

## Drug Smuggling – The State Law Enforcement Perspective

by

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MAY 21 1993

It is an honor for me to speak to you today at this International Symposium on Contraband and Cargo Inspection Technology. The Office of National Drug Control Policy and the National Institute of Justice invited me here to give the state law enforcement perspective on drug smuggling. Maryland's law enforcement activities are representative of those in many states. So I hope to provide some insight into the operations and other practical considerations that influence the efforts of state and local law enforcement. Through my description of activities in Maryland, I will attempt to bring you out of the world of the laboratory and into the world of the practitioners. That is, the people who are on the front lines investigating and detecting illegal drug smuggling.

Let's begin first by describing the state of Maryland, its geography and other factors that influence drug trafficking in this area.

### *(Slide – Map of Maryland)*

Situated in the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S., Maryland has a population of just over 4.9 million, mostly concentrated in the metropolitan areas in the central region of the state. Boasting a major port city (Baltimore), a major international

airport (the Baltimore-Washington International Airport), the East Coast's most important interstate highway (Interstate 95), and an important east-west highway (Interstate 70), Maryland is well suited for both international and interstate drug trafficking. Further, Baltimore is only a short distance from several source cities—50 miles from Washington, D.C., 102 miles from Philadelphia, and 196 miles from New York.

### *(Slide – Federal Partnership)*

To combat drugs within the state, Maryland law enforcement has established effective, cooperative agreements with a variety of federal agencies including the Baltimore branches of the FBI and DEA, the U.S. Customs Service, the U.S. Coast Guard, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. This state and federal partnership has facilitated the sharing of manpower, resources, and information. The assistance of federal enforcement agencies has been critical to the success of many operations in Maryland.

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*(Slide – MSP, Bureau of Drug Enforcement)*

Some 140 state and local law enforcement and regulatory agencies conduct drug control operations in Maryland. At the state level, the Maryland State Police is the primary agency with statewide jurisdiction to enforce drug control statutes. The Maryland State Police has established the Bureau of Drug Enforcement which spearheads the state's activities, designing operations, and programs targeted toward the investigation and apprehension of drug traffickers.

*(Slide – State/Task Forces)*

The Bureau has also established 14 drug task forces now operating in 16 of Maryland's 23 counties. Each task force includes investigators from the Maryland State Police, county, and municipal law enforcement agencies working together as partners.

The Maryland Army National Guard has also been an important addition to the state's efforts to counter drug activity. The National Guard provides personnel and equipment in support of eradication, interdiction, and information gathering activities.

**Current Efforts to Combat Drug Smuggling**

Highway interdiction efforts to intercept traffickers as they travel in and

around the major corridors within Maryland have resulted in large seizures of drugs as well as weapons and cash. Analysis of information concerning highway interdiction stops shows that Maryland is a key transportation link in the interstate distribution of drugs. While many of the drugs seized on the state's highways are destined for the local market, many more drugs transit Maryland en route to other destinations.

Aggressive patrol tactics and the use of background knowledge and intelligence information on patterns of trafficking greatly enhance the police officer's ability to make a successful interdiction stop. For example, a trooper may watch for unusual actions on the part of a driver or be alert for rental cars and out-of-state tags, particularly from those states which have been associated with couriers.

*(Slide – Drugs Hidden in Seats)*

If there is probable cause to stop a vehicle and search it, the trooper will then use his training in the detection of hidden compartments and other concealment devices.

*(Slide – Drug Dog)*

Drug dogs are frequently used to facilitate this process.

*(Slide – BWI Airport Terminal)*

The Baltimore-Washington International Airport is a busy operation. It handled over 225,000 incoming and outgoing commercial flights in 1991. These flights carried close to 10 million domestic and international passengers. Consequently, we focus much of our time on interdiction efforts at the airport.

*(Slide – KLM Aircraft)*

For example, Air Jamaica continues to deliver marijuana smugglers and KLM, from Amsterdam, has produced several heroin smuggling cases.

Most drugs that pass through BWI are smuggled by couriers who hide drugs in their luggage or on their persons. Recently, smugglers have tried several innovative techniques such as concealing drugs in various products, manifested as checked baggage. Other smugglers conceal drugs inside their bodies.

*(Slide – Customs Agent)*

Due to the large volume of flights arriving at BWI Airport, customs inspectors and other law enforcement personnel must conduct random luggage inspections of selected flights with the aid of K-9's and X-ray equipment. They focus on suspicious luggage, often looking for suitcases that have false bottoms, and emphasize the

inspection of luggage from specific flights from certain countries.

*(Slide – Boats on Water)*

Thousands of private vessels transit Maryland's 3,200 miles of coastline and there is great potential for using Maryland's waterways for drug trafficking.

*(Slide – Port of Baltimore)*

An even greater threat is the high volume of container traffic that enters the port of Baltimore each year. In 1990 over 2,100 foreign commercial vessels brought nearly 78,000 containers of merchandise into Maryland. Any of these cargo containers could have held drugs or other contraband.

Maritime interdiction activities are primarily handled by the federal government; that is, U.S. Customs, DEA, or the Coast Guard.

*(Slide – Customs Agent)*

*(Slide – National Guard Inspection)*

These agents conduct partial and, at times, full inspections of cargo. Due to the large number of containers that enter the port, inspectors check for the origin of shipments and closely examine the cargo from certain countries. They also

scrutinize first time shipments vs. long established business relationships.

