



North Texas

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Drug Market Analysis

May 2007

U.S. Department of Justice

Preface

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

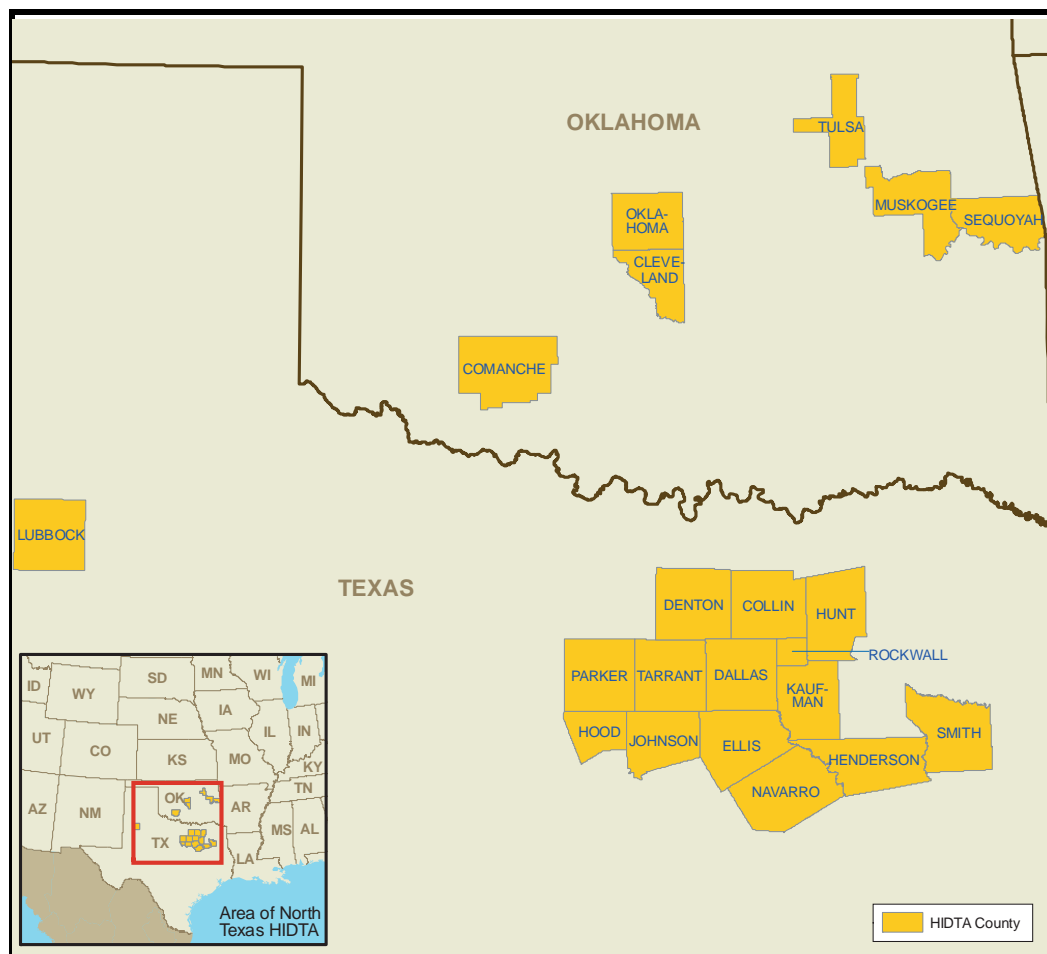


Figure 1. North Texas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.

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

- Some Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) are extending transportation and distribution operations to the North Texas HIDTA region to avoid heightened scrutiny along the Southwest Border. They can conceal their operations more efficiently among the growing Hispanic population of this area than in sparsely populated areas along the U.S.–Mexico border.
- The distribution and abuse of ice methamphetamine are expanding throughout the North Texas HIDTA region, despite steady declines in local powder methamphetamine production. Mexican DTOs are supplanting decreased local production by supplying large amounts of ice methamphetamine to the area.
- African American, Asian, and Mexican DTOs operating in the North Texas HIDTA region are increasingly conducting drug transactions with one another, an action that facilitates the expansion of drug distribution networks.
- Local traffickers have increased their access to multiple drug sources and drug types through interaction with Mexican DTOs. As a result, local traffickers are introducing different drug types to their customers.
- Asian DTOs from the Pacific Northwest and Canada reportedly trade MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, also known as ecstasy) to Mexican DTOs for cocaine in the North Texas HIDTA region, but the extent of this practice is currently unknown.
- The abuse of Mexican black tar heroin resurfaced during the past year in the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area, particularly in Collin County, where abuse of the drug was responsible for several drug overdose deaths.
- The abuse of “cheese” heroin is increasing in the Dallas area and contributed to the deaths of at least 17 local adolescents during the past 2 years.

