

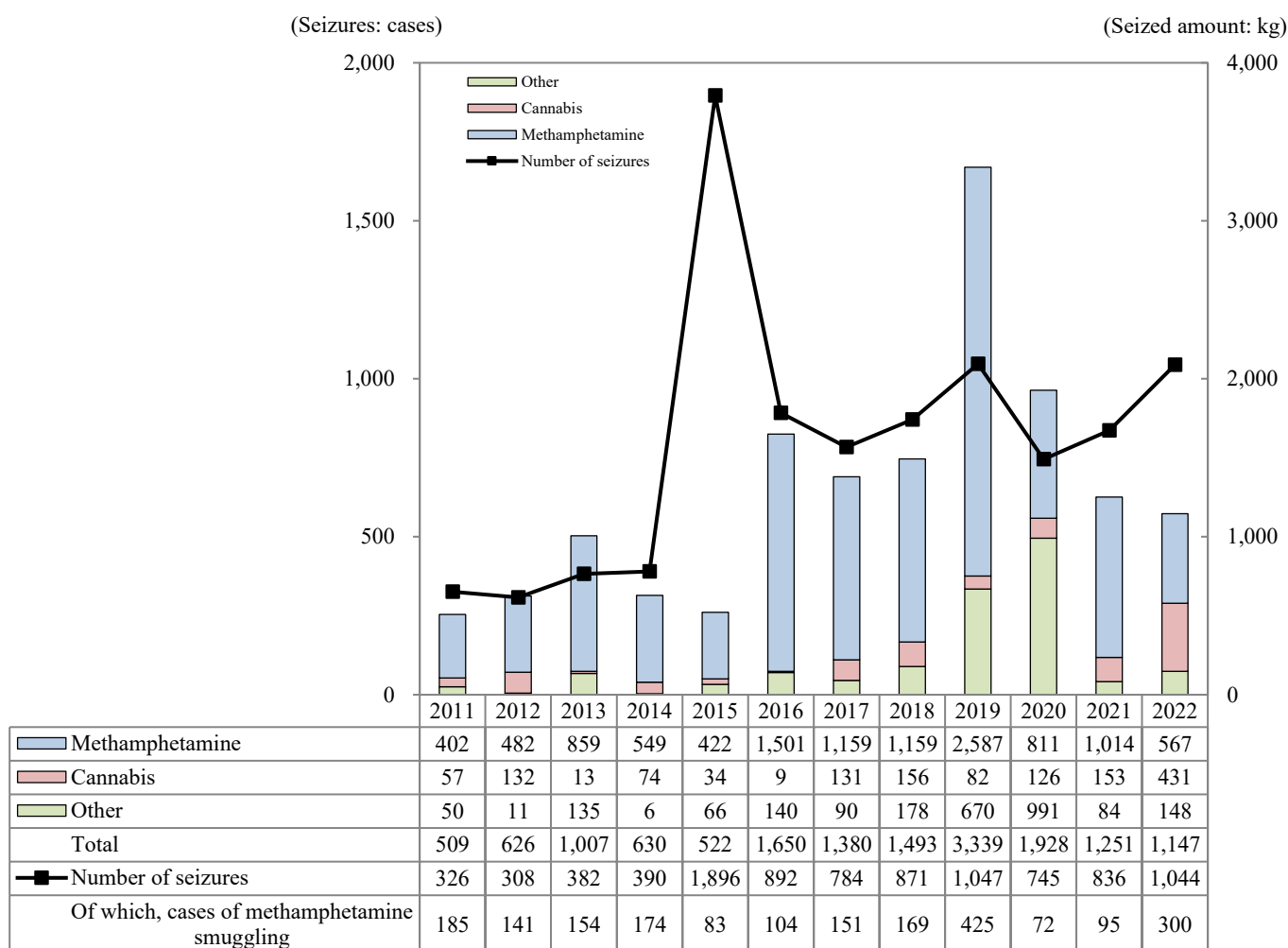
I. TRENDS IN ILLICIT DRUGS SMUGGLING

1. Seizures of Smuggled Illicit Drugs

The total number of seizures of smuggled illicit drugs*¹ during the one-year period from January to December of 2022 was 1,044 (up by 25% from the previous year), while the total amount of seized illicit drugs*^{2,3} decreased to approx. 1,147 kg (down by 8% (id.)). The number of seizures was the third largest, and the seized amount exceeded 1 ton for the seventh consecutive year, recording the tenth largest amount. The situation has remained serious.

