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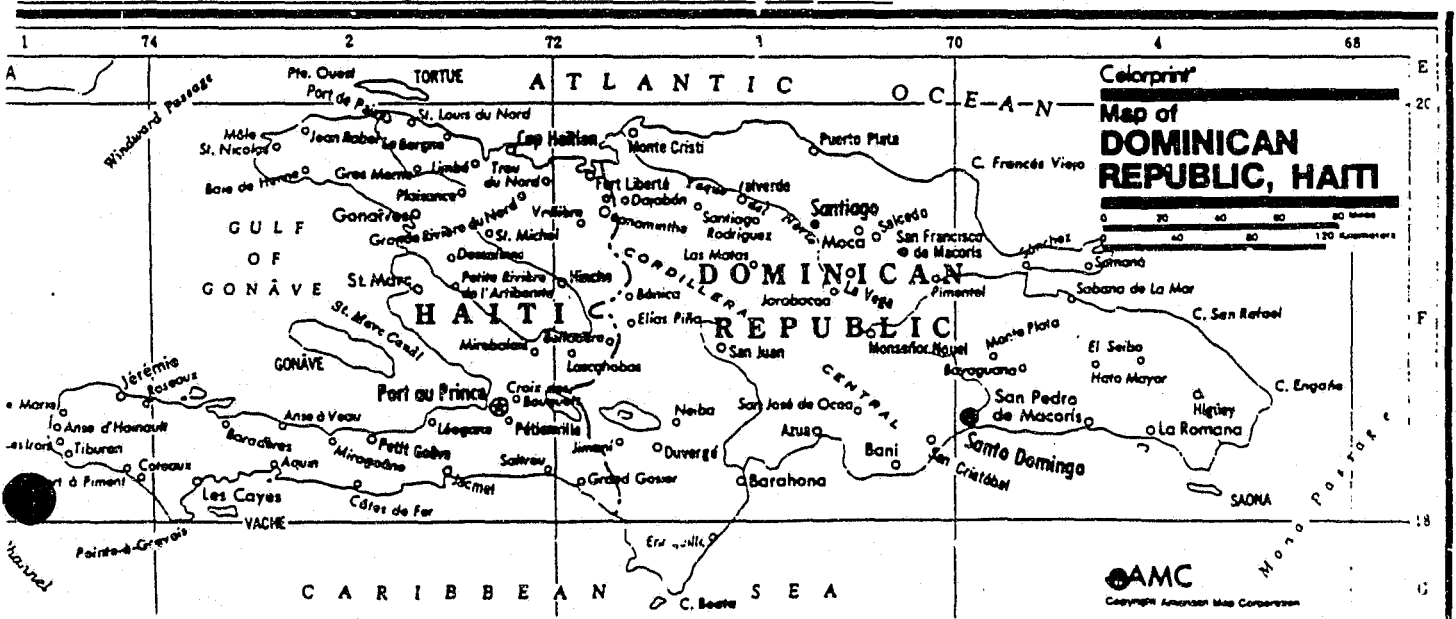
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DOMINICAN NARCO - TRAFFICKERS

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EMERGING DOMINICAN SEMI ORGANIZED CRIME

DATE OF REPORT: February 18, 1992

PREPARED BY NYPD DET. FRANK GARRIDO - DRUG ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE

It is not the intention of this document to portray or in any way infer that "ALL" Dominican nationals in or outside the Continental United States are involved in illegal/criminal activities. Only a small part of the Dominican community is involved and it is recognized that most Dominican Nationals are hard working industrious individuals who have made use of the unique opportunities available in the United States to exercise their rights to progress and improve their social and economic positions.

The sole purpose of this report is mainly directed to provide (in particular the Law Enforcement Community) an overview on the emergence of a criminal element within the hispanic criminal community which seems to be gaining momentum and perhaps surpass all other criminal organizations (organized or not) by their unlawful acts.

Whenever the word "DOMINICAN" is utilized in this document, its use is to indicate "ONLY" the criminal element in the DOMINICAN community.

