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Ohio

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area

Drug Market Analysis 2009



NATIONAL DRUG INTELLIGENCE CENTER
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE





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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.



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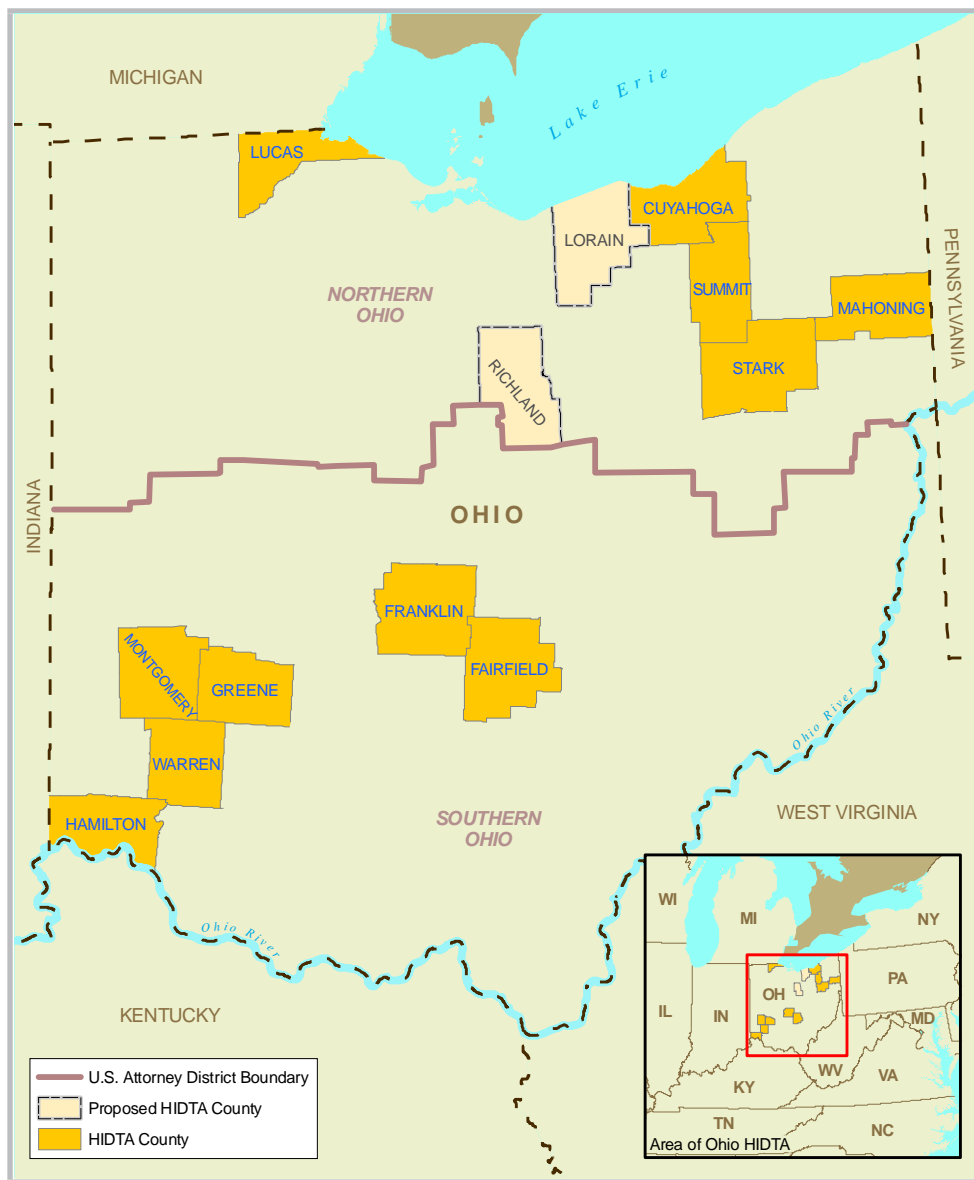
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Preface

This assessment provides a strategic overview of the illicit drug situation in the Ohio High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) region, 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 Ohio HIDTA.

Figure 1. Ohio High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area



Strategic Drug Threat Developments

- Cocaine is the greatest drug threat in the Ohio HIDTA region. However, the availability of the drug is lower than in previous years. According to law enforcement officials, distributors are selling cocaine in smaller quantities in an attempt to stretch decreased supplies, and wholesale prices have increased in some areas of the region because supplies are insufficient to meet demand.
- The availability of Mexican black tar heroin and brown powder heroin has increased greatly throughout the HIDTA region because of increased distribution of the drugs by Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), particularly in northern HIDTA counties.
- Heroin abuse is rising throughout the state, primarily among Caucasian teenagers and young adults, contributing to a 66 percent increase in heroin-related treatment admissions in the Ohio HIDTA region from 2004 through 2008.
- African American and Hispanic street gangs and criminal groups are increasingly distributing MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, also known as ecstasy) in the HIDTA region, particularly in Cleveland and Columbus; treatment providers report that MDMA abuse is rising in Cleveland, Columbus, and Toledo.
- Methamphetamine availability and production are low in the Ohio HIDTA region. Methamphetamine laboratory seizures increased slightly from 2007 to 2008 after peaking in 2005. Most law enforcement officials in the region report that methamphetamine is encountered only sporadically in their jurisdictions.

