



# North Florida

## High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Drug Market Analysis

June 2007

U.S. Department of Justice

### Preface

This assessment provides a strategic overview of the illicit drug situation in the North Florida 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 policy makers, resource planners, and law enforcement officials with a focused discussion of key drug issues and developments facing the North Florida HIDTA region.

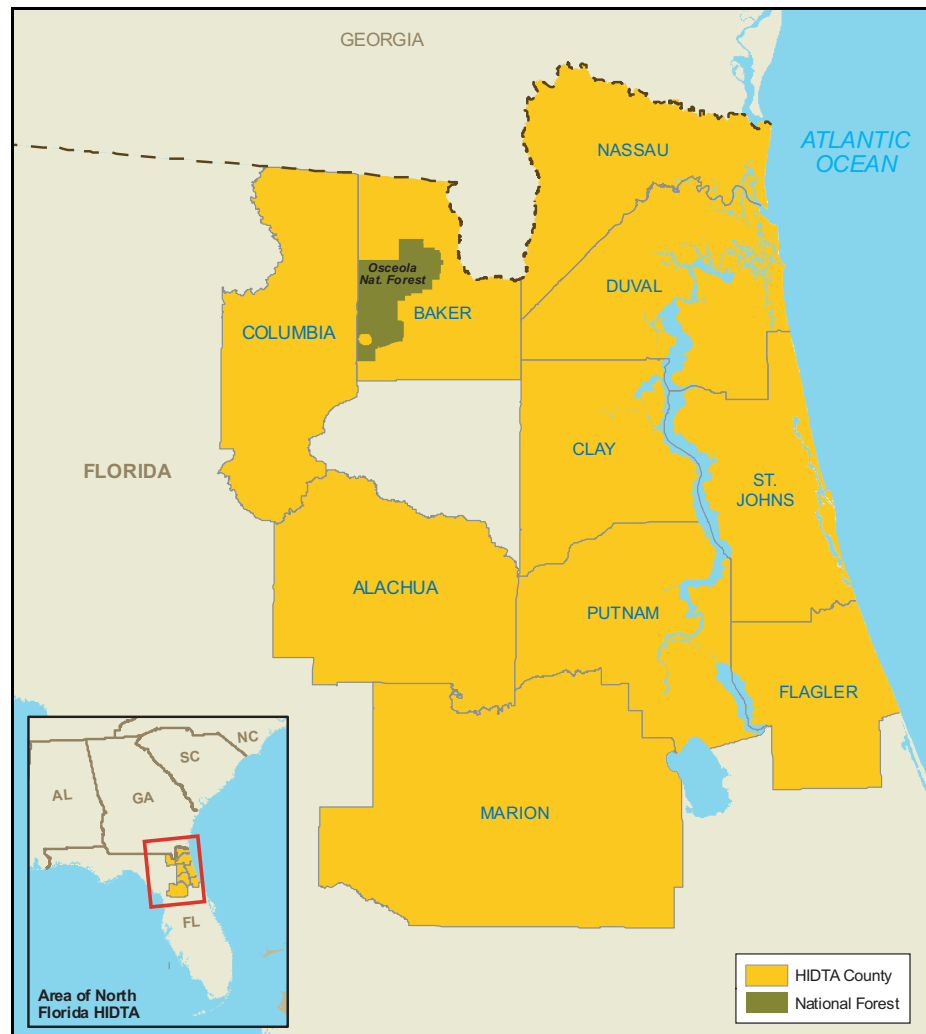


Figure 1. North Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.

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 North Florida HIDTA region’s significance as a transit area to drug markets throughout Florida is increasing because of its proximity to Atlanta, Georgia; Atlanta has recently emerged as the primary source for cocaine, methamphetamine, and marijuana distributed in central and northern Florida and as a secondary source for these drugs in South Florida.
- Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) are increasing their influence over the wholesale distribution of cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamine—particularly ice methamphetamine—a development that is threatening to undermine recent gains that North Florida HIDTA-sponsored task forces have made against overall illicit drug activity in the region.
- Methamphetamine distribution and abuse are increasing in the North Florida HIDTA region, and the drug has emerged as the greatest drug threat in many rural areas of the region.
- Local methamphetamine production poses an ongoing problem in the region; however, some laboratory operators are reportedly scaling back their operations in favor of distributing Mexican methamphetamine because of the high profit margins associated with distributing this form of the drug.
- The distribution and abuse of diverted pharmaceutical drugs in the region pose a significant threat, rivaling the threat posed by most other illicit drugs. Pharmaceuticals, predominantly prescription narcotics such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, and methadone, and benzodiazepines such as diazepam (Valium) and alprazolam (Xanax), are widely abused throughout the North Florida HIDTA region.
- Cuban DTOs are becoming increasingly involved in indoor cannabis cultivation within the region, and there is an increasing demand for high-potency marijuana in the region.

