



U.S. Department of Justice
National Drug Intelligence Center



South Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area



Drug Market Analysis 2011

Source Summary Statement

The National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) has high confidence in this drug market analysis as it is based on multiple sources of information that have proved highly reliable in prior NDIC, law enforcement, and intelligence community reporting. Quantitative data, including seizure, eradication, and arrest statistics, were drawn from data sets maintained by federal, state, or local government agencies. Discussions of the prevalence and consequences of drug abuse are based on published reports from U.S. Government agencies and interviews with public health officials deemed reliable because of their expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of drug abuse. Trends and patterns related to drug production, trafficking, and abuse were identified through detailed analysis of coordinated counterdrug agency reporting and information. NDIC intelligence analysts and field intelligence officers obtained this information through numerous interviews with law enforcement and public health officials (federal, state, and local) in whom NDIC has a high level of confidence based on previous contact and reporting, their recognized expertise, and their professional standing and reputation within the U.S. counterdrug community. This report was reviewed and corroborated by law enforcement officials who have jurisdiction in the South Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area and possess an expert knowledge of its drug situation.



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This assessment is an outgrowth of a partnership between the NDIC and HIDTA Program for preparation of annual assessments depicting drug trafficking trends and developments in HIDTA Program areas. The report has been coordinated with the HIDTA, is limited in scope to HIDTA jurisdictional boundaries, and draws upon a wide variety of sources within those boundaries.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Key Issues	2
Outlook	8
Appendix A. South Florida HIDTA Overview	9
Appendix B. Tables	12
Endnotes	13
Sources	19



Executive Summary

The overall drug threat to the South Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) region has changed little over the past year; however, several issues are of increasing concern to law enforcement officials. The diversion, distribution, and abuse of controlled prescription drugs (CPDs) and the distribution and abuse of cocaine continue to be the principal drug threats to the South Florida HIDTA region. The threat posed by CPDs is compounded by the ease with which abusers can acquire the drugs and the far-reaching negative societal effects associated with them. Cocaine remains a serious drug threat despite indicators that suggest declining levels of abuse. Cannabis cultivation and the resulting marijuana production, distribution, and abuse continue to plague the region.

Key issues identified in the South Florida HIDTA region include the following:

- Widespread CPD diversion and abuse, particularly of opioid pain relievers, are significant drug threats to the South Florida HIDTA region because of the overall negative societal effects of CPDs.¹
- CPD distributors and abusers in the South Florida HIDTA region are acquiring prescription drugs with relative ease through numerous rogue pain management clinics (commonly referred to as pill mills) operating in Florida.² This contributes to widespread availability of the drugs throughout the region and in much of the eastern United States.³
- Despite indicators suggesting declining levels of abuse in some areas, cocaine remains a serious drug threat to the South Florida HIDTA region—cocaine availability remained stable from 2009 through early 2011.⁴
- Marijuana is widely available in the South Florida HIDTA region, fueled by indoor cannabis cultivation operations conducted by Cuban drug trafficking organizations (DTOs)^{a, 5} and various other criminal groups and local independent producers.⁶
- The South Florida HIDTA region is a significant money laundering center for illicit drug proceeds. DTOs in the region are increasingly exploiting the black market Venezuelan Bolivar Exchange (VBE) to launder drug proceeds.⁷

a. Cuban DTOs are composed of individuals of Cuban descent and ethnic Cubans located in the United States.

Key Issues^b

Widespread CPD diversion and abuse, particularly of opioid pain relievers, are significant drug threats to the South Florida HIDTA region because of the overall negative societal effects of CPDs.⁸

CPD trafficking and abuse have become so pervasive that the South Florida HIDTA has identified CPDs as the primary drug threat to the region.⁹ In fact, law enforcement officials in the region have repeatedly raised concerns about widespread CPD diversion and abuse.¹⁰ For instance, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Tactical Diversion Squad officials in the South Florida HIDTA region advise that the problems attendant to CPD diversion and abuse have created a level of threat that is approaching, and could surpass, that for cocaine.¹¹ Moreover, according to National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) 2011^c data, 16 of the 48 law enforcement agency respondents in the South Florida HIDTA region report that CPDs pose the greatest drug threat to their jurisdiction, a proportion approaching the 23 of 48 respondents reporting the same for cocaine.¹²