HIDTA Overview

The Ohio HIDTA region consists of Cuyahoga, Lucas, Mahoning, Stark, and Summit Counties in northern Ohio, and Fairfield, Franklin, Greene, Hamilton, Montgomery, and Warren Counties in southern Ohio. (See [Figure 1 on page 1](#).) These counties contain more than half of Ohio's population and encompass the nine largest cities in the state. The Ohio HIDTA region is linked to major drug source areas, including Chicago, Detroit, New York City, the Southwest Border, and Canada, by numerous interstate highways that are often used by drug traffickers to smuggle illicit drugs into and through the region. Ohio has the fourth-largest interstate highway system and carries the fifth-largest volume of traffic in the nation. Commercial truck traffic in Ohio has grown 90 percent over the last 25 years and is expected to further increase 60 percent by 2020. Large amounts of illicit drugs transported to the area are abused locally; however, some are transshipped to drug markets in neighboring states. Mexican and, to a lesser extent, Dominican and Jamaican DTOs are the predominant transporters of illicit drugs that are distributed in or pass through the area. Additionally, Mexican DTOs are expanding their wholesale and midlevel distribution of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana in the HIDTA region and in neighboring jurisdictions. Significant amounts of illicit drugs are seized annually from such traffickers by law enforcement officials through Ohio HIDTA initiatives. (See [Table 1 on page 3](#).)

Drug Threat Overview

The distribution and abuse of cocaine, particularly crack cocaine, pose the greatest drug threat to the Ohio HIDTA region because of the drug's highly addictive nature and its association with violent crime and property crime. According to the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC)

Table 1. Illicit Drugs Seized Through Ohio HIDTA Initiatives, in Kilograms, 2008

Powder cocaine	404.46
Crack cocaine	5.06
Heroin	28.71
Khat	110.23
Marijuana	13,608.89
MDMA	29,439.00*
Methamphetamine	3.06
PCP	0.02
Controlled prescription drugs (CPDs)^a	33,988.07*

Source: Ohio High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.

*Dosage units.

a. Includes only federally scheduled drugs.

National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) 2009,¹ 57 of the 103 state and local law enforcement respondents in the Ohio HIDTA region identify either crack or powder cocaine as the drug that poses the greatest threat to their jurisdictions. Law enforcement reporting indicates that cocaine is being distributed in smaller quantities than in previous years because of decreased availability of the drug throughout the HIDTA region. For example, during the second quarter of 2008, some cocaine dealers in Cleveland reportedly were unable to obtain kilogram quantities of cocaine and were buying and selling ounce quantities. In some areas, decreased availability was accompanied by an increase in wholesale prices. For example, investigators in Cincinnati reported that wholesale cocaine prices increased from a high of \$25,000 per kilogram in the first quarter of 2008 to a high of \$28,000 per kilogram in the second quarter. Despite the decrease in cocaine

availability, the drug remains widely available in the HIDTA region, particularly at the retail level. Mexican DTOs are the principal transporters and wholesale distributors of powder cocaine, while African American criminal groups and street gangs are the primary retail distributors of both powder and crack cocaine in the HIDTA region.

Heroin trafficking is increasing in the Ohio HIDTA region. There is no reported change in South American (SA) heroin availability; however, Mexican black tar heroin and brown powder heroin availability is increasing in the region because of increased transportation and distribution of the drug throughout the region by Mexican DTOs. In fact, law enforcement officials in several areas of northern Ohio (Cleveland, Toledo, and Summit and Stark Counties) report that since 2007, either Mexican black tar heroin or brown powder heroin has become the primary type available in their jurisdictions. In some areas of southern Ohio, such as Columbus and Dayton, Mexican heroin is also the primary type available. Numerous law enforcement officials also report that the quantity of heroin available in their jurisdictions has increased since 2007 and that prices are decreasing. For example, in Columbus the price of Mexican black tar heroin fell from \$50,000 per kilogram in December 2007 to between \$35,000 and \$50,000 per kilogram in June 2008.

Marijuana and the diversion of controlled prescription drugs (CPDs) also pose significant threats to the Ohio HIDTA region. Most of the marijuana available and abused in the HIDTA region is commercial-grade Mexican marijuana that is transported to the region primarily from the Southwest Border by Mexican DTOs. Locally produced marijuana is also available and is typically grown at indoor grow sites throughout the HIDTA region. CPDs are widely abused throughout the HIDTA region; distributors and abusers typically obtain the drugs through doctor-shopping, prescription forgery, theft, and unscrupulous physicians.