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## 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.

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## HIDTA Overview

Established in 2001, the North Florida HIDTA encompasses 10 adjoining counties in the northeastern corner of Florida—specifically, Alachua, Baker, Clay, Columbia, Duval, Flagler, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns Counties. The HIDTA is a significant transit area for illegal drug shipments moving north from southern Florida to markets along the eastern seaboard. The HIDTA region also serves as a transit area for drug shipments moving south from Atlanta; the region’s significance as a drug transit area is increasing as more drugs are transported from Atlanta through the HIDTA region en route to drug markets throughout Florida. Jacksonville, the largest metropolitan area in the HIDTA region, is the area’s primary drug market. Ocala, the region’s second-largest metropolitan area and one of the fastest-growing cities in Florida, is a secondary drug market. Gainesville, Jacksonville Beach, and St. Augustine are the HIDTA region’s leading night-life destinations; significant retail-level distribution and drug abuse occur in these cities. Jacksonville Beach and St. Augustine are also home to sizable and growing homeless populations, which include many drug addicts.

The temperate climate and strong economy of the North Florida HIDTA region attract people who desire to relocate from national and international locations. Increasing ethnic populations have enabled many DTOs to avoid immediate law enforcement scrutiny. For instance, Mexican DTOs increasingly capitalize on a growing Hispanic population in the HIDTA region in order to transport and distribute drugs in relative anonymity. Other Hispanic criminal groups and Cuban DTOs also capitalize on the anonymity offered by the diverse population for the purposes of constructing and operating high-potency, indoor cannabis cultivation sites in the region.

## Drug Threat Overview

Powder cocaine and crack cocaine pose the greatest drug threats to the North Florida HIDTA region. The level of violence associated with the distribution of powder and crack cocaine and the number of overdose deaths resulting from abuse of these drugs are the major factors contributing to the magnitude of the threat to the region. Methamphetamine distribution and abuse are increasing in the North Florida HIDTA region, and the drug has emerged as the greatest drug threat in many rural areas in the region. Increased quantities of Mexican ice methamphetamine are increasingly being transported into the region. Diverted pharmaceutical drugs, predominantly prescription narcotics and benzodiazepines, are significant threats, primarily because of increased abuse among youth as well as high mortality rates associated with the pharmaceutical abuser population in the region. Marijuana distribution and abuse are widespread in the area. Cannabis cultivation at indoor grow sites is increasing as demand for high-potency marijuana rises, particularly among abusers in the Jacksonville metropolitan area. Heroin abuse is relatively low in the North Florida HIDTA region; however, several agencies report that abuse of the drug is moderately rising. Abuse of powder MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, also known as ecstasy) occurs at very limited levels.

## Drug Trafficking Organizations

**Mexican DTOs** are significant wholesale distributors of cocaine, methamphetamine, and marijuana in the North Florida HIDTA region. These DTOs have increased their trafficking operations in the region and have expanded their activities from rural to suburban areas across northern and central Florida; they also are expanding operations from Atlanta into the area. Mexican DTOs in the HIDTA region often have strong organizational ties to higher-level Mexican DTOs operating in Atlanta and the Southwest.

**African American and Jamaican DTOs** are extensively involved in the distribution of marijuana in the HIDTA region. Traditionally, African American organizations have obtained marijuana from lower-level Mexican organizations located in Florida, and Jamaican organizations have typically obtained marijuana from midlevel Mexican organizations in Florida or from other suppliers in the Caribbean. However, both African American and Jamaican DTOs have established relationships with high-level Mexican DTOs in the North Florida HIDTA region and in Southwest Border states to obtain wholesale quantities of marijuana for distribution in the area.

