



Nevada

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Drug Market Analysis

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U.S. Department of Justice

Preface

This assessment provides a strategic overview of the illicit drug situation in the Nevada High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), highlighting significant trends and law enforcement concerns relating 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 HIDTA program area.



Figure 1. Nevada High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.

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 vetted with the HIDTA, is limited in scope to HIDTA jurisdictional boundaries, and draws upon a wide variety of sources within those boundaries.

Strategic Drug Threat Developments

- The trafficking and abuse of methamphetamine pose the most significant drug problem in the Nevada HIDTA region. Additionally, methamphetamine trafficking and abuse are the leading contributors to property crime and violent crime in the region.
- HIDTA officials report that indoor cannabis cultivation and high-potency marijuana production appear to be increasing in the Nevada HIDTA region. Most illegal indoor grows range from 30 to 100 plants and are located in residential neighborhoods and rural areas. Additionally, some marijuana traffickers are exploiting Nevada's medicinal marijuana laws in an attempt to justify illegal indoor cannabis cultivation.
- The abuse of diverted pharmaceuticals has increased within the Nevada HIDTA region, contributing to a rise in accidental drug overdoses. More drug-related deaths are attributed to diverted pharmaceuticals in Clark County than to any other illicit drug.
- Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) are using more sophisticated compartments in private and commercial vehicles to transport drugs and bulk cash proceeds to and through the HIDTA region.

HIDTA Overview

The Nevada HIDTA region consists of Clark and Washoe Counties. Las Vegas (Clark County) and Reno (Washoe County) are the two largest metropolitan areas in the HIDTA region; they serve as distribution centers for illicit drugs supplied to markets throughout the HIDTA region and other areas of the United States. Clark County is located less than 300 miles from Los Angeles, California, and Phoenix, Arizona, and less than 400 miles from several official U.S. ports of entry (POEs) along the Southwest Border, including Douglas and Nogales in Arizona and Calexico, Otay Mesa, and San Ysidro in California. Washoe County, added to

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 and midlevels.

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.

the Nevada HIDTA's area of responsibility in late 2006, is located on the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and is less than 200 miles from San Francisco, California.

Clark County is geographically large (7,910 square miles) and is transected by Interstate 15—a roadway often used by traffickers to transport illicit drugs from Los Angeles and southern California to Las Vegas—which connects to Interstates 70 and 80, major east-west corridors. U.S. Highways 93 and 95 provide traffickers with additional routes to Las Vegas from drug markets in the Phoenix area and the Nogales and Douglas POEs.

Clark County's population is rapidly expanding, a situation that provides drug traffickers with many opportunities to establish trafficking cells in changing and developing communities. The population of Clark County increased 36 percent from nearly 1.4 million in 2000 to an estimated 1.9 million in 2006. More than 70 percent of Nevada's population resides in Clark County. The population growth in the county is due largely to a growth in its Hispanic population. Since 1990, the Hispanic population increased four times faster than the non-Hispanic population. Approximately 26 percent of

the population in Clark County is Hispanic, the region's largest minority group. The growing Hispanic population enables Mexican DTOs to blend easily into Clark County's communities, expand their drug trafficking activities, recruit new members, and reduce their risk of law enforcement detection.

Washoe County covers an area of 6,600 square miles in the northwestern section of Nevada; the county borders California and Oregon. Major roadways that transit Washoe County include I-80, which passes through Reno and connects the county with San Francisco to the west and major metropolitan areas, such as Salt Lake City, Utah; Denver, Colorado; and Kansas City and St. Louis, Missouri, to the east. Traffickers use I-80 to supply most of the illicit drugs available in the county. US 395 transits Washoe County north and south, intersecting I-80 in Reno. US 395 begins at the U.S.–Canada border on the eastern side of Washington and extends to the Mojave Desert at I-15. Traffickers use US 395 to move drugs from California into the region through Reno and Carson City, Nevada.

The population of Washoe County increased 20 percent from nearly 340,000 in 2000 to an estimated 409,000 in 2006. Steady growth in the Washoe County Hispanic population, including a significant influx of illegal immigrants, has been targeted and exploited by Mexican DTOs to expand their operations in the area. Approximately 19 percent of the population in Washoe County is Hispanic, accounting for the region's largest minority group.