1. National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) data for 2009 cited in this report are as of February 12, 2009. NDTS data cited are raw, unweighted responses from federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies solicited through either the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) or the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program. Data cited may include responses from agencies that are part of the NDTS 2009 national sample and/or agencies that are part of HIDTA solicitation lists.

The availability and abuse of other drugs, including MDMA, methamphetamine, LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), PCP (phencyclidine), khat, and psilocybin, are limited and pose much lesser threats to the HIDTA region than other illicit drugs. MDMA is generally available in urban areas and is increasingly being distributed by street gangs in Columbus and Cleveland. Methamphetamine production in the region has declined significantly since 2005; however, locally produced methamphetamine still accounts for most of the methamphetamine available in the Ohio HIDTA region. The availability of Mexican methamphetamine in the region has not increased to supplant declining local production, primarily because of decreased methamphetamine production in Mexico. Nevertheless, the drug occasionally is available in small quantities in Cincinnati, Columbus, and Dayton. LSD is available primarily in Franklin and Warren Counties, and availability may be expanding into Hamilton County (adjacent to Warren County), as evidenced by a seizure of 8,000 dosage units of LSD by the Northeast Hamilton County Drug Task Force in September 2008. PCP is distributed primarily by street gangs in Cleveland, while khat is available primarily in Columbus, and psilocybin is encountered regularly in Fairfield and Greene Counties.

Drug Trafficking Organizations

Mexican DTOs are the principal transporters and wholesale distributors of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana in the Ohio HIDTA region. They are expanding their drug distribution activities throughout the HIDTA region, particularly their distribution of Mexican black tar heroin and brown powder heroin. As a result, Columbus has developed into a regional distribution center for Mexican heroin supplied to markets in Ohio, West Virginia, and western Pennsylvania, and Dayton has emerged as a distribution center for

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 heroin in southwestern Ohio. Furthermore, since 2007, Mexican DTOs have increased the availability of heroin in the northern HIDTA counties to such a degree that Mexican heroin (either black tar heroin or brown powder heroin) has become the primary type available in most areas of the HIDTA region.

Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Jamaican DTOs also distribute illicit drugs within the HIDTA region, predominantly in northeastern HIDTA counties; they typically transport these drugs from New York City. Dominican and Puerto Rican drug traffickers distribute illicit drugs primarily in Cuyahoga County (SA heroin and cocaine) and Mahoning County (SA heroin and marijuana). Dominican DTOs also distribute cocaine in Summit County. Jamaican DTOs primarily distribute marijuana in Cleveland, Akron, and Youngstown; however, they also distribute limited amounts of cocaine. Law enforcement officials in Cleveland report that Mexican DTOs

supply wholesale quantities of cocaine and marijuana to Jamaican DTOs for local distribution; law enforcement officials attribute this arrangement to the ability of Jamaican DTOs to better integrate into the local African American community and, therefore, avoid detection by law enforcement.

Local and nationally affiliated street gangs distribute significant quantities of cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and other illicit drugs at the retail level in the Ohio HIDTA region. Street gangs in the region are also involved in a variety of other criminal activities, including burglary, robbery, theft, assault, and homicide. Most street gangs in the Ohio HIDTA region are neighborhood gangs that define their territories based upon the street or housing project in which they live and typically are unorganized in their operations. However, law enforcement officials in Cleveland report that Hispanic street gangs are more organized and structured than other gangs in the city. Some nationally affiliated gangs are also present in the HIDTA region, including 18th Street, Mara Salvatrucha (MS 13), and Tiny Rascal Gangsters in Columbus, and Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples, and Latin Kings in Cleveland. Additionally, Hispanic street gangs in Columbus, particularly MS 13, are becoming more organized than in the past. Law enforcement officials report that MS 13 in Columbus operates under a structured leadership, conducts weekly meetings, and collects dues from gang members.

Production

Illicit drug production in the Ohio HIDTA region primarily involves the conversion of powder cocaine into crack, cannabis cultivation, and limited, small-scale methamphetamine production. Large amounts of powder cocaine are converted to crack by African American criminal groups and street gangs, typically at or near local distribution sites in the region. However,

African American criminal groups that operate in Columbus reportedly transport crack cocaine to Fairfield County.

Cannabis is cultivated in the Ohio HIDTA region at both indoor and outdoor grow sites; however, indoor grow sites are more common. Most indoor cultivation in the HIDTA region is conducted by local Caucasian marijuana producers and typically takes place in private residences; however, grow operations occasionally are discovered in other locations such as outbuildings and warehouses. (See text box on page 6.) Law enforcement officials in the HIDTA region report that most indoor cannabis grows are hydroponic, employing watering, ventilation, and lighting systems to support the production of high-potency marijuana. Producers in the region often order cannabis grow equipment, supplies, and growing instructions over the Internet. For example, the Fairfield/Hocking Major Crimes Unit dismantled an indoor cannabis grow operated by an individual who ordered seeds through the Internet from Amsterdam, Netherlands. Outdoor cannabis grow site operators occasionally use techniques designed to prevent detection by law enforcement, including planting several small plots rather than a single large site.

