

ATLANTA-CAROLINAS HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING AREA'S 2019 THREAT ASSESSMENT



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SCOPE and EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Scope:

The Executive Board of the Atlanta-Carolinas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (AC-HIDTA) oversees an annual threat assessment ensuring that the AC-HIDTA will meet or exceed the annual grant requirements established by the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The scope of the assessment uses evidence-based strategic/tactical intelligence combined with results from recent Drug Threat Surveys (submitted by state and local agencies) to provide a timely evaluation of the illicit drug market influencing the AC-HIDTA area of responsibility (AOR). A return on investment approach provides both qualitative and quantitative measures of results.

Executive Summary:

The Southeast United States remains one of the largest transportation hubs in the nation. The interconnecting interstates, railways, waterways, and busiest international airport in the United States (Hartsfield Jackson Intl. Airport) help to drive the economic success of the region.¹ The AC-HIDTA AOR is a multicultural business magnet. Fully 25% of the population of the United States reside within an eight-hour drive and 80% within a two-hour flight of Atlanta, Georgia.² These reasons also make the region a primary distribution point for Transnational Criminal and Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs). DTOs must move large quantities of illegal drugs from origin locations in Central and South America to the major east coast population centers in the United States. Many DTOs are sophisticated organizations that maintain strict controls over the manufacturing, transportation, and distribution of their products. DTOs are ever evolving entities – adapting to a modern poly-drug, profit-based crime and money laundering business model. Violence is part of the DTO culture, both domestically and abroad. Mexican DTOs and their sub-groups operate in the AC-HIDTA AOR. The most prominent include: Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG), Sinaloa Cartel, Juarez Cartel, Gulf Cartel, Cartel Del Noreste (CDN), La Familia Michoacana, Knights Templars, Guerreros Unidos and Los Zetas.

The most significant drug threat in the AC-HIDTA AOR remains methamphetamine produced in Mexico. Recent information obtained from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation's Crime Lab points to a correlation between methamphetamine and violence. (GA Dept of Public Safety 2018)³ The opioid family of drugs (heroin, prescription pain medicines and synthetic fentanyl) is at epidemic proportions across the nation. Overdose deaths in the AC-HIDTA AOR continue to increase with portions of North Carolina the hardest hit.⁴ DTOs continue to smuggle fentanyl at greater quantities and suppliers are either mixing it with other drugs to increase potency or creating

¹ World Atlas, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/busiest-airports-in-united-states.html>, accessed 12/28/2018

² Stats America, <http://www.statsamerica.org/radius/big.aspx>, accessed 12/28/2018

³ GA Dept. of Public Safety, *BPS Minutes*, https://dps.georgia.gov/sites/dps.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/BPS%20Minutes%20May%2010%202018.pdf, accessed 01/04/2019

⁴ NORC, <https://opioidmisusetool.norc.org/#>, accessed 01/04/2019

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sham products substituting fentanyl for other active ingredients.⁵ Marijuana and fentanyl drug seizures remain consistent with previous year's rates. Methamphetamine and heroin availability increased. Finally, the Threat Assessment will review the activities and methods used by various DTO and Money Laundering Organizations (MLO) to conceal, convert and transport illegal proceeds. This includes bulk currency smuggling and electronic crimes using technologies such as crypto-currency and bitcoins.

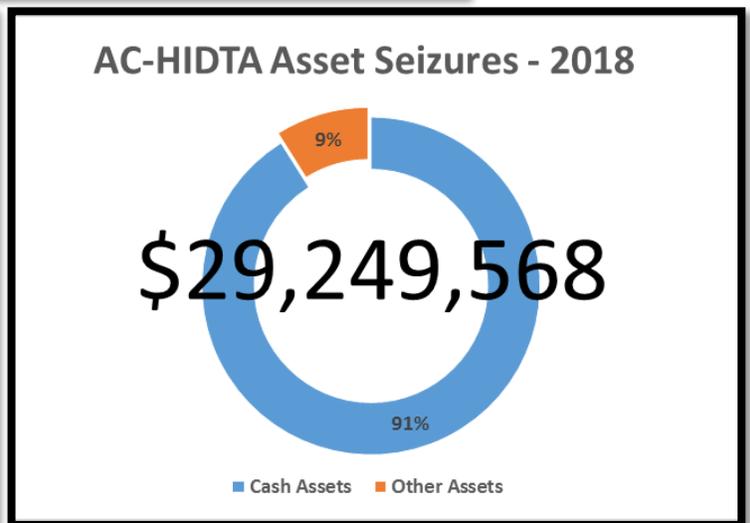
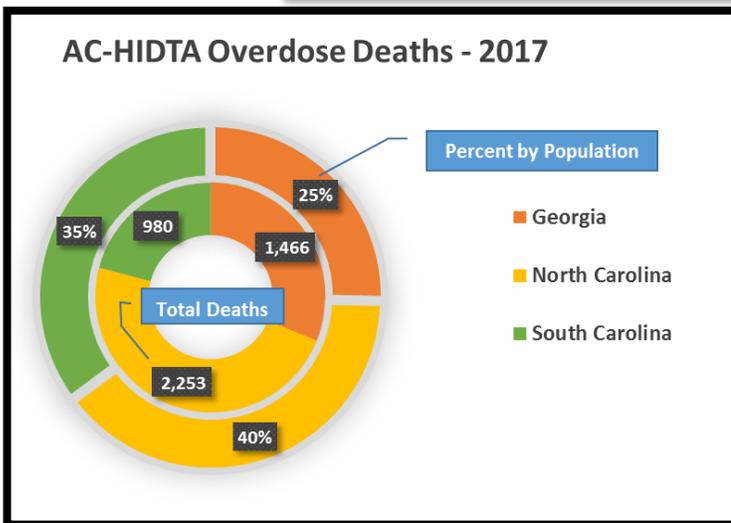
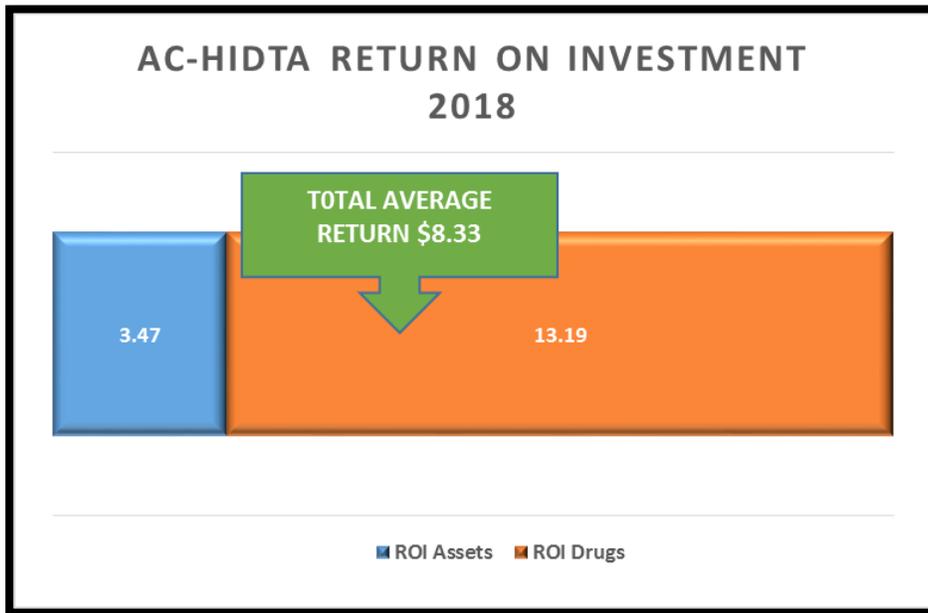
The AC-HIDTA's focus is to investigate, target, disrupt and dismantle active DTOs and MLOs. This is accomplished by federal, state, local and tribal agencies working cooperatively in task force environments. All investigative efforts are at the direction of the Executive Board.

⁵ National Institutes of Health, <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/emerging-trends-alerts>, accessed 01/04/2019

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DASHBOARD

AC-HIDTA 2018		
ARRESTS	KILOGRAMS	WEAPONS
2,927	8,186	399



ATLANTA-CAROLINAS HIDTA

The Office of National Drug Control (ONDCP) established the Atlanta HIDTA region in 1995. The Atlanta HIDTA originally consisted of two counties in the state of Georgia. The AOR began expanding in 2006. Now known as the Atlanta-Carolina’s HIDTA (AC-HIDTA), the AOR consists of 38 counties in three states. Over 100 state, local, tribal and federal law enforcement agencies are participating members with the AC-HIDTA.

