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Wednesday, 28 February, 9 a.m. GMT

INCB ANNUAL REPORT 1995

Background Note No. 4

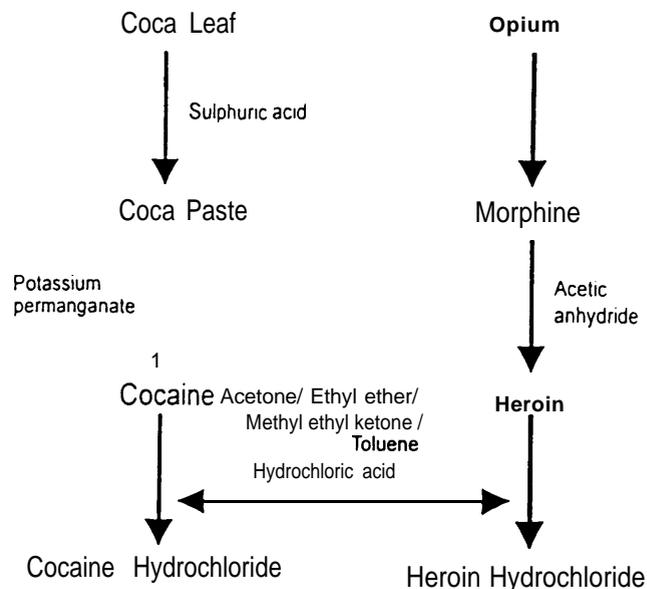
## International Control System Taking Hold: Suspicious Shipments of Chemicals Uncovered

Criminal organizations involved in the clandestine manufacture of cocaine and heroin need certain chemicals for the processing of those drugs. Since those chemicals are common substances, manufactured in many countries, and have many legitimate industrial uses, it is not possible to ban them outright or to implicate those importing them with involvement in the production of illicit drugs.

In an effort to prevent the diversion of these chemicals from legitimate commerce into clandestine drug laboratories throughout the world, an innovative system of controls was devised and has been put in force under the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Under Article 12 of that treaty, its 121\* States parties commit themselves to take measures they deem appropriate to monitor the manufacture, domestic distribution and international movement of a number of Chemicals recognized as being frequently used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances.

while the 22 chemicals listed include substances that are processed into synthetic drugs [see Background Note No. 3], they also include such common items as solvents and acids used in various stages of processing narcotic drugs from botanical materials.

### MANUFACTURE OF COCAINE AND HEROIN



\* as of 31 December 1995.

Among the types of measures which are recommended as possible ways to monitor the domestic movements of the chemicals are the control of **all** persons and enterprises engaged in the manufacture and distribution of the substances in question within a country's territory, licensing of premises in which such businesses are conducted, requiring licensees to obtain permits for such operations, limiting the quantities of the chemicals in question that may be in the possession of those enterprises under normal market conditions. With regard to international movements, countries are asked to set up and maintain systems to facilitate the identification of suspicious transactions. Such systems enlist the close cooperation of manufacturers, importers, exporters, wholesalers and retailers, who are required to inform the competent authorities of suspicious transactions. If there is sufficient evidence that the shipment in question is for use in illicit drug production, the Government must provide for the seizure of the chemical.

In recent years, more and more countries have moved to put these controls into effect, requiring that imports and exports be properly **labelled** and documented. States parties agree to **notify** one another of suspicious international shipments of the chemicals under "watch" either directly or through the INCB secretariat, thus facilitating further investigation.

Thus, it is becoming increasingly difficult for drug criminals to import the large quantities of chemicals they need for their clandestine laboratories. And, the impact of the international controls was particularly evident in 1994 and 1995: Over that two-year period, the amount of acetic anhydride -- a key chemical used for converting morphine to heroin -- seized or stopped in West **and** South-West Asia would have been enough to manufacture up to 100 tonnes of heroin.

## **International Controls, Global Cooperation in 1995**

Despite the complexity of trafficking routes and efforts by drug criminals to falsify shipping documents and conceal the intended use of chemicals, international cooperation in the monitoring of processing chemicals **led** to significant seizures in 1995, with the INCB playing a key role in coordinating action. Some examples:

*Case 1: A acetic anhydride manufactured in China was en route through Hong Kong to United Arab Emirates, where it was to continue through Iran and Afghanistan to a consignee in Pakistan.*

In August 1995, Hong Kong authorities alerted the INCB to the two consignments, together **totalling** about 40 tones of acetic anhydride. Aware that the United Arab Emirates had been used in the past as a point of diversion of precursor chemicals, the Board contacted authorities in that country to ascertain whether the shipments were intended for legitimate use and, if they were to be **re-exported**, to **identify** the transshipment points and **final** destination.