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.

HIDTA Area Overview

The North Texas HIDTA region encompasses 15 counties in North Texas, clustered primarily around the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area, and 6 counties in Oklahoma, which include the Oklahoma City metropolitan area. Most of the region’s population is located in Dallas. The Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area has a population of approximately 5.8 million people; the Oklahoma City metropolitan area has approximately 1.2 million.

The North Texas HIDTA region is supported by an extensive transportation system that provides national and international commercial connections through numerous interstate highways, U.S. highways, railways, bus lines, and airlines. Drug traffickers exploit the region’s infrastructure to transport and distribute illicit drugs to and from the area and to transport illicit proceeds generated by the sales of illicit drugs to Mexico. The North Texas HIDTA region is often a destination for illicit drug shipments from Mexico and states along the U.S.–Mexico border; it is also a transshipment zone for drug shipments en route to midwestern, southeastern, eastern, and other southwestern drug markets.



Figure 2. North Texas HIDTA transportation infrastructure.

Several primary drug transportation routes in the United States traverse the North Texas HIDTA region. Dallas, Fort Worth, and Oklahoma City are located at the intersections of major north-south and east-west transportation routes that lead from the Southwest Border area to interior drug markets. Interstate 35 is the primary north-south route that affects drug transportation into the HIDTA region. Interstate 35 begins in Laredo, the busiest inland port of entry (POE) in the United States, and passes through Dallas/Fort Worth and Oklahoma City, continuing to drug markets in the West Central and Great Lakes Regions. Interstates 20 and 40 provide access to the North Texas HIDTA region from smuggling hubs in western Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Although I-10 does not traverse North Texas HIDTA counties, traffickers use this route to access I-20, which passes through Dallas/Fort Worth and extends to South Carolina.

Drug Overview

The North Texas HIDTA region is a significant national-level distribution and transshipment center for illicit drugs supplied by Mexican DTOs. Mexican DTOs exploit the region's proximity to the U.S.–Mexico border, extensive transportation infrastructure, and global financial institutions and use the area to distribute wholesale quantities of methamphetamine, cocaine, marijuana, and heroin. Mexican DTOs also warehouse significant quantities of illicit drugs in the region for eventual transport to markets nationwide, such as those in Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, and Ohio. The Dallas/Fort Worth area is the principal drug distribution center in the region; however, Oklahoma City also figures prominently in regional drug trafficking.

Methamphetamine and cocaine, both powder and crack, pose the greatest drug threats to the HIDTA region. Methamphetamine distribution and abuse have increased significantly in recent years throughout most areas of the HIDTA region. Although local production has decreased, the amount of ice methamphetamine supplied to the area by Mexican DTOs has increased. Powder cocaine and crack cocaine are particular threats to low-income areas of Dallas, Fort Worth, Oklahoma City, and Tulsa. Marijuana poses a serious drug threat to the North Texas HIDTA region; the drug is always available to the area’s illicit drug abuser community because large quantities are smuggled to and through the area from Mexico by Mexican DTOs. Heroin, primarily Mexican black tar, is abused in the region, but to a lesser extent than other drugs. However, heroin is a growing problem in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, particularly in suburban communities. Diverted pharmaceuticals pose significant risks to the region’s teens and young adults—the demographic with the highest level of pharmaceutical abuse. Because the North Texas HIDTA region is a regional- and national-level center for wholesale drug distribution, law enforcement officers regularly seize significant quantities of illicit drugs throughout the area. (See Table 1 and Table 2.)

Table 1. Highway Interdiction Drug and Currency Seizures in Texas and North Texas HIDTA Counties, 2006*

Drug	Texas	North Texas HIDTA County
Cocaine	2,428.9 kilograms	49.1 kilograms
Methamphetamine	128.9 kilograms	4.3 kilograms
Marijuana	41,559.1 kilograms	2,387.0 kilograms
Heroin	13,095.5 grams	26.3 grams
Currency	\$20,865,714.37	\$1,112,767.00

Source: Texas Department of Public Safety.

