



1999–2003



With a new millennium, laboratory-produced synthetic drugs surged in popularity, particularly among young people. Foremost was ecstasy, a combination stimulant and hallucinogen sold in tablet form. It was touted as a feel-good drug with an undeserved reputation for safety. In 2000, an estimated two million tablets were smuggled into the United States every week. Other synthetic drugs, like methamphetamine, remained popular and continued to impact small-town, rural communities particularly hard. People used GHB, Rohypnol, GBL, and 1,4-Butanediol (1,4 BD) voluntarily as a way to get high. Tragically, some also slipped concentrated doses into the drinks of unsuspecting individuals, who often became victims of sexual assault.

The diversion of legal prescription drugs into illegal markets also rose in the late 1990s. In 1998, 2.5 million Americans admitted misusing prescription drugs. By 2001, the number almost doubled to 4.8 million. OxyContin, a powerful prescription analgesic, was heavily misused. DEA implemented a National Action Plan to combat its diversion and misuse.

Marijuana continued to be the most popular illicit drug of choice across the country, and cocaine—while use was down significantly since its peak in the mid-1980s—was the second most commonly used illicit drug. Heroin trafficking and use surged, particularly on the east coast, where high-purity Colombian heroin dominated the market. According to the 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, heroin incidence rates rose in the 1990s to a level not reached since the 1970s. By 2000 in the United States, about 146,000 new people had tried heroin.

DEA partnered with its international counterparts to disrupt supply by targeting the most significant drug trafficking organizations. Colombian drug trafficking organizations continued to dominate the international cocaine trade. However, unlike their predecessors, Colombian cocaine trafficking groups of the late 1990s and early 2000s typically specialized in one aspect of their illicit industry, with no one group dominating all aspects of the trade. DEA continued its productive working relationship with the CNP and dismantled several major cocaine and heroin trafficking groups based in Colombia.

In Mexico, with the 2000 election of President Vicente Fox and his administration's unprecedented commitment to ending their nation's unchallenged reign of drug trafficking cartels, DEA's relationship greatly improved with its Mexican counterparts. Inroads were made into Mexico-based cartels. Likewise, DEA forged productive relationships with European law enforcement to deal with ecstasy smuggling since the drug was produced almost exclusively on the continent.

DEA took on additional responsibilities in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. FBI reassigned hundreds of agents from narcotics investigations to counterterrorism activities. As a result, DEA reallocated resources to meet changing needs, continued conspiracy drug investigations, and cut off a funding source for terrorists: drug profits. Meanwhile, ONDCP launched a major ad campaign to raise awareness of the drug trade's connection to terror.

Beyond its drug interdiction activities, DEA strengthened prevention, education, and treatment initiatives at the local level through the agency's demand reduction program. DEA instituted the Mobile Enforcement Team II (MET) program, the Integrated Drug Enforcement Assistance (IDEA) program, and others to offer comprehensive help to local communities in establishing strong, coordinated antidrug strategies.

While the vast majority of Americans supported DEA's efforts and the national antidrug strategy, a well-financed and vocal legalization lobby encouraged greater tolerance for drug use. Several states passed referendums permitting drug use for various reasons, particularly marijuana for medicinal purposes not approved by FDA. In response, DEA initiated an antilegalization campaign as a way to

counter that information and publicize the many successes of current drug policy.

National Conference on Drugs, Crime, and Violence in Mid-Sized Communities (1999)

DEA hosted the National Conference on Drugs, Crime, and Violence in Mid-Sized Communities on February 23, 1999. The conference sought solutions for and drew attention to the drug crisis that had rapidly permeated mid-sized communities nationwide. Survey results from delegates showed that cocaine and marijuana were the two most prevalent drugs affecting small cities and rural areas. However, one quarter of the participants noted that methamphetamine was a major concern. The conference allowed participants to share information and learn from the experiences of other cities and communities that had faced drug trafficking and drug-related violence.

DEA Opens New Justice Training Center (1999)

First envisioned in the mid-1970s, the new Justice Training Center (JTC) opened on April 28, 1999, at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia. The JTC is a 185,000-square-foot



The Justice Training Center in Quantico, Virginia.

building that contains a 250-bed, double-occupancy dormitory, an assortment of classrooms (including practical training areas for fingerprinting, interviewing, and wiretap capabilities) and offices, a cafeteria, and an international training room equipped with simultaneous translation equipment. Prior to JTC's opening, DEA shared facilities with FBI.

JTC is used for DEA Basic Agent training, Basic Diversion Investigator training, Basic Intelligence Research Specialist training, Basic Forensic Chemist training, In-Service training, Certification training, specialized training, and supervisory, management, and executive-level training. JTC is also used to conduct drug training seminars for state and local law enforcement personnel, and through the use of specially equipped classrooms, conduct international drug training seminars for foreign law enforcement officials.

Opening of the DEA Museum (1999)

On May 11, 1999, the DEA Museum and Visitors Center officially opened at DEA Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. Occupying 2,200 square feet, the museum featured a unique exhibit titled “Illegal Drugs in America: A Modern History” that traced the history of illegal drugs in the United States from opium dens in the mid-1800s to the international drug mafias of the late 20th century. The exhibit included historical photos, artifacts, text, and interactive computer displays that showed the effects of drugs on American society and federal drug law enforcement's efforts to combat the drug problem. The exhibit highlighted major trends in illegal drug use as well as milestones and accomplishments of DEA and its predecessor agencies.

Many of the museum's artifacts were donated by former and active special agents. Members of the Association of Former Federal Narcotics Agents (AFFNA--now the Association of Federal Narcotics Agents, or AFNA) volunteered to give tours. In its first year, the museum drew 5,000 visitors and by 2003, that number had reached 10,000. Visitors continue to include student groups, law enforcement officials, international visitors, and tourists to Washington, DC.

Oral Histories Debut in the DEA Museum

The new museum also featured kiosks that played clips from oral histories: interviews conducted to collect and study personal accounts of the past. DEA's oral history program, which preserves the agency's history by capturing former and retired employees' experiences, preceded the museum. Around 1993, the Audio/Visual Unit led by William “Bill” Butler began interviewing retired DEA employees at the annual AFFNA conference. Hired under the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, Butler had long-standing relationships with agents that transitioned to DEA upon its establishment. He also trained incoming special agents to use surveillance equipment and other audio/visual devices, endearing him to new generations. While some retirees were initially hesitant to participate, Butler's trusted commitment to the project and support from DEA leadership convinced them to candidly share their stories.

The program's earliest interviews covered many topics, including high-profile cases, undercover operations, family life, and even tragedies. Employees' achievements were also documented, and a video highlighting several agency firsts debuted in the museum in 1999. “Trailblazers” assembled segments from conversations with DEA's first female SAC, first female and African American members of Senior Executive Service (SES), first female chief counsel, and more. From the beginning, Butler and his dedicated team understood the importance—and versatility—of their work. Beyond inclusion in exhibits, sound bites could orient new employees, promote DEA nationally and internationally, and educate the general public. Today, the DEA Museum oversees the oral history program, ensuring DEA's legacy and the contributions of its employees are not forgotten.

Regional Enforcement Team Program

Early in 1999, DEA created the Regional Enforcement Team (RET) program to address the threat of drug trafficking groups using established networks of compartmentalized cells to facilitate illegal activity. While these organizations

typically maintained their operations in larger cities, pressure from law enforcement led them to move into smaller locations throughout the United States. The RET program consisted of four teams of agents, analysts, and support staff that were responsible for addressing increased rates of illicit drug use, trafficking, and violent crime in smaller locations.

There were 18 RET deployments from 1999 to early 2003. In that time, 36 drug trafficking organizations were dismantled, more than 500 people were arrested, and more than 22,000 pounds of drugs were seized. As part of regular operational changes, DEA discontinued the RET program in FY 2007 to focus on new priority targets.

Mobile Enforcement Team Program

Created in 1995, the MET program fought drug-related violent crime in communities throughout the United States until it was phased out in the early 2000s. METs were groups of specially trained DEA agents deployed at the request of domestic law enforcement to help remove violent drug trafficking organizations. The program initially consisted of 21 teams based in 20 field divisions across the country. Working with local law enforcement organizations who lacked manpower and resources, METs disrupted violent drug organizations in specific neighborhoods, restoring safer environments for residents.

From 1999 to 2003, DEA deployed METs to 380 locations nationwide. Communities across the country felt a significant positive impact in areas where METs were deployed. By 2003, METs arrested more than 15,000 people and took more than 10,000 pounds of illegal drugs off U.S. streets.

In Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, a MET targeted two trafficking organizations. One group brought wholesale quantities of methamphetamine from Mexico for delivery to valley-based distributors, while the other brought in crack cocaine from New York City. Both organizations were dismantled; METs' work typically impeded future drug trafficking in the areas they supported.

DEA attempted to discontinue the MET program in 2007 primarily due to budgetary constraints. Assignments were also logistically and emotionally challenging for agents, who spent time away from their families on

rotation. However, Congress authorized additional funding for the program to specifically target domestic methamphetamine trafficking. In response, DEA established METs in 10 DEA field divisions, yielding support and results for higher-need areas—many metropolitan. As methamphetamine production slowed in the United States and new priorities arose abroad, especially in Afghanistan, funding for METs was shifted to other in-demand programs.

Mobile Enforcement Team II Program (1999)

In 1999, DEA initiated the MET II program to follow up with communities where METs had deployed. The program sought to ensure that successful law enforcement operations were reinforced by a vigorous community effort to prevent the reemergence of drug-related violent crime.

DEA, with financial assistance from the Bureau of Justice Assistance and technical support from the National Crime Prevention Council, provided cutting-edge regional training to communities where MET teams had been deployed. Each community sent a team of up to five members that included local and state elected officials; judicial and law enforcement officers; city, school, and program administrators; community activists; representatives of business and faith communities; and other key decision makers. In 1999, the program was piloted in three regional sessions to leaders of 40 MET communities. In 2000, DEA held four regional sessions to 42 community teams and another four sessions to 37 MET communities in 2001.

Committed community leaders met the program's goals by developing and employing broad-based strategies for improving citizen safety. DEA's guidance on how to plan and implement prevention programs made their work possible. Most communities conducted far more prevention activities after DEA's training than before. By 2001, the MET II program evolved into the IDEA program.

Operation Ramp Rats I and II (1999)

In August and September 1999, DEA's Miami Division concluded two successful airport-based investigations

of corrupt ramp workers, or “ramp rats,” who used their positions handling baggage and servicing airplanes to smuggle drugs. The investigations disrupted large-scale heroin and cocaine smuggling into the United States as well as the nationwide distribution of drugs, weapons, and explosives. Miami Dade County also instituted immediate security measures at Miami International Airport, making it more difficult to smuggle contraband through the area.

Operation Juno (1999)

Operation Juno was a significant and innovative investigation that targeted money laundering operations. It began after the seizure of approximately 386 kilograms of liquid cocaine, which had been found concealed and shipped in frozen fish from Cartagena, Colombia, in July 1995. The drugs were shipped under the name “Colapia S.A.,” a Colombian company whose U.S. distribution center was based in Atlanta. An investigation of Colapia revealed a partnership between the Atlanta owner and a prominent Cali, Colombia, narcotics trafficker. In 1996, DEA and IRS began the proactive undercover money laundering sting investigation Operation Juno. Based in suburban Atlanta, with a company called “Airmark,” DEA and IRS obtained permission from the Attorney General to open a legitimate stockbrokerage firm that served to validate the undercover money laundering operation.

Colapia S.A.’s owner referred the operation’s stockbrokerage firm to other drug trafficking organizations in need of financial and money laundering services. Their proceeds, which were in U.S. dollars, were sold on the Colombian illicit peso exchange market via a Colombia-based third-party money exchanger. Once the Colombian pesos were deposited into designated bank accounts, the money laundering contract with the narcotics traffickers was fulfilled. The investigation resulted in 55 arrests in the United States. Civil seizure warrants were also brought against 59 domestic bank accounts worldwide and approximately \$26 million in drug proceeds were targeted for seizure. Five Colombian nationals were indicted.

Attempted Cop Murder, Drug Ring Investigation (1999)

In 1999, DEA; Fairfax County, Virginia, Police; and the Maryland State Police completed a 3-year investigation of a drug trafficking and money laundering criminal group that attempted to kill Maryland State troopers. Since at least 1994, Sergio Barrios and Gregory McCorkle were involved in a conspiracy to distribute cocaine in the Washington, DC, area. In December 1995, McCorkle was driving his frequent route from New York to DC when Maryland State Police Trooper David Hughes arrested him for possessing one kilogram of cocaine.

Shortly after, McCorkle plotted to kill Trooper Hughes to have the case dismissed. On August 27, 1996, an associate of McCorkle shot a trooper as he drove his car into the Hughes’ family driveway. Wounded, Trooper Michael Hughes was David’s brother. Through a complex investigation supported by Washington-Baltimore HIDTA’s DEA-supervised Intelligence Group, the task force successfully linked Barrios and McCorkle to the attempted murder. In May 1997, the pair and nearly 20 others were incarcerated for a variety of drug charges, and several were convicted of attempted murder. The investigation continued until the arrest of McCorkle’s drug supplier in 1999. The task force that investigated the murder-drug ring, including three DEA agents, later received the nation’s prestigious Top Cop award and were recognized at a White House ceremony with President Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno. David Hughes later became a DEA Special Agent.

Mexico

Between 1999 and 2003, Mexico remained the key transit country for cocaine en route to U.S. markets. It also continued to supply heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine. However, the July 2000 election of President Vicente Fox ended the 70-year rule of a single political party in Mexico, ushering in renewed cooperation with DEA. President Fox ran on a platform of restoring public security and ending corruption. The Fox administration made some significant progress toward those extremely

ambitious goals by restructuring the Attorney General's Office to reduce corruption and acting against leaders of significant drug trafficking organizations. Mexican police and military arrested significant drug traffickers within virtually every major drug trafficking organization operating in Mexico.

The administration's dedicated disruption of drug trafficking resulted in unprecedented levels of counterdrug cooperation. Extremely productive information sharing between DEA and the Mexican government yielded positive results from joint enforcement operations. By 2003, DEA's relationship with its Mexican counterparts was better than ever.

Operation Impunity I and II (1999-2000)

In September 1999, the Amado Carrillo-Fuentes drug trafficking organization suffered a big hit when DEA and its counterparts arrested 3 of its major cell heads and 90 of its members. The arrests disabled all facets of their organization—the group's headquarters in Mexico, U.S. cell heads, drug and money transportation systems, and local distribution groups. From Operation Impunity, 12,434 kilograms of cocaine and more than 4,800 pounds of marijuana were seized along with \$19 million in U.S. currency and another \$7 million in assets. Believing only their low-level operatives were at risk, the Amado Carrillo-Fuentes organization had operated without fear of capture or prosecution in the United States. Operation Impunity effectively demonstrated that even the highest-level drug traffickers based in foreign countries could not freely conduct drug operations inside the country.

