

UNCLASSIFIED

2020

DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION

NDTA

NATIONAL DRUG THREAT
ASSESSMENT

STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE SECTION



UNCLASSIFIED

U.S. Drug Situation

UNCLASSIFIED

The trafficking and abuse of illicit drugs inflict tremendous harm upon individuals, families, and communities throughout the United States.

- Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), criminal groups, and violent gangs
 - Violence, intimidation, theft, and financial crimes
- Criminal activities of these organizations operating in the United States extend well beyond drug trafficking
 - Human smuggling
 - Firearms trafficking
 - Public corruption

UNCLASSIFIED



U.S. Drug Situation

UNCLASSIFIED

- Pandemic of COVID-19 & associated restrictions impact on drug trafficking
- Illicit Fentanyl: remains primary driver behind the epidemic of drug overdose deaths
- Heroin & Prescription Opioids: remain significant public health issues and challenge to law enforcement
- Methamphetamine: a persistent threat with deaths and seizures sharply rising
- Cocaine: consistently a prevalent threat
- Marijuana: state legalization remains challenging
- New Psychoactive Substances (NPS): continual concern

UNCLASSIFIED



Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations



UNCLASSIFIED

Mexican TCOs are the greatest drug trafficking threat to the United States

- Control most of the U.S. drug market
- Established varied transportation routes
- Advanced communications capabilities
- Hold strong affiliations with criminal groups & gangs in the United States.

Mexican TCO growth through business alliances with:

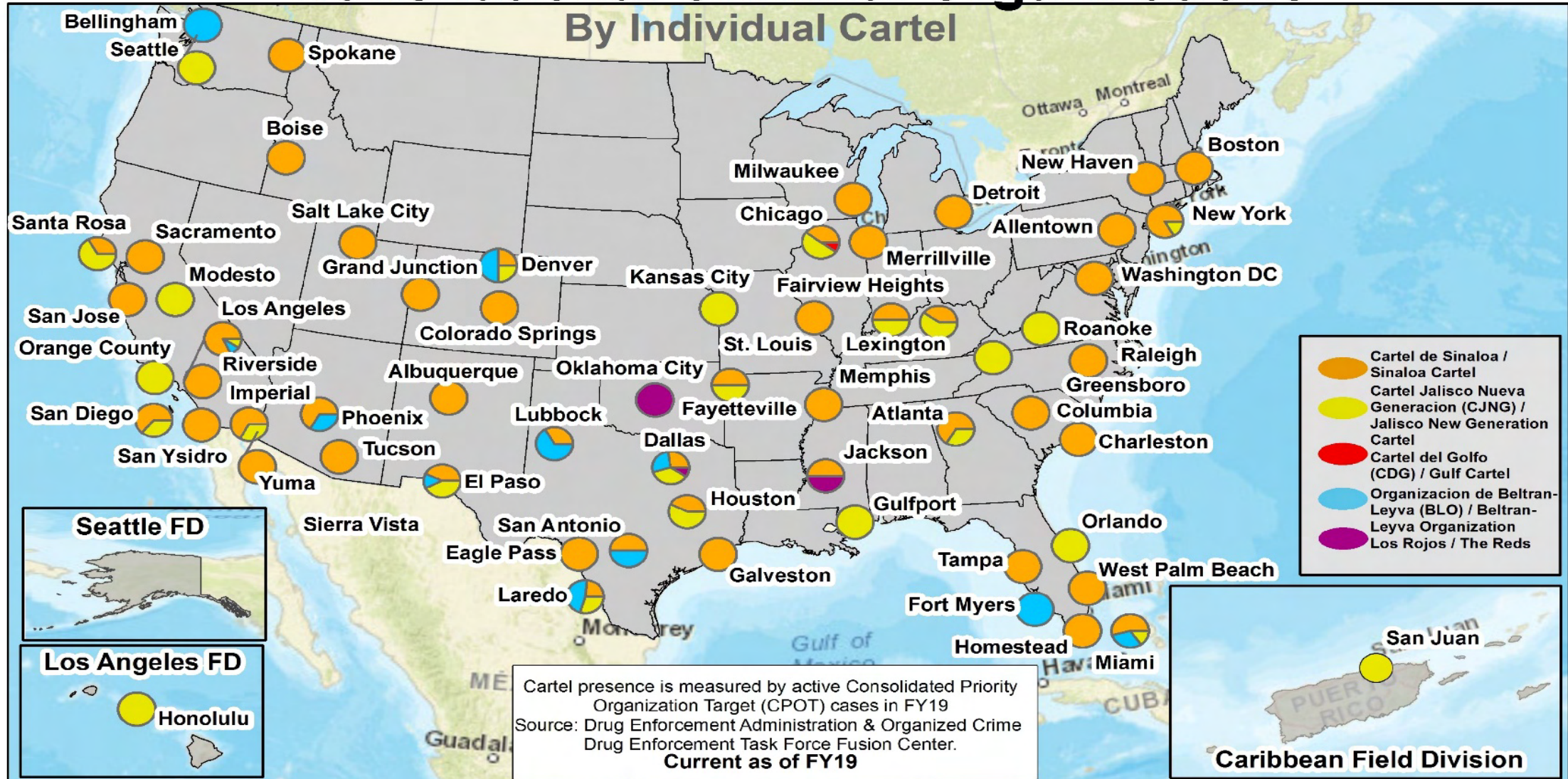
- Independent DTOs
- Asian MLOs
- U.S.-based Gangs

