



## 1985-1990

During the late 1980s, the international drug trafficking organizations grew more powerful as the cocaine trade dominated the Western Hemisphere. Mafias headquartered in the Colombian cities of Medellin and Cali wielded enormous influence and employed bribery, intimidation, and murder to further their criminal goals. Many U.S. communities were gripped by violence stemming from the drug trade. At first, the most dramatic examples of drug-related violence were experienced in Miami, where cocaine traffickers fought open battles on the city streets. Later, in 1985, the crack epidemic hit the U.S. full force, resulting in escalating violence among rival groups and crack users in many other U.S. cities. By 1989, the crack epidemic was still raging and drug abuse was considered the most important issue facing the nation. DAWN data showed a 28-fold increase in cocaine-related hospital emergency room admissions over a four-year period.

### *The Crack Epidemic*

In the early 1980s, the majority of cocaine being shipped to the U.S. was coming through the Bahamas. Soon there was a huge glut of cocaine powder in these islands, which caused the price to drop by as much as 80 percent. Faced with dropping prices for their illegal product, drug dealers made a shrewd marketing decision to convert the powder to “crack,” a smokeable form of cocaine. It was cheap, simple to produce, ready to use, and highly profitable for dealers to develop. As early as 1981, reports of crack appeared in Los Angeles, San Diego, Houston, and in the Caribbean.

At this time, powder cocaine was available on the street at an average of 55 percent purity for \$100 per gram, and crack was sold at average purity levels of 80-plus percent for the same price.

In some major cities, such as New York, Detroit, and Philadelphia, one dosage unit of crack could be obtained for as little as \$2.50. Never before had any form of cocaine been available at such low prices and at such high purity. More important from a marketing standpoint, it produced an instant high and its users became addicted in a very short time. Eventually, Caribbean immigrants taught young people in Miami how to produce crack, and they in turn went into business in the U.S.

With the influx of traffickers and cocaine, South Florida had become a principal area for the “conversion laboratories” that were used to convert cocaine base into cocaine HCl, the form in which cocaine is sold. The majority of these labs were found in South Florida, but they also appeared in other parts of the country, indicating the expansion of Colombian trafficking. For example, in 1985, four conversion laboratories were seized in

New York State, four in California, two in Virginia, and one each in North Carolina and Arizona. One year later, 23 more conversion labs were seized in the U.S.

The first crack house had been discovered in Miami in 1982. However, this form of cocaine was not fully appreciated as a major threat because it was primarily being consumed by middle class users who were not associated with cocaine addicts. In fact, crack was initially considered a purely Miami phenomenon until it became a serious problem in New York City, where it first appeared in December 1983. In the New York City area, it was estimated that more than three-fourths of the early crack consumers were white professionals or middleclass youngsters from Long Island, suburban New Jersey, or upper-class Westchester County. However, partly because crack sold for as little as \$5 a rock, it ultimately spread to less affluent neighborhoods.

The crack epidemic dramatically increased the numbers of Americans addicted to cocaine. In 1985, the number of people who admitted using cocaine on a routine basis increased from 4.2 million to 5.8 million, according to the Department of Health and Human Service’s National Household Survey. Likewise, cocaine-related hospital emergencies continued to increase nationwide during 1985 and 1986. According to DAWN statistics, in 1985, cocaine-related hospital emergencies rose by 12 percent, from 23,500 to 26,300; and in 1986, they increased 110 percent, from 26,300 to 55,200. Between 1984 and 1987, cocaine incidents increased fourfold.

By this time, the Medellin cartel was at the height of its power and controlled cocaine trafficking from the conversion and packaging process in Colombia, to the transportation of cocaine to the U.S., as well as the first level of wholesale distribution in U.S. communities. While the Medellin cartel had established a foothold in U.S. communities, its rival, the Cali mafia, began to dominate markets in the Northeastern U.S. The Cali mafia was less visible, less violent, and more businesslike than the Medellin cartel. Operating through a system of cells, where members were insulated from one another, the Cali mafia steadily began establishing far-reaching networks that eventually ensured that they would dominate the cocaine trade well into the 1990s.

By early 1986, crack had a stranglehold on the ghettos of New York City and was dominated by traffickers and dealers from the Dominican Republic. Crack distribution and abuse exploded in 1986, and by year-end was available in 28 states and the District of Columbia. According to the 1985-1986 National Narcotics Intelligence Consumers Committee Report, crack was available



Approximately 5,000 pounds of cocaine, valued at \$250 million, were seized in Chicago in July 1987. The cocaine was smuggled in 130 banana boxes. Pictured in front of the seized cocaine are (from left): Chicago ASAC John T. Peoples; Police Superintendent Fred Rice; Attorney General Edwin Meese III; Chicago SAC Philip V. Fisher; and ASAC Garfield Hammonds, Jr.

in Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, Kansas City, Miami, New York City, Newark, San Francisco, Seattle, St. Louis, Dallas, Denver, Minneapolis, and Phoenix.