- * 1 "Illicit drugs" refers to methamphetamine, cannabis, opium, narcotics (heroin, cocaine, MDMA, etc.), psychotropic substances and designated substances.
- * 2 "The total amount of seized illicit drugs" excludes tablet formed drugs.
- * 3 The seized amount excludes those whose weights, etc. are not defined. The same applies hereinafter.

Transition in the number of seizures of smuggled illicit drugs and the seized amount

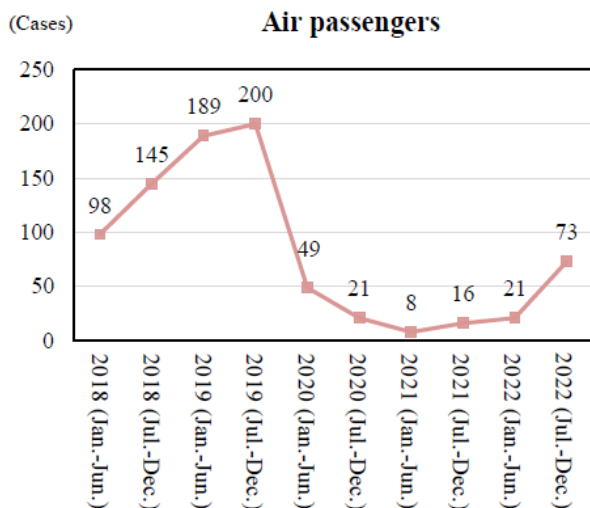
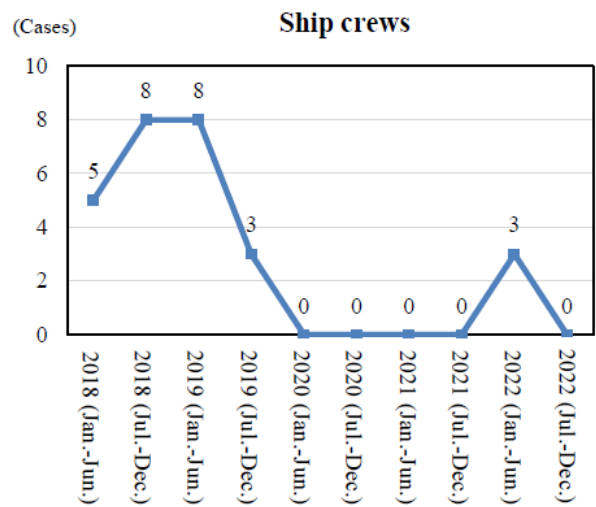
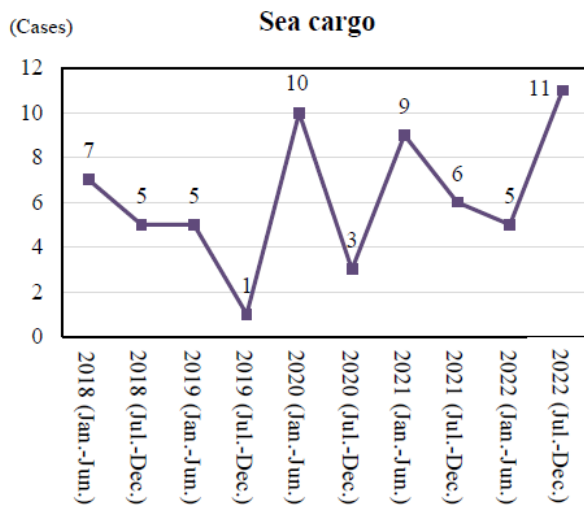
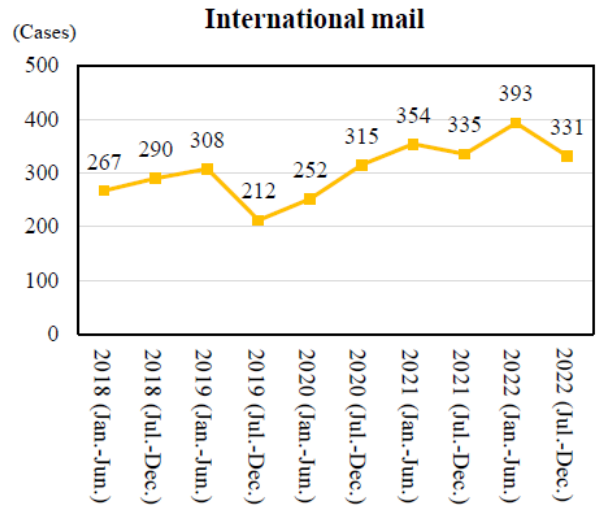
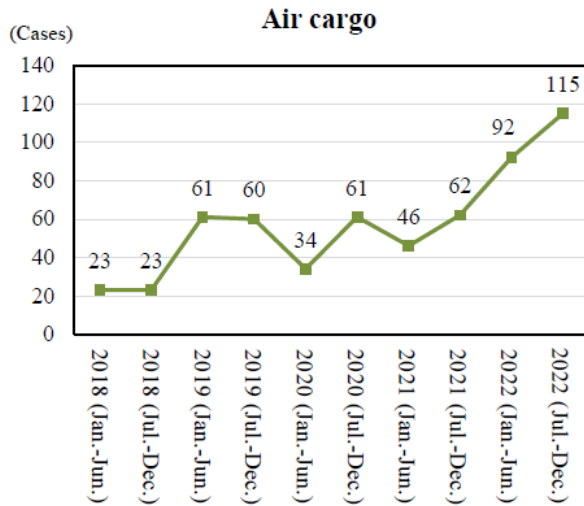


