May 2002

Tennessee

Drug Threat Assessment

National Drug Intelligence Center
U.S. Department of Justice

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National Drug Intelligence Center
319 Washington Street, 5th Floor
Johnstown, PA 15901-1622
(814) 532-4601

Preface

This report is a strategic assessment that addresses the status and outlook of the drug threat to Tennessee. Analytical judgment determined the threat posed by each drug type or category, taking into account the most current quantitative and qualitative information on availability, demand, production or cultivation, transportation, and distribution, as well as the effects of a particular drug on abusers and society as a whole. While NDIC sought to incorporate the latest available information, a time lag often exists between collection and publication of data, particularly demand-related data sets. NDIC anticipates that this drug threat assessment will be useful to policymakers, law enforcement personnel, and treatment providers at the federal, state, and local levels because it draws upon a broad range of information sources to describe and analyze the drug threat to Tennessee.

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Tennessee Drug Threat Assessment

Executive Summary

The distribution and abuse of drugs threaten the security of Tennessee residents. Drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups transport large quantities of drugs through Tennessee en route to other states. Cocaine is the primary drug threat to Tennessee because crack cocaine is readily available, commonly abused, and more frequently associated with violent crime than any other drug. Marijuana is the most prevalent drug in Tennessee, and rates of abuse are highest among teenagers and young adults. However, marijuana distribution and abuse are not generally associated with violent crime, rendering marijuana a less serious drug threat. Methamphetamine increasingly is available and abused, although associated violence remains significantly lower than the violence associated with cocaine. Other dangerous drugs, particularly MDMA and diverted pharmaceuticals, are available and abused to a much lesser extent. Heroin is the least available and abused illicit drug in Tennessee.

Cocaine, particularly crack, is the greatest drug threat to Tennessee. Crack cocaine is readily available and commonly abused. The distribution and abuse of crack are associated with more violent crime than any other drug. Tennessee has more cocaine-related treatment admissions and federal sentences than any other drug. Kilogram quantities of powdered cocaine generally are available only in the four major metropolitan areas of Tennessee—Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville. Mexican criminal groups and African American street gangs both based in Tennessee are the primary transporters and wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine. African American street gangs and local independent dealers convert most of the powdered cocaine in Tennessee to crack cocaine locally and are the primary retail distributors. Caucasian criminal groups and outlaw motorcycle gangs, among others, distribute retail quantities of powdered cocaine in Tennessee.

Marijuana, produced primarily in Mexico, is the second greatest drug threat to Tennessee. Marijuana is the most readily available and commonly abused drug in the state; however, its distribution and abuse are generally not associated with violent crime. Tennessee has more marijuana-related treatment admissions and federal sentences than any other drug except cocaine. Cannabis is grown in the Appalachia-Cumberland Plateau region in eastern and central Tennessee, one of the most productive cannabis growing regions in the country. Mexican criminal groups based in Tennessee transport marijuana produced in Mexico into and through Tennessee from distribution centers primarily in Mexico, Arizona, California, and Texas. African American and Hispanic street gangs

also transport Mexico-produced marijuana, primarily from California, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, New York, and Texas. Mexican criminal groups and, to a lesser extent, street gangs such as Gangster Disciples, Mara Salvatrucha, and Vice Lords are the primary wholesale distributors of Mexico-produced marijuana in Tennessee. Street gangs, primarily African American, and local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of Mexico-produced marijuana and the primary wholesale and retail distributors of locally produced marijuana. Caucasian criminal groups and outlaw motorcycle gangs, among others, also distribute retail quantities of marijuana in Tennessee.

Methamphetamine is the third greatest drug threat to Tennessee. Methamphetamine increasingly is available; however, the number of methamphetamine-related treatment admissions and federal sentences is significantly lower than those associated with cocaine and marijuana. Methamphetamine production, distribution, and abuse frequently are associated with violent crime in Tennessee, but considerably less often than are cocaine distribution and abuse. Mexican drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups based primarily in Mexico, Arizona, California, and Texas produce most of the methamphetamine sold in Tennessee, primarily using the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method. Mexican criminal groups based in Tennessee usually transport the drug into the state; however, Tennessee has a large number of independent methamphetamine producers as well. Methamphetamine produced in central and eastern Tennessee using the iodine/red phosphorus method and in western Tennessee using the Birch reduction method also is available. Mexican criminal groups based in Tennessee are the primary wholesale distributors of methamphetamine produced in Mexico and southwestern states by Mexican drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups. These Tennessee-based criminal groups distribute methamphetamine to a variety of criminal groups, street gangs, and outlaw motorcycle gangs that, in turn, distribute the drug at the retail level. Local independent Caucasian producers consume most of what they themselves produce, although they distribute a small amount of methamphetamine to established customers—usually family and friends—to fund further methamphetamine production.

Other dangerous drugs are a minimal but increasing threat to Tennessee. Other dangerous drugs include stimulants such as MDMA and khat and diverted pharmaceuticals such as Dilaudid and, more recently, OxyContin. Within the other dangerous drugs category, MDMA is the drug most commonly abused in Tennessee. Local independent Caucasian dealers usually distribute MDMA to teenagers and young adults, primarily at raves, dance clubs, bars, and on college campuses. Tennessee reportedly does not have a khat abuser population; however, the amount of khat seized at the Memphis International Airport and destined for other states is increasing. Dilaudid and OxyContin are two of the most frequently diverted and abused pharmaceuticals.

Heroin is the least significant illicit drug threat to Tennessee. The availability, abuse, and violence associated with heroin are limited and concentrated primarily in Memphis and, to a lesser extent, in Chattanooga and Knoxville. Mexican brown powdered heroin is available in small quantities in Memphis, Chattanooga, and Knoxville. Mexican black tar heroin is available less frequently. South American heroin rarely is available. Most of the heroin seized in the state is destined for other markets. Wholesale distribution of heroin is rare. Mexican criminal groups, African American street gangs, and local independent African American dealers all based in Tennessee are the primary transporters and retail distributors of heroin.

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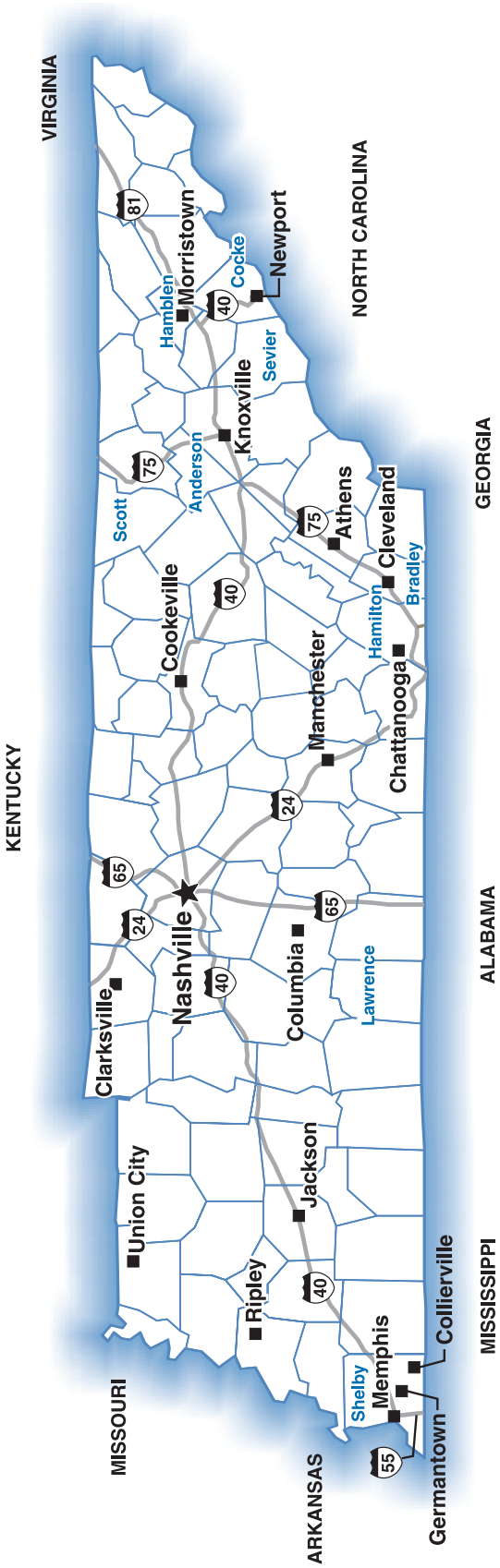

