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# Assessment of the HIDTA Program: High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas

June 30, 2001

**BOTEC Analysis  
CORPORATION**

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**ACCEPTED AS FINAL REPORT**

Approved By: *J. [Signature]*

Date: 4/23/02

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*Alison*  
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Approved By: *[Signature]*

## Executive Summary

Date: 1/23/02

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 granted the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) the authority to designate any area in the United States a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). The rationale was to create a mechanism for directing additional assistance to the most important drug trafficking areas in the United States. In 1990, the Director designated the five HIDTAs that are reviewed in this report: New York/New Jersey, Los Angeles, South Florida, Houston, and the Southwest Border.

There are now 28 HIDTA regions, covering part or all of 40 states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The geographic scope of the program has expanded so dramatically that in an interview, one ONDCP official quipped, "We used to keep track of the HIDTA program by listing areas that had HIDTAs; now, we just list areas that don't have HIDTAs." The HIDTA program can no longer be seen as directing funds to specific regions; it is de facto a national program. And the purpose of the program has indeed changed. The mission is now to enhance America's drug-control efforts by improving coordination among local, state, and Federal law enforcement agencies.

The HIDTA program funds a variety of anti-drug initiatives in each HIDTA region. The bulk of these initiatives, both in terms of assigned enforcement personnel and funding, involve multi-agency law enforcement task forces designed to investigate drug trafficking organizations, interdict drugs, or attack a particular aspect of drug trafficking, such as money laundering. While many task forces are effective, they are too often assembled indiscriminately. Some task forces in the five sites reviewed were put together to address circumstances where an absence of coordination among enforcement

agencies was clearly identified as an obstacle to effective enforcement. But such task forces appeared to be the exception more than the norm. More often, it seemed, task forces were created on the assumption that having personnel from different agencies work together would necessarily improve enforcement. Given that individual agencies have distinct operational approaches, procedures, organizational cultures, and esprit de corps, this is not always the case.

Moreover, even task forces that are successful at promoting law enforcement coordination may not always represent the best use of HIDTA resources. At least some of the coordination that occurs under the auspices of HIDTA task forces would take place without HIDTA funding and designation. HIDTA did not invent the idea of coordination among law enforcement agencies, nor is HIDTA the exclusive patron of such efforts.

If HIDTA initiatives were graded by whether they address an identified coordination problem, then deconfliction systems—which help prevent different investigations and field operations from bumping into one another—would get an A. The next highest grades would go to other types of information systems, particularly systems that created computer-based databases of information that was previously unavailable in electronic form. The photo-imaging system, implemented by the New York/New Jersey HIDTA, provides a good example. The system has taken mugshot books, housed at individual agencies, and computerized them into a database accessible to all participating law enforcement agencies at multiple locations. The payoff from implementing systems designed to improve the sharing of information about targets and informants seemed lower, but still positive. Such intelligence information is highly sensitive and cannot be

freely exchanged without careful safeguards, limiting efficiency gains over previous arrangements.

One reason that building multi-agency information systems is such an effective HIDTA activity is that rarely will such systems be developed, funded, and implemented by a single agency. On this view, HIDTA can be seen as providing "public goods" to the law enforcement community, public goods that tend to get neglected when agencies are competing for individualized funding. A public-good conception of the HIDTA program also suggests an important role for setting standards, so that law enforcement agencies use compatible systems.

Key to ONDCP's management of the HIDTA program is the Performance Measures of Effectiveness (PME) System, which sets three targets for the HIDTA program:

1. **HIDTA development**—Each HIDTA will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Federal, State, and local law enforcement efforts by the progressive compliance with the National HIDTA Developmental Standards at the rate of at least 10 percent per year beginning with the 1998 base year, with HDTAs in compliance with 90 percent of the standards by 2007.
2. **Drug trafficking organizations (DTO) in HDTAs**—By 2002, increase the proportion of drug trafficking organizations disrupted or dismantled as identified in HIDTA threat assessments by 15 percent above the proportion in the 1997 base year. By 2007, increase the proportion disrupted or dismantled to 30 percent above the base year ratio.
3. **Drug-related violent crime in HDTAs**—By 2002, reduce by 20 percent the rate of drug related homicides, robberies, rapes, and assaults in HDTAs as compared to the 1996 base year. By 2007, reduce specified drug-related crimes in HDTAs by 40 percent.

The first target appears effective in promoting coordination, but arguably it could be even more effective. The National HIDTA Developmental Standards establish infrastructure and process goals for intelligence and information sharing, teamwork,

strategic planning and execution, and accountability. Standards are well defined for intelligence and information sharing, but are not spelled out as effectively in the other areas. It is probably not a coincidence that HIDTA sites did their best work in the area of intelligence and information sharing.

There are critical questions about the appropriateness of the second and third targets. There can be no unambiguous and easily applied definition of what a drug trafficking organization is or what qualifies as the disruption or dismantling of a drug trafficking organization. Consistent standards are critical to measuring performance, but when HIDTA personnel were asked in interviews what exactly determined when a drug trafficking organization was deemed "disrupted or dismantled" for the purpose or scorekeeping, answers were vague and inconsistent.

In addition, there is reason to believe that drug trafficking organizations are more amorphous than they were in the past. Thirty years ago, traditional organized crime groups, organizations whose membership and boundaries were easily defined, dominated high-level drug trafficking. However, enforcement personnel interviewed for this report consistently noted that organizations today are far more nebulous than traditional organized crime groups, and they argued that, with the exception of certain gangs operating in retail dealing, organizations today are better thought of as a confederation or network of free-lance traffickers, or small trafficking groups, than a tight-knit unit. When asked about the implications for the goal of dismantling drug trafficking organizations, most agents agreed that the objective deserved less emphasis than it once did. Note as well that a heavy focus on increasing the number of drug trafficking organizations dismantled can discourage efforts to attack emerging drug threats. Emerging threats

involve newer, smaller markets, which means fewer targets and less intelligence information about those targets. If the goal is to dismantle organizations, large, established, markets that are well known to enforcement agents are more attractive targets.

Drug-related homicides, robberies, rapes, and assaults are influenced by many factors, of which law enforcement is but one. And to the degree these basic crime measures are under the control of law enforcement, they are primarily affected by low-level, local enforcement. But in most cases only a minor share of local enforcement personnel is assigned to HIDTA in any meaningful strategic or operational sense. In Houston, for example, only 2.9 percent of local law enforcement personnel are assigned to HIDTA; in South Florida, the figure is 2.6 percent; in Los Angeles, 0.7 percent.

The HIDTA program faces a constant tension between promoting standardization and allowing flexibility. The New York/New Jersey HIDTA's Armory Project illustrates this conflict. The initiative has converted two National Guard armories into community centers, and plans to convert four more. From a larger public policy perspective, the initiative is probably one of the most valuable that the HIDTA program has funded: massive and underutilized facilities located in drug-involved communities that have a dearth of safe, structured environments for children were, at relatively little expense, transformed into vibrant facilities providing an array of programs for community youth. But it is hard to make the case that converting armories into youth centers is consistent with the HIDTA mission.

That still leaves open the question of whether HIDTA sites should be given the discretion to pursue initiatives like the Armory project. The Armory project is one of

many HIDTA initiatives that stretch the boundaries of the HIDTA program. There are several reasons why the established practice of allowing such initiatives may be unwise. For one thing, few initiatives will be as successful as the Armory project, and all divert resources from alternative initiatives that are unmistakably designed to enhance law enforcement coordination. Also, non-law enforcement initiatives may weaken the focus of the HIDTA program, as they don't fit tightly with the program's mission, Developmental Standards, or PME targets. Lastly, such initiatives encourage increased competition for HIDTA funds, for they signify that HIDTA resources are potentially available to a wider range of agencies.

## Introduction

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 granted the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) the authority, after consulting with the Attorney General, the Treasury Secretary, the heads of national drug control program agencies, and State governors, to designate any area in the United States a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA).<sup>1</sup> In 1990, the Director designated five HIDTAs: New York City, Los Angeles, South Florida, Houston, and the Southwest Border.

At the time, the principal goal of the HIDTA program was to provide additional Federal assistance to areas that were (in the words of the statute) "center[s] of illegal drug production, manufacturing, importation, or distribution." Specifically, the HIDTA program aimed to concentrate drug interdiction personnel and resources in such areas of the country in an effort to disrupt major channels of drug distribution. Funds were designed to supplement existing federal, state, and local resources. If successful, the HIDTA program would not only reduce the availability of drugs in these specific areas, but would also shrink drug markets in the rest of the country. It was also intended that HIDTA funds would foster greater cooperation among the various law enforcement agencies involved in drug enforcement and encourage more innovative approaches to drug law enforcement.

In some respects, the HIDTA program has expanded considerably since its inception. In fiscal year (FY) 1991, the first full year of operation, total HIDTA funding was \$82 million; in FY2000, the enacted HIDTA budget was \$191 million, almost a doubling in real terms. More significantly, the number of designated HIDTAs has

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<sup>1</sup> P.L. 100-690, 21 U.S.C. 1504 (1988). For the current statute, see 21 U.S.C. 1706.

increased from five to twenty-eight, and the program now operates in forty of the fifty states.<sup>2</sup> From another perspective, however, the HIDTA program has grown modestly, if at all. In FY1991, the HIDTA program accounted for 1.8 percent of the domestic law enforcement portion of the national drug control budget.<sup>3</sup> In FY2000, the comparable share represented by HIDTA was 2.1 percent, only a slight increase. Moreover, since FY1992, almost all of nominal growth in HIDTA funding is accounted for by the designation of new sites. With the exception of a sharp rise in funding for the Southwest Border HIDTA between 1998 and 1999, funding for existing sites has not kept pace with inflation and has lagged even more when compared to overall Federal spending on domestic drug law enforcement. For instance, in FY1992, the budget for the New York/New Jersey HIDTA, located in the nation's largest drug trafficking area, was \$11.9 million. In FY2000, the budget was slightly less at \$11.0, which represents close to a 20 percent decline in constant dollars. And as a share of the Federal domestic drug law enforcement budget, the New York/New Jersey HIDTA's funding dropped by roughly 40 percent over this period.

These figures provide a useful overview of the evolution of the HIDTA program. Initially conceived as a mechanism for directing additional Federal resources to a small number of major trafficking areas, the HIDTA program is rapidly becoming a national operation, with comparatively fewer resources allocated to areas of heaviest trafficking. To emphasize the magnitude of this shift, one ONDCP official interviewed for this report

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<sup>2</sup> The Southwest Border HIDTA is operationally divided into five areas called regional partnerships: Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, West Texas, and South Texas. Sometimes, these regional partnerships are included in the count of designated HIDTA areas, bringing the total to thirty-two.

<sup>3</sup> See *The National Drug Control Strategy, 1999 Budget Summary* (Washington, D.C.: Office of National Drug Control Strategy, 1999).

humorously said, “We used to keep track of the HIDTA program by listing areas that had HDTAs; now, we just list areas that don’t have HDTAs.”

Understandably, the rapid geographic expansion of the HIDTA program presents a major management challenge for ONDCP. Many of the officials interviewed for this report noted that without central direction and oversight from ONDCP, HIDTA would for all intents and purposes become a block grant program. But if and how ONDCP can provide effective guidance and supervision for twenty-seven or more diverse HIDTA sites—a task that was exceedingly difficult when there were only five sites—remains an open question.

At the same time ONDCP is working hard to implement new HIDTA sites and improve older ones, ONDCP is also trying to determine how the performance of the HIDTA program, and in particular the performance of individual HIDTA sites, should be measured. To be sure, effective management almost always goes hand in hand with effective evaluation, but here there is a legal requirement as well. When Congress reauthorized ONDCP in 1994, it directed ONDCP to conduct annual evaluations of the effectiveness of the National Drug Control Strategy. Pursuant to this, ONDCP introduced in 1998 the Performance Measures of Effectiveness (PME) System, which strives to explicitly link the (five) goals and (thirty-one) objectives of the Strategy with quantifiable performance targets and measures.

Currently, one of the Strategy’s objectives is to “Improve the ability of High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HDTAs) to counter drug trafficking.” Under the PME System, this objective is linked to three targets:

- 1. HIDTA development**—Each HIDTA will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Federal, State, and local law enforcement efforts by the

progressive compliance with the National HIDTA Developmental Standards at the rate of at least 10 percent per year beginning with the 1998 base year, with HIDTAs in compliance with 90 percent of the standards by 2007.

2. **Drug trafficking organizations in HIDTAs**—By 2002, increase the proportion of drug trafficking organizations disrupted or dismantled as identified in HIDTA threat assessments by 15 percent above the proportion in the 1997 base year. By 2007, increase the proportion disrupted or dismantled to 30 percent above the base year ratio.
3. **Drug-related violent crime in HIDTAs**—By 2002, reduce by 20 percent the rate of drug related homicides, robberies, rapes, and assaults in HIDTAs as compared to the 1996 base year. By 2007, reduce specified drug-related crimes in HIDTAs by 40 percent.

The expanding geographic scope the HIDTA program, and ONDCP's efforts to quantify the goals and performance of the program, set the scene for this report. The purpose of this report is to help ONDCP improve its management and assessment of the HIDTA program by providing an evaluation of the five initial HIDTA sites—Houston, Miami (formerly South Florida), Los Angeles, New York/New Jersey, and the Southwest Border. The report does not attempt to answer any bottom-line question, such as “Are these HIDTA sites effective?” Rather, the report documents, compares, and contrasts the operations of the five sites and then discusses the implications of our findings for the management of the HIDTA program. Specifically, the report addresses three broad questions:

1. How does the HIDTA program function in each of the five sites initially designated?
2. What effect has the program had on interagency cooperation?
3. How might evaluators measure the impact the program has had on drug trafficking in HIDTA areas?

The report is organized as follows. This introductory section is followed by a background section, which provides a more detailed overview of the history and present

high-level operation of the HIDTA program. The introduction is followed by an overview of the five sites and their initiatives—how the sites are organized and staffed; which agencies participate in the various sites; what types of initiatives are funded. This section addresses the first and second questions posed above. Then come case studies of the five sites. Lastly, there is a discussion addressing the third question posed above, paying particular attention to how the effectiveness of initiatives and sites might be judged, and what issues ONDCP and Congress should consider in setting funding levels and programmatic rules for HIDTAs.

# Historical Context of the HIDTA Program

## ***Background and Overview***

### Conceptualizing the HIDTA "Program"

The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program is a grant-making program. It makes grants to assist a set of drug law enforcement and other drug control initiatives in each of 28 targeted areas around the country. The program started with an emphasis on providing federal assistance as needed in hard-hit areas. It has evolved to an emphasis on developing initiatives which help federal, state and local law enforcement agencies work more effectively together to fight drug trafficking. HIDTA initiatives in each area usually include joint task forces, shared intelligence systems and other mechanisms designed to coordinate field law enforcement activities.

Executive committees comprised of federal, state, and local law enforcement officials in each targeted area propose the initiatives to be funded. At the national level, a group of federal law enforcement agency representatives advise the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy as to which proposed initiatives he should fund. The proposal and funding process that ONDCP has created encourage participating agencies in each area to think strategically about how to respond to their areas' drug trafficking problems.

This section first reviews the mission of the HIDTA program. It then discusses the challenge of coordinating law enforcement activities and how the HIDTA program fits in with other mechanisms that have arisen to address that challenge. Finally, it describes the strategy-oriented process that ONDCP has developed to allocate funds.

## ***Statutory Objectives and Powers***

### **The Statutory Objectives**

Because the HIDTA program comprehends a diverse collection of grant-funded initiatives, the key challenge for an evaluator is to determine appropriate measures of success. The ultimate measure of success is fulfillment of statutory mission.

Accordingly, it is helpful to begin with an examination of the program's statutory mission and ONDCP's construction of that mission.

As a matter of statutory intent, the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area "program" should be understood as a facet of the limited powers of the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy to allocate national drug control resources in accordance with a national strategy. It originated as a mechanism for the Director to influence the geographical allocation of federal supply reduction resources.

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, Public Law 100-690, created the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Section 1005 of the Act, codified as 21 U.S.C. 1504, governs the development and submission of the National Drug Control Strategy. Subsection (a) requires the Director of ONDCP to develop a strategy including specific research-based goals and objectives. The strategy is to "describe the balance between resources devoted to supply reduction and demand reduction" and "review State and local drug control activities to ensure that the United States pursues well-coordinated and effective drug control at all levels of government."

Subsection (b) emphasizes that the strategy document should provide a "complete assessment" of how drug related federal expenditures implement the strategy. It also requires that the strategy include cooperative efforts between federal and state and local

governments. This section further requires that the strategy designate high intensity drug trafficking areas in accordance with Subsection (c).

Subsection (c) empowers the Director to designate high intensity drug trafficking areas after consultation with the Attorney General, the Secretary of the Treasury, heads of the National Drug Control Program agencies, and the Governor of each applicable State.

He is to consider "along with other criteria [he] may deem appropriate" . . . .

- (A) the extent to which the area is a center of illegal drug production, manufacturing, importation, or distribution;
- (B) the extent to which State and local law enforcement agencies have committed resources to respond to the drug trafficking problem in the area, thereby indicating a determination to respond aggressively to the problem;
- (C) the extent to which drug-related activities in the area are having a harmful impact in other areas of the country; and
- (D) the extent to which a significant increase in allocation of Federal resources is necessary to respond adequately to drug-related activities in the area.<sup>4</sup>

The section also states that the powers it grants to the Director are to be used "in order to provide Federal assistance to the [designated areas]." This language taken together makes clear<sup>5</sup> that the primary purpose of the HIDTA designation is to apply federal resources against higher-level drug trafficking in hard hit areas. At the same time, the language allows the Director discretion to use the designation to apply federal resources against other drug-related concerns.

Although drug use and drug trafficking patterns vary widely around the country, the HIDTA designation is the only statutorily required strategy component which explicitly relates to geographical resource allocation. Other required strategy components

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<sup>4</sup> 21 U.S.C. 1706(c).

<sup>5</sup> Note that the language is the only guide to the statutory intent, because there was no Senate or House report submitted with this legislation. See 1988 U.S. Code Congressional and Administrative News 5937.

pertain to allocation of resources across federal agencies and types of drug control efforts. 21 U.S.C. s. 1504(a)(4)(D), which was added by the Violent Crime Control Act of 1994<sup>6</sup>, does require that the strategy provide an assessment of drug treatment capacity and demand at a state by state level, but there is no associated mechanism for the geographic allocation of treatment funding.

### ONDCP's Construction of the Statutory Mission

ONDCP's construction of the mission of the HIDTA program has evolved from an initial emphasis on targeting resources to an emphasis on the creation of cooperation among law enforcement agencies. ONDCP's first National Drug Control Strategy (September 1989) emphasized resource shifting towards HIDTAs. It took as a premise that the purpose of the HIDTA designation "is to provide federal assistance to the area so designated," and discussed using the power of the Director to make temporary assignments with the concurrence of appropriate agency managers to address critical local needs.<sup>7</sup> The Strategy document reviewed the statutorily mandated considerations in making designations and emphasized ONDCP's statutory power to consider other factors. The 1989 HIDTA discussion makes no mention of fostering cooperation or coordination as a purpose of the HIDTA program. ONDCP deferred making any designations until the next strategy to be released in February 1990, coincident with the President's budget.

The February 1990 Strategy designated the five HIDTAs which are the subject of this report – Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City and the Southwest Border. The designation of these areas, very consistent with the statutorily mandated considerations, reflected "the seriousness of their drug trafficking problems and the

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<sup>6</sup> Public Law 103-322, s.90203, 108 Stat. 1991.

<sup>7</sup> 1989 National Drug Control Strategy, Appendix D, page 129-130.

effects that drugs flowing through these areas have on other parts of the country.”<sup>8</sup>

ONDCP stated that “The purpose of the high intensity drug trafficking area designations is to identify areas experiencing the most serious drug trafficking problems in the Nation and to determine the most pressing needs for Federal intervention.”<sup>9</sup> ONDCP sought \$50 million in HIDTA program funding for the areas and touted \$1.3 billion in direct agency resources allocated to the areas. Tacitly acknowledging the limited effect of HIDTA designation on agency resource allocation, however, ONDCP noted that the factors leading to the HIDTA designations were evident prior to their designation and that increased federal agency efforts had already been planned in the HIDTAs.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1990 budget summary, ONDCP summarized the program by saying that

Additional Federal criminal justice pressure will be targeted on the designated areas to dismantle drug trafficking organizations in these areas. Program emphasis will be on improved coordination of Federal, State, and local law enforcement resources to provide the most effective use of these resources.<sup>11</sup>

This statement combines both federal resource targeting and coordination themes.

Through the years, strategy documents have increasingly emphasized improved coordination as the primary role for the HIDTA program. The 1996 Strategy still discussed HIDTA under the banner title “Targeting Problem Areas in the United States,” but noted that HIDTA has “evolved to a program that primarily supports joint Federal, State and local efforts . . . .”<sup>12</sup> By 1998, the Strategy discussed HIDTA among other programs under the title “Coordination among Law Enforcement Agencies.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> 1990 National Drug Control Strategy, Appendix A, page 90.

<sup>9</sup> 1990 National Drug Control Strategy, Appendix A, page 93.

<sup>10</sup> 1990 National Drug Control Strategy, Appendix A, page 94.

<sup>11</sup> 1990 National Drug Control Strategy, Budget Summary, page 18.

<sup>12</sup> 1996 National Drug Control Strategy, page 71.

<sup>13</sup> 1998 National Drug Control Strategy, page 35.

ONDCP's 1998 HIDTA program overview<sup>14</sup> described HIDTAs as "joint efforts of local, State, and Federal law enforcement agencies" and stated that HIDTAs are designated "to improve coordination of drug control efforts." It defined HIDTAs drug-fighting role with an exclusive emphasis on coordination issues (as opposed to federal resource targeting issues). It defined the HIDTA role as to:

**provide a coordination umbrella [emphasis in the original] for local, State and Federal drug law enforcement efforts; [and]**

**foster a strategy-driven systems approach to integrate and synchronize [emphasis in the original] efforts.**

BOTEC has treated this redefinition of the HIDTA program's mission as the principal basis on which to judge the program in this report.

In addition, the 1998 overview document emphasized the program's commitment to "focus on outcomes." The performance measures adopted in the FY-98 Program Guidance are: Developmental progress towards higher levels of coordination; dismantling a percentage of drug trafficking and money laundering organizations; reducing crime rates. We will discuss the validity of these performance measures later in this report.

### Powers to Implement the National Drug Control Strategy

Our method does not allow an evaluation of the desirability or the political feasibility of using the HIDTA designation to concentrate agency resources instead of coordinating them. However, there is good reason to believe that ONDCP's evolution away from emphasis on resource concentration towards emphasis on coordination reflects

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<sup>14</sup> The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program: An Overview. ONDCP, March 11, 1998.

a sound sense of the possible – ONDCPs policy and financial leverage appears insufficient to dramatically shift agency resources among operational theatres.

First, the Director's statutory powers to shift resources are limited. A full characterization of the Director's powers is beyond the scope of this report, but the Director's primary compliance-assuring power is the power to develop a National Drug Control Program budget consistent with the Strategy. Agencies are required to transmit to the Director their budget requests prior to submission to the Office of Management and Budget and to include in their requests additional spending recommendations the Director may make consistent with the National Drug Control Strategy. However, the Director does not have the power to order corresponding cuts in agency budget requests and so has only limited ability to control the allocation of resources across agencies and types of drug control efforts. In 1994, Congress strengthened the director's hand by giving him the modest additional powers to order transfers of up to 2% of drug control agency budgets and to detail personnel temporarily from agency to agency.<sup>15</sup> These newly added powers have never been exercised,<sup>16</sup> suggesting the further limits placed on the Director's formal powers by his need for comity with federal agency heads and by the logistical complexities involved in shifting agency resources.

The HIDTA enabling statute, then 21 U.S.C. § 1504(c), gave the Director no additional power to target agency resources to designated HIDTAs.

“[I]n order to provide Federal assistance to [a HIDTA], the Director may  
(A) direct the temporary reassignment of Federal personnel to such area, subject to the approval of the Secretary of the department or head of the agency which employs such personnel;

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<sup>15</sup> See the Violent Crime Control Act of 1994, Public Law 103-322, s.90201, 108 Stat. 1990.

<sup>16</sup> Our interviewees were unaware any instance of its exercise for HIDTA purposes.

- (B) take any other action authorized under section 1502 of this title [primarily the budget monitoring set of powers] to provide increased Federal assistance to such areas; and
- (C) coordinate actions under this paragraph with State and local officials.”

None of these paragraphs gives the Director powers he would not otherwise be able to exercise formally or informally.

Second, the Director’s power to control the expenditure of the modest funds appropriated to ONDCP for the HIDTA “program” is unlikely to influence agency resource allocation across districts. The chart below shows expenditures for anti-drug field enforcement by federal agencies in Fiscal 1998. The functional categories included in the analysis -- investigation, intelligence and interdiction -- account for 94.0% of HIDTA program expenditures, consistent with HIDTAs focus on drug trafficking.

**Federal Domestic Anti-Drug Field Enforcement Expenditures  
(1998 Enacted, Millions of Dollars)<sup>17</sup>**

Agency	Investigation	Intelligence	Interdiction	Total Direct	S/L Assist
Drug Enforcement Administration	830.5	96.4	0.0	926.9	11.9
Federal Bureau of Investigation	752.3	30.7	0.0	783.0	0.0
U.S. Customs Service	99.6	0.0	501.8	601.4	0.0
Department of Defense	0.0	0.0	468.4	468.4	266.1
U.S. Coast Guard	0.0	0.0	400.7	400.7	0.0
Immigration and Naturalization Service	62.2	2.4	170.3	235.0	0.0
Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms	220.2	0.0	0.0	220.2	0.0
DOJ OCDEF	201.2	14.0	0.0	215.1	0.0
DOJ Asset Forfeiture Fund	170.0	0.0	0.0	170.0	221.9
Treasury Asset Forfeiture Fund	134.2	0.0	0.3	134.5	60.0
U.S. Secret Service	77.3	0.0	0.0	77.3	0.0
Treasury OCDEF	46.3	0.0	27.5	73.8	0.0
Internal Revenue Service	53.9	16.4	0.0	70.4	0.0
HIDTA Program	41.1	11.0	7.6	59.7	92.6
Federal Law Enforcement Training Center	56.8	0.0	0.0	56.8	2.0
U.S. Marshalls Service	37.0	0.0	0.0	37.0	0.0
Federal Aviation Administration	2.8	0.0	10.4	13.1	0.0
Financial Crimes Enforcement Network	0.0	11.9	0.0	11.9	0.0
Office of Justice Programs	5.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	694.9 <sup>18</sup>
Community Oriented Policing Services	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	471.9
Total Major Agency Expenditures	2790.4	182.8	1586.9	4560.1	1821.2
HIDTA share of Total	1.5%	6.0%	0.5%	1.3%	5.1%

The chart shows that HIDTA program funding to major federal agencies amounts to only 1.3% of overall domestic field enforcement spending by the agencies. There is no good data showing how much state and local governments spend on anti-drug enforcement, but total state and local direct spending for police protection is on order of \$40 billion<sup>19</sup> so that HIDTA state and local assistance amounts constitute approximately one quarter of one percent of state and local budgets. Our case studies show that even within HIDTAs, HIDTA program funding is modest in relation to total federal, state and local expenditures.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Source: BOTE analysis of The 1998 National Drug Control Strategy, Budget Summary. Treatment and Prevention account for 4.9% of HIDTA spending. These HIDTA amounts cover are negligibly small portions of total federal prevention (0.1%) and treatment (0.2%) spending. Other categories excluded in the chart are expenditures for prosecution, corrections and international operations.

<sup>18</sup> Note that not all OJP anti-drug grants are for field law enforcement, so this aggregate overstates the role of OJP in making grants for field law enforcement.

<sup>19</sup> In 1993, state and local direct expenditures for police protection were estimated at \$36.7 billion. Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Justice Expenditure and Employment Extracts: 1993 reproduced in Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 1996.

<sup>20</sup> We lack actual expenditure measurements, but can derive floor estimates for non-HIDTA expenditures from staffing data. See the Case Studies. The 1991 National Drug Control Strategy Budget Summary at

Third, Congress has expressly limited the Director's flexibility in allocating HIDTA funds in several ways. Congress has required that a significant portion of HIDTA funds be awarded to state and local agencies. In some years, Congress has specifically designated funding levels for some new HIDTA sites. In the Fiscal 1998 appropriation bill, Congress additionally required that "funding shall be provided for existing High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas at no less than the fiscal year 1997 level."<sup>21</sup> This provision significantly diminished, at least for Fiscal 1998, the Director's power to influence agency activities by allocating (or refusing to allocate) HIDTA funds.

Lastly, major law enforcement agencies were, as noted above, heavily active in high intensity trafficking areas prior to their designation by ONDCP as HDTAs. Their allocation of finite resources reflects a balancing of problems in those areas versus other problems in other areas. Additional shifting of agency resources into a HIDTA would require a determination that the agency had not already sufficiently prioritized activities in hard hit HIDTA areas and would require possibly controversial cuts in protection of other areas. This is a heavy burden of persuasion to carry.

It is unsurprising that the annual HIDTA process further discussed below includes no mechanism to affect the overall level of agency resources within geographically defined HDTAs. In our case studies, we encountered little evidence that the HIDTA designation and funding process has shifted *agency* resources *into* high intensity drug trafficking areas. Even within designated HDTAs, most of the federal agencies spend much more outside the HIDTA framework than inside the framework, that is, on

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page 16 estimated that federal enforcement agencies spent \$1.1 billion in the HIDTA sites as compared to HIDTA federal agency expenditures of \$50 million in that year. Page 16. Consistent with the shift toward an exclusive emphasis on cooperation, more recent strategy documents lack estimates of agency resources allocated to HDTAs.

<sup>21</sup> Public Law 105-61, 111 Stat.1294.

activities which are conducted through a HIDTA-assisted task force. See the case study sections of this report.

### ***The Challenge of Coordination***

When ONDCP initially stated its intention to “emphasize multi-agency efforts” for HIDTA, it explained that:

Trafficking organizations are not always rigidly hierarchical as are traditional organized crime organizations. Rather, they are frequently large, fluid, and loosely knit, reaching broadly into communities, requiring a line of attack based on enhanced State and local law enforcement efforts. Mounting successful attacks on trafficking and money laundering organizations generally exceeds the capabilities of individual law enforcement agencies.<sup>22</sup>

This characterization of drug trafficking organizations is one which we heard repeatedly in our interviews. Clearly, there are often powerful benefits to be achieved by coordinating law enforcement efforts better. However, the low integration of drug trafficking organizations usually limits the useful size of an investigative team, and in some ways, limits the benefits achievable through integration of law enforcement. Even in the HIDTA task force setting, most narcotics investigative teams are small – under 15 persons. Task forces larger than 15 persons are usually broken into smaller teams working on a number of cases unrelated to each other. The benefits and limitations of cooperative investigations and intelligence are a central theme of this report.

### **Coordination – Historical Context**

At least since the 1960s, when drug use and trafficking surged and many federal, state and local police agencies responded aggressively, policy makers and observers have

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<sup>22</sup> 1990 National Drug Control Strategy, Appendix A, page 94.

perceived strategic coordination of ensuring that agencies are working together in making a reasonable allocation of resources given national and local threat assessments;

*Investigative coordination* – assuring that agencies conducting longer term investigations into the same organizations are working together in data collection, surveillance, etc. and that agencies are assisting each other in appropriate cases;

*Operational deconfliction* – assuring that agencies conducting field operations will not encounter each other in an unsafe way;

*Intelligence coordination* – sharing of information about targets and possible informants.

Before turning to a description of HIDTA processes, it is helpful to understand other contemporary efforts to increase coordination and the players to be coordinated.

### Strategic Coordination

At the national level, of course, the strategic coordination role belongs to ONDCP in consultation with major agency heads. In most localities, however, absent the HIDTA process, there is no strategic coordination mechanism including federal, state and local agencies. State and Federal prosecutors often play a role in bringing agencies together, but generally do not conduct inclusive and systematic strategy processes. While we discuss later our views about the HIDTA threat and strategy analysis process, it is worth noting that the HIDTA process does appear to be filling an enforcement strategy vacuum.

### Federal-Federal Investigative Coordination

In most localities, the main federal-federal investigative coordination challenge is between the DEA and the FBI. The DEA and the FBI are the two leading federal agencies with the authority to prosecute drug crimes. The DEA operates both domestically and internationally, while the FBI operates primarily domestically. The

DEA is exclusively focused on anti-drug enforcement; the FBI prosecutes a variety of crimes. Within the United States, the two agency's anti-drug budgets are of comparable size<sup>25</sup> and together comprise roughly three fourths<sup>26</sup> of federal expenditures for investigation and intelligence. Both agencies generally place an emphasis on mid and upper level drug traffickers as opposed to street level retail violators.

Six other major agencies play a role in domestic anti-drug investigations and intelligence work, but each have a non-drug-related primary mission and so bring a particular focus to their efforts. The chart below shows the major federal anti-drug enforcement agencies and the emphases they bring to their involvement.

Federal Agencies Conducting Domestic Anti-Drug Investigations and Intelligence

Agency	MIS <sup>27</sup>	Role/Mission
Drug Enforcement Administration	926.9	General Mid/Upper Level Trafficking
Federal Bureau of Investigation	783.0	General Mid/Upper Level Trafficking
U.S. Customs Service	99.6	Drug importation through lawful entry points
Immigration and Naturalization Service	64.6	Drug importation across borders or by aliens
Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms	220.2	Armed Traffickers
U.S. Secret Service	77.3	Money Laundering
Internal Revenue Service	70.4	Money Laundering
U.S. Marshalls' Service	37.0	Fugitive Traffickers
DOJ OCDETF	215.1	Pass-Through to Agencies
Treasury OCDETF	46.3	Pass-Through to Agencies
DOJ Asset Forfeiture Fund	170.0	Pass-Through to Agencies
Treasury Asset Forfeiture Fund	34.2	Pass-Through to Agencies

<sup>25</sup> The FBI budget for drug anti-drug efforts represents an allocated amount based on a number of factors, including levels of drug-related crime. By contrast the DEA budget is entirely devoted to anti-drug efforts. In each HIDTA that we encountered and in other sites we have worked with in other contexts, DEA appeared to have a considerably more substantial anti-drug presence than the FBI. The relatively small difference in allocated budget levels may conceal a somewhat larger difference in dedicated anti-drug resources.

<sup>26</sup> They constitute 75% of the direct appropriations and receive a significant share of indirect funding through the Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force program and the Forfeiture Funds, based on analysis of the 1998 National Drug Control Strategy, Budget Summary.

<sup>27</sup> From 1998 National Drug Control Strategy, Budget Summary. 1998 enacted dollars.

The chart omits interdiction efforts, which in HIDTAs other than the South West Border HIDTA, play a smaller role. Customs, the Coast Guard, the Department of Defense and the Immigration and Naturalization Service make significant investments in interdiction. In the South West Border HIDTA, the challenge of coordination among federal agencies differs from that in the other HIDTAs.

The primary mechanism for coordinating federal anti-drug investigative activities is the Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force Program ("OCDETF"). This program, led by the United States Attorney in each district, is a funding mechanism designed to expand resources committed to the investigation of major drug trafficking organizations. Each year, federal investigative agencies are allotted funding which they can draw down by assigning agents to work on OCDETF designated investigations. (State and local agencies can receive overtime grants for work on OCDETF-designated investigations.) A local OCDETF coordinating committee, consisting of representatives of key federal agencies and chaired by an Assistant United States Attorney, makes the OCDETF designation according to broadly drafted national guidelines.