*Data are based solely on seizures made by Texas Department of Public Safety troopers.

Table 2. North Texas HIDTA Initiative Drug Seizures, in Kilograms, 2005–2006

Drug	2005	2006	Percent of Change
Methamphetamine	34.4	314.6	815
Cocaine	229.3	706.2	208
Marijuana	6,259.6	9,126.7	46
Heroin	5.4	2.2	-59

Source: North Texas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.

Illicit drug production in the region primarily entails methamphetamine production; however, production has decreased sharply during the past several years, most notably in North Texas HIDTA counties, as evidenced by declining laboratory seizures. In 2006 only two North Texas HIDTA counties—Dallas and Tarrant—reported methamphetamine laboratory seizures. Only 7 methamphetamine laboratories were seized in those two counties in 2006 as compared to 27 in 2005 and 57 in 2004. (See Table 3 on page 5.) The rapid decline of local methamphetamine production was a result of legislation in both states that restricted retail sales of pseudoephedrine and increased law enforcement operations targeting methamphetamine laboratories. Oklahoma House Bill 2167, enacted in April 2004, and Texas House Bill 164, enacted in September 2005, greatly reduced the availability of pseudoephedrine in these states. Additionally, growing demand for ice methamphetamine in the region coupled with the transfer of most methamphetamine production capabilities to Mexico has fueled the decline in local methamphetamine production. Mexican DTOs can more efficiently and inexpensively produce ice methamphetamine in Mexico and smuggle it into the United States from Mexico than manufacture it in laboratories in the United States. Local cannabis cultivation and marijuana production are limited in North Texas HIDTA counties, primarily because of the abundance of inexpensive Mexican marijuana. Crack cocaine is converted from powder cocaine throughout the North Texas HIDTA region, primarily in Dallas/Fort Worth and Oklahoma City.

Table 3. Number of Methamphetamine Laboratory Seizures in North Texas HIDTA Counties, 2004–2006

Texas County	2004	2005	2006
Collin	4	1	0
Dallas	13	12	4
Denton	3	1	0
Ellis	8	0	0
Henderson	3	0	0
Hood	1	1	0
Hunt	0	0	0
Johnson	3	1	0
Kaufman	0	0	0
Lubbock	6	2	0
Navarro	0	0	0
Parker	6	2	0
Rockwall	0	0	0
Smith	0	0	0
Tarrant	44	15	3
Totals for Texas Counties	91	35	7

Oklahoma County	2004	2005	2006
Cleveland	1	0	0
Comanche	4	3	1
Muskogee	11	5	2
Oklahoma	64	12	8
Sequoyah	6	26	10
Tulsa	93	28	22
Totals for Oklahoma Counties	179	74	43
North Texas HIDTA Counties Totals	270	109	50

Source: National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System,* run date 01/31/07.

*National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System is a voluntary reporting system and may not reflect all laboratory seizures.

Drug Trafficking Organizations

Local distributors and large international DTOs, varying in both scope and sophistication, operate in the North Texas HIDTA region. Mexican DTOs are the most influential drug traffickers in the region, inundating North Texas with large quantities of illicit drugs. They are the primary wholesale distributors of cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine to the area and are the ultimate source of supply for most of the region's drug traffickers and distributors. In addition, many Mexican DTOs are establishing multiple transportation and distribution cells throughout North Texas to facilitate their trafficking operations. The influence that Mexican DTOs exert over drug trafficking in the region is increasing and is also altering the way that other drug traffickers in the area operate.

Drug traffickers in the North Texas HIDTA region emulate the trafficking and distribution practices of Mexican DTOs and diversify their operations in order to compete in the local drug market. Polydrug distribution, a routine practice among Mexican DTOs, is now common among the region's drug traffickers; many are now distributing multiple drugs, some of which they typically had not distributed in the past. In addition, regional dealers are increasing their interaction and drug transactions with Mexican DTOs and other traffickers to facilitate their own drug trafficking activities. Law enforcement reporting during the past year indicates that Asian DTOs and criminal groups from Dallas, the Pacific Northwest, and Canada are trading MDMA to Mexican DTOs for cocaine, not only within North Texas counties but at the U.S.–Mexico border area in Texas as well. This development was noted in Fort Worth, but the extent to which this practice occurs throughout the North Texas HIDTA region is currently unknown. It is possibly more cost-effective for Asian DTOs to trade for or purchase cocaine near the U.S.–Mexico border than farther north as a result of the elimination of transportation surcharges associated with cocaine movement into the interior of the United States.

