



# Northwest HIDTA

Serving the needs of 14 Northwest Counties

Benton  
Clark  
Cowlitz

Franklin  
King

Kitsap  
Lewis

Pierce  
Skagit

Snohomish  
Spokane

Thurston  
Whatcom  
Yakima

May-August 2009

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## Inside this issue:

NW HIDTA Threat Assessment & Strategy 2010	1
ISC Update	2
Training Schedule	2
Director's Message	3
Prevention/Treatment Initiative	4
Emerging Trends	6
Initiative News	7
Watch Center Stats	11
DHE Stats	11

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*This report is specially prepared for the ONDCP High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Program Edited by Theresa Blahato*

## Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area: Threat Assessment & Strategy 2010 by CIS Michelle Pham

The Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) incorporates 14 counties located on both the east and west sides of the Cascade Mountains. The western counties extend from the U.S.-Canada border south to the Oregon border and include Clark, Cowlitz, King, Kitsap, Lewis, Pierce, Skagit, Snohomish, Thurston, and Whatcom County. The Eastern Washington counties include Benton, Franklin, Spokane, and Yakima. Within these vastly divergent jurisdictions, the Northwest HIDTA facilitates cooperation and joint efforts among more than 96 international, federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies, involving over 392 personnel participating in the Northwest HIDTA regional law enforcement initiatives. The Northwest HIDTA works with these agencies to identify drug threats and implement the strategies necessary to address them

Powder cocaine is the greatest illicit drug threat to Washington State according to the 2009 Northwest HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey. Use and addiction are widespread throughout the region. Cocaine distribution and use contribute to a litany of other criminal activities. According to law enforcement officials in the state of Washington, powder cocaine contributes most to violent crime followed in order by heroin and methamphetamine.

Marijuana is the most prevalent drug of abuse in the state. Cannabis cultivation in both indoor and outdoor grows throughout Washington, and to a lesser extent Canada-produced marijuana, commonly known as 'BC Bud,' supply the drug market. Crystal methamphetamine is a significant drug threat to the state of Washington. Methamphetamine production, distribution, and use contribute to a wide range of criminal activities.

Heroin is a significant threat, most readily available in the urban areas of the state. MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, commonly known as ecstasy) is also a significant problem, although most seizures appear destined for other markets. Diverted pharmaceuticals and 'other opiates' pose an increasing risk. Other synthetic drugs like lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and gamma hydroxybutyric acid (GHB) are a low threat.

The Washington-Canada border serves as a major transshipment point for drugs, illicit proceeds, and precursors. Mexican national poly-drug organizations are

Continued from page 1

responsible for most large-scale drug distribution in Washington.

Gang membership in street gangs and outlaw motorcycle gangs in Washington has continued to increase over the past few years. These gangs are often violent and participate in a variety of illegal activities including drug and firearm trafficking, prostitution, auto theft, and burglary.

### Investigative Support Center Update by Theresa P. Blahato

The NW HIDTA Investigative Support Center (ISC) continues to support all major task force initiatives as well as national HIDTA program initiatives, such as the Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE) program, National Marijuana Initiative (NMI), Native American Project (NAP), and the National Methamphetamine and Pharmaceutical Initiative (NMPI). The Northwest HIDTA ISC is responsible for coordinating the DHE program with Oregon and Idaho, and prepares a monthly newsletter of significant highway seizures. The NW HIDTA ISC supports the NMI program through cooperative efforts with the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Washington State Patrol to ensure that marijuana seizures are entered into the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) National Seizure System (NSS). In addition, the HIDTA ISC prepares trend analysis on indoor and outdoor grow operations in Washington state. The NW HIDTA ISC supports the NAP through analytical case support and is currently preparing a strategic report on drug trafficking trends in Indian Country. The NW HIDTA ISC also works cooperatively with federal, state, local, and tribal agencies to document methamphetamine and pharmaceutical drug abuse and trends in the state in support of the NMPI.

### TRAINING SCHEDULE

The NW HIDTA coordinates with the National Guard Midwest Counterdrug Training Center (MCTC), National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC), and other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to present these courses.

There is not cost to the attendees or their agencies, except for per diem, if applicable.

The courses are open to federal, state, and local law enforcement officers, criminal intelligence analysts, program analysts, and military personnel assigned to counter-drug activities.

