



Report Information from ProQuest

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Smugglers Make Kennels With Cocaine

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Abstract (Abstract): [Charlie J. Parsons] and other FBI agents noted that the kennels do not merely conceal the cocaine, but actually are made out of it. Drug traffickers allegedly mixed cocaine paste, fiberglass and other agents to create a malleable substance. That was then molded into kennels.

One small cage shipped in 1991 yielded more than three kilograms of powder cocaine, while each of the two large cages seized by the FBI this week weighed about 50 pounds and yielded between 4 1/2 and 7 kilograms of crack cocaine, officials said. A standard large kennel sells for about \$130. Infused with cocaine, they would wholesale for roughly \$140,000 and retail for as much as \$500,000 each, officials said.

According to the affidavit filed in the case, one of the kennels arrived in Los Angeles on Oct. 12, 1991, and [Luis Henry Bustos Delgado] picked it up at the airport, took it to a Riverside warehouse and chemically extracted the cocaine from it. An FBI undercover agent said he watched on closed-circuit television as Bustos performed that extraction.

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Full text: Frustrated by the risks and costs of evading drug interdiction efforts, Colombian traffickers have developed a way to build plastic and fiberglass products out of cocaine, according to FBI officials who displayed a cocaine-infused dog kennel at a news conference Tuesday.

That kennel and two others were seized during a 16-month investigation, and two men were arrested in Garden Grove on Monday night. Agents said the arrests and seizures thwarted the operation-the first of its kind uncovered by federal drug agents-and investigators quickly dubbed it "The Cocaine-Canine Connection" and the "Dog-Do Case."

The two suspects, Harold Satizabal and Luis Henry Bustos Delgado, were part of a drug-smuggling operation that mixed cocaine with fiberglass and other materials to build dog kennels and ship them to the United States, according to an affidavit filed in federal court.

Agents said they believe Bustos is a chemist and Satizabal is an engineer, and that both were working with the Cali Cartel, one of Colombia's most powerful drug-smuggling organizations.

The kennels were shipped from Cali, Colombia, to Los Angeles and are near-perfect replicas of commercial kennels made in the United States. The method of fusing cocaine to the fiberglass made the drug all but undetectable by traditional methods, officials said.

"This investigation demonstrates cocaine can be molded into any imaginable shape or form and shipped into any port in the United States," said Charlie J. Parsons, special agent in charge of the FBI's Los Angeles office.

"The case also demonstrates how sophisticated the cartels have become."

Drug agents, long accustomed to battling new techniques employed by traffickers, nonetheless were amazed by this latest approach. "There's just no limit to the imagination, is there?" asked Ralph Lochridge, a spokesman for the Los Angeles office of the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Parsons and other FBI agents noted that the kennels do not merely conceal the cocaine, but actually are made out of it. Drug traffickers allegedly mixed cocaine paste, fiberglass and other agents to create a malleable substance. That was then molded into kennels.

Once inside the United States, the kennels were stripped apart and ground into dust, according to an affidavit filed in federal court. The dust was treated with acids, ammonia and other chemicals to remove the fiberglass and other substances. What was left was pure crack cocaine.

One small cage shipped in 1991 yielded more than three kilograms of powder cocaine, while each of the two large cages seized by the FBI this week weighed about 50 pounds and yielded between 4 1/2 and 7 kilograms of crack cocaine, officials said. A standard large kennel sells for about \$130. Infused with cocaine, they would wholesale for roughly \$140,000 and retail for as much as \$500,000 each, officials said.

According to the affidavit filed in the case, one of the kennels arrived in Los Angeles on Oct. 12, 1991, and Bustos picked it up at the airport, took it to a Riverside warehouse and chemically extracted the cocaine from it. An FBI undercover agent said he watched on closed-circuit television as Bustos performed that extraction. A confidential informant led FBI agents to Bustos and Satizabal, the affidavit states. Without that break, Parsons and other agents conceded, it would have been almost impossible to detect the cocaine as it passed through U.S. Customs.

Standard field tests would not reveal that cocaine was embedded in the fiberglass, and drug-sniffing dogs would not find it either, officials said.

The unique method also made smuggling the drug much cheaper than it normally would be. FBI agents estimate that drug traffickers usually spend as much as \$3,000 per kilogram to ship cocaine to the United States.

By contrast, the dog kennel ruse is a bargain. Total cost for air freighting two of the kennels infused with as much as 14 kilos of cocaine: \$276.

Satizabal and Bustos made their initial appearance in federal court Tuesday afternoon, calmly answering questions from U.S. Magistrate Judge Ronald W. Rose. Assistant U.S. Atty. Deirdre Eliot, who is prosecuting the case, said the two men face at least 24 years in prison if convicted, and argued that they posed a significant flight risk.

They were ordered held without bail, and Eliot said she expects an indictment to be returned against them before they appear in court again Nov. 16.

While conceding that the dog kennels had the potential to stump American agents, the FBI's Parsons said that the agency's investigation of the case has led to the development of a new field test that will spot cocaine-even embedded in fiberglass or plastic.

Still, Parsons said the investigation has made him look at some products in a new light.

"Anything that's made out of plastic or fiberglass, I'm a little suspicious," he said. "If it's made in Colombia, I'm a little more suspicious."

Times staff writer Rene Lynch contributed to this report.

Illustration

PHOTO: COLOR, (Orange County Edition, A1) Charlie J. Parsons, agent in charge of the FBI's Los Angeles office, shows dog kennel made in part from cocaine. / MARK BOSTER / Los Angeles Times

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