**Caucasian independent dealers** are the primary distributors of illegally diverted prescription pharmaceuticals in the North Florida HIDTA region. They also distribute retail and, occasionally, wholesale quantities of virtually every other illicit drug sold in the region.

**Asian DTOs** pose a lower threat in the North Florida HIDTA region than other organizations and criminal groups, according to law enforcement officials. However, Asian DTOs are responsible for distributing a significant amount of MDMA and limited quantities of high-potency marijuana at the wholesale level in the region, particularly the Jacksonville metropolitan area. Law enforcement officials report that these organizations are typically affiliated with larger Asian networks that extend throughout other parts of the United States as well

as Canada and Southeast Asia. These organizations are generally based upon familial or other direct social relationships and are difficult for law enforcement to infiltrate.

**Other Hispanic criminal groups and Cuban DTOs** are increasingly cultivating and distributing high-potency marijuana from indoor grow operations established in the region.

**Numerous street gangs** are involved in drug trafficking in the North Florida HIDTA region. Most street gangs are composed of individuals with similar ethnic backgrounds, and most are established and based upon individual street or neighborhood affiliations, especially in northwest Jacksonville. Significant rivalry among street gangs, including that associated with drug trafficking, often incites violence among gangs as well as violence between gangs and other drug traffickers. Such rivalry and violence have increased in the past year, most likely as a result of shrinking drug distribution territories caused by the encroachment of DTOs, particularly Mexican DTOs, into areas previously controlled by street gangs.

**Production**

Illicit drug production in the North Florida HIDTA region primarily entails conversion of powder to crack cocaine, indoor cannabis cultivation, and limited methamphetamine and MDMA production. Powder cocaine is converted to crack by African American street gangs in the region, particularly in northwest Jacksonville. Most cannabis is cultivated

at indoor grow sites in the North Florida HIDTA region. In 2006 law enforcement officials seized 2,728 plants at indoor grow sites within the 10 North Florida HIDTA counties. (See Table 1.) Cannabis is cultivated by independent Caucasian traffickers throughout the region, and law enforcement officials report that Hispanic traffickers, particularly Cuban DTOs, are increasingly producing high-potency marijuana from cannabis that they cultivate at indoor grow sites in North Florida.

**Table 1. Marijuana Plants Seized from Indoor Grow Sites in the North Florida HIDTA Region, by County, 2006**

County	Number of Plants Seized
Alachua	491
Baker	5
Clay	95
Columbia	0
Duval	1,692
Flagler	4
Marion	16
Nassau	104
Putnam	321
St. Johns	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,728</b>

Source: Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program; State of Florida Domestic Marijuana Eradication Program.

**Indoor Cannabis Grow Sites**

According to law enforcement officials, indoor cannabis cultivation operations are increasingly being established within the North Florida HIDTA region, particularly in privately owned or rented residential homes. In Jacksonville, which is the largest and most densely populated city in the North Florida HIDTA region, law enforcement authorities dismantled at least 23 indoor cannabis cultivation grow sites between March 2005 and March 2006. The grow sites ranged from small grows with several small plants to large cultivation operations containing almost 200 plants. In several other cities and counties within the North Florida HIDTA, law enforcement authorities have reported an emerging trend in which DTOs rent homes in residential areas and use the entire home as an indoor grow site. The DTOs often pay other individuals or associates to live in the homes to cultivate plants and to provide the appearance of normal activity in the home. Most of the DTOs linked to these elaborate sites are not from the communities where the homes are rented, and several have been linked to Hispanic drug trafficking groups in South Florida and Cuba.

**Table 2. Number of Methamphetamine Laboratories Seized in the North Florida HIDTA, by County, 2002–2006<sup>a</sup>**

County	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Alachua	1	1	1	0	1
Clay	0	0	0	1	3
Columbia	0	2	0	0	0
Duval	0	1	0	4	6
Flagler	0	0	0	0	2
Marion	4	12	8	20	5
Putnam	1	0	1	1	3
St. Johns	1	0	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>22</b>

Source: National Seizure System, data run on 5/07/2007.

a. These data include seizures of laboratories, the chemicals and equipment used to produce methamphetamine, and dumpsites.

