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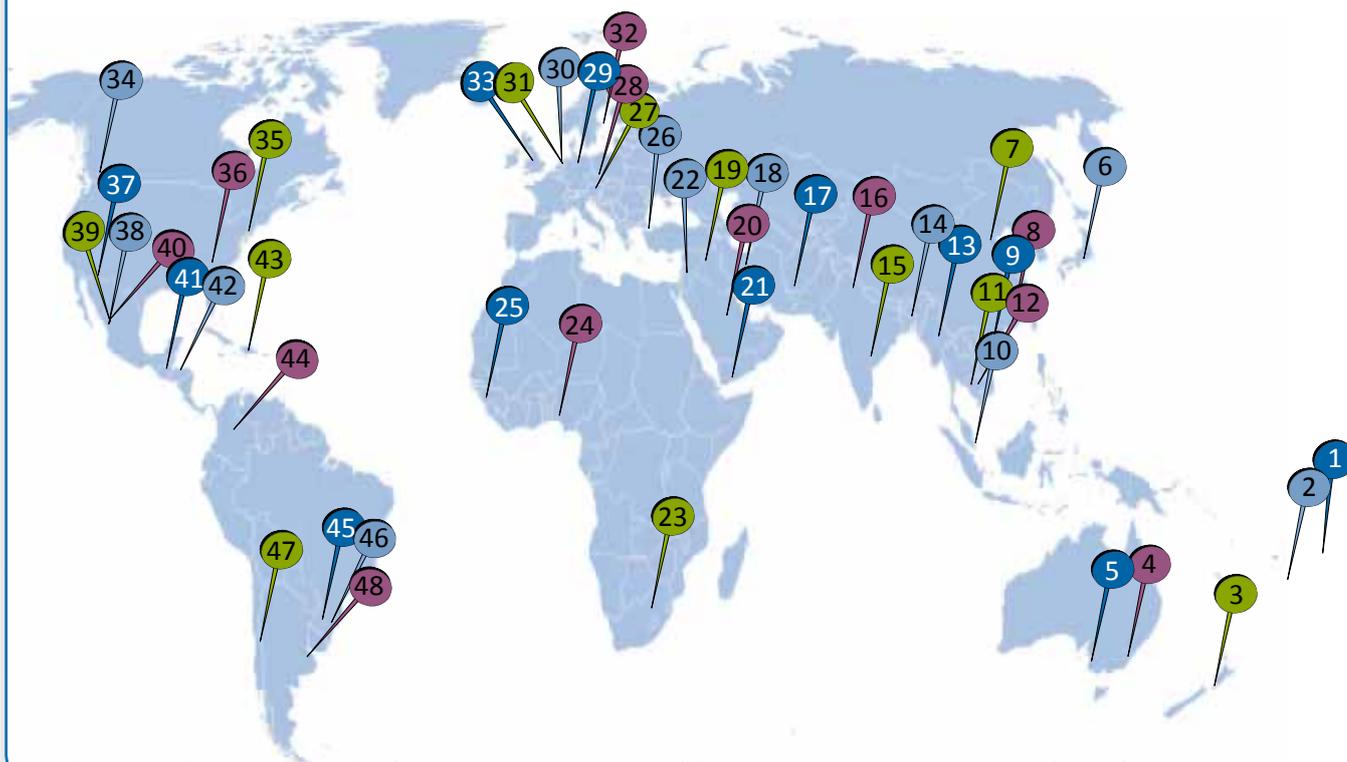
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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UPDATE
2009**

Regions covered in this issue



Note: The boundaries, names and designations used herein do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

This report is produced by the UNODC Global SMART Programme which is designed to improve the capacity of targeted Member States to generate, manage, analyse, report and use information on illicit synthetic drugs. Globally there are significantly more users of synthetic drugs, such as amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), than heroin and cocaine, combined. Additionally, since 1990 ATS-related manufacture is confirmed to have occurred in more than 60 countries worldwide, with more discovered each year. Unlike heroin and cocaine, ATS are constantly evolving with new products appearing on the market each year, some with deadly consequences.

Given the speed with which changes in the ATS markets occur, it is especially important to have a simple sustainable mechanism for frequent sharing of emerging information from different parts of the world. This biannual update highlights emerging information that illustrates shifts in the manufacture, trafficking and use of various synthetic drugs.

The Global SMART Update reports synthetic drug information in several categories, such as significant or unusual drug or precursor chemical seizures, new locations or methods for clandestine manufacture, changes in legislation to combat synthetic drugs, newly emerging drugs or user groups, and health implications related to their use. The inaugural issue (March, 2009) highlighted several countries across the globe where new incidents of manufacture had recently been identified—particularly throughout Latin America—demonstrating the flexibility and speed with which ATS manufacture can become established in any country.

This issue contains several articles related to new types of synthetic drugs and precursor chemicals—denoted in the table of contents with the double dagger symbol (‡). Some of these are simply new combinations of existing chemicals while others appear truly new to the market, such as 3-fluoroamphetamine. Many of these substances are specifically engineered to circumvent international and national controls by subtle modification to the chemistry of the controlled substance. These substances are almost never tested for human consumption and incidences of toxicity have already been reported—some fatal.