The process of OCDETF designation has important coordination benefits. When a federal agency proposes an investigation to the committee, the committee members check their own agency databases and consult supervisory staff to assure that their agencies are not already working the same targets. In addition, the decision-making process creates an opportunity to assure that agencies with a special competence relevant to the investigation are appropriately involved. The OCDETF process is a particularly effective tool when used proactively by United States Attorneys. In Florida, for example,

the United States Attorney will, in principle, refuse to prosecute larger cases that could have been "OCDETFed" but were not presented to the committee.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the formal OCDETF mechanism, federal prosecutors can provide informal leadership to investigative agencies to improve cooperation. Federal investigative coordination failures do undoubtedly occur, but there are reasonable mechanisms in place to provide federal investigative coordination. As further discussed below, the HIDTA program has evolved towards a role in creating strategic vision and providing infrastructure that strengthens relationships and enhances cooperation. The HIDTA role in federal-federal coordination is complementary to existing mechanisms.

#### Federal-Local Investigative Coordination

A second dimension of the coordination challenge is to effectively coordinate among federal and local agency investigations. Typically local agencies are responding to community identified drug problems and so are targeting drug-dealers at a lower level than most federal agencies. Yet, specialized narcotics units in state or larger city police forces may work cases comparable in size to some federal cases. And in many jurisdictions, federal agencies choose to target lower level dealers in the context of community-responsive anti-gang and anti-violence efforts.

Outside the HIDTA process, to the extent that coordination is necessary and occurs between federal and local agencies, it occurs primarily through DEA joint task forces and through a network of informal relationships among enforcement professionals.

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<sup>28</sup> Note that while the National Drug Control Strategy for 1998 pays tribute to the general coordinating value of federal prosecutors our impression was that federal prosecutorial involvement has coordinating value primarily through the OCDETF process. In the absence of an explicit process for inventorying and deconflicting agency-originated investigations, federal prosecutors would often lack sufficient knowledge to add coordination value.

The DEA has a long-standing formal program of sponsoring task forces including local law enforcement officers under its supervision.<sup>29</sup> Relationships between the FBI and local law enforcement officers are occasionally strained because of the FBI's role in prosecuting police corruption and civil rights violations and the FBI lacks a formal program for joining with local law enforcement in narcotics operations.<sup>30</sup>

The effectiveness of informal coordination depends on the extent of overlap between federal and local targets, on the judgment of officers as to when to consult with each other, and on personalities and the quality of trust among the players. These vary considerably across localities. Additionally, differences between state and federal law may affect cooperation levels. Depending on a particular state's asset forfeiture laws, federal agencies may be able to create strong incentives for local police agencies either to agree to help on federal cases or to bring local cases to federal agencies and ask for investigative participation and sponsorship. If a federal agency sponsors the case and it is prosecuted federally, then under the equitable sharing program, the federal agency may be able to return a higher proportion of seized asset value to the local police agencies than they would obtain under state law. Similarly, the federal system may offer stiffer sentencing policies and/or more advantageous procedural rules than some state systems. Our case studies suggest that the more or less formal investigative coordination introduced by the HIDTA joint task forces increase federal-local coordination, especially in areas where relationships have historically been weaker.

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<sup>29</sup> The funding status of this program is unclear for fiscal 1999 – See 1998 National Drug Strategy, Budget Summary, p 110. For helpful background on the DEA State and Local Task Force program, see Jan Chaiken, Marcia Chaiken and Clifford Karchmer, (1990) Multijurisdictional Drug Law Enforcement Strategies: Educating Supply and Demand. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice. This study covers a number of cooperative models. It traces the evolution of the DEA State and Local Task Forces back before the formation of DEA itself to 1970.

<sup>30</sup> See Testimony of Robert Scully, Executive Director, National Association of Police Organizations, at p. 87 of FBI and DEA: Merger or Enhanced Cooperation H. ep. 103-60, September 29, 1993.

### Local-local Investigative Coordination

Some local agencies have overlapping jurisdictions – for example, a county sheriff may operate on the same streets as a local police agency. In other instances, adjoining local agencies may benefit from cooperation by increased ability to handle cross-jurisdiction problems and by increased ability to flexibly share resources to handle occasional larger cases. Local agencies vary widely in the extent to which they have successful formal or informal approaches to cooperation in place already. In South Florida, the HIDTA program broke new ground by creating countywide narcotics task forces including local communities. By contrast, this was not a needed role for the HIDTA in Houston, because the state-funded Texas Narcotics Control Program had already created local task forces around the state.

### Operational Deconfliction

The problem of federal, state and local agencies encountering each other unexpectedly in the field is a very real one, especially in high intensity drug trafficking areas where enforcement is dense. The most dangerous situations occur when one law enforcement team is selling drugs to a target/buyer who is, in fact, also a law enforcement officer. Incidents with guns drawn have occurred when arrests were attempted in these circumstances. The absence of an operational deconfliction system constitutes a major need, and the HIDTA program has helped fill this need in our case-study HIDTAs.

### Intelligence Coordination

Intelligence may be divided into strategic intelligence, relating to emerging threats and criminal behavior patterns, and tactical intelligence, relating to particular

targets. Strategic intelligence always includes a significant analytic component. Tactical intelligence may consist of raw data from a primary source or may be highly analytic constituting a complete picture of a particular target based on a variety of sources. Sources relevant to narcotics investigations include informants, seized or subpoenaed records, law enforcement databases, non-enforcement governmental databases and public databases.

Strategic intelligence has been fairly widely shared in the law enforcement community for some time. Many agencies have long made efforts to publish their information as to emerging threats and patterns. By contrast, the sharing of tactical intelligence is very uneven. It raises difficult technical, political and management issues including: Prevention of unauthorized access, decision making about which agencies and officers should have access, currency of data, usefulness of products (especially products with higher analytic content), reconciliation of multiple identities, reduction in duplicate information processing, technical data sharing systems design. It is clear that nationally and in most localities there is concern to improve in the sharing of tactical intelligence.<sup>31</sup> The HIDTA program has made tactical intelligence sharing a special focus with mixed results.

#### Summary on Coordination Issues

The HIDTA program has evolved towards a focus on coordination. The chart below summarizes broadly the law coordination gaps discussed above and the role that the HIDTA program plays in addressing them:

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<sup>31</sup> In October 1997, Congress requested that ONDCP develop a plan to improve coordination among counter-drug intelligence centers and activities. See Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, 1998, P.L. 105-61, 111 Stat. 1295, October 10, 1997.

## Coordination Anti-Drug Law Enforcement

Coordination Level	Status	HIDTA Role
Strategy	Lack of systematic regional processes inclusive of federal, state and local law enforcement	Budget process encourages strategic approach
Federal-federal investigative	OCDETF and prosecutorial leadership are mechanisms pre-existing in all areas	HIDTA plays complementary role, strengthening infrastructure and relationships
Federal-local investigative	DEA task forces and informal relationships provide coordination of varying adequacy	HIDTA task forces add coordination value, especially where historical relationships weaker
Local-local investigative	Local joint task forces pre-date HIDTA in some areas; not in others	HIDTA adds considerable coordination value where local task force processes absent
Operational deconfliction	Deconfliction systems a critical unmet need in some areas	HIDTA plays an important role by insisting on and supporting this component where lacking
Intelligence sharing	Complex issues surround sharing of tactical intelligence; problems widely recognized	HIDTA has attempted to address tactical intelligence sharing with mixed results

These summary characterizations of the HIDTA program's role are developed and supported by our case studies and analysis.

### ***HIDTA Procedures and Organization***

The basic HIDTA organizational and procedural model is simple: Local executive committees each present a portfolio of initiatives to the Director of ONDCP who, in consultation with a small staff and representatives of major federal agencies, makes grants to assist the initiatives. A local HIDTA director distributes funds to the approved initiatives, monitors their success and leads the preparation of the subsequent year's portfolio.

In most instances, the initiatives derive the bulk of their funding from sources other than the HIDTA program – forfeiture funds, agency funds, agency in-kind contributions, agency manpower loans. As will be seen in the case studies, the individual initiatives are structured in a variety of ways. Some initiatives are contained within a pre-existing agency while some constitute an entity unto themselves. Some, even if independent structurally, may be dominated by a single agency; others are managed by a

consortium. Some individual initiatives conduct a single operation while others are conglomerates of several operations.

ONDCP and the individual HIDTA sites have developed a number of useful processes for evaluating initiatives. In this section, we will make some observations about the national HIDTA process and make the feasible descriptive generalizations about individual site processes.

### The HIDTA Administrative Process – Not Agency Resource Allocation

While ONDCP does prepare a National Drug Control Budget, which could specify allocations of agency resources to HIDTA sites, the HIDTA budget is just another line item in the budget instead of being an organizing concept. One can imagine a national HIDTA budget process in which agency efforts were measured geographically and agency resources were allocated based on comparative threat assessments. While special agency efforts occurring in designated HIDTAs are occasionally discussed in the National Strategy, agency drug budgets submitted to ONDCP are not evaluated against the needs of HIDTAs in a structured way. The national HIDTA process is a special purpose grant-making process decoupled from the overall national drug budget process. It includes no mechanism for measuring overall agency resources committed to the HIDTA areas.

### The HIDTA Administrative Process – Creating Coordination

The HIDTA grant-making process is well-designed given ONDCP's narrower construction of the program mission – i.e., to coordinate within-area efforts, as opposed

to allocating agency resources across areas. The grant-making process itself is designed at each stage to strengthen local strategic consensus and cooperative relationships.

There is no statutory or regulatory framework that dictates the HIDTA grant-making process. The HIDTA enabling statute provides only that the Director “*may* [emphasis added] . . . coordinate actions . . . with State and local officials.”<sup>32</sup> ONDCP has used its limited powers to allocate or withhold funds to shape HIDTA processes. ONDCP has required each HIDTA area to form an executive committee including a balance of major federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. ONDCP has expressed its intention to begin encouraging broader participation of other agency types – corrections, treatment and prevention. Although the committees were initially chaired by Assistant United States Attorneys, over time ONDCP has required that the chair be elected by the committee and that it alternate between federal and state/local officials. The local HIDTA director is hired by and reports to the committee.

ONDCP requires that as a foundation to planning, each HIDTA committee must develop a consensus local threat assessment and a local strategy for meeting those threats. Proposals for HIDTA initiatives must articulate specific goals and objectives consistent with the strategy. The primary deliverable package from each HIDTA committee to ONDCP in the grant-making process consists of the threat assessment, the strategy and a portfolio of proposals for initiatives. The HIDTA committees have developed diverse methods for conducting the planning process leading to the creation of the required proposal documents. We heard a diversity of opinions about the content of the HIDTA planning process and will give considerable attention to its content later on. One general

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<sup>32</sup> 21 U.S.C. 1504(c)(1).

theme on which our interview subjects were in general agreement<sup>33</sup>, however, was that the process of working together on local HIDTA committees strengthened personal relationships among law enforcement agencies.

At the ONDCP level, the HIDTA staff<sup>34</sup> reviews and compiles the submissions of the HIDTA committees and presents them to an interagency committee including senior officials from ONDCP, Justice, Treasury and Health and Human Services. This committee makes funding recommendations for final approval by the Director of ONDCP. ONDCP does limited review of budget details, but relies primarily on the local HIDTA committees and staff to assure reasonableness and appropriateness of individual line items in initiative budgets.

The primary standards for proposal review emphasized by ONDCP: (1) coherence between the threat assessment, the strategy and the goals and objectives of proposed initiatives; (2) apparent contribution of the proposed initiatives to achievement of goals for the HIDTA; (3) apparent contribution of the proposed initiatives to progression of the HIDTA towards higher developmental levels of coordination among agencies.

Over time, ONDCP's review process has shifted from an emphasis on individual initiatives within sites to an emphasis on the overall quality and outcomes of the HIDTA sites' efforts. This may be partly a function of the increase in number of HIDTAs from 5 to 28, but it also reflects ONDCP's evolution of a clear set of success measures (crime rate reductions, drug trafficking and money laundering organization reductions) and a clear model for features of required and desirable HIDTA program components.<sup>35</sup> In essence,

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<sup>33</sup> This held true in the metropolitan HIDTAs. The Southwest Border HIDTA committee relationships were more strained.

<sup>34</sup> The HIDTA staff consists of the HIDTA director, Richard Amamoto, and a handful of assistants.

<sup>35</sup> A copy of the HIDTA program model appears in Appendix A.

ONDCP's model defines a developmental path towards improved coordination among agencies. The success measures and program components model will be important focal point of later discussion.

# Operational Overview of HIDTA Sites and Initiatives

## ***Introduction***

As noted in the previous section, the language authorizing the HIDTA program is broad and covers a wide range of different anti-drug activities. Given that breadth, an overview of these activities provides the necessary substantive context for the analysis that follows in this report.

This section first provides an overview of the administration structure and budgets for the five sites. It then describes the type and scale of the various initiatives being supported by HIDTA funds in these areas. Finally, it attempts to quantify the degree of participation by local and federal agencies in the HIDTA program. A more detailed description of program activities is provided in the 5 case studies which appear following this section.

## ***Program Description.***

The geographic area covered by the five original HIDTA sites forms an incomplete ring around the southern border of the United States that stretches from New York, south to Florida, and westward to Los Angeles. The size of each site varies. The metropolitan HIDTAs consist of a continuous geographic area, encompassing several counties surrounding a central city. The Southwest Border (SWB) HIDTA, in contrast, stretches along over 2,000 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border and includes counties in 4 states.

## Administration and budgets

Administratively, each HIDTA site is organized under an executive committee. Representatives from federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies comprise the executive committee, which maintains responsibility for overall policy setting and the allocation of resources in each site. Day-to-day administration is the responsibility of the site's HIDTA Director.

The SWB HIDTA further sub-divides itself into five "partnerships" representing California, Arizona, New Mexico, West Texas, and South Texas. Five separate executive committees and directors oversee each of the partnerships. These five regional partnerships function independently of one another and their administrators consider the partnerships to have the same status as the metropolitan HIDTAs. The exception being that there is an additional layer of oversight and review in San Diego which functions at a level between the partnerships and the ONDCP in Washington D.C.

The director of each site is responsible for preparing an assessment of the drug trafficking threat in the area and a strategy and budget designed to respond to that threat. Site directors work with the various participating agencies to compile the threat assessment and strategy, which also must be approved by the executive committee.

Funding for the entire HIDTA program has grown dramatically since its inception in 1990. Total resources have almost doubled since fiscal year 1991, the program's first full year of operation. Funds designated for other sites or purposes beyond the original sites accounts for almost all of this growth, however (see Table 1). With the exception of the Southwest Border HIDTA between 1998 and 1999, resources for the five HIDTAs

that are the focus of this investigation, in contrast, have remained remarkably steady, and for the most part have not kept pace with inflation.<sup>36</sup>

**Table 1: HIDTA Program Funding by Site  
Fiscal Year 1990 - 2000  
(dollars in millions)**

Fiscal Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Houston	3.3	10.6	11.9	11.6	11.5	10.0	9.6	9.5	9.5	9.6	9.6
Los Angeles	3.2	10.6	11.9	11.8	12.1	11.5	11.5	11.7	14.0	13.9	13.9
South Florida	3.8	10.6	11.9	12.2	11.8	11.6	12.0	11.5	11.7	14.1	14.1
New ork	4.0	10.6	11.9	12.4	12.5	11.6	9.9	11.0	11.0	11.0	11.0
SW Border	10.7	30.0	38.0	38.0	38.0	37.7	35.7	36.8	38.7	46.0	46.0
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>72.4</b>	<b>85.6</b>	<b>86.0</b>	<b>85.9</b>	<b>82.4</b>	<b>78.7</b>	<b>80.5</b>	<b>84.9</b>	<b>94.6</b>	<b>94.6</b>
Other sites & pgms.*	0.0	9.6	0.4	0.0	0.1	24.6	24.3	59.7	77.1	91.9	96.7
<b>Total Program</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>82.2</b>	<b>86.0</b>	<b>86.0</b>	<b>86.0</b>	<b>107.0</b>	<b>103.0</b>	<b>140.2</b>	<b>162.0</b>	<b>186.5</b>	<b>191.3</b>

\*Includes funds for HIDTA sites designated after 1990, funds for the HIDTA Assistance Center, and other national initiatives.

Source: Office of National Drug Control Policy, *The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program: 2000* (Washington, DC: Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2001), p. 7.

Between fiscal year 1992 and 1998, resources allocated for the five sites averaged just over \$83 million. The distribution of the resources across the five sites also has changed little since 1992, again with the recent exception of the Southwest Border. The most significant differences among the other sites are a reduction in funds for the Houston site while resources for the Los Angeles HIDTA have increased as part of an effort to address growing methamphetamine use. Except for the methamphetamine

<sup>36</sup> The Congress has chosen to word the ONDCP appropriation such that there is little discretion in how its Director distributes the HIDTA funds.

effort, the total resources for these sites have not kept pace with inflation over the last seven fiscal years.

This "flat-funding" has made the distribution of resources within each site quite a challenge for the respective directors and executive committees. Per guidance from the ONDCP, each site prepares a budget assuming an appropriation for the next year that represents 95 percent of the current year's total. The budget also includes a plan for the distribution of resources assuming that additional funds are made available. The reality is that the HIDTA site administrators that we spoke to did not expect to see increases in their budgets from one year to the next.

One consequence of this resource constraint is that the budget process typically serves as a proxy for evaluating for the performance of the site's various initiatives. Rising costs, combined with flat funding, however, mean that site directors have found it difficult to maintain the current level of activities. Site directors and executive committee members noted that the committee could reward initiatives perceived to be performing well with additional resources only by taking money away from under-achieving initiatives. The director of the Los Angeles HIDTA set aside some of the site's appropriation to provide the executive committee with a small pool of discretionary resources for this purpose.<sup>37</sup> Program expansion is even more problematic from a budgetary perspective. If a proposal does emerge for a new initiative, the resources associated with the proposal would have to be offset with a reduction of funds elsewhere.

The scarcity of resources can, therefore, generate a creative tension, that from a management perspective might be quite constructive. The cap on resources, for example,

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<sup>37</sup> The LA HIDTA Director had initiatives compile budget requests representing 90 percent of the current year's funding. This requirement enabled the executive committee to put back 5 percent of total funds into initiatives at the margin and still comply with the ONDCP 95 percent target.

created considerable pressure for the executive committees to closely scrutinize the allocation of resources. And, HIDTA representatives in the sites were able to identify examples where funds were shifted from one activity to a more promising initiative. It should be noted, however, that this was a relatively rare occurrence. The majority of the funds distributed in each of the sites went to fund the same initiatives from one year to the next. Executive committee members interviewed by BOTEK noted that most of the participants had an institutional investment in preserving the status quo. As one respondent put it, "You don't go after the other guy's program because then they might come after yours."

One also could argue that as the programs in these sites mature, their need for more resources should actually decrease. Given the program's goal of bringing together law enforcement agencies to work in a coordinated fashion, it is not unreasonable to assume that the need for external resources might decline. The HIDTA program is intended to build infrastructure to form taskforces and facilitate information sharing. Once the site accomplishes those objectives, the maintenance of the infrastructure should cost less.

In four of the five HDTAs, program evaluation is relatively informal. Throughout the year, representatives from the initiatives will report to the executive board regarding their activities and future plans. Executive committee members can then ask questions about the initiative as well as provide feedback. It is worth noting that the South Florida HIDTA is the only one of the five sites to formalize its evaluation process. At an extended executive committee meeting, each HIDTA initiative must make a presentation covering their evolving understanding of the threat they are addressing, their

progress against defined goals, the status of their sharing efforts with other agencies, and staffing and budget status. The executive committee members then rate each component of the presentations and the individual ratings are normalized, compiled and fed back to the initiatives. The process weights the views of all members equally and is conducted quarterly.

### Program activities

The activities funded by the HIDTA program cover a variety of anti-drug efforts. The sites disaggregate their activities into individual initiatives each focusing on specific objectives designed to complement the strategy. The initiative serves as the operational unit maintaining its own command structure and budget. The total number of initiatives for a single site ranged from 10 in Houston to 91 along the Southwest Border. In accordance with ONDCP guidelines, all initiatives must be composed of personnel from multiple agencies who work out of a common location (collocation). A de facto or formally identified lead agency typically provides continuity of leadership for the effort.

Most of the initiatives are multi-agency law enforcement task forces designed to investigate drug trafficking organizations and/or interdict drugs as they cross the U.S. border (Table 2). These interdiction and investigative initiatives also account for the majority of personnel associated with the program (Table 3) and the largest share of the budgeted resources (Table 4). In each of the metropolitan HIDTAs, a single task force initiative appears to dominate. For example, the South Florida HIDTA has an estimated 569 law enforcement officers working in 6 different investigative and interdiction task forces. Of those officers, almost 300 are assigned to the Miami Task Force. Similarly, in Los Angeles, the Southern California Drug Task Force accounts for almost one-third

of the total HIDTA's personnel. In Houston, HIDTA sponsors the Major Drug Squads initiative which is composed of approximately 200 positions, or two-fifths of the total number participating in the program. The New York, the Citywide Narcotics Initiative has a whopping 2,248 full time members, 88 percent of total full-time HIDTA personnel.

Some HIDTAs have also created "special purpose" initiatives designed to investigate a particular aspect of drug traffickers' operations. In New York, for example, the El Dorado Task Force, in New York is devoted to money laundering investigations, while the Fugitive Task Force targets fugitives. Other special purpose task forces include a hotel-motel strike force, domestic or highway interdiction programs, and marine/airport port of entry task forces. These special purpose initiatives accounted for 22 percent of the total initiatives and 20.5 percent of the budgets for 5 HIDTAs. Taken together, these two categories of activities account for an average of 69 percent of the total resources for these 5 sites.

**Table 2: Number of Initiatives by Site and Type**

Site	Interdiction Investigation	Special Purpose	Intell	Admin	Other	Total
Houston	2	4	3	1	1	11
Los Angeles	5	0	3	1	5	14
South Florida	6	3	1	1	3	14
New York	3	2	5	1	7	18
SWB	42	23	12	6	8	91
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>148</b>

**Table 3: Personnel by Type of Activity**

Site	Interdiction Investigation	Special Purpose	Intell	Admin	Other	Total
Houston	203	214	107	0	14	538
Los Angeles	283	0	53	1	1	338
South Florida	569	27	94	0	0	690
New York	2529	213	109	8	8	2867
SWB	1224	307	346	37	45	1959
<b>Total</b>	<b>4808</b>	<b>761</b>	<b>709</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>6392</b>
	75.2%	11.9%	11.1%	0.7%	1.1%	100%

After the multi-agency law enforcement task forces, intelligence initiatives constitute the next most significant type of activity. Intelligence initiatives support law enforcement efforts through a variety of services including: deconfliction, threat assessment, post-seizure analysis, toll analysis, and general case support. The number of separate initiatives ranges from a low of 1 in South Florida (where all of the intelligence services are centralized under a single unit) to a high of 12 for the SWB HIDTA. Given the regional partnership structure of the SWB HIDTA, these 12 intelligence initiatives translate into an average of 2.4 per partnership. Intelligence resources account for, on average across the five sites, just under one-fifth of the total HIDTA dollars spent. The

relative share of intelligence resources varies, however, from a low of 12 percent in Houston to a high of 26 percent in Los Angeles.

Overall, these five sites maintain a relatively low overhead with an average of 7.7 percent of total resources being devoted to administration. These funds are used to pay for a site director's office and any associated staff. Los Angeles allocates a mere 1.7 percent of the site's resources to administration. Administration accounts for 8 percent of the SWB HIDTA's resources. The presence of an extra layer of administrative staff, overseeing the five partnerships, explains some of the difference. At least three administrative positions exist in each of the partnerships as well.

Table 4: Budgeted Resources and Relative Share by Type of Activity (dollars in thousands)

Site	Interdiction/Investigation	Special Purpose	Intell	Admin	Other	Total
Houston	4758	2921	1150	219	364	9412
	50.6%	31.0%	12.2%	2.3%	3.9%	
Los Angeles	6828	2250	3699	239	1015	14,031
	48.7%	16.0%	26.4%	1.7%	7.2%	
South Florida	7341	306	1577	463	1349	11,036
	66.5%	2.8%	14.3%	4.2%	12.2%	
New York	4787	2006	1647	2086	178	10,704
	44.7%	18.7%	15.4%	19.5%	1.7%	
SWB	16696	9689	6255	3406	2605	38,651
	43.2%	25.1%	16.2%	8.8%	6.7%	
Total	40,410	17,172	14,328	6413	5511	83,834
	48.2%	20.5%	17.1%	7.7%	6.6%	100.0%

The greatest degree of variation in HIDTA activities emerges from an examination of the initiatives that cannot be characterized as having an investigative, intelligence, or administrative function. The category of "Other" initiatives, that accounts for 6.6 percent of the total initiatives sponsored by the HIDTA program in these sites, fund a broad range of activities. For example, 3 of the 5 sites (SWB, South Florida, and Los Angeles) use a portion of their funds to support prosecutors either at the federal or state level. The rationale for this support is based on the notion that the increased effectiveness of the law enforcement task forces has increased the workload for prosecutors in the area. The SWB HIDTA devotes the most significant amount of resources to prosecutors with almost \$2.0 million (about 5 percent of their total FY98 funding) going to state district attorneys.

Other initiatives also serve to support the activities of the law enforcement task forces. For example, in Los Angeles, funds are provided to the state's information management system to which all of the task forces have access. The LA HIDTA also lists as separate initiatives funds provided to the IRS and U.S. Customs service. Though presented as separate initiatives, the funds provided are used to support the investigations of the site's largest task force.

Not all of these initiatives are directly related to the criminal justice system, however. The South Florida HIDTA has funded initiatives that would be more appropriately characterized as drug prevention and treatment activities. For example, the Community Empowerment program has sponsored "weed and seed" like efforts where law enforcement is combined with prevention and intervention efforts. HIDTA resources were used to fund police overtime in a particular area, which was then followed by an

intensified youth outreach program. In a different initiative, the South Florida HIDTA chose to invest in the development of software to facilitate the centralization of treatment referrals. The Treatment Automated Referral System (TARS) meets a need widely recognized in the treatment field – to improve the efficiency of referrals among treatment agencies. The system attempts to match a client's needs, as assessed at intake, and match them with the variety of services and programs maintained by different providers in the area.

The SWB HIDTA's California Border Alliance Group (CBAG) also began to fund demand reduction coordination efforts in fiscal year 1998. Although extremely modest (representing a total of \$80 thousand), these programs do represent a departure from more traditional law enforcement activities.

The New York/New Jersey HIDTA has several initiatives categorized as demand reduction. The Armory project works to convert National Guard armories into youth community centers. The New York City Model Block partners with the New York City Police Department and neighborhood and block organizations to reduce crime on selected city blocks. And the NY/NJ HIDTA is also involved in a weed and seed effort.

### ***Participation***

One way to assess the degree of cooperation fostered by the HIDTA program is to measure the amount of participation by drug law enforcement agencies. The great variety of jurisdictional structures as well as the variation in the areas themselves, however, makes such an assessment difficult. The geographic boundaries of the Houston HIDTA, for example, cover only 23 different local law enforcement departments. The boundaries of the LA HIDTA, in contrast, encompass more than 110 different jurisdictions. The

SWB HIDTA includes four states and 39 counties stretches across 2,000 miles. Within that are numerous small, rural towns and municipalities whose participation in the HIDTA, or lack thereof, may be relatively inconsequential. Given this variety, comparing the number or share of participating agencies may not be that meaningful.

As an alternative, BOTECH has attempted to estimate the relative share of law enforcement officers participating in the HIDTA. Using UCR data and the number of local officers participating on a full-time basis in the initiatives, Table 5 estimates the degree to which the program has established itself in the area's the law enforcement community.

Table 5: Estimated Share of Participation by Local Agencies

Site	Local Personnel	Total Area Law Enforcement	HIDTA %
Houston	250	8,633	2.9%
Los Angeles	187	27,995	0.7%
South Florida	245	9,523	2.6%
New York	2,676	69,330	3.9%
Total	3,358	115,481	2.9%

The estimates in Table 5 suggest that less than 3 percent of the law enforcement officers in the four metropolitan HIDTAs are participating in the program on a full-time basis.<sup>38</sup> The level of participation is more impressive when compared to the number of local law enforcement officers who work narcotic cases full-time. Although it was not possible for BOTECH to collect data on the number of local narcotic officers on a systematic basis, respondents estimated that the HIDTA share was quite high. They also

<sup>38</sup> It was not possible to develop a similar estimate for the SWB HIDTA agencies given the gaps in reporting and coverage by the UC data.

provided observations that the HIDTA program represented a large share of the "big" or "major" trafficking cases. There was no way to confirm these impressions in a systematic fashion.

Table 6: Participation by FBI and DEA in the Metropolitan HIDTAs

Site	Area FBI Agents	HIDTA Assigned	Percent	Area DEA Agents	HIDTA Assigned	Percent
Houston	434	32	7.4%	205	46	22.4%
Los Angeles	887	4	0.5%	229	43	18.8%
South Florida	572	49	8.6%	271	75	27.7%
New York	1289	8	0.6%	373	33	8.9%
Total	3182	93	2.9%	1078	197	18.3%

While the participants in the HIDTA program may represent a relatively small share of the local law enforcement personnel, its impact is much larger on the federal agencies. In the four metropolitan HIDTAs, the number of DEA agents working full-time on the task forces ranges from less than one-tenth to one-quarter of those assigned to the local field office. The number of FBI agents working on HIDTA initiatives varied more, ranging from 0.5 percent of those assigned to the Los Angeles office to 8.6 percent of the agents working in South Florida.

What is not apparent from Tables 5 and 6 is the concentration of these participants in the individual initiatives. Of the over 140 initiatives funded in these five sites, a considerable range exists in the degree to which they are "multi-agency" task forces. Personnel from the lead agency constitute over 90 percent of the full-time personnel in some investigative initiatives. The result was that some initiatives are only nominally multi-agency. In other initiatives, no one agency may make up more than 40 percent of the personnel. These initiatives appear to possess more of the multi-agency character that

was envisioned by the program. Even in these cases, however, it was not unheard of for task force participants to maintain strong allegiances to their home agencies.

### ***Resource Leveraging***

As described in the previous section of this report, the goals and guidelines of the HIDTA program have evolved over time. One objective of the program that has become more explicit over time is the desire to have the HIDTA funds supplement state and local resources as opposed to supplanting them. ONDCP guidance provided to the HDTAs has emphasized that funds should not be used to pay for the salary of sworn law enforcement officers, for example. Instead, the ONDCP encouraged the home agency to detail officers and agents to the HIDTA initiatives. In this way, HIDTA funds could act as a catalyst bringing together multiple organizations and their resources.

For four of the five sites examined, the program has proceeded along these lines.<sup>39</sup> The exception, the Southwest Border, does use HIDTA funds to pay base salaries and benefits for personnel. In FY 1998, expenditures for salaries and benefits for personnel in SWB HIDTA initiatives totaled \$16.2 million, or 42 percent of the area's total funding.<sup>40</sup> SWB administrators and partnership representatives all maintained that for some of the rural jurisdictions, paying for salaries was the only way to secure their cooperation. One border county sheriff noted that he found it difficult to convince supervisors to provide anti-narcotics resources when drug trafficking was perceived to be a federal issue. SWB administrators did note that when HIDTA funds were used to pay

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<sup>39</sup> The four metropolitan HDTAs do not pay the salaries of sworn officers. In all of the HDTAs, however, federal resources are used to pay the salaries of administrative staff and some support positions. HDTAs also will contract out for particular services.

<sup>40</sup> Most of the \$16.2 million is to pay the salaries of sworn officers. This figure includes all salary and benefit costs, however.

the salary of an officer, that position was to be a new one for the agency, consistent with the objective of having HIDTA resources supplement versus supplant state and local funds.

Using budget data and personnel figures provided by the areas, it is possible to develop an estimate of the degree to which HIDTA funds have succeeded in encouraging state and local jurisdictions to devoting more resources to anti-drug efforts. Table 7 attempts to calculate a dollar value for the state and local personnel resources dedicated to the HIDTA program. To make this calculation, the total number of full-time personnel from state and local jurisdictions participating in the HIDTA program is multiplied by \$80 thousand to produce an estimate of the total leveraged resources.<sup>41</sup> This total number is then divided by the HIDTA budget for the area to estimate a leveraging ratio.

Table 7: Estimated State and Local Resources Leveraged by HIDTA Program

Site	Total Personnel	State/local Personnel	Total HIDTA Dollars*	Estimated Leveraged Dollars**	Leveraging Ratio
Houston	538	358	9.5	28.6	3.01
Los Angeles	338	216	11.8	17.3	1.47
South Florida	690	310	11.7	24.8	2.12
New York	2867	2676	11.0	214.1	19.46
SWB	1959	1028	38.1	66.0	1.73
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6392</b>	<b>4588</b>	<b>82.1</b>	<b>350.8</b>	<b>4.27</b>

\*Fiscal year 1998 funds. The LA HIDTA amount does not include the \$2.25 million and the SWB HIDTA amount does not include \$0.6 million associated with the methamphetamine initiative. These programs were funded late in the fiscal year and personnel figures associated with them are not included in the totals.

\*\*Calculated by multiplying the total number of state and local personnel by \$80 thousand. Netted out of this amount is the \$16.2 million that the SWB HIDTA spends on

<sup>41</sup> The \$80 thousand figure represents the approximate total cost of salaries and benefits for a sworn officer. The number is not intended to include the cost of any other support that might accompany an officer assigned to a HIDTA task force such as a gun, automobile, phone, or computer.

salary and benefits for state and local personnel.

Using this method, one can estimate that for every \$1.00 of ONDCP HIDTA funds, state and local law enforcement agencies in these five areas contribute \$4.27 om personnel resources, although admittedly this figure is heavily influenced by the large number of New York Police Department personnel assigned to the NY/NJ HIDTA. Not counting the NY/NJ HIDTA, the average leverage ratio drops to 1.91. The degree of leveraging covers a relatively broad range, however. In the LA HIDTA, ONDCP funds generate only \$1.47 of state and local resources. The New York/New Jersey HIDTA anchors the other end of the spectrum, with state and local jurisdictions matching each dollar of ONDCP resources with 19 of their own.

Given the nature of these estimates, it is difficult to ascertain how significant differences in the leveraging ratio might be. It is important to note, however, that the assumptions underlying Table 7 would tend to understate the estimated amount of resources leveraged by HIDTA funds. First, the calculation was approached from the federal perspective and therefore did not consider any costs associated with federal law enforcement personnel assigned to the HIDTA initiatives to have been "leveraged." Second, the estimate of the state and local contribution did not include any in-kind support provided to the HIDTA program such as space, supplies, automobiles, or maintenance. Therefore, even without a formal matching requirement for the program, the participating state and local agencies have participated and been willing to make available significant resources.

## **Conclusion**

From a programmatic perspective, the general administration of the five HIDTA sites examined provides the greatest degree of commonality. This finding does not come as a great surprise since the guidance provided by the ONDCP is the most specific with regard to administrative structures. All of the sites share a similar administrative structure, for example. All five have experienced steady, if flat, funding over the past 7 years of their existence, with the exception of the Southwest Border from 1998 to 1999. And, with the exception of the Southern Florida site, none of the others formally evaluate the performance of their initiatives.

There is considerable commonality across the five sites in the types of initiatives they fund as well. All provide resources for large, federally led, multi-agency task forces who target their respective area's largest drug trafficking organizations. The five areas also maintain intelligence initiatives whose services range from operational deconfliction and case support to strategic threat assessments. The area of greatest variation has been in the types of special purpose and other initiatives the executive committees have chosen to fund. In this regard, the types of law enforcement activities cover a broad range including money laundering initiatives, task-forces targeting hotels and motels, and those investigating possible corruption by law enforcement officers themselves. Across the sites, there are also several initiatives that fund prosecutors and a few providing support to demand reduction agencies.

