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New Report Finds Highest Levels of THC in U.S. Marijuana to Date

(Washington, D.C.)—Today, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) released the latest analysis from the University of Mississippi's Potency Monitoring Project, which revealed levels of THC - the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana - have reached the highest-ever levels since scientific analysis of the drug began in the late 1970s. According to the latest data on marijuana samples analyzed to date, the average amount of THC in seized samples has reached a new high of 10.1 percent. This compares to an average of just under 4 percent reported in 1983 and represents more than a doubling in the potency of the drug since that time.

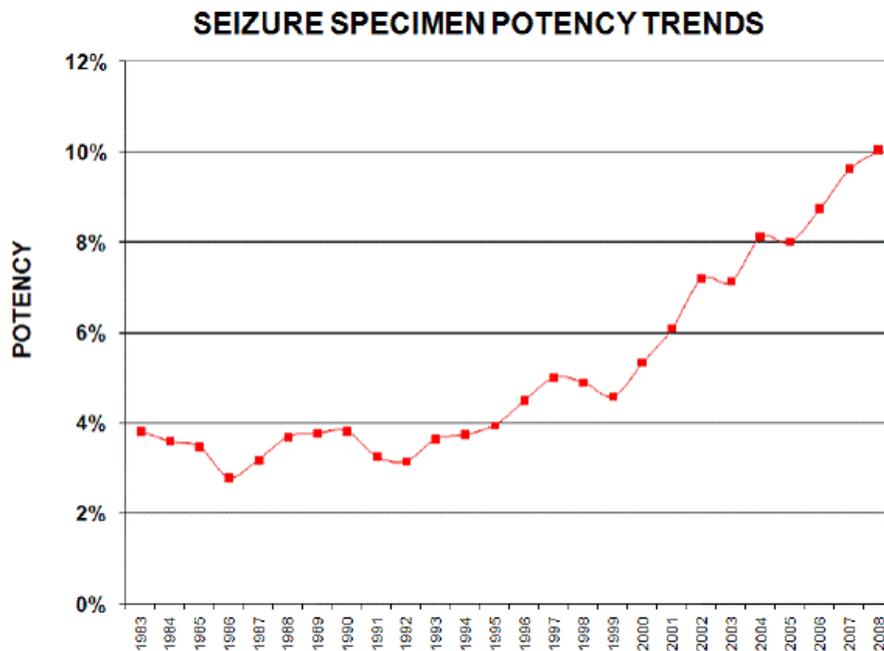
As of March 15, 2009, the University of Mississippi's marijuana Potency Monitoring Project has analyzed and compiled data on over 1,500 marijuana seizure specimens including cannabis, hashish, and hash oil samples confiscated by law enforcement agencies during 2008. In its most recent Quarterly Report, the highest concentration of THC found in a marijuana sample during this period was 27.3 percent. In the analysis, over 40 percent of all specimens analyzed from 2008 were high potency, containing THC levels of 9 percent or greater. About three-fourths of the cannabis samples acquired were from law enforcement seizures, and the remaining were from domestic eradications. The Potency Monitoring Project is funded by the National Institute for Drug Abuse (NIDA), and has conducted an ongoing analysis of seized marijuana samples since 1976.

Additional key facts:

- An analysis of marijuana seizures at Southwest border ports-of-entry shows increasing levels of potency, from a median potency of 4.8% in 2003, to 5.2% in 2005, to 7.3% in 2007. This indicates increasing potency in marijuana is not only seen from expected domestic sources, such as indoor cultivation, but from traditionally low potency non-U.S. sources crossing the Southwest border.
- The latest Treatment Episode Data Set review of drug treatment admissions in the United States has shown that treatment admissions for marijuana as the primary substance of abuse has increased steadily from 198,000 people in 1997 to 288,000 in 2007. (SAMSHA)
- According to the NIDA, heavy marijuana use impairs a person's ability to form memories, recall events, and shift attention from one thing to another. THC also disrupts coordination and balance by binding to receptors in the cerebellum and basal ganglia, parts of the brain which regulate balance, posture, coordination of movement, and reaction time. Through its effects on the brain and body, marijuana intoxication can cause accidents. Studies show that approximately 6 to 11 percent of fatal accident victims test positive for THC. In many of these cases, alcohol is detected as well.

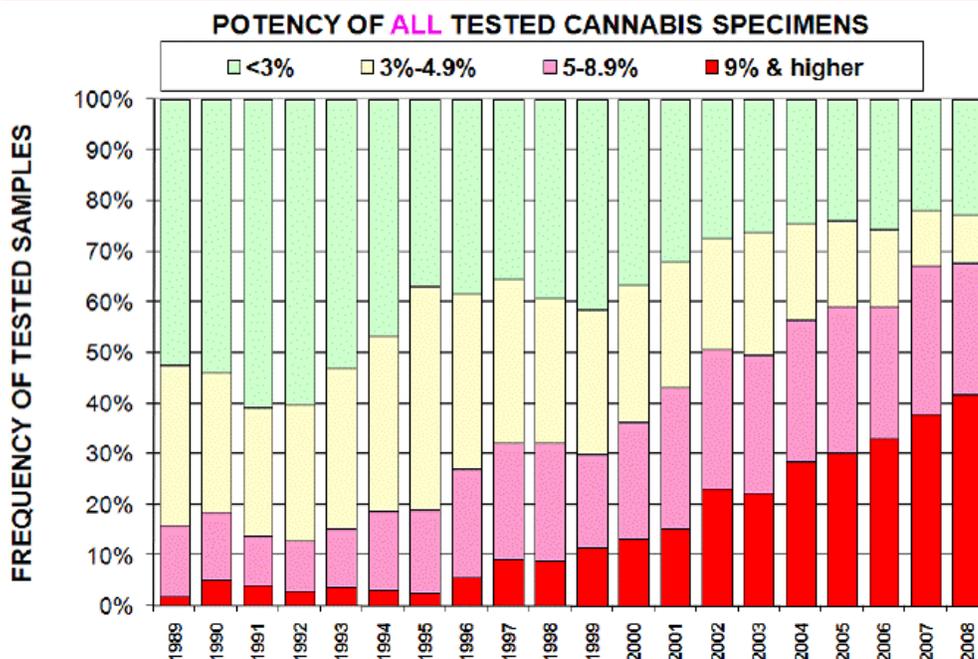
•Other recent studies show marijuana use can be a risk factor for the onset of schizophrenia in vulnerable individuals, and may be associated with other mental disorders, including depression and anxiety.

Average Marijuana Seizure Potency Exceeds 10% in 2008



Source: Univ of Mississippi Marijuana Potency Monitoring Project, Report 104, Mar. 23, 2009

Over 40% of All Tested Specimens are High Potency in 2008



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