

Miami, 55 Years as the Capital of Drug Trafficking

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While Donald Trump boasted about the destruction of at least four fishing vessels in the Caribbean Sea by his powerful war fleet and the deaths of all their crews for alleged drug trafficking that, according to him, would poison the American people, the murder of the fishermen was denounced at the United Nations and it was recalled that the United States is home to a drug trafficking worldwide, with a primary emphasis on the major cities of the industrialized West.

This categorization dates back to the 1970s and 1980s, when drug cartels used Miami as a gateway for foreigners smuggling cocaine into the United States.

Today, 55 years later, Miami has not managed to shake off the stigma. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the city remains the leading distribution center for cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines, and fentanyl in Florida. In addition, marijuana, ecstasy, and prescription opioids are trafficked to other parts of the state and the country.

According to the Florida Department of Health, thousands of drug-related deaths have occurred in recent years, although only the 2019 figure was publicly released, with 5,576, with the highest incidence in Miami-Dade County (1,037).

The US press itself has pointed to the complicity of factors. Those in charge of fighting the scourge, pointing the finger primarily at the DEA itself, with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the United States Customs and Border Protection, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and the Miami-Dade Police Department all being guilty.

NOT SO

In the various reports from the entities in charge of fighting drug trafficking, Mexico is singled out as the main culprit and Colombia in second place, as well as, for Trump's convenience, Venezuela, "forgetting" that the main drug

corridor is in the Pacific, with Ecuador as the main source.

The drug traffickers and organizations that are part of the first link within the United States are those with a certain rank and the ability to pay for a load newly arrived from Mexico.

Through them, cocaine and synthetic drugs begin to travel to the different markets across the vast US territory.

"These organizations buy drug shipments in bulk from Mexicans, but it's not that Mexicans don't have the distribution capacity. They're not interested," Jesús Esquivel, author of the book "Los narcos gringos" (2016), explained to BBC Mundo.

The researcher maintains that Latin American cartels know they are less vulnerable to capture or confiscation of their cargo by using local intermediaries "who can easily spread within American society without attracting attention."

Esquivel points out that Mexican organizations don't have an "office in Miami," but rather agents.

Asked about why US security agencies frequently announce the arrests of citizens of Mexico and other countries for carrying controlled substances, the journalist pointed out that there are many more cases involving Americans, but they don't receive media attention.

Drug trafficking researcher Hernando Zuleta points out that one of the reasons US organizations and their leaders are little known is their modus operandi.

"In micro-trafficking, gangs from the United States and various Central American countries have a strong presence, but they don't get a big slice of the pie. So everyone "He wonders who the American leaders are, because there must be some," he told BBC Mundo.

The university professor explains that The "heads of distribution within the United States," as far as we know, have a very different profile from the established image of the Latin American drug trafficker and have managed to export that model. Esquivel adds that this is why they are not ostentatious and opt for a low profile; they cannot attract attention because there is a lot of control, and if one of them is detected, they will suffer seizures and the loss of their money.

Jesus Esquivel points out that, among bulk buyers, there are motorcycle clubs that have branches in many cities and, therefore, are difficult to detect.

"A cartel moves tons of cocaine, but once it enters the United States, thousands of Americans are responsible for distributing those tons into increasingly smaller parts. It's like a spider web, that's why it's so complicated," he points out, and adds:

"The 'invisible' drug traffickers who control drug trafficking are mobsters who don't look like mobsters."

MARQUITO

"Marquito definitely doesn't want us to talk about this. His brother-in-law, Orlando Cicilia, was one of Miami's most prolific cocaine traffickers in the 1980s. He was convicted of moving thousands of kilos of drugs and money laundering, sentenced to 25 years... but only served 12. And here's the worst part: when he was arrested, he was living in the same house as Marco Rubio. The DEA broke down Rubio's door," quotes political influencer Caitlin Speaks.

Furthermore, Speaks revealed that, in 2002, when Cicilia was already free, Rubio—then on the political rise—sent a letter recommending him for a real estate license, without mentioning that he was his brother-in-law. Normally, a serious crime like drug trafficking would have barred him from obtaining a license, but Cicilia obtained it.

The influencer highlighted Rubio's hypocrisy, as he now promotes mass deportations of migrants with drug convictions, the same crime for which his brother-in-law was convicted.

Orlando Cicilia, husband of Bárbara Rubio (Marco's sister), was arrested in 1987 in "Operation Cobra," one of the

largest drug trafficking operations in Florida.

Cicilia was part of an organization led by Mario Tabraue (a drug trafficker known for his collection of exotic animals).

He was sentenced to 25 years for conspiracy to distribute cocaine and marijuana, and for ties to the murder of an informant and bribery of police officers.

The DEA raided the house where he lived with Bárbara Rubio, a property that was seized for links to drug trafficking.

At the time, Marco Rubio lived in the same house. Although his sister was not charged, the scandal left its mark on the family.

When Univision asked him about the issue, spokesperson Alex Burgos called it “a private matter” and accused the outlet of “sensationalist journalism.”

Most controversial is the contrast between Rubio's past and his current rhetoric: as Secretary of State, he promotes mass deportations of migrants with drug convictions, even shorter ones than Cicilia's.

Furthermore, Rubio has stated: “Imposing visa restrictions on drug traffickers, their families, and close associates will not only prevent them from entering the U.S., but will also serve as a deterrent.”

Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff
