PDEA STANDS BEHIND ITS ACCURACY ON IMPURITY PROFILING OF SEIZED DRUG EVIDENCE

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) stood behind its earlier findings that chemical links have been established between representative samples from the intercepted shipment of methamphetamine hydrochloride, or shabu, in Manila International Container Port (MICP) and pieces of drug evidence seized from recent anti-drug operations.

“Same profile of drug samples means same source, same manufacturer, and same method used in the production of the illegal drug. We are confident that the newfound scientific evidence will corroborate our claim that large amounts of shabu from the emptied magnetic lifters in a warehouse in GMA, Cavite, are circulating our streets,” said PDEA Director General Aaron N. Aquino.

Impurity drug profiling is a scientific tool that applies chemical and physical techniques to determine if a relation exists between illicit drug seizures and the significance of such relationship. A similarity match or strong correlation of samples where the correlation value is greater or equal to 0.98 (range is 0.98-1.0) obtained from a statistical tool and cluster analysis, meaning they came from the same manufacturer and same method of production.

Profiling analysis between samples from the intercepted shipment in MICP and bulk shabu seizures from recent entrapment operations conducted by PDEA in Sitio Tenorio, Barangay Awang DOS, Maguindanao; along Congressional Avenue, Barangay Toro, Quezon City; along Ronquillo Street, Sta. Cruz, Manila; and in Alabang Town Center, Muntinlupa, showed that the impurity patterns are of high similarity, where the correlation value between samples is 0.999, indicating strong correlation among them.
It can be inferred that the analysis results were accurate given the following considerations:

a. The samples were analyzed at the same time and condition such as extraction procedure, instrument, method parameters, and data analysis;
b. The method used for the profiling analysis of samples is validated;
c. The statistical tool or software used for the analysis of impurity patterns where no human intervention is possible;
d. PDEA Laboratory Service verified/analyzed several shabu samples from the intercepted shabu shipment in MICP using the same condition, all having similar impurity patterns, indicating strong correlations among them. These results suggested or confirmed that same source gives same profile.

The procedure undertaken by PDEA Laboratory Service for the profiling of shabu is similar to the one established and validated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The same software used for the statistical data analysis of impurity patterns is also used in drug forensic development in Japan, and was introduced by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to PDEA.

As a matter of policy and practice, PDEA Laboratory Service has been conducting impurity drug profiling since March 2014, pursuant to Section 4e of Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) Regulation No. 1 Series of 2002.

Based on investigation, the shabu came from Taiwan, while Malaysia was the transshipment point. Chinese syndicates operating in the Golden Triangle Area of Southeast Asia (Thailand, Laos and Myanmar) are believed to be the ones responsible for the illegal drug shipment.

Consigned to Vecaba Trading, the intercepted MICP shabu shipment came from Malaysia, while the emptied lifters found in GMA, Cavite were smuggled inbound through a consignee-for-hire, SMYD Trading, with Vietnam as the country of origin.
“Malaysia and Vietnam were only used as transshipment points. The shipments may have different points of origin, but we cannot deny the intercepted illegal drugs came from the same source,” Aquino said.

Four persons of interest, including two Chinese nationals in connection with the intercepted shipment in MICP, are now facing charges before the Office of the State Prosecutor, Manila.

One of the foreign respondents was implicated in the case for his involvement as an alleged consignee of Vecaba Trading, according to the records provided by Benline Agencies Philippines Inc. which acted as local agent in facilitating the shipment of the intercepted shabu cargo.

According to Aquino, it is interesting to note that the respondent’s given address is Unit 4, Lot 1-8, CRS Subdivision, Barangay F. Reyes, GMA, Cavite, the same address of the warehouse where four magnetic lifters were found abandoned.

“PDEA wishes to clarify that the Agency is just proving a point. We are not doing this to discredit any counterpart agencies but rather only to support our claims that we believe shabu supply is abundant mainly because the illegal drugs are similar to the one recovered from the magnetic lifters at MICP, as impurity profiling revealed,” the PDEA chief added.

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