Mexican cartels established labs for fentanyl synthesis

- Decline in fentanyl produced in China

UNCLASSIFIED

(U) United States: Areas of Influence of Major Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations



Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations


- *Significant Mexican TCOs Currently Active in the United States*

- Sinaloa Cartel
- Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG)
- Beltran-Leyva Organization (BLO)
- Los Zetas and Cartel del Noreste (CDN)
- Guerreros Unidos (GU)
- Gulf Cartel
- Juarez Cartel and La Linea
- La Familia Michoacána (LFM)
- Los Rojos

Drug Enforcement Administration (TestPage)
Sponsored · 6

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration is seeking the public's help in locating Nemesio Ruben Oseguera Cervantes "El Mencho". A substantial reward is offered for information leading up to his arrest.

REWARD
OF UP TO
\$10,000,000.00 USD
FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO THE ARREST OF:



Nemesio Ruben Oseguera Cervantes
"EL MENCHO"
Call: +1-213-237-9990

DEA.GOV
Submit Tips To: MENCHOTIPS@usdoj.gov [Learn More](#)
Fugitive may be armed and dangerous.

Like Comment Share

- *The Most Influential TCOs in Mexico are the Sinaloa Cartel and CJNG*

- Sinaloa Cartel presence in 15 of the 32 Mexican states
- CJNG presence in 23 of the 32 Mexican states

Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations

Drug Smuggling and Transportation Methods

- Commercial & passenger vehicles
- Tunnels
- Maritime vessels
- Aerial methods & aircraft
- Pedestrians

Money Laundering Activity

- Bulk cash in vehicles or on couriers
- Banking, structured deposits
- Cryptocurrencies
- Asian MLOs



Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations

Impact of COVID-19 on Mexican TCOs

- Long term operations not significantly hindered
- Increase in drug pricing to users
- Financial circumstances impacted due to transportation disruptions