Methamphetamine production in the HIDTA region has declined significantly since peaking in 2005, the result of statewide precursor chemical control legislation, aggressive law enforcement efforts, and public awareness campaigns. This decline is evidenced by National Seizure System (NSS) data that reveal a significant decrease in the number of methamphetamine laboratories seized by law enforcement officials in the HIDTA region between 2005 (69) and 2008 (39). (See Table 2 on page 6.) Most of the methamphetamine laboratory seizures in the HIDTA region take place in Summit County. The Akron/Summit County Drug Task Force reports that methamphetamine producers in Summit County have

1,200 Cannabis Plants Seized From Cleveland Warehouse

On October 21, 2008, law enforcement officials raided a large cannabis grow operation located in a three-story warehouse in Cleveland. The owners of the warehouse misled neighbors by telling them that the 40,000-square-foot building was a plumbing supply business. When officials entered the warehouse, they discovered a 7-foot, 125-pound alligator believed to be used to guard the grow operation. Law enforcement officials arrested four individuals and seized nearly 1,200 cannabis plants, 400 pounds of processed marijuana, an industrial harvester, \$30,000 in cash, two high-powered rifles, and seven vehicles, including a new Harley-Davidson motorcycle and a Corvette.

Source: Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Office.

Alligator Found at Grow Operation



Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Office

Cannabis Seized at Grow Operation



Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Office

Table 2. Methamphetamine Laboratory Seizures, by County, Ohio HIDTA, 2004–2008

County	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Cuyahoga	1	1	1	0	0
Fairfield	2	1	0	1	1
Franklin	2	2	2	0	1
Greene	4	2	3	2	3
Hamilton	3	1	2	1	0
Lucas	0	0	0	0	0
Mahoning	0	0	3	0	1
Montgomery	7	5	0	0	1
Stark	3	7	2	0	1
Summit	45	41	38	26	31
Warren	1	9	1	3	0
HIDTA Total	68	69	52	33	39

Source: National Seizure System, data run on March 24, 2009.

circumvented local precursor controls by having multiple individuals buy pseudoephedrine at or below the legal limit from various locations (a practice known as smurfing) and then deliver it to the producers, who often pay twice the retail value for the pseudoephedrine.

Transportation

The extensive interstate highway system in Ohio is routinely exploited by traffickers to transport drugs into and throughout the HIDTA region in private and commercial vehicles. Traffickers

primarily use north-south highways such as Interstates 71, 75, and 77 and east-west highways such as Interstates 70 and 80/90 to transport illicit drugs from distribution centers along the Southwest Border. (See Figure 2.) Additionally, traffickers often conceal drug shipments in hidden compartments in private and commercial vehicles in an attempt to avoid detection by law enforcement officials. For example, in September 2008 the Greene County Agencies for Combined Enforcement discovered a hidden compartment in a vehicle after two small magnets were discovered on one of the suspects; the magnets were

Figure 2. Ohio HIDTA Region Transportation Infrastructure



used to trigger the door of a hidden compartment. Traffickers operating in the HIDTA region also use couriers on commercial airlines and package delivery services to transport illicit drugs to the area.

Mexican DTOs are the primary transporters of illicit drugs into the Ohio HIDTA region; they generally transport wholesale quantities of cocaine, marijuana, Mexican black tar heroin and brown powder heroin and, occasionally, limited amounts of ice methamphetamine. Mexican traffickers are increasingly transporting cocaine and marijuana directly from locations along the Southwest Border to Akron, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown rather than through major drug distribution centers such as Chicago and Detroit, as in previous years. They have also increased the amount of Mexican heroin that they are transporting into the HIDTA region, particularly to Columbus and Dayton. Mexican traffickers operating in Columbus typically transport small amounts of heroin in each shipment in contrast to the larger quantities of cocaine and marijuana that they transport. Law enforcement officials believe that Mexican traffickers use smaller heroin shipments to avoid the possibility of large losses in the event that shipments are seized by law enforcement.

Dominican, Puerto Rican, Jamaican, and Somali traffickers also transport various drugs into the HIDTA region. Dominican and Puerto Rican DTOs and criminal groups primarily transport SA heroin and cocaine, while Jamaican DTOs transport marijuana. These DTOs and criminal groups transport drugs principally to northeastern Ohio HIDTA markets from New York City, Chicago, and Detroit, using private vehicles. Somali criminal groups transport wholesale quantities of khat into the Columbus area for local consumption, predominantly within the city's Somali community. These groups previously used package delivery services to ship khat into the city; however, law enforcement reporting indicates that they are now

also transporting the drug into the area from New York City, primarily in private vehicles.