Operation Impunity II continued to target the Amado Carrillo-Fuentes organization and concluded in December 2000 with the arrest of 155 individuals and the seizure of 5,490 kilograms of cocaine, 9,526 pounds of marijuana, and \$11 million in U.S. currency. Those arrested faced various federal charges for their involvement in smuggling thousands of pounds of cocaine and marijuana from Mexico across the southwest border into Texas. Some defendants were leaders who replaced those arrested in previous investigations. The

three-phased operation against the Amado Carrillo-Fuentes organization (beginning with Operation Limelight in 1996) clearly demonstrated the tenacity of some drug traffickers and law enforcement's need to continuously investigate large, well-established groups.

Colombia

By the mid-1990s, Colombian law enforcement began targeting Cali cartel leaders based on DEA's extensive investigations. The arrests or surrender of six top Cali leaders in the summer of 1995 marked the beginning of the cartel's decline.

Although some elements of the Cali cartel continued to play an important role in the world's wholesale cocaine market, they no longer dominated the international cocaine trade.

Following the dismantling of the Cali cartel, experienced traffickers who had been active for years but worked in the Cali drug lords' shadow seized the opportunity, increasing their role in the drug trade. However, unlike their predecessors, Colombian cocaine trafficking groups of the late 1990s and early 2000s were decentralized and typically specialized in one aspect of their illicit industry. No one group dominated all aspects of the trade because, with the reintroduction of extradition in Colombia in December 1997, major Colombian traffickers were increasingly willing to allow their foreign criminal associates (in particular, Mexican and Dominican transportation groups) to play an expanded international role in the cocaine trade. The strategic objective of these Colombian drug lords was to further conceal their own overt criminal acts in the United States or Europe that could be the basis for extradition.

The main trafficking groups were primarily based in two regions of Colombia: the Northern Valle del Cauca, located near the west coast, and the northern coast. While traffickers in these regions operated more independently than the Medellín and Cali cartels, they nevertheless remained very powerful. By working with their counterparts in Mexico, these drug traffickers were responsible for most of the world's cocaine production and wholesale distribution.

Operation Millennium (1999)

In October 1999, a major joint DEA-CNP investigation called Operation Millennium resulted in the arrest of two of the most powerful drug traffickers in the world—Alejandro Bernal-Madrigal, also known as Juvenal, and Fabio Ochoa. Bernal-Madrigal led the most significant Colombian narcotics transportation organization, taking cocaine transportation to unprecedented heights. Evidence obtained during this investigation demonstrated that Bernal-Madrigal's organization was responsible for transporting between 20 and 30 tons of cocaine per month from Colombia to the United States via Mexico, primarily in containerized cargo. Ochoa was one of the Medellín cartel's top leaders. He was imprisoned in 1991, released in 1996, and continued his trafficking operations with Bernal-Madrigal and others after his release.

Beginning in May 1998, DEA worked with CNP to investigate Bernal-Madrigal's drug trafficking activities. The investigation focused on authorized electronic intercepts of Bernal-Madrigal and the leaders of other Colombian drug trafficking organizations. At one point during the investigation, CNP in conjunction with DEA was managing 66 simultaneous authorized electronic intercepts on principal targets. These intercepts revealed the cocaine industry's inner workings and focused on the most significant drug traffickers and their respective organizations in both Colombia and Mexico.

In Operation Millennium, Bernal-Madrigal and 30 of his top criminal associates, including Ochoa, were arrested. In September 2001, Ochoa was extradited to the United States after a long battle to remain in Colombia. He was the 30th Colombian national and 13th Operation Millennium defendant to be extradited since the procedure's reintroduction. More than 1,500 Colombian prosecutors and CNP

officials participated in Operation Millennium, which, according to CNP, was one of the largest law enforcement actions undertaken by the Colombian government against drug trafficking.

Laboratory Reaccreditation (1999)

In 1999, the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB) reaccredited the Office of Forensic Sciences' laboratory system. It was first accredited in 1994, and the reaccreditation was significant because DEA laboratories were recognized as conforming to national and international technical and operational standards. The areas of forensic drug analysis, fingerprint examination, and Source Determination Program analysis (tablet and capsules toolmark examinations) were the technical specialties accredited by ASCLD/LAB.

Extradition of El Caracol (2000)

Alberto Orlandez-Gamboa, AKA El Caracol (the Snail), headed a major cocaine trafficking organization based in Barranquilla, Colombia. The group transshipped significant amounts of cocaine to the United States and Europe



The extradition of Alberto Orlandez-Gamboa, AKA Caracol (the Snail), August 2000.

via smuggling routes it controlled from Colombia's north coast through the Caribbean. As head of the organization, Caracol depended on his close associates to conduct the organization's operations and insulate himself. As is typical with many Colombia-based organizations, Caracol compartmentalized his business dealings. Additionally, the success of Caracol's Barranquilla-based drug trafficking organization was attributed, in part, to the respect the drug organization received from other traffickers operating on Colombia's north coast. Intelligence indicated that traffickers paid taxes to Caracol's organization to ship drugs out of Colombia. His influence in the region was so strong that traffickers asked him for permission before conducting assassinations.

On June 6, 1998, Caracol was arrested in Barranquilla following an ongoing joint investigation between DEA's Barranquilla Resident Office and CNP. After his arrest, Caracol immediately was flown to Bogotá, Colombia, where he was held on murder, kidnapping, and terrorism charges. He was extradited to the United States in August 2000.

On March 13, 2003, Caracol plead guilty to participating in a narcotics trafficking conspiracy that smuggled tens of thousands of kilograms of cocaine into New York and other cities. His plea was announced the morning he was to go on trial in Federal District Court in Manhattan after losing a crucial appellate ruling.

Retiring CNP Director Serrano Honored (2000)

DEA presented retired CNP Director General Rosso Serrano with the first-ever honorary special agent badge at a ceremony at DEA Headquarters on July 19, 2000. As DEA's highest award, it is only presented in exceptional cases to individuals outside the agency who have had a monumental impact on drug law enforcement nationally or internationally. "I can think of no one who so embodies the spirit of this award but General Serrano. He has put service to his country, his people, and the world before his personal safety," stated Administrator Donnie Marshall at the ceremony.

General Serrano joined CNP in 1963 as a second lieutenant and advanced steadily through the ranks, becoming

director in 1995. CNP's accomplishments under General Serrano's leadership debilitated major international drug traffickers and affected the drug trade worldwide. During his tenure, CNP declared war on drug cartels and joined forces with DEA to dismantle the infamous Cali organization. Other accomplishments included the arrests of José Santacruz-Londoño, Pacho Herrera, Henry Loaiza-Ceballos, and Juan Carlos Ramírez-Abadía. Cooperation between DEA and CNP continued as new independent drug organizations arose.

Drug Submarine Seized in Colombia (2000)

On September 7, 2000, CNP seized a partially constructed, steel double-hulled submarine from a warehouse outside Bogotá, Colombia. Once assembled, it would have been nearly 100 feet long. All information suggested the submarine could have been used to transport up to 10 metric tons of illicit drugs from Colombia to remote off-load sites in Latin America and the Caribbean. The high-tech submarine's seizure demonstrated the vast resources and ingenuity of Colombian drug traffickers and the lengths they were willing to go to transport their product.

Operations Odessa, Atlantico, and Journey (2000)

Maritime illicit drug smuggling organizations were the targets of Operations Odessa, Atlantico, and Journey. Operations Odessa and Atlantico, which took place from 1998 to 2000, involved multiple cocaine and money seizures from maritime Greek drug smugglers who worked closely with Colombian traffickers. Operation Odessa investigated initiatives launched by the Hellenic Republic. Thanks to cooperation from the Greek government, assets worth \$7 million and the motor vessel Bulk Princess were seized.

Operation Journey targeted maritime smuggling operations in Colombia that moved to Venezuela because of Operation Odessa. Thanks to information sharing between various law enforcement authorities, Operation Journey seized more than nine tons of cocaine hidden by the De La Vega drug trafficking organization.

DEA's Data Supports U.S. Government Drug Production Estimates

Any reality-based illicit drug production estimate must start with the most accurate information available on crop yields and clandestine laboratory operations. Accordingly, since 1993, DEA intelligence analysts and forensic chemists have collected and analyzed unique science-based data on coca and opium poppy cultivation as well as cocaine and heroin production in the Andean Region of South America. This research revolutionized U.S. Government cocaine and heroin production estimates. In 1999, for example, the U.S. Government used DEA's science-based data to revise and more than double the previous estimates of Colombia's potential cocaine base production. Likewise, in 2002, the U.S. Government slashed by more than 50 percent the previous estimates of Colombia's potential heroin production.

Operation New Generation (2000)

CNP and DEA dismantled a significant international drug trafficking and money laundering organization in November 2000. For two years, the agency had supported a CNP investigation of the Colombia-based Carlos Mario Castro-Arias cocaine transportation organization. Drug trafficker Castro-Arias' crew smuggled large quantities of cocaine secreted in heavy machinery.

Although Castro-Arias evaded authorities, the investigation yielded 102 arrests, 2,110 kilograms of cocaine, 1,400 grams of heroin, 6 tons of miscellaneous chemicals, and \$2.3 million in U.S. currency.

DEA Special Agent Richard Fass' Killer Apprehended (2000)

On June 30, 1994, DEA Special Agent Richard Fass and his partner, Special Agent Michael Pelonero, were working an undercover investigation targeting a large-scale methamphetamine trafficking organization in the Phoenix area. Agustín Vásquez-Mendoza, a Mexican national, headed the organization, and Special Agent Fass had arranged the sale of 10 kilograms of methamphetamine with him. However, Vásquez-Mendoza's colleagues, Rafael Rubio-Mendez and

Juan Vasquez-Rubio, shot and killed Special Agent Fass in an apparent robbery attempt. Fleeing, both men were arrested near the scene and later received life sentences for the murder. Vásquez-Mendoza—the leader and mastermind of Fass' killing—escaped to Mexico. The ensuing manhunt became one of the most intense in recent U.S.-Mexico history, lasting more than six years.

The Phoenix Division formed a Fass Task Force dedicated to locating Vásquez-Mendoza. The task force worked closely with U.S. and Mexico law enforcement entities, including the Mexican Military. For several years, pursuit of the fugitive concentrated in a remote mountainous region in Michoacán where residents lived in wooden shacks without telephones or electricity. Mexican law enforcement was reluctant to enter the region because of the dangerous drug traffickers who protected it. The Fass Task Force used more than 30 confidential sources to infiltrate the region.

The task force also conducted a media blitz, participating in three episodes of *America's Most Wanted*, two *Unsolved Mystery* programs, and one Latin television show called *Placas*. By 1998, the reward for Vásquez-Mendoza had reached \$2.25 million, and he was placed on FBI's "Ten Most Wanted Fugitives" list. The task force created a tip hotline manned around the clock to follow leads. DEA's Mexico office conducted their own media blitz, and Mexican law enforcement set up roadblocks on highways leaving the mountainous area where Vásquez-Mendoza was believed to be hiding. Throughout the search, the Fass Task Force arrested more than 40 fugitives wanted by other jurisdictions.

By 2000, investigators zeroed in on Puebla, Mexico. Mexican law enforcement led the town's search and learned that Vásquez-Mendoza had married and assumed a new identity. Investigators located a pay phone from which his wife frequently called her parents, and on July 9, 2000, Mexican police surrounded Vásquez-Mendoza walking away from the phone, arresting him without incident. At the time, Phoenix SAC Tom Raffanello stated, "This investigation has helped strengthen and build a stronger relationship with Mexican law enforcement officials. During this entire operation, they were constantly

amazed that DEA was so relentless in tracking this fugitive.” Vásquez-Mendoza was extradited to the United States in 2005 and sentenced to life in prison by the Maricopa County Arizona Superior Court a year later.

Operation Green Air (2000)

In April 2000, DEA’s Special Operations Division successfully concluded an 18-month investigation of a Jamaican-based marijuana trafficking organization that used Federal Express (FedEx) as its exclusive transportation method. FedEx cooperated with DEA to uncover drivers, a security official, and several customer service representatives who received substantial bribes from the traffickers. An estimated 4,000 packages of marijuana, supplied by the Mexico-based Arellano Felix organization, were smuggled into FedEx hubs in Atlanta, New York, Boston, Connecticut, Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, Philadelphia, and Newark. Operation Green Air resulted in more than 100 arrests, including 25 FedEx employees.

LSD Laboratory Seizure (2000)

DEA made a huge impact on the U.S. manufacture of LSD when agents seized an LSD laboratory in November 2000. Located in an abandoned nuclear missile silo in Wamego, Kansas, the lab contained approximately 3.9 million dosage units of the drug. According to DEA’s Special Testing and Research Laboratory, the Wamego lab could produce 258 million dosage units. For perspective, in FY 2000, DEA projected that worldwide LSD demand was 100 million dosage units. Following the seizure, submissions for source determination analysis declined 98 percent in FY 2001. No LSD exhibits were submitted to DEA laboratories for analysis the next year. In March 2003, the two men arrested for operating the LSD manufacturing lab were convicted on charges of conspiracy and possession of the drug with intent to distribute.

Operation Tar Pit (2000)

Operation Tar Pit concluded an investigation targeting a Mexico-based black tar heroin trafficking group in March 2000. This joint DEA/FBI investigation, conducted

exclusively within the United States, connected the Nayarit, Mexico, organization with transportation and distribution cells from San Diego, California, to Steubenville, Ohio. Furthermore, the investigation linked their high-purity black tar heroin to numerous overdose deaths in the small town of Chimayo, New Mexico. DEA, FBI, and state and local law enforcement agents arrested nearly 200 individuals in 12 cities.

DEA’s Participation in Making of Award-Winning Movie *Traffic* (2000)

In December 2000, *Traffic* opened to critical acclaim as a nationwide box office hit. Featuring Michael Douglas, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Benicio del Toro, Don Cheadle, Erika Christensen, and Dennis Quaid and directed by Steven Soderbergh, the movie’s intertwining vignettes tell a modern story about fighting drugs. The winner of four Academy Awards, *Traffic* focused media and public attention on DEA and problems related to illicit drug trafficking in the United States. Parts of the movie were filmed on location at EPIC, and several DEA agents played small roles. DEA offered considerable input regarding the movie’s portrayal of the drug situation, and most viewers believed it accurately depicted the challenges law enforcement faced.

