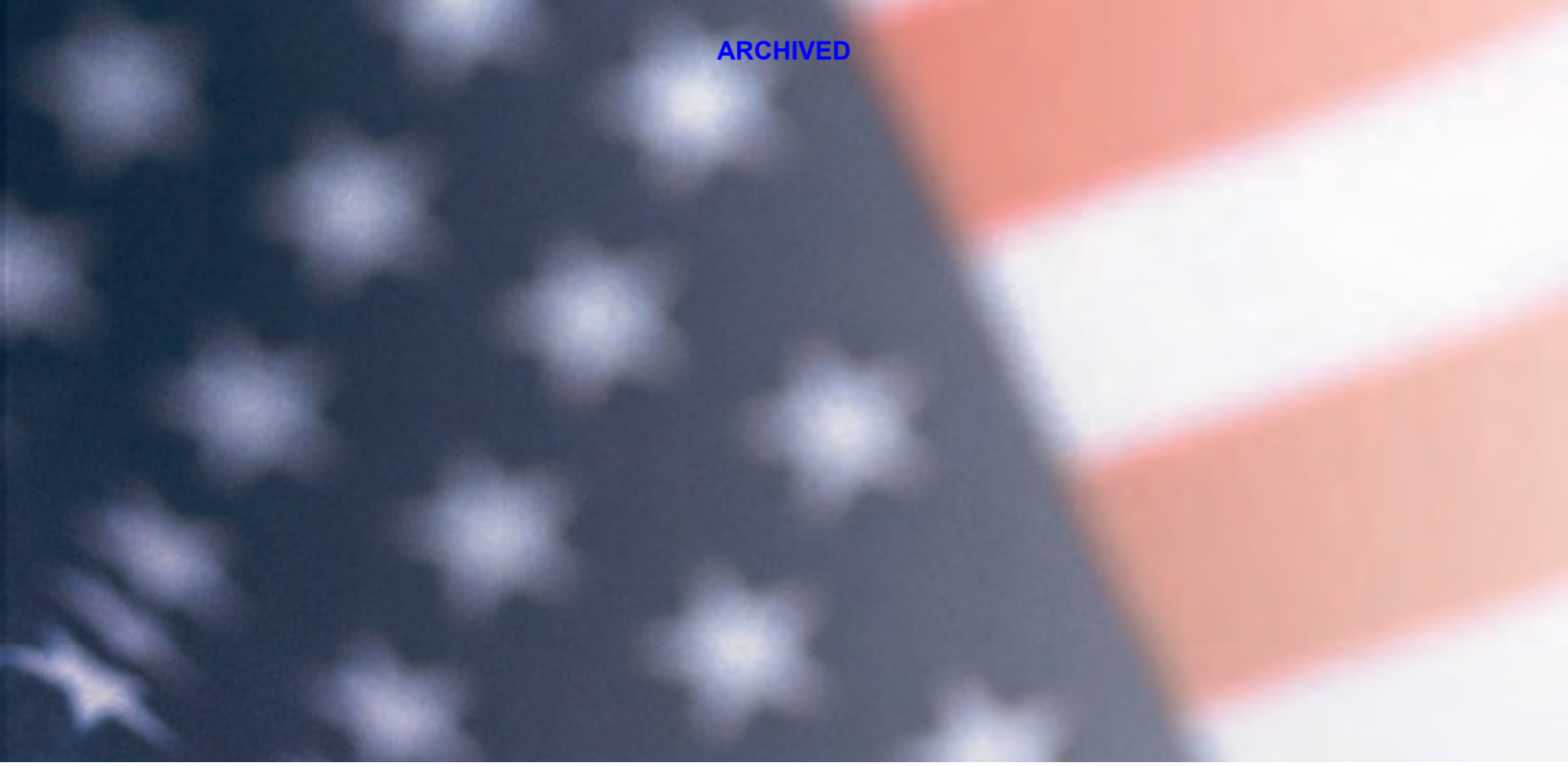

Drug Market Analysis 2008

Michigan

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area

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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PREFACE

This assessment provides a strategic overview of the illicit drug situation in the Michigan 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 Michigan HIDTA.

Figure 1. Michigan High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.

Strategic Drug Threat Developments

- African American traffickers, who are the primary distributors of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana in the Michigan HIDTA region, are increasingly smuggling MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, also known as ecstasy) from Canada. MDMA distribution by African American traffickers is contributing to increased MDMA availability and abuse among African Americans in Detroit.

- Albanian criminal groups are emerging as significant traffickers of Canadian high-potency marijuana and MDMA in the region. However, Asian drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) have been, and continue to be, the primary suppliers of these drugs.

- Nigerian traffickers have increased their involvement in heroin trafficking in Detroit. Previously, Nigerians primarily served as couriers for other heroin distributors in the region; they now distribute the heroin that they transport.

- Cocaine seizures are increasing at the international border between Michigan and Canada. The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) reportedly seized more cocaine entering Canada at the Ambassador Bridge in 2007 (418 kg) than was seized during the previous 6 years combined (233 kg). Additionally, in February 2008 CBSA conducted the largest land border cocaine seizure in Canadian history, seizing approximately 237 kilograms at the Blue Water Bridge.[1]

- Methamphetamine laboratory incidents[2] in the region have declined more than 73 percent over the past 3 years, from 221 incidents in 2005 to 59 incidents in 2007. This significant reduction can be attributed to statewide precursor control legislation enacted in December 2005, effective law enforcement initiatives, and public awareness campaigns. Limited methamphetamine production continues in the western counties of the Michigan HIDTA, often involving a simplified technique known as the "one-pot cook."