By 1987, crack was reported to be available in the District of Columbia and all but four states in the Union. Crack was *abundantly* available in at least 19 cities in 13 states: Texas (Dallas), Oklahoma (Tulsa, Oklahoma City), Michigan (Detroit), California (Los Angeles, Riverside, Santa Barbara), Florida (Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Tampa), New York (New York City), Oregon (Portland), Washington (Seattle), Missouri (Kansas City), Minnesota (Minneapolis), Colorado (Denver), Nevada (Las Vegas), and Maryland (Hagerstown, Salisbury). By 1988, crack had replaced heroin as the greatest problem in Detroit, and it was available in Los Angeles in multi-kilo quantities.

Meanwhile, wholesale and retail prices for cocaine had declined, while purity levels for kilogram amounts of the drug had remained at 90 percent or higher. Street-level gram purity rose from 25 percent in 1981, to 55 percent in 1987, to 70 percent in 1988. By the late 1980s, over 10,000 gang members were dealing drugs in some 50 cities from Baltimore to Seattle. The crack trade had created a violent sub-world, and crack-related murders in many large cities were skyrocketing. For example, a 1988 study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that in New York City, crack use was tied to 32% of all homicides and 60% of drug-related homicides. On a daily basis, the evening news reported the violence of drive-by shootings and crack users trying to obtain money for their next hit. Smokeable crack appealed to a new group of users, especially women, because it did not have the stigma associated with needles or heroin, and because it was smoked, many mistakenly equated crack with marijuana.

As a result, a generation of addicted children were born to—and frequently abandoned by—crack-using mothers. By the late 1980s, about one out of every 10 newborns in the U.S. (375,000 per year) had been exposed in the womb to one or more illicit drug.

In October 1986, Attorney General Edwin Meese explained the U.S. anti-crack strategy: “The most effective long-term way to reduce crack trafficking is to reduce the amount of cocaine entering this country. The federal government’s main priorities against cocaine are reducing production in source countries, interdicting shipments entering the U.S., and disrupting major trafficking

rings.” Thus, DEA attacked the major trafficking organizations, primarily the Medellín and Cali cartels, which were producing cocaine and smuggling it into the U.S.

To help accomplish this, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 allocated \$8 million for domestic cocaine enforcement. A portion of this budget was used to establish DEA Crack Teams. Each of these teams consisted of two DEA special agents who assisted state and local law enforcement agencies in the investigation of large-scale violators and interstate trafficking networks. The agents either worked with existing DEA-funded state and local task forces or with local law enforcement agencies that had established their own special crack groups. In addition, DEA Crack Teams were also deployed to states experiencing extensive

crack problems. Examples included Arizona, which was vulnerable to a rapid influx of crack dealers from Los Angeles street groups, and Louisiana, where traffickers from Haiti were dealing to migrant workers in rural areas.

Another significant source of support for the Crack Teams was the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984 that provided for asset forfeiture sharing with state and local law enforcement agencies.

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 later provided \$44 million to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) grant program for urban law enforcement agencies, and \$1.5 million was made available for the establishment of five Crack Task Forces. By the late 1980s, the DEA’s domestic crack cocaine enforcement activities were conducted through three multi-agency initiatives: DEA Crack Teams, Department of Justice’s BJA Crack Task Forces, and State and Local Task Forces. Cocaine investigations dominated DEA enforcement activities, as cocaine arrests accounted for nearly 65 percent of DEA’s total arrests in 1988. Simultaneously, DEA seizures substantially increased. DEA had seized only 200 kilos of cocaine in 1977; but the number of seizures jumped to 60,000 kilos by 1988.

### *Trafficking Via Mexico*

During the latter half of the 1980s, the role of traffickers based in Mexico and the use of Mexican territory increased dramatically. Mexico’s strategic location, midway between source and consumer nations, and an increasingly powerful international drug mafia headquartered in Mexico made it an ideal transit point for South American-produced cocaine. Mexico’s topography offered several seaports along its Pacific and Gulf coasts and countless airstrips scattered across its interior allowed vessel and aircraft refueling to be quickly and easily accomplished. Equally significant was Mexico’s 2,000-mile land border with the U.S., over 95 percent of which had no fences or barricades. Moreover, the remoteness of many border areas made patrolling and surveillance exceedingly difficult. Cocaine traffickers from Colombia expanded their trafficking routes to include Mexico, and increasingly used Mexico as a shipping point.

Meanwhile, the Guadalajara mafia was formed in Mexico with close ties to Colombian mafia, to ship heroin, marijuana, and cocaine to the U.S. Included in these shipments would be smaller



quantities of Mexican black tar or brown powder heroin, piggy-backed on the larger Colombian drug loads. Drug-laden private aircraft from Colombia began using thousands of registered and unregistered airstrips located throughout Mexico to deliver their product. However, the preferred method of smuggling drugs remained the overland routes, and 90 percent of cocaine seizures made by U.S. law enforcement on the southwest border in 1989 were land seizures. Cocaine seizures made by U.S. law enforcement increased from under 2,000 kilograms in 1985 to over 40,000 kilograms in 1989.

