1994–1998

The drug trade's scope and sophistication were its most significant features in the mid-1990s. Expanding into a global problem, traffickers' unprecedented power and wealth allowed them access to the most advanced technology and communications equipment. The trade had evolved into a well-organized, highly structured international enterprise, with individual organizations controlling all facets, from cultivating or manufacturing drugs in source countries to transporting them across national borders to eventually sell on U.S. streets.

At home, crime rates declined through the 1990s despite experts' predictions. Americans often did not realize or fully understand the change, and scholars still debate its primary causes. Amid a booming economy, President Clinton signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act in 1994, increasing police presence in communities across the country. A subsection of that bill, the Public Safety and Recreational Firearm Use Protection Act, banned civilian manufacture, transfer, and possession of large-capacity magazines and certain designated assault weapons. Incarceration rates rose and crack use declined in major cities. Health, safety, and socioeconomic challenges persisted. Medical professionals researched and developed treatments for AIDS, which in 1994 was the leading cause of death for Americans aged 25 to 44. Law enforcement and community leaders focused on reducing drug-related crime, gang violence, and homelessness.

DEA adjusted its strategy to address drug traffickers' growing international power and domestic drug-related violent crime. Moreover, heroin increasingly entered the country from South America instead of Asia, prompting a reallocation of resources. Hampered by budget cutbacks in the late 1980s, the agency had increased its budget, staffing, and cooperation with law enforcement counterparts both domestic and abroad by the mid-1990s.

Conviction of Dandeny Muñoz Mosquera (1994)

Dandeny Muñoz Mosquera, the Medellín cartel's chief assassin, was arrested in Queens, New York, on September 25, 1991, for making false statements to a DEA special agent. Following Muñoz's trial, conviction, and subsequent six-year sentence, he was tried for his involvement in the 1989 midair bombing of Avianca Flight 203, which killed 110 people so the cartel could silence an informant on board. Because two American citizens were passengers, the United States charged Muñoz with homicide. As the cartel's most prolific assassin, Muñoz was also linked to hundreds of other murders. In December 1994, Muñoz was convicted in New York and sentenced to 10 life terms for the Avianca homicide charges, as well as two 20-year terms and one 5-year term on a variety of drug trafficking and RICO charges, all to be served consecutively.

Operation Snowcap Concluded (1994)

Operation Snowcap was a major issue of concern brought to the attention of incoming Administrator Constantine. The program was originally instituted to eliminate the flow of cocaine by building up internal law enforcement resources in source countries and sharing enforcement techniques with foreign counterparts. As the program went on, DEA agents began participating in drug law enforcement activities.

Snowcap was envisioned as a temporary program, but after seven years it became clear that DEA's domestic field divisions needed more resources. Rotating individuals from domestic field investigations made it difficult for agents to initiate and follow through on casework and court testimony. Additionally, agents on Snowcap tours underwent intensive jungle training to prepare. Though necessary, this training further depleted domestic field divisions of special agents. Limited personnel made it increasingly difficult for domestic field divisions to combat drug-related violent crime in their regions. As countries supported by Snowcap became more self-sufficient, the operation was phased out and DEA's role overseas refocused. Permanent positions were supported in Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia. Agents in these countries offered training assistance and served as liaison officers and advisors.

Peru Airplane Crash (1994)

On August 27, 1994, during a routine reconnaissance mission near Santa Lucia, Peru, a DEA airplane carrying five special agents crashed, killing all aboard. The special agents were assigned to Operation Snowcap, which had provided support and training for Peruvian and Bolivian law enforcement personnel between 1987 and 1994. The crash site was 15 miles west of Santa Lucia, an airstrip in the foothills of the Andes Mountains of western Peru in the Upper Huallaga River Valley, where much of the world's coca leaves for cocaine were grown. They were searching for clandestine drug operations in an area known for its multitude of laboratories and airstrips. The DEA transport plane had been traveling from Santa Lucia when it lost contact with air traffic control.

DEA, the Peruvian Air Force, the Peruvian Police, and U.S. Special Forces teams assigned to Peru searched for the lost aircraft. On August 28, they were scouring the area around Puerto Piana, about 285 miles northeast of Lima, when they spotted the wreckage of the twin-engine cargo aircraft. A six-man search team began hacking through the jungle but was slowed by heavy rains and nightfall. The search team, which included two DEA agents, reached the site on Monday, August 29, and discovered the bodies of the two pilots and three agents amid the wreckage.

The special agents were: Frank Fernandez, Jr., stationed at DEA headquarters; Jay W. Seale, stationed in Los Angeles; Meredith Thompson, stationed at the Miami office; Juan C. Vars, stationed at the San Antonio office; and Frank S. Wallace, Jr., stationed at the Houston office. Their bodies arrived back in the United States on September 3, 1994, on a C-141 transport jet that landed in front of hundreds of family members, friends, and DEA agents, each wearing black ribbons over their badges.

"This is just so tragic. They were fine special agents and fine young people," DEA Administrator Thomas Constantine said. "For those people who say there is no price to pay for casual drug use, tell that to the families and friends going through this tragic time." In May 1995, the families of the five special agents received the Administrator's Award of Honor. This posthumous award recognized the bravery of Special Agents Wallace, Vars, Thompson, Seale, and Fernandez.

Operation Dinero (1994)

Operation Dinero, a joint DEA/IRS operation, was launched by DEA's Atlanta Division in 1992. In this investigation, the U.S. Government successfully operated an undercover financial institution in Anguilla to target international drug organizations' financial networks. Several undercover corporations were also established in different jurisdictions as multi-service "front" businesses designed to supply "money laundering" services, such as loans, cashier's checks, wire transfers, and peso exchanges, or establish holding companies or shell corporations for trafficking groups. Believing these services were legitimate, the Cali

The bodies of DEA agents killed in the Peru airplane crash are brought home, September 3, 1994.

mafia engaged the bank to sell three paintings: a Picasso, a Rubens, and a Reynolds. Estimated to have a combined value of $15 million, the paintings were seized by DEA and IRS in 1994. The operation resulted in 116 arrests in the United States, Spain, Italy, and Canada and the seizure of 9 tons of cocaine and more than $90 million in cash and other property. The two-year joint enforcement operation was coordinated by DEA, IRS, INS, FBI, and international law enforcement counterparts in the United Kingdom, Canada, Italy, and Spain.

Operation Dinero, 1994.

Charlestown, Massachusetts

Between 1975 and 1992, Charlestown, a small community in the northern part of Boston, Massachusetts, experienced 49 murders—33 of them unsolved. A local code of silence made it difficult for law enforcement to investigate them. The community was unwilling to share

information, possibly fearing retaliation by criminals, harboring anti-police sentiment, or relying on vigilante justice.

Charlestown was a major PCP and cocaine distribution center run by the Irish Mob, a group of career criminals. With drugs often linked to the neighborhood's crime, DEA joined forces with the Massachusetts State Police, Boston Police Department, and Boston Housing Police Department. Together, DEA agents and local officers established a comprehensive case against local criminals and found informants and other information critical to solving both drug and murder cases. Agents arranged to protect witnesses who agreed to testify against the accused. By July 1994, 3 years of extensive investigations resulted in 40 defendants indicted on charges including racketeering, murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to distribute cocaine, and armed robbery. Once the violent criminals were taken from the Charlestown community, the threat of retaliation was removed and the code of silence was broken. A hotline set up by DEA yielded hundreds of calls from community residents with valuable leads that prompted more significant arrests. The cooperative efforts by DEA and local law enforcement agencies greatly diminished violence in Charlestown.

DEA agents make an arrest in Charlestown, Massachusetts.

Creation of the Special Operations Division (1994)

To elevate attention given to targeting the highest levels of international drug traffic, Administrator Constantine approved the creation of a new Special Operations Division (SOD), which became fully functional in 1994. Its mission was to target the command and control capabilities of major drug trafficking organizations from Mexico, Colombia, and elsewhere. Originally, DEA exclusively operated the division. In 1995, FBI became full partners, followed by the U.S. Customs Service in 1996.

SOD could process intelligence derived from worldwide multi-agency elements. This information was then passed to domestic field divisions and foreign country offices for real-time, or near real-time, support to programmed investigative and enforcement activity directed against major trafficking organizations across the globe. Regarding domestic enforcement, the division's foremost function was to help field divisions build national conspiracy cases derived from multi-jurisdictional wiretap investigations.

