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Directorate of  
Intelligence

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CIA/DI.....INSITREP.94-005

# International Narcotics Review [Redacted]

*Special Focus on the  
Cali Cartel* [Redacted]

27 JUL 1994

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### The Changing Dynamics of Cali Cartel Transshipment Operations

Cali traffickers have dramatically altered the patterns of their operations over the past 18 months in ways that pose continued challenges to counternarcotics forces. [redacted] the Cali cartel has increasingly shifted many of its cocaine laboratories in Colombia from the traditional Cali area to more remote regions, where weaker government control makes counternarcotics operations difficult and where trafficking operations are less likely to be tied to the cartel. Law enforcement pressures and a coca disease have caused a similar shift away from traditional trafficking areas, especially in Peru's Huallaga Valley, to the south and east. Traffickers are also increasingly overflying and moving processing facilities to Brazil's vast Amazon region, where Brasilia has few forces capable of threatening their operations. And the cartel is increasingly turning to commercial aircraft in the transit zone, which can carry larger loads and are more difficult for counternarcotics forces to identify and interdict. [redacted]

#### Shifting Patterns Along the Peru-Colombia Airbridge

[redacted] the Cali cartel's transshipment patterns have shifted dramatically over the past 18 months. In January 1993 [redacted] followed a direct route between Peru's Huallaga Valley and Colombia's Valle del Cauca, with approximately two-thirds of the northbound flights apparently headed for the Valle del Cauca. Starting in March 1993, however, [redacted] a decline in flights to the Valle del Cauca, and by August fewer than one-fifth of the northbound flights were on course to the Valle del Cauca—a trend that has continued this year. Instead, Colombian traffickers turned increasingly to airfields in the Magdalena River Valley, southern Colombia, and the eastern Llanos plains. [redacted]

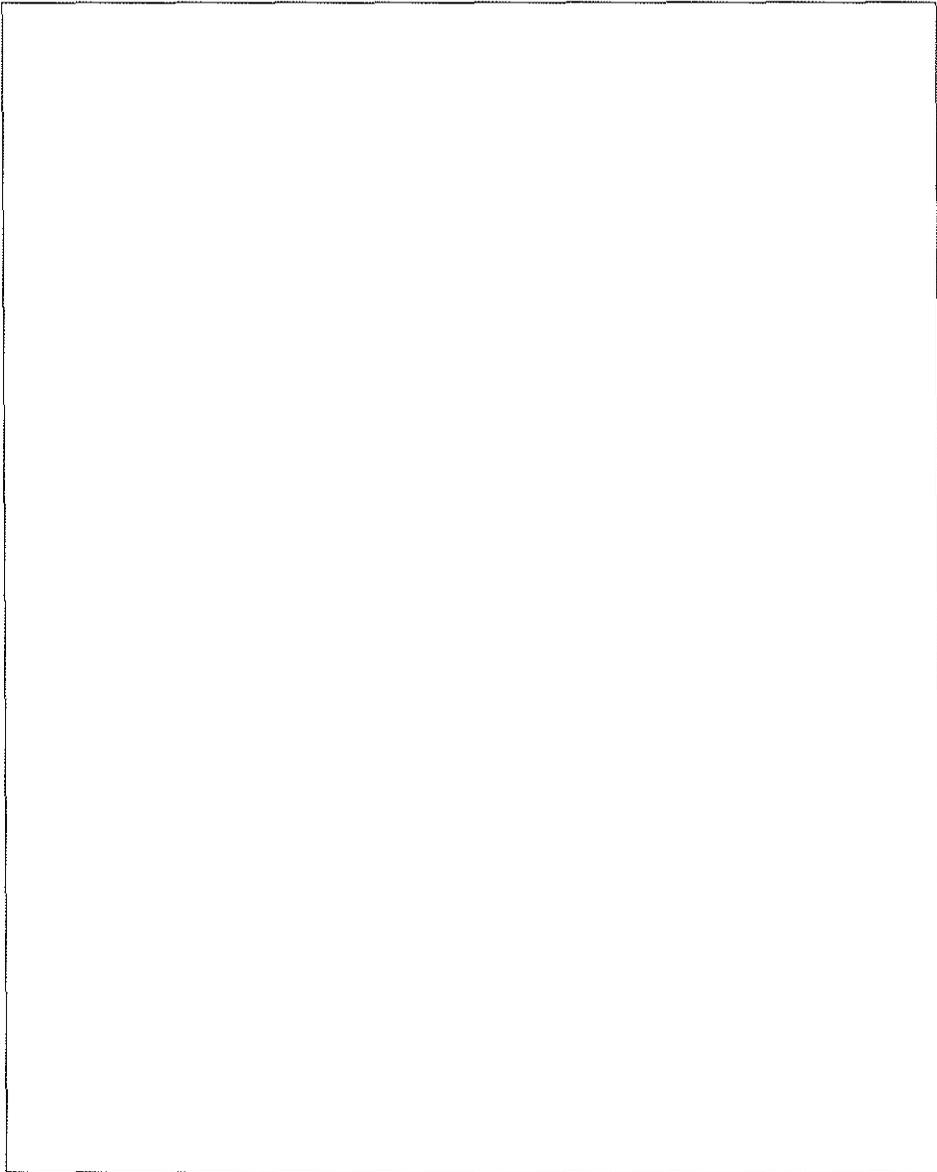
Traffickers have probably shifted their operations out of the Valle del Cauca in response to stepped-up counternarcotics operations there by the Colombian National Police (CNP) and because of a May 1993 pledge by the Cali cartel to cease trafficking in the department for 30 days as a gesture of good faith as they initiated surrender negotiations with Prosecutor General de Greiff. By moving operations from the region most closely connected with the cartel to remote areas, traffickers undoubtedly hope to continue their surrender negotiations—Colombia's legal system offers generous terms to traffickers who surrender and confess their crimes—as well as their illicit operations in regions that would attract less official notice. [redacted]