**Employee Assistance Program Expanded (1985)**

Recognizing the importance of meeting the unique needs of DEA agents, support personnel, and families, DEA had created an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) in 1978, which was expanded in 1985. By April 1986, the EAP provided each of DEA's field divisions with access to an area clinician and at least one backup clinician, enabling all DEA employees and their families to become eligible to receive professional, confidential assistance in marital/family/parenting and relationship concerns, alcohol and drug abuse, job stress and other emotional/psychological problems, as well as guidance regarding financial and legal concerns. DEA also implemented a program whereby each division had a team of personnel trained to assist employees and their families following traumatic incidents related to the dangerous nature of working in drug law enforcement. This Trauma Team program was originally established in 1978, when Yvonne Conner, the head of the EAP, conducted extensive research to determine the special needs of DEA personnel. This enabled her to design a professional and confidential program that is uniquely responsive to DEA employees and their families.

**Drug-Free Workplace (1986)**

On Sept. 15, 1986, President Reagan issued Executive Order 12564, The Drug-Free Federal Workplace Program. He called on all federal employees to refuse drugs and instructed each federal agency to set up programs to "test for the use of illegal drugs by employees in sensitive positions."

By March 1988, DEA established its own Drug-Free Workplace Program. The Drug Deterrence Staff, along with a state-of-the-art contract laboratory, conducted almost 2,000 drug tests at 51 DEA sites. Over 1,600 of those tests were conducted by the unannounced, random test method using a computer-generated program to select employees for testing.

**National Security Decision Directive 221**

On April 8, 1986, President Reagan proclaimed that drug production and trafficking constituted a threat to the security of the U.S., and extended executive sanction to an active war on drugs with National Security Decision Directive 221.

**The Murder of DEA Special Agent Enrique Camarena**

Perhaps no single event had a more significant impact on DEA than the abduction and murder of Special Agent Enrique Camarena in Mexico in 1985. His murder led to the most comprehensive homicide investigation ever undertaken by DEA, which ultimately uncovered corruption and complicity by numerous Mexican officials.

Known as "Kiki" to his friends, Special Agent Camarena had a reputation for believing that the actions of each and every individual made a difference in the drug war. He was assigned to DEA's Guadalajara Resident Office in Mexico, and was working to identify drug trafficking kingpins when he left his office to meet his wife for lunch on Feb. 7, 1985. A late-model car pulled up beside Camarena and four men grabbed him, threw him into the back of the car, and sped off. Hours later, Alfredo Zavala Avelar, a Mexican Agriculture Department pilot working with anti-drug authorities, was also abducted.

Immediately after Mrs. Camarena reported her husband missing, the DEA Guadalajara Resident Office made every effort to locate him. After determining that Special Agent Camarena's disappearance had no innocent explanation, Resident Agent in Charge James Kuykendall promptly notified his superiors and began attempting to enlist the support of the Mexican police. Meanwhile, special agents assigned to the Guadalajara Resident Office began to query confidential informants and police contacts for information about the whereabouts of Special Agent Camarena. Mexico Country Attache Edward Heath then requested assistance from U.S. Ambassador Gavin, who called the Mexican Attorney General and requested his assistance in resolving the disappearance of the special agent. Next, all DEA domestic SACs and country attaches in Latin America were notified of the agent's disappearance and were requested to query all sources knowledgeable about Mexican trafficking organizations for any intelligence that might lead to his rescue. DEA headquarters then quickly established a special group to coordinate the investigation and 25 special agents were sent to Guadalajara to assist in the search for Special Agent Camarena.

Throughout February 1985, DEA continued its efforts to locate Special Agent Camarena. Witnesses were interviewed and numerous leads were followed. Searches of several residences and ranches in Mexico took place. Based on the information that was developed, DEA requested the Mexican Federal Judicial Police (MFJP) to consider Rafael Caro-Quintero, Miguel Felix-Gallardo, and Ernesto Fonseca-Carrillo as suspects in the kidnapping.



"Kiki" Camarena with Nicole Telles (daughter of RAC Tom Telles, in Hermosillo, Mexico). SA Camarena stayed in the Telles home for security reasons while he helped launch an operation against a Mexican marijuana trafficking organization.



*Administrator Lawn comforts Geneva Camarena, widow of Agent Enrique Camarena.*

All three were notorious narcotics traffickers based in Guadalajara, and were believed to have the resources and motive to commit such an act.

On Feb. 9, 1985, Rafael Caro-Quintero was confronted by MFJP officers at the Guadalajara Airport as he was preparing to leave on a private jet with several of his associates. After an armed stand-off, the Mexican officer in charge, an MFJP Comandante, spoke privately with Caro-Quintero and then allowed him and his associates to depart.

