

Topic V: Police Initiatives against the Serious Drug Situation

Based on the seriousness of the recent drug situation, the police are promoting initiatives with the aim of intercepting the drug supply and eradicating demands.

Not only do drugs adversely affect the mind and body of abusers, but abusers also can experience hallucinations and delusions that lead to heinous cases such as murder and arson, and serious traffic accidents. In addition, the illicit sales of drugs have become a source of funds for crime organizations, such as Boryokudan, making drug abuse a major offense that threatens the security of society. Given the recent characteristics of the drug situation, such as the diversification of places of origin and types of the drugs abused, the police are partnering with relevant ministries and agencies to promote initiatives for the eradication of drug offenses.

(1) Characteristics of the Drug Situation

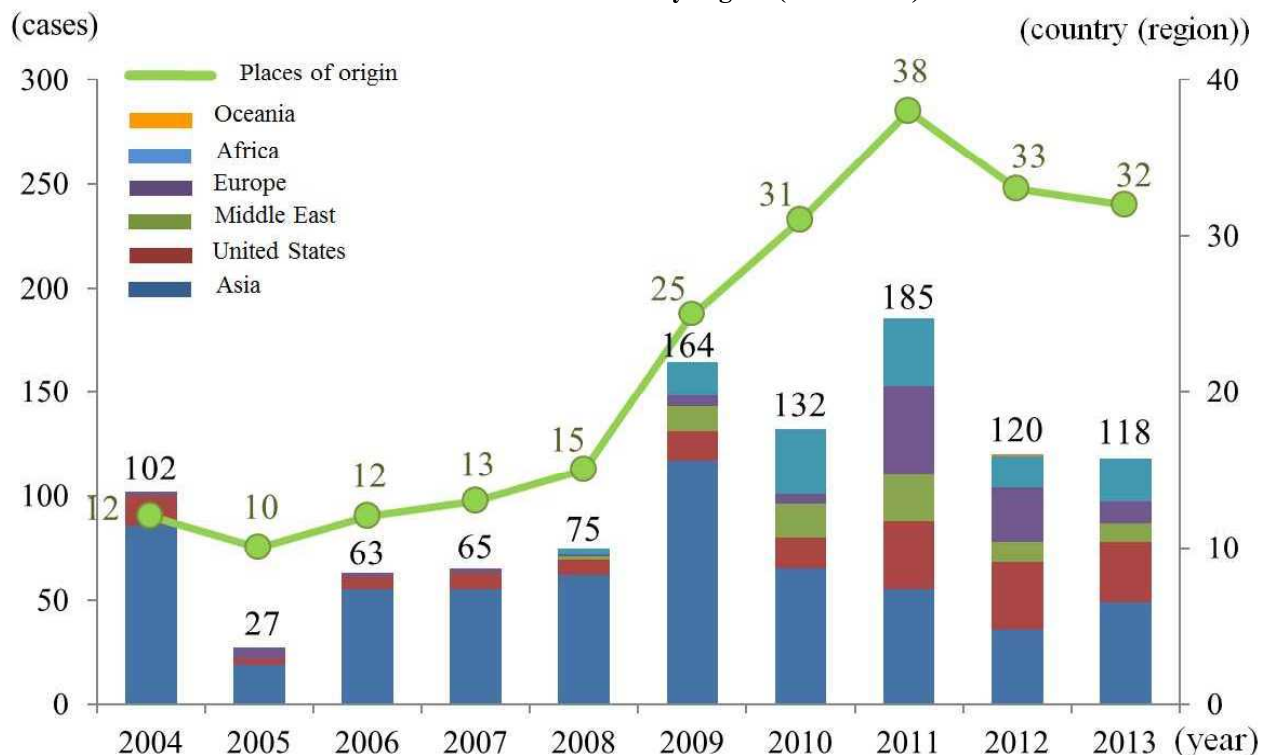
I. Diversification of the Places of Origin for Smuggled Stimulants

In Japan, the majority of drugs that are abused are smuggled from other countries, and in recent years stimulants have been originating from a variety of locations. The trend in places of origin for stimulants over the past 10 years shows that while they originated in 12 countries (regions) in 2004, in 2013 the places of origin had jumped to 32 countries (regions).

