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Illicit drugs and contraband in the Post

UPU Postal Security Group

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Foreword

This document is provided by the Universal Postal Union (UPU) to assist postal facility managers and supervisors in dealing with narcotics, drugs and other contraband in the mail and other situations where dangerous goods are transported in the mail. The document provides guidelines and recommendations for postal officials in the development and maintenance of facility contingency plans addressing drugs and contraband substances.

Security accepts no compromises. Accurate assessment of security risks and implementation of preventative measures are the only way of protecting postal service staff and customers effectively.

I. Introduction

Criminal acts can include the shipment of large quantities of illegal drugs throughout the world. Despite the range of variables between substances, we must never lose sight of our basic objective: to ensure the safety of all postal personnel and customs officers/law enforcement personnel dealing with postal consignments, as well as customers and visitors on postal premises. It must be stressed, however, that the manner of concealing illegal substances is limited only by the ingenuity of the shipper, and no procedure can guarantee the identification, removal and safety in all situations.

Current trends and statistical information was obtained from public information, prior versions of documents created by the UPU, and the European Drug Report: Trends and Developments 2022, published by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA).

II. Scope of the guidelines

These guidelines are necessarily broad in scope because of the different sizes of postal facilities and the wide range of possible situations that may occur. They are intended to aid in the preparation of local plans and should be adapted to individual facility requirements, including airport mail facilities, and all local laws and regulations regarding the use of the mail.

III. Historical drug trafficking by postal services – drug awareness

Historically, up to 1999, there were three distinct phases in the development of international drug-related crime in Africa.

From 1960 to the end of the 1970s, when drug-related crime was dominated by cannabis and its derivatives, three circumstances enabled the development of trafficking crimes:

- The availability of the substance;
- The economic situation in the producer countries and the existence of illicit markets in Europe; and
- The involvement of Africans who had moved abroad in the spread of trafficking outside Africa.

The 1980s saw the arrival of a wider variety of substances on the African trafficking scene, with heroin, cocaine and psychotropic substances making an appearance. The Indian sub-continent emerged as a major source for heroin on the international illicit market, marking a turning point for African criminal circles that took advantage of their previous experience to develop trade in a more profitable and easily concealed substance.

The early 1990s saw African criminal groups using complicated methods of operation to traffic in heroin and cocaine. These groups became increasingly organized and sophisticated, and many of them gained access to production sources in the Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent. This, coupled with increased activity in South America, gave a worldwide dimension to African trafficking networks.

Although Africa was traditionally more a transit area for the international drug trade, there was increasing evidence that the region was facing a steadily growing consumer market.

At the turn of the century, the main drugs trafficked were heroin, cocaine, cannabis, khat and synthetic drugs. Data from previous reports indicated that a large portion of the drugs was destined for Europe and the United States of America (US).

The use of the international mail system and express courier industry by drug courier organizations saw a sustained growth around the year 2000. While this trend affected many regions of the world, it was particularly significant in sub-Saharan Africa.

Several national police and customs services had undertaken studies into interceptions of illicit drugs in the mail. International analysis of interception statistics and of the development of international operations has also been undertaken by Interpol and the World Customs Organization (WCO). These studies and operations identified recognizable trafficking patterns, concealment methods and suspect criminals in numerous instances, and in some cases also resulted in successful controlled deliveries and arrests.

In early 2000, Africa increasingly became the principal destination for heroin shipments sent mainly from Thailand and Pakistan, and cocaine sent from Peru, Colombia and Brazil. It appeared in 2000 that a significant portion of these drugs imported into African countries was destined for European or North American markets. Very often, the same mail modus operandi used to import the drugs into Africa were used to export them on to their destination markets in Europe and North America.

Of significance was the fact that relatively few seizures of drugs were reported to have been made in Africa. The overwhelming majority of seizures occurred in transit countries, such as the US, United Kingdom (UK), Germany, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, or in countries located relatively closely to the drug source areas, namely Colombia, Thailand, Pakistan, Brazil, Chile and Peru.

Twenty years later drug organizations are continuing to adapt. The European Drug Report: Trends and Developments 2021, published by EMCDDA, provides information on how the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of 2019 and beginning of 2020 effected drug trafficking. It became evident how adaptive drug traffickers were in delivering their products, at both wholesale and consumer levels. Closures of borders decreased the reliance on human smuggling. Consumer distribution moved to online marketplaces and the use of the mails, while wholesale distribution increased its reliance on intermodal containers and commercial supply chains. The report indicates there was an initial decline in drug use at the beginning, but as the pandemic continued and dealers adapted to the restrictions, drug use and distribution rose again.

Historic operational examples of the use of drugs in the mail

Operation Show Me How

This operation came together when law enforcement authorities in the UK and Luxembourg discovered they were targeting members of the same criminal group. The UK investigation focused on cocaine from Latin America, and the Luxembourg authorities made an interception of heroin sent from Thailand. The common factor was that the arrested heroin importer was a member of the organization under examination by the UK.

Operation Show Me How gained its name from the hard cover children's book Show Me How, which was used to conceal the 500 grammes of heroin intercepted in Luxembourg. The operation came into full force in 1997 with interceptions of parcels mailed from Thailand and later Pakistan to over 40 countries around the world. In January 1998, several key members of the organization were arrested in Slovenia and Italy.

Operation GOALS

The WCO, in collaboration with the WCO Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for the Asia/Pacific region (RILo A/P) and the Korea Customs Service (KCS), concluded the Global Operation Against Looming Synthetic drugs (codenamed Operation GOALS) on 12 March 2021. Following the identification of illicit trafficking in synthetic drugs as a growing threat to international trade that needs to be addressed by Customs, Operation GOALS was initiated to promote coordinated responses by the international customs community. The aim was to target illegal trafficking in synthetic drugs around the globe, covering all means of transport (including air, land, sea and mail). Operation GOALS resulted in 937 seizures amounting to approximately 6.78 tonnes of drugs, 2.325 tonnes of which were synthetic, and the detention of more than 30 offenders.

For the conveyances, mail accounted for 83% (898 cases) of seizures. One of the principal lessons learned was that MDMA shipped from Belgium was trafficked globally, with 29 cases to Western Europe, 19 cases to North America, four cases to Oceania and South Asia, two cases to Eastern and Central Europe and Far East Asia, and one case to South America. Drugs were found to be concealed on the outside of the shipments (below a stamp or sticker or plastic envelope for documents), inside the packaging (sidewalls of the parcel, envelope, etc.) and inside the shipment (e.g. inside goods).

Recent European drug trends

The European Drug Report: Trends and Developments 2023, published by EMCDDA, provides a yearly updated view of drug trends. Cannabis remains the most seized drug, followed by cocaine and crack, amphetamines, heroin, MDMA and methamphetamine.

Of note regarding the use of the mail system is the fact that globalization continues to drive innovation in drug trafficking and production. Globalization has allowed for greater interaction between various drug trafficking

organizations, and it has recently been observed that Mexican crime groups have started to become involved with synthetic drug production within the European Union (EU). While confidence in the dark net seems to have decreased owing to law enforcement actions and other factors, drug sales via social media and instant messaging apps appear to be attracting greater interest and are possibly growing, as these technologies are deemed to be a safer, more convenient, and more accessible source of supply. These methods allow smaller, less detectable shipments to be transported through the mail.

In addition to adaptations using social media for small sales, trafficking organizations are developing more chemically complex substances and synthesis processes, creating major challenges for Customs, law enforcement and legal regulation. The synthetic drug market is causing a common concern that drug trafficking operations increasingly target legitimate commercial infrastructure involved in global trade, with documented attempts to infiltrate supply chains and to exploit key staff either through intimidation or corrupt practices to move the necessary chemicals to production locations.

IV. Responsibilities

Director of the facility

Once a director has made the decision to screen for drugs in the mail system, they will usually designate a suitable manager as installation head and liaison with security personnel to develop local procedures and measures for the facility and its employees to follow. Additionally, they will make sure that appropriate procedures and measures against concealing drugs in the mail are implemented. The director ultimately retains responsibility for compliance and planning.

Installation head

The installation head in a postal facility must furnish the leadership and guidance necessary to organize the dealings with mailed drugs while acting as a liaison with security forces. The installation head is expected to exercise judgement in evaluating the facts while developing and implementing responses in conjunction with security and/or law enforcement. Responsibilities include:

- developing a drug trafficking response plan in coordination with security personnel, keeping in mind all facilities and personnel that could potentially be affected;
- defining roles and responsibilities for those assigned to investigate and respond;
- setting up investigative teams;
- coordinating communication with outside responders (e.g. postal security, police, Customs, airport authorities);
- establishing regular monthly debriefings between all involved parties to keep everyone abreast of current situations and activities (notes should be kept to document information sharing and ensure items are followed up);
- preparing plans on how facility personnel will work with law enforcement and security authorities and what access those personnel may have at the facility;
- supplying security forces with all necessary safety equipment for handling drugs; and
- developing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with security and law enforcement personnel to address common questions and outline specific roles, responsibilities and expectations.

The installation head should have extensive knowledge regarding the legality of mail screening and have received training on the legality of search methods and data documentation. What may be acceptable for a private entity to do may not be acceptable once law enforcement is involved.

To ensure roles and responsibilities are understood, all relevant parties, especially the police and Customs, should be involved from the beginning.

Postal security

Designated operators (DOs) should train at least two senior postal security officers per shift (or at least two officers that can be contacted 24 hours a day) to profile for drug contraband in the mail and work directly with law enforcement.

Postal security officers should be trained to recognize information patterns that can assist with accurate profiling. These officers also need to be trained and versed on evidence handling and proper precautions to be used when screening and seizing various drugs, and to be provided with access to the following:

- GRIDS: The Global Rapid Interdiction of Dangerous Substances (GRIDS) Programme aims to measurably reduce trafficking in dangerous substances globally, with a particular focus on emerging new psychoactive substances (NPS), non-medical synthetic opioids and relevant chemicals and equipment, and to limit supply to consumer markets.
- ELITE: An eLearning Individual Training Environment available in all six UN languages. A lot of the material was developed in cooperation with the UPU. Access to ELITE is automatically initiated for all operational focal points. A request for access to IONICS provides access to the entire suite of GRIDS tools.
- PROJECT ION: Project ION (international operations on NPS) is the operational initiative of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) supporting national authorities' efforts to prevent non-scheduled NPS from reaching consumer markets. Project ION activities are primarily engaged in the coordination, collection and communication of strategic and operational information related to suspicious shipments of, trafficking in, or manufacture or production of NPS. A specific focus is on synthetic NPS with little or no known medical, scientific or industrial uses.
- IONICS: The only secure online communication platform dedicated to real-time communication of incidents involving suspicious shipments of trafficking in, or illicit manufacture or production of, NPS, including fentanyl related substances (FRS) and other non-medical synthetic opioids. IONICS allows for the development of strategic and operational intelligence to counter global trafficking.