The 12 Georgia designated counties are Barrow, Bartow, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett and Henry. South Carolina has the six counties of Charleston, Florence, Greenville, Horry, Lexington, and Richland. North Carolina has 15 designated counties which includes Alamance, Buncombe, Durham, Gaston, Guilford, Henderson, Johnston, Mecklenburg, McDowell, Randolph, Rockingham, Union, Wake, Wayne and Wilson counties. North Carolina also has the nation of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) as a new member. The EBCI territory covers portions of five counties (consolidated on the map for brevity).

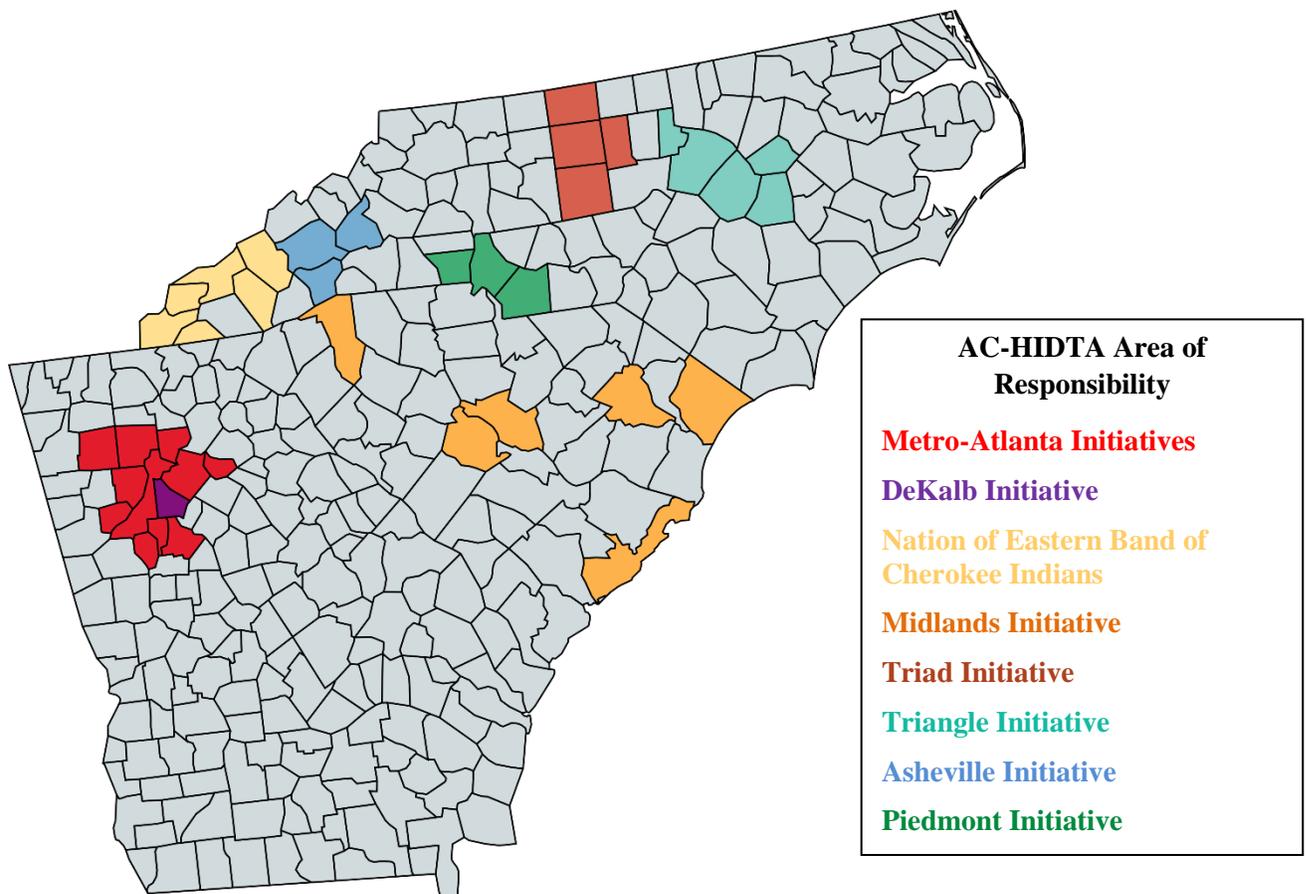


Figure 1 – Map of AC-HIDTA Area of Responsibility

AC-HIDTA REGION

The AC-HIDTA AOR covers a vast array of cultures and ethnic diversity. Within this AOR is the city of Atlanta which ranks as the 2nd most populated city in the Southeast and in the top 10 nationally. With a projected growth rate of 4.7%, Atlanta will soon outpace several other metropolitan areas.⁶ Atlanta is often referred to as the capitol of the Southeast because of the vital position it holds economically and geographically. Atlanta's global access and existing logistic networks create a perfect footprint to develop clandestine supply chains. Georgia is ranked #1 for road quality and #10 for transportation.⁷ The AC-HIDTA AOR shares a vast network of highway, rail, air, and water transportation routes. The three states share a common coastline and international ports. Illegal commerce is capable of shadowing existing legitimate business concerns. The AC-HIDTA AOR is home to more than 250 higher education campuses, major industries such as aerospace, automotive, corporate, bioscience, technologies, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and financial services.⁸ Many fortune 500 companies are based in the AC-HIDTA AOR.

The metropolitan Atlanta area and other cities within the AC-HIDTA AOR continue to act as a redistribution link for DTOs. Large quantity shipments of illegal narcotics are brought to the AOR, then redistributed in smaller loads throughout the eastern United States. Bulk currency will typically follow a reverse route – funneled into larger loads destined for the Southwest border. Couriers will primarily stay on major interstate routes for long distance runs but may use rural and state highways when moving further inland. Within the AC-HIDTA AOR major interstate corridors consist of I-20, I-26, I-40, I-73, I-74, I-75, I-77, I-85, I-95, I-285, I-385, I-520, I-526, and I-585. Of these interstates, I-20, I-75, and I-85 intersect within the city of Atlanta.



Figure 2 - Southeast Interstate Network

⁶ Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, <https://www.metroatlantachamber.com>, accessed 12/31/18

⁷ U.S. News and World Report, "2018 Best States," February 27, 2018

⁸ Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, 12/31/18

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Each state in the AC-HIDTA AOR has two seaports that take advantage of the vast interstate and railway network. These seaports provide DTOs with the ability to comingle illegal narcotics with the flood of domestic goods bound for destinations across the eastern seaboard. The Port of Wilmington, in North Carolina, offers berthing and storage areas for containers and cargo. The terminal serves container, bulk and breakbulk operations. The Port of Savannah, in Georgia, is now the largest single container port in North America and boasts over 3 million square feet of warehouse space within 30 miles of the port.⁹ Savannah also has the largest concentration of import distribution centers on the East Coast. The AC-HIDTA AOR also has three inland terminal facilities that act as consolidation points for import and export cargo.¹⁰ The Piedmont Triad Inland Terminal in Greensboro, and the Charlotte Inland Terminal are in North Carolina. The Appalachian Regional Port recently began operations in Northwest Georgia with an estimated annual capacity of 50,000 cargo containers.¹¹ U.S. Customs and Border Protection operates 14 international Ports of Entry in the AC-HIDTA AOR.¹² The utilization of ports for smuggling allows the DTOs to limit their exposure to domestic highway interdiction operations.



Figure 3 - Cargo Ship on the Savannah River



Figure 4 - U.S. CBP International Ports of Entry

The AC-HIDTA AOR includes 64 freight railroad companies. Those railroads maintain 9,578 miles of track and transport more than 339 million tons of freight each year.¹³ In addition to the numerous ground transportation opportunities, the AC-HIDTA AOR has 1,134 public and private

⁹ Georgia Port Authority, <http://gaports.com/port-of-savannah>, accessed 01/04/2019
¹⁰ North Carolina State Ports Authority, Inland Terminals
¹¹ Georgia Port Authority, <https://appalachianregionalport.com/>, accessed 01/04/2019
¹² U.S. Customs and Border Protection, <https://www.cbp.gov/>, accessed 01/04/2019
¹³ American Association of Railroads, <https://www.aar.org/data-center/railroads-states/>, accessed 01/04/2019

airports.¹⁴ DTOs are well versed in airborne smuggling operations. Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport is the busiest airport in the world.¹⁵ The Charlotte-Douglas International Airport is the second busiest airport in the region and ranks 10th in the United States.¹⁶ Private corporations and the U.S. Postal Service utilize air, rail and ground transportation options.