Historically, those who emigrated to the United States for religious, political or economic reasons, also attracted a criminal element. In the past, this criminal element preyed upon their own countrymen examples of

those include but are not limited to. The Italian Black Hand which subsequently developed into LA COSA NOSTRA, the Irish Mollie Maguires which developed into the "WESTIES", the CUBAN-MARIELITOS, the Chinese TRIADS, as well as other groups of various nationalities. The Dominicans have not adopted this type of criminal activity, but have slowly but surely and persistently removed by force key positions/areas which had once been in the hands of more "AMERICANIZED" criminal elements involved in narco-trafficking.

Many Dominicans gain entry to the United States illegally by utilizing different routes. Those who are able to finance their entry (Financed usually by friends or relatives already in the United States) obtain visas (bought from corrupt officials in the Dominican Republic) and travel to Panama where arrangements have already been made for a subsequent trip to Mexico from where they enter the United States. Texas is usually their first stop in the United States and where they are picked up and taken to their destined location.

Others enter the United States via Puerto Rico. Ships and/or fishing vessels (for a fee of course) transport illegal Dominicans to the island/US soil. In fact, many Dominicans die almost daily attempting to travel from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico using make-shift crafts made of plywood and or any type of floating material usually referred to as "YOLA". The hispanic news media constantly reports the death of Dominicans aboard "YOLAS" in the area of "LA MONA PASSAGE".

Those who successfully make the voyage usually obtain false credentials such as Puerto Rican driver licenses or birth certificates which are often purchased from corrupt Puerto Rican officials. Traveling from Puerto Rico to the United States is relatively easy since it is absent of United States Customs Inspection. In fact, a great deal of cocaine enters the United States this way, and many shipments are smuggled through Puerto Rico into the mainland via commercial airlines flying to the United States.

The Dominican population in the United States is rapidly increasing. Dominicans are populating areas such as Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey and New York City in quite large numbers. New York and in particular the Washington Heights area of Manhattan, has the largest Dominican population.

It is in this particular locale that Dominicans have concentrated their narco-trafficking activities. It is worth mentioning that auto-crime has become a very "DOMINICAN" activity, especially in the Washington Heights area. Not only are the vehicles stolen and dismantled (chop-shops), but they are usually exported to the Dominican Republic when the numerical identifications have been expertly altered as well as the vehicle's documentation.

Narcotics trafficking has become the Dominican forte and it is safe to predict that the Dominican criminal will rise to high level positions of distribution and overall control of cocaine crack, cocaine powder and

heroin. The Dominican narco-trafficker is unique in many aspects. The Dominican Republic has been ruled by dictatorships and police type of governments. The Dominicans have vast historical experience in the detection of police presence. The Dominican criminal is well aware of methods of operations used by police agencies and is equipped with a higher degree of awareness if compared to the American born/raised criminal. In fact, present day police in the Dominican Republic maintains strict laws considered in the United States as violations of civil rights. Dominican Police Officers do not react candidly if a Dominican citizen refuses to obey an order. New fads and hair-styles are not overlooked and in many cases are a reason for questioning those sporting them. Besides these solid cultural experiences, the Dominican criminal is becoming a challenge to law enforcement because of their violence.

Dominicans have become feared by other criminal groups. It is unusual not to confiscate weapons when search warrants are executed in narcotics locations controlled and operated by Dominicans. In the Washington Heights area, drug related homicides totaling 122 for the year 1991 are in most part attributed to Dominican perpetrators many victims of which are also Dominicans. As the Dominican narco-traffickers motivated by greed continues to expand in control of their areas, the blood flow will continue.

It is worth noting that many of these homicides are the result of "BUSINESS COMPETIVENESS". For example, Dominican narco-traffickers are in constant competition with each other. Suppliers may control a section of a street

or several apartments in a building. At times, two different suppliers may control different apartments in the same building. A peaceful co-existence may exist until customers shift purchasing cocaine/heroin/crack from one apartment to the other. It is not uncommon that in order to gain total control of a location Dominicans execute each other in the most fierce and bloody manners.

This violence has served them properly for it has given Dominicans a respectable position recognized by the other criminal groups. Although a sort of "COWBOY" attitude permeates the Dominican criminal, it has nevertheless allowed them to rise to higher levels of cocaine distribution by solidifying their networks of distribution which the Colombians have begun to exploit/utilize.

