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(U) Dominican Trafficking Groups Cement Role as Leaders of Mid-Level Drug Distribution in Northeastern United States

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(U) Executive Summary

(U//DSEN) Dominican trafficking groups dominate the mid-level distribution of cocaine and heroin in major drug markets throughout the Northeast, effectively serving as the critical linchpin between foreign suppliers and domestic street-level dealers in the region. There are also growing signs of their expansion into the wholesale and retail drug sectors. Illegal drugs destined for Dominican trafficking groups in the Northeast primarily arrive in New York City first, where they are distributed locally before being routed to secondary hubs and retail markets across the Northeast and some parts of the mid-Atlantic. Northeast-based Dominican traffickers generally coordinate with suppliers to have heroin and cocaine sent directly into the region from Mexico, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. However, they are also extending operations to other parts of the United States as well as foreign locations to negotiate, acquire, and occasionally transport drug shipments to the Northeast. In some cases, Northeast-based Dominican traffickers remain permanently in these areas as brokers. By diversifying drug supply lines and routes, Dominican traffickers in the Northeast promote self-sufficiency and restrict becoming over-reliant on a specific source, ensuring their permanence in the region.

(U) Details

(U) Structure of Northeast Dominican Trafficking Groups

(U//DSEN) Northeast Dominican drug traffickers^a operate as a loose network of independent groups with intermittent collaboration; they are not part of a larger centralized conglomerate. Northeast Dominican drug trafficking groups function more as entrepreneurial opportunists than structured hierarchical components, ensuring their criminal activities remain compartmentalized. Although not collectively cohesive, each Dominican trafficking group independently maintains its own organized structure with an identified leader and subordinates that have designated roles.

(U//DSEN) A typical Northeast Dominican drug trafficking group is comprised of family members and friends, primarily of Dominican nationality or American citizens of Dominican descent.¹ In many cases, members of a Dominican trafficking group can trace their roots to a common area in the Dominican Republic. By relying on family members, friends, and hometown acquaintances, Dominican traffickers in the Northeast remain insulated from outside threats.² These personal relationships also enable most Dominican trafficking groups to hold subsidiary cells in multiple cities throughout the Northeast.

- DEA reporting indicates a heroin trafficking, and bulk cash smuggling Dominican group based in Lawrence, Massachusetts, was assisted by family members in the Bronx section of New York City.³
- According to DEA reporting, the head of a Dominican drug trafficking group with cells in Rhode Island and Massachusetts brought family members from the Dominican Republic to the United States to assist in the group's criminal activities.⁴

(U//DSEN) Despite being mainly composed of members of Dominican descent, Northeast-based Dominican drug trafficking groups are open to collaborating with different local ethnic crime syndicates such as Puerto Rican, Colombian, and Mexican traffickers.

^a (U) The phrases "Northeast Dominican drug trafficking groups (or) traffickers" and "Dominican trafficking groups (or) traffickers in the Northeast" are used interchangeably in this assessment as a reference to a DTO led by or composed mainly of individuals of Dominican descent operating between Pennsylvania and Maine.

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- DEA reporting indicates a Dominican trafficking group with a family-based network spanning New York City, Philadelphia, Providence, and Boston facilitated the movement of cocaine and drug proceeds throughout the Northeast in collaboration with Puerto Rican traffickers.⁵
- According to DEA reporting, a drug trafficking organization (DTO) composed of Colombians, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans coordinated the purchase and transportation of 200 kilograms of cocaine from Hialeah, Florida, to New York in passenger vehicles with hidden compartments.⁶

(U//DSEN) Dominican traffickers in the Northeast maintain a strong connection with their home country and often travel back and forth (both legally and illegally) to repatriate drug proceeds, arrange future drug shipments, move personnel, or to evade law enforcement. Dominican traffickers in many cases enter the United States illegally through Puerto Rico using false identification.

- According to DEA reporting, a Dominican national born in Bani, Dominican Republic, who entered the United States illegally and lives in Providence, Rhode Island, helps family members distribute heroin locally.⁷
- A Dominican trafficker responsible for distributing large amounts of heroin in Western Massachusetts and linked to numerous overdose deaths fled to the Dominican Republic to escape media attention and law enforcement scrutiny.⁸

(U) Role of Northeast Dominican Trafficking Groups

(U//DSEN) Northeast Dominican drug traffickers primarily function as intermediaries between foreign suppliers and domestic retailers. Northeast Dominican trafficking groups obtain multi-hundred kilogram quantities of cocaine and heroin from wholesalers that they subsequently sell in increments to street dealers and local gangs for retail sale. Dominican traffickers distribute amounts ranging from a few kilograms to multi-gram quantities in the Northeast that primarily come in pre-bagged form ready for street-level distribution.⁹

- DEA reporting indicates that Massachusetts and Connecticut-based gangs are poly-drug in nature and are mainly sourced by Dominican traffickers. There is no current identifiable connections between the gangs and Mexican drug cartels.¹⁰
- Neighborhood gangs in Philadelphia and eastern Pennsylvania dominate their local poly-drug retail distribution market with Dominican trafficking groups serving as their primary source of supply.¹¹
- Dominican traffickers serve as the dominant distributors of cocaine to retailers in New York, receiving most of their supply from Colombian and Mexican wholesalers.¹²

(U) Concentration on Cocaine and White Powder Heroin Trafficking

(U//DSEN) Dominican trafficking groups in the Northeast mainly focus on distributing cocaine and white powder heroin. The vast majority of cocaine distributed by Dominican traffickers in the Northeast is of Colombian origin, while the vast majority of white powder heroin varies in origin between Mexico and Colombia. Although black tar heroin is generally not marketable in the Northeast, there are examples of it being brought into the region, mainly destined for Dominican trafficking groups that are able to convert it to white powder heroin.^{13,14} According to DEA reporting, black tar heroin can be turned into off-white, white, or gray powder if mixed with large amounts of sugars, starches, and other cutting agents.¹⁵ Dominican traffickers are likely incentivized to import black tar heroin into the Northeast since it costs less than Mexican white heroin.