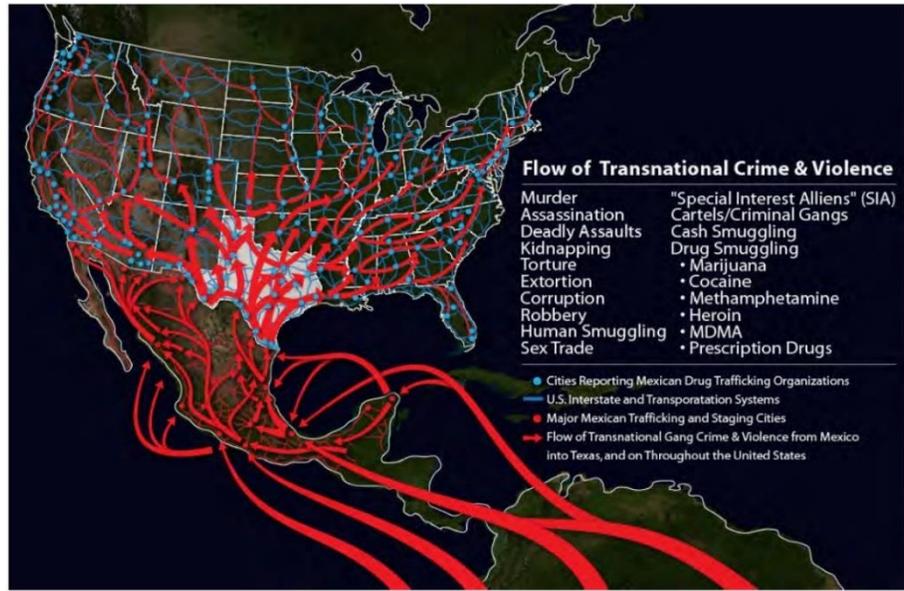


Figure 5 - Flow of Transnational Crime and Violence

DTOs are known to use these established package delivery services to supplement their own transportation efforts.

The AC-HIDTA AOR is a prime location for DTOs to establish and maintain illicit drug distribution networks. Population diversity and growth, an existing transportation infrastructure, and economic powerhouse status makes the area attractive for criminal enterprises.

¹⁴ Global Air, <https://www.globalair.com/airport/state.aspx>, accessed 01/04/2019

¹⁵ World Atlas, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/busiest-airports-in-united-states.html>, accessed 12/28/2018

¹⁶ ibid

DRUG THREAT OVERVIEW

The AC-HIDTA AOR, as a microcosm of the United States, continues to be inundated with illegal drugs that are primarily originating outside of the United States. Poly-drug DTOs based in Mexico continue to dominate the illegal drug trade in the United States. These DTOs use every method available to smuggle their illegal drugs into the AC-HIDTA AOR. This can include human body carry, vehicles, airplanes, railroads, commercial transport and waterborne cargo shipping. However, the preferred method of smuggling continues to be using the vast network of interstate highway systems that pass through the AC-HIDTA AOR. As with any legal distribution network, the illegal network brings bulk loads into a central depository, where the loads are broken down into smaller loads that are then redistributed across the region. As stated previously, the top DTOs operating within the AC-HIDTA AOR include Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG), Sinaloa Cartel, Juarez Cartel, Gulf Cartel, Cartel Del Noreste (CDN), La Familia Michoacana, Knights Templars, Guerreros Unidos and Los Zetas.

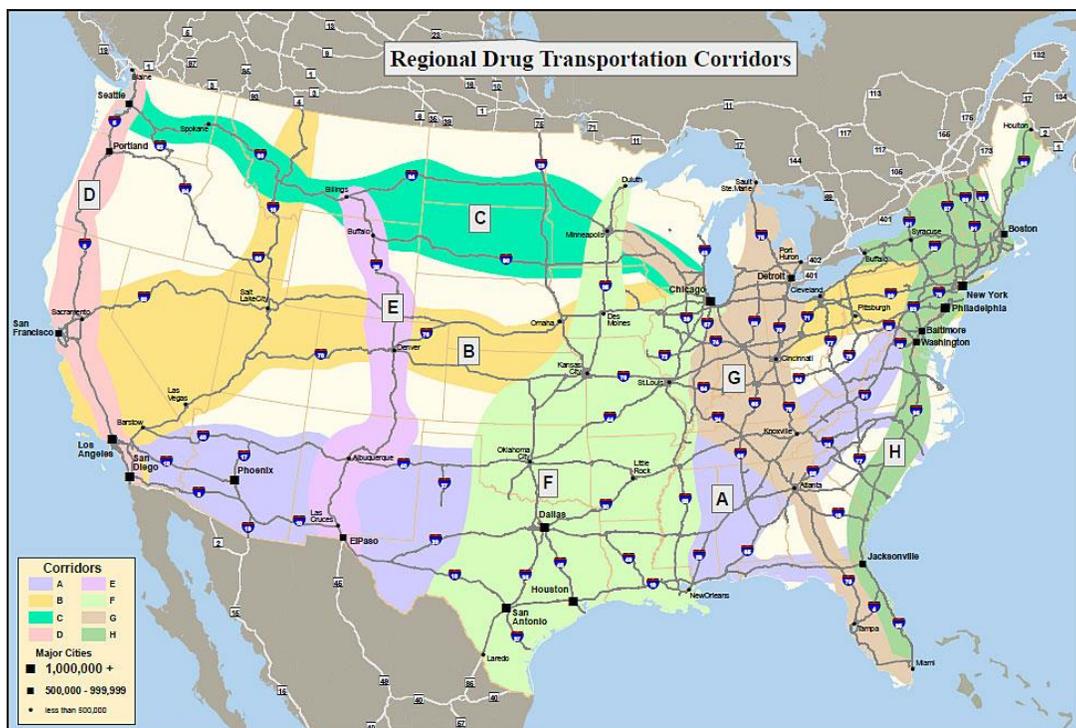


Figure 6 - Domestic Highway Enforcement Major Drug Corridors

METHAMPHETAMINE

OVERVIEW

In 2018, methamphetamine was the biggest drug threat plaguing the Atlanta-Carolinas HIDTA AOR. Large quantities of methamphetamine in crystal form as well as in solution were smuggled into the metro Atlanta area by Mexico-based methamphetamine Sources of Supply (SOS) affiliated with Los Guerreros Unidos.

[Note: Los Guerreros Unidos is a Drug Trafficking Organization (DTO) based in Mexico (MX) that is responsible for smuggling kilogram quantities of methamphetamine from MX to the AC-HIDTA AOR. Los Guerreros Unidos is affiliated with the Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG).]

Methamphetamine consignments, in a liquid solution, are easily concealed inside containers that are intended to mimic legitimate commodities. This has made liquid solution the preferred method of transportation. As a result, law enforcement agencies have encountered a large number of conversion laboratories.



Figure 7 - 275 kilograms methamphetamine

AVAILABILITY

Methamphetamine was readily available throughout the AC-HIDTA AOR in 2018 and considered by most law enforcement entities to be the most significant drug threat. In 2018, the AC-HIDTA experienced a 20-percent increase in methamphetamine seizures compared to 2017 figures. The methamphetamine market has expanded within its user base as well as increasing the number of retail distributors. This effectively fills the gap formed as other drug commodities struggle to regain their prominence following issues that limit supplies and increase costs. Contrary to previous years, African American retail dealers were more likely to distribute larger quantities of methamphetamine to maximize profits. They, along with Caucasian and Hispanic

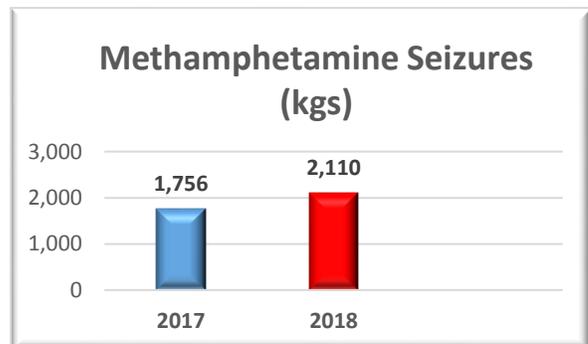


Figure 8 - Methamphetamine Seizure Graph

distributors, were sourced high-quality methamphetamine by Mexico-based SOS and their proxies operating within the AC-HIDTA footprint. These distribution cells are primarily located in the Atlanta metropolitan area and are responsible for sourcing markets in North and South Carolina.