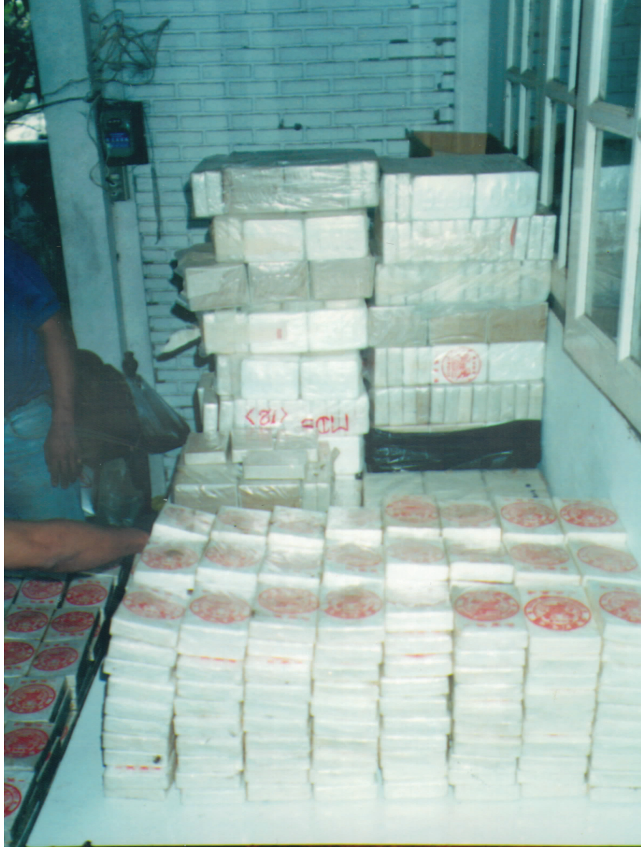
Operation Tiger Trap (1994)

DEA's Bangkok Office conceived Operation Tiger Trap in June 1994 to identify and target major heroin traffickers in the region. Tiger Trap was the first of its kind, a multi-agency international operation designed to dismantle or disrupt the activities of the world's largest heroin trafficking organization: the Shan United Army (SUA). Also known as the Mong Tai Army, it was located primarily in areas of Burma adjacent to the northern border provinces of Thailand. SUA warlord Khun Sa claimed that his army, financed primarily through heroin trafficking, fought the Burmese for the Shan people's independence.

SUA controlled heroin cultivation, production, and transportation from the Shan State. Although other insurgent groups in Burma also trafficked heroin, SUA dominated worldwide distribution. Before Operation Tiger Trap, the percentage of Southeast Asian-sourced heroin in the United States identified by DEA's Heroin Signature Program rose from 9 percent in 1977 to 58 percent in 1991.

Tiger Trap was divided into phases that targeted key SUA functionaries. On November 27, 1994, the operation culminated when teams of Royal Thai Police, Office of Narcotics Control Board Officers, and Royal Thai Army Special Forces Soldiers working with DEA agents lured targets from Burma into Thailand, where they were arrested. This significantly damaged SUA's ability to distribute heroin. The Royal Thai Army then worked with the Thai Border Patrol Police to close Burma's border to "commercial quantities" of goods entering the Shan State.

When law enforcement authorities completed their operations, 13 senior SUA traffickers were arrested, and all were pursued for extradition or expulsion to the United States. These principal defendants included some of the most persistent and high-level heroin traffickers operating out of Thailand. They were all subjects of U.S. indictments in the Eastern District of New York and a mixture of three distinct categories: eligible for expulsion (illegal aliens in Thailand); in possession of fraudulent identification; and authentic Thai citizens.


On December 3, 1993, law enforcement authorities seized 315 kilos of heroin in Pae, Thailand.

Operation Tiger Trap toppled SUA warlord and heroin trafficker Khun Sa.

New Wall of Honor (1995)

To pay tribute to the men and women of DEA and state and local task forces who gave their lives in the line of duty, Administrator Constantine directed a new, more visible Memorial Wall of Honor be erected in the lobby of DEA Headquarters. The 20-foot memorial displayed a picture of each fallen DEA employee or state and local task force member.

Mobile Enforcement Teams (1995)

Many American communities were suffering the devastating effects of drug-related crime and violence. Numerous drug-related homicides were unsolved, and, in too many cases, witnesses were afraid to come forward with information. Administrator Constantine believed that DEA had a great deal of expertise and the resources necessary to assist state and local law enforcement agencies. He established the Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) program in April 1995 to address limited state and local resources—equipment, funding, and diversification of personnel—to effectively perform drug enforcement and support local law enforcement

A MET team in Houston, Texas.

personnel who were often recognizable to those who used or sold drugs, which made undercover buys and penetration of distribution rings difficult and dangerous.

MET teams, composed of specially trained and equipped DEA special agents, were strategically located across the country to facilitate rapid deployment to communities where police chiefs or sheriffs requested assistance. MET investigations immediately reduced the impact of drug-related violence.

One of the first MET deployments was in Galveston County, Texas, in May 1995. In a single week, the county had experienced five drive-by shootings, and the sheriff requested assistance from DEA's Houston Division. The Galveston Narcotics Task Force, working with the Houston MET, launched an investigation of the drug gang believed to be connected to the shootings. Only days later, five adults were arrested on charges of attempted homicide and deadly conduct. Two juveniles were also arrested and charged with the theft of firearms used in the shootings. On June 12, 1995, three additional suspects were arrested; one suspected of multiple homicides in the area.

Another successful MET team dispatched to Opa-Locka, Florida dismantled a dangerous crack cocaine organization headed by Rickey Brownlee. The violent trafficker had intimidated local citizens for years and was allegedly involved in 13 murders since 1993. In a letter to the Attorney General, Mayor of Opa-Locka Robert B. Ingram thanked DEA for its expertise in the January 1998 dismantling of the notorious criminal enterprise. To further show his appreciation, Mayor Ingram issued an official proclamation declaring March 19, 1998, "Drug Enforcement Administration/Mobile Enforcement Team Day."

Similar MET success stories were recorded across the country as state and local law enforcement requested

DEA's assistance. From their 1995 inception through September 1998, METs arrested over 6,800 violent drug traffickers, seized vast quantities of drugs, and helped many state and local police departments restore peace to their communities.

Oklahoma City Bombing (1995)

DEA was again touched by tragedy on April 19, 1995, when a bomb exploded at the Alfred E. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, killing 168 people, including 19 children. Five DEA employees died and three additional DEA personnel were injured. DEA offices on the seventh and ninth floors were completely destroyed. Twenty-seven employees had been assigned to DEA's Oklahoma City Resident Office, including 10 special agents, 4 diversion investigators, 3 secretaries, and several task force personnel.

Within minutes of the blast, agents assisted fire and rescue workers in evacuating the building. DEA sent personnel from the Tulsa, McAlester, Dallas, Tyler, Lubbock, St. Louis, Los Angeles, Ft. Lauderdale, and San Antonio offices to assist in rescue and investigative efforts. By the first afternoon, DEA had set up a command post at the scene and a DEA trauma team was providing counseling for survivors. The rescue efforts were extremely difficult and time consuming, and DEA employees joined in the search for lost personnel. The first priority was to locate the bodies of missing employees and take care of their families.

On April 21, 1995, DEA confirmed the deaths of two employees: Special Agent Kenneth G. McCullough and DynCorp Legal Technician Carrie Ann Lenz, who was six months pregnant with her first child, Michael James Lenz III. Rescue workers next recovered the bodies of Dispatcher Rona L. Chafey and DynCorp Legal Technician Shelly Bland. During the early morning hours of April 24 workers recovered the body of Office Assistant Carrol Fields from the ruins.

The Alfred Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, April 19, 1995. Courtesy, Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum and the City of Oklahoma City

Upon learning of the deaths, Administrator Constantine flew to Oklahoma City to support the grieving families. “Our condolences go out to the families of these . . . good people, and to all the families who have lost loved ones in this cowardly and inhumane attack,” he stated. “The entire DEA family mourns their loss.” Administrator Constantine then pledged to commit DEA’s “resources and professional expertise, in collaboration with other agencies, to bring all of the perpetrators of this crime to justice.”

