

Testimony of Kyle Williamson
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South Texas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)
Before the United States Sentencing Commission
Regarding Methamphetamine

Chairman Reeves, Vice-Chairman Restrepo, and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the subject of methamphetamine. I am a Sergeant with the San Antonio, TX Police Department and have been a member of the law enforcement profession for the past 26 years.

I currently serve as a Co-Commander of the South Texas HIDTA Investigative Support Center in San Antonio, Texas. The HIDTA Program is a program funded through the Office of National Drug Control Policy within the Executive Office of the President which provides funding assistance to Federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies operating in areas determined to be critical drug-trafficking regions of the United States. The South Texas HIDTA is an alliance of 76 different law enforcement agencies working in close partnerships to promote and facilitate counterdrug investigations, information sharing, operational coordination and officer safety. It currently encompasses fifteen designated counties along the US/Mexico border and includes the cities of San Antonio in Bexar County and Austin in Travis County. The agencies involved recognize that our goal of "Disrupting the market for illegal drugs by dismantling or disrupting drug trafficking and/or money laundering organizations" is the best approach we can take to reduce the availability of drugs to our communities.

Methamphetamine is a substantial threat facing the nation. Methamphetamine seized within the South Texas HIDTA area of responsibility (AOR) is produced in Mexico where production amounts are rising as evidenced by recent seizures of historically large amounts of the drug. Production of the drug does not rely on climate or environment, making it a profitable choice for Cartels, Transnational Criminal Organizations and Drug Trafficking Organizations. Mexico remains as the top foreign supplier of methamphetamine to the United States, where the South Texas HIDTA AOR is an integral entry point of the drug.

Mexican Cartels and their proxies continue to market their methamphetamine supplies to consumers in the United States. The battles among the cartels for control of various border plazas remain violent, placing citizens on both sides of the border in harms way. Drug traffickers prey on young adults on the border to transport their illicit drugs to areas in the interior of the country.

Methamphetamine is imported into the United States in several forms; powder, crystal/ice, dissolved in solution, and tablets or pills. Methamphetamine is smuggled into and throughout the U.S. via the use of commercial and private vehicles, passenger buses, river crossings, pedestrians and parcel delivery systems.

In 2004, law enforcement agencies reported seizing 23,703 methamphetamine production laboratories in the United States. The Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act of 2005, Title VII of the USA PATRIOT Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2005, P.L. 109-177 signed into law March 9, 2006, significantly disrupted the production of methamphetamine in the United States. Today, methamphetamine production laboratories are rarely encountered and have shifted to

methamphetamine conversion laboratories necessary for the recrystallization of methamphetamine in solution to crystal methamphetamine.

In CY2024, South Texas HIDTA initiatives seized 15,128 kilograms of ice methamphetamine, 168 kilograms of methamphetamine in solution, 2,761 kilograms of powder methamphetamine, 33,485 tablets of methamphetamine for a total of 18,057 kilograms seized. These weights are an increase of 127.51% from weights seized in CY2023.

Drug price per kilogram is dictated by the physical location of the drug, its distance from point of importation to distribution, and its availability. CY2024 per kilogram prices in the South Texas HIDTA AOR are as low as \$2,000 compared to \$15,000 per kilogram in CY2021; an -87% decrease in costs. This reduction in price has increased the number of Drug Trafficking Organizations that have become involved in the importation and distribution of methamphetamine across the United States.

Methamphetamine is a highly addictive drug with potent central nervous system (CNS) stimulant properties. In CY2024, The South Texas HIDTA AOR experienced a slight decrease of -1.69% in adults that were admitted for the treatment of methamphetamine use disorder from CY2023 totals. Children under 18 years of age seeking treatment for methamphetamine use disorder increased 66.67% in CY2024. Seizure amounts coupled with treatment statistics demonstrates methamphetamine's availability and affordability to users.

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) CY2023 Office of Forensic Sciences Annual Methamphetamine Report states the average purity of domestically seized samples was 94.9% nationwide, with seizures made in Texas having maximum purity of 99%. In years past, it was thought that possession of a high-purity methamphetamine product indicated a prominent role in a criminal enterprise. Purity of a drug no longer defines the ranking status of a distributor. Purity level is now driven by customer demand.

The pervasive availability of methamphetamine and its higher purity concentration only exacerbates the addictive value of the drug. Like phencyclidine (PCP), methamphetamine use can cause aggressive and hostile behavior and is associated with property and violent crimes. Aggression is often directed at family members and those individuals in close contact with methamphetamine addicts. The physical and mental need to feed the addiction causes methamphetamine users to commit burglaries, robberies, and thefts to obtain anything of value to purchase more of the drug.

Methamphetamine is classified as a "psychostimulant with abuse potential". This category also includes a myriad of prescription medications as well as MDMA, amphetamine, and cathinones. Deaths from psychostimulants have been increasing on a yearly basis since 2011 and sharply increasing since 2019. In 2023, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 36,251 psychostimulant drug overdose deaths in the United States, a six percent increase from the previous year. Through October 2024, provisional CDC data recorded 30,023 overdose deaths from psychostimulants.

Based on recent multi-hundred-kilogram weight seizures, we believe methamphetamine importation weights will increase and will maintain a high purity rate. The abundant availability of methamphetamine will also drive an increase in violent criminal activity particularly in those areas of the country that have a large user population.

In an effort to stem the tide of addiction and overdose of methamphetamine, our law enforcement partners agree that actions must have consequences. We applaud courts and prosecuting attorneys that recommend and impose strict sentences on drug trafficking violators to deter their involvement in

the distribution of drugs to our citizens. Violent actions coupled with addictive levels of high-grade drugs should always be a consideration for punishment rendering.

Any change in our laws that minimizes the consequences of actions by these monsters gives the impression that our society is willing to tolerate the abuse of our public by individuals that care not about who they hurt as long as there is a monetary gain for them.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify about the evils of methamphetamine and its devastating effects on our community. The San Antonio Police Department and the South Texas HIDTA are happy to answer any further questions you may have.