Methamphetamine production poses an ongoing concern for law enforcement and treatment providers throughout the region, particularly in rural areas; however, production is trending slightly downward as evidenced by an overall decrease in the number of methamphetamine laboratories seized in the region from 2005 to 2006. (See Table 2.) According to law enforcement authorities, methamphetamine laboratory operators may be scaling back their production operations in favor of distributing Mexican methamphetamine, from which they can derive higher profits.

MDMA is reportedly produced in the North Florida HIDTA region; however, such production is limited and is not considered a significant threat by law enforcement officials. Only two MDMA laboratories were seized in the North Florida HIDTA region in 2006; both were seized in Clay County.<sup>1</sup>

## Transportation

The North Florida HIDTA region is a significant transit area for illegal drugs destined for drug markets throughout Florida as well as for drug proceeds

returning to source areas. Interstates 10 and 95, two primary national drug corridors, intersect in Jacksonville, the region's primary drug market. The region's significance as a transit area for Florida drug markets is largely due to the emergence of Atlanta as a national-level drug distribution center. Atlanta has now become the primary source for cocaine, ice methamphetamine, and marijuana distributed in northern and central Florida and has emerged as a secondary source for these drugs in South Florida. Additionally, high-potency marijuana cultivated in the HIDTA region is transported short distances to retail distribution sites.

Significant quantities of illicit drugs, primarily commercial-grade marijuana, are regularly seized in the North Florida HIDTA from packages shipped through commercial delivery services, and law enforcement officials in the region report that use of this transportation method by traffickers may be increasing. A large volume of packages are shipped to the Jacksonville metropolitan area, where several international shipping companies have large

### Jacksonville Port Redevelopment

The Jacksonville Port Authority (JAXPORT) and an Asian transoceanic cargo-shipping company are scheduled to redevelop the underutilized JAXPORT cruise ship terminal and turn the facility into the third-largest cargo seaport on the East Coast of the United States by 2009. The redevelopment plan calls for the construction of a 158-acre cargo container-handling facility, two 1,200-foot-long berths, six Post-Panamax container cranes, and other necessary infrastructure.<sup>a</sup> It is expected that the redeveloped port will facilitate large increases in legitimate shipping traffic and indirect and direct employment of an estimated 5,000 individuals. Moreover, if the current plan proves successful, further expansion plans could increase the port size to over 200 acres. Maritime cargo vessels will sail directly between the JAXPORT and ports in Asia and Latin America.

a. A Post-Panamax crane can fully load and unload containers from a container ship too large to pass through the Panama Canal.

1. These data include seizures of laboratories as well as the chemicals and equipment used to produce MDMA.

regional distribution facilities. Packages are then rerouted to locations throughout northeastern Florida and southern Georgia. North Florida HIDTA-sponsored task force officers based in Jacksonville typically seize multipound to multihundred-pound quantities of marijuana and, increasingly, ounce to multipound quantities of cocaine from packages that arrive from locations outside the HIDTA, predominantly from Southwest Border states.

The potential for drug transportation through the Port of Jacksonville is significant; however, the extent to which the port is used for drug smuggling is largely an **intelligence gap**. The Jacksonville

Port Authority is an international trade seaport in northeastern Florida. JAXPORT has multiple cargo terminals capable of handling container, automobile, bulk, breakbulk, and refrigerated cargo as well as cruise passenger service. Companies doing business at Jacksonville's seaport employ more than 7,000 workers and support an additional 38,000 jobs in Jacksonville. The Port of Jacksonville transships more than 70 percent of U.S. waterborne commerce to and from Puerto Rico, which is a substantial transshipment point for cocaine and heroin destined for the continental United States. Most of this cargo is not inspected, since it is being shipped within the United States. U.S. Coast Guard officials