On June 2, 1997, a jury convicted Timothy McVeigh of 11 counts of conspiracy and first-degree murder. The same panel later recommended the death penalty for the murders of 168 people, including 8 federal law enforcement agents, in the bombing.

For their heroic actions at the scene, Midwest City Police Corporal Regina Bonny and DEA Special Agent David Schickedanz received the 1996 Police Officer of the Year Award given by Parade and the International Association of Chiefs of Police. Bonny was an undercover narcotics officer on assignment with DEA at the time of the explosion. After initially being knocked unconscious by the blast, she assisted an ATF officer before exiting the collapsed building. Although she was injured (and later diagnosed with irreparable nerve damage, brain injury, and hand and shoulder wounds), she returned to the building, sprinted up the stairs to the ninth floor, and searched for other DEA employees. Schickedanz was in an elevator with ATF supervisor Alex McCauley when the explosion dropped their cab six floors. After he escaped through a trap door, Schickedanz returned to the destroyed DEA office to look for survivors. He suffered from smoke inhalation and a partial loss of hearing.

After the bombing, the Oklahoma City Resident Office recovered some of the law enforcement resources lost. The office rebuilt its record file by obtaining copies available at Headquarters. With all evidence at the office destroyed, the evidence collection had to be completely rebuilt. DEA relocated the office to 990 Broadway Extension, approximately 10 miles from the former Murrah Building.

Operation Green Ice II (1995)

Green Ice II, a spin-off of the successful 1992 Green Ice investigation, culminated in April 1995 with the arrest of 109 individuals and the seizure of 13,882 pounds of cocaine, 16 pounds of heroin, and $15.6 million in cash. This second phase operation concentrated on the Cali mafia’s money brokers and cocaine distribution networks from Mexico to the United States. Once again, DEA established storefront operations and bank accounts throughout the world, then convinced drug traffickers that undercover DEA agents had connections to launder their drug proceeds.

Most of the people arrested were high-ranking Cali cell leaders or money brokers on U.S. soil. Green Ice II had three distinct phases. The first targeted certain “Casas de Cambio,” or legal and unregulated money exchange houses that operated like banks, and check cashing institutions along the Southwest border. These organizations wire-transferred large sums of money and did not keep records of the funds’ sources or owners. Second, DEA agents created their own money exchange houses and infiltrated existing Casas de Cambio to identify major narcotic traffickers, money launderers, and the financial institutions traffickers used. The third portion of the investigation followed the money into Colombia, linking specific cartel members with the narcotics proceeds.

Ultimately, more than 200 federal agents from 27 federal, state, and foreign law enforcement agencies contributed to the indictment of over 80 individuals. Additionally, Operation Green Ice II enabled DEA to gain a wealth of information on wire transfers, bank accounts, and the identities of money couriers and brokers. It also proved that corrupt businessmen, bankers, and attorneys had allied with drug dealers to funnel profits back to them.

Operation Global Sea (1995)

In 1994, Southeast Asian heroin smuggled by China- and Nigeria-based traffickers posed significant challenges for U.S. drug law enforcement. Almost 60 percent of heroin entering the United States that year originated from the “Golden Triangle”—Burma, Laos, and Thailand. Ethnic

Agents counting money seized during Operation Green Ice II.

Chinese traffickers were chiefly responsible, controlling sophisticated international networks that regularly smuggled hundreds of kilograms of heroin in commercial cargo. Trafficking organizations in China, Nigeria, and other parts of West Africa helped smuggle the drug, typically using the "shotgun" approach: recruiting third-party couriers to travel aboard commercial airlines and smuggle from 1 to 10 kilograms of heroin per trip.

In response, Operation Global Sea targeted a Nigerian, female-led drug trafficking organization that smuggled $26 million worth of high-purity Southeast Asian heroin into the United States. Global Sea, an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force operation, comprised DEA, the U.S. Customs Service, FBI, and law enforcement authorities in Thailand, Great Britain, France, Switzerland, Mexico, and the Netherlands. By the end of this 18-month investigation, the operation immobilized the Chicago-based drug organization by seizing 55.5 kilograms of heroin with an average purity of 80 percent and arresting 44 defendants in Bangkok, Chicago, New York City, Detroit, and Pakistan.

The heroin distribution operation targeted in Operation Global Sea was directed by Ms. Kafayat Majekodunmi, shown after her arrest by DEA special agents.

Arrest of Cali Leaders (1995)

During the summer of 1995, the Cali mafia began to collapse. Six of its top leaders surrendered or were arrested by Colombian authorities under the leadership of CNP Director General Rosso Serrano. The arrest of the wealthiest and most powerful international criminal organization's entire hierarchy was the most significant enforcement action taken against organized crime leaders since the Apalachin Meeting Raid in 1957, which exposed the power of organized crime syndicates in the United States.

On June 9, 1995, CNP arrested Gilberto Rodríguez-Orejuela during a house raid in Cali. When the police searched the home several days earlier, he hid in a hollowed-out bathroom cabinet with an oxygen tank. The CNP's excellent police work led to his arrest. After he was taken into custody, police discovered that he had a copy of an unclassified DEA report titled "The Kings of Cocaine" that had been translated into Spanish. He was sentenced to 13 years in prison.

On June 19, 1995, Henry Loiaza-Ceballos, who had overseen the mafia's military infrastructure, surrendered to police. Considered one of the most violent members of the Cali drug mafia, he was linked to at least three massacres in Colombia.

On June 24, 1995, Victor Julio Patiño-Fomeque, who was responsible for ensuring the security and effectiveness of the mafia's maritime operations, also surrendered and was sentenced to 12 years behind bars.

On July 4, 1995, CNP arrested José Santacruz-Londoño, the number three leader in the Cali mafia, as he dined with associates at a Bogotá steak house. He was never sentenced because he escaped from prison and was killed in March 1996 during a confrontation with CNP.

Finally, on Aug. 6, 1995, Miguel Rodríguez-Orejuela, the brother of Gilberto, was arrested when CNP broke down his apartment's door and found him hiding in a secret closet during another house raid. He was sentenced to 21 years.

Less than one year later, there were two more arrests of major Cali mafia leaders. In March 1996, Juan Carlos "Chupeta" Ramírez-Abadía surrendered to Colombian authorities and was later sentenced to 24 years in prison. On September 1, 1996, Hélmer "Pacho" Herrera-Buitrago surrendered to Colombian authorities. A charter member of the mafia, he was the remaining kingpin sought by Colombian authorities and sentenced to six years in prison.

These arrests, resulting from extensive DEA investigations, marked the beginning of the Cali mafia's decline. However, the investigations would not have been as successful without CNP's outstanding efforts. Remarking on CNP's contributions in 1998, Administrator Constantine expressed, "No one has sacrificed more than the Colombian National Police. At great sacrifice to themselves, and in the face of extraordinary temptations for corruption, General Rosso Serrano and his brave law enforcement officers have fought the powerful drug traffickers in Colombia."

Rise of Drug Traffickers in Mexico

When enforcement efforts intensified in South Florida and the Caribbean, Colombian organizations formed partnerships with Mexico-based traffickers to transport cocaine through Mexico into the United States. As a longtime source of heroin and marijuana, Mexican drug traffickers had already established an infrastructure to serve their Colombian counterparts. Juan Ramón Matta-Ballesteros, a Honduran, pioneered Mexican cocaine trafficking. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, he was actively involved with the Mexican Guadalajara cartel—the group largely responsible for the kidnapping, torture, and murder of DEA Special Agent Enrique Camarena. By the mid-1980s, Mexico-based organizations were well-established and reliable transporters of Colombian cocaine.

Throughout the 1990s, these organizations worked with the Cali mafia to smuggle more and more cocaine into the United States. Colombian traffickers bought large cargo and passenger jets similar to 727s, gutted them, and used them to transport multi-ton loads of cocaine to Mexico. The planes were then refueled and returned to Colombia loaded with millions of dollars in cash. At first, Mexican gangs were paid cash for their transportation services. But in the late 1980s, these organizations and Colombian drug traffickers settled on a payment-in-product arrangement. Typically, transporters from Mexico were given 35 to 50 percent of each cocaine shipment, and they became formidable traffickers that distributed and transported the drug.

Mexico-based organizations also corrupted officials serving in high-level positions, a major obstacle to law enforcement. Ernesto Zedillo, President of Mexico, recognized drug-related corruption as a threat to his country's national security and, in 1998, announced an initiative to fight crime, violence, and corruption. The Mexican government also replaced civilian authorities with military officers.

