

**Statement of  
Rogelio E. Guevara  
Chief of Operations  
Drug Enforcement Administration**

*Before the*

**House Committee on Government Reform  
Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy  
and Human Resources**

**July 18, 2003**

***“Facing the Methamphetamine Problem in America”***

**Executive Summary**

*The rapid rise and spread of methamphetamine use and trafficking in the last decade has created unique and difficult challenges for our country. Initially confined mainly to the West and Midwest, methamphetamine is now impacting some of our largest cities and smallest rural towns all across America. No area is immune from methamphetamine’s dangers. Whether it is from abuse of the drug itself or the toxic environmental effects from clandestine laboratories, methamphetamine has devastated communities and shattered families as this synthetic drug epidemic sweeps across the country.*

*Unlike more traditional drugs of abuse like heroin, cocaine, and marijuana, methamphetamine presents some unique challenges. First, it is synthetic, relying on no harvested crops for its manufacture. Unfortunately, its recipe is relatively easy; anyone who can read and measure can make methamphetamine. Second, it has hit rural areas in the United States particularly hard, areas where resources to combat this drug are often the least available. Third, is the nature of the drug itself: methamphetamine is a particularly intense stimulant, highly addictive, and overwhelmingly dangerous. The combination of these factors requires a multi-faceted response.*

*The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is combating methamphetamine by working both domestically and internationally.*

*First, here at home, DEA is focusing enforcement efforts against Mexican methamphetamine organizations that operate large-scale labs (super labs) in Mexico, California and the Southwestern United States. Using their established distribution networks, these criminal organizations produce and distribute the drug throughout the country. DEA continues to target and seize these “super labs”. We have dismantled or disrupted more than 60 priority target methamphetamine trafficking organizations since 2000.*

*While the methamphetamine trade is clearly dominated by Mexican trafficking organizations, there are a growing number of small, dangerous clandestine laboratories that are straining communities and state and local police forces. DEA has joined forces with our state and local counterparts to investigate and seize these toxic labs. The second part of that process is effective and safe cleanup of the labs. However, the cleanup is very costly and drains community resources and manpower. In response to this pressure on local law enforcement, DEA is working with state and local officials to provide assistance with clandestine lab cleanup and lab training; increasing safety for affected communities and police officers.*

*Second, DEA is working with our partners around the globe to target international methamphetamine traffickers, particularly Mexican groups that produce the majority of methamphetamine trafficked in the United States. Also critical to the international aspect are chemical control efforts, specifically those limiting access to wholesale amounts of pseudoephedrine—a chemical necessary in the manufacture of methamphetamine. Canada emerged as a source of supply for pseudoephedrine after DEA’s Operation Mountain Express I and II significantly reduced the illegal pseudoephedrine trade within the United States. A recent change in Canadian regulations, encouraged by the United States, led to tighter restrictions on “pseudo” production and transportation from that country. Several joint enforcement operations appear to have had some success in limiting access to Canadian pseudoephedrine.*

*In this testimony, DEA will offer specific examples of how we are targeting methamphetamine production and distribution, the successes we are achieving in combating this dangerous drug, and the challenges we continue to face.*

Chairman Souder, Ranking Member Cummings and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, it is my distinct pleasure to appear before you as Chief of Operations of DEA. On behalf of almost 10,000 employees of DEA, I would like to thank you and members of this subcommittee for your continued support.

### **America – In the Grasp of Methamphetamine**

According to the 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, over nine million Americans or 4.3 percent of the United States population reported having tried methamphetamine on at least one occasion during their lifetimes. The Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) estimated that the number of emergency department episodes concerning methamphetamine increased from 10,447 in 1999 to 14,923 in 2001.

In 2002, the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) reported the seizure of over 9,000 clandestine methamphetamine laboratories. Additionally, in the “Associated Children Report” for 2002, EPIC reported over 2,000 children were present during the seizure of these laboratories. Of this total, 1,382 children were reported as having been exposed to toxic chemicals. These figures concerning the abuse of methamphetamine, seizure of clandestine methamphetamine laboratories and the presence of children at the lab sites,

clearly demonstrate that many parts of America are indeed in the grasp of methamphetamine.