Camioneta del CJNG | @LPueblo2



Illicit Opioids & Heroin

UNCLASSIFIED

U.S. fentanyl market is increasingly supplied by Mexican cartels

Fentanyl remains primary driver behind drug overdoses

Heroin and fentanyl markets in the United States are intertwined

Heroin often adulterated with fentanyl



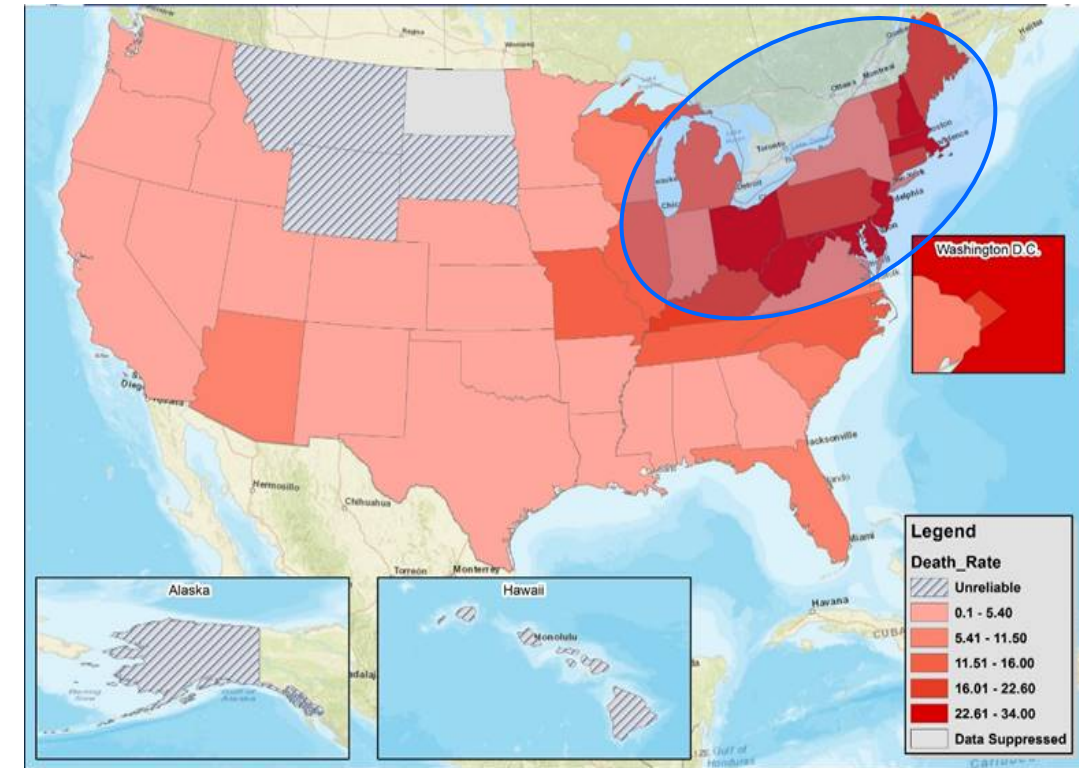
UNCLASSIFIED

Fentanyl



- Mexico-based TCOs are increasingly supplying fentanyl to the United States
- Seizures at the Southwest Border are increasing
- Synthetic opioid deaths increased in 2018
- Fentanyl-laced counterfeit pills are widely available

Age-adjusted Rates of Overdose Deaths Involving Synthetic Opioids Other than Methadone by State, 2018



