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# Cocaine Smuggling in 2007

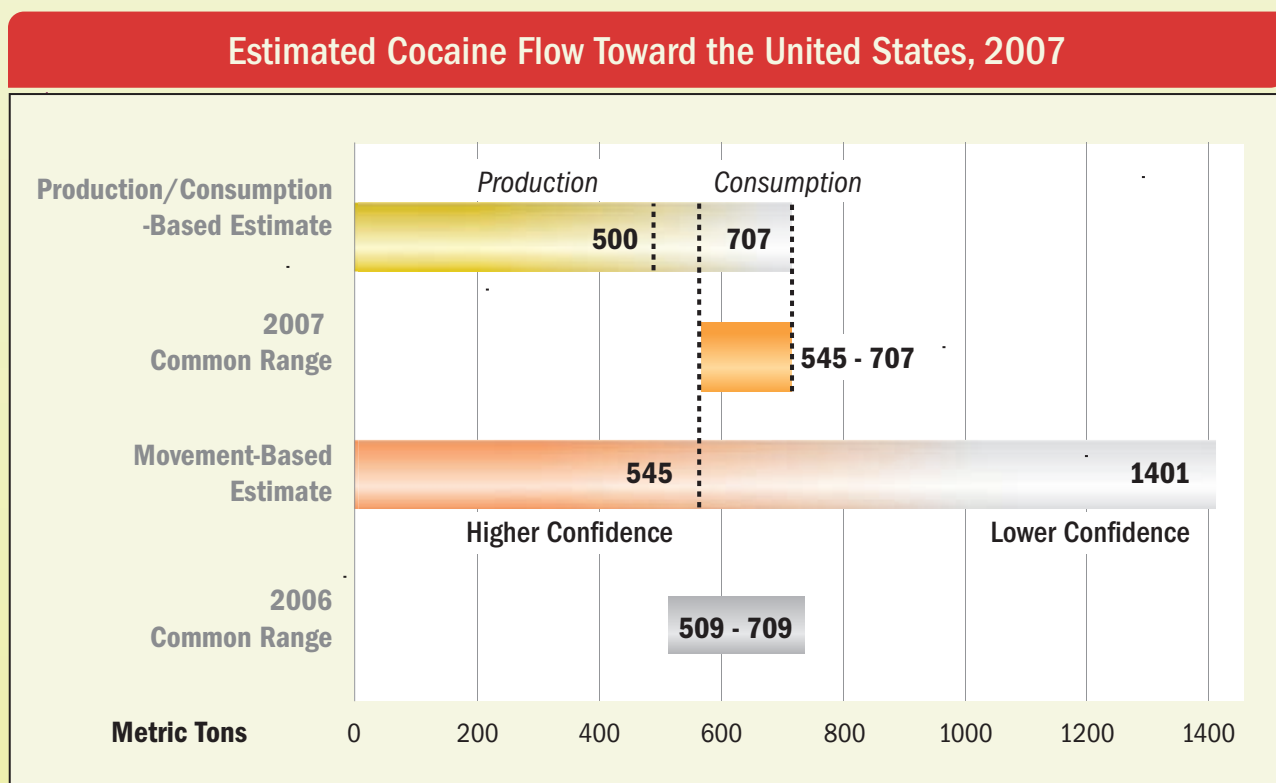
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# Cocaine Smuggling in 2007

Produced for the Office of National Drug Control Policy

# Cocaine Flow Toward the United States

The counterdrug community estimates that between 545 and 707 metric tons of cocaine departed South America toward the United States in 2007, similar to the 2006 estimate. 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 90 percent of the flow. The remaining 10 percent moved through the eastern and central Caribbean. Persistent counterdrug operations in the Transit Zone, record-breaking seizures in Mexico, and violence among Mexican traffickers subsequently disrupted the cocaine supply to the United States, causing sustained shortages in major areas of the country.



**Figure 1. Cocaine Flow Estimate, 2007.** About 626 metric tons of cocaine departed from South America toward the United States in 2007, according to the common range estimate. The common range estimate is calculated by merging the cocaine production-based estimate, cocaine consumption-based estimate, and cocaine movement-based estimate, using documented cocaine losses as one key element.

# Departure Points

Movement through the eastern Pacific side of the Central American Isthmus continued to account for an overwhelming majority of the flow at 69 percent.