Methamphetamine is a synthetic central nervous system stimulant that is classified as a Schedule II controlled substance. It is widely abused throughout the United States and is distributed under the names “crank”, “meth”, “crystal” and “speed”. It is commonly sold in powder form, but has been distributed in tablets or as crystals (“glass” or “ice”). Methamphetamine can be smoked, snorted, injected or taken orally. The clandestine manufacture of methamphetamine has been a concern of law enforcement officials since the 1960's, when outlaw motorcycle gangs produced their own methamphetamine in labs, and dominated distribution in the United States. Clandestine labs typically produce other types of illicit drugs such as PCP, MDMA, and LSD, but methamphetamine has always been the primary drug manufactured in the vast majority of drug labs seized by law enforcement officers throughout the nation. Since 1997, 97 percent or more of the clandestine lab seizures reported to DEA were either methamphetamine or amphetamine labs.

Methamphetamine is, in fact, a simple drug to produce. After being introduced to the drug, many abusers learn that methamphetamine can be manufactured using common household products found at department and hardware stores. These ingredients are not only readily available, but also inexpensive. For approximately \$100 in materials, a “cook” can produce \$1,000 worth of methamphetamine. Items such as rock salt, battery acid, red phosphorous road flares, pool acid, and iodine crystals can be utilized to substitute for some of the necessary chemicals. Precursor chemicals such as pseudoephedrine can be extracted from common, over-the-counter cold medications. A clandestine lab operator can utilize relatively common items such as mason jars, coffee filters, hot plates, pressure cookers, pillowcases, plastic tubing, gas cans, etc., to substitute for sophisticated laboratory equipment.

Another factor in the clandestine methamphetamine lab epidemic is the evolution of technology and the increased use of the Internet. While in the past, methamphetamine “chemists” closely guarded their “recipes”; today's age of modern computer technology has made “chemists” more willing to share their “recipes” of death. This form of information sharing allows wide dissemination of these techniques to anyone with computer access. Aside from marijuana, methamphetamine is the only widely abused illegal drug that is capable of being grown or readily manufactured by the abuser. A cocaine or heroin addict cannot produce cocaine or heroin, but a methamphetamine addict only has to turn on his computer to find a recipe identifying the chemicals and process required for production of the drug. Given the relative ease with which manufacturers are able to acquire precursor chemicals, and the unsophisticated nature of the production process, it is not difficult to see why this highly addictive drug and potentially explosive clandestine laboratories continue to appear across America.

### **Distribution Trends, Prices and Purity**

With the exception of the Caribbean Division, all DEA Field Divisions report that methamphetamine is produced in their areas, and most (19 of 21) report no decrease in production. Methamphetamine distribution is most pervasive in the Pacific, Southwest, and West Central regions of the United States. Distribution is slowly expanding in the Great Lakes, Mid-Atlantic, and Southeast regions. In the New England and New York/New Jersey regions, distribution of methamphetamine is very limited, and there has been little indication of any significant increase in distribution over the past year.

Of the 21 DEA Field Divisions, 15 identify the principal methamphetamine transporters in their areas as Mexican distributors. Mexican criminal groups control most mid-level and retail methamphetamine distribution in the Pacific, Southwest, and West Central regions as well as much of the distribution in the Great Lakes and Southeast regions. Mexican mid-level distributors sometimes supply methamphetamine to outlaw motorcycle gangs and Hispanic gangs for retail distribution throughout the country. Caucasian independent distributors are active throughout the country, particularly in the Great Lakes, Mid-Atlantic, and Southeast regions and in the Midwestern states of Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri, where methamphetamine produced in small laboratories is distributed to a limited number of local customers. Outlaw motorcycle gangs distribute methamphetamine throughout the country, including the Great Lakes region and are principal distributors in the New England and New York/New Jersey regions. Asian methamphetamine distributors (Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Thai, and Vietnamese) are active in the Pacific region, although Mexican criminal groups trafficking in “ice” methamphetamine have supplanted Asian criminal groups as the dominant distributors of this drug in Hawaii.