CPD abuse is a significant concern in the region and has had dire negative societal effects. For example, CPDs are the leading cause of drug-related overdose deaths in the area.¹³ Florida medical examiner data indicate that the number of deaths in the South Florida HIDTA region associated with prescription benzodiazepines and opioids, used alone or with other drugs, increased from 2008 (1,597 deaths) through 2009 (1,913 deaths), and these drugs were present or found to be a causal factor in deaths far more often than cocaine and heroin combined (476) in 2009 (the most recent data available).¹⁴ (See Table 1 on page 3.) Furthermore, according to Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) data, the number of other opiate-related^d treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities statewide in Florida increased dramatically from 2008 (8,696) through 2009 (12,348) and accounted for more admissions than any other illicit drug except marijuana in 2009 (the most recent data available).¹⁵ (See Table B1 in Appendix B.) Law enforcement reporting and medical examiner data indicate that the most commonly diverted and abused CPDs include opioid pain relievers, such as hydrocodone, methadone, and oxycodone (OxyContin and Roxicodone), and benzodiazepines (Xanax).¹⁶ As further evidence of the threat posed to the region by CPDs, NDTS 2011 data reveal that 7 of the 48 law enforcement agency respondents in the area identify CPDs as the drug that most contributes to violent crime in their jurisdictions, and 13 of the 48 report the same for property crime.¹⁷

b. For a general overview of the drug threat in the South Florida HIDTA region, see Appendix A.

c. The NDTS is conducted annually by NDIC to solicit information from a representative sample of state and local law enforcement agencies. NDIC uses this information to produce national, regional, and state estimates of various aspects of drug trafficking activities. NDTS data reflect agencies' perceptions based on their analysis of criminal activities that occurred within their jurisdictions during the past year. NDTS 2011 data cited in this report are raw, unweighted responses from federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies solicited through either NDIC or the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) HIDTA program as of April 15, 2011.

d. The TEDS "other opiates" category includes admissions for nonprescription use of methadone, codeine, morphine, oxycodone, hydromorphone, meperidine, opium, and other drugs with morphine-like effects.

Table 1. Drug Mentions in Deceased Persons in the South Florida HIDTA Region,* 2005–2009

Drug	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Prescription benzodiazepines and opioids	1,177	1,048	1,426	1,597	1,913
Cocaine	513	539	633	505	430
Heroin	58	42	40	63	46
Total Overdose Deaths	1,748	1,629	2,099	2,165	2,389

Source: Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Medical Examiner's Commission.

*Figures in this table represent medical examiner data for Brevard, Broward, Monroe, and Palm Beach Counties.

CPD distributors and abusers in the South Florida HIDTA region are acquiring prescription drugs with relative ease through numerous rogue pain management clinics (commonly referred to as pill mills) operating in Florida.¹⁸ This contributes to widespread availability of the drugs throughout the region and in much of the eastern United States.¹⁹

Rogue pain management clinics (pill mills) located in the South Florida HIDTA region are a significant source for CPDs available to abusers throughout the area as well as in other eastern drug markets.²⁰ DEA South Florida Task Force investigations indicate that pill mill operations exhibit several unique characteristics, such as the ability of operators to quickly relocate, nearly exclusive associations with specific physicians and pharmacies, primarily cash-based payment methods, and rapid examinations.²¹ (See text box on page 4.) Owners of pill mills have established many cash-only operations in South Florida that are frequently used by distributors and abusers in the region, as well as from other areas of the eastern United States, to obtain CPDs.²² Distributors and abusers from states such as Kentucky and West Virginia, where Controlled Substance Monitoring Programs (CSMPs) have made acquiring CPDs more difficult, frequently travel to South Florida to visit pill mills.²³ Moreover, many of these out-of-state distributors and abusers work in teams, traveling along the coastal perimeter of Florida for pill mill appointments scheduled solely to divert CPDs.²⁴ These individuals or teams frequently follow a route that traverses the eastern, southern, and western regions of Florida before returning north.²⁵ In addition, some distributors and abusers arrange CPD shipments through parcel delivery services from the region to other states.²⁶

State and local officials in Florida have attempted to control CPD diversion from pill mills in the state; however, the drugs remain available at high levels in the region.^{e, 27} According to NDTs 2011 data, 40 of the 48 law enforcement agency respondents in the South Florida HIDTA region report that CPDs are available at moderate or high levels in their jurisdictions.²⁸ These data are supported by recent law enforcement interviews that describe widespread CPD availability throughout the region.²⁹

e. Florida House Bill (HB) 2272, enacted on October 1, 2010, banned people convicted of drug felonies from owning clinics and prohibited pain clinic physicians from dispensing more than 72 hours' worth of prescription pain medication to patients who pay for the medicine by cash, check, or credit card. The law also requires specialized training for pain clinic doctors, forces the previously unregulated medical offices to submit to annual inspections, and authorizes the health department to fine clinics for violating standards. Florida HB 7095, enacted on June 3, 2011, reinforces provisions of HB 2272 while increasing penalties for overprescribing oxycodone and prescribing other prescription drugs under prohibited circumstances. HB 7095 also regulates wholesale distribution of certain controlled substances, requires law enforcement notification for stolen prescription drugs, and mandates recording of prescription dispensing information to a statewide database within 7 days.

