



U.S. Department of Justice
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November 2006

National Methamphetamine Threat Assessment 2007



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Assessment

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National Methamphetamine Threat Assessment 2007

29 November 2006

Strategic Findings

- Sharp decreases in domestic methamphetamine production since 2003 have been offset by increased production in Mexico for U.S. distribution by Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs).
- Recent strong chemical control efforts in Mexico may be challenging Mexican DTOs' ability to maintain their current high level of methamphetamine production.
- Mexican DTOs and criminal groups are expanding their position relative to methamphetamine distribution, particularly ice methamphetamine, including in the eastern United States.

Overview

Methamphetamine production and distribution are undergoing significant strategic shifts, resulting in new challenges to law enforcement and public health agencies. Law enforcement pressure and strong precursor chemical sales restrictions have achieved marked success in decreasing domestic methamphetamine production. Mexican DTOs, however, have exploited the vacuum created by rapidly expanding their control over methamphetamine distribution—even to eastern states—as users and distributors who previously produced the drug have sought new, consistent sources. These Mexican methamphetamine distribution groups (supported by increased methamphetamine production in Mexico) are often more difficult for local law enforcement agencies to identify, investigate, and dismantle because they typically are much more organized and experienced than local

independent producers and distributors. Moreover, these Mexican criminal groups typically produce and distribute ice methamphetamine that usually is smoked, potentially resulting in a more rapid onset of addiction to the drug. These numerous factors contribute to the significant threat posed to the United States by the trafficking and abuse of methamphetamine. In fact, according to National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) 2006 data, 38.8 percent of state and local law enforcement officials nationwide report methamphetamine as the greatest drug threat to their areas, a higher percentage than that for any other drug.

State-level precursor chemical controls have contributed to a sharp decrease in domestic methamphetamine production: Since April 2004, 44 states have restricted retail sales of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine products to varying degrees, complementing already strong federal controls over wholesale precursor chemical sales. Retail sales restrictions—supported by sustained law enforcement pressure—have limited the amount of pseudoephedrine available to small-scale methamphetamine producers, resulting in a sharp decrease in the prevalence of small methamphetamine laboratories nationally. In fact, El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System (NCLSS) data show that the overall number of reported methamphetamine laboratory seizures nationwide decreased 43 percent from 10,212 in 2003 to 5,846 in 2005 (see Figure 1 on page 2). Preliminary data indicate that this trend has continued in 2006, and the number of laboratory seizures will quite likely decrease further as more states implement similar restrictions—six more states and the District of Columbia are considering retail sales restrictions.

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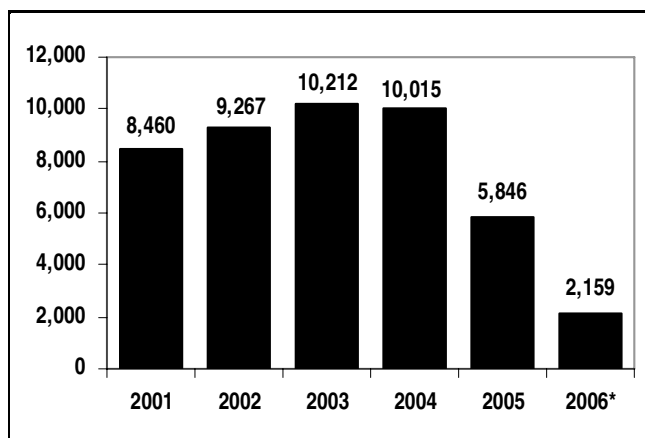


Figure 1. Reported methamphetamine laboratory seizures, 2001–2006.

Source: National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System (Run date—September 13, 2006).

*Data for 2006 are incomplete.

Precursor chemical restrictions and law enforcement pressure have forced most California superlabs to relocate: Restrictions on pseudoephedrine imports from Canada to the United States in 2003 resulted in an immediate and significant decrease in the number of reported domestic superlab (capable of producing 10 or more pounds of methamphetamine per production cycle) seizures (see Figure 2). Many of these laboratories—primarily operated by Mexican criminal groups—have relocated to Mexico, where bulk quantities of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine are more available. However, some Mexican criminal groups have remained in the United States to produce methamphetamine in superlabs, particularly in California, which accounted for 29 of 35 reported superlab seizures in 2005. Of the criminal groups that have remained in the United States, many have relocated their superlab operations to very remote rural areas, usually in the Central Valley region of California, in an attempt to decrease the risk of detection from sustained, intense law enforcement pressure. Although Mexican criminal groups have long produced methamphetamine on farms and in rural areas of California, this practice has increased since 2002 as law enforcement pressure and public awareness have increased in more populated areas. In fact, NCLSS data show that superlab seizures in urban areas are now somewhat rare, accounting for only 6 of 29 superlab

seizures in California in 2005. By relocating most superlab operations to rural areas with less law enforcement presence, Mexican criminal groups have been able to maintain significant methamphetamine production in California.

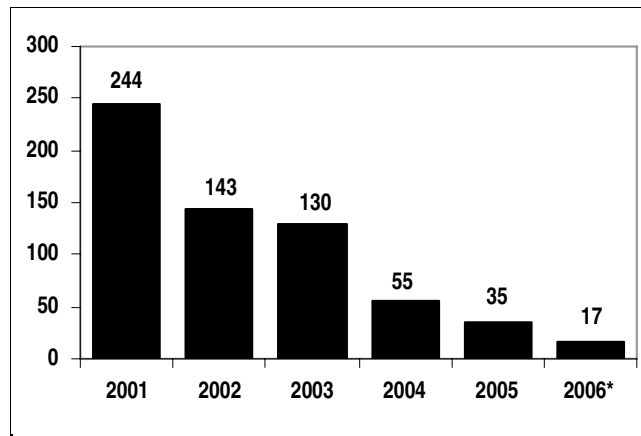


Figure 2. Reported methamphetamine superlab seizures, 2001–2006.

Source: National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System (Run date—September 13, 2006).

*Data for 2006 are incomplete.

Methamphetamine production in Mexico has increased sharply; however, chemical restrictions may render current production levels difficult to sustain: There are no widely accepted estimates regarding the amount of methamphetamine produced in Mexico; however, ample law enforcement reporting and drug seizure data at the U.S.–Mexico border indicate a significant increase in methamphetamine production in Mexico since 2003. In fact, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) data show that seizures of methamphetamine (both ice and powder) along the Southwest Border increased from 2,706 pounds in fiscal year (FY) 2003, to 3,017 pounds in FY2004, to 4,346 pounds in FY 2005, and reached 1,988 pounds through the first 6 months of FY2006. Further production increases are unlikely in the near term, however, and sustaining the current high level of production in Mexico has become more difficult, since the government of Mexico recently reduced ephedrine and pseudoephedrine imports 40.8 percent from 224 metric tons in 2004 to 132.5 metric tons in 2005 (with a goal of 70 metric tons for 2006). Attempts to defeat the increasing chemical

restrictions in Mexico will quite likely include routing chemical shipments through transit countries, particularly in Central and South America, for subsequent smuggling into Mexico.