It was further reported that motorcycle gangs,¹⁷ street-gangs (e.g. SUR-13¹⁸) and prison gangs such as the Ghost Faced Gangsters¹⁹ are also involved in distributing methamphetamine in the AC-HIDTA AOR. Reporting further revealed a significant increase in the number of investigations associated with individuals, currently incarcerated, who supervise sophisticated distribution cells from within prison.

Smuggling Cells Expand Markets

TRADITIONAL BLACK TAR HEROIN DISTRIBUTION
CELLS IN NORTH CAROLINA NOW DISTRIBUTE
METHAMPHETAMINE.

USE

The majority of methamphetamine users in the AC-HIDTA AOR were Caucasian males and females between 20 to 40 years of age. Smoking methamphetamine remained the preferred method of ingestion followed by oral and intravenous administration.

In 2018, the AC-HIDTA experienced approximately 282 methamphetamine-related overdose deaths in Georgia compared to 235 in 2017, and 161 in 2016. This represents a 20-percent increase in the number of methamphetamine-related overdose deaths. *[Note: Data associated with methamphetamine-related deaths for the Carolinas was not available.]*

Similarly, the majority of amphetamine-related admissions in North and South Carolina involved Caucasian males and females. As reported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), there were 2,652 amphetamine-related hospital admissions in North Carolina in 2018, compared to 2,389 in 2017.²⁰ This represents an 11-percent increase in amphetamine-related hospital admissions. SAMHSA data further revealed a total of 1,208 amphetamine-related admissions in South Carolina during 2017 compared to 1,171 in 2016. *[Note: Recent SAMHSA data available for South Carolina referenced 2017. 2018, figures will be reported at a later date.]*

¹⁷ Durham County SO

¹⁸ Atlanta-Carolinas HIDTA

¹⁹ Rockdale County SO, Cherokee County CMANS, Atlanta-Carolinas HIDTA

²⁰ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, <https://www.samhsa.gov/>, accessed 04/23/2019

PRICE

Methamphetamine prices vary greatly throughout the Atlanta-Carolinas supply chain depending on the affiliation and proximity to the SOS. Most agencies reported an increase in supply and demand that caused a further decrease in prices compared to those in 2017. Supplies were so plentiful that retail dealers were often fronted quantities of methamphetamine for payment after distribution. It was further reported that some Mexican sources are pushing large quantities on local distributors, some of which were primarily cocaine traffickers, in order to further expand the market²¹. Wholesale prices are lower in Atlanta because Atlanta serves as a hub to temporarily stash methamphetamine shipments and convert liquid methamphetamine solution into methamphetamine HCL.

The price of methamphetamine continued to decrease in 2018; to the point where kilogram prices were similar to pound prices reported in 2017. Wholesale kilogram prices ranged from \$4,000 to \$6,500 while retail kilogram prices were from \$7,000 to \$10,000 per kilogram. The price of ounce quantities of methamphetamine also declined and ranged from \$200 to \$400 in the metropolitan Atlanta area but could be as high as \$800 in parts of the Carolinas. Average prices for gram quantities of methamphetamine was \$40 to \$100 depending on the area.



Figure 9 - 45 kilograms of Crystal Methamphetamine

TRANSPORTATION/OUTLOOK

Atlanta remains a significant transshipment and distribution hub for Mexican DTOs that facilitate the movement of bulk quantities of methamphetamine to the area. These DTOs use traditional methods to transport large amounts of liquid methamphetamine in its various forms to stash locations throughout the metropolitan area. Methamphetamine in solution is often concealed inside the fuel tanks of tractor-trailers. DTOs also utilize plastic or glass containers to transport smaller amounts of liquid methamphetamine.

Mexican DTOs will continue to saturate the methamphetamine market in the AC-HIDTA AOR. High-quality product will dominate in 2019 and extend well into 2020 and beyond. Shipments of methamphetamine in solution will also continue at an alarming rate. This will contribute to an increase in the number of conversion laboratories. It is unclear if methamphetamine prices will

²¹ Atlanta-Carolinas HIDTA; Asheboro PD

continue to decline to record levels or if Mexican SOS will limit consignments to force a price increase.

HEROIN

OVERVIEW

In 2018, heroin was considered one of the fastest growing drug threats within the AC-HIDTA AOR. 2018, observed a change in the demographics in the abuse of heroin compared to previous years. In 2018, heroin abuse expanded from urban to rural areas. Heroin also showed increased abuse rates among younger populations. Fentanyl and other fentanyl analogues continued to be introduced into the poly-drug supply chain causing a surge in overdose deaths. Mexico-based DTOs (e.g. Sinaloa Cartel, Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG), Los Guerreros Unidos and Los Rojos)



Brown Powdered Heroin

Figure 10 - Brown Powdered Heroin

continued dominate the transportation, distribution and wholesale of heroin. Retail-level distribution remained primarily controlled by local criminal organizations.

In 2018, the AC-HIDTA seized 175 kilograms of Heroin compared to 93 kilograms in 2017 and 92 kilograms in 2016.

AVAILABILITY/USE

Reporting indicates that the supply and demand for heroin increased in the AC-HIDTA AOR in 2018; as a result, the availability of heroin was moderate to high in 2018. Mexican Brown, Black Tar and South American heroin was widely available in the AC-HIDTA. In 2018, the AC-HIDTA experienced an 89-percent increase in the number of heroin seizures compared to 2017. Among drug users, heroin remained a cheaper alternative among individuals abusing prescription opioids.

PRICE

In 2018, heroin prices in the AC-HIDTA stabilized. The wholesale price of a kilogram of powder heroin ranged from \$40,000 to \$70,000. The price of a kilogram of Black Tar heroin was between \$36,000 and \$50,000.

A gram of heroin (powder) in the AC-HIDTA AOR could be purchased from \$70 to \$180. This represents a slight decrease from 2017 prices (\$100 to \$200). The cost of an ounce of heroin (powder) notably increased in 2018, and was reported to range between \$1,500 and \$2,200 compared \$1,100 to \$1,400 reported in 2017.

INTELLIGENCE GAP

It is unclear if the popularity of adulterating heroin with fentanyl is impacting the Black Tar market.

Although larger Black Tar heroin consignments are shipped or transit through parts of the AC-HIDTA, specifically the state of North Carolina, it is not frequently encountered by law enforcement entities in Georgia or South Carolina.

Reporting further indicates that in 2018, AC-HIDTA participating agencies did not encounter a significant Black Tar heroin user population. However, in 2017, the price of 25 grams of Black Tar heroin cost between \$1,000 and \$1,200. The wholesale price of Black Tar heroin in single gram quantities was \$80. The retail price of the same was between \$120 and \$180.



In 2018, heroin remained potent and is attributed to a surge in overdoses in the AC-HIDTA AOR. The purity of heroin shipped to and seized in the AC-HIDTA AOR remained high. Although purity levels are rarely tested/reported, the overall average purity of heroin in 2018 was 90 to 95-percent at the wholesale level. These purity levels signal that the heroin market remains strong and stable in the AC-HIDTA AOR. An increasing concern comes when traditional heroin users unexpectedly receive heroin laced with fentanyl – resulting in an increase in the overdose rate.

Bottle Neck

A surge in lab submissions have put a strain on laboratories, Federal, State and Local, in the AC-HIDTA to analyze heroin samples – causing delays in reporting findings.

TRANSPORTATION/OUTLOOK

As with other drugs, Atlanta continues to serve as a major transportation hub for heroin trafficking in the southeastern region of the US. The AC-HIDTA has a vast and accessible transportation infrastructure that connects Atlanta to the Southwestern Border, as well as, the eastern seaboard. Bulk heroin shipments arriving in Atlanta are divided up into smaller quantities and transported to rural areas in Georgia and the Carolinas. Heroin continues to be transported in hidden compartments in passenger and commercial vehicles.