The gaming and entertainment industry attracts over 40 million visitors to the Nevada HIDTA region annually; drug traffickers exploit the large volume of tourists as cover for illicit drug transportation and distribution operations. Traffickers typically move illicit drugs to or through the region by

modes of transportation commonly used by tourists, such as personal and commercial vehicles and aircraft. Moreover, the nature of the 24-hour lifestyle in the gaming and entertainment industry quite likely attracts some visitors who may be vulnerable to drug abuse, thus compounding local drug distribution problems in the region. Additionally, the high volume of cash transactions occurring in the local gaming and entertainment industry provides opportunities for drug traffickers to mix their illicit funds with gaming proceeds in an attempt to mask the origin of such funds.

Drug Threat Overview

The trafficking and abuse of Mexican ice methamphetamine¹ pose the most significant drug problem in the Nevada HIDTA region. Over the last several years, law enforcement operations and legislative efforts to limit the availability of methamphetamine precursor chemicals such as ephedrine and pseudoephedrine caused a significant decrease in domestic powder methamphetamine production in the region. Mexican DTOs and Hispanic street gangs quickly exploited the decrease in local production by supplying increased amounts of Mexican ice methamphetamine to the area. Pound and ounce prices of ice methamphetamine rose in late 2005, while retail-level purity decreased, quite likely the result of a large laboratory seizure in Mexico as well as restrictions placed on the sale of precursor chemicals by the government of Mexico. This situation continued through the first 6 months of 2006.

Powder cocaine, Mexican marijuana,² and Mexican black tar and brown powder heroin also are abused in the HIDTA region. Significant amounts of the cocaine, marijuana, and heroin that flow into the region are distributed by Mexican DTOs and criminal groups for local abuse; however, most of these drugs are transshipped by these traffickers to drug markets in other areas of the

1. For the purposes of this report, ice methamphetamine refers to methamphetamine that has been crystallized from powder methamphetamine.
2. Mexican marijuana is typically cultivated along the western Sierra Madre Mountains in Chihuahua, Sinaloa, and Durango as well as farther south in Michoacán and Guerrero. This type of marijuana contains parts of the marijuana plant, such as stems and seeds, that are not of high quality (they have a lower THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol) content). Mexican marijuana is generally the least expensive type of marijuana because of its prevalence and lower THC content, which typically ranges from only 4 to 6 percent.

United States. Much of the powder cocaine supplied to the area for local abuse is converted into crack cocaine by African American street gangs for retail distribution.

Other drugs of abuse are distributed by various traffickers in the Nevada HIDTA region. Asian DTO members, mostly Chinese, distribute MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, also known as ecstasy) in Clark County, while Vietnamese criminal groups in Washoe County supply high-potency marijuana, commonly known as BC Bud, from British Columbia, Canada. Independent dealers of varying ethnicities are the principal distributors of diverted pharmaceuticals in the region, primarily Lortab and Vicodin (hydrocodone), Oxy-Contin and Percocet (oxycodone), and Soma (carisoprodol). Some independent dealers are expanding their diverted pharmaceutical distribution operations in the region.

Drug Trafficking Organizations

Mexican DTOs are the primary wholesale distributors of cocaine, marijuana, ice methamphetamine, and Mexican black tar and brown powder heroin in the Nevada HIDTA region. These traffickers generally maintain distribution cells in the area; those operating in Clark County typically are supplied by affiliated Mexican cells in southern California, southern Arizona, and western Mexico, while those operating in Washoe County typically are supplied by affiliated Mexican cells in northern and central California.

Asian DTOs have emerged as suppliers and distributors of MDMA and high-potency marijuana in the region. Recent law enforcement reporting indicates that Chinese traffickers who have connections to Northern California are supplying the Las Vegas area with large quantities of MDMA. Vietnamese groups in Washoe County are responsible for supplying BC Bud from British Columbia.

Street gangs are heavily involved in retail drug distribution in the HIDTA region. Hispanic street gangs are primarily involved in retail-level

methamphetamine distribution and also distribute powder cocaine and marijuana. African American street gang members are the primary retail distributors of crack cocaine. A number of street gang members have relocated from southern California to Clark County, either as fugitives from justice or to avoid California's "three strikes" law; this situation has contributed to an increase in drug-related crime and violence in the county. According to the U.S. Marshals Service, fugitives from other areas, such as California, have relocated to the region—not to hide out, but to establish themselves in the Las Vegas drug trade through familial or gang-related contacts.

