



Georgia

Drug Threat Assessment



National Drug Intelligence Center
and
Drug Enforcement Administration



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Preface

This report is a joint strategic assessment by the National Drug Intelligence Center and the Drug Enforcement Administration that addresses the status and outlook of the drug threat to Georgia. 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 Georgia.

Georgia Drug Threat Assessment

Executive Summary

The production, distribution, and abuse of illicit drugs and the diversion and abuse of pharmaceuticals pose serious threats to Georgia. Cocaine represents the principal drug threat to Georgia followed by marijuana. Methamphetamine is a rapidly increasing threat to the state. Heroin is a threat primarily in large urban areas such as Atlanta. Among other dangerous drugs, OxyContin and MDMA represent the primary threat. Atlanta has emerged as a regional drug transportation hub and distribution center from which various criminal groups transport and distribute cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, heroin, and other dangerous drugs.

Cocaine, particularly crack, represents the primary drug threat to Georgia. Cocaine is readily available in Georgia, and crack cocaine is the drug most often associated with violent crime in the state. Hispanic criminal groups, primarily Mexican, are the principal transporters of powdered cocaine into Georgia. These criminal groups generally transport the drug in tractor-trailers and private vehicles from Mexico, California, and southwestern states to Atlanta, which serves as a major cocaine transshipment point and wholesale distribution center for the southeastern United States. Hispanic criminal groups, primarily Mexican, are the principal wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine in Georgia. These groups supply powdered cocaine primarily to African American criminal groups, African American and Hispanic gangs and, to a lesser extent, Caucasian and Dominican criminal groups and various local independent dealers for subsequent distribution. Retail distribution of powdered cocaine is limited in Georgia; most powdered cocaine is converted to crack prior to distribution at the midlevel and retail level. African American criminal groups, African American and Hispanic gangs, and local independent dealers are wholesale distributors of crack cocaine in the state; wholesale distribution usually involves multiounce quantities. African American and Hispanic gangs frequently distribute retail quantities of crack cocaine in Georgia. African American and Mexican criminal groups and local independent dealers also distribute crack cocaine at the retail level, to a lesser extent.

Marijuana is the most widely available illicit drug in Georgia; however, the drug is considered a lower threat than cocaine because it is less often associated with violent crime. Most of the marijuana available in the state is produced in Mexico, although marijuana produced in Georgia and surrounding states also is

available. A limited amount of marijuana produced in Colombia and Jamaica is available as well. Mexican criminal groups using tractor-trailers and private vehicles are the dominant transporters of the Mexico-produced marijuana available in Georgia and are the primary wholesale distributors of Mexico-produced marijuana. Colombian criminal groups are the primary transporters and wholesale distributors of marijuana produced in Colombia, and Jamaican criminal groups are the primary transporters and wholesale distributors of marijuana produced in Jamaica. Caucasian and Mexican criminal groups and Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary wholesale distributors of marijuana produced in Georgia and surrounding states. African American and Hispanic gangs and African American and Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of marijuana in Georgia.

Methamphetamine poses an increasing threat to Georgia, particularly in northern and central sections of the state, and law enforcement officials and healthcare professionals report that a more diverse group is abusing the drug. In parts of northern Georgia, methamphetamine has emerged as the primary drug threat. Although methamphetamine-related treatment admissions have increased throughout the state, methamphetamine abuse has not yet become a problem in the Atlanta area. Most of the methamphetamine available in Georgia is produced by Mexican drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups in high volume laboratories in Mexico, California, and southwestern states. Methamphetamine also is produced in Georgia by local independent Caucasian producers and, to a lesser extent, by outlaw motorcycle gangs. Mexican criminal groups transport most of the methamphetamine available in Georgia from Mexico, California, and southwestern states using commercial and private vehicles. These groups also are the primary wholesale distributors that sell the drug to a variety of other criminal groups in the state. Mexican criminal groups, local independent Caucasian dealers and, to a lesser extent, outlaw motorcycle gangs and Hispanic gang members are the principal retail distributors of methamphetamine in Georgia.

Heroin is a threat primarily to metropolitan Atlanta and other large cities in Georgia. Heroin is also available and occasionally abused elsewhere in the state. South American heroin is commonly available in Atlanta and also is available in Augusta, Columbus, and Savannah. Southeast Asian and Southwest Asian as well as Mexican brown powdered and black tar heroin are occasionally available in very limited quantities in the state. Mexican criminal groups using private and commercial vehicles, package delivery services, and couriers aboard bus lines are the primary transporters of South American heroin into and through Georgia. Mexican and, to a lesser extent, Colombian and Dominican criminal groups distribute South American heroin at the wholesale level. Mexican criminal groups also transport and distribute very small quantities of Mexican brown powdered and black tar heroin in Georgia. Nigerian criminal groups transport and distribute South American heroin and small quantities of Southeast and Southwest Asian heroin into and through Georgia. African American, Caucasian, Dominican, and Mexican criminal groups as well as local independent dealers are the principal retail distributors of heroin in Georgia.

Other dangerous drugs pose an increasing threat to Georgia. This category of drugs includes the stimulant MDMA; the hallucinogens LSD and ketamine; the depressant GHB and its analogs; and diverted pharmaceuticals such as hydrocodone (Vicodin), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), oxycodone (OxyContin), and benzodiazepines such as alprazolam (Xanax) and diazepam (Valium). Among other dangerous drugs,

OxyContin and MDMA represent the primary threats. Many of these dangerous drugs are abused by middle-class suburban teenagers and young adults. MDMA is increasingly available and abused in Georgia, particularly in the suburbs of Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Macon, and Savannah. Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary wholesale and retail distributors of MDMA, LSD, ketamine, GHB and its analogs, and diverted pharmaceuticals in Georgia. MDMA, LSD, and ketamine, as well as GHB and its analogs generally are sold at raves, nightclubs, and private parties, and on high school and college campuses. Diverted pharmaceuticals generally are sold to acquaintances and established customers.

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Georgia Drug Threat Assessment

Overview

Georgia is the tenth most populous state in the nation with approximately 8.4 million residents. The population increased 26.0 percent from 1990 to 2000, outpacing the national population growth rate of 13.1 percent during that decade. This growth is due primarily to the state's flourishing economy led by manufacturing, service industries, agriculture, banking, and tourism. The bulk of the population growth occurred in and around Atlanta, the state's largest city. Six of every 10 Georgia residents now live within 60 miles of Atlanta. The Atlanta metropolitan area is one of the country's leading destinations for immigrants and has become a city of ethnic diversity. Consequently, it is easier for members of foreign drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) and criminal groups to blend with the population to avoid law enforcement detection. Large portions of the state are predominantly rural and agricultural, rendering them ideal for methamphetamine production or cannabis cultivation.

Criminal groups most commonly transport drugs into and through Georgia overland, primarily by commercial and private vehicle, on the state's busy interstates. Approximately 18,000 miles of federal and state roads traverse Georgia including 1,240 miles of interstate highways. Interstate 95 originates in Miami and extends north through

Fast Facts

Georgia

Population (2001)	8,383,915
U.S. population ranking	10th
Median household income (2000)	\$42,887
Unemployment rate (2001)	4.5%
Land area	57,906 square miles
Shoreline	100 miles
Capital	Atlanta
Other principal cities	Albany, Athens, Augusta, Columbus, Gainesville, Macon, Savannah, Valdosta
Number of counties	159
Principal industries	Manufacturing, service industries, agriculture, banking, tourism

eastern Georgia to the U.S.–Canada border, passing through most major East Coast cities. Interstate 20 connects with I-10 in Texas, extends

east through southwestern Texas, runs through Atlanta, and intersects I-95 in South Carolina. Interstate 75 extends from Miami to the U.S.–Canada border passing through Atlanta and other cities such as Detroit, Cincinnati, and Knoxville. Interstate 85 originates in Montgomery, Alabama, extends northeast through Atlanta, and traverses South Carolina and North Carolina before connecting to I-95 near Richmond, Virginia. Interstate 16 originates in Savannah and extends west through central Georgia before connecting to I-75 near Macon. According to Operation Pipeline seizure data, 40 of the 57 drug or currency seizures in Georgia in 2001 occurred on Interstates 95, 85, 75, or 20.

Operation Pipeline

Operation Pipeline is a highway interdiction program supported by the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC). Drug seizures are reported to Operation Pipeline by state and local law enforcement agencies nationwide operating along highways and interstates most commonly used to transport illegal drugs and drug proceeds.

Transporters ship drugs into and through Georgia in commercial and private vehicles using a variety of concealment methods. Drugs are concealed among legitimate goods such as produce, furniture, or other cargo in commercial vehicles or in hidden compartments built into private vehicles. Transporters also commonly conceal drugs in trunks, tires, fuel tanks, and seats. Hispanic criminal groups, primarily Mexican, often transport drugs into the state in commercial vehicles, taking advantage of the large amount of goods shipped in tractor-trailers from Mexico to Georgia. In 2000 approximately 523,000 metric tons of legitimate goods were shipped in tractor-trailers from Mexico to Georgia. Only seven states—Arizona, California, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, and Texas—recorded more tonnage from Mexico that year. The sheer volume of goods transported to Georgia provides Mexican and other criminal groups ample opportunities to transport concealed shipments of drugs into the state.

Transporters also ship drugs into Georgia by air, principally via package delivery services and, to a lesser extent, couriers on commercial flights. Law enforcement authorities seized 279 kilograms of marijuana, more than 2 kilograms of cocaine, and 1 kilogram of methamphetamine as part of Operation Jetway in 2001. Georgia has international airports in Atlanta and Savannah and has 109 county or municipal airports. The William B. Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport is one of the busiest international airports in the United States. It serves over 80 million passengers and handles almost 1 million metric tons of air cargo annually. Airlines that service Hartsfield offer nonstop service to and from destinations around the world including Africa, Asia, Central America, Europe, South America, and the Caribbean. Operation Jetway data indicate that drugs are transported to Atlanta on domestic flights from other southern and western states. Drugs shipped through Hartsfield International Airport usually are transported using package delivery services or couriers carrying the drugs on their person or in their luggage.

Operation Jetway

Operation Jetway is an EPIC-supported nationwide interdiction program. Drug seizures are reported to Operation Jetway by state and local law enforcement agencies across the nation at airports, train stations, bus stations, package shipment facilities, post offices, and airport hotels and motels.

