When the organization was formed + brief history
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The organization operated from 2000 to 2010 when most of its members were arrested.¹
B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,
a. In general
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Drug trafficking and money laundering.
b. Specific detail: types of illicit trafficking activities engaged in
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Major role in supplying local drug traffickers in southern part of Puerto Rico especially the municipalities of Ponce, Juana Díaz, Villalba and Yauco.²
C. Scope and Size
a. Estimated size of network and membership
<ul style="list-style-type: none">An ICE press release noted that the organization had 34 members, 27 of whom were arrested.³
b. Countries / regions group is known to have operated in. (i.e. the group’s operating area)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Moved cocaine from the Virgin Islands and the Dominican Republic while on alleged fishing trips using a luxury yacht owned by Rolo.⁴
D. Leader Characteristics
a. Who is/are the leader(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">José A. Rodríguez-Lespier, (AKA: “Topo”)Rolando Natal-Sabater, (AKA: “Rolo”)Five others who helped to organize supervise and manage the business.
b. Leadership timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The leaders were arrested in 2010.
c. Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Not exactly clear but Topo and Rolo seemed to be the authority figures.
E. Organizational Structure
a. Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Probably an informal rather than formal hierarchy.
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">Membership was informal and seems to have operated under the cover of licit businesses.
c. Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Seems to have had direction from a small core, perhaps with second tier assistance.
F. Resources
a. Financial
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The organization owned an ocean yacht motor vessel “Little Elo,” “El Monte” Service gas station and La Pollada del Topo Bar and Grill as well as other business establishments.⁵ It is alleged that the network distributed more than

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

1,500 kilos of cocaine and earned over \$75 million during the 8 years the investigation was underway.⁶

- b. Human
 - Information not found.
- c. Logistical
 - i. Forgery, safe-houses, etc.
 - Used their commercial establishments for storing, packaging, and distributing drugs and for meetings with their associates.⁷
 - ii. Key routes
 - Exploited leisure boating and fishing trips between Virgin Islands, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico.
- d. Transportation
 - i. Land
 - Information not found.
 - ii. Sea
 - Powered yacht seems to have been the major conveyance.
 - iii. Air
 - Information not found.
 - iv. Intermodal container
 - Information not found.

G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities

- a. Corruption
 - Information not found.
- b. Concealment
 - Information not found.
- c. Deception
 - Used the guise of licit businesses and fishing trips
- d. Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)
 - Information not found.

H. Prior / Existing Relationships

- a. Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual)
 - Not known
- b. Corrupt politicians, law enforcement, political parties and other state entities, etc.
 - José M. Gómez Zaldo (AKA: “Pepín”) as an employee of Senate President Thomas Rivera Schatz’ regional office in Ponce, was one of those arrested, but this does not necessarily point to more systemic corruption links.⁸
- c. Specific detail: Any alliances / past dealings with terrorist groups.
 - None

I. Ideological / Ethnic / Familial Orientation (if any)

- Information not found.

J. Technical Sophistication

- Low

K. Penchant for Innovation

- Low

L. Activities in United States

- a. Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.
All research conducted according to the project manual.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to Puerto Rico
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.
M. Evaluations	
a.	Strengths
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of licit businesses as cover. The two leaders also “invested the monies from their illegal drug activities in other businesses they owned in an effort to legitimize the income.”⁹
b.	Weaknesses and vulnerabilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found.
c.	Additional insights
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The classic problem in the Caribbean is that leisure activities provide a rationale for all sorts of travel that can hide illicit activities.
Other Notes	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group’s focus was intra-Caribbean rather than directed at smuggling drugs into the United States. Nevertheless, Puerto Rico remains an important transshipment point for illicit commodities being moved to the United States.

¹ “Thirty-Four Individuals Indicted for Drug Trafficking in the Municipality of Ponce: Forfeiture Allegation of \$75 Million” *United States Attorney’s Office, District of Puerto Rico Press Release*, November 4, 2010, and

² “Narco Gang Dismantled” *Puerto Rico Daily Sun*, November 5, 2010

³ “27 arrested in Puerto Rico for drug trafficking, money laundering,” *ICE News Release*, November 5, 2010

⁴ “Narco Gang Dismantled” *Puerto Rico Daily Sun*, November 5, 2010

⁵ “Narco Gang Dismantled” *Puerto Rico Daily Sun*, November 5, 2010

⁶ “Narco Gang Dismantled” *Puerto Rico Daily Sun*, November 5, 2010

⁷ “Thirty-Four Individuals Indicted for Drug Trafficking in the Municipality of Ponce: Forfeiture Allegation of \$75 Million” *United States Attorney’s Office, District of Puerto Rico Press Release*, November 4, 2010

⁸ “Narco Gang Dismantled” *Puerto Rico Daily Sun*, November 5, 2010

⁹ “Thirty-Four Individuals Indicted for Drug Trafficking in the Municipality of Ponce: Forfeiture Allegation of \$75 Million” *United States Attorney’s Office, District of Puerto Rico Press Release*, November 4, 2010