Chapter 6: Drug Seizures in the United States

Certainly, a desirable goal is to have a single database capable of providing a comprehensive picture of drugs seizures as the drugs approach, enter, and transit the United States. At this time, there is no single, unified, de-conflicted database for federal, state, and local drug seizures.

A variety of federal seizure databases exist, each tailored to meet specific needs. These databases overlap to a certain extent. Moreover, the federal databases contain information on an unknown portion of drug seizures made by state and local law enforcement authorities, such as seizures turned over to federal authorities or seizures reported to federal programs such as Operations PIPELINE, CONVOY, and JETWAY.

At this time, the only national data collection effort targeting state and local drug seizures is the National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS), which is managed by the DEA Office of Diversion Control. The NFLIS was designed to be a representative sample of state and local laboratories and recruitment efforts are ongoing. At this time, approximately 150 laboratories report to the NFLIS. The drug seizure information in the NFLIS, however, is limited to the drug evidence that the state and local authorities submit for forensic analysis. This represents an unknown portion of state and local drug seizure activity.

The Working Group recommends that development of a centralized database for all U.S. drug seizures be explored. At this time, we do not know how much of domestic drug seizure activity is missing from the federal databases. Is it a significant intelligence gap or is the missing amount relatively small? To that end, a survey of existing state and local law enforcement drug seizure databases should be conducted to determine the amount of drug seizures reported by those agencies and how the seizure data are stored. If a centralized database is to be created, it is necessary to have individual records for individual seizures so that duplicate reporting can be eliminated. If most states only collect summary seizure statistics, it would require a large investment of resources to develop incident-based databases for those states. The results from such a survey would enable drug policy makers to decide if it would be cost effective to develop a centralized drug seizure database.

Available Data Sources/Limitations

Federal Drug Seizures

- The most comprehensive federal database is the ***Federal-wide Drug Seizure System (FDSS),*** which was designed to provide one set of statistics that reflect the combined federal seizure effort. The FDSS contains information about drug seizures made within the jurisdiction of the United States by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Customs Service, and U.S. Border Patrol, as well as maritime seizures made by the U.S. Coast Guard. Drug seizures made by other federal agencies are included in the FDSS database when custody of the drug evidence was transferred to one of the five agencies identified above. For the most part, drug seizures made by state and local law enforcement authorities are not included in the FDSS data.

- The ***EPIC Internal Database (EID)*** contains seizures, which meet Federal Drug Identification Number (FDIN) criteria, made in the United States by federal agencies and by state and local law enforcement personnel who seize the drug as part of DEA sponsored Operations PIPELINE, JETWAY, or CONVOY. Seizure events are <u>voluntarily</u> reported to EPIC by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. As a consequence, the seizure

statistics may not necessarily provide an accurate overview of drug trafficking or seizure trends.

- The ***Consolidated Cocaine database*** captures details surrounding each drug-related event submitted and approved by counter-drug agencies. It is used in the Interagency Assessment of Cocaine Movement.

- Drug found at clandestine laboratory seizures are reported to the ***Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System (CLSS),*** which is housed at EPIC, and was established in 1998 to capture data that pertains to clandestine laboratories that are seized in the United States by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. Once again, this database may not provide a comprehensive picture. Clandestine laboratory seizure events are voluntarily reported to EPIC by state and local law enforcement and most federal agencies. DEA is the only federal agency that is required to report clan lab seizures to EPIC.

State and Local Drug Seizures

- At this time, the only national data collection effort targeting state and local drug seizures is the ***NFLIS***, which is managed by the Office of Diversion Control of the DEA. The NFLIS was designed to be a representative sample of state and local laboratories and recruitment efforts are ongoing. At this time, approximately 150 laboratories report to the NFLIS. The drug seizure information in the NFLIS, however, is limited to the drug evidence that the state and local authorities submit for forensic analysis. This represents an unknown portion of the entire drug seizure activity.

- ***At the state level***, data are maintained on law enforcement activity , including drug seizures. However, incident-based reporting is needed in order to build a national database so that duplicate reporting could be eliminated. General information on state drug seizure systems, which was provided by the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC), is contained in the Appendix.

