



Cocaine Smuggling in 2006

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The counterdrug community estimates that between 530 and 710 metric tons of cocaine departed South America toward the United States in 2006, similar to the range estimated in 2005. The eastern Pacific and western Caribbean routes to Mexico and Central America remained the primary channels for cocaine movement from South America toward the United States, accounting for about 90 percent of the flow.

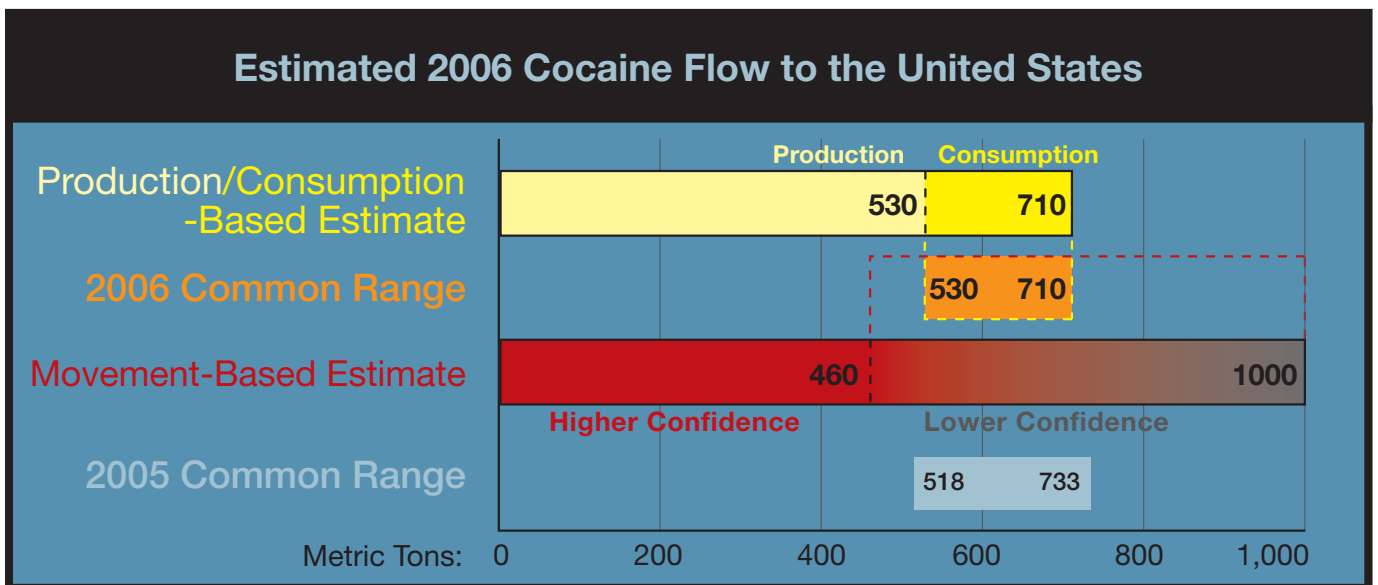
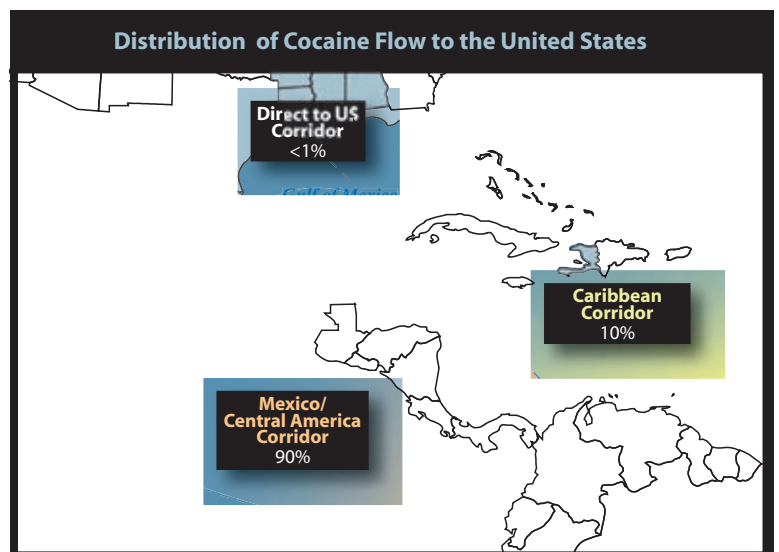