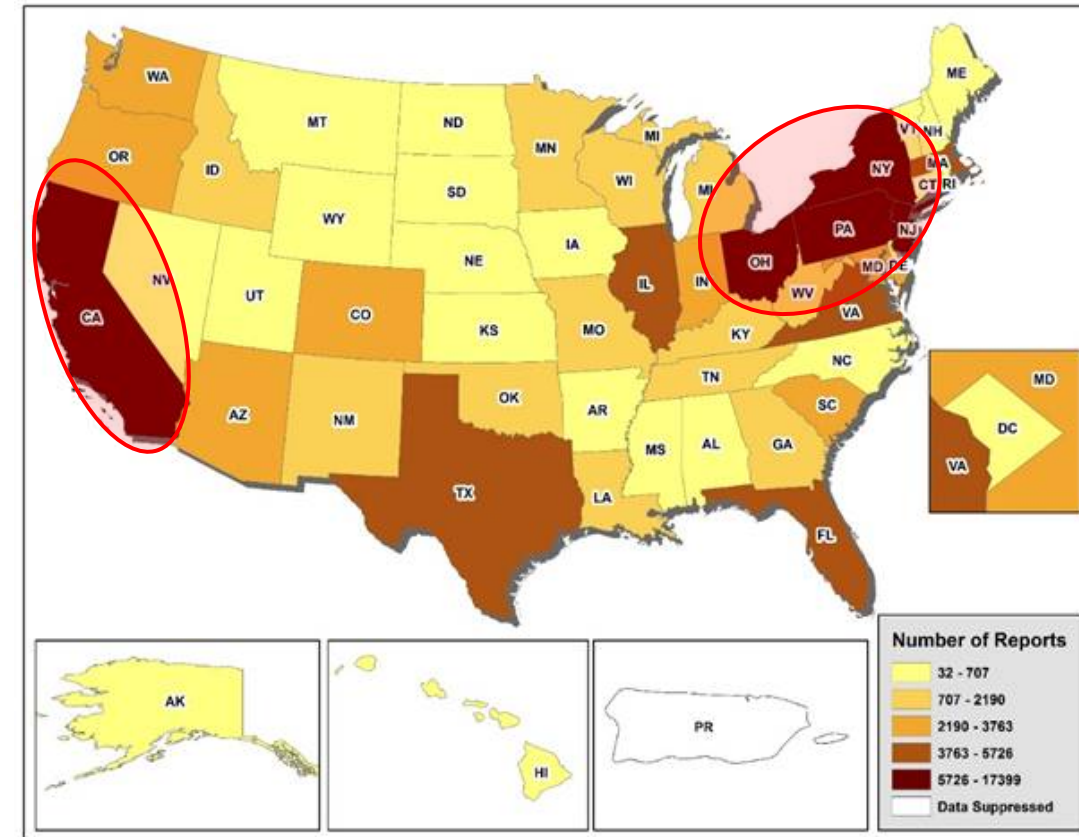
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Heroin



- Mexico remains primary source of heroin in United States
- Heroin availability remains high in the United States
- Deaths involving heroin decreased by four percent
- Poppy cultivation in Mexico decreased, but heroin seizures at the Southwest Border increased