Colombians have been and remain the main suppliers/importers of cocaine. Their import networks are secured from penetration by their methods of operation which they ensure through employment of "ONLY COLOMBIANS". The recipients of the cocaine in the United States are "bonded" that is, their cooperation and loyalty is ensured by their relatives back home. Both retain responsibilities for the security of the shipments and of the organization. With the increase in narcotics enforcement and the pressures exerted by law enforcement agencies on the Colombian traffickers, Dominicans are now assuming the responsibilities for the high level distribution of cocaine imports.

In the early 1980's. Dominican narco-traffickers were involved mainly in "LOW LEVEL-LOW QUALITY" cocaine/crack distribution usually at street level, but this is no longer so. Recent large seizures of cocaine and United States currency have been effected on Dominican nationals thus indicative of the rise of the Dominican narco-traffickers to a higher and more responsible position.

The question may arise as to what can a Dominican provide a Colombian as collateral for the security and delivery of a large cocaine shipment. At this level, Dominican Nationals, in some cases, are the owners of businesses which will rapidly change ownership should the load/shipment become lost or confiscated. Dominicans can be entrusted with this responsibility by the COLOMBIANS because as it has been mentioned, DOMINICANS are in control of most distributing networks at street level and also supply other narco-trafficking organizations (e.g. Jamaicans, Blacks, Cubans).

A typical street level organization (cocaine/crack/heroin) consists of several individuals headed by one or many managers who select their employees (usually Dominicans although recent arrests have included Nicaraguans, Puerto Ricans, and Blacks) for different positions depending on their loyalty, and responsibility.

Dominicans usually employ addicts as Heroin and Crack sellers. Their sales are constantly monitored by another who protects (almost always armed) the

seller and who also makes sure the seller does not "walk away" with the product. An addict-seller will usually be entrusted with small amounts and is therefore forced to "RE-UP" or get more product once he/she has sold out. This also ensures that the profits are collected promptly. Another, reason for employing addicts is to protect the other members from arrests. These street level operations are extremely profitable given the volume of customers. A heroin operation can be as profitable as \$20,000.00 to \$30,000.00 dollars in one day and this is only an approximation.

Dominicans usually employ Dominicans at mid-low to mid and high level distribution. This operation requires loyalty in case arrests are effected, but most importantly this requires more responsibility in that a record is maintained as to the amounts of distribution and profits obtained. Dominicans are expected to keep silent as to their organization, however, in comparison to the COLOMBIANS, a great number of Dominicans negotiate for a lesser sentence and are recruited as informants by law enforcement officers.

Cocaine/Crack and Heroin distribution usually takes place in the street since crack is sold in vials and heroin in glassine packages. COCAINE powder; however, is usually sold in apartments. Sometimes it is sold in the street already packaged in \$10.00 and \$20.00 dollar tins, but usually a customer buying cocaine powder is for the most part taken to an apartment where the powder is measured atop a scale and under guard by other(s) usually armed Dominicans.

Dominicans ensure the security of their apartment from entry by the Police, but more important from competing Dominican dealers trying to gain control of the "PUNTO" (SPOT) and by robbers who usually pose as Law Enforcement Agents. Therefore, in these "PUNTOS", a large number of Dominicans usually serve as lookouts and protection (most of the time armed).

Dominicans operate in large numbers. The streets which they have gained control of are usually crowded by other Dominicans whose sole responsibility is to deter "SPOT-ROBBERS" and warn of approaching police personnel. Dominican drug dealers usually conquer a neighborhood. Slowly they rent apartments in a building and subsequently force the tenants (by intimidation) to look the other way and/or leave. Upon seeing an approaching police vehicle, the crowds begin yelling code words to indicate police presence. Immediately, any sale taking place inside an apartment is interrupted and the apartment vacated.

Arrests have been effected on street-lookouts who have been in possession of walkie-talkies and hand held alarms connected to the sale apartments. Dominicans also employ young children since they know that children will receive little or no penalty for their acts. Children are paid to ride around street blocks to identify what seems to be a police vehicle and sound the alarm. Dominicans are also becoming adept at manufacturing "TRAPS" or hidden compartments. A search warrant executed in a Dominican drug location resulted in the discovery of a compartment big enough to hide weapons and/or cocaine kilograms. This compartment was hidden inside a

closet covered with general household objects and was opened by activating a "car alarm activator". Dominicans are also fond of creating means of escape. In one case a closet floor had been removed in a drug-sale apartment which gave access to the apartment below and thus facilitating escape. Police scanners have also been confiscated.