Methamphetamine distribution by Mexican criminal groups is expanding to sustain markets previously supplied by local production, particularly in midwestern and eastern states: As methamphetamine production in small-scale laboratories has decreased nationally since 2004, Mexican criminal groups have expanded direct distribution of Mexico-produced methamphetamine, even in many smaller communities. For example, in midwestern states such as Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, and Ohio, where methamphetamine laboratory seizures have decreased significantly—in some states by more than 55 percent—Mexican criminal groups have gained control over most distribution of the drug in these states. In fact, the Midwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) reports that in cities such as Des Moines and Sioux City, Iowa, where methamphetamine production and distribution previously were controlled by local independent traffickers, Mexican criminal groups, primarily distributing ice methamphetamine, have supplanted independent traffickers. Law enforcement reporting confirms a similar trend throughout much of the Great Lakes, Mid-Atlantic, Florida/Caribbean, Southeast, and

West Central Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Regions (see Figure 6 on page 5). These groups pose an increased challenge to local law enforcement because they are often Mexico-based, well-organized, and experienced drug distributors who have been successful in blending into somewhat insular Hispanic communities or among Hispanic workers employed in the agricultural, landscaping, construction, and meat packing industries. The ability of Mexican criminal groups to continue the expansion of methamphetamine distribution into more communities in the eastern United States appears to be limited only by their capability to further expand methamphetamine production in Mexico.

Increased ice availability is most likely contributing to increased methamphetamine addiction: Since 2001 the availability of Mexico-produced ice methamphetamine—a form of methamphetamine that typically is smoked—has increased sharply in most U.S. methamphetamine markets. For example, CBP data show that seizures of ice methamphetamine along the Southwest Border increased from 260 pounds in FY2003, to 1,034 pounds in FY2004, and 1,423 pounds in FY2005. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), smoking methamphetamine may result in more rapid addiction to the drug than snorting or injection because smoking

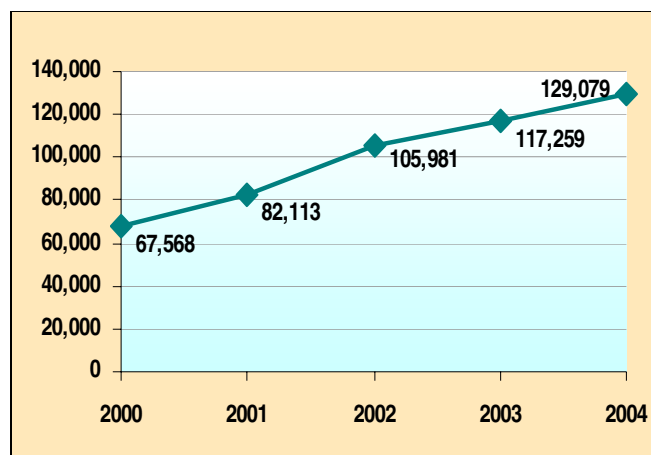


Figure 3. Primary methamphetamine admissions, 2000–2004.

Source: Treatment Episode Data Set.

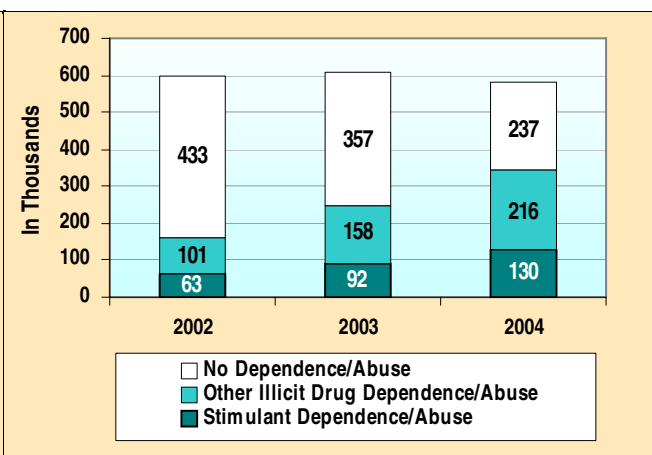


Figure 4. Estimated number of methamphetamine users dependent on or abusing illicit drugs or stimulants, 2002–2004.

Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

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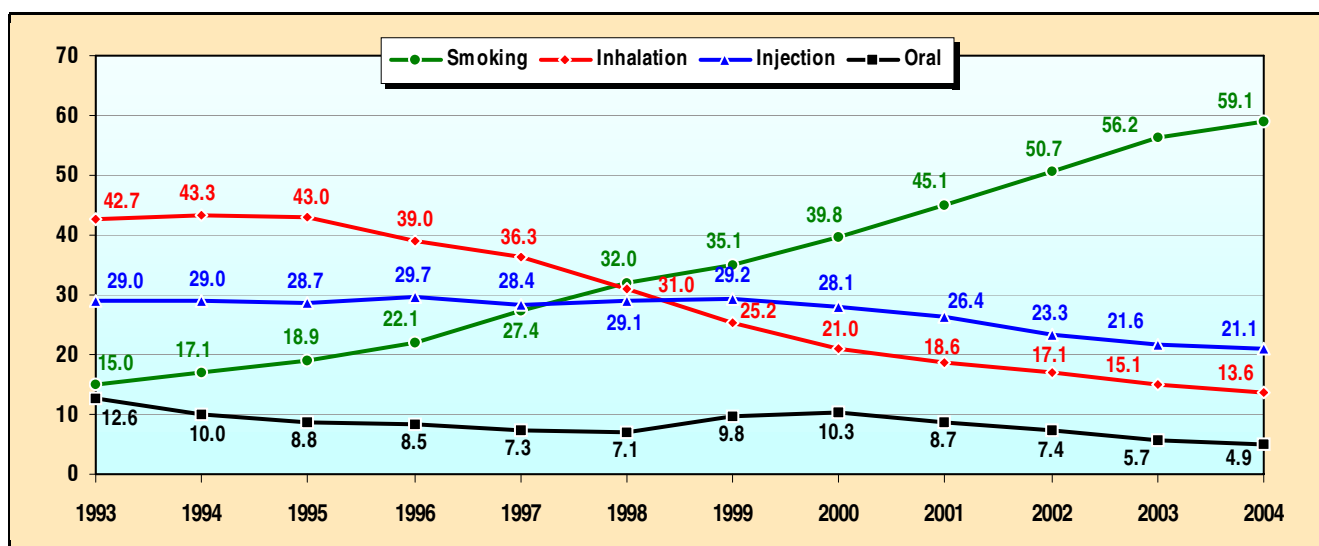


Figure 5. Percentage of primary methamphetamine or amphetamine admissions, by route of administration, 1993–2004.

