

Israel is at the center of international trade in the drug ecstasy, according to a document published last week by the U.S. State Department.

In recent years, organized crime in Israel, some with links to criminal organizations in Russia, have come to control the distribution of the drug in Europe, according to a Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs document.

The same document also points out that Israeli criminal groups have a hand in the distribution of ecstasy in North America.

During 2000, 80 percent of the ecstasy seized in North America originated in the Netherlands, which is the largest production center, along with Belgium and Poland. The State Department is certain that Israeli organizations are linked to the laboratories in the Netherlands and are responsible for the worldwide distribution.

"Israeli drug distribution organizations are currently the main source for distribution of the drug to groups inside the U.S., to smuggling through express mail services, through couriers on commercial flights and, recently, through air cargo," states the report. In the past two years, the U.S. has dealt more severely with ecstasy. Federal judges deal with smugglers in the ecstasy trade with the same severity as heroin and cocaine dealers

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