- The production of higher-potency marijuana at indoor grow sites in the Michigan HIDTA is increasing. The number and average size of indoor marijuana grows seized in Michigan have increased over the past 2 years; the number of seized indoor grows has more than doubled, while the average number of seized plants has increased fourfold. Increases in the number and size of indoor grows most likely reflect an attempt on the part of domestic producers to profit from the demand for high-potency marijuana in the HIDTA region.

1. The Blue Water Bridge is located outside the Michigan HIDTA region at the Port Huron port of entry (POE); however, it is a key cross-border transit point for illicit drugs that transit the region.

2. Methamphetamine laboratory incidents include seizures of laboratories, dumpsites, and chemicals and equipment.

HIDTA Overview

The Michigan HIDTA region encompasses nine counties—five in eastern Michigan (Genesee, Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne) and four in western Michigan (Allegan, Kalamazoo, Kent, and Van Buren). (See Figure 1 on page 1.) The population of the region is estimated at 5.8 million, with over 78 percent residing in the eastern counties of the HIDTA region. Detroit, Flint, Grand Rapids, and Kalamazoo are the primary drug markets in the region; they serve as distribution centers for many smaller drug markets within the HIDTA region as well as markets in neighboring states.

The Michigan HIDTA region is centrally located between major drug markets in Chicago and New York City and is connected by interstate highways and roads to other domestic drug markets as well as source areas along the Southwest Border and in Canada. Traffickers transport

large quantities of cocaine and marijuana and, to a lesser extent, heroin and methamphetamine from the Southwest Border. They also transport high-potency marijuana and MDMA from Canada to the area. A shared international border renders Michigan particularly susceptible to drug smuggling from Canada. The Ambassador Bridge, the world's busiest commercial border crossing, and the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel connect Detroit with Windsor, Ontario, Canada (see Figure 2). Over 38,000 vehicles cross the bridge and more than 27,000 vehicles transit the tunnel daily, providing numerous opportunities for the cross-border shipment of drugs and currency. Additionally, there are more than 2 million registered watercraft in Michigan and Ontario, some of which are used by traffickers to transport illicit drugs across the extensive maritime border. The Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport is also used by couriers transporting drugs into and through the region.

Figure 2. International border between Detroit, Michigan, and Windsor, Ontario.

Detroit and Flint are the largest drug markets in the eastern counties of the HIDTA region. Detroit, in particular, serves as the primary distribution center for illicit drugs transported into and through the HIDTA region from various source locations. Flint is principally supplied with illicit drugs from Detroit, which is located approximately 70 miles south. Some Flint distributors have their own sources outside Michigan that supply them with wholesale quantities of illicit drugs. Cocaine and marijuana available throughout the eastern counties typically are transported from sources in Mexico and states along the Southwest Border, while heroin is transported from New York, Chicago, southern California, Florida, and sources along the Southwest Border. High-potency marijuana and MDMA are transported into and through the eastern counties from Canada, primarily through Detroit ports of entry (POEs). Cocaine and bulk currency acquired from the sale of these illicit drugs in the United States are transported through Detroit to Canada. Diverted pharmaceutical drugs are available and abused, particularly by college age individuals who also are distributors.

Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo are the primary drug markets in the western counties of the HIDTA region. They are located midway between Chicago and Detroit, the cities of origin for most of the available illicit drugs in these markets. Cocaine, heroin, and marijuana are commonly available in the western counties. Methamphetamine production in the HIDTA region occurs primarily in the western counties, where the number of operating laboratories has declined significantly since the December 2005 enactment of statewide pseudoephedrine sales restrictions. MDMA and diverted pharmaceutical drugs are available and abused in the area; various independent dealers, often college students, transport these drugs into the region for personal use and limited distribution.

Drug Threat Overview

Crack cocaine poses the most significant drug threat to the Michigan HIDTA region because of the drug's association with violent and property crimes and its impact on public health resources. According to the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) 2007, 28 of the 52 state and local law enforcement respondents in the Michigan HIDTA region identified crack cocaine as the drug that poses the greatest threat to their jurisdictions. Powder cocaine typically is converted to crack cocaine by street gang members and other retail distributors near sales locations in urban areas. To maintain control of local distribution markets, crack cocaine distributors engage in violent criminal activity, such as assault and homicide, while crack cocaine abusers commit burglary, retail fraud, and robbery in order to obtain the drug or money to purchase the drug.

The trafficking and abuse of heroin, marijuana, MDMA, methamphetamine, and diverted pharmaceutical drugs also pose considerable threats to the region. Most of the heroin available in the region is South American (SA); however, Southwest Asian (SWA) heroin and, to a lesser extent, Mexican and Southeast Asian (SEA) heroin are also available and abused. Marijuana is widely available and abused throughout the region. Commercial-grade Mexican marijuana is the most prevalent type, although locally produced and high-potency Canadian marijuana are also commonly available. Local indoor and outdoor marijuana production occurs throughout the HIDTA region—the number of indoor grows has doubled over the past 2 years. Wholesale quantities of high-potency marijuana and MDMA transit the region from Canada; some is distributed and abused locally. Methamphetamine production is limited and occurs primarily in rural areas of southwest Michigan. Methamphetamine abuse may be decreasing in the region; publicly funded methamphetamine treatment admissions declined nearly 66 percent from 2005 to 2007. Diverted pharmaceutical drugs, including methadone, OxyContin, Vicodin, Xanax, and Soma, are widely abused in the HIDTA region.