“Operation SLAMDUNK” Nets Over 140 Fugitives

In February 2007 the U. S. Marshals Service, in partnership with other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, conducted a week-long effort to locate and apprehend fugitives residing in Las Vegas in an effort to curb crime and increase public safety as the community prepared to host the NBA All-Star game and related events. This effort focused on fugitives who had outstanding felony warrants, particularly involving drug-related violent crimes. During this time more than 140 fugitives were arrested. Weapons, drugs, and cash were seized. While executing an arrest warrant, officers discovered a methamphetamine laboratory in an apartment in which a fugitive was living. The fugitive was in possession of a rifle and was in the company of an ex-felon who was in possession of a handgun. During the arrest officers seized various items that had been stolen from local retailers and were in the process of being sold over the Internet.

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration.

Production

Local methamphetamine production has steadily decreased within the Nevada HIDTA region over the past 6 years. In 2001 the state of Nevada placed restrictions on retail pseudoephedrine sales. Additionally, law enforcement operations conducted in the area by local investigators and task forces, such as the Nevada HIDTA Southern Nevada Joint Methamphetamine Task Force,

have resulted in the incarceration of many local laboratory operators. As a result, the number of methamphetamine laboratories seized in Clark County alone decreased 92 percent from 2001 to

2006; most laboratories seized in Nevada over the past 6 years have been located in the county. (See [Table 1.](#))

Table 1. Number of Methamphetamine-Related Items Seized in Clark and Washoe Counties 2001–2006

Year	Items Seized	Clark County	Washoe County	State of Nevada (Total)
2001	Laboratories	179	13	195
	Chemicals/glass/equipment	53	2	56
	Dump sites	8	0	9
	Total	240	15	260
2002	Laboratories	69	10	81
	Chemicals/glass/equipment	19	0	19
	Dump sites	4	0	4
	Total	92	10	104
2003	Laboratories	68	6	77
	Chemicals/glass/equipment	43	0	43
	Dump sites	9	1	11
	Total	120	7	131
2004	Laboratories	43	9	52
	Chemicals/glass/equipment	21	0	21
	Dump sites	8	1	9
	Total	72	10	82
2005	Laboratories	22	2	27
	Chemicals/glass/equipment	17	2	22
	Dump sites	1	2	3
	Total	40	6	52
2006	Laboratories	13	1	16
	Chemicals/glass/equipment	12	1	14
	Dump sites	1	0	1
	Total	26	2	31

Source: National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System, February 7, 2007.

Most methamphetamine laboratories in the region today are relatively small and are operated by producers who manufacture only enough methamphetamine for their personal use or for limited distribution to friends and associates—on average 4 to 7 grams per production cycle. Independent producers operating these small-scale laboratories typically want to avoid the risks of dealing with street-level distributors or feel they can keep costs down by producing the drug themselves.

Cannabis cultivation and marijuana production operations appear to be increasing throughout the Nevada HIDTA region. Area law enforcement officers are increasingly encountering illegal indoor cannabis grow sites ranging from 30 to 100 plants in residential neighborhoods and rural areas. Caucasian and African American criminal groups and independent dealers are the primary cultivators of indoor marijuana. Most sites are equipped to produce high-potency marijuana. A growing demand for high-potency marijuana is fueling the increase in indoor cannabis cultivation. Indoor grow operators often use hydroponic growing technology. They also use high-pressure sodium lamps or high-intensity discharge (HID) lighting in order to reduce the risk of detection through high electricity use and to increase their control over the growing environment. Some cannabis plants are cultivated locally for medicinal purposes. Under current Nevada law, individuals registered with the state may cultivate up to three mature and four immature plants at any one time. However, some marijuana traffickers are reportedly exploiting state medicinal marijuana laws in an attempt to justify illegal indoor cannabis cultivation.

Most crack cocaine available in the Nevada HIDTA region is converted locally by African American street gangs that are supplied with powder cocaine by Mexican DTOs operating in the area. Powder cocaine is typically converted to crack cocaine at or near distribution sites; most crack distribution sites are in Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, and Reno.