Source: Treatment Episode Data Set.

causes a nearly instantaneous, intense, and longer-lasting high. Although casual use of methamphetamine appears to be stable (see Appendix B, Tables 1 and 2), national-level data show a rise in the number of methamphetamine-related treatment admissions and methamphetamine-dependent individuals nationwide (see Figure 3 and Figure 4 on page 3), particularly since ice availability began to increase.¹ In fact, even prior to the current influx of ice methamphetamine, users were increasingly choosing smoking as their primary mode of administration (see Figure 5). Increased rates of smoking ice methamphetamine, leading to increased rates of addiction, will further strain the resources of public health agencies, particularly drug treatment facilities in smaller communities.

Intelligence Gaps

The extent of precursor chemical diversion and trafficking from sources of supply in Asia is unclear. Intelligence and law enforcement reporting confirms the shipment of wholesale (multiton) quantities of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine —often repackaged with vague

labeling and disguised as legitimate business transactions—to Mexico from source areas in Asia, particularly Hong Kong. However, there are relatively few data available to measure such activity, thereby impeding a full and accurate assessment of the situation.

There are no generally accepted methamphetamine production estimates or comprehensive laboratory seizure data for most foreign countries. This lack of data limits the accuracy of analysis regarding foreign production in areas of particular interest such as Mexico, Canada, and Asia.

1. Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) 2004 data are the most current and comprehensive data available. However, other drug consequence data such as Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) Live and local drug treatment data reported by the Community Epidemiology Work Group (CEWG) are current through middle to late 2005 and indicate a similar trend continuing in 2005.

OCDETF Regional Methamphetamine Summaries

The following regional summaries provide strategic overviews of the methamphetamine situation in each of the nine OCDETF regions, highlighting significant trends and law enforcement concerns relating to the trafficking and abuse of the drug. The summaries were prepared through detailed analysis of recent law enforcement reporting, information obtained through interviews with law enforcement and public health officials, OCDETF case files, and currently available statistical data.

Florida/Caribbean OCDETF Region

Ice availability rising, driven by Mexican DTOs: Methamphetamine is a significant and increasing problem throughout Florida. Mexican DTOs, which have long been the primary suppliers of methamphetamine available in the region, are increasingly supplying large quantities of ice methamphetamine to distributors in Florida. As a result, ice has

become the predominant form of methamphetamine sold in Florida. As availability of the drug has risen, abuse has spread from rural areas of the state to a number of cities, including Orlando and Tampa. Methamphetamine is rare in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and no clandestine laboratories were seized there in the last 4 years.

Precursor laws causing drop in local laboratories: State precursor laws enacted in June 2005 have strongly contributed to a decline in local methamphetamine production in Florida. State-wide, laboratory seizures increased from 301 in 2004 to 337 in 2005 but dropped to 49 through September 2006. Nonetheless, many producers in Florida are circumventing the new precursor laws by making multiple purchases of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine under the threshold amount at different stores. Because the Florida law only limits the amount of ephedrine or pseudoephedrine that can be purchased per visit and does not establish a



Figure 6. Nine OCDETF regions.

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mechanism to track the identity and purchase history of buyers, producers who live in or near metropolitan areas and have access to many businesses that sell ephedrine and pseudoephedrine products can simply drive from store to store to purchase precursor chemicals. Some major retail stores have begun to independently track the identity and purchase history of buyers in an attempt to limit access to these chemicals to legitimate users. If the current situation with regard to tightening domestic precursor chemical controls and increasing availability of Mexico-produced methamphetamine remains unchanged, domestic methamphetamine production will most likely decline further.

Great Lakes OCDETF Region

Methamphetamine production continues to cause health and environmental concerns:

Methamphetamine production levels have increased significantly in the Great Lakes Region over the past 5 years, and although several indicators suggest the onset of a downward trend, such production continues to jeopardize the safety of citizens and drain law enforcement resources. According to NCLSS data, the number of reported methamphetamine laboratory seizures skyrocketed in the Great Lakes Region from 2001 (1,316) to 2004 (2,954) before decreasing in 2005 (2,698) and again through September 2006 (637). Law enforcement officials attribute the decrease in 2005 to a combination of factors, including the rising availability of Mexico-produced ice methamphetamine, aggressive law enforcement efforts, public awareness campaigns, and precursor chemical control legislation. Nonetheless, methamphetamine production levels at small-capacity laboratories (those that produce 2 ounces or less per cycle), usually operated by Caucasian local independent dealers and outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMG)s, remain high in many areas in the Great Lakes Region, including Ohio and southwest Michigan, and continue to adversely affect law enforcement, citizens, and the environment. NCLSS data indicate that federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies in the Great Lakes Region spent over \$4.7 million on

methamphetamine laboratory cleanup costs in 2005, up from \$3.3 million in 2004.

Methamphetamine distribution and abuse have increased in the region: The availability and abuse of methamphetamine (both powder and ice) are increasing and pose one of the most significant challenges for law enforcement officials in the Great Lakes Region, including in Chicago, which historically has had limited problems associated with distribution and abuse of the drug. Federal-wide Drug Seizure System (FDSS) data indicate that the amount of methamphetamine reported seized by federal law enforcement officials in the Great Lakes Region increased overall from 2001 (147 kg) to 2005 (465 kg). In addition, Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) data indicate that the number of admissions for methamphetamine abuse to publicly funded treatment facilities in the Great Lakes Region more than tripled from 2000 (3,535) to 2004 (12,259). The increases in the total amount of methamphetamine seized and in the number of methamphetamine-related treatment admissions are primarily due to rising availability of Mexico-produced ice methamphetamine.

Mexican traffickers transport significant quantities of ice methamphetamine to the region; some is destined for other regions: Mexican drug traffickers are the primary methamphetamine transporters to and through the Great Lakes Region, typically transporting significant quantities of the drug in private and commercial vehicles from Mexico and southwestern states to stash houses in Chicago, Illinois; Cleveland and Cincinnati, Ohio; Detroit, Michigan; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota. From these cities, significant quantities of these drugs are further transported to smaller drug markets in and outside the Great Lakes Region. For instance, law enforcement reporting indicates that Mexican DTOs transport significant quantities of ice methamphetamine through Chicago and Detroit for distribution in the West Central, New York/New Jersey, and Southeast Regions.

Ice methamphetamine is now available in areas that previously had no methamphetamine threat: Mexican DTOs, the primary wholesale and midlevel distributors of methamphetamine in the Great Lakes Region, have developed new markets for Mexico-produced ice methamphetamine in areas where methamphetamine was previously unavailable. Since the late 1990s Mexican DTOs have expanded their cocaine and marijuana distribution activities to include methamphetamine in some larger drug markets in the Great Lakes Region such as Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, and Toledo, Ohio, and Minneapolis.

