



## (C) SIGINT's Vital Role in Disrupting Three Cocaine Smuggling Operations

FROM: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED], Deputy Chief, Int'l Narcotics Division (S2F1)  
Run Date: 08/16/2006

(C) In early July 2006, the SANDKEY Community scored another win against illicit narcotics trafficking in the Eastern Pacific with three successive multi-ton cocaine disruptions. Over the course of three days, U.S. maritime counterdrug forces removed almost 12 metric tons (MT) of cocaine with a street value of \$274 million and arrested 20 narcotraffickers.

(C) The [SANDKEY Community](#) is a DoD/Law-Enforcement Agencies effort that collects and reports on illicit trafficking communications that have no reasonable expectation of privacy (unencrypted HF) to provide real-time intelligence on the locations and intentions of ships and crews engaged in multi-ton movements of narcotics.

(U) The Atundiasa

(C) In the first operation, 140 SANDKEY intelligence reports over three weeks led USS Thach on July 5 to Ecuadorian fishing vessel (F/V) Atundiasa 350 NM south of the Galapagos Islands. SANDKEY reporting also alerted law enforcement that the crew had scuttled the vessel before escaping on a small boat. Thach's embarked Coast Guard law enforcement team boarded the abandoned vessel, located and secured the scuttling valve, dewatered the engine room, and removed 282 50-lb bales of cocaine. The crew was subsequently located nearby on another Ecuadorian fishing vessel and arrested.

[REDACTED]

*(U) Atundiasa's crew flee in a small boat*

(U) The Cisne

(C) The second operation began as the first concluded. On July 5, the SANDKEY activity at El Paso Intelligence Center recovered a frequency associated with a mothership taking a littoral route from Colombia to Mexico. FCC-provided HFDF (High Frequency Direction-Finding) guided U.S. air and surface assets to identify callsign Pedro as Colombian F/V Cisne. USS John L Hall located Cisne on 7 July 50 NM south of Guatemala. SANDKEY intelligence reports then detailed the panicked communiqués between Cisne and its Colombian base station and cited the traffickers' intention to set the vessel on fire. Fortunately, USS John L Hall was able to extinguish the fire and the entire consignment of 3.7 MT of cocaine was recovered.

[REDACTED]

*(U) USS John L Hall extinguishes fire on F/V Cisne*

(U) Catching a Go-fast

(C) Finally, and also culminating on 7 July, a Mexican go-fast with an estimated two tons of cocaine was disrupted 400 NM off the west coast of Mexico. The go-fast belonged to the Cabaleiro-Rojas Drug Trafficking Organization, whose maritime activities have been documented for the last two years almost exclusively through SANDKEY intelligence. SANDKEY reporting identified callsign Chupacabra as a loaded go-fast returning to Mexico with a consignment of drugs. Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton was dispatched to the area and its helicopter was first to find the go-fast, employing disabling fire to bring it to a stop. Before the cutter arrived, the crew set the go-fast on fire and jumped into the sea. While the fire could not be extinguished, 18 bales of cocaine floated free from the burning vessel and were retrieved.

[REDACTED]

*(C) Two tons of cocaine burn on go-fast "Chupacabra"*

(U) A Successful Year

(C) The vital role of SANDKEY intelligence as a force multiplier in successful counterdrug operations is repeated time and again. This year to date, SANDKEY reporting has directly led to the loss of over 52 metric tons of cocaine, a figure on pace to meet or exceed record performances in 2004 and 2005.

**"(U//FOUO) SIDtoday articles may not be republished or reposted outside NSANet without the consent of S0121 ([DL sid comms](#))."**

---

DYNAMIC PAGE -- HIGHEST POSSIBLE CLASSIFICATION IS  
TOP SECRET // SI / TK // REL TO USA AUS CAN GBR NZL  
DERIVED FROM: NSA/CSSM 1-52, DATED 08 JAN 2007 DECLASSIFY ON: 20320108