Drug Trafficking Organizations

African American DTOs and criminal groups, the predominant drug traffickers in the Michigan HIDTA region, distribute powder cocaine, heroin, and marijuana at the wholesale level. These traffickers transport powder cocaine and marijuana directly from locations along the U.S.–Mexico border, where they have connections to Mexican sources of supply; they also purchase wholesale quantities of these drugs from Mexican traffickers in the HIDTA region. Additionally, African American traffickers are increasingly involved in MDMA smuggling into the region from Canada. In order to maintain control of drug markets in the region, African American traffickers often engage in violence including assault and homicide.

A number of other trafficking groups also distribute wholesale quantities of drugs in the Michigan HIDTA region. Mexican DTOs, many of which have direct ties to major Colombian drug cartels and other sources of supply along the Southwest Border, distribute wholesale quantities of powder cocaine, heroin, and marijuana. Asian DTOs are the principal suppliers of Canadian high-potency marijuana and MDMA to the region, often using Indo-Canadian truck drivers to transport the drugs across the border. Albanian traffickers have emerged as transporters and wholesale distributors of Canadian high-potency marijuana and MDMA in the region. Caucasian and Middle Eastern traffickers in the region distribute wholesale quantities of powder cocaine and marijuana. West African criminal groups, particularly Nigerian and Ghanaian, transport and distribute SWA heroin and, to a lesser extent, SEA heroin in the region.

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.

Various street gangs and outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMGs) distribute illicit drugs in the Michigan HIDTA region, primarily at the retail level. Nationally affiliated Gangster Disciples (GDs), Latin Kings, Sureños (Sur-13), and Latin Counts are the dominant gangs in the region; they regularly distribute retail-level quantities of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana in drug markets throughout the region. Nationally affiliated OMGs such as Hells Angels and Outlaws and the locally affiliated Highwaymen distribute cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamine in some areas of the region. According to the Detroit Police Department, between 50 and 75 gangs are active in Detroit. Approximately 70 gangs operate in Kent County (the Grand Rapids area), many of which originated in Chicago and southern California.

Detroit-based DTO Leader Sentenced to 50 Years in Prison

In February 2007 the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan announced that a leader of a Detroit-based African American DTO that had operated in the city for more than 15 years was sentenced to a 50-year term of imprisonment. The organization, with ties to Mexican sources of supply, is estimated to have distributed 600 kilograms of cocaine and 5,400 kilograms of marijuana and laundered approximately $5 million annually. The DTO transported the illicit drugs using hidden compartments in commercial trucks and personal vehicles and used two-way direct-connect communication to coordinate drug transactions. In addition to drug distribution, this DTO engaged in various other criminal activities, including tax violations, public corruption, weapons violations, violence, and murder. The leader used profits from illicit drug sales to operate three car washes and a real estate business. Investigations of this DTO resulted in 15 indictments and the seizure of 1,200 pounds of marijuana and approximately $2 million in cash and other assets, including a house, 11 automobiles, and two car-detailing businesses.

Source: U.S. Attorney Eastern District of Michigan.

The criminal activities of street gangs and OMGs in the HIDTA region typically extend beyond their drug distribution operations. Street gangs commit criminal acts such as assault, drive-by shootings, homicide, money laundering, property crime, robbery, and weapons trafficking. Many turf-oriented street gangs participate in ongoing feuds over distribution territories in neighborhood communities where they reside and conduct their drug operations. Street gang members often use the voice and text messaging capabilities of cell phones to conduct drug transactions and prearrange meetings with customers. Some gang members prefer cell phones with two-way direct-connect communication, believing that they are less vulnerable to law enforcement interception. Street gang members increasingly communicate through Blackberries and the Internet, using text messaging and photos to boast about gang membership or related activities and to advertise events and house parties. Some street gangs create web sites for rap music record labels, a number of which are fictitious and created to mask gang activities. Street gang recruitment of middle school and high school students is increasing. Young recruits are used to perform various gang-related criminal activities, including drug sales, shootings, carjackings, and robberies. The Detroit Thug Lords, for example, paid gang members, some of whom were minors, as much as $5,000 per month to distribute various drugs, including powder cocaine, crack cocaine, and marijuana. (See text box on page 10.) OMGs conduct criminal activities such as assault, theft, fraud, homicide, prostitution operations, and weapons trafficking.

Production

Crack cocaine, marijuana and, to a lesser extent, methamphetamine are the principal illicit drugs produced in the Michigan HIDTA region.

Crack cocaine conversion is a significant concern in the region because of its association with property and violent crimes committed by distributors and abusers of the drug. Crack cocaine distributors often commit violent crimes ranging from physical assault to homicide in order to control local drug operations, while abusers of the drug commit burglary, retail fraud, and robbery to obtain the drug or money to purchase the drug. Typically, African American distributors convert powder cocaine to crack in private residences, drug houses, or hotel rooms and distribute the drug close to the production site. Some dealers in Detroit use microwaves to "cook" their crack because they believe this method causes air pockets to form in the crack, increasing the volume of the product and, hence, the profits.