Traffickers also transport illicit drugs into the Ohio HIDTA region using couriers on commercial flights, package delivery services, and the mail; however, traffickers use these methods less often than overland transportation and generally only for smaller quantities of drugs. Traffickers use package delivery services to ship illicit drugs, primarily marijuana, MDMA, khat, and CPDs, to distributors and abusers in the HIDTA region. Moreover, traffickers have reportedly used package delivery services to ship CPDs and MDMA to abusers who purchased the drugs from the traffickers over the Internet. Additionally, the Akron/Summit County Drug Task Force recently identified two individuals operating in the HIDTA region who offered methamphetamine precursor chemicals for sale on the Internet; the individuals mailed chemicals to locations throughout the United States. (See text box.)

80 Pounds of Crystallized Iodine Seized

In December 2008, law enforcement officials executed a search warrant at an Akron residence and seized approximately 80 pounds of crystallized iodine (enough to produce approximately 19 pounds of methamphetamine), arrested two individuals, and removed two children from the residence. Investigators believe that the arrested individuals had purchased bulk quantities of iodine (from an unknown source) and sold ounce quantities over the Internet. They mailed the iodine to locations throughout the United States, such as Texas and California. Both individuals were charged with illegal assembly of drugs and child endangerment.

Source: Akron/Summit County Drug Task Force.

Distribution

Mexican DTOs are the primary wholesale distributors of cocaine, marijuana, and heroin in the Ohio HIDTA region; they have significantly increased the amount of Mexican heroin that they distribute throughout the region. For example, Mexican DTOs have increased their distribution of Mexican black tar heroin and brown powder heroin in northern Ohio markets, including Cleveland, Youngstown, and Summit and Stark Counties, resulting in a significant increase in heroin availability. Mexican DTOs also engage in limited retail drug distribution in Columbus, where they control the distribution of Mexican heroin at all levels.

Columbus and Dayton have emerged as regional drug distribution centers, particularly for Mexican black tar heroin and brown powder heroin that is supplied from these cities to markets throughout Ohio and neighboring states. Columbus is a distribution center for Mexican heroin supplied to markets throughout much of Ohio as well as in West Virginia and western Pennsylvania. Additionally, distributors from other markets often travel to Columbus to purchase Mexican heroin to sell in their home areas. For instance, some heroin distributors in adjoining Fairfield County travel to Columbus several times each day to purchase retail quantities of heroin. Furthermore, Columbus serves as a distribution center for powder and crack cocaine supplied from Columbus to surrounding areas and to West Virginia. Distributors from Columbus typically travel to these other areas to distribute the drugs; however, distributors and abusers occasionally travel to Columbus to purchase the drugs to sell in their home areas. Dayton serves as a source of supply for heroin available in southwestern Ohio markets, including the city of Cincinnati and Greene and Warren Counties, as well as in markets outside the HIDTA region, including the city of Troy, Mercer and Preble Counties, and nearby

Indiana cities such as Richmond. As in Columbus, distributors and abusers from other markets in and outside the HIDTA region often travel to Dayton to purchase small amounts of Mexican heroin to sell in their home areas.

Dominican and Jamaican DTOs also distribute illicit drugs at the wholesale level, principally in northeastern counties of the HIDTA region. Dominican DTOs are the principal wholesale distributors of SA heroin in Cleveland and Youngstown, while Jamaican DTOs distribute marijuana and cocaine in Cleveland and marijuana in Akron and Youngstown. Jamaican DTOs are also active in marijuana distribution in some southern HIDTA markets, including Cincinnati and Warren County. Northern Ohio Law Enforcement Task Force officials report that Jamaican drug distributors in Cleveland often use abandoned houses as stash locations. These distributors typically obtain between 500 and 1,000 pounds of marijuana at a time, divide the shipment into smaller amounts, and distribute it within 1 or 2 days. In an attempt to circumvent law enforcement detection, these groups often identify several abandoned houses and decide which one to use shortly before a shipment of marijuana arrives.

