DEA forensic chemist Dr. Albert Tillson is shown analyzing an illegal drug.

1975-1980

During this period, drug use in America escalated, and by 1979, 26 million Americans were considered regular drug us-ers. Government policies urged law enforcement organizations to de-emphasize marijuana and cocaine investigations in favor of increased heroin enforcement activities. Because marijuana and cocaine were not considered high priorities for law enforcement agencies, many Americans believed they were free to use both drugs. Consequently, cocaine and marijuana use became wide-spread throughout the U.S.

The White House White Paper

In early 1975, drug abuse was escalating and the nation faced new challenges on the drug front. By September 1975, Presi-dent Ford set up the Domestic Council Drug Abuse Task Force, chaired by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, to assess the extent of drug abuse in America and to make recommendations for han-dling it. The resulting report, the White Paper, maintained that "all drugs are not equally dangerous. Enforcement efforts should therefore concentrate on drugs which have a high addiction po-tential..." This report deemed marijuana a minor problem and declared that cocaine was not a problem. "Cocaine," the report stated, "is not physically addictive...and usually does not result in serious social con-sequences, such as crime, hospital emergency room admissions, or death." The report recommended that "pri-ority in both supply and demand reduction should be directed toward those drugs which inherently pose a greater risk—heroin, amphetamines...and mixed barbiturates."

Specifically, the panel recommended that the DEA and U.S. Customs Service de-emphasize investigations of marijuana and cocaine smuggling and give higher priority to heroin trafficking. This policy shifted enforcement efforts, resources, and manpower away from cocaine cases towards heroin. The report recommended that agents focus on Mexico, a source of both heroin and danger-ous drugs, rather than on domestic posts, such as Miami, where they were more likely to "make a cocaine or marijuana case."

Government policy makers were primarily concerned with heroin, and to a lesser extent, amphetamines and barbiturates.

Marijuana was still considered by many to be a harmless recreational drug, typically used by college students, and cocaine wasn't considered a serious drug problem. This lack of emphasis on marijuana and cocaine meant that the marijuana smugglers from Colombia and cocaine traffickers faced minimal law enforcement opposition. Moreover, it allowed the traffickers from Colombia to lay the foundations for what would become the powerful Medellin and Cali drug cartels. Both were to pose significant threats to the U.S. by the late 1970s and early 1980s. Having already established marijuana distribution networks along the East Coast, they were easily able to add cocaine to their illegal shipments.

Central Tactical Units (1975)

In April 1975, DEA created the first of its central tactical units (CENTAC) to concentrate enforcement efforts against major drug trafficking organizations. Prior to this, due to lack of coordination on a national level, many drug investigations were terminated following the arrest of low-level dealers or an occasional top figure, who was quickly replaced. However, CENTAC targeted major worldwide drug trafficking syndicates from a central, quick-response command post in Washington, D.C. Eight CENTACs investigated heroin manufacturing organizations in Lebanon, Asia, and Mexico. Three other CENTACs targeted large cocaine organizations from Latin America that operated in the U.S. Yet other CENTACs dismantled criminal groups that manufactured and distributed LSD, PCP, and amphetamines.

One CENTAC, 16, was split into West Coast and East Coast investigations, and extended its investigations into Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. It dismantled a major international heroin organization, three import groups, and five major New York distribution networks. In addition, it seized approximately $1 million and reaped another $1 million in bail left by fleeing defendants. CENTAC 16 ultimately indicted 100 major traffickers, along with 61 lesser criminals.

The CENTAC program was considered extremely successful. According to a 1980 General Accounting Office Report, "The results of CENTAC investigations have been impressive, not only in terms of the number of high-level traffickers arrested, but also the sentences the traffickers have received... CENTAC results are particularly impressive in light of the small percentage of the DEA's enforcement effort CENTAC comprised." Using only three percent of the DEA's enforcement staff and 1.3 percent of its expenditures for information and evidence, CENTAC arrested 2,116 traffickers. This total represented over 12 percent of all Class I violators arrested by the DEA over a three-year period.

Operation Trizo (1976)

In 1976, DEA and the Mexican government began a poppy eradication program called Operation Trizo. The operation called for Mexican nationals to fly helicopters donated by the U.S. State Department to spray herbicides onto poppy fields in the states of Durango, Sinaloa, and Chihuahua.

By the end of 1977, approximately 22,000 acres of poppy, enough to be processed into eight tons of heroin, had been destroyed. Because of Operation Trizo, by 1979 the purity of Mexican heroin fell to just five percent, its lowest level in seven years. In addition, 4,000 members of organizations in Mexico were arrested. Operation Trizo lessened the demand for Mexican heroin in the U.S. market.

The large numbers of arrests that resulted from Operation Trizo caused an economic crisis in the poppy-growing regions of Mexico. In order to reduce the social upheaval, the Mexican government formally asked DEA to stop participating in the surveillance flights. Operation Trizo was called off in the spring of 1978 at the request of the Mexican government. While successful in the short term, the operation did not prevent the growing sophistication of these drug organizations and their distributions systems in the U.S.

Jaime Herrera-Nevares

Jaime Herrera-Nevares was the patriarch of a huge criminal syndicate based in the mountain top village of Los Herreras, Durango, Mexico. As far back as 1957, the Herrera organization ran a farm-to-the-arm heroin operation that cultivated opium poppy plants, processed and packaged heroin in Mexico, and transported it to Chicago. There it was either sold locally or distributed to other U.S. cities. This group was extremely difficult to penetrate because family members controlled the entire heroin process from top to bottom.