Dominican versatility in the drug trade is indicative of their ability to form organizations and to connect with cocaine and heroin sources of supply. Dominicans are linked to Asian heroin sources and in a minor scale to Nigerians. This is the result of Dominican business establishments which usually are situated in areas of low income and where the ethnic make-ups are diversified giving opportunities for intra-racial social exchanges. The Dominicans have had known dealing with Chinese groups, mainly in the heroin trade. It is believed that they have great trust for the Chinese dealers and the quality of their drugs. There's a section in the Dominican Republic occupied mainly by people of Chinese/Asian origin, who speak fluent Spanish.

A great number of Dominican narco-traffickers are fond of exhibiting/ "showing off" their wealth obtained from narco-trafficking. Usually in the form of late model vehicles and jewelry. However, the "Low profile" Dominican cocaine trafficker has been successful in investing his/her profit in businesses, restaurants, real estate, discoteques, boutiques, bodegas, and currency exchange houses mostly located in the Washington Heights area. Dominicans are also involved in money laundering. A great

deal of illegally obtained money is sent to the Dominican Republic where it is invested in real estate and businesses. Two major cities in Dominican Republic, San Francisco de Macoris and Santiago de los Caballeros are prime examples of cities which have progressed thanks to funds acquired through narco-trafficking.

Many Dominican narco-traffickers from these two cities have been arrested in the United States. Given the economic growth of these cities and the number of defendants born or who are residents of San Francisco de Macoris and Santiago del Caballeros, a myth has developed as to an existing San Francisco or Santiago Cartel. At this moment insufficient evidence exists to substantiate such a claim. It is true that many Dominicans are recruited (They are provided with a place to sleep and an apartment from which to distribute illegal drugs) from these two localities to come to the United States and join the narco-trafficking ranks, just like Dominicans from other cities of the Dominican Republic. This allegation of the existence of a cartel can only be the result of comparing the economic growth of these two cities (San Francisco and Santiago) in relation to the rest of the country.

Dominicans still operate independently and in a loose-knit fashion. Dominican organizations, although homogenous in culture and nationality, do not retain a solid unchanged structure. Greed and competition are the Dominicans most obvious traits and thus dictate their inability to unite. Their ability to resort to violence and the lack of organizational loyalty

prevents the formation of one solid narco-distributing-centralized-structure typical to the Colombian cartels.

In conclusion, the increase in Dominican participation in all levels of narco-trafficking and types of substances (Heroin/Cocaine) can be viewed as the emergence of a new criminal group of major significance and a source of alarm to the law enforcement community. The Dominican Republic does not recognize extradition of its citizens, therefore it provides a safe haven for Dominican narcotic fugitives. It also provides a free escape route for drug related homicide suspects who immediately leave CONUS and who eventually return illegally to re-commence their activities (including those suspected of shooting law enforcement officers). Should Colombian cocaine growers-exporters form an alliance with the Dominican transporter-distributors, the job of the narco-enforcement community may become easier only in identifying the higher ranking members in the upper strata. This will not facilitate, however, the total eradication of these organizations just as the identification of the Ochoas, Ledhers and Escobars has not diminished cocaine importation. The Dominican narco-trafficker is perhaps one of the most cunning and resourceful. The total control of communities by coercion, the reputation for acts of violence, the security of silence by intimidation, the ability to integrate and interrelate with different ethnic groups, the resourcefulness to utilize legitimate businesses to camouflage illegal activities, and the increase in knowledge of the American judicial system have prepared this particular group to contend with any threat from the law enforcement community.

The Dominicans must be considered an emerging crime group. Although only organized in small groups at the present, they're expanding in their operations. They are extremely violent, killing without hesitation, including law enforcement officials.

In an immigration and naturalization service report dated December 4, 1990, the following is reported:

New York City has the highest concentration of Dominicans, legal and illegal, in the United States around one million people. New York City has been identified as the hub of Dominicans involved in drug distribution. Dominicans comprise the largest alien group arrested for narcotic crimes in the prisons of New York State.

