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Obama's lies about the international cocaine trade

The amount of cocaine seized in 2011 has outstripped the estimate of world cocaine production provided by the U.S. Department of State. Despite the opposing official viewpoint of the U.S., Colombia is still the world leader of cocaine production, and even the U.S. Coast Guard proved the White House's figures wrong. Narcoleaks' five questions on the embarrassing U.S. contradictions on narco trafficking

ROME (December 7, 2011) – Obama, we have a problem. Cocaine seized worldwide in 2011 has surpassed the world production estimate provided by the U.S. Through the end of November, over **734 metric tons** have been intercepted on drug routes worldwide this year, but the American Department of State maintains that the world production sums up to just **700 metric tons**. This seeming contradiction is going to keep growing until the end of this year. We estimate that by December 31 about **744-794 metric tons** of cocaine are going to be seized. It would be as if a farmer says that he has ten chickens, and then a fox eats him 12. And the farmer still manages to sell chickens at the market anyway. Apparently someone's math is wrong. We at Narcoleaks believe that this is not just a trivial mistake.

Even the official figures don't add up. According to the latest official statements by UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), the U.S. authorities and the Colombian government, Peru has taken Colombia's place as the world's largest producer of cocaine. The claim was proved wrong by the data on drug seizures. In 2011, about 80% of seized cocaine and of which the production country was known and disclosed, originated from Colombia, less than 10% from Peru. The official data on Colombia are even more impressive. The latest estimate provided by the U.S. authorities on the annual production of cocaine in Colombia refers to **290 metric tons**. As of today, though, the seizure operations of Colombian cocaine carried out in different countries have totaled **351.8 metric tons** of cocaine, i.e. **121.3%** of Colombia's annual production according to the U.S. Department of State's estimates.

Ironically, the Policia Nacional de Colombia itself drew the line on the whole affair with an official statement. On 14 October, the Colombian police found in the department of Meta a maxi cristalizadero (a cocaine processing lab) with about 6 metric tons of cocaine, the capacity to produce 500 to 800 kilos of cocaine per day, i.e. **between 182 and 292 metric tons** of cocaine per year¹. If we take the 290 t annual production estimated by the US State Department to be true, it means that Colombia has only one cocaine laboratory. This would be utterly preposterous. In Colombia, about 250-300 operating cristalizaderos, with startling productive capacity, are found and destroyed every year, but these represent only a part of the existing ones.

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A formidable blow to the U.S. Department of State's estimates came a few days ago, and it was "friendly fire". According to an official bulletin by the U.S. Coast Guard issued on December 1², of the **771 metric tons** of cocaine known to be bound for the U.S. in 2011, more than 85 percent was transported on the high seas. This proved wrong the data released by the Department of State and by the UN, according to which cocaine trafficking towards the U.S. went down to 200 tons in the last few years.

The embarrassing contradictions are visible to anyone, and you don't need to go through any leaked cable to spot them. Narcoleaks' analyses are the result of a daily media monitoring project carried out by a group of Italian journalists and researchers, in collaboration with the Italian press agency Redattore Sociale. Over 100 media and institutional sources have been monitored on a daily basis since last January. More than 4,700 anti-drug operations which led to seize huge quantities of cocaine have been recorded. An average of 14 major operations per day, and of 2 metric tons of cocaine seized worldwide every day. Narcoleaks' data mining and collection process is very meticulous, it doesn't omit the details of any seizure operation, in order to avoid duplicate entries and to catch the different dynamics. Narcoleaks kept track only of those seizure operations for which an high purity level of cocaine was certain.

"We don't publish secrets. We collect evidence", is Narcoleaks' motto. We don't commit any offence, we don't reveal State secrets, we did never even think of getting any top secret file. Our strength lies in the evidence and in getting the overall picture, that unfortunately is frequently missing for issues like the international trade of cocaine. Too often the international media trust blindly the data provided by governmental institutions, without verifying what is stated on their annual reports. It is unpleasant, moreover, to know that within the major investigative bodies and in the main international summits on counter-trafficking policies, people are fully aware of 'cooked' data, but that nobody is brave enough to make these facts come out. Interests are huge, ways to conceal the reality are sophisticated, but the truth will out. One mistake is sufficient to foul up even the most tested out space mission.

President Obama, we know that you are well aware of the issues that we have addressed here. When you still were senator for Illinois, you were in the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (SFRC). In December 2005, under President George W. Bush, the Committee examined in detail the issue of the fight against drug trafficking, producing the official report "Plan Colombia: Elements for success"³. The report stated: "The lack of reliable evidence of well-documented progress in the war against drugs and neutralizing paramilitaries is disappointing considering the billions of dollars the U.S. Congress has appropriated to finance drug interdiction and eradication since 2000. In 2005 coca eradication broke the 136,000 hectare record and destroyed the equivalent of 160 metric tons of cocaine; and though cocaine seized in 2004 almost tripled to 325 metric tons of cocaine, and is expected to be larger for 2005, Colombia continues to provide about 90 percent of the cocaine available in the U.S., in spite of the appropriated funds being earmarked for Department of State programs in Colombia to fight drug trafficking and terrorism through Plan Colombia". Among the other recommendations, the report called for the following measures: "It is strongly advised that the USG, particularly the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security, develop and coordinate reliable performance metrics to accurately measure the flow of cocaine into the United States. Once this is done, all parties will have accurate metrics on success or failure".

² <http://www.uscgnews.com/go/doc/786/1249143/>

³ <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CPRT-109SPRT25278/pdf/CPRT-109SPRT25278.pdf>

This said, we would like to address to the President of the United States **Barack Obama**, to the U.S. Secretary of State **Hillary Rodham Clinton**, and to the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy **Gil Kerlikowske**, the following questions:

1. How is it possible that, according to your official data, the quantity of cocaine seized is higher than the estimate of cocaine produced?
2. How is it possible that the U.S. Department of State maintains that the world production of cocaine amounts to 700 metric tons, if according to the U.S. Coast Guard the only U.S. bound cocaine trafficking from South America equals already 771 metric tons?
3. How is it possible that different U.S. authorities are in direct contradiction with each other?
4. Why do they continue to claim that cocaine production in Colombia has dropped when all the available data say otherwise?
5. In light of these contradictions, are all the billions of dollars spent to fund Plan Colombia justified?

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