Mid-Atlantic OCDETF Region

Methamphetamine threat increasing as Mexico-produced ice is entering region: The methamphetamine threat in the Mid-Atlantic region (MAR) is moderate but increasing in some areas. Overall methamphetamine availability in the region is low but increasing, particularly in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and the northwestern counties and Pocono Mountains area of Pennsylvania. In 2005 the number of methamphetamine laboratories seized in the MAR dropped; however, increasing amounts of ice methamphetamine transported into the region by Mexican DTOs has kept availability of the drug stable.

Recent state-level precursor chemical controls have contributed to a sharp decrease in domestic methamphetamine production in the region:

Precursor legislation enacted in several Mid-Atlantic states has been instrumental in combating local methamphetamine production. Since April 2004 four states—Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia—have restricted retail sales of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine products to varying degrees, complementing already strong federal controls over wholesale precursor chemical sales. Retail sales restrictions—supported by sustained law enforcement pressure and rising public awareness—have greatly limited the amount of pseudoephedrine available to small-scale methamphetamine producers in the region, resulting in a sharp decrease in the prevalence of small methamphetamine

laboratories. In fact, NCLSS data show that the overall number of reported methamphetamine laboratory seizures in the Mid-Atlantic Region decreased from 233 in 2004 to 177 in 2005. Preliminary data indicate that this trend has continued for 2006 and will very likely decrease further, since Maryland and the District of Columbia have proposed the implementation of similar restrictions.

Methamphetamine demand low but increasing among some segments: The overall demand for methamphetamine in the MAR is relatively low, far less than the demand for cocaine and comparable to the demand for heroin; however, methamphetamine demand is increasing in the region among certain groups. Amphetamine-related admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities in the MAR (95 percent of which are methamphetamine-related) have increased substantially over the past several years. However, treatment providers report that high methamphetamine availability in specific locations such as northern Virginia is attracting new adolescent abusers. Lower- to middle-income, blue-collar Caucasians have traditionally been the major abusers of methamphetamine in the MAR. Abuse of ice appears to be rising among teenagers and young adults as well as gay males involved in the club scene.

Mexican DTOs dominant methamphetamine transporters: Local Mexican wholesale distributors transport multipound quantities of methamphetamine into the region from superlab production sites in Mexico and transshipment locations in the Southwest Region, northern and central California, Nevada, North Carolina, and Georgia. Most methamphetamine is transported by private and rented vehicles with hidden compartments. Ounce and pound quantities of methamphetamine also are shipped on a regular basis by mail and parcel delivery services from California and other western states to recipients in northern Delaware and eastern Pennsylvania. OMGs such as Outlaws, Pagan's, and Warlocks; Asian DTOs; and long-distance truck drivers also transport gram to ounce quantities of methamphetamine into the region, occasionally in pill form from Canada. Members of the gay community

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transport ice methamphetamine into the urban areas of the MAR (most notably the District of Columbia) from sources in New York City. Other primary destinations for methamphetamine shipments in the MAR include cities and towns in West Virginia, the suburbs of the District of Columbia, and the Tidewater and Richmond areas of Virginia.

Hispanic street gangs prominent in midlevel and retail sales: Mexican DTOs and Hispanic street gangs control much of the midlevel and retail distribution in cities and towns; however, Caucasian independent dealers have been the predominant retail dealers in the rural areas, where much of the drug is distributed and consumed. Lower- to middle-income, blue-collar Caucasians are the traditional street-level purchasers and abusers of powder methamphetamine. However, Mexico-produced ice is increasingly being abused by young adults and teenagers at parties, raves, and nightclubs and by members of the gay community at private residences and alternative lifestyle establishments.

New England OCDETF Region

Methamphetamine threat low but increasing; ice rarely available: Methamphetamine is an emerging drug threat in New England, with increasing clandestine laboratory seizures occurring in Connecticut, Maine, and New Hampshire. Treatment admissions are low and stable, but providers are concerned because methamphetamine abuse is expanding among the general population. Pound and kilogram quantities of methamphetamine increasingly have been seized by law enforcement officials, signaling a rise in the midlevel distribution of the drug in the region. The drug is most prevalent in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. Powder methamphetamine is the type most commonly sold in the region; New England is one of the few areas of the nation where ice is rarely encountered.

Local production up; state legislation restricting precursor availability: Methamphetamine production levels in the New England Region (NER) are low when compared to those in the rest

of the nation; however, the number of methamphetamine laboratories seized in the region is increasing slowly, and laboratories have been encountered in both urban and rural locations. Regionally, NCLSS data indicate that the number of methamphetamine laboratories seized rose from 3 in 2002, to 8 in 2004, and 18 in 2005, reaching 11 by September 2006. Most were seized in the Seacoast area of eastern New Hampshire. In 2005 the Maine General Assembly restricted the availability of over-the-counter medications containing the precursors ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, and in 2006 both the New Hampshire and Vermont legislatures passed similar laws, while legislators in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island have proposed similar restrictions.

Methamphetamine transported primarily by mail: Mexican and Caucasian DTOs and OMGs are the primary transporters of methamphetamine available in the region. Methamphetamine shipments destined for the NER typically originate in California and southwestern states as well as Colorado and Oregon. These traffickers typically use the U.S. mail system to smuggle methamphetamine into the region and recently have begun structuring shipments sent through the mail to minimize the risk of seizure. Law enforcement officials suspect that traffickers are “shotgunning” multiple small loads into the NER so that even if one package is seized, most of the drug will reach its destination. Caucasian independent distributors and small criminal groups are the dominant wholesale and retail distributors of the drug in the region.

Methamphetamine, possibly precursors, being smuggled from Canada: Canada has emerged as a source for methamphetamine trafficked by Asian DTOs and OMGs, and possibly for ephedrine and pseudoephedrine encountered in the region. Canada-based Asian polydrug traffickers transport methamphetamine from areas in eastern Canada to the NER for distribution.

New York/New Jersey OCDETF Region

Methamphetamine threat rising; Mexican DTOs smuggling ice methamphetamine into region: The methamphetamine threat in the New York/New Jersey (NY/NJ) Region is low but increasing, especially in some areas with large Hispanic populations. Availability is rising, driven by an influx of higher purity ice methamphetamine being transported into the area by Mexican organizations based in the Southwest and Mexico. Reporting from law enforcement and public health agencies throughout the city of New York indicates that the abuse of ice methamphetamine is increasing, particularly within the gay male community and nightclub scene of New York City. Law enforcement and treatment personnel are monitoring this situation closely because these populations have long been on the cutting edge of drug trends that later spread to the general population. Ice methamphetamine abuse also is increasing among the Asian community, particularly in the southern section of Queens. These abusers appear to be supplied by Asian traffickers who ship ice methamphetamine from the West Coast.