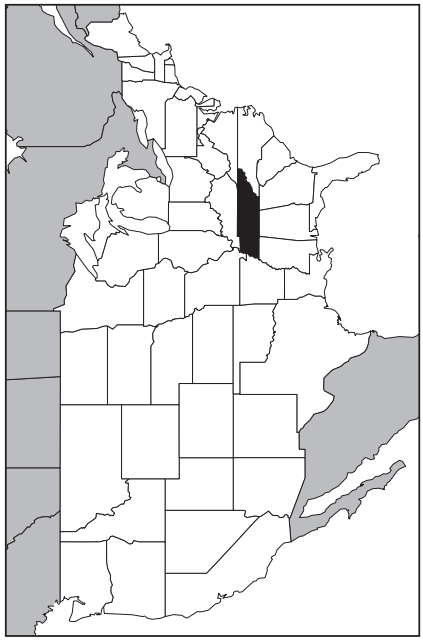

Tennessee.

Note: This map displays features mentioned in the report.

Tennessee
Drug Threat Assessment

Overview

With approximately 5.7 million residents Tennessee is the sixteenth most populous state. Memphis, located in the southeastern portion of the state near the Mississippi River, is the most populous city. Nashville, the state capital, is located in the north-central area of the state. The two other principal cities are situated near Nashville: Chattanooga is 128 miles to the southeast, and Knoxville is 178 miles to the east. The major cities in Tennessee serve as drug distribution centers for smaller communities in the state. Tennessee can be divided into three regions: western, central, and eastern, which correspond with the Western, Middle, and Eastern U.S. Attorney Districts.

Tennessee is a transit area for drugs—particularly cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamine—destined for other states. The major interstates in Tennessee—24, 40, 55, 65, 75, and 81—extend through rural areas and mountainous terrain and provide for the transportation of drugs. Interstate 24 extends from Chattanooga to I-57 in southern Illinois. Interstate 40 extends from North Carolina through Knoxville, Nashville, and Memphis to California. Interstate 55 extends from Louisiana through Memphis to Illinois. Interstate 65 extends from Alabama through Nashville to Indiana. Interstate 75 extends from Florida through Chattanooga and Knoxville to Michigan. Interstate 81 extends from I-40 east of Knoxville to New York.

Fast Facts

Tennessee	
Population (2000)	5,689,283
U.S. population ranking	16th
Median household income (2000)	$32,047
Unemployment rate (2001)	4%
Land area	41,217 square miles
Capital	Nashville
Other principal cities	Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis
Number of counties	95
Principal industries	Agriculture, construction, entertainment/tourism, forestry, mining

Drugs are transported into and through Tennessee using a variety of methods. Typically, cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine and, to a

lesser extent, heroin and other dangerous drugs are transported overland in tractor-trailers and private vehicles. These drugs are also transported into and through the state using package delivery services. Tennessee has international airports in Memphis and Nashville and has 83 county or municipal airports. The Memphis International Airport is headquarters to one of the world's largest international package delivery services, and since 1992 has been the number one cargo handling airport in the world based on the number of packages handled. The U. S. Customs Service (USCS) reported significant increases in 2000 in the amount of drugs, particularly cocaine and methamphetamine, seized from packages at the Memphis International Airport. Most of the packages were destined for other states.

To a lesser extent, criminal elements use buses to transport drugs into and through Tennessee. Law enforcement officials report that cocaine and heroin occasionally are transported and seized on buses. Seizure data and law enforcement reporting indicate that railroads rarely are used for drug transportation despite the availability of daily passenger rail service and the high volume of freight transported by rail—nearly 250 million tons were received in Tennessee in 1999.

Mexican criminal groups and street gangs, primarily African American, both based in Tennessee, are the primary transporters and wholesale distributors of drugs available in Tennessee, particularly cocaine and marijuana. Mexican criminal groups commonly transport drugs in tractor-trailers, private vehicles, and through package delivery services. Street gangs usually transport drugs in private vehicles. Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples, Mara Salvatrucha, and Vice Lords are the dominant street gangs distributing wholesale and retail quantities of drugs in the state. Local law enforcement officials in Memphis estimate that the city has over 10,000 street gang members, and most distribute drugs. (See text box on page 3.)

Drug distribution and abuse frequently are associated with other crimes in Tennessee. Drug distributors commonly commit assaults and drive-by shootings, and drug abusers often commit burglaries and thefts. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation reports that the number of drug-related investigations increased 54 percent from 622 in 1999 to 957 in 2000.

The percentage of drug-related federal sentences in Tennessee has increased, particularly for cocaine and marijuana, and is significantly higher than the percentage of drug-related federal sentences nationwide. The number of drug-related federal sentences in Tennessee increased 48 percent from 335 in fiscal year (FY) 1997 to 495 in FY2000, according to the U.S. Sentencing Commission. Tennessee had more cocaine-related federal sentences than sentences related to any other drug in 2000. The number of cocaine-related sentences increased 32 percent from 200 in FY1997 to 263 in FY2000. The number of marijuana-related sentences increased 66 percent from 73 in FY1997 to 121 in FY2000. In FY2000 about 46 percent of all federal sentences in Tennessee were drug-related compared with 39.8 percent nationwide.

Table 1. Drug-Related Federal Sentences Tennessee, FY1997–FY2000

	1997	1998	1999	2000
Cocaine/Crack	**200**	**241**	**266**	**263**
Marijuana	**73**	**75**	**118**	**121**
Methamphetamine	**35**	**79**	**63**	**91**
Heroin	**9**	**30**	**8**	**4**
Other	**18**	**11**	**15**	**16**
Total Drug Sentences	**335**	**436**	**470**	**495**

Source: U.S. Sentencing Commission.

Survey and treatment data indicate that drug abuse rates in Tennessee are below national rates. According to the 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 5.2 percent of those surveyed in Tennessee reported having abused an illicit drug at least once in the 30 days preceding the survey compared with 6.3 percent nationally. According to the 1999 Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) data, Tennessee had 73 smoked

Street Gangs in Tennessee

Bloods and Crips

Bloods and Crips are violent street gangs that formed in Los Angeles in the 1960s. The gangs are primarily African American in composition. Both gangs comprise loosely organized factions or sets that are typically turf- or neighborhood-oriented. Generally, gang sets are established by an entrepreneurial individual who runs the set and recruits members to distribute drugs, primarily cocaine. Bloods and Crips distribute drugs in California and in other states, including Tennessee. Although Bloods and Crips sets are located throughout the United States, not all gangs that claim to be Bloods or Crips are affiliated with the Los Angeles-based Bloods or Crips. Bloods and Crips embrace the principles of individualism, loyalty to their own members, and violence against other gangs. Bloods and Crips harbor deep hatred toward each other and each considers the other a rival. The two gangs will, however, cooperate in criminal ventures for profit.

Gangster Disciples

Gangster Disciples is the largest Chicago-based street gang and its members primarily are African American. This gang has been in existence since the early 1960s and has an organizational hierarchy similar to a corporation. The gang distributes cocaine, heroin, and marijuana primarily throughout Chicago, usually in low-income areas on the south and west sides of the city, and in over 40 states including Tennessee.

Mara Salvatrucha

Mara Salvatrucha is a violent street gang with a strong presence in California, Maryland, New York, Texas, and Virginia and an increasing presence in Tennessee, primarily Nashville. Original members were refugees from the civil war in El Salvador in the 1980s; many were former soldiers and guerrillas well-trained in weapons and warfare tactics. Current members include second generation Salvadorans as well as other Hispanics. Mara Salvatrucha members have distributed drugs, primarily marijuana, and committed aggravated assaults, assaults on law enforcement officials, homicides, home invasions, auto thefts, and black market weapons violations. Gang members sometimes trade marijuana for weapons, particularly handguns. Some of the weapons are retained for personal use and some are smuggled to El Salvador.