The role of African American criminal groups in the local drug market appears to be expanding. These groups historically limited their distribution operations to crack cocaine; however, they are now becoming polydrug distributors in nature, distributing several illicit drugs at the same market site. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and several local law enforcement agencies in Texas and Oklahoma, a growing number of African American distributors now distribute powder cocaine and methamphetamine in addition to crack cocaine. Moreover, law enforcement officers in Fort Worth report that African American criminal groups are also distributing Mexican black tar heroin that they obtain from Mexican traffickers and MDMA from Asian sources throughout low-income areas of Fort Worth.

Asian criminal groups also are active in the North Texas HIDTA region. They transport high-potency marijuana and MDMA from California, Washington, and Canada to North Texas. Asian traffickers also operate indoor cannabis grow sites in the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area. Law enforcement officers in the North Texas HIDTA do not report Asian criminal group involvement with ice methamphetamine. However, such involvement has been reported in other areas of the Southwest and Pacific Regions and may emerge in the North Texas HIDTA region as the interaction between Asian drug traffickers and Mexican DTOs increases.

Various prison gangs and street gangs distribute illicit drugs throughout the North Texas HIDTA region, but their distribution activities are concentrated primarily in larger metropolitan areas. The involvement that these gangs have in local drug markets often differs based on connections with larger DTOs. Prison gangs, including Tango Blast and Texas Syndicate, are typically connected to Mexican DTOs and sources of supply. These connections allow them to serve as midlevel distributors of cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine while also maintaining their own retail distribution networks. Members of prison gangs also transport illicit drug shipments into HIDTA communities from the U.S.–Mexico border area

and Mexico and distribute illicit drugs to the region's street gangs. Street gangs serve primarily as retail distributors in local drug markets; however, drug distribution is often an individual endeavor on the part of gang members rather than a gang-controlled activity. Street gangs' connections to larger sources of supply are limited compared with those of prison gangs; individual gang members typically distribute only those drugs that they are able to obtain locally.

Major Markets

The North Texas HIDTA region includes two major drug markets: Dallas/Fort Worth and Oklahoma City. These cities constitute the most significant areas of drug trafficking and abuse in the HIDTA region. Dallas/Fort Worth is a primary drug distribution and transshipment center, while Oklahoma City generally serves as a transshipment center because of its location along several of the busiest drug transportation routes in the country.

Dallas/Fort Worth

Market Overview

Dallas/Fort Worth's role as a leading distribution and transshipment center presents numerous challenges to local law enforcement officials. Mexican DTOs have established operational cells within the metropolitan area that supply the area with large quantities of illicit drugs from Mexico. Mexican DTOs also use these cells to facilitate the transportation and distribution of drug shipments, primarily marijuana, methamphetamine, and cocaine, from Dallas/Fort Worth to drug markets across the country.

Production

The conversion of powder cocaine to crack is ongoing throughout the region. Methamphetamine and marijuana are produced to a limited extent in Dallas/Fort Worth. Methamphetamine production in Dallas/Fort Worth has steadily declined since enactment of statewide legislation limiting the availability of pseudoephedrine, a major precursor chemical used in methamphetamine production. Despite these legislative controls, some local methamphetamine distributors and abusers operate

small laboratories, typically producing only enough methamphetamine for personal use or for very limited local distribution. However, they must rely on alternative sources for pseudoephedrine, such as the Internet or out-of-state suppliers. Most local producers realize that they cannot compete with Mexican DTOs that supply the region with low-cost, high-purity ice methamphetamine produced in Mexico and have disbanded their operations.

Local methamphetamine conversion may be more widespread than is currently being reported. A recent investigation revealed that a local resident was converting powder methamphetamine into ice methamphetamine. Law enforcement officials believe that converting powder methamphetamine into ice may be more cost-effective for local distributors than purchasing the drug.

Local outdoor marijuana production is unnecessary and generally unprofitable because of the large quantities of inexpensive Mexican marijuana available in Dallas/Fort Worth. However, marijuana production does take place, particularly marijuana produced from cannabis cultivated at indoor grow sites. Law enforcement officers sporadically seize hydroponic cannabis grows in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. These grows, which are occasionally linked to Asian DTOs and criminal groups, produce limited amounts of marijuana and are able to support only limited local distribution. Officials in Plano, Texas, are reporting the emergence of a new type of marijuana in the local market called “popcorn.” This type of marijuana is considered a “tweener” marijuana because the potency and price of the drug fall between those of commercial-grade and hydroponic marijuana; however, it is unknown if the drug is produced locally.

