

**THE COLOMBIAN NAVY:
RATIONAL EVOLUTION IN RESPONSE TO REGIONAL DEMANDS.**

“But there is still something to remind us that we are interdependent, that we are involved in a single process, that we are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. Therefore, whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly...”

*Extracts from “The Measure of a Man”
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., 1959.*

Colombia is a privileged country. The diversity of its territory permits all kind of crops to grow with ease; several rivers within the national geography allow Colombians from all the cardinal points to communicate through fluvial highways; shores on two oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific, provide the nation with access to a worldwide spectrum of opportunities. Its immediacy to the Panama Canal, the foremost communication channel between the Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean, positions Colombia as a natural maritime hub port. Ironically, Colombia’s greatest natural resources and location are also the reason for its biggest concerns.

The Andean Region in South America produces the world’s largest amount of coca leaves with a consequential wide range of criminal phenomena associated to drug trafficking and, therefore, constitutes the causal root of a number of threats against the stability of the region. Since most of the production derived from this illegal business is sent to consumer’s markets by maritime means, Colombia configures the perfect scenario to develop the production and transportation of cocaine thanks to its privileged location and the fecundity of its soils. As it can be inferred, drug cartels are considered a matter of national security not only in Colombia, but also in most countries of the region and therefore, military forces are required to cope with such menace to collective interests.

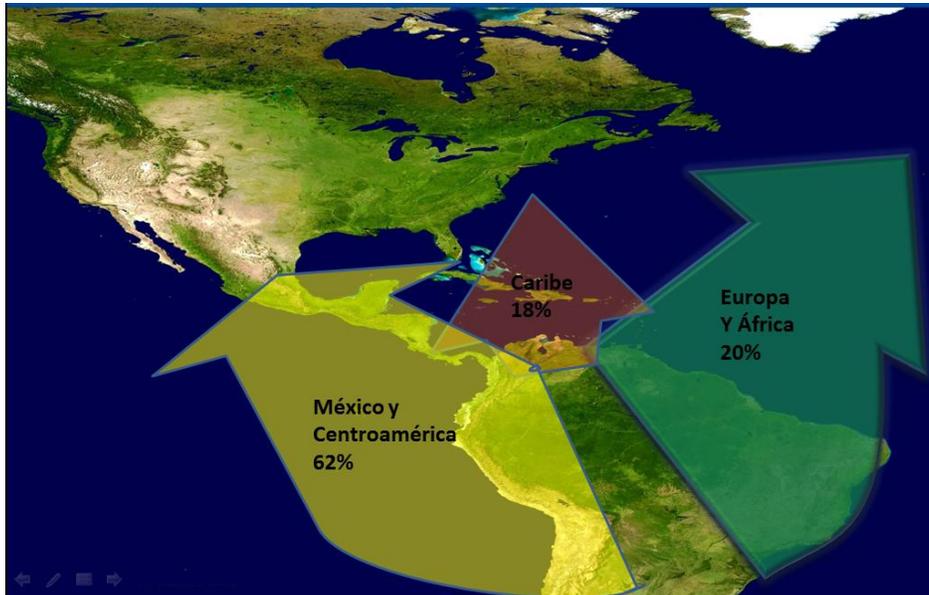


Figure 1. Drug smuggling from South America

Consequently, the Colombian Navy's organization consists of three main components: Naval, Marine Corps, and Coastguard. Each of the former performs under the leadership of the Commander of the Navy in four different but interconnected scenarios: naval, riverine, and ground jurisdictions, and international contexts as part of multinational task forces or individual missions in support of partner nations.

The Colombian Navy's capabilities and organization portray a rational evolution under the circumstances of the aforementioned context. Most of our human and material resources are adaptable to participating in blue-water-navy type of operations such as Atalanta and Ocean Shield supporting EU and NATO naval forces in the Horn of Africa, RIMPAC within a multinational task force in the Pacific Ocean, or in bi-national, on-call task forces with the French, British, U.S., Dutch, and Chilean, among other important navies with interest in the region. But also, the Colombian Navy developed the capability to use the same means against non-conventional threats of a different nature such as drug traffickers both at sea and in domestic rivers, smugglers, poachers, human traffickers, and other manifestations

of crimes within our national borders. Such evolution allows our organization to become efficient in the day-by-day missions –those of much probable occurrence– without losing effectiveness in those strategic, traditional operations of a regular navy.