The following describes the most powerful drug traffickers U.S. and Mexican authorities faced in the late 1990s.

The Amado Carrillo-Fuentes Organization

Before his death on July 4, 1997, Amado Carrillo-Fuentes was widely considered the most powerful trafficker in Mexico. He died from plastic surgery complications, leaving control of his organization, the Juárez cartel, uncertain. Vicente Carrillo Fuentes, Amado's brother, took over

CNP Gen. Rosso Serrano (right) is pictured with Miguel Rodriguez-Orejuela (center) shortly after his 1995 arrest.

shortly after amid a violent turf war. By 1999, the organization, based in Juárez, was still involved in the trafficking of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana. The cartel stored drugs at its regional bases—Juárez, Hermosillo, and Reynosa—for eventual shipment to the United States and associated with the Cali-based Rodríguez-Orejuela organization and the Ochoa brothers of Medellín, Colombia.

The Arellano-Félix Brothers Organization

This Tijuana-based organization was one of the most powerful, violent, and aggressive trafficking groups in the world. It had high-level contacts within Mexican law enforcement and judicial systems and was directly involved in street-level trafficking within the United States. The Arellano-Félix organization transported, imported, and distributed multi-ton quantities of cocaine and marijuana, as well as large quantities of heroin and methamphetamine. The Arellano family, composed of seven brothers and four sisters, inherited the organization from Miguel Ángel Félix-Gallardo upon his 1989 incarceration in Mexico for his complicity in the murder of DEA Special Agent Enrique Camarena. Alberto Benjamín Arellano-Félix assumed leadership of the family enterprise and provided a businessman's approach to the management of their drug empire, which operated in Tijuana, Baja California, and parts of Sinaloa, Sonora, Jalisco, and Tamaulipas. Benjamín coordinated the organization's activities through his brothers Ramón, Eduardo, and Francisco.

The Juan García-Abrego Organization

The Juan García-Abrego organization smuggled drugs from Yucatán, Mexico, to South Texas and New York. It transported large quantities of cocaine for the Cali mafia, as well as marijuana and heroin for other traffickers. García-Abrego pioneered deals that compensated Mexican traffickers with cocaine, substantially raising their profits and allowing them to distribute, as well as smuggle, cocaine. The organization and its leader were notorious for violence. In 1996, FBI added García-Abrego to its top 10 most wanted fugitives with a $2 million reward for his capture—the first time an international drug trafficker was included. In January 1996, he was arrested in Mexico, brought to the United States for trial, sentenced to 11 life terms, and fined $128 million.

The Miguel Caro-Quintero Organization

The Miguel Caro-Quintero organization, based in Sonora, Mexico, cultivated, processed, smuggled, and distributed heroin and marijuana. It also transported methamphetamine and Colombian cocaine into the United States. Rafael Caro-Quintero, known as the "Mexican Rhinestone Cowboy," led the organization until he was arrested and placed in a Mexican maximum-security prison for his involvement in the kidnapping, torture, and murder of Special Agent Camarena. Caro-Quintero was also convicted on marijuana and cocaine trafficking charges. His brothers, Miguel, Jorge, and Genaro, assumed control of the organization. Miguel was arrested in 1992 but used threats and bribes to have the charges dismissed by a federal judge in Hermosillo, Mexico, under questionable circumstances.

Creation of the Caribbean Field Division (1995)

While most cocaine entering the United States came across the U.S.-Mexico border, traffickers began reactivating their Caribbean routes. Many groups from Colombia, particularly those who had risen to power since the Cali syndicate's fall, returned to these routes to move their product to market. As they reestablished local ties, shipments of cocaine and heroin grew. The drug activity skyrocketed violence in Puerto Rico, which became the nation's seventh major High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA).

In response to this escalating problem, DEA established the Caribbean Division based in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1995. The division was responsible for five country offices that had previously reported to the Miami regional office—Netherlands Antilles, Barbados, Haiti, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic—in addition to the St. Thomas Resident Office and the St. Croix Post of Duty in the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Ponce Resident Office in Ponce, Puerto Rico.

A member of the Caribbean Division walks through a field of cannabis plants.

Atlanta Olympics (1996)

The White House requested DEA and other federal law enforcement agencies assist with security during the 1996 Olympic games in Atlanta, Georgia. DEA sent over 200 men and women. Security was important because national leaders from 197 participating nations, athletes, coaches, and visitors from across the globe attended. DEA had previously supported the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics and the 1987 Pan American Games in Indianapolis, Indiana.

When a bomb exploded in Centennial Olympic Park on the ninth day of the games, DEA agents were instrumental in preserving the safety of hundreds of spectators. They were on hand when FBI and Defense Department experts identified a suspicious-looking knapsack as a bomb just minutes before it exploded. DEA agents, along with Georgia State Patrol and other law enforcement officers, hurriedly evacuated the few hundred people in the park. The agents risked their own safety by evacuating nearby civilians and, after the explosion, administering first aid. By remaining calm and focused, the agents undoubtedly saved many lives.

One DEA agent, Craig Wiles, was injured in the blast. Stationed just 25 to 30 feet from the explosion, he was struck in the back of the head by a piece of wood. Despite his injuries, Special Agent Wiles continued to help fellow agents and wounded civilians. He was later

Atlanta Olympic Division Squad 23.

taken to nearby Georgia Baptist Medical Center where doctors removed wood splinters. In a few days, Wiles fully recovered and was the first agent to receive DEA's Purple Heart Award. All DEA agents who helped evacuate Centennial Olympic Park were honored for their courage when, in 1997, Atlanta Olympic Division Squad 23 was given the Administrator's Award for Outstanding Group Achievement.

The Methamphetamine Problem

In the mid-1990s, Mexico-based trafficking groups deeply involved themselves in the methamphetamine trade, replacing domestic outlaw motorcycle gangs as the drug's predominant producers, traffickers, and distributors. Their involvement was made tragically clear when, during an undercover operation, DEA Special Agent Richard Fass was shot and killed in Tucson, Arizona, on June 30, 1994, by a methamphetamine trafficker from Mexico.

By decade's end, these trafficking organizations had virtually saturated the western U.S. market with high-purity methamphetamine, known as "speed" or "crank." In some areas of California, methamphetamine replaced cocaine as the drug of choice. The traffickers then expanded their markets to the east coast, south, and the Midwest. As supplies increased, prices fell, making it a cheap alternative to cocaine (some called meth "poor man's cocaine"). In 1991, for example, the lowest price nationwide for a pound of methamphetamine was $6,000. Four years later, methamphetamine sold for $2,500 to $3,600 per pound in California.

With increased availability, methamphetamine use increased. According to DAWN, emergency room episodes involving the drug increased steadily after 1991, particularly out west. From 1991 to 1993, episodes more than doubled in Los Angeles and Phoenix.

Mexico-based organizations were sophisticated. With long-standing expertise in polydrug smuggling and skills developed while transporting cocaine for the Cali mafia, they could branch out into other contraband, like precursor chemicals to produce meth (e.g., ephedrine and pseudoephedrine).

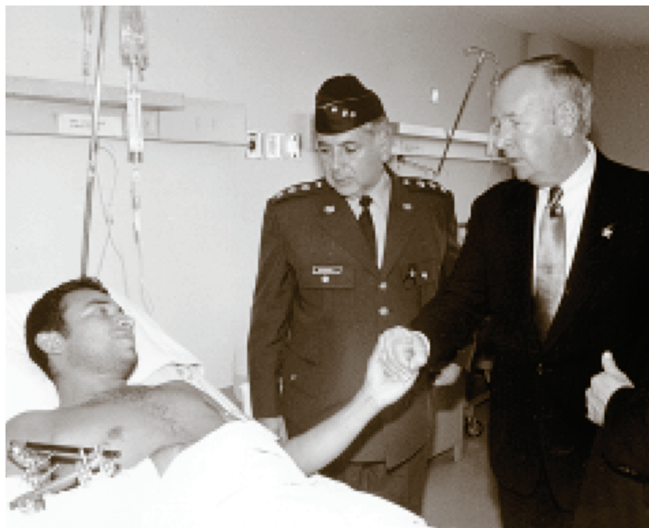
They also established international connections in Europe, Asia, and the Far East to have tons of precursor chemicals, particularly ephedrine, shipped to U.S. and Mexican addresses. In 1993 and 1994, most ephedrine shipments destined for Mexico were supplied by such diverse countries as China, India, the Czech Republic, and Switzerland. From mid-1993 to early 1995, DEA documented the diversion of almost 170 tons of ephedrine used in illicit methamphetamine production.

