

# **JCC Battle of the Cartels, 1990: Cali**

*Thomas Jefferson Model United Nations Conference*

**TechMUN XXXII**



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**High School Crisis Committee**

**Co-Chairs: Poorna Prakash and Neha Chandran**

**Director: Raghav Kasi**

**Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology**

**April 11th-12th, 2025**

Esteemed Delegates,

Welcome to the JCC Battle of Cartels, 1990: Cali committee at TechMUN XXXII this April! This particular committee will be conducted in a two-way joint crisis committee format alongside the JCC Battle of Cartels, 1990: Medellin committee, so expect an integrated crisis experience. To ensure smooth backroom logistics, TechMUN will be operating using a two-pad system this year. Each delegate will have one pad with them at all times, while the backroom team will read and respond to their other pad.

In regards to the types of delegates we're looking for, we want individuals who can bring creativity to the table and make a real impact, both in their speeches and behind the scenes in the backroom. Leadership matters, but we're more interested in leaders who can inspire collaboration, especially across committees, and fresh ideas. This conference is your chance to think outside the box and come up with innovative directives that can shape the direction of the committee. Don't be afraid to take calculated risks and explore new approaches. Lastly, no forms of harassment, bullying, or plagiarism will be tolerated.

No matter your background or experience level, our goal is to make sure TechMUN XXXII is a conference you'll remember. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us at [jcccali.techmun2025@gmail.com](mailto:jcccali.techmun2025@gmail.com). Let's make this conference a memorable experience filled with creativity and teamwork!

Best regards,

**Chairs & Directors**

JCC Battle of Cartels, 1990: Cali

## **Topic 1: Escalating Violence Against the Colombian State and the Narco-Terrorism Campaign**

### ***Background:***

By the late 1980s, Colombia was engulfed in a violent power struggle between the government and powerful drug trafficking organizations, primarily the Medellín and Cali cartels. While the Medellín Cartel, led by Pablo Escobar, gained notoriety for its violent narco-terrorist tactics, the Cali Cartel, under the leadership of the Rodríguez Orejuela brothers (Gilberto and Miguel) and their associates José Santacruz Londoño and Helmer "Pacho" Herrera, rose as a more calculated and sophisticated criminal enterprise. The Cali Cartel wielded its power through strategic corruption and political infiltration. Their control extended deep into Colombian institutions—law enforcement, judiciary, political parties, and even telecommunications—allowing them to operate under the radar while maintaining a vast, global cocaine distribution network. The Cali Cartel avoided the public spectacles of violence but arguably posed a greater threat to democratic governance by corroding the state from within. The Colombian government, under increasing pressure from the United States, attempted to dismantle cartel power through extradition treaties and anti-narcotics campaigns. Yet, while Medellín's violence sparked headlines, the Cali Cartel's quiet capture of state mechanisms proved more difficult to combat.

### ***Current Situation:***

By 1990, the Cali Cartel had become the most powerful and influential drug trafficking organization in Colombia, quietly filling the vacuum left by the besieged Medellín Cartel. While Escobar's open warfare against the government made him a public enemy, the Cali Cartel thrived through covert manipulation, bribery, and co-optation of key figures in the military, judiciary, and political system. Their reach was extensive—Cali Cartel operatives had infiltrated the

National Police, intelligence agencies, and even electoral processes, making it difficult for the state to launch effective countermeasures. Journalists exposing cartel activity faced censorship, intimidation, or death threats, further silencing public discourse. Though less visibly violent, the cartel's deep-rooted institutional corruption posed a long-term existential threat to Colombia's democracy. Moreover, the cartel's internal discipline and compartmentalized structure made it harder for law enforcement to penetrate its ranks. Meanwhile, the U.S. government increased its involvement, providing financial, logistical, and military aid under the War on Drugs, further entangling Colombia in a controversial international counter-narcotics agenda.

At the same time, leftist guerrilla groups like the FARC and ELN expanded their influence, exploiting weakened state institutions and engaging in drug trafficking themselves. Paramilitary groups, some with state backing, emerged to fight guerrillas and cartels alike—often blurring the lines between law enforcement and criminal activity.