Most of the marijuana available in the HIDTA region is produced in Mexico or Canada; however, marijuana from local indoor and outdoor production is also available throughout the region. The number of indoor marijuana grow sites seized statewide has more than doubled over the past 3

years from 44 in 2005 to 100 in 2007 (see Table 1). The average number of plants seized at these grows increased fourfold during the same time frame. Increases in the size and number of indoor grows are most likely a response on the part of domestic producers to the growing demand for high-potency marijuana in the HIDTA region. Indoor cultivation typically takes place in houses or apartments privately owned or rented by independent growers, usually African American and Caucasian. Some growers operate sophisticated operations in rented houses or apartments, or in commercial buildings that have multiple rooms in which to propagate, cultivate, and dry plants. Some cannabis cultivators who operate large-scale indoor grows steal electricity by reversing or bypassing meters, which can result in hazards such as electrical shock and fire. Some indoor grows in the region are hydroponic. In August 2007, for example, a marijuana producer in southwest Detroit pleaded guilty to operating a large-scale hydroponic grow site involving over 1,000 marijuana plants at a warehouse that used more than 100 metal halide lights and professionally installed plumbing. A few horticultural stores in Michigan that provide products to cannabis cultivators also deal with legitimate commercial greenhouses and universities to conceal the illicit nature of their businesses. Outdoor marijuana production occurs in the region, particularly on state-owned property, on other open lands, or in agricultural fields among legitimate crops.

Table 1. Marijuana Eradication From Indoor Grow Sites, Michigan, 2003–2007

Year	Grows Seized	Plants Seized
2003	53	2,582
2004	54	2,416
2005	44	3,065
2006	81	5,900
2007	100	12,509

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program, 2003–2006 and preliminary 2007 data run on 3/4/08.

Methamphetamine production in the HIDTA region has declined significantly during the last 3 years; however, limited small-scale production of the drug still occurs, particularly in the western counties of the region. Methamphetamine laboratory incidents in HIDTA counties decreased more than 73 percent over the past few years, from 221 incidents in 2005 to 59 incidents in 2007. This decrease is a proximate result of effective statewide

One-Pot Methamphetamine Production

Law enforcement initiatives and increased public awareness campaigns have deterred methamphetamine producers from stealing anhydrous ammonia, a common farm fertilizer used in some methamphetamine production methods. As a result, "one-pot cooks" are increasingly being used by local methamphetamine producers in the region. A one-pot cook is actually a variation of the lithium ammonia method of production; however, in this method a combination of commonly available chemicals is used to synthesize the anhydrous ammonia essential for methamphetamine production. In doing so, cooks are able to produce the drug in approximately 30 minutes at nearly any location by mixing ingredients in a soda bottle as opposed to using other methods that require hours to heat ingredients on a stove and result in toxic fumes, primarily from the anhydrous ammonia. Producers often use the one-pot cook while traveling in vehicles and dispose of waste components along roadsides. Discarded soda bottles may carry residual chemicals that can be toxic, explosive, or flammable.

According to the Michigan State Police, the one-pot cook is now the most commonly used production method in the state, having accounted for 39 percent of methamphetamine incidents in 2007. Additionally, Kalamazoo County recorded six laboratory seizures in January 2008; all of the laboratories had been using the one-pot cook.

Source: Michigan State Police.

Table 2. Methamphetamine Laboratory Incidents in Michigan HIDTA Counties, 2003–2008*

County	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008*
Western Counties	**193**	**186**	**216**	**126**	**58**	**29**
Allegan	88	51	32	27	3	0
Kalamazoo	42	61	108	72	32	24
Kent	5	0	2	6	0	0
Van Buren	58	74	74	21	23	5
Eastern Counties	**3**	**1**	**5**	**3**	**1**	**0**
Genesee	2	0	2	1	0	0
Macomb	0	0	0	0	1	0
Oakland	0	1	0	0	0	0
Washtenaw	1	0	2	2	0	0
Wayne	0	0	1	0	0	0
HIDTA Total	**196**	**187**	**221**	**129**	**59**	**29**

Source: National Seizure System, data run on 4/2/08.
*Partial year data through 4/2/08.

legislation enacted in December 2005 restricting the sale of and access to products containing pseudoephedrine and ephedrine, law enforcement efforts, and public awareness campaigns. Of the 59 laboratory incidents in 2007, 32 were recorded in Kalamazoo County and 23 in Van Buren County (see Table 2). Caucasian and Mexican local independent dealers are the primary local producers of the drug, operating small-scale laboratories that yield a few grams to a few ounces per production cycle. The "one-pot cook" is increasingly being used by producers to manufacture methamphetamine in the region. (See text box on page 7.) Despite limited methamphetamine production, small-scale laboratories pose significant dangers to laboratory operators, law enforcement, and first responders through laboratory fires, explosions, and the improper storage and disposal of chemicals and laboratory waste. Additionally, child abuse and neglect are common in households where methamphetamine is produced. For example, a Sterling Heights couple who operated a methamphetamine laboratory in their house were recently charged in the death of their infant as a result of child neglect.

Transportation

Traffickers use various methods and means of conveyance to transport illicit drugs into and through the Michigan HIDTA region, principally from sources of supply along the Southwest Border and from Canada, but also from other domestic drug markets. Private and commercial vehicles are the most common conveyance used by traffickers transporting drugs to the region. Private automobiles and motor homes often are equipped with false compartments or contain manufactured voids in which traffickers conceal drugs. Drug shipments in commercial vehicles are also hidden in false compartments and manufactured voids and are often commingled with legitimate products such as building materials, car parts, heavy machinery, or produce. Traffickers also hire couriers to transport illicit drugs on aircraft, buses, trains, and watercraft. Some traffickers ship drugs into the region through the U.S. Postal Service and parcel delivery services.