African American criminal groups and street gangs are the primary retail-level distributors of crack cocaine and marijuana, particularly in urban areas of the Ohio HIDTA region; they are typically supplied by Mexican DTOs. African American criminal groups and street gangs also distribute retail quantities of heroin, powder cocaine, and PCP to varying degrees throughout the HIDTA region. African American street gangs in Cleveland and Columbus are increasing their distribution of MDMA. Most of these street gangs distribute MDMA along with crack cocaine; however, some Cleveland gangs have switched from selling crack cocaine to exclusively distributing MDMA. According to recent law enforcement reporting, African American drug distributors in Cincinnati

Dayton Physician Charged in Multistate CPD Ring

In November 2008, 18 individuals, including a Dayton physician, were arrested and charged with conspiracy to distribute controlled substances. The physician is accused of prescribing hundreds of thousands of dosage units of CPDs that had been distributed at the retail level throughout southwestern Ohio, Kentucky, and Florida. The physician's office manager was involved in the conspiracy, as was her husband, who served as security for the doctor's office. Numerous individuals involved in the conspiracy provided copies of identification or introduced "patients" to the office manager and physician. Each of these "patients" obtained prescriptions for a "360 cocktail," a combination of Xanax (alprazolam), Vicodin (hydrocodone), Percocet and OxyContin (both oxycodone), and methadone; in return, the office manager and the physician each received \$100. The individuals recruited to be "patients" either kept a portion of the drugs as payment or received cash from the recruiter.

Source: Warren County Drug Task Force.

are also selling wholesale quantities of MDMA that they obtain from sources in Detroit.

Various other groups and independent dealers also serve as retail-level drug distributors in the region. Puerto Rican criminal groups are the primary retail-level distributors of SA heroin in Mahoning County; they typically are supplied by Dominican DTOs based in New York City. Hispanic street gangs are active in Columbus, where they distribute cocaine and limited amounts of Mexican ice methamphetamine; they have also emerged as retail-level MDMA distributors. Caucasian independent dealers are the principal distributors of MDMA and CPDs throughout the HIDTA region. CPDs are diverted by distributors

and abusers through various methods, including prescription fraud, doctor-shopping, theft, pharmacy robberies, and unscrupulous physicians. (See text box.)

Drug distributors in the Ohio HIDTA region use a variety of communication methods to support their criminal activities. The most common method is the use of cell phones, both subscriber and prepaid. Law enforcement officials report that street gangs in the region are increasingly using prepaid phones because they provide anonymity and can be discarded and replaced routinely on account of their low cost. Distributors in the region often use cell phones to negotiate transactions and prearrange meetings with customers. South Central Drug Task Force officials in Columbus report that customers there typically call distributors to arrange a meeting place to purchase drugs. Northern Ohio Law Enforcement Task Force officials indicate that Mexican wholesale distributors in Cleveland are increasingly using the text messaging function of cell phones to conduct drug transactions. Drug distributors in the region, particularly street gangs, also use the push-to-talk feature of cell phones and two-way radios to conduct drug activity. Street gang members typically use two-way radios that have a range of 2 to 3 miles and have several frequencies that they switch between in an effort to avoid law enforcement detection. Furthermore, street gang members, particularly those in their teens and early twenties, use social networking sites on the Internet to communicate and post pictures of their gang-related activities.

Drug-Related Crime

Law enforcement reporting indicates that cocaine, particularly crack, is the drug that most contributes to violent crime and property crime in the Ohio HIDTA region. According to the NDTs 2009, 71 of the 103 state and local law enforcement respondents in the Ohio HIDTA

region identify either crack or powder cocaine as the drug most associated with violent crime. Additionally, 60 of the 103 respondents identify crack or powder cocaine as the drug most associated with property crime. Crack cocaine distributors commit assaults and homicides to protect drug supplies and distribution territories, while abusers are often involved in shoplifting, robbery, and theft to support their addictions. Heroin abusers also contribute significantly to crime in the region by engaging in shoplifting, identity theft, and burglary to support their addictions. Several law enforcement agencies in the HIDTA region report an increase in “rip-offs” of drug distributors. For example, officials in Columbus report that home invasion robberies involving the theft of drugs or illicit drug proceeds are increasing in the city. Furthermore, law enforcement officials in Cleveland believe that there has been an increase in cocaine distributors’ stealing both drugs and drug proceeds from each other because of decreased cocaine availability in the city.

Abuse

Marijuana, cocaine, and heroin are the most widely available and abused illicit drugs in the Ohio HIDTA region. Marijuana is the most often abused drug in the region; however, the abuse of cocaine and heroin poses a more significant concern to public health and law enforcement officials because of the highly addictive nature of these drugs, the costs associated with publicly funded cocaine and heroin treatment, and the violent and property crime attendant to distribution and abuse of the drugs. According to Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services (ODADAS) data, the number of cocaine-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities increased 29 percent in the HIDTA region from state fiscal year (SFY)² 2004 (7,167) to SFY2008

Table 3. Substance Abuse Treatment Admissions, by Drug, Ohio HIDTA, SFY2004–SFY2008*

Drug	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Marijuana	9,977	11,402	11,710	13,160	14,073
Cocaine	7,167	8,086	8,390	9,990	9,215
Heroin	5,267	5,991	6,408	7,715	8,731
Amphetamine**	193	304	363	431	314

Source: Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services.

*Data for 2008 are preliminary.