In September 1977, DEA agents at JFK Airport in New York seized 85 pounds of cocaine that had been concealed in 4,500 pounds of chocolate bars. SA Michael J. Tobin displayed how the cocaine had been hidden in the candy bars.

U.S. law enforcement agencies were well acquainted with the Herrera organization and its "Heroin Highway," a drug trafficking network that stretched from Durango to Chicago. The family frequently smuggled heroin in their invention, the "Durango drive-shaft," a sleeve-like device that surrounded the vehicle's drive-shaft and held several kilos of heroin. They also used compartmentalized gas tanks and door panels to conceal the contraband.

At one time, Chicago area law enforcement agencies believed the Herreras controlled as much as 90% of local heroin distribution. DEA estimated that the Herrera organization imported 746 pounds of pure heroin into the U.S. each year. When cut, this amounted to over eight tons of five-percent pure heroin. The Herreras were considered the largest heroin trafficking organization in Mexico, with profits estimated at $1 million a year. They returned the majority of their profits to their home in Mexico, using neighborhood currency exchanges to send money orders back to Durango. In the mid-1970s, DEA traced just under $2 million from these exchanges and Western Union records. This figure represented approximately one percent of the total cash transferred to Mexico by the Herrera organization annually.

Firefighters and police on the scene of the DEA headquarters fire in October 1976.

By 1978, the Chicago Herreras were grossing $60 million a year and had established branches in Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, and Pittsburgh. By 1980, the family had established connections in South America and had diversified into cocaine. By the mid-1980s, the family's gross income had reached approximately $200 million a year.

CENTAC 19, launched in 1979, targeted the Herrera family trafficking organization and eventually resulted in the seizure of 39 kilograms of heroin, as well as the arrest and long-term incarceration of three key Chicago-based members of the Herrera organization.

During the 1980s investigations against the Herreras continued. On July 23, 1985, as a result of a two-year investigation called Operation Durango, between 450 and 500 federal, state, and local law enforcement officers in Chicago, IL, and Gary, IN, arrested 120 traffickers (of the 132 indicted) connected to the polydrug trafficking Herrera and Zambrana families. Officers seized 10 pounds of heroin, 13 pounds of cocaine, 47 properties, and $300,000. In August 1988, the Mexican leaders of the organization, Jaime Herrera-Nevarez Sr., and Jaime Herrera-Herrera Jr., were arrested in Mexico on drug charges and remain incarcerated in Mexico City. They continued being listed as DEA fugitives based on prior indictments in Miami, FL.

Fire at DEA Headquarters (1976)

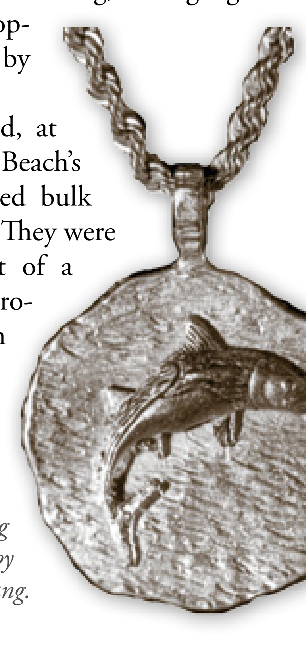
In October 1976, a small fire erupted on the second floor of DEA headquarters at 14th and "Eye" streets in Northwest Washington, D.C. Through the quick actions of DEA employee Marc Cunningham of the Forensic Science Division, the fire was brought under control, limiting the damage to a corner of the room in which it started. As DC firefighters arrived on the scene, DEA headquarters was evacuated and no injuries were reported as a result of the incident. Nevertheless, the fire prompted a thorough review and an updating of the DEA's Facility Self-Protection Plan.

The Black Tuna Gang and Operation Banco

In 1979, a joint DEA/FBI task force in Miami immobilized the Black Tuna Gang, a major marijuana smuggling ring responsible for bringing 500 tons of marijuana into the U.S. over a 16-month period.

The Black Tuna gang derived its name from the radio code name for a mysterious Colombian sugar grower and drug dealer, Raul Davila-Jimeno, who was the major supplier of the organization. Many of the gang members wore solid-gold medallions bearing a black tuna emblem. The medallions served as a talisman and symbol of their membership in this smuggling group. With the assistance of this small private army, Davila, who called himself a sugar, coffee, and petroleum exporter, virtually ruled Santa Marta, Colombia, where the majority of Colombian marijuana was grown. It was a highly organized ring, with gang members maintaining security and eavesdropping on radio frequencies used by police and U.S. Customs officials.

The Black Tuna gang operated, at least briefly, from a suite in Miami Beach's Fontainebleau Hotel and arranged bulk deliveries to a moored houseboat. They were affiliated with the vice-president of a prestigious Ft. Lauderdale yacht brokerage and were thus able to obtain specialized boats that could carry tons of marijuana without sitting suspiciously low in the water. The



Solid gold medallion bearing a black tuna emblem, worn by members of the Black Tuna gang.

contraband was transported in these modified boats and unloaded at a series of waterfront "stash houses" in posh neighborhoods.

The Black Tuna Gang ran an elaborate operation, complete with electronically equipped trucks used to maintain contact with the freighters and to monitor law enforcement channels. They were also creative. As a signal that they were ready to proceed with a drug deal, the smugglers sent Davila a box of disposable diapers. This meant, "the baby is ready, send the mother."