Transportation

The Nevada HIDTA region serves as a regional- and national-level transshipment area for Mexican DTOs that transport wholesale quantities of methamphetamine, cocaine, marijuana, and heroin from Mexico. Although significant quantities of these drugs remain in the area for local distribution, most are transshipped to drug markets throughout the United States, including the Great Lakes, Hawaiian Islands, Midwest, and Northeast.

Over the last year HIDTA law enforcement officials have reported an increase in Mexican trafficking cells' use of drug load vehicles with more sophisticated fabricated compartments. The compartments generally include electronic or magnetic switches that require several steps to open and are often welded into body frames, gas tanks, and passenger areas. Additionally, Mexican trafficking cells are using family members as couriers to transport illicit drugs into the HIDTA region; Mexican traffickers believe that family members provide greater operational security and hinder law enforcement investigative efforts. These same vehicles and couriers are also used to transport drug proceeds back to Mexico.

Las Vegas-based Asian traffickers, including independent dealers, purchase MDMA from West Coast Asian suppliers. They ship MDMA into Las Vegas via mail parcels and transport it via couriers on commercial flights or in private vehicles. Canada-based Vietnamese DTOs transport high-potency marijuana destined for Reno in private vehicles that typically cross the U.S.–Canada border at official POEs in Washington.

Distribution

Mexican DTOs dominate the wholesale distribution of methamphetamine, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin in the Nevada HIDTA region. These DTOs typically store illicit drugs at local stash sites, primarily residences located in Hispanic communities, where they repackage the drugs for distribution to markets in Nevada and other states.

Short-Term Fluctuation in Methamphetamine Price and Purity in Las Vegas

Beginning in late 2005 in the Las Vegas area, local Mexican trafficking cells were experiencing difficulty meeting local demand for ice methamphetamine. Law enforcement reporting indicated that pound and ounce prices of methamphetamine in the area rose in late 2005, while retail-level purity decreased. This trend continued through the first 6 months of 2006. These changes may be attributed, in whole or in part, to a shortage of precursor chemicals available for methamphetamine production as a result of the implementation of precursor chemical regulatory controls by the government of Mexico in that same year, in addition to the 2005 seizure of a superlab and approximately 500 kilograms of ice methamphetamine in Mexico.

Local Mexican DTOs also serve as primary midlevel and retail distributors of Mexican methamphetamine. The involvement of local Mexican DTOs in ice methamphetamine distribution has been increasing as local powder methamphetamine production by independent distributors has decreased. These local Mexican DTOs are typically associated with large Mexican DTOs that produce methamphetamine in Mexico for distribution in U.S. drug markets. Hispanic street gangs also are involved in methamphetamine distribution at the retail level.

African American street gangs are the primary distributors of crack cocaine in the Nevada HIDTA region. Some smaller Mexican criminal groups also are involved in retail crack distribution, but to a far lesser extent. Distribution of crack typically occurs at open-air markets in lower-income sections of Clark County's larger urban communities. In the Las Vegas area, crack is distributed particularly in the western section of Las Vegas and on street corners in the city's old "Strip" section downtown. Crack cocaine distribution in Washoe

County is almost exclusively controlled by African American traffickers.

Asian DTOs distribute MDMA in Las Vegas and high-potency marijuana in Reno. Asian DTOs supply Asian gangs with MDMA for retail distribution; the gangs typically distribute the drug in the Las Vegas entertainment district, especially in nightclubs. Asian DTOs, composed primarily of Vietnamese criminals, distribute high-potency BC Bud from Canada in the region; they also distribute high-potency marijuana that is grown in the region and in the northwestern United States.

The diversion of pharmaceutical drugs in the Nevada HIDTA region is increasing. Independent dealers in almost all age and ethnic groups are the principal distributors of these drugs—primarily Lortab, OxyContin, Percocet, Soma, and Vicodin.

Abuse

Drug abuse levels in the Nevada HIDTA region, particularly those for methamphetamine and prescription drugs, are high. According to the *2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*³ released by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), methamphetamine use nationwide was highest in Nevada. Additionally, data from SAMHSA's Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) for 2002 through 2005 (the most recent year for which data are available) indicate that methamphetamines/amphetamines were identified more often than any other substance, including alcohol, as the primary substance of abuse in admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities in Nevada. The vast majority of these admissions occurred in the Nevada HIDTA region. Moreover, Nevada's law enforcement and public health authorities report that methamphetamine abuse is the most significant drug-related health threat in Native American communities in Nevada.