Drug Prices

- DEA's Quarterly Trends in the Traffic Reports: Intelligence reports submitted by DEA Intelligence Groups in DEA field offices. Generally, prices are reported for gram, ounce, and kilogram quantities.

  This price information is of limited value for trending since the prices are reported as ranges.

- DEA's System To Retrieve Information from Drug Evidence (STRIDE): STRIDE contains information on drug exhibits submitted to DEA laboratories for analysis, including price if the exhibit was a purchase.

  The purchases are made in the course of federal drug investigations. Consequently, the amount of price information varies. For example, there may be no information on cocaine kilogram prices for a given time period because no such purchases were made. Nonetheless, STRIDE can be used to track certain prices. ONDCP has used STRIDE data to develop price series for selected drugs.

Drug Purity

- STRIDE: With the exception of marijuana, DEA laboratories regularly quantify drug evidence. (DEA laboratories send samples from marijuana seizures to Marijuana Potency Monitoring Project at the University of Mississippi for THC content determination.) Contained in the STRIDE database are the analysis results for retail heroin purchases made for the Domestic Monitor Program.

  Once again, the purity information is limited to federal drug evidence, primarily DEA.

Appendix 6-A - Federal Data Set Specifications

Sources: ONDCP's Federal Data Set Inventory
NDIC

Data Set: National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS)

Frequency Of Data Collection: Ongoing data collection

Sponsoring Agency: The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

Point(s) Of Contact:
Name: Frank Sapienza
Title: Chief, Drug & Chemical Evaluation Section
Address: Drug Enforcement Administration
Washington, DC 20537
Telephone No.: (202) 307-7183
Fax No.: (202) 353-1263

Purpose Of The Data Set: The NFLIS database is being developed to provide accurate, scientifically verified data to support DEA drug scheduling actions; to provide information on drug trafficking and abuse to other federal, state and local authorities; to identify changes in drug distribution geographically and over time; to provide information on diversion of legitimate pharmaceutical drugs; and to identify new and emerging drugs of abuse and follow their spread.

How And To Whom The Data Are Disseminated: NFLIS data are published in Quarterly Reports four times a year that are sent to participating laboratories and the DEA. The first Annual Report was published in December 2001. Participating laboratories can access all of their own data elements and can also access aggregate data from all other participating laboratories. Future DEA plans are to make the data also available to approved requestors via the Internet. Standard on-line queries have been developed by the contractor for this purpose.

Available Formats: The results of queries from the database can be printed or downloaded into various spreadsheet programs or file formats. Results can be downloaded directly into Excel or .htm, .html and, .txt formats. Numerous other file formats are available.

Sample Size Of Data Set: Each NFLIS record represents the results of a forensic laboratory scientific analysis of a drug sample submitted by U.S. law enforcement agencies. As of November 14, 2001, there were 1,496,454 records of analyzed drug samples in the NFLIS system.

Methodology (Sample Design, Time Frame, Criteria for Sample Selection, Sources of Data, Method of Data Collection, Validity and Reliability Checks, and Type of Data Collected):
The NFLIS database contains laboratory analysis results of illicit drug samples seized or purchased by U.S. law enforcement agencies. The results are submitted by state and local forensic laboratories in the United States. The database development started in September 1997. Records are from the time period September 1997 to December 2001 at this time. An initial sampling of laboratories was selected for recruitment that would represent approximately 70% of the drug samples analyzed by all forensic laboratories in the United States. That sample has not been completely recruited at this time. Coverage at this time is estimated to be about 65%. The data is electronically transmitted by the reporting laboratories to the contractor via encrypted format. The data is scientifically verified forensic laboratory data.

Drug-Related Variables: Variations in laboratory operating procedures determine depth of analysis of samples. All laboratories do not report secondary drugs in samples. All drug samples submitted to forensic laboratories are not analyzed. Reporting of non-controlled drugs varies from laboratory to laboratory.

Other Variables: There is variation between laboratories on the drug related data elements reported for drug samples.

