

THE NATIONAL ANTIDRUGS DIRECTION OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

PRESENTS

FIGHTING DRUG TRAFFIC IN THE MARITIME CHANNEL.

I. Introduction.

NOWADAYS, AT THE IMMINENT END OF THE CENTURY AND THE MILLENNIUM, DRUGS CONSTITUTE A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR THE WORLD, INSPITE OF THE EFFORTS MADE BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN THE ECONOMICAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS.

DURING THESE LAST YEARS, THE CONNECTIONS BY AIR AND BY SEA, AS WELL AS THE TENDENCY TO THE INCREASE OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC HAVE BECOME FACTORS THAT KEEP THE COUNTRIES FROM CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IN A CONSTANT RISK OF BEING AFFECTED BY DRUG OPERATIONS.

THE GEOGRAPHIC POSITION OF CUBA, WITH ITS LONG COASTAL STRIP OF 5200 KM AND MORE THAN 4195 KEYS AND ISLANDS, TURNS US INTO ONE OF THE DRUG TRAFFICKERS' OPTIONS SINCE OUR COUNTRY IS AN OBLIGED STEP IN THEIR WAY FROM SOUTH TO NORTH AND OTHER REGIONS OF THE AREA.

THE AIR-SEA DRUG TRAFFIC OPERATIONS AFFECT OUR COUNTRY IN A GREAT EXTEND BECAUSE OF THE AMOUNT OF THESE ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT IN THE ADJACENT WATERS AND THE DRUG ARRIVALS TO OUR COSTS CARRIED BY THE STREAMS, THAT IS WHAT WE CALL RECALO, MEANING THE DRUG THAT SIGHTS LAND. THEY CONSTITUTE THE MAIN SOURCE OF SUPPLY FOR THE CUBAN DEALERS.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THOSE CRIMES IN OUR MARITIME BORDERS, IS ONE OF THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE CUBAN BORDER GUARDS AND THE REST OF THE AUTHORITIES WHO CONSTITUTE THE SYSTEM OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR IN CHARGE OF FIGHTING DRUGS.

II. HOW DO THE DEALERS ACT ?

A) VIOLATE THE AIRSPACE BY USING AIRCRAFT TO DROP THE DRUG.

THE CUBAN REPUBLIC HAS A POINT OF CONVERGENCE AND TWO AIR PATHS, ONE AT THE EAST AND THE OTHER AT THE WESTERN PART OF THE COUNTRY. THEY ARE CROSSED BY UNIDENTIFIED PLANES VIOLATING THE AIRSPACE AND WHICH AT THE SAME TIME COINCIDE WITH THE DROPPING AND PICKING DRUG OPERATIONS AT THE NORTH COAST OF THE PROVINCES LOCATED FROM VILLA CLARA TO CAMAGÜEY.

B) VIOLATE THE TERRITORIAL WATERS BY USING GO-FAST VESSELS AND MOVING AROUND THEM.

DEALERS UNDER ARREST HAVE ADMITTED THAT THEY USE GO-FAST VESSELS TO GO INTO OUR TERRITORIAL WATERS NEAR THE SOUTH COAST OF GUANTANAMO PROVINCE, THEN THEY GO TROUGH THE WINDS PASS AND CONTINUE BY THE CUBAN WATERS CLOSE TO THE NORTH AND THE EASTERN COAST IN ORDER TO ESCAPE FROM THE PURSUIT OF OUR NAVAL MEANS OR FROM THE NORTH AMERICAN COAST GUARDS AND MAKE THEIR WAY TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL WATERS.

ANOTHER REASON FOR GOING TO THE SOUTH AND EASTERN COAST IS TO USE THE INNOCENT PATH THAT EXISTS IN THAT ZONE BECAUSE OF THE BAD SAILING CONDITIONS FOR LITTLE VESSELS AND BECAUSE THEY USE THE SHORE AS A POINT OF REFERENCE.

DURING 1999, THERE WERE FRUSTRATED 4 OPERATIONS COMING FROM THE SOUTH OF THE CARIBBEAN TO THE NORTH, AS A RESULT OF THAT 2508.478 KG OF DRUGS HAVE BEEN SEIZED, AMONG THEM 2080.25 KG OF MARIHUANA, 449 KG OF COCAINE AND 0.228 KG OF HASHISH.

FROM JANUARY TO AUGUST OF THIS YEAR THERE HAVE BEEN DETECTED 93 MARITIME SIGHTS AND 28 AERIAL ONES, ALL OF THEM SUSPICIOUS OF BEING INVOLVED IN DRUG TRAFFIC. FURTHERMORE, 4 GO-FAST VESSELS WERE SEIZED TOGETHER WITH 3 784.70 OF DRUGS (338.50 OF COCAINE AND 3 448.20 OF MARIHUANA). SIX MARITIME OPERATIONS WERE FRUSTRATED AND 10 DEALERS WERE ARRESTED.

FROM JULY TO OCTOBER AFTER EVALUATING THE WAY DRUG TRAFFIC AFFECTS, IT WAS DECIDED TO DEVELOP AN OPERATION IN WHICH WE USED NAVAL AND AERIAL MEANS, AS WELL AS RADAR. ITS MAIN OBJECTIVE WAS TO INTERRUPT THE DROPPING OF DRUGS, SEIZE IT AND ARREST THE CREW OF THE GO-FAST VESSELS.