DEA Heroin Seizures by State, 2019



Source: DEA

Methamphetamine

Readily available across the country

Increasing in purity, while remaining low-cost

Southwest Border remains main entry point

Methamphetamine use is expanding nationwide

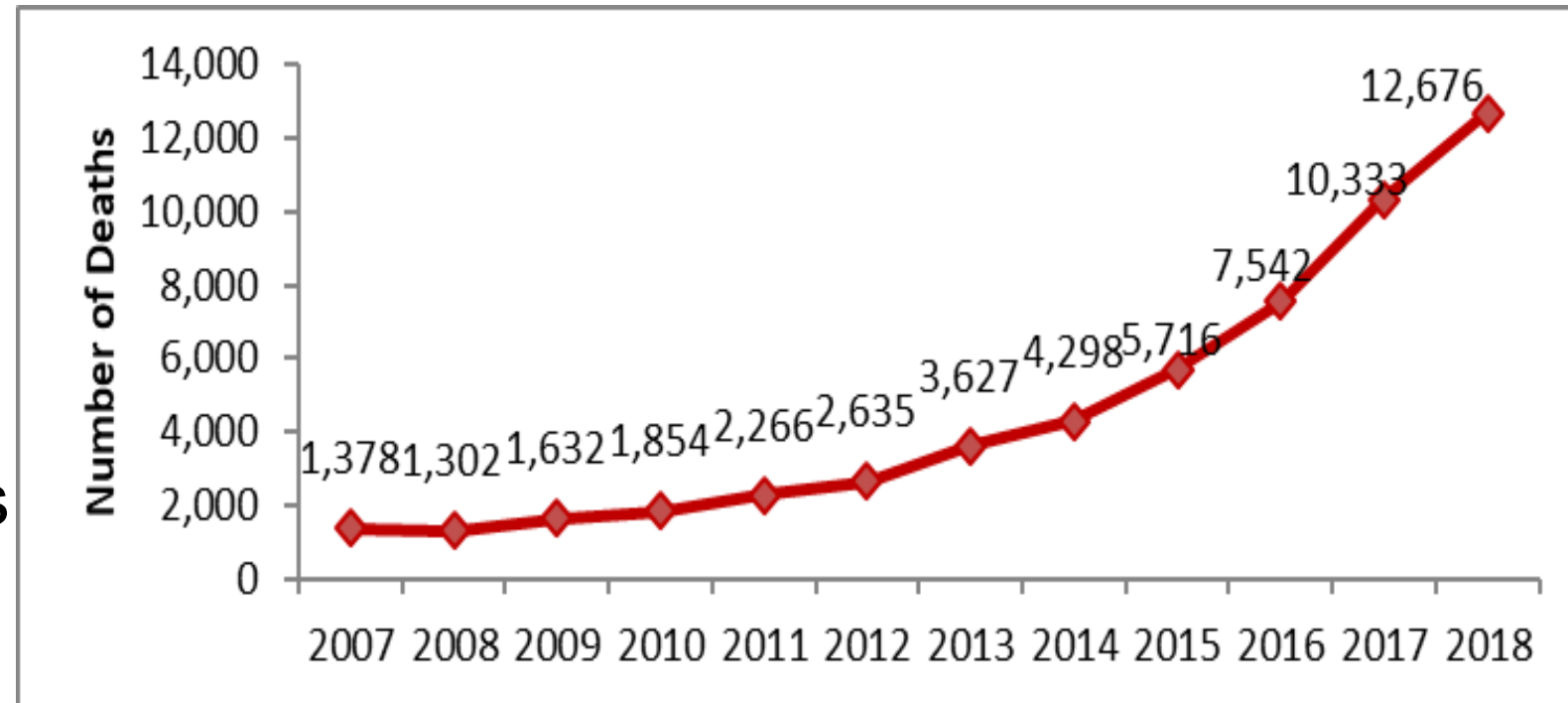


Methamphetamine



- Methamphetamine seizures are increasing across the United States
- Mexico-based TCOs are primary producers
- Domestic clan lab seizures are decreasing