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(U//DSEN) Although Dominican traffickers in the Northeast focus on the distribution of heroin and cocaine, to a lesser extent they also engage in the regional supply of numerous other illegal drugs to include marijuana, methamphetamine, and psychoactive substances. Dominican traffickers are also heavily involved in the distribution of fentanyl and controlled prescription drugs due to the current demand for opioids in the region. Dominican traffickers are generally motivated by profits and are amenable to distributing almost any illegal drug that they can acquire, for which there is a demand, and from which they can financially benefit.

- According to DEA reporting, Dominican traffickers in New York City are attempting to expand their drug business by selling synthetic pills to include Special K (ketamine) and Molly (ecstasy), which are in demand in Northeastern retail markets and produced in Canada.¹⁶
- DEA reporting indicates that a Dominican trafficking network with members in Boston, Providence, and New York City worked with Mexican suppliers to receive crystal methamphetamine from Houston.¹⁷
- A Dominican trafficker in Newark, New Jersey, was identified as the source of supply for fentanyl-laced heroin distributed to street-level dealers in eastern North Carolina that resulted in several overdose deaths in early 2016.¹⁸

(U) Areas of Influence of Northeast Dominican Trafficking Groups

(U) Dominican trafficking groups maintain their strongest influence in areas of the Northeast with a significant Dominican population, generally in cities located along the I-95 highway corridor. Dominican traffickers conceal their drug trafficking activities among established ethnic Dominican communities in various parts of the Northeast. U.S. census data from 2010 on the 10 U.S. communities with the largest Dominican population revealed these areas were also identified in DEA reporting as significant distribution hubs for Dominican drug traffickers. According to the 2010 U.S. census, New York City and, Lawrence, Massachusetts, were the top two areas, respectively, with the largest Dominican populations in the United States.¹⁹ This correlates to a wide body of DEA reporting identifying New York City as the principal hub for Dominican drug distribution in the Northeast, with Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as important secondary hubs.

(U) Figure 1. Top Ten U.S. Communities with the Largest Dominican Population.



Source: DEA

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(U) New York City: Epicenter of Dominican Drug Distribution in the Northeast

(U//DSEN) New York City serves as the nucleus for Dominican drug trafficking activity in the Northeast. The majority of cocaine, heroin, and fentanyl shipments destined for Northeast Dominican traffickers typically arrive first in New York City, where they are broken down into smaller units for local and regional distribution. New York-based Dominican traffickers supply retail markets throughout the Northeast, including Central and Western New York, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Eastern Pennsylvania. In certain instances, illegal drugs sourced by Dominican traffickers in New York City also reach retail markets in the Mid-Atlantic region including Delaware, Maryland, Northern Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, and Washington, D.C.

- DEA reporting indicates that Dominican traffickers distribute cocaine, heroin, and fentanyl in Connecticut and Rhode Island, which they receive from New York City-based Dominican sources.^{20,21}
- DEA reporting further reveals that Dominican traffickers are a major distribution source for heroin, fentanyl, cocaine, and prescription opioids in Boston and Lawrence, Massachusetts, with supplies coming from Dominican sources in New York City.²²

(U//DSEN) Dominican traffickers in New York City supply illegal drugs to both Dominican and non-Dominican distributors in the Northeast. Dominican distributors who operate in cities throughout the Northeast coordinate with Dominican sources in New York City to either travel to New York to purchase their supply or have it delivered. Non-Dominican retailers generally travel to New York City to acquire their supply of illegal drugs from Dominican sources and arrange their own transportation.

- According to DEA reporting Drug dealers in Maine and New Hampshire travel to New York City every week to buy multi-gram amounts of heroin from Dominican sources. These Dominican sources at times will send couriers with heroin to Maine and New Hampshire.^{23,24}
- Street-level dealers in Vermont travel to New York City to acquire retail amounts of heroin and oxycodone from a Dominican supplier to transport back to Vermont.^{25,26}
- DEA reporting indicates African American drug dealers from North Carolina travel from Charlotte to New York City on passenger buses to buy ounce quantities of heroin from Dominican sources for eventual retail distribution in North Carolina.^{27,28}

(U) Figure 2. Retail Drug Markets in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Supplied by Dominican Trafficking Groups based in New York City.



Source: DEA

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(U//DSEN) New York City-based Dominican traffickers supply illegal drugs to cities throughout the Northeast and the Mid-Atlantic region via human couriers on commercial buses, trains, and passenger vans running daily routes. Dominican trafficking groups also use other forms of inter-city transport, such as vehicles with hidden compartments. Dominican traffickers generally use the same transportation methods for moving illegal drugs out of New York City as they do to bring the resulting drug proceeds back into New York.

- According to DEA reporting, Dominican couriers use train services to transport illegal drugs from New York City to Baltimore and to bring drug proceeds back to New York City.²⁹
- DEA reporting indicates that members of a Delaware-based Dominican trafficking group travel to New York City from Wilmington, Delaware, on commercial buses several times a month to buy 2-4 kilograms of heroin from Dominican sources.³⁰
- A Dominican trafficking cell coordinated kilogram-quantity amounts of heroin to be transported from the Bronx section of New York City to Lawrence, Massachusetts, in private livery vans. Members of this group remained in Lawrence until the drugs were sold before returning to the Bronx with bulk cash using the same van service. This group relied on co-opted drivers who knowingly participated in the criminal activity.³¹

(U) Dominican Trafficking in Lawrence, Massachusetts

(U//DSEN) Dominican trafficking groups dominate the distribution of illegal drugs in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and its surrounding areas with wholesale supplies of cocaine, heroin, fentanyl, and controlled prescription drugs largely funneled into the region from Dominican sources in New York City.³² Some Lawrence-based Dominican trafficking groups maintain direct cocaine and heroin supply lines with foreign wholesalers.