Local production low and falling: Methamphetamine production poses a low threat in the NY/NJ Region, with most activity concentrated in rural areas, particularly Upstate New York. The number of clandestine methamphetamine laboratories seized in the region is low and stable, according to law enforcement officials in the region, in part as a result of an increase in ice methamphetamine being transported from the Southwest Border, rendering local production less necessary. Additionally, legislation enacted in New York and New Jersey has been instrumental in combating local methamphetamine production. New Jersey enacted legislation that restricts the sale of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine products, and New York introduced legislation to either schedule or place point-of-sale restrictions on these precursors. Most laboratories in the region are small-scale operations run by young Caucasian males, who produce the drug for their own use and for sale to close associates. These clandestine laboratory operators predominantly produce

user-level amounts, although there have been several cases in southern New York State and in the Watertown area where larger, multiounce quantities were manufactured.

Mexican DTOs dominate methamphetamine trade: The vast majority of the methamphetamine consumed in the region is transported from Mexico and the western United States by Mexican DTOs, using well-established transportation and distribution networks that, since the mid-1990s, have gradually extended into the NY/NJ Region. Local Mexican wholesale distributors transport multipound quantities of methamphetamine into the region from Mexico and from transshipment locations in Southwest Border states, California and, increasingly, Atlanta. Most methamphetamine is transported overland by private and commercial vehicles. DTOs also use parcel delivery services and couriers on buses, trains, and commercial aircraft to transport the drug. Mexican DTOs also are the principal wholesale distributors of methamphetamine in the region. Moreover, these Mexican DTOs, along with Hispanic street gangs, control much of the midlevel and retail distribution in the region's cities and towns. Caucasian independent dealers and OMGs are the predominant retail dealers in rural areas of the region, where most methamphetamine is distributed and consumed.

Pacific OCDETF Region

Region has most pervasive methamphetamine threat: Methamphetamine is increasingly available in the Pacific Region, particularly ice methamphetamine, which has become the predominant form of the drug available in most areas of the region. According to NDTs 2006 data, 92.2 percent of law enforcement agencies in the Pacific Region report that methamphetamine is the greatest drug threat in their jurisdictions, a higher percentage than for any other region in the country (see Appendix A, Map 2). Throughout most of the Pacific Region, the rate of methamphetamine abuse is very high; for instance, in Hawaii, methamphetamine abuse rates are extremely high, indicating that methamphetamine is significantly more abused than marijuana.

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TEDS data for Hawaii show that in 2004 (the last year for which such data are available), primary methamphetamine admissions (2,381 or 41%) accounted for twice as many admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities in Hawaii as marijuana admissions (1,209 or 20.8%). Conversely, nationwide in 2004 primary treatment admissions for methamphetamine accounted for 8 percent of all drug treatment admissions, while marijuana accounted for 16 percent of all admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities. Furthermore, Community Epidemiology Work Group (CEWG) findings indicate that, in Hawaii, methamphetamine accounted for 58 percent of drug treatment admissions in the state during 2005. Additionally, CEWG data for the state (available only through June 2005) reveal a 25 percent increase in medical examiner reports of positive decedent toxicology for methamphetamine, a 20 percent increase in occupancy of treatment spaces for methamphetamine treatment, and a 20 percent increase in methamphetamine-related cases reported by the Honolulu Police Department during that time.

Lower methamphetamine purity levels in some areas: Methamphetamine availability is high throughout most of the Pacific Region; however, law enforcement reporting from the region indicates a decrease in the purity of the drug in some areas. Law enforcement officials in California, Hawaii, and Nevada have reported lower purity methamphetamine, particularly at the midlevel and retail level. For instance, law enforcement in Las Vegas report that local distributors are limiting the amount of methamphetamine that mid- and retail-level buyers can purchase because of decreased supplies of ice methamphetamine. The lower purity observed and reported by law enforcement may be a result of decreased availability that has forced mid- and retail-level distributors to cut the drug to stretch supplies.

Chemical controls decrease production, but chemical diversion continues: Methamphetamine production has decreased significantly in the Pacific Region, largely a result of successful law enforcement operations and regulatory efforts to control precursor chemicals. Most states in the

Pacific Region have enacted legislation to regulate the sale of ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, and several states have scheduled the substances to further restrict their use. Most states report decreased production levels since enacting these controls. Nonetheless, precursor chemical diversion has persisted in the region, with wholesale quantities being smuggled in from Canada and Mexico to operators of major and large-scale laboratories. Many of the Mexican DTOs operating large-scale laboratories in the region have moved production operations to either Mexico or very remote rural areas, particularly in the Central Valley region of California, in an attempt to decrease the risk of detection from sustained, intense law enforcement pressure.

Mexican groups produce large quantities of methamphetamine, primarily in California:

Methamphetamine continues to be produced in large-scale laboratories located primarily in the Central Valley of California for distribution throughout the region and the country. Mexican DTOs and criminal groups that continue to produce methamphetamine in the region operate both superlabs and major laboratories (those capable of producing between 2 and 9 pounds of methamphetamine per production cycle). According to NCLSS, 6 superlabs were seized in the Pacific Region through September 2006, compared with 29 in 2005 and 48 in 2004. Although superlab seizures are relatively few and decreasing, 5 of the 6 laboratories seized in 2006 were relatively large, capable of producing more than 20 pounds of methamphetamine per production cycle. Additionally, 4 major laboratories were seized in the region through September 2006. While major laboratories do not have the production capability of superlabs, they can produce significantly more methamphetamine than small-scale laboratories.

Methamphetamine is distributed by Mexican traffickers from the Pacific Region to drug markets throughout the country: Methamphetamine produced in the Pacific Region and methamphetamine smuggled from Mexico are distributed to drug markets in the region and in other regions of the United States. Mexican DTOs and

criminal groups operating large-scale methamphetamine laboratories in the region distribute significant quantities of the drug that they produce to drug markets throughout the country. Mexican DTOs and criminal groups also dominate distribution of methamphetamine that is smuggled from Mexico, distributing the drug in the Pacific Region as well as to markets throughout the country. As demand for methamphetamine spreads into new drug markets and as precursor controls curb local production, methamphetamine distribution from the Pacific Region by these groups most likely will increase.

Southeast OCDETF Region

Ice distribution and abuse up dramatically: Methamphetamine poses a significant threat to the Southeast Region. The distribution and abuse of ice methamphetamine have increased dramatically in the Southeast over the past several years, primarily as a result of two factors. First, Mexican DTOs have fostered an increase in ice availability throughout the region by using transportation and distribution networks established for cocaine and marijuana to smuggle and sell massive quantities of ice and by aggressively marketing the drug. Second, abusers have been increasingly drawn to the drug's long-lasting high, declining price, and smokable form.

