

Paraguay

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Drug and Chemical Control

Paraguay made significant increases in drug seizures and illicit crop eradication in 2017. Nevertheless, Paraguay remains among the largest source countries for marijuana in the Western Hemisphere, and a transit country for Andean cocaine. Traffickers exploit the country's porous land borders, clandestine airstrips, lack of air radar, extensive internal waterways, and under-resourced, often corrupt law enforcement and judicial officials to transit cocaine, mainly to Brazil and through Brazil to overseas markets, though rarely the United States. Transnational criminal organizations engage in drug trafficking and other illicit activities, aided by corruption and legal impunity, including ongoing allegations of senior-level government involvement.

During the first nine months of 2017, the National Anti-Drug Secretariat (SENAD) seized and destroyed 996 metric tons (MT) of processed marijuana (compared to 276 in all of 2016) and 1.2 MT of cocaine (compared to 1.57 in all of 2016) and eradicated 1,343 hectares (ha) of cannabis (compared to 1,298 ha in all of 2016). Also during the first nine months of 2017, the Paraguayan National Police (PNP) seized and destroyed 350.5 MT of processed marijuana (compared to 137.6 in all of 2016), eradicated 794 ha of cannabis (compared to 413 in all of 2016) and seized 91 kilograms of cocaine (compared to 19 in all of 2016). Authorities uncovered and destroyed two marijuana and two cocaine clandestine drug laboratories. Internationally, two of Germany's largest-ever cocaine seizures (1.5 MT in March and 1.6 MT in April) were hidden in shipping containers originating from Paraguay. In December, Paraguayan authorities, with U.S. and Brazilian assistance, arrested Brazil's most wanted alleged drug trafficker.

The United States and Paraguay are parties to a 2001 extradition treaty that remains in force. There is no bilateral mutual legal assistance treaty, though both countries are party to multilateral conventions providing for cooperation in criminal matters. In October, Paraguayan President Cartes issued a decree approving a national drug policy that was drafted in 2016 with assistance from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

Drug treatment specialists report an increase in domestic drug consumption. Paraguay conducted its last national study on drug use in 2014. Outpatient community-based drug treatment programs, supported by the United States and other donors, supplement the Ministry of Health's single 27-bed inpatient detoxification facility. Paraguay's new asset forfeiture legislation, signed in September, allocates 50 percent of proceeds to demand reduction and crime prevention efforts.

U.S. law enforcement cooperation continues to help facilitate drug seizures, arrests, and the presentation of cases for prosecution by Paraguayan authorities. Increased efforts by the Government of Paraguay to enhance interagency coordination, improve the judicial system's ability to prosecute cases quickly and effectively, and reduce corruption would help further deter narcotics production and trafficking.