Postal security officers

Postal security officers (may also be called inspectors, security specialists, security managers or investigators) are responsible for leading, and/or coordinating with other agencies, the investigation of drugs found in the mail, at postal facilities or on postal property, including postal vehicles. Assistance from external agencies should be requested when needed and when required by the law.

Specific responsibilities and roles must be described in the response plan, particularly regarding profiling, searches, process documentation, and preservation of evidence.

Unless otherwise stated in an MoU, postal security officers have primary responsibility for dealing with drugs in the mail, at postal facilities or on postal property until Customs/law enforcement/the police or another appropriate authority arrives. Only trained postal security officers should profile and contact other agencies.

Postal security officers should brief the installation head and/or director of the facility on a regular basis to ensure the effective tracking of parcels profiled and removed from the system.

Postal security force

Some designated facilities have established a postal security force (in addition to the "traditional" investigation service). Postal security force personnel are assigned specific roles and responsibilities under drug profiling procedures, particularly for searches.

Inspector in charge/security expert/chief security officer

This official is responsible for the overall supervision and administration of postal security officers/inspectors/security specialists/security managers/investigators and, if established, the postal security force.

Other employees

Personnel other than installation heads and security staff must report suspected drug parcels immediately to pre-designated supervisors, who shall ensure that the proper authorities and security officers are notified. It is recommended that employees not involved in the identification and investigation of traffickers should not be trained on profiling characteristics to minimize the involvement of collusive employees.

Law enforcement authorities/Customs/police

The Customs/federal police/local police department, or the drug task force are the most important external agencies brought in to deal with drug trafficking through the mail. Usually, a drug task force includes all these agencies to ensure proper deconfliction, the successful prosecution of traffickers, and the furtherance of the investigation outside local or national boundaries if necessary.

Airport authorities

Postal facilities located at or near an airport may need to work with airport authorities to allow external agencies to have access to the facility, or may have their own investigative teams able to assist.

V. Memorandum of understanding*What is an MoU?*

It is an agreement that formally recognizes a willingness for voluntary commitment by participating parties to cooperate, in this instance against drug trafficking and cross-border organized crime.

An MoU is not a contract, legal agreement or legal document, but rather an agreement based on good will, and it is not enforceable in a court of law.

It promotes greater understanding of agency objectives and operating requirements by extending one party's capabilities through mutually supportive training. Mutual supportive training is aimed at providing access to regular cooperation, information support and operational effectiveness. It also supports control efforts in areas of mutual interest.

Why an MoU?

An MoU lends agency recognition to the desire for partnership and cooperation. It can extend the resources available to be effective in drug enforcement and focus the expertise of different agencies on one problem.

MoUs also supersede disagreements between individuals, personalities, or sections by addressing common questions before they arise and defining expectations.

How do you create an MoU?

Interested parties should have a round table discussion to create an outline of agency operations and control/enforcement functions. This discussion needs to outline the following:

- Legislation and powers that their agency works with to highlight common areas where similar roles are performed and similar tasks are undertaken;
- Identify current areas of inter-agency cooperation;
- Identify where there could be better cooperation;
- Identify the process or impediments to better cooperation.

An MoU should:

- Outline the respective roles/mandates of the agencies involved and identify the areas of lead operational authority;

- Identify the areas of responsibility of each party in drug enforcement to enhance the operational responses and resources available for drug enforcement;
- Encourage staff interaction, inter-agency training, and the establishment of a liaison officer or point of contact in each respective agency;
- Encourage the exchange of information between agencies.

Two examples of MoU agreements

Two examples of MoU agreements have been included in Appendix A to provide you with an idea of what an MoU might look like.

They are provided as examples for your information, modification and adoption as you see fit.

The first is a generic MoU that makes a general statement confirming the wish to cooperate, then allows specific details to be enumerated in the accompanying guidelines.

The second is an example where the agencies have chosen to write certain terms and conditions into the body of the agreement, and in this instance have not felt the need to use guidelines to expand on what is covered.

Guidelines

Some ideas to consider when constituting the basic principles of guidelines to accompany inter-agency MoUs:

Principles to observe

The following principles should be observed:

- The prime responsibility and concern of each signatory lies in performing their mandated task and operations in the best possible manner;
- No signatories, nor any of their employees, will be asked to take any action conflicting the criminal laws or regulations of the country or any other country;
- Any information provided by the signatories will be treated by the recipient(s) as confidential;
- The measures recommended:
 - Are voluntary;
 - Should be within the legislative and procedural restraints the signatories operate;
 - Do not remove any existing obligations;
 - Do not introduce any new legal obligations;
- Where an offence, in particular the trafficking of illicit drugs, is discovered and evidence indicates the involvement of one or more of the signatory's employees, these persons will be prosecuted to the normal extent of the law.

General – recommended measures to be undertaken by signatories

- All employees/staff of the signatories commit to the acceptance of the MoU with the expectation for a similar commitment from the staff of the other partners.
- Encourage an open on-going exchange of information between the signatories, either direct or through established liaison channels such as consultative meetings, nominated liaison officers or points of contact.
- There should be discussion at regular intervals between signatories on the scope and application of the MoU to ensure it continues to meet the needs of all parties and provide the opportunity to address any differences that may have arisen.

Documentation and information

- Each signatory will nominate and provide the name and contact details (telephone/e-mail/fax) of an officer who will act as the point of official liaison and contact.
- Procedures should be agreed for the exchange and distribution of information as well as the level of confidentiality of the data exchanged.
- In support of these nominated positions, the MoU will establish the procedures to be followed in the event of an offence being suspected or discovered.
- Each signatory should undertake to ensure the others are briefed and conversant with their procedures and requirements in respect of drug offence operations.
- Each signatory will agree to bring, to the best of their ability and in a timely manner, information that relates to the use of the mail for drug trafficking offences.

Security

- All signatories agree to assist each other in maintaining and supporting the security of the international and domestic mail, and its freedom from abuse by drug traffickers.
- Signatories can call for support from each other to assess, review and examine operational procedures and vulnerabilities associated with mail processing, clearance and delivery.
- Signatories can call for support from each other to develop strategies, plans and procedures to minimize any vulnerabilities identified.
- Signatories can call for support from each other when assessing the background and integrity of potential new staff.

Training

Signatories agree to support each other in staff training through such activities as drug identification, testing procedures, safety protocols, risk assessment and screening, raising security awareness, improving operating procedures, documentation, evidence handling and investigation practices.

VI. Risk assessment, profiling and selection

Introduction

The huge volume of mail that enters and leaves a country or any number of domestic mail facilities on any given day makes it impossible to examine more than a small percentage. Drug traffickers attempt to take advantage of the limited search ability by using the mail to transport contraband. Our ability to screen mail is decreased with online access to suppliers who ship smaller quantities through the mail system. Contraband may be concealed inside packages, in goods contained within a package, within the packaging or envelope itself, or even in a letter.

While the amount of contraband that can be concealed in a package or envelope may not be as great as that which can be concealed in cargo, there are other challenges to screening that make using the mail to transport contraband an attractive option:

- Use of the mail avoids having to physically transport drugs across international borders or conducting hand-to-hand transfers in local jurisdictions;
- False names, addresses and misdeclarations (i.e. fraudulent supplements and documents) can be used to avoid identification, should the contraband be detected;
- Owing to the ease and relatively low cost of using the mail, a large quantity of drugs may be split into many packages or envelopes to avoid entire shipments needing to be screened.

Officers responsible for examining mail have a great responsibility in stopping the movement of contraband in to, out of, and throughout a country. Owing to the significant role officers have in stopping drug trafficking and

the tremendous challenge in choosing what mail to examine from among the huge volume of mail, it is essential each officer make the most effective use of the resources available.

The guidelines below focus on international mail and can be used to help concentrate examination efforts on the mail posing the highest risk for drug smuggling. These same guidelines can be used with some alterations for domestic mail. They can assist with profiling and how to identify the common characteristics associated with smuggling contraband through the mail. Some of these characteristics may not apply to everyone and no one characteristic should be used; rather, when combined, multiple characteristics will increase the likelihood that a parcel may contain drugs.

Postal and express courier services

Mail may be transported internationally through national postage services or through privately owned express courier services. As express courier services have a significant role in transporting mail internationally, it is important for postal security forces and drug enforcement officers to establish a cooperative working relationship with each other.

Mail may enter a country by air, land or sea transport. However, whether sent through a national postal service or an express courier company, the mail is normally taken to a regional centre prior to distribution. This is often where the opportunity exists for law enforcement officers to examine mail.

Definition of border controls

The purpose of border controls is to ensure that all international movement of goods, conveyances and people occurs within the laws, regulations and procedures that govern them. Border controls concerning international mail are the procedures used by law enforcement to ensure compliance with the laws and regulations that are intended to protect the borders of a country against the unlawful movement of contraband, drugs and other items through the mail.

For law enforcement purposes, international mail controls include:

- Identifying packages and envelopes entering or exiting the country that are a high risk for smuggling contraband;
- Examining international mail for the purpose of finding contraband.

To be effective, international mail controls must use intelligence and other information to concentrate on identifying parcels and envelopes that are the highest risk for smuggling contraband.

Balancing facilitation and enforcement

Law enforcement agencies face the problem of facilitating the international movement of legitimate mail while attempting to minimize the ever-growing international movement of contraband. The huge amount of mail entering or exiting a country greatly increases the chances of consistently finding contraband through randomly searching the mail. Drug smugglers rely on the high volume of mail in their efforts to transport contraband across international borders. The solution to this problem is to concentrate resources on identifying and examining high risk mail.

Purpose of risk assessment

With regard to stopping the movement of contraband through the mail, "risk" can be defined as the likelihood that contraband is being smuggled through the postal or express courier systems.

Many people may think that all mail entering a country presents the same degree of risk for drug smuggling. However, when such things as the fact that some mail is coming from a drug source country and other mail is coming from a non-source country are considered, it is quite easy to recognize that some mail represents a higher risk than other mail.

Risk assessment techniques attempt to identify and quantify risks in order to develop control procedures and concentrate control efforts on those risk areas where drug smuggling is most likely to occur.

Increasing the effectiveness of international mail controls

The goal of risk analysis is to concentrate examination efforts on the mail that represents the highest risk, while at the same time leaving most of the mail to move relatively freely across international borders. The result is that the efficiency of enforcement efforts is maximized.

A benefit of risk assessment is that it helps security and enforcement agencies to decide how they should allocate limited resources. For example, they can allocate more officers to examine mail coming from a drug source country (or domestic area), or mail going from a drug source country to user or transit countries. GRIDS global alerts about company names often used for distributing drugs through the mail can assist in these assessments.