Subsequently, a local farm worker discovered two bodies in a field adjacent to a busy road about one kilometer from a ranch in Michoacan, Mexico. The bodies, which apparently had been dumped there, were identified as those of Special Agent Camarena and Captain Zavala. Soil samples taken from the two bodies by FBI special agents in Mexico proved the bodies had previously been buried elsewhere and then moved. On March 7 and 8, 1985, a U.S. pathologist and forensic team analyzed the discovery site and performed an autopsy. The pathologist's findings made positive identifications and indicated that death in both cases was due to blunt force injuries to the head.

On March 8, 1985, Agent Camarena's body was returned to the U.S. for burial. For the DEA and the American public, the 1985 torture and murder of Agent Camarena marked a turning point in the war on drugs. His violent death brought the American public face-to-face with the vicious brutality of drug trafficking.

### ***Camarena Investigation Leads to Operation Leyenda***

On March 14, 1985, DEA was notified by MFJP officials that they had taken into custody five Jalisco State Police officers who were believed to have participated in the abduction of Special Agent Camarena. However, DEA was neither advised in advance of this operation, nor invited to participate in the subsequent interviews of the suspected Jalisco State Police officers.

Under Mexican police questioning, the Jalisco officers gave statements implicating themselves and others in the abduction of Special Agent Camarena. One suspect died during the interrogation. The statements of the Jalisco officers implicated Caro-Quintero and Fonseca-Carrillo, among others, in planning and ordering the abduction of Special Agent Camarena.

On March 17, 1985, Mexican newspapers reported that 11 individuals had been arrested by the MFJP for the kidnapping of Special Agent Camarena. Arrest orders were also issued for seven international drug traffickers, including Caro-Quintero, on kidnapping and murder charges.

DEA subsequently discovered that Caro-Quintero was in

Costa Rica. On April 4, 1985, the DEA Office in San Jose, in conjunction with the local authorities in Costa Rica, located and apprehended Caro-Quintero and seven of his associates. The Mexican Government then sent MFJP officials to Costa Rica after persuading the Costa Rican Government to expel Caro-Quintero to Mexico on immigration violations. On April 5, 1985, Caro-Quintero and the others arrested with him left Costa Rica for Mexico aboard two jets belonging to the Mexican Government. In Mexico City, Caro-Quintero was interrogated for several days by police officials. Ultimately he gave a statement implicating himself and others in the abduction of Special Agent Camarena.

But Caro-Quintero denied any knowledge of who actually killed Special Agent Camarena or how he died. He also denied any knowledge of the abduction and death of Captain Zavala.

On April 7, 1985, drug trafficker Ernesto Fonseca-Carrillo and several of his bodyguards were arrested by Mexican police officials and military forces in Puerto Vallarta and taken to Mexico City for questioning. Fonseca and his right-hand man, Samuel Ramirez-Razo, gave statements to the MFJP implicating themselves in the abduction of Special Agent Camarena. However, neither individual admitted having any knowledge of Camarena's death or Captain Zavala's abduction.

Although there were some discrepancies in the testimony of Caro-Quintero, Fonseca-Carrillo, and Ramirez-Razo, all claimed that they had nothing to do with the death of the DEA agent and further stated that these crimes were probably the work of another narcotics trafficker, Miguel Angel Felix-Gallardo.

Meanwhile, in April 1985, DEA learned that certain members of the Mexican Government had in their possession a series of audio tapes of Camarena's torture and interrogation. These tapes allegedly had been seized by Mexican military authorities from Fonseca during his arrest in Puerto Vallarta. When DEA confirmed that the voice on the tape was Camarena, the Mexican Government, after great pressure from the U.S. Government, turned over copies of all five tapes.

On April 12, 1985, a team of one DEA and four FBI agents arrived in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, via DEA aircraft. These agents were advised that the house where Special Agent Camarena was alleged to have been taken after his abduction had been located by the MFJP in Guadalajara.

On May 3, 1985, a new DEA investigative team was established to coordinate and investigate the abduction of Camarena and Captain Zavala. This investigation was given the name Operation Leyenda (the Spanish word meaning "lawman"). Through evidence gained from cooperating individuals and relentless investigative pursuit, this team was able to ascertain that five individuals abducted Special Agent Camarena and took him to a house at 881 Lope de Vega in Guadalajara on Feb. 7, 1985. Ultimately, the agents were successful in securing the indictments of several individuals connected to the abduction and murder. The hard work, long hours, and total agency commitment had yielded positive results.

In retrospect, Operation Leyenda was a long and complex investigation, made more difficult by the fact that the crime was committed on foreign soil and involved major drug traffickers and government officials from Mexico. It took several years to develop the facts, to apprehend the perpetrators, and to finally bring them to justice.