Ultimately, partners in a Miami used car agency were indicted as the masterminds of the Black Tuna Gang, which federal prosecutors called the "biggest and slickest" gang yet uncovered. It was the meticulous work of a DEA-FBI probe of Florida banks called Operation Banco, which began in 1977, that led investigators to the auto dealers and ultimately resulted in the downfall of the Black Tuna Gang. Operation Banco traced the group's drug profits through South Florida banks until members of the Black Tuna Gang made a large cash deposit in Miami Beach Bank. This case was notable as the first combined investigation by the DEA and the FBI on drug profits behind the marijuana trade.

Heroin from Mexico

For decades, traffickers based in Mexico had been involved in the production and smuggling of drugs. During WW II, when fighting cut the Allies off from other legal sources of drug supplies, Mexico became a source of morphine for the legal market and heroin for the illegal market. The war also created a need for hemp fiber for rope, which led to large-scale cultivation of marijuana in both Mexico and the U.S. Until the 1960s, when major traffickers began operating in Mexico, the marijuana issue was not considered a very serious one.

By the late 1960s, Mexico was a major source of both heroin and marijuana, as well as barbiturates and amphetamines. As a result, many U.S. enforcement efforts were directed toward stemming the tide of drugs coming across the southern border. In 1969, in an effort to stop trafficking across the Southwest Border, the Nixon Administration ordered that each person and vehicle crossing the border be inspected. However, Operation Intercept, as the project was called, tied up border traffic, angered the Mexican government, and disturbed the economy on both sides of the border. As a result, Operation Intercept was soon terminated. Recognizing that interdiction alone was not a successful strategy, the U.S. Government subsequently increased aid to Mexico, and offered greater cooperation and technical assistance to eradicate cannabis and opium poppy plants.

It was not until 1972, with the dismantling of the French Connection, that heroin market structures and distribution patterns radically shifted. At that point, drug trafficking from Mexico expanded and the cultivation of opium poppy fields increased. "Mexican mud," or brown heroin, was suddenly in great demand and from 1972 through 1976, groups from Mexico dominated the heroin trade and supplied an ever-increasing demand for marijuana. By 1974, traffickers from Mexico controlled three-fourths of the U.S. heroin market.

Development of the Heroin Signature Program (1977)

In 1977, DEA developed the Heroin Signature Program (HSP). This program classified samples of heroin according to the process by which they were manufactured, enabling investigators to determine the geographic areas where the samples were produced. Data from the HSP were used in conjunction with investigative intelligence, drug production, and seizure data to develop an overall assessment of heroin trafficking to and within the U.S. The Special Testing and Research Laboratory conducted the analysis for the program and developed the protocol that revolutionized the way analytical data were used for tracking the origins of heroin exhibits. With this information, law enforcement was alerted to emerging drug problems and developed strategies to counter them. For example, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the HSP documented the decrease in the proportion of Mexican heroin seized in the U.S. and the concomitant increase in heroin seized from Southwest Asia.

Tighter PCP Controls (1977)

In the mid-1970s, the abuse of phencyclidine (PCP) was an increasing problem. PCP-related deaths had increased 60 percent from 1976 to 1977, and PCP was involved in 35 of the 36 deaths attributed to hallucinogens for that year. In addition, the number of PCP laboratory seizures during 1977 was 42 percent higher than the combined totals of the two previous years.

In 1977, Administrator Bensinger recommended to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare that PCP, an animal tranquilizer, be rescheduled from Schedule III to Schedule II of the Controlled Substances Act of 1970. In 1977, the Food and Drug Administration's scientific and medical evaluations confirmed the necessity for this action, and effective Feb. 24, 1978, PCP was moved from Schedule III to the Schedule II classification.

The DEA also combated escalating nationwide manufacture and abuse of PCP or "angel dust" by creating a new Special Action Office (SAO/PCP) in 1977. During its first 18 months, the SAO/PCP was responsible for initiating 96 PCP investigations and arresting 149 defendants. In addition, more than 5.1 million dosage units of PCP and 23 clandestine labs were seized.

The DEA's success in curbing PCP trafficking continued on Dec. 17, 1978, when it completed one of the largest PCP seizures

Carlo Boccia (right), coordinator of a special operation that targeted PCP distribution and abuse, was photographed consulting with SA Joe Brzostowski who helped initiate the operation in 1978.

in the agency's history. In a pre-dawn search, more than 50 special agents and several deputies confiscated $300 million worth of PCP in a clandestine lab in Los Angeles. Upwards of 900 pounds of PCP, in either the finished or intermediate stage, was seized. This quantity of PCP would have yielded 36 million dosage units. A large amount of lab equipment, including a sophisticated high-speed pill press, was also seized. Five suspects were arrested at the scene. The lab was by far the largest of its kind ever dismantled in the West and one of the largest of any type ever seized in the U.S. The seizures and arrests concluded a year-long joint investigation between the DEA and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department.

Colombian Marijuana

In the mid-to-late 1970s, trends in drug abuse were beginning to change. In fact, drug smuggling was taking on an entirely different scope. Cocaine and Colombian marijuana had become the drugs of choice, and the burgeoning drug organizations in Colombia took full advantage of new markets in the U.S. It was no longer unusual for law enforcement to seize cocaine in 100-pound shipments. Also, marijuana was being shipped to the U.S. in ton quantities, as evidenced by a 113-ton seizure from a single ship off the northeastern coast of Florida in August 1978.