Commercial trains and buses also are used by criminal groups and individuals to transport drugs into and through Georgia, although these are not common modes used to transport drugs into the state. However, according to DEA Atlanta, drugs more commonly are seized from buses since September 11, 2001. Major train and bus carriers connect most large cities in Georgia including Atlanta, Columbus, Gainesville, Macon, and Savannah with cities used as wholesale drug distribution centers such as Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, and New York. Law enforcement officials report that drugs transported on trains and buses

occasionally are concealed underneath passengers' clothing or in their shoes or luggage. Transporters also occasionally use freight rail service to ship drugs into and through Georgia, according to law enforcement officials. Two major railroads provide freight service in the state and manage some 4,000 miles of track. Another 1,000 miles of track are operated by 15 independent railroads.

There are two modern, deepwater ports in Georgia—Savannah and Brunswick. The Port of Savannah, located near Interstates 16 and 95, receives the most containerized cargo in the state and is one of the five busiest ports for containerized cargo in the southeastern United States. The Port of Brunswick handles large quantities of bulk cargo from the Bahamas, Belize, Jamaica, and Trinidad. A significant amount of legitimate goods pass through these Georgia ports, and the potential for smuggling large quantities of drugs exists. However, law enforcement officials in Georgia indicate that drugs are transported via maritime methods less frequently than via private and commercial vehicles and aircraft.

Hispanic criminal groups, primarily Mexican, are the principal transporters and wholesale distributors of most of the illicit drugs available in Georgia. According to law enforcement officials throughout the state, Mexican criminal groups in California and southwestern states as well as Mexican DTOs in Mexico often use Mexican illegal immigrants as couriers to transport cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, and heroin into and through the state.

Members of Hispanic, African American, and Caucasian gangs distribute drugs at the retail level in most large cities in Georgia and, to a lesser extent, in suburban areas, smaller cities, and rural communities. According to law enforcement estimates, there are 58 gangs with over 1,950 members in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Hispanic and African American gangs are the most prevalent in and around Atlanta. These gangs almost always distribute multiple drugs. Gangs in cities such as Albany, Athens, Columbus, Decatur, Gainesville, Hinesville, Macon, Statesboro, and Valdosta are heavily involved in cocaine distribution but also

distribute other drugs such as marijuana and methamphetamine. Generally, gangs in Georgia are not affiliated with large, nationally recognized street gangs in other U.S. cities; however, some gangs in Georgia including Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, and Vice Lords do have national affiliations. (See text box on page 4.)

Georgia's gang problem is unusual. Many gangs in Georgia are hybrid gangs (made up of members from different ethnic backgrounds) and are not nationally affiliated. These gangs sometimes call themselves Bloods but use symbolism from other gangs. For example, gangs composed primarily of Caucasians sometimes take the name and exhibit the symbols of nationally affiliated Hispanic or African American gangs. African American gangs are being challenged by an increasing number of Hispanic gangs as they attempt to carve out a niche in Georgia's drug trade. There is growing concern over the increased presence of older, more experienced gang members from Chicago and Los Angeles such as 30- to 40-year-old members of the 18th Street gang, a prominent Hispanic gang based in Los Angeles. Local law enforcement street gang units believe this growing presence to be an initial stage of organization and an attempt to affiliate well-organized street gangs with loosely organized gangs in the state. Law enforcement officials report that most violent crimes committed by gang members result from protecting turf or settling drug debts.

Outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMGs) have a limited presence in Georgia. Georgia law enforcement authorities report that OMGs are not as active in Georgia as they are in surrounding states, although law enforcement authorities report that OMGs occasionally produce and distribute methamphetamine in Georgia. In addition, members of the Outlaws Motorcycle Club transport methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states into Georgia, primarily to the Atlanta metropolitan area.

Drug-related crimes are common in Georgia. Aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and robbery often are related to the distribution and abuse

Gang Activity in Georgia

Bloods and Crips. These street gangs are two of the largest and most violent associations of criminal street gangs in the United States. The membership of both gangs is primarily African American. Both gangs are a collection of structured and unstructured gangs commonly known as sets. 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 many other states including Georgia. Although Bloods and Crips sets are located throughout the United States, not all gangs that claim to be Bloods and Crips are affiliated with the Los Angeles-based Bloods and Crips. Bloods and Crips embrace the principles of individualism, loyalty to their own members, and violence against other gangs. The gangs 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. This street gang is the largest of the Chicago-based street gangs, and its membership is primarily African American. This gang has been in existence since the early 1960s, and its organizational hierarchy resembles that of a corporation. The gang distributes illegal drugs, primarily crack cocaine, heroin, and marijuana, throughout the Chicago area, usually in low-income areas on the south and west sides of the city, and in over 40 other states including Georgia.

La Gran Familia. This gang is one of the primary Hispanic street gangs in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Its members distribute cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine and engage in violent criminal activity including assault, auto theft, drive-by shooting, and homicide. In Atlanta La Gran Familia is an alliance of predominantly Hispanic street gangs. Gangs identified with La Gran Familia alliance in Atlanta include Vatos Locos, Pachucos, Latin Kings, Riverside, 18th Street, East Side Locos, La Raza, Aztecas, and Matildos 13.

Latin Kings. Also known as Almighty Latin Kings Nation, this gang is a predominantly Hispanic street and prison gang with two major factions: one in Chicago and one in the northeast. These gangs started as social groups in Hispanic communities but later evolved into criminal groups that distribute drugs and commit violent crimes. Latin Kings is a highly structured gang that relies on strict, detailed charters to maintain discipline. Chicago-based Latin Kings, affiliated with People Nation, is the foundation for all other Latin Kings gangs. The gang has expanded throughout the nation including into Georgia. Latin Kings members in the Atlanta metropolitan area reportedly have ties to Latin Kings in New York.

Sureños 13. This gang is a major Hispanic street gang in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Its members distribute cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine. They also commit assault, auto theft, drive-by shooting, and homicide. Law enforcement reports indicate that Sureños 13 in Atlanta identifies itself as a gang rather than an alliance of gangs as does Sureños 13 in Southern California. There are no reports to indicate that Sureños 13 in Atlanta is associated with the Sureños 13 alliance of gangs in Southern California.

Vice Lords. This Chicago-based gang is one of the largest and most violent associations of criminal street gangs in the United States. Its membership is predominantly African American. Vice Lords is split among major factions such as the Conservative Vice Lords, Traveling Vice Lords, and Four Corner Hustlers. Each faction has a distinct membership and leadership. Vice Lords distributes drugs, principally crack cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, and some heroin, in Chicago and other states including Georgia.

Folks. This gang is a local street gang in the Atlanta metropolitan area consisting primarily of Caucasian youths from the suburbs. The gang has no affiliation with Folk Alliance of Chicago or any other national gang. Gang members distribute drugs and are involved in many other types of criminal activity including assault, burglary, and robbery.

of illegal drugs, especially crack cocaine. Some gangs in Georgia have “robbing crews.” These crews conduct home invasions that typically target rival drug dealers. In December 2001 a man was shot and killed in Savannah after an attempted home invasion robbery. The robber reportedly was attempting to steal a cache of marijuana stashed in the apartment. Gun-related crimes are closely linked to the drug trade in Georgia. Law enforcement authorities report that there have been instances where weapons have been traded for drugs.

The percentage of Georgia’s population that abuses illicit drugs is comparable to the percentage nationwide. According to data from the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), in 1999—the most recent year for which these data are available—5.7 percent of Georgia residents abused an illicit drug in the month prior to the survey compared with 6.3 percent nationwide.

A large percentage of adult male arrestees in Atlanta tested positive for drug abuse. According to 2000 Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) Program data, 70 percent of adult male arrestees in Atlanta tested positive for the use of any drug—a category that includes cocaine, heroin, marijuana, methamphetamine, and PCP (phencyclidine). Over 19 percent tested positive for the use of multiple drugs. Nearly one-half (48%) of adult male arrestees tested positive for cocaine, 38 percent tested positive for marijuana, and 3 percent tested positive for heroin.

The percentage of drug-related federal sentences in Georgia is comparable to the national percentage. In fiscal year (FY) 2000 drug-related sentences accounted for 38 percent of all federal sentences in Georgia, compared with 40 percent of all federal sentences nationwide, according to the U.S. Sentencing Commission (USSC). While calendar year (CY) and FY data sets cannot be directly compared, USSC FY data reflect similar trends to CY data used throughout this report. Cocaine-related sentences accounted for the largest percentage of drug-related federal sentences in Georgia;

approximately 55 percent involved powdered or crack cocaine compared with 44 percent nationally.

The financial impact on Georgia’s government from substance abuse-related costs and services is significant. In 1998—the most recent year for which these data are available—Georgia spent over \$1.5 billion on substance abuse-related costs and services across program areas including justice, education, health, child-family assistance, mental health-developmental disabilities, public safety, and the state workforce. This figure amounted to nearly 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 are even higher.

Drug money laundering is a serious problem in Georgia, primarily in Atlanta. The state’s transportation infrastructure, international banks, ethnic diversity, and proximity to drug source countries and Caribbean financial havens make it attractive to money launderers. Criminal groups use various methods to launder drug proceeds in Georgia. Money launderers structure bank deposits, transport bulk shipments of cash, and use wire transfers to launder illicit funds. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) estimate that criminal groups transfer—primarily to Mexico and Colombia—approximately \$2,000,000 per week from money remitting businesses in Georgia. Law enforcement officials report that criminal groups regularly structure bank deposits to avoid reporting requirements. Criminal groups transport bulk currency using couriers in overland conveyances and, to a lesser extent, aboard commercial aircraft. Law enforcement officials in Georgia seized over \$1.07 million as part of Operation Pipeline and nearly \$1.06 million as part of Operation Jetway in 2001. Most of this currency was destined for southwestern states and southern Florida where it is either transported out of the country or is laundered. Other money laundering methods used in Georgia include purchasing assets such as automobiles or real estate.