Pill mill operators continually devise methods to subvert regulations and investigations while attracting patients.³⁰ For example, law enforcement or regulatory investigations have closed pill mills and suspended the licenses of the associated physicians in South Florida only to have the owners reopen the business at a new location staffed by other licensed physicians.³¹ In addition, physicians not formerly associated with CPD diversion are increasingly opening pill mills disguised as wellness centers, functional medicine clinics, and urgent care centers.³² The DEA Tactical Diversion Squad reports that many of these establishments are cash-only businesses; however, some accept insurance.³³ Most of the businesses reject Medicaid and Medicare because of the ease with which law enforcement officials can review Medicaid and Medicare databases.³⁴ Moreover, pill mill operators are increasingly establishing proprietary relationships with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) services and pharmacies.³⁵ The DEA Tactical Diversion Squad reports that applications for new pharmacies in the South Florida HIDTA region increased in 2010 (the exact number of such applications was not available for inclusion in this report).³⁶ Many of the new pharmacies are being established by former pill mill owners seeking to profit as they did while operating pain management clinics.³⁷

Operation Pill Nation

In February 2011, federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies concluded Operation Pill Nation—an investigation that resulted in the arrest of 22 individuals and the seizure of \$2.2 million and 70 vehicles. Among those arrested were doctors who had conspired to distribute and dispense more than 660,000 dosage units of oxycodone. Operation Pill Nation documented 340 undercover buys of prescription drugs from 60 doctors at more than 40 pill mills in South Florida during the past year. According to the indictment, the defendants operated pill mills that offered patients prescriptions for oxycodone and other controlled substances without a proper medical diagnosis or purpose. The indictment alleged that the defendants marketed pill mills as pain management clinics through more than 1,600 Internet sites. Patients using the pill mills were required to make cash payments as a “visit fee” and were often directed to obtain MRI examinations. The pill mills would then purposely misinterpret the MRIs to justify the prescriptions. For an additional fee, the pill mills would falsify the results of patients’ urinalyses to justify high and often dangerous dosages of prescription opioid pain medications.³⁸

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration.

Despite indicators suggesting declining levels of abuse in some areas, cocaine remains a serious drug threat to the South Florida HIDTA region—cocaine availability remained relatively stable³⁹ from 2009 through early 2011.⁴⁰

Cocaine remains a serious drug threat to the region despite indicators that suggest declining levels of abuse in some parts of Florida.⁴¹ To illustrate, the total number of cocaine-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities in Florida decreased from 2008 (14,917) through 2009 (11,384), according to TEDS data.⁴² (See Table B1 in Appendix B.) In addition, Florida medical examiner data indicate that the number of deaths in the South Florida HIDTA region associated with cocaine, used alone or with other drugs, decreased 15 percent from 2008 (505) through 2009 (430)—the latest full year for which data are available.⁴³ (See Table 1 on page 3.) Nonetheless, NDTs 2011 data reveal that 23 of the 48 law enforcement agency respondents in the South Florida HIDTA region identify cocaine (powder or crack) as the greatest drug

threat in their jurisdictions.⁴⁴ In addition, cocaine is associated with violent and property crime in the region.⁴⁵ Thirty-one of the 48 law enforcement agency respondents in the region identify cocaine as the drug that most contributes to violent crime in their jurisdictions, while 22 report the same for property crime.⁴⁶ Most cocaine-related violence in the region occurs between retail-level cocaine traffickers, particularly street gangs.⁴⁷ For example, in March 2011, following an investigation by federal and state law enforcement authorities, the leader of the Krazy Locos street gang and two associates pled guilty in federal court to numerous criminal offenses, including homicide, narcotics and firearms trafficking, and obstruction of justice.⁴⁸ The defendants had been involved in the distribution of powder cocaine and crack, among other illicit drugs, in Palm Beach County and had killed a fellow gang member after he attempted to renounce his gang membership.⁴⁹