Crack cocaine conversion is common in the Dallas/Fort Worth area; the drug is distributed from Dallas/Fort Worth to markets throughout the HIDTA region. Local African American criminal groups dominate crack cocaine conversion; however, an increasing number of crack abusers are now converting powder cocaine to crack. According to law enforcement reporting, some crack cocaine

abusers now purchase powder cocaine from suppliers in Dallas and Houston, transport the drug to their private residences, and convert the powder cocaine to crack.

Transportation

Dallas/Fort Worth is a primary transshipment point for methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana en route from Mexico to drug markets throughout the country. Law enforcement officials report that the load sizes for cocaine and methamphetamine shipments are increasing and that more large-quantity drug loads are being seized as compared with past years.

Mexican DTOs dominate drug transportation into and through the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Mexican DTOs that are involved in drug transportation into the Dallas/Fort Worth area are highly sophisticated. They use multiple transportation cells and far-reaching networks that facilitate the smuggling of drugs from Mexico and transportation into the metropolitan area and beyond. Transportation cells of Mexican DTOs often specialize in a particular component of the process, such as transportation through Mexico, cross-border smuggling, or transportation from the border area to Dallas/Fort Worth. In addition to transporting illicit drugs on their own behalf, Mexican DTOs contract with other transportation groups to transport illicit drugs to and from Dallas in an attempt to insulate their organizations from law enforcement detection. According to DEA, Mexican DTOs and transportation organizations are hiring African American tractor-trailer operators to transport cocaine shipments from the U.S.–Mexico border area to Dallas and to drug markets across the country.

Dallas/Fort Worth receives drug shipments from most Southwest Border POEs; however, Laredo and El Paso are the primary entry points for drug shipments destined for the region. During the past year, law enforcement officers have reported increasing amounts of illicit drugs transported from California and Arizona to Dallas. Houston also is a source for significant quantities of illicit drugs,

primarily cocaine, that are distributed in Dallas/Fort Worth and surrounding communities.

Distribution

Dallas/Fort Worth is a primary drug distribution center in the southwestern United States. The metropolitan area is a regional and national distribution center for wholesale quantities of cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine that are supplied by traffickers in Mexico and destined for the Dallas/Fort Worth area and other national-level markets. Additionally, drug traffickers from across the country travel to Dallas/Fort Worth to purchase illicit drugs from local suppliers.

Mexican DTOs control wholesale distribution of most cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine that enter Dallas/Fort Worth. Mexican DTOs are also the primary suppliers of illicit drugs to the area's midlevel and retail distributors. Many midlevel and retail distributors are increasingly conducting business with multiple Mexican trafficking groups, thereby increasing their access to the types of drugs that they have not distributed in the past. As such, distribution at the midlevel and retail level is largely polydrug in nature. The trend toward polydrug distribution could result in the emergence of serious drug abuse issues as new drug types are introduced into different user communities.

Drug traffickers in Dallas increasingly use the Internet to facilitate pharmaceutical drug distribution, particularly through Internet pharmacies. These pharmacies frequently operate numerous Internet sites that redirect users to a central web site, where a network of web site operators and complicit doctors and pharmacists fill orders for prescription drugs. In order to limit potential law enforcement scrutiny, an increasing number of Internet pharmacies list themselves as "closed door pharmacies," which are supposed to distribute pharmaceutical drugs to a very limited clientele, such as nursing homes or prisons. However, these Internet pharmacies illicitly distribute pharmaceutical drugs nationwide. Law enforcement officials in Dallas also report the increased use of social networking web sites in drug distribution.

The distribution of diverted pharmaceuticals among Dallas teenagers is becoming increasingly common. Some teenagers steal prescription drugs from their parents' medicine cabinets and abuse the drugs themselves or distribute them throughout their peer groups. Dallas teenagers also trade, sell, and abuse different types of pharmaceutical drugs at parties, referred to as pharma parties.