African American and Mexican traffickers are the primary transporters of illicit drugs to Detroit and other major drug markets in the Michigan HIDTA region; they generally smuggle illicit drugs from various locations along the Southwest Border and from other drug markets in the United States. These traffickers have developed connections to Mexican sources of supply for multihundred-kilogram quantities of cocaine and marijuana, most of which they distribute throughout the Michigan HIDTA region or in neighboring domestic markets; however, they smuggle some cocaine to Canada. Recent law enforcement reporting indicates that Mexican traffickers have increased the amount of Mexican black tar and brown powder heroin that they transport to Detroit and that sources of supply for Mexican heroin have shifted from Arizona to Texas. African American and Mexican traffickers also transport heroin from sources in Chicago, Miami, New York, Newark, and southern California and from other sources along the Southwest Border. Moreover, Mexican traffickers transport wholesale quantities of SA heroin and, to a lesser extent, ice methamphetamine to the region.

Asian traffickers are the primary transporters of high-potency marijuana and MDMA into the region from Canada. Asian traffickers commonly recruit Indo-Canadian truck drivers to transport these drugs into Michigan and to transport cocaine and drug proceeds derived from sales in the United States to Canada. Asian traffickers recruit college age individuals at Windsor area nightclubs that are frequented by Detroit area residents; many of these clubs admit individuals as young as 19. The traffickers pay the recruits to smuggle drugs across the U.S.–Canada border and deliver them to specific locations in Detroit. To maintain control over the recruited couriers, traffickers obtain their names and addresses and use this information to threaten them or their families if the drugs do not reach the intended destination. These traffickers also recruit members of the NEXUS program, an international air, land, and maritime border crossing initiative, to transport illicit drugs across the U.S.–Canada border (see text box).

Drug Traffickers Recruit NEXUS Members to Transport Illicit Drugs

Drug traffickers in Canada are recruiting NEXUS members to transport high-potency Canadian marijuana and MDMA into the United States. Under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, the NEXUS program allows prescreened, low-risk travelers to be processed with little or no delay by U.S. and Canadian officials at designated highway lanes, airports, and marine locations. Individuals qualifying to participate in NEXUS must meet specific citizenship/residency requirements, pass criminal history and law enforcement checks, and be approved by both the United States and Canada. Unless they are chosen for a selective or random secondary referral, they pass through POEs without inspection. NEXUS is operational at various POEs in Michigan that are commonly used by traffickers to transport illicit drugs, including the Ambassador Bridge, the Detroit/Windsor Tunnel, the Blue Water Bridge, and the International Bridge.

Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Most cross-border drug trafficking involves the transportation of high-potency marijuana and MDMA into the region from Canada; however, some cocaine is smuggled by traffickers into Canada from Michigan. Moreover, northbound cocaine seizures are increasing at Michigan POEs. CBSA reportedly seized more cocaine at the Ambassador Bridge in 2007 (418 kg) than was seized during the previous 6 years combined (233 kg). The Ambassador Bridge handles more than $206 billion in cross-border commodities annually and provides numerous opportunities for illicit drug and currency transportation between the United States and Canada. The Detroit-Windsor Tunnel is also heavily traveled, providing many opportunities for international drug trafficking. Additionally, in February 2008 CBSA conducted the largest land border cocaine seizure in Canadian history, seizing approximately 237 kilograms at the Blue Water Bridge.

Other criminal groups also transport illicit drugs into the Michigan HIDTA region for local distribution. Albanian traffickers are emerging as significant transporters of high-potency Canadian marijuana and MDMA into the region. Caucasian and African American criminal groups also smuggle MDMA into Michigan from Canada. College students in Michigan travel to Canada to purchase small quantities of MDMA for personal use and limited distribution to friends and associates. Caucasian and Middle Eastern criminal groups transport cocaine and marijuana. West African criminal groups, particularly Nigerian and Ghanaian, transport limited quantities of SWA and SEA heroin into the region. Nigerian criminals, in particular, have increased their involvement in heroin distribution. Previously, the primary role of Nigerian criminals in heroin trafficking was to serve as couriers aboard aircraft transporting heroin for other distributors. However, Nigerian traffickers are increasingly transporting and distributing heroin in the region on their own behalf.

Distribution

African American, Mexican, and Asian traffickers who transport drugs to the Michigan HIDTA region are also the primary wholesale distributors of these drugs. African American and Mexican traffickers are the principal suppliers of cocaine, Mexican marijuana, and SA and Mexican heroin in most areas of the HIDTA region. Asian and, increasingly, Albanian traffickers are wholesale suppliers of high-potency marijuana and MDMA produced in Canada. Caucasian and Middle Eastern traffickers are wholesale distributors of cocaine and marijuana in the region, but to a lesser extent. Nigerian traffickers supply wholesale quantities of heroin, particularly in the Detroit area.