DATE	COURSE	PROVIDER	LOCATION
9/10-9/11/2009	Conspiracies	MCTC	Spokane
9/15-9/17/2009	Interview & Interrogation	MCTFT	Mason County
9/28-10/1/2009	Canine Narcotics Operations	MCTFT	Wapato PD
10/19-10/30/2009	Mobile FLEAT	DEA	Sacramento
10/26-10/30/2009	CADRE Clan Lab	CADRE	WSP Fire Training Academy
11/4-11/6/2009	Interview & Interrogation	MCTFT	Tacoma PD

Continued on page 4



## Director's Message by Dave Rodriguez

At the June Executive Board Meeting the current Threat Assessment & Strategy report, and the 2010 Initiatives and Budgets were approved and forwarded to ONDCP. These documents are required reports and critical in accomplishing the Northwest HIDTA mission. I wish to thank all of the individuals and participating agencies that contributed to these well documented reports. The Threat Assessment and Strategy report was distributed to the Law Enforcement and Prevention Treatment subcommittees, and is the subject of a separate article in this newsletter.

There were a number of useful and productive conferences that many of you attended during this last quarter to include the Task Force Commanders conference in Hood River, the Marijuana Eradication Planning meeting in Wenatchee, and the National Methamphetamine and Pharmaceutical Initiative meeting in Nashville, which coincidentally was Director Gil Kerlikowske's first keynote speech in his new position. I also had the opportunity to participate at a briefing for the Public Lands Committee at ONDCP on several significant investigations taking place nationwide that impact our Public Lands and Reservations. The Yakima LEAD Task Force gave an outstanding presentation on the Vineyards case that was featured in the last newsletter.

I also wish to congratulate the three agencies that received agency of the year awards from the Western States Information Network (WSIN): Northwest Regional DTF in Bellingham, Tacoma Police Department SIU, and the aforementioned Yakima LEAD TF. Unfortunately the WSIN conference had to be canceled this year due to travel restrictions.

Lastly as the Obama Administration develops its first *National Drug Control Strategy*. I as well as treatment providers, law enforcement officials, doctors, researchers, social workers, parents, and others from our community participated in a roundtable with Director Gil Kerlikowske and US Representative Jay Inslee. This will be one of several roundtables conducted around the country that will lay the foundation for the future of drug policy. Congressman Inslee did a great job in moderating the roundtable, and his staff did a great job in planning and logistics for the meeting and the press conference.

US Representative Jay Inslee at rear & Drug Czar Gil Kerlikowske, Seattle's former police chief, take part in a drug-policy discussion with other officials in Shoreline, WA on 8/8/09.

Photo Credit: Daniel Houghton/The Seattle Times



### Prevention/Treatment Initiative by Steve Freng, Manager

(Note: This piece is excerpted from an article by the author entitled “Combating Meth: The Washington State Approach, published in *The Health Exchange Newsletter*, Volume 4, August 2009).

During the 10 years spanning the second half of the ‘80’s and the first half of the ‘90’s, an average of 42 clandestine methamphetamine laboratories were discovered and dismantled throughout Washington State each year. However, change was stirring during this period, prompted in part by an economic downturn (especially impacting rural communities) and more directly by the dissemination of simple “recipes” for manufacturing meth on the Internet. By 1996 a total of 153 meth labs, representing a 300% increase from the preceding year, were seized throughout the state.

Then in 1997 the total increased to 203 and, by happenstance more than design, that same year the Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (NW HIDTA) was designated by the Office of National Drug Control Policy. Although not yet considered the principal drug threat in the region, the NW HIDTA almost immediately began allocating resources to the region’s drug task forces in order to help them respond to the increasing production, availability and trafficking of methamphetamine. Concurrently, allocations also began to community-based partner agencies, both prevention and treatment, thus implementing what has come to be known as the “three-legged stool” strategy in Washington State, collaborating and coordinating the efforts of law enforcement, prevention and treatment organizations toward a common goal of reducing the demand, production, availability and use of methamphetamine.