Unlike other drugs, methamphetamine was controlled by these criminal organizations from beginning to end. Beyond acquiring precursor chemicals, they also had clandestine labs to process them into methamphetamine on both sides of the border. They used and intimidated undocumented noncitizens to expand their distribution networks. Unlike the organizations' service as middlemen moving cocaine and heroin, they kept 100 percent of the profits from methamphetamine sales.

In late 1994, state and local authorities in California requested a meeting with Administrator Constantine. They expressed concern about escalating methamphetamine use and the rising number of clandestine meth labs discovered in the state. The information they provided mirrored information and intelligence DEA received about a scourge of nationwide meth use cases.

Working closely with California law enforcement, DEA hosted a National Methamphetamine Conference in February 1996. The event brought together experts from across the United States to examine enforcement and policy options. It incorporated perspectives from knowledgeable DEA personnel and state and local law enforcement agencies encountering meth in their jurisdictions. Conferees heard reports from their peers and federal agencies beyond DEA, exchanging ideas on strategies to address the problem.

In his opening remarks, Administrator Constantine stated that holding the conference allowed those with extensive experience in drug law enforcement "to help identify the scope of the methamphetamine problem and to ensure that [there would be] a coordinated response." Participants offered their input by filling out surveys and taking part in group discussions.



During an August 1998 visit to Colombia, Administrator Constantine (right) and General Serrano met with a wounded Colombian National Police officer who survived an attack by a rebel group against Colombian anti-narcotics headquarters. Courtesy, Publicaciones Semana

Comprehensive Methamphetamine Control Act of 1996

The Comprehensive Methamphetamine Control Act of 1996 was passed unanimously in Congress and signed into law by President William Clinton on October 3, 1996. It augmented DEA's effort to control precursor chemicals and lab equipment used to produce meth. Several provisions affected DEA operations:

1. Restricting access to precursor chemicals such as iodine, red phosphorous, and hydrochloric gas used to make methamphetamine, and tightening controls on the sale of pseudoephedrine, phenylpropanolamine, and ephedrine combination products, all common ingredients found in over-the-counter diet pills and cold medicines.
2. Tracking mail-order purchases of precursor chemicals.
3. Establishing civil penalties of up to $250,000 for firms that distribute laboratory supplies with "reckless disregard" for the illegal purposes for which the supplies might be used.
4. Doubling the maximum criminal penalty to 20 years in jail for possession of chemicals or equipment used to make methamphetamine.
5. Increasing penalties for trafficking and manufacturing methamphetamine or its precursor chemicals.
6. Directing the Attorney General to coordinate international drug enforcement efforts to reduce trafficking in methamphetamine and its precursor chemicals.
7. Making it a crime to manufacture precursor chemicals outside the United States with the intent to smuggle them into the country.
8. Allowing courts to order restitution for the extensive costs (often as much as $8,000) associated with the cleanup of methamphetamine labs and for any person injured as a result of the lab's operation.

In March 1997, DEA Ft. Worth and DEA Midland, Texas, offices jointly investigated a large-scale drug smuggling operation and seized 2,175 pounds of marijuana in Odessa.

9. Creating the Methamphetamine Interagency Task Force to design and implement methamphetamine education, prevention, and treatment strategies and establishing an advisory board to educate chemical companies to identify suspicious transactions.

Purple Heart Award (1996)

The Hispanic Advisory Committee suggested the Administrator establish an award to honor the "thousands of men and women sworn to enforce the drug laws of the U.S. who deserve the full benefit of our recognition of the inherent dangers of our profession."

In response, the DEA Purple Heart Award was instituted. As of January 1, 1996, any DEA agent wounded in the line of duty became eligible for the award. Based on the design of the military's Purple Heart for battle injuries, DEA's award honors agents who suffer injuries that require medical treatment or cause death and are incurred during the performance of official duties as the direct result of a hostile or criminal action.

The heart-shaped pendant, with a DEA special agent's badge embossed on a purple background, is suspended from a red, white, and blue ribbon. It is presented in a glass-front shadowbox and accompanied by a smaller version of the pendant as a lapel pin. With the creation of this award, DEA established a significant way to recognize employees injured while confronting the everyday dangers of drug law enforcement.

In 1998, DEA's SAC Advisory Committee expanded the awarding of a Purple Heart to state and local law enforcement officers killed or wounded in the line of duty while working with DEA.

Operations Reciprocity and Limelight (1996)

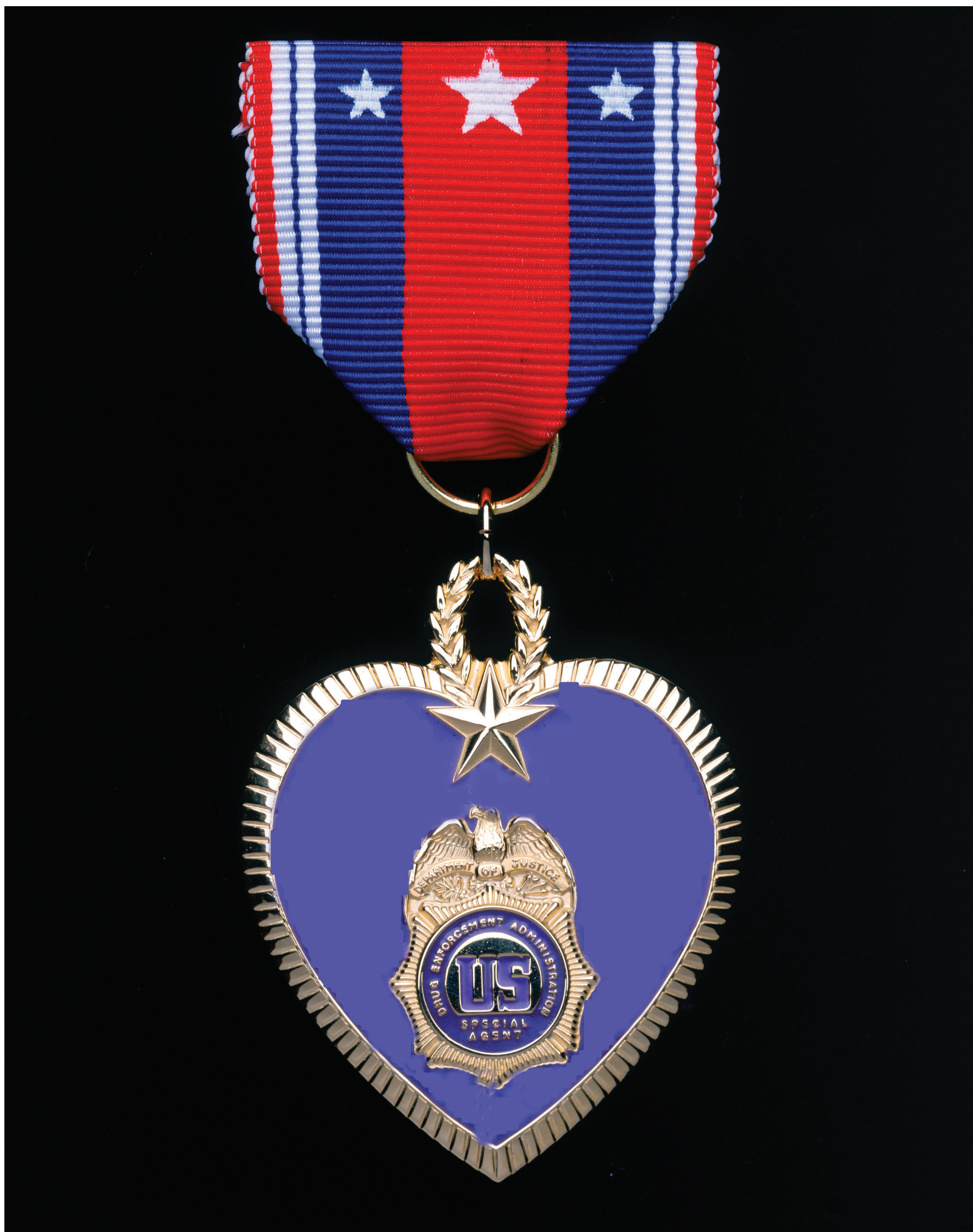
Two investigations in the late 1990s demonstrated that Mexico-based drug traffickers had displaced some Colombia-based cocaine organizations that traditionally dominated New York City's cocaine traffic.