Abuse spreading beyond traditional users: Interviews of law enforcement and public health agencies throughout the Southeast Region indicate that methamphetamine abuse is expanding among users and in locations that historically have not been associated with the drug. Previously, almost all methamphetamine abused in the Southeast was used by lower-income Caucasians in rural areas, and they almost exclusively abused powder methamphetamine. Now, a growing number of methamphetamine abusers in the Southeast are middle- and upper-income Caucasians, African Americans, and Hispanics who live in cities and suburban areas and abuse ice. A substantial portion of these users are teenagers and young adults involved in the club scene, a venue where many new ice abusers are introduced to the drug.

Local methamphetamine production is declining as more ice is transported into the region and precursor restrictions take hold: Overall production of methamphetamine within the Southeast is declining. Seizure data and reports from law enforcement officials throughout the region indicate a reduction in the number of laboratories in the Southeast. In fact, NCLSS data show that the number of methamphetamine laboratories seized in the region decreased from 2,241 in 2004 to 1,327 in 2005 and 521 through September 2006. The influx of Mexico-produced ice has rendered local production less necessary, and restrictions in every Southeast state limiting access to products containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine have made production of methamphetamine more difficult.

Mexican DTOs primary suppliers: Mexican DTOs supply most of the ice available in the Southeast. These DTOs produce the vast majority of the drug in laboratories in Mexico and transport it to markets throughout the region, often via distribution hubs, including Atlanta. The Mexican DTOs that distribute ice frequently are polydrug organizations, and they traffic ice using many of the same relatively secure methods and networks used to transport the other drugs that they distribute. Mexican DTOs supply African American, Caucasian, other Hispanic, and Asian distribution groups as well as OMGs, who sell midlevel or retail quantities of ice in the region. Mexican DTOs do not typically sell ice at the street level.

Aggressive marketing expanding ice availability: Mexican DTOs are aggressively marketing ice in the Southeast. Law enforcement officials report that Mexican DTOs frequently front pound quantities or more of the drug to local distributors in order to build a customer base for the drug without having to pay for supplies up front. Mexican DTOs' willingness to take the risk of fronting ice—sometimes to distributors they do not even know—suggests that they have ready access to a supply and are making a concerted effort to further expand the market for this drug. Mexican DTOs are quite likely attracted to the ice market not only because of the profitability of selling ice, but also

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because they have strong connections to producers, which allow them to operate independently of Colombian and other suppliers (as in the cocaine trade) and to adjust production to meet demand.

Southwest OCDETF Region

Increasing quantities of methamphetamine smuggled into the Southwest Region from Mexico: The amount of methamphetamine smuggled across the Southwest Border has increased considerably in recent years, resulting in increased transshipment and abuse of the drug throughout the Southwest. EPIC data show that the total amount of methamphetamine seized along the Southwest Border increased from 1,935 kilograms in 2004 to 2,481 kilograms in 2005. Data for 2006 are incomplete; however, through July 2006 officials report seizing approximately 602 kilograms of methamphetamine along the Southwest Border. The increase in methamphetamine seizures at or between ports of entry (POEs) on the Southwest Border most likely reflects increased methamphetamine production in Mexico since 2002. Production capability of Mexico-based methamphetamine laboratories is largely an intelligence gap; methamphetamine production in Mexico is dependent greatly upon the acquisition of ephedrine, particularly from China, by laboratory operators in Mexico. The amount of ephedrine available for methamphetamine production is unknown, and Mexican DTOs are not the only consumers of this precursor. The International Narcotics Control Strategy Report further indicates that Mexican DTOs must compete for ephedrine shipments with criminal groups in Southeast Asia, particularly Burma, that produce billions of methamphetamine tablets annually and also are increasing production.

Declining domestic methamphetamine production offset by increased production in Mexico: Methamphetamine production in both large-scale and small-scale laboratories has decreased significantly in the Southwest Region. However, methamphetamine continues to be produced in superlabs in southern California and in small-scale laboratories located throughout

the Southwest Region. Many Mexican DTOs operating large-scale laboratories in southern California have transferred production operations to Mexico, where they can more easily obtain precursor chemicals, while small-scale domestic producers have begun to purchase rather than produce the drug. The methamphetamine threat will very likely remain high if producers in Mexico continue to produce enough methamphetamine to offset additional decreases in domestic production and increased demand for the drug in the United States.

Precursor control legislation has contributed to decreased methamphetamine production in the Southwest Region: Methamphetamine laboratory seizures have declined significantly over the past several years, primarily as a result of regulatory efforts to control precursor chemical diversion, the influx of powder and ice methamphetamine from Mexico, and law enforcement efforts. In fact, NCLSS data show that the number of methamphetamine laboratory seizures in the Southwest Region decreased from 1,415 in 2003, to 955 in 2004, to 391 in 2005, and 173 through September 2006. Most states in the Southwest Region currently schedule ephedrine or pseudoephedrine and/or have point-of-sale restrictions, including restrictions on quantity, packaging, and/or display. Local municipalities also have passed laws regulating precursor chemicals in parts of the region, including Cottonwood and Tucson, Arizona, and Albuquerque, New Mexico. Local precursor laws often are put in place where statewide regulations are not implemented or to complement state legislation. These laws primarily impact small-scale laboratories because operators of these laboratories typically obtain precursor chemicals from retail outlets. Increasing transportation and distribution of Mexico-produced methamphetamine in the region have offset the drop in local production, thereby sustaining availability of the drug.

The Southwest Region is the primary entry point for ice methamphetamine supplied to most consumer markets in the United States: Methamphetamine smuggled from Mexico is distributed in market areas in the Southwest Region as well as throughout the United States. Ice methamphetamine is becoming the predominant form of the drug seized in and transshipped from the region and may pose an even more severe threat as a result of increased demand, purity, and profit potential. Methamphetamine produced and smuggled into the Southwest Region from Mexico is distributed primarily from Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and San Diego to markets throughout the United States.

West Central OCDETF Region

Methamphetamine production has decreased significantly in the region; however, local production continues to pose a significant threat to the public and environment: NCLSS data reveal that seizures of methamphetamine laboratories decreased significantly in the West Central Region from 3,082 in 2004 to 1,705 in 2005 to 560 through September 2006 as a result of a combination of factors, including increasing availability of Mexico-produced ice methamphetamine, aggressive law enforcement efforts, public awareness campaigns, and precursor chemical control legislation. Although methamphetamine production levels have decreased significantly, 64.7 percent of NDTs 2006 respondents in the West Central Region report that the level of methamphetamine production is moderate to high in their jurisdictions. According to NCLSS data, laboratory cleanup costs in 2005 totaled \$3,989,371² for federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies in the West Central Region, down from \$4,575,803 in 2004.