Cocaine availability has remained stable at high levels in the region over the past few years (2009 through early 2011), as indicated by law enforcement reporting and survey, seizure, and price data.⁵⁰ Law enforcement officers report that since 2009, cocaine availability has remained stable at levels sufficient to support market demand—albeit at higher prices per kilogram.^{51, f} This contention is supported by NDTs 2011 data: 40 of the 48 respondents in the South Florida HIDTA region report that powder cocaine is available at moderate or high levels in their jurisdictions, and 36 respondents report the same for crack.⁵² Cocaine prices further indicate ready availability of the drug.⁵³ Kilogram prices for cocaine in Miami remained relatively stable from year-end 2009 (\$24,000 to \$35,000) through midyear 2010 (\$25,000 to \$31,000).⁵⁴ Gram prices for cocaine at the retail level in Miami, however, decreased from year-end 2009 (\$80 to \$100) through midyear 2010 (\$50 to \$90).⁵⁵ Decreased retail prices are likely due to lower purity levels caused by adulteration of the drug.⁵⁶ For instance, in 2011, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida charged 27 individuals with selling large quantities of powdered chemicals used to adulterate or cut illicit drugs such as cocaine.⁵⁷ In addition, cocaine seizures increased in the South Florida HIDTA region from 2009 to 2010, further supporting the assertion of stable availability at high levels.⁵⁸ South Florida HIDTA initiatives seized more than 16,127 kilograms of powder cocaine in 2010, a 27 percent increase from the 12,731 kilograms seized in 2009.^{59, g} (See Table 2 on page 6.)

f. Some areas of the South Florida HIDTA region experienced decreases in cocaine availability from 2008 to 2009. In particular, the DEA Miami Division reported lower cocaine availability and higher kilogram prices in the Greater Miami area.

g. The amount of cocaine and marijuana seized by South Florida HIDTA initiatives in 2010 was greater than the amount of cocaine and marijuana seized in all of Florida, according to National Seizure System (NSS) data. NSS data run on March 25, 2011, indicate that 11,484 kilograms of cocaine; 9,108 kilograms of marijuana; 79 kilograms of heroin; and 49 kilograms of methamphetamine were seized in Florida in 2010. The South Florida HIDTA reports that its seizure data most accurately reflect its efforts in the region.

Table 2. Drug Seizures Through South Florida HIDTA Initiatives, by Drug, in Kilograms,* 2010

Drug	2009	2010
Powder Cocaine	12,731	16,127
Crack Cocaine	7	4
Powder Methamphetamine	3	0
Ice Methamphetamine	6	0
Marijuana	9,225	9,169
Marijuana (hydroponic)	7,120	4,812
Hashish	43	1
Heroin	59	11
Hydrocodone (in dosage units)	8,174	4,022
OxyContin (in dosage units)	94,059	57,633
Xanax (in dosage units)	23,682	40,743
Other CPDs (in dosage units, including steroids)	597,389	531,899

Source: South Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.

*Rounded to nearest kilogram.

Marijuana is widely available in the South Florida HIDTA region, fueled by indoor cannabis cultivation operations conducted by Cuban DTOs⁶⁰ and various other criminal groups and local independent producers.⁶¹

Marijuana available in the HIDTA region includes commercial-grade marijuana from sources in Mexico; low-quality locally produced marijuana; marijuana produced in the Caribbean, including the Bahamas and Jamaica; and high-potency marijuana produced locally at indoor grow sites.⁶² In fact, 35 of the 48 law enforcement agencies that responded to the NDTS 2011 report high marijuana availability, and 5 report moderate availability in their jurisdictions.⁶³ Although several varieties of marijuana are available, high-potency marijuana (typically produced locally) is the most popular among abusers and commands a much higher price.⁶⁴ For instance, in Miami at midyear 2010, wholesale prices for high-potency marijuana (\$3,000 to \$4,500 per pound) were much higher than those for commercial-grade Mexican marijuana (\$600 to \$4,000 per pound).⁶⁵

High-potency marijuana is produced at indoor grow sites throughout the region. According to NDTS 2011 data, 28 of the 48 law enforcement agency respondents in the South Florida HIDTA region indicate that cannabis is grown at indoor sites in their jurisdictions.⁶⁶ However, the number of cannabis plants eradicated from indoor grow sites in the region decreased from 2009 (24,633 plants) through 2010 (20,425 plants).⁶⁷ Law enforcement officials report that this decrease is most likely related to the difficulty of detecting indoor grow operations—not to a decline in indoor cannabis cultivation.⁶⁸ (See Table B2 in Appendix B.) Most indoor grow sites are constructed in privately owned homes or rental properties located throughout the region.⁶⁹

Cuban DTOs are significant producers of high-potency marijuana; however, various other criminal groups and local independent producers also produce high-potency marijuana at indoor grow sites in the region.⁷⁰ Cultivators establish grow operations in residential homes (which they often obtain through mortgage fraud) surrounded by acreage secured with gated drives.⁷¹ These operations are difficult to detect because neighbors are kept at a distance and law enforcement officers cannot execute effective surveillance without being observed by the operators.⁷² Cuban DTOs are increasingly establishing smaller indoor grows at these residences, cultivating fewer than 100 plants in order to remain below federal prosecution thresholds.⁷³ They typically hire Cuban immigrants, many of whom were trained in agricultural studies in Cuba, to care for indoor marijuana grow operations.⁷⁴