Drug smugglers take advantage of the fact that it is not possible to examine all mail entering or exiting a country, or even a significant percentage of it. In addition to using risk assessment, we must counter this by using profiling and selectivity methods. For example, since traffickers frequently use the same or similar fake addresses, specific addresses used in mail items found to contain contraband in the past can be used as risk profiles. Once high-risk international mail drug smuggling methods have been identified, profiles are used to show common features of these smuggling methods. Selectivity is then used to select and examine the mail in which there is the greatest likelihood of finding contraband. This process results in more uniform controls and is more effective than randomly selecting mail for examination.

Terms commonly used in risk assessment, profiling and selection

- Risk: The possibility that people or goods may illegally cross an international border.
- Risk areas: Those procedures and categories of international travel and trade that present a risk.
- Risk assessment: Systematic use of information to determine how often identified risks may occur and the consequences of their occurring.
- Risk indicators: Specific criteria which, when taken together, can be used to identify high risk persons, conveyances, mail, or goods.
- Risk management: Systematic application of management procedures to identify, analyze and take enforcement action to prevent risks from occurring.
- Profile: A group of common characteristics, information or risk indicators that describes an existing or potential drug smuggling method or group involved in drug smuggling.
- Profiling: Identifying conveyances, mail, or goods that match a profile indicating illegal activity.
- Selection: Based on profiling and other information, actively selecting for examination the highest risk people, conveyances, mail, or goods.

VII. Performing a risk assessment

Risk assessment is the process of identifying:

- What contraband is entering or leaving the country in the mail;
- Why the contraband is being transported by mail (what weaknesses in enforcement controls exist that make drug traffickers believe that they can successfully send contraband through the mail);
- The degree of risk of contraband being transported by mail;
- The effectiveness of controls designed to prevent smuggling of contraband by mail.

Risks may vary between postal centres and depending on whether contraband is entering, leaving or travelling within the country. For example, smuggling methods may be the same or different depending on the type of contraband or the type of mail commonly going to or coming from another country. Because of this variance, it is necessary to perform an individual risk assessment for each mail centre.

In determining the degree to which a port or mail facility is at risk of drug smuggling, an officer will be able to rate the threat as “high”, “medium” or “low”.

In performing a risk assessment, postal security officers should work with law enforcement and should concentrate on several areas; however, these areas should not be separate and distinct from each other because they are closely interrelated in helping to identify why a specific postal centre is at risk of drug smuggling by mail and the extent to which that threat exists.

The following areas could be considered in your risk assessment. These areas are not all-inclusive and officers must use their imagination and experience in considering other areas to include in a risk assessment. As local officers have more knowledge regarding the situation at their workplace, they must utilize that knowledge to ensure that all relevant areas that are unique to a specific postal centre are covered in the risk assessment.

A. Risk assessment for incoming international mail (for drug user or drug transit countries)

Traffic patterns

- What percentage of arriving mail comes directly from source countries?
- Are there specific express courier service companies that have had more drug seizures made from them than other companies? In the past, an express courier company with a long history of drug seizures from its mail posed a greater risk than one with no seizures. With the increase in technology, some express couriers have sophisticated methods to profile contraband in their network and may be more proactive, resulting in larger volumes of seizures. Express couriers with less sophisticated systems may benefit from more hands-on attention.

Goods

- Do the goods that commonly come in the mail offer a good opportunity for concealing contraband?
- Does the packaging for the goods that commonly come in the mail offer a good opportunity for concealing contraband?
- Is information on typical methods of concealment collected and available for risk profiling purposes? (Also refer to “Profiling” below.)

Local drug trends

- What kinds of contraband are commonly used locally/nationally? The type of drug being imported will determine concealment techniques – concealment methods for marijuana may differ from those for heroin.
- Are drug prices in your area going up or down? If drug prices are dropping, this means that there is greater availability of the contraband. You can therefore assume that more contraband is being smuggled into the country if it is not produced locally.
- Has the number of drug addicts or drug overdoses been increasing in your country? The greater the amount of contraband being used in your country, the greater the risk that it is being smuggled through the mail.

Controls

Officers should evaluate the effectiveness of existing controls. If current practice is to examine a small percentage of mail and your examination is based on random selection, then the risk is higher than if you regularly use risk assessment, profiling and selection to choose what mail to examine. With improvements in tracking and data collection from mail entering the system, officers can (and should) use mail databases to develop profiles and identify suspect mailings. Digital profiling can improve the efficiency of officers’ efforts.

- If this is a drug source country, is outgoing mail searched?
- If this is a drug user country, is incoming mail searched?
- Are profiles of suspect drug smuggling methods created and used through international mail?
- Are risk indicators identified and used for suspect smuggling methods in international mail?
- Do officers make extensive efforts to work with courier service companies and postal authorities to develop information that can be used to detect smuggling by mail?

- Do officers receive updated information or lists of nationally controlled substances from relevant authorities? This includes numerous synthetic substances (such as synthetic opioids and NPS) and can frequently change.
- Is intelligence received on smuggling trends, and is information exchanged with other mail clearance centres? If not, a great opportunity to identify smuggling trends and methods is missed.
- Are mail parcels entering or leaving the country required to have a customs declaration or other form on them, on which the sender is required to describe the contents?

Security

- Does a law enforcement officer supervise the offloading of the mail from the vessel, vehicle or aircraft on which it arrived?
- Is the mail in sealed bags or containers, or does the opportunity exist for someone to remove a piece of mail prior to it going to the clearance centre?
- Is the transport of mail from the port of entry to the clearance centre supervised?

B. Risk assessment for outgoing international mail (for countries that are drug source or drug transit countries)

Traffic patterns

- What percentage of outgoing mail goes directly to countries in which there is a large market for contraband?
- Are there specific express courier service companies that have had more drug seizures made from them than other companies? In the past, an express courier company with a long history of drug seizures from its mail posed a greater risk than one with no seizures. With the increase in technology, some express couriers have sophisticated methods to profile contraband in their network. They may therefore be more proactive, which results in a larger volume of seizures. Express couriers with less sophisticated systems may benefit from more hands-on attention.

Goods

- Do the goods commonly sent through the mail offer a good opportunity for concealing contraband?
- Does the packaging for the goods commonly sent through the mail offer a good opportunity for concealing contraband?
- Is information on typical methods of concealment collected and available for risk profiling purposes? (Also refer to “Profiling” below.)

Local drug trends

- What kinds of contraband are used locally/nationally? The type of drug being produced will determine concealment techniques – concealment methods for marijuana may differ from those for heroin.
- Are drug prices in your area going up or down? If drug prices are dropping, this means that there is greater availability of contraband, and you can assume that more contraband is being smuggled out of the country.
- Has the number of drug addicts or drug overdoses been increasing in your country? An increased amount of contraband being used in your country is an indicator that drug production is increasing, which means that there is a greater risk of the contraband being sent to other countries through the mail.

Controls

The effectiveness of your existing controls. If the controls currently in place do not examine outgoing mail or examine only a small percentage of it, and the examination is based on random selection, then the risk is higher than if regular risk assessment, profiling and selection is used to choose what mail to examine.

- If this is a drug source country, is outgoing mail searched?
- Are profiles of suspect drug smuggling methods through international mail developed and used?
- Are risk indicators identified and used for suspect smuggling methods in international mail?
- Do officers make extensive efforts to work with courier service companies and postal authorities to develop information that can be used to detect smuggling by mail?
- Do officers receive updated information or lists of nationally controlled substances from relevant authorities? This includes numerous synthetic substances (such as synthetic opioids and NPS) and can frequently change.
- Is intelligence on smuggling trends received and is information exchanged with other mail clearance centres? If not, a great opportunity to identify smuggling trends and methods is being missed.
- Are mail parcels entering or leaving the country required to have a customs declaration or other form on them, on which the sender is required to describe the contents?

Security

- Does a law enforcement officer supervise the loading of the mail onto the vessel, vehicle or aircraft on which it is departing?
- Is the mail in sealed bags or containers?

Profiling

A profile should be thought of as a tool that can provide a “picture” of a smuggler or a smuggling method. Many smuggling attempts have common characteristics and in looking for those characteristics, an officer will be able to identify high risk vessels, cargo and mail.

Profiles, when properly developed and used, are a very useful drug enforcement tool. To be effective, profiles must be continually updated as new information becomes available. This means that officers must have an efficient system of intelligence collection and analysis.

As an example of building a profile, imagine reviewing seizure reports for heroin seizures from express courier mail at a specific mail clearance centre for the past year. In reviewing these seizures, seizures were found made from mail parcels coming from country A, the contents of the parcels were described as magazines, the packages were heavier than normal for magazines, and the contraband was concealed in a space made by cutting out a part of the magazine pages. In putting these characteristics together, officers have a good picture of a heroin smuggling method.

Not all these characteristics will be present in every smuggling attempt and some characteristics will differ, but the important thing to consider is that officers will have a good idea as to what they should be looking for. In this way, officers will not treat every piece of mail as an equal risk and will be able to concentrate on the mail representing the highest risk. Officers’ efficiency and effectiveness are increased when they are able to review these characteristics electronically without searching through live mail.

The main element in developing profiles is the availability of information on prior seizures. It is essential that officers be able to review past seizures to identify those characteristics that are common to smuggling attempts.

In order to ensure that this information is available, it is necessary for a report to be completed for each seizure that is made and that there be a central collection place where the seizure reports are available for review. At a minimum, a report form for seizures made from mail should contain the following information:

- Date of seizure;

- Place of seizure;
- Seizing officer;
- Contraband seized (type and quantity);
- Tracking information (if available);
- Addressee's name and address;
- Sender's name and address;
- Type of transport: postal service or express courier company (if express courier, include the name of the company);
- Concealment method;
- Risk indicators (why did the officer decide to examine that piece of mail? This is commonly referred to as "reasonable suspicion" or, with more indicators, probable cause (see Appendix B));
- Description of the goods (customs declaration on the package).

In order to help show how valuable profiles can be, imagine that an officer currently has access to the foregoing information. Consider how important this information can be in helping to decide what mail to examine.

- Date of seizure: Helps to identify the current drug smuggling trends.
- Place of seizure: Shows drug smuggling methods and trends in a specific mail clearance centre and in other places.
- Contraband: Informs officers as to the types and quantities of contraband being smuggled. This aids in identifying where to look for contraband in the mail.
- Addressee's name and address: Any prior drug seizure intended for a specific name or address would mean that subsequent mail destined for the name or address should be considered high risk.
- Sender's name and address: Helps to identify high risk countries of origin.
- Type of transport: Shows whether a particular courier service should be considered high risk based on previous seizures.
- Concealment method: Helps to identify what and where to search.
- Risk indicators: Shows why previous mail was considered high risk and the reasons for examining mail that has similar risk indicators.
- Description of the goods: Helps to identify the current drug smuggling trends by identifying similar shipments.