AFTERWORD:

This report is prepared as an informative source based on personal experience during extensive narcotics undercover assignments infiltrating Dominican narco-trafficking organizations at different levels of distribution.

In addition, consultation with several sources of information such as: Confidential Informants of Dominican origin, and Dominican nationals unrelated to any narcotics or criminal activities who have been questioned and whose opinions provided insight from a different "non-law-enforcement perspective". Also, interviews conducted on Law Enforcement personnel

whose experiences with Dominican Criminal added support to what is presented.

At present, several hispanic newspapers offer invaluable information as to narco-related events in the Dominican Republic. These newspapers specifically "LISTIN USA," "EL NACIONAL", and "NOTICIAS DEL MUNDO" provide almost daily information about the activities of "DOMINICAN-YORKS" (term utilized by these dailies to indicate Dominicans who reside in NY) in the Dominican Republic and New York.

Several recent events have served to the assumption as to the existence of a so called "CARTEL" in the Dominican Republic when in fact have been only isolated incidents whose only common denominator is their relatedness to narcotics trafficking. One recent event published in "NOTICIAS DEL MUNDO" dated December 5, 1991 reached first page attention when a Dominican York Jose Manuel Cedra Ortiz was executed in the hands of corrupt "DOMINICAN POLICE OFFICERS", in Santo Domingo, Capital of the Dominican Republic. (The officers have been arrested).

Cedra-Ortiz's drug activities were based in the Knickerbocker/Jefferson (83 PCT) Brooklyn, area. The alleged organizer of Cedra-Ortiz's demise, Jose Luis Tavarez Santos AKA Chi-Chi was subsequently executed in New York City (34th PCT) by loyal members of the group once headed by Cedra-Ortiz's organization which continues to distribute crack/cocaine/heroin in the above mentioned area. The Cedra-Ortiz/Tavarez-Santos incident resulted

from an internal feud in the organization or a sort of "coup"/take over by some of its members in New York while Cedra-Ortiz was visiting the Dominican Republic.

Another incident which prompted the assumption of the emergence of Dominican Organized Crime, came about as the result of the arrest of five Dominicans which headed the "Gerry Curl Gang." This "Gang" was responsible for cocaine/weapon distribution in the Washington Heights area and had been involved in several homicides. It is now evident that the Gang's activities were designed to discourage competition from other dealers by intimidation, and secure strongholds in areas of drug distribution. It is almost certain that their expansion would have been inevitable had this "GANG" not been successfully neutralized by the NYPD/HIDTA Team III in August 1991. It is worth mentioning that the five leaders were Dominicans and were brothers (MARTINEZ), but the membership was from varying regions in the Dominican Republic and included non-Dominican members.

Present day drug enforcement is utilizing every means available to counter narco-trafficking activities throughout the city. However, as it relates to the Dominican trafficker, it is worth noting that the law enforcement community lacks the cultural know how in dealing with this particular criminal element. Enforcement has been geared towards the low level activity which certainly demands attention given the high volume of violators involved at this stage of drug distribution. Enforcement, however, should also consist of a more culturally-oriented intelligence

gathering system comprised of investigators capable of recruiting "sources of information". Dominican criminal activity, specifically "NARCO-TRAFFICKING" intelligence may be easier to monitor and to provide to other law enforcement units, in and outside New York City. (Dominican drug activity is no longer solely a New York phenomenon).

Moreover, coordination of enforcement on Dominican narco-traffickers at all levels: City, State, and Federal, should be better coordinated/distributed with specific information on the violator (specific town of origin in the Dominican Republic). Also, better working relations with United States Immigration Services by the formation of a specific Dominican Liason which would serve in the identification and travel patterns of Dominicans suspected of narco-trafficking and also with United States Custom Services and Internal Revenue Services.

Lastly, there are in the Dominican Republic two agencies the CND or CONSEJO NACIONAL DE DROGAS (National Drug Council) and the DNCD or Direccin Nacional de Control de Drogas (Agency for National Drug Control equivalent to U.S. DEA) whose objectives are narcotics enforcement. Given the high incidence of drug trafficking and drug related activity in the Dominican Republic, these two agencies may be requested to provide assistance, if not in the apprehension, at least in providing intelligence information regarding Dominican narco-traffickers.