The AC-HIDTA anticipates that heroin will remain a significant threat plaguing the Southeastern region of the U.S. in 2019. This threat is expected to continue into 2020 and beyond. In addition, fentanyl and other fentanyl analogues/opioids will continue to be introduced into the heroin supply as users seek longer lasting highs. Prices will continue to stabilize and distribution networks will continue to receive a steady supply of heroin from Mexico-based DTOs.

Heroin overdoses are expected to continue at alarming rates. However, AC-HIDTA projects mortality rates could decline slightly as overdose reversal drugs (e.g. Narcan) are deployed to first responders.

COCAINE

OVERVIEW

Cocaine remained a significant threat that plagued the AC-HIDTA AOR in 2018. The southeastern region remained a major transit hub. Traffickers often stage cocaine shipments in the AC-HIDTA AOR prior to redistributing them to distribution centers located along the eastern seaboard of the United States. In 2018, cocaine shipments arriving to the AC-HIDTA AOR were smaller in quantity and were comingled with other drug commodities such as heroin and methamphetamine.

The transportation, wholesale and distribution of cocaine was predominately dominated by Mexican DTOs. In 2018, the AC-HIDTA learned that cocaine distribution networks were adulterating cocaine with fentanyl. During 2018, the AC-HIDTA AOR experienced approximately 936 overdose deaths. Cocaine or a cocaine/opioid blend was associated with 156 of those deaths.

Seizure of 14 kilograms of cocaine concealed inside a flatbed tractor-trailer 02-21-2018



Source: AC HIDTA

Figure 11 - 14 kilograms of cocaine

Intelligence Gap

It is unclear if DTOs are adulterating the cocaine supply with fentanyl in the US or if being mixed in MX.

AVAILABILITY/USE

During 2018, cocaine availability within the AC-HIDTA AOR was moderate. Intelligence indicates that a series of disruptions throughout the supply chain, as well as, the destruction of laboratories in South America contributed to a slight shortage.

[Note: A few participating AC-HIDTA law enforcement entities reported no significant encounters of cocaine.]

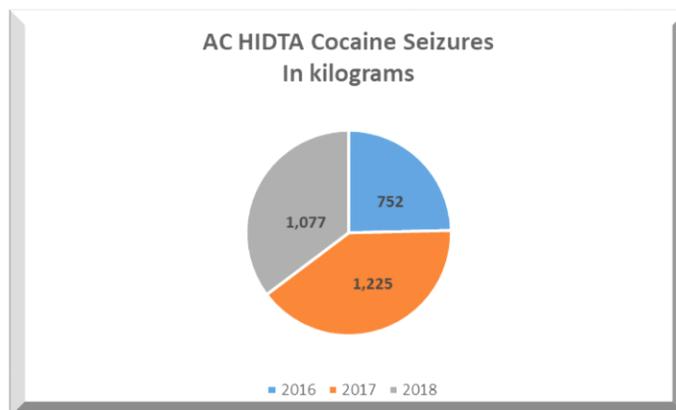


Figure 12 - AC-HIDTA Cocaine Seizures

[Note: AC-HIDTA cocaine seizure amounts were significantly lower than those experienced by the DEA Atlanta Field Division. The difference is because of a single, large cocaine seizure of approximately 516 kilograms that occurred at the Port of Savannah – a non-HIDTA county.]

PRICE

The AC-HIDTA experienced a slight increase in the price of cocaine during 2018. The average price of a kilogram of cocaine was \$30,000 to \$38,000. The increase in price is attributed to domestic and foreign interdiction efforts. As of this reporting, cocaine prices in the AC-HIDTA AOR were beginning to stabilize. AC-HIDTA anticipates that cocaine prices will remain at their current levels for the predictable future.

While cocaine prices rose, purity levels in the AC-HIDTA decreased during 2018. Intelligence sources indicated that the decrease in purity is attributed to cutting agents added to cocaine supplies in an effort to increase yields and profits.

TRANSPORTATION/OUTLOOK

Personal and rental vehicles along with tractor-trailers are the preferred mechanism for transporting Cocaine shipments from the U.S.-Mexico border to Atlanta. Shipments transported via tractor-trailers are typically larger and vary in size. DTOs continue to smuggle fewer large quantities of Cocaine consignments to Atlanta, opting for smaller more frequent shipments to avoid suffering significant losses in revenue as a result of interdiction efforts. Smuggling cells utilize interstates I-20, I-85 and I-75 which traverse the AC-HIDTA AOR. Predictions are that the demand for cocaine will continue for the remainder



Figure 13 - 50 kilograms of cocaine

of 2019, extending well into 2020 and beyond. The AC-HIDTA also anticipates that fentanyl will continue to be blended into the cocaine supply as DTOs attempt to increase profits.

FENTANYL

OVERVIEW

Fentanyl continued to be a threat in the AC-HIDTA AOR in 2018. The AC-HIDTA experienced fentanyl mixed with a widening variety of other drugs including heroin, methamphetamine, MDMA, cocaine, and a variety of counterfeit pharmaceuticals (notably Oxycodone, Xanax, and Roxicodone).

The AC-HIDTA reported that counterfeit pills seized in 2018, were predominantly found to contain fentanyl and mixed with other drugs, usually heroin. These pills were pressed to mimic legitimate pharmaceuticals, like Oxycodone and Percocet.

Reporting indicates that fentanyl is smuggled into the AC-HIDTA AOR from fentanyl SOS in Mexico (MX). In addition, fentanyl is also obtained via the Dark Web. Further reporting indicates that the United States Postal Service (USPS) seized multi-kilogram quantities of pure fentanyl in the AC-HIDTA AOR.

Clandestine Laboratory

A non-participating AC-HIDTA agency (Catoosa County, GA) reported encountering a fentanyl laboratory in 2018. The lab was connected to a large pill mill located in Chattanooga, TN. The mill had a production capability of 500 to 1,000 fentanyl pills per week, but was in the process of expanding when located. The chemist was also producing a version of the plastic high-explosive compound Semtex.²²

AVAILABILITY/USE

In 2018, fentanyl was readily available in the AC-HIDTA and was mixed with a variety of poly-drugs compared to previous years. Initially, fentanyl seizures occurred in pill form. Current reporting indicates that drug users are now intentionally seeking drugs that contain fentanyl. Local medical examiner offices in the AC-HIDTA AOR identified 2,330* overdose deaths in 2018. Of

²² Catoosa County Sheriff's Office Narcotics Division, May, 2019

these, 1,291* involved the use of fentanyl. This accounts for 55-percent of the overall drug-related overdose deaths.

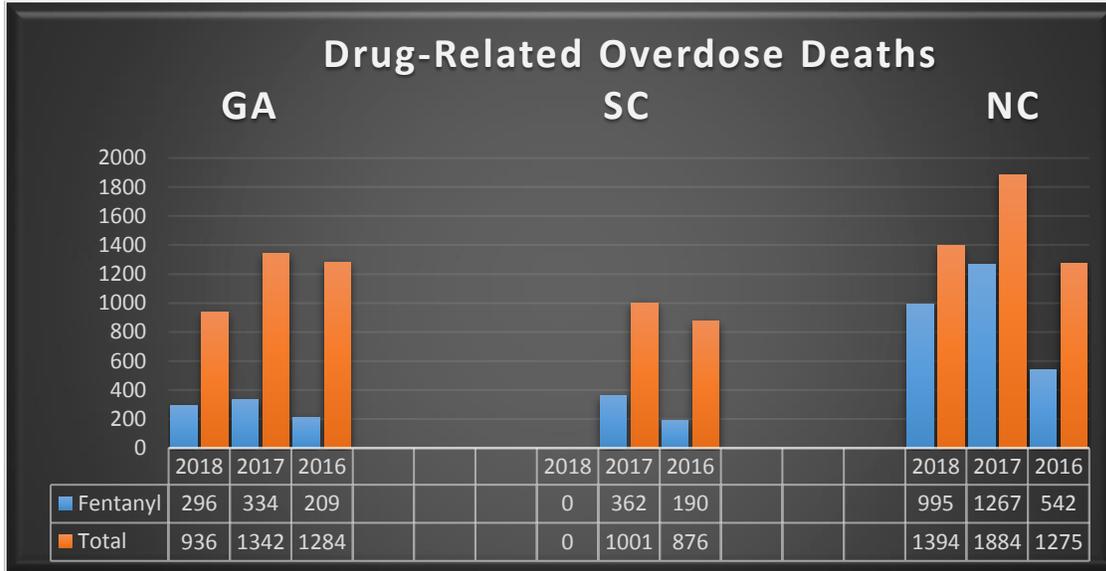


Figure 14 - AC-HIDTA AOR Drug-Related Overdose Deaths

* Overdose death data is incomplete (SC 2018 not yet published), and subject to change as data becomes available.