While the foregoing information is sufficient to create a profile, it would also be helpful to obtain as much information as possible regarding seizures made in other places and seizures made by other law enforcement agencies or available via open source information, such as the annual WCO Illicit Trade Report and other law enforcement and organization press releases. For example, a drug seizure made at someone's house may lead to information showing how, when and where the contraband entered the country. If officers have this outside information, they may find that the same profiles exist in other mail centres or, more importantly, they may find characteristics common to mail entering or exiting through their workplace. When such common characteristics are found, officers may realize that the same smuggling methods are happening at different workplaces and that enforcement efforts should focus on them.

Examples of seized parcels can be found in Appendix C.

Steps in developing a profile

i Collect available information

The first step in developing a profile is to collect all available information. As previously mentioned, reports of past seizures and open source information are a primary source of information in developing profiles.

ii Chart the information

For mail, the chart could contain the following suggested headings:

- Date of seizure
- Place of origin
- Postal service or express courier
- Type of contraband
- Parcel or envelope concealment method
- Place of seizure
- Place of destination
- Class of mail
- Quantity of contraband
- Description of contents
- Risk indicators

These are only suggested headings, which should be adjusted to fit the unique situation of specific mail clearance centres. Seizure reports and other sources of information should be reviewed and information input under each of the chart headings.

iii Analyze the information contained in the chart

After filling in the information under each of the headings on the chart, the information should be reviewed with the goal of identifying the common features of past drug smuggling methods through the mail.

Example

Information contained in the seizure reports resulted in the following chart:

<i>Drug type</i>	<i>Mail type</i>	<i>Described contents</i>	<i>Place of origin</i>
Heroin	Air	Magazines	Country A
Heroin	Express courier	Books	Country B
Hashish	Air postal	Clothing	Country B
Heroin	Express courier	Papers	Country B
Heroin	Air courier	Clothing	Country A

The foregoing is an elementary example, but it should still show how a profile can aid in not only showing what to look for, but also where to look. The chart shows the ability to build a profile regarding how people are attempting to send heroin through the mail and where it is coming from.

iv Distribute the profile

The profile will not be of any use unless it is given to the officers who need it. A system should be developed to distribute profiles or to make them available to everyone who needs them. When distributing the profile, consideration should be given to the fact that this is sensitive information that you would not want to be accessible to unauthorized persons.

v Obtain feedback

A periodic review should be done to determine whether the profiles are working. Have the profiles resulted in increased seizures?

vi Modify the profile

As success against drug smugglers increases, they will change their methods. Therefore, it is important that profiles be constantly changed to reflect the new smuggling methods.

Selection

During the risk assessment process, officers identify those areas that present the greatest threat for smuggling contraband through the mail. They also identify the strengths and weaknesses of their control system. In the profiling stage, officers build a picture of what drug smuggling methods through the mail would look like. These first two processes help to identify possible high-risk mail.

Selection is then used to determine which parcels or envelopes to actually examine. This is done by identifying risk indicators associated with specific pieces of mail. There is a greater challenge with identifying high risk mail because officers have less information to work with. With passengers, for example, officers are able to use questioning to identify risk indicators, and with cargo there are various documents available for review.

Postal and express mail risk indicators

One concern of drug traffickers, regardless of whether they are the senders or receivers of contraband, is their desire to conceal their identity should the contraband be discovered by law enforcement. Therefore, a drug trafficker will often use a false name and address for the sender and a false name for the addressee.

Risk indicators for the sender's address may include:

- No sender name or address.
- The name on the return address is foreign to the country from which the mail is sent (example, John Smith with a return address in Bangkok, Thailand).
- Incomplete sender name or address.
- Name and address of sender cannot be read.
- Return address is a hotel.
- Address is a drug source country.
- Spelling of address is incorrect or does not have normal postcodes.
- The return address was not within reasonable proximity of the location where the mail entered the system.
- The sender and return address are the same as the recipient information.
- Prior record of a drug seizure involving the same senders and addresses. Though traffickers usually use fake or non-existent names and addresses, they frequently use the same fake names and addresses.

Risk indicators for the addressee may include:

- Prior record of a drug seizure from mail intended for the addressee, or the address.
- Mail addressed to a person at a hotel.
- Mail addressed to be held for "general delivery" at a post office.
- Address is non-existent.
- Address is in a country that is a drug user country or a country that is infamous for being a drug transit location for drug couriers.
- The addressee and destination address are the same as the sender information.

Address label: An address label that appears to be computer generated on what is supposed to be personal mail (the labels could be used by drug traffickers sending many pieces of mail).

Contents:

- Feel of the contents does not seem normal (e.g. a letter that is too stiff).
- Weight is too heavy for the declared contents.
- Not logical to send the declared contents.
- Cost of sending the parcel, particularly by express courier, is too high for the declared contents.
- Package or packaging seems to be too extensive for the declared contents.
- Declared contents are unusual for the country of origin or destination.
- No clear reason why contents should be sent by express courier (e.g. magazines sent by courier).
- Feel of the parcel or envelope does not seem normal.

Mail marked "return to sender"

One method of smuggling contraband is known as the "return to sender" method. In this method, a package is sent from a drug user country to a drug source country. The drug trafficker in the source country carefully opens the package and inserts contraband. The package is then closed and marked with the instructions "return to sender." The package is then sent back to the drug user country in the hope that it will not be examined because law enforcement officers will believe that the package was not opened and it is just the goods from the drug user country being returned.

Officers should regard this mail coming from a drug source country as high a risk as mail originating in the drug source country.

VIII. Drug trafficking by postal services evidential chain

The following are evidence handling guidelines. Laws specific to the host country and location need to be considered when developing evidence procedures. It is imperative to include law enforcement in developing the following steps to ensure successful prosecution of drug traffickers:

- Have an appreciation of the need for continuity of evidence for prosecution purposes;
- Understand the requirements to document all stages of an investigation;
- Be able to develop a secure and consistent evidence management system.

Postal staff and members of law enforcement agencies may acquire property and/or drugs in the course of their work. The treatment of that property should be uniform in its handling.

Proof regarding continuity in the handling of evidence is imperative to satisfy the requirements of a successful prosecution. Each person handling the evidence must be able to identify it by signature, initials, or other marks. They should also be prepared to testify from whom and when the property/evidence was received; to whom and when it was released; and that it was not changed, altered, or tampered with while in their custody.

It should be the policy of any (involved) agency to maintain rigid control over acquired property/evidence so that a credible chain of custody is established and maintained. Since the chain of custody can be challenged whenever property/evidence changes hands, a record endorsed by each recipient of the item strengthens the reliability of testimony regarding the continuity in the handling of the evidence. A successful prosecution may hinge on being able to properly document the chain of custody for the evidence.

In the event of the investigation involving two or more services, a lead agency (agreed by MoU based on the national law and regulations in the respective country that may regulate the lead agency) should take custody of the evidence.

Preserving and protecting property/evidence

All property/evidence should be afforded proper security. The following guidelines are recommended as minimum standards required for safe custody and to establish a consistent evidential chain. It is recommended that law enforcement well-versed on country-specific requirements be involved in developing these procedures.

- On initial discovery of envelope/package/parcel commence the evidence log. The log should record the unique serial number, case number, exhibit number, description of the item, and printed name and signature of the person preparing the log.
- Isolate evidence and place in a secure property container, bag, or room.
- Affix label to evidence and add signature or initials. The unique serial number should be consistent with that on the evidence log. Details of the case number, exhibit number, description of item, etc. should be included on the label.
- Each transfer of property/evidence between agencies/personnel is to be accompanied by the signature, date and time of transfer by the recipient agency/person. Details are to be recorded on the log.
- The chain of custody will be complete only if the recipient signs the label each time the item is transferred. Current technology may allow for electronic signatures and record keeping.
- Prior to being stored/transferred property/evidence should be sealed (if possible) in tamper-resistant sealed bags to ensure integrity.
- When an item is sent to a forensic laboratory, the sealed container selected should be large enough to permit re-sealing by the laboratory after analysis.

Evidence management system

It is important to establish (either manually or on a computer) an evidence management system to record and track all property seized as evidence in support of a prosecution.

The officer in charge of a case (whether law enforcement or not) should be the person responsible for entering information on the log and ensuring that it is maintained in a timely and accurate manner. As changes occur, the officer should update the system as required.

The officer is responsible for the proper security and protection of evidence until its final disposal. The system should ensure that continuity of handling of evidence can always be established. Access to the items should be limited to those individuals recorded in the chain of custody to preclude contamination of evidence.

Evidence transferred to a forensic laboratory

Non-documentary evidence transferred to the custody of a forensic science laboratory should be delivered (where practicable) by hand or via registered mail. The receiving analyst should sign the chain of custody log and the evidence should be entered into the laboratory's own recording system. The process should be reversed on completion of the forensic examination and the return of the evidence to the officer in charge of the case.

Final disposal of property/evidence

Court exhibits or evidentiary items obtained from offenders, or during an investigation, should be disposed of only upon completion of all judicial proceedings. Caution must be exercised in the disposal of evidentiary items to ensure that no pending litigation, appeal, or administrative hearing would be jeopardized through the disposal of such items.

Narcotic substances not disposed of by a court order should be destroyed. Disposal should be accompanied by the officer in charge of the case and two witnesses. It is good practice to issue a destruction certificate fully describing the substance, quantities, method and date of destruction, and signed by all three parties at the time of the destruction. The disposal certificate should be attached to the evidence/chain of custody log and appended to the case file.

Exceptions to the above disposal system include:

- Permanent retention by the court;
- Permanent transfer to a forensic laboratory; and
- Permanent transfer to another agency in cases involving multi-agency investigations not concluded.

IX. Controlled deliveries

The continuing problem of drug trafficking, including the constantly increasing international movement of illicit drugs, the expansion of the consumer market for drugs, the improvement in drug quality and in particular the large increase in profits, have all combined to bring about considerable changes to criminal prosecution procedures.

Consequently, it is quite clear that the only appropriate and effective way of combating this drug trafficking is through closely coordinated cooperation at both international and national levels. However, as this can often be impaired by legal incompatibilities, a recognition of the need for procedural changes in the legal context has resulted in a series of international treaties and agreements, which enable prosecuting authorities to act more effectively across borders.

In December 1988, concentrated international efforts culminated in the adoption of the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (the Vienna Convention), article 11 of which deals with the application of the controlled delivery technique. All parties acceding to the new Convention shall allow for the appropriate use of controlled delivery. If necessary, contracting parties must amend their national legislation to permit the technique.