Regionally, methamphetamine prices vary throughout the United States. At the wholesale level, prices range from \$3,000 to \$17,000 per pound in the West, and from \$5,000 to \$23,000 per pound in the Midwest, Southeast, and Northeast areas of the country. Prices for ounce quantities range from \$300 to \$2,200 and gram prices range from \$20 to \$200.

The purity of methamphetamine analyzed by DEA laboratories varies widely across the United States. The average purity of DEA methamphetamine exhibits has declined significantly from 71.9 percent in 1994 to 44.0 percent in 2002. This decrease in purity is partially attributed to international chemical control efforts that reduced the supply of those chemicals needed to produce high-quality methamphetamine.

### **Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations**

For the first time in law enforcement history, beginning around 1994, Mexican drug trafficking organizations operating out of Mexico and California began to take control of the production and distribution of methamphetamine from outlaw motorcycle gangs. DEA estimates that the majority of the U.S. methamphetamine production and distribution is controlled by Mexican crime groups operating out of Mexico, California

and the Southwestern United States. Outlaw motorcycle gangs remain active in methamphetamine production, but do not produce anywhere near the quantities now being distributed by the Mexican organizations. The dominant presence of these Mexican methamphetamine trafficking groups can be partially attributed to their access to chemicals and established distribution networks.

These groups have established contacts with chemical suppliers in Europe, Canada, Asia and the Far East, who provide access to precursor chemicals, reagents and solvents. The resulting availability of ton quantities of chemicals, such as ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, has permitted these groups to establish and operate large-scale clandestine laboratories in Mexico and California. These laboratories are capable of producing unprecedented quantities of methamphetamine, saturating the wholesale/retail markets throughout the United States. Many of the “super labs” (laboratories capable of producing 10 or more pounds of methamphetamine within a production cycle) seized in the United States have been associated with Mexican traffickers.

These trafficking groups are also often involved in the distribution of other illicit drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, and heroin. Through the distribution of these illicit substances, over the years these groups have established transportation and distribution networks throughout the United States. The exploitation of these existing distribution networks and the production capability of their clandestine laboratories has enabled the Mexican groups to establish national dominance in the manufacture and distribution of methamphetamine.

Four recent large seizures of pseudoephedrine illustrate Mexican traffickers' ability to obtain large quantities of precursor chemicals from international sources and to adapt to changes in the availability of Canadian pseudoephedrine. Between March 21, and April 25, 2003, in excess of 22 million pseudoephedrine tablets were seized in Panama and Laredo, Texas. The tablets were manufactured in Hong Kong and destined for Mexico.

Reporting on the exact number of methamphetamine clandestine laboratories seized in Mexico is inconsistent. Official Government of Mexico figures as reported in the International Narcotics Control Strategic Report (INCSR) reflect that 10 labs were destroyed in 2002, down from the 18 seized in 2001. In 2002, according to information provided by Mexican authorities in Baja California, however, 53 labs were seized in Baja alone and Mexico Interpol reports that 13 labs were seized or destroyed. This discrepancy may reflect the limited resources and lack of coordination in Mexico to successfully attack the problem. In any case, the relatively small number of clandestine laboratories seized belies the large-scale production of methamphetamine that is believed to occur in Mexico.

### **The Spread of Small Toxic Labs**

On a much smaller production and distribution scale are the independent operators of small toxic labs (STLs), which collectively account for approximately 95

percent of the clandestine laboratories seized in the United States. These STLs produce ounce quantities of methamphetamine for local use and distribution while generating significant quantities of hazardous waste during each production cycle. Small, rural communities are now recognizing the fiscal, environmental, health, and safety issues that are associated with the operation of these independent laboratories.

