## Why HIDTA Must Remain Under ONDCP

The **High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) Program**, administered by the **Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)**, is a proven, cost-effective initiative that delivers measurable results in combating drug trafficking and related crime. Its unique structure promotes collaboration among federal, state, local, and tribal agencies, making it a model of intergovernmental cooperation. The deliberate placement and structure of the HIDTA Program within ONDCP was part of the original authorizing statute passed by Congress in 1988. As one of the federal government's most effective tools against drug trafficking and associated violence, HIDTA's continued placement under ONDCP is not merely administrative; it is essential to the effectiveness and fiscal responsibility of the Program. This partnership ensures that the President's National Drug Control Strategy is implemented across all levels of government.

## ONDCP Oversight Is Central to HIDTA's Effectiveness

**ONDCP** provides neutral oversight, leaving operational decisions to balanced regional executive boards that are strategically situated and best able to evaluate and address matters underway. ONDCP provides high-level coordination, and national connectivity essential to the success of the **HIDTA Program**. Its oversight ensures HIDTA operates HIDTA task forces that are empowered to operate independently from any one particular agency's mission thereby allowing executive boards to tailor strategies to local threats that have a direct impact on public safety. ONDCP is charged with developing and furthering the implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy. There are 19 federal agencies whose mission in one aspect or another has a drug related focus and is tasked with the implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy. The majority of these federal agencies play significant roles in the 33 HIDTAs across the country, serving as Executive Board members and assigning personnel to HIDTA task forces. ONDCP purposely remains apart from regional executive boards to remain a neutral arbitrator of the HIDTA Program. HIDTAs are tasked with standing up Intelligence Centers, case deconfliction services preventing dangerous "blue on blue" events from occurring and also hosts multiple platforms of law enforcement data sharing, collection and dissemination. If HIDTA were placed under one of these federal agencies, HIDTA would no longer be perceived as a neutral entity and sharing between state, local and federal law enforcement agencies would be severely hampered.



Published: 10-17-2025

***This decentralized structure among the 33 HIDTA executive boards around the country:***

- **Fosters balanced representation** among federal, state, local, and tribal partners
- **Creates locally tailored strategies** through regional executive boards
- **Prevents centralization** that could dilute and undermine regional effectiveness
- **Maintains operational accountability** through multi-agency outcomes rather than federal metrics alone
- **Upholds fiscal responsibility** to Congress and the American taxpayer through internal checks and balances of all HIDTA grant fund expenditures

## Expansion Driven by Success – A Proven Model

From **5 HIDTAs** in 1988 to **33 HIDTAs** in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, HIDTA's growth reflects its effectiveness. The HIDTA Program is present in 96 of the Nation's top 100 most populated metropolitan areas and 71% of the U.S. population lives in HIDTA designated counties. **Congress** and criminal justice leaders have consistently supported the program's expansion, recognizing it as a force multiplier that reduces duplication and enhances interagency coordination. This expansion reflects bipartisan recognition of its effectiveness and efficiency.

## ONDCP–HIDTA: A Partnership and Foundation for the Implementation of the National Drug Strategy

The close **partnership between ONDCP and HIDTA** is foundational to the development of an effective N**ational Drug Control Strategy**. HIDTA provides ONDCP and federal law enforcement with **timely, region-specific intelligence** on emerging drug threats and trends across the country. This structure enables the production of the most accurate and actionable **regional drug threat assessments**—driven by local perspective and expertise, ensuring the strategy is informed by those closest to the front lines.

The **HIDTA structure under ONDCP** produces complete, accurate and actionable regional assessments. Rather than being generated using a "one size fits all" perspective, these assessments are generated by regional and local expertise that are collected and used by ONDCP to inform the President's *National Drug Control Strategy*.

The **HIDTA structure under ONDCP** promotes innovation and flexibility, with the ability to rapidly deliver federal funds to address emerging threats. Regional executive boards can swiftly implement innovative strategies to counter emerging drug threats—an agility that is often difficult for federal agencies operating under national directives (like "turning an aircraft carrier around in a shipping lane port").