Cocaine

Cocaine, particularly crack, represents the primary drug threat to Georgia. Cocaine is readily available in Georgia, and crack cocaine is the drug most often associated with violent crime in the state. Hispanic criminal groups, primarily Mexican, are the principal transporters of powdered cocaine into Georgia. These criminal groups generally transport the drug in tractor-trailers and private vehicles from Mexico, California, and southwestern states to Atlanta, which serves as a major cocaine transshipment point and wholesale distribution center for the southeastern United States. Hispanic criminal groups, primarily Mexican, are the principal wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine in Georgia. These groups supply powdered cocaine primarily to African American criminal groups, African

American and Hispanic gangs and, to a lesser extent, Caucasian and Dominican criminal groups and various local independent dealers for subsequent distribution. Retail distribution of powdered cocaine is limited in Georgia; most powdered cocaine is converted to crack prior to distribution at the midlevel and retail level. African American criminal groups, African American and Hispanic gangs, and local independent dealers are wholesale distributors of crack cocaine in the state; wholesale distribution usually involves multiounce quantities. African American and Hispanic gangs frequently distribute retail quantities of crack cocaine in Georgia. African American and Mexican criminal groups and local independent dealers also distribute crack cocaine at the retail level, to a lesser extent.

Abuse

Survey data indicate that the percentage of Georgia’s population that abuses cocaine is comparable to the percentage nationwide. According to NHSDA, in 1999—the most recent year for which these data are available—2.1 percent of Georgia residents abused cocaine at least once in the year prior to the survey compared with 1.7 percent nationwide. The highest percentage (5.2%) of past year cocaine abusers in Georgia was among 18- to 25-year-olds.

Treatment data indicate that cocaine is commonly abused in Georgia. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS), the state had more cocaine-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities than admissions for abuse of any other illicit drug from 1997 through 2001. Cocaine-related treatment admissions decreased from 4,636 in 1997 to 3,592 in 1998, then increased steadily to 9,052 in 2001. Of

Table 1. Drug-Related Treatment Admissions to Publicly Funded Facilities, Georgia, 1997–2001

Year	Cocaine*	Smoked Cocaine	Marijuana	Methamphetamine	Heroin	Hallucinogens
1997	4,636	3,214	2,672	451	171	20
1998	3,592	2,436	2,153	319	186	3
1999	4,505	3,334	2,497	263	202	17
2000	7,915	4,965	3,791	630	429	38
2001	9,052	6,029	4,636	953	628	53

Source: TEDS.

*Includes admissions for smoked cocaine and cocaine administered via another route as well as admissions for which a route of administration was not specified.

the total cocaine-related treatment admissions reported in 2001, approximately 67 percent (6,029) were for smoked cocaine, which primarily represents crack cocaine but also includes freebase.

Cocaine frequently is a factor in drug-related deaths in the Atlanta metropolitan area. According to Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) Medical Examiner (ME) data, cocaine was a factor in 151 of the 233 drug-related deaths in Atlanta reported in 2000. Of the 151 deaths in which cocaine was a factor, 29 were cocaine-induced (overdoses).

Mortality Data

For the purposes of DAWN reporting, mortality data for the Atlanta metropolitan area represent the following counties: Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Paulding.

There were more emergency department (ED) mentions related to cocaine abuse than for abuse of any other illicit drug from 1997 through 2001. According to DAWN, the number of cocaine-related ED mentions was dramatically higher in 2001 (8,891) than in 1997 (4,244). The rate of cocaine-related ED mentions per 100,000 population in Atlanta likewise was higher in 2001 (244)

than in 1997 (156). In 2001 Atlanta ranked third in the rate of cocaine-related ED mentions per 100,000 population after Chicago (277) and Philadelphia (252) among the 21 metropolitan areas reporting to DAWN.

Cocaine was detected frequently among adult male arrestees in Atlanta in 2000. According to ADAM data, over 48 percent of adult male arrestees in Atlanta tested positive for cocaine abuse in 2000.

Powdered cocaine is commonly abused at raves, nightclubs, and bars. Between 1998 and 1999 abuse of smoked cocaine increased from 61.2 percent to 71.6 percent in Atlanta, according to the Community Epidemiology Work Group. Although crack cocaine usually is smoked, a small number of abusers in Georgia dissolve crack and then inject it. Most people who administer cocaine this way are current or former heroin addicts. Cocaine abusers often abuse cocaine in combination with other drugs. In Atlanta powdered cocaine sometimes is combined with heroin and marijuana and smoked, a combination known as a turbo. Crack cocaine primarily is abused in inner-city neighborhoods and housing projects and, to a lesser extent, in rural areas.

Availability

Cocaine is readily available in Georgia. Most of the powdered cocaine available in the state is converted locally into crack. Crack cocaine is commonly available at the retail level as rocks sold in small plastic bags, clear plastic vials, and 35-millimeter film canisters. The Atlanta Police Department reports that other than marijuana, crack is the most widely available drug in the city, and officials estimate that 75 percent of all drug-related arrests involve crack cocaine. Powdered cocaine availability at the retail level in Georgia is limited except in large cities such as Atlanta. Powdered cocaine most commonly is packaged in small glass vials and plastic bags for retail sale. Powdered cocaine usually is cut with diluents such as cornstarch, flour, talc, and vitamin B₁₂. In

Atlanta powdered cocaine is widely available at open-air drug markets, nightclubs, and other night entertainment establishments.

The price and purity of powdered and crack cocaine vary throughout Georgia. According to the DEA Atlanta Division and law enforcement responses to the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) National Drug Threat Survey 2001, powdered cocaine sold for approximately \$14,000 to \$19,000 per kilogram. Both powdered and crack cocaine sold for \$800 to \$1,000 per ounce. Retail quantities of powdered cocaine in the state sold for \$70 to \$100 per gram, and crack sold for \$20 to \$40 per rock, depending on the weight of the rock (generally one-fifth to one-fourth gram). According to laboratory testing, in

2000 purity levels for wholesale quantities of powdered cocaine ranged from as low as 55 percent in Hall County to as high as 95 percent in Liberty County. During the same year purity levels for retail quantities of powdered cocaine ranged from 18 percent in Hall County to 90 percent in Columbus (Muscogee County). The purity of crack distributed at the retail level ranged from 7 percent in Forest Park to 90 percent in Columbus. Purity levels for crack cocaine in Atlanta at both the wholesale and retail levels averaged 75 percent.

Seizure data reflect the ready availability of cocaine in Georgia. According to Federal-wide Drug Seizure System (FDSS) data, federal law

enforcement officials in Georgia seized 568 kilograms of cocaine in 1998, 356 kilograms in 1999, 605 kilograms in 2000, and 967 kilograms in 2001.

In FY2000 the percentage of drug-related federal sentences that were cocaine-related in Georgia was higher than the percentage nationwide. According to USSC data, powdered and crack cocaine accounted for 55 percent of drug-related federal sentences in Georgia in FY2000 compared with approximately 44 percent nationally. Nearly 31 percent of the drug-related federal sentences in Georgia in FY2000 were crack cocaine-related compared with approximately 21 percent nationwide.

Table 2. Federal Drug Seizures in Kilograms, Georgia, 1998–2001

Year	Cocaine	Marijuana	Methamphetamine	Heroin
1998	568	425	121	9
1999	356	5,536	59	11
2000	605	5,587	93	54
2001	967	5,055	76	16

Source: FDSS.

Violence

Crack cocaine is the drug most frequently associated with violent crime in Georgia. Retail crack distributors, most commonly African American and Hispanic gang members, often engage in violent crimes such as assault and homicide to protect their turf. In Gwinnett County law enforcement officials report that some gangs involved in distributing crack have committed drive-by shooting, robbery, and assault. Crack cocaine abusers also commit violent crimes.

Officers Seize Cocaine and Cash

In May 2001 a drug transporter traveling to Atlanta in a passenger van full of cocaine and cash rammed a Georgia State Police officer's vehicle. The officer, whose vehicle was traveling at 80 miles per hour at the time, lost control of his vehicle and struck another police cruiser. The Georgia State Police later arrested the driver of the van and his associate and seized 250 kilograms of cocaine and \$3.9 million.

Source: Georgia State Police.

Production

Coca is not cultivated nor is cocaine produced in Georgia; however, powdered cocaine is converted to crack within the state. African American criminal groups, African American and Hispanic gangs and, to a lesser extent, Caucasian and Dominican criminal groups and local independent dealers convert most of the powdered cocaine in the state to crack cocaine locally, often in large cities such as Atlanta. Hispanic criminal groups,

primarily Mexican, sometimes transport powdered cocaine and then convert the drug to crack. These groups, gangs, and independent dealers convert cocaine after it has been transported into the state to avoid federal drug sentences that are lengthier for possessing crack than powdered cocaine. They then transport some of the crack cocaine to suburban areas, smaller cities, or rural communities in Georgia for distribution.

Transportation

Hispanic criminal groups, primarily Mexican, are the principal transporters of cocaine into Georgia. They transport the drug in commercial and private vehicles and, to a lesser extent, via couriers aboard buses. As part of Operation Pipeline, state and local law enforcement officials seized 697 kilograms of cocaine in, or destined for, Georgia in 2001. Of the total, 568 kilograms were seized in the state, and 129 kilograms destined for Georgia were seized in other states. Hispanic criminal groups, primarily Mexican, transport most of the cocaine into the state from Mexico, California, and southwestern states. These groups frequently transport multihundred-kilogram quantities of cocaine into Atlanta—a major cocaine transshipment point and wholesale distribution center for the southeastern United States—concealed in tractor-trailers traveling on I-20 and I-85. However, Hispanic criminal groups, primarily Mexican, occasionally transport multihundred-kilogram quantities of cocaine in tractor-trailers to cities in the central and southern parts of the state as well. These large shipments are then broken down into smaller quantities and transported to other locations throughout the state and the southeastern United States, primarily using passenger vehicles. Hispanic criminal groups, primarily Mexican, sometimes employ drug couriers to transport cocaine to Atlanta; the couriers travel from southwestern states on commercial buses.

African American criminal groups, African American and Hispanic gangs and, to a lesser extent, Caucasian and Dominican criminal groups and local independent dealers also transport cocaine into Georgia. These criminal groups, gangs, and local independent dealers occasionally travel to drug distribution hubs such as Houston, Miami, Los Angeles, and New York City as well as Jacksonville to purchase wholesale quantities of powdered cocaine and transport the drug back to Georgia in private or rental vehicles. They then convert most of the powdered cocaine into crack locally, often in Georgia's larger cities, and transport some of the crack and small quantities of powdered cocaine to suburban areas, smaller cities, and rural communities in Georgia for retail distribution.