- DEA reporting revealed that Dominican traffickers dominate the transportation and distribution of large quantities of heroin, cocaine, and oxycodone pills into and through the Merrimack Valley area of Massachusetts; they also dominate street-level sales, particularly in Lawrence, with drugs that they receive from Dominican sources of supply in New York City.^{33,34}
- According to DEA reporting, Lawrence-based Dominican trafficking groups receive large shipments of heroin for local distribution from suppliers in Mexico and the Dominican Republic.^{35,36}

(U//DSEN) Lawrence-based Dominican traffickers are the primary suppliers of cocaine, heroin, fentanyl, and prescription opioids to retailers in New Hampshire and Maine, taking most of the market share from New York-based Dominican distributors. Mid-level retailers and street dealers from New Hampshire and Maine generally travel to Lawrence to purchase their drug supply from local Dominican traffickers.^{37,38}

- A Lawrence-based Dominican trafficking group responsible for distributing cocaine, heroin, and opioid pills supplied clients in Maine and New Hampshire.³⁹ Dealers from these two states would travel to Lawrence once or twice a week to obtain multi-gram quantities of heroin from Dominican suppliers for \$35 U.S. currency (USC) per gram, which they would then retail for \$50 USC in their home states.^{40,41,42}
- DEA reporting indicates that Lawrence-based Dominican trafficking groups supply heroin, cocaine, fentanyl, and controlled prescription drugs to dealers in the New Hampshire cities of Manchester, Nashua, and Concord, as well as Portland, Maine.^{43,44}

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(U) Dominican Trafficking in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

(U//DSEN) Dominican traffickers control the mid-level distribution of heroin and cocaine in Philadelphia.⁴⁵ Although a majority of the heroin found in Philadelphia originates in Mexico, Mexican suppliers lack a robust distribution infrastructure in the city and therefore rely on Dominican groups for dissemination.⁴⁶ Dominican traffickers, in turn, employ African American gang members in Philadelphia to handle street-level poly-drug distribution.⁴⁷ In general, Dominican traffickers bridge the gap between Philadelphia-based criminal groups and Dominican sources of supply in New York.⁴⁸ However, some Philadelphia-based Dominican trafficking groups have been known to import shipments directly into Philadelphia.

- DEA reporting indicates a Philadelphia-based Dominican trafficking group obtained kilogram and multi-hundred gram quantities of heroin from Dominican sources in New York City for wholesale and retail distribution in local markets.⁴⁹
- According to DEA reporting, crack cocaine distribution in Philadelphia is controlled by Dominican traffickers but sold at the street-level mainly by African American and Puerto Rican dealers. Philadelphia-based Dominican traffickers receive their cocaine supply from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic via couriers aboard commercial flights.⁵⁰
- DEA reporting revealed that a Mexican drug supplier in Chicago coordinated large shipments of heroin from Mexico to multiple U.S. cities to include Philadelphia, where he had multiple Dominican clients.⁵¹

(U//DSEN) The evolution of Philadelphia as a significant hub for Dominican trafficking in the last decade coincides with the growth of its ethnic Dominican community, particularly in the city's northern section. The legal Dominican immigrant population in Pennsylvania grew 270 percent between 2000 and 2010; currently, Dominicans represent the second largest Hispanic group in Philadelphia and the sixth largest Dominican population in the country.⁵² Philadelphia-based Dominican traffickers supply markets in the surrounding areas of eastern Pennsylvania to include Hazleton, Allentown, Reading, and Scranton, as well as Delaware and Maryland.

- According to DEA reporting, members of a Dominican street-level drug distribution group in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, travel to Philadelphia to obtain multi-hundred gram quantities of heroin and cocaine from Dominican sources of supply in Philadelphia.⁵³
- A Philadelphia-based Dominican trafficking group supplied Mexican white heroin to non-Dominican clients in Delaware and Maryland and brought drug proceeds back to Philadelphia.^{54,55}

(U) Flow of Heroin and Cocaine from Foreign Suppliers to Dominican Trafficking Groups in the Northeast

(U//DSEN) Northeast Dominican traffickers are entrepreneurial, indiscriminate, and typically maintain multiple sources of supply depending on price, availability, and opportunity when they establish drug supply lines.⁵⁶ Northeast Dominican traffickers coordinate directly with sources of supply in Mexico, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic to have wholesale quantities of cocaine and heroin shipped directly to the Northeast.

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(U) Figure 3. Flow of Illegal Drugs Destined for Dominican Trafficking Groups in the Northeast United States.

Source: DEA

(U) Supply Lines from Mexico

(U//DSEN) Mexican transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) supply the majority of cocaine and heroin distributed by Dominican trafficking groups in the Northeast. Mexican TCOs rely on Dominican traffickers' commanding presence in the Northeast to manage the mid-level distribution of their drug supply.⁵⁷ In many cases, Dominican traffickers in the Northeast serve as intermediaries between Mexican suppliers abroad and local street dealers.

- Dominican traffickers in eastern drug markets who were previously supplied entirely by Colombian sources have increasingly become supplied by Mexican TCOs, with no indication of Colombian sources attempting to recover or retain their hold of Dominican distribution networks. Mexican TCOs expanded operations in New York, New Jersey, Florida, and the Caribbean—areas traditionally dominated by Colombian sources, by supplying Dominican distributors directly with cocaine and heroin.⁵⁸
- Mexican TCOs have formed alliances with Dominican trafficking groups in the Northeast to distribute Mexican white heroin.⁵⁹

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(U//DSEN) Mexican-sourced shipments destined for Dominican trafficking groups in the Northeast generally enter the United States via the Southwest Border (SWB) and transit through specific corridors. Some of the common transit hubs for drug shipments bound for the Northeast include Southern California, Houston, and Chicago.