Ecstasy and Predatory Drugs

By the late 1990s, MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine)—commonly known as ecstasy—emerged full force in American youth culture. A hallucinogen sold in a small ingestible pill form, often imprinted with colorful logos and designs, ecstasy initially gained popularity at raves. Raves are all-night dance events, generally operating from approximately 10:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. the following morning, and characterized by loud, rapid-tempo techno music, light and laser shows, smoke or fog, and psychedelic screen images. From 1996 to 2001, ecstasy use by 12th graders nearly doubled. According to NIDA’s 2022 Monitoring the Future survey, two years of decreased usage followed this spike before leveling off for nearly a decade. From 2015 to 2022, ecstasy use among 12th graders declined, ultimately hovering around 1.4 percent.

Other drugs like Gamma-Hydroxybutyric acid (GHB) and ketamine were also used at raves, and all came to be known as club drugs. However, by 2002, DEA began calling this subset of synthetics “predatory drugs” because many of them, particularly GHB and Rohypnol, could be used to commit rape and sexual assault. Perpetrators slipped the odorless and tasteless drugs into a victim’s drink, rendering them unconscious. Beyond rendering a victim incapable of resisting, the drugs’ effects further complicated case prosecution by causing memory problems.

Emergency room mentions of these synthetic drugs also signified their popularity. In 1998, there were 1,282 mentions of GHB, a number that rose almost 3-fold to 3,340 in 2001. DEA seizures also indicate usage. In 1999, DEA seized 4,552 dosage units of ketamine. By 2001, the agency seized 7,020,317 units. DEA enacted several enforcement, prevention, and legislative measures to combat ecstasy and predatory drug use.

DEA’s Legislative Response to Club Drugs

In response to the increasing misuse of GHB, DEA’s Office of Diversion Control initiated a scheduling review incorporating data on the abuse, diversion, and trafficking of GHB, which it sent to the Department of Health and Human Services in 1997. At that time, DEA provided abuse, diversion, and trafficking data to Congress in support of legislative action. Misuse of GHB, a central nervous system depressant originally marketed as a releasing agent for growth hormones that stimulate muscle growth, attracted nationwide attention when growing numbers of Americans sought out the drug for its intoxicating feelings of euphoria or to perpetrate sexual assault. In early 2000, the Hillary Farias and Samantha Reed Date-Rape Prohibition Act of 1999 became law, placing GHB in Schedule I, as well as the related chemical gamma-butyrolactone (GBL). GHB is now subject to federal regulatory controls and criminal, civil, and administrative sanctions specified in the CSA.

Ecstasy-like substances, touted as “legal” substitutes, were also found in clubs and advertised over the Internet. In September 2002, DEA published a final rule in the

Federal Register temporarily placing pharmacologically related and chemically similar substances with an imminent hazard to public safety, like BZP, TFMPP, and 2C-T-7, in Schedule I pursuant to the CSA’s emergency scheduling provision. In early 2003, DEA’s Diversion Control office continued to gather information regarding the abuse, diversion, and trafficking of these substances to schedule them permanently. In January 2003, DEA published a proposal in the Federal Register temporarily placing AMT and 5-MeO-DIPT into Schedule I; the move was made permanent in 2004.

DEA’s Ecstasy and Club Drugs Conference (2000–2001)

To focus national attention on ecstasy use and trafficking, DEA hosted the International Conference on Ecstasy and Club Drugs in partnership with about 300 officials from domestic and foreign law enforcement, judicial, chemical, prevention, and treatment communities. Held in Arlington, Virginia, from July 31 to August 2, 2000, the conference centered on the growing threat of ecstasy, GHB, Rohypnol, and ketamine. By hosting, DEA took the lead on identifying the issue’s gravity and efforts to combat club drug use and trafficking in the United States.

Medical experts provided information on club drugs’ harmful physical effects, and media representatives offered their perspectives on the club drug epidemic. A working group developed several objectives that were adapted into DEA’s demand reduction plan. Goals included advancing drug education and prevention, enhancing parental knowledge of raves and club drugs, and educating high school and college students about the realities of both.

To follow up the international conference, DEA held three regional club drugs conferences in 2001. Held in Atlantic City, New Jersey, Oak Brook, Illinois, and San Diego, California, all three gathered between 200 and 250 participants from regional law enforcement, education, prevention, treatment, medical, and health areas to develop area-wide plans to address the problem. Moreover, each domestic DEA division organized numerous club drug seminars and trainings in their areas.

Arrest of Salvatore Gravano (2000)

In December 1999, DEA's Phoenix Division and the Phoenix Police Department initiated a joint Title III investigation of a major international ecstasy organization headed by former mob underboss Salvatore "Sammy the Bull" Gravano and his son. The three-month investigation resulted in the arrest of both and 38 codefendants, the confiscation of tens of thousands of ecstasy pills, and approximately \$500,000 in asset seizures. The Gravano organization imported huge quantities of ecstasy directly from Europe and is one of the largest ecstasy organizations ever dismantled in Arizona.

In the 1990s, Gravano admitted to killing 19 people but received leniency in exchange for his testimony against mob boss John Gotti and others. He served five years in prison, then moved to Phoenix under the witness protection program. He pled guilty to both Arizona and New York federal drug charges, receiving a 20-year concurrent sentence. Gravano was released from prison early in 2017.

Operation Rave Review (2000)

In cooperation with the U.S. Attorney's Office and the New Orleans Police Department, DEA's New Orleans Field Division Office initiated OCEDEF Operation Rave Review in January 2000. The investigation targeted raves held at the State Palace Theater in New Orleans and was prompted by hundreds of drug overdose incidents among clubgoers reported by local emergency rooms. More than 500 teenagers and young adults were treated in a 2-year period; all had attended raves at the theater. A 17-year-old girl died after overdosing. The investigation further determined that most of New Orleans' ecstasy distribution occurred at the raves, which were attended by as many as 4,000 teenagers and young adults. DEA agents worked undercover at the events and made numerous illegal drug purchases. The agents observed 50 to 60 percent of rave patrons under the influence of club drugs.

Based on DEA's investigation, a federal grand jury returned indictments against the rave promotion company's three managers for federal narcotics violations in January 2001. The indictment marked the first time a rave

promoter and/or manager had ever been charged in violation of Title 21 U.S. Code, Section 856(a)(2): maintaining drug-involved premises, otherwise known as the "crack house statute."

The investigation's effects were immediately felt in New Orleans as the number of club drug-related overdoses dropped by 90 percent. The State Palace Theater Corporation, "Barbecue of New Orleans," pled guilty to all charges in the indictment and was fined \$100,000. Furthermore, this case inspired then Senator Joe Biden, a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee and author of 1986's federal "crack house" laws, to expand the statutes to include any businessman, club owner, or promoter on whose premises or at whose events illicit drugs are used or sold. Under the legislation's provisions, property owners, promoters, and event managers could be fined up to \$250,000 and face up to 20 years in prison on federal criminal charges.

Strategic Planning Conference (2000)

In 2000, the Office of Forensic Sciences held a Strategic Planning Conference at the Justice Training Center in Quantico, Virginia. Attendees analyzed the needs and expectations of the DEA Laboratory System's many customers and developed ways to meet them. Specific goals, objectives, and strategies to improve service, strengthen organizational structure, more efficiently use technology, and obtain additional facilities and resources were identified. The resulting Strategic Plan helped the laboratory system position itself over the next five years to meet expected, and unexpected, challenges in the coming decade.

Operation Red Tide (2001)

The largest single seizure of ecstasy—2.1 million tablets in Los Angeles (July 2000)—sparked Operation Red Tide. The 18-month investigation targeted a multi-ethnic, transnational ecstasy and cocaine distribution organization. It culminated when Dutch National Police arrested 7 co-conspirators, executed search warrants at 17 locations, and seized several hundred thousand U.S. dollars

and Dutch guilders. More than 22 suspects in 4 U.S. cities and 4 European countries were arrested.

Approximately 3.3 million tablets linked to the syndicate were seized. Administrator Marshall stated, “The success of Operation Red Tide has ensured that a large volume of ecstasy that would have made it into the hands of our youth never hit the streets.”

Kidnappers of Special Agents Charles Martinez and Kelly McCullough Convicted and Sentenced (2001)

In February and March 2001, Southern Florida courts convicted Jose Ivan Duarte Acero and Rene Benitez in separate trials for the 1982 kidnapping and attempted murder of DEA Special Agents Charles Martinez and Kelly McCullough. On June 8, 2001, Duarte and Benitez received life sentences.

The sentencing marked the end of DEA’s longest-running investigation: a 19-year effort to track, capture, try, and convict in U.S. courts the men who kidnapped and nearly killed Martinez and McCullough in Colombia. “This case, once again, sends a clear message to violent drug traffickers who attempt to harm DEA agents: DEA will never waiver, not for a second, in its efforts to, commitment to, bring you to justice,” said Administrator Marshall at the time.

Operation White Horse (2001)

In January 2001, DEA, along with FBI, IRS, and the U.S. Customs Service, concluded a 10-month investigation to dismantle an organization that put high-purity Colombian heroin on U.S. streets. OCADETF Operation White Horse brought together federal agencies, CNP, and state and local law enforcement to net 96 arrests and seize approximately \$1.3 million in U.S. currency. Ultimately, Operation White Horse wiped out an entire international heroin trafficking organization from its Colombia-based headquarters to its street-level dealers in Philadelphia.

U.S. Supreme Court Decision on Marijuana as Medicine (2001)

When California voters enacted the Compassionate Use Act of 1996, a medical marijuana initiative, it gave residents the

right to obtain and use marijuana for medical purposes. The measure created an exception to California laws prohibiting the possession and growing of marijuana by a patient or their primary caregiver. Several groups, including the Oakland Cannabis Buyers’ Cooperative (OCBC), organized medical cannabis dispensaries to grow and distribute marijuana to qualified patients. Per the act, a person was required to provide a written statement from a treating physician assenting to marijuana therapy and submitting to a screening interview. If accepted by the OCBC, the patient received an identification card entitling them to obtain marijuana from the cooperative.

In January 1998, the United States sued the cooperative in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California to prevent it from distributing and manufacturing marijuana, arguing that, while the OCBC’s activities were legal under California law, they violated the federal CSA. The District Court issued an order prohibiting OCBC from possessing, manufacturing, and distributing marijuana. The cooperative continued to distribute the drug and claimed it was medically necessary. The District Court held OCBC in contempt and authorized the U.S. Marshal to seize their premises. OCBC appealed to the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, which held that medical necessity is a legally cognizable defense to violations of the CSA.

The U.S. Government appealed to the Supreme Court. OCBC claimed it was entitled to a medical necessity defense. On May 4, 2001, the Supreme Court rejected the defense and held that marijuana had no accepted medical use under federal law. Moreover, the ruling asserted that the CSA reflects a determination that marijuana has no medical benefits worthy of exception beyond government-approved research projects.

Operation Marquis (2001)

Operation Marquis, an 18-month nationwide investigation, brought together agents from DEA, FBI, the U.S. Customs Service, and state and local law enforcement officers. The operation targeted a Mexico-based drug trafficking organization responsible for putting tens of millions of dollars’

worth of cocaine and marijuana on the streets of at least a dozen U.S. cities. The organization allegedly brought the drugs into the country from Mexico through southern Texas where they were warehoused before being transported to established U.S. distribution cells. Operation Marquis yielded the arrest of more than 300 individuals and the seizure of over \$13 million U.S. currency, 8,645 kilograms of cocaine, 23,096 pounds of marijuana, and 50 pounds of methamphetamine.

Operation Caribe and Wirecutter (2001)

Two related 2001 investigations focused on money laundering and the Colombian black market peso exchange. Operation Caribe, spearheaded by DEA's Caribbean Division, led to the seizure of more than a million dollars in cash, 347 kilograms of cocaine, 3.8 kilograms of heroin, and 15 arrests. Operation Wirecutter, a joint U.S. Customs and DEA Bogotá case, also targeted drug traffickers and the black market peso exchange in Bogotá. It resulted in 10 arrests and the seizure of approximately 4,000 kilograms of cocaine, 5.5 kilograms of heroin, and \$2,304,843 in currency.

The Cancún Case (2001)

DEA's Merida, Mexico, office played a significant role in arresting Mario Ernesto Villanueva, Mexico's most wanted fugitive for more than two years. As former governor of Quintana Roo, one of Mexico's wealthiest states, Villanueva had created Mexico's first narco-state, a government that worked for, and with, some of the world's largest drug traffickers. The television show *60 Minutes* dedicated an entire episode to his corruption and belief that he was untouchable.

For three years, DEA's Merida office conducted an intense, focused investigation that eventually put an end to the narco-state of Quintana Roo and its leader. The investigation's two main goals were to arrest Villanueva and dismantle the Juárez Cartel cell operating in the Yucatán Peninsula and run by Alcides Ramón, AKA El Metro.

Ramón corrupted Mexican officials at all levels across the peninsula, including Villanueva. He paid the governor

\$400,000 to \$500,000 for each shipment of cocaine smuggled through Quintana Roo. Between 1994 and 1997, the Juárez Cartel allegedly transported between 17 and 27 tons of cocaine monthly through the state.

In 1998, after several failed attempts to significantly disrupt the Ramón organization, the dedication and determination of Mexican law enforcement and DEA agents began to pay off. Between October 31 and November 11, more than 300 million dollars' worth of luxurious waterfront properties, yachts, jet skis, boats, cars, and motorcycles were seized by the Mexican government. In addition, over 115 arrests and/or indictments took place during the investigation.

On June 12, 2001, Ramón was arrested by elements of the Mexican military in Villahermosa, Tabasco, Mexico. Villanueva was extradited to the United States in 2010 and released from prison in 2020 on house arrest.

Caribbean Initiative/UNICORN

The transit of illegal drugs throughout the Caribbean created unique challenges for law enforcement. An intelligence void on trafficking organizations operating in the region persisted, and law enforcement agencies lacked cooperation. As a result, DEA's Caribbean Field Division created the UNICORN system (Unified Caribbean On-Line Regional Network) in 1998, establishing a communications network among Caribbean law enforcement agencies to share information and better cooperate against the area's drug traffickers. It was the first step in developing a systematic regional strategy in narcotics investigations.

UNICORN spawned Regional Intelligence Centers throughout Mexico, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. This concept and the global exchange of information eventually spread to 36 countries, even in Eastern and Western Europe. Using the groundwork UNICORN laid, at least four major drug trafficking organizations targeted by the international law enforcement community were dismantled.