The total number of drug-related deaths in Clark County rose between 2004 (391) and 2006

3. From 2002 through 2005 an estimated 1.4 million persons (0.6% of the total U.S. population) aged 12 or older had used methamphetamine in the past year. Rates of abuse were highest in Nevada (2.0%), Montana (1.5%), and Wyoming (1.5%).

(474), according to the Clark County Coroner’s Office. Drug-related deaths have been attributed more to diverted pharmaceuticals than to any other drug, and the number of deaths has increased annually over the last 3 years. The number of drug-related deaths attributed to cocaine has also increased steadily since 2004. The number of methamphetamine-related deaths slightly decreased in 2005, a development that could reflect the decline in the availability of higher-purity methamphetamine during this time. However, the number of methamphetamine-related deaths increased in 2006, rising above both 2004 and 2005 levels. (See Table 2.) Additionally, numerous autopsies revealed the abuse of various drug combinations involving pharmaceuticals (including oxycodones and hydrocodones), stimulants (methamphetamine and cocaine), and opiates (heroin, methadone, and prescription opiates).

Table 2. Number and Percentage of Increase of Drug-Related Deaths by Drug in Clark County 2004–2006

Drug Type	2004	2005	2006	Percent of Increase
Diverted pharmaceuticals	115	147	165	43
Cocaine	93	109	115	24
Methamphetamine	78	65	80	3
Heroin	24	40	35	46

Source: Clark County Coroner’s Office.

Drug-Related Crime

Methamphetamine trafficking and abuse are the leading contributors to property crime and violent crime in the Nevada HIDTA region. Most methamphetamine-related property crime, such as burglary, identity theft, and larceny, is committed by methamphetamine abusers, while most methamphetamine-related violent crime, such as armed robbery, assault, and homicide, is committed by methamphetamine distributors in the course of drug trafficking operations. Additionally, Nevada

state and local law enforcement agencies responding to the NDIC 2006 National Drug Threat Survey report that methamphetamine was the drug that most contributed to property crime and violent crime in their areas.

High abuse levels of diverted pharmaceuticals have also been linked to property crime within the HIDTA region. According to law enforcement officials, pharmaceutical drug abusers are increasingly engaging in identify theft to obtain fraudulent prescriptions for OxyContin (oxycodone) and hydrocodones. They are also committing pharmacy break-ins to acquire the drugs.

A significant number of homicides are committed each year in Nevada; most are perpetrated in Clark County. (See Table 3 on page 9.) Several homicides are linked to drug trafficking and gang-related violence each year. Law enforcement officials anticipate that gang-related homicides may rise as a result of a general increase in violence among younger gang members seeking to establish “street” reputations. Moreover, law enforcement officers report that younger gang members are also more likely to commit violent acts toward law enforcement officers.

Operation Community Shield

To combat the escalating problem of transnational and other violent street gangs across the country, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) launched “Operation Community Shield” in February 2005 in partnership with other federal, state, and local law enforcement, prosecutors, and probation officers. This initiative focuses on developing a comprehensive and integrated approach in conducting criminal investigations and other law enforcement operations against these violent street gang members. Since 2005, participants of this initiative in the Nevada HIDTA region arrested 50 gang members and associates from 18th Street Gang (the El Salvadoran rival of Mara Salvatrucha (MS 13)), Barrio Naked City, Latin Kings, and Sureños (Sur 13).

Source: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Table 3. Number of Homicides by Circumstance in Clark and Washoe Counties and Statewide in Nevada, 2004–2006*

Circumstance of Homicide	Clark County			Washoe County			Total Statewide		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Argument	22	30	50	4	4	1	28	37	51
Burglary	4	3	1	0	0	0	5	3	2
Child abuse	6	8	9	1	0	1	7	11	12
Domestic conflict	19	17	19	4	2	3	24	26	28
Drive-by shooting	4	5	3	1	0	0	5	7	3
Drug-related	14	17	5	0	0	5	14	17	10
Gang-related	17	7	7	1	1	1	18	9	10
Other	17	27	15	2	5	14	22	30	32
Robbery	9	9	12	0	2	0	9	10	12
Unknown	44	54	57	2	0	2	44	60	71
Total	156	177	178	15	14	27	176	210	231

Source: *Crime and Justice in Nevada*, Nevada Department of Public Safety; Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department.