Vice Lords

Vice Lords is the oldest street gang in Chicago, and its members are predominantly African American. Vice Lords distributes cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, and some heroin in Chicago, Tennessee, and other states. Vice Lords gangs in Tennessee are located predominantly in Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville. Vice Lords is split among major factions: Conservative Vice Lords, Traveling Vice Lords, and Four Corner Hustlers.

cocaine-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities per 100,000 population compared with 76 per 100,000 nationally. There were 10 admissions per 100,000 for cocaine administered via another route, 32 for marijuana, 3 for methamphetamine, and none for heroin. These were all lower than the national rates. (See Table 2 on page 4.)

High school students in Tennessee report abusing drugs at rates comparable to high school students nationwide. According to the 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 47.0 percent of high school students surveyed in Tennessee reported having abused marijuana at least once in their lifetime compared with 47.2 percent of high school students nationwide. Additionally, 9.5 percent of high school students surveyed in Tennessee and nationwide reported having abused cocaine at least once in their lifetime; 10.2 percent of high school students surveyed in Tennessee reported

having abused methamphetamine, higher than the 9.1 percent reported by high school students nationwide.

The financial impact on Tennessee's government from substance abuse-related costs is significant. In 1998 Tennessee spent over $918 million on substance abuse-related programs including child-family assistance, education, justice, health, mental health-developmental disabilities, and public safety. This figure amounted to approximately 10 percent of the total expenditures for the state. When factoring in the cost of lost productivity and nongovernmental expenses by private social services, estimates for total substance abuse-related costs were even higher.

Table 2. Drug-Related Treatment Admissions to Publicly Funded Facilities Per 100,000 Tennessee and Nationwide, 1999

	Tennessee	National
Cocaine (smoked)	73	76
Cocaine (other route)	10	28
Marijuana	32	103
Methamphetamine	3	32
Heroin	0	105

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set.

Cocaine

Cocaine, particularly crack, is the greatest drug threat to Tennessee. Crack cocaine is readily available and commonly abused. The distribution and abuse of crack are associated with more violent crime than any other drug. Tennessee has more cocaine-related treatment admissions and federal sentences than any other drug. Kilogram quantities of powdered cocaine generally are available only in the four major metropolitan areas of Tennessee—Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville. Mexican criminal groups and African American street gangs both based in Tennessee are the primary transporters and wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine. African American street gangs and local independent dealers convert most of the powdered cocaine in Tennessee to crack cocaine locally and are the primary retail distributors. Caucasian criminal groups and outlaw motorcycle gangs, among others, distribute retail quantities of powdered cocaine in Tennessee.

Abuse

Treatment data indicate that cocaine is commonly abused in the state. The number of cocaine-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities in Tennessee increased from 1995 to 1999. According to TEDS data, treatment admissions for cocaine as the primary drug of abuse increased from 2,773 in 1995 to 3,809 in 1999 and exceeded admissions for any other drug during those years. (See Table 3 on page 5.) In 1999 the number of treatment admissions per 100,000 in Tennessee for smoked cocaine (73) nearly equaled the national number per 100,000 (76). In 1999 the number of treatment admissions per 100,000 for cocaine abuse by another route of administration (10) was less than the national number per 100,000 (28). (See Table 2 on page 4.)

State survey data also indicate that powdered cocaine and crack cocaine are commonly abused in Tennessee. According to the 1998 Tennessee Department of Health, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use Survey, 7 percent of Tennessee residents surveyed reported having abused powdered cocaine and/or crack at least once in their lifetime, and 0.2 percent reported they were current abusers. Results from another survey by

Table 3. Drug-Related Treatment Admissions to Publicly Funded Facilities, Tennessee 1995–1999

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Cocaine	**2,773**	**2,911**	**3,437**	**4,098**	**3,809**
Marijuana	**974**	**961**	**1,674**	**1,729**	**1,482**
Methamphetamine	**8**	**3**	**72**	**113**	**134**
Heroin	**35**	**55**	**15**	**0**	**0**

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set.

the same department that year indicated that 9 percent of emergency admissions surveyed reported they had abused cocaine at least once in their lifetime and 0.8 percent reported current abuse.

The percentage of Tennessee residents, particularly young adults, reporting having abused cocaine at least once in the past year is slightly higher than the national percentage. According to the 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 2.0 percent of Tennessee residents surveyed reported they had abused cocaine in the past year compared with 1.7 percent nationally. Individuals aged 18 to 25 reported the highest rate (4.4%) of past year cocaine abuse in Tennessee that year.

The rates of cocaine abuse reported by high school students in Tennessee are comparable to the rates reported nationwide. According to the 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 3.8 percent of high school students surveyed in Tennessee reported having abused cocaine at least once in the past month compared with 4.0 percent nationwide. Rates of abuse among high school males and females in Tennessee were 5.0 percent and 2.7 percent respectively, compared with national rates of 5.2 percent and 2.9 percent.

Availability

Cocaine is readily available in Tennessee. Powdered cocaine is available at the wholesale and retail levels; however, most of the powdered cocaine is converted locally into crack. Kilogram quantities of powdered cocaine generally are available only in the four major metropolitan areas of Tennessee—Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville. Each of these areas is a distribution center for the rest of the state. Crack is available throughout Tennessee.

Prices for powdered and crack cocaine indicate that both drugs are available in Tennessee. Powdered cocaine sold for $14,000 to $30,000 per kilogram and $90 per gram in 2000, according to survey responses to the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) National Drug Threat Survey 2000. The Jackson, Clarksville, and Knoxville Police Departments reported that crack generally sold for $20 per rock and weighed between 0.05 and 0.25 of a gram.

Table 4. Powdered Cocaine Prices Per Kilogram, Tennessee, 2000

Location	Price
Cleveland	**$14,000**
Humboldt	**$18,000**
Lawrence County	**$18,000**
Germantown	**$19,000**
Nashville	**$21,500**
Shelby County	**$23,000**
Shelbyville	**$30,000**

Source: NDIC, National Drug Threat Survey 2000.

Federal-wide Drug Seizure System

The Federal-wide Drug Seizure System (FDSS) reports seizures made within the jurisdiction of the United States by DEA, FBI, U.S. Customs, U.S. Border Patrol, and U.S. Coast Guard. Only seizures that exceed certain threshold weights are included in these statistics. (Heroin–100 grams; Cocaine–500 grams; Marijuana–25 kilograms; Methamphetamine–250 grams)

Purity levels for powdered cocaine vary widely throughout the state. Wholesale purity levels for powdered cocaine ranged from 50 to 98 percent. Retail purity levels for powdered cocaine ranged from 10 to 85 percent and for crack cocaine from 10 to 95 percent.

Seizure data reflect the ready availability of cocaine in Tennessee. Quantities seized by federal and state law enforcement agencies varied over the past 2 years. FDSS data indicate that federal law enforcement officials in Tennessee seized 558.6 kilograms of cocaine in 1999 and 319.5 kilograms in 2000. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation seized 44.8 kilograms of cocaine in 1999 and 329.2 kilograms in 2000. Law enforcement officials seized 10.7 kilograms of cocaine in 1999 and 6.1 kilograms in 2000 under Operation Jetway. They also seized 217.5 kilograms of cocaine in 1999 and 167 kilograms in 2000 under Operation Pipeline.

Operations Pipeline and Jetway

Operation Pipeline is a nationwide highway interdiction program that focuses on private vehicles and operates along the highways and interstates most commonly used to transport illegal drugs and drug proceeds.

Operation Jetway is a nationwide interdiction program that operates at airports, train stations, bus stations, package shipment facilities, post offices, and airport hotels and motels.

Both programs are supported by the El Paso Intelligence Center.

Tennessee had more cocaine-related federal sentences than any other drug each year from 1997 through 2000. According to the U.S. Sentencing Commission, the number of cocaine-related federal sentences increased 32 percent from 200 in 1997 to 263 in 2000. (See Table 1 on page 2.)