**Psychostimulant-involved
Drug Poisoning Deaths, 2007 – 2018**



Source: CDC

Cocaine

Readily available across the United States

Cocaine-related overdose deaths increased

Nationwide seizures increased

Cocaine production reached record highs

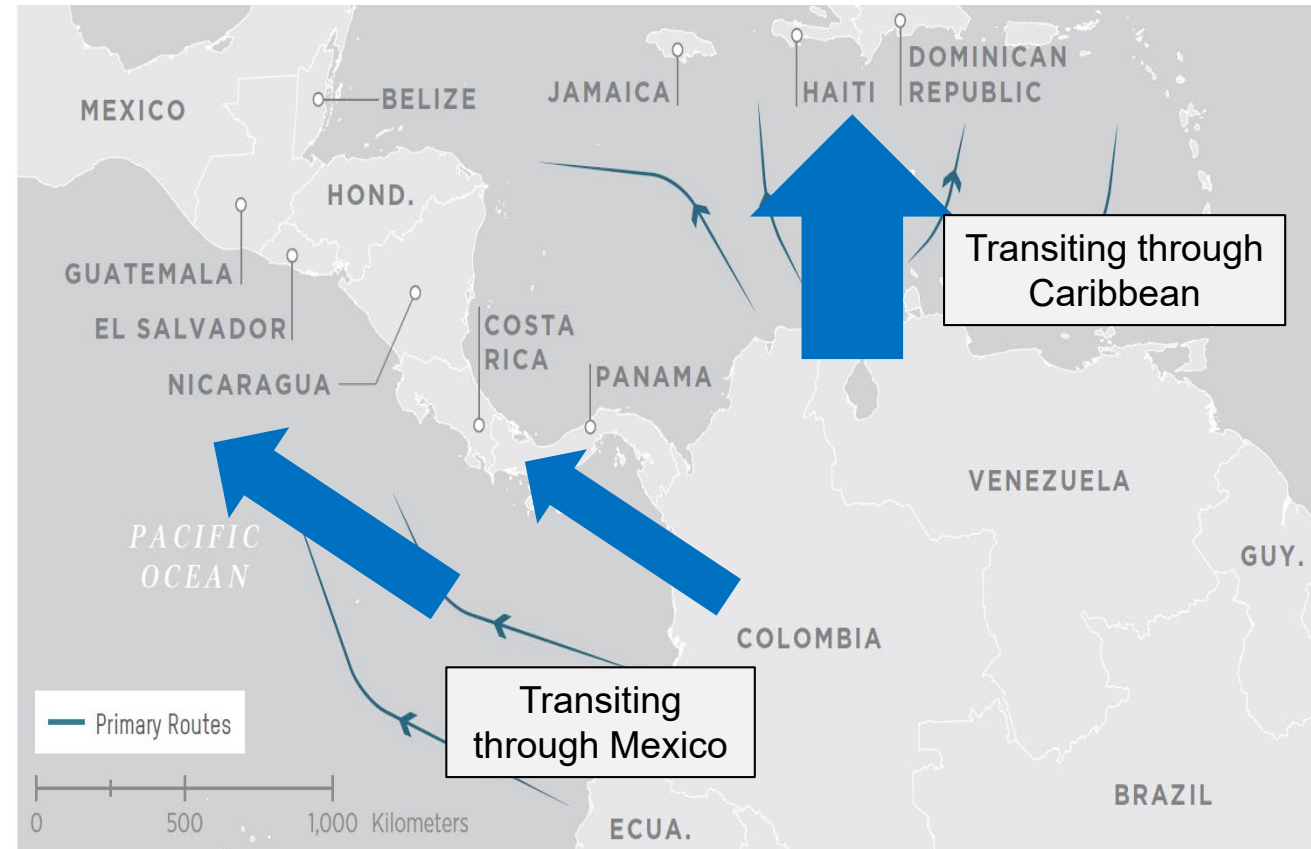


Cocaine



- Most DEA seizures occurred along the Southwest Border and the Caribbean Corridor
- Mexico-based TCOs control distribution, but Colombian TCOs control production/supply
- In 2019, about 74% of cocaine documented departing South America toward the United States transited the Eastern Pacific