Figure 1. Cocaine Flow Estimate, 2006. The common range estimate, shown above, is calculated using four data sets: potential cocaine production, cocaine consumption estimates, documented cocaine losses, and cocaine movement data.

Figure 2. Cocaine Flow Distribution. Eastern Pacific and western Caribbean routes to Mexico and Central America account for about 90 percent of the cocaine flow toward the United States.



Departure Points

The distribution between regions appeared to shift in 2006, with the eastern Pacific growing from 54 percent in 2005 to account for roughly 66 percent of trafficking while the western Caribbean's share of trafficking declined from 38 percent in 2005 to 24 percent. Some of this apparent shift may have been caused by the difficulty detecting traffickers in the western Caribbean who changed their smuggling techniques and shifted their departure points in the Caribbean to avoid interdiction.

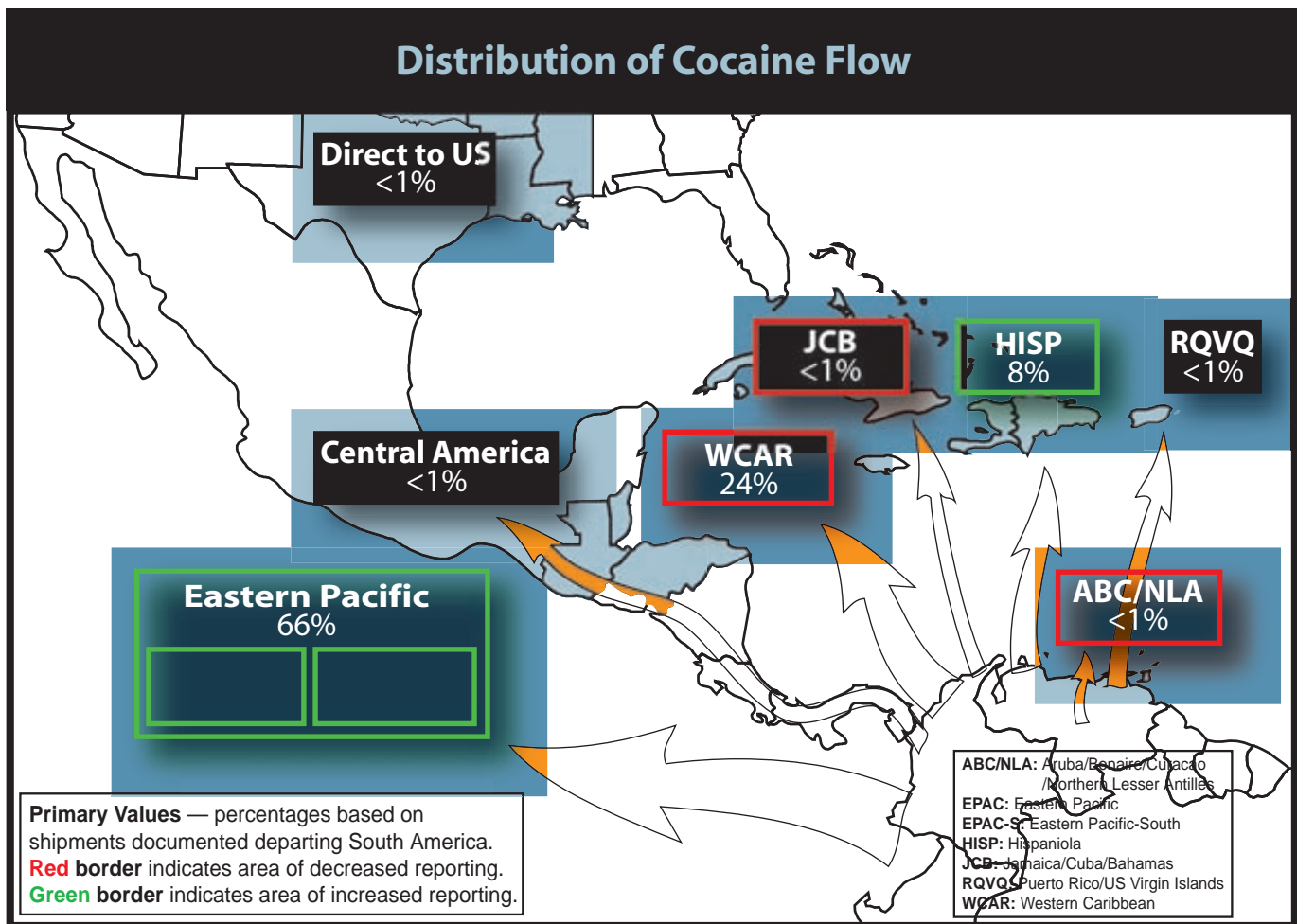


Figure 3. Percentages of Cocaine Flow Distribution Departing South America Toward the United States in 2006.

Changing Tactics

Trafficking operations in the eastern Pacific during 2006 evolved to include four general routes—littoral, north of the Galapagos, south of the Galapagos, and deep south and far west of the Galapagos. The use of multiple at-sea transfers and increased use of decoy vessels and logistics supply ships added more complexity and challenged interdiction forces. By the end of 2006, the littoral route emerged as the traffickers' favorite. Unlike the larger go-fasts used on the high seas, some go-fasts using the littoral route had two to four smaller outboards and were being constructed with cocaine placed between the inner and outer hulls. These go-fasts made one-way journeys to their points of destination, where they were dismantled to retrieve the cocaine.