*(Slide - K-9 Search)*

To facilitate these activities, inspectors use K-9's, conduct measurements of the inside and exterior of containers to look for hidden compartments, and sometimes resort to drilling.

*(Slide - Bus Station)*

New York, Philadelphia, and other large metropolitan areas of the east are drug distribution points for the Mid-Atlantic region and passenger rail and bus service flourish as major ways of redistributing drugs from these source cities.

*(Slide - New Carrollton Amtrak Station)*

Maryland Law Enforcement has intensified its interdiction efforts at many of the train and bus stations around the state. Investigators from the commercial interdiction unit of the Maryland State Police monitor passenger movements along the Amtrak system.

*(Slide - Drug Courier)*

These specially trained, highly skilled investigators approach individuals that display actions or other "indicators"

consistent with those of drug couriers. They engage in conversation with these people and ask general questions about their travel. When asked properly, a majority of persons give consent to search even if they are transporting drugs or other contraband.

**The Challenge for the Future: Use of Technology on the State Level**

I have just described in brief detail a few of the more common methods of detecting contraband. These methods are practiced by law enforcement agencies all over the country. However, these approaches have certain limitations. One of the most daunting issues that all law enforcement must face is the sheer volume of work. We are forced to be selective and limit our investigations and inspections to a reasonable and manageable amount.

Police have a distinct advantage when they work for an organization that provides the most up-to-date training and information on the latest concealment methods and modes of operation. Information gathering and networking with other agencies should always be a top priority for law enforcement agencies.

The use of trained drug detection dogs can also be very effective. However, there are certain limitations to the use of K-9's. For one, sustained use of these animals can cause burn out. Further, most drug dogs are trained to detect only a few

types of drugs. They may not be able to detect new synthetic drugs or drugs that are masked by the scent of certain substances.

But there is great potential for us to make advances in this field. We can detect more of the contraband that is out there if we take advantage of some of the latest technology. As a representative of state law enforcement, I can see a few technology-related limitations connected with budget, personnel, and training issues. If technological resources are going to be made available to a greater number of law enforcement agencies, we would expect them to meet certain criteria. They would need to be:

1. Relatively inexpensive (state's limited budgets)
2. Easy to operate (trooper proof)
3. Mobile (use in a variety of settings)
4. Durable (must last--can't afford to purchase items over and over)

The Maryland State Police Bureau of Drug Enforcement has been approached by various companies offering services to improve our investigative efforts and detection rates. The Bureau has established working relationships with several of these companies:

- The Westinghouse Law Enforcement Systems Department is developing a hand-held detection unit, called the Illicit Substance Detector. This product is appealing because it is portable, it gives real-time results, and it is inexpensive.

- In a completely difference area of operations, the Bureau is working with MRJ, Inc., a private corporation, to develop an effective intelligence database system.

There is little doubt that if state and local agencies had access to new, affordable technology, their ability to detect concealed contraband would greatly increase. This would directly impact on resource and manpower allocations. I offer the following recommendations:

- In addition to working with federal agencies, R & D companies need to work more closely with state and local law enforcement to gather more information about local and regional issues and needs.
- The technology that is developed must be affordable, and offer real time detection.
- When developing technology, keep in mind how important it is to have a human component. We cannot rely on the equipment to do the entire job.

In preparation for this symposium, we surveyed several law enforcement agencies in Maryland and asked them what they would like to see in terms of advance technology. Here are three items they felt were needed.

First, a hand-held body scanner that could be passed over a person and his belongings and give an immediate alert if any illicit drugs were present.

Second, an X-ray machine linked to artificial intelligence that could X-ray

luggage and alert operators if drugs or money were present.

And third, a global positioning system, like that used in Desert Storm, which can be used to track merchandise, police officers, or prisoners.

I have learned that there are two rules of success which relate to our mission to control drug and alcohol abuse.

First, know where you want to go and what you want to accomplish.

Second, you must appreciate and understand the obstacles in your way.

A story I heard recently illustrates these two rules.

It seems there was a recently promoted navy captain during WW II who was placed in command of a battleship. Well, this was a true honor, and the skipper was very proud. He was doing quite well with his new command until one night, when he was returning from maneuvers. As he guided his ship back to harbor he looked out from the bridge and saw a light. Recognizing they were on a collision course, the captain alertly called his signal man to the bridge.

The captain instructed the signal man to flash, "We are on a collision course—steer 2 degrees north." The response—"I see you, steer 2 degrees south" didn't sit well with the captain. He signaled, "This is Captain Smith, USN, steer 2 degrees north." Response—"This is Petty Officer Jones, steer 2 degrees south." Well, Captain Smith was irate, and he had

his signal man flash, "This is a battleship, I have the right of way." Immediate reply—"No you don't, this is a lighthouse!"

So you see, it is very important to understand the distinction between moveable and immovable objects, and who you can persuade to do your bidding.

In conclusion, we must continue our efforts to interdict the drugs between the supplier and the dealer prior to the drugs reaching the street. Investment in research to develop technology that will facilitate the activities of federal, state, and local law enforcement in detecting contraband is one of the most important means of achieving this goal.