STLs initially emerged as a problem in the Midwest in the early to mid-1990s. After the introduction of methamphetamine to this area by Mexican trafficking organizations, users discovered that they could produce their own methamphetamine. These operations became extremely popular because of the simplicity of the Birch method (commonly known as the “Nazi” method) and pseudoephedrine/iodine/red phosphorus methods of manufacturing methamphetamine. Each of these methods relies on readily available and inexpensive products and an uncomplicated production process to manufacture methamphetamine. The ease of manufacturing and availability of chemicals contributed greatly to the dramatic growth and spread of these labs throughout the United States. Anhydrous ammonia, while not readily available at the retail level, is extensively used in rural areas. Anhydrous ammonia can be easily stolen from nurse tanks stored on farms or at farming cooperatives, train tanker cars that transport the chemical, or from one of the anhydrous pipelines.

The size of the lab does not matter when it comes to the danger level involved. In fact, the STLs are often more dangerous than the larger operations. The “cooks” are generally less experienced and have little regard for the consequences arising from the use of toxic, explosive, and poisonous chemicals. EPIC reported that during 2002, there were 126 explosions and 208 fires as the result of clandestine laboratories. The threats posed by clandestine laboratories are not limited to fire, explosions, poisonous gas, drug abuse and booby traps; the chemical contamination caused by the hazardous waste also endangers the nation’s environment.

The combination of demand, ease of production, and a rural setting has led to the explosion of STLs that now plague the Midwestern and Southern States, and has continued eastward to New York. Despite the fact that the majority of these labs produce relatively small amounts of methamphetamine, their proliferation has imposed terrific burdens on law enforcement and other agencies in states such as Missouri. In 1992, Missouri reported only two clandestine laboratory seizures; in 2002, 1,046 labs were seized in that state. When dumpsites and other seizures (chemicals, glassware and equipment) are included, this total climbs to 2,747.

### **Enforcement Initiatives**

DEA’s efforts to address methamphetamine production and distribution incorporate the assets of the Offices of Domestic and International Operations, Diversion, Intelligence, Forensic Sciences, and Training. DEA focuses assets on both domestic groups, which represent the largest number of methamphetamine laboratories seized in the United States, and international organizations, particularly Mexican groups which

produce the majority of methamphetamine trafficked in the U.S. The following are key components of DEA's methamphetamine initiative:

### **1. Elimination of Small Toxic Labs**

Working arm-in-arm with state and local law enforcement counterparts, DEA eliminates STL operators that impact communities throughout the United States. In addition to providing investigative support to state and local agencies, DEA assists state and local authorities with hazardous waste removal, prevention, public awareness, training, and legislative programs that are associated with methamphetamine. DEA cases involving methamphetamine have almost tripled from 1,171 in 1995 to over 3,000 in 2002.

### **2. Chemical Control**

DEA uses the precursor control program to identify and target the most significant sources of methamphetamine precursor chemicals. DEA works domestically with legitimate handlers of precursor chemicals to ensure that these chemicals are not diverted for illicit use.

### **3. Priority Targeting Program**

One of DEA's most aggressive enforcement efforts to attack these organizations is the utilization of the Priority Targeting Program. Once identified and designated as priority targets, these investigations are provided with substantial financial and manpower resources. Since the inception of the Priority Targeting Program in 2000, DEA has dismantled or disrupted over 60 priority target methamphetamine trafficking organizations.

Utilizing Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigations, DEA targets significant methamphetamine manufacturers and traffickers. In 2001, DEA conducted 250 methamphetamine OCDETF investigations, which represented approximately 19 percent of the total DEA OCDETF investigations conducted that year. Thus far in 2003, DEA has initiated 87 methamphetamine OCDETF investigations representing approximately 25 percent of the total of the OCDETF cases.

Operation Stopgap was a cooperative effort directed by DEA's Nashville Resident Office in conjunction with local law enforcement, which identified, targeted, and federally prosecuted small independent laboratory operators in a six county area known as the Cumberland Plateau. This OCDETF case culminated during October 2001, with the arrests of over 175 individuals and the seizure of approximately 150 methamphetamine laboratories.

