



Drug Market Analysis

2008

Houston

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area



NATIONAL DRUG INTELLIGENCE CENTER
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



ARCHIVED



Drug Market Analysis **2008**

Houston High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area



NATIONAL DRUG INTELLIGENCE CENTER
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



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.



National Drug Intelligence Center

This page intentionally left blank.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	1
Strategic Drug Threat Developments	2
HIDTA Overview	2
Drug Threat Overview.....	3
Drug Trafficking Organizations.....	4
Drug Markets.....	5
Houston Drug Market.....	5
Production.....	5
Transportation	6
Distribution	8
Drug-Related Crime.....	12
Abuse	12
Illicit Finance.....	12
Outlying Markets.....	14
Beaumont/Port Arthur.....	14
Corpus Christi.....	14
Southern Houston HIDTA Region.....	15
Padre Island National Seashore.....	15
Outlook.....	17
Sources.....	19



ARCHIVED

National Drug Intelligence Center

This page intentionally left blank.

PREFACE

This assessment provides a strategic overview of the illicit drug situation in the Houston High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), highlighting significant trends and law enforcement concerns related to the trafficking and abuse of illicit drugs. The report was prepared through detailed analysis of recent law enforcement reporting, information obtained through interviews with law enforcement and public health officials, and available statistical data. The report is designed to provide policymakers, resource planners, and law enforcement officials with a focused discussion of key drug issues and developments facing the Houston HIDTA.

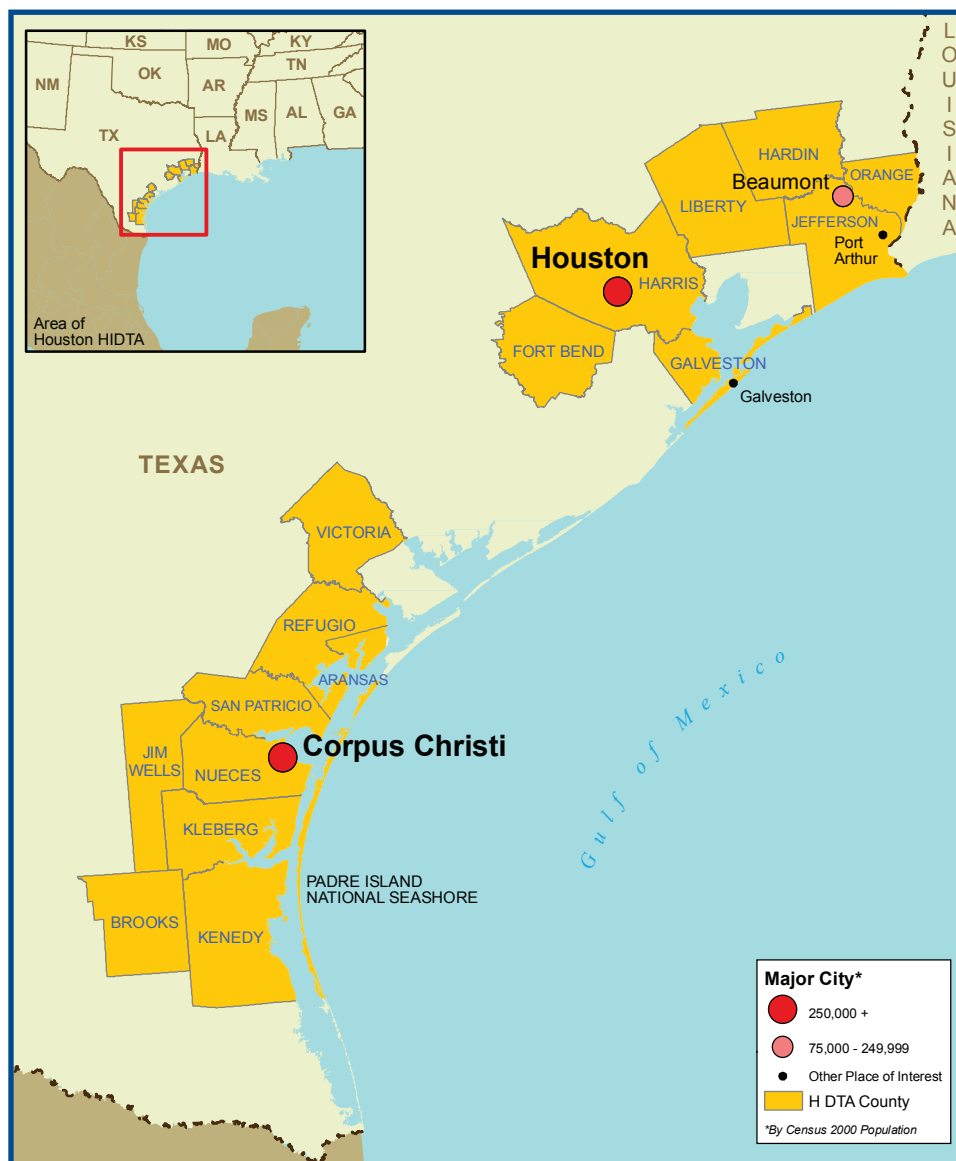


Figure 1. Houston High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.



STRATEGIC DRUG THREAT DEVELOPMENTS

- Houston is one of the most significant cocaine markets in the United States. The city has not experienced the wide fluctuations in cocaine availability that have occurred in many major drug markets throughout the United States over the past year. The price of cocaine remained fairly constant at the wholesale and retail levels in Houston throughout much of 2007; however, the price of cocaine did increase in the fourth quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2007.
- Houston is a principal transshipment area for Mexican marijuana destined for drug markets throughout the United States. The total amount of Mexican marijuana seized by Houston law enforcement en route to markets within and outside Texas has increased significantly over the past 3 years.
- The diversion of pharmaceutical drugs in Houston has substantially increased; the city has become a significant source area for diverted pharmaceuticals. Pharmaceuticals diverted in Houston are regularly distributed throughout the state and have been distributed in Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Tennessee. The diversion of narcotic pain relievers from pain clinics in the Houston area has also increased over the past year.
- The number of indoor cannabis grow sites in the Houston area has increased over the past year, largely as a result of rising demand for high-potency marijuana. Most of the larger, more sophisticated cannabis grow sites in the area are operated by Vietnamese criminal organizations.
- Powder methamphetamine production has decreased in the Houston HIDTA region. This decrease can be attributed to precursor chemical control legislation enacted in Texas, the influx of ice methamphetamine from Mexico, and successful law enforcement and military operations in Mexico.

HIDTA OVERVIEW

The Houston HIDTA region, which encompasses 16 counties along the Gulf of Mexico in southeastern Texas, is a key distribution and transshipment area for illicit drugs supplied to drug markets in the Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast and a consolidation point for the smuggling of illicit drug proceeds into Mexico. The proximity of the Houston HIDTA region to the U.S.–Mexico border and the Gulf of Mexico makes the area susceptible to drug trafficking as well as other national security and law enforcement threats, such as alien smuggling, weapons trafficking, and terrorist entry into the United States. Houston, located in Harris County, is the principal drug market area in the HIDTA region. Smaller, outlying drug markets, such as Corpus Christi and Beaumont/Port Arthur, exist in the area.

Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) exploit the geography and economy of the Houston HIDTA region to smuggle illicit drugs from Mexico and to launder their illicit proceeds. The HIDTA region's geographic makeup varies from sparsely populated ranch land in the south to major metropolitan areas in the north—including Houston, the fourth-largest city in the United States. A large segment of the HIDTA region is located along undeveloped areas of the Gulf Coast, which are susceptible to maritime drug smuggling from Mexico. Well-developed economic and financial infrastructures in metropolitan areas of the HIDTA region, particularly in Houston, provide DTOs with the means to launder illicit drug proceeds through traditional financial institutions and money services businesses (MSBs).

The Houston HIDTA region has a dynamic transportation infrastructure that offers DTOs extensive land, sea, and air modes of transportation. Overland transportation through an intricate network of interstates, highways, advanced secondary routes, and railroads provides DTOs with numerous means with which to smuggle illicit drugs into and through the area. Moreover, Houston is a major hub for the trucking industry; tractor-trailers are

commonly used by DTOs to smuggle large drug shipments from Mexico through the HIDTA region to markets throughout the United States. The Houston HIDTA region's transportation system also is supported by four major railroads in Houston, Beaumont/Port Arthur, and Corpus Christi, which provide access to Mexico. Drug smuggling by sea and air conveyances poses a moderate threat to the Houston HIDTA region, which contains or immediately borders 10 seaports. The sheer volume of maritime traffic and foreign cargo that passes through these ports offers another avenue for drug smuggling. The Port of Houston has long been the nation's leading port for foreign tonnage and is the sixth-largest seaport in the world. Additionally, the Padre Island National Seashore (PINS), an undeveloped natural barrier island that extends south from Corpus Christi to the Mansfield Channel, poses a distinct maritime smuggling vulnerability to the area. Commercial aircraft are also used by traffickers to smuggle drugs and U.S. currency through the three major international airports in the Houston HIDTA region.

DRUG THREAT OVERVIEW

The Houston HIDTA region is one of the most significant distribution and transshipment areas in the United States for drugs smuggled from Mexico to U.S. drug markets. Large-scale transportation and distribution of illicit drugs and laundering of illicit drug proceeds are the primary drug-related issues facing the Houston HIDTA region, requiring a large commitment of law enforcement resources from member agencies (as evidenced by the amount of drugs seized.) (See [Table 2 on page 10.](#)) Wholesale quantities of illicit drugs, particularly cocaine and marijuana, are transported from Mexico through South Texas to the HIDTA region, primarily to Houston and Corpus Christi, where they are distributed to major markets throughout the United States, including Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; Denver, Colorado; Detroit, Michigan; Los Angeles, California; and New York, New York. Wholesale quantities of ice methamphetamine are transported to the region

and distributed to markets in the southeastern and central United States. Heroin, MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, also known as ecstasy), and pharmaceuticals are also distributed to markets outside the HIDTA region, but to a much lesser extent. Additionally, some wholesale quantities of drugs remain in the HIDTA region for local distribution.

Illicit drug production in the Houston HIDTA region is limited and entails crack cocaine conversion, increasing cannabis cultivation, and decreasing powder methamphetamine production. Crack cocaine conversion occurs throughout the HIDTA, primarily in the Houston metropolitan area—no significant change has occurred over the past several years. The number of indoor cannabis grow sites found in the HIDTA region has increased over the past 2 years. The number of powder methamphetamine laboratory seizures decreased 36 percent from 2005 through 2007 in the Houston HIDTA region, a development that can be largely attributed to an influx of ice methamphetamine from Mexico, recently enacted precursor chemical control legislation, and successful law enforcement programs. (See [Table 1 on page 6.](#))

The distribution and abuse of illicit drugs in the Houston HIDTA region place substantial societal and financial burdens on communities and local, state, and federal agencies. Crack cocaine is the primary drug of abuse for many drug abusers in urban areas of the HIDTA region; the drug has had a major impact on the level of violent and property crime occurring in many communities. Ice methamphetamine is being increasingly distributed and abused in many areas of the HIDTA region, fueling methamphetamine-related treatment admissions and crime in these areas. Heroin abuse is a substantial problem in some HIDTA communities because of its highly addictive nature. MDMA and other dangerous drugs (ODDs) are distributed and abused in the HIDTA region as well, particularly among the region's youth. The diversion of pharmaceuticals, such as hydrocodone, is increasing in the HIDTA region, particularly in the Houston area.



DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS

Mexican DTOs are the most pervasive organizational threat to the Houston HIDTA region. The proximity of their operations to the U.S.–Mexico border and their access to major drug market areas throughout the United States have enabled Mexican DTOs to emerge as the predominate traffickers in the HIDTA region, in most areas along the U.S.–Mexico border, and in many areas of the United States. Mexican DTOs, particularly DTOs aligned with the Gulf and Sinaloa Cartels, have established bases of operation in the HIDTA region, particularly in Houston and Corpus Christi, where they distribute large quantities of drugs to major market areas throughout the United States. These DTOs compartmentalize their organizations in order to insulate themselves from law enforcement. Mexican DTOs operating within the Houston HIDTA also use advanced communication techniques including prepaid cell phones, satellite phones, and global positioning systems as well as

Internet-based methods such as instant messaging, e-mail, social networking web sites, and file sharing web sites to facilitate drug trafficking. For example, traffickers in the HIDTA region sometimes share an e-mail account and communicate by creating draft messages that are saved and can be viewed by anyone within the organization that can access the account. Additionally, Mexican DTOs continually adapt to law enforcement efforts to detect and dismantle their operations, contributing to the magnitude of the threat they pose to the region.

Over the past several years, several Mexican DTOs have been engaged in a violent struggle over drug trafficking corridors that transit the U.S.–Mexico border, several of which lead into the Houston HIDTA region. However, recent law enforcement and military operations in Mexico against Mexican DTOs appear to have diverted the attention of the DTOs from each other to Mexican law enforcement and military personnel. Some DTOs have formed alliances to combat increased law enforcement and military operations, since the operations pose a direct threat to the smuggling operations of the DTOs.

Drug Trafficking Organizations, Criminal Groups, and Gangs

Drug trafficking organizations are complex organizations with highly defined command-and-control structures that produce, transport, and/or distribute large quantities of one or more illicit drugs.

Criminal groups operating in the United States are numerous and range from small to moderately sized, loosely knit groups that distribute one or more drugs at the retail level and midlevel.

Gangs are defined by the National Alliance of Gang Investigators' Associations as groups or associations of three or more persons with a common identifying sign, symbol, or name, the members of which individually or collectively engage in criminal activity that creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

Mexican Law Enforcement Operations in Tamaulipas

Mexican law enforcement and military personnel began an operation in several Mexican cities—Matamoros, Rio Bravo, Reynosa, Ciudad Miguel Alemán, and Ciudad Mier—along the U.S.–Mexico border in the state of Tamaulipas in late 2007. Violence in Tamaulipas has substantially increased as a result of this operation. As such, Mexican law enforcement and military personnel reportedly are implementing numerous law enforcement measures, including highway checkpoints and routine flyovers in the area. Mexican authorities also are investigating local police departments, particularly in Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, and Reynosa, for links to DTOs. These counterdrug measures may impact the flow of drugs into the HIDTA region as traffickers avoid smuggling through this area.