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Special coverage - West Africa and ATS

Recently in 2008, the Executive Director of UNODC Antonio Maria Costa warned: *“The alarm bells are ringing. West Africa, which already faces mass poverty, hunger, and a legacy of conflict, is under attack and is at risk of becoming an epicentre for drug trafficking, crime and corruption.”* At that time, the concern was about trafficking of cocaine through West Africa to Europe. Ironically, the predicted and much dreaded scenario of production/processing of controlled drugs is unfolding in a prophetic and alarming manner. In July 2009, a joint UNODC-Interpol team uncovered the strongest evidence yet that West Africa is now involved with the manufacturing of amphetamine type stimulants, specifically ecstasy (MDMA).

At two locations in Guinea Conakry (see story #25), over 5000 litres of sassafras oil and 80 litres of 3,4-MDP2P precursors for synthesizing MDMA were found. Forensic analysis confirmed the presence of MDMA in a high pressure reaction vessel found at Kissosso. Four industrial-sized high pressure chemical reaction vessels were also found at the second site, Cite de lair, along with quantities of sassafras oil. It is still unclear if these had been relocated from manufacturing site(s) within Guinea or from outside. However, the seizure of chemical precursors of MDMA, the presence of industrial- scale high pressure reaction vessels and strong forensic evidence linking machinery and precursors to an intention to synthesize MDMA presents a worrying prospect for Governments in Africa who are not prepared for a new front in the battle against drugs. This, more than ever before, raises the need for a truly global effort to address the synthetic drugs problem.



High Capacity Pressure Vessel



Sassafras Oil



Reaction Vessels



Tableting Machine

Methamphetamine From Mexico Seized in Tahiti

TAHITI, French Polynesia - May 11, 2009. Authorities in Tahiti arrested 15 people in connection with a methamphetamine trafficking ring, seizing 340 grams of crystalline methamphetamine. The drugs arrived in liquid form shipped in plastic bottles via air-mail from Mexico. After arrival, the liquid was transformed into the high purity crystalline form in a makeshift laboratory. Methamphetamine trafficking into French Polynesia was first reported in 2004 when authorities seized 107 grams. It appears to be increasing with 323.5 grams seized in 2005 and 467 grams in 2006 along with the arrest of 19 members of a trafficking ring which may have smuggled an additional 3 kg from California.



Photo: La Direction de la Sécurité Publique (DSP)

Tonga-Pacific Transshipment Point For Methamphetamine

NUKU'ALOFA, Tonga - September 21, 2009. Tongan Police seized a significant amount of methamphetamine in the capital, Nuku'alofa, in one of the island nation's most significant drug hauls ever. Twenty-five officers and sniffer dogs were deployed on the raids of two residential homes, which resulted in the seizure of liquid methamphetamine base in 26 storage containers. New Zealand Police and forensic specialists assisted with the investigation on the small Pacific Island nation of 119,000 inhabitants. The case remains under investigation and forensic details have not yet been reported. The large shipment would suggest that Tonga was not the only destination for the drug. Transshipment of drugs and their precursor chemicals via the Pacific Islands has been an increasing concern to many of the island nations.

New Zealand To Restrict Pseudoephedrine In "P" Fight



Photo: ESR New Zealand

WELLINGTON, New Zealand - October 8, 2009. The New Zealand Government has proposed restricting access to precursor chemicals commonly used in the domestic manufacture of methamphetamine, known locally as "P". The government will reclassify over-the-counter pharmaceuticals containing pseudoephedrine and ephedrine as prescription-only drugs. Alternative medicines such as phenylephrine, which cannot be used in the manufacture of methamphetamine, are already available for therapeutic purposes. The government is considering a total ban on these products similar to what Mexico enacted. These steps to help stem domestic diversion of precursor chemicals will likely increase pressure on Customs to fight their illegal importation.

1.8 Tons of Precursors Seized From Dismantled International Drug Ring

SYDNEY, Australia - June 3, 2009. Australian Federal Police and Australian Customs seized 1.8 tons of precursor chemicals smuggled from China. This, including 200 kg of pseudoephedrine, led to the dismantling of an international drug trafficking organization. Six men were arrested including two Chinese nationals on conspiracy to illegally import precursor chemicals and to manufacture commercial quantities of methamphetamine. The men were arrested in Sydney and Canberra, in the culmination of a seven month investigation. Authorities estimated that the pseudoephedrine was enough to manufacture in excess of 150 kg of methamphetamine.

Australian Methamphetamine “Chemists” Exploring New Recipes

ADELAIDE, Australia - August, 2009. Forensic Science International’s August 2009 issue details a new approach to methamphetamine manufacture in Australia. A January 2008 drug raid in Adelaide resulted in the seizure of an unusual mixture involving fermented yeast mixed with benzaldehyde to produce L-phenylacetylcarbinol (L-PAC). L-PAC, a precursor to ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, is not under international control. Clandestine methamphetamine manufacture in Australia typically uses bulk pseudoephedrine/ephedrine or the same chemical extracted from over-the-counter cold medications. However, restrictions on the import, export, and sale of these products make the chemicals more difficult to obtain for illicit manufacture. As a result illicit drug chemists have had to resort to other means of obtaining the necessary chemical precursors.

120 kg of Methamphetamine Seized In Japan

MUROTO, Japan - February 7, 2009. Japanese Police reportedly seized 120 kg of methamphetamine representing one of the largest seizures in recent years. Four 30 kg packages were found on the embankment of the fishing port of Muroto, in Kochi, south-western Japan. Three suspects were arrested near the port, while an additional six were arrested the following morning on a small fishing boat in connection with the case. All arrestees were reportedly Chinese nationals.* Arrests for methamphetamine in 2008 accounted for more than three-quarters of all drug arrests in Japan.