In April of this year, 18 individuals were arrested in New Mexico and California, in connection with a Mexican methamphetamine and crack cocaine distribution organization. As part of this continuing investigation, in June, DEA's Albuquerque

District Office and state and local agencies arrested 12 additional individuals on federal charges and 38 on State of New Mexico charges. This organization was responsible for the distribution of 60 pounds of methamphetamine on a monthly basis. Over \$291,000 in assets were seized in addition to 12 vehicles, 24 firearms (including 4 assault-type weapons), and 21 pounds of methamphetamine.

In May of this year, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma sentenced Norma El-Samad to 97 months incarceration on drug and money laundering charges. El-Samad owned Norma's Enterprises of Oklahoma City, which purchased over 14 million 60mg. pseudoephedrine tablets from Summa Laboratories in Mineral Wells, Texas. DEA was able to provide convincing evidence that most, if not all, of the pseudoephedrine was directed toward clandestine methamphetamine laboratory operations.

In August of 2002, DEA working with the Riverside (California) County Sheriff's Department and the Riverside Police Department, arrested over 57 individuals in connection with a two-year investigation targeting a Mexican trafficking organization, which was involved in the manufacture and distribution of methamphetamine. Investigators seized in excess of 33 pounds of methamphetamine, 196 gallons of methamphetamine in solution, 8 pounds of "ice", 80 exotic vehicles and over \$500,000 in cash.

### **Canadian Pseudoephedrine Issues**

Pseudoephedrine, an essential precursor for the production of methamphetamine, was initially diverted to Mexican trafficking groups for utilization in "super labs" by "rogue" DEA registered manufacturers and distributors. Operation Mountain Express I and II were directed primarily against these "rogue" chemical companies. These operations proved effective in cutting off the supply of domestic origin pseudoephedrine to the large Mexican controlled "super labs." However, in 2000, pseudoephedrine of Canadian origin began to appear in "super labs" in the western United States, primarily due to the culmination of Operation Mountain Express I and II and the non-existence of effective Canadian regulations governing pseudoephedrine. This new source for pseudoephedrine can be dramatically illustrated by the increase in the amount of pseudoephedrine imported by Canada beginning in 2000. As reported by the Canadian government, in 1996, approximately 30,000 kilograms of pseudoephedrine were imported into Canada. In 2001, Canada imported approximately 175,000 kilograms of pseudoephedrine, nearly a 500 percent increase.

As a result of this alarming trend, DEA in conjunction with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) initiated Operation Mountain Express III. This investigation targeted individuals responsible for smuggling pseudoephedrine of Canadian origin into the United States, many of whom were of Middle Eastern descent. Once the Canadian pseudoephedrine was successfully smuggled into the United States, the pseudoephedrine was sold directly to Mexican organizations that operated the large "super labs" in the west. This operation was extremely successful, resulting in the arrest of 136 individuals,

the seizure of 35.8 tons of Canadian origin pseudoephedrine, 179 lbs. of methamphetamine, six methamphetamine labs and \$4.5 million in assets. To date, Operation Mountain Express Phases I, II and III has netted over 370 arrests, the seizure of 49.4 tons of pseudoephedrine, and over \$17.4 million in assets.

However, major concerns remained in the Canadian pseudoephedrine problem. DEA sought to address this issue with the culmination of Operation Northern Star on April 15, 2003. This international enforcement operation employed a comprehensive strategy targeting the entire methamphetamine trafficking process, including the suppliers of precursor chemicals, chemical brokers, transporters, manufacturers, distributors and the money launderers who helped conceal their criminal proceeds. As part of this investigation, six executives from three Canadian chemical companies were targeted. All sold bulk quantities of pseudoephedrine to methamphetamine manufacturers in the United States, with the full knowledge that their sales were intended for the illegal production of the highly addictive and dangerous drug methamphetamine. In April 2003, DEA and the RCMP announced the arrests of over 65 individuals in ten cities throughout the United States and Canada, including the six executives from the three Canadian chemical companies. The 34,000 pounds of pseudoephedrine seized in this investigation could have produced approximately 20,000 pounds of methamphetamine.