(Note) "Others" includes opium, narcotics (heroin, cocaine, MDMA, etc.), psychotropic substances and designated substances. Figures for 2022 are provisional.

The number of seizures of smuggled illicit drugs by mode of transport increased from the previous year for all modes. Increases were significant for the number of seizures from air cargo (up by 92% from the previous year) and that from air passengers (up by approx. 3.9 times (id.)).

The number of seizures from international mail increased by 5% (id.), maintaining a high level continuously from the previous year.

Transition in the number of seizures of smuggled illicit drugs



(Note)
 "Air passengers" includes crew members, and "ship crews" includes passengers and cases of trafficking by sea. "Air cargo" includes unaccompanied baggage sent by air, and "sea cargo" includes unaccompanied baggage sent by sea.

(1) Methamphetamine

< Seizures of smuggled methamphetamine >

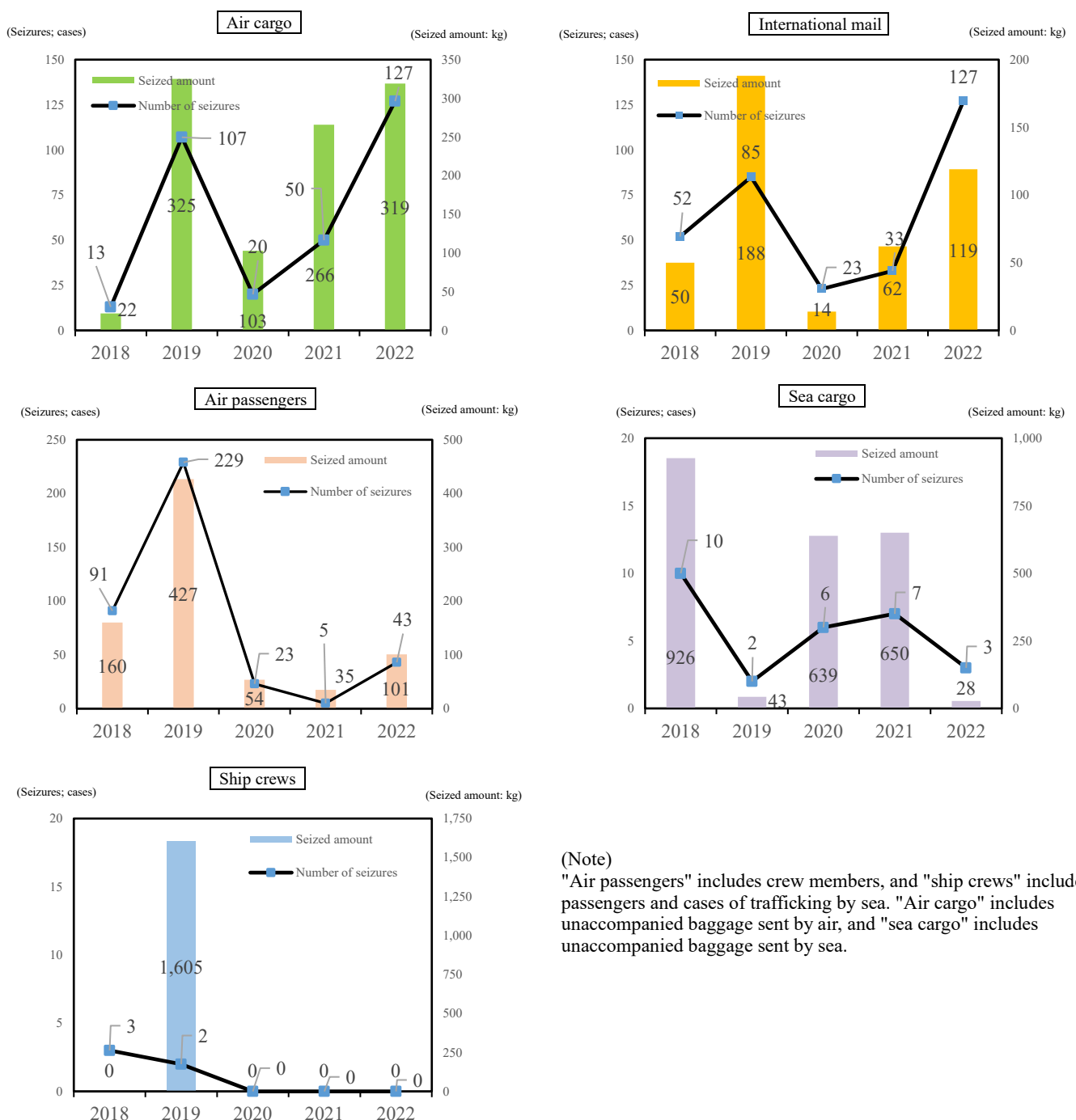
The number of seizures of smuggled methamphetamine during the one-year period from January to December of 2022 was 300 cases (up by approx. 3.2 times from the previous year), while the amount of seized methamphetamine decreased to approx. 567 kg (down by 44% (id.)).

Seized methamphetamine is equivalent to approx. 18.92 million doses, worth approx. 33.5 billion yen in end price.

By mode of transport, the number of seizures and seized amount of methamphetamine from air cargo, international mail, and air passengers all increased from the previous year.