By 1998 the number of meth labs seized in Washington State had risen to 349 and then more than doubled to 789 in 1999. The epidemic was beginning to overwhelm all of the collaborating agencies. Because requests from citizens and civic groups for meth presentations began to increase dramatically and because many well-meaning but misinformed agencies and individuals were providing presentations of questionable value around the state, the TOGETHER! Coalition in Thurston County and the NW HIDTA developed the Meth Safety Education Program, a standardized presentation curriculum for which citizens could be trained as presenters in their own communities. These groups of citizens were organized as “Meth Action Teams”, one in each participating county, comprised of professionals representing several disciplines as well as concerned citizens. As the year 2000 came to a close, seven Meth Action Teams had provided 119 Meth Safety Education Program presentations to nearly 2,700 attendees in 14 counties – while yet the number of meth labs seized throughout the region rose to a total of 1,454.

Resources were obviously being stretched to the limit, so in that same year an interdisciplinary group based in Tacoma-Pierce County requested and received funding for the Washington State Methamphetamine Initiative (WSMI). Toward furthering the interdisciplinary strategies developed in previous years, the WSMI allocated resources to drug task forces to support proactive – rather than reactive – investigations of meth production; provided resources for the development of protocols and interventions for Drug Endangered Children; supported the development of Family Services Treatment Programs within the Family Courts for families in meth-affected homes; increased the resources available to the state Department of Ecology for lab clean-up; and supported community coalitions across the state to organize and mobilize their communities to address the many consequences of meth production

and addiction. Meth Action Teams were implemented in each of the 39 Washington State counties under the leadership of local law enforcement and community organizing agencies. And the first annual statewide Methamphetamine Summit was conducted in order to bring all participating professions and citizens together to share practices, assist with problem solving and hear from local, national and international experts. However, at this early stage of the strategy, the epidemic was still raging -- with a total of 1,890 meth labs seized throughout the state in 2001.

Given the emphasis on community organizing and mobilization, treatment, law enforcement and the environment, efforts at public education also required more resources as well as a reinvigoration. The Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council (GSSAC) – a NW HIDTA partner agency located in Spokane County – stepped into this role with the introduction in 2001 of the *Washington Meth Watch* Retailers Program. *Meth Watch* originally targeted retail stores that sold items used as precursor chemicals when “cooking” methamphetamine and helped establish the development of effective communications between retailers that witnessed suspicious transactions and local law enforcement. In collaboration with each county’s Meth Action Team, the program cut off supply sources for meth cooks, reduced theft and fraud, reduced product sales for illicit uses and provided a wealth of law enforcement intelligence.

The continuing annual increases in the number of meth labs in Washington State finally began to abate, with 1,697 labs seized in 2002. Increased law enforcement resources and attention, strengthened by public education and involvement began to stem the tide. The Washington State Legislature passed legislation that enhanced sentences for meth cooks whose activities endangered children, regulated precursor chemicals such as pseudoephedrine and anhydrous ammonia, and restricted the sales of products containing ephedrine, pseudoephedrine and phenylpropanolamine. And 2002 saw the implementation of the *Washington Meth Watch* Community Education Program, built on the foundation established by the Meth Safety Education Program. The GSSAC, in collaboration with the NW HIDTA, updated the presentation curriculum, designed training materials and distributed the presentation on PowerPoint to participating presenters for their on-going use within their own communities. To date, 477 presenters have been trained and provided with supporting materials, and have conducted nearly 1,000 presentations to over 34,000 Washington State citizens, increasing community awareness of the scope and breadth of meth-related issues.

The epidemic finally showed clear signs of subsiding. In 2003 a total of 1,480 meth labs were seized, followed by 1,337 in 2004 and 806 in 2005. The numbers continue to decline, with 137 meth labs seized throughout Washington State last year. Yet, challenges remain. The proliferation of meth labs over a 10-year period encouraged addiction to set down deep roots in Washington State. Overwhelming meth-related caseloads are still to be found in the treatment system, the child welfare system, the criminal justice system and the medical and dental care systems. Although the entrepreneurship of drug trafficking organizations more than made up for the decrease in the availability of domestic methamphetamine, foreign governments are beginning to address such exportation and an uptick in local meth labs is again being seen in the region and across the country. Rural communities, once relatively immune from the drug epidemics of past decades but often hit hardest by the consequences of meth production and use, continue to struggle with damaged families, impaired employees and meth-related crime.