The diversification of routes and methods was the most notable trend in 2007. Traffickers proved to be highly adaptive and innovative in every aspect of transportation. Some of their variations included the use of low-profile and self-propelled semi-submersible vessels (LPVs/SPSSs), the shipment of uncharacteristically large cocaine loads in commercial maritime containers, and the use of alternative routes in response to interdiction pressure.

By the end of 2007, traffickers were relying heavily on go-fast operations along coastal routes to move cocaine. These tactics represented a significant change from traffickers' previous reliance on fishing vessels transiting south of the Galapagos that was prominent in 2006.

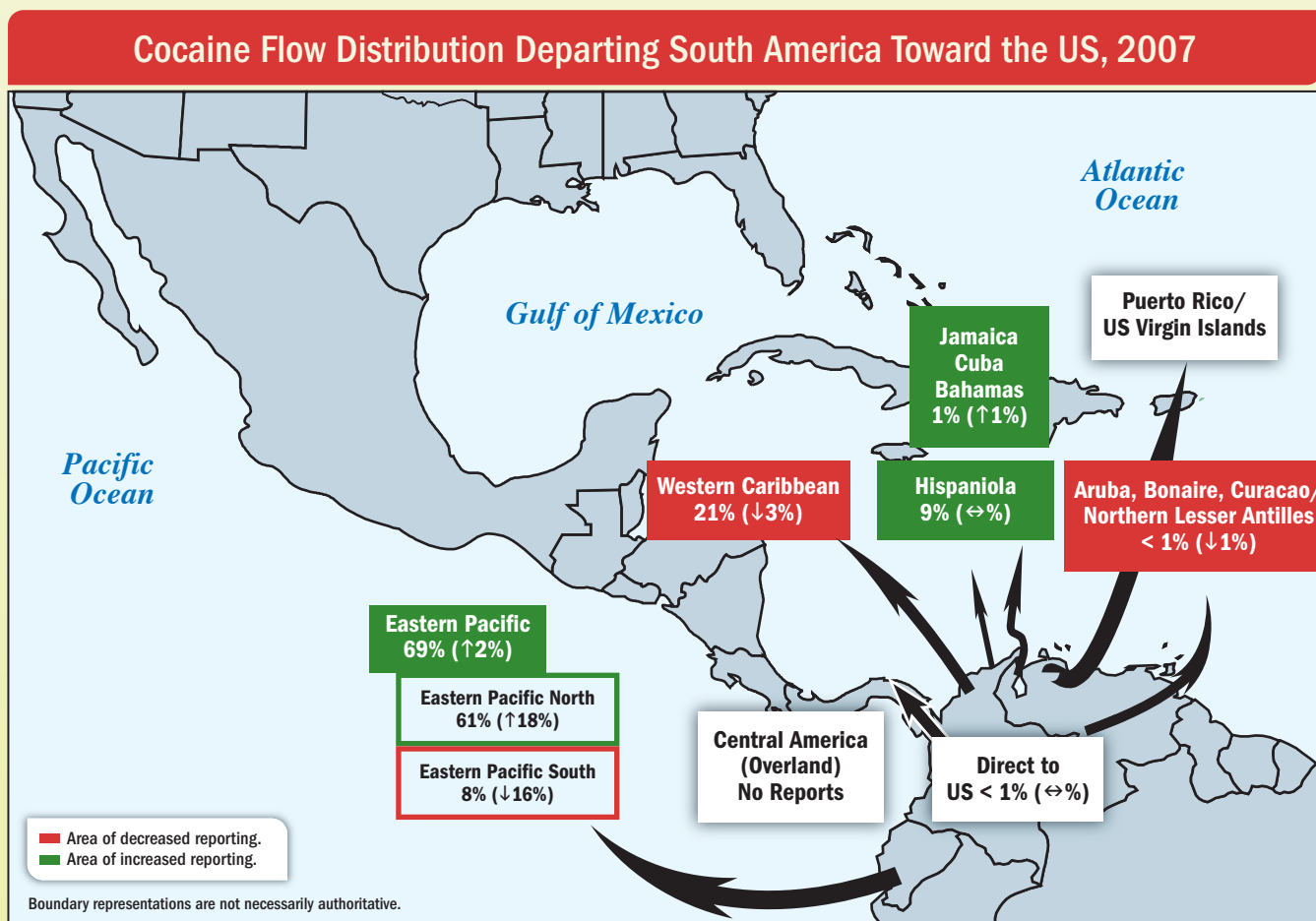
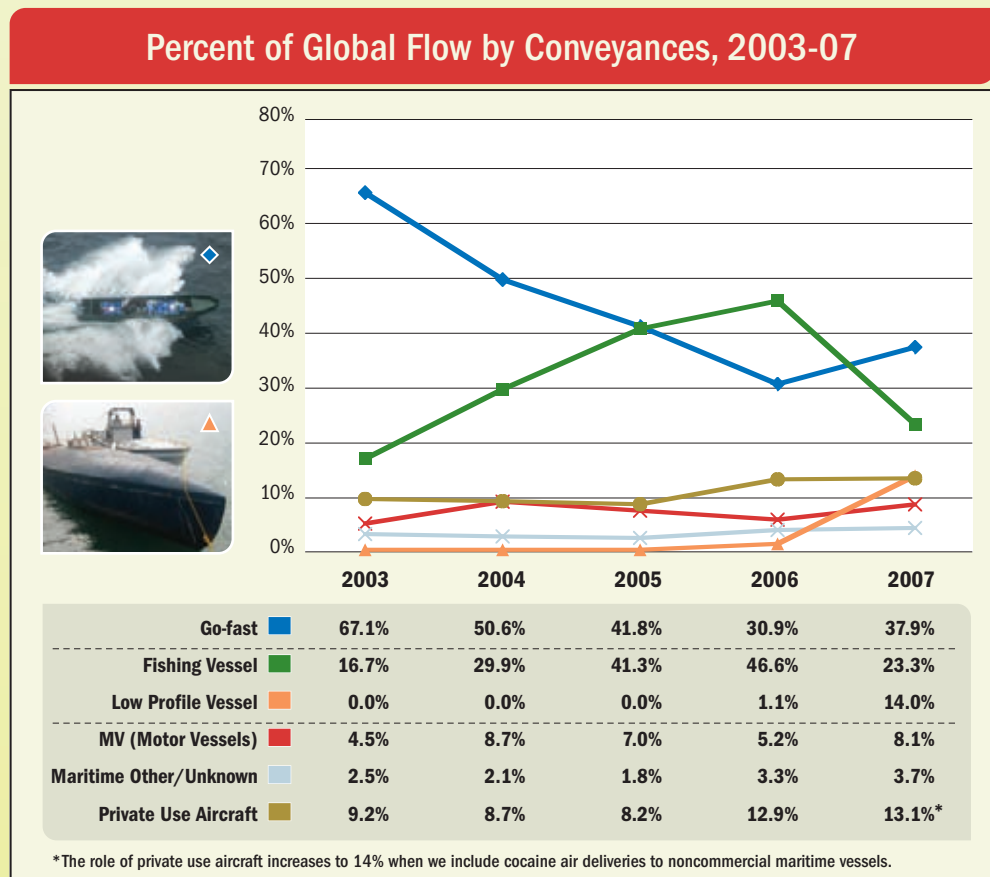