Finally, the five sites vary in the degree and type of participation by law enforcement. The DEA maintains a significant presence at all five sites, except perhaps for New York, where less than 10 percent of DEA personnel are assigned to HIDTA.

Overall, participation by local agencies represents less than 3 percent of the sworn officers in the areas. New York has managed a particularly high level of local participation relative to the other metropolitan HIDTAs. Consequently, New York appears to have been most successful in leveraging resources to match the federal dollars.

## The Houston HIDTA

### *The Area*

The broadest approach to defining "the Houston area" would be to take the Houston-Galveston-Brazoria Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes eight contiguous economically integrated counties. In the original HIDTA designation, Harris and Galveston Counties were included. In 1997, eight south Texas coastal counties were added. These counties are not contained in or even contiguous to the Houston-Galveston-Brazoria CMSA; they are further down the coast towards Mexico.

In practice, the Houston High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area consists primarily of the City of Houston and surrounding areas of Harris County. Harris County accounts for 73.5% of the population in the Houston-Galveston-Brazoria CMSA.<sup>42</sup> Of 476<sup>43</sup> officers assigned to Houston HIDTA enforcement activities, all but 14 are based in the Harris County Area. Within Harris County, Houston and the unincorporated areas of Harris County account for 86.8% of the population. The Houston Police Department and the Harris County Sheriff's Office account for 90.2% of the 8633 local law enforcement officers in Harris County.<sup>44</sup> They are the only two local law enforcement agencies participating in the Houston HIDTA aside from 14 officers assigned to the remote Texas Coastal Corridor group. Neither the 21 smaller municipal police forces in Harris County,

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<sup>42</sup> Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States 1997, Appendix II, Table E. 1996 Population.

<sup>43</sup> All HIDTA assignment counts are based on authorized staffing levels as of June 30, 1998 supplied by the HIDTA director. The count of 476 excludes intelligence functions located in Austin. It appears that authorized levels may slightly exceed actual levels in each initiative.

<sup>44</sup> 1997 staffing data from Texas Department of Public Safety. Excludes school and transit police, 446 officers.

nor any of the forces in the seven outlying counties in the larger Houston metropolitan area participate in the HIDTA.

The Harris County Sheriff's Office responds to calls from the portions of the county not served by other identified police forces – that is, unincorporated areas of the county and incorporated communities which have elected not to maintain their own police forces. The Sheriff may, however, investigate crimes proactively in any part of the county.

Houston Case Study Table 1 lists the local law enforcement agencies covering the communities in Harris County together with the populations they serve and their crime rates. Houston as a whole has a modestly elevated crime rate, but law enforcement perceptions are that its crime rate varies widely by neighborhood and some neighborhoods have much more elevated crime rates.

### ***The Threat***

In the 1990 National Drug Control Strategy, the Office of National Drug Control Policy gave this explanation for its designation of the Houston area as a HIDTA:

Large-scale trafficking organizations use the Houston area as a hub for importing and transshipping heroin, cocaine, and marijuana from Latin America to other parts of the United States. Houston is an international shipping port and is a major road, rail, and air transportation hub geographically convenient to traffickers bringing drugs across the Southwest Border. Its cosmopolitan population provides cover for Latin American trafficking organizations, including the Medellin and Cali drug cartels.<sup>45</sup>

This 1990 characterization would be a fair summary of the 1997 threat assessment prepared by the Houston HIDTA.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> ONDCP, 1990 National Drug Control Strategy, page 91.

<sup>46</sup> Houston HIDTA 1997 Threat Assessment.

ONDCP's characterization of Houston resembles but differs subtly from ONDCP's characterization of Miami in that it does not emphasize traffickers' use of the area as a "base of operations from which they can distribute."<sup>47</sup> This is a hard-to-quantify difference, but it is consistent with our impressions from our interviews: While Miami is a major wholesale market place in which traffickers buy and sell cocaine, Houston seems to serve more as a way station for trafficking organizations (although there also are undoubtedly many buy-sell transactions). We also detected a difference in the way Houston officers tend to talk about trafficking organizations – the organizations which loom large in Houston appear to be somewhat more stable and organized than the importation operations working through Miami. These two differences fit with each other: Larger organizations may be more vertically integrated and so have less need to make a purchase and sale in the course of transportation. Houston, like Miami, does host significant money laundering activities.

The North American Free Trade Agreement and increasing economic integration along and across the nearby border with Mexico make the challenge of controlling narcotics trafficking in Houston ever more difficult. The Houston HIDTA 1997 Threat Assessment (at page 3) states that "In recent years, drug trafficking and distribution activity in the Houston HIDTA has increased substantially – growing, perversely, into a major industry."

Houston, the fourth largest city in the United States, is, of course, also a good-sized retail market. Indicators of arrestee drug use in the Houston area have fluctuated. They have not clearly trended either up or down over the past few years, except that heroin appears to be rising among males while cocaine appears to be falling slightly

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<sup>47</sup> 1990 National Drug Control Strategy characterization of Miami HIDTA, page 92.

among females.<sup>48</sup> Trends in emergency room drug mentions per 100,000 population are not broken out for the Houston area.<sup>49</sup> We lack a good relative measure of overall drug use prevalence in Houston as compared to other areas.

### ***Overview of the Houston HIDTA Program***

Organizationally, the Houston HIDTA conforms to the basic model described earlier. A representative executive committee supervises a HIDTA director. The HIDTA director has a small staff. The HIDTA director and his staff oversee the distribution of HIDTA funds and coordinate the preparation of the required HIDTA threat, strategy and budget documentation.

### **HIDTA Administration**

The HIDTA Executive Committee builds on a set of long standing relationships among key law enforcement agencies in the Houston area. The major federal agency Special Agents in Charge had traditionally met socially with top managers from the major local agencies prior to the arrival of the HIDTA concept. The concentration of local enforcement power in a pair of large agencies – the Harris County Sheriff's Office and the Houston Police Department – has rendered the local participants equal in significance to the federal participants. A decision was made early on to exclude the smaller forces in the area.

Evaluation of proposed or renewing HIDTA initiatives is based on a thorough onsite evaluation conducted by the HIDTA director with his staff, and in some instances,

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<sup>48</sup> National Institute of Justice 1998. *1997 Drug Use Forecasting: Annual Report Adult and Juvenile Arrestees*. (Provides results only for past five years).

<sup>49</sup> See Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 1997. *Year-End Preliminary Estimates from the 1996 Drug Abuse Warning Network*, Drug Abuse Warning Network Series: D-3.

executive committee members. The director visits initiatives year round to examine their performance on a number of specific dimensions. Ultimately at the executive committee meeting to review funding proposals, his presentation is the basis from which consensus-building and negotiation begin.

### The Initiatives

Houston HIDTA funding allocated to local agencies is in many instances used in part to fund officer overtime, and in one instance, officer salary and benefits. For federal agencies in the HIDTA, funds are not allocated to agent salaries, but do occasionally fund agent overtime. HIDTA guidelines encourage an emphasis on non-salary expenses.<sup>50</sup>

The initiatives comprising the Houston HIDTA fall into four categories. First, there are two major federal-state-local task forces. The Major Drug Squads are a group of drug task forces under joint management with DEA in overall control. The Houston Money Laundering Initiative combines Customs-led and IRS-led investigative groups with considerable local participation. Together, the two task forces include roughly 200 agents.<sup>51</sup> Taken together, they parallel in role the single "Miami Task Force" in the South Florida HIDTA. The Miami Task Force has 300 agents and combines both money laundering and trafficking enforcement. As further discussed below, the Houston Major Drug Squads initiative gives local officers more responsible roles than the Miami Task Force.

Second, the Houston HIDTA includes four special-purpose initiatives under the primary control of the Houston Police Department:

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<sup>50</sup> ONDCP, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas, Fiscal Year 1998 Program Guidance, July 25, 1997.

<sup>51</sup> respectively, the Major Drug Squads and the Houston Money Laundering Initiative had 122 and 81 positions authorized on June 30, 1998. These include respectively 18 and 3 contract personnel. The contract personnel generally do analytic, technical and clerical work.

Houston Police Department Initiatives	Staffing	HPD Staffing Share
Currency/Narcotics Transshipment Interdiction	72	79.2%
Drug Gang Intelligence Network	93	77.4%
Narcotics Operation Control Center	15	93.3%
Targeted Offender Group	34	85.3%

All of these task forces have missions roughly consistent with their names. The Harris County Sheriff's Office also participates in all of them except for the Narcotics Operations Control Center. The federal role in these task forces is quite limited.

Third, there are three intelligence oriented initiatives:

Intelligence Initiatives	Staffing	Lead Agency (% of staff)
Joint Drug Intelligence Group	45	FBI (46.6%)
Texas Narcotics Information System	38	Texas DPS (94.7%)
Post Seizure Analysis Team	24	Texas DPS (66.7%)

The Joint Drug Intelligence Group is supported as a HIDTA initiative in Houston. The other two initiatives operate in Austin under the criminal division of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Lastly, the HIDTA includes a new initiative in the Texas coastal corridor near Mexico. This is a domestic interdiction effort in a high volume transit zone. Only 14 agents are assigned to it, and we omitted it from our study.

The Houston HIDTA has focused on enforcement, and has not undertaken any treatment, prevention or community development efforts. Arguably, the Drug Gang Intelligence Network is a community-policing project, since it does not focus exclusively on drug gangs but on gangs in general.

Initiative Class	Staffing <sup>52</sup>	Share of Enforcement Staffing
Federal-State -- Local General	203	37.7%
Houston PD -- Special Purpose	214	39.8%
Intelligence	107	19.9%
Texas Coastal Corridor	14	2.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Memo: Administration		

### ***Initiative Specific Observations***

#### Federal-State-Local Task Forces

#### The Major Drug Squads

The Major Drug Squads consist of roughly 104 collocated agents from diverse agencies and 18 contract staff personnel organized into 7 enforcement squads.

Agency	Agents Assigned to Major Drug Squads
Drug Enforcement Administration	29
U.S. Customs	10
Federal Bureau of Investigation	8
Internal Revenue Service	3
Immigration and Naturalization Service	5
Department of Defense	2
Texas Department of Public Safety	10
Texas National Guard	12
Houston Police Department	15
Harris County Sheriff's Office	10
<b>Total: All Agencies, excluding contract personnel</b>	<b>104</b>

Excepting the National Guard, each of the agencies contributing more than 5 agents has a supervisor running one squad. DEA runs two squads. Each of the squads is a completely mixed team of agents. For example in one squad, DEA, FBI, INS and Customs agents, a Harris County Sheriff's officer and a Texas DPS officer all report to a Houston Police Department Sergeant.

<sup>52</sup> Source: Houston HIDTA director -- authorized staffing as of June 30, 1998.

At the next supervisory level up, three of the group leaders report to a Customs ASAC and four report to a Houston Police Department Lieutenant. These two in turn report to a DEA ASAC. All groups follow DEA guidelines on investigative procedures, confidential informant usage and undercover work. Each agent follows his own agency's administrative procedures (for example, overtime limitations). The task force as a whole is governed by a memorandum of understanding clarifying these procedural issues.

The enforcement squads participating in the MDS investigate larger trafficking cases. We heard differing opinions as to how MDS cases compared to the cases worked by non-HIDTA federal enforcement groups. Two DEA agents in supervisory roles felt MDS cases were essentially the same as non-HIDTA DEA cases. One local officer in a supervisory role felt that the cases were larger in the MDS. One DEA agent offered a reconciliation of these two points of view suggesting that HIDTA made it possible to do more big cases, but not bigger cases. By freeing agents from the responsibility to pursue quick "reactive" cases, the HIDTA environment allows better focus on the big cases. On the other hand, a senior FBI manager felt that his agents outside HIDTA groups were making larger cases than his agents assigned to HIDTA-groups. He saw the HIDTA-assigned agents as doing smaller, more community-oriented cases.

To some extent, it appears that the Major Drug Squads have evolved over time. Initially, each squad focused on just one major organizational case that was selected with participation of the HIDTA executive committee. Over time, in order to keep staff productive as the work loads imposed by the large investigations fluctuates, the squads have taken on some smaller, more reactive cases. One senior agent referred to the need to "keep putting drugs on the table." The differences in perceptions about case mix may

reflect changes over time. In any event, essentially all of the cases developed by the Major Drug Squads are OCDETF level cases.

In our interviews, we formed an impression of a very high level of federal-state-local cooperation occurring in the Major Drug Squads. The agreement to abide by DEA rules eliminated procedural conflicts, but we took away little sense that other agencies had given up their autonomy to work with DEA. The diversified participation in the command structure (at all but the top level) put all agencies on an essentially equal footing.

Our interviewees talked about the value of having agents with diverse expertise work closely together. The advantages were described not in terms of complementary roles or competences, but primarily in terms of complementary territorial familiarity – for example, the Houston officers know the neighborhoods, the DEA and FBI officers have national networks to draw on, the Highway Patrol officers know the highways.

#### The Houston Money Laundering Initiative

The Houston Money Laundering Initiative is less integrated than the Major Drug Squads. The initiative's 81 collocated agents come primarily from four agencies: Customs, the IRS, the Houston Police Department and the Harris County Sheriff's Office. Customs and the IRS each lead groups pursuing separate investigations. There are no groups mixing the two agencies, but in some extended investigations, groups led by the two agencies may work together in the later, more labor-intensive stages.

Some money laundering investigations are fairly straightforward and are not at the OCDETF level. Many, however, are quite complex financial investigations, but even then often have a street investigative component. The IRS and customs officers have the

financial expertise and lead the investigations. The local officers “do the street work.” The Houston Police officers are assigned on a flextime basis, while the Sheriff’s are assigned on a dedicated basis. Overtime for the Houston Police officers is funded under the Currency/Narcotics Transshipment Interdiction HIDTA initiative budget (discussed below).

The managers in the HMLI meet regularly to discuss resource-sharing issues. This initiative seems to provide a good environment in which the IRS and Customs money laundering investigators can gain the support they each need from local police. It is not a collaborative in which federal and local officers are on the same footing.

### Houston Police Department Initiatives

#### Drug Gang Intelligence Network

The Drug Gang Intelligence Network initiative supports a central gang database and related enforcement activities in the city of Houston. The database captures data on gangs broadly, as opposed to only drug gangs, but of course, many gangs deal drugs. The database captures gang-related events and affiliations and personal identifying information for gang members, including not only names, but also photographs, identifying marks and characteristics. All officers in the Houston Police Department who learn of apparently gang-related incidents or identify potential gang members are required to complete forms that are routed to the Drug Gang Intelligence group. This group is part of the central Houston Police Department Criminal Investigative Division. Analysts in the CID review the reports and, if they meet specified criteria, enter them in

the database. Approximately 14,000 individuals, mostly young adults, associated with 400 groups have been identified through this process.

The database has proved useful in several ways according to our interviewees involved in the management of the initiative. It has helped solve crimes. With detailed knowledge of gang membership, the Houston Police have been able to quickly identify suspects in several gang violence incidents. The database has been helpful in understanding patterns. The police have been better able to target locations and groups for intensive enforcement. The database also helps the police quickly recognize displacement of crime patterns and retarget efforts. Additionally, it allows them to provide a statistical picture of gang activity for public policy makers. Finally, requiring regular patrol officers to contribute to the database has an indirect benefit: It focuses the officers on observation and recognition of gang activities.

The database is under the management of a gang coordinator who also manages a central group of gang officers. These officers are each assigned to work with police officers in each of 10 areas of the city. In each area, there are several officers assigned to particularly focus on gang issues. The gang coordinator and his team stay in close contact with gang officers, community leaders, school and other officials throughout the city. Their mission is to understand gang activities and to help regular officers respond to gang crime. The gang coordinator has an overtime budget to which HIDTA contributes. He can allocate this budget to fund particular gang investigations. This has helped focus attention on gang issues.

In addition to these Houston Police Department gang operations, the HIDTA initiative supports an ATF-led effort to target gangs with guns. The ATF effort includes

approximately 9 ATF agents and 5 Houston Police officers. HIDTA also supports an 11-member gang intelligence unit within the Harris County Sheriff's office (with no participation by other agencies). This unit coordinates the activities of the Sheriff's Officers focusing on gangs in 4 quadrants of the county. These two groups are collocated and support each other occasionally on larger investigations.

The "DGINet" HIDTA initiative funds all three of these groups. They all contribute to and gain benefit from the common gang database. The HIDTA umbrella facilitated the multi-agency cooperation in the development and ongoing expansion of the database by "blessing communication" among the agencies. The groups do not otherwise appear to work closely together. Nor do they cooperate heavily with other agencies; one local federal agency manager had no knowledge of the gang database.

#### Narcotics Operations Control Center

The Narcotics Operations Control Center is a deconfliction group staffed by the Houston Police Department but serving most of the agencies doing narcotics work in the area. It originated before Houston was a HIDTA, but HIDTA now contributes to its support and may have facilitated the broadening of participation in it.

Any of the over 600 officers with the appropriate clearance in participating agencies can call the NOCC phone number which is staffed seven days a week, 24 hours per day. They can tell the responding officer skeletal facts about planned undercover transactions -- date, time, location and possibly the drug and quantity involved. The officer will enter the data in a database and check for any nearby law enforcement operations which might be the other side of the planned transaction or might otherwise conflict.

As many as 800 calls come in to the Center each month – roughly 500 from Houston Police operations; roughly 200 from joint operations including the Houston Police and roughly 100 from other agencies. The staff of the Center estimated that roughly two-thirds of operations in the Houston area are checked through the Center.

The Center has chosen to cover a phone line with live support in order to assure security and effective deconfliction. The Center feels that in a completely automated system where agencies get responses by logging on to a computer network there is the possibility that conflicting operations may not be called off. One side may not be aware of the conflict or junior officers may press an operation when it is ill advised. Human staffing can assure that the appropriate senior officers in the agencies with a possible conflict are aware and involved.

In addition to the core officer safety role – operational deconfliction -- the Center is capable of investigative deconfliction. Participants can call in target information for their longer investigations. This capability is much less extensively used. Center staff feel that the operational deconfliction is “85%” of the value of the Center. Interestingly, when the group was originally formed, it was staffed with analysts who were expected to provide investigative support as well as deconfliction. The central analytic group was under-utilized and the analysts were disbanded so that only the deconfliction functions remain.

#### Other Houston Police Department HIDTA Initiatives

We were unable to interview staff associated with the Currency/Narcotics Transshipment Interdiction and Targeted Offender Group initiatives. Neither of these groups has large significance in the development of interagency cooperation in the

Houston HIDTA. The currency interdiction group of CNTI accounts for over half of the staff "assigned" to the CNTI initiative. In fact, this group is one of the Customs-led groups in the Houston Money Laundering Initiative discussed above. The remaining two CNTI groups target drug couriers in hotels/motels and public transportation locations – a classic "domestic interdiction" operation. These are special purpose groups, primarily staffed by Houston Police Department personnel with modest participation from other agencies. An allocation of resources to this type of effort is consistent with the perception that Houston is a transit area more than a wholesale marketplace.

The Targeted Offender Group is essentially a Houston Police narcotics task force targeting mid-level narcotics traffickers. Of 34 officers assigned, 29 are from the Houston Police Department and two from the Harris County Sheriff's Office. A single DEA representative and a single FBI representative each perform liaison roles to their respective agencies.

### Intelligence Initiatives

#### Joint Drug Intelligence Group

The Houston HIDTA contributes to the support of the FBI's Joint Drug Intelligence Group. HIDTA's contributions account for 13.8% of the JDIG's resources. The JDIG performs three types of functions: Strategic trend analysis, organizational profiling and tactical (analytic) case support. Its professional staff of 45 is roughly evenly divided between agents and analysts, and roughly evenly divided between FBI and other agency staff. Other agency staff include representatives from all of the major

federal, state and local agencies in the areas. Diverse agency participation assures access to a broad set of agency databases and expertise when assembling analytic products.

The JDIG prides itself on very high quality analytic work products. They produced the very thorough and well-organized threat assessment for the Houston HIDTA. We were also permitted to review some of the "organizational profiles" generated by the group. These were also impressive. In preparing the profiles, the JDIG goes beyond database review and actually uses agents to develop significant intelligence about the organizations. In principle, the profiles are developed up to the point where a wiretap would be the next appropriate investigative step. The JDIG then hands the profile package to an appropriate agency for enforcement action.

Participating agencies may request "tactical" analytic support from the JDIG. According to the JDIG supervisor roughly 40% of the requests come from the FBI and roughly 60% from other agencies. When agencies request "tactical" analytic support from the JDIG, the JDIG supervisor will assign an analyst to support the particular case. "Analysts are not gophers." In principle, they are to become a part of the requesting agencies investigative team for the case.

The JDIG does not seek to create a central database of investigative targets for other agencies (as for example, the South Florida Investigative Support Center does). A JDIG supervisor identified several concerns about a common target database: First, it is difficult to get data contributed; second it is hard to recognize the significance of skeletal information retained in a database; third, much of the information in the database may be entered or retrieved after enforcement is complete, making it primarily of historical value.

The supervisor nonetheless valued a pointer-system for investigative deconfliction as maintained by the DEA and FBI.

While the JDIG has systems to log requests to it and its own work products, it is has no customer satisfaction systems in place. For example, it has no system to track how many of the organizational profiles that it hands off actually result in indictments. It defines success as completing a high quality analytic work product.

We got indications from several agencies suggesting that more attention to customer feedback could help the JDIG perform a greater service to the law enforcement community. One senior local official said: "They say 'call us,' but they don't give us anything. Their approach is to collect and hold information, not collect and disseminate." Another local official complained of very slow turnaround for analytic requests to the JDIG. A state official said his operation made little use of JDIG and was unaware of ever having received a case referral from them. A mid-level federal manager said he used JDIG primarily for access to databases, precisely the "gopher" role that JDIG seeks to avoid. The Houston JDIG provides another example of how difficult it is for a centralized analytic support group to stay close to its operational customers.

#### Texas Narcotics Information System

The Texas Narcotics Information System is a shared database of potential narcotics traffickers. It is housed in the Texas Department of Public Safety Criminal Division in Austin. The system allows the entry of identification information about targets and a justification for their identification as targets. Entry terminals at approximately 100 participating locations generate printouts in Austin for each entry.

Target information is evaluated and captured permanently in the database if it is appropriately substantial and indicative of criminal activity.

Data entry participation in the system appears to be low among higher-level enforcement operations. TNIS managers indicated that although the system receives some HIDTA funding, the major HIDTA initiatives, the Major Drug Squads in particular, probably do not use the system consistently. The primary sources of entries for the system are the narcotics units of the Texas DPS Criminal Division and local task forces created by the Texas Narcotics Control Program. TNCP, sponsored by the Texas Governor's office, funds task forces drawing together local police department narcotics officers. Our understanding is that TNCP mandates use of the system. TNIS staff indicated that most of those contributing data "are not wild" about using the system.

The system lacks any mechanism for tracking usage that would give a sense of the value of the data. One senior local manager suggested that he got little value from the system - "all they do is feed us back our own data." On the other hand, one senior federal manager said that, while his agency does not contribute data to the system, it is essential to his agency, because it allows him to monitor state and local enforcement activity. It is a 20-year old system using dated mainframe technology. Currently, the TNIS group is developing a new Windows-based system that will make entry easier, allow the capture of more data and include better usage monitoring.

Physically located in Austin along with the support staff for the TNIS system is a group of approximately 20 analysts who respond to a wide range of information requests. Many of the requests need only a simple response. They are "any-analyst calls" seeking, for example, phone access to information in TNIS, in the Texas or national criminal

records systems or in the motor vehicle license system. In the FY98 budget request for the group, it is estimated that the analysts handled approximately 40,000 calls in FY97 – for a staff of 20, this would be an average of over 1 call per hour. In addition, the group creates some more labor-intensive work products – they may travel to assist in investigations or produce complex graphics for courtroom use. There are no systems for measuring analyst output or the realized value of the larger work products. However, the call volume suggests a significant demand at least for the basic data access services offered by the group. Two other HIDTAs, the West Texas HIDTA and the South Texas HIDTA, contribute to the support of this group.

#### Post-Seizure Analysis Team

The Post-Seizure Analysis Team is a group of roughly 8 agents and 8 analysts<sup>53</sup> collocated with the TNIS group in Austin. Their mission is to analyze reports of seizures of cash and drugs. The Texas Highway Patrol, some units of the INS Border Patrol and the Texas Narcotics Control Program task forces report seizures through a teletype system to the PSAT. PSAT enters all seizures into a database. For the larger seizures, they work up available leads opened by the seizure. They have pushed the Highway Patrol to attempt to capture more data at the time of the seizure – for example to recognize pocket trash that might contain leads.

PSAT builds files relating to potential trafficking organizations. In some instances, PSAT-assigned agents will interview possible informants identified through the seizures. Their goal is to develop files worth handing-off to enforcement groups for further potential investigation. Something under 20% of the files that PSAT hands off

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<sup>53</sup> This is the headcount offered by the manager that we interviewed. The authorized headcount per the HIDTA director is 24.

include potential informants, but these more fully-developed files account for much more than 20% of the PSAT unit's time.

The PSAT team does not have a formal process for evaluating the bottom-line arrest productivity of their efforts. However, the PSAT concept seems to make particular sense in a HIDTA where traffickers are often simply passing through as opposed to conducting high-level buy-sell transactions. In many narcotics enforcement areas, transactions create the openings for agents to penetrate trafficking organizations. In a transit area, it is harder to find an opening, and the step-by-step identification of routes, couriers and corrupt transportation firms becomes more central.

### ***HIDTA Participation Levels***

As noted at the outset, two large local agencies – the Houston Police Department and the Harris County Sheriff's office constitute 90.2% of the 8633 local law enforcement officers in Harris County (which is the primary focus of the HIDTA). Inclusion of these two large agencies undoubtedly captures an even higher share of the officers making mid and upper level narcotics cases – the smaller agencies excluded must primarily focus on local retail enforcement if they do any narcotics enforcement at all. The HIDTA does include all major federal agencies that are involved in drug enforcement and the Texas Department of Public Safety.

A second dimension of participation is the share of all officers in the area that are participating in HIDTA initiatives. Of the 8633 local agency officers in Harris County, 2.9% are participating in HIDTA initiatives. In the Harris County Sheriff's Office, 1.7% participate; in the Houston Police Department, 4.0% participate. It should be noted that in the Houston Police Department, 81.5% of the officers participating are participating in

the four initiatives which are dominated by their department (as opposed to the initiatives which blend multiple agencies). Only 0.7% of Houston Police officers are participating in true multi-agency initiatives.

Among narcotics officers, participation is considerably higher. For the Harris County Sheriff's Office, roughly half of 65 officers assigned to do narcotics work participate in HIDTA initiatives. The other half work through a long-standing non-HIDTA task force funded by the Texas Narcotics Control Program. For the Houston Police Department, the counts we obtained were hard to reconcile, but it appears that most, if not all, of the Houston Police Department officers doing higher-level narcotics cases work in HIDTA groups. Approximately 200 officers are dedicated to narcotics work, but many of them focus at the retail level. Of course, regular uniformed officers also have an impact on retail dealing.

Among federal agencies a considerable share of narcotics agents operate outside the HIDTA framework. The chart below shows the HIDTA participation levels for major agencies operating in the area.

Agency	Total Agents <sup>54</sup>	Drug Agents <sup>55</sup>	HIDTA Assigned <sup>56</sup>	HIDTA as % of Total	HIDTA as % of Drug
FBI	434	106	32	7.4%	30.2%
DEA	205	205	46	22.4%	22.4%
Customs	NA	73	33	NA	45.2%

These statistics about participation levels suggest conclusions similar to those in the Florida HIDTA case study. Given the very low share that HIDTA has of the total

<sup>54</sup>For DEA and FBI, data are those compiled by T AC, Syracuse University and made available at <http://trac.syr.edu/>. DEA data is 1996 and FBI is 1994, the most recent official data made available. Data for both agencies refer to their Houston offices which cover an area possibly somewhat larger than the HIDTA. The data include only criminal investigators for DEA.

<sup>55</sup> Uses 1996 statistic from prior column for DEA; For Customs and FBI, the estimates are based on our interviews with senior management.

<sup>56</sup> Source: HIDTA director – authorized levels as of May 1998. There is some imprecision in all of these counts.

police manpower in the area, it is entirely unrealistic for HIDTA to use overall crime levels as a success measure. Given that at the retail level, HIDTA involvement is quite limited, local retailing levels would not be a good HIDTA success measure either. Given the modest HIDTA-involvement among federal agents doing mid and upper level work, there is even a need for caution in the use of trafficking statistics as a HIDTA success measure.

### ***Summary and Perspective***

The Houston HIDTA builds on a tradition of management cooperation among the larger law enforcement agencies operating in the area. The decision early on to exclude the smaller local agencies may reflect: (1) The fact that the largest local agencies constitute such a large share of the local agency manpower; (2) the likelihood that few of the smaller local agencies are doing any higher level narcotics work; (3) the fact that the Texas Narcotics Control Program already funds horizontal task forces including smaller departments; (4) an affirmative desire to keep executive committee politics simple.

Some of the senior federal, state and local agency managers that we spoke with felt that HIDTA had materially improved communication and teamwork among the agencies. Others felt that cooperation among them had predated HIDTA, and some were skeptical of HIDTA's value. One federal manager went so far as to state "All HIDTA does is give me a few extra bucks; they used to be in my budget; now I have to beg for them." Yet this same manager was positive about the value of collocating agents from other agencies at the one initiative in which his agency had a major role. Another senior federal manager characterized ONDCP in general as just adding another layer of

bureaucracy. A mid-level federal agent complained about the bureaucratic reporting burdens imposed by the HIDTA program in particular.

It does seem clear that federal and local priorities are different in the Houston area. One local manager stated, "HIDTA does nothing for the local communities large or small. We answer to the people. The federal agents are free-lance police." In his view, HIDTA's emphasis (and general federal agency emphasis on trafficking) does not speak to the problems that local communities are experiencing. Another local officer similarly expressed that the traffickers passing through Houston while nationally significant did not generate much violence in Houston.

All of the managers we talked to spoke positively of the relationships on the HIDTA board. Several viewed the Major Drug Squads as representing a higher level of cooperation than was previously attainable. It is also clear that the HIDTA structure facilitates occasional dispute resolution. We heard from a couple of different federal agencies the story of how the Houston Police had been refusing to cooperate with them in mining a vein of cases that was particularly lucrative in generating seizures. Through the intervention of the HIDTA director, they had been forced to form a task force including the federal agencies.

The chart below summarizes our impressions as to the effect of the HIDTA program on law enforcement cooperation in the Houston area.

HIDTA Effects on Anti-Drug Law Enforcement Coordination in the  
Houston Area

Coordination Level	HIDTA Contribution	Limitations/Concerns
Strategy	Small	Major agencies already working together; strategy structured loosely; significant federal resources outside process not necessarily influenced by HIDTA strategy per se.
Federal-federal investigative	Medium. Major Drug Squads a very positive model; some improvement in communication.	Significant resources outside HIDTA; working relationships already existed
Federal-local investigative	Large. Major Drug Squads a very positive model; dispute resolution value.	Working relationships already existed.
Local-local investigative	None	Only two local agencies participating in HIDTA. Local-local cooperation already addressed by Texas Narcotics Control Program.
Operational deconfliction	Medium. HIDTA helped expand existing system	
Intelligence sharing	Uncertain	JDIG strong, but locals not well supported by it. TNIS and PSAT hard to evaluate

Initially, the Houston HIDTA seems to have been the response devised by a set of large players with comfortable relationships to the problem of how to equitably divide a pot of newly available funds. In the early days of the program the state/local share was split three ways between the Sheriff, the Police Department and the Department of Public Safety. In return, the locals did "the street work" in federal anti-trafficking efforts which do not speak to local priorities.

It appears that over the last few years, efforts have been made to devote more of the funds to initiatives which serve clear strategic goals. The Major Drug Squads as currently constituted stand out as a model of integration among agency forces. It too may depend on a preexisting higher level of trust among law enforcement agencies. Only where the federal agencies have a high degree of confidence in the integrity of local law enforcement would they consent to place their agents under local supervisors.

**HOUSTON CASE STUDY – TABLE 1  
LOCAL POLICE FORCES IN HARRIS COUNTY<sup>57</sup>**

County	Department Name	UCR Crimes 97	Population (1996)	Crimes/100K Pop.
Harris	Baytown	3806	71348	5334
Harris	Bellaire	408	15514	2630
Harris	Deer Park	633	31525	2008
Harris	Galena Park	302	10810	2794
Harris	Harris County SO	37071	990573	3742
Harris	Hedwig Village	289	2848	10147
Harris	Houston	130844	1801370	7264
Harris	Humble	1368	13852	9876
Harris	Jacinto City	365	10664	3423
Harris	Jersey Village	226	5678	3980
Harris	Katy	345	9153	3769
Harris	La Porte	956	32706	2923
Harris	Lakeview	132	8398	1572
Harris	Nassau Bay	136	5047	2695
Harris	Pasadena	7295	136756	5334
Harris	Seabrook	329	7966	4130
Harris	South Houston	860	15578	5521
Harris	Southside Place	39	1545	2524
Harris	Spring Valley	87	3958	2198
Harris	Tomball	412	8246	4996
Harris	Village	185	13109	1411
Harris	Webster	726	5219	13911
Harris	West U. Place	247	14649	1686
Harris	TOTAL	187061	3216512	5816

<sup>57</sup> Source: Texas Department of Public Safety. Note that population assigned to Harris County Sheriff's office is the residual population in unincorporated areas.

## **The Los Angeles HIDTA**

### ***The Area***

The Los Angeles HIDTA consists of the 4 southern California counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino. Geographically, it stretches from Catalina Island in the west to the Nevada border, covering an area of over 32,000 square miles. Close to 15 million people reside in the area. The population density varies considerably with most concentrated in the urban area anchored by the city of Los Angeles. Population density decreases as one moves away from the coast. Several square miles of suburban development stretch east of the city, which eventually give way to the sparsely populated sections of the desert and mountains, which extend to Nevada. The result is a widely diverse area with considerable demographic and geographic variation.

Equally varied is the range of law enforcement agencies operating in the LA HIDTA. In addition to the four county sheriff offices, the area encompasses over 100 different municipal jurisdictions each with its own police department. Also present are field offices of the federal law enforcement agencies as well as the California Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement and the California Highway Patrol.

### ***Drug Trafficking Threat***

The area's proximity to the U.S./Mexico border as well as its status as a financial and transportation center for much of Latin America and the Pacific Rim places it at the center of a significant portion of the country's drug trafficking activities. A considerable amount of cargo, both legal imports and contraband, passes through the area's three

international airports and two seaports. In addition, the LA HIDTA's southern edge is a short distance by interstate freeway north of the land ports of entry with Mexico.

The 1990 National Drug Control Strategy, which designated Los Angeles as one of the original HIDTA's cited this role as a major importation and transshipment center for Asian and Mexican heroin, cocaine, and marijuana.<sup>58</sup> That characterization, in general holds today. The LA HIDTA's FY98 Threat Assessment estimated that 158 major drug trafficking organizations were involved in the distribution of drugs into and through the area. Law enforcement reports note that many of the major drug traffickers in the area can be traced to organizations in Colombia and Mexico. These organizations deal in all types of illegal drugs.

In addition to moving drugs into and through the area, the LA HIDTA also is home to a considerable degree of illicit drug production. Its sparsely populated eastern section has a considerable history as a marijuana growing area. Law enforcement officials continue to find small plots on public and private land as well as indoor operations.