Trafficking to Mexico, South America, and the Caribbean



Source: U.S. Government database, 2019

Controlled Prescription Drugs

UNCLASSIFIED

CPD availability in illicit markets remains high throughout United States

CPD abuse levels and related deaths decreased in 2018

CPDs are the second most abused illicit substance



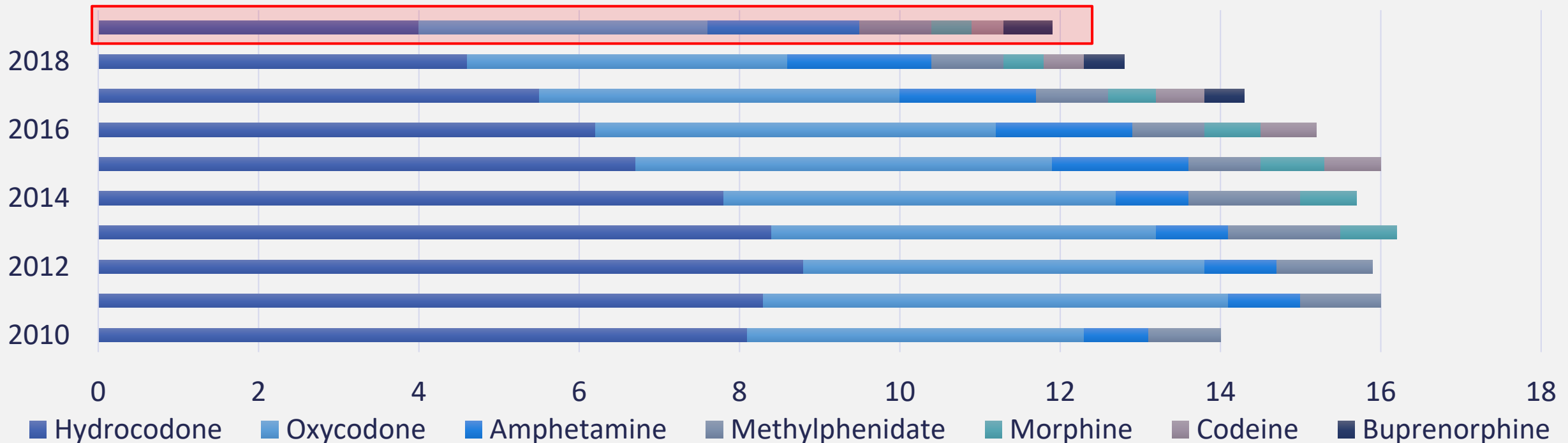
UNCLASSIFIED

Controlled Prescription Drugs (CPD)



- CPD abuse decreased, but remains at high levels
- Hydrocodone products are the most commonly misused pain relievers
- Majority of pain reliever abusers obtained their CPD from friend or relative

Top Controlled Prescription Drugs Sold to Domestic Retail Level Purchasers in Billions of Dosage Units, 2010-2019