Drug-Related Crime

Although statistical reporting is unavailable, law enforcement officials in the Dallas/Fort Worth area indicate that drug-related violent crime has been stable over the past 2 years, with the exception of Tyler, where officials report that drug-related violent crime increased from 2005 to 2006. The distribution and abuse of illicit drugs fuel violent crime and property crime throughout Dallas/Fort Worth. Abusers of crack cocaine and ice methamphetamine frequently commit assaults and shootings to protect their drug operations; they also commit home invasions and robberies to support their drug addictions.

Gang-related violence is a threat to the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Most violence is related to feuds among individual gang members and is not gang-on-gang violence, as in other large cities such as Chicago and Los Angeles. Violent confrontations between gang members are often the result of disputes over drug distribution. Gang members periodically commit crimes such as robberies and assaults against nongang members.

Abuse

The fastest-growing drug threat to Dallas/Fort Worth is methamphetamine abuse. The drug's high purity, low cost, and intense, long-lasting physiological effects entice many individuals, including abusers of other drugs, to try methamphetamine. This trend is most prevalent among the area's African American crack cocaine abusers; many now abuse ice methamphetamine in addition to or in place of crack cocaine.

The abuse of diverted pharmaceuticals is prevalent throughout the local teenage and young adult

population and may be increasing. Pharmaceutical abuse is common among high school students in Dallas/Fort Worth. They frequently take the drugs before arriving at school or at home during their lunch breaks. Also contributing to local teenage pharmaceutical abuse is the tendency of teens to distribute these drugs among their friends and peer groups. The Dallas Police Department (DPD) is also reporting limited abuse of fentanyl by teenagers, generally in the form of Actiq, commonly referred to as fentanyl “lollipops.”

The abuse of Mexican black tar heroin has resurfaced during the past year in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, particularly in Collin County. Abuse of the drug is increasing among middle-class residents who travel from the suburbs or outlying communities to Dallas and Fort Worth to purchase the drug. Twenty heroin overdoses and seven heroin-related deaths were reported in Collin County in 2006, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Law enforcement officers also report that heroin distribution and abuse are increasing among teenagers and young adults in Frisco.

Abuse of “cheese” heroin—a combination of Mexican black tar heroin and Tylenol PM (acetaminophen and diphenhydramine HCl)—is increasing in the Dallas area. This drug combination is popular among Hispanic adolescents, but abuse by Caucasian students is increasing. Once primarily concentrated at northwest campuses within the Dallas Independent School District (DISD), cheese heroin has been encountered throughout the entire school district. As of April 2007, at least 11 DISD schools, including middle schools and high schools, reported the presence of this drug combination on their campuses. Neighboring school districts, including Garland, Mesquite, and Coppell, also report the presence of cheese heroin in their districts; all three districts report student deaths related to cheese heroin. Local officials attribute the deaths of at least 17 Dallas County teenagers since 2005 to cheese heroin; eight of that number were DISD students.

Local treatment providers report an increase in treatment admissions for the drug, especially among children and adolescents. Arrests for cheese heroin are also increasing dramatically; DISD officials report 122 cheese heroin-related arrests so far this school year, an 80 percent increase from last year. While no deaths outside Dallas County have been attributed to cheese heroin, officials in Grapevine, Tarrant County, report the presence of cheese heroin in that community. In addition, the DPD reports that the drug is abused by the general public in Dallas. Cheese heroin typically has a light tan, powdery or granular appearance, is often found folded inside torn pieces of paper, and is snorted by abusers. The low cost of cheese heroin (sometimes as low as \$2) makes it affordable to most students and may facilitate its expansion beyond Dallas County and into surrounding North Texas counties.

Illicit Finance

Drug traffickers launder proceeds generated through drug transactions in Dallas/Fort Worth primarily by consolidating and transporting the proceeds in bulk to Mexico for eventual repatriation. Traffickers also use the area as a consolidation point for bulk currency shipments from other regions of the country. Traffickers transport smaller bulk cash shipments to Dallas for consolidation before the shipments are transported to the U.S.–Mexico border area, where they are eventually smuggled into Mexico.

Drug traffickers also use front companies, trucking companies, structured bank deposits, wire transfers, real estate, and the purchase of luxury items to launder drug proceeds in Dallas/Fort Worth. Asian DTOs frequently launder illicit drug proceeds through the operation of nail salons throughout the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Additionally, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) reports that the operators of locally based Internet pharmacies often launder drug proceeds by structuring bank deposits into local banks and then transferring the funds to offshore bank accounts.