Whereas the 1990 Strategy noted that the LA HIDTA served as the source of most of the PCP distributed in the country, that drug has been displaced by methamphetamine. Recently, methamphetamine production has emerged as a significant trafficking threat in the form of drug production. The combination of few neighbors in the HIDTA's eastern region, easy access to major transportation routes, and the proximity to sources of the chemicals needed for production make the area an attractive one to the operators of clandestine laboratories. The labs range in scale. At the small end are "stove-top"

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<sup>58</sup> Office of National Drug Control Policy, National Drug Control Strategy (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), p. 91.

operations capable of production runs measured in ounces. These methamphetamines often will be sold and consumed in or around the immediate region. At the other end of the spectrum are the major manufacturing facilities capable of producing multiple pounds of the substance. The output of these larger labs is destined for other parts of the United States.

### ***Overview of the LA HIDTA Program***

The LA HIDTA is run by an 18-member Executive Committee which is responsible for overall planning, policymaking and budget decisions. Representatives from eight federal, nine local, and one state constitute the board membership.<sup>59</sup> The Committee formally meets every other month. Interview respondents noted, however, that Executive Committee members communicate frequently with one another between meetings.

The Executive Committee also has established a Intelligence Sub-committee to address the specific issues of information sharing and deconfliction. A second sub-committee is expected to emerge out of a recently created methamphetamine initiative. The Executive Committee has also formed ad hoc sub-committees to address particular concerns. For example, the Southern California Drug Task Force (SCDTF) Oversight sub-committee was created to address complaints about the way the SCDTF was handling cases and information vis-a-vis the other LA HIDTA task forces. The ad hoc committee was formed, investigated the issue, and recommended that a memorandum of

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<sup>59</sup>The federal seats are held by the DEA, FBI, U.S. Customs Service, I S, Marshals, ATF, INS, and the U.S. Attorney. The local seats are held by the Los Angeles Police Department, the four county sheriffs, and the heads of the police chiefs associations in each of the counties. The Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement holds the state agency seat.

understanding be drafted to spell out the responsibilities of the task forces relative to one another. With implementation of the recommendation, the sub-committee disbanded.

In addition to administrative structure of the LA HIDTA, a significant informal network has emerged which has the capacity to share information and address potential conflicts before they reach the Executive Committee or one of its sub-committees. Two working groups, one representing senior officials from the operational task forces and the other composed of intelligence officials also meet regularly. Respondents noted that these meetings proved extremely useful in establishing rapport with other organizations. They also represented an efficient source of information sharing.

Several respondents noted that both the formal Executive Committee meetings and the informal working group sessions could serve as a subtle disciplinary mechanism. Earlier in the HIDTA's history these interagency meetings were often characterized by agency posturing and grudging cooperation. Many decisions were made by formal votes, often breaking down along traditional lines of institutional conflict (e.g., federal versus state and local representatives). Participants in these meetings now describe a more collegial atmosphere with much more consensus decision-making. The difference can be attributed to a combination of institutional maturation, changing personnel, and what can best be described as peer pressure. One respondent who participated at the working group level explained how the other members of the group already had accumulated many years of law enforcement experience and that he held them in high regard. Consequently, he made a concerted effort to be responsive to their inquiries and forthcoming with information about his own task force's activities. In short, it was a group in front of which he did not want to be embarrassed.

An Executive Committee member described how a similar dynamic had developed in that body as well. Although the composition has changed periodically, there has been enough continuity among the members to develop what appears to be a reasonably effective working relationship. It should be noted no one interviewed who had participated in or observed Committee activities attempted to characterize the interactions as conflict-free. Rather, respondents simply described how these conflicts now are addressed in a constructive manner. As one federal agency interviewee noted, "You see these people month after month. And if you don't take care of it this month, you know you're going to have to face them next month and be held accountable."

In addition to the program-wide committee and working group structures, almost all of the individual initiatives have their own oversight committee or board of directors. Those organizations contributing personnel to the initiative are given a seat on the board. These boards meet on a regular basis (ranging from monthly to quarterly) to discuss the individual initiative's operations and priorities as well as to resolve any disputes that may emerge.

### ***General Administration***

Day-to-day decisions and administration are the responsibility of the HIDTA Director's Office. The director serves as a liaison between the ONDCP in Washington D.C. and the Executive Committee as well as between the Committee and the initiatives. He also serves as staff support to the Executive Committee. For example, although the Committee must provide final approval on strategy and budget issues, much of the preparation and collation of information is done by the Director.

In Los Angeles, the director's office consists of one person, the HIDTA director. He receives some assistance from the Southern California Drug Task Force in the form of office space and access to support staff. He will also receive some assistance from the initiative staff with regard to the formulation of the area threat assessment, strategy, and budget. That aside, site administration is essentially a one-person operation. As such, administration is relatively decentralized.

The minimal nature of the administrative structure complements the director's own job description and vision of the program. He emphasizes a low-profile approach for both himself and the program more generally. He sees the director's role as that of facilitator, bringing together different combinations of resources and skills, removing obstacles if possible, and then stepping back. He makes a conscious effort to limit his participation in operations to that of an observer, leaving strategic and tactical decisions "up to the experts."<sup>60</sup> As for the program, he envisions it as the "fiber" or "glue" that holds the various organizations together. HIDTA is not, in his opinion, a highly institutionalized structure. Toward this end, the director is quick to point out small but symbolic gestures that help to keep the program in the background. For example, if one of the HIDTA task forces makes a significant arrest or large seizure of cash and/or drugs, the participating agencies are credited with the success, not the HIDTA program.

### ***Program evaluation***

Each receiving is required to present a summary of its activities to the Executive Committee once a year. It provides an opportunity for the initiative to highlight its accomplishments and outline its strategy for the future. It also enables Committee

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<sup>60</sup> It should be noted that the director is a retired chief of local police department in the area and has accumulated many years of law enforcement experience himself.

Members to ask questions regarding performance and operations. This process does not follow a set format nor are specific evaluation criteria identified. Participants in the process noted, however, that the Committee has used these opportunities in the past to send subtle and not so subtle messages of dissatisfaction to initiatives leaders if members thought it necessary.

In addition to these sessions, the annual budget process provides a second opportunity for members of the Executive Committee to evaluate the performance of the HIDTA's initiatives.

### ***Budget process***

The budget process serves the dual purpose of providing a comprehensive examination of the LA HIDTA's activities for the past year as well as determining resource priorities for the upcoming year. The Director begins 95 percent of the current year's funding level as a starting point (e.g., in FY98 the LA HIDTA received 11 million).<sup>61</sup> From that number, the Director sets aside an additional \$500 thousand. The remainder is divided among the initiatives relative to their current year budget as their baseline for the upcoming year (approximately 90 percent of their current year amount). They are then asked to submit budget requests at three levels: baseline, enhanced, and supplement. The enhanced would bring them up to 95 percent of their current budget. Supplemental requests will range from flat-funding (100 percent of the current year) to total amounts 150 percent of the current year.

Given this structure, the Executive Committee is able to exercise some discretion over the distribution of marginal dollars. This distribution is based on some assessment

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<sup>61</sup> The assumption of a funding level of 95 percent is part of the guidance provided by the ONDCP in Washington, D.C.

of the initiative's past performance and the Committee's future priorities. Although most initiatives will receive their "enhanced" request, it is not impossible for an initiative to be denied the additional funds by the board with another initiative being rewarded with the additional funds. Although these shifts in the distribution of resources do not occur often nor are they large, respondents reported that they do deliver a strong message to the participating agencies.

To help inform the Committee in these decisions, the LA HIDTA Director attempts to track performance measures that are quantifiable. These measures include such indicators as: amount of drugs seized; arrests and indictment of major drug traffickers; increased use of intelligence assets; etc. The heads of initiatives are asked to determine their own performance measures prior to the start of the year. The HIDTA Director then requires progress reports after 6 months and at the end of the year. These reports are summarized and presented to the Executive Committee.

The timing of progress reports on performance measures and the nature of the budget formulation result in the budget process becoming a de facto program evaluation element with the distribution of marginal resources being held in the balance. In interviews, the Director, Executive Committee members, and task force administrators all reported that the process had the benefit of encouraging participation and some degree of accountability was worth the cost of decreased certainty with regard to funding.

A budget policy worth noting in the LA HIDTA is the Executive Committee's policy not to use HIDTA resources for the salaries and benefits of sworn law enforcement officers. These expenses must be covered by the officer's home agency. The site's budget does include pay for some support positions, analysts, and one district attorney. It

also funds law enforcement overtime. The impact of this policy is significant. First, it means that the program leverages the contribution of significant additional resources from the participating organizations. Second, because of its absolute nature, the Executive Committee is not put in the position of deciding whether an agency should be reimbursed for the cost of salaries. The decision rule becomes a simple one, as described by one local law enforcement administrator: "Let them pay for it [salaries and benefits] out of pocket, like everyone else."

### ***Initiatives***

The LA HIDTA initiatives fall into three categories: investigation, intelligence, and other (prosecution, support, and administration). Within each of these categories, initiatives can be cataloged as either a federal effort (meaning a federal agency has the lead, not necessarily that the effort consists of only federal players) or as a state and local effort (again, an effort coordinated by, but not exclusive to, state and local officials).

Table 1, below, summarizes the expenditures of HIDTA resources on different initiatives. (Note that there are some differences in the data provided in tables and the initiatives described below, as tabular data are more current.)

**Table 1. LA HIDTA Initiative Budgets**

Initiative Title	FY 2000	Share of Total
<b>Investigation Initiatives</b>		
Southern California Drug Task Force	\$4,151,634	30.0%
Los Angeles Metropolitan Police TF (LA IMPACT)	\$1,057,718	7.6%
Regional Narcotics Suppression Program (RNSP)	\$1,082,718	7.8%
Inland Regional Narc. Enforc. Task Force (IRNET)	\$640,886	4.6%
Inland Crackdown Allied Task Force (INCA)	\$150,000	1.1%
Equal Justice Fugitive Task Force	\$50,000	0.4%
Regional Methamphetamine Task Force	\$2,000,000	14.4%
<b>Intelligence Initiatives</b>		
Joint Drug Intelligence Group (JDIG)	\$1,157,507	8.3%
Los Angeles County Clearinghouse (LACRIC)	\$2,458,993	17.7%
Inland Narcotics Clearinghouse (INCH)	\$356,776	2.6%
<b>Other Initiatives</b>		
Case Information Management System	\$154,164	1.1%
LA District Attorney	\$111,426	0.8%
LA HIDTA Director's Office	\$284,793	2.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$13,906,615</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Investigative initiatives

The LA HIDTA maintains five investigative task forces all targeting drug traffickers in the region. The Southern California Drug Task Force (SCDTF) represents the largest of the LA HIDTA's investigative task forces. Composed of approximately 100 sworn officers, it combines agents from federal, state and local law enforcement agencies (see table above). The task force is headed by DEA, whose agents comprise 35 of the 107 dedicated personnel. The task force conducts long-term investigations into high-level drug transportation, distribution, and money laundering organizations, particularly those with national and international connections. Although

based in Los Angeles, the SCDTF has investigative teams located in other parts of the HIDTA.

Table 2: LA HIDTA Investigative Initiatives

Initiative Title	FBI Staffing	Federal Share
<b>Southern California Drug Task Force</b>	107	63%
<b>Los Angeles Interagency Metropolitan Police Apprehension Crime Task Force (LA IMPACT)</b>	66	0%
<b>Regional Narcotics Suppression Program (RNSP)</b>	44	16%
<b>Inland Regional Narc. Enforc. Task Force (IRNET)</b>	28	14%
<b>Inland Crackdown Allied Task Force (INCA)</b>	28	4%

**Initiatives where federal agencies supply more than 50 percent of staff in bold.**

The other four investigative task forces focus more of their efforts and resources on the counties in which they are located. The **Los Angeles Interagency Metropolitan Police Apprehension Crime Task Force (LA IMPACT)** is a county-wide, collocated crime task force with members from several local police agencies, the LA County Sheriff's Department, the state Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement and Highway Patrol, as well as the FBI. Although the state's Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement leads the task force no single agency dominates. The LA County Sheriff's Department has the largest number of sworn officers participating but represent only one-sixth of the 62 sworn officers listed in the FY98 budget. Thirty-three other local forces contribute any where from 1 to 3 officers. The only federal presence is the FBI with 2 agents. The task force focuses on major trafficking organizations within the county as well as financial investigations and clandestine lab enforcement.

The **Regional Narcotics Suppression Program (RNSP)** is a locally led task force comprised led by the Orange County Sheriff's office. In addition to the 17 officers the Sheriff supplies, 13 local agencies contribute a total of 28 law enforcement officers and the FBI and DEA each have assigned one agent. The RNSP investigates drug trafficking and money laundering specifically in the Orange County area.

Two of the investigative initiatives are located in Inland Empire Region of the HIDTA which includes San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. The **Inland Regional Narcotics Enforcement Team (IRNET)** a locally led, cooperative task force comprised of federal (DEA, INS, Customs, FBI, and IRS), state and local law enforcement agencies based in San Bernardino County. It is comprised of 39 sworn officers with the San Bernardino Sheriff's Office contributing 40 percent of the personnel. Twelve local and the Riverside County Sheriff's office also contribute personnel. IRNET targets major narcotics and money laundering operations in and traveling through the HIDTA. Clandestine labs are also a major focus of enforcement efforts.

The **Inland Crackdown Allied Task Force (INCA)** is a state-led investigative task force based in Riverside County. The Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement supplies 13 of the 24 sworn officers assigned to the task force. Its stated mission is to target major Colombian and Mexican drug cartels within the Inland Empire, and particularly within Riverside County. The task force's primary focus is cocaine and money laundering investigations. Its activities also include heroin and marijuana interdiction as well as efforts to control precursor chemicals, clandestine labs, and the trafficking of methamphetamines.

### Intelligence initiatives.

The LA HIDTA supports three intelligence initiatives. Although each has a distinct mission in either functional or geographic terms, there is a degree of overlap in their various responsibilities and functions.

The site's budget submissions describe the **Joint Drug Intelligence Group (JDIG)** to be a strategic and operational intelligence center which provides strategic profiles and target packages, post seizure analysis, telephone toll analysis, and major case support to the entire law enforcement community in the region. Although each request for services is evaluated on an individual basis, the JDIG's primary focus is on major drug trafficking and money laundering organizations. The initiative also provides and facilitates training programs for law enforcement officers and analysts. The JDIG is staffed by a combination of sworn officers, analytical, and support personnel supplied by 6 different federal entities (FBI, DEA, IRS, USCS, INS, and JTF-6), the state government, and local agencies (Orange and LA county sheriff's offices, and the LAPD). While the participating agencies pay the salaries of their own personnel, the initiative also pays for the salaries and benefits of several contract personnel.

The primary purpose of the **Los Angeles County Regional Criminal Information Clearinghouse (LACRIC)** is to enhance officer safety through the sharing of operational and tactical information. The central element of this effort is the 24 hour-a-day War Room deconfliction center. The center seeks to identify concurrent investigations and other potential conflicts in an effort to reduce the duplication of effort as well as harm to officers. The number of area law enforcement agencies participating in the LACIRC deconfliction effort totaled 176.

In addition to the deconfliction mission the LACRIC maintains a Research and Analysis Unit that provides case support to law enforcement agencies in the area. The LACRIC also has begun to serve as a clearinghouse for sophisticated investigative equipment and provides technical support and linkages to the state narcotics intelligence system for several law enforcement agencies in the HIDTA. The Clearinghouse is staffed by personnel from the state Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement, the DEA, the LA and Orange County Sheriff's Departments, and the Hawthorne Police Department. Other agencies will collocate to operate the surveillance and command centers as necessary for specific cases. Like the JDIG, the LACRIC's significant share of the initiative's budget pays for the salaries and benefits of contracted analytical personnel.

The Executive Board of the LA County Chiefs' Association sets policy for the LACRIC. This board meets bi-monthly and also resolves any disputes which may arise regarding operational complaints and participating agencies' adherence to established guidelines. Any decisions regarding the allocation or re-allocation of resources must be unanimous.

The Inland Narcotics Clearinghouse (INCH) is a third intelligence effort that is based in Riverside County. It provides agencies and task forces within the Inland Empire with analytical support on narcotics cases that include telephone toll analysis, intelligence profiles, and cross-case analysis. Respondents at the INCH as well as the LACRIC noted a close working relationship between the centers as exemplified by the fact that an individual from the LACIRC has been assigned to the INCH (as has one person from the IRNET initiative). The remaining personnel are comprised of the Riverside County

Sheriff's office, the California National Guard and Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement, DEA, JTF-6, and contracted analysts whose salaries the initiative pays directly.

Other support efforts and expenditures.

Listed in the LA HIDTA budget documents are a number of separate expenditures that although they are identified as initiatives, are better described as support activities. For example, the **Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement Case Information Management System (BNE-CIMS)** is designed to improve access to information on narcotic trafficking and money laundering organizations from a database maintained by the state. To accomplish this increased accessibility, the initiative will provide telecommunications infrastructure and support to participating HIDTA agencies, other are law enforcement agencies, and regional networks.

The LA HIDTA also provides funds directly to some agencies in an effort to encourage their participation or to fund specific activities. For example, the total LA HIDTA budget includes funds for the **U.S. Customs Service** and the **Internal Revenue Service** to support their participation in the SCDTF. The relatively small amount of funds (both receive less than \$150,000) pay for such things as travel and equipment. It should be noted that several other federal, state, and local agencies assigned agents to the SCDTF and other task forces without the guarantee of a direct payment. Respondents indicated that this method of funding was a compromise between the Executive Board and the agencies to provide the necessary financial "carrot" to ensures the participation of Customs and the IRS in HIDTA activities.

Finally, the LA HIDTA pays for the salary of one **LA County District Attorney**. The LA County District Attorney's office acts as the HIDTA prosecutor, and assists the

SCDTF and LA-IMPACT in state search warrants, court orders, prosecutions and training.

### ***Observations Regarding Initiative Coordination***

A review of the LA HIDTA program raises some questions with regard to the program's goal of increasing interagency participation and the coordination of law enforcement efforts. Specifically, both the investigation and intelligence initiatives suggest a degree of duplication of effort and overlapping of responsibilities. While some of these issues emerged as a result of BOTEC's review, it is extremely important to note that most were identified by HIDTA administrators themselves. In many cases, these administrators were already in the process of addressing these concerns, either on an individual basis or through the Executive Committee structure.

### **Overlapping Investigative Initiatives**

An initial overview of the LA HIDTA investigative initiatives suggests the possibility of duplication of effort and overlapping of responsibilities. For example, the state BNE-led INCA located in Riverside County notes that it focuses on major Mexican and Colombian drug trafficking organizations. This description, however, closely resembles the mission of the DEA-led SCDTF based in Los Angeles. Similarly, one law enforcement official noted that LA IMPACT's mission appeared to overlap considerably with that of the SCDTF. In his words, "Why do you need a state and local task force right next to a federal task force?" The SCDTF Director, who assumed the position just two months prior to being interviewed by BOTEC, echoed the concern. He acknowledged that "on paper" there appeared to be some redundancy.

The LA HIDTA Director, when asked about the question of overlapping responsibilities, responded that the structure was less duplication and more division of labor. In his opinion, the DEA-led SCDTF served as the "mother ship," identifying targets and focusing on the largest trafficking organizations, particularly those with national and international connections. From their investigations, the SCDTF would hand off targets and cases to the regional task forces. The four regional task forces, in turn, are suppose to pass on to the SCDTF information or targets that may lead to cases with broader implications. This relationship is spelled out in the memorandum of understanding (MOU) referred to previously. The MOU, signed by the heads of each of the five task forces, provides a formal description of the relationship between the HIDTA initiatives.

When task force personnel were asked whether this was the way investigations were conducted in practice, they were unanimous in stating that they had experience little or no friction with their counterparts in other HIDTA initiatives. Most acknowledged that historically this had not always been the case and that they had witnessed thier share of interagency competition over drug cases. They credited the HIDTA structure with contributing to a more cooperative environment. Some specifically made reference to the MOU. Others, however, suggested that the informal relationships developed as a by-product of the formal structure also helped to build ties across organizational lines. One initiative administrator noted that it was at the monthly breakfast meeting for investigative initiative directors held was where he "found out what other people were doing and what was going on."

It is also worth noting that most of the task forces pre-date the creation of HIDTA. The Orange County Sheriffs Office sponsored the first interagency narcotics task force over 20 years ago. Similarly, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors authorized and funded the IRNET in 1989, before the county was part of the HIDTA. While the fact that this history could lead to some parochialism on the part of law enforcement agencies, it was clear that HIDTA program benefited from being able to build upon a tradition of local, inter-agency cooperation.

Finally, geography makes consolidation of investigations difficult. The area encompassed by the LA HIDTA is quite large. Those distances, combined with traffic congestion in the Los Angeles area, mean that law enforcement officers in the inland counties of Riverside and San Bernardino can be a 2-hour drive from downtown and western Orange County. One HIDTA administrator located in Riverside County observed that few law enforcement officers would want to spend 4 hours commuting to and from a task force headquarters.

### Overlapping Intelligence Initiatives

The other area of potential duplication of effort is with regard to the intelligence initiatives. In 1995, the Executive Committee requested that Joint Task Force Six (JTF-6) conduct a comprehensive assessment of the intelligence programs in the HIDTA. The JTF-6 assesment concluded that, at that time, intelligence responsibilities were fragmented and needed to be rationalized and prioritized. Working from the JTF-6 recommendations, the LA HIDTA's Intelligence Working Group developed a matrix that identifies and assigns responsibilities (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: LA HIDTA Intelligence Responsibilities Matrix

Responsibility	JDIG	LACIRC	INCH
War Room/Deconfliction	3	1	3
Threat Assessment	1	2	3
Quarterly Briefings	2	1	3
Org. Trends/Patterns	1	2	3
Cross Case Analysis	1	1	1
Advisories	2	1	3
Tactical Alerts	2	1	3
Seizure Database	2	1	3
Post Seizure Analysis	1	1	3
Asian Crime	1	1	3
<b>Case Support</b>			
LA County	1	1	2
Orange	1	2	2
Riverside	2	2	1
San Bernardino	2	2	1

- #1 -- Primary Responsibility
- #2 -- Secondary Responsibility (Lend significant assistance to the primary)
- #3 -- Tertiary Responsibility

The matrix prioritizes responsibilities in some cases along functional lines, and in others, along geographic areas. Relative to certain functions, the division of labor is quite clear. For example, the LA Clearinghouse is the deconfliction center for the entire HIDTA. There was no confusion among investigative task forces in this regard. The INCH, located in Riverside, clearly does not see itself in competition or overlapping with the other two. The INCH Director saw his responsibility to serve the case support needs of law enforcement agencies in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. He was in the process of integrating his operations with those of the LA Clearinghouse. Toward this end, LA Clearinghouse personnel were assigned and collocated at the INCH. The INCH was also in the process of establishing a data connection to the LA Clearinghouse to facilitate the exchange of information and access to the databases there. The LA HIDTA

Director confirmed that while the INCH was a separate entity in some respects, it was more appropriate to think of the INCH as an intelligence node rather than an intelligence center.

Despite the outlining of responsibilities in the wake of the JTF-6 assessment, BOTEK found a degree of confusion regarding how responsibilities between the JDIG and LA Clearinghouse are divided. As noted above in Table 3, both have primary responsibility for post seizure analysis, cross case analysis, Asian crime, and case support for LA County. Respondents at both intelligence centers found it difficult to differentiate who was responsible for serving which agencies. One state law enforcement official characterized as dividing along levels of government with one serving state and local agencies (LA Clearinghouse) while the other was for federal agencies (JDIG). This observation, however, contradicts to some degree with another respondent who felt the DEA was reluctant to use the JDIG because it was perceived to be an FBI dominated initiative. A third respondent noted that while the DEA and specifically the DEA-led SCDTF had been under utilized the JDIG in the past, it was in the process of changing. He cited the fact that 2 JDIG analysts were then collocated at the SCDTF as evidence of the shift.

The confusion surrounding the role of the JDIG, particularly as it relates to the LA Clearinghouse, stood out during BOTEK's review of the LA HIDTA site. The reason it stood out was that it represented almost the only instance where respondents with different perspectives on the same issue did not agree. Regarding most other issues, the officials who BOTEK interviewed provided very similar assessments about both the positive attributes of the program as well as its drawbacks.

## **Summary**

The LA HIDTA presents an interesting example of how resources can be used to build ties across agencies. Although there are admittedly some areas of potential overlap or duplication, law enforcement officials participating in the program have gone to great lengths to bridge institutional gaps that had existed between federal, state, and local organizations. Some of this existed prior to the HIDTA program. On that foundation, however, HIDTA funds appear to have solidified some of these existing ties between agencies as well as drawn other organizations into the task forces. Consequently, the HIDTA as a whole has a great deal of participation among agencies at all levels of government. The result is task forces and initiatives that, for the most part, are very close to the concept of multi-agency law enforcement that was envisioned when the program was created. It also manages to leverage a significant amount of resources from state and local agencies to devote to multi-agency law enforcement. The HIDTA now appears to be taking this idea to another level, focusing a considerable amount of attention and effort to integrating the task forces with one another.

## **The New York/New Jersey HIDTA**

### ***The Area***

The New York/New Jersey HIDTA consists of New York City (the five boroughs of Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island), Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester Counties in New York, and Union, Hudson, Essex, Bergen, and Passaic Counties in Northeastern New Jersey. According to 2000 census data, the region served by the NY/NJ HIDTA encompasses an aggregate population of 14.9 million, with New York City contributing 8 million to the total. The region has the highest population density in the United States.

### ***Drug Trafficking Threat***

The New York City metropolitan area has long been the nation's largest center of drug trafficking, drug dealing, and drug use. On the trafficking side, the environment is highly attractive for drug importation. There are two major international airports (John F. Kennedy International Airport and Newark International Airport), a large and very busy domestic airport (LaGuardia), and several smaller airports that serve both commercial and general aviation. Kennedy, Newark, and LaGuardia airports together service more than 25 million passengers annually, and a substantial amount of air cargo as well. The region has two sizeable railroad complexes in Grand Central and Pennsylvania Stations, and extensive bus and subway systems. As a coastal city centered about an island, there are multiple waterfront points of entry. And the vast network of highways, bridges, and tunnels provide traffickers with even more entry points.

But it's not only the transportation infrastructure that makes the New York metropolitan area particularly vulnerable to drug trafficking activity. New York City is often referred to as "the financial capital of the world," and its wealth of banks and other financial institutions provide opportunities for the laundering of drug money. Reliable data on money laundering are hard to come by; money laundering is perhaps the most hidden of all illicit activities. However, the United States Customs Service has estimated that between \$4 billion and \$8 billion is laundered annually by drug traffickers in the New York City area.

Moving beyond importation, New York City is the principal Northeast distribution center for cocaine, heroin, and other illicit drugs, and a significant distribution center for other North American regions as well. In fact, it has been estimated that more than half of all the cocaine and heroin consumed in the United States either enters or passes through New York City.

Of course, much of the drug market in the New York City area is fueled by local consumption. Data from the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program (ADAM) indicates that 76.9 percent of male arrestees, and 82.1 percent of female arrestees, tested positive for illicit drugs when administered a urine test.<sup>62</sup> Among the 35 cities included in the ADAM program, only Philadelphia had a higher positive rate among men (78.7 percent), and none had a higher rate among women. As New York is by far the largest city in the United States, these figures confirm that New York City has the largest population of heavy drug users in the country.

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<sup>62</sup> National Institute of Justice, *1998 Annual Report on Drug Use Among Adult and Juvenile Arrestees* (Washington, D.C., National Institute of Justice, 1999).

## ***Overview of the New York/New Jersey HIDTA***

Approximately 100 organizations participate in the New York/New Jersey HIDTA. The overwhelming majority are law enforcement agencies, but a non-trivial numbers are not. For example, among the participating organizations are John Jay College of Criminal Justice at the City University of New York (which has partnered in one of the NY/NJ HIDTA's training initiatives), Teach for America, and New York Computer Action Now. Based on interviews, it appears that the breadth of participation in the NY/NJ HIDTA's initiatives reflects a conscious effort to reach beyond traditional law enforcement agencies rather than an attempt on the part of non-law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organizations to gain additional funding from the HIDTA.

Ultimate responsibility for decision-making, however, still lies with individuals representing federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. The NY/NJ HIDTA has an 18-member Executive Committee, whose members represent the following agencies (listed in alphabetical order):

- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms
- Drug Enforcement Administration
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Internal Revenue Service
- Nassau County Police Department
- New Jersey Attorney General's Office
- New York City Criminal Justice Coordinator
- New York City Police Department

- New York County Attorney General's Office
- New York State Police
- Suffolk County Police Department
- U.S. Attorney's Office – District of New Jersey
- U.S. Attorney's Office – Eastern District of New York
- U.S. Attorney's Office – Southern District of New York
- U.S. Customs Service
- U.S. Marshall's Service
- U.S. Secret Service
- Westchester County District Attorney's Office

As we will discuss below, many of the initiatives of the NY/NJ HIDTA do not support law enforcement activities, at least not as traditionally thought of. To date, Executive Committee members have been supportive of efforts to reduce the funding of pure law enforcement initiatives, and to increase support for demand reduction and other alternative initiatives. One has to wonder, though, whether an Executive Committee that exclusively represents law enforcement agencies will always support a policy that can be seen as diverting funding away from their own agencies. Moreover, if substantial non-law enforcement activities are to be a permanent feature of the NY/NJ HIDTA, there is the obvious question of whether the Executive Committee should include representation beyond the law enforcement community.

The New York/New Jersey HIDTA has established eight operational goals in its effort to combat the drug problem in the New York area:

- a. Reduce crime, particularly in federally assisted housing

- b. Reduce illegal drug use, particularly among young people
- c. Enhance cooperation and information sharing among law enforcement agencies, particularly through technology
- d. Reduce money laundering activities
- e. Increase forfeiture of drug trafficking proceeds
- f. Reduce the number of drug fugitives and criminal aliens at-large in this area
- g. Reduce gun violence
- h. Prevent emerging drug epidemics, particularly heroin and methamphetamine

This list of objectives indicates that the NY/NJ HIDTA has set for itself broader objectives, and is less focused on drug trafficking per se, than the other four original HIDTAs. This contrast is perhaps best illustrated by comparing mission statements. The NY/NJ HIDTA states that "The New York/New Jersey HIDTA's mission is to measurably reduce illegal drug use and the harm it causes." By contrast, the other four HIDTAs reviewed in this report all state a primary mission of "measurably reducing drug trafficking." As such, the NY/NJ HIDTA has moved itself closer in mission to some of the newer HIDTAs that explicitly target goals other than reducing drug trafficking. Consider, for example, the Atlanta HIDTA. "The mission of the Atlanta HIDTA is to improve the quality of life in metropolitan Atlanta by reducing the availability of and demand for illicit drugs; curtailing the attendant violent crime and illegal firearms trafficking; eliminating the profits from illegal drug related activities, and reclaiming neighborhoods from criminal control."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Mission statements for all HIDTA sites can be found in Office of National Drug Control Policy, *High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Program: 2000* (Washington, DC: Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2001).

The New York/New Jersey HIDTA distinguishes its initiatives by organizing them into four categories:

- i. Information Sharing
- j. Enforcement
- k. Demand Reduction
- l. Training

The organization again confirms the relative priority given to demand reduction when the New York/New Jersey HIDTA is compared to the four other original HIDTAs.

### ***Initiatives and Observations***

#### **Information Sharing**

##### **Regional Intelligence Center (RIC)**

The goal of the RIC, which is located at the NY/NJ HIDTA Center, is to facilitate intelligence and other information sharing among the various federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies that operate in the New York City area. The RIC has two components. First, the *Watch*, which aims to provide a “one stop shopping” center for law enforcement personnel who need information available on law enforcement and commercial databases. With a full-time staff of 40—35 drawn from the New York Police Department (NYPD)—the Watch provides access to over 30 databases.

In fiscal year 1999, information requests averaged 2137 per month. At first glance, that may seem like a large number, but it’s only about 70 requests per day, a modest number given the amount of law enforcement activity in the region. Although request volume was up 60% over the previous year, the volume figures imply that the

resource cost of operating the Watch still exceeds \$100 per request. Until the Watch generates greater economies of scale, there is a question of its short-term payoff.

The other component of the RIC is the *Analytical and Investigative Group (AIG)*. With a staff of 23, the AIG provides investigative case support. Depending on the circumstances, AIG members will do everything from develop background threat assessments to providing material for trial preparation.

The RIC has budgetary cost of \$108,000 for FY2000. This grossly understates the RIC's cost—virtually all costs are borne by participating agencies—and RIC's importance in the eyes of NY/NJ HIDTA senior staff. In interviews, staff emphasize the role of the RIC in serving the HIDTA's long term objectives to a much greater degree than its share of the budget would predict.

#### RIC Satellites

There are several additional intelligence centers electronically connected to the RIC. There is the Money Laundering Intelligence Center, which is designed to assist the sharing of money laundering intelligence. There are intelligence centers covering the non-New York City areas of Westchester, Nassau, and Suffolk counties, and Northern New Jersey. And there is the Regional Crime Gun Center. The Gun Center has a staff of 19, 10 of whom are ATF personnel, and using computer, ballistics, and mapping technology, they provide support to investigations that involve firearm violations. The aim is to provide a centralized firearms tracing mechanism for all firearms seized or recovered in the region, the data from which is then transferred to the ATF National Tracing Center. In addition, the Gun Center takes on specific projects, such as identifying organizations that supply firearms to juveniles in public housing projects.

### HIDTANET Technology

The NY/NJ HIDTA has a number of technology-focused initiatives. Two are worth noting here. First, there is the Unified Drug Enforcement Coordination System (UDECS). Prior to UDECS, there was no centralized database that recorded drug enforcement activities among the various law enforcement agencies involved in drug cases in the New York metropolitan area. As a result, there was always a risk that enforcement agencies could undermine each other's efforts by unknowingly pursuing the same investigative targets, or at worst put law enforcement personnel in danger by mistaking undercover agents as offenders. UDECS is a deconfliction system designed to prevent such problems. Developed primarily with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the NYPD, it provides a centralized, integrated deconfliction database for all drug investigations in New York City. The database, which can be accessed remotely (a critical feature in any deconfliction system), includes drug trafficking, money laundering, and firearms investigations; it provides computerized mapping of specific enforcement activities; and keeps a record of all queries.

Second, there is the Photo-Imaging Network (PIMS). Before the development of PIMS, arrest photographs were primarily kept in old-fashioned mugbooks housed at individual enforcement agencies. PIMS is a computerized, centralized repository of mugshots and attendant biographical information, which can be accessed from multiple remote sites. Needless to say, such electronic access improves efficiency and identification rates. PIMS initially covered New York City, but is being expanded to link all the major police departments and law enforcement agencies throughout the State of New York.

## nforcement

### Citywide Narcotics Initiative

Measured by staff, the Citywide Narcotics Initiative (CNI) is the largest initiative of the NY/NJ HIDTA. Personnel number 2,428. Since all but 17 are members of the NYPD, it is fair to ask what distinguishes the CNI from the ordinary drug enforcement work of the NYPD. Or looked at another way, why should the CNI be thought of as a HIDTA initiative rather than an NYPD initiative? The answer, in principle, is that despite its modest involvement of federal personnel on a full-time basis, the CNI creates a structure that facilitates the sharing of information among the NYPD and federal law enforcement agencies, as well as a mechanism to allow federal agents to be temporarily assigned to investigations on a case-by-case basis where appropriate. Perhaps more important, one could argue that HIDTA involvement helps connect NYPD to other HIDTA activities, particularly information-sharing initiatives, and encourages the coordination of strategic goal-setting among NYPD and federal law enforcement agencies. Evaluating how well the CNI succeeds on these fronts is exceedingly difficult. Not only is it hard to measure coordination, and its impact, but it is even harder to know how much interagency coordination would have taken place in the absence of the CNI.

### El Dorado Task Force

The El Dorado Task Force represents the largest initiative of the NY/NJ HIDTA if measured by funding. The El Dorado Task Force accounted for \$1,806,447 of a total budget of \$10,973,941 for FY2000, or 16 percent. The purpose of the task force is to disrupt and dismantle money-laundering activities in the New York metropolitan area.