New Synthetic Drug Combinations Emerging In China

BEIJING, China - July 30, 2009. New synthetic drugs are emerging on the Chinese market compounding the escalating ATS problem. While drugs such as methamphetamine (“*Magu*”), ecstasy (MDMA), and increasingly ketamine have been problematic for several years, new drugs in liquid form such as “*Happy water*”—a cocktail of methamphetamine, amphetamine and ketamine—“*Fairy water*”—a mixture containing MDMA, nimetazepam, and codeine—and liquid GHB mixed with MDMA and ketamine are emerging in entertainment places throughout the country. Forensic profiles of these new liquids were not available. While ATS use is occurring in most medium and large sized cities throughout China, it is particularly problematic in northeast and southeast provinces where the number of registered ATS-users outpaces that of opiate-users.

Hong Kong Customs Seize Record 140 kg Of Ketamine

MAN KAM TO, Hong Kong (SAR) - September 22, 2009. For the second time in less than a year, authorities seized a record amount of ketamine hidden inside audio speakers. Customs at the Man Kam To Control Point—between mainland China and Hong Kong (SAR)—detected 140 kg of ketamine in a consignment of 120 audio speakers during a routine check of a container truck arriving from the mainland. A controlled delivery resulted in the apprehension of four men, aged between 29 and 53, in connection with the case. In November 2008, 307 kg of ketamine and 10 kg of crystalline methamphetamine were found in a shipment of audio speakers originating from India, making it one of the largest transnational seizures of ketamine in Hong Kong (SAR).



Photo: Hong Kong (SAR) Customs



Photo: Taiwan(POC) National Police Agency

Record Ketamine Seized In Taiwan, Province Of China

TAINAN, Taiwan, Province of China - May 30, 2009. Authorities in Tainan seized 366 kg ketamine and 2.1 million ecstasy tablets representing one of the largest seizures of drugs reported in the Province. On May 28, the fishing boat “Xinfengli” left Anping harbor in the southwest of the island for international waters. Upon its return two days later, authorities seized the vessel and arrested two for trafficking. On April 3, authorities in Jilong had arrested four others suspected for trafficking 246 kg of ketamine hidden in sacks of grain from mainland China. Taiwan (POC) ketamine seizure statistics for the first half of 2009 exceeded 1 ton, the highest levels ever recorded.

Malaysian Authorities Seize Massive 978 kg Of “Syabu”

JOHOR BARU, Malaysia - May 2, 2009. Malaysian Police seized 978 kg of high purity crystalline methamphetamine (‘syabu’), busting one of the country’s biggest drug trafficking operations. On the morning of May 2, police intercepted a truck which contained the drugs at Jalan Cenderawasih, Johor Baru, just north of Singapore. The driver of the truck was arrested, while an associate remains at large.



Photo: Malaysian Drug Control Authority



Photo: UNODC File

Sassafras Oil Continues To Flow Out Of Cambodia

VEAL VENG DISTRICT, Cambodia - June 12, 2009. Cambodian authorities seized 5.2 tons of sassafras oil, a precursor chemical used in the manufacture of the drug MDMA (ecstasy). The oil was found in 142 large drums hidden in an empty house in the Phnom Samkos Wildlife Sanctuary in western Cambodia. Illicit harvesting and oil extraction is devastating to the environment as entire forests are cut down. In 2008, the NACD reported 35 tons of safrole-rich oils seized. There is evidence suggesting that criminal groups are increasingly relying on oils rich in safrole in the manufacture of MDMA as global seizures of the precursor 3,4-MDP-2-P have declined dramatically.

Cambodian ATS-Precursor Extraction Labs On The Rise

KAMPONG CHAM PROVINCE, Cambodia - March 21, 2009. Authorities dismantled an operation extracting significant quantities of ephedrine from the natural *Ephedra* plant in the central province of Kampong Cham. More than 2.4 tons of *Ephedra* reportedly sourced from northern China were seized along with 48 liters of extracted liquid ephedrine. The following day, another bulk *Ephedra* operation was also raided in the capital Phnom Penh. On the same day in another operation in the capital the chemicals methylamine, sodium acetate, iron powder and other chemicals related to various methods of P-2-P manufacture were found. Between March and July, authorities dismantled five ATS-related precursors extraction operations.



Photo: National Authority for Combating Drugs



Photo: Central Committee for Drug Abuse and Control

Drug Seizures Increase In Myanmar's Border Regions

TACHILEK, Myanmar - August 24, 2009. Myanmar police seized nearly 3 million methamphetamine tablets (yaba), 10 kg of high purity crystalline methamphetamine (ice), and 57.4 kg of heroin in a raid near the Thai border. Four arrests were made and weapons and vehicles seized after officers raided a house near Tachilek, located in the Golden Triangle. In March, an estimated 2 million methamphetamine tablets were discovered hidden in the fuel tank of a 10-wheel truck traveling from Kengtung to Tachilek in eastern Myanmar. In July, another 340,000 tablets were seized along with 955 kg of heroin in Tachilek. More big seizure are likely as drug manufacturers move their stocks to safer locations due to uncertainties as the 2010 presidential elections approach in Myanmar.