This will cover both the legal and the practical aspects of controlled deliveries. It is intended to be a useful tool for determining when and how a controlled delivery should be applied and, if the controlled delivery is to be international, for facilitating the necessary direct contact between the countries concerned. This will help to focus on the fact that since legal systems differ from country to country, any successful controlled delivery must include close cooperation between Customs and other agencies concerned, such as police and judicial authorities. As laws constantly change, it is recommended to verify current laws and policies prior to executing a controlled delivery.

Definitions

The technique of controlled delivery is ideally suited for identifying principals, organizers, and financiers of illicit drug trafficking, rather than merely supporting the arrests of couriers and the seizures of drug shipments at transit points where detection is made.

Based on general agreements and specific arrangements between members on a case-by-case basis, drugs, once seized, are allowed to proceed to their final point of destination to allow drug law enforcement agencies a more far-reaching and successful investigation of the drug trafficking. The transport of the drugs might take place by the smuggler, with or without their knowledge, if the law enforcement agencies so agree. In this case, the drugs must be kept under constant surveillance, which may be supported by officers from any of the countries affected by the operation. It is also possible that a shipment may travel without the presence of any officer if the circumstances are conducive.

The controlled delivery technique aligns with the 1961 United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, but its feasibility depends on the particular legal and administrative provisions in the countries concerned. The Single Convention does not define the term "controlled delivery" as such, but article 35 provides a clear statement regarding enforcement action:

"Having due regard to their constitutional, legal and administrative systems, the Parties shall:

- (a) Make arrangements at the national level for co-ordination of preventive and repressive action against the illicit traffic; to this end they may usefully designate an appropriate agency responsible for such co-ordination;
- (b) Assist each other in the campaign against the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs;

- (c) Co-operate closely with each other and with the competent international organizations of which they are members with a view to maintaining a co-ordinated campaign against the illicit traffic;
- (d) Ensure that international co-operation between the appropriate agencies be conducted in an expeditious manner;
- (e) Ensure that where legal papers are transmitted internationally for the purposes of a prosecution, the transmittal be effected in an expeditious manner to the bodies designated by the Parties; this requirement shall be without prejudice to the right of a Party to require that legal papers be sent to it through the diplomatic channel."

Article 35 of the Single Convention clearly indicates the spirit of cooperation which is embodied in the use of controlled delivery techniques. By using controlled deliveries, international cooperation in the fight against international organized drug crime is indeed improved.

The 1988 UN Convention specifies the technique itself in article 11 (Controlled delivery), which provides as follows:

- “1. If permitted by the basic principles of their respective domestic legal systems, the Parties shall take the necessary measures, within their possibilities, to allow for the appropriate use of controlled delivery at the international level, on the basis of agreements or arrangements mutually consented to, with a view to identifying persons involved in offences established in accordance with article 3, paragraph 1, and to taking legal action against them.
2. Decisions to use controlled delivery shall be made on a case-by-case basis and may, when necessary, take into consideration financial arrangements and understandings with respect to the exercise of jurisdiction by the Parties concerned.
3. Illicit consignments whose controlled delivery is agreed to may, with the consent of the Parties concerned, be intercepted and allowed to continue with the narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances intact or removed or replaced in whole or in part.”

Note: The only way to carry out controlled deliveries appropriately, effectively, and in a legally consistent manner internationally is by recourse to a common procedure that satisfies the legal provisions of each country involved. Details regarding basic legal requirements for the various legal systems concerned are discussed below.

Advantages and disadvantages of controlled deliveries

a Advantages

The principal aim of controlled deliveries is to identify principals, organizers, financiers, and others involved in international drug trafficking. By using this technique, the law enforcement officer investigating may be able to identify contact points, networks, and the principal infrastructure to an extent which would never be possible by only using traditional investigation methods that would follow from a seizure at the border point of discovery. Tactically, the drug smugglers prefer their organization to work in a closed environment to make infiltration difficult.

Carrying out controlled deliveries rather than seizing at the point of interdiction not only results in greater harm to the smuggling operation, but it can also often result in information about transit routes. Although smugglers must often accept transit stops pertaining to the traditional routes of transport and supply, in some cases these transit routes are deliberately chosen to confuse the law enforcement officers at the end destination about the actual starting point of the journey.

With the use of controlled deliveries, there is a greater chance of the arrest of contact persons and the identification of more members of an organized group in addition to the drugs found during the initial examination. The opportunity for obtaining additional evidence also increases the likelihood of more co-conspirators being charged and successfully prosecuted.

Since it may require the cooperation of many agencies and more than one country, this method has, as a hidden benefit, the opportunity for cooperating agencies to share intelligence and knowledge that may not have been obtained through direct seizure alone. This then provides incentives in the development of communication lines between countries maintaining direct personal relationships between the officers responsible.

b Disadvantages

Some disadvantages must also be considered when considering the technique. Decisions must be made, and risks assessed very quickly. This can be minimized by extensive pre-planning on the subject, but risks will always be greater for loss of the drugs and injury to the officers in controlled delivery circumstances.

If circumstances permit, the drugs can be removed from the shipment and substituted with other material, where legally allowed. The relevant considerations for this are the time available, the ease of access, the rapid response of other law enforcement agencies, and the possibility of substitution in such a way as to avoid suspicion or discovery by the conveyance operator.

The amount of manpower necessary to undertake a controlled delivery can be extensive. Since most of the cases require extensive surveillance operations, a significant number of personnel may be required during such an operation.

Associated with this are the costs involved, such as travel expenses and overtime costs (something criminals are not concerned with).

The requirement for additional manpower increases when the trafficking organization pays individuals outside the organization to catch the drugs. These individuals are commonly provided with instructions to hold the drugs unopened for an extended time frame, which puts a strain on law enforcement resources. The people catching the drugs may be given instructions to open the package while representatives of the organization conduct surveillance on the catcher's residence. If law enforcement reacts to the catcher opening the box, the organization immediately becomes aware that the catcher and the drugs were compromised and can change tactics.

Circumstances at the time of delivery of the drugs are never as controlled as they are at the border location or facility of discovery. Pre-planning a course of action can help to minimize risks, as can surveillance. However, controlled delivery necessarily involves taking the shipment into areas with little or no knowledge of buildings, persons, or other areas of potential risk. This can be decreased by involving local law enforcement.

Difficulties can arise when agencies do not have practical experience in surveillance techniques, coordination between relevant agencies, operational matters involving international coordination, and other such procedures. These difficulties will, of course, dissipate in time.

Legislation

a Roman/Napoleonic law

In a Roman/Napoleonic legal system, the justice authorities, in general, have responsibility for the application of criminal law procedures. Law enforcement agencies are not able to make decisions on their own regarding procedures that could have direct influence on criminal proceedings.

Any action taken by the competent law enforcement agency during a criminal investigation is, in principle, subject to instructions given under the responsibility of the justice authorities. In some cases, instructions are given directly by the responsible representative of the justice authorities, while in other cases the law enforcement agency acts on behalf of the justice department according to a general authorization laid down in the criminal procedure code.

Most legal systems provide a procedure to prosecute offences according to constitutional ideas. The precise details may not be laid down, leaving room for tactical and operational variations. The arrest of an offender, a house search or seizure of drugs could be postponed for a time with sufficient justification. This may include the identification and arrest of principals, financiers, and other high-level helpers in an international drug smuggling operation. Each authorization for delay in procedures requires a case-by-case decision in conformity with the code.

In the case of an export-controlled delivery operation, the government of the country or territory concerned must be willing to relinquish its powers to prosecute and hold a trial in favour of another judicial body in another country or territory. Most certainly each government should set out the guidelines for the law enforcement agency to follow prior to presenting the case to the justice department for final decision. Within the justice department, it is normal for a judge to empower the agents to proceed.

It is also possible that in certain special situations the public prosecutor will permit the operation according to legal requirements. The agents carrying out the action are then seen to be acting on behalf of the justice department.

This legal framework requires allowing sufficient time for planning by the various government departments involved in the decision process to fulfil their obligations thoroughly. The basic concepts of the Roman law system do not provide for the delegation of decision making to the law enforcement agency.

b Anglo-Saxon law

Anglo-Saxon law allows the law enforcement agency to initiate or accept an international controlled delivery according to a decision taken by the department itself. Operational guidelines should be set out within appropriate administrations. Anglo-Saxon law may allow the customs or police administration to prosecute its own cases and may not consider it appropriate to involve other departments in a decision if the prosecution is postponed or delayed. The advantage of this to controlled deliveries is obvious. The decision process only involves the responsible law enforcement agency at a senior operational level. The time required to get such a decision can be very short.

Drug detection in the mail – operational guidelines

The decision of whether a controlled delivery will be considered or accepted in connection with drugs concealed in mail or parcel post is dependent on the understanding of mail handling procedures in general. Drug smugglers often conceal drugs in mail and parcels because they offer volume and anonymity. The volume of mail is often greater than the capacity of authorities to examine it, and traffickers become quickly familiar with postal clearance formalities as a result. Therefore, drug enforcement agencies must cope in many cases with those who have “insider information”. This raises the difficulty that any unusual handling and delivery of mail may alert the criminals involved to the activity of law enforcement agencies. It is essential for drug enforcement officers carrying out controlled delivery operations to be aware of the Post and Customs mail clearance procedures and the normal time limits for clearance and delivery.

For drug detection in the mail, delivery of the goods should always be under the total control of police and Customs, usually with the active involvement of the postal authorities or express parcel companies. The operational considerations for controlled deliveries of mail detections can be dealt with in four sections: the basic arrangements; procedure in the mail facility; initial preparations for delivery; and delivery.

a Basic arrangements

The critical feature of controlled delivery of a drug detection in the mail is timing. Depending on the method used by the offenders, this could vary from several days to a few hours. As the use of express parcels and instant tracking increases, many of which guarantee delivery within 24 hours of dispatch, so the capacity for rapid response becomes more essential. It is therefore necessary for all involved agencies to have clearly laid down procedures to facilitate immediate action.

The agencies involved should be able to contact the correct persons immediately following detection. Within the mail facility, the postal security staff and Customs should both be present at the mail opening and thus both will automatically be aware. In most cases, it will be necessary to contact the police and customs offices that will carry out the controlled delivery. A list of relevant contact names and telephone numbers should therefore be available at the facility. To ensure that the list contains current information, regular contact between agencies is clearly desirable.

In respect of export or outward transit seizures, the contact information will necessarily include relevant international agencies. There needs to be a system to ensure that these details are also kept up to date.

Dependent on the legal requirements within each country or territory, there may be certain procedures that should be followed to ensure that a successful prosecution can eventually be mounted. Feedback from prosecutors to police, customs and postal staff is therefore essential to avoid practices that are prejudicial in the justice system.