(U) Southern California

- (U//DSEN) Sinaloa Cartel members in Tijuana arranged for a female driver to transport kilogram quantities of heroin from Southern California to Paterson, New Jersey, for delivery to locally-based Dominican traffickers.⁶⁰
- (U//DSEN) Members of a Mexican TCO based in Ventura, California, were responsible for shipping multi-kilogram quantities of Mexican white heroin to a Philadelphia-based Dominican group.⁶¹
- (U//DSEN) A Mexican trafficker coordinated the movement of 100 kilograms of “China white”^b heroin per month to New York, the majority of which was purchased by the head of a local Dominican trafficking group. Heroin is transported from Culiacan, Mexico, to Tijuana via private aircraft, then in tractor trailers from Tijuana to Los Angeles and subsequently New York.⁶²
- (U//DSEN) Cocaine and heroin shipments sourced by members of the Sinaloa Cartel in Southern California are sent in bulk quantities via tractor trailer or by express mail to Dominican traffickers in Lawrence and Boston, Massachusetts; Providence, Rhode Island; and New York City.^{63,64}

(U) Chicago, Illinois

- (U//DSEN) Philadelphia-based Dominican trafficking groups responsible for the local distribution of heroin would receive kilogram quantities of Mexican white heroin from Mexican traffickers tied to the Sinaloa Cartel. Shipments of approximately 35-50 kilograms of heroin would be sent to Chicago and stored there in stash sites before being sent to Philadelphia.^{65,66,67}
- (U//DSEN) A Guadalajara-based Mexican TCO shipped kilogram quantities of heroin concealed in a tractor trailer to Dominican traffickers in New York. Shipments would come across the SWB and go directly to Chicago before being routed to New Jersey.⁶⁸

(U//LES) Figure 4. Seizure of 70 kilograms of Heroin in New York City from a Dominican Trafficking Group in May 2015.



Source: DEA

^b (U) Mexican traffickers commonly refer to Mexico-produced white heroin as “China white” even though Mexican white heroin is typically off-white, tan, or beige in color. The term “China white” is also used by Mexican traffickers to distinguish between Mexican black-tar heroin and white heroin.

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- (U//DSEN) A Chicago-based cell of the Mexican TCO, Los Guerreros Unidos, supplied heroin to a Dominican trafficking group in New Jersey, which it received concealed in vehicle batteries and fire extinguishers sent via the SWB from Morelos, Mexico.⁶⁹

(U) Houston, Texas

- (U//DSEN) A Dominican trafficker in Houston obtained cocaine from a Mexican supplier and sent multiple kilograms to criminal relatives in the Northeast inside a vehicle transported by an auto shipping company.⁷⁰
- (U//DSEN) In August 2015, two Dominican couriers were arrested with 5 pounds of cocaine in Little Rock, Arkansas (that they had acquired in Houston). The couriers were transporting the cocaine to New Jersey for delivery to a Dominican group in the Bronx area of New York City.⁷¹
- (U//DSEN) In July 2015, Dominican traffickers in New York were looking to contract a transporter to move cocaine from Houston to New York City.⁷²

(U) Mexican TCO Representatives in the Northeast

(U//DSEN) Mexican TCOs typically send a representative to the Northeast to collaborate with Dominican trafficking groups in overseeing inbound drug shipments and collect and repatriate ensuing drug proceeds. In many cases, Dominican traffickers assist Mexican TCO members in sending drug proceeds to the West Coast for repatriation to Mexico. Dominican traffickers, working in concert with Mexican TCOs, arrange for drug payments to be shipped out of the Northeast via the same methods used to transport illegal drugs into the Northeast, such as passenger vehicles with hidden compartments, tractor trailers, express and freight mail services, and commercial flights.⁷³

- (U//DSEN) DEA reporting indicates that Mexican TCOs send representatives to Philadelphia to collect drug payments from local Dominican distributors, and drive to Mexico with the bulk cash in vehicles with secret compartments.⁷⁴ Dominican traffickers also reportedly drop off bulk cash to an independent money laundering organization in Rhode Island for eventual repatriation to a TCO in Mexico.⁷⁵
- (U) In May 2015, two leaders of a Dominican trafficking group, based out of the Bronx area of New York City, and with distribution cells in five surrounding states, were arrested in connection to the seizure of 70 kilograms of heroin and \$2 million USC in a DEA-led investigation. This group received monthly shipments of heroin from Sinaloa, Mexico, supplied by a Mexican TCO that would send its members to New York to oversee the delivery of the shipments.⁷⁶
- (U//DSEN) In May 2016, U.S. law enforcement officers arrested several members of a Dominican trafficking group in Philadelphia who were responsible for receiving shipments of Mexican white heroin from a Mexican supplier in Ventura, California. A representative of this Mexican supplier would travel to Philadelphia to arrange the repatriation of drug payments to California hidden within motor engine parts using a freight service, with the assistance of the head of this Dominican trafficking group.⁷⁷

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(U) Supply Lines from Colombia

(U//DSEN) Northeast Dominican trafficking groups maintain an active partnership with Colombian suppliers, both domestic and foreign, to obtain cocaine and South American heroin. Colombian suppliers no longer control a robust distribution infrastructure in the Northeast and generally rely on intermediaries such as Dominican trafficking groups to purchase and disseminate their supply. In some cases, East Coast-based Colombian traffickers work jointly with Dominican trafficking groups.