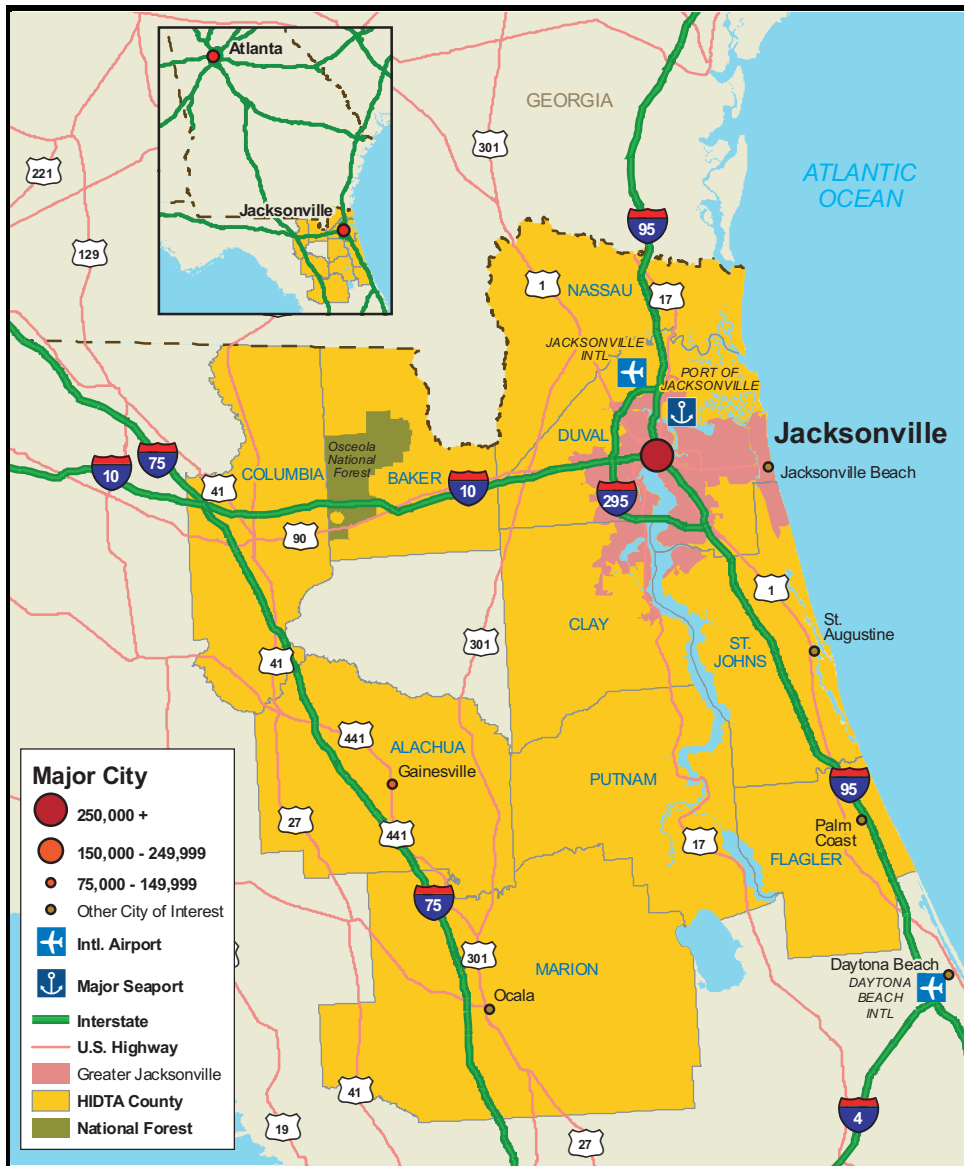


Figure 2. North Florida HIDTA transportation infrastructure.

report investigating several smuggling organizations that operate between the Port of Jacksonville and Puerto Rico. The volume of commerce with Puerto Rico is expected to increase when construction at the expansive Port of the Americas, located in Ponce, Puerto Rico, ends in 2012. Moreover, the JAXPORT cruise ship terminal is scheduled to be redeveloped into one of the largest cargo seaport terminals on the East Coast of the United States. This redevelopment will further increase maritime traffic and personnel and will quite likely offer DTOs and criminal groups an increased opportunity for maritime drug smuggling.

## Distribution

Jacksonville, the region's primary drug market, and Ocala, a secondary market, serve as distribution centers for many drug markets throughout Florida. Additionally, low-level wholesale and retail distributors often travel to these cities to acquire drugs for distribution in their home communities. DTOs, criminal groups, independent dealers, and gangs of various nationalities and ethnicities distribute illicit drugs at the wholesale and retail levels in the North Florida HIDTA region. A listing of these distributors is provided in [Table 3](#).