PRICE

Although the amount of fentanyl seized has fluctuated over the last 3 years, the AC-HIDTA reported that the price for kilogram quantities of fentanyl has remained relatively steady. Reporting indicates that the price for gram quantities of fentanyl was between \$100 to \$160 U.S. dollars, and patches were being sold between \$20 and \$40 U.S. dollars. The AC-HIDTA anticipates that fentanyl prices will continue this trend.

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2018</u>
	kg	kg	kg	DU
Amount	49.26	3.63	13.81	739
Value	\$3,202,030	\$236,145	\$897,338	\$99,765
Price/Unit	\$65,000	\$65,000	\$65,000	\$135

Figure 15 - Fentanyl Seizures by Year

TRANSPORTATION/OUTLOOK

Law enforcement sources indicated the majority of fentanyl is smuggled into the U.S. from Mexico. DTOs in Mexico typically import high-quality fentanyl from China. Mexican DTOs are also importing fentanyl precursors and attempting to manufacture their own fentanyl product (which tends to be lower quality). The fentanyl is later transported into the US in vehicles concealed in hidden compartments. Additionally, the use of less-than-load (LTL) shipping companies, such as USPS and Fedex, continue to be used to facilitate the transportation of packages containing fentanyl

The AC-HIDTA predicts that the demand for fentanyl will continue for the remainder of 2019, and for the foreseeable future. The AC-HIDTA also anticipates that fentanyl will continue to be used to cut other drugs, notably heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine. Fentanyl-laced pills came on the scene in 2018 and the AC-HIDTA predicts there will be an increase in this method of distribution. The discovery of a fentanyl synthesis lab in 2018, raises concern that this may become an increasing threat for law enforcement in the future.



Figure 16 - 10 kg Fentanyl

MARIJUANA

OVERVIEW

In 2018, marijuana was readily available in the AC-HIDTA AOR. A significant reason for the prevalence of marijuana in the AC-HIDTA AOR is the steadily increasing rate of decriminalization nationwide and legal “medicinal” uses for marijuana. A substantial amount of marijuana and other THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) derivatives seized in the AC-HIDTA revealed markings indicating that they were originally sourced from legal dispensaries in western states (e.g. California, Washington and Colorado).

Law enforcement continues to encounter an increasing amount of marijuana derivatives in recent years. Drastic increases in seizures of marijuana by-products such as vapes, oils, edibles, and wax continue to occur. The demand for higher THC levels, combined with the availability of high-purity marijuana by-products, is resulting in significant increases in availability and a relatively stable low price. Mid to low quality marijuana can still be purchased from Mexican sources, and synthetic marijuana is prevalent with a fairly low price as well.



Asheville DEA 200lb Seizure

As has been the case in previous years, much of the high-quality marijuana encountered in the AC-HIDTA was transported by commercial mail carriers such as United Parcel Service (UPS), FedEx and the USPS.²³ Distributors generally operate by sourcing their products from states that have legalized or decriminalized marijuana use and sale, such as Colorado and California.²⁴ In total, the AC-HIDTA has seized over 4,500 kilograms of marijuana, in 2018.²⁵

Local marijuana grows continue to be a source for local users, but as in previous years, the number of grow house interdictions has decreased. This has been largely due to the ease and relative safety involved in transporting marijuana and its derivatives from states where it can be produced legally.

AVAILABILITY/USE

Marijuana prices have not changed drastically from 2017, with high-grade going for \$2,000 - \$5,000 a pound and \$250-\$700 per ounce. Mexican marijuana is selling for \$1,000-\$2,800 per

²³ Cherokee County CMANS

²⁴ DeKalb County Narcotics

²⁵ 2018 AC-HIDTA Drug Seizures

pound and \$200-\$400 per ounce. Synthetic marijuana generally sells for \$20-\$40 a package, and THC extracts such as edibles and wax go for \$25-\$80 wholesale and \$80-\$125 retail.

Overall, marijuana seizures have decreased nearly 45% in 2018 from 2017, not as a result of less product on the street, but because of fewer interdiction seizures in general. Marijuana is readily available from most dealers and is almost always sold alongside other drugs²⁶. Law enforcement efforts have largely shifted to seizures involving large-scale grow houses and bulk shipment operations.

TRANSPORTATION/OUTLOOK

DTOs continue to use personal vehicles and tractor trailers to transport shipments from sources in Mexico to distribution groups operating in the metropolitan Atlanta area. Natural voids, man-made traps, luggage and legitimate loads are used to conceal the shipments within these vehicles. The use of commercial mail carriers continues to be the preferred method of transportation for local retail dealers acquiring high-grade marijuana from sources in legalized states. Retail distributors obtain high-grade marijuana from these sources using FedEx, UPS, USPS and other commercial carriers.

Marijuana will continue to be extremely ubiquitous and very commonly abused in 2019. As the amount of legal producers on the west coast rise, it will become increasingly easy for DTOs to bring in product from those states where production will not be prevented by law enforcement. As more states continue to legalize and decriminalize marijuana use, it will become increasingly easy for DTOs to bring product into Georgia and the Carolinas. The use of commercial mail couriers will continue to increase as well, facilitated by online transactions and sellers. To avoid prohibitive shipping costs, DTOs may also continue resorting to grow houses, preferring efficient and sophisticated indoor grows. As vaping and edible marijuana continue to gain popularity, so too will the use of vapes and other THC variants by younger users.

PHARMACEUTICAL DIVERSION

OVERVIEW

Pharmaceutical Diversion continues to threaten the United States despite the slight decline of pain reliever misuse according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health.²⁷ This trend coincides with reporting from AC-HIDTA. According to the Journal of American Medical Association, the opioid epidemic has evolved from deaths primarily associated with prescription painkillers. The epidemic gave rise to heroin and now the manufacture of synthetic opioids on the illicit drug

²⁶ Barrow County Sheriff's Office

²⁷ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 2018

market. (JAMA 2019).²⁸ Purchasing pharmaceuticals on the black market through the internet and the Dark Web has enhanced convenient and discreet access.

Controlled Prescription Drug abuse accounts for 4.2% of the total population or approximately 11.4 million people. In comparison, the combined abuse rates of cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin affects 3.1% of the total population or nearly 8.4 million individuals.²⁹

The overdose death rate in the U.S. has risen to 70,200, a 6-fold increase since 1999. Approximately 68% of these deaths involved an opioid according to the Center for Disease Control. As the manufacturing of counterfeit prescription drugs with synthetic opioids increases, the overdose rate continues to escalate this statistic.³⁰

President Trump's sustained focus on the opioid crisis resulted in financial support surpassing \$100 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 for the ongoing efforts of law enforcement, drug education programs and evidence-based treatment and recovery support services. To reinforce these endeavors, the president made a March announcement in the *Initiative to Stop Opioid Abuse and Reduce Drug Supply and Demand*, a comprehensive strategy to stop opioid abuse and reduce drug supply and demand.

AVAILABILITY/USE

Doctor shopping, fraudulent prescriptions, pill mills and direct delivery of counterfeit Controlled Prescription Drugs (CPDs) present pharmaceutical diversion challenges. Within AC-HIDTA, law enforcement indicates highest demand for alprazolam (Xanax®), oxycodone (OxyContin®), oxycodone hydrochloride (Roxicodone®) and methylphenidate (Adderall®).