- Dominican drug trafficking groups in New York and New Jersey buy wholesale amounts of heroin and cocaine from Colombian sources, which they then sell to Puerto Rican and African American dealers for retail distribution.⁷⁸
- A drug trafficking organization composed of Colombians, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans coordinated the purchase and transport of 200 kilograms of cocaine from Hialeah, Florida, to New York in passenger vehicles with hidden compartments.⁷⁹

(U//DSEN) Drug shipments sourced by Colombian TCOs and destined for Dominican traffickers in the Northeast generally consist of multi-hundred kilograms of cocaine and multiple kilograms of heroin and, primarily transit through the Caribbean and South Florida. In some instances, small drug shipments reach the Northeast directly from Colombia, mainly via couriers on commercial flights.

- Colombian TCOs send cocaine shipments to the Dominican Republic where the drugs are smuggled into Haiti and then sent via maritime shipment to Miami. Once in Miami, shipments are typically driven in passenger cars to New York.⁸⁰
- DEA reporting indicates a Colombian trafficker was importing kilogram quantities of Colombian heroin into Massachusetts from the Dominican Republic via a local shipping company that employed several Dominican workers. The Dominican workers received a portion of the heroin shipments for local distribution.⁸¹
- According to DEA reporting, the majority of the heroin available in New Jersey originates in Colombia and is primarily smuggled into the United States by Colombian and Dominican groups via human couriers on commercial flights to the Newark International Airport.⁸²

(U) Supply Lines from the Dominican Republic

(U//DSEN) Dominican traffickers in the Northeast also maintain active supply lines for cocaine and (mainly Colombian) heroin with their counterparts in the Dominican Republic. Dominican traffickers based in the Dominican Republic collaborate with Colombian sources to import ton-sized quantities of cocaine and multi-kilogram quantities of heroin into the Dominican Republic on a monthly basis. Dominican nationals take ownership of the majority of these drug shipments when they arrive in the Dominican Republic and subsequently coordinate with family and friends in the Northeast to send smaller increments of these shipments to the United States. According to DEA reporting, Dominican Republic-based TCOs typically route shipments of multi-hundred kilogram to ton quantities of cocaine from northern Colombia to the Dominican Republic, through Venezuela and the Margarita Islands.^{83,84,85,86}

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(U//DSEN) Dominican Republic-based TCOs generally route larger drug shipments destined for the Northeast through the Bahamas and/or South Florida by using a variety of maritime conveyance methods, to include speedboats, fishing vessels, sailboats, yachts, and containerized sea cargo. In some cases, Dominican Republic-based traffickers will also transport cocaine into Haiti for subsequent shipment to the United States via the Bahamas and/or South Florida corridor using maritime and air transport. From South Florida, cocaine shipments are typically driven in passenger vehicles up to New York.^{87,88}

- DEA reporting indicates a Dominican trafficker used personal sail boats in Florida to transport kilogram quantities of heroin from the Dominican Republic into the United States through Miami for delivery in the Northeast.⁸⁹ In November 2015, Dominican authorities seized 52 kilograms of cocaine and 2 kilograms of heroin hidden in two suitcases on a vessel travelling from the Dominican Republic to West Palm Beach, Florida.⁹⁰
- Dominican traffickers employ a scheme whereby they send a fishing boat from the Dominican Republic to Miami without drugs. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers search the vessel and after finding no contraband, issue a permit to the captain to fish for several weeks in the Bahamas. Dominican traffickers, believing that once CBP registers a vessel it is rarely searched again, then arrange for the vessel to return to the Dominican Republic to be loaded with cocaine and sent back to the Bahamas where the cocaine is offloaded onto speedboats and transported into South Florida and ultimately sent to New York.^{91,92}
- In May 2016, U.S. law enforcement officers seized 364 kilograms of cocaine from couriers in Punta Gorda, Florida. The cocaine had arrived a month earlier in a shipping container at the Miami-Dade port from the Dominican Republic.⁹³
- As of February 2016, a Dominican Republic-based TCO planned to move a multi-hundred kilogram cocaine shipment from the Dominican Republic to Haiti in a vehicle, then use a small aircraft to transport it to the Bahamas, where it would ultimately be shipped to South Florida aboard a maritime vessel.⁹⁴
- DEA reporting indicates a Dominican drug trafficking group based in New York with cells in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Providence, Rhode Island, smuggled cocaine and heroin into the Northeast using human couriers transporting small amounts at a time in carry-on bags on Haitian airlines.⁹⁵

(U//DSEN) Due to Puerto Rico's proximity and status as a U.S. territory,^c Dominican Republic-based traffickers commonly direct drug shipments to Puerto Rico, where they are partitioned into small units and sent directly to the Northeast, mainly through the U.S. postal system, parcel mail service, and couriers on commercial flights.⁹⁶ Apart from Puerto Rican citizens, Dominican nationals represent the primary wholesale and retail distributors of cocaine in Puerto Rico.⁹⁷

- Dominican traffickers work with Puerto Rican traffickers to ship cocaine and heroin to New York City by mail using post offices in Puerto Rico.⁹⁸
- Dominican TCOs operating in Puerto Rico use next day mail services to send kilogram quantities of cocaine to various addresses in New York City, as well as couriers on commercial flights to transport cocaine-laden suitcases to various destinations in the Northeast.⁹⁹

^c (U) Legal residents of Puerto Rico do not require a passport or visa to travel into the United States.

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- Dominican drug trafficking groups recruit couriers from Puerto Rico to transport cocaine concealed on their person and luggage on commercial flights to New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia for \$2,000 USC per flight.^{100,101}

(U) Complex Multinational Supply Lines

(U//DSEN) Dominican Republic- and U.S.-based Dominican traffickers are also experienced in coordinating sophisticated international drug shipments destined for Northeast markets using multiple countries, routes, and conveyance methods, without a need for a command-and-control presence in the shipment's origination or destination points.