Mexican DTOs are the primary transporters and wholesale distributors of methamphetamine in the region: Mexican DTOs and local independent dealers use sophisticated networks to transport large quantities of methamphetamine from

Mexico and the Pacific and Southwest Regions to market areas in the West Central Region, typically by private and commercial vehicles and, to a lesser extent, parcel delivery services and couriers aboard buses, trains, and commercial aircraft. Mexican and Caucasian criminal groups, Caucasian and Native American local independent dealers, street gangs, and OMGs distribute midlevel and retail-level quantities of methamphetamine.

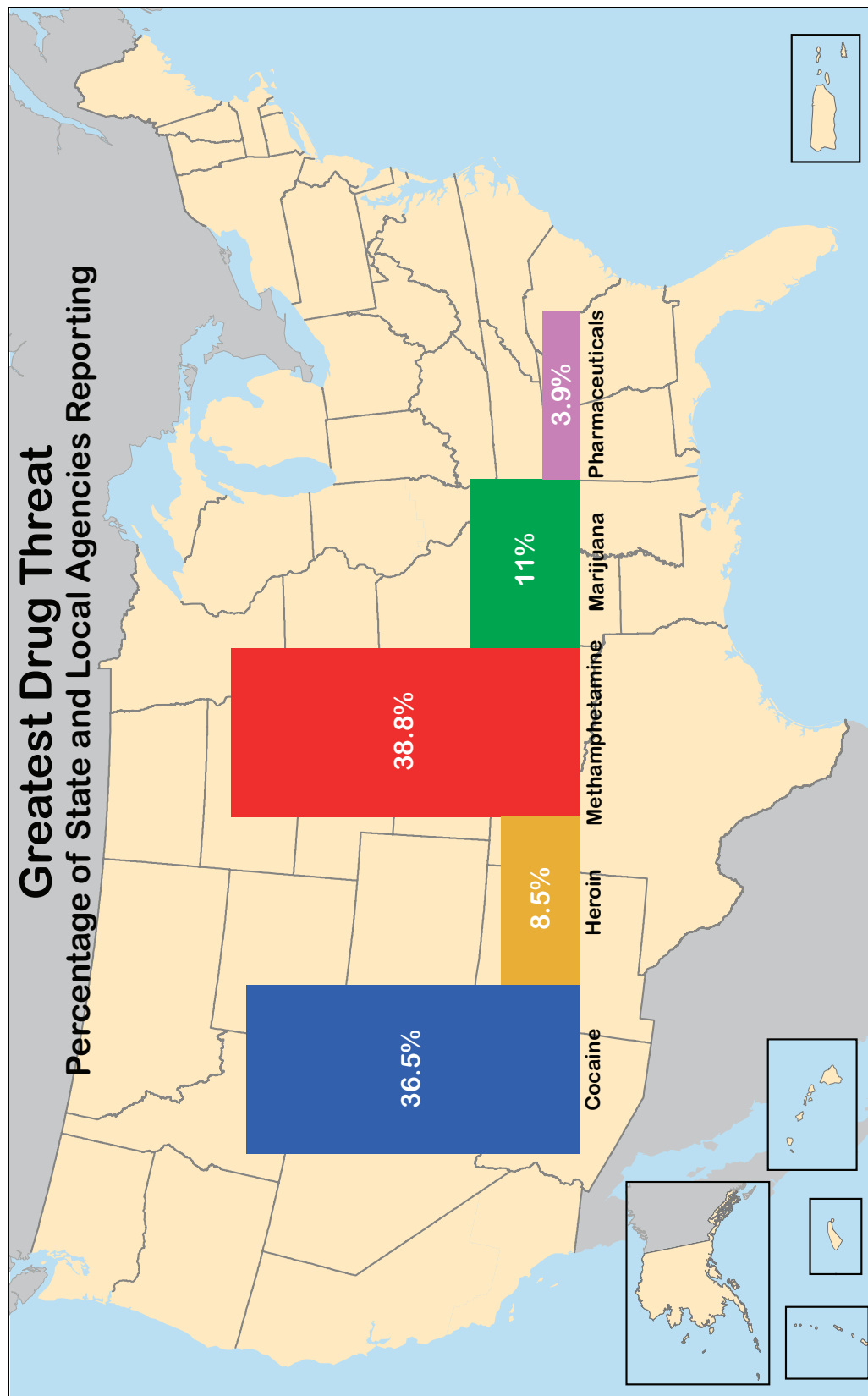
Methamphetamine abuse continues to increase in the region: Increasing demand for methamphetamine in the region has been fueled in part by the increasing availability of ice methamphetamine supplied by Mexican traffickers. TEDS data indicate that the number of individuals seeking treatment for methamphetamine abuse at public treatment facilities in the West Central Region increased nearly 68 percent from 18,444 in 2000 to 30,936 in 2004. CEWG reporting shows that in 2005 and through midyear 2006, methamphetamine abuse indicators in Denver (the only West Central state represented in CEWG) were higher than those for cocaine and heroin.

Increasing availability and abuse of methamphetamine associated with increasing violence and property crime: Law enforcement reporting indicates that much of the crime throughout the West Central Region has a methamphetamine nexus. Abusers and distributors throughout the region increasingly commit crimes such as burglary, automobile theft, currency counterfeiting, home invasion, and forgery. The majority of law enforcement agencies in the West Central Region that responded to the NDTs 2006 indicate that methamphetamine contributes greatly to crime in their areas; 71.3 percent report that methamphetamine is the drug that most contributes to violent crime, and 74.4 percent report that methamphetamine is the drug that most contributes to property crime.

