

## Organization Attributes Sheet: “The Organization”

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<b>A. When the organization was formed + brief history</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “The Organization” is a drug trafficking organization based in Venezuela that is involved in a Trans-Atlantic smuggling ring that sends cocaine into West Africa and ultimately Europe. The organization is referred to but not identified by name in a DEA affidavit in 2010.<sup>1</sup></li><li>• One of The Organization’s planes was caught in Sierra Leone in 2008, with more than 1,320 pounds of cocaine on board.<sup>2</sup></li><li>• In November 2009, a burned out hulk of a Boeing 747 was found in the Mali desert. The plane was suspected of belonging to “The Organization.”<sup>3</sup></li><li>• In December 2009, three AQIM associates were arrested for narco-terrorism conspiracy. These men were suspected of assisting groups like “The Organization” in transporting cocaine in West and North Africa.<sup>4</sup></li><li>• Trafficking cocaine into West Africa for distribution in the European continent is the main goal of the group.</li><li>• The Organization is suspected to work for the FARC and use Venezuela instead of Colombia as a primary base of operations because the Chavez administration turns a blind eye to most drug trafficking operations. It has been stated that nearly half of all aircraft seizures made in West Africa had departed from Venezuela.<sup>5</sup></li><li>• High level of importance due to connections with terrorist group (AQIM) in Northern and Western Africa.<sup>6</sup></li></ul>
<b>B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,</b>
a. In general
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drug trafficking.</li></ul>
b. <i>Specific detail: types of illicit trafficking activities engaged in</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Transport cocaine into West Africa via Venezuela with use of both small planes and large commercial aircraft.</li><li>• Shipments are transported by land into North Africa then reach Europe through cargo ships.</li></ul>
<b>C. Scope and Size</b>
a. Estimated size of network and membership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information not found.</li></ul>
b. Countries / regions group is known to have operated in. (i.e. the group’s operating area)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Venezuela, West Africa, North Africa, Europe.</li></ul>
<b>D. Leader Characteristics</b>
a. Who is/are the leader(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information not found.</li></ul>
b. Leadership timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information not found.</li></ul>
c. Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information not found.</li></ul>
<b>E. Organizational Structure</b>
a. Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information not found.</li></ul>
b. Membership – is there formal or informal membership in the organization or network?

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

	What role do informal or nonmembers play in trafficking and other criminal activities?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information not found.</li> </ul>
c.	Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information not found.</li> </ul>
<b>F. Resources</b>	
a.	Financial
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large quantities of cocaine shipments earn vast sums of wealth that is used to bribe West African officials.<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>
b.	Human
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced pilots who are paid between \$200,000 and \$300,000 per trip.<sup>8</sup></li> <li>• Protective assistance from AQIM.</li> <li>• Support from corrupt African officials.</li> </ul>
c.	Logistical
	i. Forgery, safe-houses, etc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilization of airstrips to import cocaine shipments that are located within the sphere of AQIM influence.<sup>9</sup></li> <li>• Aircraft fleet.</li> <li>• Constant supply of cocaine from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).</li> </ul>
	ii. Key routes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trans-Atlantic flights from Venezuela to West Africa.</li> <li>• Overland routes from West Africa to North Africa.</li> </ul>
d.	Transportation
	i. Land
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cocaine shipments are transported via ground under the protection of AQIM from West Africa to North African ports.</li> </ul>
	ii. Sea
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cocaine is smuggled in shipping containers into Europe via large transport vessels from Egypt and Libya.<sup>10</sup></li> </ul>
	iii. Air
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small and large aircraft transport cocaine shipments across the Atlantic Ocean without interference.</li> </ul>
	iv. Intermodal container
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cargo container ships.<sup>11</sup></li> </ul>
<b>G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities</b>	
a.	Corruption
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance from West African officials, which ensures that traffickers consider West African routes and airspace to be safe.<sup>12</sup></li> </ul>
b.	Concealment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cocaine shipments hidden in shipping containers on cargo ships that find their way into European ports.</li> </ul>
c.	Deception
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilots use fraudulent registration documents.<sup>13</sup></li> </ul>
d.	Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of radar coverage over much of the Atlantic Ocean facilitates the effectiveness of Trans-Atlantic flights.</li> <li>• Use of aircraft circumvents border checkpoints.</li> </ul>

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

## H. Prior / Existing Relationships

- a. Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual)
  - Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) – protects overland shipments of cocaine to the Mediterranean Sea, allow organization to utilize airstrips under their sphere of influence.<sup>14</sup>
  - Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) – supply “The Organization” with cocaine. Possibly hire “The Organization” to transport cocaine to West Africa.
- b. Corrupt politicians, law enforcement , political parties and other state entities, etc.
  - Nations of West Africa including Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Ghana, and Guinea Bissau facilitate trafficking efforts through corrupt support and an overall inability to secure their airspace.
- c. *Specific detail: Any alliances / past dealings with terrorist groups.*
  - Smuggling efforts directly protected and supported by AQIM, a group known to have direct ties with Al Qaeda and commit terrorist attacks on western targets.