Other organizations operating in the Houston HIDTA region include African American, Caucasian, Colombian, Dominican, Jamaican, and Asian DTOs and criminal groups. Colombian DTOs transport and distribute illicit drugs, particularly cocaine, in the HIDTA region; they also sell illicit drugs, particularly cocaine, directly to members of Mexican DTOs based in Mexico, who smuggle and distribute the drugs in the HIDTA region on their own behalf. Asian DTOs and criminal groups, particularly Chinese and Vietnamese, are the principal MDMA traffickers in the HIDTA region; they transport MDMA from Canada, primarily through Los Angeles, to Houston for distribution. Additionally, Asian DTOs have been linked to indoor cannabis cultivation in the region.

Prison gangs,¹ street gangs, and outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMGs) distribute illicit drugs at the wholesale and retail levels in the Houston HIDTA region. Drug trafficking is the primary source of income for most gangs operating in the area. Most gangs distribute drugs at the retail level; however, some, including Mexican Mafia and Texas Syndicate, have developed ties with Mexican DTOs, enabling them to obtain wholesale quantities of drugs directly from Mexico. Gangs in the region also engage in violent criminal activity, including assault and homicide; such activity poses a considerable threat to public and law enforcement safety.

DRUG MARKETS

The Houston metropolitan area is the major drug market in the HIDTA region; several significant outlying markets also exist in the region, including Beaumont/Port Arthur, Corpus Christi, the southern Houston HIDTA region, and PINS.

1. Prison gangs operate within state correctional facilities located in the HIDTA as well as on the streets, particularly in Houston and Corpus Christi.

HOUSTON DRUG MARKET

Houston, located in Harris County, is a major drug distribution center that supplies Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia with illicit drugs, primarily cocaine and marijuana. Houston's well-developed highway system, established financial infrastructure, racial and ethnic diversity, and large volume of international trade contribute to the area's role as a major transshipment point for illicit drugs destined for U.S. drug markets and drug proceeds destined for Mexico. The significant number of drug-related investigations linked to the city, such as cases in Atlanta, Chicago, Miami, Newark, New Orleans, New York, and St. Louis, exemplifies Houston's role as a key national drug distribution and money laundering center.

PRODUCTION

Very little drug production occurs in Houston because of the ready availability of drugs from Mexico; however, powder cocaine is converted to crack, cannabis is cultivated, and methamphetamine is produced to varying degrees. Significant amounts of powder cocaine are converted into crack cocaine within the city for local and regional consumption. Crack cocaine is often converted in crack houses, hotel rooms, and garages.

An increasing number of indoor cannabis grow sites have been discovered by law enforcement officials in the Houston metropolitan area over the past 2 years. More than 55 grow operations were dismantled in the Houston HIDTA region in 2006 and 2007; most were located in Harris County and its surrounding areas (Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties). Cannabis cultivators typically locate grow sites in densely populated metropolitan areas of Houston; the sites range from simple, one-house grows to a network of multiple houses linked to one organization. More sophisticated hydroponic grow sites are generally operated by Vietnamese organizations; smaller, less sophisticated operations are generally run by Caucasian independent growers. Vietnamese cannabis cultivators in Houston have been



National Drug Intelligence Center

linked by law enforcement officials to traffickers in California, Florida, Louisiana, Minnesota, Utah, and Washington as well as in Canada. Indoor cannabis cultivators realize higher profits because indoor cultivation is a year-round process with four to six harvests per year and controlled conditions that enable growers to produce high-quality marijuana that commands higher prices in most drug markets. A pound of locally produced hydroponic marijuana usually sells for \$2,500 to \$5,000 per pound compared with Mexican marijuana, which sells for \$280 to \$500 per pound. Most hydroponic marijuana grown in the HIDTA region is sold locally; some is also transported to other areas of Texas, such as Austin and Dallas, and to Louisiana for distribution.

Methamphetamine production has decreased in Harris County over the past few years. According to the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) National Seizure System (NSS), the number of methamphetamine laboratories seized by law enforcement in Harris County decreased 57

percent from 2005 through 2007. (See Table 1.) The enactment of precursor chemical control laws in August 2005 greatly contributed to this decrease. The wide availability of Mexican ice methamphetamine in the HIDTA region has also contributed to the decrease in local production. However, methamphetamine production does occur in Houston, with methamphetamine producers attempting to circumvent chemical control laws by using fraudulent identification to obtain pseudoephedrine through retailers, turning to new sources of supply for precursor chemicals, and employing alternative production methods.²

TRANSPORTATION

Houston is one of the most significant transshipment points used by Mexican DTOs to facilitate drug distribution from the Southwest Border to major market areas throughout the United States. Mexican DTOs primarily use private and commercial vehicles on interstates and highways, particularly U.S. Highways 59 and 10, to transport drugs to Houston. (See Figure 2 on page 7.) U.S. Highway 59 extends directly from the Laredo port of entry (POE) to Houston and also connects with US 281 and US 77, which provide routes of travel from the McAllen and Brownsville areas. Interstate 10 provides access to the city from El Paso through San Antonio. Additionally, the proposed Trans-Texas Corridor, or I-69, which is expected to extend from Mexico to Canada, traversing

Table 1. Number of Methamphetamine Laboratories Seized in the Houston HIDTA Region, by County, 2005–2007

HIDTA County	2005	2006	2007
Fort Bend	0	0	1
Galveston	1	0	0
Hardin	0	1	0
Harris	7	2	3
Jefferson	2	0	3
Nueces	0	1	0
Victoria	1	1	0
Total	11	5	7

Source: El Paso Intelligence Center, National Seizure System, as of January 28, 2008.

*HIDTA counties not listed had no laboratories seized from 2005 through 2007.

2. In August 2005 Texas passed precursor control legislation requiring pharmacies that engage in over-the-counter (OTC) sales of tablet forms of products containing ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, or norpseudoephedrine to keep those products behind the pharmacy counter or in a locked case within 30 feet of, and in a direct line of sight from, a pharmacy counter staffed by an employee of the pharmacy. The state law does not apply to liquid, liquid capsule, or liquid-gel capsule forms of the products. Additionally, before completing the OTC sale of a product containing the above-mentioned precursors, a pharmacy employee must ask for photo identification and a signature from the buyer and must record the name of the person making the purchase, the date of purchase, and the item and number of grams purchased. Individuals may not purchase more than two packages or 6 grams of ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, norpseudoephedrine, or a combination of those substances at the same time.



Figure 2. Houston HIDTA region transportation infrastructure.

the Houston area, will quite likely be used by Mexican DTOs upon its completion to smuggle drug shipments.

Mexican DTOs also use couriers on buses and trains to transport illicit drugs to Houston. At least two Mexican-owned bus companies operate daily routes from Mexico through Houston to destina-

tions in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. Couriers on these buses transport cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamine for distribution in these states; they also transport drug proceeds back to Mexico. Several rail systems also operate in the Houston area, including Amtrak as well as the Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Union Pacific, Kansas City Southern, and



National Drug Intelligence Center

Texas Mexican Railroads;³ however, the degree of use by traffickers to transport drugs using these rail systems is an intelligence gap.

