

CROSSING THE BORDER: SCENARIOS OF REAL ISSUES

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I have to hide my true identity, but you can call me Carlos. I live in Bogotá, Colombia and I am a member of a small drug trafficking ring. I used to belong to the Norte del Valle Cartel. It became the most powerful drug trafficking organization in Colombia after the government disbanded the Medellín and Cali Cartels, rival groups, which competed for power. They were broken up by a special division of the Colombian National Police known as the Bloque de Busqueda, which was trained and equipped by the U.S. A similar force was assembled to dismantle the Norte del Valle cartel.

Since the crackdown on the cartels, numerous smaller organizations, such as the one I belong to, have continued to produce and smuggle cocaine. My organization, which is located on Colombia's north coast, purchases coca plants grown by local farmers, turns it into cocaine in a refinery plant, and then smuggles the drug out of the country. My job is to load up to three tons of cocaine onto our go-fast boat, named this way because it can outrun most police boats. Sometimes I wrap the cocaine in coffee to keep sniffer dogs from picking up the scent. Then I run the boat to a port in Mexico or Haiti in the middle of the night. In order to evade the Colombian and U.S. authorities policing the waters I frequently find new routes for my shipments. In Central America I pass my load of the cocaine to someone else who will take it to the streets of U.S. cities, where it sells for over \$150 per gram. Some people call us modern-day pirates of the Caribbean.

The U.S., which receives most of its illegal cocaine from Colombia, works with the Colombian government to fight the drug trade. As part of the "Plan Colombia," the Colombian government sprays fields of coca with herbicides, killing the plants that are used to make cocaine. American drug enforcement agents also organize international operations to catch the leaders of the organizations. In one such operation in May 2006, police from nine different countries captured a Colombian drug lord who had been living in Brazil. My organization faces a lot of pressure, but as long as people use drugs, and drug trafficking is a lucrative business; there will always be someone ready to replace the fallen drug leaders. Demand for high quality cocaine in the U.S. and Europe means that low-level drug runners like me will always have a great future.

1. What problem concerning U.S. and Latin American relations are mentioned in this scenario?
2. What are some of the solutions suggested?
3. Brainstorm other solutions to the problems.