

# South Florida Is Emerging As Center of Drug Traffic

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MIAMI, April 30—Enterprising Frenchmen, South Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cuban refugees are turning southern Florida into the premier American entry point for smuggled heroin and cocaine.

Federal law enforcement officials say the emerging prominence of southern Florida in hard-drug trafficking reflects the increasing use of South America as a stopover and dispersal point for European-refined heroin, the growing popularity of South-American-grown cocaine in the United States and an infusion of new Latin elements in the high-profit, high-risk business.

They also say that stepped-up law enforcement efforts in New York—traditionally the major entry point—have encouraged the expansion of the southern Florida route. Other still-used entryways to the American addict market are Montreal, Mexico and the California coast.

## The Largest Seizure

In January, Federal agents here made the largest heroin seizure in the history of American antismuggling efforts—385 pounds—and arrested two Cubans, five Puerto Ricans and an Argentinian. The Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs is reticent about details, but it does say that the heroin was refined in Europe and brought into Miami on the Latin-American route.

And early in March, Marseilles customs agents discovered a half ton of pure heroin—the largest seizure ever made—in the bilges of a shrimp boat that operated out of Guadeloupe in the Caribbean. Officials said the ship's French captain, Marcel Boucan, had moved heroin in the past from Marseilles to Miami.

To date, Federal agents from the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs and the Bureau of Customs have seized more pounds of hard drugs in

New York than in Miami. But officials say that shipments of heroin and cocaine seized in New York, intended for the metropolitan addict clientele, are often smuggled in through Miami or other points of entry.

In 1971, Customs agents intercepted 539.1 pounds of heroin and 67 pounds of cocaine in New York; in Miami they seized 464.45 pounds of heroin and 35.76 pounds of cocaine. The figures for 1970 were 15.3 pounds of heroin and 0.6 pounds of cocaine in New York, 304.67 pounds of heroin and 170.25 pounds of cocaine in Miami.

Smugglers who use New York confront a stiffer law enforcement effort, and bad

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weather half the year. The attractions of Miami, however, are many.

There are some 280,000 Cuban refugees in southern Florida, most of them in Miami—a city so Latinized that some stores post signs saying "English Spoken Here." In this milieu, it is easy for Latin drug smugglers, Cuban and non-Cuban, to remain relatively inconspicuous.

Cubans have traditionally been involved in cocaine smuggling in Batista's Cuba the rich snorted cocaine, while the poor smoked marijuana; the many rich Cubans who fled Castro's Cuba brought their acquired tastes with them.

"Some Cubans think that the cocaine is like the violation of the tax," commented one Cuban journalist. "But the heroin is a vice."

Yet there are indications, officials say, that some Cubans' moral inhibitions about smuggling. In Batista's Cuba the fading in face of the big money to be made.

Among those who have moved into the trade, well-placed informants say, are certain members of the ill-fated Assault Brigade 2506, which landed at the Bay of Pigs on April 17, 1961.

Trained by the Central Intelligence Agency, defeated on the Cuban beaches, ransomed by the United States Government, a few of the anti-Castro exiles moved into smuggling fellow Cubans out of Cuba in small craft, for a price, until this became too risky.

Like certain Corsicans who served in the French maquis in World War II, some of these Cubans drifted naturally into drug trafficking, putting to profitable use their newly learned guerrilla techniques.

## Corsicans Played Role

"We used to go after a lot of these people as revolutionaries," commented one Customs official. "Now we're following them around on narcotics cases."

But Federal officials say that Cubans are only one of many nationalities involved in mov-

ing heroin and cocaine from Latin America to the Miami area in ships, on scheduled airline flights, in small planes and by individual couriers.

Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs intelligence indicates that in the late nineteen-fifties a number of Corsican heroin traffickers settled in South America and, by the early sixties, had established ties with soldier-of-fortune pilots who had for more than a decade smuggled scarce American consumer goods southwards.

The Corsicans gave the pilots, many of them American World War II fighter and bomber pilots, something to carry northward in their largely empty planes: heroin and cocaine.

Since then, officials say, many others have moved into the Corsicans' business—Brazilians, Argentinians, Colombians, Chileans, Uruguayans, Panamanians, and others.

So far the heroin they deal in appears to come from Europe, but since South America faces the Pacific as well as the Atlantic, it would be an ideal spot to transship Asian heroin as well, officials note worriedly.

The narcotics bureau maintains that a major figure in the South American heroin trade is Auguste Joseph Ricord, a 61-year-old French-born former Gestapo agent, whom it has been trying unsuccessfully to extradite from Paraguay. Ricord was indicted in New York two years ago after the arrest of five alleged associates and the seizure of 97 pounds of heroin.

## Dealer Deported

In February, avoiding the frustration of the Ricord situation, the narcotics bureau and the Bureau of Customs arranged for the summary deportation of Howsep Chambian Caramian, a convicted Argentinian heroin smuggler, from Bolivia in a United States Air Force C-130 transport. Caramian had jumped \$100,000 bail on the day his case went to the jury here.

The removal of Caramian from Bolivia, whose Government reportedly consented to



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**SEIZED IN MIAMI:** Heroin taken in a raid being displayed by Peter Rankin of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. Southern Florida has become a primary American entry point for the smugglers of heroin and cocaine.

the move in exchange for a shipment of American revolvers, has set off a minor debate within the Nixon Administration over permissible tactics in its proclaimed "war" on narcotics.

Caramian, who traveled on a "questionable" Uruguayan passport, used a private Argentine-registered Lockheed Lodestar to fly 156 pounds of heroin into Miami. The contraband was sequestered in a false

panel in the rear section of the plane.

While Caramian's plane landed at Miami International Airport and cleared customs formalities, other airborne smugglers, after making short hops up through South America and across the Caribbean, prefer to land at one of the 60 small airfields that are scattered over southern Florida south of Lake Okeechobee. Many have no control towers or customs procedures and some are not paved.

Customs officials say that one smuggling team used two identical twin-engined planes. One would take off from a customs-free domestic airport and then land at a larger airport as if it had just come in from Latin America. The second plane, coming in off the Caribbean loaded with heroin, would land at the first airport as if it had been off on a domestic jaunt.

Smugglers also use small boats to bring drugs into the many little snug harbors that dot the Florida coast. Customs officials point out that there are 240,000 boats registered in the state.