DTOs exploit air conveyances in Houston to transport illicit drugs to and from the HIDTA region. Law enforcement agencies occasionally seize illicit drugs and currency from passengers on domestic and international flights and from freight arriving at the George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) and Hobby Airport. For example, in April 2007 a Nigerian national bound for London, England, was arrested at IAH after attempting to smuggle 7 kilograms of cocaine in a toy box concealed in his checked luggage. The large number of passenger and cargo activities at these airports provides camouflage to traffickers who smuggle illicit drugs through these airports. Over 52 million passengers and 387,000 metric tons of air cargo passed through these airports in 2007. Additionally, international carriers are increasingly initiating service at Houston's airports as a result of the city's economic growth. Over the past 15 months, several Asian air cargo services have begun service to Houston, and nonstop passenger flights to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Singapore, and Moscow, Russia, began in March 2008. Such international service may expose Houston and the HIDTA region to an increased threat of air smuggling.

Maritime smuggling through the Port of Houston poses a viable threat to the HIDTA region—a threat that could increase in the long term. The amount of cargo traversing the Port of Houston has consecutively increased over the past 10 years, with more than 16 million tons of cargo moving through its facilities in 2007. The Port of Houston also links the city with 1,053 ports in 203 countries; these links make the port vulnerable to drug smuggling. Law enforcement reporting indicates that South American heroin is being smuggled into the United States via commercial cargo ves-

sels and cruise ship lines. Additionally, in February 2007, the Port of Houston opened the Bayport Container Terminal, which is expected to triple the port's container-handling capacity when fully developed, enabling it to handle 2.3 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units).⁴ In 2008 the Port of Houston will also open a cruise ship terminal in which as many as 1.7 million passengers can be accommodated. The increase in the number of containers processed through the port facilities and the addition of a large cruise ship terminal could enable DTOs to more easily smuggle illicit drug shipments using maritime methods.

DISTRIBUTION

Houston is a primary drug distribution center in the southwestern United States and is used by numerous DTOs to supply illicit drugs to drug markets in the HIDTA region as well as to major market areas throughout the United States. Traffickers in Houston supply cocaine, marijuana and, to a lesser extent, heroin, methamphetamine, MDMA, and diverted pharmaceuticals to distributors in major market areas such as Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Kansas City, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and St. Louis. Prior to shipping illicit drugs to other areas, traffickers in Houston often store the drugs at local stash sites. The traffickers' operations are extremely vulnerable at these stash sites; seizures of illicit drugs from locations in which large quantities are stored typically result in a much greater loss for DTOs.

Houston is one of the most significant cocaine distribution centers in the United States. Houston has not experienced the wide fluctuations in cocaine availability that have occurred in many major drug markets throughout the United States over the past year. The price of cocaine remained fairly constant at the wholesale and retail levels

3. The Texas Mexican Railroad is a 157-mile rail line between Laredo and Corpus Christi, Texas. This railway also provides service to Houston and Beaumont, Texas, through trackage rights—an arrangement between railroad companies that permits one company to operate over certain sections of track owned by another railroad company.

4. Twenty-foot equivalent units, or TEUs, are a standardized maritime industry measurement used when counting cargo containers of varying lengths. TEU measurements are inexact; one TEU most commonly is equivalent to the capacity of a cargo container measuring 20 feet (length) by 8 feet (width) by 8.5 feet (height) with a volume of 1,350 cubic feet.

in Houston throughout much of 2007; however, from December 2006 to December 2007, the price of cocaine increased from between \$13,500 and \$17,500 per kilogram to between \$15,000 and \$19,000 per kilogram and from between \$400 and \$800 per ounce to between \$600 and \$1,000 per ounce. Anecdotal law enforcement reporting during this time indicates that cocaine availability and purity did not change, suggesting that there may be another reason for the price fluctuation, other than a cocaine shortage. Further, according to NSS data, cocaine seizure amounts in Harris County decreased 57 percent from 2005 through 2007; however, seizure totals for the entire HIDTA region are similar to those for 2005. In fact, cocaine seizure amounts have increased in the counties of Fort Bend (77%) and Galveston (seizures increased from zero in 2005 to 100 in 2007)—which are located in the immediate Houston area—and in Nueces County (585%), indicating that DTOs may have changed trafficking patterns within the HIDTA region. Additionally, changes in law enforcement operations and priorities may have impacted the amount of cocaine seized as well as the location in which it was seized. (See Table 2 on page 10.)

Houston is a principal transshipment area in the United States for Mexican marijuana; the amount seized in the Houston area has increased over the past 3 years. According to NSS data, marijuana/hashish seizures in Harris County increased 47 percent from 2005 through 2007. (See Table 2 on page 10.) Further, several large seizures of marijuana took place in the area in 2006 and 2007, confirming Houston's role as a principal transshipment area. In March 2007 law enforcement officers seized over 9,000 kilograms of marijuana from two school buses and two rental vans on a property located in southeast Houston. In December 2006 the Harris County Sheriff's Office seized 502 bales of marijuana that weighed nearly 7,000 kilograms and had a street value of \$25 million to \$40 million. Mexican marijuana that transits Houston is typically destined for Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina.

Heroin transported to Houston is distributed locally as well as to other U.S. drug markets; however, the amount of heroin seized has decreased over the past 3 years. According to NSS data, seizure amounts decreased 50 percent overall from 2005 through 2007 in Harris County. (See Table 2 on page 10.) The amount of heroin seized in the overall HIDTA region in 2007 also decreased, by 47 percent. However, in 2007 anecdotal law enforcement reporting indicated that there had been no significant changes in availability, distribution, price, or purity. Several factors may account for this trend: DTOs may be smuggling heroin along different routes or often using other transportation modes, such as sea or air, that have not been detected by law enforcement. Moreover, the flow of heroin into the HIDTA region may have decreased, but changes would not have been apparent because the drug could have been diverted from other source areas to fill the void in Houston. The changes most likely would have been noticed in markets supplied by DTOs operating in the Houston area. Furthermore, placement of operations and priorities of law enforcement agencies may have affected how much heroin was seized in 2007. Heroin is transshipped from Houston to markets in California, Louisiana, New York, and Texas.

Methamphetamine is transshipped from Houston to markets in the midwestern and eastern United States; however, methamphetamine seizure amounts in Harris County have declined over the past 3 years, indicating a decreased flow of the drug from Mexico into the area. According to NSS data, methamphetamine seizure amounts decreased 100 percent overall from 1,005 kilograms in 2005 to 2 kilograms in 2007. (See Table 2 on page 10.) It is probable that these methamphetamine seizure amounts peaked in 2005 because Mexican DTOs had increased ice methamphetamine smuggling into the United States in response to large decreases in powder methamphetamine production that year in the United States. That decrease was compounded locally by the enactment of precursor control legislation in Texas. Further, the Mexican Government has continually



Table 2. Illicit Drugs Seized in Houston HIDTA Counties, in Kilograms, 2005–2007*

County	Cocaine**			Heroin			Marijuana/Hashish			Methamphetamine***		
	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007
Aransas	0	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	644	NR	681	0	NR	NR
Brooks	847	884	679	1	11	NR	26,299	59,210	59,084	49	33	5
Fort Bend	91	25	161	10	NR	NR	54	1,540	130	NR	NR	NR
Galveston	0	28	100	NR	NR	NR	3	3	0	0	NR	NR
Hardin	80	6	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
Harris	954	1,322	409	34	9	17	10,837	13,131	15,889	1,005	5	2
Jefferson	16	115	31	NR	NR	NR	160	139	95	0	NR	0
Jim Wells	125	0	7	NR	NR	NR	757	281	1,190	0	0	NR
Kenedy	281	868	59	NR	NR	6	18,919	26,257	2,829	21	34	NR
Kleberg	9	368	57	0	NR	NR	1,418	5,723	9,547	NR	NR	7
Liberty	1	30	NR	NR	NR	NR	1	NR	1,161	0	NR	0
Nueces	132	53	904	NR	NR	1	1,228	2,600	3,027	2	NR	62
Orange	36	4	18	NR	NR	NR	64	66	742	0	NR	0
Refugio	NR	0	3	NR	NR	NR	547	1,278	929	NR	NR	NR
San Patricio	10	0	49	NR	20	NR	2	NR	39	0	NR	NR
Victoria	44	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	65	NR	NR	0	0	0
Total	2,626	3,703	2,477	45	40	24	60,998	110,228	95,343	1,077	72	76

Source: El Paso Intelligence Center, National Seizure System.