Cocaine also is transported into Georgia by air. Criminal groups and local independent dealers sometimes transport cocaine into the state concealed in air cargo or via package delivery services. These groups and independent dealers also use couriers aboard commercial aircraft to transport cocaine into Hartsfield International Airport generally from California and southwestern states such as Arizona and Texas. Cocaine that is transported by couriers typically is concealed in their luggage or on their person. State and local law enforcement officials seized slightly more than 2 kilograms of cocaine as part of Operation Jetway in 2001. U.S. Customs Service (USCS) agents in Georgia seized

71 kilograms of cocaine that had been transported into the state via commercial airlines in 1999, 147 kilograms in 2000, and 34 kilograms in 2001.

Cocaine also is transported to Georgia on maritime vessels arriving in the ports of Savannah and Brunswick. Law enforcement authorities report that Colombian DTOs, or associates of these organizations, and Mexican DTOs and

criminal groups occasionally transport cocaine from Central and South America on commercial vessels to these ports. Because of the volume of commercial cargo arriving at the ports, law enforcement authorities are able to inspect only a small percentage of the cargo. Thus, cocaine seizures at these ports are rare.

Distribution

Georgia, particularly Atlanta, is a significant cocaine distribution center in the southeastern United States. Numerous criminal groups based in Atlanta supply cocaine to distributors in various cities throughout the state as well as to distributors in Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, and Tennessee, according to law enforcement responses to the NDIC National Drug Threat Survey 2001. Law enforcement officers in numerous cities report that Atlanta serves as a distribution center for their cities; these cities include Birmingham and Mobile, Alabama; Jackson, Mississippi; Raleigh, North Carolina; Myrtle Beach, South Carolina; Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Memphis, Tennessee; and Hamilton, Ohio (near Cincinnati).

Hispanic criminal groups, primarily Mexican, are the principal wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine in Georgia. These groups supply powdered cocaine and occasionally crack cocaine to African American criminal groups, African American and Hispanic gangs and, to a lesser extent, Caucasian and Dominican criminal groups and various local independent dealers for subsequent distribution. Many of these other criminal groups, gangs, and local independent dealers also transport powdered cocaine into Georgia for wholesale and retail distribution.

African American criminal groups, African American and Hispanic gangs, and local independent dealers are wholesale distributors of crack cocaine in the state, although the extent of their involvement varies by location. Mexican, Dominican, and Caucasian criminal groups also

distribute crack at the wholesale level in Georgia but to a lesser extent. These criminal groups, gangs, and local independent dealers supply various crack cocaine retail distributors in the state. Law enforcement officials report that wholesale crack distributors sometimes sell “cookies”—crack cocaine formed into patties that measure approximately 3 inches in diameter. These cookies typically sell for \$900 to \$1,000 each.

African American and Hispanic gangs—some of which are affiliated with Chicago- and Los Angeles-based street gangs—frequently distribute retail quantities of cocaine in Georgia, principally in larger cities such as Atlanta. Street gangs such as Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, Sureños 13, Vatos Locos, and La Gran Familia typically purchase kilogram quantities of powdered cocaine from Mexican criminal groups in Atlanta or travel to other states such as California, Florida, New York, and Texas to purchase powdered cocaine, most of which they convert to crack for retail sale. Gang members also distribute small quantities of crack and, to a much lesser extent, powdered cocaine in many small towns and rural areas throughout Georgia. African American, Caucasian, and Dominican local independent dealers who transport powdered cocaine to Georgia usually convert the drug into crack and sell it at the retail level. African American and Mexican criminal groups and local independent dealers also distribute crack cocaine at the retail level, to a lesser extent.

Retail distributors sell crack primarily at open-air drug markets, on street corners, and in alleys. Some abusers travel to stash houses,

where crack is sold on a continual basis, to obtain the drug. Powdered cocaine and crack cocaine also are distributed at nightclubs and student

hangouts. Powdered cocaine usually is distributed at private residences, parties, nightclubs, bars, and raves.

Marijuana

Marijuana is the most widely available illicit drug in Georgia; however, the drug is considered a lower threat than cocaine because it is less often associated with violent crime. Most of the marijuana available in the state is produced in Mexico, although marijuana produced in Georgia and surrounding states also is available. A limited amount of marijuana produced in Colombia and Jamaica is available as well. Mexican criminal groups using tractor-trailers and private vehicles are the dominant transporters of the Mexico-produced marijuana available in Georgia and are the primary wholesale distributors of Mexico-

produced marijuana. Colombian criminal groups are the primary transporters and wholesale distributors of marijuana produced in Colombia, and Jamaican criminal groups are the primary transporters and wholesale distributors of marijuana produced in Jamaica. Caucasian and Mexican criminal groups and Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary wholesale distributors of marijuana produced locally in Georgia and surrounding states. African American and Hispanic gangs and African American and Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of marijuana in Georgia.

Abuse

Marijuana is commonly abused in Georgia, and survey data indicate that the percentage of the state's population that abuses the drug is comparable to the percentage nationwide. According to NHSDA data, in 1999—the most recent year for which these data are available—4.2 percent of Georgia residents abused marijuana in the month prior to the survey compared with 4.7 percent nationwide. The highest percentage (12.1%) of past month marijuana abuse in Georgia was among 18- to 25-year-olds.

Treatment data indicate that marijuana is commonly abused in the state. The number of marijuana-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities was second only to the number of cocaine-related treatment admissions from 1997 through 2001, according to TEDS. Marijuana-related treatment admissions increased from 2,672 in 1997 to 4,636 in 2001. (See Table 1 on page 6.)

Marijuana frequently is mentioned in drug-related ED episodes in Atlanta. According to DAWN, the number of marijuana-related ED mentions in Atlanta in 2001 (3,486) was more than double the number in 1997 (1,577). The rate of marijuana-related ED mentions per 100,000 population likewise was higher in 2001 (96) than in 1997 (58). Of the 21 metropolitan areas reporting to DAWN in 2001, Atlanta ranked fourth in the rate of marijuana-related ED mentions per 100,000 population (96), which was more than twice the rate nationwide (44).

Marijuana was detected frequently among adult male arrestees in Atlanta. In 2000 approximately 38 percent of adult male arrestees tested positive for marijuana abuse in Atlanta, according to ADAM data.

Availability

Marijuana is the most readily available illicit drug in Georgia. Most of the marijuana available in the state is produced by Mexican DTOs and criminal groups in Mexico, although marijuana produced in Georgia and surrounding states also is available. Most cannabis is cultivated outdoors in Georgia; however, indoor cultivation also occurs. Marijuana produced in Colombia and Jamaica also is available but to a much lesser extent.

Marijuana prices vary widely throughout Georgia. According to the DEA Atlanta Division and law enforcement responses to the NDIC National Drug Threat Survey 2001, marijuana produced in Mexico sold for \$600 to \$1,500 per pound in the state. DEA reports that in 2002 marijuana in Georgia sold for \$100 to \$350 per ounce and \$10 to \$20 per gram.

Seizure data reflect the ready availability of marijuana in Georgia. According to FDSS data, federal law enforcement officials in Georgia seized 425 kilograms of marijuana in 1998, 5,536 kilograms in 1999, 5,587 kilograms in 2000, and 5,055 kilograms in 2001. (See Table 2 on page 8.)

The number of cannabis plants seized and destroyed by the Governor’s Task Force on Drug Suppression increased from 1999 through 2000, and the number of cannabis growers arrested by local and federal authorities nearly doubled during the same period. The Governor’s Task Force seized and destroyed 27,063 cannabis plants in

Chocolate Flavored Marijuana

Chocolate flavored marijuana has been seen recently in the Atlanta area. According to the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, there are several varieties of marijuana that are popular among users—hydro (hydroponic), Cambo (Cambodian red), purple haze, and chocolate (brown chocolate). Hydro is grown in water devoid of any soil or other organic matter. Cambo comes from East Asia and has a reddish color due to the high acidity of the native growing soil. Purple haze reportedly is grown exclusively in Amsterdam and derives its name from the faint purple hue it has due to soil content. Chocolate is reportedly marijuana that is cured in Kahlúa. The liquor reportedly gives the marijuana a light chocolate flavor or smell when smoked.

Source: Atlanta High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area; New York Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services.

1999 and 33,669 cannabis plants in 2000. The number of cannabis growers arrested increased from 66 in 1999 to 121 in 2000.

The percentage of drug-related federal sentences in Georgia involving marijuana was significantly lower than the national percentage in FY2000. According to USSC data, in FY2000 marijuana-related sentences accounted for 13 percent of drug-related federal sentences in Georgia compared with 31 percent nationally.

Violence

The level of violence directly attributed to marijuana distribution in Georgia is low. However, some gangs such as Gangster Disciples, Sureños 13, Vatos Locos, Latin Kings, and La Gran Familia that traditionally distributed cocaine began distributing marijuana in the early 1990s. These polydrug gangs have a history of violence and often commit violent acts to protect their interests including their marijuana distribution activities.

Marijuana abusers are generally nonviolent; however, some marijuana abusers in Georgia use marijuana in combination with other drugs increasing the risk that they may become violent. The most common mixture involves small rocks of crack cocaine—a drug frequently associated with violent behavior—added to marijuana-filled cigars known as blunts.

Cannabis cultivation sometimes is associated with violent crime in Georgia. Law enforcement officials report that outdoor cannabis growers use

trip wires, beds of nails, and explosives to secure cultivation sites and deter intruders.

Production

Most of the marijuana available in Georgia is produced in Mexico; however, a substantial amount is produced locally or in neighboring states. The Georgia Governor’s Task Force on Drug Suppression reports that 93 of Georgia’s 159 counties are significant locations for cannabis cultivation. In 2000—the most recent year for which this information is available—the 12 counties in Georgia with the most cannabis plants eradicated by the Georgia Governor’s Task Force on Drug Suppression were Wilkinson, Polk, Bacon, Decatur, Haralson, Putnam, Richmond, Bartow, Gordon, Whitfield, Brantley, and Carroll. Eighty-seven percent of the cannabis plants eradicated in Georgia were eradicated in these counties. (See Table 3.)