Violence

Cocaine, primarily crack, is the drug most commonly associated with violent crime in Tennessee. Distributors frequently commit assaults, drive-by shootings, and homicides to protect their turf. Most federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies in Tennessee report that violent crime associated with gang-related crack distribution is the most serious criminal threat in their jurisdictions. In October 1999 law enforcement officials arrested the former head of Gangster Disciples in Memphis for ambushing and shooting to death two high-ranking fellow gang members over a disputed cocaine deal. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Chattanooga Resident Office reports that most crack dealers carry guns. Cocaine abusers frequently commit burglaries and thefts, among other crimes, to support their habits.

Production

Coca is not cultivated nor is cocaine produced in Tennessee. The cocaine consumed in Tennessee is produced in South America, primarily Colombia. Street gang members and local independent African American dealers convert most of the powdered cocaine in Tennessee to crack cocaine locally.

Transportation

Mexican criminal groups—some associated with Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs)—and African American street gangs, both based in Tennessee, are the primary transporters of cocaine into and through the state. The Mexican criminal groups employ couriers who transport cocaine from distribution centers in Mexico, Arizona, California, and Texas using private vehicles and tractor-trailers. African American street gangs in western Tennessee transport cocaine in private vehicles primarily from Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin via I-55, and members based in central Tennessee transport cocaine in private vehicles from Chicago via I-65 and from Los Angeles via I-40. African American street gangs based in the eastern part of the state generally transport cocaine in private vehicles from Jacksonville via I-75 and New York State via I-81.

Local independent African American dealers also transport powdered cocaine into Tennessee in private vehicles from Arizona, California, and Texas, and occasionally on commercial buses from Texas. DEA agents in Chattanooga arrested a local independent dealer in April 2000 traveling in his private vehicle from Atlanta, Georgia, to Athens, Tennessee. The dealer was transporting approximately half a kilogram of powdered cocaine hidden in his clothing.

Cocaine transported into and through Tennessee in private vehicles and tractor-trailers is concealed using a variety of methods. Cocaine has been concealed inside door panels, in gas tanks, and in vacuum-sealed inner tubes inside tires. The drug often is wrapped in tape and coated with grease to mask the odor from drug-detection dogs. Cocaine transported in tractor-trailers frequently is concealed among legitimate cargo.

Cocaine also is transported into and through Tennessee concealed in packages sent through package delivery services. Some items used to conceal cocaine include automobile parts, cookie tins, document packs, stuffed animals, and toy trucks. More elaborate concealment techniques include hiding cocaine in books with hollowed centers, between the corrugated sections of packing boxes, and in cored-out sections of 4- by 4-inch wooden blocks. Liquid cocaine—cocaine hydrochloride dissolved in water—has been packaged in bottles labeled as shampoo and in souvenir snow globes, among other items, and transported through the state using package delivery services.

Operation Southwest Express

In August 1999 federal and local law enforcement officials in Tennessee arrested eight individuals and seized over 16 kilograms of cocaine, 50 pounds of marijuana, and $261,990 in cash. These individuals smuggled multikilogram quantities of cocaine and marijuana across the Southwest Border, through San Diego and El Paso, for distribution in the East and Midwest. The drugs, transshipped to associates in Chicago, were concealed in compartments built into cars and tractor-trailers. From Chicago the drugs were transported to Atlanta, Boston, Cleveland, Nashville, and New York for final distribution. They transported as much as 182 kilograms of cocaine and 300 pounds of marijuana to Nashville.

Source: FBI, August 1999.

Distribution

Mexican criminal groups and African American street gangs are the primary wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine in Tennessee. Both distribute kilogram quantities, most of which are converted to crack cocaine. Mexican criminal groups purchase powdered cocaine from Mexican DTOs in Mexico

and other criminal groups primarily in Arizona, California, and Texas. Street gangs such as Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples, and Vice Lords located primarily in Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville distribute wholesale quantities of powdered cocaine, among other drugs. Bloods and Crips generally purchase kilogram quantities of powdered cocaine from street gangs based in California, and Gangster Disciples and Vice Lords purchase kilogram quantities of powdered cocaine from street gangs based in Chicago.

African American street gangs and local independent African American dealers are the primary retail distributors of cocaine in Tennessee. Street gang members primarily distribute crack cocaine, although they also distribute small amounts of powdered cocaine. Local independent African American dealers purchase retail quantities of powdered cocaine from Mexican criminal groups and, to a lesser extent, from street gang members in Tennessee.

Caucasian criminal groups and outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMGs), among others, also purchase powdered cocaine from Mexican criminal groups and street gangs in Tennessee and distribute retail quantities of the drug. Law enforcement officials in Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Nashville report that Caucasian criminal groups distribute powdered cocaine in their areas. The Hamilton County Sheriff's Office reports that the Outlaws OMG distributes powdered cocaine in its area.

Crack cocaine is sold primarily at open-air drug markets and on street corners. Small amounts of powdered cocaine also are sold at these locations. Crack also is sold in houses in metropolitan areas and distributed in smaller municipalities throughout much of the state. The Memphis Police Department reports that street gangs commonly paint graffiti with a dollar sign to indicate that crack is sold at a particular location.

Marijuana

Marijuana, produced primarily in Mexico, is the second greatest drug threat to Tennessee. Marijuana is the most readily available and commonly abused drug in the state; however, its distribution and abuse are generally not associated with violent crime. Tennessee has more marijuana-related treatment admissions and federal sentences than any other drug except cocaine. Cannabis is grown in the Appalachia-Cumberland Plateau region in eastern and central Tennessee, one of the most productive cannabis growing regions in the country. Mexican criminal groups based in Tennessee transport marijuana produced in Mexico into and through Tennessee from distribution centers primarily in Mexico, Arizona, California, and Texas. African American and Hispanic street gangs also transport Mexico-produced marijuana, primarily from California, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, New York, and Texas. Mexican criminal groups and street gangs such as Gangster Disciples, Mara Salvatrucha, and Vice Lords are the primary wholesale distributors of Mexico-produced marijuana in Tennessee. Street gangs, primarily African American, and local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of Mexico-produced marijuana and the primary wholesale and retail distributors of locally produced marijuana. Caucasian criminal groups and OMGs, among others, also distribute retail quantities of marijuana in Tennessee.

Abuse

Treatment data indicate that marijuana is commonly abused in Tennessee. The number of marijuana-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities in Tennessee increased from 1995 to 1999 and was second only to cocaine. (See Table 3 on page 5.) According to

TEDS data, treatment admissions for marijuana as the primary drug of abuse in the state increased from 974 in 1995 to 1,482 in 1999. Although the number of treatment admissions per 100,000 for marijuana abuse increased dramatically in Tennessee, the number of admissions per 100,000 is significantly lower than the national average. Tennessee had 32 marijuana-related admissions per 100,000 in 1999 compared with 103 per 100,000 nationwide. (See Table 2 on page 4.)

Tennessee residents, particularly young adults, report abusing marijuana more often than any other illicit drug. According to the 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 3.6 percent of Tennessee residents surveyed reported past month marijuana abuse compared with 4.7 percent nationally. Individuals ages 18 to 25 reported the highest rate of past month marijuana abuse (9.7%) that year.

State survey data also indicate that marijuana is commonly abused in Tennessee. According to the 1998 Tennessee Department of Health, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use Survey, 29 percent of adults surveyed reported they had abused marijuana at least once in their lifetime, and 2.6 percent reported they were current abusers. Results from another survey by the same department that year indicated that 37 percent of emergency room patients surveyed reported they had abused marijuana at least once in their lifetime, and 8 percent reported current abuse.

The rate of marijuana abuse reported by high school students in Tennessee is comparable to the rate reported by high school students nationwide. According to the 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 26.6 percent of high school students surveyed in Tennessee reported having abused marijuana at least once in the past month compared with 26.7 percent of high school students surveyed nationwide. Rates of abuse among high school males and females in Tennessee were 31.1 percent and 22.0 percent respectively, compared with 30.8 percent and 22.6 percent nationwide.