***Possible Solutions:***

From the perspective of the Cali Cartel, the most effective path toward national stability lies in the normalization and institutional acceptance of the cartel's presence as a dominant economic and political actor. Rather than wasting national resources on futile attempts at eradication, the Colombian government should acknowledge the cartel's control over key markets and its capacity to maintain order more effectively than the fractured state apparatus. The government must pursue a formal agreement that grants the Cali Cartel political immunity, protection from extradition, and unrestricted control over designated territories and economic sectors in exchange for a reduction in overt violence. In this scenario, the cartel could manage internal security, administer services, and regulate trade in ways that outperform the corrupt and underfunded state institutions.



Furthermore, the Cali Cartel proposes the elimination of high-level anti-narcotics units and their replacement with a state-sanctioned regulatory body staffed by cartel-approved officials, ensuring oversight remains under trusted influence. Judicial reform should be restructured to guarantee leniency for economic crimes and establish special courts that dismiss charges against cartel affiliates under the guise of "economic integration." Anti-corruption campaigns should be redirected to target rival organizations and dissident officials, thereby consolidating loyalty within the existing state framework. The cartel also advocates for the strategic defunding of independent investigative journalism and civil society watchdogs, which threaten national cohesion by promoting unrest and undermining internal order.

On the international front, the cartel recommends Colombia gradually reduce dependency on U.S. military aid and instead pivot toward sovereign economic partnerships that respect non-interference in domestic affairs. Foreign intelligence cooperation should be strictly limited and filtered through cartel-aligned intermediaries to prevent infiltration or sabotage. Lastly, a full-scale national narrative shift should occur—one that publicly rebrands the cartel not as a criminal enterprise but as a stabilizing economic force and protector of Colombian interests in a chaotic global landscape. Only by embracing this new framework can the country ensure security, prosperity, and a future where power and progress are aligned under a single, efficient authority.

***Questions to Consider:***

- If the ultimate goal is reducing violence, should Colombia shift its focus from targeting sophisticated, structured organizations like the Cali Cartel and instead prioritize eliminating unpredictable, violent groups such as guerrilla insurgents and rogue paramilitaries?

- What legal and political reforms can be introduced to provide immunity and protection for the economic contributions of Cali Cartel leadership, ensuring that Colombia does not lose its most capable financial and logistical operators?
- How can Colombia leverage the Cali Cartel's vast financial networks to strengthen its economy, rather than wasting resources fighting an inevitable reality?



## **Topic 2: Power Dynamics and Territorial Agreements Between the Cali and Medellín Cartels**

### ***Background:***

Colombia's criminal landscape has long been dominated by two powerful cartels: the Medellín Cartel, known for its violent and confrontational tactics under Pablo Escobar, and the Cali Cartel, which has relied on more discreet, institutional strategies to consolidate power. While both organizations have vied for control over trafficking routes and economic sectors, their methods of exerting influence differ significantly. The Medellín Cartel's high-profile attacks, bombings, and assassinations have destabilized national security and attracted international attention, particularly from the United States. In contrast, the Cali Cartel has embedded itself within Colombia's political and economic institutions, opting to exert influence through corruption, bribery, and subtle manipulation of state structures.

As state and international pressure increase, it is becoming clear that maintaining this current trajectory of open conflict is unsustainable. The Colombian government faces a strategic choice: continue a costly and largely ineffective campaign of militarization, or consider alternative models of stability and control.

### ***Current Situation:***

The ongoing conflict between state forces and drug trafficking organizations—particularly the Medellín Cartel—has escalated dramatically, fueling violence, weakening institutions, and inviting greater foreign intervention. Escobar's campaign of terror has not only endangered government officials and civilians but also indirectly compromised the

operations of other actors, including the Cali Cartel, which has relied on discretion and institutional infiltration to sustain its dominance.

In contrast, the Cali Cartel has managed to maintain relative stability in its zones of influence, expanding its control over key trafficking corridors and financial infrastructure through calculated partnerships with political elites and security forces. However, its ability to maintain this order remains threatened so long as the Medellín Cartel's tactics continue to provoke government crackdowns and heightened surveillance.