In that sense, the Colombian Navy conceived a strategy to wage a war against transnational crimes and drug trafficking involving the use of submarines to early detect targets of interests moving from and to the shore, frigates to exert sea control in expanded areas, air assets capable of NVG operations to interdict suspicious vessels, and coastguard patrol boats to board and inspect them. “Naval Net” is the name of the focused and differential plan that allowed the Colombian Navy to seize an historical average of 80 tons of cocaine per year, equivalent to 48% of the total amount captured by Colombia’s security agencies-

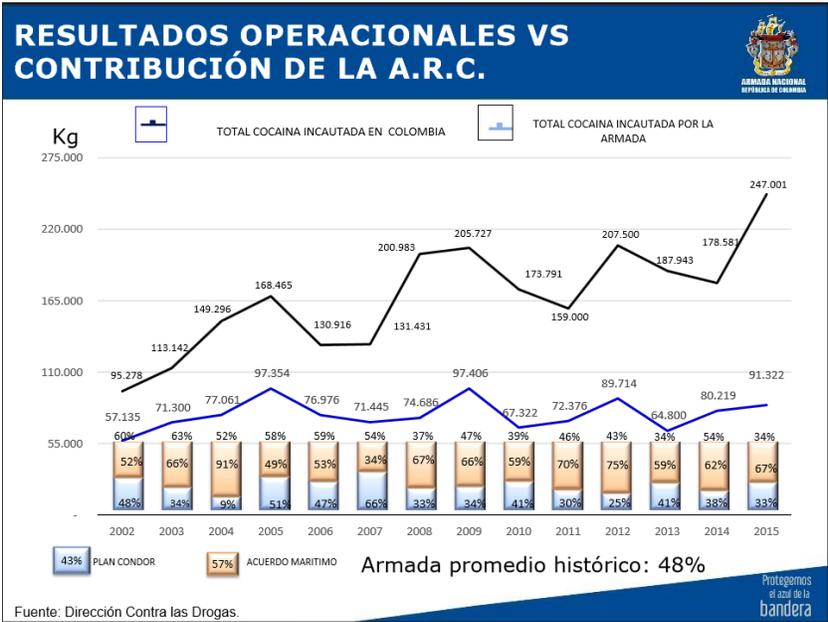


Figure 2. Results of the Colombian Navy in the fight against drug smuggling by sea

In addition to the abovementioned, maritime interdiction operations succeed thanks to the execution of combined and coordinated missions integrating intelligence and

operations phases with other services and agencies so that the sum of different efforts complement each other and reduce gaps at which crimes take form.

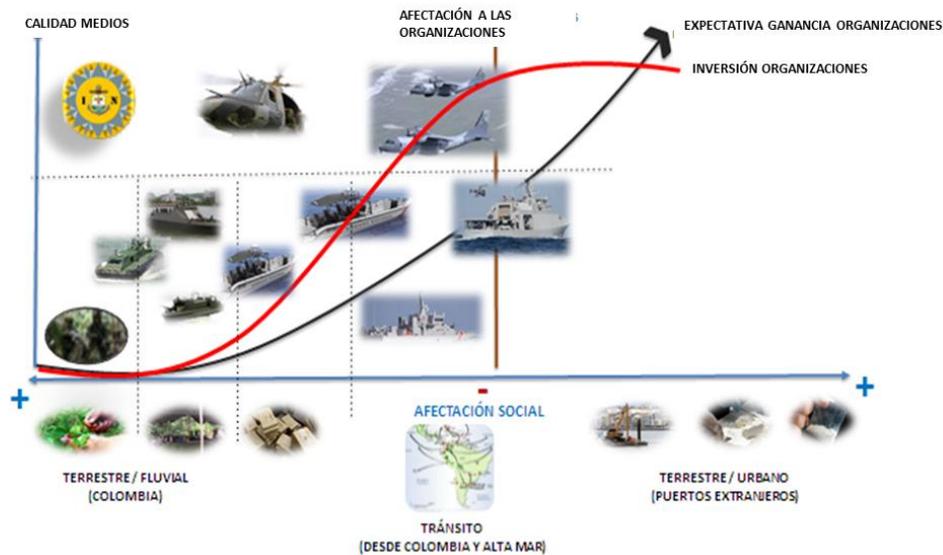


Figure 3. Importance of maritime interdiction vs land interdiction

All these knowledge, experience, and capabilities not only serve the Colombians, but also a number of partner nations the Colombian Navy has cooperation agreements with. It is so, that we established the Coastguard International School, the Marines International School, and the International Counter-Narcotics Maritime Analysis Center (CIMCON) with the purpose of providing training and education to countries in the region facing problems of similar nature as those we have been fighting so long. Moreover, CIMCON is an academic center integrated by delegates from partner nations to produce knowledge from case studies and experiences resulting from counter-narcotics operations at sea, not only in Colombia, but the entire region. In the end, our operational experience among larger navies and as part of multinational operations and our flexible approach to employ human and material assets to fight unconventional and sometimes, domestic threats define our organization as a bilingual navy, capable of speaking the language of traditional naval scenarios, but also able to communicate –and interoperate- with smaller and of limited scope navies and coastguard services such as those present in Central

America and the Antilles, among which we have developed common tactics, techniques, and procedures.

The Colombian Navy thanks all members of WPNS. We consider a privileged to become Observer Member of such important body of multinational cooperation as it portrays a magnificent opportunity to share all those experiences, but also allows us to strengthen the inescapable network of mutuality we are all caught on.