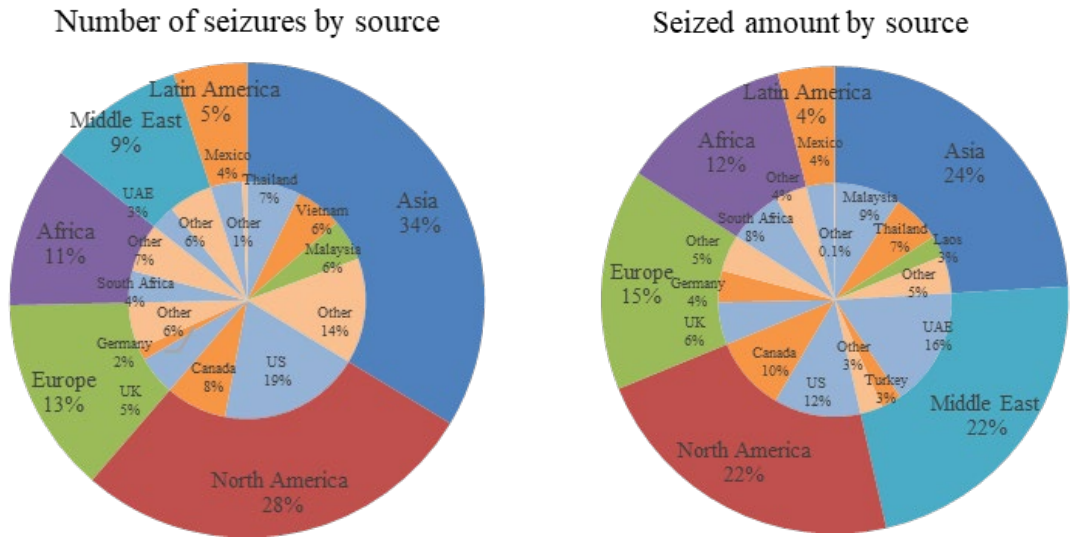
In the meantime, smuggling cases by sea cargo decreased from the previous year, and there was no seizure from ship crews.

Transition in the number of seizures and seized amount



(Note)
 "Air passengers" includes crew members, and "ship crews" includes passengers and cases of trafficking by sea. "Air cargo" includes unaccompanied baggage sent by air, and "sea cargo" includes unaccompanied baggage sent by sea.

Looking at seizures by source, Asia accounted for the largest proportion, at 34% (101 cases). In terms of the seized amount, Asia also accounted for the largest proportion, at 24% (approx. 137 kg).



< Major seizures of smuggled methamphetamine >

[Case 1]
 Customs seized **approx. 9 kg of methamphetamine** concealed in the personal effects of three Japanese nationals who arrived at Narita Airport from the UAE.
 (May 2022; Tokyo Customs)

[Case 2]
 Customs seized **approx. 5.6 kg of methamphetamine** concealed in air cargo (canned food) from Turkey.
 (Jan. 2022; Tokyo Customs)

Dissolved methamphetamine in liquid and disguised it as canned food

[Case 3]
 Customs seized **approx. 1.7 kg of methamphetamine** concealed in international mail from Mexico.
 (Apr. 2022; Nagoya Customs)

Stored methamphetamine in a bottle labeled as activated carbon powder

[Case 4]
 Customs seized **approx. 2 kg of methamphetamine** concealed in air cargo (3D printer filaments) from the United States.
 (Nov. 2022; Tokyo Customs)