Oklahoma City

Market Overview

Mexican DTOs are increasing their presence in Oklahoma City; many are establishing transportation and distribution cells in Oklahoma City to aid their drug trafficking operations. Mexican DTOs control the drug market in Oklahoma City and dominate the wholesale and midlevel distribution of cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine. Mexican traffickers also use Oklahoma City as a principal transit and transshipment location for drugs originating in Mexico and the Southwest Border region that are intended for distribution in other U.S. drug markets.

Production

Illicit drug production is limited in Oklahoma City and consists primarily of small-scale methamphetamine production, cannabis cultivation, and crack cocaine conversion.

The Oklahoma City area has experienced a significant decline in local methamphetamine production and laboratory seizures since 2004, when the state of Oklahoma enacted legislation limiting the availability of pseudoephedrine. The Oklahoma City Police Department reported a decline in methamphetamine laboratory seizures from 54 in 2004 to 7 in 2006. According to data from the National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System (NCLSS), laboratory seizures in Oklahoma and Cleveland Counties—the counties in which Oklahoma City is located—declined from 65 in 2004 to 8 in 2006.¹ (See Table 3 on page 5.) While methamphetamine production continues in Oklahoma City, most methamphetamine is produced in rural areas outside the city.

Cannabis cultivation in the Oklahoma City area is limited as a result of the abundance of Mexican marijuana in the local market, although DEA reports an increase in local indoor and outdoor cannabis cultivation occurred in 2004 and 2005. Oklahoma City is one of the primary locations in the

state for crack cocaine conversion. African American criminal groups purchase powder cocaine from Mexican dealers operating locally or in Dallas and convert it into crack for local distribution.

Transportation

Oklahoma City is a key transit area and transshipment center for Mexican drug traffickers because of its location at the intersection of Interstates 35, 40, and 44, three of the principal drug transportation routes in the Southwest. Law enforcement officers in Oklahoma City report that it is common for multihundred- to thousand-pound quantities of marijuana and multihundred-pound quantities of cocaine to transit these cities along I-40 and I-44 en route to drug markets in the central and eastern United States. As a result, significant quantities of illicit drugs continue to be seized through highway interdiction operations. (See Table 4.)

Table 4. Drug (in Pounds) and Currency Highway Interdiction Seizures in Oklahoma County, 2005–2006

Drug	2005	2006
Marijuana	7,153.39	4,015.32
Cocaine (powder)	106.48	751.97
Heroin	70.10	0.00
Methamphetamine	54.54	20.02
Currency	\$2,875,097	\$1,457,902

Source: Central Oklahoma Metro Interdiction Team.

Distribution

Mexican DTOs control the wholesale drug market in Oklahoma City, supplying wholesale and midlevel quantities of illicit drugs to other distributors within and outside the area. Their control over the local market and the large quantities of drugs that they supply to Oklahoma City have resulted in a decrease in local drug prices, according to local law enforcement officials. Increased drug distribution in Oklahoma City most likely results from

1. The National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System (NCLSS) is a voluntary reporting system; data are continually updated but may not reflect all methamphetamine laboratories seized.

Mexican control of the local market and local dealers, who have become polydrug distributors in nature. Local law enforcement officials report that African American drug dealers are continuing to become more involved in local methamphetamine distribution. The trend toward polydrug distribution allows dealers to increase profits by distributing drugs to a wider drug abuser community.

Drug-Related Crime

A significant amount of the property crime and violent crime that take place in Oklahoma City is drug-related. Methamphetamine abusers in Oklahoma City often commit property crimes, such as burglary, to support their drug addictions. The level of drug-related violent crime has remained consistent during the past year, according to local law enforcement officials. Competition among various local distributors, including Mexican DTOs and street gangs, is most likely a cause of violent crime in the area, in which gang- and drug-related rivalries result in assaults, drive-by shootings, and homicides.

Abuse

Ice methamphetamine abuse is becoming more widespread in Oklahoma City and throughout the entire state. Caucasians have historically been the primary abusers of ice methamphetamine in Oklahoma City; however, ice methamphetamine abuse is expanding into other ethnic user communities. In recent years African American crack cocaine dealers have begun distributing ice methamphetamine—a practice that has resulted in increased ice methamphetamine abuse in Oklahoma City's African American communities.