The UAE authorities subsequently informed the Board that the acetic anhydride was to be sent through Iran and Afghanistan to Pakistan. With suspicions raised, the Board contacted the Governments of those countries to find out whether the legal requirements for such imports had been met. The Pakistani authorities confirmed that the consignee was suspected of being involved in heroin manufacture. Since there was no possible licit use for the substance by the consignee, the Board asked the United Arab Emirates to halt the shipment, which it did.

*Case 2: Acetic anhydride was ordered from German and Belgian firms by an*

*importer in Turkmenistan using falsified import authorizations. Its real destination -- possibly a heroin manufacturing operation in Afghanistan -- is now under investigation.*

Heroin-producing operations in the "Golden Crescent" -- Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan -- frequently try to divert the chemicals they need through "importers" in nearby countries where heroin manufacturing would not be so quickly suspected. When a supplier in Germany received an order in early 1995 for 36 tones of acetic anhydride to be shipped to Turkmenistan, the German authorities wanted to **verify** the legitimacy of the order. However, since Turkmenistan was not a party to the 1988 Convention and it was unclear which national authority was in charge of controlling chemicals, the German authorities called on the INCB for assistance. The Board initiated an investigation with the cooperation of Turkmenistan. Meanwhile, the German authorities stopped the shipment in view of indications that it may have been destined for illicit heroin manufacture in Afghanistan. The INCB subsequently determined **that** the import authorization had been falsified.

In June 1995, the Belgian authorities asked the Board to assist them in **verifying** the legitimacy of an order for 17 tones of acetic anhydride from **the** same importing company in Turkmenistan. Once again it was found that the letter of authorization had been falsified and Belgium stopped the shipment. Investigations are continuing in Turkmenistan.

*Case 3: A large quantity of acetic anhydride was seized by Turkey, in packaging indicating that the chemical had originated in Germany and had been shipped to Turkey via the United Arab Emirates and Cyprus.*

Turkish authorities reported to the INCB that between late 1994 and early 1995 it had seized 16 consignments of acetic anhydride, **totalling** 53 tones. The packaging showed the chemical had been exported from Germany to the United Arab Emirates before being smuggled by boat to Turkey by way of Cyprus. German investigations revealed that the exports had been authorized for use in the manufacture of insecticides and antiseptics in the United Arab Emirates. The UAE importer had submitted an "end-use" declaration stating that the substance would not be re-sold or used in the manufacture of drugs. While the company had been shut down in 1993, its name had been used by a drug trafficker to obtain the chemical. The cases remain under investigation by the authorities of **all** the countries concerned.

## **National Enforcement Achievements**

*Colombian police are making major strides in limiting traffic in chemicals used in the manufacture of cocaine.*

In a single operation in Colombia in early 1995, police seized nearly 200 tones of chemicals, mostly solvents, which would have been sufficient to process 14 tones of cocaine, as well as **3,000** tones of sodium carbonate, a non-scheduled but locally regulated substance often used in extracting cocaine from the coca leaf.

In the latter case, Colombian police had targeted the company where the **chemicals** were found **after** national authorities had used import documents to track a shipment of sodium carbonate to Poland. Most chemicals used in illicit cocaine manufacture in Colombia are imported legally and later diverted through normal commercial channels. Therefore, authorities in that country continue to monitor the domestic movements of particular channels.