<p>Drug Task Force Destroys Cannabis Plants in Atlanta</p> <p>In early July 2001 the Georgia Governor’s Task Force on Drug Suppression seized and destroyed 365 cannabis plants near downtown Atlanta. The plants, some as high as 10 feet, were growing behind an industrial park.</p> <p>Source: Georgia Governor’s Task Force on Drug Suppression.</p>
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The primary cannabis cultivators in Georgia are Caucasian and Mexican criminal groups and Caucasian local independent dealers. These criminal groups and independent dealers cultivate significant quantities of cannabis, principally outdoors, throughout the state. The cannabis typically is grown in numerous small plots with two to five plants located every 50 to 100 yards, although state law enforcement officials indicated that one 10,000-plant cultivation site and one 15,000-plant cultivation site were seized in 2002. Cultivators space the plants in this manner to avoid aerial detection. Seeds are planted outdoors in March, and the cannabis is harvested in late summer or

early fall. Criminal groups and local independent dealers often cultivate cannabis in national parks to avoid property seizure. Chattahoochee National Forest in northern Georgia ranked ninth in the nation in the number of cannabis plants eradicated from national forests during 2000. According to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, locally produced marijuana is typically packaged and shipped to northern states.

Table 3. Cannabis Plants Eradicated by the Georgia Governor’s Task Force on Drug Suppression, 2000

Total Statewide	33,669
Top 12 Counties	
Wilkinson	8,304
Polk	4,960
Bacon	2,756
Decatur	2,300
Haralson	1,865
Putnam	1,756
Richmond	1,488
Bartow	1,352
Gordon	1,180
Whitfield	1,111
Brantley	1,048
Carroll	1,040
Total	29,160

Source: Georgia Governor’s Task Force on Drug Suppression.

Cannabis also is grown indoors in Georgia. Many indoor cannabis cultivation operations involve sophisticated hydroponic equipment and techniques. During FY2000 federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies seized eight

indoor cannabis grows. Local independent dealers and, to a lesser extent, marijuana abusers are the primary cultivators of cannabis grown indoors; they usually cultivate small quantities.

Transportation

Marijuana from foreign and domestic sources is transported into Georgia by various groups and methods. Mexican criminal groups are the primary transporters of marijuana available in Georgia. These groups transport multikilogram shipments of marijuana from sources in Mexico and distribution centers in southwestern states, primarily using commercial and private vehicles. Marijuana transported in commercial vehicles often is intermingled with legitimate cargo, and marijuana transported in private vehicles often is concealed in hidden compartments. In April 2000 law enforcement officials in La Grange, southwest of Atlanta, seized 1,875 kilograms of marijuana on I-85 in a tractor-trailer. The tractor-trailer was traveling from Edinburg, Texas, (near McAllen) and was destined for Atlanta. As part of Operation Pipeline, state and local law enforcement officials seized 2,697 kilograms of marijuana in, or destined for, Georgia in 2001. Of the total, 523 kilograms were seized in the state and 2,174 kilograms destined for Georgia were seized in other states.

African American and Caucasian criminal groups, local independent dealers and, to a lesser extent, African American and Hispanic gangs also transport Mexico-produced marijuana as well as marijuana produced in neighboring states into Georgia, primarily using private vehicles. Caucasian and Mexican criminal groups and Caucasian local independent dealers that cultivate cannabis in Georgia generally transport locally grown marijuana to distributors in Georgia or

surrounding states by private vehicle. African American and Hispanic gangs also transport marijuana produced in Georgia within the state or to neighboring states, principally by private vehicle.

Marijuana is transported into Georgia by air, primarily using package delivery services and, to a lesser extent, couriers or cargo aboard commercial airlines. Most of the marijuana transported to Georgia by air is produced in and smuggled from Mexico or shipped from distribution centers in southwestern states. Marijuana produced in Colombia and Jamaica sometimes is smuggled to Georgia by air using package delivery services or couriers on commercial flights or by concealing the drug in cargo. State and local law enforcement officials seized 279.0 kilograms of marijuana as part of Operation Jetway in 2001. USCS agents in Georgia seized 2.4 kilograms of marijuana that was transported to the state on commercial aircraft in 1999, 1.0 kilogram in 2000, and 0.7 kilogram in 2001.

Marijuana produced in Colombia and Jamaica sometimes is transported to Georgia aboard maritime vessels. Colombian criminal groups are the primary transporters of marijuana produced in Colombia. These criminal groups transport marijuana to Georgia principally using maritime vessels that transit the Caribbean. Jamaican criminal groups transport marijuana produced in Jamaica; these groups often conceal the drug among legitimate cargo aboard maritime vessels.

Distribution

Atlanta is a regional distribution center of marijuana. Atlanta-based criminal groups supply distributors in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Gangs and local independent dealers in these states and within Georgia frequently travel to Atlanta to purchase marijuana from suppliers and then transport the marijuana in private vehicles to retail markets, sometimes along with other drugs.

Mexican criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of Mexico-produced marijuana. However, no specific organization or group controls the retail distribution of Mexico-produced marijuana. African American and Hispanic gangs, African American and Caucasian local independent dealers, and other gangs and local independent dealers are all known to distribute marijuana at the retail level in Georgia.

Colombian criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of marijuana produced in Colombia, and Jamaican criminal groups are the

primary wholesale distributors of marijuana produced in Jamaica. These criminal groups sell marijuana to various other criminal groups and local independent dealers for retail distribution.

Caucasian and Mexican criminal groups and Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary wholesale distributors of marijuana produced in Georgia and surrounding states. African American and Hispanic gangs also sell wholesale quantities of marijuana produced in Georgia and surrounding states, although to a lesser extent. Criminal groups that distribute wholesale quantities of locally produced marijuana either produce the marijuana themselves or purchase it from other criminal groups, local independent dealers, or gangs.

Marijuana usually is distributed at the retail level in low-income housing areas and at open-air drug markets. Retail quantities of marijuana also are sold to established contacts, at bars and nightclubs, in businesses and private homes, and on college, high school, and middle school campuses.

Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine poses an increasing threat to Georgia, particularly in northern and central sections of the state, and law enforcement officials and healthcare professionals report that a more diverse group is abusing the drug. In parts of northern Georgia, methamphetamine has emerged as the primary drug threat. Although methamphetamine-related treatment admissions have increased throughout the state, methamphetamine abuse has not yet become a problem in the Atlanta area. Most of the methamphetamine available in Georgia is produced by Mexican DTOs and criminal groups in high volume laboratories in Mexico, California, and southwestern states. Methamphetamine also

is produced in Georgia by local independent Caucasian producers and, to a lesser extent, by OMGs. Mexican criminal groups transport most of the methamphetamine available in Georgia from Mexico, California, and southwestern states using commercial and private vehicles. These groups are also the primary wholesale distributors that sell the drug to a variety of other criminal groups in the state. Mexican criminal groups, local independent Caucasian dealers and, to a lesser extent, OMGs and Hispanic gang members are the principal retail distributors of methamphetamine in Georgia.

Abuse

Treatment data indicate that there are fewer methamphetamine-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities than admissions for cocaine and marijuana abuse in Georgia; however, the number of methamphetamine-related admissions more than doubled from 1997 through 2001. The number of methamphetamine-related admissions to publicly funded facilities decreased from 451 in 1997 to 263 in 1999, then increased dramatically to 953 in 2001, according to TEDS. (See Table 1 on page 6.)

Methamphetamine abuse is increasing in Georgia, but this trend is not evident in Atlanta. While statewide methamphetamine treatment admissions have increased significantly since 1997, the number of methamphetamine-related deaths and ED mentions in the Atlanta area have remained low.

Methamphetamine infrequently is cited in drug-related deaths in the Atlanta metropolitan area. (See text box on page 7.) According to DAWN ME data, methamphetamine was a factor in 3 of the 233 drug-related deaths in Atlanta in 2000—a decrease from 4 out of 466 deaths in 1999. It was the only drug present in one drug-related death in 2000.

From 1997 through 2001 the number of methamphetamine-related ED mentions was lower than the number of mentions for cocaine, marijuana, or heroin. According to DAWN, the number of methamphetamine-related ED mentions in Atlanta fluctuated from 214 in 1997 to 172 in 2001. The rate of methamphetamine-related ED

mentions per 100,000 population in Atlanta in 2001 (5) was lower than in 1997 (8).

Methamphetamine rarely was detected among adult male arrestees in Atlanta in 2000. According to ADAM, only 0.5 percent of adult male arrestees tested positive for methamphetamine abuse in Atlanta in 2000.

Methamphetamine currently is abused by a more diverse population in Georgia. According to law enforcement officials, OMG members and blue-collar workers such as truck drivers were traditionally the predominant methamphetamine abusers in the state. However, a new abuser population emerged in 2000 that includes Caucasian white-collar professionals and college students. Caucasian teenagers and young adults, primarily in central and northern Georgia, also abuse methamphetamine, often in combination with other drugs at raves or nightclubs. Some individuals who frequent raves and nightclubs in Atlanta also abuse crystal methamphetamine or “ice.” Ice abuse among the general population in Georgia is rare.

Ice

Crystal methamphetamine, also known as ice, is highly refined methamphetamine that resembles shards of glass. It is produced using a washing technique that involves dissolving powdered d-methamphetamine in a solvent such as acetone or denatured alcohol. The mixture is then allowed to evaporate. The purity of crystal methamphetamine generally is much higher than powdered methamphetamine, and crystal methamphetamine typically commands a higher price.

Availability

Methamphetamine is readily available in northern and central Georgia and is increasingly available in southern Georgia. In parts of northern Georgia, methamphetamine has emerged as the

primary drug threat. Law enforcement officials in Dalton and Macon report that methamphetamine abuse poses a significant drug threat in their jurisdictions. Mexican DTOs and criminal groups

produce most of the methamphetamine available in Georgia in high volume laboratories in Mexico, California, and southwestern states using the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method. Small quantities of the drug also are produced in Georgia by local independent Caucasian dealers using the Birch reduction method and, to a lesser extent, by OMGs using the phenyl-2-propanone method. (See text box on page 18.)

Methamphetamine prices in Georgia have decreased from 2000 to 2002, possibly indicating increased availability. According to the DEA Atlanta Division, wholesale quantities of methamphetamine in Georgia sold for \$5,000 to \$10,000 per pound, \$500 to \$2,000 per ounce, and \$80 to \$100 per gram in 2002. In 2000 DEA reported that methamphetamine sold for \$8,000 to \$20,000 per pound, \$750 to \$2,000 per ounce, and \$300 per gram.