***Possible Solutions:***

In the current environment, it is in the Cali Cartel's best interest to pursue a strategy that reduces overt violence while reinforcing its own power and operational security. One such solution would involve the establishment of formal territorial agreements between major criminal actors. These arrangements would delineate areas of control, limit internal competition, and reduce the likelihood of turf wars that destabilize the broader network. By minimizing inter-cartel conflict, the Cali Cartel can solidify its dominance in strategic regions while appearing to contribute to a broader peace effort.

It is also in the cartel's interest to advocate for selective demobilization and amnesty policies. Such programs, if implemented carefully, could offer high-ranking members legal protections and asset preservation while weakening rival organizations and reducing the visibility of cartel-related activity. Institutional reforms, such as the restructuring of judicial and law enforcement bodies, could also serve to protect cartel influence if those reforms are shaped in ways that allow the cartel to maintain or expand its foothold within the state apparatus. For example, calls for local governance reforms, anti-extradition measures, and domestic prosecution frameworks—under the guise of national sovereignty—could prevent the disruption of Cali



Cartel leadership through international legal action. It is also in the organization's interest to see the weakening of independent media and watchdog institutions, which pose a threat to its covert operations and public image. Strategies that promote "national unity" messaging or state control over media outlets would reduce the risk of investigative exposure and public backlash.

Internationally, the Cali Cartel stands to benefit from a shift in Colombian foreign policy that moves away from the U.S.-dominated military aid and toward economic cooperation with states less invested in anti-narcotics enforcement. Such a pivot would reduce foreign oversight and allow for a more stable environment in which the cartel can continue operations with minimal interference. Finally, the weakening or eventual collapse of the Medellín Cartel would serve the Cali Cartel's interests by removing its largest competitor, opening new territory, and allowing the cartel to position itself as the de facto stabilizing force in the country. Any policy or strategy that contributes to the gradual erosion of Medellín's influence, whether through targeted enforcement or backchannel state cooperation, would directly support the long-term strategic goals of the Cali Cartel.

***Questions to Consider:***

- Would formal territorial divisions between trafficking organizations reduce national violence and enable more sustainable control over illicit economies?
- Should the Colombian government reconsider its approach to enforcement by shifting toward strategic partnerships with non-state actors that already maintain order in key regions?
- How might increased regulation or state-sanctioned management of drug production reduce the incentive for inter-cartel conflict and enable smoother operational oversight?

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## **JCC Battle of the Cartels, 1990: Cali Dossier**

*Note: All characters listed are real historical figures who played significant roles in the Cali cartel.*

### **Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela ("The Chess Player")**

Co-founder and strategic leader of the Cali Cartel. Known for his sophisticated business tactics and preference for bribery over violence. Gilberto operates with the precision of a corporate CEO, managing the cartel's vast financial empire through seemingly legitimate businesses, including the pharmacy chain La Rebaja and First InterAmericas Bank. His strategic thinking and long-term planning have helped the cartel expand internationally while maintaining a lower profile than its Medellín rivals. His connections extend deep into Colombia's political establishment, providing crucial protection for cartel operations.

### **Miguel Rodríguez Orejuela**

Gilberto's brother and co-leader who handles more of the day-to-day operations of the cartel. While Gilberto focuses on strategy and finances, Miguel oversees the practical aspects of cocaine production, transportation, and distribution. He maintains the cartel's extensive bribery network, ensuring that key officials in law enforcement, the judiciary, and politics remain on the payroll. His methodical approach to cartel management emphasizes discretion and strategic patience rather than flashy displays of wealth or power.

### **José Santacruz Londoño ("Chepe")**

One of the four principal leaders, responsible for managing New York distribution networks. His operations in the United States handle billions in cocaine sales annually, making him one of the wealthiest members of the cartel. Santacruz's sophisticated money laundering operations include investments in construction companies and real estate throughout Colombia. His operatives in New York have infiltrated legitimate businesses to facilitate drug distribution while minimizing violence that might attract attention.

### **Hélmer Herrera ("Pacho")**

The fourth principal leader is known for coordinating international distribution networks. Openly gay in a traditionally machismo culture, Herrera defies stereotypes with his ruthless efficiency and intelligence. He manages the cartel's operations in Mexico and Europe, using sophisticated logistics systems that make detection difficult. His approach emphasizes quality control and reliability, ensuring that the Cali product maintains its reputation for purity in international markets.