During a highway interdiction stop on October 30, 1996, near Tyler, Texas, two state troopers discovered over $2 million in cash concealed in a van heading south. This stop was the first seizure linked to Operation Reciprocity. On December 3, investigators seized 5.3 tons of cocaine from a Tucson, Arizona, warehouse. Evidence linked the warehouse operation to a Los Angeles investigation, a New York operation, a Michigan transportation group, and a trafficking cell connected to the Carrillo-Fuentes organization. On December 13, the same state troopers stopped a tractor trailer truck in Tyler and seized 2,700 pounds of marijuana from a hidden compartment in the vehicle's ceiling. The investigation revealed that traffickers were smuggling cocaine to New York in concealed compartments in the roofs of tractor trailer trucks and in hollowed-out five-foot tall stacks of plywood. The same trucks transported cash in kilo-sized packages of $5, $10, and $20 bills back to Mexico.

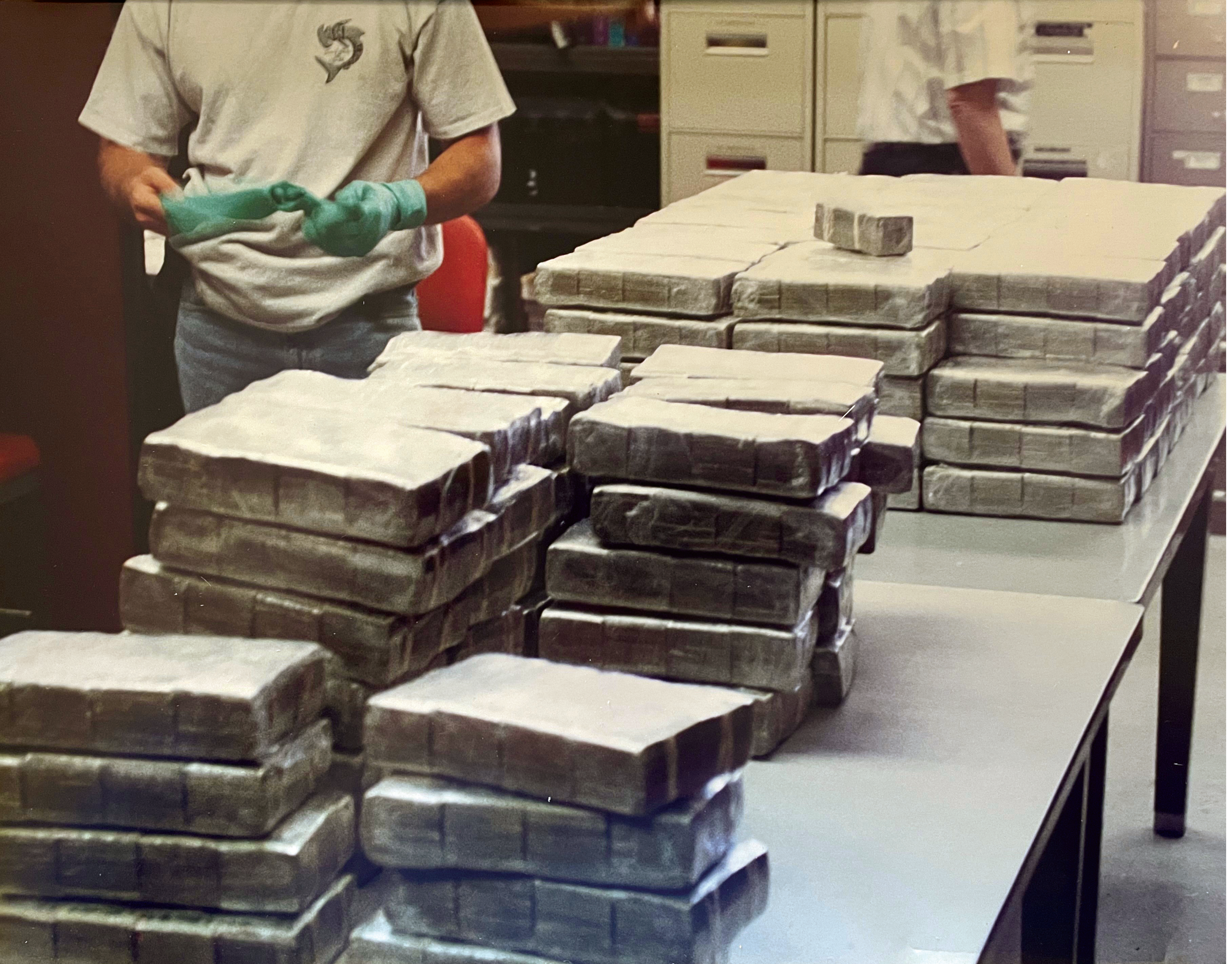
On April 9, 1997, the U.S. Customs Service found $5.6 million in street cash hidden inside a tractor trailer truck ceiling compartment in El Paso, Texas, as part of Operation Reciprocity. This operation resulted in 41 arrests, as well as the seizure of 7 tons of cocaine, 2,800 pounds of marijuana, and more than $11 million. Meanwhile, an investigation initiated by DEA's Imperial County, California, Resident Office in August 1996 developed into Operation Limelight, which involved several state, local, and U.S. Treasury agencies, including the IRS and U.S. Customs Service. The investigation focused on the Alberto Beltran transportation and distribution cell, which was part of the Carrillo-Fuentes organization.

Operation Limelight resulted in 48 arrests and the seizure of over 4,000 kilograms of cocaine, 10,800 pounds of marijuana, and $7.3 million. State and federal investigators believed the Beltran cell was responsible for the monthly smuggling of at least 1.5 tons of cocaine, typically concealed in crates of vegetables or fruits and trucked across the United States by Mexican nationals.

In March 1996, Operation Limelight investigators arrested the head of the Beltran organization in the United States, Gerardo Gonzalez. His capture resulted from the "carrot case," which also led to the New York seizure of 1,630 kilograms of cocaine hidden in a 30-ton shipment of



The DEA Purple Heart award.



Operation Reciprocity investigators found $5.6 million in street money hidden in this truck's ceiling compartment during the El Paso seizure on April 9, 1997.

chopped carrots for horse feed. At that time, the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force also seized $1.3 million and arrested 9 organization members. Eight more, including Gonzalez's wife, were arrested on August 1, 1997, in the investigation's second phase.

Legalization in California and Arizona (1996)

In the early 1990s, as many communities grappled with crime and violence, a small, but vocal, group of people believed that legalizing drugs would reduce drug use, lessen violence, and restore peace to U.S. cities. Because DEA believed that legalization would exacerbate these problems, not solve them, the agency sponsored a forum in 1994 on how police chiefs and others could address drug legalization arguments. The conference's findings were published in a manual that police chiefs and others used to speak out against legalization.

In 1996, powerful, wealthy special interest organizations pushed for marijuana legalization. They successfully put the issue before voters in California and Arizona. Through media advertising campaigns, voters were led to believe the initiative would simply allow medical doctors to treat terminally ill and suffering patients with marijuana for pain relief. In Arizona, messaging emphasized that the proposition included provisions to toughen criminal justice systems.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) released resolutions expressing their opposition to the states' legalization propositions. IACP outlined the grounds for its objections: marijuana is more carcinogenic than other Schedule I drugs or tobacco; it compromises brain functions, the immune system, the lungs, and hormonal responses to stress and metabolic changes; and makes diseases such as tuberculosis, asthma, and multiple sclerosis worse. IACP also maintained that marijuana did not prevent blindness due to glaucoma nor did any national health organization accept marijuana as medicine. Additionally, the resolutions contained a list of organizations that asserted the drug had not been scientifically proven safe or effective as a medicine. The list included the American Medical Association, American Cancer Society, National Multiple Sclerosis Association, American Academy of Ophthalmology, National Eye Institute, National Cancer Institute, National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Strokes, National Institute of Dental Research, and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Despite such widespread objections, the propositions passed in both states. California's Proposition 215 allowed anyone who received a doctor's recommendation to possess and use marijuana for cancer, AIDS, glaucoma, and "any other illness for which marijuana provides relief." It allowed doctors to verbally "recommend" marijuana use to minors, prisoners, individuals in sensitive positions, or anyone who claimed to have a medical condition. The proposition, by extension, also allowed individuals to smoke and cultivate marijuana openly on the premise that the drug had been recommended for a medical condition.