Operation Genesis was the first of its kind to employ UNICORN. The binational initiative fostered and maintained cooperation between Haiti and the Dominican



A press conference of a maritime seizure where 15 countries, DEA, the U.S. Coast Guard, and U.S. Customs participated.



A press conference announcing the successes of joint operations with the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central and South America.

Republic. Conducted in late 1998, Genesis resulted in 126 arrests across the countries. Both nations had never before coordinated their antidrug efforts. DEA assisted the historic information exchange with UNICORN.

Operations Conquistador and Columbus

Operation Conquistador and its predecessor, Columbus, both used UNICORN to facilitate an information exchange among counterdrug agencies in the Caribbean and source countries. Conquistador combined the efforts of 26 countries in total and embodied the overall objective of developing effective regional strategies to disrupt drug trafficking and criminal organizations. Executed by DEA's Caribbean Field Division with assistance from the U.S. Coast Guard and ATF in March 2000, the operation resulted in the arrest of over 2,000 people and the seizure of almost 5,000 kilograms of cocaine, 362 metric tons of marijuana, and 3,370 dosage units of dangerous drugs.

Operation Columbus was a multinational regional enforcement effort focused on air, land, and maritime interdiction; eradication; and airstrip denial. It targeted the operations of Caribbean-based drug trafficking groups and had unprecedented arrest and seizure statistics for the region. Involving Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, and the Caribbean's island nations, the investigation yielded over 1,000 arrests and the seizure of 900 kilograms of cocaine and 9 kilograms of heroin.

Operation Liberator

In November 2000, DEA concluded Operation Liberator, a multinational regional investigation focused in the Caribbean and South America that also owed its success to UNICORN. Consisting of three weeks of raids, the operation intended to disrupt trafficking in both regions, consolidate counterdrug efforts in the Caribbean transit zone, continue development of a broader regional strategy, and inspire a cohesive environment among local source and transit countries. The effort, led by DEA with the collaboration of 36 countries, produced the arrest of several drug trafficking organizations' leaders, one of whom was suspected of

shipping two tons of Colombian cocaine into the United States each month.

DEA and Explorers

Beginning in 1980, DEA Demand Reduction Coordinators (DRCs) worked with Law Enforcement Explorers across the country to assist youth interested in law enforcement careers. This partnership continued through the late 1990s and early 2000s. In some cases, DEA sponsored the Explorer Post. DRCs provided training in narcotics enforcement, community involvement, and general drug use issues. The Demand Reduction Section participated in the biannual Law Enforcement Explorer Conference as well as the Explorer Leadership Training sessions held at both DEA and FBI's academies during the summer. Since many Explorers become either police officers or federal agents, the Explorer program remains an effective recruitment tool.

Operation Green Clover (2001)

Operation Green Clover, a one-year investigation of an ecstasy trafficking organization, concluded in August 2001. Named after the green clover logo on the group's ecstasy pills, DEA and its law enforcement partners arrested 55 individuals in Colorado and California and seized 85,000 ecstasy tablets plus significant amounts of other drugs. Beyond dismantling a primary source of ecstasy in Colorado, Operation Green Clover was one of the first to call public attention to the drugs. Brittney Chambers, who died on her 16th birthday in Colorado after taking one ecstasy pill distributed by the organization, sparked the investigation. Her mother participated in Operation Green Clover's press conference and later opened a teen center to promote drug awareness and alternatives to drug use in Colorado.

Operation Triple X (2001)

DEA dismantled a major methamphetamine and ecstasy drug laboratory in Escondido, California, in October 2001. The takedown, dubbed Operation Triple X for the logo on the organization's ecstasy tablets, resulted in 20 arrests and seizures of 48,000 ecstasy tablets, 1 pound of methamphetamine, 48 kilograms of 3,4-Propene (which produce

500,000 ecstasy tablets), 700 pounds of camphor oil (which produce one million ecstasy tablets), 45 gallons of GBL (used to produce GHB), other precursor chemicals and laboratory equipment, and \$429,000. While the vast majority of ecstasy in the United States was produced in European labs, the lab seized in Operation Triple X was one of the most significant ever dismantled in this country.

Operation Landslide (2001)

Operation Landslide, an OCDETF investigation, resulted in 38 U.S. arrests and 5 Mexican arrests in November 2001. Drug seizures totaled over 770 pounds of heroin, 34 pounds of methamphetamine, and 3 kilograms of cocaine. The operation revealed U.S.-based drug trafficking cells operating in San Francisco, San Jose, and Los Angeles.

Operation Perfect Storm (2001)

Initially targeting lower distribution cells in the greater Boston area, Operation Perfect Storm identified sources of supply for the city's trafficking cells. The groups operated out of New York, New Jersey, and Florida (and were already being targeted by federal authorities on unrelated investigations). This multi-agency law enforcement effort resulted in the arrests of at least 144 defendants and the seizure of over 2,700 kilograms of cocaine, 17 kilograms of heroin, and \$3 million in cash.

September 11th Terrorist Attack and DEA (2001)

On Tuesday, September 11, 2001, terrorists attacked the United States by hijacking commercial airplanes and crashing them into the World Trade Center's towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. A third hijacked plane—believed to be headed for either the White House or the Capitol—crashed in rural Pennsylvania. More than 3,000 Americans died. The culprits were part of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terrorist network, based in Afghanistan.

The DEA Headquarters building—which directly overlooks the Pentagon—was immediately affected. Many

employees witnessed the plane strike, and Headquarters shook from the impact. The building was secured and employees immediately evacuated. The Washington Division office maintained a command center. Agents and intelligence analysts were detailed to FBI to follow up on investigative leads. More agents were detailed to support FBI's work at the Pentagon crash site, even helping with evidence collection. Testing was also conducted to verify the Headquarters building's safety.

In New York, DEA's office, approximately 40 blocks from the World Trade Center, was secured, and all employees were safe. Some agents immediately deployed to the FBI Command Center, and the enforcement group located at conjunction with Customs established perimeter security at the John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport's Building 75, which housed various federal agencies. The New York office also helped apprehend and detain five individuals suspected of participating in the attack as they attempted to travel outbound from JFK. The office supplied technical equipment to help search and rescue operations as well as telephone lines to support Title III interceptions. DEA further assisted in intelligence gathering, translating foreign documents, executing search warrants, and provisioning temporary office space.

DEA's Aviation Division significantly contributed to rescue and recovery efforts too. From September through January, the division completed various missions, including transporting personnel, equipment, and critical blood supplies, and provided airborne video and Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) camera systems. The equipment could detect signals given off by electronic devices like cell phones. The FLIR camera systems assisted the New York City Fire Department with thermal imaging technology that determined "hot spots" within the World Trade Center buildings, indicating where to deploy firefighting equipment that extinguished underground fires located near subterranean fuel storage tanks.

When Attorney General Ashcroft asked for volunteer air marshals from Department of Justice agencies, over 1,000 DEA special agents offered help within hours of the request. More than 250 special agents served as air

marshals for seven months following the attack to increase in-flight security.

The terrorist attacks necessitated increased security measures at DEA facilities, such as x-ray screenings of visitors, restrictions on vehicles entering properties, and revised occupant emergency plans. Overseas, DEA's office in Peshawar, Pakistan, was evacuated, and DEA's Islamabad, Pakistan, office was reduced to essential staff.

Security measures at all overseas DEA facilities were upgraded. Shortly following the attacks, there were anthrax exposures throughout the country, which prompted more security measures within DEA, particularly mail handling operations. Fortunately, no DEA facilities tested positive for anthrax exposure.

Narco-Terrorism

Terrorists and the drug trade have been connected for centuries as various rulers and terrorist organizations have used vast profits from the trade to arm, equip, and train their members. However, the 9/11 terrorist attacks brought that connection to the American public's attention. Drug money, in part, contributed to al-Qaida's execution of the attacks.

DEA defines narco-terrorism as a subset of terrorism in which terrorist groups participate directly or indirectly in the cultivation, manufacture, transportation, or distribution of controlled substances and the monies derived from these activities. A third of international terrorist organizations identified by the State Department are linked to illicit drug activities. For example, in South America, Colombia's two major insurgent groups—the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN)—as well as the right-wing United Self-Defense of Colombia (AUC) are linked to drug trafficking. In Peru, the Shining Path, a terrorist organization, most likely extracted a revolutionary tax from cocaine base operators.

While DEA does not specifically target terrorists, the agency tracks down drug traffickers and drug trafficking organizations involved in terrorist acts. For example, in January 2002, DEA announced the successful conclusion of Operation Mountain Express III, which targeted

suppliers of pseudoephedrine, the chemical essential to making methamphetamine. The operation yielded the seizure of more than 30 tons of pseudoephedrine and arrests of roughly 370 people in 12 cities. Many were citizens of Middle Eastern countries who sent their sizable drug profits back home. DEA investigated the money flow, revealing indications that some funded terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas.

Drugs and Osama bin Laden

In Afghanistan, ruling Taliban built its financial base from heroin trafficking. They taxed opium production, lab operations, and the movement of drugs as a major source of funding. U.S. intelligence confirmed a connection between the Taliban, international terrorist Osama bin Laden, and al-Qaida. Moreover, DEA's intelligence indicated that bin Laden was involved in the financing and facilitation of heroin trafficking activities. Afghanistan was a major source country for the cultivation, processing, and trafficking of opiate products, producing over 70 percent of the world's supply of illicit opium in 2000.

Narco-Terrorism Symposium (2001)

On December 4, 2001, DEA hosted the groundbreaking symposium "Target America: Traffickers, Terrorists, and Your Kids" to call attention to the link between drug trafficking and terrorism. Held at DEA Headquarters, the symposium was moderated by Robert Novak, longtime syndicated columnist and TV political commentator. Hosted by the AFFNA DEA Museum Foundation, a 6-member expert panel discussed the significant and complex relationships between terrorism and drug trafficking before a full house of DEA employees and invited guests, including Members of Congress and their staff representatives. Afterward, Novak wrote a column on the symposium and DEA's important role in the war against terrorism.

Integrated Drug Enforcement Assistance Program (2001)

In late 2001, Administrator Hutchinson launched a new initiative from the MET II program: the IDEA program.



The aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.



IDEA combined law enforcement action with strong community efforts to find solutions to problems that caused drug use and created a welcoming environment for drug traffickers. IDEA was innovative; while many programs only addressed law enforcement or treatment, IDEA brought diverse community groups together to holistically solve problems. Instead of MET II's regional approach, it focused on one community at a time. IDEA not only confronted drug problems but also the root causes of drug use and trafficking.

DEA and state and local law enforcement identified drug trafficking targets and executed enforcement operations. Concurrent to drug enforcement action in a community, IDEA provided long-term support in developing and implementing prevention and treatment programs. The goal was to partner law enforcement with community coalitions. Summits at each site brought together large numbers of community-based organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, parks and recreation departments, schools, drug courts, law enforcement, and local leaders to form new, lasting partnerships and identify problems and long-term solutions. Once enforcement efforts were complete, IDEA encouraged 15 percent of law enforcement-seized assets be directed to community prevention, education, and treatment programs.

In 2001 and 2002, three sites piloted the program: North Charleston, South Carolina, Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Portsmouth, Virginia. Three additional sites were added later in 2002 and 2003: Springfield, Missouri, Mobile/Prichard, Alabama, and Pueblo, Colorado. DEA provided a full-time special agent to each site to work with experts in crime prevention, alternative judicial systems (like drug courts), restorative justice initiatives, drug testing, and law enforcement training. Administrator Hutchinson established an IDEA National Advisory Council comprising law enforcement, judiciary, government officials, and substance abuse and crime prevention experts to consult with DEA on program design, implementation, and evaluation. To support IDEA and emphasize demand reduction activities on the whole, Administrator Hutchinson committed to doubling the number of DRCs across the country.

The IDEA program was ongoing at all six sites in 2003, and all reported significant arrests and seizures from law enforcement efforts and encouraging results in prevention, education, and treatment areas. IDEA communities saw increased participation in community drug programs, better identification of funding sources for antidrug efforts, stronger and better organized community coalitions, greater awareness of local drug problems, and more enthusiasm for solving them. While IDEA's funding was eliminated in DEA's 2003 budget due to tightening, national security-related fiscal concerns, DEA continued providing nonmonetary support to IDEA communities through its DRCs and local offices so successes could continue.

DEA World Goes High Tech (2001)

In September 2001, the popular DEA in-house publication, *DEA World*, was distributed electronically for the first time. Switching to an electronic format allowed for quicker and more frequent publication of the news-magazine, ensuring everyone at DEA could access it easily.

The new publication featured many of the same types of stories as the older print version but was timelier and more current. *DEA World* published on Webster, DEA's internal computer network, and each issue had the appearance of a miniature website. Soon after the first electronic newsletter released, entries poured in from all over the field. Employees were eager to share their local news with the global DEA community. Stories in a typical issue featured successful cases, awards won by employees, community service events, and information on employee services.

This new communication tool kept employees around the world in touch with each other by sharing the agency's news and accomplishments.

Operation Containment

Operation Containment, an intensive, multi-national law enforcement initiative congressionally mandated and led by DEA, began in 2002. It initially involved 19 countries from Central Asia, the Caucasus, Europe, and Russia. The goal was to implement a coordinated post-Taliban heroin counternarcotics strategy that deprived international terrorist

groups of some of the financial basis for their activities. While each country had unilaterally or jointly conducted similar interdiction operations in the past targeting Afghanistan heroin transporters, Operation Containment was the first coordinated, large-scale operation.

Working to diminish heroin and morphine base availability along the Balkan and Silk Road trafficking routes, the operation focused on interdiction at specific land, air, and sea border checkpoints; intelligence sharing; database connectivity; and collective targeting of drug traffickers and organizations. The operation eliminated duplication efforts and effectively allocated limited counterdrug law enforcement resources throughout the region. The operation also targeted other illicit commodities such as precursor chemicals, weapons, ammunitions, and currency that could be used by terrorist organizations to finance their operations.

Operation Containment included reopening DEA's office in Kabul, Afghanistan (which had been closed for security reasons in 1980), and expanding existing offices in Asian and European cities. DEA's communications intercept and intelligence capabilities also grew in support of agencies conducting counterterrorism investigations in the United States.

Operation Containment has proven to be one of the most successful drug interdiction initiatives undertaken on a multiregional basis. During a mid-2002 blitz operation, 1,705 kilograms of heroin were seized, with an estimated value between U.S. \$28 and \$51 million. Also seized were 5,329 kilograms of marijuana, 355 kilograms of opium, 2,013 poppy plants, and significant amounts of cocaine, weapons, cigarettes, and amphetamines. The operation was responsible for collecting considerable information on terrorist activities in the region.