Colombian marijuana, or "Colombian Gold," a highly potent marijuana, was reaching the U.S. in "mother ships," which were large maritime vessels that carried bulk shipments of marijuana to prearranged points off the U.S. coast. These ships were moored far enough away from the shore to avoid notice, and off-loaded smaller quantities of the drug to smaller yachts, "go fast" boats, and fishing vessels that could smuggle the drug ashore less conspicuously and avoid detection by law enforcement. During the mid-to-late 1970s and early 1980s, DEA conducted a number of notable operations targeting the organizations behind these mother ships. One such program, Operation Stopgap, was created in December 1975. As part of this program, DEA pilots flew up and down the coast of La Guajira, Colombia, which was a major source of drug smuggling. They reported suspect vessels to the DEA's El Paso Intelligence Center, which then relayed the information to U.S. Coast Guard cutters. The operation also used U.S. Navy satellites to track the suspect vessels.

By 1978, Operation Stopgap effectively reduced the flow of marijuana from Colombia to the U.S. by at least one-third. The Stopgap program seized over one million pounds of marijuana. These significant seizures caused the price of marijuana in Colombia to increase from $20 a pound to as much as $80. In addition, more than 220 people were arrested, almost all of whom were Colombian nationals.

The Arrest of Nicky Barnes

Leroy "Nicky" Barnes, a former street addict and common thief turned multi-millionaire drug lord, was the subject of one of DEA's most significant investigations of the 1970s. Since the 1940s, African-American criminal groups had controlled portions of the heroin traffic in New York City, and their influence increased significantly after the French Connection in the early 1970s. Growing up in Harlem, Barnes saw that people who controlled the drug trade had considerable power. While in his 20s, Barnes became a mid-level drug dealer until sent to prison in 1965. There, he teamed up with gangster "Crazy Joey" Gallo who taught him how to operate a drug trafficking organization.

Gallo had wanted to be a major force in the Harlem drug trade, but he lacked the personnel. He urged Barnes to recruit African-Americans into the business. With the help of a lawyer provided by Gallo, Barnes' conviction was reversed and he was released from prison. Barnes went back to the streets of New York and began establishing his own trafficking network.

Barnes' organization was among the first of a new trend of African-American and Hispanic trafficking groups which took over from long-entrenched Italian organizations. His syndicate made enormous profits by cutting and packaging low-quality heroin. Barnes controlled heroin sales and manufacture throughout New York State and extended his business into Canada and Pennsylvania. By 1976, he had at least seven major lieutenants working for him, each of whom controlled a dozen mid-level distributors, who in turn supplied up to 40 street-level retailers.

Barnes modeled his growing empire after some of the more successful organized crime families and built administrative layers between himself and his crimes. Even though he was arrested numerous times, few charges against Barnes himself were able to stick, which earned him the nickname of "Mr. Untouchable." Barnes reveled in his nickname. He developed an aggressive style when dealing with police, often leading surveillance teams on hundred-mile-an-hour car rides into New York City and then out again with no apparent purpose. Also, he would make scores of pointless stops, just to aggravate his surveillance officers.

In 1976, he estimated that his trafficking income was at least several million dollars, and like most organized crime leaders, he lived a life of extravagant self-indulgence. He owned five homes, wore expensive, hand-tailored outfits and furs, owned luxury cars, and surrounded himself with a half dozen bodyguards.

In 1977, a *New York Times* article reported that Barnes owned 300 suits, 100 pairs of shoes and 50 leather coats. His fleet of cars included a Mercedes-Benz, a Citroen-Macerate, and several Thunderbirds, Lincoln Continentals, and Cadillacs. To prevent his cars from being seized and forfeited, Barnes set up phony leasing companies to make it appear that the cars he drove were not owned by him, but merely rented. Eventually federal agents unraveled his scheme and proved that his front companies were phony.

Working closely with the U.S. Attorney in New York, DEA agents infiltrated the Barnes syndicate and put together a case that led to his conviction. On Jan. 19, 1978, in the Federal District Court in Manhattan, Leroy "Nicky" Barnes was sentenced to life in prison on a federal charge that he headed, in the words of the prosecutor, "the largest, most profitable and venal drug ring in New York City." For many DEA agents, the arrest of Leroy "Nicky" Barnes was the most significant of their careers, the result of almost four years of dangerous undercover work.

The Office of Compliance and Regulatory Affairs

In October 1976, the DEA established the Office of Compliance and Regulatory Affairs, under the direction of Kenneth Durrin. The office was created to provide a specialized work force that could focus exclusively on the diversion of legitimate drugs and take full advantage of the controls and penalties established by the Controlled Substances Act (CSA).

From 1971 through 1978, 33 previously uncontrolled drugs of abuse were brought under CSA control. The best known of these drugs was methaqualone, which was controlled in Schedule II. An additional 11 drugs, including amphetamine, methamphetamine, and the fast-acting barbiturates were rescheduled from lower schedules into Schedule II, where the tightest security, import, record-keeping and reporting controls were applied. For example, a Schedule II drug could only be distributed on official order forms between registrants, exported only by official permit, and produced only in limited quantities. This significantly curtailed the amount of many popular drugs that were available for diversion.

While DEA had been successful in regulating manufacturers and distributors, it now had the opportunity to work cooperatively with doctors and pharmacists at the retail level. The 1979 National Institute on Drug Abuse survey showed that non-medical use of prescription drugs was second only to marijuana use. More startling statistics came from the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), which measured hospital emergency room episodes and medical examiner reports concerned with specific drugs.

In 1980, legally produced drugs accounted for 15 of the 20 most frequently mentioned controlled drugs in DAWN emergency mentions and 75 percent of total mentions of controlled drug use. In addition, legally produced drugs constituted 74 percent of controlled substance mentions in deaths reported by medical examiners.