The South Florida HIDTA region is a significant money laundering center for illicit drug proceeds. DTOs in the region are increasingly exploiting the black market Venezuelan Bolivar Exchange (VBE) to launder drug proceeds.⁷⁵

The South Florida HIDTA region has long been a significant money laundering center for illicit drug proceeds.⁷⁶ Drug traffickers launder and move billions of dollars in illicit drug proceeds through the financial infrastructure and extensive international banking community in the region, particularly in Miami.⁷⁷ DTOs routinely launder illicit drug proceeds through local financial institutions, money remittance businesses, shell corporations, cash value insurance policies, real estate fraud, and the Colombian Black Market Peso Exchange (BMPE).⁷⁸ Additionally, DTOs in the South Florida HIDTA region transport bulk cash into and through the region to the Caribbean and Southwest Border areas.⁷⁹

DTOs in the region have also used *permutas*—Venezuelan bond markets permitting the exchange of various international currencies—to launder drug proceeds.⁸⁰ The Venezuelan *permuta* was a bond trade or “swap” market in which one type of currency bond was exchanged for another.^{81, h} However, in May 2010, the Venezuelan Government declared *permutas* illegal, fueling growth of the VBE, according to the U.S. Attorneys Office, Southern District of Florida.⁸² The VBE, similar to the Colombian BMPE, is an exchange wherein narco-dollars (illicit drug proceeds) in the United States are sold by traffickers to “bolivar brokers.”⁸³ The bolivar broker delivers bolivars to traffickers in Venezuela and uses the dollars to pay U.S. debts on behalf of Venezuelan businessmen, who pay the brokers with bolivars in Venezuela.⁸⁴ The VBE is attractive to Venezuelan businessmen because Venezuela has imposed a US\$2,500 limit on the exchange of bolivars to U.S. dollars.⁸⁵ The exchange rate for the VBE fluctuates daily;⁸⁶ however, because Venezuelan businessmen have no other place to buy dollars once the \$2,500 limit is reached, Bolivar brokers regularly sell dollars for more than their actual currency value.⁸⁷

h. *Permutas* required two offshore companies to process the bond swap and exchange of underlying currency. Typically, one offshore company managed the bond swap denominated in two separate currencies, while the second offshore company provided currency to a broker or financial institution in the United States. By design, the activity limited or prevented transparency in exchanges between individuals—an intelligence gap for regulatory or law enforcement officials—as the transactions could be traced only to the *permuta*. Historically, bond rates were unregulated and existed outside the jurisdiction of the Venezuelan Government.