Prior to January 9, 2003, Canada had no effective laws regulating the importation, distribution or exportation of pseudoephedrine, the primary precursor chemical used to manufacture methamphetamine. With DEA's assistance, the Canadian authorities developed new regulations implementing a previously enacted law. These regulations require individuals who produce, import and export pseudoephedrine to have licenses and permits issued by the Canadian Health Ministry.

While it is still too early to draw definitive conclusions, initial indications show that these initiatives have been effective. A review of the statistics on Canadian pseudoephedrine tablets seized shows a significant reduction since January 2003. In 2002, over 22 million tablets were seized and, as of May 31, 2003, only 12,000 tablets have been seized. These seizures have been identified as being Canadian in origin because packaging, lot numbers, and labeling are consistent with previous seizures of Canadian pseudoephedrine. The decrease in seizures may be due to a combination of factors; however, we believe that increased DEA enforcement efforts targeting Canadian pseudoephedrine and the implementation of the Canadian chemical regulations are the main causes of the decrease.

### **Efforts to Control Pseudoephedrine/Precursor Trafficking**

DEA continues to address the trafficking of methamphetamine's most important precursor, pseudoephedrine, and other precursor chemicals through voluntary, regulatory, and legislative means. Although DEA chemical investigations have increased by 400 percent since 1999, DEA also undertakes yearly "outreach" liaison and education with the regulated chemical industry for the purpose of preventing chemical diversion to methamphetamine traffickers. During September of 2002, DEA hosted a Chemical

Industry Conference in which representatives of chemical handlers were provided updates on chemical diversion issues worldwide. A similar conference was hosted by DEA with major pseudoephedrine retailers during February of 2003.

DEA aggressively investigates applications from companies who wish to distribute List I chemicals (27 chemicals designated by the Administrator of DEA and regulated under the Controlled Substance Act that in addition to legitimate uses, can be utilized in manufacturing a controlled substance). Between 2000 and 2002, 74 registrants surrendered their registrations, 6 were revoked, and 3 were restricted. List I chemical applicants withdrew another 710 applications during that same time period.

DEA also operates a Warning Letter Program wherein manufacturers and distributors of pseudoephedrine and ephedrine tablets are notified when their product was found in illicit settings. To date, DEA has issued 634 warning letters. These letters form a foundation for criminal, civil, and/or administrative action against registrants who distribute List I chemicals.

In June 2002, in conjunction with the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), DEA hosted an International Meeting on Amphetamine-type Stimulant (ATS) Precursors in Washington, D.C. The INCB is responsible for coordinating international chemical control efforts worldwide. The delegates from 38 nations represented all major ATS precursor manufacturing, exporting, transiting, and importing countries, as well as those countries where illicit ATS production takes place. The meeting resulted in "Project Prism," an international initiative aimed at assisting governments in developing and implementing operating procedures to more effectively control and monitor trade in ATS precursors in order to prevent diversion.

DEA continues its support of the U.S.-Mexico Bilateral Chemical Control Working Group. This partnership is made up of experts in chemical control, and focuses on methamphetamine precursor chemicals in order to promote and enhance the Mexico's diversion control program. The group works to develop and implement strategies aimed at increasing bilateral communication and cooperation regarding chemical control, specifically ephedrine and pseudoephedrine.

As methamphetamine production continues to pose significant risks to public health and safety in the United States, DEA is cautiously optimistic that precursor chemical controls, combined with aggressive local law enforcement efforts in chemical interdiction, can produce positive results.