## Drug-Related Crime

Many crimes perpetrated in the North Florida HIDTA region have a drug nexus; however, such crimes are not specifically defined as drug-related by law enforcement or public agencies operating in the HIDTA region. Drug-related crime often impacts innocent victims in the North Florida HIDTA region, and in response, law enforcement officials have implemented innovative approaches to crime control. In July 2006 an 8-year-old Jacksonville girl was killed after gunfire from a drive-by shooting penetrated the walls of her grandparents' home. In February 2007 a pregnant woman was murdered after her boyfriend stopped the vehicle in which they were riding to purchase illicit drugs and the vehicle was fired upon by a known criminal. These and similar incidents have provided public support and funding for "Operation Safe Streets" (OSS), a collaborative federal, state, and local law enforcement initiative that actively targets crimes involving firearms in areas of Jacksonville that are prone to drug-related violence. Program partnerships also have developed because of increased violence, including a partnership between OSS and the First Coast Crime Stoppers. This partnership encourages the public to provide tips to police

**Table 3. Drug Distribution Activities in the North Florida HIDTA Region, 2007**

Ethnicity of Drug Trafficking Organization	Wholesale Distribution		Retail Distribution
	Upper Level	Lower Level	
<b>African American</b>	Cocaine, marijuana	Cocaine, crack, heroin, marijuana, MDMA	Cocaine, crack, heroin, marijuana, MDMA, diverted pharmaceuticals, methamphetamine (limited)
<b>Caucasian</b>	Cocaine, marijuana	Cocaine, diverted pharmaceuticals, heroin, marijuana, MDMA, methamphetamine	Cocaine, diverted pharmaceuticals, heroin, marijuana, MDMA, methamphetamine
<b>Colombian</b>	Cocaine	Not applicable	Cocaine
<b>Cuban</b>	High-quality marijuana	High-quality marijuana	Not applicable
<b>Jamaican</b>	Cocaine, marijuana	Cocaine, marijuana	Cocaine, marijuana
<b>Mexican/Hispanic</b>	Cocaine, ice methamphetamine, marijuana, heroin	Cocaine, ice methamphetamine, marijuana, MDMA	Cocaine, marijuana
<b>Asian</b>	High-quality marijuana, MDMA	High-quality marijuana, MDMA	Cocaine, heroin, high-quality marijuana, MDMA

through either telephone or e-mail communications regarding individuals who illegally carry firearms. The tips are subsequently relayed to OSS Task Force officials for immediate investigation.

An increase in the overall number of murders and violent crimes committed in the North Florida HIDTA region is of particular concern to law enforcement officials in the region. In 2006, 110 homicides were committed in the Jacksonville/Duval County metropolitan area—only one portion of the entire HIDTA region—compared with 104 homicides committed in 2005 and 92 homicides committed in 2004.<sup>2</sup> While officials are uncertain as to the cause of this upsurge, some speculate that it may have resulted from continued fighting among rival African American distributors over drug distribution territories. Moreover, officials report that many of the individuals who have been accused or convicted of committing these crimes have previously been involved in drug trafficking and that many of them are members of loosely organized gangs and criminal groups.

**Abuse**

Marijuana is the most widely abused illicit drug in the North Florida HIDTA region; however, the direst drug-related societal and personal consequences are associated with powder and crack

cocaine. According to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Medical Examiner’s Commission (MEC), 817 drug deaths<sup>3</sup> occurred in the areas of Gainesville, Jacksonville, and St. Augustine in 2005 (the latest year for which data are available). Cocaine-related deaths (267) accounted for the highest percentage of deaths.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, data from the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) indicate that cocaine was the second most identified drug of abuse in admissions to publicly funded treatment centers in Florida in 2005 (the latest year for which data are available). (See Table 4.)