Purity levels of methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states are generally lower than purity levels of locally produced methamphetamine. DEA reports that in 2001 the purity of methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states that was distributed at the wholesale level in Georgia

ranged from 2 percent to 18 percent, and the purity of locally produced methamphetamine at the wholesale level ranged from 61 to 99 percent. Law enforcement officials report that local producers generally sell the drug directly to customers without cutting or diluting it with other substances; thus, locally produced methamphetamine has higher purity levels.

Seizure data reflect the ready availability of methamphetamine in Georgia. According to FDSS data, federal law enforcement officials in Georgia seized 121 kilograms of methamphetamine in 1998, 59 kilograms in 1999, 93 kilograms in 2000, and 76 kilograms in 2001. (See Table 2 on page 8.)

The percentage of drug-related federal sentences in Georgia involving methamphetamine was significantly higher than the national percentage in FY2000. According to USSC data, 25 percent of drug-related federal sentences in Georgia in FY2000 were methamphetamine-related, compared with 15 percent nationwide. Sentencing figures were highest in the U.S. Attorney's Office Northern District of Georgia, where nearly 33 percent of drug-related federal sentences in FY2000 were methamphetamine-related.

Violence

Methamphetamine production, distribution, and abuse often are associated with violent crime in Georgia. Mexican criminal groups, African American and Hispanic gangs, OMGs, and local independent Caucasian dealers that distribute methamphetamine in Georgia commit assault,

homicide, and weapons violations. Methamphetamine abusers and producers often commit crimes of domestic violence, including spousal and child abuse and child neglect. Local methamphetamine laboratory operators and distributors often carry pistols and modified shotguns.

Production

Methamphetamine is produced in Georgia usually by Caucasian local independent dealers using the Birch reduction method. However, Mexican DTOs and criminal groups produce most of the methamphetamine available in

Georgia using the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method. These DTOs and criminal groups operate high volume laboratories in Mexico, California, and southwestern states.

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.
- **Iodine/hypophosphorous acid.** The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, iodine, and hypophosphorous acid. The required hydriodic acid in this variation of the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method is produced by the reaction of iodine in water with hypophosphorous acid. Known as the hypo method, this method yields lower quality d-methamphetamine. Hypophosphorous acid is more prone than red phosphorus to cause a fire and can produce deadly phosphine gas.
- **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.

Phenyl-2-propanone:

- **P2P.** The principal chemicals are phenyl-2-propanone, aluminum, methylamine, and mercuric acid. This method yields lower quality dl-methamphetamine and has been associated with OMGs.

Anhydrous Ammonia

Many methamphetamine producers store anhydrous ammonia in small propane tanks that are not designed to hold the toxic gas. Such tanks and tank valves often leak because anhydrous ammonia is extremely corrosive. In addition, anhydrous ammonia can explode when tanks are exposed to high temperatures.

Methamphetamine laboratory seizures in Georgia have increased dramatically since FY1999. According to the DEA Atlanta Division, methamphetamine laboratory seizures increased from 29 in FY1999, to 88 in FY2000, to 218 in FY2001, to 395 in FY2002.

The Birch reduction method is the primary method used to produce methamphetamine in Georgia. It yields ounce quantities of high quality d-methamphetamine and is used primarily by local independent Caucasian producers. Anhydrous ammonia—a common farm fertilizer readily available at agricultural sites—is a reagent used in this method. According to law enforcement officials, methamphetamine producers in Georgia frequently steal anhydrous ammonia from farms and produce methamphetamine in rural locations. Laboratories also are established in single-family homes, apartments, storage buildings, and automobiles.

Methamphetamine production poses serious safety concerns in Georgia. The production process involves the use of volatile chemicals and

creates toxic and hazardous waste that endangers law enforcement personnel, emergency response teams, children in homes where methamphetamine is produced, and the environment. Methamphetamine laboratories create 5 to 7 pounds of toxic waste for every 1 pound of methamphetamine produced. Most of the toxic residue from methamphetamine production is dumped in the local area, killing vegetation and contaminating water supplies and soil.

Methamphetamine Laboratory Explosion Causes Child's Death

In June 2001 a 15-month-old Catoosa County child died from severe burns caused by a methamphetamine laboratory explosion. The explosion occurred 4 months earlier at a laboratory operated by the child's parents in their home.

Source: Catoosa County Sheriff's Office.

Transportation

Mexican criminal groups transport most of the methamphetamine available in Georgia from Mexico, California, and southwestern states using tractor-trailers or private vehicles. Hispanic gangs such as Sureños 13 and OMGs such as the Outlaws Motorcycle Club also transport methamphetamine from Mexico, California, and southwestern states using private vehicles. As part of Operation Pipeline, state and local law enforcement officials seized over 21 kilograms of methamphetamine in, or destined for, Georgia in 2001. Of the total, over 8 kilograms were seized in the state and 13 kilograms destined for Georgia were seized in other states.

Mexican criminal groups occasionally use couriers aboard commercial airlines and package delivery services to transport methamphetamine into Georgia from Mexico, California, and southwestern states. In 2001 law enforcement officials seized 1 kilogram of methamphetamine as part of Operation Jetway.

Methamphetamine produced in Georgia is transported within the state for distribution. Local independent Caucasian producers and OMGs transport—usually by private vehicle—very small amounts of methamphetamine within a limited radius of the production site to established customers.

Distribution

Mexican criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors in Georgia of methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states by Mexican DTOs and criminal groups. Mexican criminal groups in Georgia usually sell wholesale quantities of methamphetamine to other Mexican criminal groups, local independent Caucasian dealers, OMGs (principally Outlaws), and Hispanic gangs that distribute midlevel and retail level quantities of methamphetamine. These midlevel and retail distributors also travel to California and southwestern states to purchase the drug or distribute small quantities of methamphetamine produced in Georgia.

Mexican criminal groups use various cutting agents to dilute methamphetamine for retail sale. These criminal groups usually dilute the methamphetamine at “cut houses” (private residences including apartments where methamphetamine is cut) in Atlanta. They also cut methamphetamine during the production process. The most common cutting agents used by such groups are MSM and caffeine.

OMGs and local independent Caucasian dealers sell methamphetamine at the retail level in locations such as truck stops, strip clubs, bars, housing projects, mobile home parks, and

MSM

Methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states commonly is cut with MSM (methylsulfonylmethane), also known as dimethylsulfone (DMSO₂). MSM is a white powder that melts to a liquid at relatively low temperatures (109°F). It is highly soluble and readily mixes with most substances without leaving a residue, making it a suitable cutting agent for methamphetamine. MSM is inexpensive and legally available in the United States as a nutritional supplement for humans and horses.

through personal contacts. Local independent Caucasian dealers also sell methamphetamine at raves and dance clubs. Mexican criminal groups and Hispanic gang members usually distribute methamphetamine at open-air markets and on street corners and in alleys.

Methamphetamine Distribution Ring Dismantled

In March 2002 Walker County law enforcement officials arrested seven individuals and dismantled a large-scale methamphetamine distribution ring that had been operating for at least 6 years. The individuals, who were truck drivers, purchased methamphetamine from Mexican criminal groups in Dalton and transported the drug to distributors in northern Georgia. One of the truck drivers also produced small quantities of methamphetamine in the sleeper compartment of his truck. The truck drivers sold the methamphetamine for approximately \$700 per ounce to established retail distributors in northern Georgia. The retail distributors then sold the methamphetamine to established customers for \$100 per gram.

Source: Walker County Sheriff's Office.

Heroin

Heroin is a threat primarily to metropolitan Atlanta and other large cities in Georgia. Heroin is also available and occasionally abused elsewhere in the state. South American heroin is commonly available in Atlanta and also is available in Augusta, Columbus, and Savannah. Southeast Asian and Southwest Asian as well as Mexican brown powdered and black tar heroin are occasionally available in very limited quantities in the state. Mexican criminal groups, using private and commercial vehicles, package delivery services, and couriers aboard bus lines, are the primary transporters of South American heroin into

and through Georgia. Mexican and, to a lesser extent, Colombian and Dominican criminal groups distribute South American heroin at the wholesale level. Mexican criminal groups also transport and distribute very small quantities of Mexican brown powdered and black tar heroin into Georgia. Nigerian criminal groups transport and distribute South American heroin and small quantities of Southeast and Southwest Asian heroin into and through Georgia. African American, Caucasian, Dominican, and Mexican criminal groups as well as local independent dealers are the principal retail distributors of heroin in Georgia.

Abuse

Heroin abuse is a problem in Georgia's larger cities, principally the Atlanta metropolitan area. The Georgia Department of Public Health estimates that there are a minimum of 7,000 heroin addicts in Atlanta. Treatment providers in Atlanta indicate an increase in the number of heroin abusers among adolescents and teens. Heroin

abuse is also a problem in Augusta, Columbus, and Savannah, although to a lesser extent. According to responses to the NDIC National Drug Threat Survey 2001, law enforcement agencies in the Atlanta metropolitan area reported levels of heroin abuse as high or moderate.

Treatment data indicate that the number of heroin-related treatment admissions in Georgia is low but has increased since 1997. Despite a dramatic increase from 171 in 1997 to 628 in 2001, the number of heroin-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities in Georgia was lower than for cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamine, according to TEDS. (See Table 1 on page 6.)

Heroin abuse often is cited in drug-related deaths in the Atlanta metropolitan area. (See text box on page 7.) According to DAWN ME data, heroin was a factor in 30 of the 233 drug-related deaths in Atlanta in 2000. Of the 30 deaths in which heroin was a factor, 3 were heroin-induced (overdoses).

Heroin frequently is mentioned in drug-related ED episodes in Atlanta. The number of heroin-related ED mentions in Atlanta was dramatically higher in 2001 (848) than in 1997 (384), according to DAWN. In 2001 the number of heroin-related ED mentions was exceeded only

by the number of cocaine- and marijuana-related ED mentions.

The percentage of adult male arrestees who tested positive for heroin abuse in Atlanta in 2000 was low. Approximately 3 percent of adult male arrestees in Atlanta tested positive for heroin abuse in 2000, according to ADAM data. Male arrestees over the age of 31 were more likely to test positive for heroin abuse than those under the age of 31.