Methamphetamine has happened to our communities differently than marijuana, heroin or cocaine happened to our communities. It severely impacts the lives of individuals and families and damages the social fabric in profound ways. Unlike any other drug that has swept through the culture, it creates alarm within citizens and communities to the extent that they mobilize, attend meetings, become politically active and get involved on many levels. The successes met in Washington State have been based on a statewide, multi-systemic strategy involving professionals and citizens alike and we intend to pursue future successes in this same way, lessening and hopefully eliminating this scourge called methamphetamine.

If you have questions or comments regarding the Northwest HIDTA Prevention/Treatment Initiative, Steve Freng can be contacted at 206.352.3603 or [sfreg@nw.hidta.org](mailto:sfreg@nw.hidta.org).

## Emerging Trends

The following highlights emerging trends that federal, state, and local law enforcement officers observed at marijuana grow operations:

- Women are becoming increasingly involved in all aspects of marijuana grow operations. One female tender was recently arrested in Walla Walla and served as the “spokesperson” for her two male cohorts. Additionally, women are being recruited by DTO’s to assist in money laundering activities and the purchase/registration of vehicles.
- Reports have surfaced of marijuana growers tying down marijuana plants. This forces the plants to grow closer to the ground and covered by other vegetation, making them difficult to spot by helicopter.
- DTO’s are taking advantage of the “drip irrigation” provided by tree leaves in fiber farms in Eastern Washington. Man-made/powered irrigation systems and equipment, as well as the presence of grow tenders, are unnecessary using this system.
- Marijuana grows were discovered on the Kalispel and Colville reservations in June 2009. The presence of Mexican Nationals on the reservations, both located in remote areas of the state, is a recent occurrence.
- Tenders at live-in grows are taking extra measures to avoid detection. Tenders have stopped lighting fires and using flashlights at night, and rely on propane stoves to cook. Supply drops are also done under the cover of darkness.

## Initiative News

### US Marshals Service

During the week of June 8, 2009, members of Operation FALCON 2009 (Federal and Local Cops Organized Nationally) captured 140 fugitives and cleared 206 warrants in the Western Washington area. The operation, led by the US Marshals, included 65 officers from various federal, state and local agencies that were formed into nine teams. Each team focused on finding and arresting fugitive sex offenders, violent offenders, and gang members in King, Pierce, Clark, Thurston, and Snohomish counties. Operation Falcon was an opportunity not only for federal, state and local officers to work together, but also for the analysts of those agencies represented.



Photo: Snohomish Regional Drug Task Force

### Snohomish Regional Drug Task Force

On February 5, 2009, the Snohomish Regional Drug Task Force took down a drug trafficking organization operating in Snohomish County. The case resulted in six federal indictments and one state indictment. Total seizures during and after the investigation included:

- 4782 dosage units of 80 mg Oxycontin
- 8.7 kg cocaine powder
- \$232,968.00 US Currency
- 7 vehicles
- 2 motorcycles
- 1 house



Photo: Snohomish Regional Drug Task Force

### Yakima County HIDTA Task Force

#### Law Enforcement Against Drugs (LEAD)

LEAD Task Force, together with DEA Yakima Resident Office, and Yakama Nation Tribal Police Department joined in eradication efforts, which began July 27-31, 2009 and then again from August 3-5, 2009. In eight days, their combined efforts resulted in the identification of 26 grows, the eradication of over 112,000 plants, which were harvested from the Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation Reservation, and the arrest of six suspects.

### Tacoma Regional HIDTA Task Force

Alfonso Ibanez-Martinez aka Alejandro Barragan Lopez was sentenced on July 14, 2009 to 13 years of prison and five years of supervised release. Ibanez-Martinez was charged and convicted of conspiracy to distribute heroin, distribution of heroin, and possession of heroin with intent to distribute. Ibanez-Martinez was a subject in a 2007 DEA Tacoma Resident Office and Tacoma Police Department investigation that culminated in the seizure of over 48 pounds of heroin -- the largest amount that has ever been seized in any previous Tacoma case.

In another investigation, DEA Tacoma Resident Office and the U.S. Immigration and Customs

Enforcement agents conducted a joint case codenamed Operation Arctic Chill. The 14-month investigation resulted in the arrests of 31 individuals.