The security of the drugs is the paramount consideration, and secure storage facilities should be available at the mail facility for short-term retention prior to their transfer to the enforcement sector or for scientific analysis as appropriate.

b Procedure on detection

On detection of drugs in mail, the principal considerations other than the security of the drugs are forensic requirements and the decision whether to substitute the drugs prior to a controlled delivery.

It is essential for forensic requirements to be understood and observed by all examination and enforcement staff. It may well transpire that fingerprints inside a letter or package will form a significant part of the prosecution case, so as few people as possible should handle the items concerned. For evidential purposes, photographs of the package and the concealment will be beneficial. These may be taken by qualified forensic officers or by the detecting staff. If the latter, photographic equipment needs to be available. Also, for evidential purposes, handwriting analysis may need to be carried out in detected instances of multiple illegal packages.

The written notes of detecting staff should also be made as detailed and available as soon as possible for use in subsequent proceedings. In offices where frequent detections are likely, it may be helpful to have the facility develop procedures for immediate witness statements or processes to be completed in anticipation of a controlled delivery, thus saving time.

If a controlled delivery is to be made, it is obviously essential that the recipient does not receive any indication of police and customs involvement. There should thus be no leakage of information or announcement to the media about the detection prior to actual delivery. This can be improved by limiting profiling and risk assessment to postal security personnel.

c Initial preparations for delivery

Immediately following detection, the appropriate enforcement agencies should be informed. They will make the decision whether to carry out a controlled delivery. If this is a feasibility, the next issue is to decide whether to substitute the drugs. The main points for consideration are that mail, when delivered, invariably passes beyond the sight and total control of enforcement staff; security of the drugs is therefore a significant risk. Generally speaking, drugs detected in the mail are far more likely to be substituted than not. If they are substituted, it needs to be done in such a way as to resemble the original concealment in weight and volume as far as possible, and to permit the package to be resealed in such a manner as not to alert the suspicion of the recipient. Material for resealing must therefore be available.

Prior to resealing of import consignments, some form of electronic or other indicative device may be inserted in the package depending on national legislation and practicability. For export or outward transit packages, the recipient country's agency may wish to do the resealing itself to permit the necessary forensic examination to be carried out in-country. Some of these issues can be addressed in MoUs.

Initial checks can be carried out on relevant databases to ascertain whether anything is known of the recipient or declared sender or their addresses. In particular, it can be established whether they have any connection with previous detections. For this reason, it is imperative that accurate databases of detections are maintained.

The purpose of controlled deliveries means arrests are likely to be made and premises searched for evidence. It is therefore essential that the proper authorization, perhaps in the form of search warrants, is obtained prior to delivery. A surveillance and arrest team should be formed as soon as possible. To enhance operational co-operation between agencies, it is advisable to incorporate both police and customs staff within that team.

Other matters requiring advance consideration are that mail is often addressed to a post office box number, details of which need to be established, or to ascertain whether the recipient's address is a multi-occupancy address such as a block of apartments.

d Controlled delivery

The decision as to whether a controlled delivery will be carried out, both on inward and outward detections, will be made at the appropriate level within the relevant law enforcement agencies. In the case of outward consignments, agreement of the recipient agency is essential prior to the package being allowed to proceed at export.

Once the package has been resealed and prepared for delivery, arrangements can be made for its delivery. Depending on the preferred method, this may be by the regular postal staff or by police/customs staff working "undercover." If postal staff make the delivery, they must be briefed extensively so that the enforcement team retains control to the greatest extent possible. In either event, it is wise to make the delivery as near as possible to the normal mail delivery schedule to avoid alerting the recipient.

It will be necessary for the enforcement officers to make a pre-delivery external examination of the recipient premises, to establish possible access and egress and to carry out surveillance of the delivery and post-delivery period. The surveillance may include photographing persons entering or leaving the premises and delivery of the package. This is particularly important if signature of receipt of the package is required.

Following delivery of the package, a decision must be made concerning the timing of entry to the premises. One person should be designated as responsible for making this decision. The optimum time is immediately following the opening of the package. If there is any electronic device, an indication as to the best time may be given, but it should not be taken as definitive. It should be borne in mind that the package may remain unopened in the premises, possibly awaiting the return of the recipient. It is therefore necessary for the surveillance team to be prepared to wait for some time. Having said that, whereas the waiting time for controlled delivery of freight consignments may last several days, with mail packages it may be measured in hours. Since controlled deliveries have been common practice for years, some organizations have put practices in place whereby packages are not opened for days.

Following entry to the premises, the initial requirement is generally to recover the package as soon as possible. Following this, normal arrest, search and interview techniques will be adopted. The result of the delivery should later be notified to all relevant parties, particularly at the mail facility where the detection was made, and to ensure that intelligence databases are updated.

Appendix A – Memorandum of understanding

Example 1

Memorandum of understanding

This memorandum of understanding (MoU) formally recognizes the willingness and a voluntary commitment by the ... [insert names of participating parties] ... of ... [insert name of country] ... hereafter referred to as “the Signatories” to cooperate in combating drug trafficking and cross-border criminal offences, in particular trafficking in illicit drugs. It is not a contract, legal agreement, legal document or enforceable in a court of law.

Aims

The aims of this MoU are to:

- RAISE AWARENESS of these criminal offences, in particular the drug problem and its effects;
- FACILITATE to the greatest possible extent the effective performance of the mandated role of the Signatories;
- DENY access to those seeking to use the international mail services and facilities as a mode for illicit drug trafficking;
- INCREASE the chances of timely detection of criminal offences, in particular illicit drug trafficking through the international mail;
- ASSIST the appropriate authority in the identification, investigation and successful prosecution of parties involved in these offences.

Strategies

The three Signatories identify the following strategies for meeting the MoU aims, namely to:

- promote mutual understanding, the timely exchange of information, lend operational support and encourage full cooperation between the post, police and customs services;
- introduce the development of improved security, sound operating procedures and the application of best practices in post and customs operations at international mail centres;
- mutually support all agency efforts to identify, investigate and successfully prosecute those attempting to traffic in drugs or commit cross-border criminal offences using the international post.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The ... [country] **POST**

The ... [country] **POLICE**

The ... [country] **CUSTOMS**

RECOGNIZING that offences against the national laws, particularly drug trafficking and cross-border criminal enterprise, are prejudicial to the economic, security and social interests of ... [the country], ... community and to the interests of all parties involved;

RECOGNIZING ALSO that such offences may involve the use of not only the international postal system but also a variety of legitimate transport modes and handling facilities;

ACCEPTING that commercial time sensitivities and an effective operational response create the need to facilitate to the greatest possible extent the clearance of the international mail, consistent with the application of adequate controls;

ACKNOWLEDGING the existing wish to cooperate between the Signatory parties;

AWARE that by cooperating more closely, there is the potential to introduce more efficient clearance and screening procedures, which will in turn result in more effective interventions and reduce delays for legitimate users of the international mail;

BELIEVING that such cooperation would be of benefit to all parties in the performance of their duties;

HAVE, WITHOUT INCURRING ADDITIONAL LEGAL OBLIGATIONS, VOLUNTARILY AGREED TO

STRENGTHEN COOPERATION by jointly developing ways of enhancing the existing consultative procedures with a view to ensuring that the needs of all Signatories are met;

HEIGHTEN AWARENESS by seeking to ensure a better understanding of each other’s mandates, empowering legislation and operating procedures;

PRACTICE PREVENTION by considering together practical steps and procedures to improve agency operations that might help prevent offences from occurring, in particular those of drug trafficking and cross-border criminal enterprise;

IMPROVE DETECTION by examining and developing together ways of sharing productive and timely information and lending mutual support to the operations of all Signatories with a view to detecting drug trafficking and cross-border criminal offences; and

IMPLEMENT the attached Model Guidelines to give practical effect to this MoU.

Signed at on 2023

POST

POLICE

CUSTOMS

*Example 2***Memorandum of understanding**

The Commissioner of Police,

The Director General of Customs, and

The Postmaster General,

RECOGNIZING that individuals and speculator groups continue to commit serious offences, there is evidence that illicit drug trafficking and attempts at other cross-border crime is in the hands of organized criminal groups;

ACKNOWLEDGING that in ... [name of country] ... the Post, police and Customs all have valuable expertise and resources for combating this problem;

DECLARING that controlled and coordinated measures are necessary to utilize to best advantage the resources of the three agencies to:

- disrupt the destabilizing efforts of organized criminal activity;
- minimize the impact of drugs on ... [name of country as an adjective] society;
- bring to justice all persons who finance, plan, organize and participate in the importation, manufacture, cultivation, distribution or supply of illicit drugs;

AFFIRMING that full cooperation at all agency levels is vital to develop and execute effective multidisciplinary strategies and tactics to counter cross-border crime and drug use and abuse in society;

AGREE that border enforcement policy in drug and crime control in [name of country] shall be based on the following principles:

- 1 This agreement is based on mutual cooperation and should always be interpreted in the spirit intended.
- 2 Operational areas are defined as:
 - a postal jurisdiction and operating areas defined;
 - b customs jurisdiction and operating areas defined;
 - c police jurisdiction and operating areas defined
- 3 The ... [name of agency if applicable] ... is recognized as having the lead responsibility in the investigation and prosecution of offences involving illicit drugs. This agency will normally assume the role of Operational Commander;
- 4 Interceptions of illicit drugs and contraband in the mail by the Post and Customs shall be promptly reported to ... [the lead investigating authority];
- 5 Controlled deliveries from outside ... [name of country] ... shall be facilitated by the coordinated actions of all the agencies to ensure an effective investigation response;
- 6 Where drugs and/or drug-related exhibits are seized, the custody and control of such items will be determined by the Operational Commander in each case;
- 7 Arrests and prosecution on drug charges will be the responsibility of ... [name of agency];
- 8 The other agencies involved in the operation will provide full support as required in the preparation of the case for court;
- 9 Staff of the ... [name of country as an adjective] ... Post, police and Customs shall ensure that drug and cross-border crime information is exchanged and made freely available to all agencies;
- 10 To enhance operational cooperation and effectiveness, each agency should task or dedicate specific personnel to liaise with major operational units of the other.
- 11 [name of country as an adjective] Post, police and customs should make available general and specialist resources to support drug operations and investigations. The allocation and use of those resources will be subject to consultation and negotiation as circumstances determine.