Heroin abusers in Georgia often inject the drug, although younger and newer abusers who are averse to using needles often snort the drug. According to the Community Epidemiology Work Group, all indicators suggest the emergence of a younger cohort of heroin abusers in the Atlanta metropolitan area who snort rather than inject the drug. Further, federal law enforcement officials report that heroin is popular in Savannah nightclubs where it typically is snorted and usually is used in combination with other drugs such as MDMA and cocaine.

Availability

South American heroin is commonly available in Atlanta and also is available in Augusta, Columbus, and Savannah. Heroin availability is limited in the rest of the state. In addition to South American heroin, Southeast and Southwest Asian heroin as well as Mexican brown powdered and black tar heroin are occasionally available in very limited quantities in Georgia.

Heroin prices in Georgia vary depending on the area. The DEA Atlanta Division reports that in 2001 heroin sold for \$60,000 to \$120,000 per kilogram. However, heroin is mostly sold in ounce or gram quantities and is rarely sold in kilogram quantities in the state. In 2002 heroin sold for \$4,000 to \$7,000 per ounce and \$85 to \$600 per gram, according to DEA. Wholesale quantities of heroin generally ranged from 75 to 85 percent pure.

The quantity of heroin seized by federal law enforcement agencies in Georgia increased from 1998 through 2000, then decreased in 2001. According to FDSS data, federal law enforcement officials seized 9 kilograms of heroin in 1998, 11 kilograms in 1999, 54 kilograms in 2000, and 16 kilograms in 2001. (See Table 2 on page 8.)

The percentage of drug-related federal sentences in Georgia involving heroin was considerably lower than the national percentage in FY2000. According to USSC data, 3 percent of drug-related federal sentences in Georgia in FY2000 were heroin-related, compared with 8 percent nationwide.

Violence

Violence associated with heroin distribution and abuse in Georgia is limited, although heroin distributors in Georgia sometimes commit violent crimes such as homicide, kidnapping, and robbery. Heroin abusers who commit crimes in Georgia generally commit nonviolent property crimes to support their heroin habits.

Heroin-Related Violence

In June 2001 the driver of a vehicle occupied by five suspected heroin dealers attempted to run over a narcotics officer. The officer fired on the vehicle killing one of the suspects. Law enforcement officials arrested the remaining four suspects and seized 9 ounces of heroin.

Source: Atlanta High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.

Production

Opium is not cultivated nor is heroin produced in Georgia. Heroin available in the United States is produced primarily in four source regions: South America, Mexico, Southeast Asia, and Southwest Asia. Most of the heroin available in Georgia is produced in South America, although very limited amounts of Southeast Asian, Southwest Asian, and Mexican brown powdered and black tar heroin are occasionally available.

Heroin sold on the street typically is cut and packaged in a glassine envelope or bag known as a dime bag—a term derived from the fact that

most bags cost \$10. Cutting mills are the locations where the heroin is cut and packaged for retail sale. Many law enforcement officials report that cutting mills appear to be less common in Atlanta than in the past. Most law enforcement officials report that the cutting mills of previous years are now largely bagging operations in which distributors simply repackage bulk heroin into user quantities without cutting it with other substances. This is a probable reason for the higher purity heroin available on the streets.

Transportation

Mexican criminal groups are the primary transporters of South American heroin into and through Georgia. They also transport small quantities of Mexican brown powdered heroin and very limited quantities of Mexican black tar heroin into Georgia. Mexican criminal groups primarily use commercial and private vehicles, package delivery services, and couriers aboard commercial buses to transport heroin into and through Georgia. When transporting heroin in private and commercial vehicles, they occasionally intermingle heroin with other drugs such as cocaine.

U.S. Customs Service (USCS) reporting indicates that between June and October 2002 heroin embedded in foam pads was seized at the Hartsfield International Airport in Atlanta. The foam pads were concealed in the outer walls of the luggage. Colombian criminals were transporting the heroin to New York City for distribution.

Source: USCS.

Colombian and Dominican criminal groups also transport South American heroin into and

through the state, although to a lesser extent. Nigerian criminal groups transport small quantities of Southeast Asian and Southwest Asian heroin into and through Georgia. Colombian and Nigerian criminal groups primarily use couriers aboard commercial airlines to transport heroin into Georgia. Dominican criminal groups primarily use private vehicles to transport South American heroin into Georgia, generally from northeastern cities

such as New York and Philadelphia. State and local law enforcement officials seized over 3 kilograms of heroin in Georgia in 2001 as part of Operation Pipeline. No heroin seizures were reported in 2001 as part of Operation Jetway. USCS agents in Georgia seized nearly 11 kilograms of heroin transported via commercial air in 1999, 35 kilograms in 2000, and 13 kilograms in 2001.

Distribution

Various criminal groups distribute heroin at the wholesale level in Atlanta and other large cities such as Augusta, Columbus, and Savannah. Mexican and, to a lesser extent, Colombian and Dominican criminal groups are the principal wholesale distributors of South American heroin. Mexican criminal groups also are the principal distributors of Mexican brown powdered and black tar heroin, although Mexican brown powdered heroin availability is limited and Mexican black tar heroin is occasionally distributed in Georgia. Nigerian criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of the limited quantities of Southeast Asian and Southwest Asian heroin that

are available in Georgia. All these criminal groups sell heroin to various criminal groups and local independent dealers for retail distribution.

African American, Caucasian, Dominican, and Mexican criminal groups as well as local independent dealers are the principal retail distributors of heroin in Georgia. Most retail heroin sales in Atlanta take place in economically depressed inner-city public housing projects. Heroin also is sold at the retail level in private residences and through established contacts. Distributors often arrange sales using pagers and cellular telephones.

Other Dangerous Drugs

Other dangerous drugs (ODDs) pose an increasing threat to Georgia. This category of drugs includes the stimulant MDMA; the hallucinogens LSD and ketamine; the depressant GHB and its analogs; and diverted pharmaceuticals such as hydrocodone (Vicodin), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), oxycodone (OxyContin), and benzodiazepines such as alprazolam (Xanax) and diazepam (Valium). Among ODDs, OxyContin and MDMA represent the primary threat. Many of these ODDs are abused by middle-class suburban teenagers and young adults. MDMA is increasingly available and abused

in Georgia, particularly in the suburbs of Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Macon, and Savannah. Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary wholesale and retail distributors of MDMA, LSD, ketamine, GHB and its analogs, and diverted pharmaceuticals in Georgia. MDMA, LSD, and ketamine, as well as GHB and its analogs generally are sold at raves, nightclubs, and private parties, and on high school and college campuses. Diverted pharmaceuticals generally are sold to acquaintances and established customers.

Raves and Club Drugs

Throughout the 1990s, high energy, all-night dances known as raves, which feature hard-pounding techno-music and flashing laser lights, increased in popularity among teenagers and young adults. Raves occur in most metropolitan areas of the country. They can be held at either permanent dance clubs or temporary “weekend event” sites set up in abandoned warehouses, open fields, empty buildings, or civic centers. Club drugs are a group of synthetic drugs often sold at raves and dance clubs. MDMA is one of the most popular club drugs. Rave managers often sell water, pacifiers, and glow sticks at rave parties. “Ravers” require water to offset dehydration caused by MDMA; use pacifiers to prevent the grinding of teeth, which is a common side effect of using MDMA; and wave glow sticks in front of their eyes because MDMA stimulates light perception.

MDMA

The increasing availability and abuse of MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine), particularly among teenagers and young adults, poses an increasing threat to Georgia particularly in the Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Macon, and Savannah suburbs. MDMA, also known as Adam, ecstasy, XTC, E, and X, is a synthetic stimulant and low level hallucinogen. MDMA was patented in 1914 in Germany where it was given to psychiatric patients to assist in psychotherapy. This practice was never approved by the American Psychological Association or the Food and Drug Administration. Sometimes called the hug drug, abusers claim that the drug helps them 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 methamphetamine and cocaine abuse including confusion, depression, sleeplessness, anxiety, and paranoia. The physical effects can include muscle tension, involuntary teeth clenching, blurred vision, and increased heart rate and blood pressure. MDMA abuse can also cause a marked increase in body temperature leading to muscle breakdown, kidney failure, cardiovascular system failure, stroke, or seizure as reported in some fatal cases. Research suggests that MDMA abuse may result in long-term and sometimes permanent damage to parts of the brain that are critical to thought and memory.

Most of the MDMA consumed in Georgia is produced outside the United States, typically in laboratories in the Netherlands and Belgium. The MDMA usually is transported via package delivery services and couriers on commercial aircraft through distribution centers such as Los Angeles, Miami, and New York City. Local independent Caucasian distributors based in Georgia frequently travel to Miami to purchase MDMA and return to the area to sell wholesale quantities.

Transporters also use Hartsfield International Airport to smuggle MDMA into the United States. According to USCS, nearly 32 kilograms of MDMA were seized at Hartsfield International Airport in 2001. In February 2001 USCS officials at Hartsfield International Airport seized 1,600 tablets of MDMA concealed in balloons that had been swallowed by a courier traveling from the Netherlands. In August 2000 USCS officials at Hartsfield International Airport seized 11,250 MDMA tablets from a Spanish citizen arriving from Frankfurt, Germany; the tablets were concealed in a package strapped to the man’s mid-section. Caucasian local independent dealers in Georgia also receive MDMA shipments from wholesale MDMA distributors in California, Louisiana, and Texas via package delivery services.

Local independent dealers, usually Caucasians between the ages of 18 and 25, are the principal wholesale distributors of MDMA in Georgia.

However, law enforcement officials in Macon indicate that African American local independent dealers are abusing and distributing MDMA in that city. These dealers usually purchase MDMA from interstate wholesale distributors in Atlanta in 100-tablet quantities for sale to local retail distributors.

Retail level MDMA distributors typically are middle- and upper-class Caucasian high school or college students. They usually distribute the drug at clubs and private parties and on high school and college campuses. At the retail level MDMA sold for \$15 to \$35 per tablet in Georgia in 2002, according to the DEA Atlanta Division.