Up until then, diversion by unscrupulous practitioners had not been the major investigative focus of DEA because the huge quantities of drugs diverted at the manufacturer and distributor level had overshadowed this problem. However, when estimates indicated that 80-90 percent of diversion was now occurring at the practitioner level, it became time to increase efforts against practitioner diversion. Because practitioners and pharmacies had emerged as the main sources of diverted controlled substances, the Office of Compliance and Regulatory Affairs changed its priorities to deal with this problem. This was a daunting challenge for a work force of about 200, because by the late 1970s, there were over 550,000 practitioners and pharmacies registered under the CSA. An example of practitioner-level abuse in the mid-1970s occurred at "weight" clinics where "patients" were able to obtain many diverted drugs. In October of 1979, DEA initiated Operation Script, a pilot program designed to focus DEA's technical, investigative, and legal expertise on this problem. A total of 94 priority targets in 23 cities were identified by analyzing drug sales data reported to DEA by manufacturers and distributors through a system known as the Automated Reports and Consummated Orders System (ARCOS). This ARCOS system contained information for estimating drug requirements and alerted investigators to sources of diversion in the legal drug distribution chain. In September 1980, a DEA internal review of Operation Script showed that investigations had resulted in 28 convictions, 10 additional indictments, five surrenders or revocations, and 17 state board actions.

An important aspect of the overall investigative program was that data developed through these investigations was used to initiate significant regulatory actions. For example, the maximum quantity of commonly abused drugs that could be manufactured legally was reduced through the quota process. Manufacturing quotas were applied to Schedule I and II substances and limited production to the actual amount necessary for legitimate medical and scientific need. Information documenting the diversion of these substances was used to justify reductions in these quotas, greatly reducing the amount of drugs available for diversion.

DEA also actively pursued the enhancement of state-level investigative capabilities by funding Diversion Investigation Units (DIUs). The DIUs combined state law enforcement and regulatory bodies into a single unit dedicated to investigating and taking action against practitioners who were diverting controlled substances.

By the late 1970s both the U.S. Congress and the General Accounting Office (GAO) recognized the significant contributions that DEA's efforts had achieved in eliminating diversion at the manufacturer and distributor level. These efforts were able to successfully shore up the weakest portions of the upper end of the distribution chain. Drug manufacturers and distributors either improved their controls or ceased controlled substance activity altogether. The Office of Compliance and Regulatory Affairs was ultimately changed to the Office of Diversion Control in 1982.

South Florida

By the mid-1970s, Miami had become the drug capital of the Western Hemisphere because of its geography and cooperative international banks. Within a short time, South Florida was overwhelmed by violent cocaine and marijuana traffickers from Latin America.

In 1975, the U.S. Customs Service seized 729 pounds of cocaine, up from only 108 pounds in 1970. During that same period, in Miami Airport alone, cocaine seizures increased from 37 pounds to over 271. By 1979, the South Florida illegal drug trade was the state's biggest industry and was said to be worth $10 billion a year wholesale. "There is so much money, they weigh it instead of counting it," commented Administrator Bensinger. In what had once been a tranquil vacation spot, violence was becoming commonplace. In July 1979, an incident that occurred in the Dadeland Mall, Florida's largest shopping center, offered a startling glimpse of the emerging drug trade in South Florida. In broad daylight, two gunmen exited a paneled truck, entered a liquor store, gunned down two men and wounded the store clerk. The dead men were eventually identified as a Colombia-based cocaine trafficker and his bodyguard.

Paraphernalia Law (1979)

As drug use grew in America, especially on college campuses, the paraphernalia industry developed to support the drug culture. Retailers sold items such as "bongs," "roach clips," and specialized razor blades purchased to enhance the use of marijuana, hashish, heroin, cocaine, and a variety of other drugs. These "head shops," as they were called, became big business. In 1980, it was estimated that 25,000 retail outlets for drug paraphernalia grossed up to $3 billion annually in sales. The sale and advertising of drug paraphernalia glamorized the drug culture, promoted drug use, and undermined educational and community programs designed to prevent drug abuse among our youth.

In 1979, in response to the growing problem, President Carter asked the DEA to draft a model anti-drug paraphernalia law that could be adopted by state and local governments. Early state laws aimed at controlling drug paraphernalia were ineffective because they had dealt with the problem on a piecemeal basis, and were so vaguely worded they could not withstand a constitutional attack. In contrast, the Model Act, which was designed by Harry Myers in the DEA's Office of Chief Counsel, was clear and comprehensive and contained a detailed definition of "drug paraphernalia." It also included lists of criteria that courts could use in order to determine if particular objects should be considered paraphernalia.

The Model Act made the possession of paraphernalia, with the intent to use it with illicit drugs, a crime. Manufacturing and delivering paraphernalia was a crime, and the delivery of paraphernalia to a child by an adult was a special offense. In addition, the publication of commercial advertisements promoting the sale of paraphernalia was unlawful.

By mid-1981, 20 states had enacted DEA's Model Drug Paraphernalia Act. However, the head shops did not go without a legal fight. One Illinois business challenged a drug paraphernalia ordinance on the grounds that it was unconstitutionally broad and vague. However, on March 3, 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the ordinance did not violate the head shop owner's First Amendment rights nor was there a danger of arbitrary enforcement, which is necessary to render a law void for vagueness. As more and more states adopted these anti-drug measures, thousands of paraphernalia shops were essentially legislated out of business.