The widespread diversion and abuse of pharmaceutical drugs are a significant and rapidly growing drug threat in the North Florida HIDTA region. The most commonly abused pharmaceuticals are prescription narcotics such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, and methadone, and benzodiazepines such as diazepam (Valium) and alprazolam (Xanax). According to the FDLE MEC, when all pharmaceutical drugs that were mentioned in connection with a death, either alone or in combination with other drugs, are combined as a class, they account for over one-half of all drug deaths in the region during 2005 (the latest year for which data are available). (See Table 5 on page 9.) Further, law enforcement and drug treatment officials in the region report that the average age of prescription

**Table 4. Number of Florida Drug Treatment Admissions, 2000–2005**

Drug	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>Cocaine (powder and crack)</b>	17,568	13,375	17,368	16,650	14,859	12,846
<b>Heroin</b>	4,201	3,723	5,078	4,021	2,988	2,186
<b>Marijuana</b>	15,842	14,356	19,287	20,129	21,670	17,089
<b>Diverted Pharmaceuticals</b>	3,476	4,162	5,199	5,341	4,344	4,322
<b>Amphetamine</b>	420	467	741	1,022	1,220	1,458

Source: Treatment Episode Data Set.

2. Since there is no commonly accepted definition of “drug-related crime,” the murders may or may not be solely the result of drug activity; however, law enforcement investigations suggest that the vast majority of such crimes are drug-related.  
 3. Drug deaths include both drug-induced deaths (drugs directly caused death) and drug-related deaths (drugs contributed to death).  
 4. Because of regional designations as established by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Medical Examiner’s Commission (MEC) for data collection in counties including those within and outside the jurisdictional boundaries of the North Florida HIDTA, only generalized assumptions may be drawn for medical examiner data specific to city areas within the HIDTA region.



drug abusers and distributors is decreasing. In most cases prescription drug abusers in the North Florida HIDTA region purchase prescription drugs over the Internet and visit unscrupulous physicians to obtain multiple illegal prescriptions for pharmaceutical drugs; in some cases unethical physicians cater to abusers and intentionally overprescribe pharmaceuticals for personal profit.

The abuse of high-potency ice methamphetamine is limited but increasing in the HIDTA region. Rapid increases in abuse of the drug quite likely have been slowed by an abundant supply of powder and crack cocaine, particularly in Jacksonville. High levels of availability of powder and crack cocaine together with consistently low prices contribute to reluctance on the part of abusers to experiment with or switch to ice methamphetamine. Heroin abuse is limited in the North Florida HIDTA region. Only five deaths in the region were associated with heroin abuse in 2005, according to the FDLE MEC; however, the low death rate may possibly be attributed to first-response protocols applied by emergency medical service (EMS) respondents, not to a lack of or decrease in abuse. When responding to a heroin-related incident, EMS responders often employ a first-response application of Narcan (naloxone), also marketed as

Naloxone and Narcan, an injectable narcotic antagonist that immediately reverses respiratory arrest caused by a heroin or other opiate overdose.

## Illicit Finance

Traffickers operating in the North Florida HIDTA region, particularly Mexican DTOs, typically transport illicit drug proceeds in bulk to Atlanta or Southwest Border states for further laundering. Additionally, many members of Mexican DTOs and criminal groups transport large portions of their drug proceeds to friends and family in Mexico, using either private or commercial vehicles. Mexican DTOs in the region sometimes structure deposits into numerous bank accounts and electronically transfer the funds to accounts in Mexico or Southwest Border states. Mexican DTOs also launder illicit funds through money remitters—most of whom are unlicensed—and, more recently, by converting drug proceeds to stored value cards and then mailing the cards to locations around the world.

DTOs and criminal groups in the region also use front companies and cash-intensive businesses to launder drug proceeds. Restaurants, clothing stores, used car dealerships, and offices related to the construction industry are commonly used by traffickers in the region as fronts for drug enterprises. Some unscrupulous construction companies hire illegal immigrants and offer to pay their wages in drugs instead of currency. The employees gain the benefit of receiving hidden, nontaxable income but subsequently must either sell or trade the drugs to acquire cash. Additionally, most retail and low-level wholesale cocaine and marijuana distributors operating in the HIDTA launder drug proceeds by purchasing tangible assets such as high-value vehicles, vehicle accessories, or jewelry.

A significant and growing money laundering trend developing among traffickers in Jacksonville involves investing drug proceeds in real estate ventures. In doing so, traffickers attempt to conceal the true origin of their funds by purchasing real estate through multiple, layered transactions; they make additional money through real estate sales.