In addition, typically the majority of drugs

were smuggled from Asian countries including China, Malaysia, and the Philippines, but lately smuggling from Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East has increased. Recently, there has been a particular increase in the proportion of stimulants smuggled from Mexico, which accounted for 16.1% of all smuggling cases in 2013, and there have been arrests for high-volume smuggling of stimulants by Mexican nationals. It seems that drug-related criminal organizations in that country are widely participating in the smuggling of stimulants.

Trends in the number of places of origin of stimulants smuggling and the number of arrests by region (2004–2013)



Note: The places of origin exclude unknown locations.

Case: In May 2013, a man (age 36) and others from Mexico concealed stimulants in fake iron ore and smuggled them into Japan on a shipping container from Mexico. In June of that same year, two Mexican nationals and one Japanese national were arrested for violation of the Stimulants Control Act (importing for the purpose of sale), and approximately 194kg of stimulants were seized. (Hyogo Prefecture)



Stimulant hidden in fake iron ore

II. Diversification of the Drugs Abused

Lately, there have been a succession of cases where users of so-called law-circumventing drugs (NPS (New Psychoactive Substances)) have caused serious traffic accidents when driving a vehicle or been transported to hospitals by ambulance because of drug-induced physical and mental abnormalities. Also, the successive emergence of new law-circumventing drugs are becoming a new issue in the war on drugs.



law-circumventing drugs

(2) Formation of The Fourth Five-Year Drug Abuse Prevention Strategy by the Government

Drug abuse is a grave issue involving the foundation of public security in Japan. Since it

requires measures conducted together with the government, relevant institutions are collaborating to promote measures under the Council for Promoting Measures to Prevent Drug Abuse, which is chaired by the Minister of State for Special Missions (drug abuse measures) and vice-chaired by ministers including the Chairperson of the National Public Safety Commission. In August 2013, The Fourth Five-Year Drug Abuse Prevention Strategy was drawn up and established five objectives, including the promotion of international cooperation to interdict drug smuggling.

(3) Police Initiatives

I. International Cooperation in Measures against Drugs

Illegal drug trafficking is carried out across borders by drug-related criminal organizations. It is not an issue that can be solved by one country alone. The police are developing international investigative cooperation for information exchange through dispatch of investigators and participation in international conferences, and promoting technological cooperation in guidance for drug investigations in relevant countries.

The National Police Agency has held discussions on the drug situation, investigative methods, and international cooperation in relevant countries centered in Asia and the Pacific region, and has hosted the Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference with the aim of building mutually cooperative systems. In February 2014, the nineteenth conference was held in Tokyo with 28 countries/regions and two international organizations (including observers) participating.



19th Asia-Pacific Operational Drug Enforcement Conference

In addition, with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) co-sponsoring, the

National Police Agency invited the senior executives of drug control agencies in countries and regions facing serious drug problems and held a Seminar on Control of Drug Offenses for the purpose of exchanging information on drug control and transferring Japanese investigative technologies.

II. Measures against so-called Law-circumventing Drugs

The police take measures such as issuing guidance and warnings to the retailers of so-called law-circumventing drugs, arresting malicious retailers for violations of the Pharmaceutical Affairs Act and arresting users under charges such as dangerous driving causing death or injury. In 2013, there were 176 persons arrested for cases relating to so-called law-circumventing drugs, an increase of 64 (57.1%) arrests over the previous year.

Moreover, to cope with the emergence of new so-called law-circumventing drugs, a review conducted with relevant ministries and agencies

of the tightening of regulations, such as additional designations as narcotics and designated substances under the Pharmaceutical Affairs Act, resulted in revision of the Act, which in turn led to provisions such as the prohibition of the mere possession and use of designated substances from April 2014. The police are fully utilizing these various laws and regulations to make arrests. Furthermore, since the term “law-circumventing” could be misleading among the citizens, the police are working with relevant authorities to review the use of the term.

Case: Around July 2012, an unemployed man (age 35) and others sold liquid and dried plant leaves containing designated substances to a proprietor of a so-called law-circumventing drug shop. In February 2013, two of those persons were arrested for violation of the Pharmaceutical Affairs Act (accordance of designated substances). (Saitama Prefecture)