2. This figure includes the total cleanup cost for the entire state of Illinois.

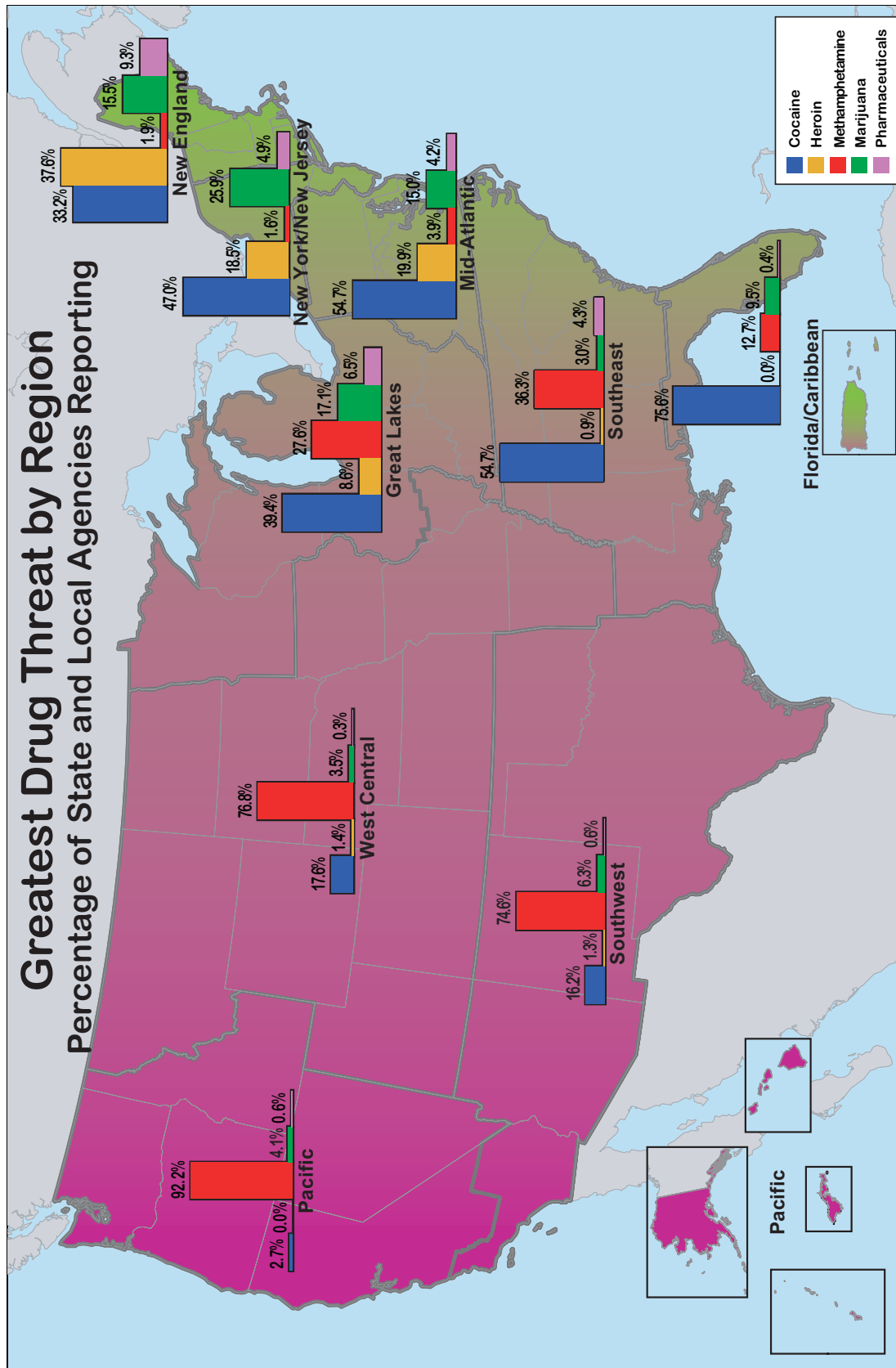
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Appendix A. Maps



Map 1. National Drug Threat Survey 2006 greatest drug threat as reported by state and local agencies.

National Methamphetamine Threat Assessment 2007



Map 2. National Drug Threat Survey 2006 greatest drug threat by OCDETF region.

Appendix B. Tables

Table 1. Trends in Percentage of Past Year Methamphetamine Use, 2002–2005

	2002	2003	2004	2005
Individuals (12 and older)	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.5
Adolescents (12-17)	0.9	0.7	0.6	0.7
Adults (18-25)	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.5
Adults (26 and older)	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3

Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

Table 2. Adolescent Trends in Percentage of Past Year Methamphetamine Use, 2000–2005

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
8th Grade	2.5	2.8	2.2	2.5	1.5	1.8
10th Grade	4.0	3.7	3.9	3.3	3.0	2.9
12th Grade	4.3	3.9	3.6	3.2	3.4	2.5

Source: Monitoring the Future.

Table 3. Federal Methamphetamine Seizures, in Kilograms, 2000–2006

Drug	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*
Methamphetamine	3,471.0	3,971.0	2,478.0	3,856.0	3,127.0	4,767.0	601.9

Source: Federal-Wide Drug Seizure System.

*Data for 2006 are incomplete.

Table 4. Methamphetamine-Related Arrests, United States, 2001–2006

Drug	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*
Methamphetamine	7,363	6,231	6,055	5,893	6,090	1,504

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration.

*Data for 2006 are incomplete.

Table 5. Average Purity of Methamphetamine Samples Tested by Percentage, 2002–2005

	2002	2003	2004	2005
Kilogram	43	66	78	80
Ounce	37	54	58	68
Gram	49	59	61	69

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration.

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Sources

In addition to the sources listed below, numerous state and local law enforcement agencies throughout the United States provided valuable input to this report through their participation in the National Drug Threat Survey.

Executive Office of the President

Office of National Drug Control Policy

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas

Appalachia

Atlanta

Central Florida

Central Valley California

Chicago

Gulf Coast

Hawaii

Houston

Lake County

Los Angeles

Michigan

Midwest

Milwaukee

Nevada

New England

New York/New Jersey

Northern California

North Florida

North Texas

Northwest

Ohio

Oregon

Philadelphia/Camden

Puerto Rico/U.S. Virgin Islands

Rocky Mountain

South Florida

Southwest Border

Washington/Baltimore

National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse

Columbia University

Partnership Attitude Tracking Study

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

United Nations International Narcotics Control Board

U.S. Department of Agriculture

U.S. Forest Service

National Forest System

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- U.S. Department of Defense
 - Defense Intelligence Agency
 - Joint Interagency Task Force/West
 - Joint Task Force
 - Naval Criminal Investigative Service
 - U.S. Air Force
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - National Institutes of Health
 - National Institute on Drug Abuse
 - Community Epidemiology Work Group
 - Monitoring the Future
 - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
 - Drug Abuse Warning Network
 - National Survey on Drug Use and Health
 - Treatment Episode Data Set
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
 - U.S. Customs and Border Protection
 - Border Patrol Intelligence Center
 - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
 - U.S. Coast Guard
 - Maritime Intelligence Center
- U.S. Department of Justice
 - Bureau of Justice Assistance
 - Western States Information Network
 - Criminal Division
 - Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force
 - Drug Enforcement Administration
 - Atlanta Field Division
 - Boston Field Division
 - Caribbean Field Division
 - Chicago Field Division
 - Cocaine Signature Program
 - Dallas Field Division
 - Denver Field Division
 - Detroit Field Division
 - Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program
 - Domestic Monitor Program
 - El Paso Field Division
 - El Paso Intelligence Center
 - National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System
 - Federal-Wide Drug Seizure System
 - Houston Field Division
 - Los Angeles Field Division

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Miami Field Division
National Forensic Laboratory Information System
Newark Field Division
New Orleans Field Division
New York Field Division
Office of Diversion Control
Philadelphia Field Division
Phoenix Field Division
San Diego Field Division
San Francisco Field Division
Seattle Field Division
Special Operations Division
St. Louis Field Division
System to Retrieve Information From Drug Evidence
Washington, D.C., Field Division

U.S. Department of State
International Narcotics Control Strategy Report

U.S. Government Accountability Office

U.S. Sentencing Commission

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