### **Red Ribbon Campaign**

The National Red Ribbon Campaign was sparked by the murder of DEA Special Agent Enrique Camarena by drug traffickers. Within weeks of his death in March of 1985, Camarena's Congressman, Duncan Hunter, and high school friend Henry Lozano launched "Camarena Clubs" in Imperial Valley, CA, Camarena's home. Hundreds of club members pledged to lead drug-free lives to honor the sacrifices made by Camarena and others on behalf of all Americans. That spring, two club members presented the "Camarena Club Proclamation" to then-First Lady Nancy Reagan, bringing the program national attention. That summer, parent groups in California, Illinois, and Virginia began to expand the Camarena Club program and promoted the wearing of red ribbons nationwide during one week in late October. In 1988 the National Federation of Parents organized the first National Red Ribbon Week, an eight-day event proclaimed by the U.S. Congress and chaired by President and Mrs. Reagan. The Red Ribbon Campaign also became a symbol of support for the DEA's efforts to reduce demand for drugs through prevention and education programs.

### **Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986**

In 1986, Congress approved a significant bill authorizing \$6 billion over three years for interdiction and enforcement measures, as well as demand reduction education and treatment programs. On the enforcement side, increases in criminal penalties were passed as part of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act. Mandatory prison sentences for large scale marijuana distribution were reinstated and Federal Drug Control scheduling was expanded to include analogues (designer drugs). A federal grant program for state drug enforcement was also created to assist local efforts at thwarting traffickers. On the demand side, federal funds were allocated for prevention and treatment programs, giving these programs a larger share of federal drug control funds than did previous laws. Prevention efforts were expanded under this law with the creation of the White House Conference for a Drug-Free America and the establishment of the Office for Substance

Abuse Prevention (OSAP), aimed at community prevention strategies. In the international arena, the 1986 law established a requirement that foreign assistance be withheld from countries if the President could not certify that they had cooperated fully with the U.S. or taken adequate steps on their own to prevent drug production, drug trafficking, and drug-related money laundering.

### **The Certification Process (1986)**

The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended by the Anti-Drug Abuse Acts of 1986 and 1988, required the President to make yearly determinations and file a report to Congress regarding the progress of drug producing and/or drug transit countries' efforts to eliminate the drug threat.

After the President's certification of a country for fully cooperating in counter-drug efforts, decertification for noncooperation, or decertification with a waiver for vital U.S. national interests, the Congress had 30 days in which to disapprove of the President's certification decisions by a simple majority vote before the decisions took effect. If the President vetoed a disapproval action, Congress could override the veto with a two-thirds vote. Decertification resulted in reduction of foreign aid by 50 percent and U.S. opposition to loans from any international agency, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

For those countries not certified, the Act required that most forms of U.S. foreign assistance, with the exception of counter-narcotics assistance and humanitarian aid, be withheld, and further required the U.S. to vote against bank lending to non-certified countries.

As part of the certification process, the U.S. Department of State, through its Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, presented findings on the drug strategies and policies, as well as current drug trafficking and abuse situations in every country listed as a major drug producing and/or drug-transit country, precursor chemical source country, or money laundering country. This Department of State report, known as the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, provided an



*Agents of DEA's Phoenix Field Division and the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) pose with 700 pounds of cocaine seized in 1987. The seizure, which took place 50 miles south of Phoenix, was the result of a joint DEA, U.S. Customs Service, and Arizona DPS investigation.*

objective basis for the certification determinations and was issued at the same time as the list of certification.

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 also required that every certified country have a treaty in effect with the U.S. addressing drug eradication, interdiction, demand reduction, chemical control, and cooperation with U.S. drug law enforcement agencies. DEA's role in the certification process is limited to providing the Attorney General and other U.S. policy makers with an assessment of the level of cooperation between the DEA and foreign law enforcement counterparts.

### **Operation Snowcap (1987)**

The success of Operation Blast Furnace set the stage for one of the DEA's most extensive and unprecedented enforcement efforts— Operation Snowcap. This initiative was developed by the DEA and the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics Matters (INM) in 1987, and was designed to disrupt the growing, processing, and transportation systems supporting the cocaine industry.

DEA and INM coordinated Operation Snowcap operations in 12 countries including Guatemala, Panama, Costa Rica, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, and Mexico. The Department of Defense and the U.S. Border Patrol also participated in the operation. The majority of Snowcap activity was concentrated in Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador because of the prevalence of coca processing in these nations.

Planning for Operation Snowcap began in September 1986, two months before Operation Blast Furnace was concluded. When the 1987 operation was launched, there was a smooth transition of responsibility for air operations from the U.S. Army to the Government of Bolivia. Six Bell UH-1 Huey helicopters, loaned by the U.S. Army to the INM, and a U.S. Army training team arrived on the same C5-A transport that withdrew the Blast Furnace equipment from Bolivia.

Besides coca suppression operations, the Snowcap strategy included chemical control, vehicular interdiction, and marine law enforcement interdiction operations. The marine law enforcement and vehicular interdiction concepts mirrored successful programs in the U.S. The marine law enforcement operations grew from DEA's close coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard, while

vehicular interdiction originated from DEA's Operation Pipeline, EPIC's national highway interdiction program.

Operation Snowcap depended on agents who volunteered for temporary assignments in foreign countries. These special agents left domestic field divisions for temporary tour of duty assignments to work closely with host country law enforcement counterparts. As envisioned, Operation Snowcap was designed to be a temporary program to assist law enforcement entities in Latin America with training and investigative work.