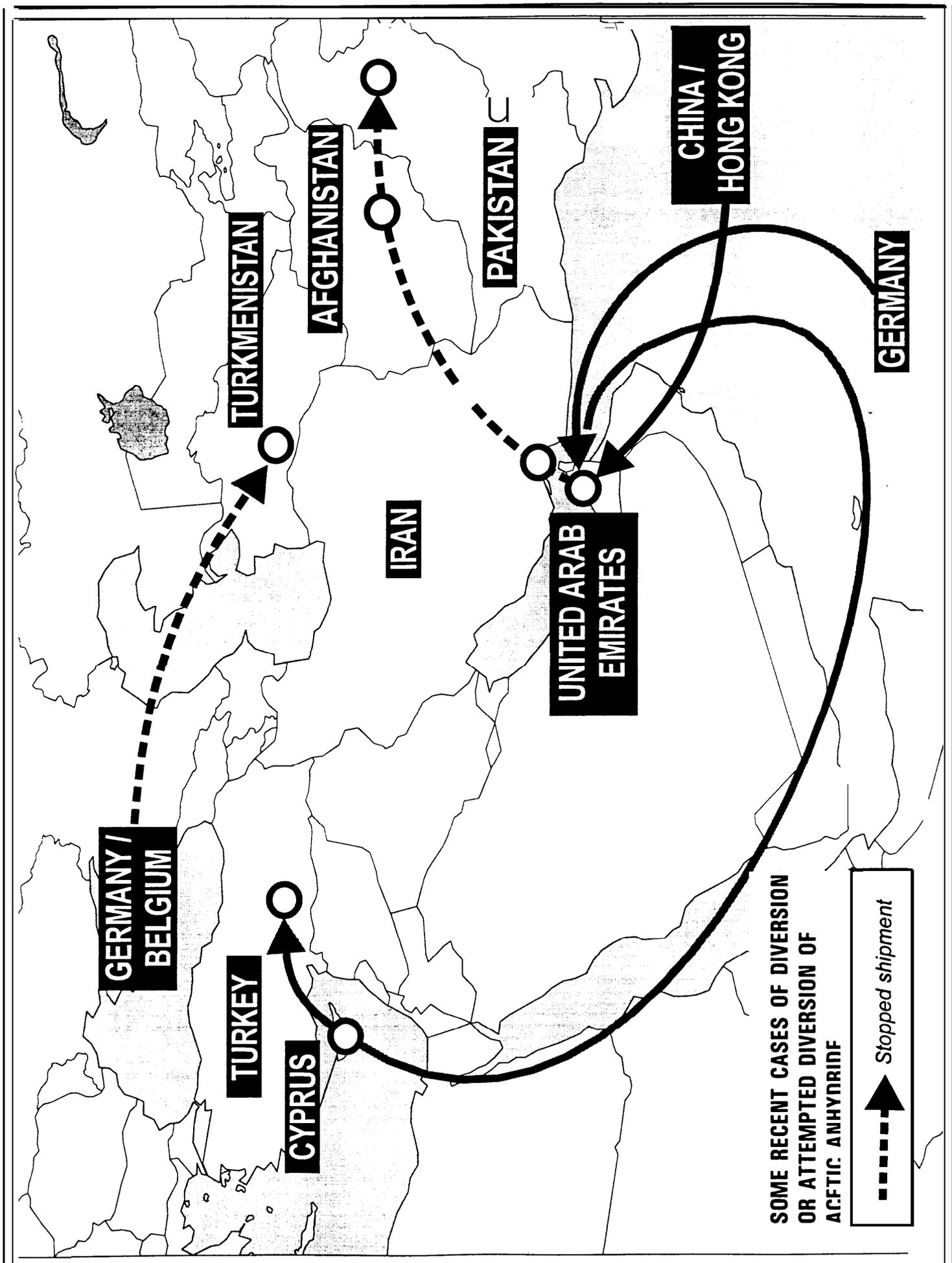
It is also suspected that some chemicals entering Venezuela legitimately are smuggled into Colombia for use in illicit drug laboratories. However, Venezuela's present monitoring system does not allow any definite conclusions to be drawn.

*In Bolivia and Peru, increasing quantities of cocaine-processing chemicals - chiefly hydrochloric acid and sulphuric acid -- are being seized by authorities. This, along with evidence obtained in raids on illicit processing sites, indicates that traffickers have expanded their activities in those countries, in direct*

*competition with their counterparts in Colombia*

The **final** stage of processing cocaine hydrochloride, in addition to the **long-**established coca paste and cocaine base operations, is now being carried out near coca cultivation sites in the two countries although on a smaller scale than in Colombia. Some of the chemicals required are diverted from licit distribution channels within Bolivia and Peru, while others -- originating in Europe or the United States -- arrive from neighboring countries, such as Brazil and Chile, which still lack monitoring systems. Cross-border smuggling of chemicals from neighboring countries also occurs.

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**SOME RECENT CASES OF DIVERSION OR ATTEMPTED DIVERSION OF ACETIC ANHYDRIDE**

**Stopped shipment**