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Precursor Traffickers Sourcing Tableted Pharmaceuticals From Bangladesh

DHAKA, Bangladesh - March 20, 2009. Criminals appear to be targeting Bangladesh as source of pseudoephedrine-containing pharmaceuticals preparations for trafficking to Latin America. The authorities in the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa seized 55,000 pseudoephedrine tablets which had arrived on a scheduled flight from Bangladesh via Panama in March. A month later, Honduran law enforcement agents seized an additional 2.1 million pseudoephedrine tablets that had been imported by a 'non-existent' local pharmacy from Bangladesh. In April, the authorities in the Dominican Republic also intercepted more than 409,000 pseudoephedrine tablets en route to Guatemala from Dhaka, Bangladesh.*

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India Significant Source Of South-East Asia's Ketamine

CHENNAI, India - August 23, 2009. Indian airports are being targeted for ketamine trafficking carried by person, mail and through cargo destined for South-East Asia. Initially Chennai, Coimbatore and Calicut emerged as the primary departure points, but now Bangalore, Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai airports are also being used. Between May and September, IGI Airport (New Delhi) authorities intercepted nine seizures totaling 195.5 kg of ketamine with nine arrests. In all cases the drugs were acquired in or nearby Chennai. The largest seizure was 47.3 kg brought to New Delhi via domestic airlines *en route* to Bangkok, Kula Lumpur, and Jakarta. In 2008, a massive 197 kg shipment was seized in Chennai, hidden in a load of onions bound for Malaysia.



Photo: Directorate of Revenue Intelligence

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India Busts Another Clandestine Methamphetamine Laboratory

PATIALA, India - June 8, 2009. The Indian Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) dismantled a methamphetamine laboratory and seized 28.1 kg of crystalline methamphetamine. The laboratory operating inside a factory in Patiala, Punjab (230 km north of New Delhi) was discovered after an initial arrest and seizure of 25 kg of the drug in Mumbai. Follow-up investigations led to the discovery of an additional 3.1 kg of methamphetamine and a laboratory. Various chemicals including 200 litres of methylamine and small amounts of ephedrine along with equipment were also seized. Four arrests were made in connection. India's significant precursor chemical industry, growing affluence of a young urban population, and low awareness of ATS make the country an attractive location for methamphetamine manufacture. India reported seizing its first operational methamphetamine laboratory and significant amounts of drugs and chemicals in November 2008.

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Photo: Counter Narcotic Police Afghanistan

Methamphetamine Hits The Afghanistan Market

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan - January 31, 2009. Forensic analysis confirmed the first seizure of high-purity crystalline methamphetamine, in Lashkar Gah city, in southern Helmand Province. A man was arrested for the distribution of four 1 gram bags, believed to have been sourced from Iran. The price in Afghanistan has declined rapidly from between \$250-375 per gram in late 2007 to \$85-125 in early 2009, suggesting increased drug availability, and making it more profitable than the commonly traded heroin. Past reports of methamphetamine seizures in the country have proven to be false, however street price reports since 2007 suggest the drug has been available for quite some time.

Synthetic Drug Prices Drop In Iran, As Clandestine Laboratories Discovered

TEHRAN, Iran – October 6, 2009. Iran's Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ) official website reported that the prices of synthetic drugs have dropped dramatically as multiple "home-made industrial" clandestine laboratories have been discovered and dismantled in the country. The specifics of the dismantled operations have not yet been released, however methamphetamine seizures in the country have increased substantially over the past three years. Additionally, several significant cases of methamphetamine trafficking from Iran have been reported recently. The largest occurred on August 20, when Turkish Police seized 21 kg of methamphetamine and arrested three Iranian nationals transiting Istanbul's Ataturk International Airport on a flight from Iran destined for Japan.

Seized "Captagon" In Iraq Contain Amphetamine

AL ANBAR PROVINCE, Iraq - March 2009. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) *Microgram Bulletin* reported that analyses of two groups of *Captagon* tablets recently seized in Iraq were amphetamine, not fenethylamine. A total of 9,382 tablets, each between 163-179 mg and bearing the unique *Captagon* logo, contained between 7 and 20 mg of *d,l*-amphetamine, caffeine (30-65 mg/ tablet) and theophylline (8-39 mg/ tablet). The western province of Al Anbar borders Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria, with each reporting significant increases in *Captagon* trafficking since 2004.



Photo: UNODC File



Photo: Official Saudi Press Agency

Saudi Arabia Nets 5.5 Million Tablets In "Captagon" Offensive

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia - June 07, 2009. Security services foiled another attempt to smuggle significant quantities of drugs into Saudi Arabia across both land and sea entry points. More than 5.5 million "Captagon" tablets were seized, along with 3 tons of hashish and 19.5 kg of heroin. One hundred and sixty-six (166) suspects, of which 75 were foreign nationals, were arrested throughout the country in connection with the case. This case comes after two additional cases were reported on March 8, where a total of 35 drug traffickers including 22 non-nationals were arrested trafficking 3.4 million "Captagon" tablets and 1,768 kg of hashish into the Kingdom.



Photo: Bundeskriminalamt (BKA), Germany

2.6 Million “Captagon” Tablets Halted In Yemen Port

ADEN, Yemen - January 31, 2009. Security personnel in the Aden free port seized over 2.6 million *Captagon* tablets hidden in ovens, shipped in containers from Egypt. In August 2008, a similar sized shipment of 2.3 million *Captagon* tablets seized by Yemeni authorities were found hidden in water heaters bound for Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia represents the largest *Captagon* market in the region. Recent forensic analysis of *Captagon* tablets seized in Yemen found they contained amphetamine sulphate (from 1% - 8% per tablet) as their main psychoactive ingredient—not fenethylamine—along with caffeine and theophylline among other chemicals.

