



STATEMENT

OF

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HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING AREA**

BEFORE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON BORDER AND MARITIME SECURITY
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

AT A FIELD HEARING ENTITLED

**“STOPPING THE FLOW OF ILLICIT DRUGS IN ARIZONA BY
LEVERAGING STATE, LOCAL AND FEDERAL INFORMATION SHARING”**

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Statement of

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High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area
(Arizona HIDTA)**

**U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security**

Chairman Quayle, Ranking Member Cuellar, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:

It is my privilege and pleasure to address you today on behalf of the Arizona High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area's (HIDTA) Executive Board and to demonstrate how intelligence is the cornerstone of the Arizona HIDTA Program.

The HIDTA Program, a grant-funded initiative of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, provides assistance to Federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies operating in areas determined to be critical drug trafficking regions of the United States. Every year HIDTAs identify the most current threat, develop a strategy to address the threat, and evaluate the results. This procedure allows HIDTAs the flexibility to adjust in a timely manner and redirect resources to have the greatest impact. The productivity and success of the Program has been a model for efficient and effective government.

The Arizona HIDTA was established in 1990 as part of the Southwest Border HIDTA, which includes California, New Mexico, and Texas. The Arizona HIDTA, under the leadership of its Executive Board, coordinates and supports the efforts of more than 575 sworn law enforcement officials from 72 participating agencies throughout Arizona. The Executive Board is comprised of equal Federal and State/Local law enforcement agency members. Participating Arizona counties include Cochise, La Paz, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz, and Yuma. The Arizona region also encompasses the Phoenix and Tucson metropolitan areas, with a combined population of approximately 5.1 million residents.

Of the 21 Native American Reservations in Arizona, 17 fall within the Arizona HIDTA region.

The mission of the Arizona HIDTA is to facilitate cooperation among all enforcement agencies through the sharing of information and to support coordinated law enforcement efforts to eliminate the drug trafficking and money laundering organizations operating in Arizona. By focusing on this mission, the Arizona HIDTA Program has evolved into a reliable and accountable counter-drug grant program. Arizona law enforcement agencies have come to rely upon the Arizona HIDTA to assess regional drug threats, facilitate the creation of cooperative strategies, and provide resources to enhance their ability to implement those strategies.

During the past year, the Arizona HIDTA Executive Board directed the successful restructuring and refocusing of the Arizona HIDTA Investigative Support Center (ISC). Through those efforts, intelligence became an integral component of the infrastructure of the Arizona HIDTA Program. The ISC is staffed by representatives of participating agencies who have direct on-site access to their agencies' information databases. The Arizona HIDTA ISC now enhances the sharing of intelligence among law enforcement agencies, the Arizona Counter Terrorism Information Center (ACTIC), the Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats (ACTT), and the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC). Systematic collection, analysis, and dissemination of secure, accurate, and timely intelligence promote inter-agency communication and coordination. Increased communication enhances officer safety through deconfliction and eliminates duplication of effort. Coordination through shared intelligence is critical to combating the increasing threat of narcotics traffickers and criminal organizations.

Following the enhancements to its infrastructure, the members of the newly-formed ISC Threat Analysis and Production Unit conducted a comprehensive Threat Assessment to identify new and continuing trends in the Arizona region. The purpose of the yearly Threat Assessment is to provide strategic intelligence to the Arizona HIDTA and its partners to assist in the development of drug enforcement strategies.

The Threat Assessment found that the Sinaloa Cartel presents the primary operational threat to Arizona, possessing vast resources to source, distribute,

transport, and smuggle large amounts of cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and methamphetamine in and through Arizona. The Sinaloa Cartel exploits well-established routes in Arizona and perfected smuggling methods to supply drug distribution networks located throughout the United States. The Mexican State of Sonora is home to key drug trafficking plazas controlled by the Sinaloa Cartel. The plazas are used for off-loading, stashing, and staging of drugs, money, and weapons. Furthermore, the Sinaloa Cartel's influence in Arizona is growing stronger as the cartel continues to gain control of additional drug trafficking corridors and routes in Sonora, Mexico, and neighboring Baja California, Mexico.

The Phoenix and Tucson areas are exploited by Mexican drug trafficking organizations as transportation and distribution hubs. The transportation of drugs through the Arizona corridor to drug markets across the United States is accomplished in two ways: drug loads are shipped to other locations in the United States by the same transportation group that smuggled the drugs into Arizona; or drug loads are taken to "stash houses" in the Phoenix and Tucson metropolitan areas, where the drug loads are re-packaged and then shipped to drug markets throughout the United States.

The Executive Board uses the Threat Assessment as the foundation for developing the Arizona HIDTA Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is designed to enhance the impact the 19 Arizona HIDTA Task Forces are having on drug trafficking and money laundering organizations and thereby improve public safety in Arizona.

The Arizona HIDTA Task Forces are organized into three primary Initiatives: Enforcement (interdiction, investigation, fugitive arrests, and prosecution); Intelligence (coordination, deconfliction, investigative case support, threat analysis, and intelligence gap identification); and Support (management and training). The Initiatives consist of full-time Federal, state, and local law enforcement investigators, prosecutors, and intelligence analysts. Through co-location, inter-agency cooperation, and the consolidation of strategic and tactical intelligence at the ISC, the framework of the Arizona HIDTA provides for a coordinated and comprehensive response to drug trafficking threats that are both regional and national in scope. From the policymakers on the Executive Board to the Initiatives, there is a shared vision to attack the threats posed by drug trafficking and drug abuse.