### **Methamphetamine Labs and the Environment**

Methamphetamine trafficking not only devastates America's population, but also the environment. Methamphetamine laboratories create environmental hazards with enormous cleanup costs. The chemicals used to produce methamphetamine are extremely flammable and toxic. Production of every pound of methamphetamine yields up to five pounds of waste chemicals such as lye, red phosphorus, hydriodic acid, and

iodine that contaminate land, streams and rivers, and public sewer systems. Cleanup costs have risen dramatically, draining the budgets of federal, state and county governments, as well as those of private owners. Often the value of the contaminated property is less than the cleanup costs and owners simply walk away from their investments leaving the cleanup costs to the state or local governments. Many of the methamphetamine laboratories seized are located in agricultural areas resulting in the dumping of high volumes of hazardous waste on farmlands and in water sources. Authorities have found barrels, glassware, hoses, and other waste from methamphetamine laboratories in irrigation canals. The impact on local agriculture is unknown, but is believed to be substantial.

To illustrate the catastrophic effects methamphetamine production has on the environment, consider what took place in Brandon, Florida just a few weeks ago. In July 2003, an individual from Brandon was arrested for operating two methamphetamine labs. He was also suspected of sabotaging an anhydrous ammonia pipeline in order to obtain the chemical, which is used in manufacturing methamphetamine. The release of the anhydrous ammonia caused an immense cloud of toxic gas to hover over a main boulevard, forcing 2,000 students from nearby schools to be relocated to other schools for two days. It took emergency workers using airtight equipment a full day to get the leak under control.

In another equally disturbing case, in October 2002, police in Hockerville, Oklahoma located an old mine sinkhole, which was nearly full of equipment and chemicals used to manufacture methamphetamine. The sinkhole was approximately 25 feet across and more than 30 feet deep. DEA estimated that toxic waste from approximately 200 methamphetamine lab operations was deposited in the shaft over the previous two years. After responding to the scene, DEA cleaned up the hazardous waste from the site; however, DEA is not equipped to cleanup the contaminated soil or assess any potential problems associated with contaminated water in the area.

### **Hazardous Waste Cleanup**

As DEA has heightened its enforcement efforts concerning methamphetamine trafficking in recent years, state and local agencies have also witnessed an increase in the number of organizations operating illicit methamphetamine laboratories, resulting in a dramatic increase in the number of clandestine laboratories seized throughout the United States. When a federal, state or local agency seizes a clandestine methamphetamine laboratory, EPA regulations require that the agency ensure that all hazardous waste materials are safely removed from the site in accordance with the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (40 CFR 261 and 262). With regard to environmentally sound cleanup of clandestine drug laboratories, DEA has enlisted the services of the private sector. These companies provide hazardous waste removal and disposal services to DEA, as well as state and local law enforcement agencies.

DEA, along with the state and local law enforcement agencies, becomes the “generator” of hazardous waste when clandestine drug laboratories are seized. As the

“generator”, law enforcement bears the responsibility for ensuring that the wastes from clandestine drug laboratories are managed in compliance with all applicable health, safety, transportation, and environmental requirements.

In 1990, DEA established a Hazardous Waste Cleanup Program to address environmental concerns from the seizure of clandestine drug laboratories. This program promotes the safety of law enforcement personnel and the public by using qualified companies with specialized training and equipment to remove hazardous waste. Costs associated with the cleanup of these labs have been reduced several hundred dollars per response since the implementation of DEA’s new FY 2003 contract.

DEA’s hazardous waste program, with the assistance of the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program, supports and funds the cleanup of a majority of the laboratories seized in the United States. Between 1992 and 2002, the number of cleanups increased from 394 to over 7,000. Even though the number of cleanups has increased by 1,700 percent, the average cost per cleanup has continued to decrease since DEA first began using contractor services in the early 1990s. Currently, the average cost per cleanup is \$1,900, down from \$3,300 in FY 2002.

In FY 2003, Congress provided cleanup funds in the amount of \$2.7 million in Asset Forfeiture Fund monies for cleanup of DEA seizures, \$4.1 million in appropriated monies for DEA and state and local seizures, and \$57 million (including \$20 million for cleanup) in the COPS funding for state and local seizures.