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Jordan Border Stopping Millions Of “Captagon” Tablets

JABAR BORDER CROSSING, Jordan - July 11, 2009. Jordanian Customs authorities at the Jaber Border Crossing thwarted an attempt to smuggle 980,000 *Captagon* tablets hidden in a secret compartment in a vehicle arriving from neighboring Syria. The Jaber Border Crossing is the second main border crossing between Jordan and Syria and is located 90 km north of the capital Amman. It has been the location of several significant seizures of *Captagon* in 2009, including 39 kg hidden in the fuel tank of a vehicle on March 1, and 130,000 tablets seized from a vehicle’s secret compartment June 27.



Photo: Official Jordan Press Agency

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‘Tik’ Precursor Chemicals Crossing South Africa Border

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa - July 17, 2009. South African Customs have stopped several significant shipments of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine arriving to or transiting through Johannesburg’s OR Tambo International Airport. On July 17, authorities confiscated 9 drums containing 210 kg of chemicals used in the manufacture of ecstasy and methamphetamine on cargo flights originating from India and Dubai, and presumed destined for Brazil and Columbia. The following day another considerable seizure of chemicals transported on flights from India destined for South Africa were intercepted. Two drums containing a mixture of ephedrine and cocaine (20 kg) and another drum containing 50 kg of ecstasy were seized. In April 2008, South Africa rescheduled medications containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, limiting their retail sale to 720 mg of active ingredient per customer. Domestic limitations on ephedrine and pseudoephedrine may be increasing domestic theft and illicit importation of the raw materials to continue clandestine manufacturing of methamphetamine.

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Nigeria Stops South African Bound Precursors & ATS

LAGOS, Nigeria - July 8, 2009. The Nigerian National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) seized a mixed consignment of ATS precursor chemicals and drugs, including 10 kg of crystalline methamphetamine, 10 kg of amphetamine, with 57 kg of ephedrine at the Murtala Mohammed International Airport in Lagos. The seizure was made at the departure concourse for a Kenya Airways flight en route to South Africa. Both drugs and chemicals were concealed inside compact discs packed inside sacks. The origin of the drugs are not known, but the simultaneous seizure of the precursor chemical ephedrine along with the methamphetamine and amphetamine points to the possibility of nearby clandestine manufacture.



Photo: National Drug Law Enforcement Agency

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Photo: UNODC

West Africa, Guinea Emerge As Source For Ecstasy

CONARKY, Guinea - July 15, 2009. The first evidence of ATS-manufacture in West Africa was uncovered after experts from UNODC and INTERPOL examined the discovery of multiple facilities scattered across the Republic of Guinea, which contained thousands of liters of chemicals that could be used in illicit drug manufacture. Among the seized materials were more than 5,000 lt of sassafras oil, 80 lt of 3,4-MDP2P, and methylamine along with multiple large-scale reaction vessels used in the manufacture of MDMA, commonly referred to as ecstasy. The region is believed to have little domestic demand for ecstasy leaving Europe and South America as the nearest significant markets.

Istanbul Dismantles Massive Amphetamine Operation, 5 Tons Of P-2-P Pre-Precursor Seized

ISTANBUL, Turkey - September 9, 2009. In what is described as the largest amphetamine seizure to date, Istanbul Narcotics Police seized three clandestine drug laboratories and one storage facility in industrial areas of the Tuzla and Pendik districts. Several tons of precursor chemicals and drugs were seized including 400 kg of amphetamine, 600 kg of the precursor P-2-P, and 5 metric tons of the pre-precursor α -phenylacetoacetonitrile used to make P-2-P. Police estimate that available materials could have manufactured more than 200 million tablets, likely destined for Middle East markets. Twenty-one suspects were arrested in connection with the seizure.



Photo: Narkotik Suçlarla Mücadele

Hungary Seizes Large Amphetamine Laboratory, First In A Decade

BUDAPEST, Hungary - July 9, 2009. Hungarian authorities uncovered a large clandestine drug laboratory operating in a housing estate in the capital. The chemist and three other suspects were arrested with an additional 12 reportedly under investigation in the manufacture of significant quantities of amphetamine from benzaldehyde and nitroethane. Several other chemicals seized, included 2-bromopropiophenone (used in the manufacture of methcathinone), 4-methoxybenzaldehyde (used in the manufacture of para-methoxyamphetamine or PMA) and 1-benzylpiperazine (known as BZP and used as a substitute for ecstasy), point to the possibility of a poly-drug manufacturing operation. This represents the first report to UNODC of amphetamine manufacture in Hungary since 1998.

Czech Republic Restricts Pharmaceuticals In Fight Against 'Vint'

PRAGUE, Czech Republic - May 1, 2009. The State Institute for Drug Control has imposed strong restrictions on the retail sale of products containing pseudoephedrine. Methamphetamine precursor chemicals in the Czech Republic primarily come from over-the-counter cold medication containing pseudoephedrine, where as much as 82% may be diverted into illicit manufacture. Restrictions include prohibiting mail order sales, setting a maximum dose sold per patient per month (1800 mg of pseudoephedrine), and registering sales in a central prescriptions database. While common in Central Europe, the Baltic and Nordic States, there are now indications that the supply of methamphetamine is increasing throughout Europe.