Just as important, Operation Containment laid the groundwork for closer cooperation among countries for future operations. The mutual participation of 19 countries in a common operational and intelligence sharing action had not been undertaken before. Significantly, Russian and Chinese representatives traveled to Turkey for operational planning. Pakistanis and Indians in conflict with

one another put their differences aside, as did the Turks, Macedonians, and Greeks to deprive violent terrorists of drug-derived funds.

New Museum Exhibit on Narco-Terrorism (2002)

To continue educating Americans about the strong, historic link between terrorists and drug trafficking, DEA opened a new exhibit at the Headquarters Museum: "Target America: Traffickers, Terrorists, and You." It was housed in a new 1,500-square-foot addition to the DEA Museum. Administrator Hutchinson opened the exhibit at a ceremony on September 3, 2002, joined by former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Attorney General John Ashcroft, and ONDCP Director John Walters.

The exhibit opened with a sculpture composed of rubble and artifacts from the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and it used the events of 9/11 as a starting point to historicize connections between violent drug trades and terror from the 11th-century Silk Road to the present. With interactive kiosks, visitors followed drug trafficking, the movement of money, and terrorism worldwide. Photo essays and artifacts detailed the broad impact of drugs and terrorism, showed individuals and groups responsible for terrorist acts, examined America's response to drugs and terrorism, and presented visitors information on spreading antidrug messages in their communities, in part, to deny terrorists funding.

The exhibit stayed at the DEA Museum through August 2003, then began a nationwide tour with stops in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Dallas, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Tampa, and Omaha. Today, nearly 22 million visitors at venues across the country have enjoyed the reimagined and renamed exhibit as *Drugs: Costs and Consequences*.

DEA Turkey Seizes Worldwide Record 7.4 Tons of Morphine Base (2002)

On March 31, 2002, Turkish Jandarma officials, accompanied by Istanbul Resident Office personnel, arrested 15 individuals and seized 7.4 tons of morphine base. The base was discovered beneath piles of hay during the search of

a warehouse located in Hendick, Turkey, approximately 120 miles east of Istanbul. This seizure marked the culmination of five days of arrests and searches executed by the Jandarma in conjunction with DEA, targeting a multifaceted organization led by Attila Ozyildirim. It was involved in the production, transportation, and distribution of multi-hundred-kilogram quantities of morphine base and heroin. Intelligence indicated that Ozyildirim and his associates maintained strong connections with other significant Turkish traffickers as well as sources of supply in Afghanistan and Iran.

Although large shipments of morphine base and heroin are common in Turkey, according to the Jandarma, it was the largest seizure of its kind in the country. It was also one of the largest opiate seizures in Europe. According to the U.S. Department of State, Turkish authorities seized approximately 1.7 metric tons of morphine base in 2000 alone. This single seizure is almost six metric tons larger than that annual total. Given the 1:1 ratio for the conversion of heroin from morphine base, the seizure would have provided a significant amount of heroin to the European market.

FARC Indictments and Arrest (2002)

For the first time, the Department of Justice indicted members of a known terrorist organization on drug trafficking charges in March 2002. Three FARC members were indicted for conspiracy to manufacture cocaine with the intent to transport and distribute it in the United States. FARC is a Colombian Marxist terrorist organization whose stated goal is to overthrow the Colombian government. At the time, the U.S. State Department called FARC the most dangerous international terrorist group based in the Western hemisphere, and it was heavily engaged in drug trafficking.

In December 2000, DEA's Bogotá office opened an investigation of Tomás Molina-Caracas, the commander of FARC's 16th Front. His unit controlled territory in a sparsely populated area in eastern Colombia and used it to manufacture and export multi-ton quantities of cocaine. Molina and the 16th Front also dominated a small village with an airstrip, transforming it into a center for cocaine collection

and exportation. By 2000, Molina was manufacturing and exporting between one and three tons of cocaine per month, most shipped to the United States and Europe.

Between 1999 and 2000, Molina began purchasing large quantities of weapons and military equipment for FARC. Some transactions were direct trades of weapons for cocaine; other times, arms were purchased with cash derived from drug sales. By early 2002, DEA had enough evidence to seek an indictment against key members of Molina's organization. That March, the indictment was unsealed charging Molina, two other FARC members, a Colombian cocaine lab operator, and three Brazilian traffickers with conspiracy to produce and export cocaine knowing and intending that it be smuggled into the United States.

In June 2002, Surinamese authorities arrested Carlos Bolas—one of the indicted FARC members—in possession of a false Peruvian passport. Bolas appeared before a local magistrate and, knowing he was wanted in the United States on drug trafficking charges, Surinamese authorities expelled him, turning him over to U.S. authorities. On June 19, Bolas was transported to the Washington, DC, area where he was arraigned in U.S. District Court.

Administrator Hutchinson explained the significance of Bolas' arrest by saying, "This arrest takes our fight against narco-terrorism to a new level. For the first time we have not only indicted a member of a terrorist organization involved in drug trafficking, but we have also arrested him. This means that narco-terrorists will be held accountable to the justice system and to the rule of law in both U.S. and Colombia."

AUC Indictments and Arrests (2002)

On September 24, 2002, Attorney General Ashcroft announced the indictment of AUC leaders on charges of trafficking over 17 tons of cocaine into the United States and Europe beginning in early 1997. The indictment was based on a two-and-a-half-year DEA investigation that gathered witness testimony and evidence from Colombia, Spain, Portugal, Chile, and Puerto Rico.

AUC was a right-wing paramilitary group in Colombia listed on the State Department's Foreign Terrorist

Organization List. It operated in most regions of Colombia and was principally funded by drug trafficking. At the time of the indictment, the organization was estimated to have more than 8,000 paramilitary fighters with operations that varied from multi-ton cocaine distribution to the United States and Europe, assassinations, and involvement in guerrilla combat units. According to Colombian authorities, international human rights groups, and the U.S. State Department, AUC was responsible for 2,601 deaths, 182 kidnappings, and 70 percent of the human rights violations in Colombia in 2002.

Carlos Castaño-Gil was Commander in Chief of AUC until he resigned in May 2001 to become a member of its Political and Military Directorate. However, he retained the title of Commandante of the Autodefensas Campesinas de Cordoba and Uraba (ACCU), the largest paramilitary group under the AUC umbrella. For several years, multiple sources cited Castaño as one of Colombia's most powerful drug traffickers.

In an interview broadcast on September 8, 2002, Castaño expressed his willingness to surrender to Colombian and U.S. authorities should he be indicted on narco-trafficking charges by the United States. After an indictment was announced on September 24, Castaño reiterated this stance and said that he planned to surrender pending further review of the charges by his U.S. lawyer. Castaño also stated that he could no longer remain in an authority position with neither the AUC nor the ACCU because of the damage the charges would do to both organizations' credibility. He remained at large until he was kidnapped and killed in 2004.

In a separate DEA/FBI investigation, two other AUC commandants were arrested in Costa Rica on November 6, 2002, for their involvement in a multimillion-dollar cocaine-for-arms deal. In March 2003, DEA and Colombian authorities conducted the takedown of Operation Pegasus II. This case targeted a large drug trafficking organization with close ties to the AUC Bloque Libertadores del Sur.

Legalization

The small, but vocal, minority of drug legalization advocates pushing for decriminalization and outright legalization

of drugs for several years continued unabated in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These groups, like NORML, focused on the state ballot initiative process to achieve their goals. Financially backed by several multimillionaire sponsors, these organizations have the means to launch all-out publicity campaigns. While achieving early success in some states and gaining momentum through the 2010s and 2020s, by 2002, community coalitions across the country made marked gains opposing legalization initiatives.

Administrator Hutchinson Debates Legalization Advocates (2001-2002)

During his tenure at DEA, Administrator Hutchinson engaged in three public debates on drug legalization. He viewed them as important opportunities to deliver a positive, antidrug message, helping educate Americans about the dangers of drug use and legalization. His first debate, against New Mexico Governor and drug legalization proponent Gary Johnson, occurred one month after taking office. It was the first time a DEA Administrator formally debated drug legalization in a public forum. National Public Radio (NPR) hosted the event, titled "Directing America's Drug War: Which Way to a Safer Society," on September 10, 2001, at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

Before a packed house of hundreds of students and citizens (including numerous protesters), Administrator Hutchinson and Governor Johnson debated the issue and took questions from the audience for two hours. Hutchinson emphasized a balanced antidrug strategy that encompassed education and treatment in addition to law enforcement. He pointed out many successes in the fight against drugs and offered areas where the country could do better.

Administrator Hutchinson and Governor Johnson continued the debate in November 2001 at Yale University's Law School. Hutchinson discussed the history of illegal drugs, pointing out that the country had legalization in the 19th century, and it was a failure. He also discussed the connection between drugs and terrorism.

In April 2002, Fordham University's School of Law hosted a debate titled "America's Oldest War: The Efficacy

of U.S. Drug Policy.” This time, Administrator Hutchinson debated Graham Boyd, a lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union. The debate focused largely on marijuana as medicine, with Hutchinson arguing that safe and effective medicines must be determined by science and the regulatory process, not by referenda sponsored by the legalization lobby.

Marijuana Research

Repeated attempts by marijuana legalization proponents in the late 1990s to remove marijuana from Schedule I of the CSA, thereby effectively legalizing the drug, were curtailed with the April 2001 publication in the Federal Register of DEA’s denial of the Jon Gettman/*High Times* magazine petition. In January 2001, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) returned a scientific and medical evaluation on this petition and recommended that marijuana and THC continue to be subject to control under Schedule I. In its decision, HHS clearly reaffirmed that marijuana has a high abuse potential and is not approved for medical use.

However, in response to national interest in the potential therapeutic use of marijuana to treat symptoms of illnesses, DEA registered eight researchers to study the effects of smoked marijuana. These registrations were granted upon close and thorough review of study protocols by an independent review board and panels from HHS and FDA. By early 2003, neither the medical nor the scientific community had found sufficient data to conclude that smoked marijuana was the best approach to dealing with these important medical issues. The most comprehensive, scientifically rigorous review of studies of smoked marijuana was conducted by the Institute of Medicine, an organization chartered by the National Academy of Sciences. In a 1999 report, the Institute did not recommend the use of smoked marijuana, but did conclude that active ingredients in the drug could be isolated and developed into various pharmaceuticals.

One such drug, Marinol, was brought to market in the 1980s after DEA granted researchers authorization to work with marijuana. Marinol is a prescription drug containing

synthetic THC, which has been found to relieve nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy for cancer patients and assist with AIDS patients’ loss of appetite. Unlike smoked marijuana—which contains more than 400 different chemicals, including most hazardous chemicals found in tobacco smoke—Marinol was proven safe, and its therapeutic value was supported by clinical evidence.

San Francisco Marijuana Raids and Protests (2002)

On February 12, 2002, DEA Agents confiscated more than 8,000 marijuana plants and made several arrests at a San Francisco cannabis club known as the Harm Reduction Center. The operator, Kenneth Hayes, was cultivating large quantities of marijuana in San Francisco and Sonoma County. He also smuggled high-grade Canadian marijuana into the Bay Area.

The arrests received considerable publicity because of California’s medical marijuana law. The club was affiliated with the local government to provide medical marijuana to patients. Additionally, one of the arrestees was Edward Rosenthal, longtime contributing editor to *High Times* and *Cannabis Culture* magazines and the author of several how-to books on marijuana cultivation.

The investigation determined that the club was engaged in marijuana trafficking, violating federal law. While the club claimed to distribute marijuana to sick people, it was in fact selling marijuana to anyone. Four operators were federally charged with cultivation, conspiracy, and maintaining a location for drug manufacturing.

Two pled guilty. The third defendant, Rosenthal, went to trial, his case resulting in a guilty conviction. The fourth, Hayes, sought asylum in Canada. He remained in the country until 2008 when he returned to the United States, pled guilty, and was sentenced to six months home confinement.

Coincidentally, on the same day of the cannabis club raids, Administrator Hutchinson spoke before a sold-out audience at San Francisco’s Commonwealth Club, a prestigious public affairs speech forum. The city, caught between conflicting state and federal laws concerning medical marijuana, had long been home to intense debate

over drug laws. Hutchinson’s visit and the cannabis club arrests prompted public protests from local residents and elected officials.

When Administrator Hutchinson arrived to deliver his speech, over 200 protestors had gathered outside the Commonwealth Club. Chanting “DEA, go away,” and waving banners, they expressed their disapproval of the marijuana arrests. Simultaneously, protest groups launched a web attack against DEA’s website, attempting to shut it down by visiting it repeatedly. The site received 30,000 hits at once, but service was not disrupted. “In many ways, this debate is a good thing,” said Administrator Hutchinson of his not-so-warm welcome. “If nothing else, it shows everyone how important this issue is and it helps the DEA get our message across. DEA must follow the law—we don’t judge what is use and what is abuse. We judge what is legal and what is illegal.”



San Francisco Marijuana Protests, 2002.

Speaking Out Booklet and Grass Roots Movement

To spread DEA’s message on drug legalization and why marijuana should not be legalized for medicinal or recreational use, DEA’s Public Affairs office initiated an informational campaign. A new section of DEA’s website was devoted to anti-legalization, which included many supporting resources. One of the most comprehensive was “Speaking Out Against Drug Legalization,” a 25-page booklet that logically laid out the top 10 facts on legalization. It detailed national, international, and local statistics; provided examples of failed legalization experiments; and discussed the many successes of contemporary drug policy.

DEA’s Demand Reduction section also began a new, proactive emphasis on outreach and coalition-building. The agency reached out to antidrug and pro-law enforcement organizations that interacted with the media and public on a regular basis and those who were intimately involved in their communities. The Demand Reduction section’s mission proactively engaged these coalitions’ support. The number of neighborhood antidrug coalitions in the United States was huge, but largely unorganized. DEA established a goal to help those groups develop better communication networks to build local, state, and national support for the fight against drugs and widespread support for DEA.

2002 Election Results on Legalization Initiatives

Grassroots support of existing drug policy paid immediate dividends. In fall 2002, drug decriminalization or legalization initiatives were on several state ballots. The legalization lobby greatly assisted these initiatives with funding and signatures, even helping word them. Widespread passage was expected, but because of a strong movement by parents, antidrug coalitions, and law enforcement, four of the six initiatives failed, demonstrating the American public’s overall support for drug enforcement. The results were:

Arizona: 57 percent of voters opposed Proposition 203, which would have made state law enforcement the broker for medicinal marijuana.