The shooting of Medellin kingpin Pablo Escobar—the CNP's principal target—in December 1993 freed up counternarcotics resources and provided added impetus for Cali traffickers to reduce the profile of their illicit operations. [redacted] members of the Cali cartel have decided to cease all cocaine processing in the Valle del Cauca, to remove anything related to cocaine processing from their farms, and to relocate operations to the eastern Llanos region or the Magdalena Department in the north. Press reporting has also recorded an increase in trafficking in both eastern Colombia and western Brazil. While the cartel's intention to abandon many of its operations in the Valle del Cauca may be serious, the move out of the department is certainly not complete. Colombian counternarcotics officials seized more than 1 metric ton of cocaine base from an aircraft at a Cali airfield in March 1994, while in May 400 kilograms of cocaine were seized in Cancun, Mexico, on a jet arriving from Cali. [redacted]

Over the course of 1993, Cali traffickers also altered their use of Peruvian airfields. Fewer Colombian-bound flights departed the Huallaga and nearby

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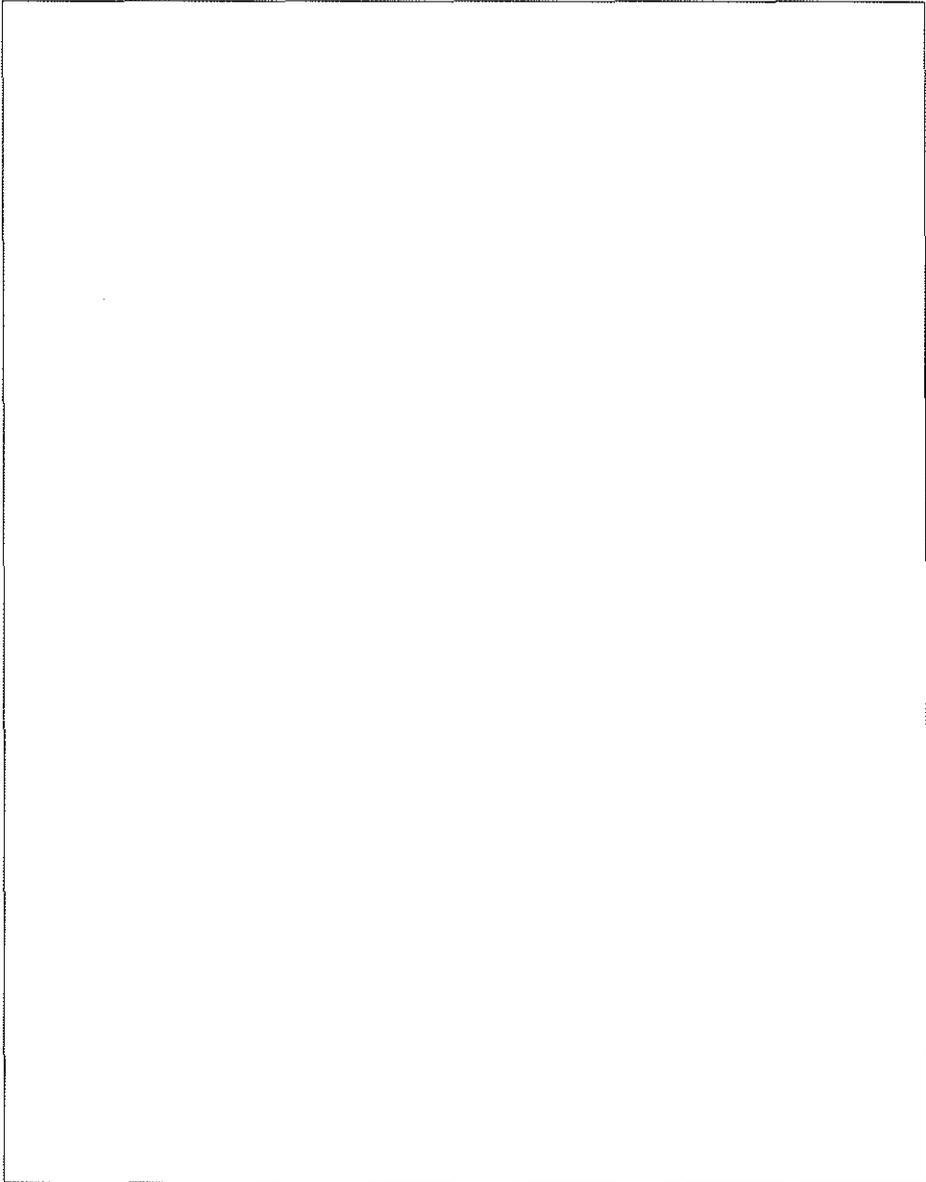
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Aguaytia Valleys, which accounted for about nine-tenths of first-quarter 1993 international trafficking flights whose origin could be determined.