African American traffickers are the primary retail-level distributors of crack cocaine and heroin throughout the area; they also distribute marijuana and, increasingly, MDMA in urban areas of the HIDTA region. MDMA distribution by African American traffickers is quite likely contributing to increased MDMA availability and abuse among African Americans in Detroit. Some African American crack cocaine dealers in Detroit are selling smaller rocks of crack known as "nicks" or "nickels," which sell for $5. This marketing technique may be a response to weak economic conditions in the area. African American traffickers typically sell heroin to abusers in urban areas but are increasingly distributing the drug to suburban and rural abusers, particularly young Caucasians. Drug sales at the retail level, especially sales of crack cocaine, occur in private homes, public bars, nightclubs, hotel rooms, and drug houses, as well as on street corners. Some African American dealers operate drug houses where multiple illicit drugs are available, including crack cocaine, marijuana, and MDMA.

Mexican, Hispanic, Caucasian, Middle Eastern, and West African criminal groups and independent dealers distribute illicit drugs at the retail level throughout the HIDTA region. Mexican criminal groups distribute cocaine and marijuana throughout the entire region and distribute MDMA in Flint and the Kalamazoo-Grand Rapids area. They also distribute SA heroin and, to a lesser extent, Mexican black

Detroit Thug Lords Street Gang

In March 2008 the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan announced that the leader of a gang known as Detroit Thug Lords had pled guilty to felony drug charges. During the prosecution of this drug trafficking gang, 14 additional members were either convicted or pled guilty to felony drug charges. Gang members, including minors, were paid as much as $5,000 per month to distribute powder cocaine, crack cocaine, and marijuana. Drug sales were prearranged using cellular telephone numbers; the drugs were typically delivered in rental vehicles. The gang maintained drug houses on Woodmont, Lawndale, Winthrop, Rockdale, Longacre, and Rosemont Streets; firearms were kept at the various locations for protection.

Source: U.S. Attorney Eastern District of Michigan.

tar and brown powder heroin, particularly in western counties of the HIDTA. Some Hispanic traffickers are distributing MDMA in southwestern Detroit, where there is a large Hispanic population. Caucasian criminal groups and independent dealers distribute marijuana, MDMA, and methamphetamine throughout the region. Middle Eastern traffickers distribute cocaine, marijuana, and MDMA in Detroit. West African criminal groups, particularly Nigerian traffickers, are expanding their involvement in heroin trafficking; they are now distributing SWA and SEA heroin at the retail-level in addition to coordinating heroin transportation into the area. Some street gangs operating in the region distribute cocaine, heroin, and marijuana at retail drug markets; OMGs distribute cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamine. Various independent dealers and some unscrupulous doctors distribute diverted pharmaceutical drugs in the HIDTA region.

Drug-Related Crime

Drug distributors and abusers often engage in other criminal activities to sustain their drug-related activities. Law enforcement reporting indicates that crack cocaine is the illicit drug most associated with violent and property crimes in the HIDTA region. According to the NDTS 2007, 30 of the 52 state and local law enforcement respondents in the Michigan HIDTA region identified crack cocaine as the drug most associated with violent crime; 31 respondents reported the same for property crime. Drug distributors often commit violent crimes such as assault and homicide in order to maintain control of their drug distribution territories. Some young distributors are unwilling to work for established distributors and instead resort to theft from, and violence against, established distributors to begin their own criminal enterprises. Drug abusers typically commit crimes including burglary, retail fraud, robbery, and identity theft in order to obtain drugs or money to purchase drugs. Law enforcement officials in the western suburbs of Detroit report a noticeable increase in the level of property crimes, which they attribute to young Caucasian heroin abusers and the relatively poor local economy. Drug abusers steal a wide variety of items that they can sell, including scrap metal, window air conditioners, catalytic converters, and grounding bars from cellular phone and radio towers, in order to acquire drug funds. The theft of grounding bars from cellular phone and radio towers has disrupted emergency communications in Oakland County, creating a threat to public safety. Methamphetamine producers steal precursor chemicals or obtain them through illegal sources in order to produce the drug in the region. Additionally, marijuana producers who operate indoor grows often steal electricity by reversing or bypassing meters.

Abuse

Marijuana is the most widely abused illicit drug in the HIDTA region; however, cocaine poses a more significant concern to law enforcement and public health officials because of its highly addictive nature, the high number of abusers seeking publicly funded treatment, and the drug's common association with violent and property crime. Powder cocaine is typically abused by Caucasians and Hispanics in suburban areas of the region, while crack cocaine is most often abused by African Americans in urban areas.

Heroin abuse in the HIDTA region has been trending upward over the past few years. Heroin treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities increased by over 25 percent from 2003 (6,653) to 2007 (8,372). (See Table 3 on page 12.) African Americans are the primary heroin abusers in the Michigan HIDTA region, particularly in Detroit. However, heroin abuse among young suburban and rural Caucasians, including females, has increased over the past few years. Many heroin abusers began opiate abuse with prescription narcotics and then switched to heroin, which is typically lower in price. Increased heroin abuse by young suburban and rural Caucasians may also be attributed, in part, to the purity level of heroin in Detroit; relatively high heroin purity in the region has enabled users to inhale the drug and avoid the

Table 3. Publicly Funded Treatment Admissions in the Michigan HIDTA Region, 2003–2007

