



## **UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE PRESS RELEASE**

**OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
950 H STREET N.W., SUITE 8400  
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### **COLOMBIAN POLICE AND UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE SEIZE \$20 MILLION IN COUNTERFEIT U.S. CURRENCY**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In what is described as the largest seizure associated with an active counterfeiting plant in Colombian history, the United States Secret Service and the Colombian National Police Service (DIJIN), uncovered more than \$20 million in counterfeit U.S. dollars on a farm in Toro, near Cali, on Tuesday, February 11, 2003.

“This is a significant seizure, not only in size, but also because it is an indication of the continued strong working relationship that the Secret Service has developed with the Colombian National Police,” said U.S. Secret Service Director Ralph Basham. “This year alone, we have jointly seized three other counterfeiting plants in addition to this facility.”

Since 1998, the Secret Service and the Colombian authorities have seized more than \$150 million in counterfeit currency and have dismantled operations that could have produced billions of dollars in bogus bills. According to Colombian officials, the Toro plant was in the process of filling an order for \$50 million in the counterfeit notes of various denominations.

The seizure of the counterfeit \$100, \$50, and \$20 notes was the culmination of a four-month joint investigation between U.S. and Colombian law enforcement officials. According to the Colombian authorities, the counterfeit notes were intended for distribution in Spain, France, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Ecuador and the United States.

Secret Service analysis indicates the counterfeit notes seized at the Toro plant are among the most actively passed notes in the world. Overall, more than \$30 million in counterfeit produced at the plant has been passed worldwide.

Eight individuals associated with the plant, including the operation’s financier, printer and main distributors have been arrested by the DIJIN.

This was largest and most significant seizure of an active counterfeit U.S. currency plant in Colombia, though larger amounts have been seized from inactive plants. In December 2001, the Secret Service and DIJIN seized more than \$41 million in counterfeit just outside of Bogotá.

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The Secret Service opened a resident office in Bogota in 1996. As countries throughout South and Central America “dollarize” – adopt U.S. currency as their own national currency – the office expanded its staff and increased its work with Colombian authorities.

The U.S. Secret Service was created in 1865 with the sole purpose of suppressing counterfeit currency. While the agency’s responsibilities have expanded to include presidential protection, its investigative mission still focuses on protecting the infrastructure of the nation’s financial systems.

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*Editor’s Note: Questions regarding this release may be directed to the U.S. Secret Service Office of Government and Public Affairs at 202-406-5708.*