- According to DEA reporting, a Dominican trafficker who previously resided in Mexico, and currently operates in the Dominican Republic, coordinates with Mexican sources to lead an international criminal enterprise responsible for supplying large quantities of Mexican white heroin from Mexico to Philadelphia.¹⁰²
- DEA reporting revealed that a New York-based Dominican drug trafficking group collaborated with Peruvian associates in New York and Peru to coordinate the transport of a multi-hundred kilogram cocaine shipment from the Port of Callao, Peru, to the Dominican Republic for ultimate shipment to New York.¹⁰³
- DEA reporting indicated that a Dominican trafficking group operating between the Dominican Republic and northern New Jersey coordinated cocaine shipments from Colombia to the United States through Ecuador. The cocaine was hidden within legitimate maritime containerized cargo arriving at various seaports in the Northeast. In April 2015, this group sourced a 473 kilogram cocaine shipment concealed inside plantains that was seized at the Port of Guayaquil, Ecuador. In August 2015, a 150 kilogram cocaine shipment hidden in plantains coming from Guayaquil to the Port of Philadelphia was seized by U.S. law enforcement in Reading, Pennsylvania. This shipment was reportedly destined for a network of Dominican traffickers in Philadelphia, New York City, and northern New Jersey.¹⁰⁴

(U) Northeast Dominican Drug Traffickers Extend Beyond Defined Areas of Influence

(U//DSEN) Dominican traffickers in the Northeast continually to explore new avenues to acquire shipments, and are not geographically confined to their areas of influence. Dominican traffickers are extending to various parts of the United States and other countries to negotiate, acquire, and transport illegal drug shipments to the Northeast. In some cases, Northeast-based Dominican traffickers send representatives to foreign destinations such as Mexico to oversee the coordination of a drug shipment or serve as a guarantor for its successful delivery.

- According to DEA reporting, Dominican traffickers travel from New York City to Houston to purchase 15 to 20 kilograms of cocaine, once or twice per month, from a Mexican source linked to the Sinaloa Cartel. The Dominicans transport the drugs back in passenger vehicles with hidden compartments.¹⁰⁵
- DEA reporting indicates that members of a Northeast Dominican trafficking group traveled to Nuevo Laredo, Mexico to meet with members of Los Zetas to negotiate the purchase of multi-kilogram amounts of heroin and cocaine for delivery to New York City.¹⁰⁶

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- Dominican traffickers often travel to South America to buy cocaine directly from Colombian sources and coordinate their own transportation back to the Dominican Republic.¹⁰⁷ DEA reporting indicates one Dominican trafficker who wanted to transport 100 kilograms of cocaine and 4 kilograms of heroin from Colombia to the New York/New Jersey area, traveled to Bogota to negotiate and coordinate his transaction.¹⁰⁸
- DEA reporting revealed that the nephew of the leader of a New York-based Dominican drug trafficking group relocated to Sinaloa, Mexico, to serve as a guarantor for Mexico-based heroin suppliers.¹⁰⁹

(U) Dominican Traffickers Expand Role as Wholesale Suppliers for the Northeast

(U//DSEN) In some instances, foreign and domestic Dominican drug traffickers have evolved to become sources of supply for Dominican trafficking groups and local customers in the Northeast. This trend has been noted in many regions but is most apparent in Houston, drug transit hub commonly frequented by Dominican trafficking groups from the Northeast.

- DEA reporting revealed that Dominican trafficking groups in Houston serve as a source of cocaine supply for Dominican traffickers from New York as well as locally-based traffickers in Houston.^{110,111}
- A Massachusetts-based cocaine distributor was supplied by a family-based Dominican trafficking group in Houston, Texas, with connections to Mexican sources.¹¹²
- A Dominican trafficking group based in Culiacan, Sinaloa, Mexico, was responsible for coordinating large shipments of cocaine to the United States and Europe by working with the Sinaloa Cartel and independent Colombian traffickers.¹¹³
- DEA reporting indicates that a Dominican trafficker responsible for supplying heroin to U.S. markets resided in Michoacán, Mexico, and was associated with Los Caballeros Templarios.¹¹⁴

(U) Dominican Traffickers Expand into Retail Drug Sector in the Northeast

(U//DSEN) Dominican traffickers also engage in street-level drug sales in certain parts of the Northeast region, and are increasingly showing signs of expansion. Dominican retailers operating in the Northeast region are mainly sourced by Dominican trafficking groups in New York City, Philadelphia, and Lawrence. Northeast Dominican traffickers maintain an established role as middle-men for retail distributors in the region. However, Dominican groups are not dependent on third-party retailers to move their supply, as Dominican traffickers throughout the Northeast have the infrastructure to handle all facets of product distribution to include the wholesale, mid-level, and retail sectors. By diluting cocaine and heroin for street sales, Northeast Dominican traffickers are able to expand their inventory and increase profits.

