

**Organization Attributes Sheet: Trafficking Organization run by Nelson Castrillón Ospina aka “Samy”**  
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<b>A. When the organization was formed + brief history</b>	
•	In 1995 Nelson Castrillón Ospina aka “Samy” moved from his native Colombia to the district of La Unión in southern El Salvador. <sup>1</sup> It is unclear exactly when he set up his trafficking network but it likely occurred sometime soon after arriving. Until his arrest in 2008 Castrillón Ospina ran a trafficking network that shipped heroin and cocaine to the United States mostly by airplane through Newark where the other key member of the group Rubén Torres Cruz worked as a baggage handler. <sup>2</sup>
<b>B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,</b>	
a.	In general
•	Drug trafficking
b.	<i>Specific detail: types of illicit trafficking activities engaged in</i>
•	Smuggled Colombian heroin and cocaine from El Salvador to the United States. <sup>3</sup>
<b>C. Scope and Size</b>	
a.	Estimated size of network and membership
•	Small network. 3-4 main actors and a small but unknown number of freelance operators. <sup>4</sup>
b.	Countries / regions group is known to have operated in. (i.e. the group’s operating area)
•	El Salvador, United States. <sup>5</sup>
<b>D. Leader Characteristics</b>	
a.	Who is/are the leader(s)
•	Nelson Castrillón Ospina aka “Samy”. Oversaw the shipments of cocaine and heroin from Colombia and organized the transfer of the drugs from El Salvador to the United States. Castrillón Ospina worked closely with native-Salvadoran José Erwin Reyes Bautista. <sup>6</sup>
•	Rubén Torres Cruz. Worked at Newark airport and used knowledge of airport customs and security procedures to get the shipments out of the airport. <sup>7</sup>
b.	Leadership timeline
•	Castillón Ospina started the operation some time in the late 1990s and ran the operation until his arrest in 2008.
c.	Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)
•	Diffuse. <sup>8</sup>
<b>E. Organizational Structure</b>	
a.	Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)
•	Cellular
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?
•	Informal.
c.	Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)
•	Centralized. Castrillón Ospina organized most aspects of the shipments from his headquarters in El Salvador. <sup>9</sup>

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

<b>F. Resources</b>	
a. Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No hard numbers could be found relating to how much money this trafficking ring generated. It was a sufficiently high number to allow Castrillón Ospina to have as many as 6 properties and multiple cars and all-terrain vehicles in El Salvador.<sup>10</sup></li> </ul>
b. Human	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3-4 and a small but unknown number of freelance operators.</li> </ul>
c. Logistical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forgery, safe-houses, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Samy had safe-houses and some storage warehouses in La Unión district of El Salvador.<sup>11</sup></li> </ul> </li> <li>Key routes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial flights from San Salvador to Newark.<sup>12</sup></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
d. Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used cars and trucks with hidden compartments in El Salvador and the United States.<sup>13</sup></li> </ul> </li> <li>Sea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information was found.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Air <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shipped cocaine and heroin through commercial airplanes, which were retrieved at Newark airport by a member of the group.<sup>14</sup></li> </ul> </li> <li>Intermodal container <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information was found.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities</b>	
a. Corruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A group of Salvadoran postal workers are under suspicion for collaborating with the network.<sup>15</sup></li> </ul>
b. Concealment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soaked clothes in heroin and cocaine which were later extracted.<sup>16</sup></li> <li>Had cars with secret compartments.<sup>17</sup></li> </ul>
c. Deception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information was found.</li> </ul>
d. Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used contact at Newark airport to circumvent security control.<sup>18</sup></li> </ul>
<b>H. Prior / Existing Relationships</b>	
a. Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The American end of the organization sold the cocaine and heroin to street gangs in the New York, New Jersey, and the Washington DC areas.<sup>19</sup></li> </ul>
b. Corrupt politicians, law enforcement, political parties and other state entities, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information was found.</li> </ul>
c. <i>Specific detail: Any alliances / past dealings with terrorist groups.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Torres Cruz testified that one of the groups who supplied the network with cocaine and heroin was the FARC.<sup>20</sup></li> </ul>
<b>I. Ideological / Ethnic / Familial Orientation (if any)</b>	

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

- No information was found.

#### J. Technical Sophistication

- Method of drug transportation (soaking clothes) indicates some level of technical sophistication.

#### K. Penchant for Innovation

- No information was found.

#### L. Activities in United States

- a. Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities
  - Drug trafficking. Sold drugs to street gangs for distribution.<sup>21</sup>
- b. *Specific detail: trafficking activities ; logistical activities*
  - Torres Cruz organized the smuggling of the heroin and cocaine out of Newark airport and sold it to drug dealers and gangs.<sup>22</sup>
- c. Linkages with US groups
  - i. Market/transaction links
    - The American end of the organization sold the cocaine and heroin to street gangs in the New York, New Jersey, and the Washington DC area.<sup>23</sup>
  - ii. Stable supplier
    - Cocaine and heroin to various gangs in the United States.<sup>24</sup> There was no specific mention of which gangs the group supplied.
  - iii. Franchise arrangement
    - No information was found.
  - iv. HQ and Branch office
    - La Unión district in El Salvador, Newark, New Jersey.

#### M. Evaluations

- a. Strengths
  - Good knowledge of smuggling tactics
  - Strong ties to Colombia ensured a steady supply of heroin and cocaine
- b. Weaknesses and vulnerabilities
  - Castrillón Ospina, Torres Cruz, and Reyes Bautista and three other members of the network have been arrested and are currently serving sentences.<sup>25</sup>
- c. Additional insights
  - In July 2010 Castrillón Ospina's wife Norma Esperanza Castrillón was arrested in El Salvador for conspiring to traffic cocaine.<sup>26</sup>

#### Other Notes

- Castrillón Ospina's arrest was part of an increase in the Salvadoran government's fight against drug trafficking. Nevertheless, the country continues to dedicate most of its law enforcement efforts to fighting street crime and gangs, allowing networks like Castrillón Ospina's to operate with relative ease in the coastal areas.

<sup>1</sup> Equipo de nación. "Heroína de las FARC se trafica por El Salvador", La Prensa Gráfica, 2008, retrieved online at <http://archive.laprensa.com.sv/20080816/loeldia/20080816/17245.asp>

<sup>2</sup> Equipo de nación. "Líder de narcored va 13 años a la cárcel", La Prensa Gráfica, 2008, retrieved online at <http://www.laprensagrafica.com/el-salvador/judicial/42380--lider-de-narcored-va-13-anos-a-la-carcel.html>

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Equipo de nación. “Salvadoreño y colombiano señalados de ser red de heroína”, La Prensa Gráfica, 2008, retrieved online at <http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/28877>

<sup>7</sup> Equipo de nación. “Líder de narcored...” . op cit

<sup>8</sup> Equipo de nación. “Salvadoreño y colombiano...” . op cit

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Equipo de nación. “Líder de narcored...” . op cit

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Equipo de nación. “Líder de narcored...” op cit

<sup>17</sup> Equipo de nación. “Salvadoreño y colombiano...” op cit

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Equipo de nación. “Salvadoreño y colombiano...” op cit

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Equipo de nación. “Líder de narcored...” op cit

<sup>26</sup> Attorney General of El Salvador. “Condenan a seis años de cárcel a mujer traficante”. 2010 Retrieved online at <http://www.fiscalia.gob.sv/?p=6192>