*Data as of January 30, 2008. Amounts of less than 1 kilogram are shown as zero. NSS data are based on voluntary reporting and may not include all seizures occurring in the Houston HIDTA region.

**Cocaine seizure totals reflect only powder and crack cocaine.

***Methamphetamine seizure totals reflect only powder and ice methamphetamine.

NR—None reported

strengthened precursor chemical control regulations in Mexico since mid-2004 and increased drug interdiction efforts in 2007, actions that have affected methamphetamine flow into the United States along the entire Southwest Border. These factors quite likely impacted methamphetamine smuggling into Houston and the HIDTA region in 2006 and 2007 and will most likely continue to have an effect in the near term. Methamphetamine is distributed from Houston to markets throughout the midwestern and eastern United States, including those in Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, and Texas.

The diversion of pharmaceutical drugs in Houston has significantly increased; the city has become a key source area for the diverted drugs. Distributors and abusers obtain diverted pharmaceutical drugs by purchasing them on the Internet, doctor-shopping, visiting corrupt pain clinics, obtaining prescriptions from unscrupulous physicians, stealing from pharmacies, forging prescriptions, and smuggling the drugs from Mexico. Moreover, an increasing number of pain clinics in the Houston area are serving as a source of diverted prescription narcotics, such as hydrocodone, for distributors and abusers. Such pain clinics are

sometimes owned by unscrupulous physicians and corrupt pharmacists, making it relatively easy for distributors and abusers to obtain pharmaceuticals. Additionally, distributors frequently recruit homeless persons to make straw purchases of pharmaceuticals for them. Once distributors obtain the pharmaceuticals, they distribute them in Houston, throughout Texas, and within drug markets in other states, including Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Tennessee.

Associations between Houston and Louisiana drug traffickers have become stronger since Hurricane Katrina. Approximately 150,000 Katrina

Schedule III, IV, and V Prescription Drugs Added to the Texas Prescription Monitoring Program

The Texas legislature has passed a bill that will require Schedule III, IV, and V drugs to be monitored through the Texas Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP), which is overseen by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS). Since 1982, the Texas PMP has monitored Schedule II prescription drugs—which include hydromorphone (Dilaudid), methylphenidate (Ritalin), and oxycodone (OxyContin)—and has been able to effectively reduce the abuse and diversion of these drugs through its monitoring efforts. Currently, the Texas PMP requires medical practitioners to use special forms to write prescriptions for Schedule II drugs and pharmacists to transmit a record of the prescription to Texas DPS. The new legislation will require Texas PMP to monitor Schedule III, IV, and V drugs using this same process and will place increased administrative burdens on Texas DPS. Over the past several years, the abuse and diversion of Schedule III, IV, and V drugs—which include alprazolam (Xanax), benzodiazepine (Valium), codeine, flunitrazepam (rohypnol), hydrocodone (Vicodin), promethazine (lean), and propoxyphene (Darvocet)—have been on the rise. The increased oversight of these drugs through the Texas PMP will quite likely curtail some diversion of these pharmaceuticals and will allow law enforcement to better monitor the diversion of these drugs.

evacuees relocated to the Houston area. Some of these evacuees were drug traffickers from high-crime areas of New Orleans, and upon relocating to Houston, they formed relationships with drug dealers and gang members. Many of these traffickers have returned to Louisiana, and the relationships that they formed with Houston-based drug dealers and gang members have enabled them to obtain significant quantities of illicit drugs directly from connections in Houston. According to NSS data, the amount of illicit drugs seized in Harris County that were destined for Louisiana substantially increased from 13 kilograms in 2005 to 95 kilograms in 2006 to 287 kilograms in 2007. (These figures apply only to those instances in which a destination state was identified.) Marijuana is the primary drug transported from Houston to Louisiana; cocaine, heroin, MDMA, and diverted pharmaceuticals are also transported to the area.

Significant quantities of cocaine, heroin, marijuana, methamphetamine, and MDMA are distributed in the Houston area at the wholesale level. Mexican DTOs, criminal groups, and prison gangs are the primary wholesale distributors in Houston; they dominate the wholesale distribution of cocaine, Mexican black tar and brown powder heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine. Colombian and Dominican DTOs and criminal groups also distribute wholesale quantities of cocaine, but to a lesser extent. Colombian and Dominican DTOs and criminal groups dominate the wholesale distribution of South American (SA) heroin. Asian DTOs and criminal groups distribute MDMA and marijuana.

Street and prison gangs, Mexican criminal groups, and local independent dealers distribute illicit drugs at the retail level. Street gangs, prison gangs, and local independent dealers are the primary retail-level distributors of powder and crack cocaine, Mexican black tar and brown powder heroin, SA heroin, and marijuana; Mexican criminal groups also distribute marijuana at the retail level.



National Drug Intelligence Center

DRUG-RELATED CRIME

A significant amount of drug-related violent and property crime takes place in Houston. Drug abusers and dealers, particularly crack cocaine and methamphetamine users and dealers, engage in a host of violent and property crimes including assaults, drive-by shootings, home invasions, robberies, burglaries, and firearms violations. Additionally, drug traffickers, particularly street gangs, routinely engage in violent criminal activity to protect and/or expand their drug distribution territory.

Houston is a significant source area for weapons smuggled south into Mexico. Mexican DTOs and their associated enforcement groups generally rely on firearms trafficking from the United States to Mexico to obtain weapons for their smuggling and enforcement operations. Drug traffickers, firearms smugglers, and independent criminals smuggle large quantities of firearms and ammunition from Houston to Mexico on behalf of Mexican DTOs, which then use these weapons to defend territory, eliminate rivals, enforce business dealings, control members, and challenge law enforcement. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) estimates that thousands of weapons are smuggled into Mexico every year. Firearms are typically purchased or stolen from gun stores, pawnshops, gun shows, and private residences prior to being smuggled into Mexico, where they are often sold for a markup of 300 to 400 percent. Moreover, large caches of firearms often are stored on both sides of the Southwest Border for use by Mexican DTOs and their enforcement groups.