The ISC, in concert with the Initiatives, monitors investigative needs and collection requirements and integrates them into the intelligence collection process to fully develop and expand the scope of investigations. Intelligence garnered during these operations is provided to the ISC for analysis via an open loop intelligence process from which time-sensitive and actionable intelligence is disseminated to the Initiatives and appropriate law enforcement entities.

Fully understanding the drug-related threat in Arizona and using an intelligence-driven enforcement strategy, the Arizona HIDTA Initiatives are having a more significant impact on the drug trafficking organizations operating in Arizona and throughout the United States.

In 2011, Arizona Initiatives disrupted or dismantled 37 drug trafficking and money laundering organizations operating within Arizona, 57 percent of which were international or multi-state in scope. Arizona investigations focused on five Consolidated Priority Organization Targets (CPOTs) and three Regional Priority Organization Targets (RPOTs). Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) designated cases totaled six. The level of sophistication of those cases necessitated the use of 298 separate court-ordered pen registers and 123 Title III orders, a 413 percent increase over 2010 Title III orders. Local community impact investigations were extremely successful and accounted for 43 percent of the drug trafficking and money laundering organizations disrupted or dismantled.

The Arizona HIDTA seized illicit drugs with an estimated wholesale value of \$1.19 billion, a 106 percent increase over 2010. Marijuana continued to lead as the most seized drug, with 519,954 kilograms seized in 2011, an increase of 118 percent over the previous year. Arizona Initiatives experienced a significant increase in both methamphetamine and heroin seized, with methamphetamine seizures of 728 kilograms, an increase of 88 percent, and heroin seizures of 257 kilograms, an increase of 1,017 percent. The return on investment for every \$1 received by the Arizona HIDTA during 2011 was \$112.09, a 100 percent increase over 2010.

The Arizona HIDTA Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE) program conducted 898 operations and assisted in the coordination of 2,650 Stonegarden Project Operations. The intelligence and investigative leads developed from those operations were essential to the overall Arizona strategy. DHE operations seized

illicit drugs with an estimated wholesale value of over \$39 million and seized \$7.2 million in cash and assets. Two international drug trafficking organizations were identified, with one disrupted and 782 individuals arrested.

The Arizona HIDTA statewide fugitive Task Force arrested 4,228 subjects, an 18 percent increase over 2010. Drug-related arrests accounted for 32 percent of the overall arrests, with a higher percentage of those arrested wanted for crimes related to drug use or violent crimes associated with drug rip-offs and/or home invasions. Fugitive apprehensions resulted in seized drugs, currency, and assets valued at \$2 million.

Drug-related corruption poses a significant detriment to law enforcement efforts to combat smuggling, drug transportation, and drug trafficking in Arizona. The Arizona HIDTA investigated seven corruption-related cases, which resulted in one court-ordered Title III wiretap investigation, the serving of 23 search warrants, and 35 corruption-related indictments. Quantities of heroin and methamphetamine were also seized, along with \$197,000 in U.S. currency.

Prosecutors dedicated to Arizona HIDTA Initiatives reviewed over 375 search warrants, obtained 2,701 indictments, and convicted 2,467 individuals.

The ISC produced and disseminated over 147 intelligence-related documents, including officer safety, situational awareness, suspect aircraft, and DHE-related bulletins. The ISC presented numerous briefings for the Arizona HIDTA Executive Board, Initiative Commanders, and Congressional representatives.

Arizona HIDTA is actively involved with outreach, training, and coordinating with Arizona tribal communities. As an active participant with the Arizona Indian Country Intelligence Network, the Arizona HIDTA sponsored and participated in a two-day Strategy Session with representatives from 11 Arizona tribal communities to develop an intelligence and information sharing framework within Arizona. In addition, eight tribes took advantage of HIDTA-sponsored training, which included a Prescription Drug Abuse Summit, Prescription Drug Abuse Epidemic workshop, narcotics investigative techniques, and Domestic Highway Enforcement training.

The Arizona HIDTA philosophy of cooperation and coordination is based upon enhanced information and resource sharing through co-located and/or collaborative Task Force Initiatives strategically located throughout the region. Under the coordination umbrella of the Arizona HIDTA, the participating law enforcement agencies eliminate duplicative operational and investigative programs and facilitate tactical, operational, and strategic intelligence sharing. The extent of inter-agency cooperation supported by the Arizona HIDTA illustrates that all Initiatives are working investigations in an efficient and effective manner. The Arizona HIDTA approach demonstrates that when traditional organizational barriers are overcome, Federal, state, and local law enforcement entities can better focus investigative and intelligence resources in dismantling and disrupting the most dangerous and prolific drug trafficking and money laundering organizations.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and for the Subcommittee's continued support of the HIDTA Program. The Arizona HIDTA remains committed to facilitating cooperation among Federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement through the sharing of intelligence and to supporting coordinated law enforcement efforts.

I will be glad to address any questions you may have at this time.