SINCE 1998 UP TO AUGUST 2000, 24 NAVAL CRAFTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN DRUG TRAFFIC OPERATIONS :

	1986	1997	1998	1999	2000	TOTAL
GO-FAST VESSEL	8	4	3	3	4	20
YACHT	-	-	-	1	-	1
SCHOONER	-	-	-	1	-	1
MOTORBOAT	1	1	-	-	-	2
TOTAL	7	5	3	5	4	24

C) USE OF MERCHANT SHIPS BELONGING TO DIFFERENT SHIPPING COMPANIES INVOLVED IN INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRAFFIC OPERATIONS.

THE DEALERS TRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FREIGHTER IN CHARGE OF CARRYING LEGAL LOAD BETWEEN A DRUG PRODUCER COUNTRY AND CUBA SO AS TO DELIVER THE DRUG TO GO-FAST VESSELS NEAR OUR TERRITORIAL WATERS BEFORE IT LANDS IN A CUBAN PORT.

ANOTHER DETECTED MODUS OPERANDI HAS TO DO WITH SUSPICIOUS VESSELS THAT HAVE TRIED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CUBA'S CONDITION OF NOT BEING A RISKY COUNTRY, SO AS TO LEAVE A CUBAN PORT WITH LEGAL LOAD OR PICK UP THE DRUG ALONG THEIR VOYAGE AFTER REPAIRING THEIR VESSELS.

FOR INSTANCE, ON MAY ,1999 AS A RESULT OF AN OPERATION DEVELOPED BY THE ENGLISH SERVICE, THEY CAPTURED THE PANAMANIAN MOTORBOAT "CHINA BREEZE", BEARING 4 TONS OF COCAINE COMING FROM INTERNATIONAL WATERS OF THE CARIBBEAN, AFTER SAILING OUT OF A CUBAN PORT WHERE THEY HAD LOADED SUGAR BOUND TO PORTUGAL. OUR COUNTRY PASSED VALUABLE INFORMATION TO THE BRITISH SERVICE.

D) MOVEMENTS OF CONTAINERS CARRYING DRUGS THROUGH CUBA TO A THIRD COUNTRY.

THIS MODUS OPERANDI BECAME EVIDENT ON DECEMBER 1998, AFTER DE SEIZURE OF 7254 KG OF COCAINE IN COLOMBIA. THE DRUG WAS CONCEALED IN CONTAINERS THAT WERE SUPPOSED TO LOAD RAW MATERIAL TO CUBA AND CONTINUE VOYAGE TO EUROPE.

III. HOW IS THE FIGHT AGAINST DRUGS ORGANIZED ?

THE FIGHT TO ILLEGAL DRUG ACTIVITIES RELATED TO DRUGS IS ORGANIZED AS A SYSTEM OF MANY BRANCHES WHERE THE FORCES OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, THE GENERAL REPUBLIC CUSTOMS AND INSTITUTIONS FROM THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE, MAINLY FISHING, MERCHANT AND PORTS MINISTRY AND THE POPULATION IN GENERAL TAKE PART.

INSPIRE OF THE EFFORTS MADE, WE FACE DIFFICULTIES BECAUSE OF THE SCARCE AND UNTIMELY INFORMATION WE RECEIVE FROM ABROAD AS WELL AS THE LACK OF SUITABLE CRAFTS FOR THE PATROL AND INTERCEPTION.

THE REINFORCEMENT OF THE FORCES AND MEANS IS VERY EXPENSIVE, FOR INSTANCE, THE RECONDITIONING OF A MEDIUM PATROL VESSEL OF OUR BORDER GUARDS COSTS AROUND 2 500 000 MILLION DOLLARS.

CUBA HAS MAINTAIN ITS FIRM POSITION IN FIGHTING DRUG TRAFFIC AND THE WILLING TO COLLABORATE WITH EVERY GOVERNMENT, AS A WAY TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLL IN THE EFFORTS TO INCREASE THE CO-OPERATION IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION, THE LATIN AMERICAN AND THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.

SO FAR WE HAVE SIGNED 28 GOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENTS.

AS A RESULT OF THE FIGHT AGAINST DRUGS IN OUR COUNTRY, THERE HAVE BEEN ARRESTED 713 FOREIGN DEALERS FROM 1970 TO AUGUST 2000.

BETWEEN 1970 AND 1990, THERE WERE SEIZED 30 AIRCRAFTS AND 73 VESSELS, AMONG THEM 84 CARRYING NORTHAMERICAN REGISTRATION NUMBER.

FROM 1990 TO AUGUST 2000, THERE HAVE BEEN SEIZED 82.3 TONS OF DRUG.

THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT AIMS ITS STEPS TO THE FULFILLMENT OF THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES :

- PRESERVE THE SOVEREIGNTY AND THE INTEGRITY OF THE NATION.
- COOPERATE WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE SCOURGE OF DRUGS.
- AVOID THE FACT THAT IMPROPER USAGE OF DRUGS BECOMES A SOCIAL PHENOMENON IN CUBA.
- IMPEDE THE USE OF OUR TERRITORY FOR DRUG TRAFFIC.

END.