- Nevada: 61 percent of voters opposed a proposal that would have allowed anyone to possess up to 3 ounces of marijuana.
- Ohio: 67 percent opposed Issue 1, a proposal that would have allowed nonviolent drug offenders to seek treatment instead of serve jail time.
- South Dakota: 62 percent of voters defeated an industrial hemp initiative.
- Washington, DC: 78 percent of voters approved an initiative that offered drug rehabilitation instead of prison for some nonviolent offenders.
- San Francisco: 63 percent approved a measure to have the city study growing and dispensing marijuana for medical purposes.

Methamphetamine

From 1999 to 2003, methamphetamine use became a national problem as the drug epidemic spread east. Initially, its use was largely confined to the West and Midwest, but soon surfaced in other areas, especially the Southeast. Florida in particular witnessed an increase in use and clandestine laboratory production. In 1999, law enforcement seized 22 methamphetamine labs in Florida, but by 2002, the number increased to 109. Similarly, 30 meth labs were seized in Alabama in 1999; by 2002, seizures rose to 198.

The number of small, toxic methamphetamine labs in rural communities also dramatically increased. While the meth trade was, and continues to be, dominated by Mexico--based traffickers producing the drug in larger “super labs” on the west coast, the increase in small labs was significant. It strained communities and state and local police forces. Effective and safe lab clean-up was very costly and drained community resources and manpower. In response to this new pressure on local law enforcement, DEA worked with the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program to provide state and local clan lab clean-up training.

Traffickers’ methods of producing methamphetamine and obtaining pseudoephedrine (or pseudo), a chemical necessary to make meth, had changed. More

small, domestic labs increased the use of over-the-counter blister packs of cold and allergy medication to source pseudoephedrine. Such medications are packaged to be impractical supply sources for super labs that make massive quantities of meth.

Canada emerged as a pseudoephedrine supply source after DEA’s Operation Mountain Express I and II effectively stopped the domestic illegal pseudo trade. Discussions between the United States and Canada led to tighter restrictions on pseudo production and transportation.

In 2002, a new meth threat emerged: tablets, called “Yaba,” from Southeast Asia. By 2003, Yaba only accounted for a small percentage of meth used in the United States, but law enforcement monitored the drug as it gained traction in club culture.

Operation Mountain Express I, II, and III (2000–2002)

In August 2000, DEA special agents stunned the methamphetamine production underworld, arresting more than 140 individuals in 8 cities with a promise of more to follow. The arrests marked the first of three phases of Operation Mountain Express. The operation combated the production of methamphetamine by targeting those who produced and illegally distributed pseudoephedrine.

Its first phase yielded arrests in Los Angeles, Denver, Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, San Diego, Portland, Houston, and Lodi, California. Additionally, DEA suspended 10 companies’ chemical registrations, 770 chemical registrations were surrendered, and 29 wholesale chemical companies closed. Defendants faced federal charges for their involvement in a loosely structured national pseudoephedrine trafficking network. In response to pseudo’s availability in over-the-counter cold and allergy medications, the operation focused on the drug’s transfer from legal sale to illegal meth production.

Operation Mountain Express’ second phase used information from phase one to identify registrants (physicians or pharmacists authorized to handle controlled substances) illegally diverting pseudo to cancel their registrations. While not subjected to criminal prosecution,



IA Melissa Conway and SA Sean Stephen King examine some of the Mt. Express seizures.

the rogue registrants were prohibited from working with controlled substances.

Operations Mountain Express I and II effectively shut down the illegal pseudo trade within the United States. Traffickers began looking for supply sources in Canada, growing the illegal trade and transport across the U.S. border. DEA created Operation Mountain Express III to pursue the new Canadian pseudo trafficking market. Intelligence indicated that traffickers purchased large amounts of pseudo in Canada before returning to the United States with the product, often via Detroit's Ambassador Bridge. As a result, Detroit and nearby Chicago became pseudo distribution hubs. The drug was then transported to California and distributed to super labs where it was converted to methamphetamine by Mexico-based drug traffickers.

The successful conclusion of Operation Mountain Express III was announced by DEA Administrator Hutchinson, U.S. Customs Commissioner (and former DEA Administrator) Robert Bonner, and IRS Deputy Commissioner Bob Wenzel. It ended on January 10, 2002, when DEA special agents, assisted by the U.S. Customs Service, IRS, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police arrested 54 traffickers in addition to the 67 previously arrested as part of the investigations.

Operation Mountain Express did unprecedented damage to the methamphetamine trade. In 2001, DEA seized 6,000 pounds of meth; Operation Mountain Express' three phases resulted in the seizure of nearly 30 tons of pseudoephedrine, which could produce 37,000 pounds of meth. The operations also yielded 371 arrests and the seizure of 269 pounds of meth, 151 vehicles, 13 weapons, and nearly \$17.5 million. DEA also tightened regulatory controls over agency-registered chemical handlers. Legislative initiatives were undertaken to address weaknesses in the regulatory framework. Additionally, the investigation traced large amounts of profit sent to individuals in the Middle East who had possible ties to terrorist organizations.

Methamphetamine Summits (2000–2002)

In the early 2000s, DEA cosponsored methamphetamine summits across the country in partnership with the National Crime Prevention Council and local communities. At these training conferences, a state, county, or city developed a strategic plan to reduce methamphetamine use and trafficking in the area. The summits brought together hundreds of people from the community who were involved in different aspects of the methamphetamine problem:

law enforcement, social workers, school officials, local officials, prevention experts, treatment providers, parents, and environmental firms. The goal was to coordinate these various groups and mobilize resources to prevent and reduce the proliferation of meth and meth labs. Meth summits were held in Sacramento, California, in 2000; Bellevue, Washington, in 2001; and Indianapolis, Indiana, Little Rock, Arkansas, Lexington, Kentucky, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and Hawaii County, Hawaii, in 2002.

Meth in America Tour (2002)

In spring 2002, Administrator Hutchinson launched a nationwide tour calling attention to the country's growing methamphetamine problem. The campaign, called "Meth in America: Not in Our Town," began in May and continued through July 2002. DEA took the tour to 32 states over three months. Many stops were in smaller states struggling with social and financial impacts of the drug.

At each site, Administrator Hutchinson held press conferences in conjunction with state and local officials. The tour was often combined with scheduled meth summits. Both focused on a community's meth problem and the resources and options available to help combat it. Administrator Hutchinson emphasized the federal response to methamphetamine trafficking, but also cited the many innovative actions communities took, including community coalitions. The tour received much national and local attention, raising overall awareness of the meth problem and sparking discussions on solutions.

Hazardous Waste Cleanup Program

Since 1980, the Environmental Protection Agency's regulations have required hazardous waste generators to properly manage their waste. DEA, along with state and local law enforcement agencies, technically become generators when they seize clandestine drug laboratories—which, in the early 2000s, were generally methamphetamine labs. As the generator, law enforcement bears the responsibility for ensuring waste is managed in compliance with all applicable health, safety, transportation, and environmental requirements.

The DEA Laboratory System established a program in 1990 to address environmental concerns from clandestine drug laboratory cleanups. The amount of waste material and chemicals from clan labs vary from a few pounds to several tons, depending on the size of the laboratory and its manufacturing capabilities. Wastes can be highly toxic, flammable, corrosive, reactive, and, in some cases, radioactive. They can cause injury and death to laboratory operators as well as fires and explosions that contaminate the interior of homes, apartments, motels, and more. In some instances, these wastes have been indiscriminately dumped into pits, streams, lakes, septic tanks, and along the roadside.

Cleaning up a seized clandestine drug laboratory can be complex, dangerous, and expensive. The DEA hazardous waste program has been successful in promoting the safety of law enforcement personnel and the public, protecting the environment, and minimizing the agency's liability. With nationwide contracts, DEA's program promotes the safety of law enforcement personnel and the public by using highly qualified companies with specialized training and equipment to remove wastes from seized laboratories.

The program has become increasingly more efficient as DEA gained more experience cleaning up clandestine drug labs. The average cost per cleanup from FY 1991 to 1992 was \$17,000. While the number of cleanups rose, the average cost per cleanup went down. Through contract improvements and DEA's contract management experience, removal costs were reduced to approximately \$4,000 in FY 2000 and to less than \$3,300 in FY 2002.

New FY 2003 hazardous waste contracts included many time and cost saving tools to address the field's concerns and the dramatic workload increase. Specifically, they were designed to improve response times by increasing the number of Contract Areas from 29 to 44 and requiring response facilities in each. The greater competition created by smaller Contract Areas and new cost reduction factors provide additional cost savings for the government, while maintaining strict environmental compliance standards. Moreover, the new contracts contained



Hazardous Waste Cleanup Program.



provisions for weekly pickups from containers in states that established a container storage program and entered into a Letter of Agreement with DEA to provide this service.

Targeting the Arellano-Félix Trafficking Organization (2000–2002)

The Arellano-Félix Organization (AFO), often referred to as the Tijuana Cartel, was one of Mexico's most powerful and violent drug trafficking organizations. At the height of its power, AFO transported, imported, and distributed multi-ton quantities of cocaine and marijuana as well as large quantities of heroin and methamphetamine into the United States (primarily from Tijuana into San Diego and Los Angeles).

DEA offices in Mexico and the United States, most notably Tijuana, San Diego, and Los Angeles, relentlessly pursued the organizations' principal members. AFO's most prominent members were brothers Benjamín, Eduardo, Ramón, and Francisco Javier Arellano-Félix; Ismael Higuera-Guerrero; Jesus Labra Aviles; and Manuel Aguirre Galindo. Aviles, long considered the organization's financial mastermind, was arrested in Mexico City in March 2000 by the Mexican government with support from DEA's Tijuana office. He had been the most blatant AFO member directing operations in Tijuana. The arrest of key AFO lieutenant Ismael Higuera-Guerrero followed two months later.

At the beginning of 2002, AFO was dealt two huge blows. First, its infamous and brutal enforcer and assassin Ramón Arellano-Félix was killed in a street fight with drug trafficking competitors and Mexican police. Then, a month later, the Mexican Military arrested AFO's overall Chief of Operations Benjamín Arellano-Felix in Puebla, Mexico.

Operation Crossfire (2002)

On April 10, 2002, Operation Crossfire, a bilateral anti-corruption investigation conducted in collaboration with federal Mexican government officials, resulted in the arrest of 42 active federal, state, and local law enforcement officers from Mexicali, Tijuana, and Ensenada. They included the Tijuana chief of police; heads of the State Judicial Police in Tijuana, Tecate, and Mexicali; and the

assistant state attorney general. All assisted the Arellano-Félix Organization.

Drug Smuggling Tunnels

Reports of drug smuggling tunnels increased significantly in late 2002 and early 2003. Traffickers likely used subterranean smuggling more in response to increased border security, either real or perceived. Mexican drug trafficking organizations had used smuggling tunnels since at least 1990. All narco-tunnels seized were in California (in the San Diego-Tijuana area) and Arizona (Douglas, Naco, and Nogales). At least 13 tunnels were discovered. Narco-tunnels ranged in sophistication from a 16-inch PVC pipe; to tunnels dug off of drainage systems; to well-engineered tunnels equipped with electricity, ventilation, and rails.

DEA, in cooperation with Mexico's Policía Federal Preventiva, discovered one of the most significant drug smuggling tunnels on February 27, 2002. It was approximately 4 feet by 4 feet, more than 800 feet long, and 20 feet underground. Equipped with its own ventilation system and lighting, the tunnel included an electric cart on rails to move drugs. The Mexican entrance was hidden behind a fireplace in a home near Tecate, Mexico, and the U.S. exit was concealed under a stairway in a home in Boulevard, California. About 300 pounds of marijuana were seized from inside the tunnel. The tunnel's ownership was attributed to the Jose Albino Quintero-Meraz organization.

Drug Treatment Courts

Drug treatment courts are specialized community courts designed to help stop illicit drug use, alcohol misuse, and related criminal activity. Nonviolent offenders charged with simple drug possession are given the option to receive treatment instead of jail time. A judge oversees each case from the beginning and traces progressions and lapses with random drug testing and treatment attendance monitoring. If a participant fails to meet the court's minimum requirements, immediate sanctions are imposed. Completing the program may result in dismissed charges, a reduced sentence, a lesser penalty, or a combination of these.

Drug courts have rapidly grown since their 1989 inception—by 2003, there were about 700 nationwide. Administrator Hutchinson championed drug courts during his DEA tenure. He visited several across the country to encourage and support participants and spoke at many graduation ceremonies. Drug courts were a centerpiece of his message that, to make progress in the fight against drugs, it was necessary to treat addiction, restore productive, healthy lives, and help reduce domestic demand for illicit drugs.

Israeli Ecstasy Traffickers Extradited (2002)

Two Israeli ecstasy traffickers were extradited to Miami in August 2002, marking the first time that Israeli citizens were extradited to the United States on drug charges. Meir Ben David and Josef Levi were indicted in October 2000 for conspiracy to import ecstasy and possession with intent to distribute into Florida's Southern District. The investigation, initiated by DEA's Fort Lauderdale office in 1998, revealed that Ben David and Levi were part of an Israeli organized crime syndicate responsible for smuggling large quantities of ecstasy from Europe to the United States. Ben David coordinated ecstasy shipments using body and parcel couriers. Levi assisted by distributing the drug at various nightclubs throughout South Florida and to other Israeli ecstasy traffickers. The investigation documented the organization's importation of hundreds of kilograms of ecstasy into the United States.

Operation X-Out (2002–2003)

In late 2002, DEA began Operation X-Out, a multifaceted, 12-month initiative that identified and dismantled organizations producing and distributing ecstasy and predatory drugs in the United States and abroad. At the time, DEA invested more resources in ecstasy and predatory drug investigations, increasing such operations from 5 percent of DEA's total caseload to at least 10 percent. DEA likewise increased interdiction task forces at certain airports, created new task forces in cities like New York and Miami that were primary entryways for the drugs, and

established a task force focused exclusively on Internet drug trafficking.

Moreover, Operation X-Out included an awareness campaign to educate students, parents, educators, and health and law enforcement communities about the dangers of ecstasy and predatory drugs. DEA held press conferences and town hall meetings across the country that focused on enforcement and prevention efforts at the local level. At the first, held in November 2002 in San Diego, Administrator Hutchinson launched Operation X-Out, calling attention to the rising ecstasy and predatory drug use rates. It was followed by a town hall meeting attended by roughly 300 educators, health experts, students, rape crisis centers, and concerned citizens who discussed solutions to problems in their communities. Similar events were held nationwide in 2003 with an emphasis on college campuses.