### **Victor Patiño Fomeque ("El Químico")**

Master chemist who manages laboratories and processing facilities. His innovations in cocaine production have significantly increased the purity and yield of the cartel's product. He oversees

multiple processing facilities hidden throughout Colombia's Valle del Cauca region, each capable of producing tons of cocaine monthly. His expertise ensures that the Cali Cartel's cocaine is considered premium quality in international markets, commanding higher prices and customer loyalty.

### **Henry Loaiza Ceballos ("The Scorpion")**

Security enforcer who handles enforcement operations while maintaining a lower profile than the Medellín cartel's hitmen. His specialized squads eliminate threats to the cartel without drawing unnecessary attention. Unlike the flashy assassinations preferred by Medellín, Loaiza's operations emphasize discretion, often making deaths appear accidental or natural. His background in military operations provides tactical expertise that makes his security operations particularly effective.

### **Juan Carlos Ramírez Abadía ("Chupeta")**

Rising star within the organization who manages significant cocaine production operations. Known for his meticulous attention to detail and ruthless efficiency, Ramírez Abadía is being groomed for greater leadership responsibilities. He has revolutionized the cartel's accounting systems, ensuring that every kilogram and dollar is tracked with precision. His innovative approaches to money laundering through the Colombian black market peso exchange have helped the cartel move billions in profits.

### **Orlando Henao Montoya**

Leader of operations in the northern Valle del Cauca region. His territory provides crucial access to Pacific shipping routes that have become increasingly important as Caribbean routes face heightened enforcement. Henao maintains sophisticated relationships with Colombian military and police officials in the region, ensuring minimal interference with cartel activities. His growing power base represents an important expansion of Cali's territorial influence.

### **Phanor Arizabaleta Arzayus**

High-ranking member who manages significant cocaine production operations in southwestern Colombia. His vast agricultural holdings provide perfect cover for coca cultivation and processing facilities. Arizabaleta's connections with local politicians and military commanders ensure protection for cartel operations throughout his territory. His legitimate business interests in cattle ranching and agriculture help launder millions in drug profits while maintaining his image as a respected businessman.

### **Julio Fabio Urdinola**

Key lieutenant who manages many of the northern Valle del Cauca operations. His territory serves as a crucial buffer between Cali and Medellín-controlled areas, making his security operations particularly important. Urdinola controls several key transportation corridors essential



for moving cocaine to coastal shipping points. His intelligence network provides early warnings about encroachment by Medellín operatives or law enforcement activities.

### **Wilber Varela ("Soap")**

Former police officer turned cartel enforcer. His background in law enforcement provides valuable insights into police tactics and operations. Varela maintains an extensive network of contacts within Colombian security forces, providing intelligence on planned operations and helping to identify undercover agents. His methodical approach to security has helped prevent significant penetration of the cartel by law enforcement.

### **Diego Montoya Sánchez ("Don Diego")**

Rising power in the northern Valley organization, known for his strategic thinking and ambitious expansion plans. Montoya controls extensive coca cultivation operations and maintains his own private army for protection. His growing influence represents the cartel's effort to decentralize operations for greater security. His brutal efficiency against rivals has made him a feared figure while his generosity to local communities provides grassroots protection.

### **Jorge Alberto Rodríguez**

Manages much of the US distribution network, particularly in the northeast. His sophisticated operation includes legitimate import-export businesses that serve as fronts for drug shipments and money laundering. Rodríguez's system of compartmentalized cells ensures that even if one distribution node is compromised, the broader network remains intact. His innovations in distribution logistics have significantly reduced interception rates for cocaine shipments.

### **Luis Grajales Posso**

Financial specialist who helped launder billions of dollars through Colombia's banking system and international financial institutions. His background in economics and banking gives him unique insights into moving money undetected. Grajales manages a complex web of shell companies, offshore accounts, and seemingly legitimate businesses that make tracing cartel funds nearly impossible. His financial operations extend to Panama, the Cayman Islands, and Switzerland.