**Table 5. Drug Mentions in Deaths  
North Florida HIDTA, 2005**

Drug	Number of Deaths
Cocaine	267
Methadone	126
Hydrocodone	124
Diazepam	90
Morphine	77
Alprazolam	65
Oxycodone	63
Heroin	5
<b>Total Deaths</b>	<b>817</b>

Source: Florida Department of Law Enforcement Medical Examiner's Commission.

## Outlook

Mexican DTOs' influence over the North Florida HIDTA drug market will most likely increase during the next year as they expand their trafficking operations into additional markets within the HIDTA region. Over the past several years, Mexican DTOs have been expanding and strengthening their networks throughout the region. This expansion can be expected to continue as these organizations search for new or previously underdeveloped markets to exploit.

Mexican DTOs in the region will increasingly obtain drug supplies from other Mexican DTOs operating in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Atlanta-based Mexican DTOs have been supplying an increasing amount of drugs to wholesale and retail distributors in the southeastern United States, including those in northern Florida; these distributors previously received most of their drug supplies directly from Mexican DTOs along the Southwest Border or from non-Mexican traffickers in South Florida. The Atlanta-based DTOs have "pushed out" other suppliers and are now well-positioned to supply increased quantities of illicit drugs in support of Mexican DTO expansion within the HIDTA region.

The distribution of powder and crack cocaine will remain the primary drug threat in the foreseeable future. However, if a significant disruption were to occur in the cocaine supply to Jacksonville or if a significant relocation of existing methamphetamine distributors or abusers to the region from adjacent areas were to occur, ice methamphetamine distribution and abuse would inevitably increase.

In the near term, the North Florida HIDTA region will most likely realize an overall increase in the production and distribution of high-potency marijuana produced at local indoor grow sites. Marijuana abuse is widespread in the HIDTA region, and now that this established market of abusers has been exposed to a high-potency, preferable product, the drug's popularity will certainly climb.

Since traffickers are beginning to launder illicit proceeds through real estate ventures, it is likely that real estate money laundering schemes encountered by law enforcement officials in other HIDTA regions may eventually be used in the North Florida HIDTA region. One such scheme involves the purchase of residential dwellings and their use as rental properties. Under this scheme, traffickers report drug proceeds as rent in addition to rent that they receive from legitimate tenants. Another scheme involves traffickers' purchases of property that is immediately sold, or "flipped," at substantially increased prices to associates, who obtain mortgages to purchase the property. In this scenario, the dealers receive the profit from the property sale, seemingly legitimizing drug proceeds as income from real estate investments, while the associates typically default on the loan, leaving banks with properties worth much less than the amounts borrowed against them.

## Sources

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### Local, State, and Regional

Alachua and Columbia County Initiative  
Alachua County Sheriff's Office  
Baker County Sheriff's Office  
Bradford County Sheriff's Office  
Clay County Sheriff's Office  
Columbia County Sheriff's Office  
Crescent City Police Department  
Duval County Sheriff's Office  
Fernandina Beach Police Department  
Flagler County Sheriff's Office  
Gainesville Police Department  
Gilchrist County Sheriff's Office  
Green Cove Springs Police Department  
Jacksonville Beach Police Department  
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office  
Lake City Police Department  
Marion County Sheriff's Office  
Nassau County Sheriff's Office  
Ocala Police Department  
Orange Park Police Department  
Polk County Sheriff's Office  
Putnam County Sheriff's Office  
St. Augustine Police Department  
St. Johns County Sheriff's Office  
State of Florida  
    Department of Corrections  
    Florida Department of Law Enforcement  
        Domestic Marijuana Eradication Program  
        Medical Examiner's Commission  
    Highway Patrol  
        Contraband Interdiction Unit  
    Office of Drug Control  
Sumter County Sheriff's Office  
Union County Sheriff's Office  
University of North Florida Police Department

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Williston Police Department

**Federal**

Executive Office of the President

Office of National Drug Control Policy  
High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area  
North Florida

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  
Drug Abuse Warning Network  
Treatment Episode Data Set

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Coast Guard  
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives  
Drug Enforcement Administration  
Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program  
El Paso Intelligence Center  
National Seizure System  
Jacksonville District Office

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