**Amphetamine category includes methamphetamine.

(9,215). Despite reporting that cocaine availability has decreased in some areas of the Ohio HIDTA region, cocaine is second only to marijuana as the most commonly reported primary drug of abuse by individuals seeking treatment in the HIDTA region. (See Table 3.) Heroin abuse is rising in the Ohio HIDTA region, particularly among young Caucasians from suburban areas; heroin-related treatment admissions increased 66 percent between SFY2004 (5,267) and SFY2008 (8,731). Additionally, law enforcement officials in Toledo and Fairfield County report that some abusers of controlled prescription opioids are switching to heroin. This switch may be attributed, at least in part, to effects of the Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System (OARRS),³ a prescription drug monitoring program that was fully implemented in October 2006, and to the increasing availability throughout the HIDTA region of Mexican heroin, which is typically lower in price.

CPDs are abused at high levels throughout the Ohio HIDTA region. OxyContin is often abused in the region, despite reports of decreased availability in some areas. Other commonly abused CPDs include Xanax, Vicodin, and Percocet. Additionally, a recent study by the Ohio

2. Ohio’s state fiscal year (SFY) is July 1 through June 30.

3. The Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System (OARRS) is a state-wide computerized prescription monitoring program that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to physicians, pharmacists, and law enforcement personnel via a secure web site.

Substance Abuse Monitoring (OSAM) Network⁴ reported instances of Seroquel⁵ (quetiapine fumarate) abuse in Dayton and Toledo. Crack abusers in the HIDTA region often use Seroquel to help them “come down” from a high.

Methamphetamine, PCP, and MDMA are abused to varying degrees throughout the HIDTA region. Treatment data from ODADAS indicate that the number of amphetamine-related (including methamphetamine-related) admissions is significantly lower than the number of admissions for other drugs of abuse in the region. Furthermore, the OSAM Network indicates a continuing decrease in methamphetamine availability and abuse in most of the HIDTA region. PCP is abused primarily by teenagers in Cleveland, where the OSAM Network indicates high and increasing availability of the drug. MDMA is abused at low levels in the Ohio HIDTA region; however, reporting from the OSAM Network indicates increased availability and abuse of the drug in Cleveland, Columbus, and Toledo. Rising MDMA abuse in Cleveland and Columbus is most likely due to increasing distribution of the drug by street gangs in the cities.

Illicit Finance

Drug-related money laundering in the Ohio HIDTA region typically entails the transportation of bulk currency from major metropolitan areas in the state to Mexico. Mexican DTOs are the primary transporters of bulk currency, typically using the same private and commercial vehicles used to transport drugs into the area. Law enforcement officials in Columbus report that Mexican DTOs involved in marijuana and

cocaine distribution in the city typically transport large amounts of currency in a single shipment, whereas groups involved in heroin distribution usually transport currency in smaller quantities, corresponding to the typical size of shipments for each drug.

Traffickers operating in the Ohio HIDTA region also launder money through various other means, including purchasing real estate and luxury items, using money services businesses (MSBs), structuring bank deposits, and commingling drug proceeds with revenue generated by businesses. Retail-level distributors in the HIDTA region typically use their drug proceeds to purchase luxury items such as real estate, vehicles, and jewelry. Traffickers also move drug proceeds to drug source locations using wire transfers through the many MSBs in the area. Mexican traffickers who distribute drugs at the wholesale level in Montgomery County launder drug proceeds by structuring bank deposits into financial institutions (a practice commonly known as smurfing). These DTOs then provide individuals (known as smurfs) with multiple contacts in Mexico to whom they transfer small amounts of money. Additionally, drug traffickers in Stark County have used legitimate businesses to launder their drug proceeds. For example, in 2007 several traffickers operating in the county provided large sums of money to a local businessman, who used the funds much like an interest-free loan. The businessman used the drug proceeds to purchase used vehicles that he later sold at a significant markup, enabling him to quickly return the initial funds to the traffickers and generating a profit for himself. In an effort to provide legitimacy to the transactions, the money was typically returned to the traffickers in the form of business checks as payment for “consulting fees.”

4. The Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring (OSAM) Network is sponsored by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services (ODADAS) and operated by Wright State University, Dayton, and the University of Akron.
5. Seroquel is prescribed to treat symptoms of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder but is not scheduled in the Controlled Substances Act as a controlled substance.

Outlook

Mexican black tar heroin and brown powder heroin availability in the Ohio HIDTA region will increase, particularly in the northern counties, as Mexican DTOs supply larger amounts of the drug, taking advantage of their well-established cocaine and marijuana transportation routes to the region and their distribution methods and networks.

Heroin abuse will most likely increase in the Ohio HIDTA region, largely because of increasing Mexican heroin availability. As a result, the significant consequences associated with heroin abuse—including associated crime and treatment costs—will rise in the HIDTA region, increasing the threat posed by the drug.