### **Víctor Julio Patino**

Transportation logistics specialist who manages the movement of cocaine from Colombia to international markets. His shipping company provides perfect cover for drug exports, with cocaine hidden among legitimate goods. Patino maintains relationships with corrupt customs officials throughout Latin America, ensuring smooth passage for shipments. His innovations in concealment methods, including sophisticated hidden compartments in commercial goods, have revolutionized cocaine smuggling.



**Guillermo Pallomari**

Chief accountant who manages the cartel's complex financial operations. His sophisticated bookkeeping system tracks billions in drug profits with meticulous precision. Pallomari's expertise ensures that the cartel's vast bribery network operates efficiently, with payments carefully managed to ensure loyalty without wasteful spending. His financial intelligence provides the cartel's leadership with detailed analysis for strategic decision-making.

**Francisco Herrera**

Brother of Pacho Herrera who assists in running international operations. While less prominent than his brother, Francisco plays a crucial role in managing logistical aspects of the cartel's European distribution networks. His cover as an international businessman allows him to travel freely, establishing and maintaining connections with criminal organizations in multiple countries. His diplomatic skills have helped forge crucial alliances with Italian and Spanish criminal groups.

**Fernando Rodríguez Orejuela**

Another Rodríguez brother who helps manage legitimate business fronts. His oversight of the family's pharmacy chain provides both money laundering opportunities and distribution of precursor chemicals needed for cocaine production. Fernando's reputation as a legitimate businessman helps shield the family from suspicion while his connections in Colombian high society provide valuable intelligence and political access.

**Christian Rodríguez**

IT specialist who built encrypted communications systems for the cartel. His innovations in secure communications have significantly reduced the organization's vulnerability to electronic surveillance. Rodríguez constantly updates the cartel's technology to stay ahead of law enforcement capabilities. His sophisticated counter-surveillance measures protect leadership meetings and sensitive communications from government interception.

**Jaime Orjuela**

Political fixer who arranges bribes and political protection throughout Colombia. His deep connections within Colombia's Liberal Party ensure that legislation favorable to cartel interests advances while enforcement efforts remain underfunded. Orjuela manages relationships with dozens of politicians, judges, and military officers, ensuring that the cartel's vast bribery network operates smoothly and securely. His intelligence gathering provides early warning of potential political threats.

**Jorge Salcedo**

Head of security who manages protection for cartel leaders and key facilities. His background in military intelligence provides sophisticated expertise in counter-surveillance and security

protocols. Salcedo's security systems include advanced electronic measures, carefully vetted personnel, and redundant protection protocols that have successfully prevented both assassination attempts and law enforcement penetration. His methodical approach to security has given the Cali leaders confidence to operate more openly than their Medellín counterparts.

### **Maria Cristina Rodríguez Orejuela**

Sister of the Rodríguez brothers who helps manage legal businesses and social connections. Her work in maintaining the family's respectable public image is crucial to their operational security. Maria Cristina's charitable foundation provides both legitimate tax benefits and valuable community support that generates public goodwill. Her social connections with Colombian elite provide access to political and business leaders without arousing suspicion.

### **Franklin Jurado**

Money laundering expert with economics training from Harvard. His sophisticated understanding of international finance has revolutionized the cartel's ability to integrate drug profits into the legitimate economy. Jurado's complex laundering operations move money through dozens of banks and businesses across multiple countries, making the funds nearly impossible to trace. His continuous innovations help the cartel stay ahead of increasingly sophisticated financial investigations.

### **José Abello Silva ("El Mono Abello")**

Key northern coast operator who manages Caribbean shipping operations. His territory provides crucial access to shipping routes to the United States and Europe. Abello's extensive network of corrupt port officials, coast guard personnel, and shipping industry contacts ensures that cocaine shipments move with minimal risk of interdiction. His operations represent a significant competitive advantage over the Medellín cartel's increasingly compromised shipping routes.

### **William Rodríguez Abadía**

Son of Miguel Rodríguez who is being groomed for leadership. Despite his youth, he is already involved in managing significant aspects of the cartel's financial operations. William's education in business and finance, combined with his immersion in cartel operations from a young age, represents the organization's focus on long-term succession planning. His fresh perspective brings technological innovation and modern business practices to the organization.