



NNOAC *Insight*

The Official Position of the National Narcotic Officers' Associations Coalition

HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING AREA FUNDING

The National Narcotic Officers Associations Coalition strongly supports the funding and continued congressional support for the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Program (HIDTA), within the Office of National Drug Control Policy. In 1988, Congress initiated an effort to aid federal, state and local law enforcement by establishing the HIDTA program as a means of providing coordination of enforcement efforts in critical regions of the country. This coordinated effort was critical due to competing strategies within the federal, state, and local law enforcement community.

HIDTA Program Highlights

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTAs) are regions designated by the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) that have critical drug trafficking problems that adversely impact the United States. The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (P. L. 100-690, November 18, 1988), and the ONDCP Reauthorization Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-277) authorizes the Director of ONDCP, in consultation with the Attorney General, Secretary of the Treasury, and the Governor of each applicable state, to designate any specified area of the United States as a high intensity drug trafficking area.

Building on the concept that the country faces not a national or federal drug abuse epidemic, but a series of regional and local drug epidemics, that can and should be addressed regionally, the HIDTA Program is designated around the geographic boundary of a county. In considering whether to designate an area as a high intensity drug trafficking area, the Director of ONDCP shall consider, in addition to such other criteria as the Director of ONDCP considers to be appropriate:

1. The extent to which the area is a center of illegal drug production, manufacturing, importation, or distribution;
2. 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;

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3. The extent to which drug-related activities in the area are having a harmful impact in other areas of the country; and
4. The extent to which a significant increase in allocation of Federal resources is necessary to respond adequately to drug-related activities in the area.

The mission of the HIDTA Program is to enhance and facilitate the coordination of 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.

HIDTAs strengthen America's drug control efforts by forging partnerships among local, state and Federal law enforcement agencies and function as a coordination umbrella to facilitate information and criminal intelligence sharing, cooperative investigations, and joint operations related to reducing drug trafficking. A tenet of the HIDTA Program is the importance of state and local law enforcement input into the regional enforcement strategy. Data for CY2000 indicated that 32,365 arrests for drug offenses were made by all federal law enforcement agencies. In CY2001 the Drug Enforcement Administration made 35,000 arrests for drug offenses, and during the same time period, 1,586,902 arrests for drug offenses were made by state and local law enforcement agencies. The mission of HIDTA is to measurably reduce the impact of regional drug production, trafficking, and distribution in their designated areas thus impacting other parts of the United States through unified initiatives concerning investigation, intelligence, interdiction, prosecution, and demand reduction. Central to this mission is the expansion of cooperative, multi-jurisdictional law enforcement efforts involving HIDTA funded and non-HIDTA funded resources.

With a balanced partnership approach under the control and direction of an Executive Board, each HIDTA produces a regional threat assessment, develops a strategy to address the threat, and builds initiatives to implement the strategy. HIDTA resources are to be used only to fund and support initiatives with sufficient measurable and attainable outputs/goals that target and advance the HIDTA strategy. Federal funds appropriated to the HIDTA Program assist multiple law enforcement agencies, aligned with a HIDTA, that have documented a need and have committed personnel and other resources to mutual drug control efforts.

A key component of each HIDTA is the mandate to have one Executive Board whose role is to provide direction and oversight in implementing the HIDTA concept and establishing the goals of the region. Fostering a balanced partnership, the Executive Board will be comprised of an equal number of Federal and state/local law enforcement leaders in the HIDTA region who together make decisions regarding the regional HIDTA strategy, initiatives/budget, and internal policies and procedures. The Executive Board is responsible for providing direction and oversight to ensure that the HIDTA funds and resources are utilized in compliance with all program guidance and policies, that the

HIDTA achieves measurable results in addressing the threat. The HIDTA Director, in concert with the Executive Board and various committees, is responsible for the successful implementation of its HIDTA Program. The Director provides day-to-day program and administrative management and serves as a conduit to the participating states and agencies for directives, policy and related administrative information required by ONDCP, and the HIDTA Executive Board.

The Executive Board will oversee and direct the development of HIDTA Initiatives to implement the strategy and target the threat. The collocated and commingled drug task forces and initiatives that are built to implement the strategy must be comprised of full-time, multi-agency participants. If the HIDTA incorporates an existing task force, intelligence or support operation, or other program into the HIDTA's Strategy, then the value added by such a group to the HIDTA must be evident.

The Initiatives must be focused with measurable outputs (goals/objectives) that justify the requested HIDTA funding. Initiatives must be reevaluated each year by the Executive Board to determine that the initiative should continue to be included in the HIDTA's strategy. Such determination is made based upon the current drug threat, reviews of the Initiatives by the HIDTA, and progress that the initiative makes towards the identified goals and objectives. HIDTA Program funds will support only collocated Initiatives that include full-time Federal and state/local participation and directly support the collective HIDTA strategy.