Availability

Marijuana is the most readily available drug in Tennessee. Mexico-produced marijuana is the type most commonly available in Tennessee; however, locally produced marijuana also is available. According to FDSS data, federal law enforcement officials in Tennessee seized 2,120.4 kilograms of marijuana in 1999 and 3,015.7 kilograms in 2000. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation seized 5.2 kilograms of marijuana in 1999 and 12.3 kilograms in 2000. Law enforcement officials seized 199.8 kilograms of marijuana in 1999 and 148.1 kilograms in 2000 under Operation Jetway and 2,395.4 kilograms of marijuana in 1999 and 5,658.3 kilograms in 2000 under Operation Pipeline. Additionally, DEA eradicated 380,164 cannabis plants in 2000.

The price of marijuana in Tennessee usually is based on the type and quantity being sold. Law enforcement officials in the state reported that Mexico-produced marijuana sold for $600 to $1,200 per pound in 2000, although distributors could purchase marijuana in Texas for half that price. The DEA Memphis Resident Office reported that Mexico-produced marijuana generally sold for $275 per ounce. Locally produced marijuana generally was of a higher quality than Mexico-produced marijuana and usually sold for $2,800 to $3,200 per pound.

Tennessee had more marijuana-related federal sentences than any other drug except cocaine in 1999 and 2000. According to the U.S. Sentencing Commission, the number of marijuana-related federal sentences increased annually from 73 in 1997 to 121 in 2000. (See Table 1 on page 2.)

Violence

Violence related to marijuana distribution and abuse in Tennessee generally is minimal. However, street gangs such as Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples, Mara Salvatrucha, and Vice Lords, among others, that sell marijuana along with other drugs commit violent crimes. These gangs have a propensity for violence and have committed burglary, theft, and black market weapons violations.

Violent crimes sometimes are associated with marijuana production in Tennessee. Cannabis growers frequently carry weapons, place animal traps among plants, post guard dogs, and hang fish hooks from monofilament line around the perimeter of the fields to protect their crops. Cannabis growers also use metal spikes and "punji" stakes placed randomly throughout cannabis fields to injure or kill intruders. Law enforcement officers in Tennessee occasionally seize unmanned firearms that are rigged to fire in the direction of intruders.

Production

Cannabis is cultivated primarily outdoors in Tennessee. The growing conditions in Tennessee are ideal for outdoor cannabis cultivation. Cannabis plants are cultivated primarily in the Appalachia-Cumberland Plateau region in eastern and central Tennessee, which has ample rainfall and a temperate climate. The Appalachia Mountain region—which includes portions of Tennessee, Kentucky, and West Virginia—is considered one of the most productive cannabis growing regions in the country. Between 1993 and 2000 Tennessee ranked among the top five states in the nation based on the number of cannabis plants eradicated. The quantity of cannabis eradicated in Tennessee in 1999 had an estimated street value of more than $628 million, surpassing the value of tobacco, the largest legitimate cash crop, which was valued at $218 million.

Outdoor cannabis growers attempt to conceal their plants in a variety of ways. Cultivators sometimes use camouflage netting to cover the plants or hang red Christmas balls from the stems of cannabis plants to make them resemble tomato plants. Many cannabis cultivators plant numerous, smaller plots scattered throughout a large area to avoid law enforcement detection. Law enforcement officials report that large-scale growers sometimes produce as many as three crops annually.

Governor's Task Force for Marijuana Eradication

In 2000 the Governor's Task Force for Marijuana Eradication granted approval for task force officers (members of the National Guard, DEA, Tennessee Alcohol Beverage Commission, and the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation) to rappel from helicopters directly onto marijuana fields and immediately arrest cultivators. Prior to this approval, it took officers several hours to reach cannabis grows in remote locations, and cultivators usually had ample time to escape.

Source: TBI, July 2000.

Indoor cannabis grows are becoming more common in Tennessee. Indoor cannabis cultivators using hydroponic techniques produce marijuana with higher levels of THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), the primary psychoactive compound in marijuana. Indoor cannabis production occurs year-round and is easily concealed from law enforcement officials and thieves. In April 2000 the DEA Chattanooga Resident Office arrested an older Caucasian individual and seized an indoor cannabis grow equipped with a cooling system for temperature regulation, a remote controlled irrigation system, and specialized lighting.

Transportation

Mexican criminal groups, some associated with Mexican DTOs, transport large quantities of marijuana into and through Tennessee in tractor-trailers from distribution centers primarily in Mexico, Arizona, California, and Texas. Reports from the DEA Memphis Resident Office indicate that Mexican criminal groups usually transport between 100 and 1,000 pounds of marijuana per shipment. In January 1999 local law enforcement officials in Morristown, northeast of Knoxville, seized 160 pounds of marijuana wrapped in aluminum foil, duct tape, and cellophane. The marijuana was hidden inside a duffel bag in a tractor-trailer that departed from Mexico. In February 1999 law enforcement officials in Manchester, southeast of Nashville, seized 500 pounds of marijuana destined for distribution in Chattanooga and Atlanta. The marijuana was concealed in a compartment covered by lumber in a tractor-trailer that originated in Texas and traveled through Nashville.

Mexico-produced marijuana also is transported into and through the state in private vehicles. Mexican criminal groups based in Tennessee frequently purchase large automobiles or sport utility vehicles and build concealed compartments in the gas tanks that can hold up to 100 pounds of marijuana. African American and Hispanic street gang members travel in private vehicles from Tennessee primarily to California, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, New York, and Texas to purchase Mexico-produced marijuana from other street gangs and transport the drug back. Members of Gangster Disciples and Vice Lords in western Tennessee commonly transport marijuana in private vehicles from Chicago and St. Louis to Tennessee on I-55. Members of Mara Salvatrucha in Nashville transport marijuana in private vehicles primarily from California, Texas, and New York via I-40 and I-81. Members of Niggas from Lonsdale, a Knoxville-based gang, transport marijuana in private vehicles from Florida using I-75 and New York using I-81.

Mexican criminal groups also ship Mexico-produced marijuana into and through Tennessee concealed in packages sent through commercial package delivery services. Marijuana transported through package delivery services sometimes is concealed inside boxed window shutters and doors and in computer monitors. In December 1999 USCS seized over 4 kilograms of marijuana hidden inside a wooden plaque in a package at the Memphis International Airport.

Various local independent dealers transport locally produced marijuana out of the state in private vehicles to metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh. Some locally produced marijuana is transported within the state primarily to Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville for local distribution.

Distribution

Mexican criminal groups and, to a lesser extent, street gangs such as Gangster Disciples, Mara Salvatrucha, and Vice Lords are the primary wholesale distributors of Mexico-produced marijuana in Tennessee. They usually purchase Mexico-produced marijuana from Mexican criminal groups and street gangs in states such as California, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, New York, and Texas. Bloods and Crips distribute Mexico-produced marijuana at the wholesale level in the state but to a much lesser extent. Street gangs, primarily African American, and various local independent dealers are the dominant retail distributors of Mexico-produced marijuana in Tennessee. They commonly sell the drug at open-air drug markets.

Street gangs, primarily African American, and local independent dealers are the primary

wholesale and retail distributors of locally produced marijuana. Locally produced marijuana usually is distributed outside the state; however, some is sold in Tennessee. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation reports that most of the cannabis cultivated in central and eastern Tennessee is distributed outside the state, while the DEA Memphis Resident Office reports that most of the cannabis cultivated in western Tennessee is distributed locally. Local independent dealers usually distribute locally produced marijuana from their homes and through business fronts.

Caucasian criminal groups and OMGs, among others, also distribute retail quantities of marijuana in Tennessee. Caucasian criminal groups distribute retail quantities of both Mexico- and locally produced marijuana, while OMGs distribute Mexico-produced marijuana. Law enforcement officials in Chattanooga report that Caucasian criminal groups and OMGs distribute marijuana in their area, while law enforcement officials in Knoxville report that Caucasian criminal groups distribute marijuana in their jurisdiction.

Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine is the third greatest drug threat to Tennessee. Methamphetamine increasingly is available; however, the number of methamphetamine-related treatment admissions and federal sentences is significantly lower than those associated with cocaine and marijuana. Methamphetamine production, distribution, and abuse frequently are associated with violent crime in Tennessee, but considerably less often than cocaine distribution and abuse. Mexican drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups based primarily in Mexico, Arizona, California, and Texas produce most of the methamphetamine sold in Tennessee, primarily using the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method. Mexican criminal groups based in Tennessee usually transport the drug to the state; however, Tennessee has a large number of independent methamphetamine producers as well. Methamphetamine produced in central and eastern Tennessee using the iodine/red phosphorus method and in western Tennessee using the Birch reduction method also is available. Mexican criminal groups based in Tennessee are the primary wholesale distributors of methamphetamine produced in Mexico and southwestern states by Mexican drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups. These Tennessee-based criminal groups distribute methamphetamine to a variety of criminal groups, street gangs, and outlaw motorcycle gangs that, in turn, distribute the drug at the retail level. Local independent Caucasian producers consume most of what they themselves produce, although they distribute a small amount of methamphetamine to established customers—usually family and friends—to fund further methamphetamine production.

Abuse

Methamphetamine is increasingly abused in Tennessee; however, the rate of abuse is significantly lower than the national rate. According to TEDS data, the number of treatment admissions reporting methamphetamine as the primary drug of abuse increased dramatically from 8 in 1995 to 134 in 1999. (See Table 3 on page 5.) Despite this increase, there were 3 methamphetamine-related treatment admissions per 100,000 in Tennessee in 1999, significantly fewer than the 32 per 100,000 nationwide. (See Table 2 on page 4.)

The rate of methamphetamine abuse reported by high school students in Tennessee is slightly higher than the rate reported nationwide. According to the 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 10.2 percent of high school students surveyed in Tennessee reported having abused methamphetamine at least once in their lifetime compared with

9.1 percent of high school students surveyed nationwide. Rates of abuse among high school males and females in Tennessee were 10.5 percent and 10.0 percent respectively, compared with national rates of 9.9 percent and 8.4 percent.

Availability

Most methamphetamine available in Tennessee is produced by Mexican DTOs and criminal groups in Mexico and southwestern states. This methamphetamine frequently is diluted with a cutting agent such as MSM resulting in a less pure, less expensive drug than is locally produced. Although average purity levels are not recorded, the DEA Chattanooga Resident Office reported that methamphetamine produced in Mexico and southwestern states ranged from 9 to 40 percent pure and sold for approximately $900 an ounce in early 2000. Wholesale quantities sold for $8,000 to $20,000 per pound.

MSM Used as a Cutting Agent

Methamphetamine produced in Mexico and southwestern states commonly is cut with MSM, also known as dimethylsulfone ($DMSO_2$). MSM is a white powder that melts to a liquid at a relatively low temperature (109 degrees Fahrenheit). It is highly soluble and readily mixes with most substances without leaving a residue, making it a suitable cutting agent for methamphetamine. It is inexpensive and legally available in the United States as a nutritional supplement for horses and humans.

Locally produced methamphetamine also is increasingly available in Tennessee. The DEA Chattanooga Resident Office estimated that locally produced methamphetamine sold for $100 per gram at the retail level and was 80 percent pure.

Seizure data reflect the ready availability of methamphetamine in Tennessee, although the quantities seized by federal and state law enforcement agencies varied over the past 2 years. According to FDSS data, federal law enforcement officials in Tennessee seized 26.9 kilograms of methamphetamine in 1999 and 66.9 kilograms in 2000. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation seized 22.5 kilograms of methamphetamine in 1999 and 7.8 kilograms in 2000. Law enforcement officials seized 3.0 kilograms of methamphetamine in 1999 and 6.5 kilograms in 2000 under Operation Jetway, and 31.1 kilograms of methamphetamine in 1999 and 2.4 kilograms in 2000 under Operation Pipeline.

The number of methamphetamine-related federal sentences ranked third to cocaine and marijuana in 1999 and 2000. According to the U.S. Sentencing Commission, the number of methamphetamine-related federal sentences nearly tripled from 35 in 1997 to 91 in 2000. (See Table 1 on page 2.)

Violence

Methamphetamine production, distribution, and abuse frequently are associated with violent crime in Tennessee, although violence is more frequently associated with cocaine distribution and abuse. Methamphetamine producers often booby-trap laboratories, which results in increased danger to unsuspecting civilians and law enforcement personnel. The DEA Chattanooga Resident Office reports that agents have seized methamphetamine laboratories booby-trapped with dynamite and jugs of gasoline equipped with blasting caps. The Crips and Vice Lords street gangs in Columbia, the Outlaws OMG in Chattanooga, and the Hells Angels OMG in Union City

commonly distribute methamphetamine, among other drugs, and also have committed crimes such as assault and black market weapons distribution. Chronic methamphetamine abusers often display paranoia, experience hallucinations or mood disturbances, and are prone to violence.

Methamphetamine Production Methods

Ephedrine/Pseudoephedrine Reduction:

- **Hydriodic acid/red phosphorus**. The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, hydriodic acid, and red phosphorus. This method can yield multipound quantities of high quality d-methamphetamine and often is associated with Mexican drug trafficking organizations.
- **Iodine/red phosphorus**. The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, iodine, and red phosphorus. The required hydriodic acid in this variation of the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method is produced by the reaction of iodine in water with red phosphorus. This method yields high quality d-methamphetamine. Another iodine/red phosphorus method, limited to small production batches, is called the cold cook method because the chemicals, instead of being heated, are placed in a hot environment such as in direct sunlight.
- **Birch**. The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, anhydrous ammonia, and sodium or lithium metal. Also known as the "Nazi" method, this method typically yields ounce quantities of high quality d-methamphetamine and often is used by independent dealers and producers.

Production

Mexican DTOs and criminal groups based primarily in Mexico, Arizona, California, and Texas produce most of the methamphetamine sold in Tennessee, principally using the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method.

Tennessee has a large number of independent methamphetamine producers as well. Law enforcement officials in Tennessee seized an increasing number of methamphetamine laboratories from 1999 through 2001. DEA seized 122 methamphetamine laboratories in Tennessee in FY1999, 235 laboratories in FY2000, and 631 laboratories in FY2001. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation seized 78 methamphetamine laboratories in 1999 and 85 in 2000.

Most of the methamphetamine produced in Tennessee is from laboratories in the Appalachia-Cumberland Plateau region in central and eastern Tennessee. The most common methamphetamine production method used in this region is the iodine/red phosphorus method, locally known as the Red P method. Most laboratories are small and capable of producing 5 to 10 grams of methamphetamine per cook. Laboratories have been seized in private residences, motel rooms, cars, trucks, trailers, and secluded wooded areas.

Some methamphetamine is produced in western Tennessee using the Birch reduction method, also known as the Nazi method. The DEA Memphis Resident Office reports that every methamphetamine laboratory seized in western Tennessee since FY1998 used the Birch reduction method. This method does not require extensive knowledge of chemistry and does not use heat. The laboratory can fit into something as compact as a small cardboard box. Methamphetamine—usually an ounce or less with a purity level of 90 percent—can be produced in less than an hour using the Birch reduction method. In April 2001 the Shelby County Sheriff's Office in Memphis seized a Birch reduction method laboratory and multiple ounces

of methamphetamine at a residence in a suburban neighborhood close to a major shopping mall.

Methamphetamine production raises serious safety and environmental concerns. The chemicals used in the production process are volatile and laboratories usually contain a variety of highly flammable toxic chemicals and vapors. For every pound of methamphetamine produced, 5 to 7 pounds of hazardous waste materials result. Toxic waste—dumped onto the ground, into rivers, or placed in containers that will eventually corrode and leak—can contaminate soil, kill vegetation, and poison local water supplies. Farmers could unwittingly use contaminated water to irrigate crops and water livestock. Rural areas are more at risk of water contamination than urban areas because municipal water supplies are chemically treated and frequently monitored.