Pharmacy burglaries in Houston have dramatically risen, the result of an increasing number of traffickers and abusers seeking diverted pharmaceutical drugs. According to the Houston Police Department, from June to October 2007 (the latest date for which data are available), 94 pharmacy burglaries were reported in the city. These burglaries generally took place at locally owned “mom and pop” pharmacies. During the burglaries, perpetrators reportedly entered the pharmacies in

groups of two or three after hours, usually through a broken door or window; in one case the perpetrators drove a vehicle through the front door of a pharmacy in October 2007. In a number of the burglaries, pharmacy owners and employees were involved. Drugs stolen during these burglaries were distributed throughout the HIDTA region and in other states, including Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

ABUSE

The number of drug-related treatment admissions in Harris County declined from 2005 through 2007. According to Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) data, total drug-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities declined 17 percent during this period; however, the number of drug-related treatment admissions fluctuated for specific drugs. Crack cocaine, heroin, and marijuana/hashish-related treatment admissions declined, powder cocaine-related admissions slightly increased, and amphetamine/methamphetamine-related admissions remained stable over the 3-year period. (See [Table 3 on page 13.](#))

ILLICIT FINANCE

Houston is a significant money laundering location because of its proximity to Mexico as well as its role as a global financial center. Traffickers launder drug funds in Houston primarily by consolidating illicit proceeds generated in the city and transporting them in bulk to Mexico. Traffickers also use the area as a consolidation point for bulk currency shipments from other regions of the country. Traffickers transport smaller bulk cash shipments to Houston for consolidation before the shipments are transported to the Southwest Border area, where they are smuggled into Mexico for eventual repatriation. NDIC estimates indicate that Mexican and Colombian DTOs operating in the United States generate, remove, and launder between \$8.3 billion and \$24.9 billion in illicit drug proceeds (the latest data available) annually,

Table 3. Number of Adult and Youth Drug-Related Treatment Admissions to Publicly Funded Facilities in the Houston HIDTA Region, 2005–2007

County		Powder Cocaine			Crack Cocaine			Heroin			Marijuana/ Hashish			Amphetamines		
		2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007
Aransas	Adult	*	*	*	*	*	*	35	28	21	0	0	*	14	*	*
	Youth	0	0	0	*	0	0	0	0	0	27	28	36	*	*	*
Brooks	Adult	12	14	26	13	*	*	0	0	0	*	15	25	0	0	0
	Youth	0	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	*	*	*	0	0	0
Fort Bend	Adult	45	70	88	73	70	57	13	*	*	152	140	170	13	*	20
	Youth	*	*	0	*	0	0	0	0	0	54	21	13	0	0	0
Galveston	Adult	118	115	106	387	273	301	31	30	19	158	133	149	36	32	31
	Youth	*	*	*	*	*	0	0	0	0	81	96	141	0	*	*
Hardin	Adult	*	18	*	22	29	32	*	*	0	10	10	17	33	15	17
	Youth	0	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	*	*	11	0	*	*
Harris	Adult	759	924	819	2,058	1,798	1,605	386	420	169	1,339	1,280	1,153	181	264	199
	Youth	50	42	48	*	10	*	0	*	0	992	888	800	*	*	*
Jefferson	Adult	59	67	89	411	414	357	*	16	11	117	139	142	26	54	64
	Youth	0	*	0	0	*	*	0	0	0	53	47	38	0	*	0
Jim Wells	Adult	31	58	42	17	28	20	13	12	*	32	46	37	*	*	*
	Youth	0	0	0	0	*	*	0	0	0	*	*	*	0	0	0
Kenedy	Adult	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Youth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kleberg	Adult	*	11	*	*	14	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	0	*
	Youth	0	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	*	*	0	0	0	0
Liberty	Adult	*	11	*	20	16	20	*	0	*	17	13	12	25	17	32
	Youth	*	0	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	*	*	*	0	0	*
Nueces	Adult	334	324	282	468	360	278	404	443	340	230	256	312	155	75	104
	Youth	*	10	18	*	*	*	*	*	*	154	163	181	*	*	*
Orange	Adult	12	*	27	57	81	82	*	*	*	21	36	34	29	51	34
	Youth	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	*	*	*	0	*	0
Refugio	Adult	*	*	0	*	0	*	0	0	*	*	*	0	0	0	
	Youth	0	0	0	0	*	0	0	0	0	*	*	0	0	0	
San Patricio	Adult	34	36	21	34	36	28	32	41	28	12	14	19	10	*	18
	Youth	*	*	*	*	*	*	0	0	0	16	15	29	0	0	*
Victoria	Adult	25	11	*	18	17	17	0	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	10
	Youth	*	*	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	68	40	0	*	0
Total**	Adult	1,429	1,659	1,500	3,578	3,136	2,797	914	990	588	2,088	2,082	2,070	522	508	529
	Youth	50	52	66	0	10	0	0	0	0	1,417	1,326	1,289	0	0	0

Source: Texas Department of State Health Services.

*As a result of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act confidentiality requirements, fewer than 10 treatment admissions cannot be reported.

**Houston HIDTA region totals do not include fewer than 10 admissions in any category; therefore, actual totals are slightly higher than those represented.



National Drug Intelligence Center

a significant portion of which is most likely bulk-smuggled across the Southwest Border into Mexico.⁵ Of this amount, it is likely that a large portion is smuggled through South Texas POEs such as Brownsville, Laredo, Rio Grande City, and Roma. A large percentage of these proceeds probably transit the Houston metropolitan area en route to South Texas and Mexico.

Traffickers also engage in other money laundering activities within Houston, including exploiting financial institutions, commingling illicit proceeds with legitimate business funds generated at cash-intensive businesses, using MSBs and informal value transfer systems (IVTSs),⁶ purchasing tangible assets, and gambling. Traffickers often use several methods of money laundering concurrently in an attempt to mask illicit proceeds.

OUTLYING MARKETS⁷

BEAUMONT/PORT ARTHUR

The Beaumont/Port Arthur area is located approximately 80 miles east of Houston in Jefferson County and is a transit area for drugs transported to markets in southeastern states, including Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi, via

5. NDIC estimates indicate that DTOs generate, remove, and launder from \$13.6 billion to \$47.7 billion in wholesale distribution proceeds annually. These figures were derived by multiplying the total quantity of foreign-produced drugs available at the wholesale level in the United States by wholesale prices for those drugs.

6. Informal value transfer systems (IVTSs) include the Black Market Peso Exchange (BMPE) and *hawala*. Such systems provide a means to transfer value from one location to another without the details of each transaction being recorded at a traditional financial institution, such as a bank or a registered money transmittal service. The BMPE is used primarily by South American, particularly Colombian, traffickers, while *hawala* is used by Southwest Asian traffickers.

7. Information regarding drug-related activities in outlying markets often is not as readily available as is information in metropolitan areas. This section addresses particular markets and includes information gleaned from available law enforcement reporting and interviews.

I-10, as well as illicit proceeds transported west to Houston and the Southwest Border. Significant drug and currency seizures are made by law enforcement authorities along the portion of I-10 that passes through the area.

Ice methamphetamine demand is increasing in Beaumont/Port Arthur; the drug may supplant crack cocaine as the drug of choice in the area. According to Texas DSHS data, the number of adult amphetamine-related treatment admissions (including methamphetamine-related admissions) to publicly funded facilities in Jefferson County has increased 146 percent over the past 3 years, from 26 in 2005 to 64 in 2007. Crack cocaine-related admissions decreased 13 percent from 411 in 2005 to 357 in 2007. (See Table 3 on page 13.) Most of the ice methamphetamine available in Beaumont is reportedly transported by traffickers through the use of package delivery services in California and Dallas.