Cocaine

By the late 1970s, a flood of cocaine was entering the country in Miami and being transported north to New York City and to cities and towns all along the East Coast. Cocaine, however, was not yet considered a major threat because many believed that its use was confined to the wealthy.

Cocaine Use: Statistics indicated otherwise: by 1974, 5.4 million Americans acknowledged having tried cocaine at least once. By 1979, cocaine use was at its peak. That year, the Household Survey showed that almost 20 percent of Americans had used cocaine in the past year, and 9.3 percent had used cocaine in the previous month. By the early 1980s about 22 million Americans admitted to having tried cocaine.

The rise in drug use was fueled, in part, by the tolerant attitudes prevalent in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Many people saw cocaine as a benign, recreational drug, celebrated for its "pleasureability" in the media. Dr. Peter Bourne, drug advisor to Jimmy Carter and Special Assistant for Health Issues, wrote, "Cocaine…is probably the most benign of illicit drugs currently in widespread use. At least as strong a case could be made for legalizing it as for legalizing marijuana. Short-acting…not physically addicting, and acutely pleasurable, cocaine has found increasing favor at all socioeconomic levels." This was an attitude shared by the public at large.

Cocaine Trafficking: In 1974 DEA began to make connections between cocaine seizures and realized that cases that appeared to be isolated were actually linked. It became obvious that a well-organized smuggling effort was being orchestrated from abroad. Traffickers from Colombia monopolized the cocaine business in Queens and Manhattan, New York. However, a large-scale cocaine problem was still believed to exist only in Miami.

DEA estimated that Colombia-based traffickers had been processing 70 percent of the cocaine entering the U.S. each year, which was estimated to yield approximately $150 million in gross profits to the dealers. In more and more investigations around the nation, DEA encountered trafficking networks controlled from Colombia, who were running stash houses, moving money, and developing drug market networks for their suppliers back home.

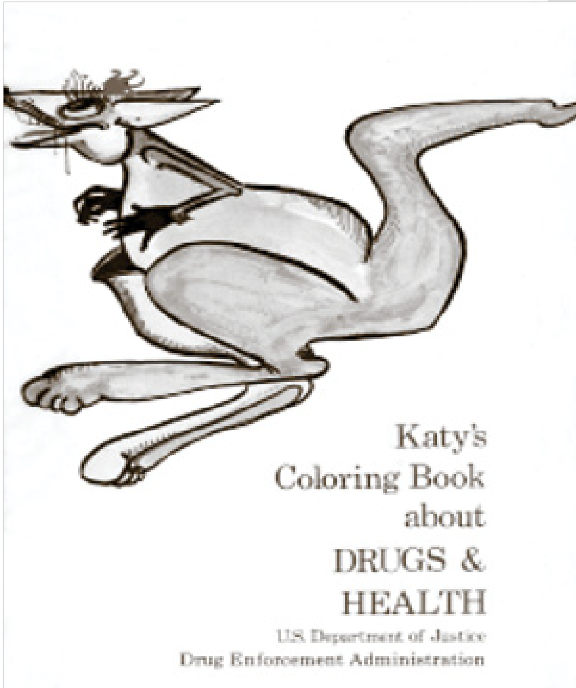
Initially, traffickers from Cuba controlled the distribution organizations in South Florida and New York. Eventually, however, through violence and the so-called "cocaine wars," Colombia-based traffickers wrested control of the cocaine business. Other groups were allowed into the cocaine business, but strictly on terms set by the traffickers from Colombia who controlled the market. Meanwhile, law enforcement continued to make small seizures that were viewed as isolated, independent cases.

The Origins of the Medellin Cartel

The 1979 incident at Dadeland Mall in Florida that had received national attention was the first visible evidence of the growing presence of a network of Colombia-based drug dealers in the U.S. This drug alliance had been conceived by Carlos Enrique Lehder-Rivas, who had met George Jung, a drug trafficker, while in prison. Jung had been transporting tons of marijuana in private planes. Noting how successful this method of smuggling marijuana had been, Lehder reasoned that cocaine could also be moved in ton quantities.

Carlos Lehder (left) is shown using cocaine with his former prison buddy Steven Yakovac on Norman's Cay in 1978.

Lehder purchased Norman's Cay, shown here in 1981, to facilitate his smuggling operations.



Katy's Coloring Book was originally conceived and illustrated by Suzie Rice in 1970. It was innovative in that it was the first publication that addressed the subject at a child's level.

In the late 1970s, Carlos Enrique Lehder-Rivas began cooperating with other Colombia-based traffickers in the manufacturing, transportation, and distribution of tons of cocaine to the U.S. and around the world. Lehder's idea evolved into of the most lucrative, powerful, and deadly partnerships known—the Medellin cartel. Its membership included some of the most notorious drug lords of the 1980s—Jorge Ochoa, Pablo Escobar, Griselda Blanco, Gustavo and Benjamin Herrera, and Jose Rodriguez-Gacha.

By the summer of 1976, Jung and Lehder were out of jail and in the cocaine business. Lehder bought Norman's Cay, an island in the Bahamas, which served as a base for air smuggling between Colombia and the U.S. Lehder was just one of the hundreds of Colombia-based traffickers expanding the cocaine business.

By the mid-1970s, these traffickers, already active in marijuana trade, had established a virtual monopoly over cocaine distribution. The Andean city of Medellin, Colombia's second largest city, was home to most of these traffickers. With cooperation, the cartels began processing even greater amounts of cocaine—from 25 tons in the late 1970s to 125 tons by the early 1980s. In the U.S. in 1978, a kilo of 12-percent purity cocaine had sold on the street for an average of $800,000. But by early 1984, cocaine was so plentiful that there were substantial price reductions in many U.S. cities. Prices for a kilo of cocaine dropped as low as $30,000 in New York City and $16,000 in South Florida.