- Dominican trafficking groups responsible for the retail distribution of cocaine and heroin in Hazleton send couriers to Philadelphia and New York City once a month to replenish their supply with locally based Dominican sources.^{115,116}
- According to DEA reporting, Dominican drug traffickers dominate the street level distribution of heroin, cocaine, and opioid pills in the Merrimack Valley area of Massachusetts.¹¹⁷
- DEA reporting indicates that a Philadelphia-based Dominican trafficker obtained hundred gram-sized quantities of heroin from Dominican sources in New York to convert into bundles for street sales.¹¹⁸

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- DEA reporting revealed that a Dominican trafficking group distributed 300-400 grams of heroin at a time in Boston and Providence, which they cut with diluents.¹¹⁹

(U) Northeast Dominican Traffickers and Money Laundering

(U//DSEN) Northeast Dominican traffickers generally send the majority of their drug proceeds to the Dominican Republic to invest in real estate and local businesses.¹²⁰ The drug proceeds are generally laundered through front and shell companies within the Dominican Republic before being integrated into the local economy. Some of the younger generations of these Dominican networks, to include American-born members, retain most of their illicit earnings in the United States to enjoy a comfortable lifestyle and/or invest in local businesses.¹²¹ Some common types of businesses that Dominican traffickers open in the Northeast to serve as fronts for money laundering are pizza parlors, beauty salons, tire shops, and bodegas (grocery stores).^{122,123} In many cases, Dominican traffickers will also use these businesses as bulk cash repositories to consolidate drug proceeds before they are laundered, with the bulk cash typically stored in false walls and hidden floor compartments.¹²⁴

- According to DEA reporting, the head of one Dominican trafficking group with cells in New York City and Boston sent most of his drug proceeds to the Dominican Republic to buy real estate.¹²⁵
- DEA reporting revealed that a Dominican trafficking group in the Dominican Republic used drug proceeds to buy bath tiles and fixtures, through a cover business, for exportation to Venezuela. Resulting proceeds would then be deposited in a bank account in the Dominican Republic as legitimate sales.¹²⁶

(U//DSEN) Northeast based Dominican traffickers primarily send drug proceeds to the Dominican Republic in the form of bulk cash using various methods, such as legitimate cargo shipments and human couriers on commercial air flights.¹²⁷ Dominican traffickers generally use the same couriers who deliver drugs into the Northeast to transport drug proceeds back to the Dominican Republic on return flights, often transiting through Puerto Rico. Dominican traffickers also rely on corrupt personnel at the various airlines and airports to facilitate the flow of bulk cash to the Dominican Republic.

- DEA reporting revealed that a Lawrence-based Dominican trafficking group shipped bulk cash in appliances to the Dominican Republic, while a New York-based Dominican group sent bulk cash to the Dominican Republic in exported vehicles.^{128,129}
- Dominican traffickers arrange couriers to transport cocaine in suitcases on flights from Puerto Rico to Philadelphia and New York, and to deliver bulk cash drug proceeds to Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic on return flights.^{130,131}
- Drug proceeds generated by Dominican traffickers in New York are often transported as bulk cash in luggage and carry-on bags on flights to the Dominican Republic, at times with the assistance of flight crews, pilots, and airline employees.^{132,133}

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(U//DSEN) Northeast-based Dominican traffickers also use wire transfers, money remittance services, and businesses with check cashing capabilities, to move drug proceeds to the Dominican Republic.^d Bodegas are a type of business, exclusive to Dominican traffickers in the Northeast that are used to transfer funds informally to the Dominican Republic. In some cases, Dominican-owned bodegas have a wire remittance service where funds can be transferred through a legitimate automated platform. However in many cases, bodegas use an informal system to transfer funds to the Dominican Republic, with no actual wire taking place. For example, a trafficker will drop off drug proceeds at a bodega, with its equivalent value in cash (minus commission) paid within hours or days later to a representative of the trafficker in the Dominican Republic.

- Dominican traffickers in Lawrence typically deposit drug proceeds in small increments into various banks then wire the funds to the Dominican Republic, while drug proceeds generated in Philadelphia are often sent via remittance service to the Dominican Republic, taking up to a week to arrive.^{134,135}
- DEA reporting indicates that New York-based Dominican trafficking groups set up front businesses in New York City, Miami, and the Dominican Republic to launder drug proceeds through check cashing businesses.¹³⁶ Dominican traffickers in New York and Miami also use bodegas and “casas de cambio” (money exchange houses) to send drug proceeds to the Dominican Republic by sending remittances under the names of nominees.^{137,138}
- According to DEA reporting, Northeast-based Dominican traffickers typically use Dominican-owned businesses that provide bill-paying services to send drug proceeds to the Dominican Republic. Fund transfers are usually made in 10 days using a form of the Hawala system,^e with a 5 to 7 percent fee charged on the transfer amount.¹³⁹
- DEA reporting revealed that Dominican traffickers in the New York/New Jersey area reportedly drop off bulk cash drug proceeds at bodegas in Bayonne, New Jersey, at which point store owners contact associates in the Dominican Republic and instruct them to release funds on their end, with transfers ranging from \$200,000 USC to \$500,000 USC.¹⁴⁰

(U//DSEN) Further, Dominican traffickers in the Northeast employ a variety of trade-based money laundering schemes to repatriate drug proceeds to the Dominican Republic. For example, drug proceeds are used to purchase high-value items in the United States, which are then exported to the Dominican Republic and held indefinitely as assets or sold locally to recoup funds as legitimate earnings.

- DEA reporting indicates that Dominican trafficking groups in New York launder money by purchasing construction vehicles and shipping them to the Dominican Republic, where they are sold for cash.¹⁴¹
- According to DEA reporting, a New York-based Dominican trafficking group laundered drug proceeds by purchasing high-end items, such as luxury watches, and transporting them to the Dominican

^d (U) According to the World Bank, as of 2016, the Dominican Republic was ranked the third largest recipient of remittances in Latin America behind Mexico and Guatemala but ahead of Colombia, and first in the Caribbean, with \$5.3 billion USC received in remittances in 2015. In addition, in 2012, the World Bank reported that external remittances accounted for approximately 7 percent of the Dominican Republic’s gross domestic product, representing the country’s third largest source of foreign income after exports and tourism revenues. The United States, Spain, and Italy accounted for 80 percent of total remittances sent to the Dominican Republic as of 2012.

^e (U) *Hawala* commonly refers to an informal value transfer method in which money is received in one location and released almost immediately in another location through the use of brokers and reliance on trust-based relationships.