*Figures for 2006 are tentative and are currently being reconciled by the Nevada Department of Public Safety (DPS) for statistical purposes.

Illicit Finance

Drug traffickers throughout the United States use the Nevada HIDTA region to launder illicit drug proceeds because of the area's proximity to the U.S.–Mexico border and the area's gaming and entertainment industries. Mexican DTOs transport bulk cash shipments or electronically wire drug proceeds from drug markets throughout the nation—particularly in the East, the Great Lakes area, the Midwest, and Hawaii—to the HIDTA region for consolidation. Moreover, some HIDTA-based Mexican DTOs that supply distributors in Hawaii transport drug proceeds to Las Vegas from Hawaii in containerized cargo shipments of automobiles packed with cash proceeds. After drug proceeds are consolidated, Mexican DTOs smuggle them in bulk across the U.S.–Mexico border for eventual repatriation. Illicit drug proceeds are generally transported in private and commercial vehicles through the U.S.–Mexico border POEs nearest the HIDTA region. Additionally, Mexican DTOs transship drug proceeds from markets in other states through the HIDTA region along I-15 en route to southern California and Mexico.

The attractions that draw tourists to Las Vegas and Reno afford drug traffickers a venue through which they may attempt to mask the origin of their illicit drug proceeds. Casinos and businesses that provide entertainment and services to the tourist population are often exploited by traffickers for money laundering purposes. Traffickers exchange illicit cash proceeds for casino chips, hold them for a period of time, and later cash them in for a casino check or have the casino wire the money elsewhere. Traffickers also use the chips to gamble in hopes of generating certifiable winnings to make their illicit funds appear to be legitimate gambling winnings.

Additionally, traffickers often launder drug proceeds through cash-intensive businesses, such as limousine services, motels, nightclubs, restaurants, strip clubs, and tour providers, by commingling drug proceeds with legitimate funds generated at the businesses. Traffickers also use money services businesses (MSBs), primarily money remitters, to move drug proceeds from the HIDTA region to

accounts established at other domestic or international locations.

Nevada HIDTA officials report that some Hispanic traffickers also use drug proceeds to purchase real estate in Clark County. For instance, in January 2007 the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Nevada announced the sentencing of the leader of a local Hispanic cocaine trafficking ring that had been distributing multikilogram quantities of cocaine in the Las Vegas area. The leader was sentenced on several drug-related charges, including laundering drug proceeds by purchasing homes through a front company in the names of family members.

Outlook

The trafficking and abuse of ice methamphetamine will remain the primary drug threat in the Nevada HIDTA region. Demand for the drug is strong, and Mexican DTOs are poised to meet that demand. Further, high methamphetamine abuse levels in the area will quite likely contribute to an escalation in drug-related criminal acts.

Mexican DTOs will continue to exploit the HIDTA region's growing Hispanic population, location near the Southwest Border, and transportation infrastructure to expand their wholesale distribution of ice methamphetamine, cocaine, commercial-grade marijuana, and heroin in and around the Nevada HIDTA region.

As the demand for high-potency marijuana increases within the Nevada HIDTA region, other criminal groups and DTOs, particularly Asian organizations, may begin to establish indoor cannabis grow operations similar to those that Asian DTOs established in northern and central California.

The region's gaming and entertainment industries attract some visitors to the region who are vulnerable to drug abuse. As such, drug abuse by transients together with the traffickers who fuel it will remain a considerable problem for law enforcement and public health officials. This problem will be compounded by traffickers who seek to mask the origin of their drug proceeds by exploiting casinos.

Sources

Local, State, and Regional

City of Las Vegas

Clark County

County Coroner's Office

Henderson Police Department

Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department

Gang Crimes Section

North Las Vegas Police Department

Narcotics Division

State of Nevada

Department of Justice

Department of Public Safety

Bureau of Records and Identification

Health Division

National

Executive Office of the President

Office of National Drug Control Policy

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area

Nevada

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

Las Vegas Division

U.S. Department of Justice

Criminal Division

Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force

Drug Enforcement Administration

El Paso Intelligence Center

National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System

Los Angeles Field Division

Las Vegas District Office

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Uniform Crime Report

U.S. Marshals Service

U.S. Department of the Treasury

Internal Revenue Service



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