## Empowering Local Leadership Through Strategic Collaboration

The HIDTA Program is the only federal law enforcement grant program requiring shared federal and state/local decisions for resource allocation. HIDTA's emphasis on regional collaboration and operational flexibility previously complemented the **Department of Justice's (DOJ) Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF)** federal focus, creating a seamless and effective national strategy and the same complimentary relationship already exists with the newly formed **Homeland Security Task Forces (HSTF)**

HIDTA strengthens local responsibility by uniting federal, state, local, and tribal resources, working towards common goals to confront drug threats that cross jurisdictional boundaries. Rather than replacing local efforts, HIDTA enhances them—empowering law enforcement through strategic coordination and shared infrastructure. This collaborative approach significantly amplifies the impact of Congressionally appropriated funds to HIDTA, delivering greater outcomes through partner contributions while reinforcing local leadership in addressing complex drug challenges.

## HIDTA Delivers Unmatched Results

In **2024** alone, HIDTA's **1,035** funded task force initiatives comprised of more than **24,000** federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agents, officers, analysts and support personnel achieved tremendous outcomes to include:

- **9,762 investigations** targeting major drug and money laundering organizations.
- **3,209 criminal organizations significantly disrupted or dismantled, leading to 89,827 arrests —** more than half involving subjects with international or multi-state operations.
- **Total return on investment (ROI) of $68.18** for every federal HIDTA dollar spent.
- **Massive drug seizures**, including:
    - **113,526,123** counterfeit pills containing fentanyl.
    - **7.3** metric tons of fentanyl powder.
    - **167.3** metric tons of cocaine.
    - **121.3** metric tons of methamphetamine.
    - **1.4** metric tons of heroin.

- **40,216 firearms** removed from criminal networks.
- **35,864 fugitives** apprehended.
- **30,039 investigations** supported by HIDTA intelligence analysts from **63 Investigative Support Centers** (ISC) strategically located in major U.S. cities and along our Nation's Southern and Northern borders.
- **290,236 law enforcement event deconflictions** processed.
- **104,698 law enforcement and demand reduction professionals** trained.
- **$17.6 billion in drug value,** currency and other assets seized from criminal networks – over **61 times** the federal HIDTA budget.
- **$488.6 million in illicit cash and $184.6 million in other assets seized from criminal organizations** — more than double the funding allocated for the HIDTA Program.

These outcomes are not theoretical; they are measurable, repeatable, and scalable, reflecting HIDTA's strategic focus on high-level threats and its ability to deliver outsized returns on federal investment.

## House Financial Services and General Government (FSGG) Appropriations Committee Markup Language – 2026 Budget

The language emerging from the House FSGG Appropriations Committee concerning the 2026 HIDTA budget articulates the priorities and intent of this document with exceptional clarity and alignment:

***COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION***

"**High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program Oversight**. The Committee recognizes that the HIDTA program, established under the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, has been effectively administered by ONDCP since its inception. As the lead agency coordinating the nation's drug control strategy, ONDCP is uniquely positioned to ensure HIDTA resources are strategically deployed and integrated to combat drug trafficking. **Transferring oversight of the program to another agency would risk undermining HIDTA's core mission and diminishing the effectiveness of its locally driven enforcement model. Therefore, it is the sense of the Committee that the HIDTA program should remain under the jurisdiction of ONDCP.**

**The Committee recommends $299,600,000 for the HIDTA Program."**

- U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Appropriations. *Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Bill, 2026*, H. Rept. 119-236, 119th Cong., 1st sess., September 5, 2025. https://www.congress.gov/committee-report/119th-congress/house-report/236

## The Bottom Line for Policymakers

- **ONDCP oversight ensures neutrality and effectiveness**, preventing bureaucratic bias and allowing HIDTA to remain focused on regional needs rather than federal agency agendas.
- **HIDTA's decentralized structure empowers regional executive boards** to develop locally tailored strategies, fostering balanced representation among federal, state, local, and tribal partners.
- **The program's expansion from 5 to 33 HIDTAs across all U.S. states and territories reflects bipartisan recognition** of its success and necessity.
- **HIDTA complements—rather than duplicates**—other federal efforts, such as DOJ's OCDETF and the newly formed Homeland Security Task Forces (HSTF), creating a seamless national strategy.
- **Local law enforcement is strengthened**, not replaced, through HIDTA's collaborative model and shared infrastructure.
- **Over the past decade, HIDTA has consistently delivered unmatched results**: - achieving average return on investment (ROI) of **$83.65** for every federal HIDTA dollar invested.

***Removing HIDTA from ONDCP risks politicizing its mission, weakening interagency collaboration, and undermining decades of proven success.***

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Published: 10-17-2025