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Republic.¹⁴² A New England-based Dominican trafficker bought and shipped jewelry, which is easier to conceal and can be traded for cash if needed.¹⁴³ High-end jewelry stores are commonly used in the Dominican Republic to launder drug proceeds from New York City and Miami.¹⁴⁴

(U) Outlook

(U//LES) Dominican trafficking groups are firmly positioned to retain their status as leaders of the mid-level drug distribution market in the Northeast in the near term. Northeast Dominican traffickers are self-sufficient and maintain the ability to access diverse drug supply lines, smuggling routes, and conveyance methods involving multiple criminal organizations, and across several nations, ensuring their sustainability in the region. In addition, Dominican traffickers have demonstrated they can successfully expand into domestic and foreign wholesale and retail drug distribution markets, providing them the flexibility to change their role if challenges arise to their current dominance over mid-level distribution in the Northeast.

(U//LES) Over the long term, the continued influx of Mexican immigrants to the region and the anticipated growth of their local population may present a challenge to Dominican trafficking groups. The dominance that Dominican traffickers have established on the mid-level distribution of illegal drugs in the Northeast over the past decades has largely coincided with the growth of the Dominican population in the region. However, according to open source reports, Mexicans now account for the fastest growing Hispanic population in certain parts of the Northeast, to include New Jersey and New York. Mexicans now represent the third largest Hispanic group in New York City after Puerto Ricans and Dominicans.^{145,146} Further, a 2013 study from the City University of New York revealed the Mexican population of the New York metropolitan area grew 6.5 percent annually from 2000 to 2010 and will likely surpass the Puerto Rican and Dominican population as the city's largest Hispanic group by the 2020's if similar growth rates continue.¹⁴⁷ Dominican traffickers in the Northeast have exhibited adaptability to evolving trends in the region over past decades, first functioning as intermediaries for Colombian TCOs in the 1980s and 1990s and then as primary distributors for illegal drugs supplied to the region by Mexican TCOs. Although Mexican traffickers may threaten their dominance in future decades, Dominican traffickers continue to position themselves to remain a significant element of the regional drug trade regardless of their extent of influence or role.

(U//DSEN) As key distributors of heroin, controlled prescription pills, and fentanyl—in their various forms—Dominican traffickers play a critical role in fomenting the national opioid epidemic, specifically in the Northeast. In addition, in the last few years, Dominican traffickers have been linked to numerous overdose deaths involving opioids throughout the Northeast and in some parts of the Mid-Atlantic. As such, the successful targeting of their networks by U.S. law enforcement would be an essential component to any broad strategy for resolving the current opioid crisis.

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- ¹²⁸ (U//DSEN) DEA New England Division Investigative Reporting, December 2015; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹²⁹ (U//DSEN) DEA New England Division Investigative Reporting, March 2016; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).

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- ¹³⁰ (U//DSEN) DEA Scranton Resident Office Investigative Reporting, May 2015; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹³¹ (U//DSEN) DEA Caribbean Division Investigative Reporting, January 2016; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹³² (U//DSEN) DEA Philadelphia Division Investigative Reporting, April 2016; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹³³ (U//DSEN) DEA Caribbean Division Investigative Reporting, December 2015; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹³⁴ (U//DSEN) DEA New England Division Investigative Reporting, May 2015; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹³⁵ (U//DSEN) DEA Philadelphia Division Investigative Reporting, April 2016; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹³⁶ (U//DSEN) DEA Miami Division Investigative Reporting, June 2013; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹³⁷ (U//DSEN) DEA New Jersey Division Investigative Reporting, March 2016; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹³⁸ (U//DSEN) DEA West Palm Beach District Office Investigative Reporting, September 2015; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹³⁹ (U//DSEN) DEA Philadelphia Division Investigative Reporting, September 2014; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹⁴⁰ (U//DSEN) DEA New Jersey Division Investigative Reporting, December 2015; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹⁴¹ (U//DSEN) DEA New Jersey Division Investigative Reporting, October 2015; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹⁴² (U//DSEN) DEA Santo Domingo Country Office Investigative Reporting, May 2016; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹⁴³ (U//DSEN) DEA New England Division Investigative Reporting, May 2015; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹⁴⁴ (U//DSEN) DEA Miami Division Investigative Reporting, May 2016; extracted information is (U//DSEN); overall document classification is (U//DSEN).
- ¹⁴⁵ (U) *Star Ledger*, "New U.S. Census figures show Mexican population in N.J. more than doubles in past decade," May 26, 2011; http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2011/05/new_us_census_figures_show_mex.html; Accessed on November 17, 2016.
- ¹⁴⁶ (U) *Gotham Gazette*, "As Mexican Community Grows, Local Leaders Eye Greater Political Prowess," September 19, 2014; <http://www.gothamgazette.com/index.php/government/5334-as-mexican-community-grows-local-leaders-eye-greater-political-prowess>; Accessed on November 17, 2016.
- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid.



(U) This product was prepared by the DEA Strategic Intelligence Section. Comments and questions may be addressed to the Chief, Analysis and Production Section at [REDACTED]



DEA Intelligence Product Feedback Database



Name of Organization: _____
 Point of Contact: _____ Telephone Number: _____
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DEA Product #: DEA-DCT-DIB-010-17

Title: (U) Dominican Trafficking Groups Cement Role as Leaders of Mid-Level Drug
 Distribution in Northeastern United States

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Overall satisfaction with DEA Product	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Readability/Understanding of DEA Product	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Value/Usefulness of NNP Product	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report Increased my Understanding or Knowledge of the report subject	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Product Relevance to my agency's mission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will you use this report? (Check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy Formulation <input type="checkbox"/> Situational Awareness <input type="checkbox"/> Operational Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Training <input type="checkbox"/> Resource Allocation <input type="checkbox"/> Other				

Additional Comments:

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