

# ILLEGAL DRUGS AND

**I**llicit drug use, with its well-established relationship to acquisitive crime and violence, poses a variety of security challenges, particularly in homeland security, safety-critical workplaces and prisons. There is evidence that detection of illegal drug use in individuals through screening acts as a deterrent to drug abuse. A range of drug tests is available, each with their own advantages and limitations. But could improved drug screening methods help us tackle the security challenges of illegal drug use more effectively?

Illegal drug use is extensive. Some 22 million adults in the EU have used cannabis in the past year and around 1 percent of European adults use

it on an almost daily basis. Illegal drugs are also big business and are estimated to contribute to about one fifth of global crime proceeds. In the UK alone the Home Office estimates that drug-related crime costs £13 billion per year. With EU citizens spending over £24 billion every year on illicit drugs, it is not surprising that drug markets are also one of the most profitable areas for organised crime groups.

The security ramifications of extensive drug use and related crime are wide ranging and pose risks internationally through the drug world's ties with terrorism. Internationally, there is evidence of links between organised crime groups involved in drug trafficking and terrorist organisations. Terrorist



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organisations often use involvement in the drug trade to fund their activities. In Europe, terrorist activity carried out either by small cells or lone wolves may be financed through drug dealing or trafficking. The 2016 EU Drug Markets Report identifies the links between the drug market and terrorism as a gateway for radicalisation because incarceration for drug offences can expose individuals to extremist ideologies.

Speaking at a conference in Istanbul – The Role of Drug Trafficking in Promoting and Financing Today's Global Terrorism – the Senior Terrorism Prevention Officer for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Irka Kuleshnyk, said: "While it is difficult to

establish how widely terrorist groups are involved in the illicit drug trade, or the breadth and nature of cooperation between these two criminal groups, the magnitude of the numbers involved make the relationship worrisome". Drug screening could be used to tighten border security, therefore reducing the funding to terrorist groups from drug trafficking.

Tightening border control is an area where drug screening could increase homeland security. Cocaine trafficking by air involves individual couriers, airfreight aboard commercial flights and the use of private aircraft. Until recently, cocaine smuggled in this way was always in powder form; however, there has been a switch by the smugglers to the use of cocaine in liquid form, presumably in an attempt to avoid the scanning equipment now in place at several airports. This recent innovation in the area of trafficking routes and smuggling techniques may be more difficult to detect. Targeted screening for identifying drug mules can increase the efficiency of border control and keep up with innovations in smuggling.

As with legitimate commodity markets, the rate of change in the drug market is being accelerated by globalisation and technology. Cyber-enabled drug markets help to facilitate transnational organised crime, with criminal groups benefitting from easier access to information through the internet as a social and commercial medium. Moreover, the growth in international trade has resulted in an increase in the volume of goods moving across international borders and through multiple transit points, making it much more difficult to monitor borders thoroughly.

In the workplace, drug abuse is surprisingly prevalent with some 16 percent of UK employers suspecting a staff member of having taken an illegal substance at some point. Drug use among employees can have important ramifications. Dependence on illegal drugs can increase incidents of theft in the workplace as a means to fund a drug habit as well as drastically reducing productivity. Meanwhile drugs and alcohol contribute to 26 percent of workplace accidents, costing the UK £4 billion every year and making drug abuse a particular issue in safety-critical workplaces. Drugs-of-abuse screening plays an important part in identifying substance misuse by employees as well as acting as a deterrent to their use.

Despite strict preventative measures in prisons, as many as one in three prisoners tests positive in random drug screens and 16 percent admit to using drugs at least once a week. According to figures from the HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales Annual Report 2011–12, 29 percent of prisoners reported having a drug problem when they arrived at the prison and 6 percent said they had developed a drug problem since their arrival. 24



**US coast guard members offload bags containing approximately 719kg of cocaine in Miami Beach**



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**Intelligent Fingerprinting's Drug Screening System in use**

percent of prisoners reported that it was easy or very easy to get drugs in their prison. As Matt Chambers writes in the opening of *Coming Clean: Combating Drug Misuse In Prisons*, "The easy availability of drugs in prisons undermines treatment programmes, allows prisoners to maintain anti-social habits during their sentence, and leaves them unprepared for release and primed to reoffend". Drug screening can be used as an evaluation tool to assess the effectiveness of current systems and to identify prisons with serious drugs problems.

The most common drug screening methods involve analysis of urine, oral fluid (saliva) or blood samples to look for the presence of specified drugs or their metabolites: the chemicals that remain after the drug breaks down in the body. Since these methods rely on the invasive collection of biohazardous body fluid samples, they can be costly, time consuming and difficult to administer because of the need for trained, gender-specific collectors (in the case of observed urine sample collection), specially prepared collection areas and specialist waste disposal facilities. These requirements also reduce the ability to undertake random drug testing where there is a need to be spontaneous and immediate in order to detect recent drug use.

Illegal drug use poses many challenges to the security of individuals, businesses and society. Current drug screening methods have their limitations and better alternatives are required. There is a need for a non-invasive, dignified, versatile screening technique with minimal risk of cheating or sample mix ups. A new fingerprint-based technology developed by British company Intelligent Fingerprinting will enable non-invasive screening for multiple drugs in less than 10 minutes. The world's first portable fingerprint-based drug screening system works by analysing the sweat from a fingerprint sample. Fingerprint sweat samples are non-biohazardous, quick and easy to

collect and because this method is dignified and portable, it can be used almost anywhere and at any time with minimal risk of cheating. This could make planned or random drug screening programmes more effective and more widely implemented.

As well as detecting drug abuse in the workplace, fingerprint-based drug screening could provide a convenient way to test people suspected of drug smuggling across borders. Because the technology detects drugs and metabolites in body fluids, it will detect the contents of internalised packages, which leach into the blood stream. This type of drug screen could act as an important deterrent for this type of smuggling. In the future, the new technology has the potential to be adapted for use in targeted border control screening to detect explosives, in the form of internalised IEDs or recent contact explosives.

Delays in receiving prisoner information files can necessitate a drug screen upon a prisoner's arrival. Existing drug tests are costly and difficult to administer, particularly if the prisoner is unwilling or unable to cooperate. This is complicated further by the need for prison officers who are trained to collect samples. These officers are required to have availability on weekends and gender-specific prison officers are necessary for urine drug testing. A fast and easy-to-use, non-invasive technology could revolutionise assessment of drug use in prisons by speeding up drug screening on arrival and simplifying the process for maintaining drug-free wings.

The relationship between illegal drugs and security is highly complex due to modern technology as well as connections to terrorist groups and acquisitive crime. The development and implementation of effective drug screening could play a positive role in reducing the impact that illegal drugs have on individuals, legitimate business within the wider economy and even governing institutions at international and national levels.

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