Precursor chemical control legislation and sustained law enforcement pressure will quite likely keep local methamphetamine production at low levels in the HIDTA region, unless producers are able to find alternative sources for chemical supplies. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Mexican methamphetamine availability will increase in the region in the near term because of decreased methamphetamine production in Mexico.

The availability and abuse of MDMA in the HIDTA region will most likely rise as African American and Hispanic street gangs and criminal groups increase their involvement in the distribution of the drug.

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Sources

Local, State, and Regional

Akron Police Department
 Allen County Sheriff's Department
 Alliance Police Department
 Barberton Police Department
 Bath Police Department
 Beachwood Police
 Beaver Police Department
 Bedford Heights Police Department
 Bedford Police Department
 Bellbrook Police Department
 Brooklyn Police Department
 Brook Park Police Department
 Brookville Police Department
 Butler Township Police Department
 Canfield Police Department
 Canton Police Department
 Centerville Police Department
 Cincinnati Police Department
 City of Mussillon Police Department
 City of Sharonville Police Department
 Cleveland Division of Police
 Clinton Township Police Department
 Columbus Division of Police
 Copley Police Department
 Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Office
 Cuyahoga Falls Police Department
 Dayton Police Department
 Drug Abuse Reduction Task Force
 East Cleveland Police
 Euclid Ohio Police Department
 Evendale Police Department
 Fairborn Ohio Police Department
 Fairfield/Hocking Major Crimes Unit
 Fairview Police Department
 West Shore Enforcement Bureau Narcotics Task Force
 Franklin County Sheriff's Office
 Glenwillow Police Department
 Grandview Heights Division of Police
 Greene County Agencies for Combined Enforcement Task Force
 Green Township Police Department
 Grove City Police Department
 Hamilton County Sheriff's Office
 Regional Narcotics Unit
 Highland Heights Police Department
 Hilliard Division of Police
 Jackson Township Police Department
 Kettering Police Department
 Lake County Narcotics Agency
 Lakewood Police Department
 Lebanon Police Department
 Lorain County Drug Task Force
 Lucas County Sheriff's Office
 Madison Township Police Department
 Mahoning County Sheriff's Office
 Maple Heights Police Department
 Mariemont Police Department
 Marlboro Township Police Department
 Maumee Police
 Medina County Drug Task Force
 Miamisburg Police Department
 Middleburg Heights Police Department
 Milton Township Police Department
 Montgomery County Sheriff's Office
 Montville Township
 Moraine Police Department
 Moreland Hills Police Department
 Northeast Hamilton County Drug Task Force
 North Olmstead Police Department
 West Shore Enforcement Bureau Narcotics Task Force
 North Randall Police Department
 Northwest Ohio Drug Task Force
 Ohio Attorney General's Office
 Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation
 Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services
 Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring Network
 Ohio State Highway Patrol
 Parma Heights Police Department
 Parma Police Department
 Perkins Township Police Department
 Perry Township Police Department
 Poland Township Police Department
 Poland Village Police Department
 Salem Police Department
 Shaker Heights Police Department
 Southeast Area Law Enforcement Narcotics Task Force
 Springdale Police Department
 Stark County Sheriff's Office
 Stark County Metropolitan Narcotics
 Stow Police Department
 Summit County Sheriff's Office
 Summit County Drug Unit
 Sylvania Police Division
 Sylvania Township Police Department
 Toledo Police Department
 Trotwood Police

Twinsburg Police Department
Upper Arlington Division of Police
Warren County Drug Task Force
Westerville Division of Police
Westlake Police Department
Whitehall Police Department
Worthington Division of Police
Wyoming Police Department
Youngstown Police Department

Federal

Executive Office of the President
Office of National Drug Control Policy
Ohio High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area
Akron/Summit County Drug Task Force
Commercial Vehicle Intelligence Initiative
Drug Enforcement Administration Youngstown Task Force
Mahoning Valley Law Enforcement Task Force
Miami Valley Drug Task Force
Money Laundering Intelligence Initiative
Northeast Ohio Interdiction Task Force
Northern Ohio Law Enforcement Task Force
Northwest Ohio HIDTA Task Force
South Central Drug Task Force
Southwest Ohio Regional Drug Task Force
Stark County Violent Crimes Task Force
Toledo Metro Drug Task Force
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Office of Applied Studies
Treatment Episode Data Set
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Cleveland Resident Office

U.S. Department of Justice
Criminal Division
Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force
Drug Enforcement Administration
Detroit Division Office
Columbus District Office
Cleveland Resident Office
Dayton Resident Office
Toledo Resident Office
Youngstown Resident Office
El Paso Intelligence Center
National Seizure System
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Cleveland Division
U.S. Attorneys Offices
Northern District of Ohio
Southern District of Ohio
U.S. Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

Other

The Plain Dealer
The Vindicator

**Questions and comments may be directed to
Great Lakes/Mid-Atlantic Unit, Regional Threat Analysis Branch.**

National Drug Intelligence Center

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