Synthetic Drug and Precursor Chemical Trends in the Americas

Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) – 49th Regular Session
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Globally there are more users of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) than heroin and cocaine combined.

UNODC-GLOBAL SMART

Quotes

In response to stronger controls in many regions, traffickers have been forced to seek non-scheduled chemical substances for the illicit manufacture of drugs.
- INCB, “Precursors,” 2009

The supply routes through which diverted preparations travel are now more complex than raw material shipment routes previously identified.
- INCB, “Precursors,” 2009

Mexico was the leading importer by far of PAA (declared in PENS), importing 2242mt in 2009 from five countries (400mt amongst the other 13 countries).
- INCB, “Precursors,” 2009

Amphetamine-group substances rank as the second most commonly used drug, followed by cocaine and opiates.

ATS have come to represent a major and evolving threat for present and future drug control efforts.

But there are indications that the traffickers are adapting yet again, identifying new sources of precursors, new techniques for synthesizing the drug, and new countries in which to locate manufacturing.
OPERATION CRYSTAL FLOW (1 January - 30 June 2007)
- INCB Notifications FROM CHINA
- INCB Notifications FROM INDIA
- INCB Notifications TO MEXICO

ATS Precursor Trafficking Routes

- Ephedrine
- P2P Precursors
- Preparations
International Progression of Meth Precursors

- Bulk powder
- Diverted preparations
- Smuggled/mislabeled preparations
- Emergence of PAA for illicit P2P

DEA Forensic Sciences Methamphetamine Profiling Program (MPP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>OTC/PSE (from P/I or Unknown Routes)</th>
<th>OTC/PSE + P2P (Mixed Routes)</th>
<th>P2P</th>
<th>No OTC/PSE + P2P (Mixed Routes)</th>
<th>No OTC/PSE (from P/I + Other Routes)</th>
<th>No OTC/PSE (Unknown)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>52%</td>
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Graph showing changes over 2007 and 2009 in the distribution of Methamphetamine Profiling Program (MPP) categories.
**Changing Paths – Chemical Precursors**

- Decreased overt shipments into countries with adequate chemical control mechanisms
- Manifest data no longer lists pills / cold medicine / brand names
- Increased use of cover loads (smuggling)
  - Fire Extinguishers
  - Luggage
- The precursor is treated as illicit and moved outside standard commercial shipping mechanisms

**Belize PAA Seizure**

- 15 Oct 2010: Belizean Customs announce seizure of a 40-foot container with 320 drums of PAA shipped from Shanghai, China
  - Shipment consigned to Secret Garden, health food company in the Corozal Free Zone
    - The container arrived on October 5; however, company did not clear the container
  - Importation of PAA not illegal in Belize
    - False Customs declaration may be only charge resulting from seizure
  - May 2010, Customs returned two PAA containers to China, shipped to another company in the Corozal Free Zone
    - The containers not permitted to enter Belize

Source: Belizean Press

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Conclusions

- **Ephedrines Threat**
  - Multiple source countries for acquisition
  - Pseudoephedrine preparation manufacturing locations throughout Asia and Middle East
  - Increasing occurrence of pseudoephedrine extraction labs taking advantage of pharmaceutical availability

- **Other Meth Precursors**
  - Shifting distribution patterns of PAA and Methylamine to Central America
  - Ephedrine precursors - L-PAC, Benzaldehyde, Methylamine - next chemicals of concern

Asian precursor chemicals drive methamphetamine production in North America and Southeast Asia
**What are Synthetic Cannabinoids?**

- Synthesized in early 1980's for research, which are similar to THC found in marijuana

- Marketed as herbal incense that are sold under the names Spice, Amsterdam Gold, Herbal Smokes, K2, Yucatan Fire, Genie, Magma, Dream, Hard Core, and many others

- "not for human consumption"

- Sold in 3-5 gram packages and can be purchased thru many sites on the internet, at head shops, gas stations, and other retail outlets

- There may be in excess of 100 cannabinoid products that have yet to be introduced to the marketplace

**Effects**

- Synthetic cannabinoids produce effects similar to THC, the main psychoactive substance found in marijuana

- Produces a high similar to marijuana with periods of euphoria and altered consciousness

- Side effects include hallucinations, seizures, and dependency/addiction not usually associated with cannabis users
What are they?

- Products sold typically contain one of the following substances, which are a potent central nervous system stimulant
  - MDPV, Mephedrone, Methylone
- Originally synthesized as “research chemicals” and not approved for human consumption
- Now marketed as “plant food” and “bath salts”
- Sold under the names Ivory Wave, Vanilla Sky, Energy-1, Ocean Wave, White Lightning, Hurricane Charlie and many others
- Sold at smoke shops, head shops, convenience stores, adult book stores, gas stations and through the internet

Effects

- Produces a high similar to methamphetamine, MDMA and cocaine
- Abusers experience chest pain, increased blood pressure, agitation, panic attacks, hallucinations, paranoia, and delusions
- Users self-administer the drugs by snorting the powder, smoking it, or injecting themselves intravenously
- The products are typically sold in packets of 250 mg for about $25 to 500 mgs for $50
THANK YOU

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