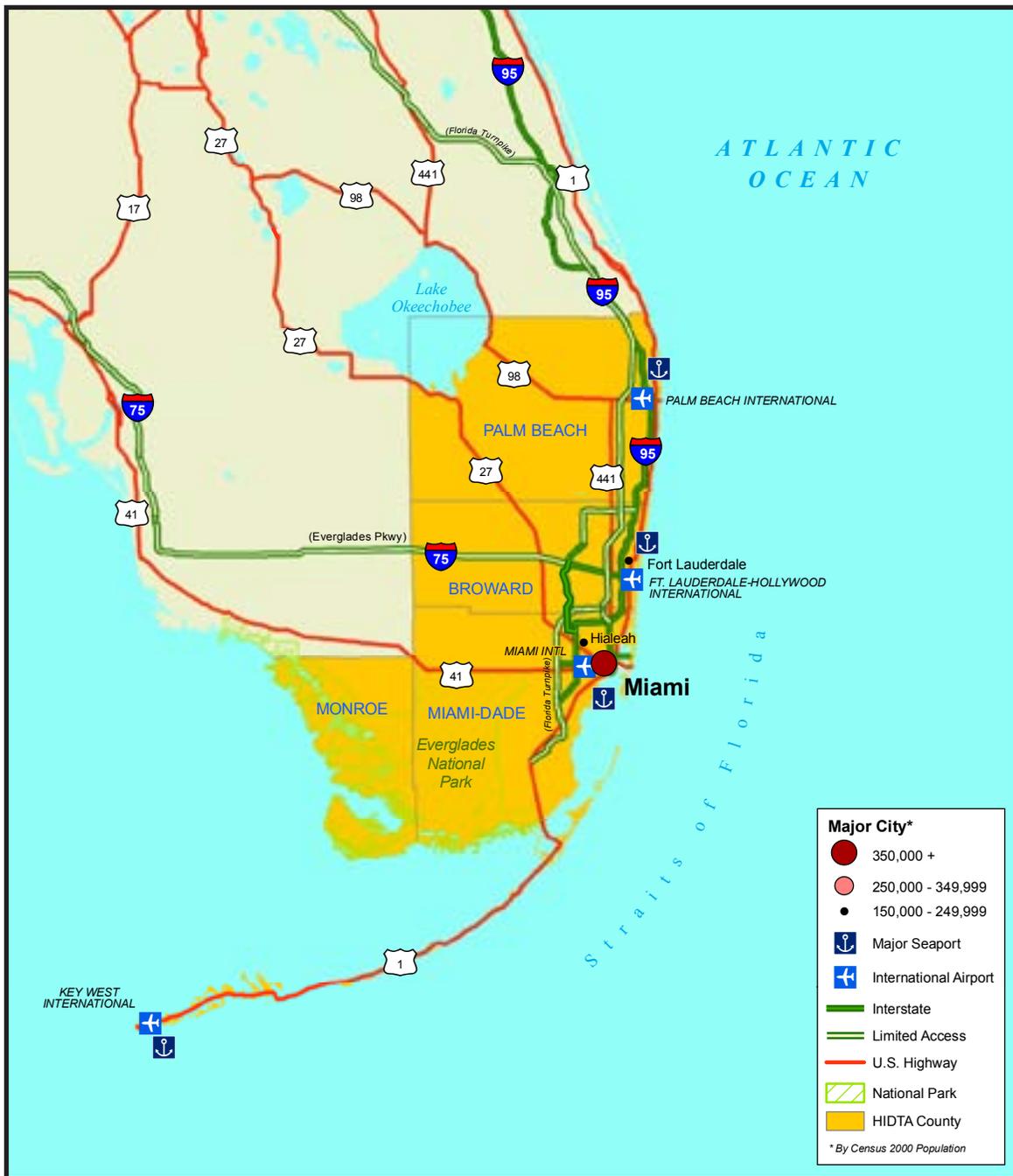
Outlook

NDIC assesses with high confidenceⁱ that CPD diversion, trafficking, and abuse will remain a significant threat to the region because of the high availability and overall negative societal effect of CPDs in the South Florida HIDTA region. The region will remain a significant source area for CPDs abused throughout the eastern United States until legislation aimed at curbing diversion, particularly through the many pill mills in the state, is successfully implemented. NDIC assesses with high confidence that cocaine trafficking and abuse will remain a serious drug threat in the near term, with availability sufficient to meet demand. NDIC assesses with high confidence that the availability of high-potency marijuana in the region will remain strong. Indoor cannabis cultivators, particularly Cuban DTOs, will continue to employ strategies that make detection of grow operations more difficult for law enforcement.

i. **High Confidence** generally indicates that the judgments are based on high-quality information or that the nature of the issue makes it possible to render a solid judgment. **Medium Confidence** generally means that the information is credibly sourced and plausible but can be interpreted in various ways, or is not of sufficient quality or corroborated sufficiently to warrant a higher level of confidence. **Low Confidence** generally means that the information is too fragmented or poorly corroborated to make a solid analytic inference, or that there are significant concerns or problems with the sources.

Appendix A. South Florida HIDTA Overview

Map A1. South Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area



The South Florida HIDTA region encompasses Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe, and Palm Beach Counties. (See Map A1.)⁸⁸ The region is a principal arrival zone for multikilogram quantities of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana transported through the Caribbean corridor into the continental United States for distribution throughout the country.⁸⁹ The region is also a destination for multithousand-kilogram quantities of cocaine and marijuana and multipound quantities of heroin

and methamphetamine transported from the Southwest Border.⁹⁰ In addition, South Florida is a source area for CPDs intended for distribution in drug markets located in the eastern United States, and it serves as a major venue for money laundering transactions involving billions of dollars in illicit drug proceeds.⁹¹

The region has a large population that is racially/ethnically diverse.⁹² The population increased slightly from an estimated 5,575,050 in 2008 to an estimated 5,620,216 in 2009.⁹³ Many foreign nationals or immigrants have relocated to the region from drug source or transit countries such as Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, and Venezuela, enabling drug traffickers to blend into local communities and mask their illegal activities.⁹⁴

The South Florida HIDTA region has a highly developed transportation infrastructure composed of seaports, airports, and roadways (such as Interstates 75, 95, and 595)⁹⁵ that link the area to drug source and transit areas as well as other domestic drug markets. (See Map A1 in Appendix A.) Millions of tons of commercial truck and maritime freight and parcels transit the region daily.⁹⁶ The region has two major seaports (Port of Miami and Port Everglades) that offer services for cargo and cruise ships. The Port of Miami is an international trade seaport in South Florida with approximately 20 shipping lines that call on more than 100 countries and 250 ports across the world, serving the markets of Asia, the Caribbean, Central America, Europe, the Middle East, North America and South America.⁹⁷ In fiscal year 2010, the Port of Miami handled more than 6.8 million tons of cargo. Port Everglades, in Fort Lauderdale, has more home-ported cruise ships than any other port in the world, with 15 cruise lines, 55 cruise ships, and more than 2,000 sailing itineraries.⁹⁸ There are two major airports in the region that offer services for cargo and passenger aircraft: Miami International Airport and Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. Miami International Airport is among the busiest airports in the world, with more than 80 airlines using the facility for flights to approximately 150 destinations around the globe.⁹⁹ In 2010, almost 17 million airline passengers traveled through the facility.¹⁰⁰ DTOs frequently exploit these infrastructures for illicit drug activity.¹⁰¹