Photo: US Drug Enforcement Administration

Germany Bans Synthetic Cannabinoid "Spice"

BERLIN, Germany - January 22, 2009. The smokable herbal preparation 'Spice' which is commonly marketed on the internet as incense has been shown to contain synthetic drugs which produce cannabis-like effects. These synthetic cannabinoid receptor-agonists include JWH-018 (1-pentyl-3-(1-naphthoyl) indole) and derivatives of CP-47,497, a chemical for scientific research developed by Pfizer in the 1980s. Germany has announced the addition of these substances and several other synthetic cannabinoids to its list of substances under control. Following Germany's ban, several other mostly European countries have moved to control it.

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New, Solid P-2-P Used In Netherlands Amphetamine Lab

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands - June 9, 2009. Authorities arrested five people for their roles in an industrial-scale amphetamine laboratory which utilized a new solid form of the precursor P-2-P (BMK), called P-2-P bisulphite adduct. On October 18, 2008, a fire at an amphetamine laboratory in Breda led to the discovery of 480 kg of the previously unknown precursor solid, along with 230 liters of traditional P-2-P. The new precursor form is believed to originate in the Russian Federation and can be easily converted into liquid P-2-P, thus avoiding detection by law enforcement. The investigation also led to a storage warehouse containing nearly 6 tons of various precursor chemicals and laboratory equipment. Records indicate that both locations may have been in operation since 2005.



Photo: Netherlands Openbaar Ministerie (FOID-ECD)

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Photo: Swedish National Forensic Laboratory (SKL)

Fluoroamphetamine Entering Amphetamine Market

THE HAGUE, Netherlands - July 1, 2009. Europol reports that several significant seizures of the amphetamine analogue- 4-fluoroamphetamine- have recently occurred in several European countries. As of April 2009, 10% of all amphetamine powders seized in the Netherlands were actually 4-fluoroamphetamine. In January and again in February clandestine laboratories with 4-fluoroamphetamine were dismantled in the Netherlands. The less known 2- and 3-fluoroamphetamine isomers were recently reported to the European Early Warning System in January by Belgium. Fluoroamphetamine and its precursor chemicals are not under international controls.

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Sweden Bans New Synthetic Associated With Overdose

STOCKHOLM, Sweden - May 25, 2009. "Mephedrone" (4-methylmethcathinone) is an emerging synthetic stimulant structurally similar to illicit drugs such as methcathinone. However, due to deliberate molecular engineering, mephedrone is not under international control nor is it illegal in most countries; a reason for its growing popularity. The drug sells on the internet as "plant food." The effects of using mephedrone have not been scientifically tested on humans, however in December 2008, an 18 year-old female from Stockholm, Sweden was reported to have died after taking mephedrone in combination with other drugs.



Photo: US Drug Enforcement Administration

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“Designer Drugs” Staying One Molecule Ahead Of The Law

KINGSTON UPON THAMES, UK - March 10, 2009. Fluoromethcathinone-an analogue of the stimulant methcathinone-is increasingly being found in the “designer drug” market. These relatively new synthetic compounds have been specifically engineered so as to avoid controls mechanisms. 4-Fluoromethcathinone, commonly known by its street name “Flephedrone”, was first reported in the European Early Warning System by Denmark in September 2008. However, British researchers reported in the March 2009 issue of Forensic Science International the presence of the new 3-fluoromethcathinone isomer emerging on the drug market. Little is known about the long-term effects of these substances in humans, and with no controls over their composition and dosage these compounds, even in very small doses, pose potential dangers associated with their use.

Drug Sniffing Drones For ATS Manufacture Possible

VANCOUVER, Canada - May 9, 2009. Canadian researchers from the University of British Columbia have identified the possibility of using remote sensing technology to locate clandestine methamphetamine laboratories. The unique gases emitted from the three most common synthesis methods (Birch reduction, P2P-based, and red phosphorous-based methods) can be detected using a variety of commercially available sensors. Chemical sniffers could be attached to remote controlled moving drones to detect the gases from illicit manufacture. Currently, several countries utilize similar technology to detect illicit indoor cannabis cultivation, such as the “CannaChopper” remote controlled helicopter, used successfully in the Netherlands since 2009.



Photo: CannaChopper

US Nationwide Raid Nets 300 kg Of Methamphetamine In Two Days

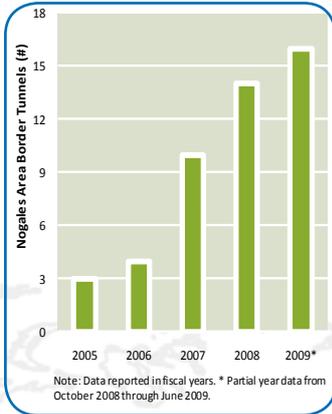
WASHINGTON DC, USA - October 22, 2009. The US Attorney General reported that in a two-day nationwide operation entitled “Project Coronado”, which targeted the distribution network of the *La Familia* Mexican drug trafficking organization operating within the US, more than 300 alleged cartel members and their associates in 19 states were arrested. More than 3,000 law enforcement officers were involved and seized 330 kg of methamphetamine, 62 kg of cocaine, and 200 kg of marijuana. To date, the 44-month anti-drug operation has led to the arrest of 1,186 individuals and the seizure of approximately 1,229 kg of methamphetamine and significant amounts of other drugs along with \$32.8 million.