Signed

Postmaster General

Commissioner of Police

Director General of Customs

Appendix B – Parcel profile characteristics

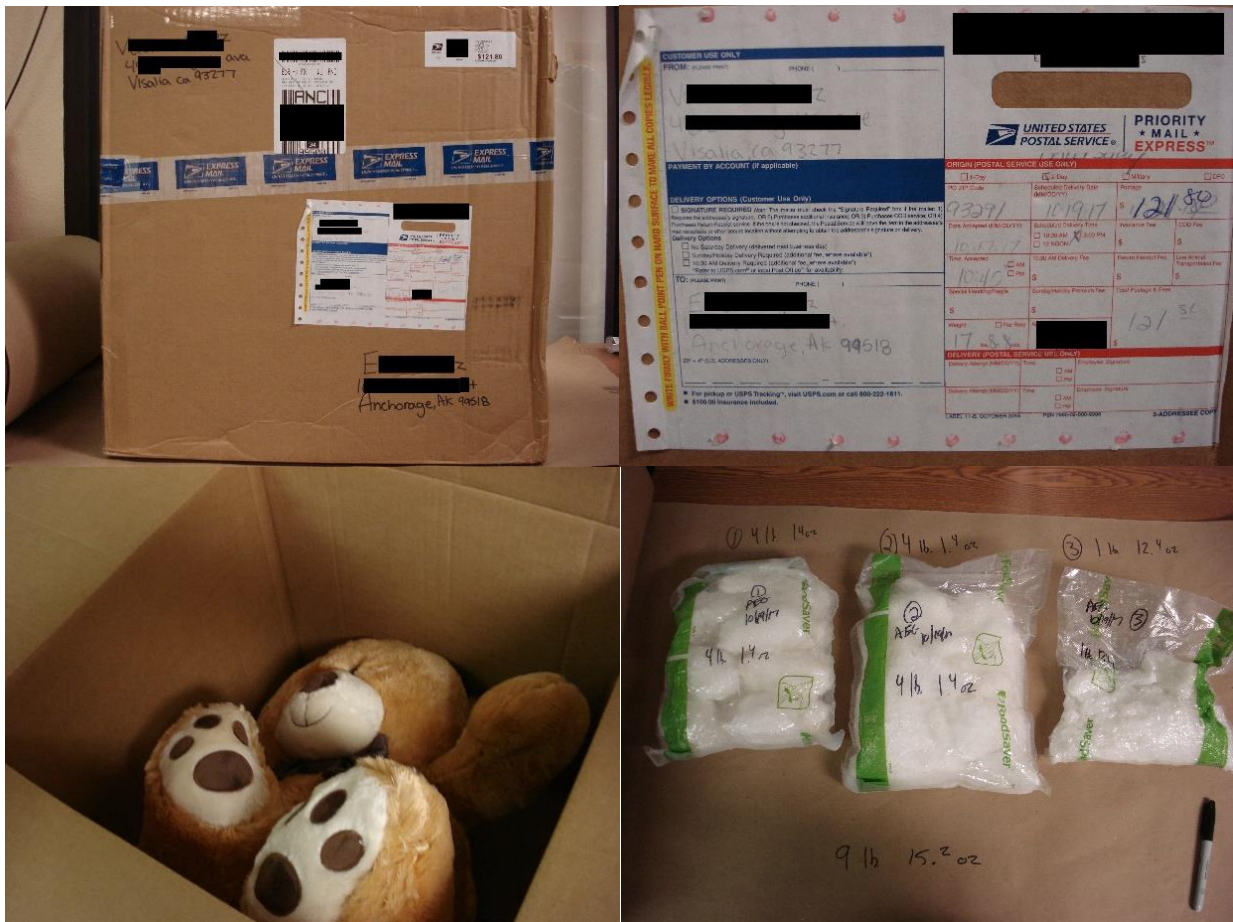
- Mailed to or from a known source city
- Bears a handwritten label for what would be expected to have a computer-generated label
- Bears a computer-generated label on what is supposed to be personal mail
- Cash paid for express delivery
- If priority mail, delivery confirmation requested
- Glued seams/heavily taped
- Fictitious/incomplete address
- Misspelling/punctuations/abbreviations/acronyms
- Unknown sender or recipient
- Use of unusual names/common names
- Different return/office of mailing ZIP codes
- Multiple labels bearing similar handwriting
- Personal stickers on boxes
- Unusual/masking odours
- Fictitious telephone number listed on express mail
- The “signature required” box was not checked on the priority mail express label
- Similar parcels mailed from different locations
- Box in a box (parcel containing other boxes)
- Heavy centre mass
- Commercial mail receiving agency (CMRA) address (private mailbox (PMB), suite)
- Feels like parcels contain magazines
- Electronic equipment boxes cost less than postage
- Parcel seems solid with no movement inside
- Signs of a packing material inside, such as expanding foam
- Return address is sloppy or unreadable
- Signature on waiver is a different name from the individual mailing it
- Different coloured ink/penmanship used on different portions of the label

Appendix C – Seizure examples

Example parcel 1 – no return/sender address or information



Example parcel 2 – excessive postage, overnight, person-to-person, cash



Appendix D – Drug descriptions, effect and street names

Amphetamines

What are amphetamines?

Amphetamines are stimulants that speed up the body's system. Some are legally prescribed and used to treat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Amphetamine sulphate is a synthetic drug. It can be purchased, in some countries, as a stimulant – dexedrine, durophet, etc. Generally found as a white, grey, pink or yellow powder.

Invented in Germany in the 1930s and prescribed to combat depression or as a slimming aid. Used during the Second World War to keep soldiers awake and suppress appetite.

Street names

Bennies, Black Beauties, Crank, Ice, Speed, Uppers and Clear.

How are they abused?

Amphetamines are generally taken orally or injected. However, the addition of "ice", the slang name of crystallized methamphetamine hydrochloride, has promoted smoking as another mode of administration. Just as "crack" is smokable cocaine, "ice" is smokable methamphetamine.

What is their effect on the body?

Similar to cocaine, but slower onset and longer duration. Increased body temperature, blood pressure and pulse rates, insomnia, loss of appetite, physical exhaustion. Chronic abuse produces a psychosis that resembles schizophrenia: paranoia, hallucinations, violent and erratic behaviour.

What are their overdose effects?

Agitation, increased body temperature, hallucinations, convulsions, and possible death.

Anabolic steroids

What are steroids?

Anabolic steroids are synthetically produced variants of the naturally occurring male hormone testosterone that are abused in an attempt to promote muscle growth, enhance athletic or other physical performance, and improve physical appearance. Testosterone, trenbolone, oxymetholone, methandrostenolone, nandrolone, stanozolol, boldenone, and oxandrolone are some of the anabolic steroids most commonly encountered by United States law enforcement.

Street names

Arnolds, Gear, Gym Candy, Juice, Pumpers, Roids, Stackers and Weight Gainers.

How are they abused?

Steroids are ingested orally, injected intramuscularly, or applied to the skin. The doses abused are often 10 to 100 times higher than the approved therapeutic and medical treatment dosages. Users typically take two or more anabolic steroids at the same time in a cyclic manner, believing that this will improve their effectiveness and minimize the adverse effects.

What is their effect on the body?

A wide range of adverse effects is associated with the use or abuse of anabolic steroids. These effects depend on several factors, including the following: age, sex, the anabolic steroid used, amount used, and duration of use. In adolescents, anabolic steroid use can stunt the ultimate height that an individual might otherwise achieve. In adolescent girls and women, anabolic steroid use can induce permanent physical changes, such as deepening of the voice, increased facial and body hair growth, menstrual irregularities, male pattern baldness, and lengthening of the clitoris. In men, anabolic steroid use can cause shrinkage of the testicles, reduced sperm count, enlargement of the male breast tissue, sterility, and an increased risk of prostate cancer. In both men and women, anabolic steroid use can cause high cholesterol levels, which may increase the risk of coronary artery disease, strokes, and heart attacks. Anabolic steroid use can also cause acne and fluid retention. Oral preparations of anabolic steroids, in particular, can damage the liver. Users may also develop endocarditis, a bacterial infection that causes a potentially fatal inflammation of the heart lining.

What are their overdose effects?

Anabolic steroids are not associated with overdoses. The adverse effects a user would experience develop from the use of steroids over time.

Cannabis*What is marijuana?*

Mind-altering psychoactive drug. Dry, shredded, green/brown mix of flowers, stems, seeds and leaves from the cannabis sativa plant. THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol) is the main ingredient that produces the psychoactive effect.

The most widely used illicit drug. First documented in China in the first century AD. Hemp plant of the genus cannabis. Comes in its original form as a bushy plant. Can be found growing wild in most countries, particularly in Asia, North Africa, America, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Morocco and Mexico. It is available in three forms – resin, herbal, and oil.

Street names

Aunt Mary, BC Bud, Blunt, Boom, Chronic, Dope, Gangster, Ganja, Grass, Hash, Herb, Hydro, Indo, Joint, Kif, Mary Jane, Mota, Pot, Reefer, Sinsemilla, Skunk, Smoke, Weed and Yerba.

How is it abused?

Smoked as a cigarette or in a pipe or bong. Smoked in blunts (cigar emptied of tobacco and filled with marijuana, and sometimes mixed with additional drugs). Mixed with food (edibles) or brewed as tea.

What is its effect on the body?

Relaxation, disinhibition, increased appetite, sedation, increased sociability, effects memory and learning, difficulty in thinking and problem-solving, hallucinations, impaired judgment, reduced coordination, distorted perception, decreased blood pressure, increased heart rate, dizziness, nausea, tachycardia, confusion, anxiety, paranoia, drowsiness, respiratory ailments.

What are its overdose effects?

No deaths from overdose of marijuana have been reported, although there have been an increasing number of emergency room visits involving marijuana edibles.

Cocaine*What is cocaine?*

White, crystalline powder derived from coca leaves. Cocaine base looks like small, irregularly shaped white rocks. Cocaine is an intense, euphoria-producing stimulant drug with strong addictive potential.

Used in small quantities in the soft drink Coca-Cola until 1907.

Street names

Blow, Coca, Coke, Crack, Crank, Flake, Rock, Snow, Soda Cot and White Girl.

How is it abused?

Snorted or dissolved in water and injected. Cocaine users usually binge on the drug until they are exhausted or run out of cocaine. Crack cocaine is smoked.

What is its effect on the body?

Restlessness, irritability, anxiety, paranoia, dilated pupils, insomnia, loss of appetite. Irregular heartbeat, ischemic heart conditions, sudden cardiac arrest, convulsions, strokes and death. Tolerance builds quickly, easy to overdose. Long-term use of inhaled cocaine has led to a unique respiratory syndrome, and chronic snorting of cocaine has led to the erosion of the upper nasal cavity. The crash that follows a high is mental and physical exhaustion, sleep, and depression lasting several days. Following the crash, users crave cocaine again.

Crack

What is crack?

Off-white to yellow in colour and looks like marble chips. Crack is produced from a manufacturing process whereby cocaine is dissolved in water and heated with a chemical reagent to “free” the cocaine alkaloid “base” from the powder. This forms small crystals or rocks, which “crack” when smoked in pipes. Crack is classed as a stimulant.