### **Methamphetamine Laboratories and Children**

In addition to the evident toll on law enforcement resources, the demands on medical, social, environmental, and public health and safety services continue to grow. This is particularly true when it comes to the health and safety of children exposed to the ravages of this illegal substance. STLs account for the vast majority of clandestine labs seized and are often discovered in vehicles, buildings, and homes. Many of these lab sites are also locations where children live and play. In 2002, over 2,000 children were present during the seizure of clandestine laboratories nationwide. Twenty-two of those children encountered were reported injured and two were killed.

More than any other controlled substance, methamphetamine trafficking endangers children through exposure to drug use/abuse, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, toxic chemicals, hazardous waste, fire, and explosion. In response to these tragic phenomena, DEA has enhanced its Victim Witness Program to identify, inform, refer, and report these incidents to the proper state agencies. Each of DEA’s Field Divisions has a Victim/Witness Coordinator to ensure that all endangered children are reported. DEA prepares an annual report for the Attorney General regarding this matter. This DEA program guarantees that endangered children are identified and that the child’s immediate safety is addressed at the scene through coordination with child welfare and health care service providers.

DEA also works with various state and local Drug Endangered Children (DEC) programs. DEC programs protect endangered children through the formation of multi-disciplinary teams, which consist of child protective services, medical and public health professionals, environmental, and law enforcement personnel. DEC ensures that child endangerment cases are developed along with the clandestine laboratory investigation. DEA encourages regional U.S. Attorney's, when applicable, to utilize the enhanced sentencing guidelines promulgated as directed in the "Children's Health Act of 2000". This legislation mandates severe penalties for methamphetamine manufacturers whose operations pose a threat to minors.

### **Clan Lab Training**

In 1987, DEA created a special training unit for clandestine laboratory safety/certification training. As mandated by 29 CFR 1910.120, all federal, state, and local law enforcement officers must receive at least 24 hours of hazardous chemical handling training (specific Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for courses and equipment), prior to entering a clandestine drug laboratory.

As the number of nationwide clandestine laboratory seizures continues to mount into the thousands, there has been a corresponding demand for related training from state and local law enforcement organizations. Since 1998, with funding received originally through the COPS program and then through direct appropriations to the annual budget, DEA has offered a robust training program for state and local officers. DEA provides basic and advanced clandestine laboratory safety training for state and local law enforcement officers and Special Agents at the DEA Clandestine Laboratory Training Facility in Quantico, Virginia. Established instruction includes the Basic Clandestine Laboratory Certification School, the Advanced Site Safety School, and the Clandestine Laboratory Tactical School.

Each course exceeds OSHA-mandated minimum safety requirements, lasting approximately one week, and is provided at no cost to qualified state and local law enforcement officers. The specialized Clandestine Laboratory Training Unit also provides in-service training and seminars for law enforcement groups such as the Clandestine Laboratory Investigator's Association (CLIA) and the International Association of Chief's of Police (IACP). The Unit conducts a number of courses off-site each year to meet regional training demands and will additionally provide annual recertification training as required by OSHA.

Law enforcement officers who graduate from the Clandestine Laboratory Basic Certification School are issued over \$2,500 in specialized clandestine laboratory safety equipment. Since 1997, DEA has conducted numerous clandestine laboratory schools and has provided basic training/certification to over 9,300 Special Agents and state and local law enforcement officers from across the country. Since 1999, DEA has trained approximately 69,000 students in clandestine laboratory awareness. Utilizing the advances of technology, in FY 2000, a video broadcast on Clandestine Laboratory Awareness was transmitted to approximately 10,000 state and local personnel.

## **Conclusion**

DEA is combating the methamphetamine epidemic currently being experienced by the United States on several fronts. DEA is targeting Mexican trafficking organizations, who control the majority of the methamphetamine produced and distributed in this country. Additionally, DEA is working closely with state and local law enforcement to eliminate the spread of small toxic labs. DEA's efforts also include preventing diversion and targeting the traffickers of precursor chemicals on a domestic and international level, as well as providing training and assistance to state and local law enforcement officers throughout the United States.

As a single mission agency, DEA will continue to devote its resources to identify, investigate and dismantle the organizations responsible for the spread of methamphetamine across our country.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee today. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have at the appropriate time.