(2) Cannabis

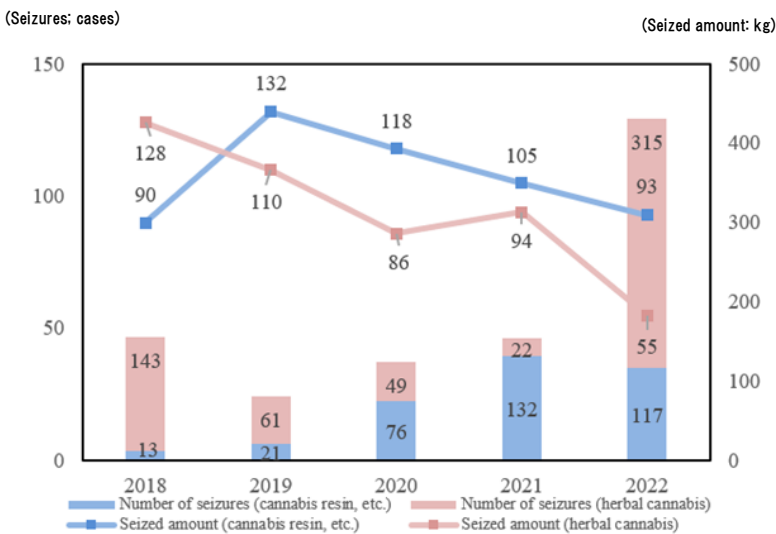
< Seizures of smuggled cannabis >

The number of seizures of smuggled cannabis during the one-year period from January to December of 2022 was 148 cases (down by 26% from the previous year), while the seized amount increased by approx. 2.8 times (id.) to approx. 431 kg.

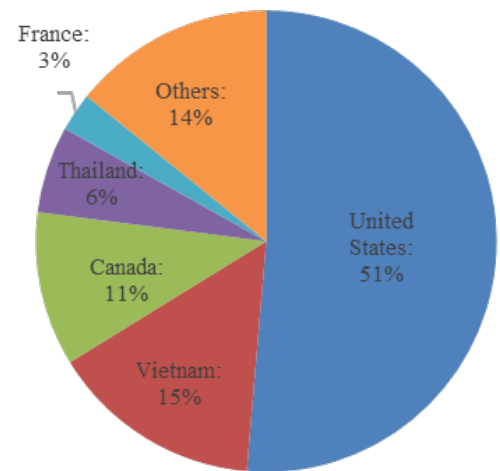
The seized amount increased for herbal cannabis to approx. 315 kg (up by approx. 14.5 times (id.)), but decreased for cannabis resin, etc. (including cannabis products, such as cannabis liquid and cannabis sweets, in addition to cannabis resin) to approx. 117 kg (down by 11% (id.)).

Looking at seizures by source, the United States accounted for the largest proportion, at 51%, followed by Viet Nam (15%) and Canada (11%). North America accounted for approx. 60% of the overall total.

Transition in the number of cases and seized amount



Number of seizures by source



< Major seizures of smuggled cannabis >

[Case 5]

Customs seized **approx. 1.3 kg of herbal cannabis** concealed in international mail from the United States.

(Aug. 2022; Osaka Customs)



[Case 6]

Customs seized **approx. 4.8 kg of cannabis resin** concealed in air cargo (a wooden table) from India.

(Jun. 2022; Moji Customs, etc.)



(3) Narcotics

< Seizures of smuggled narcotics >

The number of seizures of smuggled narcotics (heroin, cocaine, MDMA, etc.) during the one-year period from January to December of 2022 was almost the same as in the previous year, at 232 cases. The seized amount increased to approx. 131 kg (up by approx. 2.2 times from the previous year), while the seized amount decreased to approx. 78,000 tablets (down by 41% (id.)).

The number of seizures of smuggled MDMA, etc. increased to 96 cases (up by 19% (id.)), while the seized amount of MDMA tablets decreased to approx. 78,000 (down by 40% (id.)) but the seized amount of MDMA in other forms increased to approx. 46 kg (up by 52% (id.)).

The number of seizures of smuggled cocaine decreased to 28 cases (down by 18% (id.)), but the seized amount increased to approx. 48 kg (up by approx. 3.3 times (id.)).

< Major seizures of smuggled narcotics >

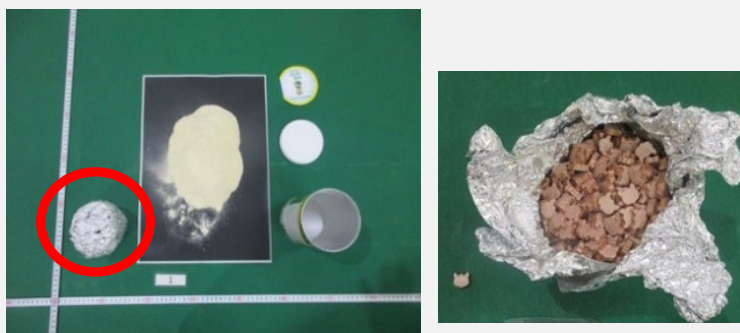
[Case 7]

Customs seized approx. 10 kg of cocaine concealed in the personal effects of a Peruvian national who arrived at Kansai International Airport from Peru.
(Sep. 2022; Osaka Customs)



[Case 8]

Customs seized approx. 1.6 kg of MDMA and approx. 212 g of ketamine concealed in international mail from Germany.
(Aug. 2022; Nagoya Customs, etc.)