Marijuana

UNCLASSIFIED

The most commonly used illicit drug in the United States

Readily available throughout the nation

Grown on public lands to the detriment of the local environment and water supply

National legal landscape is constantly evolving

Mexico is the primary source of foreign marijuana

Cuban traffickers establishing a presence in Colorado

UNCLASSIFIED

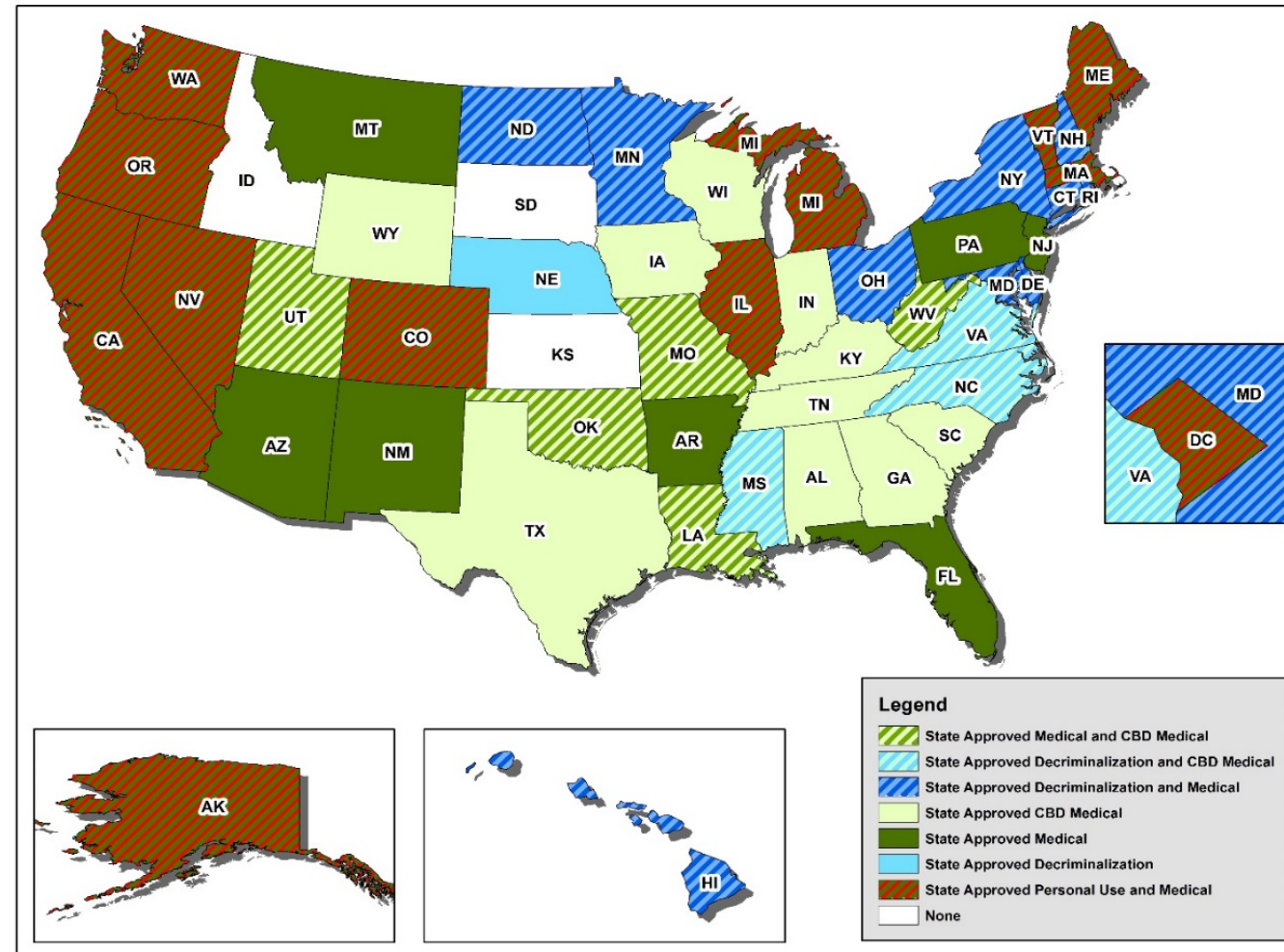


Marijuana



- Constantly evolving national landscape
- Variance of laws regarding marijuana regulations
- Black market production increasing

State Approved Marijuana Status, July 2020



New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

These are a diverse group of synthetic substances

The most common are synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones

Available to varying degree in the United States

Some emerging NPS are sold as counterfeits



Transnational Criminal Organizations



UNCLASSIFIED

Mexican TCOs

- Dominate wholesale importation and distribution of all major drugs

Colombian TCOs

- Control cocaine production and supply
- Partner with Mexican TCOs

Dominican TCOs

- Mid-level distribution networks in the Northeast
- Mostly self-sufficient organizations

Domestic Gangs

- Opportunistic – no specific allegiances
- Associated with violent crimes and street-level distribution and sales

UNCLASSIFIED

Illicit Finance

UNCLASSIFIED

Previous trends expected to continue

- Trade-based money laundering (TBML)
- Black Market Peso Exchange (BMPE)
- Asian MLOs
- Cryptocurrencies

Asian money laundering organizations & ties to Mexican TCOs

- Asian MLOs contracted by Mexican TCOs

COVID-19 disrupted money laundering

- Increase in bulk cash smuggling

UNCLASSIFIED




UNCLASSIFIED



Questions?

Paul E. Knierim
Chief of Intelligence

A large graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a blue jacket with "DEA INTELLIGENCE" written on the back, a group of seven people in business attire standing in front of a building with an American flag, and a syringe with pills at the bottom. A large blue arrow points from the group of people towards the right.

2020 DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION **NDTA** NATIONAL DRUG THREAT ASSESSMENT

UNCLASSIFIED