Doctor shopping occurs when addicts request CPDs from multiple doctors and/or request a medical prescriber offer the controlled substance beyond reasonable care guidelines. If not consumed by the individual, the pills are sold for a profit on the black market. This practice is being curtailed by Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMP's) and ongoing DEA 360 Strategy of educating doctors and pharmacists to recognize abusive drug behavior. Likewise, pharmacies often refuse to fill excessive numbers of CPDs in order to uphold their legal responsibility for dispensing prescriptions in the usual course of professional treatment and working in conjunction with the DEA by alerting the DEA Diversion Control Team.

While AC-HIDTA has observed a decrease in doctor shopping, prescription theft is still prevalent. In one Georgia county, as many as 15 organized theft groups have been encountered over the last three years.³¹ In addition, opioids continue to be sold on the black market by individuals with legitimate prescriptions and now, even the elderly population has been observed selling prescribed pills to supplement fixed incomes.³²

²⁸ *JAMA Netw Open*. 2019;2(2):e190040. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.0040

²⁹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 2018

³⁰ Center for Disease Control (CDC) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 2019

³¹ Interview notes from Cherokee County PD

³² Interview notes from Myrtle Beach, SC PD, N. Myrtle Beach, SC PD, Reidsville PD, Highpoint, NC PD

In conjunction with forgery, AC-HIDTA had multiple pill mill seizures in 2018. Medical professionals with prescribing privileges are disguised as legitimate medical practices offering prescriptions for courses of therapy that exceed normal or recommended guidelines with little to no follow-up care. To avoid law enforcement detection, these operations exist in single locations for short periods. The price per prescription varies with each operation. One agent indicated a doctor was charging \$200 per prescription in a cash only business, although prescriptions can sell for as high as \$500 each.³³

Another problematic area is the direct delivery of counterfeit CPDs using pill presses purchased online solely for the purpose of manufacturing counterfeit pharmaceuticals. The most frequently seen counterfeit drugs are alprazolam and oxycodone as reported within AC-HIDTA. Stronger manufacturing restrictions in China has created a market shortage of alprazolam. As a result, branded Xanax® is being counterfeited using etizolam in powder form shipped from China. AC-HIDTA's Group IV seized 9,815 alprazolam pills and found counterfeited pills while conducting an undercover purchase from the Dark Web. This case target is based in Canada. Similarly, DEA Charlotte reports pressed fentanyl pills that resemble both alprazolam and oxycodone pills have been encountered with identifiable branding, M30 and a215. Raleigh PD worked an overdose case involving Xanax® suspected to be cut with fentanyl.³⁴



Figure 17 - Etizolam

Chemically similar to benzodiazepines, etizolam has a potency 6-10 times higher than diazepam (Valium®). Used for recreational purposes in the United States, etizolam is not currently listed under the Federal Controlled Substances Act.³⁵ However, it is a scheduled or banned drug in 8 states including Georgia and South Carolina.³⁶ Etizolam is not authorized by the Food and Drug Administration for medical use in the United States.

Finally, Adderall® and amphetamine-related drug abuse is prevalent, particularly on college campuses due to focus-enhancing features of this drug class. Heroin users also seek this stimulant for its ability to keep users alert for longer periods of time. This class of drugs are normally prescribed for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy.

³³ Interview notes from W. Metro PD

³⁴ Interview notes from A/C HIDTA Group 4, Raleigh PD, Charleston & Greenville County, SC

³⁵ DEA Diversion Control Division, October 2018 & State of Ohio Board Of Pharmacy Rule Update 4729-11-02

³⁶ State of Ohio Board Of Pharmacy Rule Update 4729-11-02

PRICES

Atlanta-Carolinas HIDTA Drug Price List, 4th Quarter 2018

PRICES (Atlanta/Carolinas HIDTA 2018) Pharmaceutical	Price Per Pill	Pharmaceutical	Per Unit
OxyContin	\$25-\$40	Codeine (per ounce)	\$20-\$25
Oxycodone	\$20-\$30	Fentanyl 25mg	\$ 2,500
Hydrocodone	\$10-\$30	100mg	\$10,000
Roxicodone	\$ 5-\$30	Adderall	\$ 5-\$20
Percocet	\$10-\$30		
Morphine	\$ 5-\$30		

Figure 18 - AC-HIDTA CPD Price List

TRANSPORTATION/OUTLOOK

CPDs are transported for distribution in the same manner as any other illegal drug. Stronger regulations in conjunction with the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) and law enforcement interdictions continue to deter some interstate trafficking. However, the use of the Dark Web continues to become a significant source of drug distribution. Prescription drugs are shipped via commercial parcels, such as USPS, FedEx, and UPS from source countries directly to the user’s front door.

Pharmaceutical Diversion is ongoing even as heroin and synthetic opioid usage has risen. Many users are switching to heroin because it is less expensive and drug monitoring strategies are successfully helping the medical community stop drug seeking behavior. This is contrary to

previous year's reporting wherein 80-percent of heroin users first abused controlled prescription drugs and then switched to heroin sold at a lesser price. Unfortunately, distribution of counterfeit Xanax® with the substitution of etizolam or fentanyl appears to be an emerging trend in light of the scarcity of alprazolam on the illicit drug market. To monitor this activity, Georgia Bureau of Investigation tracks counterfeit submissions and has ongoing plans to enhance tracking by developing a report accessible to law enforcement. In conclusion, AC-HIDTA continues to partner with law enforcement communities to fulfill President Trump's strategies to combat drug diversion and halt the nation's drug crisis.

MONEY LAUNDERING

OVERVIEW

In 2018, Georgia continued to serve as a major hub for the transportation of drug proceeds for Mexico-based DTOs operating within and transiting through the AC-HIDTA AOR. Large bulk-currency shipments continued to be the most preferred method of transporting drug proceeds. DTOs are constantly enhancing bulk currency concealment methods to avoid detection by US authorities. In order to avoid detection by U.S. authorities, traffickers have been employing different transportation methods. These include shipping smaller amounts of currency in separate vehicles to avoid significant losses and using other monetary instruments such as money remitters, preloaded electronic cards, fraudulent purchase of real estate, shell companies and purchase of cryptocurrency.

BULK CURRENCY

Bulk cash transportation of drug proceeds was sustained as the most favored method used by DTOs in order to avoid the scrutiny of financial regulators and law enforcement agencies. Although, shipments of large amounts of cash continued to occur, they are becoming less frequent. DTOs are dividing large currency amounts into numerous, smaller shipments. These shipments are mostly found in vehicles outfitted with after market compartments. DTOs also utilize existing cavities of vehicles such as glove compartment, tires, stereos and gas tanks. Duffle bags, mislabeled boxes and containers have also been used.



Source: Gwinnett Metro Task Force

Figure 19 - Bulk Currency

ALTERNATIVE METHODS

As law enforcement agencies effectively target bulk currency shipments, DTOs increasingly find and use more sophisticated and effective methods to launder drug proceeds and ensure they reach their intended recipients. DTOs utilize smurfing methods by conducting structured deposits of small amounts of money into multiple bank accounts at different bank locations.

Prepaid cards and cash transferring applications are the other alternate methods used since they are easily accessed and the transactions are conducted electronically.

The AC-HIDTA conducted ten virtual currency investigations in 2018. The number of virtual currency investigations increased by 100% compared to the number of investigations conducted in 2017.

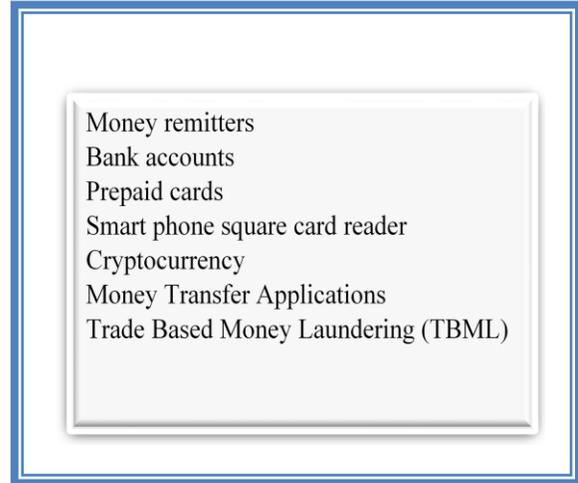


Figure 20 - Alternate Methods

In 2018, there was an increase in the technique called Trade-Based Money Laundering (TBML) utilized by DTOs in the AC-HIDTA AOR. Investigations involving African American and Hispanic DTOs revealed that their illicit revenues originated from music studios, night clubs and the purchase of vehicles that later revealed to have lien holders from shell companies.