Photo: Snohomish Regional Drug Task Force

“Shake And Bake” Responsible For US Lab Increases

ATLANTA GEORGIA, USA - April, 2009. The DEA reports that “Shake and Bake” or “One-Pot” methamphetamine manufacture - a simpler and growing method - appears to be responsible in part for increases in the number of methamphetamine laboratories detected in parts of the US. This approach is a variation of the common lithium-ammonia method where chemists generate their own anhydrous ammonia essential for manufacture, with common chemicals. The drug can be manufactured in approximately 30 minutes at nearly any location by mixing and “shaking” ingredients in a single common plastic bottle. This method forgoes the need for sophisticated equipment and requires an amount of pseudoephedrine small enough that it falls under the federal purchase limits.



Source: US Department of Homeland Security

Secret USA-Mexico Border Drug Tunnels On The Rise

NOGALES ARIZONA, USA - June 12, 2009. A growing number of secret tunnels are being detected along parts of the USA-Mexico border. In June, US Customs and Border Protection agents arrested two men finishing the exit for a sophisticated tunnel from Mexico. The exit was found in an abandoned warehouse on the USA side of the twin cities of Nogales, where it extended 48 feet on the USA side and 35 feet into Mexico. The tunnel had lighting and electricity, a ventilation system, and was constructed with reinforced walls. In 2005, there were only 3 tunnels detected in the Nogales area. However, authorities have reportedly been discovering tunnels every two or three weeks and between October 2008 and June 2009, police discovered 16 tunnels.

Mexico Seizes Record 4.3 Tons Of Ecstasy Precursor

MANZANILLO, Mexico - March 1, 2009. Mexican authorities seized a record 4.3 metric tons of piperonal, a key precursor chemical used to manufacture ecstasy, in a cargo container shipped from China. There was enough piperonal to manufacture nearly 22 million ecstasy tablets, each containing 75 mg of MDMA. The container arrived at the Pacific Port of Manzanillo on March 1, 2009 aboard the vessel "MSC Debra" from Shanghai. The piperonal was found inside 80 barrels, each weighing approximately 50 kg. While Mexico reported dismantling an ecstasy laboratory in 2007, it is unclear if the piperonal was destined for domestic manufacture or simply in transit.



Photo: Procuraduría General de la República, Mexico



Photo: Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (SEDENA)

Mexico Busts Massive Methamphetamine Complex

TAMAZULA, Mexico - August 7, 2009. Mexico's Ministry of Defense (SEDENA) dismantled the country's largest-ever methamphetamine manufacturing complex located near Tamazula, in north-central Mexico. The complex located on 240 hectares, had 22 individual buildings including bedrooms, kitchens, rest houses, warehouses for storage and processing of methamphetamine. More than 31,000 litres of chemicals were seized along with 15 kg of crystalline methamphetamine and significant amounts of marijuana. The size, sophistication, and number of operations detected by authorities in 2009 appear significantly larger than in previous years.

Record Precursor Seizure Points To Shift In Manufacture Techniques In Mexico

NUEVO LAREDO & MANZANILLO, Mexico - October 2, 2009. Mexican authorities seized a record breaking 37 tons of precursor chemicals used to manufacture methamphetamine, signaling significant diversification in Mexican-based manufacturing. On October 2, authorities reported seizing 17 tons of 2-phenylacetamide at Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, on the border with the USA, and an additional 20 tons of sodium phenyl acetate at the Pacific port of Manzanillo, Colima. These chemicals are derivatives of phenylacetic acid (PAA), chemicals used in the manufacture of methamphetamine. The chemicals could yield between 19 and 26 tons of methamphetamine. Several significant PAA seizures have been reported throughout the country in 2009, including 8.5 tons seized in March, 0.7 ton in June, 1.0 ton in both July and August. Using PAA to manufacture methamphetamine signals a significant shift in manufacturing to diversify away from banned pseudoephedrine.

Guatemala Seizes 10 Million Pseudoephedrine Tablets, Largest Ever

GUATEMALA CITY, Guatemala - June 16, 2009. Guatemalan authorities reportedly confiscated nearly 10 million pseudoephedrine tablets worth \$33 million in a record seizure of the precursor chemicals used in the manufacture of methamphetamine. The tablets were seized in Puerto Quetzal, Guatemala's main Pacific coast port on a ship originating from India. It is reportedly the biggest seizure of methamphetamine precursor chemicals in Guatemala. Countries throughout Latin America are increasingly being targeted as transshipment points for tableted pseudoephedrine as they circumvent Mexico's ban on imports of the chemical. Guatemala banned the import, export, storage, transport and sale of pseudoephedrine and its salts, in February 2009.*

Honduras Transshipment Point For Pseudoephedrine Trafficking

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras - April 17, 2009. Honduras drug enforcement agents raided a house in the capital Tegucigalpa seizing nearly 2.1 million pseudoephedrine tablets, which had been imported from Bangladesh. The shipment was imported by a non-existent pharmacy and was the third seizure reported within a month. One day earlier Honduran police in La Pavana Valle reportedly seized more than 34,000 pseudoephedrine tablets en route to El Salvador. The tablets, coming from Nicaragua, were discovered in 3,400 cartons hidden in a truck driven by a Nicaraguan national. On March 20, authorities at Tegucigalpa's Toncontin International Airport drug seized at least 55,000 pseudoephedrine tablets from Bangladesh, which arrived on a commercial flight via Panama.*

Caribbean Intercepting ATS Precursor Tablets

SANTA DOMINGO, Dominican Republic - April 16, 2009. Authorities intercepted more than 409,000 pseudoephedrine tablets used in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine. The shipment falsely labeled as vitamins originated from Bangladesh and arrived at the Punta Cana International Airport. It was subsequently transferred to the Las Américas International Airport, east of Santo Domingo en route to Guatemala. This was the third group authorities arrested attempting to export significant quantities pseudoephedrine tablets that month. In December 2008, authorities arrested three men in connection with the trafficking of nearly 800,000 pseudoephedrine tablets also falsely labeled as vitamins and destined for Honduras.