The Arizona proposition was more restrictive than California's: a physician had to cite a study confirming the proven medical benefits of the Schedule I drug and provide a written prescription, which was kept in the patient's medical file. The patient was required to obtain a written opinion from a second physician confirming that the prescription of marijuana was "appropriate to treat a disease or to relieve the pain and suffering of a seriously ill patient or terminally ill patient." The Arizona proposition, however, also provided for other actions that eroded existent drug policies, including the release of prisoners previously convicted of personal possession or use of a controlled substance.

Even with the initiatives' differences, there was an indisputable similarity: both states allowed individuals to possess substances that have no legitimate medical use. California and Arizona had taken the first steps toward proponents' ultimate goal of legalizing drugs. Inspired by the new laws, legalization campaigns organized in other states.

Operation Zorro II

As part of the Southwest Border Initiative launched in 1994, the Zorro II investigation targeted Mexico-based cocaine smuggling and distribution organizations as well as partnership groups in Colombia. Working together, these organizations imported and distributed almost six metric tons of cocaine throughout the United States.

Zorro II illustrated the partnership's strength and efficiency. The international drug trade was a seamless continuum, a criminal enterprise that stretched, without interruption, from the jungles of South America—across transit zones, such as Mexico—to U.S. cities and communities.

Zorro II was particularly important because, for the first time, law enforcement dismantled a Colombian organization that produced cocaine and the Mexico-based organization that provided its transportation. During the 8-month investigation, law enforcement officers coordinated and shared information gleaned from more than 90 court-authorized wiretaps. The operation involved 10 federal agencies, 42 state and local agencies, and 14 DEA domestic field divisions across the country. As a result, over $17 million and almost 5,600 kilograms of cocaine were seized, and 156 people were arrested. Zorro II confirmed that Mexico-based traffickers transported cocaine and maintained their own distribution networks throughout the United States.

Billion-Dollar Budget (1997)

In 1997, DEA achieved its first-ever billion-dollar direct appropriation budget. This $1.054 billion budget was approximately $200 million, or 23 percent, greater than DEA's 1996

budget, which had been an agency all-time high. DEA's funding increased in a time of fiscal belt-tightening; a tribute to the outstanding work DEA personnel performed worldwide and the agency's many achievements in 1996. DEA's fiscal year (FY) 1997 appropriation contained significant resources to restore its source country drug trafficking programs to FY 1992 funding levels. DEA also received $29 million in the 1997 appropriations for construction of a training center at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

Jose Ivan Duarte (1997)

Colombian drug traffickers hired Jose Ivan Duarte and his conspirator, Rene Benitez, to plan and execute the kidnaping of DEA Special Agents Charles Martinez and Kelly McCullough in 1982. The agents were taken from their hotel in Cartagena, Colombia, and transported by car to a secluded area 15 miles away. Agent Martinez was first shot within city limits. After continuing on, Duarte and Benitez stopped the car and shot Martinez again. At that point Agent McCullough fled. He was shot as he ran into the jungle. Martinez escaped when his captors' gun jammed as they attempted to shoot him for a third time. Both Martinez and McCullough escaped despite their wounds. They reached Cartagena the next day and phoned the U.S. Embassy for assistance. A U.S. Air Force plane from Panama airlifted them out of the country.

Both Duarte and Benitez initially eluded capture. Warrants for their arrest were issued in June 1982. Benitez was eventually captured in Colombia, extradited, and imprisoned in Miami in 1995. Duarte, however, evaded U.S. authorities until August 1997, when he was detained in Ecuador. The Ecuadorian government expelled the fugitive, who was then transported to the United States to stand trial. His capture marked the end of a 15-year investigation and search. According to Administrator Constantine, "Duarte's expulsion by the Ecuadorian government show[ed] great courage and commitment to battling drugs."

DEA/Wal-Mart Partnership (1997)

As part of the nation's efforts against methamphetamine production, on April 9, 1997, DEA and Wal-Mart formed a partnership to control large-scale purchases of three over-the-counter products—pseudoephedrine, ephedrine, and phenylpropanolamine—used in the clandestine manufacture of methamphetamine and amphetamine. Wal-Mart, one of the nation's largest employers, implemented a chain-wide policy limiting sales of these allergy, cold, and diet products. Cash registers at stores nationwide were programmed to limit sales to three to six packages per customer. The company also discontinued the 100-count bottle of their brand of pseudoephedrine tablets (found at illegal labs), replacing them with small-count blister packs. Wal-Mart further limited the sale of blister packs, which were generally exempt from federal regulations. The company's initiative dovetailed with federal regulations stipulated under the second phase of the Methamphetamine Control Act of 1996.

DEA Heroin Conference (1997)

Heroin use increased significantly in the United States in the mid1990s. DAWN statistics for 1995 reported the drug second only to cocaine in hospital incidents. The annual number of heroin-related emergency room mentions increased from 33,384 in 1990 to 76,023 in 1995. The number of heroin overdose deaths also rose nationally from 4,188 in 1994, to 4,625 in 1995. Purity levels increased from 7 percent in 1985 to 40 percent in 1995. In some areas, particularly the Northeast, 80 to 90 percent purity was reported.

The problem grew worse as South America played a bigger role in heroin trafficking. Soon, heroin from the continent dominated the east coast and accounted for the majority of heroin DEA seized. Heroin use also increased because drug dealers actively marketed their product. To raise demand, traffickers included free heroin samples in cocaine shipments. This scheme introduced heroin to those who dealt and used cocaine.

In response, Administrator Constantine held a National Heroin Conference in February 1997. More than 300 federal, state, local, and international law enforcement officials, as well as demand reduction/prevention experts, attended the event in Reston, Virginia. Conferees assessed

the heroin threat to the United States and shared effective strategies to address the problem.

Included in the submitted 26 recommendations were:

1. develop a national media campaign against heroin use;
2. support the development of community-based educational/awareness drug campaigns;
3. increase law enforcement and interdiction training regarding heroin concealment and transportation;
4. enhance DEA's Heroin Signature Program and Domestic Monitor Program;
5. bolster interagency intelligence sharing; and
6. identify a national heroin strategy.

National Drug Pointer Index (1997)

For many years, state and local law enforcement envisioned a drug pointer system to determine if other law enforcement organizations were investigating the same drug suspect. Despite some statewide and regional systems, none extended nationwide. At the direction of ONDCP, DEA took the lead in the development of a national drug pointer system to assist federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies investigating drug trafficking organizations.

The DEA Survivors' Benefit Fund (1998)

In April 1998, Administrator Constantine announced the creation of the DEA Survivors' Benefit Fund, established to assist surviving family members of DEA employees and task force officers killed in the line of duty. The fund also supported programs preserving the memory of those lost and providing financial assistance for family members of employees who died from non-job-related causes.

The Survivors' Benefit Fund combined existing organizations, namely, the Enrique Camarena Fund in Miami; the Seema/Montoya Fund in Los Angeles; the Rick Finley Memorial Foundation in Detroit; the Richard Fass Foundation in Phoenix; and the New York Drug Enforcement Agents Scholarship Foundation. Respectively, these foundations honored Enrique Camarena, who was kidnapped and murdered by drug traffickers in Mexico in 1985; Special Agents Paul S. Seema and George M. Montoya, who were both killed performing an undercover operation in Los Angeles in 1988; Special Agent Rick Finley, who was killed in a plane crash in 1989 returning from a DEA operation in Peru; and Special Agent Richard Fass, who was killed performing an undercover methamphetamine investigation in 1994. Many of these organizations held annual fundraising events to support the families of DEA agents killed in the line of duty. The funds' representatives came together to support one national fund, realizing this change would assist more people. Each fund maintained a separate identity by continuing to hold individual annual fundraisers. Financial support for the Survivors' Benefit Fund came from donations by the general public, as well as profits from various fundraising events across the country.