### **Carlos Lehder Extradition (1987)**

In 1981, Carlos Lehder was indicted on U.S. federal charges in Jacksonville, FL, and a request for his extradition from Colombia was formally presented to that government in 1983. Up until that time, no extradition requests had been honored by the Colombian Government. Lehder, a major cocaine trafficker, had formed his own political party and adopted a platform that was vehemently opposed to extradition. He viewed cocaine as a very powerful weapon that could be used against the U.S. and referred to the substance as an atomic bomb. Lehder also claimed that he was allied with the Colombian guerilla movement, M-19, in an effort to protect Colombian sovereignty.



*Carlos Lehder conceived the idea of transporting loads of cocaine from Colombia to the United States.*

Fanatical in his efforts to prevent extradition, Lehder was instrumental in forcing a political debate on the merits of extradition and publicly faced off against Colombia's Justice Minister, Rodrigo Lara-Bonilla. When Lara-Bonilla was suddenly murdered in 1984, Lehder and the Medellin cartel, who had hidden behind the pseudonym "The Extraditables," were suspected.

Embarrassed and outraged by the terrorist tactics employed by the Medellin organization, the Colombian Government turned Lehder over to DEA and extradited him to the U.S. in February 1987. Lehder was convicted and sentenced to 135 years in federal prison. He subsequently cooperated in the U.S. investigation of Panama dictator Manuel Noriega and received a reduced sentence in return for his testimony. However, the Medellin reign of terror did not end. The Medellin cartel was responsible for the murders of many government officials, including Attorney General Carlos Mauro Hoyos-Jimenez in 1988, and presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galan in 1989.



*Operation Snowcap, 1987.*



*At the 1987 National High School Athletic Coaches Association Convention, Nancy Reagan greets Jacquelyn D. Rice, an assistant in the DEA's Demand Reduction Section, as Administrator Lawn looked on.*

### ***Demand Reduction Section (1987)***

In 1987, the DEA took another step forward in the demand reduction arena by establishing the Demand Reduction Section. "If we are truly the leaders in drug efforts," said DEA Administrator Jack Lawn, "we must also establish a leadership role in drug education efforts... I believe... that our personnel can do more to direct the attitudes of young people than can many other professions because our personnel know the reality of drugs."

Following its establishment, the DEA's Demand Reduction Program provided leadership, coordination, and resources for drug prevention and education. Each of the DEA's domestic field divisions was assigned a demand reduction coordinator whose role was to provide leadership and support to local agencies and organizations as they developed drug education and prevention programs. The program soon evolved from a few drug awareness presentations, to a nationwide effort that worked to change attitudes about drugs in sports, schools, and communities all across the nation.

### ***The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988***

The 1988 Anti-Drug Abuse Act (PL 100-690) increased criminal penalties for offenses related to drug trafficking and created new federal offenses and regulatory drug control requirements. Federal funding for state and local drug enforcement grant programs were also bolstered under this law.

The 1988 Anti-Drug Abuse Act also expanded a change to the certification process established by the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act. The 1986 legislation required all certified countries to sign a treaty with the U.S. that addressed drug eradication, interdiction, demand reduction, chemical control, and cooperation with U.S. drug enforcement agencies. The 1988 act went a step further and

made it unlawful to certify a country's compliance unless it had signed such a treaty.

Another requirement called for the Secretary of the Treasury to initiate negotiations with governments whose banks were known to engage in significant U.S. dollar transactions. This requirement helped to identify money laundering and illicit drug transaction funds.

Perhaps the most significant provision of this legislation was the creation of the Office of National Drug Control Policy and its' director, the "Drug Czar."

### ***The Creation of a Drug Czar (1988)***

The Anti-Drug Abuse and Control Act of 1988 established the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and its director became the nation's "Drug Czar." ONDCP was charged with setting national priorities and implementing a national drug control strategy. The ONDCP director was required to ensure that the national drug control strategy was research-based, contained long-range goals and measurable objectives, and sought to reduce drug abuse, drug trafficking, and their consequences. In 1993, Executive Orders No. 12880, 12992, and eventually 13023 (1996), extended ONDCP as the leading entity for drug control policy. The Executive Orders also created the President's Drug Policy Council. In 1994, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act extended ONDCP's mission to assessing budgets and resources related to the National Drug Control Strategy. It also established specific reporting requirements in the areas of drug use, availability, consequences, and treatment.

### ***Colombian Government Helps Seize Gacha Funds (1989)***

In 1989, a successful international cooperative effort helped to bring down one of the highest ranking members of the Medellin drug cartel, Jose Rodriguez-Gacha, the right-hand man of cocaine kingpin Pablo Escobar. First, the Government of Colombia provided the investigation and enforcement actions that revealed the extent and location of Gacha's drug assets. These efforts also uncovered documents disclosing that some of Gacha's assets were hidden in accounts in Switzerland and elsewhere. Next, DEA and other law enforcement agencies in Europe and Latin America, working closely with the Colombian National Police, froze over \$80 million of Gacha's assets in bank accounts throughout the world. Large amounts of Gacha's financial empire were forfeited and disbursed to the governments of countries aiding in the cooperative effort to bring down Gacha. Over \$1.5 million was allotted to the government of Colombia. This investigation and seizure represented one of the largest financial efforts in the history of DEA and underscored the importance of attacking a cartel's financial holdings as well as its physical assets.