CORPUS CHRISTI

Corpus Christi, located in Nueces County, is a key transshipment area for illicit drugs in the Houston HIDTA region. Although not comparable in scale to Houston in terms of illicit drug activities, Corpus Christi mirrors many of the smuggling activities that occur in the city. Corpus Christi is a transshipment area for illicit drugs, particularly cocaine and marijuana, that are smuggled from Mexico by Mexican DTOs overland in private and commercial vehicles or by maritime methods through the PINS. The city is the first metropolitan area north of the U.S. Border Patrol checkpoints in the Rio Grande Valley, making it an ideal location for DTOs to stash drugs prior to distribution. Stash houses are numerous in and around Corpus Christi and are most often used by traffickers to store cocaine and marijuana prior to transshipment to major markets in the central and eastern United States.

Drug seizure amounts in Nueces County have increased significantly over the past 3 years. According to NSS data, overall drug seizures in the county increased 193 percent, with cocaine,

marijuana, and methamphetamine seizures accounting for the majority of the seizures. (See [Table 2 on page 10.](#)) This increase could be attributed to DTOs changing their method of operation as a result of perceived higher law enforcement scrutiny in other areas of the HIDTA region, particularly Houston, where drug seizures have decreased over the past 3 years. Additionally, Nueces County has a smaller population and more rural areas in which drug activities could be more easily concealed, a circumstance that may be enticing traffickers to increasingly use the area for drug smuggling.

Prison gangs operating in Corpus Christi, including Texas Syndicate and Mexican Mafia, have established direct connections to Mexican DTOs along the U.S.–Mexico border, giving them easy access to wholesale quantities of drugs. Texas Syndicate has the most advanced drug trafficking network in the Corpus Christi area. Members of this gang have local access to many types of drugs; they also smuggle illicit drugs directly from Mexico into the area. Mexican Mafia is involved in drug and alien smuggling. Mexican Mafia members reportedly pick up drugs and aliens in the Rio Grande Valley and smuggle them to the area.

SOUTHERN HOUSTON HIDTA REGION

The southern portion of the Houston HIDTA region, south of Corpus Christi, is the main entry point for drugs smuggled into the area; most enter through the Brownsville, Hidalgo, and Progreso POEs. (See [Figure 2 on page 7.](#)) This sparsely populated area is close to the U.S.–Mexico border and comprises mainly ranch properties. Drug shipments from Mexico generally transit the area; distribution in the area is limited because of the area's sparse population. U.S. Highway 77, which extends from the Brownsville POE, and US 281, which extends from the Progreso and Hidalgo POEs, serve as major corridors for drugs smuggled north from South Texas. The successful movement of drug shipments through these POEs and, later, through the two Border Patrol checkpoints—one in Kingsville/Sarita in Kenedy County on US 77

and one in Falfurrias in Brooks County on US 281—is a critical phase of drug transportation from the U.S.–Mexico border. The two HIDTA counties in which these checkpoints are located accounted for 64 percent of total drug seizures in the HIDTA in 2007. (See [Table 2 on page 10.](#)) Drug shipments increase significantly in value after successfully passing through the POEs and again after passing through these checkpoints. For example, 1 pound of marijuana purchased in Mexico for \$40 to \$50 typically increases in value to \$200 per pound when smuggled across the border and further increases to \$250 to \$400 per pound north of the checkpoints. Additionally, large quantities of bulk cash are smuggled south through this portion of the HIDTA region. For example, in January 2008 officers from the Kingsville Police Department seized over \$1 million from a vehicle being driven south on US 77.

PADRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE

Mexican DTOs use the PINS as an entry point to smuggle drugs and illegal aliens. The PINS is located on an undeveloped natural barrier island that extends south from Corpus Christi to the Mansfield Channel, a waterway that divides the PINS from South Padre Island. (See [Figure 3 on page 16.](#)) The PINS and South Padre Island consist of 95 miles of mostly uninhabited and undeveloped beaches that offer traffickers an attractive venue for maritime smuggling. Mexican DTOs often use the area for smuggling operations to avoid enhanced overland border protection at the checkpoints in Kingsville/Sarita and Falfurrias. Seashore visitors have reported witnessing illicit deliveries from shark boats to land vehicles; such smuggling operations pose a danger to visitors if they are perceived as a threat by traffickers.

DTOs use shark boats,⁸ or “*lanchas*,” to smuggle cocaine, marijuana, and illegal aliens to the PINS. Shark boats typically depart from Playa

8. Shark boats, also known as *lanchas*, are low-riding vessels that can endure voyages of up to 19 hours while carrying over 1,000 pounds of illegal drugs or 10 to 20 illegal aliens.



National Drug Intelligence Center

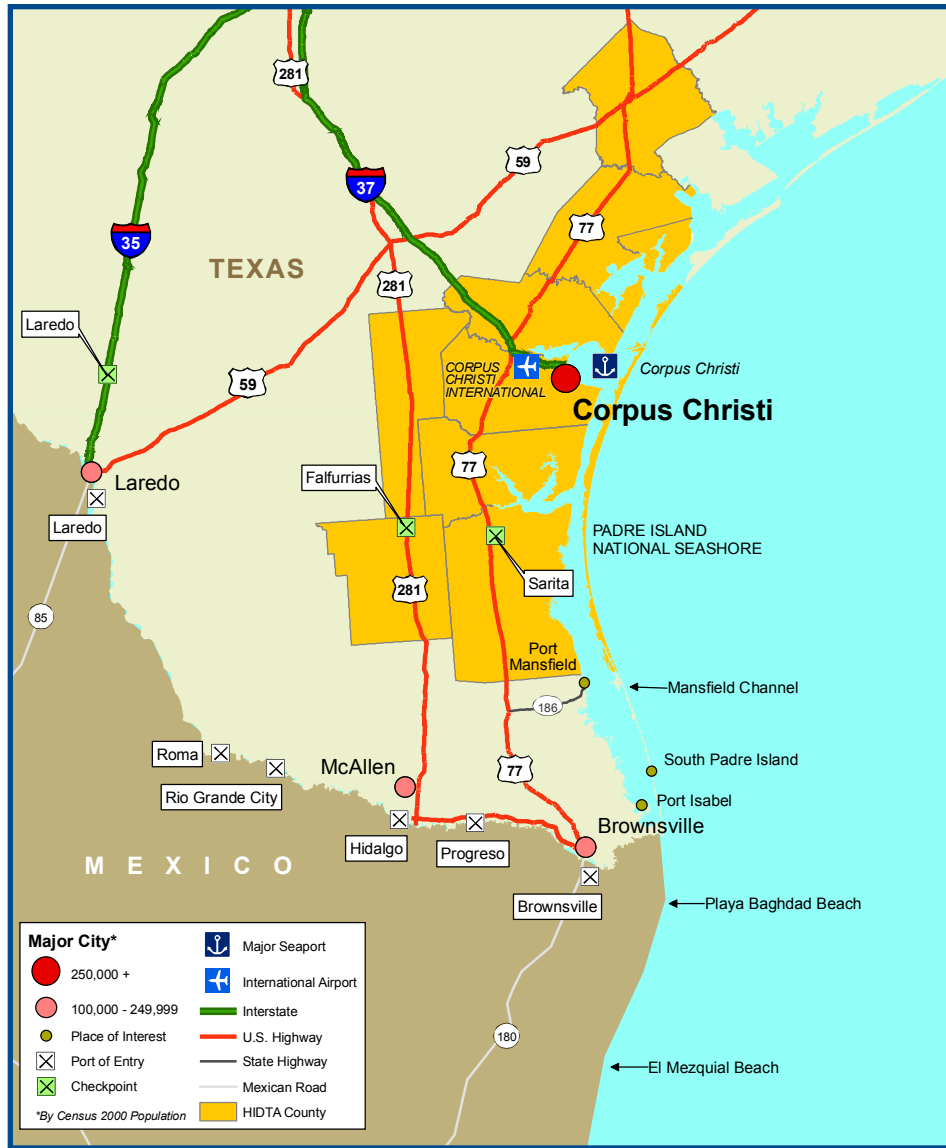


Figure 3. Padre Island National Seashore.