Strengths And Limitations Of The Data Set: The strength of the data is that they are scientifically accurate and verified. Limitations arise from variations in laboratory operating procedures that determine depth of analysis of samples and manner of reporting of testing results. All laboratories do not report secondary drugs in samples. All drug samples submitted to forensic laboratories are not analyzed. Identification and/or reporting of non-controlled drugs varies from laboratory to laboratory. Data cannot be trended at this time because the number and type of laboratories that are reporting are not a representative samples at this time. The database does not contain information from Federal laboratories.

Implications For Drug Policy: The NFLIS system is the first attempt to gather analyzed state and local forensic laboratory drug data. The DEA anticipates that the data will be used by federal and state drug abuse control authorities to support drug scheduling and policy issues. The data can also be used by law enforcement personnel to identify specific geographic drug problems and follow the spread of new drugs of abuse.

Data Set: Federal-wide Drug Seizure System (FDSS)

Frequency Of Data Collection: Monthly

Sponsoring Agency: The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) manages the database.

Point(s) Of Contact:
Patrick Gartin
Drug Enforcement Administration
Washington, D.C 20537
Telephone No.: (202) 307-8276
Fax No.: (202) 307-7916

Purpose Of The Data Set: The FDSS was designed to meet a specific need defined by the National Drug Policy Board: to provide aggregate statistics on federal drug seizures made within U.S. jurisdiction. This need arose because of frequent instances when more than one federal agency is involved with or has custody of a single drug seizure. Each agency maintains its own records on such activities, which overlap the contents of other agencies' similar records; therefore, federal drug removal activity would be significantly overstated if statistics from individual agency databases were simply added together.

How And To Whom The Data Are Disseminated: Summary data are published semiannually and are distributed to Federal managers.

Available Formats: Printouts, as well as responses to standard queries that are returned to the monitor from which the query was made.

Sample Size Of Data Set: Each FDSS record tagged with a Federal Drug Identification Number (FDIN), as well as seizures under the required threshold amount which do not need FDINs.

Methodology (Sample Design, Time Frame, Criteria for Sample Selection, Sources of Data, Method of Data Collection, Validity and Reliability Checks, and Type of Data Collected): FDSS data are based upon extracts of drug removal information from databases maintained by the DEA, U.S. Customs, and the U.S. Coast Guard, as well as U.S. Border Patrol seizures reported in the FDIN log. In these databases, records of drug removals that exceed established threshold weights include a unique number, the FDIN, which is assigned to a drug removal by the first federal agency having custody of the drug. The FDIN is provided to any other federal agency that has involvement in or takes custody of the drug seizure for inclusion in its database. When data from agencies are entered into the FDSS, the presence of more than one record for the same seizure is determined by the FDIN. It should be noted that the extracts from those agency systems include all drug removals, both those with and without FDINs.

Drug-Related Variables: Each record in the FDSS has fields for the type of drug; quantity and unit of measure; how the drug was identified (i.e., laboratory analysis, field test, or visual examination); how the weight was determined (i.e., in a laboratory, via scale or balance, or estimated); data collected; place collected (State only); and FDIN.

Other Variables: None available.

Strengths And Limitations Of The Data Set: The FDSS provides information of Federal drug seizure activity.

Because the system was designed to provide summary information, there is limited information on each individual seizure. Furthermore, because the FDSS is a combination of data from several databases, with drug identity and weight sometimes based on visual examination and estimation, the statistics are not as precise as those based solely on laboratory analysis.

Implications For Drug Policy: The FDSS helps to inform national drug policy by providing long-range trends on the nature and extent of Federal drug seizures.

Data Set: System To Retrieve Information Drug Evidence (STRIDE)

Frequency Of Data Collection: Ongoing data collection

Sponsoring Agency: The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

Point(s) Of Contact:
Rhesa G. Gilliland
Laboratory Support Section
Drug Enforcement Administration
Washington, DC 20537
Telephone No.: (202) 307-8785
Fax No.: (202) 307-8851

Purpose Of The Data Set: To maintain an inventory of drug exhibits submitted to DEA laboratories.

How And To Whom The Data Are Disseminated: Summary data are published semiannually and distributed to DEA managers in its Headquarters and field offices. All DEA field offices have access to and may query STRIDE via a generalized query capability for generalized reports. DEA Headquarters also uses a separate, more powerful query capability to generate a wide variety of statistical reports.