Major Cocaine Seizures

In late 1979, DEA and the U.S. Customs Service conducted a two-part drug air interdiction campaign in the Turks and Caicos islands near the Bahamas. The campaign, which was called Operation Boomer/Falcon, mostly focused on South Caicos Island. The island had become an established transshipment and refueling point for drug smugglers from South America because many corrupt South Caicos government officials were easily bribed.

One phase of the operation involved a covert surveillance of nearby uninhabited West Caicos Island, which was also used as a transshipment point. When aircraft laden with illicit drugs landed on the island, DEA agents and local law enforcement officers were on-hand to seize the aircraft and arrest the pilots. The other phase of the operation was an undercover investigation used to collect intelligence about aircraft transporting drugs. Two DEA agents posing as mechanics lived in a DEA DC-3 plane for six weeks. During that time, they collected identification information about planes that were smuggling drugs and relayed this information to a command post in Miami, FL. Using this information, which included the tail identification numbers and take-off times of planes transporting illicit drugs, the command post launched aircraft to intercept the traffickers.

The operation was enormously successful and resulted in the seizure of 27 aircraft, 1,203 pounds of Quaaludes and almost eight tons of marijuana, as well as the 1985 arrest and conviction of the Prime Minister of South Caicos, Norman Saunders, who had accepted bribes from drug traffickers. Operation Boomer/Falcon was responsible for the seizure of a total of 785 pounds of cocaine, of which two seizures were of record quantities—329 and 384 pounds. Previously, agents rarely seized more than 10-20 pounds at a time. These large seizures alerted law enforcement of the increase in cocaine trafficking from South America.

U.S. Drug Use Peaks (1979)

Drug use by Americans reached its all-time high in 1979. With relaxed attitudes regarding the harmfulness of marijuana, cocaine, and other illegal substances, young people recklessly experimented with these drugs and suffered severe consequences as a result. According to the 1979 National Survey on Drug Abuse, more than two-thirds of young adults, age 18-25, reported experience with an illicit drug. About three in 10 youth, age 12-17, and one in five older adults, age 26 and older, reported having used an illicit drug. These statistics sent shock waves through the law enforcement, civic, and educational communities. As a result, in subsequent years, anti-drug campaigns and concerted efforts were launched by governments and communities across the nation aimed at decreasing teen drug use.

Domestic Cannabis Eradication and Suppression Program (1979)

Marijuana was the only major drug grown within U.S. borders, and since the 1960s, had been the most widely used drug in the U.S. In the late 1970s, it was estimated that the U.S. was producing almost 25 percent of all the marijuana consumed domestically. During the two-year period from 1977 to 1979, the demand for it was confirmed by the percentage of adults who admitted to ever having tried marijuana in their lifetime. These rates increased from 59.9 percent to 68.2 percent for young adults, and from 15.3 percent to 19.6 percent for older adults.

In 1979, an estimated 10-15,000 tons of marijuana were consumed in the U.S. It is believed that up to 10 percent of that amount was cultivated in the U.S., a majority from California and Hawaii. In response to this serious problem, DEA began its Domestic Cannabis Eradication and Suppression Program in 1979 with only two states participating, California and Hawaii. DEA provided three special agents to work with local authorities in California on case development and intelligence gathering.

The DEA Air Wing also provided aircraft and pilots as part of the search effort, and local police received aerial search techniques instruction. In the same year, three DEA agents also worked with the U.S. Customs Service and U.S. Coast Guard in Operation Green Harvest that targeted marijuana growers in the Hawaiian Islands. More and more states joined the cannabis eradication program and by 1982, 25 states had joined.

This program was established as a partnership of federal, state, and local agencies. In addition to cultivating an illegal drug that contributed to wholesale abuse, marijuana growers presented other problems to law enforcement and the environment. They encroached on national forests and parks and threatened innocent people. To protect their marijuana crops, many growers equipped their marijuana patches with booby traps, trip wires, and explosives. Marijuana growers also threatened the environment by using pesticides, building harmful dams for irrigation, and cutting down trees.

Training

In 1975, DEA began adjusting the focus of its Basic Agent training class, and by 1977 the length of the course had increased from 10 weeks to 12 weeks. Students trained from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and were given only five days off, receiving what would be equivalent to 16 weeks of training. The rigorous schedule insured that DEA agents-in-training would be prepared to face the challenges ahead of them. Other changes to the training class included an increase in field training and report writing exercises, as well as the addition of a three-day conspiracy school. Students also spent more hours studying law than did their predecessors. These changes were made in response to the DEA's increasing focus on conspiracy cases and to a survey of agents in the field that indicated more training was needed. Starting in June 1977, basic agents received increased training in law, the use of technical investigative aids, and new conspiracy techniques. Training was still performed at the National Training Institute, which was located at DEA Headquarters, 1405 "Eye" Street in Washington, D.C.

In April 1978, the Philadelphia District Office staff designed and implemented a clandestine methamphetamine laboratory school that proved to be a catalyst for similar seminars conducted throughout the U.S. This school combined laboratory exercises with realistic, practical exercises on the street.