### ***Rescheduling of Marijuana Denied (1989)***

During the late 1980s, as a proposed solution to the enormous drug problem in the U.S., a small, but vocal minority began supporting the wholesale legalization of drugs, particularly marijuana. However, in December 1989, DEA Administrator Jack Lawn overruled the decision of one administrative law judge who had agreed with marijuana advocates that marijuana should be moved from Schedule I to Schedule II of the Controlled Substances Act. This proposed rescheduling of marijuana would have allowed

physicians to prescribe the smoking of marijuana as a legal treatment for some forms of illness.

Administrator Lawn maintained that there was no medicinal benefit to smoking marijuana. While some believed that smoking marijuana alleviated vomiting and nausea experienced by cancer patients undergoing radiation, scientific studies indicated otherwise. These also showed that smoking marijuana did not benefit patients suffering from glaucoma or multiple sclerosis. In addition, it was found that smoking marijuana might further weaken the immune systems of patients undergoing radiation and might speed up, rather than slow down, the loss of eyesight in glaucoma patients.

It was found that pure Delta-9-Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), one of 400 chemicals commonly found in marijuana, had some effect on controlling nausea and vomiting. However, pure THC was already available for use by the medical community in a capsule form called Marinol. For these reasons, and the fact that no valid scientific studies offered proof of any medicinal value of marijuana, Administrator Lawn maintained that marijuana should remain a Schedule I controlled substance.

### ***Operation Polar Cap (1989)***

Operation Polar Cap involved two international organizations that were laundering the proceeds of cocaine sales by using false gold sales and wholesale jewelry businesses as cover. Between 1988 and 1990, these two organizations laundered almost \$1.2 billion in drug proceeds. Operation Polar Cap led to the first conviction of a foreign financial institution, Banco de Occidente/Panama, for violating U.S. money laundering laws. As a result of this operation, over 100 people were arrested, and more than \$105 million in assets, including currency, bank accounts, real estate, jewelry, gold, and vehicles were seized. The money forfeited by the Banco de Occidente/Panama was shared with other governments, including Canada and Switzerland, which each received \$1 million.

### ***Sylmar Seizure (1989)***

On Sept. 29, 1989, the American public was presented with irrefutable evidence of the enormous volume of cocaine coming into the country when the DEA raided a warehouse in Sylmar, California, and seized 21.5 tons of cocaine. Such a huge amount of cocaine was amassed at the Sylmar warehouse because of a conflict between Colombia-based distributors and the Mexico-based group they had hired to transport the drug. The group from Mexico had continued to transport cocaine to the warehouse but refused to release it to the Colombian distributors until they were paid for their transportation services. This was the largest cocaine seizure in U.S. history. Colombian drug traffickers responded to the staggering Sylmar seizure by changing the way they compensated transportation groups from Mexico; they began to pay Mexico-based smuggling organizations up to 50 percent of each cocaine shipment in product rather than in cash. This shift to using cocaine as compensation for transportation services radically changed the role and sphere of influence of Mexico-based trafficking organizations in the U.S. cocaine trade. Criminal groups from Mexico became not only transporters, but also distributors of cocaine.



*New DEA Headquarters, 1989.*

### ***DEA Headquarters Relocated (1989)***

By the late 1980s, the DEA headquarters building at 1405 “Eye” St. in Washington, D.C., was no longer large enough to house the increasing headquarters staff. In fact, many of the 1,500 headquarters employees had already been dispersed to 13 nearby buildings in an effort to accommodate the agency’s continued growth.

The search for a new headquarters location included an evaluation of land in Arkansas and Mississippi, as well as abandoned military bases around the country. However, Attorney General Edwin Meese determined that the DEA headquarters had to be located in close proximity to the Attorney General’s offices. Thus, the location selected for the new headquarters building was on Army-Navy Drive in Arlington, VA. The new facility consisted of two buildings that provided 292,000 square feet of available space.

The relocation of headquarters was the largest non-enforcement related project ever undertaken by DEA or its predecessor agencies. The physical relocation began in May 1988.

### ***Arrest of Noriega (1989)***

On Feb. 4, 1989, Manuel A. Noriega and 15 defendants were indicted by a grand jury in Miami, FL. The structure of the RICO





*General Manuel Antonio Noriega surrendered to U.S. authorities on January 3, 1990.*

indictment alleged that Noriega was a drug facilitator for the Medellín cartel. Noriega had utilized his position as the Commander of the Panamanian Defense Forces and as the ruler of Panama to assist the Medellín cartel in shipping cocaine; procuring precursor chemicals for the manufacture of cocaine; providing a safe haven for cartel members following the assassination of Colombian Minister of Justice Rodrigo Lara-Bonilla on April 30, 1984; and sponsoring the laundering of narco-proceeds in Panamanian banks.