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

- Since “The Organization” has close ties with FARC, it is likely that the group possesses anti-American sentiment. It has also been stated that The Organization is sympathetic to the cause of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).<sup>15</sup>

## J. Technical Sophistication

- “The Organization” uses smaller aircrafts with enlarged fuel tanks to successfully cross the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>16</sup>
- Known to use large commercial aircraft as a Boeing 727 bearing one of the group’s cocaine shipments was discovered burned out in the Mali desert.<sup>17</sup>

## K. Penchant for Innovation

- High – aircraft technology.

## L. Activities in United States

- a. Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities
  - Information not found.
- b. *Specific detail: trafficking activities ; logistical activities*
  - Information not found.
- c. Linkages with US groups
  - i. Market/transaction links
    - Information not found.
  - ii. Stable supplier
    - Information not found.
  - iii. Franchise arrangement
    - Information not found.
  - iv. HQ and Branch office
    - Information not found.

## M. Evaluations

- a. Strengths
  - Inability of nations in Western and Northern Africa to combat routes allows for continued safe passage.
  - Large quantities of shipments are highly lucrative.
  - Lack of radar coverage over Atlantic Ocean allows for continued easiness of flights.
  - Little to no information on group’s identity.
  - Large market for cocaine in Europe.

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

b.	Weaknesses and vulnerabilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emerging awareness of trans-Atlantic drug smuggling.</li> </ul>
c.	Additional insights
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>
<b>Other Notes</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Hawley, Chris. "As drug planes get seized, cartels adapt." *Arizona Republic* 17 Mar 2010, Web. <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/news/articles/2010/03/16/20100316mexico-drug-smugglers-planes.html>

<sup>2</sup> Hawley, Chris. "As drug planes get seized, cartels adapt." *Arizona Republic* 17 Mar 2010, Web. <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/news/articles/2010/03/16/20100316mexico-drug-smugglers-planes.html>

<sup>3</sup> Hawley, Chris. "As drug planes get seized, cartels adapt." *Arizona Republic* 17 Mar 2010, Web. <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/news/articles/2010/03/16/20100316mexico-drug-smugglers-planes.html>

<sup>4</sup> "Drug Planes Link South America to West Africa." *Dialogo* 2010, Web. [http://www.dialogo-americas.com/en\\_GB/articles/rmisa/features/global\\_glance/2010/01/01/feature-05](http://www.dialogo-americas.com/en_GB/articles/rmisa/features/global_glance/2010/01/01/feature-05)

<sup>5</sup> Bronstein, Hugh. "Colombian rebels, al Qaeda in "unholy" drug alliance." *Reuters* 4 Jan 2010, Web. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/01/04/us-drugs-colombia-qaeda-interview-idUKTRE6034L920100104>

<sup>6</sup> Hawley, Chris. "Crackdown clips wings of drug runners; Mexican drug cartels modify planes, routes." *USA Today*, March 17, 2010, Web. [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2010-03-16-drug-planes\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2010-03-16-drug-planes_N.htm)

<sup>7</sup> "Report Links Latin American Narcotics Rebels to Al-Qa'ida in Saharan Africa," *Johannesberg DefenseWeb/Reuters*. January 14, 2010

<sup>8</sup> Hawley, Chris. "As drug planes get seized, cartels adapt." *Arizona Republic* 17 Mar 2010, Web. <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/news/articles/2010/03/16/20100316mexico-drug-smugglers-planes.html>

<sup>9</sup> "Drug Planes Link South America to West Africa." *Dialogo* 2010, Web. [http://www.dialogo-americas.com/en\\_GB/articles/rmisa/features/global\\_glance/2010/01/01/feature-05](http://www.dialogo-americas.com/en_GB/articles/rmisa/features/global_glance/2010/01/01/feature-05)

<sup>10</sup> Doward, Jamie. "Drug seizures in west Africa prompt fears of terrorist links." *The Observer* 29 Nov 2009, Web. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/29/drugs-cocaine-africa-al-qaida>

<sup>11</sup> Doward, Jamie. "Drug seizures in west Africa prompt fears of terrorist links." *The Observer* 29 Nov 2009, Web. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/29/drugs-cocaine-africa-al-qaida>

<sup>12</sup> "Report Links Latin American Narcotics Rebels to Al-Qa'ida in Saharan Africa," *Johannesberg DefenseWeb/Reuters*. January 14, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> "Drug Planes Link South America to West Africa." *Dialogo* 2010, Web. [http://www.dialogo-americas.com/en\\_GB/articles/rmisa/features/global\\_glance/2010/01/01/feature-05](http://www.dialogo-americas.com/en_GB/articles/rmisa/features/global_glance/2010/01/01/feature-05)

<sup>14</sup> Johannesberg DefenseWeb/Reuters, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Doward, Jamie. "Drug seizures in west Africa prompt fears of terrorist links." *The Observer* 29 Nov 2009, Web. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/29/drugs-cocaine-africa-al-qaida>

<sup>16</sup> "Report Links Latin American Narcotics Rebels to Al-Qa'ida in Saharan Africa," *Johannesberg DefenseWeb/Reuters*. January 14, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Hawley, Chris. "As drug planes get seized, cartels adapt." *Arizona Republic* 17 Mar 2010, Web. <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/news/articles/2010/03/16/20100316mexico-drug-smugglers-planes.html>