Three Largest Ecstasy Seizures

The following seizures were the largest made in the United States in 2003. The millions of tablets involved demonstrate the extent that international drug trafficking organizations smuggled ecstasy into the country and the drug's tremendous popularity.

1. In July 2000, DEA and the U.S. Customs Service seized approximately 2.1 million ecstasy tablets at the Los Angeles International Airport. Labeled as clothing, the tablets arrived on an Air France flight from Paris concealed in an airfreight shipment. Several individuals responsible for overseeing and coordinating the shipment were arrested. DEA later connected them to a significant Israeli trafficking organization that imported multi-kilogram quantities of ecstasy into the United States. (See Operation Red Tide)
2. The New York Police Department made the second largest seizure of 1.6 million ecstasy tablets from two Israeli nationals at a Manhattan apartment. The pills had an estimated street value of \$40 million and were sold in 100,000 tablet quantities to local mid-level distributors.



Roughly 1.2 million ecstasy tablets seized in New York inside a diamond cutting apparatus.

3. The third largest ecstasy seizure occurred in conjunction with arrests made by DEA New York in October 2002. Agents arrested three Israeli nationals in connection with 1.4 million seized ecstasy tablets. DEA's Belgium office began the investigation when they received information from local law enforcement about the tablets bound for New York. It was the second largest seizure in Europe.

DEA Website Reaches Millions

In DEA's early years, internet communications would have seemed like a sci-fi fantasy. By 2003, with websites serving as primary sources for information, DEA met the demand for a thorough, informative web presence. When www.dea.gov first debuted in 1996, it only hosted a few web files. In 2003, it included 2,500 files that addressed every aspect of the agency and its mission. The website featured recent news that changed almost daily, current drug facts and statistics, recruiting and training information, and photos of major fugitives. In late 2002, it expanded with webpages for

each of DEA's divisions, which used their sites to promote local drug news and connect with communities.

DEA became adept at using DEA.gov to reach out to the public, schools, the media, and law enforcement partners. Upon its launch, the website had one million visitors. By 1998, that number had grown to 18 million. In 2002, after a major overhaul and new efforts to publicize it, DEA.gov received 100 million visitors. This staggering growth represented the public's expanding interest in DEA and the agency's improved capability to provide important information to the American people.

Operation Webslinger (2002)

In a first-of-its kind investigation, Operation Webslinger targeted predatory drugs such as GHB and its derivatives, GBL and 1,4 BD, sold over the Internet. The groundbreaking operation identified Internet drug traffickers' email addresses and webpage communications for Title III interceptions. Operation Webslinger was one of the earliest to use this intercept method on a national and international scale. The intercepts revealed key information about the traffickers' operations, including their supply sources and the quantity of drugs they were selling. Most importantly, the Internet communications proved the sites were selling chemicals not as industrial solvents as advertised, but for human consumption (which is key to prosecuting traffickers under drug analogue statutes).

In September 2002, DEA successfully concluded this operation with the arrest of 175 individuals in more than 100 cities across the United States and Canada. By arresting sources of supply, mid-level brokers, and people who used predatory drugs, DEA and law enforcement partners dismantled four nationwide distribution rings. DEA seized approximately 25 million dosage units and more than \$1 million in assets. The operation immediately affected Internet drug sales, with people complaining in online chat rooms that they could no longer purchase the drugs.

Operation Arctic Heat (2002)

Operation Arctic Heat targeted a savvy, flexible drug operation involving Alaskan traffickers who did business across

the United States, including New York and Los Angeles. In November 2002, DEA agents arrested more than 60 individuals and seized 160 kilograms of cocaine, \$2 million in cash, and \$35,000 in counterfeit money. Seizures took place in Anchorage, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Salt Lake City, Chicago, and Grand Junction. The operation also targeted money laundering, tracked drug proceeds' movements, and worked on an extensive embezzlement scheme designed to "smurf" money (i.e., breaking up large transactions into smaller ones to hide illegal activity) from the United States to the Dominican Republic.

Lebanese Opium and Marijuana Eradication Program Resumes (2002)

With urgency and support expressed by DEA and other international drug liaison officers, Lebanon reengaged their opium poppy and cannabis eradication initiatives in 2002. That February, Lebanese Internal Security Forces, assisted by the Lebanese and Syrian militaries, eradicated approximately 7 million square meters of opium poppy in the Bekaa Valley. Six months later, approximately 9 million square meters of cannabis were eradicated. DEA special agents, along with other drug enforcement liaison officers, were invited to witness the eradication initiatives. Agents in the Bekaa Valley likened their assignment to finding the Holy Grail; the initiative was expected to have a significant impact on the availability of heroin and marijuana in Western Europe.

International Drug Profiling Conference (2002)

The International Drug Profiling Conference (IDPC) convened in December 2002 as the first-ever forensic science conference that brought delegates together to define and standardize forensic "drug profiling" to meet international drug law enforcement and intelligence requirements. Attendees hailed from the United States, Australia, Great Britain, Finland, Sweden, Germany, Japan, Switzerland, Hong Kong, the United Nations Drug Control Program, and the Netherlands. The first IDPC ended with an agreement among delegates to set realistic and achievable goals that

could be implemented internationally. By consensus, the delegates' first two goals were the development of drug profiling databases and programs profiling heroin and Amphetamine Type Stimulants (ATS).

Operations Pipe Dreams and Headhunter (2003)

On February 24, 2003, DEA successfully completed Operations Pipe Dreams and Headhunter, a nationwide sweep of major drug paraphernalia distributors and businesses. The coordinated operations netted 55 individuals across the country and seized \$150,000 cash. As a result, 11 internet sites were taken offline and redirected. Targeted companies sold half of the nation's drug paraphernalia supply and accounted for more than a quarter of a billion dollars in retail drug paraphernalia sales annually. Using both traditional retail stores and Internet websites, the distributors were one-stop shops for drug dealers and customers, selling everything from miniature scales, pipes, bongs, cocaine freebase kits, and cutting agents to dilute processed drugs in their raw form. Approximately 115 tons of drug paraphernalia with an estimated wholesale value of \$15 to \$20 million were removed from the sites too.

Critical to Operation Pipe Dreams' success was the use of internet intercepts on e-commerce sites and email accounts to track drug paraphernalia money and domestic and international shipments. DEA offices in Des Moines, Iowa, Boise, Indiana, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, conducted Operation Pipe Dreams.

Arrest of Osiel Cárdenas-Guillén in Mexico (2003)

On March 14, 2003, Mexican officials brought Osiel Cárdenas-Guillén's reign to an end. He was arrested at a residence in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico, following a fierce firefight with Mexican police. Before his arrest, Cárdenas led a drug trafficking organization that controlled large-scale marijuana and cocaine trafficking through the smuggling corridor between Matamoros, Mexico, and Brownsville, Texas. Cárdenas had numerous resources that enabled him to maintain 15 to 25 heavily

armed bodyguards at all times, protection and support from all levels of Mexican law enforcement, and technical assistance from the Mexican phone company.

Through the combined efforts with the Mexican government, DEA, FBI, and U.S. Customs, Cárdenas' reign on the Northeastern Mexico corridor halted. This investigation, called Operation Golden Grips, sent a message to traffickers that violence and intimidation did not protect them from law enforcement.

The operation's catalyst was the November 1999 assault and attempted kidnapping of two U.S. federal agents and a confidential source. During the assault, Cárdenas and 12 to 15 members of his organization, armed with assault rifles, surrounded a vehicle occupied by the agents and attempted to kidnap them and a confidential source who was in the car. Only after an extensive discussion between one of the agents and Cárdenas were they allowed to leave the scene and travel directly to the border. The agents were followed by members Cárdenas' organization.

Hemp Rule (2003)

On March 21, 2003, DEA announced two final rules that addressed the legal status of products derived from cannabis plants. Such “hemp” products often contain THC, the primary psychoactive chemical in the cannabis (marijuana) plant.

DEA's rules defined which products could contain hemp. Under the CSA, THC is a Schedule I controlled substance, meaning it has not been approved as medicine by FDA. Furthermore, anything that contains “any quantity” of a Schedule I hallucinogenic controlled substance is, itself, a Schedule I controlled substance, unless it is an FDA-approved drug product. Thus, the CSA prohibits human consumption of any non-FDA-approved product that contains any amount of THC.

In some cases, a Schedule I controlled substance may have a legitimate industrial use. The CSA allows for such instances, but only under highly controlled circumstances. The new rules created an exemption that removed all CSA regulatory restrictions for legitimate industrial products made from cannabis plants like paper, rope, and clothing

(which contain fiber made from cannabis plants), animal feed mixtures, soaps, and shampoos (which contain sterilized cannabis seeds or oils extracted from the seeds). DEA exempted these products because they are not intended for human consumption and do not cause THC to enter the human body.

The rules prohibited cannabis products containing THC and intended or used for human consumption (e.g., foods and beverages). This approach is consistent with the long-standing rule under federal law disallowing human consumption of Schedule I controlled substances outside of FDA-approved research. The rules became effective April 21, 2003.

International Drug Enforcement Conference

The International Drug Enforcement Conference (IDEC) was established in 1983 to institutionalize regional cooperation among executive-level drug law enforcement officials from South, Central, and North America, as well as the Caribbean. IDEC is an “operationally oriented conference.” In its earlier years, the conference served as a forum to discuss country-specific enforcement problems and programs, later shifting to topical-related issues. The principal purpose of the yearly conference was to share drug-related intelligence and develop an operational strategy to successfully attack trafficking organizations at every link in the drug chain. IDEC XX was the first conference that included new members as well as observers from Asia, Europe, and Russia.

The following meetings explored various themes from 1999 to 2003:

- IDEC XVII: 1999, Washington, DC, United States, “Identifying and Attacking Major Trafficking Organizations”
- IDEC XVIII: 2000, Buenos Aires, Argentina, “Multi-Regional Investigations and Operations Targeting Major Traffickers”
- IDEC XIX: 2001, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, “Multi-Regional Investigations and

Operations Targeting Major Traffickers and Their Organizations”

- IDEC XX: 2002, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, “Combating Major International Drug Trafficking Organizations Through Global Cooperation and Partnership”
- IDEC XXI: 2003, Panama City, Panama, “International Counternarcotics and Terrorism”

Diversion

The diversion of legitimately manufactured controlled substances from their lawful purpose into illicit drug traffic causes many problems associated with drug use and misuse. By 2003, the percentage of people who misused prescription drugs each year roughly equaled the percentage who used cocaine—about 2 to 4 percent of the population. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, prescription drug misuse was a growing problem.

In 1998, 2.5 million Americans admitted misusing prescription drugs. By 2001, that number had almost doubled to 4.8 million.

OxyContin Misuse

Widespread misuse of OxyContin, which began in the late 1990s, brought the problem of prescription drug diversion to Americans’ attention. OxyContin is a 12-hour controlled release formulation of the Schedule II drug oxycodone, a powerful analgesic. It was introduced in 1996 and became the number one controlled pharmaceutical in terms of sales by 2000. This rapid growth accompanied similar increases in diversion and misuse. The number of people reporting OxyContin use for nonmedical purposes at least once in their lifetime increased from 221,000 in 1999 to 399,000 in 2000 to 957,000 in 2001.

OxyContin was diverted through fraudulent prescriptions, overprescribing, theft and illegal sales, and “doctor shopping” (i.e., going to different doctors until one prescribes the desired narcotic). The drug’s active ingredients and easily compromised controlled release mechanism made it a popular target for diversion and misuse. Simply

crushing a tablet negates its timed effect, enabling people to swallow, inhale, or inject the drug for a powerful morphine-like high. DAWN reported that emergency room mentions for oxycodone, the active ingredient in OxyContin, were more than 100 percent higher in 2000 than in 1998.

OxyContin misuse likely began in rural parts of the eastern United States before it spread to suburban and urban areas. Numerous communities experienced an upswing in crime as a direct result. Medical examiners also reported overdose deaths associated with oxycodone misuse.

In response, DEA implemented a comprehensive OxyContin Action Plan in FY 2001—the first to target a specific brand of controlled substance. The plan focused on enforcement and regulatory investigations of key diversion points. It brought OxyContin diversion and misuse to the attention of numerous federal, state, and local agencies; advisory committees; and the general public through meetings, presentations, interviews, demand reduction, and internet sites.

The Action Plan had a significant impact. A fourfold increase in DEA OxyContin cases opened in FY 2001 over FY 2000. Arrests made in conjunction with OxyContin investigations rose sevenfold over the same period. OxyContin cases opened in FY 2001 and 2002 totaled 305, and arrests for the same period totaled 351.

Pain Management Initiative

For years, adequate pain management was a source of controversy in the medical community. Some viewed DEA’s role enforcing the CSA and regulating the most powerful narcotics used to treat pain as inhibiting pain medication availability. However, both diversion control and pain management constitute health issues.

Recognizing the need to reconcile differences and work together to ensure optimum pain treatment, drug diversion control, and drug misuse prevention, the Office of Diversion Control developed consensus on the issue with 21 prominent health organizations. The resulting joint statement, “Promoting Pain Relief and Preventing Abuse of Pain Medications: A Critical Balancing Act,” emphasized

that patients' ability to receive proper care, including pain management, should not be hindered by drug misuse prevention efforts. It pledged cooperation between the health care community and law enforcement, stating, "The roles of both health professionals and law enforcement personnel in maintaining this essential balance between patient care and diversion prevention are critical."

DEA's Office of Diversion Control continues with its efforts to strike that balance. Ongoing relationships with renowned pain specialists and medical groups yields educational materials for physicians and investigators concerning both diversion and acceptable medical practices.

Targeting International Precursor Chemical Diversion: Operations Purple and Topaz, and Project PRISM

Illicit drug production depends on the availability of legally produced, internationally sourced and marketed precursor and/or essential chemicals with widespread industrial applications. All nations share the responsibility to deal with issues related to drug or chemical trafficking. Preventing chemicals' diversion from legitimate commerce to clandestine drug manufacture is a powerful weapon in the global struggle against illegal narcotics' and synthetic drugs' spread.

As a result, and in response to a resolution by the United Nations General Assembly Special Session, the Office of Diversion Control, together with worldwide regulatory and enforcement counterparts, embarked on several informal, multilateral chemical control and enforcement initiatives. Each showed marked success preventing and detecting the diversion of key chemicals used in the illicit production of cocaine, heroin, and amphetamine-type stimulant chemicals. Taken together, the initiatives sought to identify, intercept, and prevent diversion attempts; identify criminals; gather intelligence on traffickers' diversion methods; take appropriate administrative, civil, and/or criminal action; and obtain intelligence on chemical trafficking trends and shipping routes.