Although much of the work of the task force is tied to case-specific investigations, interviews with staff suggest that there is an increasing focus on interventions that can proactively make it structurally more difficult for drug traffickers to launder proceeds. For example, in 1998, the Geographical Targeting Order (GTO) lowered the monetary threshold at which money transmitters were required to report cash transactions. Prior to GTO, remitters were only required to report cash transactions of \$10,000 or more; under the GTO, the threshold was lowered to \$750. Cash seizures increased significantly. But the principal effect was the remitting business dried up; for most remitters, the dollar value of transactions over \$750 declined by 95 percent or more. The result is that traffickers were forced to use alternative, and presumably more costly and less secure, methods of transferring their money overseas.

In interviews, staff acknowledged that one of the challenges of money laundering enforcement is that it is unclear how to best measure its effectiveness. Aggregate cash seizures don't tell you how much of a threat money laundering enforcement poses for individual traffickers. An alternative is to track the fee rates charged for laundering money, on the grounds that better enforcement would raise the cost of laundering. But such rates are unreliable indicators unless they are adjusted for security levels. For example, if enforcement makes a particular method of laundering less secure, then we would expect fees for that method to decline, while we would expect the fees for alternative methods to rise. At present, data that could track fees while making such distinctions are not available.

### Drug Trafficking Organization Task Force

The Drug Trafficking Organization Task Force represents a merger of two previous initiatives: the Public Housing Task Force and the FBI Regional Intelligence Squad Initiative. The task force targets drug trafficking organizations, with the aim of dismantling them and seizing assets. From an evaluative perspective, two main questions arise about the Drug Trafficking Organization Task Force. First, as with the Citywide Narcotics Initiative, does the task force merely replicate or claim credit for enforcement activity that would otherwise occur under other auspices? Second, is enforcement devoted to trying to dismantle drug trafficking organizations more effective at the margin than other types of drug enforcement?

### Fugitive Task Force

Identifying and apprehending fugitives is often the most efficient way for law enforcement officials to get high-rate offenders off the street. Fugitives don't have to be caught in the act of committing a new crime; they are less likely to be released than non-fugitive arrestees; and enforcement can be tailored to the most dangerous offenders.

The Fugitive Task Force has a total of 18 representatives from U.S. Marshals Service (USMS), the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), and the NYPD. The task force targets drug fugitives wanted by the USMS and NYPD, and criminal alien re-entries. As an indication of how enforcement efforts play out, in FY1999, the task force arrested 163 fugitives. Twenty-nine of these were wanted by USMS on drug and violent crime charges; 62 were wanted by NYPD and other local organizations on similar charges; and 72 were arrested on immigration charges.

Given that the NYPD has 26,000 outstanding felony warrants alone,<sup>64</sup> 163 is not a large number in relative terms. However, since 163 arrests represents less than one arrest per task force member per month, the effectiveness of the task force turns on the question of how is being arrested. Unfortunately, there are not aggregate data on the past or likely criminal activity of those apprehended.

An interesting feature of the Fugitive Task Force is its focus on aliens. In interviews, task force members emphasized the relative efficiency of such efforts. This would seem deserving of further study, since the claim, if accurate, could provide an important lesson for fugitive apprehension efforts in other jurisdictions.

#### Northern New Jersey Heroin Trafficking Task Force

The Northern New Jersey Heroin Trafficking Task Force targets organizations that traffic heroin in the five Northeastern New Jersey counties included in the HIDTA region. Considering its size and limited geographic location, the Northern New Jersey Heroin Trafficking Task Force may have the most diversified representation of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies of any of the NY/NJ HIDTA task forces.

From an assessment point of view, what catches one's eye about the Northern New Jersey Heroin Trafficking Task Force is its cost to the NY/NJ HIDTA: \$1,710,000 for FY2000, or 16 percent of the HIDTA's total budget. The issue that arises is whether the Northern New Jersey Heroin Trafficking Task Force is a cost-effective use of HIDTA budgetary resources when compared to alternative initiatives. Heroin trafficking in Northern New Jersey counties is no doubt an important drug problem, but if one were to identify and rank the top drug trafficking threats in the New York metropolitan area, it

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<sup>64</sup> Office of the Mayor, New York City, Press release 021-01, January 25, 2001.

would not rank as high as many other problems that are receiving far less or no HIDTA funding. NY/NJ HIDTA staff often used the term "leverage" in describing the role of the HIDTA, the idea being that HIDTA funding can be most effective when it acts to magnify non-HIDTA funding or activities. Here, however, there would appear to be far less leverage than with other initiatives. The task force has 35 full-time personnel; by contrast, the Citywide Narcotics Initiative has 2,428 full-time members at a lower budgetary cost to the HIDTA.

### Demand Reduction

#### Armory Project

In 1990, former New York City Marathon Champion, Dr. Norbert Sander, embarked on a campaign to have the 168th Street Armory, located in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan, transformed from a homeless shelter into a track and field facility for young runners. To this end, he founded the 168th Street High School Sports Armory Foundation, and assembled a board of New York City business and political leaders who raised a half-million dollars towards converting the Armory's drill floor into a running track.

A few years ago, the NY/NJ HIDTA decided to build on Sander's efforts, and proposed converting the Armory into a neighborhood center for a variety of after school programs, including but not limited to track and field and other sports. HIDTA officials worked in partnership with the New York National guard, city, state, and local law enforcement agencies, and non-profit organizations inside and outside the Washington Heights community, and put together financing from several sources, including \$400,000

in federal money forfeited from drug dealers. The Armory atrium and a number of adjoining rooms were then renovated, and on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1998, the Armory was rededicated.

In addition to hosting over 100 track and field events annually, the Armory will house dozens of other programs, including the following:

- Sports leagues, arts and crafts programs, and computer training sponsored by the Police Athletic League.
- Tutoring, mentoring, and SAT preparation courses
- Vocational classes
- A youth cadet program sponsored by the New York National Guard;
- Anti-drug and anti-gang classes taught by officers from the NYPD;

The NY/NJ HIDTA also worked to have the National Guard Armory in Jersey City, New Jersey converted into a community youth center, and on September 2, 1998, that facility was rededicated as the Jersey City Armory Youth Center. The Jersey City facility is being used for recreation programs, after school and mentoring programs, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.), and the Community Outreach through Peer Education (commonly called C.O.P.E.) program. In what has become a regional movement, the NY/NJ HIDTA is currently working to effect similar conversions of Armories in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens, and Manhattan.

Visiting the 168<sup>th</sup> Street Armory Center and the Jersey City Armory Center leaves one with the feeling that these initiatives are the most effective public policy endeavors that the NY/NJ HIDTA has undertaken. Massive and underutilized facilities located in drug-involved communities that have a dearth of safe, structured environments for children were, at relatively little expense, transformed into facilities that provide an array

of valuable community youth programs. However, notwithstanding their evident value from a larger public policy perspective, the Armory Project still raises difficult questions. Is this drug policy? More specifically, is building community youth centers an appropriate activity for a federal program whose mission, according to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, is “to enhance and coordinate America’s drug-control efforts among local, state and Federal law enforcement agencies in order to eliminate or reduce drug trafficking and its harmful consequences in critical regions of the United States.”<sup>65</sup> Does the Armory project fall within the boundaries of that mission?

### Model Block

The concept of the Model Block program is to coordinate and target efforts of law enforcement agencies, community organizations, and neighborhood block associations on individual city blocks in drug-involved neighborhoods. The first model block, dedicated on May 17, 1998, was 163<sup>rd</sup> Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, in Manhattan. In the ensuing year, crime on that block decreased 83 percent.

The key evaluative question is to what extent that decline is attributable to the additional law enforcement attention given to that block—which presumably came at the expense of enforcement attention elsewhere—as opposed to changes in the block’s physical infrastructure and greater community involvement on the part of residents of that block. To the degree that changes in infrastructure and increased community involvement are at work, the Model Block program may represent a permanent and successful investment in the quality of life on that block. If the reduced crime is just an

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<sup>65</sup> Office of National Drug Control Policy, *The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Program: 2000* (Washington, DC: Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2001), p. 1.

artifact of heightened law enforcement presence, the benefits of the program will be shorter-lived.

It is the intention of the NY/NJ HIDTA to expand the Model Block program to distressed blocks throughout New York City.

### Weed and Seed

Weed and Seed is a program, administered by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, is a crime reduction and community revitalization program targeted at high-crime communities. As its name suggests, the program's strategy is premised on a two-pronged approach: "weeding out" criminals who participate in violent crime, drug abuse, and gang activity, and "seeding" neighborhood revitalization by bringing in needed individual and social services.

The NY/NJ HIDTA has worked with the Justice Department to establish new Weed and Seed sites in Northern Manhattan.

### Treatment

In interviews, NY/NJ HIDTA officials expressed an interest in expanding initiatives to include a focus on drug treatment, on the grounds that treatment is critical to demand reduction, and demand reduction is critical to curtailing drug trafficking. This interest in treatment is expressed in the published strategy of the HIDTA, which includes a section titled, "Treatment," and reports that the "HIDTA is actively exploring potential partnerships with Drug Courts."<sup>66</sup> This exploration is more significant than it might seem, because Federal law states "The Director [of ONDCP] shall ensure that no Federal funds

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<sup>66</sup> N /NJ HIDTA Strategy 1999.

appropriated for the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Program are expended for the establishment or expansion of drug treatment programs.<sup>67</sup>

### Training Initiatives

#### The Regional Training Center (RTC)

The Regional Training Center is located at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, which is part of the City University of New York system. In FY 1998, the RTC provided investigative and operational training to more than 2,700 federal, state, and local law enforcement personnel. There are 8 full-time and 22 part-time personnel assigned to the training center, representing a variety of agencies, including DEA, FBI, Customs, NYPD, the New York State Police, the New Jersey State Police, and the NY District Attorney's Office. Recently, the RTC has worked to provide more regionally-focused training courses, as well as training targeted to narrower enforcement issues, such as gangs. Additionally, the RTC has been working on making certain training available via the Internet.

#### The HIDTA Training Group

The HIDTA Training Group provides supplementary, no cost, training to law enforcement personnel computer use, intelligence analysis, and foreign languages. In 1998, over 2,500 law enforcement personnel were provided training in one or more of these areas.

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<sup>67</sup> 21 U.S.C. 1706(d).

### The Translation Center

Established in 1998 by the New Jersey National Guard, and located at the Armory in Lodi, New Jersey, the Translation Center is staffed by foreign language specialists who provide quick turnaround, no cost, translation services to participating HIDTA agencies.

### Urban Training Center

The Urban Training Center is a simulated portion of city block located in the Bronx. Developed in conjunction with the NYPD and the Department of Defense's Joint Task Force Six (JTF-6), the Urban Training Center will make it easier for the RTC trainees to practice tactical operations.

### ***Staff and Budgetary Allocations***

The following table summarizes the staffing levels and budgetary allocations of the New York/New Jersey HIDTA. Note that the organization and description of initiatives for budgetary purposes does not precisely match the organization and description of initiatives for strategic and operational purposes.

Initiative	Personnel	FY2000 Funding
Citywide Narcotics Initiative (CNI)	2,428	\$1,641,995
El Dorado Task Force	195	\$1,806,447
Fugitive Task Force	18	\$199,625
Northern New Jersey Heroin Trafficking Task Force	35	\$1,710,000
Regional Intelligence Center (RIC)	63	\$108,000
Westchester County HIDTA Intelligence Center	7	\$338,612
Regional Crime Gun Center	19	\$271,890
Prosecutor's Intelligence Sharing	20	\$928,891
Regional Training Center (RTC)	30	\$177,650
Management and Support Services	8	\$2,086,420
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$10,973,941</b>

### ***Summary and Perspective***

The New York/New Jersey HIDTA is clearly an ambitious and innovative HIDTA. The NY/NJ HIDTA is the only site among the five reviewed for this report that has broadened its stated mission to look beyond drug trafficking. The NY/NJ HIDTA has a signed on a wider range of participating organizations than have the other four HIDTAs, has continually looked for new opportunities to improve drug policy in the New York City metropolitan area, and in the process has developed and implemented a variety of ground-breaking initiatives.

However, some of these initiatives, though seemingly effective from a broad public policy perspective, do not appear to consistent with the stated goals of the HIDTA program. Whether it is appropriate for HIDTA sites to pursue such non-law enforcement initiatives is a more difficult question. Granting HIDTA sites the flexibility to pursue

unconventional initiatives can have big payoffs, but it also risks weakening the focus of the HIDTA program and opening the door to increased competition for HIDTA funds among local agencies outside of the law enforcement community.

## South Florida HIDTA

### ***The Area***

The South Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area consists of three counties on the southern tip of Florida: Miami-Dade, Broward and Monroe Counties. On the east side of the tip lies Miami-Dade County which includes the City of Miami and the metropolitan area around it. To the immediate north of Miami-Dade County lies Broward County, which includes Fort Lauderdale and the metropolitan area around it. Together Miami-Dade and Broward Counties constitute the Miami-Fort Lauderdale Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) and cover the east side of the tip of Florida. The coastal areas of the CMSA are densely populated, while the inland areas are less dense. Monroe County covers the west side of the tip, which consists of the Florida Keys and the largely unpopulated Everglades.

Florida Case Study Table 1 lists the local law enforcement agencies covering the communities in the three counties of the HIDTA together with the populations they serve and their crime rates. Crime rates vary widely in the area communities. The larger cities like Miami, Miami Beach and Fort Lauderdale have crime rates two or three times higher than the crime rates in many of the smaller communities.

The Miami-Dade Police Department and the Broward and Monroe County Sheriffs' Offices cover the portions of their respective counties which are not served by other identified police forces – that is, unincorporated areas and incorporated communities which have elected not to maintain their own police forces. In each county, the county force covers more population than any municipal police force. And, as shown

in Florida Case Study Table 2, the county force in each county has over twice the manpower of any local police force in their county.

However, the county forces are not so large that the other local forces are irrelevant. The Miami-Dade County Police Department controls 53.8% of the manpower in Miami-Dade County. The Broward County Sheriff controls only 28.9% of the officers in Broward County. The Monroe County Sheriff controls 72.0% of the officers in Monroe County, but all together, the Sheriff and other Monroe County forces amount to only 3.2% of the local officers in the tri-county area. Municipal police manpower is fragmented among 53 municipal forces in the tri-county area.

### ***The Threat***

In the 1990 National Drug Control Strategy, the Office of National Drug Control Policy gave this explanation for its designation of the Miami area as a HIDTA:

Miami is a major center for importing cocaine and marijuana smuggled from South America and for transshipping it to all parts of the United States. Drug traffickers use the Miami area as a base of operations from which they can distribute multi-kilogram quantities of cocaine. In addition, local distribution rings supply Miami and other cities in South Florida and the Southeastern United States with crack.

This characterization of the South Florida HIDTA is still entirely valid today.

Indicators of arrestee drug use in the Miami area have paralleled national trends in the 1990s. The percentage of adult felony arrestees testing positive for recent drug use has been fairly stable, fluctuating the Miami area around 60%.<sup>68</sup> The share of arrests in Miami positive for cocaine has fluctuated but trended slightly downward from over 60%

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<sup>68</sup> National Institute of Justice 1998. *1997 Drug Use Forecasting: Annual Report Adult and Juvenile Arrestees*. (Provides results only for past five years).

in 1993 to 45.5% in 1997. In Fort Lauderdale, all categories of drug use among arrestees have trended slightly upwards over past five years.

Trends in emergency room drug mentions per 100,000 population have been more distressing in Miami than nationally.<sup>69</sup> Any-drug mentions increased 6.9% nationwide but 81.8% in the Miami area from 1989 to 1996; cocaine emergency mentions have trended upward more sharply, increasing 22.3% nationally and 181.2% in Miami; heroin mentions went up by 57.4% nationally but increased by 536.4% in Miami. In absolute terms, as compared to U.S., Miami is 56.9% above the national average for any-drug mentions per capita, almost three times the national average for cocaine mentions, and one third below the national average for heroin mentions. The good news is that like other areas, Miami saw a flattening of the increasing trend in cocaine mentions in the mid-90s. The sharp increases in heroin mentions reflect the progression from casual use to addiction among novice users.<sup>70</sup>

Trends in trafficking levels are harder to quantify accurately. Our law enforcement interview subjects expressed the consistent impression that while enforcement efforts in the early 90s had been successful, the mid-90s saw a shift of interdiction resources away from Miami to the Southwest Border and that in response, drug traffickers shifted their trafficking routes back to Miami. Whatever the correct causal explanation, our interviewees agreed that the volume of drug trafficking in the Miami HIDTA is generally higher than it was in the early 90s. One measure of activity –

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<sup>69</sup> See Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 1997. Year-End Preliminary Estimates from the 1996 Drug Abuse Warning Network, Drug Abuse Warning Network Series: D-3.

<sup>70</sup> James N. Hall, Abstract of Presentation to Community Epidemiology Working Group, June 23-26, 1998. Abstracts. National Institutes of Health

convictions by the South Florida DEA region, rose 9.5 from 1992 to 1996,<sup>71</sup> while the number of agents rose only 1.8%.<sup>72</sup> According to the FY1998 threat assessment from the South Florida HIDTA, "U.S. Customs seizures in South Florida more than doubled from the previous year to 72,452 pounds or the equivalent of 37 percent of Customs' cocaine seizures nationwide."

The continued high intensity of the trafficking in the area makes it a "target rich" environment. Many interviewees confirmed that the Miami area has a very high concentration of large drug transactions. It is a distribution hub, where recently imported loads are broken down and distributed to traffickers bound for other United States destinations. Negotiations and/or actual exchanges of cash for drugs occur in restaurants, safe houses and on the streets all over the South Florida area. As a result, even the smaller local police forces in the area frequently make seizures above the one-kilogram level, a level which distinguishes elite narcotics units in other parts of the country. The specialized organized crime unit in the Miami-Dade County prosecutors office will not usually handle cases involving under 15 Kilograms of cocaine – they are referred to "the pits," the general felony prosecutorial function. The large amount of illicit cash generated in the area and payable to Colombians creates a heavy demand for money laundering and shipment services.

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<sup>71</sup> Source: BOTEK analysis of DEA data compiled by T AC, Syracuse University, available at <http://trac.syr.edu/tracdea>.

<sup>72</sup> Source: BOTEK analysis of DEA data compiled by T AC, Syracuse University, available at <http://trac.syr.edu/tracdea>. Of course, the number of convictions is a highly complex quantity, which may be affected by a change in the size of cases agents choose to make, as much as by the exogenous level of activity.

## ***Overview of the South Florida HIDTA Program***

Organizationally, the South Florida HIDTA conforms to the basic model described earlier in the report. A representative executive committee supervises a HIDTA director. The HIDTA director has a small staff. The HIDTA director and his staff oversee the distribution of HIDTA funds and coordinate the preparation of the required HIDTA threat, strategy and budget documentation. The South Florida HIDTA staff have developed some very constructive processes for evaluating ongoing and proposed initiatives.

### **HIDTA Administration**

The Director of the South Florida HIDTA combines a low-key style and a sensitivity to local realities with a commitment to accountability. These attributes are reflected in the local HIDTA processes that he has developed. In addition to the core components – threat, strategy and budget prepared by a balanced executive committee – required by ONDCP, he has implemented a quarterly evaluation process for initiatives. At an extended executive committee meeting, each HIDTA initiative must make a presentation covering their evolving understanding of the threat they are addressing, their progress against defined goals, the status of their sharing efforts with other agencies, and staffing and budget status. The executive committee members then rate each component of the presentations and the individual ratings are normalized, compiled and fed back to the initiatives.

The process weights the views of all members equally. It engages the executive committee in an ongoing collective thought process about the threat, the strategy and the implementation of the strategy. It puts a spotlight on outcomes and encourages all

initiative managers to come up to a high standard. We were somewhat concerned that an effective presenter could do better in the process than a less articulate but effective group manager.

The types of goals used to judge the progress of the enforcement initiatives are standard goals consistent with the National Drug Control Strategy – disrupt or dismantle specified numbers of organizations, make specified numbers of arrests, drug seizures, weapons seizures and asset seizures. The HIDTA staff makes a systematic effort to allocate successes across groups when they are shared, so as to avoid double counting. There is no easy way for managers to judge the effectiveness and efficiency of enforcement efforts without direct hands-on contact and the South Florida HIDTA is certainly making a very serious effort.

### The Initiatives

HIDTA funding in South Florida is used primarily to purchase facilities, equipment and staff, as opposed to agent and officer, salaries. In a few instances, HIDTA funds support agent overtime efforts. This emphasis on non-salary expenses reflects ONDCP's Program guideline to "examine all personnel costs and explore alternative ways to support salaries, benefits and overtime." The guidelines require each agency to certify "that HIDTA funded positions would be terminated if the funding were not available."<sup>73</sup>

The initiatives comprising the South Florida HIDTA fall into five categories. First, there are two federally dominated general narcotics enforcement task forces. Federal agencies supply roughly 80% of the roughly 300 assigned to the "Miami Task

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<sup>73</sup> ONDCP, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas, Fiscal Year 1998 Program Guidance, July 25, 1997.

Force.”<sup>74</sup> It is organized into 15 distinct working groups, mostly led by federal agencies. These groups, although collocated, function with considerable independence. They target higher-level drug traffickers and money launderers, as do similar federal enforcement groups operating outside the HIDTA framework. A smaller general-purpose task force, the Southeast Florida Regional Task Force (SERTF) is dominated by the DEA. DEA has twelve agents assigned while none of the 20 other agencies participating have more than 2 agents assigned and most have only one for a total of 36 agents assigned.

Second, there are four smaller narcotics task forces with heavier local representation that operate in different areas of the HIDTA:

Mixed Initiatives	Staffing	Federal Share
South Broward Drug Enforcement Unit	104	40.4%
Monroe County Task Force	9	33.3%
South Florida Impact	48	16.7%
North Broward Drug Enforcement Unit	81	14.8%

All of these task forces conduct general mid to upper level trafficking and/or money laundering cases. The Broward County drug units (North and South) also do quite a bit of lower level enforcement. The groups all have slightly different emphases as discussed below.

Third, there are three smaller special purpose task forces:

Special Purpose Initiatives <sup>75</sup>	Staffing	Federal Share
Violent Crimes/Fugitive Task Force	11	54.5%
Cali Cartel Enforcement Group	10	30.0%
Domestic Interdiction Task Force	6	0.0%

<sup>74</sup> Counts as of May 1998 per the HIDTA Director’s staff put federal participation at 79.4% of the 291 agents.

<sup>75</sup> In addition to these three ongoing special purpose initiatives, there is a small fourth special purpose initiative, Operation Deco Drive the staffing of which is entirely provided by the Miami Beach Police Department and which was being phased out in 1998.

These task forces each have narrower missions consistent with their names. They include fewer agencies. The domestic interdiction Task Force is staffed entirely by the Miami-Dade Police Department.

Fourth, the South Florida Investigative Center combines several shared intelligence functions and an operational deconfliction system. Its staff of 94 includes 10 on temporary contract. The bulk of the permanent staffing is federal, 73.8%; state agencies account for 19.0%; county sheriffs for 7%; no local police departments are represented.

In addition to these four groups of enforcement initiatives, the South Florida HIDTA program supports initiatives to fund a group of "community empowerment" projects and the development of two treatment-oriented computer systems. Overall, the allocation among of staffing and funding among these five types of initiatives is summarized in the following chart:

Initiative Class	Enforcement Staffing <sup>76</sup>	Share of Enforcement Staffing	HIDTA Funding	Share of HIDTA Funding
Federal Dominated	327	47.4%	5,157,967	48.8%
Local/Mixed	242	35.1%	2,182,791	20.6%
Special Purpose	27	3.9%	305,591	2.9%
Intelligence	94	13.6%	1,577,231	14.9%
Non-enforcement	NA	NA	1,348,651	12.8%
TOTAL	690	100.0%	10,572,231	100.0%
Memo: Administration			462,953	4.4%

It is important to keep in perspective the magnitude of HIDTA funding. While HIDTA staff indicated that is essentially impossible to measure the agency contributions to HIDTA funded initiatives, we can construct some order-of-magnitude estimates. If we

<sup>76</sup> Source: South Florida HIDTA administrators. Staffing as of May 1998. Excludes 1 attorney assigned to South Florida Impact.

take a low estimate of the annual average cost of a fully equipped and supported federal or local agent at 100 thousand dollars, then the total cost of operating these initiatives is on the order of 70 million and the HIDTA contribution is on the order of 14%.

***Initiative Specific Observations***

**Federally Dominated Task Forces**

**The Miami Task Force**

The Miami task force consists of roughly 300 collocated agents organized into 15 enforcement squads and a financial analysis resource group:

Lead Agency	Number of Enforcement Groups in Miami Task Force
Drug Enforcement Administration	4
U.S. Customs	5
Federal Bureau of Investigation	1
Internal Revenue Service	2
U.S. Marshalls	1
Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms	1
Secret Service/INS	1

As noted above, only roughly 1 in 5 agents assigned to the task force are state or local agents. While many of the squads include a few state or local agents, our understanding is that in general<sup>77</sup>, the squads do not mix agents from multiple federal agencies. A group of six Assistant United States Attorneys provide investigative supervision as needed and prosecute resulting cases.

The enforcement groups participating in the task force investigate a roughly 50/50 mix of large trafficking and money laundering cases. Money laundering cases in the Miami area are larger and more diverse than in other areas, including bulk currency

<sup>77</sup> We were told of one I S agent assigned to a Customs money laundering group. This would be a person with special expertise. In addition, DEA and Customs may work together in a group focussed on a particular class of cases.

shipment and a variety of more complex laundering and shipment systems. Laundering cases may be quite separate from trafficking cases. In addition, the task force investigates some local non-trafficking cases, typically involving violence: There is one group which functions quite separately from the other groups and is focused on robberies in Metro-Dade County. It includes members of the Miami-Dade Police and representation from several other agencies.<sup>78</sup>

The Task Force agents use the normal panoply of investigative techniques – physical surveillance, informants, undercover work, stings and reverse stings, wiretaps, search warrants. Some of the groups place a heavier emphasis on more sophisticated money laundering cases where financial document analysis play an important role. According to one interviewee in a position to see the work of many of the groups, DEA tends to do more undercover work than the other federal agencies, but the best undercover work tends to be by done local and county police officers familiar with local culture and language. FBI is stronger on analysis-intensive cases. Customs naturally has a special expertise in customs and shipping records and has special jurisdictional responsibilities at the airports and marine cargo areas, which generate a high volume of importation cases. The Secret Service focuses on counterfeit currency cases.

The enforcement groups participating in the task force are all collocated in a group of buildings in an office park. The agencies having multiple groups in the HIDTA cluster the groups physically together. Groups from different agencies have their own partitioned secured areas within the buildings. Some informal contact occurs, but two agents from different agencies separately expressed the feeling that they did not have

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<sup>78</sup> This is an example of local/federal cooperation driven by sentencing differentials. The program originated in the early 90s with the goal of bring some of the robbery offenders into the federal system where they would receive longer sentences.

enough contact with other agencies. One of these agents was unable (willing but unable) even to characterize the type of cases that some of the other groups in his agency were investigating (much less the type of work that groups from other agencies were investigating).

Each enforcement group reports up through the chain of command of its own lead agency. There is no cross-agency investigative coordinating process for the collocated groups. One Federal group supervisor said he relied primarily on access to agency databases (his own and other federal agencies) to do early-stage investigative deconfliction. The OCDETF process, of course, provides investigative deconfliction for HIDTA cases as it does for non-HIDTA cases. Most of the HIDTA cases are "OCDETF'd" and they constitute a disproportionate share of the high quality larger OCDETF cases in the OCDETF region. The Assistant United States Attorneys on site do contribute to deconfliction and there was a strong sense expressed that that their location on site reduced communication difficulties between agents and AUSA's.

Our interviewees identified benefits from agency collocation including the increased ability to share agents for the occasional large operation requiring more agents than a single group can supply. For example an extended wiretap operation may require a large number of monitoring officers. Another benefit was the possibility to exchange agents for undercover or surveillance work to provide new, unknown faces. While informal deconfliction and cooperation "at the water cooler" appear to be quite limited, one interviewee reported that collocation does make it easier for agents seeking to inquire about targets to find other agency personnel who can make the necessary internal database inquiries – there is a benefit to "one-stop shopping."

As further discussed below, all of the agencies have considerable enforcement efforts ongoing outside the HIDTA framework. There seems to be little interaction between the groups inside the HIDTA and groups outside the HIDTA. One federal group supervisor explained that in the target rich Miami environment, there was more than enough work to keep everyone busy separately. Another federal manager explained that his several narcotics and money laundering groups each targeted quite distinct types of narcotics operations. While many agency interviewees were positive generally about the interagency interaction created by HIDTA, none suggested and one affirmatively denied that relationships developed in the HIDTA materially facilitated cooperation at the case level among groups outside the HIDTA.

#### The South East Florida Regional Task Force

We did not interview personnel of the SEFRTF. Based on conversations with HIDTA staff, it is a DEA-led task force essentially on the model of DEA's traditional State and Local Task Forces. These task forces traditionally combine local undercover expertise with DEA's higher-level investigative capabilities. A point of interest regarding this task force: It functions in the same geographic area with the North and South Broward Drug Enforcement Units with no clear division of responsibility or formal method of coordination.

#### Local/Mixed Initiatives

##### South Florida Impact

South Florida Impact is a general narcotics task force with a (non-exclusive) emphasis on money laundering. It is unique among the South Florida HIDTA narcotics

task forces in a number of respects. First, it is almost entirely non-federal in its staffing – there is one INS agent. The balance of the 48 enforcement personnel are from state, county and local agencies.<sup>79</sup> There are 10 agents from state agencies and 2 from Monroe County. Most of the personnel are from agencies in Miami-Dade County. While the group does not limit its operations to Miami-Dade County, and, in fact, generates investigations reaching far afield in other states, geographically its operational base area is roughly complementary to the Broward County Drug Enforcement Units. Impact is the source of most of the cases involving over five kilograms of cocaine in the Miami-Dade County prosecutor's office.

Second, Impact has a dedicated state prosecutor on site to help oversee investigations. The other initiatives either have no prosecutor on site, or in the case of the Miami Task Force, have federal prosecutors on site. State prosecutorial participation appears to be a general gap in the HIDTA orientation. While HIDTA places considerable emphasis on fostering cooperation between federal and state/local investigators, there is no parallel emphasis on building cooperation among prosecutors. According to one source, the local U.S. Attorney's office tends to act as if it is entitled to prosecute the larger cases, even when local prosecutors have supervised most of the investigative work leading to the prosecution. Higher sentences once made federal prosecution more desirable, but this differential has now reversed for many cases in Florida.

Third, unlike many HIDTA "task forces," it has a genuine consortium management process. A steering committee meets twice monthly to set policies and procedures and affirmatively to coordinate investigations. The assigned state prosecutor participates in the steering committee. The other participants represent the agencies with

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<sup>79</sup> Among the 48 are 7 contract staff personnel. We did not determine the agency location of their funding.

the most agents participating in Impact – Miami, Miami Beach, Coral Gables, and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. Personnel assigned to Impact come with an overtime budget paid by their agency. The steering committee allocates the overtime to particular investigations.

Lastly, consistent with its management approach, it integrates agency personnel from multiple agencies in flexibly constituted enforcement groups, as opposed to grouping agents according to their agency. The Impact managers we met with were very enthusiastic about the high flexibility of resource allocation and the free-flow of expertise and information among agency personnel participating in Impact. They expressed that HIDTA participation had “brought many agencies out of their shells.”

Impact has had considerable success in seizing assets and drugs. According to our interviewees, its average cocaine seizure is 100 kilograms and its average money seizure is \$300,000. Under state forfeiture rules and the Impact agreement, 2/3 of these assets revert to the seizing agencies. Impact is self-funding and not financially dependent on HIDTA. Our Impact interviewees nonetheless perceived considerable value in HIDTA participation per se. They valued HIDTA oversight and the resulting credibility and access to other agencies nationally and internationally. For these local agencies, HIDTA participation adds a level of access that federal agencies enjoy to a considerable degree without HIDTA.

#### Broward Drug Enforcement Units

There are two locally-oriented HIDTA drug task forces in Broward County. Note that all of our facts regarding the Broward County Drug Enforcement Units are based on

interviews with staff at the South Broward Drug Enforcement Unit. HIDTA staff indicated that the two units (North and South) were similar.

Although heavily local in composition, these task forces resemble the federal Miami Task Force more than they do Impact. There is no central steering committee with the authority to control investigations. There are quarterly task force management meetings where cases are discussed and possible coordination issues identified, but these meetings are too infrequent to be significant in most investigative decisions – compare Impact’s steering committee which meets twice monthly. The task force director has administrative authority, but no operating authority. Each agency contributing personnel to the task force retains control over their personnel. To a considerable degree they operate separately. Many local police departments have located their entire narcotics squads – from one to 26 officers -- at the task force facilities. These officers continue to be primarily responsible for narcotics problems in their home jurisdictions.

Collocation in this instance appears to have had some benefits in relationship building. Our interviewees explained that while local police departments may usually be addressing smaller dealing problems on their local streets, they do run into situations that cross municipal boundaries. Many of these situations gave rise to disputes among the local police chiefs in the past. The collocation of narcotics units has greatly reduced disputes of this kind. In addition, it has made possible the sharing of resources for larger cases in some instances. Given the number of municipal police forces in Broward County, the formation of these collocated groups represents a significant accomplishment.

The South Broward Drug Enforcement Unit has 22 FBI agents housed in its facility. Half of them are doing narcotics work, while half are doing Eurasian Crime work. They generally work quite separately from the local groups (as the local groups work separately from each other). One of our interviewees noted that local officers are often uncomfortable with the FBI which they view as similar to their internal audit department. He stated that nonetheless, the FBI/local relationships seemed comfortable at the site. Customs agents at the site worked autonomously on port issues.

### Special Purpose Initiatives

BOTEC was able to interview one officer involved with the Domestic Interdiction Initiative. Domestic interdiction generally involves using surveillance and informants to identify likely couriers at hotels, airports and train and bus stations. The HIDTA funded operation is a traditional domestic interdiction operation staffed by 6 Miami-Dade Police officers and benefiting from cooperation with other agencies. Through the DEA the group coordinates with 187 similar groups at other airports.

We did not interview officers associated with the other two special purpose initiatives. All three special purpose initiatives account for only 2.9% of the South Florida HIDTA budget.

### Intelligence Initiatives – The South Florida Investigative Support Center

The South Florida Investigative Support Center combines several different functions. These functions fall in two main categories. First, the Center serves as a systems integrator – putting in place software, computers and connections to allow law

enforcement agencies better access to data that third parties and the agencies themselves are generating. Second the Center generates data and analysis on its own.

### Systems Integration Functions

In the systems integration category, the Center is investing in expansion of a secure regional network to link law enforcement agencies in the HIDTA. This network will allow agencies to communicate with each other and access a variety of third party databases of potential investigative value. For example, while today, agencies might need to place a phone call to get a driver's license photograph and might experience delays, when the system is implemented, they will be able to download it directly. In some instances, agents will learn to access the systems themselves and disintermediate "analytic" support personnel (either on their own agency staff or on the Center's staff). Thus, the system has the potential to create cost savings, although we are not aware of any computations done to measure the cost-benefit ratio of the project.

The Center has a more ambitious goal for the project: To facilitate the sharing of data generated by law enforcement agencies about potential targets. The Center is implementing software that will provide an interface with agency databases. The software will be installed on a computer at each agency that has a database to share. The software will link to the agency database (in any of the common database environments) and map the variables in that database into a standard set of variables. Other agencies on the network can then frame queries using the standard set of variables and retrieve the agency data subject to security limitations. They will be able to frame general queries that will access all databases linked on the network.