Available Formats: Data are available in printouts, including responses to standard queries that are returned to the monitor from which the query was made.

Sample Size Of Data Set: Information is input at each of the eight DEA laboratories using source documents from special agents and forensic chemists for over 40,000 exhibits of drug evidence per year. The system has been operational since 1971.

Methodology (Sample Design, Time Frame, Criteria for Sample Selection, Sources of Data, Method of Data Collection, Validity and Reliability Checks, and Type Of Data Collected):
See response to item above.

Drug-Related variables: STRIDE contains all the information from the laboratory analysis of each exhibit. There are approximately 60 data elements of information concerning each exhibit, such as data collected, place collected, how acquired (e.g., purchased, seized), price if purchased, name of the drug, potency of the drug, adulterants and diluents found, and how the exhibit was packaged.

Other Variables: One variable is the DEA case from which the drug exhibit was acquired.

Strengths And Limitations Of The Data Set: STRIDE can provide detailed information on a large volume of federal drug removals over a relatively long period of time. However, its data are limited because (1) the system includes little information about state and local activities that comprise an important element of the Nation's drug control efforts and (2) DEA's formal mandate is to focus enforcement activities on distinct geographical areas (such as trafficking areas with numerous high-volume heroin and cocaine dealers).

Implications For Drug Policy: STRIDE information is used as an investigative tool by agents in the field and provides a database which is used to analyze both strategic and tactical intelligence, establishing drug-trafficking patterns as well as detecting the appearance of new drugs.

STRIDE helps inform national drug policy by providing indicators of drug availability in the form of long-term trends in the price and purity of drug exhibits.

Statewide Drug Seizure Systems

State	Statewide Seizure System	
Alabama	No.	
Alaska	Yes.	The Statewide Drug Enforcement Unit, comprised of five teams: Anchorage Airport Interdiction Team; Fairbanks Areawide Narcotics Team; Mat-Su Drug Enforcement Team; Southeast Alaska Narcotics Team; and Western Alaska Alcohol and Narcotics Team, report drug seizures on a monthly basis to the Statewide Drug Enforcement Unit.
Arizona	Yes.	Unclear as to the comprehensiveness of the system.
Arkansas	No.	There is no central system for state seizures however, the Arkansas State Police compile some state seizure statistics such as methamphetamine laboratory seizures, while other statewide seizure statistics are available from the State of Arkansas, Annual Report for its Byrne Grant drug task forces.
California	No.	
Colorado	No.	
Connecticut	Yes.	
Delaware	No.	
Florida	Yes.	Florida Department of Law Enforcement's DrugNet program tracks statewide drug seizures. It is incident based.
Georgia	No.	
Hawaii	No.	
Idaho	Yes.	It is an incident based system
Illinois	Yes.	Although not compiled in one collective report, Illinois captures quantities of drugs and type seized through two separate enforcement programs. Operation Valkyrie is the Illinois State Police interdiction program on Illinois' highways and the Metropolitan Enforcement Group (MEG) units are the multi-jurisdictional drug task forces located throughout the state (9 total).
Indiana	No.	
Iowa	Yes.	Fairly comprehensive system administered by the Iowa Division of Narcotics Enforcement (under the Department of Public Safety.) Statistics only include Iowa State Patrol seizures as well as seizures from cases with Iowa DNE participation.
Kansas	Yes.	Kansas Bureau of Investigation maintains drug seizure statistics for drugs interdicted by the KBI. Additionally, Kansas Highway Patrol maintains separate statistics for drug seizures that occur along Kansas highways.
Kentucky	No.	
Louisiana	Yes.	Limited to Louisiana State Police seizures.
Maine	Yes.	
Maryland	Yes.	
Massachusetts	Yes.	
Michigan	No.	Michigan is developing a statewide drug seizures tracking system that they believe will be operational by November 2002.
Minnesota	No.	Only Byrne Grant task force drug seizures are recorded to the Byrne Grant Coordinator.
Mississippi	Yes.	Limited to Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics seizures and does not include all drugs.
Missouri	Yes.	Missouri State Highway Patrol maintains the ECCO (Eliminate