Colombian and Mexican DTOs are the principal suppliers of wholesale-quantity drugs in the South Florida HIDTA region.¹⁰² They supply most of the available illicit drugs in the HIDTA region to African American, Caucasian, Cuban, Dominican, Haitian, Hispanic, Jamaican, and Puerto Rican distributors, and to street gang members.¹⁰³ Colombian DTOs, the dominant wholesale traffickers in the South Florida HIDTA region, supply most of the wholesale quantities of cocaine and South American (SA) heroin available in the South Florida HIDTA region, relying heavily on Bahamian, Cuban, Dominican, Haitian, Puerto Rican, and Venezuelan DTOs and criminal groups to transport these drugs through transit areas in the Caribbean.¹⁰⁴ Colombian DTOs are well organized, deeply entrenched, and extensively networked with DTOs based in South America, Mexico, and the Caribbean.¹⁰⁵ Law enforcement officials in the region report that Colombian DTOs coordinate with South American and Mexican DTOs to transport cocaine and SA heroin from South America through Central America and Mexico, and then across the U.S.–Mexico border into the United States and South Florida.¹⁰⁶ Colombian DTOs also exploit South Florida as an entry point for drug shipments transported directly from South America or through the Caribbean for distribution in the region.¹⁰⁷ Mexican DTOs supply significant quantities of cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine from Mexico to the South Florida HIDTA region via the Southwest Border.¹⁰⁸ For example, in June 2010, the U.S. Attorney for the South-

ern District of Florida announced the arrest of 25 members of a Mexican DTO that had been transporting multikilogram quantities of cocaine from Mexico to Palm Beach County (FL).¹⁰⁹ During the investigation, law enforcement officials seized 16 kilograms of cocaine, \$150,000 in U.S. currency, four vehicles, and various firearms.¹¹⁰ The operation was a result of Project Deliverance, a multiagency investigation that identified extensive Mexican drug trafficking networks operating throughout various areas of the United States, including South Florida.¹¹¹ Mexican DTOs also transport bulk cash drug proceeds from South Florida to Mexico.¹¹²

CPDs are widely available and abused throughout the region.¹¹³ Owners of rogue pain management clinics (commonly referred to as pill mills) are operating cash-only businesses throughout Florida, including South Florida, and thereby have become a significant source for CPDs available in the region as well as the eastern United States.¹¹⁴ Abusers are enticed in part by the ease with which they can obtain CPDs from pill mills and unscrupulous physicians as well as through doctor-shopping, from retail-level distributors, and over the Internet.¹¹⁵ Cocaine remains a serious drug threat to the South Florida HIDTA region, despite indicators suggesting declining abuse. Availability is stable and sufficient to meet demand, according to law enforcement reporting and drug seizure data.¹¹⁶

Cannabis cultivation and the resulting marijuana production, distribution, and abuse pose serious concerns to law enforcement officers.¹¹⁷ Cannabis is grown at indoor and outdoor cultivation sites in the South Florida HIDTA region.¹¹⁸ (See Table B2 and Table B3 in Appendix B.) Because of the high demand for high-potency marijuana, cannabis is cultivated indoors at moderate or high levels.¹¹⁹ Indoor cultivation sites are established and operated by Cuban DTOs and various other criminal groups and local independent producers.¹²⁰ Drug traffickers transport additional quantities of marijuana into the region from the Caribbean, including the Bahamas and Jamaica, using maritime vessels.¹²¹ In addition, the Broward County Sheriff's Department reports that Mexican traffickers supply large quantities of lower-quality marijuana to the region.¹²² Marijuana abuse is widespread, and the drug is abused by members of all racial/ethnic and social groups.¹²³

Heroin and methamphetamine pose a lower threat to the South Florida HIDTA region than cocaine, CPDs, and marijuana. Availability and abuse of heroin are stable at low or moderate levels.¹²⁴ The Broward County Sheriff's Department reports that much of the heroin transported into the region is destined for other U.S. drug markets, with limited quantities of heroin distributed in the region.¹²⁵ Methamphetamine is available at low levels, and demand for the drug is low.¹²⁶ An increase in the smurfing of precursor chemicals—a trend observed in 2009 that was projected to potentially increase methamphetamine production and abuse in the region—likely supplied methamphetamine producers in other areas of the state, as no increase in production was observed in the South Florida HIDTA region in 2010.¹²⁷ In fact, only three methamphetamine laboratories have been seized in the region since 2006.¹²⁸

j. Pseudoephedrine smurfing is a method used by some methamphetamine traffickers to acquire large quantities of precursor chemicals. Methamphetamine producers purchase the chemicals in quantities at or below the legal thresholds from multiple retail locations. Methamphetamine producers often enlist the assistance of several friends or associates in smurfing operations to increase the speed of production and the quantity of chemical acquired.