Transportation

Mexican criminal groups based in Tennessee, some associated with Mexican DTOs, transport methamphetamine into and through Tennessee from distribution centers primarily in Mexico, Arizona, California, and Texas. These criminal groups commonly transport methamphetamine in tractor-trailers and private vehicles.

Mexican criminal groups also transport methamphetamine through the Memphis International Airport using package delivery services. Methamphetamine sometimes is concealed in packages that contain auto parts or stuffed animals or is hidden between the glass and the backing of picture frames.

Local methamphetamine producers generally transport small quantities of the product in privately owned vehicles. They transport it within a small radius of the production site to established customers.

Distribution

Mexican criminal groups based in Tennessee are the primary wholesale distributors of methamphetamine produced in Mexico and southwestern states. These groups purchase methamphetamine from Mexican DTOs in Mexico and criminal groups primarily in Arizona, California, and Texas and supply a variety of other criminal groups, street gangs, and OMGs that distribute the drug at the retail level. Methamphetamine usually is distributed in Tennessee at open-air drug markets and on street corners. Local independent Caucasian producers distribute a small amount of methamphetamine to established customers—usually family and friends—to help fund further methamphetamine production.

Other Dangerous Drugs

Other dangerous drugs are a minimal but increasing threat to Tennessee. Other dangerous drugs include stimulants such as MDMA and khat and diverted pharmaceuticals such as Dilaudid and, more recently, OxyContin. Within the other dangerous drugs category, MDMA is the drug most commonly abused in Tennessee. Local independent Caucasian dealers usually distribute MDMA to teenagers and young adults, primarily at raves, dance clubs, bars, and on college campuses. Tennessee reportedly does not have a khat abuser population; however, the amount of khat seized at the Memphis International Airport and destined for other states is increasing. Dilaudid and OxyContin are two of the most frequently diverted and abused pharmaceuticals.

Stimulants

MDMA is the most commonly abused drug within the other dangerous drugs category in Tennessee, and it poses a minimal but increasing threat to the state. MDMA, also known as ecstasy, Adam, XTC, E, and X, is a stimulant and low-level hallucinogen. MDMA was patented in 1914 in Germany where it was sometimes given to psychiatric patients to assist in psychotherapy, a practice never approved by the American Psychological Association or the Food and Drug Administration. Sometimes called the hug drug, MDMA purportedly helps abusers to be more "in touch" with others and "opens channels of communication." However, abuse of the drug can cause psychological problems similar to those associated with cocaine and methamphetamine abuse including anxiety, confusion, depression, paranoia, and sleeplessness. The physical effects can include blurred vision, increased heart rate and blood pressure, involuntary teeth clenching, and muscle tension. MDMA abuse can also cause a marked increase in body temperature leading to cardiovascular system failure, kidney failure, muscle breakdown, seizure, or stroke, as reported in some fatal cases. Researchers suggest that MDMA abuse may result in long-term, and sometimes permanent, damage to parts of the brain that are critical to thought and memory.

The level of MDMA abuse in Tennessee is low but increasing. Limited law enforcement reporting indicates that MDMA abuse is more common now than it has ever been in metropolitan areas such as Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville.

The price of MDMA, available in tablets imprinted with various logos, usually depends on the quantity sold. Some of the most popular logos in Tennessee include the Blue Butterfly, Crowns, Mitsubishi, and Okey Dokeys. Prices for these tablets ranged from $6 to $18 at the wholesale level and averaged $26 at the retail level in 2000.

The distribution and abuse of MDMA rarely are associated with violent crime in the state. MDMA reportedly enhances feelings of happiness and friendliness, and abusers typically are seeking an exaggerated sensory and emotional experience.

Table 5. MDMA Prices, by Logo Tennessee, 2000

Logo	Wholesale Price	Retail Price
Mitsubishi	**$18**	**$25–$27**
Blue Butterfly	**$16**	**$25–$27**
Crowns	**$16**	**$25–$27**
Okey Dokeys	**$6**	**unknown**

Source: DEA.

Most of the MDMA transported to Tennessee is produced in Europe—primarily in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg—and is smuggled into the state through package delivery services and on passenger airlines. Most of the MDMA shipped to Tennessee is destined for other states. In December 1999 USCS agents at the Memphis International Airport seized over 1 million MDMA tablets with an estimated street value of $30 million. The drugs were being shipped from France to Los Angeles. In April 2000 USCS agents at the Memphis International Airport seized several boxes containing MDMA—172,000 tablets with an estimated street value of $4.5 million—that were shipped from Paris destined for Boston.

MDMA distributed in Tennessee commonly is transported to the state from Atlanta and southern Florida. Law enforcement authorities report that local independent Caucasian dealers in Chattanooga and Nashville travel to Atlanta in private vehicles on the interstates to purchase MDMA. Wholesale MDMA distributors in southern Florida also ship MDMA using package delivery services to local independent Caucasian dealers in Nashville for local distribution.

University Investigation

During 1998 the DEA Nashville District Office investigated several fraternity members at a large university who allegedly were purchasing between 300 and 500 MDMA tablets weekly from an independent Caucasian supplier in West Palm Beach, Florida. The MDMA, generally 100 tablets per package, was concealed in bubble wrap, placed inside a folder, and sealed with masking tape. It was covered with carbon paper, put in a cardboard folder, and packaged in a large white envelope before being sent via package delivery services. The carbon paper was allegedly used in an effort to avoid X-ray detection. The supplier purchased the MDMA for $4.50 per tablet from a producer in Amsterdam who hired Colombian criminals to package the drug. To circumvent tightened security at Amsterdam customs, the Colombian criminals drove to a neighboring country, usually Belgium, to mail the drugs. The supplier in Palm Beach was arrested and sentenced to 36 months' probation in December 1999.

Source: DEA Nashville District Office.

Khat, also known as African salad, Bushman's tea, and qat, is a natural stimulant found in the leaves of the Catha edulis plant, a flowering shrub native to Northeast Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Fresh khat leaves are crimson-brown and glossy but become yellow-green and leathery as they age. The leaves contain cathinone; if left unrefrigerated for 48 hours after picking, the leaves contain only cathine, a milder, less potent form of cathinone. The cathinone, ingested by chewing the leaves, can produce a caffeine-like jolt and a 24-hour high. Khat was made a Schedule I drug in 1993. Khat abuse may produce hallucinations, manic behavior, and paranoid delusions and may damage the nervous and respiratory systems.

Tennessee reportedly does not have a khat abuser population, but the amount of khat seized at the Memphis International Airport and destined for other states is increasing. USCS officials seized 1,849.3 kilograms of khat in FY2000 and 2,139.2 kilograms in FY2001 from package delivery services at the airport. These shipments were destined for outside the state. Khat abuse in the United States appears to be limited to ethnic enclaves consisting of Arabian, East African, and Middle Eastern immigrants, primarily in cities such as Boston, Dallas, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, D.C.

Diverted Pharmaceuticals

Diverted pharmaceuticals, particularly opioids such as Dilaudid and, more recently, OxyContin, pose an increasing threat to Tennessee. Pharmaceuticals are diverted in a variety of ways in Tennessee including "doctor shopping," improper prescribing practices by physicians, pharmacy diversion, and prescription forgery. Doctor shopping refers to a process in which individuals who may or may not have a legitimate ailment visit numerous physicians to obtain drugs in excess of what should be legitimately prescribed. Prescription forgery and doctor shopping are the most widely used diversion techniques. Pharmacy diversion occurs when pharmacy employees steal products directly from the shelves.

Law enforcement officials did not report any OxyContin investigations in Tennessee in 1999; however, law enforcement officials in Anderson, Cocke, Hamblen, Scott, and Sevier Counties in eastern Tennessee reported numerous investigations of OxyContin distribution and abuse in 2000. In response to the NDIC National Drug Threat Survey 2000, the Sevier County Sheriff's Department reported that OxyContin is the drug most commonly distributed and abused in that county. Anecdotal information from law enforcement officials in Tennessee indicates that several deaths may have been related to OxyContin abuse. Other opioids such as Lortab, Lorcet, and Vicodin, and benzodiazepines such as Xanax and Valium also are diverted to a lesser extent in the state.

