



Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the UK and Ireland

*Fact Sheet:*

## VENEZUELA'S SUCCESSFUL FIGHT AGAINST ILLEGAL DRUGS – 2011 UPDATE

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### **Background**

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Venezuela is neither a major drug-producing nor drug-consuming country. But Venezuela finds itself in a difficult geographical position, as being situated **between one of the world's largest producers of cocaine, Colombia, and one of its biggest users, the United States.** Venezuela shares one of the world's longest borders with Colombia. This means that the Venezuelan government has had to take strong action in the fight against illegal drugs.

### **False accusations by the US**

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Venezuela has long been the subject of false allegations by the US. Up until 2005, Venezuela collaborated with the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) until there were indications that DEA officials were engaged in espionage.

Venezuela has been listed in the "Presidential Determination for Major Drug Producing and Transit Countries" published on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September, 2011 as having "failed demonstrably" in the fight against drugs despite strong evidence to the contrary (see the next section on anti-drug achievements for more information).

Also in September 2011, four Venezuelan high-ranking officials were placed on the list of "Specially Designated Nationals" and falsely accused of arming leftist guerrillas in neighbouring Colombia and supporting drug trafficking. However, the "intelligence" implicating the officials comes from highly discredited "information" gleaned from the former FARC leader, Raul Rey's laptop which

was seized following a Colombian bombing raid on a FARC camp in Ecuador. According to Interpol the handling of the evidence did "not conform to internationally recognised principles". Similarly, the "evidence" from the laptop was ruled inadmissible by the Colombian Supreme Court.

### **Anti-drug policies and achievements of the Chavez government**

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As part of the fight against illegal drug-trafficking and drug consumption, the Venezuelan President approved the "**National Anti-Drug Plan 2009-2013**" and the creation of the "**National Anti-Drug Fund**" on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2009.<sup>1</sup> This action-plan involves the State, the business sector and the communities and takes place on 3 strategic levels: family guidance, drug prevention and therapy for those suffering from addiction.

### Drug seizures

- For a period of four consecutive years, including 2011, **the United Nations has positioned Venezuela within the first places of the list of countries with the largest number of cocaine seizures around the world** and the UN in its latest report from 2011 recognized the implementation of appropriate policies by the Venezuelan Government.
- **Over 500 tons of drugs have been seized within the last 10 years**, thanks to the

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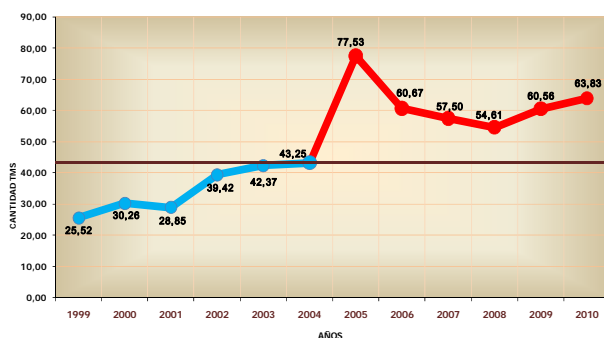
<sup>1</sup>National Anti-drug Plan:  
[http://www.ona.gob.ve/Plan\\_Nacional\\_Construccion.php](http://www.ona.gob.ve/Plan_Nacional_Construccion.php)



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successful cooperation with a number of countries worldwide. 63 tonnes of drugs were seized in Venezuela over the course of 2010. This represents an 11% increase from 2009<sup>2</sup> and a 46% increase on 2004 when Venezuela was working with the US's Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

- On average, the Venezuelan anti-drug authorities are seizing almost double the amount of illegal drugs than when Venezuela cooperated with the DEA. During the years when Venezuela cooperated with the DEA an annual average of 38 metric tonnes of illegal drugs were seized. Following the DEA's departure, an annual average of 60 metric tonnes has been seized as shown in the graph below (source Venezuelan National Anti-Drugs Office).



### Investment in infrastructure and military technology to intercept drugs

- **Ten Chinese made radar stations have been installed** to track and intercept planes carrying illegal drugs. This was an important investment, as after the suspension of cooperation with the US Drug Enforcement Agency's (DEA), US forces withdrew the radar-systems they

<sup>2</sup> <http://venezuela-us.org/?s=drugs#9>

had previously installed in Venezuela. The break in cooperation between the DEA and Venezuela was based on accusations that agents were involved in espionage in Venezuela and were linked to drug trafficking rings. **Drug seizures in recent years have increased 40 percent relative to the level of seizures during the final years of cooperation between Venezuela and the DEA.**

- In 2010 Venezuela purchased 18 K-8 scout planes from China to continue intercepting illegal air drug-transport. Ten Y8 planes, also from China, have been ordered and expected to be delivered in 2011.<sup>3</sup>
- The installation of **non-intrusive baggage screening systems in 5 airports** throughout the country.
- **Since 2007, 52 drug laboratories have been dismantled** on the border with Colombia.
- As of September 2008, **over 223 illicit landing strips were destroyed in Venezuela over the first three quarters of that year.**<sup>1</sup>
- The **construction of 10 incineration ovens** is planned. As of 2011, 7 out of the 10 are fully operational.