Street names

Crack, Rock and Freebase.

How is it abused?

Can be smoked in specially adapted pipes or by using flattened Coke cans. Holes are punched in the can and crack rock is placed over the holes. Once heated, the user inhales the fumes.

What is its effect on the body?

Crack can be dangerous to health and have direct action on the heart, which can be fatal.

Physical symptoms are similar to those for cocaine, but it is more addictive when smoked. Other symptoms include aggressive behaviour and toxic psychosis.

The effects of crack are intense and immediate, but wear off within 15 minutes.

Ecstasy (MDMA)

What is ecstasy (MDMA)?

Ecstasy (MDMA) acts as both a stimulant and hallucinogen, producing an energizing effect, distortions in time and perception, and enhanced enjoyment of tactile experiences.

Ecstasy is a hallucinogenic amphetamine belonging to the MDA family, of which there are over 1,000 compounds. Its full name is methylenedioxymethamphetamine. It was first synthesized by two German chemists in 1910. Its effects were discovered in the 1950s by the American researcher, Gordon Alles.

Ecstasy is produced illegally in laboratories in Europe. In tablet form it is usually white in colour with a logo stamped on the surface. Homemade tablets or capsules are very often brown speckled.

Known as a party drug, ecstasy comes in pill or powder form; the pill has a variety of logos and colours.

Street names

Adam, Beans, Biscuit, Clarity, Disco Biscuit, E, Eve, Go, Hug Drug, Lover's Speed, MDMA, Peace, STP, X and XTC.

How is ecstasy abused?

Swallowing gel capsules (molly), pills, tablets. Powder, crystal, liquid. Crushed or snorted. Occasionally smoked.

What is its effect on the body?

Increased motor activity, alertness, heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension, tremors, teeth clenching, nausea, sweating, euphoria, empathy, feelings of closeness, sexuality, reduced inhibition, chills, blurred vision, confusion, anxiety, depression, paranoia, severe dehydration, sleep problems, and drug craving.

What are its overdose effects?

In high doses, MDMA can interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature. On occasions, this can lead to a sharp increase in body temperature (hyperthermia), resulting in liver, kidney, or cardiovascular system failure, swelling of the brain, and even death. Furthermore, repeated use of MDMA over a short period of time may lead to potentially harmful concentrations of MDMA within the body owing to the complex metabolism of MDMA.

Fentanyl

What is fentanyl?

Fentanyl is a potent synthetic opioid drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use as an analgesic (pain relief) and anaesthetic. It is approximately 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin as an analgesic.

While fentanyl is a typical synthetic opioid that is broadly abused in various parts of the world, there are also various types of its analogues and non-fentanyl synthetic opioids being trafficked and abused. Since some of them are even more potent than fentanyl, postal security officers need to be prepared to prevent unintended/inattentive exposure to products containing these substances.

Street names

Apace, China Girl, China Town, Dance Fever, Friend, Goodfellas, Great Bear, He-Man, Jackpot, King Ivory, Murder 8, Poison, Tango & Cash.

How is it abused?

Snorted/sniffed, smoked, taken orally by pill or tablet, spiked onto blotter paper, or taken via patches. It is sold alone or in combination with heroin and other substances, and has been identified in fake pills mimicking pharmaceutical drugs such as oxycodone.

What is the effect on the body?

Similar to other opioid analgesics, fentanyl produces effects such as relaxation, euphoria, pain relief, sedation, confusion, drowsiness, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, urinary retention, pupillary constriction, and respiratory depression.

What are the overdose effects?

Overdose may result in stupor, changes in pupillary size, cold and clammy skin, cyanosis, coma, and respiratory failure leading to death. The presence of a triad of symptoms, such as coma, pinpoint pupils and respiratory depression are strongly suggestive of opioid poisoning.

Heroin*What is heroin?*

Heroin is from the family of “opiates”, which are a group of drugs obtained from the opium poppy. Opiates date back to 6,000 BC with records indicating their medical use for pain relief. Heroin was developed as a safer alternative to morphine.

Opium is obtained by making cuts in the seed pod of the poppy and allowing the resin or “milk” to ooze out. This is then dried for 24 hours, from which morphine, and subsequently heroin, is produced.

The main producing countries are Afghanistan, Pakistan, Myanmar, Thailand and Iran (Islamic Rep.). Heroin depresses the nervous system’s activity and can cause coughing, increased heart rate and constipation. Effects include a feeling of well-being, euphoria and drowsiness. Contracted pupils and injection “track” marks are among the physical indications of use.

Heroin is highly addictive and users suffer from withdrawal symptoms similar to those of flu. Signs of use include paper wraps, syringes/needles and burnt spoons.

An opiate (narcotic) drug processed from morphine and extracted from certain poppy plants. Heroin comes in a white or brownish powder, or a black sticky substance known as “black tar heroin.” Often “cut” with other drugs or substances, such as sugar or powdered milk. Users are unaware of how much heroin is actually being used, creating the likelihood of an overdose.

Street names

Big H, Black Tar, Chiva, Hell Dust, Horse, Negra, Smack, Thunder, Dark.

How is it abused?

Heroin can be injected, smoked, or sniffed/snorted. High purity heroin is usually snorted or smoked.

What is its effect on the body?

Highly addictive. Initial surge of euphoria or “rush”, followed by a twilight state of sleep and wakefulness. Physical symptoms of use include drowsiness, respiratory depression, constricted pupils, nausea, a warm flushing of the skin, dry mouth, and heavy extremities.

What are its overdose effects?

Because heroin users do not know the actual strength of the drug or its true contents, they are at a high risk of overdose or death.

The effects of a heroin overdose are slow and shallow breathing, blue lips and fingernails, clammy skin, convulsions, coma, and possible death.

Ketamine*What is ketamine?*

Ketamine is a dissociative anaesthetic that has some hallucinogenic effects. Ketamine distorts the perception of sight and sound and makes the user feel disconnected and not in control. It is referred to as a “dissociative anaesthetic hallucinogen” because it makes patients feel detached from their pain and environment.

Ketamine can induce a state of sedation (feeling calm and relaxed), immobility, relief from pain and amnesia (no memory of events while under the influence of the drug), and is abused for the dissociative sensations and hallucinogenic effects. Ketamine has also been used to facilitate sexual assault.

Ketamine is an approved medical product as an injectable, short-acting anaesthetic for use in humans and animals and as esketamine (Spravato®, the active form of the drug) as a nasal spray for treatment-resistant depression.

Street names

Cat Tranquilizer, Cat Valium, Jet K, Kit Kat, Purple, Special K, Special LA Coke, Super Acid, Super K, Vitamin K

How is it abused?

Injected, liquid mixed with liquids, powder that is snorted or mixed in drinks, or smoked.

What are its effects on the body?

Ketamine produces hallucinations. It distorts perceptions of sight and sound and makes the user feel disconnected and not in control. Ketamine may cause unwanted side effects such as agitation, depression, cognitive difficulties, unconsciousness and amnesia. Involuntary rapid eye movement, dilated pupils, salivation, tear secretions, and stiffening of the muscles, possible nausea. Hallucinogen-persisting perception disorder (HPPD) has been reported several weeks after ketamine use and may include the experiencing of prolonged visual disturbances.

What are its overdose effects?

An overdose can cause unconsciousness and dangerously slow breathing.

LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide)

What is LSD?

Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) is a potent hallucinogen that has a high potential for abuse and currently has no accepted medical use in treatment in the US.

Produced from the fungus ergot in 1938, LSD was used for therapeutic purposes during the 1950s and 1960s. It is an illegally manufactured hallucinogenic drug, which usually appears in the form of a small square of patterned blotting paper, but it can also be in tablet or capsule form.

Produced in illicit laboratories.

Street names

Acid, Blotter Acid, Dots, Mellow Yellow, Window Pane

How is it abused?

LSD is available in saturated absorbent paper (e.g. blotter paper, divided into small, decorated squares, with each square representing one dose), tablets or "micro dots", saturated sugar cubes, or in a liquid form. LSD is abused orally.

What are its effects on the body?

Dilated pupils, high body temperature, increased heart rate and blood pressure, sweating, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, dry mouth, and tremors. While under the influence, the user may suffer impaired depth and time perception accompanied by distorted perception of the shape and size of objects, movements, colours, sound, touch, and the user's own body image. The ability to make sound judgments and see common dangers is impaired, making the user susceptible to personal injury. It is possible for users to suffer acute anxiety and

depression after an LSD “trip”. HPPD, which may include fragmentary recurrences of certain aspects of the drug experience or “flashbacks”, has been reported days, and even months, after taking the last dose.

What are its overdose effects?

Longer, more intense “trip” episodes may occur with larger doses. Serious psychological harm can occur after administration, including fear, depression, anxiety and paranoia, and can be long-lasting. Death after LSD use is rare.

Methamphetamine

What is methamphetamine?

Stimulant that speeds up the body’s system that comes as a pill or powder. Available in prescription as Desoxyn® to treat obesity and ADHD. Crystal methamphetamine (meth) resembles glass fragments and is an illegally altered version of the prescription drug, which is cooked with over-the-counter drugs in meth labs.

Street names

Batu, Bikers Coffee, Black Beauties, Chalk, Chicken Feed, Crank, Crystal, Glass, Go-Fast, Hiropon, Ice, Meth, Methlies Quick, Poor Man’s Cocaine, Shabu, Shards, Speed, Stove Top, Tina, Trash, Tweak, Uppers, Ventana, Vidrio, Yaba, Yellow Barn

How is it abused?

Powder, pill, smoked, snorted, or injected. To intensify the effects, users may take higher doses of the drug, take it more frequently, or change their method of intake.

What is its effect on the body?

Highly addictive, agitation, increased heart rate and blood pressure, increased respiration and body temperature, anxiety and paranoia. High doses can cause convulsions, cardiovascular collapse, a stroke, or death.

What are its overdose effects?

High doses may result in death from stroke, heart attack, or multiple organ problems caused by overheating.

NPS (new psychoactive substances)

A new psychoactive substance (NPS) is defined as “a new narcotic or psychotropic drug, in pure form or in preparation, that is not controlled by the United Nations drug conventions, but which may pose a public health threat comparable to that posed by substances listed in these conventions”. The EMCDDA plays an active role in the monitoring, assessment and control of new and potentially threatening narcotic and psychotropic drugs (natural and synthetic alike) as they appear on the European drug scene. National control status of NPS is frequently updated and varies from country to country. Competent national authorities of respective countries are encouraged to keep postal security officers in their countries informed of the most updated status of control over NPS. Postal security officers are also encouraged to collect updated information on national control over NPS in foreign jurisdictions, which are frequently identified as origin, transit or destination.