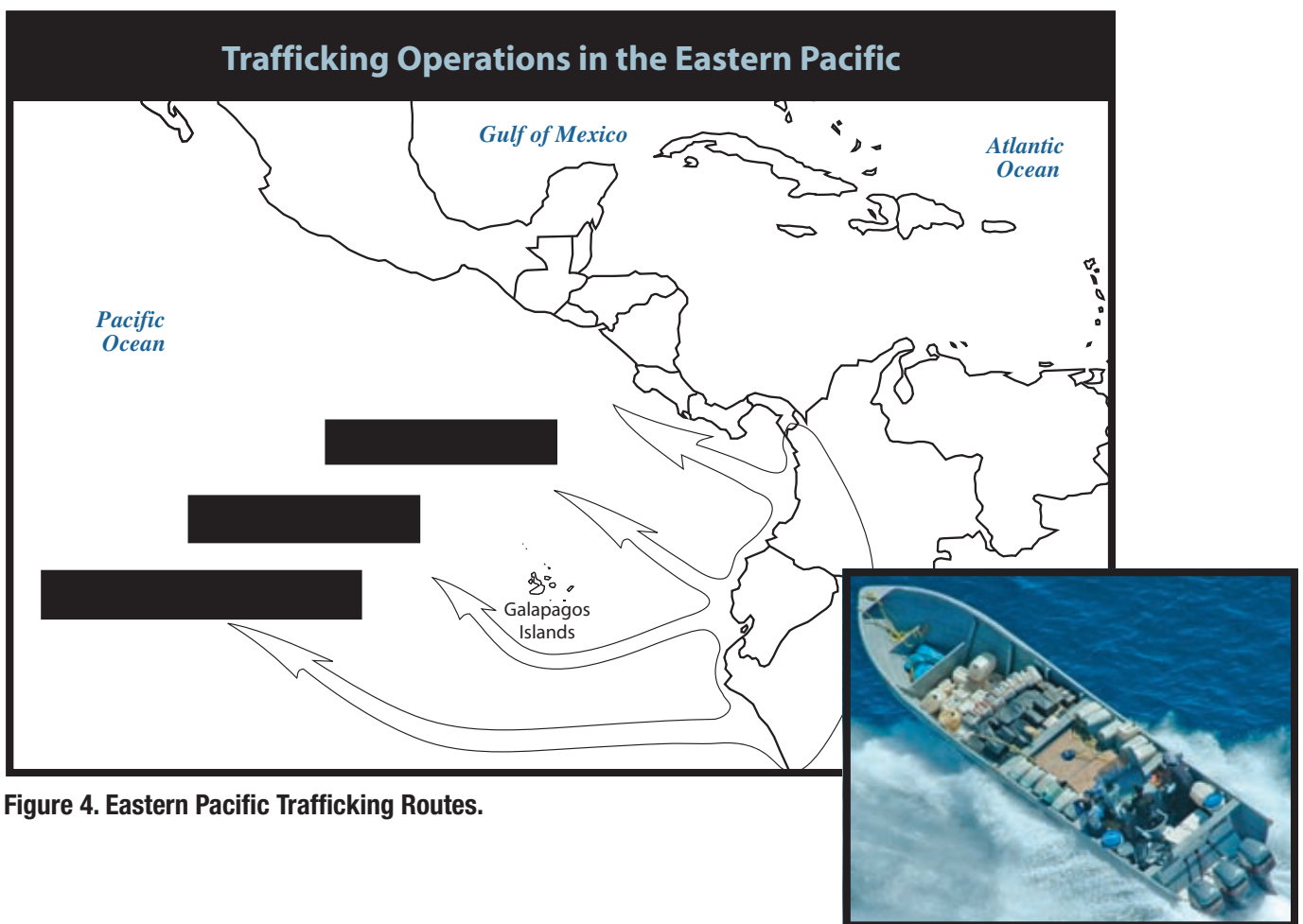


Figure 4. Eastern Pacific Trafficking Routes.

Go-fast with three outboard motors

Modes and Methods

Private aircraft movement in the Transit Zone was more pronounced than in the past, mostly because traffickers flew more cocaine from Venezuela to Hispaniola rather than relying on go-fasts from Colombia.



Figure 5. Aircraft Typically Depart Venezuela to Deliver Cocaine to Hispaniola. Using clandestine air strips in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the aircraft offload to awaiting personnel and take off within a short period of time. Alternatively, some aircraft drop their bales over water to awaiting pick-up vessels.

Coca Cultivation and Cocaine Production

In 2006, we observed more coca cultivation in the Andean region than in 2005. Colombia accounted for about 70 percent of all coca cultivation, followed by Peru and Bolivia with 17 and 12 percent, respectively. The increase in the Colombian coca crop, partly due to expanded survey areas, resulted in a 6-percent increase in our estimate of the potential production of Andean cocaine in 2006. Colombia represented an increasing portion of the Andean Cocaine Production estimate with about 62 percent, followed by Peru with 25 percent and Bolivia with 12 percent. Colombia's coca farmers and traffickers continued to adjust to aerial eradication by shifting cultivation to smaller plots outside sprayed areas and to national parks—where spraying is prohibited—or by replanting and reconstituting sprayed fields. Peru also showed an increase in cultivation; however, new coca plants there had not reached maturity and did not produce enough useable leaf to impact overall cocaine production.