The aforementioned methods allow DTOs to maintain their anonymous capacity while conducting banking transactions while at the same time not having funds immediately flagged as illicit. These methods slow the ongoing investigation process since investigators must follow a long and tedious legal process to obtain records from the financial institutions.

TRANSPORTATION/OUTLOOK

DTOs will continue to utilize the same practices to relocate their drug proceeds while trying to avoid law enforcement detection by masking their illicit activity. More sophisticated bulk currency transportation methods that allow anonymity will upsurge. Cryptocurrency transactions will become more common.

Drug Trafficking Organizations

The southeastern region of the United States; specifically the AC-HIDTA’s Area of Responsibility (AOR) remains the primary conduit for the movement of drugs to the eastern seaboard and serves as a major staging area for the collection of drug proceeds.

In 2018, Mexican drug cartels, as well as, smaller Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs), dominated the distribution of illicit drugs in the AC-HIDTA AOR. Intelligence indicates that the listed Mexican Cartels significantly influenced drug trafficking in the AC-HIDTA AOR.

<u>Major DTOs</u>	<u>Smaller DTOs</u>
Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG)	Guerreros Unidos
Sinaloa Cartel	Cartel Del Noreste – Formerly part of Los Zetas
Juarez Cartel	Los Zetas – Remnants
Colima Cartel	Gulf Cartel – Remnants
	La Familia Michoacana – Remnants
	Knights Templars – Remnants



Figure 21 - Areas of Cartel Influence in Mexico

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AC-HIDTA 2018 Identified DTOs				
Characteristics	International	Multi-State	Local	Total
Total DTOs	49	50	41	140
Predominate Ethnicities				
Hispanic (Non-Mexican)	17	14	11	42
Mexican	11	2	3	16
Other	12	23	19	54
Multi-ethnic	9	11	8	28
Total Members (Leaders)	663 (49)	556 (50)	337 (41)	1556 (140)
Average DTO Size	14.53	12.12	10.68	12.11
Gang Related	10	13	13	36
Violent	14	15	12	41
Poly-drug	35	36	23	94
Money Laundering Activities	3	1	1	5
Federal Case Designations				
OCDETF	11	12	5	28
CPOT	5	1	1	7
RPOT	1	0	0	1
PTO	19	18	9	46

Figure 22 - AC-HIDTA 2018 Identified DTOs

The AC-HIDTA investigated 140 DTOs during 2018, of which 49 were international in scope (HIDTA 2019). They are primarily split in ethnicity between Hispanic (non-Mexican) and other ethnicities. The majority are poly-drug in nature. The average DTO size is 12 members and only a few of these DTOs are known to be engaging in money laundering activities. As Figure 23 indicates, in general, the AC-HIDTA DTOs are gang related about a quarter of the time and about a third of DTOs are considered violent.

MONEY LAUNDERING ORGANIZATIONS IDENTIFIED BY THE AC-HIDTA			
TOTAL IDENTIFIED	INTERNATIONAL	MULTI-STATE/REGIONAL	LOCAL
5	3	1	1

Figure 23 - MLOs Identified by AC-HIDTA

OUTLOOK

The AC-HIDTA predicts increased pressure by DTOs operating in the AOR for 2019. Changing markets will continue to inspire DTOs to increase profitability while reducing exposure to law enforcement. The presence of cheaper poly-drug alternatives fueled by the surge of fentanyl analogs will likely increase. Cocaine abuse will remain consistent. Marijuana abuse may increase as public attitudes follow the nationwide trend to decriminalize and marginalize marijuana use. Counterfeit production of controlled prescription drugs will become an ever increasing threat to the general public. Drug trafficking in the AC-HIDTA AOR will continued to be controlled by smaller, more numerous DTOs willing to use violence to control their territory.

With guidance from the Board of Directors, the AC-HIDTA will adapt its strategy and tactics for 2020. The new direction will emphasize the ability to counter and overcome the changing DTO threat within the AC-HIDTA AOR. AC-HIDTA will:

1. Add an investigative focus on the proven strategy of Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE). Note: DHE is a proven strategy that focuses on all crimes, all threats and all hazards. DHE strikes at the Achilles heel of any crime – transportation. DHE efforts in the AC-HIDTA AOR recently even have interdicted several cases of human trafficking.
2. Re-evaluate AC-HIDTA measurements of success.
3. Concentrate on countering the increased threat of violence DTOs.
4. Follow the movement of DTOs to the East toward coastal areas and Ports of Entry. Note: AC-HIDTA will work to increase shared intelligence with coastal entities such as the Department of Justice's Project SeaHawk.
5. Concentrate on prevention methods for demand reduction.

APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY

The AC-HIDTA Intelligence Support Center (ISC) prepares the annual threat assessment. The ISC interviewed numerous law enforcement agencies within the AC-HIDTA AOR to collect the valuable intelligence and statistical data. The goal is to produce an accurate document that identifies the current drug threat within the AC-HIDTA AOR. The Threat Assessment’s purpose is to utilize the data to identify new developments in drug usage, supplies, and distribution routes. This information will be passed to federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies within the AC-HIDTA AOR who can use the information to develop strategies to interdict drug shipments before they can destroy the lives of an end user. The Public Health sector, will also be able to use the Threat Assessment to improve their ability to provide services as part of a complete approach to addressing the problem of illegal drug abuse. The AC-HIDTA Executive Board uses the Threat Assessment each year as they establish specific, measurable goals for the upcoming year. Information used to develop the Threat Assessment comes from multiple law enforcement and public health sources including:

Georgia	North Carolina	South Carolina
Alpharetta PD	Alamance County SO	Charleston County SO
Atlanta PD	Archdale PD	Charleston PD
Banks County SO	Asheboro PD	Columbia PD
Barrow County SO Interview	Asheville PD	Columbia – DEA
Bartow County SO	Charlotte – DEA	Florence County SO
Carroll County SO	Charlotte – DEA 2	Greenville County SO
Cherokee Multi-Agcy Narc Sqd-CMANS	Charlotte TDS	Horry County PD
Clayton County PD	Cherokee Indian PD	Horry County SO
Clayton County SO	Durham County SO	Lexington County SO
Columbia County SO	Gastonia PD	Myrtle Beach PD
Columbus Metro NTF	Guilford County SO	North Myrtle Beach PD
Columbus PD	High Point PD	Oconee County SO
Conyers PD	HSI - NC/SC	Richland County SO
Coweta County SO	Jackson County SO	SLED
DEA AFC Task Force Group 3	Johnston County SO	Summerville PD
DEA AFD Enforcement Group 2 (FIT)	Kernersville PD	
DEA AFD Strike Force	Mecklenburg PD	
Decatur PD	Mint Hill PD	
DeKalb County Narcotics	Nash County SO	
DeKalb County PD	Raleigh DO - DEA	
DHS/HSI - GA	Raleigh PD	
Division – Group 1	Randolph County SO	
Douglasville PD	Reidsville PD	

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Eatonton PD	Rockingham County SO
Fayetteville County SO	SBI
Forsyth County SO	Wake County SO
GA Dept. of Corrections	Wayne County SO
Georgia Bureau of Investigation	Wilson PD
Georgia State Patrol	
Gwinnett County Metro Drug Task Force	
Gwinnett County PD	
Hall County SO	
Henry County Police – Narcotics	
HIDTA Group 1	
HIDTA Group 2	
HIDTA Group 3	
HIDTA Group 4	
ICE DHS – Interview	
Johns Creek/Alpharetta/Forsyth Co DTF	
Jonesboro PD	
Marietta PD	
Milton PD	
NE GA Regional DTF	
Newnan PD	
Norcross PD	
Ocmulgee DTF	
Powder Springs PD	
Rockdale County SO	
Roswell PD	
South Central DTF	
Suwanee PD	
US Postal Inspection Service-USPIS	
West Metro Interview	
West Metro Regional DEO	
Whitfield County SO	

The AC-HIDTA uses a team concept to produce and review the annual Threat Assessment. The final product is subject to the approval of the AC-HIDTA Executive Board. Once approval of the Threat Assessment and Strategy is given, the AC-HIDTA executive staff, enforcement and intelligence managers will implement new strategies to counter the identified threats.

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