Each initiative must provide a detailed budget identifying the funding requirements needed to achieve its expected outputs. Budgets must reflect realistic funding projections in support of each initiative's mission. As HIDTA funds are used to provide resources to an initiative that has a specific purpose in the overall HIDTA Strategy, HIDTA funds initiatives rather than agencies.

No other program of the federal government that integrates state, local, and federal assistance and financial awards, has this level of local oversight and direction.

Federal assistance and funding is provided for support of a collocated HIDTA Intelligence Subsystem that contains one or more intelligence centers with joint, collocated local, state, and Federal participation that provide full-service analytical support for the HIDTA initiatives. Participating agencies have access to information through on-site local, state, and Federal databases, case analysis, and other support services. The Intelligence Subsystem is frequently included within an Investigative Support Center (ISC), which may include other support elements such as technical equipment pools, electronic surveillance monitoring facilities, etc.

An integral component in the HIDTA Strategy is the need to enhance and increase the free exchange of drug and criminal intelligence and information among all HIDTA participants and other agencies throughout the region. An acknowledged weakness of the law enforcement effort is the insufficient dissemination of timely,

actionable criminal intelligence regarding the activities of drug traffickers and criminal organizations. The HIDTA program dramatically improves the collection, analysis, and dissemination of criminal intelligence by instituting a “ systems network” of sharing. The HIDTA program coordinates this effort with national intelligence centers such as the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) and the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC), and partnerships within all other HIDTA’s such as the Southwest Border HIDTA and Caribbean area HIDTAs, the source areas for much of the illegal narcotics brought into the United States.

Each HIDTA Investigative Support Center is the mechanism to implement communication improvements. Each ISC is managed and co-managed by law enforcement agencies as a multi-agency intelligence task force consisting of federal, state, and local agencies located within the HIDTA. Each HIDTA ISC is electronically linked via the HIDTA.net riss.net/LEO information system architecture. The Intelligence Center is tasked with and accomplishes the mechanism to collect and analyze information from all HIDTA task forces and other participating task forces and agencies, providing multi-source name checks, post seizure analysis, investigative case support, toll analysis, charting, graphic work and trend/predictive analysis. Each ISC also provides continual evaluation of the drug threat to the region, identifying changes in patterns and trends. By improving the exchange of intelligence and information through more efficient coordination and communications, the HIDTA intelligence centers enhance the ability of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to identify, arrest, and prosecute key members of narcotic trafficking and manufacturing organizations. Trend and predictive analysis developed by the ISC assists the HIDTA in utilizing its limited resources more efficiently.

Federal assistance is provided to each HIDTA as they establish an investigative system consisting of multi jurisdictional enforcement task forces. The Investigative Subsystem (task forces) focus on the identification and immobilization of individuals and organizations involved in the importation, distribution, and clandestine manufacturing of illegal narcotics. Where possible and in the more urban areas, large collocated HIDTA multi-jurisdictional groups have been formed. In counties where federal resources and manpower are scarce, HIDTA funding has been utilized to enhance existing multi-agency state and local task force operations. These task forces target the most significant individuals in their area involved in the distribution and trafficking of illegal narcotics, with the goal of developing OCDETF level cases resulting in the identification of major organizations and out of state sources. All task forces then provide input to the HIDTA Investigative Support Center.

In some HIDTAs, and integral component of the strategy is a Prosecution Subsystem. The Prosecution Subsystem interacts with the investigation and intelligence subsystem, to ensure that the additional impact cases investigated by task forces receive proper attention and focus in the judicial system. Additional investigative cases, identified through intelligence analysis, improperly prosecuted, will not have the resulting impact expected. Prosecutors specializing in intelligence driven and HIDTA

impact cases will be able to follow trends in distribution, manufacturing, and trafficking resulting in more efficient investigations and prosecutions.

Some HIDTA's also include a Demand Reduction Subsystem, which interacts and enhances both the investigative and prosecution subsystems by engaging in community coalition building. Through the efforts of HIDTA Demand Reduction Initiatives, efforts are made to focus and measurably reduce the use of drugs in the designated areas utilizing a regional strategy augmented by individual and local government plans. These initiatives have developed comprehensive public awareness and education campaigns assisting existing community anti-drug coalitions in educating the region's youth, families, and other at risk groups regarding the consequences of illicit drug use.

Depending on the drug threat and enforcement needs in the region, other activities that integrate local, state and Federal mutual drug control efforts within a HIDTA in achieving the goals of the National Drug Control Strategy, include joint interdiction efforts, investigative support such as surveillance or technical support, crime/forensic lab programs, and joint training.

Conclusion:

By taking a regional coordinated approach to implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy, the enforcement problems of target displacement, coordination, and cross-jurisdictional investigations is diminished. The HIDTA Program allows law enforcement to enhance enforcement activities, provide focus to regional problems, and facilitate cooperation between criminal justice agencies. Each HIDTA has developed a cohesive, comprehensive program combining regional, and locally focused initiatives to implement the national mission.