### High profile arrests of international drug kingpins and drug offence convictions in Venezuela

- So far in **2011, 69 drug kingpins** wanted by Interpol have been captured and deported by the Venezuelan authorities. Of the 69, 15 have been extradited to the US.
- The numbers of kingpins captured has gone up steadily since Venezuela stopped working with the DEA. Between 2002 and 2005, when Venezuela was working

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/nacionales/venezuela-fortalece-su-aviacion-militar-aviones-carga-chinos-y-8/>



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with the DEA, there were no drug traffickers wanted by Interpol captured in the country.

- In 2010, 17 people wanted internationally for drug trafficking or related crimes have been captured by Venezuelan authorities. Of these, 12 have been deported, two are set to be deported and one is being tried in Venezuela. Five of those detained were deported to the U.S. and three to Colombia.<sup>4</sup> So far in 2011, 3 key drug traffickers wanted by Interpol.<sup>5</sup>
- After the July 2010 deportation of the three Colombian drug kingpins wanted by the U.S. (Carlos “Beto” Rentería, Luis Tello, and Carlos Ojeda), even the U.S. Embassy in Caracas recognized the work of Venezuela’s security agencies and qualified the deportations “positive.”<sup>6</sup>
- Over people **13,000 were convicted** of drug trafficking offences were made in **Venezuela in 2010**. Of the 13,000, nearly 400 foreigners were arrested. 65% of the foreigners were Colombian citizens.<sup>7</sup>

### International cooperation

- **Venezuela is signatory to over 50 bilateral cooperation agreements with 38 countries**, including Spain, France and Portugal. Venezuela has also signed and ratified the 1988 U.N. Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and the 1971 U.N. Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and it is a signatory to the 1961 U.N. Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs.

<sup>4</sup> Informe de la Oficina Nacional Antidrogas. “Balance de la Lucha Antidrogas” Enero Septiembre 2010

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.avn.info.ve/node/38538>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.globovision.com/news.php?nid=154835>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.ona.gob.ve/Pdf/Estadisticas\\_de\\_la\\_Oferta/CIERRE\\_GENERAL\\_ANO\\_2010.pdf](http://www.ona.gob.ve/Pdf/Estadisticas_de_la_Oferta/CIERRE_GENERAL_ANO_2010.pdf)

- According to a 2010 report of the U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Venezuela ranks second in South America, behind only Colombia, in drug seizures.<sup>8</sup>
- Venezuela is continuing to cooperate with the UNODC on a law enforcement and intelligence cooperation **project against cocaine trafficking from Latin America to West Africa**.

### Venezuela-UK cooperation

- The strong and long-standing “de-facto relationship”, between Venezuela and the UK in terms of counter-narcotic policies was formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding. The Memorandum centres on the exchange of intelligence information in real time, carrying out joint operations such as the interception of boats and the capture of drug traffickers, as well as preventing the trafficking of synthetic drugs into Europe.<sup>2</sup> **Chris Bryant, former British Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs**, who visited Venezuela in autumn 2009 made clear that *“The drug problem cannot be addressed in isolation. First, there is a consumer demand for illegal drugs in Europe, which is a huge part of the problem. [He added that] Venezuela has made progress in various areas of the fight against drug trafficking.”*<sup>3</sup>
- In a common operation in September 2008 last year, which resulted in the seizure of 337 kilos of pure cocaine to be smuggled to the UK, Bill Hughes, the Director of the UK Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) stated that **“We have forged new links with the Venezuelan authorities which will be of enormous value in**

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR\\_2010/World\\_Drug\\_Report\\_2010\\_lo-res.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/World_Drug_Report_2010_lo-res.pdf)



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future investigations.”<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, at a Westminster debate Gillian Merron, former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs made clear that “We [the British Government] engage with the [Venezuelan] Administration on the many social justice initiatives ... [and] We have also tackled drug trafficking and corruption.”<sup>5</sup>

Participatory democracy

- The creation of a **national anti-drug network** where organised communities choose their leaders for anti-drug campaigns. Over 200 agreements have been signed with the government.

For more comprehensive information on Venezuela’s fight against illegal drugs visit:

[http://www.venezlon.co.uk/pdf/fc\\_drugs.pdf](http://www.venezlon.co.uk/pdf/fc_drugs.pdf)

This fact-sheet is based on a report by the Bolivarian Government of Venezuela. All numbers mentioned stem from this report, unless indicated otherwise.

London, 26<sup>th</sup> of October, 2011

<sup>1</sup> “Venezuela destruyó 223 pistas clandestinas en su combate al narcotráfico - Vanguardia.com”

<http://www.vanguardia.com/mundo/america/81-america/7092-venezuela-destruyo-223-pistas-clandestinas-en-su-combate-al-narcotrafico->

<sup>2</sup> Press Release, “British Government Acknowledges the Effectiveness of Drug Policy in Venezuela”, Oct. 2009, <http://www.venezlon.co.uk/news/231.asp>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> “Soca cracks Venezuela connection”, Sep. 2008, [http://www.policeoracle.com/news/SOCA-Cracks-Venezuelan-Connection\\_17382.html](http://www.policeoracle.com/news/SOCA-Cracks-Venezuelan-Connection_17382.html)

<sup>5</sup> Official Parliamentary Report, Daily Hansard, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090303/halltext/90303h0004.htm#09030330000505> retrieved March 9, 2009.