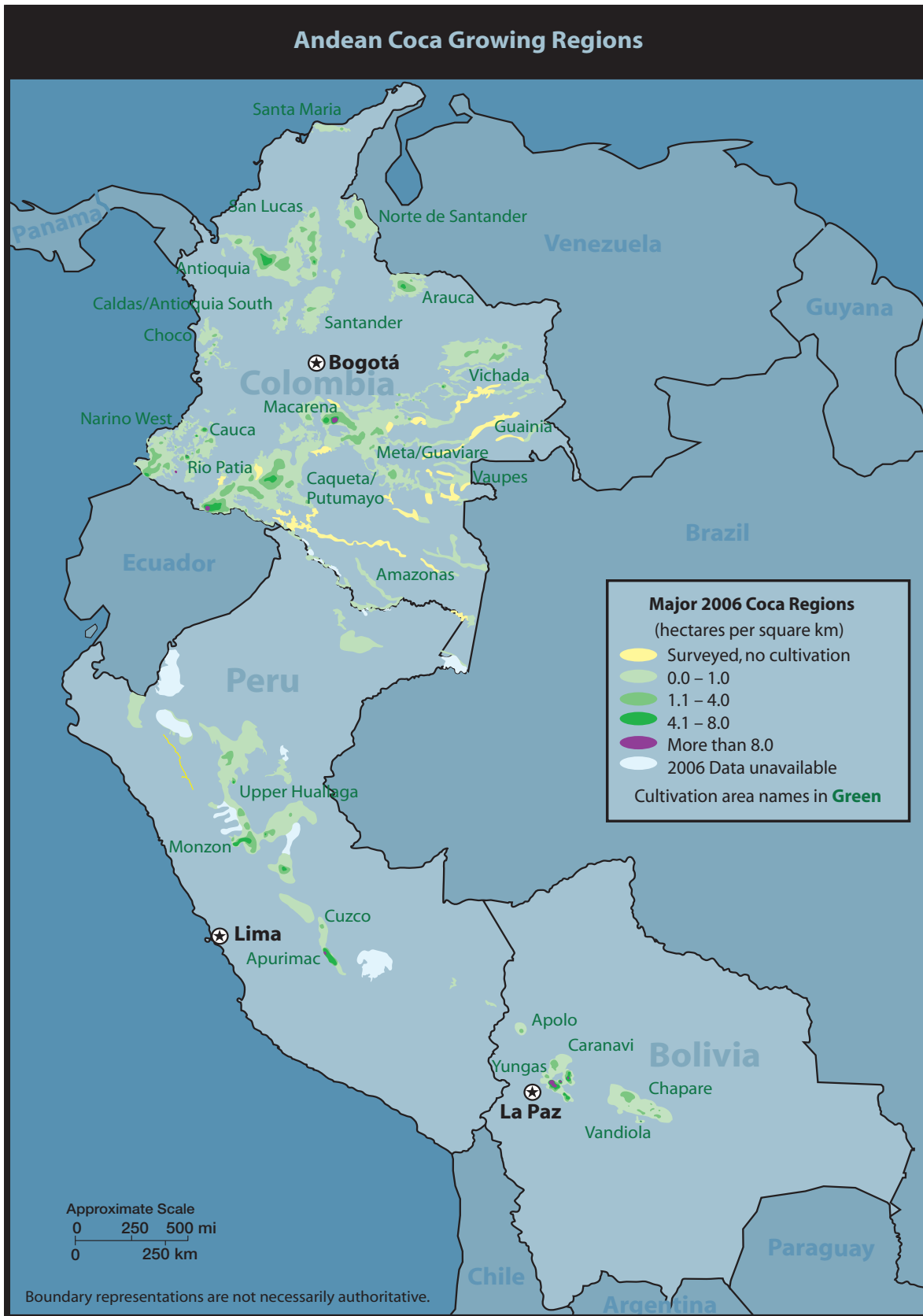


Figure 6. Andean Coca Cultivation.

Cocaine Seizures and Disruptions

In 2006, 492 metric tons of cocaine were interdicted worldwide, the second highest total on record. Although total cocaine interdictions were down from the record 552 metric tons taken in 2005, losses were still greater than the 440 metric tons seized and disrupted in 2004. Cocaine seizures decreased in the Source and Transit Zones while they increased slightly in the US Arrival Zone, and remained stable in the Non-US Arrival Zone. Despite the overall decrease in interdictions, instances of large, multi-ton seizures continued to be high in 2006.