Appendix B. Tables

Table B1. Substance Abuse Treatment Admissions in Florida, 2005–2009

Drug	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Cocaine (Smoked)	7,762	7,963	7,658	9,720	7,608
Cocaine (Other Route)	3,655	4,122	4,105	5,197	3,776
Heroin	1,537	1,865	1,413	2,005	1,680
Marijuana	13,922	14,291	15,245	24,770	24,623
Amphetamines (Including Methamphetamine)	1,194	1,142	981	1,222	1,297
Other Opiates*	2,580	3,704	4,400	8,696	12,348

Source: Treatment Episode Data Set, data run date March 30, 2011.

*The “other opiates” category includes admissions for nonprescription use of methadone, codeine, morphine, oxycodone, hydromorphone, meperidine, opium, and other drugs with morphine-like effects.

Table B2. Indoor Cannabis Cultivation Sites Seized and Plants Eradicated in South Florida HIDTA Counties, 2006–2010

County	Sites					Plants				
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Broward	33	30	11	10	50	3,021	1,906	1,333	1,523	2,616
Miami-Dade/Dade	206	382	348	340	319	15,749	26,019	23,621	20,223	15,904
Monroe*	0	2	0	0	3	0	27	0	0	63
Palm Beach	26	36	79	41	40	1,938	3,727	4,997	2,887	1,842
Totals	265	450	438	391	412	20,708	31,679	29,951	24,633	20,425

Source: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement.

*Monroe County did not participate in Florida’s Domestic Marijuana Eradication (DME) Indoor Grow Program in 2006.

Table B3. Outdoor Cannabis Cultivation Sites Seized and Plants Eradicated in South Florida HIDTA Counties, 2006–2010

County	Sites					Plants				
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Broward	2	1	0	2	2	79	1	0	7	12
Miami-Dade/Dade*	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	7	85	3
Monroe**	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
Palm Beach	2	0	0	2	6	31	0	0	10	96
Totals	4	1	1	6	10	110	1	7	102	115

Source: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement.

*Miami-Dade County did not participate in Florida’s Domestic Marijuana Eradication (DME) Outdoor Grow Program in 2006.

**Monroe County did not participate in Florida’s DME Outdoor Grow Program in 2006.

Endnotes

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Broward County Sheriff's Office
City of Plantation Police Department
City of Sunrise Police Department
Coconut Creek Police Department
Coral Gables Police Department
Coral Springs Police Department
Davie Police Department
Delray Beach Police Department
Doral Police Department
Florida City Police Department
Highland Beach Police Department
Hollywood Police Department
Key West Police Department
Medley Police Department
Miami Beach Police Department
Miami-Dade Police Department
Miami Gardens Police Department
Miami Police Department
Miami Shores Police Department
Miami Springs Police Department
Monroe County Sheriff's Office
North Miami Beach Police Department
North Miami Police Department
Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office
Palm Beach Gardens Police Department
Palm Beach Shores Police Department
Palm Springs Police Department
Pinecrest Police Department
Riviera Beach Police Department
South Miami Police Department
South Palm Beach Police Department
State of Florida
 Florida Department of Law Enforcement
 Medical Examiner's Commission
 Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
 Domestic Marijuana Eradication Indoor Grow Program
 Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement
 State Attorney's Office
Stuart Police Department
Surfside Police Department
Tequesta Police Department
West Miami Police Department
Wilton Manors Police Department

Federal

Executive Office of the President

Office of National Drug Control Policy

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas

Central Florida

South Florida

U.S. Department of Commerce

U.S. Census Bureau

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

National Institutes of Health

National Institute on Drug Abuse

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Treatment Episode Data Set

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement

U.S. Secret Service

U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

Drug Enforcement Administration

Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program

El Paso Intelligence Center

National Seizure System

Federal Bureau of Investigation

U.S. Attorneys Office, Southern District of Florida

U.S. Postal Service

Other

Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport

Miami-Dade County, Port of Miami

Miami International Airport

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MoneyLaundering.com

Port Everglades

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LEO <https://www.leo.gov/http://leowcs.leopriv.gov/lesig/ndic/index.htm>

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