

**Pennsylvania State Police Testimony
Hearing on Heroin Abuse and Drug Enforcement Policies
November 21, 2013**



**Presented by:
Colonel Frank Noonan
Commissioner
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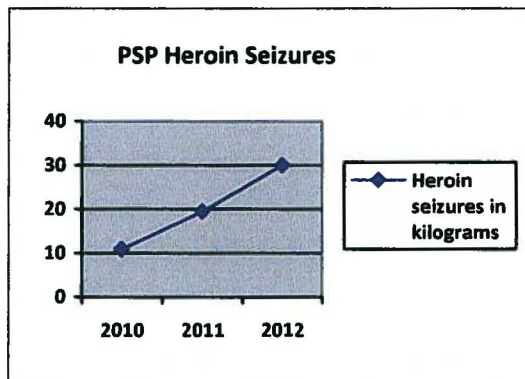
Good morning Representative Marsico, Representative Caltagirone, and members of the House Judiciary Committee. I am Colonel Frank Noonan, Commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the heroin trend in Pennsylvania and share with you the measures being taken by the PSP to combat this very important issue.

The PSP has seen an increase in the amount of heroin within the Commonwealth over the past several years. Emerging trends such as this are identified and tracked by our Analytical Intelligence Section which houses the Pennsylvania Criminal Intelligence Center (PaCIC). The PaCIC, which is the state-designated fusion center, maximizes the ability of the Pennsylvania State Police to detect, prevent, investigate, and respond to a variety of criminal activities including but not limited to heroin and other drug sales and trafficking trends.

Increased heroin sales and use over the past several years has become an issue of great concern. For many, the road to heroin use and addiction begins with the abuse, misuse, and addiction of prescription pain medication. These individuals often transition to heroin when prescription medication becomes too difficult or costly to obtain. Heroin tends to be less expensive, readily available, and of high purity level. Three separate studies by the National Institute on Drug Abuse found almost 50% of intravenous heroin users reported abusing prescription opioids before beginning heroin use.

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) 2013 National Drug Threat Assessment reports an increase in heroin availability that began in 2007 due to an increase in Mexican heroin production and trafficking. The amount of heroin seized at the southwest border of the United States increased significantly between 2008 and 2012. This increase, along with other indicators, points to increased smuggling of heroin from Mexico.

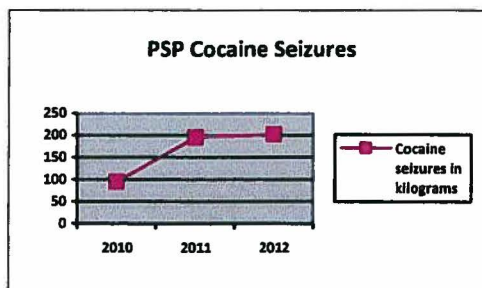
As heroin availability has increased in Pennsylvania, seizures of heroin by the PSP have increased as well. In 2012 PSP seized over 30 kilograms of heroin. This is a 54% increase from the 2011 seizure of 19.5 kilograms of heroin and a 175% increase from 2010 seizure of nearly 11 kilograms of heroin.



Over the last several years, heroin prices have significantly decreased across the Commonwealth. In 2009 and 2011, the Mid Atlantic Great Lakes Organized Crime Law Enforcement Network (MAGLOCLLEN) reported the average price of a "bag" or "packet" containing .02 grams of heroin was \$20. In 2013, MAGLOCLLEN reported the average for the same amount to be \$15. Pennsylvania State Police investigations indicate that the average cost is currently \$10 per "bag" or "packet", however, purchases have been made for as little as \$5 in some areas of the Commonwealth. Consistent with this,

Pennsylvania State Police drug units are reporting the price per kilogram (1000 grams) of heroin dropped from \$75,000 - \$90,000 to \$35,000 - \$50,000 over the past five years. This indicates a 44% to 53% drop in bulk heroin prices in the last five years.