This high level of data integration seems to promise a correspondingly high level of law enforcement coordination and efficiency. The major roadblocks to the ideal include the following: (1) Many agencies do not keep any of their enforcement data in a computer database, still relying on manual systems of varying completeness. We did not survey agencies to assess their level of automation but heard this comment from more than one source. (2) Many agencies with databases will be unwilling to allow access to their more current and valuable data. One federal agency indicated they would never allow general local access to their databases because of concerns about corruption. Our interviewees at the Center indicated to us that they did not expect federal agencies to make their databases available through the network. (3) Even when agencies officially grant access, many narcotics officers may be slow in contributing data that they believe is highly sensitive to the official databases. This is particularly true in local departments where administrative procedures around the process of case opening are less well-defined. (4) Finally, and most fundamentally, the chances that a datum buried in another agency's historical database will be of current investigative value are essentially nil. As we heard on several occasions in our interviews, and as ONDCP pointed out in its 1990 National Drug Strategy,<sup>80</sup> narcotics organizations are not static and integrated, rather they are transient and fragmented. In addition, narcotics traffickers hide their identities.

Moreover, one investigator explained, even current information that a certain individual is involved in trafficking may be of low value unless it is highly specific. General information will not as a legal matter support the intrusion of a search warrant or wiretap warrant. And since sentencing rules turn on quantities of drugs involved, it is often necessary to seize a considerable quantity of drugs in order to assure a long prison

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<sup>80</sup> 1990 National Drug Strategy, Appendix A, page 94.

term. This creates the need for completely current specific information as to particular transactions. In a target-rich environment where many investigators have access to such current information from informants, it is unprofitable to spend investigator time following up weak leads in other agency databases.

One senior federal agency official expressly indicated that his investigators had little interest in accessing local data files, saw little value in data sharing or investigative deconfliction with locals and made little use of the Center. We heard similar comments from some investigators: It is more cost-effective to sort out the rare investigative overlaps when they occur than to work too hard at up-front investigative deconfliction with locals. (This official was nonetheless enthusiastic about the NINJAS operational deconfliction system discussed below. He also valued the broadly cooperative attitudes created by HIDTA participation. He also stated that his agents consistently checked other federal agency databases at the time of case opening and rely on the OCDETF process to deconflict major federal investigations.)

One interesting feature of the sharing network project is that it will log inquiries, creating, in effect, a pointer index to agencies interested in given subjects. This logging mechanism itself could generate a good deal of data if the database were widely and heavily used. Of course, depending on what access to the log is allowed, the logging of inquiries could create concerns among some agencies that would discourage use. The value of the log would ultimately turn on the same considerations that affect the value of the underlying data.

Our overview of HIDTA processes in South Florida does not allow us to pass judgment on the more ambitious data-sharing goals of the Center. However, we heard

enough skepticism from both local and Federal officials to be concerned that the Center might be attempting to provide services for which the demand had been inadequately assessed. The well-prepared briefings that we received regarding the Center's operations emphasized military "sensor-target-shooter" metaphors in justifying the information system projects. We came away with the concern that an intelligence model appropriate to the stark environment of air warfare was being extended to a completely different environment where it may not apply. Narcotics law enforcement is guerilla warfare where one side must fight under the supervision of judges who, as one federal agent pointed out, usually demand verifiable informant information before authorizing intrusive surveillance. We heard little indication of any real demand assessment for the proposed integration of agency databases.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to the larger sharing project, software development staff at the Center produce some smaller database applications, including a gang database, a product for logging conversations on longer wiretaps, a project to support the interdiction of fast-boats landing contraband and some other special purpose databases. With one exception, we did not hear much about these databases from interviewees other than the Center management. They are special purpose projects that may meet or have met particular demands.

The NINJAS database was the one product of the Center which all agencies seemed to use heavily and to value highly. The Narcotics Information Network – Joint Agency System (NINJAS) allows participating agencies to enter skeletal information (operation type; rough location; time and date, etc.) about planned street operations –

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<sup>81</sup> We did hear that the needs of users for training in applications such as Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel had been surveyed.

stings, reverse stings, search warrants. If another agency has entered similar information, both will be warned of the danger of possible conflict. A "soft match" algorithm is used so that agencies can enter very partial information and be warned if other agencies have entered similar partial information. Roughly 300 entries are made per month of which roughly 60 match and roughly 20 constitute genuine possible conflicts. All of the agencies we spoke to indicated that they used NINJAS consistently and considered it a very important safety system. The system has been exported to several other localities. It seems to be a clearly beneficial investment by the South Florida HIDTA.

#### Content Oriented Services

The Center staff includes 28 analysts who provide a variety of case support services. These include both "strategic" and "tactical" services. Strategic services generally involve compilation of emerging trend data to make officers more aware of potential threats and their modes of operation. The Center disseminates this intelligence in the form of newsletters and training. The Center also contributes to the HIDTA threat assessment.

At a tactical level, the analysts provide services ranging from essentially clerical services to more analytic services. At the low end, analysts may retrieve data for investigators from various third party databases, such as the driver's license database. They also may perform the service of checking with analysts from various agencies to locate any data they may have about a particular target. This type of work may be substantially reduced (and service quality improved) by the systems integration project. The value of searches across multiple agency files for target data is subject to the caveats discussed above.

The analysts produce a variety of more sophisticated analytic products. For example, trial graphics projects. These products are time consuming to produce and may or may not be used effectively by the requestors. The Center also does some larger data projects to respond the needs of longer term or more complex investigations. They do no data entry, but may provide assistance in setting up databases for agencies and in analyzing the results. One senior manager commented on a pattern of slow responses to requests and a resulting loss of interest among agents. The center has finite resources and might do better to focus on meeting the simple requests very quickly rather than supporting more complex and time-consuming requests.

The Center includes a post-seizure analysis project. When the highway patrol or another agency make a seizure that was not the product of a targeted investigation, the team will analyze the seizure event and possibly materials seized along with the contraband such as records. The goal is to identify additional possible targets for investigation. A package of information regarding the seizure is developed for handoff to an appropriate investigative agency. Many of the concerns discussed above in the context of the sharing network apply to the output of this post-seizure analysis process.

#### Summary Comments on the South Florida Investigative Support Center

Overall, our principal concern regarding the Center was that while there was a great deal of work being done there, we saw little indication that strong feedback loops were in place to assure the operational value of the work. We did gather that the Center was conducting classes to make agents aware of its services and their potential value. We also gathered that some Center personnel attended agency meetings on a monthly basis. But apart from general support for the NINJAS system and one positive comment about a

particular analyst at the Center, we heard little indication that it was playing an important role in operational law enforcement and a several comments questioning its value. Like all centralized support groups, the Center is at constant risk of irrelevance to the true current concerns of its clients.

### Non-enforcement Initiatives

#### Community Empowerment Program

The HIDTA's Community Empowerment program is essentially a "Weed and Seed" program. It has gone through two major incarnations. In the more recent incarnation, HIDTA funding was used to purchase police overtime to increase protection in six high-crime, high-drug-abuse areas. Each area is small – on the order of six city blocks. Initial funding purchased four months of targeted protection in late 1997. During that period there was a significant reduction in crime. On a continuing basis after the enforcement surge, the program has purchased organizing, outreach and youth services. The overall length of the intervention is approximately 17 months.

Of course, BOTEK cannot opine on the long-term effectiveness of the Community Empowerment program. To do so would require a direct evaluation of the targeted sites. We did gather that this program was not integrated with other HIDTA programs. We were also struck that the HIDTA executive board, while representative of high-level enforcement perspectives, does not include any of the local social service and political players that should be involved in the allocation of project funding for community and social service programming.

## Software Development for Treatment

The South Florida HIDTA has chosen to invest in treatment software development by the private software developer that is also supporting the South Florida Investigative Center. The Treatment Automated Referral System (TARS) meets a need widely recognized in the treatment field – to improve the efficiency of referrals among treatment agencies. The system tabulates standard patient descriptive data captured from the screening process, uses rules to inventory the patients' needs for care and compares the patients' needs to the capabilities of agencies with available treatment capacity. The project appears to have the backing of the State of Florida, in that they have mandated provider participation in the system in the Miami area.

Automation of the referral process may dramatically increase the speed with which addicts find the care they need. Initial indicators are that TARS has had a significant impact in the HIDTA area, however, our interviews of law enforcement agents provided no opportunity to directly assess the field success of the system. Our only perspective was from the developer and one treatment provider involved in the oversight of the development process.

In addition to TARS, the HIDTA is supporting the same developer in the development of JAMS, the Judicial Access Management System. This system assembles treatment, criminal justice and drug testing data to give drug court judges more ability to assess the defendants appearing before them. Our interview process gave us no basis to assess the value of this system.

While these systems appear to be very reasonable investments, we were again struck that the HIDTA board does not have the necessary participation to assure that

these investments address the greatest need in the treatment area or that these particular systems are the most appropriate vehicles for addressing the identified needs.

### ***HIDTA Participation Levels***

An important question to be asked is: To what extent has the HIDTA effectively included the anti-drug law enforcement agencies in the area in meaningful coordination processes? The crudest measure of participation is the number of agencies participating: 31 of 53 or 58.4% of local police departments and all three county agencies are participating. However, these local departments include most of the larger departments, and if the departments are weighted by a reasonable measure of work load then the participating share is much higher: 94.4% if weighted by population served; 96.4% if weighted by crimes reported; 97.2% if weighted by the number of robberies reported.<sup>82</sup> All major federal agencies that are involved in drug enforcement participate. State agencies do not have a primary drug-fighting role in Florida, but several participate in the HIDTA.

A second dimension of participation is the share of all officers in the area that are participating in a HIDTA initiative. By this measure, local participation is quite low: No local police department or sheriff's office in the area has more than 9.0% of its officers participating in the HIDTA. In the area as a whole, only 2.6% of the full-time local or county police officers are assigned full-time to a HIDTA initiative (245 of 9523). See Florida Case Study Table Two. Of course, a greater number may be assigned on a part-time basis, but there are no good statistics on part-time assignment. Given the HIDTA

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<sup>82</sup> BOTEK analysis computation based on data from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. See Florida Case Study Table One.

concept of full-time collocated task forces, we do not believe part-time involvement to be a significant factor.

It appears that most local officers who are involved in higher-level drug trafficking work are participating in HIDTA task forces. According to interviewees in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, cases above the three to five kilogram range in the state court system generally originate from the HIDTA task forces. An officer in Broward County reported that most "larger" cases go through the HIDTA. Most of the municipal police narcotics groups in Broward County are situated in the one of the Broward County Drug Units. (These units therefore do both larger and smaller cases.) While it may be possible that some local police groups are taking some larger cases into the federal system through non-HIDTA assigned DEA units, it appears that HIDTA has succeeded in involving most of the local officers doing mid and upper level narcotics work.

In some interviews we were able to get rough data about the numbers of police officers in each police force committed to anti-drug work. For the Sheriff's offices and the larger municipal forces, especially in Miami and Miami Beach, there are considerable numbers of officers<sup>83</sup> involved in retail enforcement units not involved in the HIDTA. These officers are distributed around their respective jurisdictions. It is understandable given HIDTA's focus on mid and upper level narcotics work that they are not participating.

Among the major federal drug fighting agencies, participation is high, but it is clear in each case that there are significant high-level anti-drug efforts occurring outside

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<sup>83</sup> Our statistics are rough, but it appeared that outside HIDTA, Miami PD had roughly 80 narcotics officers, Miami Beach roughly 30 and Miami-Dade Police Department and Broward County Sheriffs office, roughly 100 officers.

the HIDTA framework. This is especially true for DEA, which has only 27.7 % of its officers operating within the HIDTA framework.

Agency	Total Agents <sup>84</sup>	Drug Agents <sup>85</sup>	HIDTA Assigned <sup>86</sup>	HIDTA as % of Total	HIDTA as % of Drug
FBI	572	90	49	8.6%	54.4%
DEA	271	271	75	27.7%	27.7%
Customs	N/A	120	72	NA	62.5%

These statistics about participation levels suggest several conclusions: First, given the very low share that HIDTA has of the total police manpower in the area, it is entirely unrealistic for HIDTA to use overall crime levels as a success measure. Given that the retail enforcement in the largest urban areas is outside of the HIDTA framework, it is also probably unrealistic to use local drug dealing or use statistics as a success measure. This is less clear in Broward County (where much retail work may be done by the HIDTA funded Drug Enforcement Units).

Given the high involvement among officers doing mid and upper level work, it is appropriate for HIDTA to measure its success with reference to higher level trafficking disruption. However, the large numbers of federal agents dedicated to anti-drug work outside the HIDTA framework indicate a need for caution in the use of trafficking reduction statistics for the area as a measure of HIDTA success.

One might argue that a reduction in trafficking would result in a reduction in local crime and drug use, making crime reduction a valid indirect measure of HIDTA success.

This must be true in principle to some degree. However, the primary purpose underlying

<sup>84</sup> For DEA and FBI, Data compiled by T AC, Syracuse University and made available at <http://trac.syr.edu/>. DEA data is 1996 and FBI is 1994, the most recent official data made available. Data for the DEA covers the South Florida Federal Judicial District, which is slightly larger than the HIDTA area. FBI Data refers to the Miami Office. Includes only criminal investigators for DEA.

<sup>85</sup> Uses 1996 statistic from prior column for DEA; estimates based on interviews with senior management for customs and FBI.

<sup>86</sup> Source: HIDTA director. Assignments as of May 1998. Excludes staff assigned to the South Florida Investigative Center.

the designation of South Florida as a HIDTA was to disrupt trafficking in contraband bound for other parts of the country. Although, in the mid-80s, the "cocaine cowboy" days, a good deal of local violence was attributable to trafficking, our interviewees indicated that law enforcement has succeeded in making the traffickers more discrete, so that the local benefits of disrupting trafficking operations are less tangible. None of our interviewees suggested a link between their anti-trafficking activities and local crime rates (setting aside the Community Empowerment Program).

### ***SUMMARY AND PERSPECTIVE***

The South Florida HIDTA has made considerable progress in bringing together law enforcement operations in the area. The cooperative interaction generated by the HIDTA program was valued by most of the law enforcement officials we met with. HIDTA executive board participation per se was identified by some interviewees as a positive process generally encouraging the development of positive relationships among law enforcement officials. One used the phrase: "HIDTA brought us together and we found we liked each other." The HIDTA process developed by ONDCP and the local HIDTA director creates an opportunity for thoughtful discussion of strategic and systemic issues.

At an operational level, the greatest progress appeared to us to have occurred among local agencies. The federal agencies still do a considerable portion of their anti-drug work still outside the HIDTA framework. While relationships of trust with lasting value do form occasionally, no agents suggested and some affirmatively denied that cooperation within HIDTA affected cooperation outside HIDTA. Even within the HIDTA framework, the agency groups function quite independently. The groups

stationed in the Miami HIDTA buildings realize limited benefits from collocation, but they are not jointly managed and some agents continue to feel isolated. The OCDETF process remains the principle investigative coordinating mechanism within and without the HIDTA framework.

Among local operations, the progress is much more tangible. A few departments were cooperating with each other on special projects before HIDTA came, but many were working in isolation and we heard from several sources about fractious relationships among them. The South Florida HIDTA took the sensible approach of building on and carefully cultivating the scattered existing cooperative efforts. Today, most of the agents doing higher-level trafficking work in Miami-Dade County are participating in HIDTA task forces. The IMPACT task force represents the highest possible level of interagency cooperation – pooled agents working under the direction of a management consortium. In Broward County, although local police narcotics units still operate separately, they are collocated and are much more likely to cooperate when the occasion arises. Given the number of different local police forces operating in the South Florida area, the integration achieved by HIDTA is a very considerable political and managerial accomplishment.

As to federal-local relationships, while the dialog at the HIDTA executive committee is valuable, it is unclear to us how much effect HIDTA has had on federal-local cooperation. The local-dominated HIDTA task forces involve federal agents only marginally. Federal participation in the South Broward Drug Enforcement Unit appears to consist only in collocation. The North Broward Unit includes very modest federal participation. The Impact task force, which is almost entirely local, was formed in 1994

partly in reaction to the way federal agencies marginalized locals in higher level investigations:

Historically, a significant number of South Florida local law enforcement agencies have participated in federally sponsored money laundering operations and investigations. These local and state investigators were almost without exception utilized for low-level street work, primarily surveillance. These local investigators were seldom provided any realistic opportunity to participate in and learn the elements, philosophy and dynamics of money laundering.<sup>87</sup>

(Reciprocally, a few federal agents discussed Impact with slightly raised eyebrows, evincing general discomfort with the state forfeiture rules that allow Impact to be self-funding.) The main Miami Task Force is federal dominated. We did not interview any local officers participating in federally led groups within the Miami Task Force, but our limited sense of the local role in these task forces was that it was not different from the historical role suggested by the quotation above.<sup>88</sup>

The chart below summarizes our impressions as to the effect of the HIDTA program on law enforcement cooperation in the South Florida area.

HIDTA Effects on Anti-Drug Law Enforcement Coordination in the South Florida Area

Coordination Level	HIDTA Contribution	Limitations/Concerns
Strategy	Small. HIDTA processes have created inclusive dialog.	Significant resources outside process not necessarily influenced by HIDTA strategy
Federal-federal investigative	Medium. Collocation adds limited relationship benefits and occasionally facilitates communication	Agencies function separately within HIDTA task forces and have considerable resources outside HIDTA
Federal-local investigative	Small. Participation in joint task forces is possibly increased	Task forces generally are either federally or locally dominated; none are jointly managed by federal and local entities
Local-local investigative	Large. Considerable increase in local cooperation through joint task forces	
Operational deconfliction	Large. Built and developed NINJAS system; high level of usage	
Intelligence sharing	Unclear. South Florida Investigative Support Center has ambitious plans	Federal agencies are not fully supporting the center and goals may be unrealistic

<sup>87</sup> South Florida Interagency Metropolitan Anti-Crime Task Force. Project Synopsis. Furnished to us by Impact management group.

<sup>88</sup> But compare the source noted in the description of the Miami Task Force who indicated that the locals often do the better undercover work.

It is worth noting that our interview list was constructed with the help of the HIDTA staff. We identified the types of people we wished to speak to. HIDTA staff identified and scheduled the individuals. In a few instances, we felt that interviewees were eager to accentuate the positive. Overall, however, we feel that enough of the answers we elicited were factual (as opposed to judgmental) that we have reasonable confidence in our own bottom-line judgments.

**FLORIDA CASE STUDY - TABLE 1**  
**LOCAL POLICE FORCES IN THE SOUTH FLORIDA TRI-COUNTY AREA<sup>89</sup>**

Department Name	UCR Crimes (97)	Population	1000 PPS	
Miami-Dade	Miami-Dade PD	116734	1082510	10784
Miami-Dade	Aventura PD	NR	20383	NR
Miami-Dade	Bal Harbour PD	182	3131	5813
Miami-Dade	Bay Harbor Island PD	154	4688	3285
Miami-Dade	Biscayne Park PD	121	3032	3991
Miami-Dade	Coral Gables PD	3624	42238	8580
Miami-Dade	Florida City PD	978	5978	16360
Miami-Dade	El Portal PD	219	2510	8725
Miami-Dade	Golden Beach PD	7	840	833
Miami-Dade	Hialeah PD	17659	207053	8529
Miami-Dade	Hialeah Gardens PD	994	16630	5977
Miami-Dade	Homestead PD	4480	25865	17243
Miami-Dade	Indian Creek Vill. PD	0	52	0
Miami-Dade	Key Biscayne PD	357	8937	3695
Miami-Dade	Medley PD	411	877	48864
Miami-Dade	Miami PD	50254	364732	13778
Miami-Dade	Miami Beach PD	16390	92927	17838
Miami-Dade	Miami Shores PD	956	10214	9360
Miami-Dade	Miami Springs PD	960	13320	7207
Miami-Dade	Miccosukee PD	103	NR	NR
Miami-Dade	North Bay Village PD	339	5934	5713
Miami-Dade	North Miami PD	6255	50393	12412
Miami-Dade	North Miami Beach PD	3100	37151	8344
Miami-Dade	Opa Locka PD	2521	15771	15985
Miami-Dade	South Miami PD	946	10521	8992
Miami-Dade	Surfside PD	333	4361	7636
Miami-Dade	Sweetwater PD	256	14011	1827
Miami-Dade	Village of Pinecrest PD	NR	18431	NR
Miami-Dade	Virginia Gardens PD	66	2264	2915
Miami-Dade	West Miami PD	334	5819	5740
<b>Total Miami-Dade:</b>		<b>228713</b>	<b>2070573</b>	<b>11048</b>
Broward	Broward County SO	19621	310707	6315
Broward	Coconut Creek PSD	1296	35949	3605
Broward	Cooper City PD	800	27920	2885
Broward	Coral Springs PD	4519	102916	4391
Broward	Davie PD	4695	61813	7595
Broward	Fort Lauderdale PD	20666	150175	13761
Broward	Hallandale PD	3007	31470	9555
Broward	Hillsboro Beach PD	2	1781	114
Broward	Hollywood PD	12582	126522	9945
Broward	Lauderdale PD	283	2985	9481
Broward	Lauderhill PD	3658	50198	7287
Broward	Lighthouse Point PD	287	10469	2741
Broward	Margate PD	2099	49908	4206
Broward	Miramar PD	3147	50058	6287
Broward	North Lauderdale PSD	1820	27806	6545
Broward	Oakland Park PD	3970	28200	14078
Broward	Parkland PSD	151	11268	1340
Broward	Pembroke Pines PD	4794	104143	4803
Broward	Plantation PD	6195	77450	7969
Broward	Pompano Beach PD	9259	74245	12471
Broward	Sea Ranch Lakes PD	18	619	2906
Broward	Sunrise PD	6989	75310	9280
Broward	Wilton Manors PD	1099	11837	9284
<b>Total Broward:</b>		<b>110957</b>	<b>1423729</b>	<b>7793</b>
Monroe	Monroe County SO	3805	56390	8748
Monroe	Key Colony Beach PD	0	1048	0
Monroe	Key West PD	2949	27305	10800
<b>Total Monroe:</b>		<b>6754</b>	<b>84743</b>	<b>7970</b>
<b>Total HIDTA</b>		<b>346424</b>	<b>3679046</b>	<b>9679</b>

<sup>89</sup> Source: Florida Department of Law Enforcement. FDLE uses current population estimates from University of Florida (1997). Florida Estimates of Population: Bureau of Economic and Business research, Warrington College of Business Administration.

**FLORIDA CASE STUDY – TABLE 2  
LOCAL POLICE FORCES HIDTA PARTICIPTION  
IN THE SOUTH FLORIDA TRI-COUNTY AREA<sup>90</sup>**

County	Department Name	Full-Time Officers	HIDTA/Assigned Personnel	
Miami-Dade	Miami-Dade PDT	2998	33	1.1%
Miami-Dade	Aventura	48	1	2.1%
Miami-Dade	Bal Harbour	20	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	Bay Harbor Island	24	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	Biscayne Park	7	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	Coral Gables	158	5	3.2%
Miami-Dade	Florida City	20	1	5.0%
Miami-Dade	El Portal		0	NA
Miami-Dade	Golden Beach		0	Na
Miami-Dade	Hialeah	322	1	0.3%
Miami-Dade	Hialeah Gardens	29	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	Homestead	69	3	4.3%
Miami-Dade	Indian Creek Village	14	1	7.1%
Miami-Dade	Key Biscayne	26	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	Medley	37	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	Miami	961	29	3.0%
Miami-Dade	Miami Beach	341	11	3.2%
Miami-Dade	Miami Shores	34	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	Miami Springs	44	1	2.3%
Miami-Dade	Miccosukee	18	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	North Bay Village	20	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	North Miami	112	2	1.8%
Miami-Dade	North Miami Beach	89	8	9.0%
Miami-Dade	Opalocka	46	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	South Miami	45	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	Surfside	21	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	Sweetwater	23	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	Village of Pinecrest	30	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	Virginia Gardens	6	0	0.0%
Miami-Dade	West Miami	11	0	0.0%
Broward	Broward County SO	1052	26	2.5%
Broward	Coconut Creek PSD	69	4	5.8%
Broward	Cooper City PD	47	0	0.0%
Broward	Coral Springs PD	159	12	7.5%
Broward	Davie PD	131	6	4.6%
Broward	Fort Lauderdale PD	481	16	3.3%
Broward	Hallandale PD	86	5	5.8%
Broward	Hillsboro Beach PD	14	0	0.0%
Broward	Hollywood PD	315	27	8.6%
Broward	Lauderdale By The Sea	18	0	0.0%
Broward	Lauderhill PD	90	1	1.1%
Broward	Lighthouse Point PD	32	2	6.3%
Broward	Margate PD	102	4	3.9%
Broward	Miramar PD	118	2	1.7%
Broward	North Lauderdale PSD	58	2	3.6%
Broward	Oakland Park PD	79	1	1.3%
Broward	Parkland PSD	21	0	0.0%
Broward	Pembroke Pines PD	190	6	3.2%
Broward	Plantation PD	168	1	0.6%
Broward	Pompano Beach PD	235	14	6.0%
Broward	Sea Ranch Lakes PD	6	0	0.0%
Broward	Sunrise PD	148	11	7.4%
Broward	Wilton Manors PD	29	1	3.4%
Monroe	Monroe County SO	219	8	3.7%
Monroe	Key Colony Beach PD	4	0	0.0%
Monroe	Key West PD	81	0	0.0%
TOTAL:		9523	246	2.6%

<sup>90</sup> Sources: Florida Department of Law Enforcement and Florida HIDTA Director.

## Southwest Border HIDTA

### *The Area*

The area that defines the Southwest Border HIDTA is not as easily described as the four other original HIDTA locations. The most diverse of all the HIDTAs, the Southwest Border abuts Mexico for almost 2,000 miles, from San Diego, CA to Brownsville, TX and borders six Mexican states including Baja California Norte, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Since the majority of this area is unpopulated, it is a prime target for air, land and maritime drug trafficking. Traffickers are able to cross unmanned borders with ease, hide in the many mountains that surround the area, and use stash houses all along the Mexican border. Given the vast size and difficult terrain, the Southwest Border is a naturally vulnerable target that is grossly abused by Mexican drug smugglers.

The Southwest Border is divided into five regional "partnerships" that stretch across four states. In 1998, the Southwest Border HIDTA consisted of the following locales: California Border Alliance Group (including San Diego and Imperial Counties and all the municipalities therein); Arizona Alliance Planning Committee (including Yuma, Maricopa, Pinal, Pima, Santa Cruz and Choise Counties and all the municipalities therein); New Mexico Partnership (including Hidalgo, Grant, Luna, Chavez, Dona Ana, Eddy, Lea, Bernalillo and Otero Counties and all the municipalities therein); West Texas Partnership (including Ei Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, Presidio, Brewster, Pecos, Terrell and Reeves Counties and all the municipalities therein); South Texas Partnership Strategy (including Val Verde, Kinney, Maverick, Zavala, Dimmit, Bexar, La

Salle, Webb, Zapata, Jim Hogg, Starr, Hidalgo, Willacy and Cameron Counties and all the municipalities therein). New Mexico and South Texas have both added additional counties that were not part of the original 1990 ONDCP Southwest Border HIDTA designation.

### ***The Threat***

ONDCP's 1990 National Drug Control Strategy described the rationale for the Southwest Border HIDTA designation as follows:

Extending from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Coast, the U.S. border with Mexico is more than 1,900 miles long. The Southwest Border is a principal corridor for moving drugs - especially marijuana, heroin, and cocaine - into the United States. Not only is Mexico itself a chief source of the marijuana and heroin consumed in the United States, it is also a transit country for these drugs and for cocaine smuggled from South America. U.S. cities hardest hit by drug trafficking from the Southwest Border include San Diego, El Paso, and Phoenix.<sup>91</sup>

This 1990 threat assessment summary holds true eight years later. A significant addendum to this assessment would be the increase in methamphetamine being produced in Mexico for delivery to U.S. markets as well as the growth of domestic methamphetamine production in some areas.

The implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994 also has exacerbated the problem of trafficking drugs across the United States/Mexico border. Increases in legitimate commercial trade have abetted and facilitated increases in illegal drug trades, as smugglers take advantage of the "legal" expanding causeway into the United States. Enforcement officials have seen an increase in tractor-trailers and other commercial vehicles carrying legitimate goods with stashes of illegal drugs. Smugglers

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<sup>91</sup> ONDCP, 1990 National Drug Control Strategy, page 92.

know that border officials cannot and will not stop all vehicles crossing the border and they use this to their advantage.

In response to this threat, the stated goal of HIDTA officials along the border is to disrupt and dismantle smuggling operations that bring drugs into the United States, or in the words of one administrator, to “develop the perfect mousetrap.” While disrupting trafficking operations is a goal shared by the four metropolitan HDTAs, a number of elements combine to produce a different law enforcement response to drug trafficking along the border. In short, the presence of the land border with Mexico, the widely varying geography, and the multitude of political jurisdictions create an environment where the overall law enforcement effort in the HIDTA can be characterized as schizophrenic. In the more rural areas, strategy documents, reports, and interviews revealed an emphasis on interdiction efforts. Conversations with law enforcement officials affiliated with the SWB HIDTA indicated that their efforts in these areas were more reactive and concentrated on border crossings. The interdiction effort also permeated investigations in the more rural areas where officers typically worked cases with a shorter turn-around times and a greater emphasis on a smuggling connection. This emphasis merely reflects the fact that the drugs that are brought into the rural regions of the SWB HIDTA are almost always en route to some other final destination.

In contrast, the SWB’s major cities (i.e., San Diego, Phoenix, Albuquerque, El Paso, and San Antonio) serve as both retail markets and trans-shipment points. Here, the law enforcement activities more closely resemble those observed in the Miami and Los Angeles HDTAs. For example, officials described how task forces in those cities targeted trafficking and money laundering networks over extended periods of

time. These organizations may have ties to retail distributors in the area or wholesaling drugs for distribution in other parts of the country. This "schizophrenic" nature, with its dual emphasis on both interdiction and longer term investigations, contributes to some problems of communication and coordination which are discussed below.

### ***Overview of the Southwest Border HIDTA Program***

As stated previously, the Southwest Border HIDTA is a unique entity. This uniqueness permeates into the administrative structure of the Southwest HIDTA. On paper, each of the five regional partnerships has their own executive boards and operate with considerable autonomy. Administratively, however, they are still responsible to and intimately connected with the "head office", located in San Diego, CA. The partnership structure was introduced in 1993 when the ONDCP and SWB HIDTA participants decided that managing the area as a single unit was too cumbersome. Each partnership is still responsible to the main office both fiscally and in terms of threat assessments and strategies. The result is an extra administrative layer not found in the other HIDTAs. The purpose of this additional layer is to provide organizational continuity between the five HIDTAs while working towards the common goal of decreased drug trafficking across the border.

How this system functions in reality depends upon who is doing the speaking. SWB HIDTA officials in San Diego placed considerably more emphasis on the official definition speaking of the area as a single unit. Partnership administrators and initiative level personnel, in contrast, were much more likely to speak in terms of the "Arizona HIDTA" or the "West Texas HIDTA" as if they were separate entities directly responsible to the ONDCP in Washington. In addition, these officials were quick to

emphasize the costs of the extra layer of bureaucracy. All threat assessments, strategies, fiscal requests and reprogramming of initiative's budgets (if over 10% of original budget) must go through San Diego. This extra step requires added time and effort on the part of each partnership (e.g., while other HIDTAs must have threat assessments in by June of a fiscal year, Southwest HIDTAs have to submit these at least a month earlier). SWB HIDTA administrators then review and edit the budgets, threat assessments, and strategies that reach San Diego before sending them on to the ONDCP in Washington, D.C. Respondents in the partnerships leveled a number of criticisms at this practice. Their complaints ranged from charges that HIDTA officials in San Diego had mischaracterized or changed the original intent of the partnership's document to frustration that others were taking credit for their work product.

SWB HIDTA administrators acknowledged that their reviews did lengthen the process and to some degree increased the administrative burden on the partnerships. They also noted, however, that their presence did "add value" to the documents forwarded to ONDCP. Simply providing a consistent presentation of the data was one example of such value added. SWB HIDTA officials require the partnerships to report program descriptions, accomplishments, and budget information in a standard format. They have even gone as far as providing a word processing file template to each to the partnerships to facilitate the standardization. With 83 different initiatives being funded under the auspices of the SWB HIDTA, this standardization makes review and comparison of the individual activities much easier for ONDCP officials who may have limited familiarity with the areas and agencies involved.

A second contribution cited by the SWB HIDTA administrators was their detailed programmatic and fiscal oversight of the partnerships. In San Diego, they demonstrated for BOTEK how they systematically reviewed budget submissions for each initiative on a line-by-line basis. In the past, this process had proved a safeguard against agencies using HIDTA funds to supplant state or local resources. For example, SWB HIDTA officials would question budget presentations that would request funds to lease more vehicles than the number of personnel assigned to the initiative. The assumption was that the agency was attempted to pass on other, non-HIDTA, expenses to be covered by the federal program. In a more recent submission, an agency had requested funds to retrofit a vehicle to convert it into a K-9 unit. The SWB HIDTA financial analyst, however, found that there was no K-9 unit assigned to the initiative. After being questioned about it, the agency amended the request to exclude the retrofit.

SWB HIDTA administrators also can serve as a resource for the partnerships, noting that they can and have provided both programmatic and technical assistance to the partnerships and some of the newly created HIDTAs in other parts of the county. Although HIDTA administrators at the partnership level did not offer this information, they did confirm that some of the assistance from San Diego had proved useful, particularly with regard to the budget submissions.

#### Partnership Administration

An executive committee and HIDTA director administer each of the individual regional partnerships; although, in the New Mexico Partnership, the position of director has only existed since early 1997. Directors answer to the executive committee and are responsible for day-to-day administration as well as preparing the total partnership

budget, and overseeing the execution of the budgets for each of the initiatives. Within the HIDTA partnerships that we visited (due to time constraints we were not able to visit the South Texas Partnership), the use and role of the executive committees varied. For example, in New Mexico and West Texas, the executive committees meet once a month. In both partnerships, we were given the impression that these meetings carried a considerable amount of weight with regard to their respective regions' law enforcement effort. For example, in West Texas, the HIDTA executive meeting is the only regularly scheduled meeting of top law enforcement officials in the area. Therefore, it provides tremendous value added in terms of both HIDTA initiatives and law enforcement in general. The West Texas HIDTA director described how a great deal of work and discussion took place prior to, and after the formal meeting, often on issues not pertaining to the HIDTA.

In New Mexico, the partnership director and committee members noted that principals usually attend the meetings of the executive committee. This fact was cited as an example of the seriousness that area law enforcement showed for the HIDTA program. It was also noted that by having high-level decision makers attend the meetings, decisions could be made on the spot without having to go back to supervisors for input. This allows for greater expediency when making decisions and determining strategies for the HIDTA.

The Arizona Alliance Planning Committee meets only quarterly, though it would meet more often when necessary. We were given the impression from partnership administrators that, while playing an important role with regard to drug enforcement efforts in the state, the Committee did not serve the same central role with regard to law

enforcement efforts in the region. Conversations with members of the California Border Alliance Group Executive Committee painted a similar picture. Principals typically attended the meetings and their proceedings were extremely substantive in nature. The meetings of the CBAG executive committee, however, represented one of many interagency activities that addressed criminal justice problems in the area.

HIDTA directors interviewed also differed in the interpretation of their own role vis-a-vis. They varied in the degree to which they saw their job as policymaking position. One director described his job as planning counter-border efforts and providing a vision for anti-drug efforts. Another saw his charge to be the implementer of policies determined by his executive committee. A third fell in between these two. We were unable to interview the director of the CBAG as the position was vacant at the time of our visit.