Figure 2. Cocaine Flow Threat Departing South America Toward the United States.

# Modes and Methods

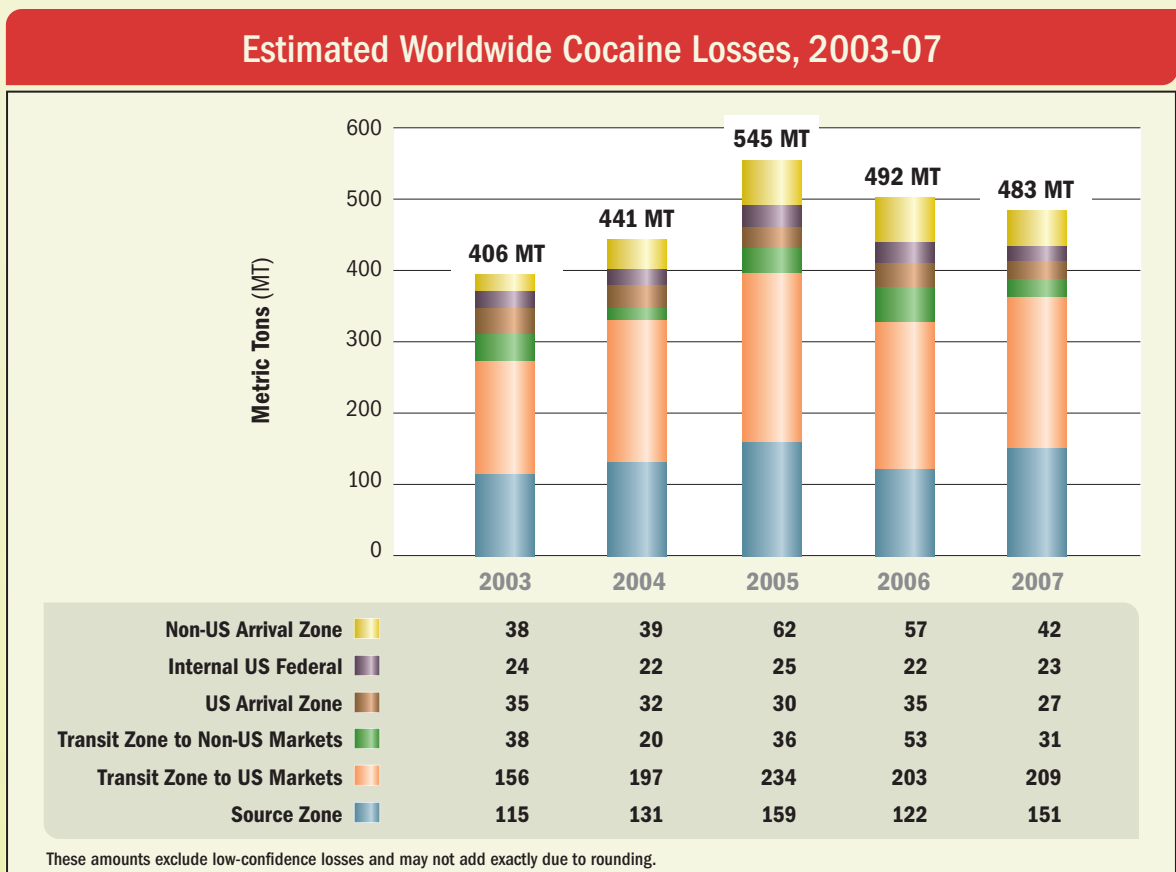
The pressure against fishing vessels as a preferred mode of conveyance resulted in a major shift toward other modes of transportation, to include LPVs/SPSSs.



**Figure 4. Decreased Use of Fishing Vessels, Increased Use of Go-fasts and LPVs/SPSSs.**

# Cocaine Seizures and Disruptions

In 2007, documented worldwide cocaine interdicted—seized and scuttled—totaled 483 metric tons, 9 metric tons less than the revised total for 2006. The overall decrease was due to a sharp decrease in seizures recorded in the non-US Transit and Arrival Zones. Nonetheless, counterdrug forces recorded 4 of the top 10 seizures of all time in 2007, 3 of which were connected to commercial maritime movements. US Transit Zone seizure totals in 2007 were 6 metric tons higher than in 2006; Mexico and Costa Rica led Transit Zone countries in the amount seized with Mexico seizing nearly five times the amount of cocaine seized in 2006. US Arrival Zone seizures decreased most notably across the US Southwest Border, as a result of a combination of factors that reduced the amount of cocaine reaching the border through Mexico.



**Figure 5. Worldwide Cocaine Seizures/Losses.** Although only 483 metric tons were seized in 2007, 9 metric tons less than in 2006, seizures in the US Transit Zone were 3 percent higher than in 2006.

## Source Zone

The most significant development in the Source Zone in 2007 was Venezuela’s increasing role as the primary transit country for the movement of increasing amounts of Colombian cocaine by noncommercial aircraft.

## Assessment of Cocaine Departing South America to Global Markets by Departure Country, 2007



**Figure 6. Cocaine Flow Departing South America to Global Destinations, 2007.**

# Non-US Markets

Only 40 percent of the cocaine documented departing South America in 2007 to non-US markets transited directly to Europe; 60 percent transited Africa on its way to Europe.