When the U.S. invaded the country of Panama on Dec. 20, 1989, Noriega eluded capture by the U.S. military for the next several weeks. Finally, Noriega surrendered to DEA in Panama and was immediately taken to Miami to answer the indictment. Over the next 21 months, enforcement Group 9 in Miami interviewed hundreds of individuals and reviewed reams of seized papers in the U.S. and Panama. In September 1991, the drug “Trial of the Century” began.

During the next eight months, over 100 prosecution witnesses, including Carlos Lehder, ex-DEA Administrator Bensinger, Mullen, and Lawn, an ex-Panamanian Attorney General, cartel leader Pepe Cabrera, and others testified at the trial. In supporting the prosecution, the DEA had special agents deployed in 15 countries around the world, including Panama, Colombia, Spain, Luxembourg, Germany, France, and Cuba.

Finally, on April 9, 1992, the jury returned a verdict of guilty on eight of the ten counts in the indictment. Noriega, who had become Panama’s political leader in 1988 after President Eric Arturo Delvalle was ousted, was convicted on racketeering and cocaine-trafficking charges for protecting Colombian smugglers who had routed drugs through Panama. On July 9, 1992, Manuel Noriega was sentenced to 40 years in federal prison.

On April 6, 1998, he failed to overturn his drug trafficking conviction and the 40-year prison sentence it drew. Noriega’s appeal contended that the drug cartel had paid \$1.25 million to a witness to testify falsely against him, and that the government must be held

responsible for the alleged bribe. The U.S. Supreme Court, acting without comment, let stand a ruling that said Noriega received a fair trial. The Noriega case was the most notorious drug trial in U.S. history and demonstrated to the American public the global scope of corruption that accompanied international drug smuggling.

### ***Aviation***

During this period, the DEA’s Air Wing program was expanding rapidly. From 1975 to 1985, the number of Air Wing planes had doubled, rising from 30 to 61. After a budget increase from \$1,310,00 in 1980 to \$3,760,000 in 1985, the Aviation Division anticipated purchasing more aircraft and increasing the Air Wing’s staff.

With the rapid growth of the Air Wing, the facility at Addison quickly became inadequate. Operations had been separated among several buildings and security had become a problem because the airport was located right on the street with public access to several ramps. In addition, airplanes were parked in the open and were subject to vandalism. From 1986 to 1988, the DEA’s Air Wing looked for a secure location in Texas in order to be equally accessible for DEA officials located on the East and West Coasts. In addition, Texas was an ideal location based on its proximity to Central and South America, where many Air Wing support operations were performed. The location chosen for the new facility was a 12.3-acre site adjacent to Alliance Airport, north of Fort Worth, TX. The site selected was spacious and accommodated future expansion. The new facility also offered greater security and included a guarded fence.

### ***Training***

Although DEA training had been conducted at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Glynco, GA since 1981, Administrator Lawn wanted the DEA to establish a unique training facility that focused specifically on drug law enforcement.

Because FBI and DEA agents cooperated on many cases and would benefit from a degree of shared training, Administrator Lawn decided that the new training center should be located near the FBI Training Academy in Quantico, VA. Ultimately, he acquired 155 acres of land adjacent to the FBI Academy from U.S. Marine Corps Commandante Alfred M. Gray for the construction of the new training center.

Originally the move was expected to take several months, with new classes not beginning until January 1986, but a special appropriation from Congress was earmarked for agent classes starting in 1985. Consequently, the pace of the move was accelerated and the DEA Office of Training officially moved to Quantico on Oct. 1, 1985.

### **Laboratories**

In 1989, the Western Field Laboratory, under the leadership of Robert Sager, moved to a new location in San Francisco, CA. The new laboratory featured 17,000 square feet of floor space and had benches for 16 chemists, special purpose instrument rooms, and natural light from several windows.

### **Technology**

The first office automation (OA) system for DEA was procured in 1986 for a contract cost of \$36 million. The operating system of this computer network provided DEA employees with E-mail, word processing, spreadsheets and other standard desktop tools. Based on its experience with the OA system, DEA's introduction to and reliance on automation tools to assist in all facets of the agency's day-to-day operations were established. This computerization of the agency produced increased demands for more capabilities through the office automation infrastructure.

### **El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC)**

#### **Dedication (1989)**

To celebrate the opening of a new facility, the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) held a dedication ceremony on Feb. 22, 1989, in Ft. Bliss, TX. The new installation was dedicated in the name of slain DEA SA Enrique Camarena. Heartfelt remarks made by Dora Camarena, his mother, were the highlight of the ceremony.



*Pictured at the EPIC groundbreaking ceremony in September 1987 are, from right to left: William I. Norsworthy, EPIC staff assistant; Larry L. Orion, EPIC SAC; Thomas G. Byrne, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Intelligence; and Fort Bliss staff.*