#### Budgeting and Program Review.

None of the Southwest Border partnerships has a standardized method of explicitly reviewing initiative performance. Instead, the processes of renewing existing initiatives or creating new ones are part of the annual budget cycle. Although this always goes through the committee, the individual processes vary between partnerships.

#### ***The Initiatives***

The Southwest Border initiatives fall into four categories: interdiction; investigation; intelligence; and, other (prosecution and administration). Within each of these categories, initiatives can be cataloged as either a federal effort (meaning a federal agency has the lead, not necessarily that the effort consists of only federal players) or as a

state and local effort (again, an effort coordinated by, but not exclusive to, state and local officials). Since the entire Southwest Border consists of a total of 82 efforts within these categories, it is not prudent to detail each initiative individually. Instead, we offer an overview of each state with more specific detail provided for the initiatives that we experienced hands-on (through both tours and interviews).

### Interdiction

The Southwest Border HIDTA has a total of 15 interdiction initiatives across the four states. (See Table 1 below; note again that tabular data are more current and thus may differ somewhat from descriptions.) Almost all of the initiatives have a federal agency designated as the lead, though federal officers do not constitute a majority of the full-time personnel.

**Table 1: Interdiction Initiatives**

Parameter State	Initiative	Lead Agency	FT Staff	% Federal
CA	East San Diego County Initiative (ESDCI)	CA DOJ	23	39 %
CA	Imperial Valley Drug Coalition (IVDC)	USBP/Imp. Cty. Sheriff's Office	27	56 %
CA	Marine Task Force (MTF)	U.S. Customs	23	83 %
CA	Commercial Interdiction Unit	DEA	25	28 %
AZ	Border Anti-Narcotic Network (BANN)	U.S. Customs	35	74%
AZ	Cochise County Border Alliance Group (BAG)	joint fed/local	17	12%
AZ	Santa Cruz County Drug Enforcement Unit		18	28%
AZ	Southwest Border Alliance (SBA) Interdiction Initiative	U.S. Customs	50	58%
NM	New Mexico Border Operations Task Forces	U.S. Customs	28	82%
NM	New Mexico Enhanced Line Watch Operations	multi-agency, led by USBP		
NM	Regional Coordination and Logistics Support Center - New Mexico		3	0%
WTX	West Texas HIDTA Smuggling Initiative	USCS	58	86%
STX	Unity Task Force	U.S. Customs	18	67 %

The California Border Alliance Group's interdiction initiatives consist of two task forces focused on coordinating operations along the land border with Mexico, one on the Pacific Ocean, and one on commercial carriers. The East San Diego County and Imperial Valley interdiction efforts seek to maximize the impact of law enforcement efforts in the sparsely populated border areas. The Marine Task Force concentrates on traffickers who

use the west coast beaches and waterways to transport illicit drugs. The Commercial Interdiction Unit seeks to disrupt traffickers who use commercial conveyances (e.g., airlines, trucking, buses, etc.) to smuggle drugs into the country and/or trans-ship the drugs to other parts of the United States.

Arizona sponsors four interdiction initiatives that focus primarily on identified drug trafficking organizations (DTO). Some initiatives are federally led, such as the Border Anti-Narcotics Network, while others consist of collocated, multi-agency efforts, such as the Southwest Border Alliance Interdiction Initiative. Two initiatives patrol the sparsely populated border between Mexico and the United States. The remaining interdiction initiatives tackle organized crime and money laundering efforts in addition to narcotics smuggling.

New Mexico has two interdiction initiatives: The New Mexico Enhanced Line Watch Operations and the Regional Coordination and Logistics Support Center. The Line Enhancement initiative is a collocated, multi-agency task force whose participation is split fairly evenly, 50% federal and 50% state and local. Efforts are concentrated on seizing narcotics, currency and weapons before and during transfer over the New Mexico border. The Logistics Support Center is designed to assist New Mexico and West Texas HIDTA participants in counter-narcotics activities by providing support services including intelligence, aerial photographs, maps and threat assessments. This initiative has a small staff of two HIDTA funded local sheriff's department employees and one non-HIDTA funded USBP employee.

West Texas has three interdiction initiatives: Operation "Nighthawk", the West Texas HIDTA Smuggling Initiative, and the Regional Coordination and Logistical

Support Center (RCLSC). Nighthawk involves the participation of over 1,000 law enforcement agents, with the vast majority (95%) sponsored by the USBP. The border area covers 529 miles of bleak and mostly uninhabited terrain that provides numerous crossing points for smugglers. The Nighthawk initiative focuses on exploiting identified weaknesses of known DTOs. The Smuggling Initiative, a DEA lead effort, has the charge of disrupting transportation cells used by DTOs within the West Texas HIDTA area. The West Texas branch of RCLSC provides the same services as the New Mexico Logistics Support Center.

The South Texas Partnership supports two interdiction initiatives, one led by the U.S. Border Patrol and the other by the U.S. Customs Service. The former, Operation Tri-Star, attempts to coordinate interdiction efforts in the Del Rio, McAllen, and Laredo Border Patrol sectors. There are no personnel assigned full-time to Tri-Star. Agencies contribute personnel as needed to periodically disrupt traffickers routes for a short period of time. The Customs-led Operation Unity focuses on drug smuggling and money laundering in the Brownsville area.

### Investigations

The Southwest Border HIDTA has a total of 45 investigative initiatives across the four states (see Table 2). All are multi-agency collocated efforts designed to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations. They vary, however, to the degree they are (a) dominated by federal agencies; (b) focused on mid- to high-level drug transactions; and (c) concentrate on a particular type of trafficker or tactic, i.e., special purpose task forces.

The California Border Alliance Group has five investigation initiatives. All five are dominated by federal agencies that supply over 90 percent of the full-time personnel

associated with these efforts. Either the DEA or U.S. Customs Service leads the initiatives.

Table 2: California Border Alliance Group Investigative Initiatives

Initiative Title	El Staffing	Federal Staff
<b>El Centro HIDTA Narcotics Task Force</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>84 % (DEA led)</b>
<b>Operation Alliance Joint Task Force (San Ysidro)</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>95 % (USCS led)</b>
<b>San Diego Financial Task Force*</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>80 %</b>
<b>San Diego Violent Crime Task Force</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>50 % (USCS led)</b>
<b>Major Mexican Traffickers</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>95+ % (DEA led)</b>

Initiatives where federal agencies supply more than 50 percent of staff in bold.

Special purpose initiatives marked with an asterix (\*).

Three of the five—the El Centro Task Force, Operation Alliance, and the San Diego Narcotics Task force—concentrate their investigations on major trafficking organizations. They are distinguished by their location. The special purpose Financial Task force focuses on money laundering operations in the region. The Major Mexican Traffickers initiative is the most unique of the five. It targets the most significant trafficking organizations along the border and attempts to disrupt their operations. OCADETF designations are often sought for its investigations. The initiative also includes a multi-agency Border Corruption Task force.

The fact that the five investigative initiatives are dominated by the federal agencies is particularly notable given that their presence is much more diminished in the interdiction initiatives. This discovery seems counter-intuitive and raises some questions about the ability of the partnership to leverage state and local resources. One would assume that the responsibility of patrolling the border would be a greater priority for

federal agencies. Investigating traffickers on the streets of the California, in contrast, would be an issue of greater concern for state and local law enforcement. The pattern of resource distribution in the California partnership suggests just the opposite.

Arizona has twelve investigation initiatives, ranging from general drug smuggling investigations to task forces focused on methamphetamines, public corruption or money laundering. Arizona has one investigative initiative led primarily by federal law enforcement agencies. The Pima County Task Force is a multi-agency, collocated effort focused on the major DTOs in Southern Arizona. This task force also works closely with Pima County prosecutors to make and bring cases to trial.

Table 3: Arizona Alliance Partnership Initiatives

Initiative Title	FT Staffing	Federal Share
<b>Pima County HIDTA Investigative Task Force</b>	17	<b>76% (DEA/BP)</b>
Phoenix HIDTA Narcotic Technical Support Center	121	11%
Metropolitan Area Narcotics Trafficking Interdiction Squad	56	9%
Multi-Agency Surveillance Team	7	14%
Pinal County Unified Drug Interdiction/Investigative TF	15	0%
HIDTA Enforcement Agencies Task Force	22	45% (USMS led)
<b>Drug-Related Public Corruption Initiative*</b>	8	<b>100% (FBI led)</b>
<b>Maricopa County HIDTA Methamphetamine TF*</b>	13	<b>54%</b>
Phoenix Financial Task Force*	20	35% (USCS)
Serious Incident Multi-Agency Response Team*	15	40%
<b>Tucson HIDTA Financial Task Force*</b>	20	<b>60% (USCS)</b>

Initiatives where federal agencies supply more than 50 percent of staff in bold.

Special purpose initiatives marked with an asterix (\*).

Five mixed (federal, state and local law enforcement officials) initiatives exist in the Arizona Alliance. All the initiatives are collocated and provide a variety of services ranging from technical support (Narcotic Technical Support Center; Multi-Agency

Surveillance Team) to gang activity and drug related violence (Metropolitan Area Narcotics Trafficking Interdiction Squad) to identifying methamphetamine laboratories (Pinal County Task Force).

The five special purpose initiatives have missions consistent with their names. These task forces range in their level of federal participation from 100% with the Drug-Related Public Corruption Initiative to 35% with the Phoenix Financial Task Force.

Table 4: New Mexico Partnership Investigative Initiatives

Initiative Title	FT Staffing	Federal Share
New Mexico DEA HIDTA Task Force	68	48%
Region I Multi-Agency Task Force	19	0%
Region II HIDTA Narcotics Task Force	9	0%
Region III Multi-jurisdictional Task Force	14	0%
Region VI Drug Task Force	40	13%
Regional Interagency Drug Task Force	24	4%
Southwestern New Mexico Task Force	10	10%

New Mexico has seven investigative initiatives. The largest of these is the New Mexico DEA HIDTA Task Force, which is the only New Mexico Partnership initiative to have significant federal participation on a full-time basis. Overall, the investigative initiatives of New Mexico Partnership have lower levels of federal participation than the other partnerships. The DEA HIDTA Task Force has four units in two locations. The two units in Albuquerque have a total of 32 full-time personnel, 12 of whom are from DEA. The two units in Las Cruces have 36 full-time personnel, led by 13 DEA agents. The second largest initiative is the Region VI Drug Task Force, which is smaller than it appears, since it divided into five units, each representing an area: Otero County, Pecos Valley, Lea County, Lincoln County, and Chaves County.

Table 5: West Texas Partnership Investigative Initiatives

Initiative Title	FT Staffing	Federal Share
Alpine Multi-Agency HIDTA Task Force	14	50%
El Paso Multi-Agency Task Force	20	50%
Operation HIJACK*	21	38%
<b>Southwest Fugitive/Violent Offender Task Force*</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>85%</b>
West Texas Financial Disruption Task Force*	23	30%
West Texas HIDTA Hotel/Motel Initiative*	12	17%

**Initiatives where federal agencies supply more than 50 percent of staff in bold.**

Special purpose initiatives marked with an asterisk (\*).

West Texas has six investigative initiatives. Both of the mixed initiatives are collocated in their respective cities. Their shared mission is to target and investigate large sized DTOs.

The special purpose initiatives are all multi-agency, collocated initiatives. The focus varies with each group: Operation HIJACK concentrates on drug transportation; Southwest Fugitive/Violent Offender Task Force identifies and targets violent drug smuggling fugitives; West Texas Financial Disruption Task Force targets and seizes criminal's assets; West Texas HIDTA Hotel/Motel Initiative develops relationships with El Paso hotel and motel employees to identify narcotics transactions.

South Texas has ten investigative initiatives. Both the federally led task forces share the charge of dismantling high-level DTOs. These initiatives focus on disrupting identified DTOs. The areas covered range from county coverage, as with the Hidalgo County HIDTA Task Force, to the Eagle Pass Southwest Multi-Agency HIDTA Task Force, which patrols over 400 miles the Texas/Mexican border.

Table 6: South Texas Partnership Initiatives

Initiative Title	FTE Staffing	Federal Share
<b>McAllen HIDTA Investigative Task Force</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>74% (DEA led)</b>
<b>Multi-Agency Major Organizations Investigative Initiative</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>85% (FBI led)</b>
Hidalgo County HIDTA Task Force	25	28%
Brownsville HITDA Investigative Task Force	23	30% (DEA led)
Eagle Pass Multi-Agency HIDTA Investigative TF	16	50%
<b>Del Rio Money Laundering/Narc. Smuggling TF*</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>64% (USCS led)</b>
Laredo Multi-Agency Intelligence, Narcotic Transshipment and Financial Disruption TF*	49	37% (DEA led)
<b>McAllen Financial Task Force*</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>70% (USCS led)</b>
<b>San Antonio Multi-Agency Investigative Partnership*</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>69% (IRS led)</b>
Multi-Agency Drug Courier Detection and Apprehension Group*	25	8%

Initiatives where federal agencies supply more than 50 percent of staff in bold.

Special purpose initiatives marked with an asterix (\*).

The special purpose initiatives are all multi-agency, collocated initiatives. The focus varies with each group: Del Rio Money Laundering/Narcotics Smuggling Task Force focuses on money laundering and drug smuggling along 125 miles of borderland; Laredo HIDTA Multi-Agency Intelligence, Narcotic Transshipment and Financial Disruption Task Force is comprised of a narcotics' enforcement unit, a financial disruption unit and an intelligence component; McAllen Financial Task Force concentrates on drug-related money laundering; San Antonio Multi-Agency Investigative Partnership focuses on money laundering organizations; Multi-Agency Drug Courier Detection and Apprehension Group targets services/facilities often used by drug smugglers such as truck stops, bus stations and post offices.

## Intelligence

The Southwest Border HIDTA has a total of 12 intelligence initiatives across the four states (see Table 7).

Table 7: SWB Intelligence Initiatives

Partnership	Initiative	Lead Agency	Deconfliction	PSAT	Case Support	Threat Assess.
SWB	Operational Intelligence Unit	EPIC			X	X
SWB	Southwest Border Unit	EPIC				X
CA	Customs Intelligence Group	U.S. Customs		X	X	
CA	San Diego/Imperial County Regional Narcotics Information Network	CA DOJ	X		X	X
AZ	Arizona HIDTA Center (Intelligence and Operations)	AZ DPS	X	X	X	X
AZ	Joint Drug Intelligence Group	FBI				X
AZ	Post Seizure Analysis Team	AZ DPS		X		
NM	New Mexico Intelligence Center	U.S. Customs		X		X
WTX	West Texas HIDTA Intel Initiative (Inc. WTX Reg. Intel Clearinghouse)		X			X

STX	STX HIDTA Intelligence Center	San Antonio PD	X	X	X	X
STX	Texas Narcotics Information System (TNIS) - Analyst Section	TX DPS			X	
STX	Unified Narcotics Intelligence Task Force	Cameron Cty. Dist. Attorney			X	

\*Intelligence initiatives typically do not designate a lead agency. Those listed here often represent the agency which provides space for the initiative or provides the most personnel. In some cases, it represents the affiliation of the initiative's director.

Each of the Southwest Border HIDTAs is in a different stage of development and operation. Variations between HIDTAs result from different priorities in each state, different levels of funding, and different relationships with various law enforcement agencies. Similar to the autonomous administrative structures of each of the five Southwest HIDTAs, each HIDTA has its own Intelligence initiative strategy.

At the center of the California Border Alliance Group's intelligence efforts is the Regional Narcotics Information Network (NIN). The NIN operates a watch center to provide a monitored deconfliction as well as to coordinate law enforcement activities. It also provides tactical analytical case support and strategic planning. The Customs Intelligence Group provides case support and post seizure analysis for Customs and Border Patrol agents.

The Arizona Alliance is working towards a "one stop shopping" approach to intelligence. With its newly created Arizona HIDTA Center, located in Tucson, all information gathered by Arizona task forces will be entered into this system. Staff at the Center include analysts from the Post Seizure Analysis Team (PSAT) and the FBI's Joint Drug Intelligence Group (JDIG) as well as from USBP, USCS, DEA, and a variety of

state and local agencies. To ensure that all involved agencies contribute to this pool of intelligence, the Arizona HIDTA has made funding contingent on initiatives participation and contribution to the Intel Center. The Intel Center is in the process of coming on-line and will include the introduction of some new technology including the NINJAS deconfliction system.

New Mexico is in the process of creating a more centralized Intel Center, called the Regional Intelligence Center (RIC), that will serve to collect and share information throughout New Mexico with all law enforcement agencies (both HIDTA and non-HIDTA affiliated). The RIC is in the process of coming on-line. It's purpose is to provide post-seizure analysis and jump start investigations, not provide investigative support. The RIC will also offer deconfliction services, but given the nature of drug smuggling cases (their reactive, not intelligence driven, nature), this has not been seen as a priority. The RIC will house a crime lab and will have evidence destruction capabilities. Employees from the FBI, DEA, and USCS will each operate secure databases from the RIC: this will be an important addition to the capabilities of accessing federal information, a task that previously flowed through EPIC and then, only with federal assistance. Priorities for the RIC were designated by an intel sub-committee: first, respond to interdiction cases; second, support the USAO (Intel is responsible for opening cases that end up at the USAO). One important reason for Intel and the USAO to work together is the ability of further intelligence to bump seemingly below the threshold cases up to the federal level for prosecution.

The West Texas Partnership has just opened the West Texas Regional Intelligence Clearinghouse (RIC) in El Paso. Similar to the Arizona Intel Center, the West Texas RIC

will be "one stop shopping" for all intelligence needs (including connections to EPIC) to target drug trafficking organizations (DTO). The West Texas RIC is comprised of four nodes; these nodes exist more for historical reasons than for reasons of efficiency. The first node is the RIC itself that will serve as the hub of all operations and will provide deconfliction services through NINJAS. Node two is the Criminal Intelligence Squad (CIS), led by the FBI to provide strategic analysis for HIDTA initiatives. Node three is the District Office Intelligence Group (DOIG) that provides historical intelligence to law enforcement officials to make cases. Node four is the Texas Narcotics Information System (TNIS), located in Austin, which connects West Texas to informational databases in other states. The idea is to create access to all federal, state, commercial and county databases. The director of the RIC is invested in marketing these intelligence services. RIC realizes the importance of meeting their customer's needs and plans to do visits every six months to a year to the initiatives to see if needs are being met and how services could be better designed.

The South Texas Partnership features three intelligence initiatives which provide case support to investigators. The Cameron County-based Unified Narcotics Intelligence Task Force will support agencies in and around Brownsville as well as providing a link to intelligence units in San Antonio and Laredo. The South Texas Partnership, like its West Texas counter part, also funds a portion of the Analyst Section of the Texas Narcotics Information System (TNIS) in Austin. TNIS responds to law enforcement officers' requests for a variety of information including toll analysis, link analysis, financial analysis, suspect identifications, and biographical information on suspects. The South Texas HIDTA Intelligence Center is designed to serve as the region's intelligence hub.

On paper, it has the broadest collection of responsibilities, although it is the smallest of the three STX intelligence initiatives from a resource perspective.

### Other Initiatives

Table 8: Other SWB Initiatives

Partnership	Initiative	Type of Initiative
CA	Combined Border Prosecutions	Prosecution
CA	CBAG Support	Support
AZ	AZ HIDTA Reg. Training Center	Training
AZ	AZ Alliance Planning Committee	Support
NM	Operation Up the Ladder	Prosecution
NM	Southern Crime Lab	Lab
NM	NM Exec. Committee Support	Support
WTX	West Texas HIDTA Prosecution	Prosecution
WTX	West Texas Partner. Administration	Support
STX	Administrative Support Element	Support

### Prosecutions

All five of the partnerships fund initiatives that support either federal or state prosecutors. HIDTA officials offered two related, but slightly different rationale, to explain the funding of prosecutions initiatives. The first explanation was merely a function of workload. State and federal prosecutors argued that HIDTA initiatives led to increased arrests, and consequently, increased prosecutions. Therefore, it seemed appropriate that if HIDTA funds were being used to increase the number of drug trafficking arrests, a portion of those resources should be allocated to trying to convict these individuals.

The second explanation was based on the work load of U.S. Attorneys. In many areas, the U.S. Attorneys are unable to prosecute all of the traffickers caught. As a result, federal prosecutors have established thresholds for the volume of drugs seized before they will take on the case. For example, a local U.S. Attorney may decide not to pursue in federal court anyone caught with less than 100 pounds of marijuana. By providing funding for additional state prosecutors, law enforcement officers can work with District Attorneys to pursue these cases in the state court system.

In California, the CBAG has combined its support for prosecutors in a single initiative. The Combined Border Prosecutions initiative funds 6 Deputy District Attorneys and 2 Assistant U.S. Attorneys in Imperial and San Diego Counties.

New Mexico's Operation Up the Ladder supports the prosecution of drug cases in both Albuquerque and Las Cruces. New Mexico differs from other partnerships in its dedication of 25% of its entire HIDTA budget to prosecutorial efforts. The reason again is that given the limited tax base of the state and the enormous number of drug cases that come from being located so close to the border, the funds to support these prosecutions simply do not exist. Before HIDTA came to New Mexico, many cases were plead out or dismissed due to a lack of attorneys able to handle the overwhelming caseload.

Operation Up the Ladder will consists of 17 Assistant U.S. Attorneys and 11 District Attorneys on a full time basis. Federal prosecutors are located in the same building as the federal law enforcement agencies in Las Cruces. Prosecutors from the local District Attorney offices, though not collocated with individual task forces, have an intimate relationship exists between the investigators. HIDTA attorneys work cases from their inception and investigation stages (advising about wire taps and other legal issues)

to the prosecutorial stage. Having a pre-existing relationship between law enforcement and attorneys enables cases to be prosecuted more quickly and efficiently, which is important when, as in Las Cruces, the majority of cases are drug felonies. In 1997, HIDTA attorneys handled 519 drug cases<sup>92</sup>

#### Other initiatives

Each of the five partnerships includes funds for an administrative initiative to support their executive committee and oversee day-to-day operations of the HIDTA. The scale of these ranges, however. In Arizona, the administrative support consists of 14 full-time employees; in New Mexico and South Texas, management and administration has a staff of four.

In addition to the administrative initiatives, the New Mexico partnership funds a crime lab to speed up analysis of seizures and the Arizona partnership operates a training center.

#### ***Observations and Notes***

A review of the administration of programs funded by SWB HIDTA resources raises several important procedural and programmatic questions. In some cases, these are unique to the area relative to the other four HIDTAs visited. At the same time, they illustrate critical issues to the program as a whole. These issues relate to the bureaucratic structure of the HIDTA, with its additional administrative layer, the problem of distance and duplication, and defining the mission of the HIDTA.

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<sup>92</sup> Personal communication, Las Cruces DA, July 28, 1998 .

## Bureaucratic Structure

In many ways, the tension between the individual partnerships and the SWB HIDTA administrators is simply a microcosm of the centralization-decentralization challenge that surrounds the entire HIDTA program. The SWB HIDTA administrators are attempting to exert a degree of standardization and control over the activities of the partnerships in an effort to reduce duplication and waste. This degree of oversight, they feel, is simply carrying out the program as the Congress originally intended.

On the other hand, many Southwest Border partnership players feel that they need greater autonomy in order to make budgetary and strategy decisions appropriate to more local needs. Beyond the question of local control, the partnership administrators also raised what they perceived to be an issue of fairness. They asked why their partnerships should be subject to this increased scrutiny and bureaucracy when all of the other HDTAs deal directly with the ONDCP.

The situation raises the classic administrative puzzle of the trade-offs between centralized and decentralized structures. The accountability and standardization gained by a centralized bureaucratic structure may come at the expense of the flexibility needed to address a variety of different local problems. The answer to this question, as noted in the body of this report, depends upon how one defines the program and its goals. It remains the case, however, that from interviews with four of the five HIDTA directors on the Southwest Border, they saw themselves as individual HIDTA directors as opposed to a group of directors who all worked within one large HIDTA, the Southwest Border. The degree to which they assert this independence varied. In Arizona, for example, the regional director has attempted to change the name of the partnership from the Arizona

Alliance Planning Committee to Arizona HIDTA. He also does not include the SWB HIDTA administrators in descriptions of the organization's structure. Instead, the Arizona HIDTA Director is presented as the link between the ONDCP in Washington D.C. and the partnership's Executive Committee.

Though not all of the regional directors expressed this level of independence, there was a consensus among partnership administrators that a degree of regional autonomy was necessary. This freedom enabled them to narrow their focus to the specific needs of their region, be they geographical, political, or economic. The cost of this autonomy, however, is a decrease level of coordination and communication across the partnerships, which was part of the original design. (Officials at the El Paso Intelligence Center supported this notion that the border HIDTAs had become fragmented. They expressed frustration at the inefficiency of dealing with "5 organizations and 5 personalities" when attempting to address issues of intelligence sharing.) In sum, the autonomy of the the individual partnerships gains them flexibility while at the same time contributing to a certain amount of distance between the different states.

SWB administrators in San Diego, as noted above, argued that their presence served as both a source of additional programmatic oversight as well as a potential resource for the partnerships. We found the claims of value added by the SWB administrators to be quite convincing. This finding is not surprising given the nature of our overall charge, that is, to assess the processes of the HIDTA program. In short, the additional oversight introduced by the added bureaucratic layer did provide, from a procedural perspective, some of the benefits claimed. The review provided by the SWB

administrators, in particular, instituted an important safeguard against the supplanting of state and local funds. We were not in a position to ascertain what the programmatic cost of these procedures might have been.

Partnership administrators, however, also pointed out that they were the only regions in the entire program subject to this level of scrutiny. This "fairness" issue does raise an important question relative to the program as a whole. If this added level of administrative oversight is so desirable, why does it not exist for the other four HIDTAs visited? Conversations with site administrators in Houston, Miami, New York, and Los Angeles suggest the ONDCP did not scrutinize their budget submissions to the degree San Diego administrators reviewed the partnership submissions. From our perspective, the individual partnerships along the border were organized and functioned in a manner almost identical to their counterparts in the other four cities. They are, for all practical purposes, individual HIDTAs themselves. Therefore, if it is desirable to hold these area partnerships to this degree of accountability, then that type of oversight should be extended to the other HIDTAs. On the other hand, if the type of oversight provided by the SWB administrators is deemed to not be beneficial, then the additional bureaucratic layer should be removed.

#### Distance and duplication

Several of the intelligence and investigative initiatives in the various partnerships appear to have overlapping missions. For example, the South Texas partnership has three intelligence initiatives that provide some form of case support. Similarly, the Arizona partnership is performing threat analysis and targeting at the HIDTA intelligence center in Tucson as well as at the JDIG in Phoenix. On the investigative front, the California

partnership has four initiatives all targeting major drug trafficking organizations. In Arizona and New Mexico each have 8 investigative initiatives with very similar objectives. South Texas has 10.

On paper, many of these overlapping missions appear redundant and could represent the type of fragmentation that the HIDTA program was suppose to reduce, not create. Some of the duplication, however, is a function of the tremendous amount of area that each partnership is responsible for covering. For example, in Arizona, the partnership is headquartered in Tucson. Although relatively centralized, the city is still more than 60 miles north of the border, 100 miles south of Phoenix, and over 200 miles east of Yuma, all of which are encompassed by the HIDTAs' boundaries. Consolidating task forces to reduce duplication, while still meeting the requirement of collocation, creates major logistical problems. There is simply a great deal of distance between many of the law enforcement personnel.

Even modern telecommunication technology does not always overcome these distances. For example, the California partnerships intelligence center, the NIN, is designed to serve law enforcement officers in both San Diego and Imperial Counties. With the exception of the DEA, law enforcement officials in Imperial County stated that it was rare for them to access the NIN and avail themselves of its services.<sup>93</sup> They cited the distance and a lack of familiarity with their personnel there as reasons for their reluctance. Given the value that law enforcement officers place on trusting others in the

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<sup>93</sup>POTEC was invited to attend a planning session for a major interdiction campaign that involves representatives from most of the law enforcement agencies operating in Imperial County and eastern San Diego counties. During a period for questions, one participant asked who would be coordinating deconfliction for the exercise. San Diego officials and the NIN representative present at the meeting were obviously surprised at the question. They responded that they assumed deconfliction for all anti-drug activities were coordinated by the NIN. From the response of the person who asked the question as well as other Imperial County participants, it was clear that utilizing the NIN in this manner was not standard operating procedure.

performance of their jobs, they place a premium on face-to-face interactions. This type of exchange is difficult given the geographic obstacles along the border and telephones, faxes, and email does little to change that.

While there may be some good reasons for having multiple initiatives with overlapping missions, there still appear to be remnants of duplication and interagency turf battles in the activities of the SWB HIDTA. For example, in both our conversations with EPIC officials and an earlier JTF-6 assessment of intelligence activities in this region, it seemed that some streamlining of activities would be useful. It would appear that some of this already is being done. New Mexico closed its JDIG in Albuquerque during the past year. At the same time, there appear to be intelligence initiatives in California, Arizona, and South Texas that closely parallel what is being done elsewhere.

One finds similar instances with regard to investigations. For example, the California partnership's San Diego Narcotics Task Force is a Customs-led effort focused on major drug trafficking organizations. The DEA-led Major Mexican Traffickers initiative is, as the name implies, concentrating its efforts on drug trafficking organizations with ties to Mexico. Unless the number of major trafficking organizations is considerably larger than what has been reported by intelligence assessments, there must be some overlap in the cases being worked by these two initiatives. In a similar vein, the partnerships in Arizona, New Mexico, and South Texas have scattered a total of 26 task forces across their combined areas. While they are, for the most part, based in different towns, the mobility of traffickers would suggest that there is some duplication of effort.

It would appear that given the decision making structure of the HIDTA partnerships, which are based on a committee system, they are limited in their capacity to set hard priorities. With such limits, it becomes difficult to emphasize one agency or geographic location over another. The result is that resources are spread among many recipients, even if committee harmony comes at the expense of some duplication.

### Defining the mission of the HIDTA

The final issue raised by the initiatives funded by the SWB HIDTA is how their variety pushes the boundaries of the mission of the HIDTA program as a whole. As noted earlier in this report, HIDTA began as a funding mechanism designed to concentrate resources in the areas where drug trafficking was the most problematic. In theory, HIDTA would bring together a variety of law enforcement agencies and resources in an effort to address major drug traffickers. While a number of initiatives clearly have been designed to do just that, there are several elements that push and complicate the mission of the HIDTA along the border.

The first complicating factor is the division between interdiction and investigative initiatives. As discussed above, all five partnerships have interdiction initiatives focused specifically on smuggling as well as investigative initiatives that concentrate on trafficking organizations more generally. The major investigative initiatives were located in the largest metropolitan area of the partnership. In many ways, the two functions are clearly compliments to one another. The two activities, however, are sufficiently different that they can create problems for administrators and policy makers. Prioritizing the services provided by an intelligence center presents an example of such a problem. Investigative initiatives are much more likely to value the case support and deconfliction

functions that an intelligence center might offer. In contrast, interdiction initiatives might be less concerned with deconfliction. Given the large amount of territory that they cover, it is simply less likely that law enforcement officers will "bump into one another" in any manner. Interdiction agencies are also more likely to value post seizure analysis as an intelligence service that could lead to future arrests or seizures. These generalizations are not absolute, but they do provide a sense of the challenge administrators must confront when attempting to direct a HIDTA with this schizophrenic nature. Relative to the other HDTAs BOTEC visited, only Miami must contend with a similar issue.

The tension between the dual missions of interdicting drugs and investigating trafficking organizations illustrates the complexity of the HIDTA mission. Providing funds for initiatives explicitly aimed at street-level enforcement stretches the overall program mission beyond its original intent. A portion of the Arizona partnership's HIDTA resources fund street-level enforcement activities. Though these activities may be successful at reducing drug transactions in particular neighborhoods, it represents an inappropriate expansion of the program mission. If all of the metropolitan areas in the region were to seek funds for street-level enforcement, the already limited funds would be stretched extremely thin.

Partnerships using HIDTA funds for prosecution initiatives represents a similar expansion in the HIDTA mission. Acknowledging that the HIDTA law enforcement efforts may have increased the workload for prosecutors, and acknowledging the fact that the current resources devoted to prosecutions have resulted in more traffickers being convicted of more serious offenses, the funds for prosecutors could prove to be setting a dangerous precedent. Quite simply, what is to keep the other elements of the criminal

justice system from making a similar appeal for HIDTA funds? For example, a county sheriff could seek federal support for expansion of an over-crowded local jail. Or, a state judge could argue that HIDTA funds should be used by the courts to reduce a backlog of cases filed by HIDTA-funded prosecutors. These may seem to be extreme examples, but in states where the competition for additional resources is fierce, they are conceivable. Partnerships considering expanding the resources provided to prosecutors should proceed carefully.

## **Additional Discussion and Analysis**

### ***What Should HIDTA Sites Do?***

A useful starting point in reviewing the HIDTA program is to ask, What should HIDTA sites do? It is clear that as originally conceived, the primary purpose of the HIDTA program was to create a mechanism for directing additional Federal funding and personnel to a small number of geographic areas that represented the most problematic drug trafficking areas in the U.S. The subsequent designation as HIDTAs of the five areas reviewed in this report—Houston, Los Angeles, New York/New Jersey, South Florida, and the Southwest Border—was consistent with that understanding of the HIDTA program's purpose.

Presumably, Congress felt that certain heavily drug-involved areas might be getting fewer resources than appropriate. The HIDTA program, then, could be seen as an effort to bypass the ordinary funding process and strategy development of law enforcement agencies, whose inertia might neglect certain critical regions.

But this conception of the HIDTA program is no longer tenable. There are now 28 HIDTA regions, covering part or all of 40 states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In an interview, one ONDCP official quipped, "We used to keep track of the HIDTA program by listing areas that had HIDTAs; now, we just list areas that don't have HIDTAs."

Indeed, the stated purpose of the HIDTA program has changed. ONDCP now states:

**The mission of the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program is to enhance and coordinate America's drug-control efforts**

among local, state and Federal law enforcement agencies in order to eliminate or reduce drug trafficking and its harmful consequences in critical regions of the United States. The mission includes coordination efforts to reduce the production, manufacturing, distribution, transportation and chronic use of illegal drugs, as well as the attendant money laundering of drug proceeds.<sup>94</sup>

Coordination is the focus, which implies the following rationale for the HIDTA program: left to their own devices, federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies do not coordinate their activities to the degree that they should. On that view, the HIDTA program represents an “outside” operator that works to foster better coordination among agencies.

In our view, this conception of the HIDTA program is far more compelling than the original view of HIDTA as a apparatus for additional funding. However, the current idea of HIDTA as a coordination-enhancing program is a far more demanding conception. It is easier to write checks than to make people from different agencies work together, much less work effectively together.

One of the questions asked about particular initiatives in many interviews was: What was the coordination problem that this initiative was designed to address? This was, perhaps, the most valuable question asked in interviews. On an initiative-specific level, answers helped reveal the extent to which initiatives were formulated with the mission of enhanced coordination in mind. On a broader level, the answers, when aggregated over different types of initiatives, in different sites, pointed to systematic failures of coordination that the HIDTA program may be well positioned to address.

If grades were assigned to HIDTA initiatives based on the extent to which they were implemented to address an identified coordination problem, then deconfliction

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<sup>94</sup> Office of National Drug Control Policy, *The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program: 2000* (Washington, DC: Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2001), p. 1.

systems would get an A. Of all of the different types of initiatives implemented across the five HIDTA sites, systems that were put into place to ensure that different investigations and field operations don't find themselves at odds were the ones most clearly designed to rectify a lack of coordination. This makes sense: improved coordination is the sole purpose of deconfliction systems.