The first initiative, Operation Purple, targeted potassium permanganate, an oxidizing agent used in

clandestine cocaine processing. Developed together with Germany, Operation Purple brought together the potassium permanganate producing, major importing, and illicit cocaine source countries. The operation tracked every potassium permanganate shipment from the producing country through any transit countries and, ultimately, to the end-user. The operation's success—preventing tons of the chemical's diversion, identifying "rogue" chemical companies and suspect individuals, gathering intelligence on trafficker diversion methods, and improved regulatory control of the chemical—led to two subsequent chemical targeting initiatives, Operation Topaz and Project PRISM.

Operation Topaz was an international initiative aimed at preventing the diversion of AA, a chemical used by traffickers to illicitly produce heroin. Topaz began on March 1, 2001, and was a cooperative effort by drug law



Dr. Eddie Sfeir-Byron, Bolivian Drug Czar and Vice Minister for Social Defense, along with Bolivian officials witness the destruction of 344 pounds of cocaine and 17 metric tons of coca leaf seized by DEA and Bolivian authorities.

enforcement and regulatory officials from 40 countries and regions, the International Narcotics Control Board, ICPO-Interpol, European Commission, and the World Customs Organization. Based on the premise that preventing the diversion of certain industrial chemicals to illicit drug production is a critical element of any drug enforcement effort, Operation Topaz was developed as a long-term AA monitoring program.

Project PRISM assists governments in developing and implementing operating procedures to more effectively control and monitor trade in ATS precursors to prevent their diversion. Project PRISM targets multiple chemicals used in the clandestine production of ATS, including ephedrine and pseudoephedrine (for illicit production of amphetamine and methamphetamine) and safrole and methylenedioxyphenyl-2-propanone (for production of MDMA and its analogs).

These initiatives have resulted in a broad level of international agreement regarding the actions needed to prevent chemical diversion, thereby affecting clandestine, illicit drug production. In 2006, Operations Purple and Topaz were consolidated into Project Cohesion, which, along with Project PRISM, continues today.

National Forensic Laboratory Information System

As the nation's primary agency charged with enforcing U.S. controlled substances laws and regulations, DEA has invested in strategic and operational information sources at the federal, state, local, and international levels. The National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS), a DEA program that systematically collects drug analyses' results and other associated information from state and local forensic laboratories nationwide, enhances DEA's resources for carrying out its core mission.

NFLIS is an effective information source to better understand and monitor the nation's drug problems. It improves DEA's ability to track national, regional, and local drug use trends, including providing timely and geographically specific information on emerging drug problems. NFLIS can also be used to identify specific drug

characteristics like commonly reported used or misused drug combinations. One of NFLIS's key advantages is its collection of forensic laboratory data verified by chemical analysis with the highest degree of validity.

Sponsored by the Office of Diversion Control, NFLIS is the only database in the United States that provides actual and estimated nationwide and regional scientifically validated data on drugs associated with law enforcement activity. Initiated in 1997 to provide reliable data for drug scheduling, NFLIS has grown into a fully operational system with interest from other DEA offices and government agencies. By 2003, 32 out of 50 state laboratory systems and 48 out of 72 local laboratories participated in NFLIS; over 800,000 drug analyses results were collected during 2001. Participation in NFLIS is voluntary. As of 2021, 50 state systems and 108 local or municipal laboratories/systems participated, representing 283 individual labs.

Aviation

From 1998 to 2003, the Aviation Division recognized the ever-increasing role its support played in obtaining DEA enforcement objectives. The division implemented long-term strategic plans to provide more effective and efficient service, including a modern, standardized fleet.

Older, maintenance-intensive aircraft were replaced with Cessna 206 surveillance aircraft, Pilatus PC-12 cargo aircraft, and Eurocopter A-Star helicopters. Newly acquired Beech Super King Air cargo aircraft replaced other aging turboprops, further standardizing the fleet.

The Aviation Division applied the same upgrade policy to its technology by purchasing day/night video surveillance cameras to replace less dependable, less capable equipment. In 2003, the division created a state-of-the-art Aviation Communications Center capable of tracking and flight-following all assets through high frequency radio, very high frequency radio, and satellite communications. The center facilitates the maximization of aviation asset usage and produces cost savings by eliminating the requirement for contractor-flight following.

The division also acquired a Learjet 60 aircraft, expanding its representation and support assets in the Caribbean



Training exercises.



and poising itself for future mission expansion worldwide. This aircraft significantly increased mission profiles and represented an asset capable of global deployment.

Training

DEA's Training Division continued its work, providing DEA employees with technical and professional competencies and ethical and leadership skills to accomplish the agency's mission. For the first time, training took place at DEA's new Justice Training Center, which opened April 1999 in Quantico, Virginia.

Established in 2000, a new Clandestine Laboratory Tactical Training School was one of the academy's most significant developments. Increased clandestine laboratory seizures nationwide necessitated its creation, along with a corresponding escalation of problems confronting state and local agencies that responded to the scenes. Often referred to as "chemical time-bombs," these labs presented unique dangers to their operators, neighbors, law enforcement, and the surrounding environment. Typically, state or local police first encounter the labs and must ensure they are investigated, dismantled, and disposed of appropriately and safely.

The class was designed for special agents and narcotics officers involved in clandestine laboratory raids who had limited tactical training and experience. At the school, participants fully used issued equipment, including air purifying respirators and self-contained breathing apparatus.

DEA's Basic Clandestine Laboratory Certification School is the most widely recognized law enforcement sponsored clandestine lab training course that meets Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards. Upon its launch, the unit also conducted an Advanced Site Safety Officer School for DEA and state and local officers designed to certify attendees as clandestine laboratory site safety officers, an OSHA requirement for every clandestine lab site.

From 1999 to 2003, DEA continued its mission to conduct and sponsor counternarcotics training for thousands of foreign law enforcement counterparts. Since 1969, DEA

and its predecessor agencies trained officials in more than 243 countries. DEA continued its participation at the four International Law Enforcement Academies, including one in San Jose, Costa Rica. These academies have successfully increased the professionalism of participants through the exchange of law enforcement techniques and investigative strategies, strengthening transnational crime fighting.

Technology

DEA's secure, centralized computer network, Firebird, which standardizes investigative reporting, case file inventories, administrative functions, and electronic communications, was successfully deployed to approximately 97 percent of DEA's offices (domestic and foreign) by 2003. This was accomplished in part by the Small Firebird Initiative (SFI) that provided full Firebird functionality to DEA offices where its installation was either cost prohibitive or a security issue. Only offices with outstanding security or facilities-related issues could not connect. Additionally, the agency completed Firebird technical refreshment of all division networks and shared servers and initiated workstation replacements.

DEA was the first component in the Department of Justice to electronically transmit information through its Joint Automated Booking System (JABS) to FBI's Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS) using the Firebird Booking Station (FBS). FBS provides rapid identification of individuals under arrest or detention by automating the booking process and electronically accessing IAFIS. With an average response time of 30 minutes, it minimizes data entry duplication during booking and promotes data sharing of arrest records among Department law enforcement agencies and other authorized parties through an interface with the nationwide JABS.

Investigative Management Process and Case Tracking (IMPACT), an automated case management system, was developed to support DEA special agents, intelligence analysts, and diversion investigators in their daily case management activities. Its design improves mission performance and achieves greater operational efficiency in the establishment, recording, accessibility, and analysis



DEA laboratory technicians.



of information pertaining to DEA investigations. In 2003, the Phoenix and Miami Divisions piloted IMPACT with over 800 field users.

DEA also transitioned to a full, online Electronic File Room. All investigative reports from 2002 on—and millions of earlier records—are available for full text search from the desktop of any DEA office with access to Firebird or SFI.

Internet and new, trusted dial-up technologies enhanced communication capabilities. The development of Web Architecture, which published the Administrator's newsletter, improved access to information available on DEA's website. Moreover, by 2003, DEA connected to the DOJ/FBI-sponsored Law Enforcement Online (LEO) secure dial-up network, providing protected access to and among federal and state law enforcement organizations. DEA also implemented a Centralized Call Data Delivery system for field-intercepted cellular pen register data that enabled each division to obtain cellular call data without establishing a dedicated connection to individual cellular companies. The move generated substantial cost savings.

New DEA Laboratory Construction (2002–2003)

In two years, DEA replaced four of its aging laboratory facilities: three regional laboratories and the Special Testing

and Research Laboratory. The new multimillion-dollar, state-of-the-art regional laboratories in Dallas, Texas, Dulles, Virginia, Largo, Maryland, and Vista, California, were equipped to provide a full line of forensic analytical support to drug law enforcement agents.

Laboratory System Reorganization (2003)

With support from DEA's executive management, several changes were implemented in 2003 to address critical needs in the Laboratory System's FY 2000-2005 Strategic Plan. The changes included reorganizing the Office of Forensic Sciences to create two new positions at Headquarters: a quality assurance manager and a second associate deputy assistant administrator. The reorganization directly affected the laboratories by stationing associate laboratory directors in each and establishing a new Digital Evidence Laboratory for the forensic examination of digital evidence.

Creation of DEA's Digital Evidence Laboratory (2003)

DEA's commitment to supporting 21st-century drug investigations reached a major milestone with the Digital Evidence Laboratory, established in 2003 within the agency's Office of Forensic Sciences. In just nine years, DEA built

a world-class digital forensic program from a small engineering program capable of handling a full range of digital evidence, including computers, servers, Personal Digital Assistants, Global Positioning System navigational devices, satellite phones, two-way pager devices, and cell phones. By providing needed forensic support at the field level to acquire digital evidence, the laboratory leaves no stone unturned. Furthermore, elevating digital evidence function to a laboratory status organizational level reflected the relatively new forensic science's importance to DEA investigations in the millennium.

The Scientific Working Group for the Analysis of Seized Drugs

Since 1997, the Scientific Working Group for the Analysis of Seized Drugs (SWGDRUG) has evolved into one of the most successful groups of its kind in the world. Its mission is to recommend minimum standards for the forensic examination of seized drugs and seek their international acceptance. SWGDRUG is a cooperative effort between DEA's Office of Forensic Sciences and ONDCP to:

- recommend minimum standards for forensic drug analysts' knowledge, skills, and abilities;
- promote the professional development of forensic drug analysts;
- provide a means of information exchange within the forensic drug analyst community;
- promote the highest ethical standards of practitioners in all areas of forensic drug analysis;
- recommend minimum standards for drug examinations and reporting;
- establish quality assurance recommendations; and
- seek international acceptance of SWGDRUG minimum standards.

Historically, SWGDRUG's core committee has been comprised of representatives from federal laboratories and regional forensic science associations in the United States,

the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes, the United Nations Drug Control Program, Australia, Great Britain, Japan, Canada, and Germany. A forensic science educator and a representative from an internationally recognized standards writing organization also participate on the committee.

Sub-Regional Laboratories and Mobile Operations

DEA's first sub-regional laboratory became operational in FY 1997 to support the Midwest HIDTA. The lab brought analytical and support services closer to the source of illicit drug activity: clandestine manufacture of methamphetamine. In 1999, it was relocated from the FDA Laboratory in Kansas City, Kansas, to the Kansas City Regional Crime Laboratory in Kansas City, Missouri.

In 1999, DEA opened a second sub-regional laboratory in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Collocated with the FDA Laboratory, it provided analytical and support services to the Caribbean Division as well as other federal agencies within the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

In 2000, DEA took delivery of a 38-foot mobile laboratory. Equipped with a fume hood, bench space, support infrastructure, and appropriate analytical instrumentation, the laboratory operated by either shore power through a 100-amp, 200-volt shore line or an onboard diesel generator. In early 2001, it was deployed to Tucson, Arizona, where two chemists gave additional forensic support along the U.S. Southwest Border. In late 2002, the mobile laboratory was moved to El Paso, Texas, to provide much needed forensic laboratory support in the region.

Microgram

The 35th anniversary issue of *Microgram* was published in 2002. The periodical had progressed from a "communication" sporadically printed by the Bureau of Drug Abuse Control and the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs in the late 1960s to an electronic resource disseminated regularly by DEA in the 21st century. By 2003, over 1,400 offices around the world received *Microgram* each month.

In 2002, the Office of Forensic Sciences converted *Microgram* into two separate publications: *Microgram Bulletin* and *Microgram Journal*. The first included all material previously published in *Microgram* (except scientific articles) plus additional and/or expanded information. The quarterly *Microgram Journal*, in contrast, was dedicated solely to the publication of scientific articles on the detection and analysis of suspected controlled substances for forensic/law enforcement purposes. Its editor and the Office of Forensic Sciences intended the publication to become a premier scientific journal.

Starting with the January 2003 issues, the *Bulletin* and the *Journal* moved from a law enforcement restricted status to an open, unclassified status, and both were posted on DEA's website. The last issue of *Microgram Journal* ran in 2018.

Inspections

The Inspection Division is responsible for maintaining DEA's integrity and providing security for its employees. The agency's integrity system is comprised of three primary components within the division: the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR), the Office of Inspections, and the Office of Security Programs.

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks made the vulnerability of federal agencies' infrastructure evident. Technological upgrades and resource enhancements were acquired, enabling the Inspection Division to more effectively and efficiently carry out its mandate. DEA's security apparatus matched the challenges posed by terrorism and cutting-edge technology available to criminals.

With the new millennium, DEA remained committed to ensuring the integrity and professionalism of its

employees and thoroughly investigated all credible allegations of employee misconduct. In October 2000, OPR opened a field office in Dallas, Texas. DEA's presence along the Southwest Border and the power and influence of drug trafficking organizations that operated in the area necessitated OPR's expansion.

The Office of Inspections, through the annual Division Inspection Program (DIP) and the three-year cyclical onsite inspection process, ensures that managers maintain the highest level of operational, financial, and organizational integrity, as well as compliance with internal and external controls, policies and procedures, federal laws, and sound auditing practices. It investigates all shooting incidents related to DEA special agents and DEA-sponsored state and local task force law enforcement personnel to determine the circumstances involved and accountability of an incident. Due to a major organizational realignment and the establishment of DIP and cyclical onsite processes, the office assisted managers in identifying issues that improved operational and financial efficiency and effectiveness in all DEA program areas and offices.

The most dramatic changes in the Inspection Division were in the Office of Security Programs (IS). The office experienced significant growth in the late 1990s. By 1997, it had a staff of 28 employees. As of spring 2003, the staff had expanded six-fold to 189 employees and contractors. The office is now divided into three sections: Information Security, Physical Security, and Personnel Security—each headed by a supervisory special agent. IS provides a wide variety of continuing security services and equipment to the entire agency, inspecting and issuing compliance orders to Headquarters as well as domestic and foreign offices.