

BOWLES'S NEW AND ACCURATE MAP OF THE WORLD, OR TERRESTRIAL GLOBE, laid down from the BEST OBSERVATIONS and NEWEST DISCOVERIES; particularly those of other celebrated CIRCUMNAVIGATORS: Illustrated with a variety of useful PROJECTIONS and GEOGRAPHICAL DEFINITIONS, TABLES, and PROBLEMS: With an easy and familiar Explanation.

THE WORLD, OR TERRESTRIAL GLOBE, made in the SOUTH SEAS, by ANSON, BYRON, WALLIS, BOUANSVILLE, COOK, and REPRESENTATIONS of the HEAVENLY BODIES: the most approved, ASTRONOMICAL and of the most curious and interesting PHENOMENA in the UNIVERSAL SYSTEM.



Narco Embarcaderos as a Logistical Tactic to Support Hashish Trafficking in Southern Spain

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Open Source, Foreign Perspective, Underconsidered/Understudied Topics

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Hashish trafficking between Spain and Morocco across the Strait of Gibraltar is nothing new and has flourished over the last two decades, but, as *El Pais* reports, drug traffickers are employing a relatively new trafficking tactic involving enclosed boat slips known as “narco-embarcaderos” along the Guadarranque River.¹ This phenomenon draws from tactics used along the Barbate and Guadalquivir Rivers (Spain’s southwest coast) in the sense that it uses the river as an entry point and may even involve drug drops at pre-coordinated points. However, it represents a change to historic river trafficking in the region because it effectively utilizes established infrastructure in luxury communities as a logistics and storage base for its fleet of inflatable fast-boats and large-scale shipments of hashish.

Importance of the Guadarranque River

The Guadarranque River is located along Spain’s southeast coast and represents key terrain for traffickers, as its estuary is located just 1 km from the Bay of Algeciras, which leads directly to open sea and the Strait of Gibraltar. It is a relatively short river that measures only 43 kilometers and has been classified as one of the most “unnavigable rivers” in the country, which makes it a trafficker’s haven, as authorities are only able to monitor the mouth of river during low tide.² In comparison, the Guadalquivir River is one of the longest and most navigable in the

¹ “La estela del narco” [The River of Drugs]. *El Pais*. Accessed on October 28, 2015 from http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/05/12/actualidad/1431445354_453320.html

² “Embarcaderos de los narcos en Los Barrios.” *La Voz Digital*. Accessed on October, 6 2015 from <http://www.lavozdigital.es/campo-gibraltar/201505/18/embarcaderos-narcos-delito-urbanistico-20150518203523-pr.html>

country, and while this route is popular amongst traffickers, fast-boats are frequently intercepted by authorities who continuously patrol along it.

The Guadarranque's privileged location is also apparent from a real estate perspective, as the high-end homes along this waterway are fully equipped with efficient waterway access and ample concealment for fast-boats looking to move into covered embarcaderos. Moreover, although homes along the Guadalquivir River do have embarcadero access in some cases, Lieutenant Pablo Tosco of the Algeciras Anti-Drug Task Force reports that the embarcadero tactic is much more prevalent along the Guadarranque River than any other fluvial route in the country.³

During an interview with *El Mundo*, Tosco confirmed that the Guadarranque is the official logistical base of hashish traffickers in Southern Spain. Emilio Miro, the Algeciras Anti-Drug Chief, reiterated this, stating that "the homes are used to store fast boats where they can quickly reach high sea. These locations are also used as refueling points and may be used to store hashish shipments until they can be moved to other distribution points." In some areas along the Guadarranque, traffickers rent out embarcaderos for €6000 a month.⁴

In addition to serving as logistical bases, embarcaderos help traffickers mitigate risk related to the seizure of shipments and fast-boats alike. On any given day authorities in the area report that 7-10 fast-boats depart from the Guadarranque River to Morocco or just off its coast, where they pick up multi-ton hashish shipments valued at millions of dollars. Upon return, the embarcaderos are key to a fast escape in case the radars detect the shipment, as fast-boats can

³ "Las lanchas kamikazes del hachís" [Kamikaze Fast-Boats Used by Hashish Traffickers]. *El Mundo*. Accessed from

<http://www.elmundo.es/cronica/2015/05/24/5561e19ae2704e66778b4574.html>

⁴ Ibid.

quickly pull into their hiding spots undetected.⁵ This ability not only saves shipments, but also keeps the fast-boat fleet safe and functional, which is important because hashish traffickers use this mode of transportation nearly exclusively to move their cargo. Furthermore, acquiring fast-boats can be difficult, as both Spain and Morocco have outlawed the sale of the inflatable versions commonly used by hashish traffickers, which has forced buyers to look for options in other areas of Europe, especially Holland.

Spanish authorities are well aware of the embarcadero tactic, but traffickers stay one step ahead by strategically placing lookouts in commonly patrolled areas before fast-boats leave the embarcadero. These individuals are usually couples or females because they are less likely to arouse suspicion. An added complication posed by traffickers to authorities is that fast-boats commonly return to Spanish territory camouflaged among groups of illegal immigrants attempting to enter into the country. When this happens, Spain's Integral System of Exterior Vigilance (SIVE) detects the fast-boats, but naturally assigns priority to helping immigrants in possible danger instead of pursuing drug shipments.

Despite previous setbacks in thwarting shipments and the use of embarcaderos, in August 2015 Spain's Secretary of State for Security (Francisco Martínez) announced a plan that may end the embarcadero tactic along the Guadarranque River once and for all. The new plan, which is now underway and due for completion in the summer of 2016, involves driving metal posts into the riverbed, about 2.2 meters apart, to prevent the inflatable fast-boats, which typically have a beam of around 3 meters, from getting through. As reported by *El País*, the latest bid to halt the drug traffickers aims to be a "permanent solution" that uses "metal elements along the lines of sheet piling, running parallel and equidistant to each other along the width of the river and facing

⁵ Kamikaze Fast-Boats Used by Hashish Traffickers.

upstream, creating a staggered pattern dug into the riverbed.”⁶ If successful, the Spanish government will effectively cut off the hashish industries’ logistical support base in Guadarranque, which will likely result in temporary supply shortages and permanent trafficking shifts.

⁶ “Interior cerrará con estacas antinarcos la ruta del hachís del Guadarranque” [Can new metal barriers seal off Spain’s river of drugs?]. *El Pais*. Accessed on October 23, 2015 from http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2015/09/08/actualidad/1441710427_820978.html