The second highest grades would go to other types of information systems, particularly systems that created computer-based databases of information that was previously unavailable in electronic form. The photo-imaging system, implemented by the NY/NJ HIDTA, provides a good example. The system has taken books of thousands of mugshots, housed at individual agencies, and computerized them into a database that is accessible to all participating law enforcement agencies at multiple locations in the HIDTA region. The payoff from implementing systems designed to improve the sharing of information about targets and informants seemed much lower. Such intelligence information is highly sensitive and cannot be freely exchanged without careful safeguards. When asked about the use of such systems (whether computerized or not), all of the enforcement personnel interviewed expressed concerns about sharing intelligence information, and many claimed that enforcement personnel sometimes withhold particularly sensitive information, at least temporarily. As a result, there are limits to the efficiency that can be gained by attempting to improve intelligence coordination.

The lowest grades would go to enforcement-oriented task forces—the predominant type of activity in the five HIDTA sites reviewed—although that is by no means true of every law enforcement task force. Some task forces were put together to focus on a particular situation where an absence of coordination among enforcement

agencies was clearly identified as an obstacle to effective enforcement. But such task forces appeared to be the exception more than the norm. More often, it seemed, task forces were assembled on the assumption that having personnel from different agencies work together would necessarily improve enforcement.

Yet this assumption should not be regarded as a law of nature. When enforcement personnel from different agencies work together, it can reduce redundant enforcement, improve intelligence sharing, and enhance the range of skills brought to bear on cases. But it is also true that individual agencies have distinct operational approach, culture, and esprit de corps, the effectiveness of which can be undermined when personnel are mingled with those from other agencies. Ask a group of FBI agents how they feel about conducting field operations with DEA agents, and you will hear DEA agents characterized as reckless and sloppy—"a bunch of cowboys," was one description offered in an interview. Ask a group of DEA agents how they like working in the field with FBI agents, and you will hear FBI agents described as inexperienced. "The typical FBI agent," said one DEA agent in an interview, "has spent his entire career working on one bank fraud case. You want to take down a crack house with that guy?" So whether a multi-agency task force improves the overall effectiveness of enforcement in an area is a question that has to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

It is clear that HIDTA can provide an effective framework for bringing together different agencies. Another DEA agent commented: "the DEA and the FBI hate each other and will never voluntarily work together. But if we can both pretend we're working for HIDTA, then we can get along fine." Still, bear in mind that there were multi-agency task forces prior to the HIDTA program. There are multi-agency task forces in HIDTA

regions that exist outside of the HIDTA program. And there are other programs, most notably the Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF), that promote task force-based coordination among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. So even where a particular HIDTA task force is having a beneficial effect on law enforcement cooperation, there is a question of whether that cooperation would occur without HIDTA. And in some cases, it is clear that it would. Indeed, in some situations, HIDTA task forces represent task forces that existed in a region under other auspices prior to the HIDTA. In those cases, HIDTA funds are being used to pay for something that would be taking place anyway.

What this discussion suggests is that the threat assessments carried out by sites should take a broader view, looking not only at the drug trafficking threats in an area, but also at weaknesses in the enforcement community's response to those threats. Specifically, threat assessments should identify where cooperation among law enforcement agencies is lacking, how the absence of cooperation limits effectiveness, and how HIDTA initiatives would work to improve cooperation and enhance enforcement effectiveness.

Much of this analysis would have to take place at the level of a HIDTA's Executive Committee. Members of Executive Committees interviewed generally described their role as two-fold: first, helping to determine the candidate initiatives submitted to ONDCP for funding; and second, helping to oversee the implementation of initiatives by the HIDTA director. What's curious is that rarely was the Executive Committee described by its members as a vehicle for strategic coordination among participating agencies. This is somewhat surprising. The leading goal of the HIDTA

program is to foster interagency cooperation, and strategic cooperation is every bit as important as operational cooperation. Moreover, a HIDTA's Executive Committee provides a structured forum for top decision-makers from the major law enforcement agencies in a region to coordinate strategy.

### ***Customer Focus and Satisfaction***

All of the HIDTA sites have initiatives designed to promote the cooperative sharing of intelligence information. As stated above, operational deconfliction systems and efforts that built easily accessible databases of less-sensitive information appeared more effective than efforts aimed at improving the quality and availability of investigative intelligence. One reason, suggested earlier, is that investigative intelligence is more sensitive in nature, and therefore it cannot be freely distributed without safeguards, limiting the potential efficiency gains of a coordinated system of intelligence. But another reason is that much of the work was of the intelligence centers examined for this report was not case-driven.

Staff at intelligence centers often saw one of their roles as generating intelligence information that would lead to new investigations. But when investigative personnel were interviewed, they said they rarely made use of such intelligence. In their view, intelligence was most valuable when it was generated specifically to support a specific case. As an example, one of the activities of many intelligence centers was to conduct network analyses of mobile phone calls. Law enforcement agents felt that such analyses were valuable in the context of an existing case, but were rarely useful as a lead to new investigations.

One approach to improving the effectiveness of intelligence centers would be to define enforcement personnel as their customers and manage the centers with increased customer focused. Since the primary goal of intelligence centers is to support investigative work, there is no reason why the effectiveness of intelligence centers can't be evaluated on the basis of customer satisfaction, just as many businesses do.

### ***Outcome Measures***

Congress has mandated that ONDCP conduct annual evaluations of the effectiveness of the National Drug Control Strategy, of which the HIDTA program is a part. Unfortunately, there is no flawless way, and perhaps not even a good way, to gauge the effectiveness of drug enforcement efforts. The standard method is to quantify the operational activities of agencies involved in drug law enforcement. Number of arrests of drug traffickers, volume of drug seizures, and number of drug trafficking organizations dismantled are examples of measures that are reported by HIDTA sites.

But there are significant drawbacks to using such measures of organizational activity to assess enforcement effectiveness. While it is clear that improved enforcement can result in more arrests, seizures, or organizations dismantled, it is also evident that better enforcement can have the opposite impact on these measurements. Because all law enforcement has some deterrent effect, effective enforcement can change the behavior of traffickers in ways that make such measures arrests less likely. Moreover, the focus on certain measures of organizational activity can make it difficult to implement certain types of enforcement that by their nature do not produce high numbers.

Start with arrests. Suppose that effective retail enforcement leads drug dealers to abandon open markets, and instead sell drugs to users in discrete transactions removed

from public view. This change is highly desirable. Arranging deals transaction-by-transaction is far more costly for dealers and users than is any kind of open market, such as a drive-by market or crack house. Moreover, underground drug markets are far less prone to violence than open markets, and are generally far less damaging to the quality of life in involved communities. However, when drug markets leave the street in favor of more discrete locations and methods of connecting buyers and sellers, arrests will inevitably decline.

So arrests may decline because enforcement leads dealers to be more careful in avoiding enforcement. Arrests can also decline because of changes in the demand for drugs. Lower demand can mean fewer transactions and hence fewer arrests. Again, arrests become an ambiguous measure of enforcement effectiveness. And arrests can decline because of shifts in enforcement practices that should not be considered less effective. This is particularly the case when enforcement is directed at emerging threats. Emerging threats involve newer, smaller markets, which means fewer targets and less intelligence information about those targets. Thus, when enforcement is redirected from an established threat—where there is a large and established market, well-known to enforcement personnel—to an emerging drug treat, arrests will almost always decline.

There is a similar story with seizures, which are also an equivocal indicator of enforcement effectiveness. Suppose that there is an increase in seizures of a particular drug in a HIDTA region. Does this mean that enforcement agencies are doing a better job of interdicting shipments? Or does it mean that more of that drug is being imported into the region? Or have smugglers simply changed their methods, switching to routes or conveyances that are more vulnerable to detection? By the same token, a decline in

seizures in a region might reveal better enforcement, if enforcement prompted traffickers to shift routes to other regions or switch to more costly methods of concealment that are less likely to be interdicted.

It should be noted that seizure information is not without important value. With additional research, it is sometimes possible to determine with some confidence the cause of changes in seizure patterns. Moreover, such changes are often an important leading indicator of developments in drug production or trafficking. For example, in the first quarter of 1991, the U.S. Customs Service recorded no seizures of Colombian heroin. Seizures then rose in each of the subsequent seven quarters; in the fourth quarter of 1992, there were over 120 seizures of Colombian heroin. At the time, this represented one of the only indicators—and probably the strongest sign—of Colombian heroin production and trafficking, especially since the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) had yet to identify a chemical signature for Colombian heroin processing. Still, it is one thing to use seizure information as an intelligence source; it is another thing to use seizure data as a measure of enforcement effectiveness.

Similar problems to the ones noted arise if enforcement is assessed by tallying the number of drug trafficking organizations dismantled. If better enforcement can lead to fewer arrests, it can obviously lead a lower count of organizations dismantled as well. Enforcement may lead drug trafficking organizations to be more cautious in their operations, especially in making new connections or otherwise expanding their business. This is a welcome development, but it makes organizations harder to attack.

But there are some additional concerns with counting organizations dismantled. Unlike arrests or seizures, there is no clear and easily applied definition of what a drug

trafficking organization is or what qualifies as the disruption or dismantling of a drug trafficking organization. Data are rarely useful unless there consistent measurement standards are applied, but when HIDTA personnel were asked in interviews what exactly determined when a drug trafficking organization was deemed “disrupted or dismantled” for the purpose or scorekeeping, answers were vague and inconsistent. In addition, as we will discuss in some more detail below, there is reason to believe that the structure of drug trafficking industries has changed sufficiently over the last two decades to make the dismantling a trafficking organization less meaningful and less useful as a goal for drug law enforcement.

A general drawback of measures of organizational activity is that they are at best proxies for the larger aim of drug law enforcement: to reduce drug use by making drugs more expensive and difficult to buy. This has led many to argue that the price of drugs is a better indicator of enforcement effectiveness than organizational outputs like arrests or seizures. Effective enforcement, it is argued, makes it costly for drug traffickers to do business and raises prices; ineffective enforcement has the opposite effect. The problem is that prices aren't only influenced by enforcement. Other developments in supply and demand can be more important, making it difficult to draw connections between drug prices and enforcement activity. Over the course of the 1980s, there was an enormous increase in drug enforcement efforts. Substantial numbers of agents were sent overseas to assist in crop eradication, the military was used to help with interdiction, forfeiture laws were aggressively employed, and unprecedented numbers of drug offenders were arrested and incarcerated. Yet the retail prices of the two most damaging (illicit) drugs of abuse—cocaine and heroin—plummeted.

Note as well that a HIDTA site's initiatives represent a small share of total enforcement activity in a particular region. Thus, to the extent that enforcement in a HIDTA region influences drug prices, non-HIDTA enforcement activities are likely to play a bigger role than are HIDTA activities. HIDTA initiatives in an area might be doing their job, but if non-HIDTA enforcement is slipping, then the effect of the HIDTA's work will not register in drug prices.

Or in any other broad outcome measure. For example, it is difficult to link drug enforcement efforts to changes in drug use. So many factors influence drug use that identifying the specific impact of enforcement on use is more than challenging. But it is even more difficult is to connect HIDTA activities to drug use, since, again, HIDTA activities are only a small portion of drug law enforcement activities in a region.

In an effort to comply with the Congressional mandate to assess the effectiveness of the National Drug Control Strategy, ONDCP in 1998 implemented Performance Measures of Effectiveness (PME) System, which links the goals and objectives of the Strategy with quantifiable performance targets and measures.

One of Strategy's objectives is to "Improve the ability of High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTAs) to counter drug trafficking." Under the PME System, this objective is linked to three targets:

1. **HIDTA development**—Each HIDTA will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Federal, State, and local law enforcement efforts by the progressive compliance with the National HIDTA Developmental Standards at the rate of at least 10 percent per year beginning with the 1998 base year, with HIDTAs in compliance with 90 percent of the standards by 2007.
2. **Drug trafficking organizations in HIDTAs**—By 2002, increase the proportion of drug trafficking organizations disrupted or dismantled as identified in HIDTA threat assessments by 15 percent above the proportion in the 1997 base year. By 2007, increase the proportion disrupted or dismantled to 30 percent above the base year ratio.

3. **Drug-related violent crime in HIDTAs**—By 2002, reduce by 20 percent the rate of drug related homicides, robberies, rapes, and assaults in HIDTAs as compared to the 1996 base year. By 2007, reduce specified drug-related crimes in HIDTAs by 40 percent.

We will discuss the first of these three objectives later. The second and third objectives clearly have serious weaknesses. Based on the foregoing discussion, it should be clear that measuring the number of organizations disrupted or dismantled is an uncertain indicator of enforcement effectiveness, and single-minded pursuit of this goal could lead to undesirable emphases in enforcement, such as an avoidance of emerging drug threats, where identifying and tackling organizations is relatively more difficult. Drug-related homicides, robberies, rapes, and assaults are, arguably, even weaker indicators of a HIDTA's effectiveness. To the degree that such basic criminal activity is influenced by law enforcement, they are primarily affected by low-level, local enforcement. But in most cases only a minor share of such enforcement is assigned to HIDTA in any meaningful strategic or operational sense. In Houston, for example, only 2.9 percent of local law enforcement personnel are assigned to HIDTA; in South Florida, the figure is 2.6 percent; in Los Angeles, 0.7 percent.

### ***Intelligence, Enforcement, and the Changing Nature of Drug Trafficking***

As noted, one of the three stated targets for HIDTA sites under the PME is to increase the disruption or dismantling of drug trafficking organizations. This has long been a major goal of drug law enforcement, and it is based on the idea that dismantling an organization removes the capacity of the drug industry to supply drugs to a degree that removing individual dealers does not.

The rationale is logical on its surface, and there is certainly some merit to it. But the goal of dismantling organizations may be less compelling now than it once was. And

as a result, it may be appropriate for the HIDTA program to rethink its emphasis on this objective.

Thirty years ago, traditional organized crime groups, organizations whose membership and boundaries were easily defined, dominated high-level drug dealing. Today, however, it appears that the entity we call a drug trafficking organization is less well defined. When enforcement agents with years of experience were asked to describe changes in the structure of trafficking industries, they consistently noted that organizations today are far more nebulous than traditional organized crime groups. With the exception of certain gangs operating in retail dealing, enforcement agents argued that organizations today are better thought of a confederation or network of free-lance traffickers, or small trafficking groups, than a single, tight-knit, organization.

When asked about the implications for the goal of dismantling drug trafficking organizations, most agents agreed that the objective made less sense than it used to. In fact, several agents used the Internet as an analogy. The Internet, they noted, was designed so that the destruction of particular nodes or links would not threaten the whole system. Similarly, agents suggested, the networked structure of drug industries makes it more difficult to bring down a major part of a drug-distribution system. If a large section of a traditional organized crime group is dismantled, others within that organization may be unable to function. In today's drug trafficking environment, traffickers at all levels are likely to work with several groups, both above and below in the distribution chain, so that the loss of one set of connections is a less serious blow.

If this reporting is accurate, it not only has implications for the HIDTA goal of dismantling organizations, but also for the more general strategy of "working up the

chain,” whereby arrested drug dealers and traffickers are viewed as opportunities to identify higher level dealers and traffickers that they do business with. For those higher level traffickers may not be part of a larger organization in the way that they would have been in the past, and the removal of high-level traffickers from the distribution system may not frustrate the workings of the distribution system to the degree it once did.

The most interesting comments in this regard came from a former NYPD narcotics officer then assigned to the NY/NJ HIDTA. He argued that the traditional enforcement strategy of “working up the chain” had things backwards, and that the goal should be to “work down the chain.” As an example, he supposed the arrest of a mid-level New York City dealer. Currently enforcement will try to use that arrest as an opportunity to identify higher-level dealers. But, he argued, instead of negotiating with this dealer to try to find out who his suppliers are, it would make more sense to try to learn who his buyers are. He pointed out that most of the crime and violence associated with drug dealing occurs at or near the retail level, as do the biggest price markups. Moreover, availability of drugs to end-users is determined by the scope and nature of retail distribution outlets, not the market’s wholesale infrastructure. He suggested that information about a gang, say one operating in a public housing project, that this dealer supplied would be far more valuable than information about a high-level trafficker from whom he bought.

### ***National-Level Management of the HIDTA Program***

How might ONDCP and Congress manage the HIDTA program in order to make it more effective? With a small staff and limited resources, ONDCP cannot directly manage site-level initiatives. Nor, in any case, would such micromanagement be

advisable. Assessing the effectiveness of initiatives according to specified outcome measures makes sense in principle, but in practice there are significant questions about how well this can be expected to work. The PME goals of dismantling drug trafficking organizations, and reducing drug related homicides, robberies, rapes, and assaults are worthy objectives, and holding HIDTA sites accountable for these outcomes may be better than no accountability, but these goals are, in all honesty, weak measures of the effectiveness of a HIDTA in enhancing law enforcement coordination.

Given the limitations of quantifiable outcome measures, it may be more promising to tighten the boundaries of HIDTA activities. This would require a clearer conception of what types of initiatives are most likely to enhance coordination, and on what basis initiatives should be approved. Earlier in this section, it was suggested that deconfliction systems and information sharing systems appeared to be most effective in improving coordination, especially if one considers the likelihood that the initiative would occur in the absence of HIDTA, a consideration that makes many task forces look less effective.

This makes sense and it suggests a model for HIDTA's role in enhancing interagency coordination. There are many initiatives that generate important benefits for multiple law enforcement agencies, but would never get developed, funded, or implemented by a single agency. Consider again the NY/NJ HIDTA's photo-imaging system. Even if it were possible for a single agency to build such a system, it wouldn't be worth it, because most of the benefits accrue to other agencies. On this view, HIDTA can be seen as providing "public goods" to the law enforcement community, public goods that tend to get overlooked when agencies are competing for funding.

Classically, public goods consist of infrastructure whose benefits are sufficiently broad that no one wants to pay for it out of his own pocket. Deconfliction systems and information systems are most likely to fit that bill. Task forces may, in some cases, constitute such public goods, but they often do not, and so it would seem that task forces should not be given the benefit of the doubt that they currently are.

Note that a public-good conception of the HIDTA program suggests an important role for standard-setting. To take a simple example, there are multiple formats that are used to store digitally-scanned documents. Different software programs use different formats, and major compatibility problems can arise when formats are not standardized. Without some centralized standard-setting, it is inevitable that enforcement agencies will end up with millions of dollars invested in incompatible scanning systems. HIDTA could play a valuable role by helping to establish uniform standards.

There are, of course, difficult issues raised by setting the bar higher as to what types of initiatives fit with HIDTA goals, and also by applying a public-good model of HIDTA's role. For one thing, there are public-good problems within law enforcement agencies, and not merely across agencies. Many local law enforcement agencies are woefully underinvested in information technology, often because long-term investments tend to lose out to short-term labor expenses in budgetary battles. Should HIDTA step in to address such a shortcoming? In many cases, there are investments that a HIDTA could make that would have a high payoff in terms of law enforcement effectiveness, but do nothing for interagency coordination.

Another difficulty is balancing the need for strict standards for HIDTA initiatives with the need for flexibility to account for variation in local circumstances. Consider that

only two local law enforcement agencies—the Houston Police Department and the Harris County Sheriff's Office—participate in the Houston HIDTA. By contrast, 31 local police departments participate in the South Florida HIDTA. The explanation is that the State of Texas had a cooperative framework in place that predates HIDTA and so the Houston HIDTA felt it would be redundant to bring more local agencies into their fold. But allowing HIDTAs the flexibility to adopt dramatically different structures of operation, while maintaining firm standards, is a difficult balancing act.

This challenge is underscored when one recognizes that some of the HIDTA initiatives that appear most effective in a larger public policy sense have little to do with promoting law enforcement coordination. The NY/NJ HIDTA's Armory Project is a shining example. At reasonable expense, the project has converted two National Guard armories located in drug-involved neighborhoods into vibrant youth-oriented community centers. Such initiatives are incompatible with the idea that HIDTA initiatives should have clearly defined boundaries.

This discussion suggests that management of the HIDTA program should lessen emphasis on the second and third objectives established under the PME system: increasing drug trafficking organizations disrupted or dismantled, and reducing drug related homicides, robberies, rapes, and assaults. The first objective—improving compliance with the HIDTA Developmental Standards—should not be scaled back. The Developmental Standards set infrastructure and process goals for HIDTA sites that are far more likely to promote effective coordination among law enforcement agencies than are standard measures of organizational activity.

In fact, a good case can be made for strengthening the Developmental Standards. If someone who knew little about the HIDTA program were to look at the Developmental Standards (see Appendix A), he or she would assume that task forces played a relative minor role in HIDTA sites, and that most HIDTA activity involved building information systems and other infrastructure designed to improve information sharing, enhancing strategic coordination among law enforcement agencies, and improving accountability. After all, "Task Force Operations" are simply one item under the general goal of "Teamwork," while there are six items under the goal of "Information Sharing," three under "Strategic Planning and Execution," and three under "Accountability." In practice, however, task forces are the predominant activity at the five HIDTA sites reviewed for this report.

If the distribution of HIDTA funding and activity more closely mirrored the distribution of activities identified in the Developmental Standards, it is likely that the HIDTA program would do a better job of promoting coordination of drug law enforcement.

## Appendix A: HIDTA Developmental Standards

<b>A. INTELLIGENCE AND INFORMATION SHARING</b>		
Basic	Intermediate	Optimal
<b>1. Event Deconfliction Services</b>		
A.1.1 <input type="checkbox"/> service to all HIDTA task forces	A.1.4 <input type="checkbox"/> service to all drug control agencies within HIDTA	A.1.5 <input type="checkbox"/> service to all enforcement in HIDTA region
A.1.2 <input type="checkbox"/> work week availability		A.1.6 <input type="checkbox"/> 24 hours/7 day availability
A.1.3 <input type="checkbox"/> same day service		A.1.7 <input type="checkbox"/> immediate service
<b>2. Case/Subject Deconfliction</b>		
A.2.1 <input type="checkbox"/> criminal subject deconfliction to all HIDTA task forces	A.2.2 <input type="checkbox"/> pointer index service to the HIDTA region	A.2.4 <input type="checkbox"/> connectivity to national pointer index
	A.2.3 <input type="checkbox"/> connectivity of all HIDTA task forces to the Intelligence Center and each other	A.2.5 <input type="checkbox"/> pointer index service to other HIDTAs and HIDTA agencies
<b>3. Post Seizure Analysis</b>		
A.3.1 <input type="checkbox"/> ad hoc post seizure analysis	A.3.2 <input type="checkbox"/> post seizure analysis and dissemination for HIDTA task forces and participating agencies	A.3.3 <input type="checkbox"/> post seizure analysis and national dissemination
<b>4. Analytical Case Support</b>		
A.4.1 <input type="checkbox"/> case support for most significant cases	A.4.2 <input type="checkbox"/> specific analytical support to HIDTA task forces (e.g. too, Title III, and document analysis)	A.4.3 <input type="checkbox"/> full-service case support to all
<b>5. Connectivity to Other Databases</b>		
A.5.1 <input type="checkbox"/> collocated access to major databases	A.5.3 <input type="checkbox"/> access to unique databases	A.5.5 <input type="checkbox"/> access to global intelligence
A.5.2 <input type="checkbox"/> access to regional intelligence	A.5.4 <input type="checkbox"/> access to domestic intelligence	
<b>6. Strategic Intelligence</b>		
A.6.1 <input type="checkbox"/> collection of trend and pattern analysis	A.6.2 <input type="checkbox"/> full trend, pattern analysis, and special assessments produced	A.6.3 <input type="checkbox"/> predictive analysis (strategic intelligence products)

<b>B. TEAMWORK</b>		
<b>1. Task Force Operations</b>		
B.1.1 <input type="checkbox"/> multi-jurisdictional, collocated task forces	B.1.2 <input type="checkbox"/> joint OCDETF-level investigations, HIDTA region multi-task force operations (information exchange, case coordination)	B.1.3 <input type="checkbox"/> routine/institutional multi-task force OCDETF operations
		B.1.4 <input type="checkbox"/> task force operations with other HIDTAs
<b>2. Training</b>		
B.2.1 <input type="checkbox"/> joint training for HIDTA task forces	B.2.2 <input type="checkbox"/> joint training for HIDTA region	B.2.3 <input type="checkbox"/> export specialized training to requesting HIDTAs

<b>C. STRATEGIC PLANNING AND EXECUTION</b>		
<b>Basic</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Optimal</b>
<b>1. Planning</b>		
C.1.1 <input type="checkbox"/> develop available HIDTA regional threat assessment, strategy, and annual report	C.1.4 <input type="checkbox"/> produce measurable outputs and outcomes	C.1.5 <input type="checkbox"/> achieve targeted (articulated) outputs and outcomes
C.1.2 <input type="checkbox"/> correlate strategy to threat		C.1.6 <input type="checkbox"/> establish evaluation capacity
C.1.3 <input type="checkbox"/> identify measurable objectives		C.1.7 <input type="checkbox"/> integrate planning with other HIDTAs
<b>2. Initiative Execution</b>		
C.2.1 <input type="checkbox"/> implement initiatives which execute strategy	C.2.2 <input type="checkbox"/> integrated systems approach among HIDTA task forces (investigation, intelligence, interdiction, prosecution)	C.2.3 <input type="checkbox"/> integrated systems approach within HIDTA region (parole, courts, probation, corrections, testing, sanctions)
<b>3. Resource Management</b>		
C.3.1 <input type="checkbox"/> correlate budget to strategy (initiatives)	C.3.2 <input type="checkbox"/> periodically review and reallocate resources	C.3.3 <input type="checkbox"/> continuous review and reallocation of resources

<b>D. Accountability</b>		
<b>1. Fiscal Controls</b>		
D.1.1 <input type="checkbox"/> establish sound fiscal/programmatic management, including shared fiscal reports among EXCOM members	D.1.3 <input type="checkbox"/> implement a scheduled, self-inspection program to monitor HIDTA resources	D.1.5 <input type="checkbox"/> implement a self-review process to evaluate initiatives and recommend needs to EXCOM
D.1.2 <input type="checkbox"/> identify and implement resource saving systems, eliminate duplication	D.1.4 <input type="checkbox"/> share successes and failures with all HIDTAs (recommend best practices)	D.1.6 <input type="checkbox"/> adapt efficiencies developed by other HIDTAs
<b>2. Inventory Controls</b>		
D.2.1 <input type="checkbox"/> establish and maintain HIDTA equipment inventory and control system	D.2.2 <input type="checkbox"/> share equipment between initiatives	D.2.3 <input type="checkbox"/> share equipment with other HIDTAs
<b>3. Information Management</b>		
D.3.1 <input type="checkbox"/> establish and information management system		

## Appendix B: Interview Guide

It is possible to identify three different organizational levels within the HIDTA program. First, the entire program is administered **nationally** out of ONDCP in Washington, D.C. Second, each of the five sites possesses its own administrative structure. Third, within each site individual **initiatives** exist which are the operational unit of the program. Given that the site level is our unit of analysis, we plan to concentrate our inquiry on questions of administration and resource allocation at the second level. In order to fully understand the program, however, we will be examining organizational issues at both the national and initiative level.

Each interview will begin with asking the respondent to identify their position, "home agency," length of service with the agency and HIDTA, and to describe their general responsibilities. Then, as appropriate based on the interviewee's position within the organization, the interviewer will ask questions derived from the overall interview framework below.

**A. Organizational questions (National) – *(comparable questions would be asked both of ONDCP staff and senior staff at each of the HIDTA sites)***

1. How does your site function in general relative to the ONDCP? (Alternately for ONDCP officials, "What is your relationship to each of the 5 sites?")
  - a. Who is your point of contact?
  - b. What type of contacts?
  - c. How often?
2. What formal exchanges or interactions are there?
  - a. Reports or submissions?
  - b. Meetings or conferences? Etc.
  - c. What is their purpose? Value?
3. To what degree does the ONDCP participate in the selection of initiatives or priorities at the site level?

- a. Where do the proposals come from? (Bottom up vs. Top down)
  - b. How many (approx. %) get forwarded to ONDCP?
  - c. Who has the final say? On what basis or criteria?
  - d. What guidance does ONDCP provide to sites?
4. How is it determined how much money each site will receive?
- a. Could you please describe the process by which funds are distributed to each site.
  - b. What is the role of ONDCP in this process? Do you/they indicate priorities and/or activities that would be preferred or more strongly supported?
  - c. What is the relationship of the individual initiatives to the project amount? In other words, during the budget process does the site propose a list of initiatives which add up to a given amount, or is a larger sum divided up among a group of initiatives?
  - d. Does ONDCP make recommendations or directives as to funding levels for individual initiatives? Or does ONDCP manage only the total spending level?
5. What kind of oversight or follow-up is there
- a. What types of goals are defined – are they clearly defined?
  - b. Are performance goals defined entirely by the initiatives? Or does the HIDTA site staff help define performance goals? Does ONDCP staff also help define performance goals?
  - c. Are comparisons of actual to goal performance made at the initiative level? At the site level? By whom?
  - d. How frequently are comparisons of actual to goal performance made?
  - e. Where performance fails to meet goals, what consequences ensue? Is there management follow-up at the site or ONDCP level to examine the causes of failure?
  - f. Are goals and/or achievements compared across sites and/or initiatives to determine relative return on investment?

**B. Organizational questions (Site level). *(These questions would be addressed to both the site administrators and managers at the initiative level).***

1. Please describe the general organization.
  - a. Is there an organizational chart? For the HIDTA site as a whole? For individual initiatives?
  - b. Who's in charge? Who answers to whom? (Specifically, who is your "boss" – your HIDTA boss or your home agency superior? How do you reconcile the two?)
  - c. How are roles defined?
  - d. Other lines of authority and communication/interaction? How closely does day-to-day practice conform to the formal organization charts?

2. How were key staff (of the site or initiative) identified and appointed?
  - a. Do they have prior allegiances to particular agencies in addition to their employing agency?
  - b. What circumstances led to their selection? Is there a formal assignment process?
  
3. Are there regular planning/strategy sessions?
  - a. Administratively?
  - b. Across initiatives?
  - c. Who participates?
  - d. What planning documentation is created (if any apart from the standard communications to ONDCP)?
  
4. Did "the *HIDTA*" begin with a clearly developed set of goals. Specifically what were they? How were they developed? Who participated?
  
5. How have the goals evolved over time? Has the annual budget review cycle played a central part in the goal definition process? Or do the goals emerge from management of operational units only to be reported in the budget cycle? See the other questions above regarding the setting of goals.
  
6. How are priorities determined within the site today?

C. Procedural questions (initiative level).

1. Begin with open-ended: Can you describe a typical case.
  - do you generate most cases directly or are they referred by other agencies?
  
2. Who makes the key case decisions – undercover buys, search warrants, wiretaps, arrests, cooperation agreements?
  
3. To what degree are agents collocated – percent of time spent at collocated base as opposed to on the street? As opposed to own agency location?
  
4. Who determines strategy/tactics?
  
5. Who is in charge making day-to-day decisions? Is one agency dominant – does this agency also contribute most of the personnel?
  
6. Who controls the compensation and assignment of agents?
  - a. Allocation of overtime expenses?
  - b. Salary (all controlled by participating agency contracts?)
  - c. Promotion/regognition?
  - d. Allocation of efforts to individual investigations?

7. Are there formal decision-making protocols defined uniquely for the HIDTA initiative? Or, case-by-case? Evolved over time?

D. Coordination/cooperation questions. (Site and initiative staff and senior staff of participating agencies)

1. How does the HIDTA program interact with other law enforcement agencies?

2. Apart from hands-on cooperation at the initiative level, has the HIDTA program created cooperation at the planning and strategy level of involved agencies

3. How are investigative teams constituted within HIDTA initiatives?

a. Do mixed teams work together on the street – surveillance, warrant execution, arrests, wiretap operation

b. Do mixed teams conduct direct undercover work – exchange of agents, undercover buddy groups, mixed agency roles agent-runner/agent (all one way? Do federal agencies gain agents primarily)

c. Or are teams merely coordinated, with single agency teams conducting the high cooperation tasks?

4. Do any specific examples of successful coordination that have come about as a result of HIDTA stick out in your mind? Please describe them? What, do you think, accounted for the success?

5. Are any examples of agencies not working in a coordination fashion – failures to coordinate – memorable? What accounted for that failure? What might have been done differently in the future?

6. Are there regular interactions with non-HIDTA law enforcement agencies? Do any formal documents exist which describe these relationships?

7. Although HIDTA plays a large part in encouraging interagency coordination in this area, can you describe any other examples of cooperative efforts that have emerged outside of the HIDTA structure? Any notable failures? What do you think accounted for them?

8. How has the availability of HIDTA resources encouraged the creation of new cooperative efforts?

9. Has HIDTA led to the creation of any new models of cooperation or has it simply encouraged more joint efforts along the lines of prior efforts (examples?)?

10. Has HIDTA led to the creation of cooperative efforts among agencies not previously cooperating? Has it helped create trust where previously missing?

11. If you are in a position to comment, how have things changed over the life of the HIDTA program in this area with regard to coordination?
12. What are the benefits of cooperation – deconfliction? Expanded agent pool (is this a two-way street or benefit primarily to federal agencies)? Trust and networking – expanded asset pool (again, a two-way street? Resource concentration for larger operations? Complimentary competences – e.g. undercover work from local level combined with federal document control orientation?
13. Does cooperation have costs as well as benefits – increased risks of leaks? Physical overhead increase? More decision-making overhead? Reduced accountability?
14. What environmental variables affect the value of cooperation?
  - a. Asset/target overlap (geography, ethnicity, gangs/networks)
  - b. Need to cross jurisdictions
  - c. Bad-guy operational integration – value of intelligence chains?
  - d. Agency resource availability – less resources implies more incentives and probably less duplication in joint operations
  - e. Degree of complementary competences
  - f. Pre-existing cooperation

**E. Results Characterizations (ask these questions at national, site and initiative levels)**

1. What have been the greatest successes of the HIDTA (program/site or initiative)?
  - a. Are there particular organizational or process features which account for these successes?
  - b. Have other sites or initiatives been encouraged to or able to emulate these successes?
2. What are the greatest failures of the HIDTA (program, site or initiative)?
  - a. Are there particular organizational or process features which account for these failures?
  - b. How have other sites or initiatives been able to avoid these failures?
3. How have perceptions of the HIDTA (program, site or initiative) results changed over time?
  - a. Are there particular organizational or process features which have been changed which account for these changes in perceptions of the results?
  - b. Have other HIDTA sites or initiatives served as models for these changes?

**F. Resource Issues.**

1. What are the non-HIDTA resources operating in the HIDTA area?
2. Where do resources come from? Who/which agencies contribute either money or individuals?
3. Who determines the budget for your site/initiative? How does that happen?
4. If an unforeseen need for money arises, to whom do you turn? Who controls the overtime budget?
5. What would you identify as the most important issues regarding resources? What would you do differently if you could?

**G. Shared Intelligence Functions**

1. What types of information are shared?
  - a. Target Characterizations (identity, operating style, geography, links, agencies with interest)
  - b. Other types of information sharing?
2. Issues as to information quality?
  - a. Completeness limitations due to concern about exposure of sources or loss of control or credit – lack of trust
  - b. Completeness/quality loss due to logistical difficulties
  - c. Completeness/quality loss due to lack of commitment/diligence/perceived value
3. Factors governing value of information?
  - a. Target density – actual, known, targeted – and value off deconfliction
  - b. Access processes (through task forces only; or for all participating agencies?)
4. Are intelligence assets shared?
  - a. Is asset data included with target data in database?
  - b. Or are assets shared on an as needed basis?
  - c. Do the initiatives develop their own assets or rely on participating agency assets?

**H. Baseline supplementation questions -- Drug Problems in the HIDTA Area**

1. Drug Markets
  - a. Level – retail or anonymous wholesale
  - b. Locations
  - c. Concomitant disorder/violence

2. Organizations operating
  - a. Types
  - b. Size, operating style, relationships
3. Trafficking Damage
  - a. Licit industries dominated
  - b. Corruption