LSD

The distribution and abuse of LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) pose a low threat to Georgia due to the drug's limited availability and comparatively low rate of abuse. LSD, also known as acid, boomers, and yellow sunshine, is a hallucinogen that induces abnormalities in sensory perceptions. The effects of LSD are unpredictable depending upon the amount taken, the environment in which it is abused, and the abuser's personality, mood, and expectations. The physical effects include dilated pupils, sweating, loss of appetite, nausea, numbness, weakness, insomnia, dry mouth, tremors, and increased body temperature, heart rate, and blood pressure. Such effects can last up to 12 hours. Two long-term disorders associated with LSD are persistent psychosis and hallucinogen persisting perception disorder (flashbacks).

LSD typically is taken orally and is available in powdered and liquid forms, in tablets or capsules, and on small candies and pieces of blotter paper. Most abusers are high school and college age individuals. Treatment providers in Atlanta indicate an increase in the number of LSD abusers among adolescents and teens. Some abusers hide

liquid LSD in breath mint vials or eyedrop bottles. Law enforcement officials in DeKalb County report that LSD sometimes is distributed in small gelatin squares in their area. The squares are formed by mixing the LSD with food coloring and gelatin then spreading the solution on a beveled plastic sheet (similar to the design and type of plastic used as a cover on fluorescent lights).

Most LSD available in the state is produced in northern California and transported to Georgia using package delivery services. Local independent Caucasian dealers, primarily college and high school students, are the principal wholesale and retail distributors of LSD in the state. In 2001 the Atlanta High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) reported that LSD sold for approximately \$1,000 for a 1,000-dosage-unit sheet, and a single dosage unit or "hit" sold for \$4 to \$10 in 2001. LSD can be purchased at gyms, dance clubs, night-clubs, raves, private parties, high school and college campuses, and over the Internet. Law enforcement officials in Atlanta report that LSD is available in some clubs that cater to teens and young adults.

Ketamine

The threat associated with the abuse and distribution of ketamine is low in Georgia. Ketamine, also known as K, special K, vitamin K, and cat valium, is an injectable anesthetic that is approved for both human and animal use. Ketamine is sold commercially and is produced in liquid, powdered,

and tablet forms. The liquid form is injected intramuscularly. Liquid ketamine is sometimes converted to powdered ketamine and placed in capsules. In its powdered form ketamine resembles cocaine or methamphetamine and often is snorted or smoked with marijuana or tobacco products.

Low-dose intoxication from ketamine may result in impaired attention, learning ability, and memory; dissociation, which includes out-of-body and near-death experiences; and hallucinations. High doses of ketamine can cause delirium, amnesia, impaired motor function, high blood pressure, depression, and potentially fatal respiratory problems. Ketamine abusers in the United States and the United Kingdom have reported incidents similar to bad LSD trips. Some abusers try to fly or jump from moving vehicles.

Local independent dealers based in Georgia and Florida supply most of the ketamine available in Georgia. Some distributors and abusers break into veterinary clinics to steal the drug. Local independent Caucasian dealers are the principal wholesale and retail distributors of the drug in Georgia. Young adults, primarily Caucasians, are the principal abusers of ketamine in Georgia. Retail distributors sell ketamine at raves and other social venues or to known associates. In 2001 ketamine sold for \$20 per 50 milligrams in Georgia.

GHB and Analogs

The threat posed by GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) and its analogs—GBL, BD, GVL, and GHV—is low but increasing in Georgia. GHB, also known as liquid MDMA, scoop, grievous bodily harm, and Georgia homeboy, is a depressant that occurs naturally in the body and is necessary for full functioning of the brain and central nervous system. GHB analogs are drugs that possess chemical structures that closely resemble GHB. Users of GHB and its analogs may experience insomnia, anxiety, tremors, and sweating. Abuse of GHB and its analogs also may cause drowsiness, nausea, vomiting, loss of consciousness, impaired breathing, and death. These drugs increasingly are cited in poisonings, overdoses, sexual assaults, and fatalities in Georgia and nationwide. Using GHB or its analogs in combination with methamphetamine increases the risk of seizures.

GHB and its analogs are available in Georgia primarily at social venues such as bars, nightclubs, raves, and on high school and college campuses. GHB analogs also are available at some disreputable health food stores, gyms, and

via the Internet. Young adults, usually Caucasians, are the principal distributors and abusers of the drugs. According to the DEA Atlanta Division, liquid GHB sold for \$500 to \$1,000 per gallon and for \$15 to \$20 per dosage unit in 2001. A capful, typically the size of the cap from a small water bottle, is the most common dosage unit at the retail level.

GHB Analogs	
Analog	Chemical/Alternative Name
GBL	gamma-butyrolactone furanone di-hydro dihydrofuranone
BD	1,4-butanediol tetramethylene glycol sucol-B butylene glycol
GVL	gamma-valerolactone 4-pentanolide
GHV	gamma-hydroxyvalerate methyl-GHB

Diverted Pharmaceuticals

Diverted pharmaceuticals frequently are abused in Georgia. Oxycodone, primarily OxyContin, was the most commonly diverted pharmaceutical in Georgia in 2002 and represents the greatest pharmaceutical threat to Georgia. Hydrocodone (Vicodin), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), and benzodiazepines (Xanax and Valium) also were diverted, but to a lesser extent. Oxycodone is a synthetic opioid analgesic used for relieving moderate to severe pain. It is similar to hydrocodone but is more potent and has a greater abuse potential. Hydrocodone is an opioid analgesic used to relieve moderate to moderately severe pain. Hydromorphone is an opioid used to relieve pain by acting on specific areas of the spinal cord and brain that process pain signals from nerves throughout the body. Benzodiazepines are minor tranquilizers that reduce stress and anxiety, relax muscles, and induce sleep.

Pharmaceutical Diversion Methods

Pharmaceuticals are diverted by prescription drug abusers and dealers through various methods. Prescription drug abusers and dealers often divert pharmaceuticals through “doctor shopping,” a practice by which individuals who may or may not have a legitimate ailment visit numerous physicians to obtain drugs in excess of what should legitimately be prescribed. Prescription drug abusers and dealers also steal drugs by robbing pharmacies or the homes of legitimate prescription holders. Dealers and abusers also may forge prescriptions by stealing blank prescription papers from physicians or altering the writing on prescriptions. Pharmacy employees also may divert drugs by intentionally filling fraudulent prescriptions or stealing pharmaceuticals directly from the shelves. Some unscrupulous physicians may also contribute to pharmaceutical diversion by prescribing unnecessary medications, sometimes for a fee or for sexual favors.

The diversion and abuse of oxycodone, primarily OxyContin, represent the most significant pharmaceutical drug threat to Georgia. According to the Georgia Drugs and Narcotics Agency, abuse of OxyContin, also known as Oxys or OCs, is the fastest-growing drug threat to northern Georgia, and law enforcement officials in Macon indicate that OxyContin is the greatest prescription drug threat in their jurisdiction. Diverted OxyContin is becoming increasingly available in central and southern Georgia as well. Law enforcement officials and treatment providers report that OxyContin, once predominantly abused by lower-income, middle-age individuals, increasingly is being abused by middle-class individuals, and the average age of abusers is decreasing. OxyContin abusers crush the tablets to destroy the controlled-release properties, then snort or inject the drug. The resulting physiological effects are similar to those caused by heroin. A 20-milligram tablet of OxyContin sells for approximately \$20.

Hydrocodone (Vicodin), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), and benzodiazepines (Xanax and Valium) also are diverted and abused in Georgia, but to a lesser extent than oxycodone. Law enforcement officials and treatment professionals in Georgia report that crack cocaine abusers occasionally abuse these prescription drugs to ameliorate the negative effects of crack cocaine. The Community Epidemiology Work Group reports that benzodiazepines such as Valium and Xanax are now being abused in crack houses in Atlanta.

Caucasian local independent dealers are the principal distributors of diverted pharmaceuticals in Georgia. Retail distributors often sell diverted pharmaceuticals to acquaintances and established customers.

Outlook

Cocaine, particularly crack, likely will remain the greatest illicit drug threat to Georgia, primarily because of the high demand for and ready availability of the drug. The level of violence associated with crack cocaine distribution and abuse will continue to contribute to the magnitude of the threat. However, in some rural areas of the state, primarily in northern Georgia, methamphetamine availability and abuse have surpassed cocaine as the primary drug threat. Mexican criminal groups with well-established transportation and distribution networks will remain the dominant suppliers and wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine in the state. Distributors within the state will continue to convert most of the powdered cocaine to crack for retail distribution. African American and Hispanic gangs likely will remain heavily involved in the retail distribution of crack cocaine.

Marijuana will continue to be the most widely available and commonly abused illicit drug in Georgia. Marijuana produced in Mexico likely will remain the most common type available; however, marijuana produced locally will be readily available as well. In some larger metropolitan areas such as Atlanta, specialty types of marijuana such as chocolate-flavored marijuana may gain in popularity. Mexican criminal groups—with their established transportation and distribution networks—will remain the primary transporters and wholesale distributors of marijuana produced in Mexico. Various gangs and local independent dealers will continue to be the primary marijuana retail distributors in the state.

The production, availability, and abuse of methamphetamine may increase in Georgia. In some areas of the state, principally in northern Georgia, methamphetamine availability and

abuse have surpassed cocaine as the primary drug threat. However, statewide abuse levels will remain well below those for cocaine and marijuana. Methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states will continue to be the predominant type of methamphetamine available in the state. Mexican criminal groups will remain the primary methamphetamine suppliers, distributing wholesale quantities to criminal groups, local independent dealers, OMGs, and gangs that sell midlevel and retail level quantities of the drug. Local methamphetamine production likely will continue to increase based on equipment and dumpsite seizure statistics.

The availability and abuse of heroin likely will remain at low levels in Georgia except in metropolitan areas, principally Atlanta. South American heroin will continue to be the type of heroin most commonly available and abused in the state. Mexican criminal groups will remain the primary transporters and wholesale distributors of South American heroin, although Colombian and Dominican criminal groups also will continue to transport and sell wholesale quantities of South American heroin. African American, Caucasian, Dominican, and Mexican criminal groups as well as local independent dealers will remain the principal retail distributors of heroin in Georgia.

The availability and abuse of other dangerous drugs—particularly MDMA and OxyContin—likely will increase. State and local law enforcement officials report that abuse levels for these drugs are increasing, and there are no indications that this trend will subside. However, these drugs will remain a lesser drug threat to the state than cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, and heroin.

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