Another factor involved in the rise in heroin trafficking and addiction may be attributed to the shift in cocaine availability and price. Cocaine prices have risen over the last several years. Approximately 5 years ago, the price for a kilogram (1000 grams) of cocaine in Pennsylvania was between \$17,000 and \$25,000. The current price for a kilogram of cocaine is between \$34,000 and \$48,000. The DEA has reported that a decrease in cocaine availability in 2012 has led to price fluctuations. There have been reports of shortages of cocaine throughout the Commonwealth believed to be caused, in part, by dealers who are switching to heroin sales. During a PSP undercover operation in 2012, cocaine dealers discussed making the switch to heroin sales because of the increased profit potential that existed. However, significant cocaine seizures continue to be made by the PSP and have even increased over the last few years. In 2012, the PSP seized over 203 kilograms of cocaine and 196 kilograms of cocaine in 2011; a significant increase over the 2010 seizure of 95.57 kilograms of cocaine.



Currently, the PSP has no information linking the significant distribution or importation of heroin to any specific gang or drug trafficking organization (DTO) within Pennsylvania. The DEA reports, and PSP investigations support, that much of the heroin in Pennsylvania enters the United States via the Mexican border. The PSP, Drug Law Enforcement Division (DLED), has reported some investigations involving low ranking Mexican cartel associates. Further, it is believed that some drug trafficking organizations in Pennsylvania have established connections to Mexican cartels and their associates. However, the PSP has not encountered any established base of operations for Mexican cartels operating within the Commonwealth.

Various methods and means of importing and smuggling heroin and other illegal drugs into the Commonwealth are employed utilizing an array of transportation, parcel, freight, and mail services. However, the most common method of transportation is to simply drive a drug laden vehicle over the interstates and highways located throughout the Commonwealth. For many parts of the state, the largest source city for heroin is Philadelphia. However, Baltimore, New York City, Newark, Camden, Cleveland, and Detroit are also prominent.

The availability and decreased price of heroin has opened the market to all age groups. Heroin is considered one of the most addictive substances to overcome and affects all socioeconomic levels. Many deaths are the result of mixing heroin with other substances, such as other drugs, alcohol, and prescription medications, including fentanyl. In the most recent published report

by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Pennsylvania is listed as having the 16th highest heroin use in the country as compared to other states.

The Pennsylvania State Police has taken significant steps to combat the heroin problem in the Commonwealth as well as the entire illegal drug trade plaguing Pennsylvania. In 2011, I restructured our Drug Law Enforcement Division. Strike Force Drug Units have been established across the Commonwealth in six separate regional locations. The mission of these newly formed units is to investigate and dismantle drug trafficking organizations taking full advantage of investigative tools such as electronic interceptions and the use of state and federal grand juries.

The Safe Highways Initiative thru Effective Law Enforcement and Detection (SHIELD) has been established. The SHIELD units consist of uniformed Troopers in marked and unmarked patrol units that are specially trained to interdict criminal activity occurring on major highways. These units have also been strategically deployed throughout the Commonwealth with an emphasis on obstructing traditional drug transportation routes. Similarly, the department maintains full-time drug interdiction units focused on the detection and seizure of controlled substances and proceeds that travel to and from the Commonwealth through freight, parcels, mail, airports, bus terminals, and hotels and motels. Finally, fifteen of our troop commands have a Vice Unit assigned to them as well. These undercover units are able to quickly respond and investigate drug dealing on the local level. These special duty investigators work

with local police, PSP field commanders, and federal partners to detect and arrest drug dealers operating in our communities.

The PSP continues to work cooperatively with many local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to vigorously combat the heroin problem in Pennsylvania. We remain an information hub, sharing both drug trafficking and traditional criminal intelligence by way of intelligence briefs, seizure reports and daily bulletins. Further, we are committed to increasing officer safety by providing a clearinghouse in our Intelligence Division for all agencies to determine if they are about to engage in a tactical operational plan on the same target. We strongly believe that this multi-layered approach provides the best chance of stemming flow of illegal drugs and organized criminal activity in the Commonwealth.

In closing, I want to thank this body for their interest in the growing problem of heroin in Pennsylvania and look forward to working with you towards solutions to improve the quality of life to our citizens. Thank you for inviting me to appear before you. I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have.