Substance	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Alcohol	14,935	13,726	13,938	13,776	13,481
Amphetamines	24	38	30	30	19
Antidepressants	5	5	18	2	1
Barbiturates	21	12	12	9	11
Benzodiazepine	71	75	107	104	125
Cocaine (Powder)	1,354	1,468	1,605	1,603	1,553
Cocaine (Crack)	7,326	6,889	6,888	7,299	6,847
Ecstasy (MDMA, MDA)	21	28	23	52	51
Hallucinogens	18	11	10	11	3
Heroin	6,653	7,498	8,243	8,321	8,372
Inhalants	18	15	16	4	12
Marijuana/Hashish	4,986	5,002	5,429	5,678	5,411
Methamphetamines	195	279	295	222	101
Methadone (Illicit)	102	124	66	113	107
Opiates/Synthetics	993	1,153	1,487	1,732	1,970
Over-the-Counter	5	12	9	11	9
Sedatives/Hypnotics	34	25	29	31	70
Tranquilizers	4	5	7	3	14

Source: Michigan Department of Community Health.

stigma associated with injection. For example, in late 2007 law enforcement officials tested a heroin sample in Chesterfield Township (Macomb County) with a purity of 72 percent; another heroin sample obtained from the east side of Detroit was tested at over 65 percent purity. All heroin samples tested by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) through the Heroin Domestic Monitor Program in Detroit in 2007 were above 23 percent purity, while the purity of most samples exceeded 40 percent.

Methamphetamine abuse typically occurs in the western HIDTA counties; Caucasians are the predominant abusers of the drug. Methamphetamine is most often smoked or snorted by individuals who also produce the drug locally in limited quantities. Treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities for methamphetamine in Michigan HIDTA counties have decreased by nearly 66 percent from 295 in 2005 to 101 in 2007, a trend concurrent with declining local methamphetamine production (see table 3).

MDMA availability and abuse are trending upward, particularly in the Detroit area. MDMA is abused throughout the region, most often by high school and college age individuals; however, African Americans are increasingly abusing the drug in Detroit, where it is often sold along with marijuana. MDMA treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities more than doubled from 2005 (23) to 2006 (52), and remained at that level in 2007. (See Table 3.) MDMA abuse typically occurs at small gatherings and parties; large "rave-style" gatherings are uncommon.

The availability and abuse of diverted pharmaceutical drugs are a significant problem in the Michigan HIDTA region. OxyContin, Vicodin, Xanax, and Soma are the more commonly abused pharmaceutical drugs. Methadone abuse is occurring; the drug is increasingly prescribed by doctors for pain treatment instead of OxyContin, which has a higher potential for abuse and has received a higher level of law enforcement attention. Publicly funded treatment admissions show that the abuse of some pharmaceutical drugs increased from 2003 to 2007 including those for opiates/synthetics (98 percent) and benzodiazepines (76 percent). (See Table 3 on page 12.)

Pharmaceutical drugs are diverted for illicit use by abusers and distributors through various methods, including doctor-shopping, copied or scanned prescriptions, forged prescriptions, theft, and unscrupulous physicians. In Macomb County, numerous instances of prescription fraud are perpetrated by individuals who steal prescription pads and use a computer scanner to duplicate the pads with different doctors' telephone numbers. Other abusers steal large bottles of controlled substances directly from pharmacies. Abusers communicate on the Internet and in doctors' waiting rooms to identify distributors or doctors who will write illegal prescriptions. Some distributors recruit Medicaid patients by offering money in exchange for their prescriptions.

Illicit Finance

A large portion of the proceeds generated by drug sales in the Michigan HIDTA region are transported by traffickers in bulk to drug source locations; however, money services businesses (MSBs) and front businesses are also commonly used by traffickers to launder illicit drug proceeds. Mexican DTOs use private and commercial vehicles to transport bulk currency shipments to source locations including California, Mexico, and other areas along the Southwest Border; they also use money orders and wire transfers to move illicit drug proceeds out of the HIDTA region. Canadian traffickers transport bulk currency across the U.S.–Canada border. African American traffickers commonly use local cash-intensive businesses such as car washes, clothing stores, and hair and nail salons to launder illicit drug proceeds. Middle Eastern traffickers generally use wire-transfer services housed in convenience stores owned by Middle Eastern criminals to transmit illicit drug proceeds out of the region. Some traffickers use casinos in Detroit to mask the nature of illicit funds; they gamble for short periods of time before converting illicit funds into seemingly legitimate gambling receipts. Some retail-level drug traffickers purchase luxury items such as real estate, vehicles, and jewelry to legitimize funds.

Outlook

Young suburban and rural Caucasian abusers of prescription opiates in the Detroit area will increasingly experiment with heroin in the near term. Prescription opiate abusers are inclined to try heroin when purity levels are high enough for them to inhale the drug rather than inject it and when heroin is cheaper than prescription opiates.

The number and size of indoor marijuana grows will quite likely increase during the next year as local producers attempt to profit from the demand for higher-potency marijuana in the Michigan HIDTA region.

African American traffickers in the Detroit area will most likely continue to sell MDMA along with cocaine and marijuana at drug houses in Detroit, leading to increased abuse of MDMA among African Americans who previously did not have access to the drug.

Methamphetamine production in the Michigan HIDTA region has stabilized at low levels; however, small-scale producers who also use the drug will continue to find alternate sources for chemical supplies and employ simplified techniques such as the one-pot cook.