Instead, traffickers increasingly flew from airfields in the Pachitea and Apurimac Valleys in central and southern Peru, and by late 1993 and early 1994 flights were also departing from the Manu area near the Brazilian border. By the end of the first quarter of 1994, less than 30 percent of all of the identified Colombian-bound cocaine base flights departed airfields in the Huallaga and Aguaytia Valleys; the majority of the flights left from southern Peru, particularly the Apurimac Valley and Manu in Madre de Dios Department.

The dispersal away from airfields in the Huallaga and Aguaytia Valleys probably is primarily because of effective counternarcotics operations by the Peruvian Government. In late 1992 Lima started deploying Peruvian Air Force personnel to municipal airports heavily used by traffickers and placing barriers on clandestine airfields. The Air Force has also shown a willingness to strafe trafficker aircraft. The cumulative effect of these operations has been to reduce traffickers' confidence in operating in traditional trafficking areas of Peru, forcing them to move to more remote areas. The spread of a coca-killing fungus in the Huallaga Valley has also contributed to this shift, although the Huallaga remains the most important coca cultivation center despite the disease.



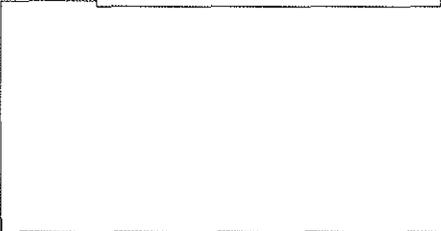
**Changing Nature of Operations in the Transit Zone**

Cali traffickers are also altering their operations in the transit zone by moving cocaine loads via more discreet methods. Traffickers are increasingly turning

from general aviation aircraft to commercial aircraft—including jets as large as Boeing 727s—to move multiton loads of cocaine out of South America, as well as continuing to use a variety of maritime vessels. The use of large, multiengine aircraft was first noted in the late 1980s but did not emerge as a major means of moving cocaine until late 1993.



The use of commercial aviation to move large loads of cocaine poses significant challenges to interdiction forces.



**Conclusions**

The changing nature of the Cali cartel's transshipment operations shows the organization's flexibility in responding to mounting government pressure. Operation Double King that was conducted against trafficker airfields and cocaine laboratories in Colombia's Vichada region in December 1993 and February 1994 and the continuing Jolly Roger operation against North Coast traffickers have succeeded in causing traffickers to shift transshipment routes but probably have had little effect in lowering the overall flow of cocaine.



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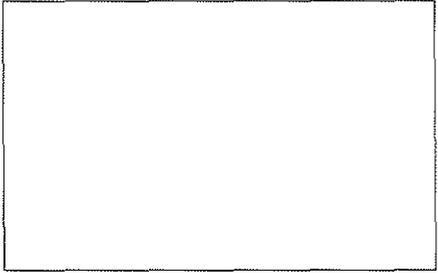


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traffickers recovered quickly from a March 1994 seizure of more than 1 ton of cocaine base at Candilejas in that department and are once more flying to airfields in the Vichada. The permanent suppression of trafficking in any region requires the establishment of permanent bases, not simply periodic police sweeps. However, limited host-nation resources may make a permanent government presence in remote regions problematic. Quick, well-focused strikes that are based on timely human source or other information probably offer the best near-term solution.



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