# US Arrival Zone

Cocaine seizures in the US Arrival Zone decreased, from 35 metric tons in 2006 to a 5-year low of about 27 metric tons in 2007, a decline of about 23 percent. Seizures were lower in all corridors. A reduction of the amount of cocaine reaching the U.S. Southwest Border from Mexico stemmed from a combination of key factors, including Mexico's aggressive counter-drug initiatives and a surge in cartel violence in 2007. Moreover, a series of large seizures in the Transit Zone limited the amount of cocaine available in Mexico to move toward the US Southwest Border.

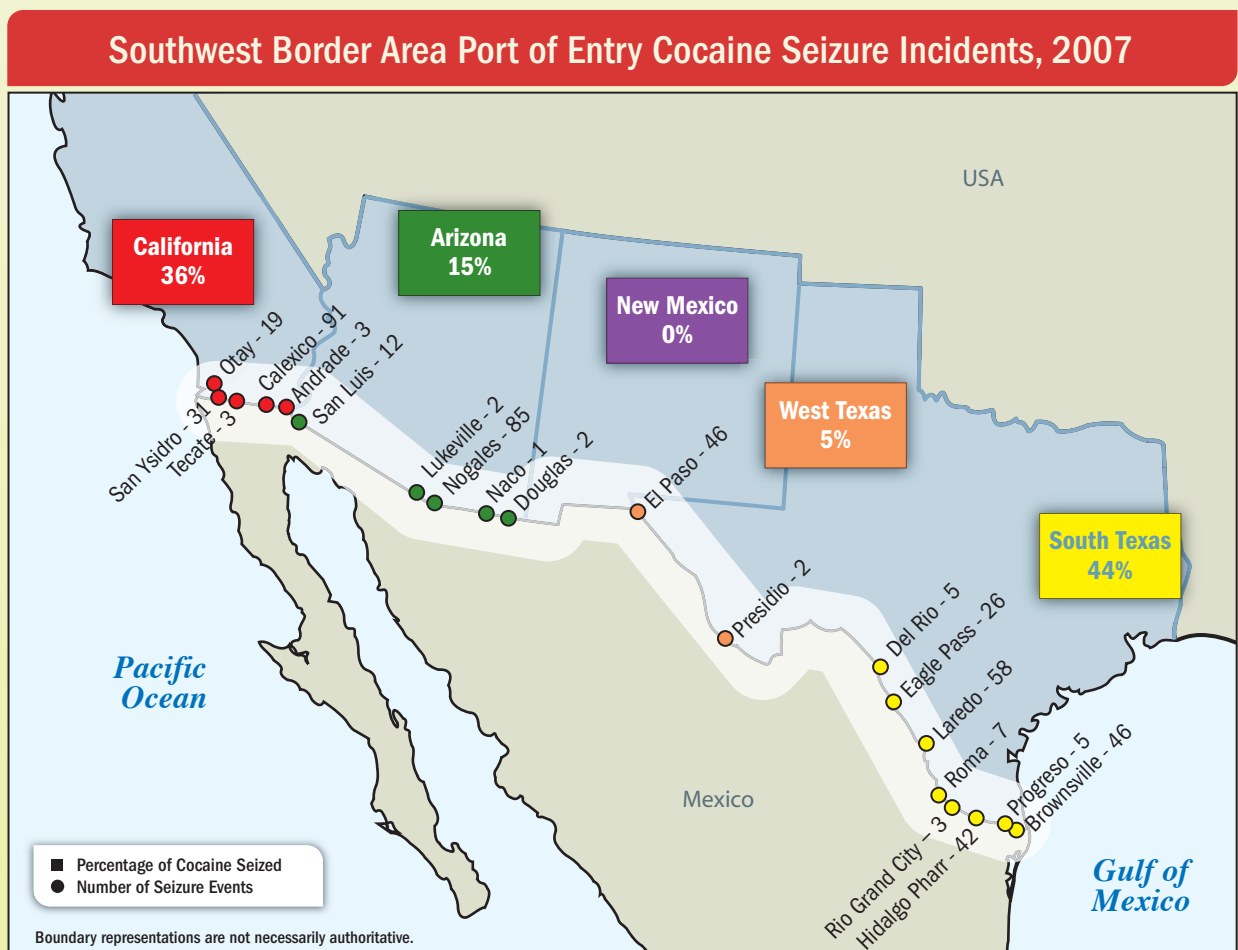


Figure 7. Southwestern Border Ports of Entry Cocaine Seizures.





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