		Contraband Courier Operations seizures) database to track drug seizures made by Missouri Highway Patrol. This would only be a portion of total drugs seized in the state.
Montana	Yes.	The Montana Department of Justice, Board of Crime Control compiles state statistics from the six Byrne Grant drug task forces, the Department of Criminal Investigation, and some local seizure information.
Nebraska	Yes.	Nebraska State Patrol maintains a drug seizure system but it only includes seizures by the State Patrol – very limited.
Nevada	Yes.	Seizures are tracked by drug type.
New Hampshire	No.	
New Jersey	No.	
New Mexico	Yes.	The New Mexico HIDTA coordinates the compilation of New Mexico state drug seizures and reports the figures quarterly.
New York	No.	
N. Carolina	Yes.	Limited to North Carolina Bureau of Investigation seizures.
North Dakota	No.	
Ohio	No.	
Oklahoma	No.	
Oregon	No.	
Pennsylvania	No.	
Puerto Rico	Yes.	Limited to Puerto Rico Police and reporting appears sporadic.
Rhode Island	No.	
S. Carolina	No.	
South Dakota	Yes.	South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation maintains a statewide database of task force seizures.
Tennessee	Yes.	Limited to Tennessee Bureau of Investigation seizures. It is case/incident based.
Texas	Yes.	Texas Department of Public Health tracks statewide drug seizures. It is incident based.
Utah	Yes.	The Utah Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Criminal Identification compiles state seizure statistics for most drugs but the comprehensiveness of the system is unclear.
Vermont	No.	
Virginia	No.	
West Virginia	Yes.	
Wisconsin	No.	Only Byrne Grant task force drug seizures are recorded to the Byrne Grant Coordinator.
Wyoming	Yes.	Fairly comprehensive system administered by the Wyoming Department of Criminal Investigation. Includes all highway patrol and task force seizures but may miss some local police seizures.

Glossary - List of Acronyms

ADAM	Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring program (formerly the DUF program)
CCDB	Counterdrug Consolidated Database
CDSM	Combined Dominant Source Methodology
CEWG	Community Epidemiology Working Group
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CLSS	Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System
CNC	Crime and Narcotics Center
CONACE	National Council for Drug Control
CSP	Cocaine Signature Program
DASC	Drug Availability Steering Committee
DAWN	Drug Abuse Warning Network
DCE/SP	Domestic Cannabis Eradiction/Suppression Program
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DMP	Domestic Monitor Program
DUF	Drug Use Forecasting program (now the ADAM program)
EID	EPIC Internal Database
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Addiction
EPIC	El Paso Intelligence Center
ER	Emergency Room
FARC	Revoluntionar Armed Forces of Columbia
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FDIN	Federal Drug Identification Number
FDSS	Federal Drug Seizure System
HCL	hydrocloride
HSP	Heroin Signature Program
IACM	Interagency Assessment on Cocaine Movement
MAWG	Marijuana Availability Working Group
MCEDSS	Mississippi Counterdrug Enforcement Decision Support System
ME	Medical Examiner
MSA	metropolitan statistical area
MT	metric tons
MTF	Monitoring the Future
NDIC	National Drug Intelligence Center
NDIN	National Drug Identification Number
NFLIS	National Forensic Laboratory Information System
NGO	NonGovernmental Organization
NHSDA	National Household Survey on Drug Abuse
NIDA	National Institute on Drug Abuse
NIJ	National Institute of Justice
ONDCP	Office of National Drug Control Policy
POE	Ports of Entry
PRIDE	Parents Resourse Institute for Drug Education
SA	South America
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SEA	South East Asia
STL	Small Toxic Laboratories
STRIDE	System To Retrieve Information from Drug Evidence
STRL	Special Testing Research Laboratory

SWA	South West Asia
SWB	Southwest Border
TEDS	Treatment Episode Data Set
THC	*delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol* (the active ingredient of marijuana)
UCR	Uniform Crime Reports (compiled by the FBI)
UNDCP	United Nations Drug Control Policy
USCS	U.S. Customs Service
USIC	U.S. Interdiction Command
WG	Working Group