Baghdad and El Mezquial, Mexico, approximately 20 miles south of the U.S.–Mexico border on Mexico’s east coast. It is common for 10 to 20 shark boats loaded with drugs or illegal aliens to leave Playa Baghdad Beach and flood an area along the PINS. DTOs also hire fishermen in Mexico to use their boats to smuggle contraband into the PINS; some Mexican fishermen may be particularly susceptible to recruitment by traffickers because the Mexican fishing industry has collapsed as a result of overfishing and loss of fishing grounds.

Traffickers engage in most smuggling activity through the PINS during the night to avoid detection. Once a shipment of drugs or illegal aliens reaches the PINS, traffickers on the shore generally retrieve the contraband from the traffickers manning the boat. Traffickers use Park Route 22, the only accessible land route to the PINS, to transport illicit drug shipments and illegal aliens from the island. Drugs are then transported to Corpus Christi, where they are stored in stash houses for later distribution. Illegal aliens are

transported to Corpus Christi prior to moving to other locations in the United States.

Marijuana and, to a lesser extent, cocaine are the drugs most often smuggled through the PINS. The size and number of marijuana seizures have increased significantly in the PINS during the past several years; shipments in excess of 1,000 pounds are now common. For example, in September 2007 over 1,200 pounds of marijuana were discovered among the sand dunes by U.S. Customs and Border Protection on routine air patrol. The number of seizures most likely has increased as a result of better intelligence and increased law enforcement attention in the area. Very little is known about cocaine trafficking through the PINS; most seizures of the drug are limited to shipments that wash ashore.

OUTLOOK

Drug flow into the HIDTA region may decrease in the near term. The presence of law enforcement and military personnel in Tamaulipas as well as in other source areas in Mexico may cause DTOs to reroute drug shipments through other areas along the Southwest Border. Additionally, increased Mexican law enforcement presence in the area quite likely will lead to more seizures of drug shipments destined for the HIDTA region.

The HIDTA region will most likely experience a decrease in the flow of methamphetamine in the near term as a result of precursor regulations and counterdrug operations in Mexico. Enhanced import and chemical control restrictions will go into effect in Mexico during 2008 and 2009; these restrictions will most likely curtail methamphetamine production in Mexico. Additionally, the Mexican Government is likely to conduct ad-

ditional counterdrug operations that will impede methamphetamine smuggling operations.

The diversion and distribution of pharmaceutical drugs from the HIDTA region will increase as long as traffickers are able to obtain the drugs through current diversion methods. The increasing number of pain clinics in the Houston HIDTA region, continued smuggling of the drugs from Mexico, Internet pharmacies, lack of regulatory oversight of medical professionals, increased availability of generic drugs that can be sold for higher profits, and increasing pharmacy burglaries will quite likely contribute to increased diversion. Increased oversight of Schedule III, IV, and V drugs in Texas is likely to curtail some pharmaceutical diversion and distribution using doctor-shopping, visiting corrupt pain clinics, obtaining prescriptions from unscrupulous physicians, and forging prescriptions. However, traffickers may increasingly use other diversion methods, such as purchasing pharmaceuticals on the Internet, stealing from pharmacies, and smuggling the drugs from Mexico, which will not be directly affected by enhanced regulations.

Marijuana production in the Houston HIDTA region will most likely increase in response to the growing demand for higher-potency marijuana in Texas and the United States and because of the high profit margin associated with the drug. Anecdotal reporting indicates that marijuana users are demonstrating a preference for higher-potency marijuana. The user preference trending toward higher-potency marijuana is readily apparent in the Southwest Region of the country. Producers of higher-potency marijuana will most likely take advantage of this trend by establishing increasing numbers of indoor cannabis grow operations in the HIDTA region.



National Drug Intelligence Center

This page intentionally left blank.

SOURCES

Local and State

Alvin Police Department
 Baytown Police Department
 Beaumont Police Department
 Brazoria County Sheriff's Office
 City of Houston
 Houston Police Department
 Mayor's Office of Public Safety and Drug Policy
 Corpus Christi Police Department
 Deer Park Police Department
 Dickson Police Department
 Fort Bend Sheriff's Office
 Friendswood Police Department
 Grimes County Sheriff's Office
 Gulf Coast Addiction Technology Transfer Center
 Hardin County Sheriff's Office
 Harris County Medical Examiner's Office
 Harris County Sheriff's Office
 Houston Airport System
 Ingleside Police Department
 Jefferson County Narcotics Task Force
 Jim Wells County Sheriff's Department
 Kenedy County Sheriff's Office
 Kingsville Police Department
 Kountze Police Department
 Montgomery County Sheriff's Office
 Orange County Sheriff's Office
 Orange Police Department
 Pasadena Police Department
 Port of Corpus Christi Police Department
 Port of Houston Authority
 South Houston Police Department
 Stafford Police Department
 State of Texas
 Texas Commission on Drug and Alcohol Abuse
 Texas Department of Public Safety
 Texas Department of State Health Services
 University of Texas at Austin
 Center for Social Work Research
 School of Social Work
 West University Place Police Department

Regional

Middle Atlantic–Great Lakes Organized Crime Law Enforcement Network

Federal

Executive Office of the President
 Office of National Drug Control Policy
 High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas
 Houston
 South Texas
 U.S. Department of Homeland Security
 U.S. Coast Guard
 U.S. Customs and Border Protection
 Houston Division
 U.S. Border Patrol
 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
 U.S. Department of Justice
 Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
 Houston Field Division
 Drug Enforcement Administration
 El Paso Intelligence Center
 National Seizure System
 Houston Field Division
 Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys
 U.S. Attorneys Offices
 Southern District of Texas
 Federal Bureau of Investigation
 U.S. Department of the Interior
 National Park Service
 Padre Island National Seashore
 U.S. Department of the Treasury
 Financial Crimes Enforcement Network

Other

Houston Chronicle



ARCHIVED

National Drug Intelligence Center

This page intentionally left blank.

ARCHIVED

Cover photo: ©EyeWire, Inc.™

National Drug Intelligence Center

319 Washington Street 5th Floor, Johnstown, PA 15901-1622 • (814) 532-4601

NDIC publications are available on the following web sites:

INTERNET www.usdoj.gov/ndic ADNET <http://ndicosa> RISS ndic.riss.net

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