Sources

Local, State, and Regional

Allegan County Sheriff's Department
Ann Arbor Police Department
Auburn Hills Police Department
Berkley Police Department
Bloomfield Township Police Department
Canton Township Police Department
Chelsea Police Department
Chesterfield Township Police Department
City of Plymouth Police Department
City of Troy Police Department
City of Wixom Police Department
Clinton Township Police Department
Dearborn Heights Police Department
Dearborn Police Department
Detroit Police Department
Farmington Hills Police Department
Flint Police Department
Flushing Police Department
Genesee County Sheriff's Department
Grand Rapids Police Department
Grosse Pointe Farms Department of Public Safety
Grosse Pointe Woods Department of Public Safety
Hamtramck Police Department
Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Department
Kalamazoo Public Safety
Kalamazoo Valley Enforcement Team
Kent County Sheriff's Department
Kentwood Police Department
Livingston and Washtenaw Narcotics Enforcement Team
Livonia Police Department
Macomb County Sheriff's Office
Madison Heights Police Department
Mundy Township Police Department
Oakland County Sheriff's Office
Pontiac Police Department
River Rouge Police Department
Riverview Police Department
Rochester Police Department
Roseville Police Department
Royal Oak Police Department
Southfield Police Department/OCSO Net
St. Clair Shores Police Department
State of Michigan
  Department of Community Health
  State Police
Sterling Heights Police Department
Sumpter Township Police Department
Taylor Police Department
Trenton Police Department
Village of Holly Police Department
Warren Police Department
Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department
Waterford Police Department
Wayne County Sheriff's Department
Westland Police Department
Wyoming Police Department

Federal

Executive Office of the President
  Office of National Drug Control Policy
    High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area
      Michigan
U.S. Census Bureau
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
  U.S. Customs and Border Protection
  U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
U.S. Department of Justice
  Drug Enforcement Administration
    Detroit Field Division
      El Paso Intelligence Center
        National Seizure System
          Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program
    Heroin Domestic Monitor Program
  Federal Bureau of Investigation
  U.S. Attorneys Office
    Eastern District of Michigan

Other

The Ambassador Bridge
Canada Border Services Agency
Canadian Press Newswire

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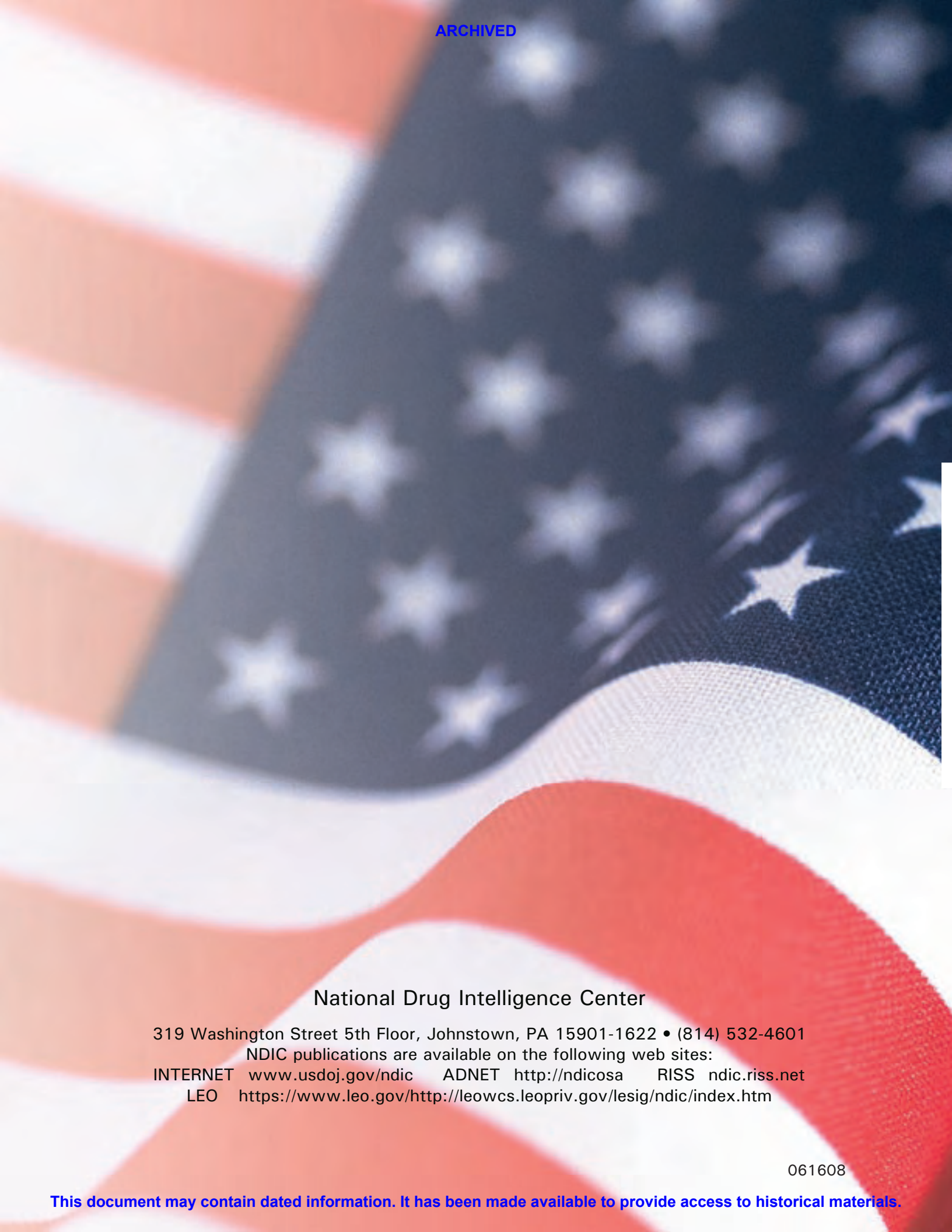

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