Heroin

Heroin is the least significant illicit drug threat to Tennessee. The availability, abuse, and violence associated with heroin are limited and concentrated primarily in Memphis and, to a lesser extent, in Chattanooga and Knoxville. Mexican brown powdered heroin is available in small quantities primarily in Memphis, Chattanooga, and Knoxville. Mexican black tar heroin is available less frequently. South American heroin rarely is available. Most of the heroin seized in the state is destined for other markets. Wholesale distribution of heroin is rare. Mexican criminal groups, African American street gangs, and local independent African American dealers all based in Tennessee are the primary transporters and retail distributors of heroin.

Abuse

Heroin abuse rates are low in Tennessee. According to TEDS data, the number of treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities reporting heroin as the primary drug of abuse decreased from 35 in 1995 to 0 in 1998 and in 1999. (See Table 3 on page 5.) In 1999 there were no heroin-related treatment admissions per 100,000 in Tennessee compared with 105 per 100,000 nationwide. (See Table 2 on page 4.)

State survey data also indicate that the rate of heroin abuse in Tennessee is low. According to the 1998 Tennessee Department of Health, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use Survey, 0.9 percent of Tennessee residents surveyed reported having abused heroin at least once in their lifetime. Results from another survey by the same department that year indicate that 1.6 percent of emergency room admissions surveyed reported having abused heroin at least once in their lifetime and 0.8 percent reported having abused heroin in the 30 days preceding the survey.

The rate of heroin abuse reported by high school students in Tennessee is comparable to the rate reported nationwide. According to the 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2.2 percent of high school students surveyed in Tennessee reported having abused heroin at least once in their lifetime compared with 2.4 percent of high school students surveyed nationwide. Rates of abuse among males and females in Tennessee were 3.0 percent and 1.5 percent respectively, compared with national rates of 3.5 percent and 1.3 percent.

Availability

Heroin availability varies by type and location. Mexican brown powdered heroin is available in small quantities primarily in Memphis, while Mexican black tar heroin is available less frequently, according to the Memphis Police Department. The DEA Chattanooga Resident Office and the Shelby County Sheriff's Department reported that Mexican brown powdered and black tar heroin occasionally are available in small quantities in their areas. The Knoxville Police Department reported four heroin-related investigations in 1999. Most law enforcement officials reported that South American heroin rarely was available in Memphis, Chattanooga, or Knoxville.

Heroin is seized in Tennessee; however, law enforcement officials report that most of the heroin is destined for areas outside the state. According to FDSS, federal law enforcement officials seized 2.4 kilograms of heroin in 1999 and 15.1 kilograms in 2000. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation seized 38 grams of heroin in 1998 and none in 1999 or 2000. Law enforcement officials seized 0.5 kilograms of heroin in 1999 and none in 2000 under Operation

Pipeline and reported no heroin seizures in 1999 or 2000 under Operation Jetway.

Tennessee had a small number of heroin-related federal sentences from 1997 through 2000. According to the U.S. Sentencing Commission, the number of heroin-related federal sentences peaked at 30 in 1998, but decreased to 8 in 1999 and 4 in 2000. (See Table 1 on page 2.)

Violence

Heroin-related violence is minimal in Tennessee. Gangster Disciples and Vice Lords distribute limited quantities of heroin, among other drugs, although gang violence associated with heroin distribution is limited, according to local police department officials.

Production

Opium poppies are not cultivated nor is heroin refined in Tennessee. Heroin is produced in four source regions: Mexico; South America, primarily Colombia; Southeast Asia, primarily Burma; and Southwest Asia, primarily Afghanistan. Most of the heroin available in Tennessee is produced in Mexico.

Transportation

Mexican criminal groups, African American street gangs, and local independent African American dealers all based in Tennessee are the primary transporters of heroin in the state. They usually transport heroin in private vehicles but also transport small quantities from Texas to Memphis by bus—internally (in body cavities or swallowed), externally (hidden on their persons), or in luggage. Mexican criminal groups based in Tennessee transport heroin primarily from Los Angeles. The Memphis Police Department reports that Gangster Disciples and Vice Lords members transport 1 or 2 kilograms of heroin from Chicago or Detroit two or three times a year.

Heroin commonly is transshipped in packages through the Memphis International Airport. USCS agents seized a total of 41.1 kilograms of heroin at the Memphis International Airport in FY2001, most of which was destined for other states. In November 2000 USCS at the Memphis International Airport seized a package containing 5.3 kilograms of heroin that was concealed in hollowed-out books that were sent from Colombia destined for New York City.

Distribution

Wholesale distribution of heroin is rare in Tennessee and retail distribution is limited. Most local agencies responding to the NDIC National Drug Threat Survey 2000 reported little or no heroin distribution in their areas. Mexican criminal groups, African American street gangs, and local independent African American dealers all based in Tennessee are the primary retail distributors of heroin in Memphis, Chattanooga, and Knoxville. Mexican criminal groups based in Tennessee

purchase small quantities of Mexican brown powdered heroin from Mexican and other criminal groups, primarily in Los Angeles. Street gangs purchase small quantities of Mexican brown powdered heroin from other street gangs, primarily in Chicago and Detroit, and usually distribute it to local African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic abusers, primarily in Memphis and, to a lesser extent, in Chattanooga and Knoxville. Local independent African American dealers purchase small quantities of Mexican black tar and brown powdered heroin from local independent dealers, primarily in Texas, and sell the drug on street corners in Memphis.

Distributors attempt to avoid law enforcement detection by using the "beep and meet" method. Abusers usually page retail distributors and set up appointment times and locations to exchange cash for heroin. Distributors commonly keep heroin-filled balloons in their mouths while waiting for customers and swallow the balloons if approached by law enforcement.

Outlook

Cocaine, particularly crack, will continue to be the most significant drug threat to Tennessee. The situation is not likely to change in the near future because of the strong market. Street gangs with a long history of violence associated with crack distribution will continue to protect their turf and threaten the security of Tennessee residents.

Marijuana will remain the most readily available and commonly abused drug in Tennessee. Mexico-produced marijuana is the type most commonly abused throughout the state, and there are no indications that this trend will change. Local producers will continue to cultivate cannabis in the Appalachia-Cumberland Plateau region, which provides ideal growing conditions. Numerous criminal groups, street gangs, and local independent dealers likely will continue to distribute marijuana in Tennessee since demand for the drug is high.

Methamphetamine abuse will continue to increase in Tennessee, but abuse rates will remain below the national rates for the near term. Methamphetamine produced in Mexico and southwestern states will continue to be the principal type available and abused in Tennessee. However, local production likely will continue to increase as the popularity of the drug increases. Mexican criminal groups based in Tennessee will remain the primary wholesale distributors of methamphetamine and local independent Caucasian producers will continue to be the primary distributors and consumers of locally produced methamphetamine. If methamphetamine becomes even more available, the level of associated violence likely will escalate.

The distribution and abuse of MDMA and diverted pharmaceuticals will continue to increase in Tennessee. Abuse levels of MDMA likely will escalate as the drug becomes more available at rave parties, dance clubs, bars, and on college campuses. Prescription drugs, particularly Dilaudid and OxyContin, will increasingly be diverted in Tennessee. Although it is unlikely an abuser population for khat will develop in Tennessee, khat will continue to be shipped through the Memphis International Airport using package delivery services.

Heroin is infrequently available and rarely abused in Tennessee and there are no indications that this trend will change. Heroin, which is mostly destined for areas outside the state, will continue to be shipped through Memphis International Airport using package delivery services.

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Chattanooga Police Department

Clarksville Police Department

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Columbia Police Department

Cookeville Police Department

Greeneville Police Department

Hamilton County Sheriff's Office

Jackson Police Department

Johnson City Police Department

Kingsport Police Department

Knoxville Police Department

Lake County Sheriff's Office

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- Gang Unit

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