(4) Designated Substances

< Seizures of smuggled designated substances >

The number of seizures of smuggled designated substances during the one-year period from January to December of 2022 increased to 348 cases (up by 15% from the previous year), but the seized amount decreased to approx. 17 kg (down by 13% (id.)).

<Major seizures of smuggled designated substances >

[Case 9]

Customs seized approx. 31 g of designated substances (isobutyl nitrite) concealed in international mail from Taiwan.
(Feb. and Nov. 2022; Yokohama Customs)



2. Influences of Illicit Drug Abuse

Methamphetamine and narcotics significantly harm the mental and physical health of people who abuse them, make them unable to live like human beings, or even cause deaths.

Hallucinations or delusions due to the illicit drug abuse may lead to heinous crimes, such as murder or arson, or traffic accidents in some cases. The abuse of illicit drugs may thus cause irredeemable damage not only to abusers themselves but also to the people around them and to society as a whole in the end.

(1) Mental and physical influences

The abuse of methamphetamine and other illicit drugs fatally destroys abusers' mental and physical health. Major organs are subject to serious adverse influences listed as follows, which may even cause death in the worst case.

- Brain: Brain atrophy and brain hemorrhage (memory deterioration and senility symptoms)
- Eyes: Optic nerve disorder and fundus hemorrhage (decreased vision and loss of sight)
- Bronchi: Mucosal abnormality (bronchitis)
- Lungs: Mucosal abnormality (lung cancer)
- Stomach: Gastric mucosal abnormality and bleeding (gastric pain, nausea, and emesis)
- Bone marrow: Red blood cell dysplasia (anemia)

The abuse of illicit drugs hinders normal brain development and worsens abusers' mental balance. Abusers may temporarily feel to be clear-headed or have nervous excitement, but will be overwhelmed by a sense of exhaustion or a feeling of fatigue, and will eventually have hallucinations and delusions.

(2) Influences on surrounding people

The abuse of illicit drugs not only exerts influences on individual abusers but also causes damage to the people around them and society as a whole. One of the representative adverse influences is violence. Long-term abuse of illicit drugs causes disturbance of perception, decreased appetite, emotional disorder, hallucinations and strong paranoia, due to which abusers often use violence on their family members or develop abnormal behavior, such as carrying a weapon all the time. Family members and people around them are swayed by such behavior and are forced to live with fear and suffering.

The high prices of illicit drugs often make abusers heavily debt-ridden, leading to the destruction of families or failure of lives, or triggering minors to take money from the home. The abuse of illicit drugs thus also causes serious economic problems.

Furthermore, the abuse of illicit drugs triggers various offenses. There seems no end to the heinous crimes, such as murder, arson, captivity, and injury, caused by hallucinations, delusions or flashbacks,* or theft just to get money for purchasing drugs.

Additionally, it is also a serious social problem that money paid by illicit drug abusers becomes the source of funds for international narcotics crime organizations and organized crime groups in Japan. In this manner, the influences of abuse of illicit drugs threaten people's lives on a broad scale from various aspects.

* Once a person develops a hallucination, delusion or other symptoms of mental illness due to the abuse of illicit drugs, even if the person superficially seems to have recovered through treatment, his/her base prone to mental disorders remains and something may easily trigger a mental disorder, such as a hallucination or delusion, after the person stopped the drug abuse and resumed his/her normal life. This is called a flashback, which may be caused by a trivial stimulus such as drinking alcohol or mental stress.

Refer to Japan Customs' Website: <https://www.customs.go.jp/mizugiwa/smuggler/abuse.htm>