Photo: Dirección Nacional de Control de Drogas

Colombia To Restrict Pseudoephedrine, List Grows Throughout Latin America

BOGOTA, Colombia - July 8, 2009. Colombia will ban the manufacture, importation and sales of virtually all products containing pseudoephedrine and ephedrine. Resolution 2335 was adopted on July 8, 2009 in response to the increasing diversion of pharmaceutical preparations containing precursor chemicals into the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine. Additionally, related precursor chemicals methyl-ephedrine and methyl-pseudoephedrine, which not under international control, have also been added to the list of substances to be banned. The ban goes into effect in 2011 giving retailers 18 months to deplete all existing stocks. Organized crime groups have been targeting Latin America to obtain pseudoephedrine and ephedrine. Other countries which have recently imposed restrictions include: Argentina, Chile, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, and Peru.



Photo: Paraná Divisão Estadual de Narcóticos

Brazil Uncovers First Methamphetamine Laboratory

CURITIBA, Brazil – January 19, 2009. Brazil's Paraná State Drug Police (DENARC) discovered what is believed to be the country's first clandestine methamphetamine laboratory. The operators extracted pseudoephedrine from over-the-counter medicines to manufacture methamphetamine. Capsules containing the drug, known locally as "MD", were sold at local raves from around \$10 USD each. Three people were arrested in connection with the case and 1,050 capsules seized along with chemicals and equipment. In July 2008, authorities in Paraná recorded what is believed to have been the country's first ATS laboratory manufacturing ecstasy (MDMA).

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Second Ecstasy Laboratory Found In South Brazil

IMARUI, Brazil – August 3, 2009. Military Police seized the country's second clandestine ecstasy laboratory in the southern state of Santa Catarina. The sophisticated operation yielded drugs, chemicals and tableting equipment for the manufacture of 30,000 tablets, and was considerably larger than the previous laboratory discovered. On July 11, 2008, Federal Police dismantled the country's first reported clandestine MDMA laboratory in Pinhais, in the southern state of Paraná. A pill-press, materials and more than 1,200 tablets were seized in the operation which utilized saffrole-rich oil. In recent years, there has been a global shift in the location of ecstasy manufacture from Europe closer to regions with large consumer markets.



Photo: Policia Militar de Santa Catarina

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Photo: Policia de Investigations de Chile

Chile Stops Pseudoephedrine Traffickers, Restricts Sales

SANTIAGO, Chile – March 13, 2009. Chile now requires a prescription to purchase pharmaceutical medicines containing ephedrine after three Mexican nationals were arrested March 9 at the Santiago airport for the attempted trafficking of 111 kg of ephedrine out of the country. On July 14, prosecutors charged six other men on suspicion of trafficking significant quantities of ephedrine to Mexico. The six were charged in connection with two shipments totaling 850 kg of ephedrine in drums falsely labeled as vitamin C, detergents, and fructose, which were stopped in March and May of 2008. The investigation identified that Mexico had previously received 600 kg of ephedrine from the same organization.

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Argentina Confiscates 8.5 Metric Tons of Methamphetamine Precursor

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina – August 24, 2009. Argentine authorities seized 4.2 mt of ephedrine in two operations in greater Buenos Aires. The first 1.7 mt seizure occurred in a house in the suburb of Villa Luzuriaga, where one man was arrested. The second, larger seizure of 2.5 mt occurred shortly thereafter in the Núñez neighborhood. Two weeks earlier (August 12), customs officers confiscated 4.2 mt of previously seized pseudoephedrine from a 2008 investigation into violent drug traffickers with ties to Mexico. The size of these chemical precursors seizures point to illegal transshipment north, most likely to Mexico. However, some domestic manufacture cannot be ruled out as the country's first clandestine methamphetamine laboratory was discovered in July 2008 near Buenos Aires.

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The Global SMART Programme was announced in March 2008 at the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna Austria, and launched in September 2008 in Bangkok Thailand. Since that time the Global SMART Programme has initiated operations through:

- production of the first issue of the Global SMART Update in March 2009;
- convening the first Global SMART Programme Advisory Group meeting;
- the selection and placement of a team in the UNODC Regional Centre in Bangkok;
- conducting a regional synthetic drug information workshop in East and South-East Asia; and
- continued development of the Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific, the Asia and Pacific ATS Information Centre, and the on-line Forensic Alert.

Near-term future activities of the Global SMART Programme will include:

- publication of the first Global SMART regional assessment of synthetic drugs in East and South-East Asia, with overviews of South Asia and the Pacific Islands;
- working with Member States and partners in East Asia and the Pacific to identify opportunities to build capacity to generate, manage, analyse, report and use synthetic drug information;
- assessing expanded operations for Member States in the Americas and Pacific Island regions; and
- preparing for the 2010 Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

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If you have comments on this report, or would like to contribute information that should be considered for future reports, please contact the Global SMART Programme at globalsmart@unodc.org. Information on the Global SMART Programme can be found via the internet at www.unodc.org and www.apaic.org or by contacting UNODC at the Vienna International Centre, P.O. Box 500, A-1400, Vienna, Austria.