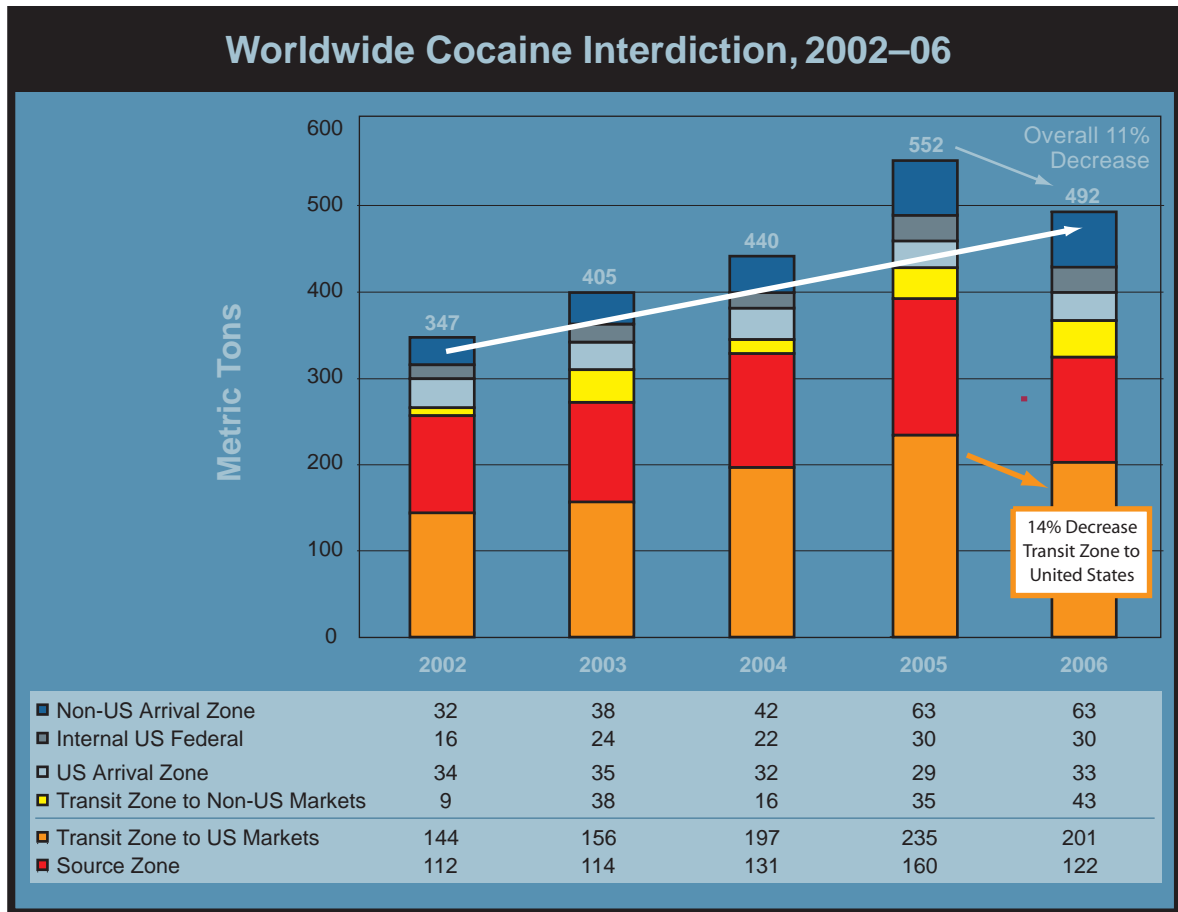


Figure 7. Worldwide Cocaine Seizures/Losses.

Source Zone

Within South America, some reports indicated the use of aircraft expanded slightly in 2006, even though highway transport remained the main cocaine shipment method. The west coast was the main departure area from Colombia for maritime trafficking, with about two thirds of recorded cocaine movements leaving there in 2006, compared to about half in 2005. The use of containers for commercial movement of cocaine appeared to be growing, with Venezuelan ports gaining preference over Colombian ports among traffickers.