The abuse of diverted pharmaceuticals is prevalent in Oklahoma City, particularly among adolescent abusers. In this age group, hydrocodone products are the primary pharmaceutical drug of abuse. Local officials report that abusers use common diversion techniques, including stealing pharmaceutical drugs from family members and using fraudulent prescriptions as well as forged and altered prescriptions, to obtain pharmaceutical drugs.

The extent of drug abuse in the six North Texas HIDTA Oklahoma counties is evident in the high number of drug-related deaths reported in the state. According to the State Medical Examiner, the number of drug-related deaths remained relatively consistent in these six counties from 2005 (287 deaths) to 2006 (288 deaths). Oklahoma County reported the second-highest number of drug-related deaths in 2005 and 2006 for these counties and showed an increase in drug deaths during that time. (See [Table 5.](#))

Table 5. Drug-Related Deaths in North Texas HIDTA Oklahoma Counties, 2005–2006

County	2005	2006
Cleveland	16	24
Comanche	9	7
Muskogee	6	8
Oklahoma	88	107
Sequoyah	7	9
Tulsa	161	133

Source: Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs.

Illicit Finance

Wholesale distributors in Oklahoma City smuggle most of their drug proceeds to Mexico in bulk, while midlevel and retail distributors typically launder drug proceeds through businesses such as restaurants and auto repair shops. Drug traffickers from other areas of the country use Oklahoma City as a transit area for bulk cash shipments derived from the distribution of illicit drugs. Traffickers from states such as Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania transport illicit drug proceeds through Oklahoma City en route to destinations in Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas and, ultimately, Mexico. Seizure data reveal that law enforcement officers in Oklahoma City have seized bulk currency shipments ranging from \$10,000 to several hundred thousand dollars; a few seizures have amounted to over \$1 million. Bulk currency shipments are frequently concealed in luggage or in hidden compartments in private and

commercial vehicles; these vehicles are often the same ones used by traffickers to transport illicit drugs from the Southwest Border area through Oklahoma City en route to other areas of the country.

Mexican drug traffickers also use money transmitters to transfer their drug proceeds to the Southwest Border area. There, the funds are often collected and bulk-shipped across the border to Mexico. Many money transmitters in the Oklahoma City area cater to the growing Hispanic immigrant community, which uses these services to wire money to relatives in Mexico and other Latin American countries.

Outlook

The roles of Dallas/Fort Worth and Oklahoma City in regional and national drug transportation and distribution will quite likely increase. The establishment of multiple operational cells in these cities by Mexican DTOs and the expansion of Mexican distribution networks into new markets across the United States will most likely result in increased drug distribution, transshipment, and transportation to and through the North Texas HIDTA region.

The threat posed by ice methamphetamine could increase in the North Texas HIDTA region. Mexican DTOs will increase the amounts of Mexican ice methamphetamine that they supply to the local market to meet the growing demand for the drug and to offset the continued decline in local production.

The increasing trend toward polydrug distribution in Dallas/Fort Worth and Oklahoma City will most likely result in the emergence of new drug abuse problems. Low-income areas may be hardest hit as local distributors, who are becoming polydrug in nature, introduce different drugs such as ice methamphetamine, heroin, and MDMA to new abusers in these areas.

Law enforcement officers in the North Texas HIDTA region may begin to encounter Asian DTOs that distribute ice methamphetamine. This trend has been documented throughout the United States and may emerge locally, primarily within Asian communities. Asian DTOs will most likely obtain ice methamphetamine from local Mexican suppliers or from sources in Canada and transport the drug to the region for local distribution.

Sources

Local, State, and Regional

Dallas Independent School District Police Department

Dallas Police Department

 Gang Unit

 Narcotics Division

Fort Worth Police Department

 Narcotics Section

Plano Police Department

State of Oklahoma

 Central Oklahoma Metro Interdiction Team

 Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

 Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs

 Oklahoma City Police Department

State of Texas

 Department of Public Safety

Federal

Executive Office of the President

 Office of National Drug Control Policy

 High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area

 North Texas

 Regional Intelligence Support Center

U.S. Department of Commerce

 U.S. Census Bureau

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

U.S. Department of Justice

 Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

 Dallas Field Division

 Drug Enforcement Administration

 Dallas Field Division

 Tulsa Field Office

 Tyler Field Office

 El Paso Intelligence Center

 National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Dallas Field Division

Plano Resident Office

Northern Drug Squad

Tyler Resident Office

East Texas Violent Crimes Task Force

U.S. Department of the Treasury

Internal Revenue Service

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