Justice Training Center

Since 1985, DEA and FBI shared training facilities at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia. With the expansion of both agencies and increasingly complex DEA training requirements, the need for additional space became critical. In May 1991, the Department of Justice completed a study that determined the best and most efficient way to satisfy both agencies' needs was to expand Quantico.

Securing necessary funding to construct a new training center became a major priority for Administrator Constantine upon his appointment. Congress approved the funding in FY 1997's appropriations. Located within the FBI complex, the $29-million academy, called the Justice Training Center, was constructed on land made available to DEA by the Marine Corps. The new center enabled DEA to provide state-of-the-art training for basic agents, state and local law enforcement officials, and international law enforcement counterparts. It was designed to house a 250-bed double-occupancy dormitory, classrooms, office space for staff, a cafeteria, and an international training room equipped for simultaneous translations. An adjacent special facility supports clandestine laboratory training. Special purpose facilities—ranges, a driver training course,

a swimming pool, a gymnasium, and an auditorium—are still shared with FBI. Construction on the new center began in April 1997 and finished in April 1999.

DEA planned a new curriculum for all training courses. In March 1998, Administrator Constantine commissioned the Office of Training to review all DEA training programs, from entry-level basic agent training to specialized and supervisory/management training. The review anticipated the Justice Training Center's completion and opening, ensuring that each program was current. A team of selected supervisory and special agents from the field, diversion investigators, chemists, DEA Headquarters personnel, and members of the training staff conducted the review, offering its suggestions in June 1998.

Training

Administrator Constantine's review of DEA's training curriculum ensured state-of-the-art procedures and techniques were provided across all agency training. The goal was to have every DEA employee fully trained and prepared for the ever-changing environment of drug law enforcement. From the reevaluation, several significant changes were instituted:

- Training programs for basic agents, diversion investigators, intelligence analysts, and chemists were required to devote more time to legal issues, integrity, and personal responsibility.
- Basic agent training was extended to 16 weeks. Also, to support the greater emphasis on personal responsibility, DEA structured 25 hours of formal ethics and integrity sessions into the basic agent training program. These "life training" sessions stressed the positive aspects of integrity and police ethics and equipped new agents with moral tools to successfully tackle ethical dilemmas.
- The Field Training Agent Program was instituted to provide continuous training and

Breaking ground on the new DEA training academy, April 21, 1997. Pictured from left: Brig. Gen. Edwin C. Kelley, Lt. Gen. Paul K. Van Riper, Mr. Benjamin F. Burrell, SAC David Westrate, Administrator Thomas A. Constantine, FBI Director Louis J. Freeh, Mr. Steven S. Honigman, Rear Adm. David J. Nash, Mr. Harold J. Parmelee, and Mr. Everett Medling.

direction to probationary agents following basic agent training.

- An in-service training course, to be held every 18 months, was developed for all core series employees. The program stressed reviews of internal regulations, oral and written communication skills, legal issues, case law, operational and tactical procedures, integrity, and personnel issues, such as sexual harassment. The course also included an ethics curriculum similar to that used for basic agent training.
- A Training Advisory Committee, which met twice a year, was established to assess the training curriculum and increase field input into specific training programs.

From 1995 to September 1998, DEA trained 1,586 basic agents, and from 1994 to September 1998, over 110,000 state and local law enforcement officers.

Aviation

Compared with its 1971 budget of $58,000, the Airwing's 1998 operating budget of $24,400,000 covered a fleet of 98 aircraft and 108 special agents/pilots. On a daily basis, Air Wing personnel worked in close support of domestic offices and provided sophisticated electronic, air-based surveillance.

Creation of the El Paso Field Division (1998)

Because of its proximity to the southwest border, the El Paso, Texas, region experienced a great deal of drug trafficking. As a result, FBI and the U.S. Customs Service established field divisions there. To focus on drug trafficking along the U.S.-Mexican border and better cooperate with other federal law enforcement efforts in the area, Administrator Constantine requested the creation of an El Paso Field Division. The division opened in June 1998.

A reorganization realigned the former El Paso District Office from the Houston Division; the Alpine, Texas, Resident Office from the Dallas Division; and the Albuquerque, New Mexico, District Office from the Denver Division. It also realigned the Las Cruces, New Mexico, Resident Office from the Denver Division to the new El Paso Division and transferred the responsibility for the Billings, Montana, Resident Office from the Seattle Division to the Denver Division. By establishing the El Paso Division, adjoining geographical areas facing a common drug threat were combined under a single authority. With a separate field division to manage the El Paso region, DEA focused directly on the significant drug threat facing the West Texas and New Mexico areas, thereby enhancing the agency's effectiveness along the entire U.S.-Mexican border.

Technology

In late 1995, DEA replaced its aging office automation system (UNISYS BTOS) with a network of Pentium-grade personal computers. The new Firebird system represented a major effort to improve DEA's automated infrastructure ($150 million) with a secure, centralized computer network that standardized the agency's investigative reporting system, case file inventories, administrative functions, and electronic communications. Available at DEA Headquarters and all 22 division offices, Firebird allowed access to the electronic Headquarters file room, connected the DEA community through electronic mail and bulletin boards, and offered a common suite of office automation functions. These capabilities increased user productivity and provided improved access to many automated tools essential to investigative activities. Plans were also made to install Firebird in the 180 DEA field offices, El Paso Intelligence Center, Air Wing, Laboratories, and several overseas offices.

DEA employees also had access to two major online resources: Webster and Investigative Management Program and Case Tracking (IMPACT). Webster was the familiar name for the DEA Electronic Library project. As the core of DEA's intranet, its objectives included building an electronic library for distributing official, up-to-date documents and news, providing secure access to DEA users worldwide via Firebird and Department of Justice mainframe/Teleview (which allowed full-text search and

retrieval), and assisted DEA in expanding its presence on the public internet. The IMPACT system launched in 1996. This program was a mission-oriented, field-led initiative that focused on the collection, use, and dissemination of case-related information at the field level with an emphasis on group supervisors and agents.

In 1988, DEA awarded a contract to investigate and evaluate a preliminary Intelligence Analyst Workstation that would help intelligence analysts develop their reports. The project evolved into a third online resource, Merlin: a system that supports the classified processing needs of intelligence analysts and special agents. Merlin was deployed to DEA Headquarters, the Special Operations Division, and the Houston, San Diego, and Los Angeles Field Divisions. Merlin's project plan called for seven additional divisions and one foreign office to be completed by the end of FY 2000.

Laboratories

DEA laboratories continued using the latest forensic science technology to aid DEA investigations. Beginning in the 1980s, DEA's technology experienced a quantum leap in microprocessor and computer technology. The agency's laboratories engaged in extensive programs to convert to state-of-the-art instrumentation. For example, the outdated vacuum sweep apparatus that collected traces of material for later laboratory analysis was replaced by the Ionscan: a portable instrument that collected trace materials and provided preliminary on-the-spot identification. In 1994 alone, the Ionscan unit developed evidence in cases that seized 22 vehicles, 19 buildings, 2 aircraft, and over $350,000 in cash.

In 1995, the Department of Justice Inspector General conducted a study of the DEA Laboratory System. In a survey of all DEA and FBI field offices, U.S. Attorney's Offices, and Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces, 96 percent of respondents expressed their overall satisfaction with DEA's laboratory services. "The DEA is justifiably proud of the contributions made by all laboratory system employees to maintain such a high level of accomplishment," stated Aaron Hatcher, Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Office of Forensic Science.

DEA continued to upgrade and expand its laboratory facilities. In 1994, a new lab, the North Central Laboratory, was built in Chicago. In 1998, DEA planned new replacement labs to update the Mid-Atlantic Lab in Washington, DC, the Southeast Lab in Miami, the Southwest Lab in San Diego, the Western Lab in San Francisco, and the Special Testing and Research Lab in McLean, Virginia. These expansions would accommodate staffing increases. The new Special Testing and Research, MidAtlantic, and Southeast labs were scheduled to begin operation during the last quarter of 2000, while a schedule for the openings of the new Western, Southwest, and South Central labs had not yet been established. Congress provided funding for the expansions.

DEA also developed mobile labs, further expanding its laboratory capabilities. The small laboratories, driven from site to site, enabled DEA forensic chemists to conduct on-the-spot analysis of seized drugs. Analyzing drugs at the scene accelerated drug traffickers' prosecutions and provided information that identified other drug activity in the local area.