Non-US Markets

Over 60 percent of recorded cocaine movement toward non-US markets headed directly for Europe in 2006, mostly for entry points in Portugal and Spain. Another 30 percent headed to Africa—most likely ultimately destined for Europe, while the remaining 10 percent was distributed to other global destinations.

US Arrival Zone

Personal vehicles were the most common conveyance used to smuggle cocaine into the United States in 2006, arriving primarily across the US-Mexico border. Tractor-trailers were also used, though to a much lesser extent. South Texas was the primary entry region for cocaine shipments, particularly for loads concealed in tractor-trailers. California ports of entry showed a large increase in cocaine seizures over the past year, suggesting more smuggling across the border in that region than in previous years. Less than 17 percent of the cocaine seized in the US Arrival Zone in 2006 was seized from commercial and noncommercial maritime vessels. Much smaller amounts of cocaine entered by other methods, such as commercial air and mail.

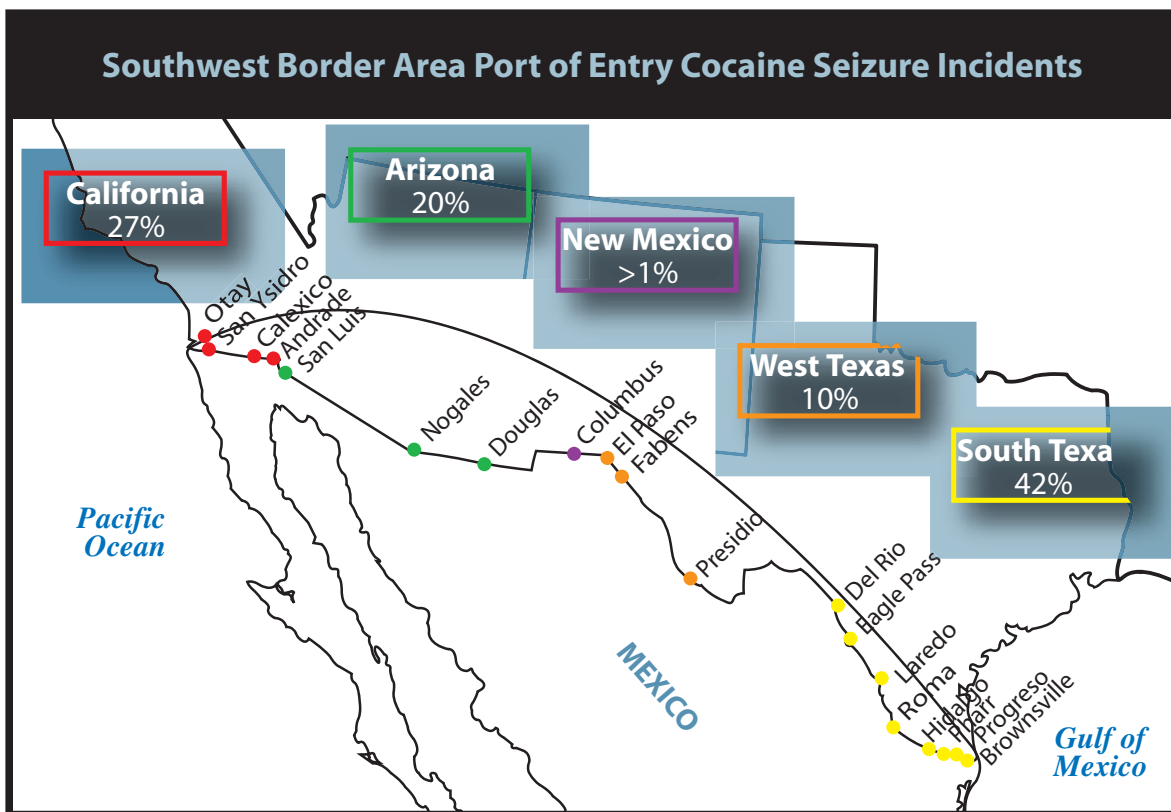


Figure 8. Southwest Border Area Port-of-entry Incidents with Cocaine Seizures of At Least 500 Grams during 2006.



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