



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Justice

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DOJ OIG Releases Report on the DEA's Controls Over Seized and Collected Drugs

The Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General (OIG) announced today the release of a report examining the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) controls over seized and collected drugs. The OIG conducted this audit to determine whether the DEA's controls are adequate to safeguard against theft, misuse, and loss of drug evidence. We found that, with a few exceptions, DEA procedures generally were appropriate for handling seized and collected drugs, although the implementation of some procedures was not consistent across the offices we reviewed.

The OIG's specific findings in the report released today include:

- **Drugs were not always properly recorded in the Temporary Drug Ledger.** The Temporary Drug Ledger is a formal record of seized and collected drugs stored at DEA field divisions. When drugs are not entered into the ledger properly, or are not entered at all, the risk that evidence will be lost increases. Gaps in the formal documentation of the chain of custody for drugs can also compromise the security of the drugs and jeopardize the government's ability to use the evidence in court proceedings.
- **Gross weights of seized and collected drug were not always recorded on the Report of Investigation form.** The DEA Agents Manual requires that the gross weight of all seized and collected drugs be recorded on a Report of Investigation form, which provides a benchmark for future weight calculations, thereby helping to prevent loss and ensure the integrity of the evidence for prosecution. However, we found that for 128 of the 250 items we tested, the gross weight was not recorded on this form.
- **Reports of Drug Property Collected, Purchased, or Seized were not always prepared in the required amount of time.** We found that for 81 of the 250 items tested, the Report of Drug Property Collected, Purchased, or Seized form, which documents the seizure of drug evidence, was not prepared within the 48-hour timeframe. Timely completion of these forms is important in ensuring that an appropriate chain of custody is maintained.
- **Laboratories are not being notified of shipments of seized and collected drugs.** The DEA Agents Manual requires DEA employees to notify laboratories when shipping drugs to them. We found that DEA field division staff regularly did not make the requisite

notification. As a result, the laboratories did not know to expect delivery, and would not have been able to identify and follow up on missing shipments in a timely fashion.

- **Seized and collected drugs were not always entered into the Laboratory Inventory Management System in a timely manner.** We found that 58 of the 346 items we tested at the laboratories were not entered in the inventory management system within the required timeframe. Delayed entry of drugs into a laboratory's inventory system increases the risk of evidence tampering, misplacement, and loss.

The OIG's report made nine recommendations to the DEA to improve the controls over seized and collected drugs. The DEA agreed with all of the recommendations.

Today's report is available on the OIG's website at the following link:

<https://oig.justice.gov/reports/2016/a1608.pdf>.