A major improvement in lab training occurred in April 1979, when DEA began clandestine laboratory synthesis training, coordinated by Forensic Chemist Alan B. Clark of the Southwest Regional Laboratory. Groups of three agents per class were trained in the synthesis of PCP and methamphetamine, the two substances most frequently produced in clandestine lab operations. Previously, new agents were trained only in the investigative aspects of clandestine labs, but had little or no training in chemical synthesis. With this new training, they were better equipped to identify what substances were being synthesized and which procedures were being used in the clandestine labs they encountered. This training not only increased agents' inves-

Cooperative international law enforcement efforts allowed the DEA to stop the flow of drugs at the source. Pictured above, Col. Choktip (left) of the Thai Office of Narcotics Control Board and DEA Case Agent Paul Salute (right) questioned a defendant after the 1980 arrest of 10 morphine traffickers in Thailand.

Firearms classes were originally conducted in two inside ranges in the "bank" building on Eye Street.

Physical Fitness was also a part of training given to state and local police officers. The gymnasium was located in a former bank, which was next door to the original headquarters building at 14th and Eye streets in Washington, D.C. Police officers from these classes would often later become DEA agents. This is class P-19, 1978.

tigative capabilities, but also improved safety by increasing their knowledge of the toxic dangers encountered in clandestine labs.

In 1978, SA's Steve Prator (left) and Ron Hall examined chemical equipment seized from a clandestine methamphetamine lab in Shreveport, Louisiana.

Technology

During the period 1975 through 1980, DEA continued to take advantage of the latest in law enforcement technology. For example, in 1976, DEA employed the Policefax DD-14, a new system for transmitting information about criminals. The system, a precursor to modern-day fax machines, transmitted photo-quality fingerprints over the conventional telephone network. This communication tool served as a link between DEA field offices and DEA's Central Identification Bureau. Transmitting fingerprints via Policefax DD-14 allowed the field offices to quickly determine if suspects had previous records and obtain those records, when necessary.

These Policefax machines required several hours to transmit data to a receiving machine, which would then take 14 minutes per page to print eight-inch square reproductions of the original fingerprint card. Nevertheless, according to Dr. Al Glass of the DEA's Office of Enforcement, the new system was the fastest way to send fingerprints and significantly reduced the time spent waiting for 'rap sheets.'

DEA also made use of the best available communication technology at its improved communication centers. The Dallas Regional Communications Center, which began providing around-the-clock support in February 1976, was one of the first to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The center provided tactical, near-real-time response support for agents in the field, as well as day-to-day support for regional and district offices. DEA personnel used the center to quickly access intelligence sources such as

NCIC, driver's license checks, and NADDIS. This center was the first fully operational DEA network, with 16 manned sub-stations and 11 unmanned base-repeaters, and covered the entire Texas and Oklahoma area. In addition to Dallas, similar DEA commu-nications centers began operating in the Los Angeles, New York, and Seattle regions.

Aviation

By the mid-1970s, the DEA Air Wing was comprised of 38 pilots stationed across the country. Many had commercial flight experience, or had flown in Vietnam or WW II. Air Wing service became available to every DEA regional and district office in the continental U.S.

Supervision of Air Wing operations was divided between the chief pilot, Marion Joseph, at the central Air Wing facility in Addison, TX, and four regional air coordinators. The air coor-dinators were responsible for the four Air Wing regions —East-ern, Central, Midwestern, and Western—that were centered in Miami, Dallas, Denver, and Los Angeles, respectively. The chief pilot had jurisdiction over the aircraft, while the air coordinators supervised personnel. This division of supervision over Air Wing resources made it difficult to coordinate aircraft and personnel for Air Wing missions. In 1975, supervision was centralized and the chief pilot at Addison became responsible for both the Air Wing personnel and aircraft. The program became more structured as it grew, and eventually included uniform safety and flight pro-cedures. While the Addison facility handled the coordination of resources, headquarters established and standardized administra-tive procedures and developed an official aviation manual. When additional air support was needed, planes and pilots were resched-uled on a temporary duty basis or were provided by the Central Air Wing in Addison.

In 1978, the chief pilot position was reassigned to headquar-ters to focus on program management, budget, and policy. The deputy chief pilot assumed responsibility for the day-to-day op-erations of the Addison Aviation Facility. At the same time, four area supervisor positions were transferred to Addison from regional offices to improve management structure. Shortly thereafter, a full-time safety/training position was created at Addi-son. By the late 1970s, Air Wing opera-tions provided eradication support and transportation of prisoners, personnel, and evidence. Air Wing employees also performed undercover work and sur-veillance.

Laboratories

In early 1975, DEA was busy con-structing a new regional lab in the San Diego area. The impetus behind the decision to build it was the dramatic increase in heroin trafficking from Mexico into the southwestern U.S. For two years, San Diego lab employees worked in a temporary facility, the old U.S. Customs Bureau Laboratory, while their new lab was being designed and constructed. The n ew b uilding, w hich w as c ompleted i n J uly 1976, featured the latest in safety and efficiency fe atures. The fact that the structure was only one-story high allowed for safer utilization of extremely heavy equipment. The b uilding a lso contained a vault space that was four times larger than that in any other DEA lab at that time.

Another important event for DEA laboratories occurred in the fall of 1976, when chemists from around the world studied in DEA lab facilities as part of the International Forensic Chemist Seminar. Fourteen chemists from Hong Kong, Germany, France, Iran, Belgium, and the Netherlands spent two weeks at DEA's Special Testing Research Lab in McLean, VA. They also visited DEA's Southeast Regional Lab.

The program included advanced training for the already pro-ficient chemists. Courses covered such subjects as the history of drug abuse and control, advanced techniques, and ballistics.