This case targeted the Martin Oseguera-Chavez drug trafficking organization that supplied methamphetamine and cocaine from Mexico, through California, into Washington State. Drugs, guns, and money were seized in a series of search warrants that included more than 35 locations in Washington, including Federal Way, Lynnwood, Olympia, Puyallup, Rainier, Roy, Tacoma, Vancouver, and Yelm. A search warrant was also served at a residence in Modesto, California, where a methamphetamine super lab was discovered along with a pound of methamphetamine. At the culmination of the investigation, agents seized more than 19 pounds of meth, ¼ pound of cocaine, approximately \$60,000 in US currency, 22 vehicles, and 23 firearms. Some of the vehicles had hidden compartments.

Those arrested and charged include the following individuals:

- Martin Oseguera Chavez, 50
- Maria Oseguera Lopez, 50
- Maria Del Socorro Oseguera Oseguera, 33
- Baldemar Huerta Galvan, 28
- Alberto Rosales Torres, 39
- Erika Oseguera Oseguera, 26
- Rosalinda Oseguera Lopez, 44
- Doug Alfonso, 48
- Rigoberto Farias Contreras, 46
- Daniel Camarena, 30
- Miguel Mora Esquivel, 36
- Harold Wesley Moreland, 59
- Gabriela Ludmila Safr, 28
- Crescenciano Yanez Bucio, 30
- Bernardo Salazar Ponce, 28
- Juan Pablo Rincon-Lopez, 30
- Juan Antonio Trejo-Lopez, 30
- Gregorio Gomez-Lopez, 34
- Eduardo Martinez, 27



Crystal Methamphetamine  
Photo: DEA



Combined Federal, State and Local Law Enforcement  
Photo: DEA

### Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Narcotics Task Force

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Narcotics Task Force concluded a six month investigation on July 30, 2009, combating a cocaine and methamphetamine drug trafficking organization in Southwest Washington. Throughout the duration of this case, agents made multiple, narcotics purchases from key members of the organization, subsequently linking them to other co-conspirators, residences, and drug stash houses. This organization was responsible for bringing multiple pounds of methamphetamine and multiple kilograms of cocaine into the Cowlitz/Wahkiakum area per week.

A series of search warrants were executed, including the search of 12 separate residences. A total of eight suspects were arrested and more than a pound of cocaine,  $\frac{1}{3}$  pound of methamphetamine, marijuana, ten handguns, five rifles, ammunition, cash and other evidence were seized from the search warrant locations. The firearms were seized from over half of the residences and included stolen handguns, guns with their serial numbers obscured, and one that was hidden in a kitchen appliance.

Those arrested included the following subjects:

- Ignacio Tovar Arechiga, 25.
- Jesus Alejandro Mejia Rosas, 25
- Jose Luis Ramirez, 41
- Adelaido Orozco Soto, 43
- Juan Angel Orozco Quintero, 24
- Adrian Orozco, 22
- Eduardo Luis Pelayo Muro, 20
- Adalberto Jimenez Macias, 32
- Carlos Armando Perez, 43

### Clark-Skamania Narcotics Task Force

In 2007, members of the Clark/Skamania Drug Task force and the DEA Portland District Office initiated an investigation on a Vancouver, Washington-based poly-drug organization with outdoor marijuana grows in Eureka, California; Yakima, Washington; and Cowlitz County, Washington. The primary leader of the organization was also involved in selling methamphetamine, while other family members distributed heroin.

In July 2009, this investigation, aided by the efforts of Multnomah County Sheriff's Office Drug Unit; WSP Reconnaissance and Arrest Team (RAT); the STABO team; Forestry Department; ATF Vancouver; Cowlitz/Wahkiakum DTF; Cowlitz SWAT Team; and the LEADS DTF in Yakima County, resulted in 10 arrests, with subjects facing federal charges. Additionally, 122 pounds of processed marijuana; 19,541 marijuana plants; one hand gun; 1,581 gross grams of heroin; and 1,041 gross grams of cocaine; and over \$75,000 in cash

were seized. Another 5 ounces of heroin was found during the arrest of one suspect.

Detectives executed a search warrant on the suspect's residence and vehicle. Upon entry into the home, three other subjects were encountered and taken into custody. Entry officers also observed heroin and cocaine in plain view, while doing a protective sweep of the remainder of the home. Some of the heroin and the majority of the \$75,000 seized were found hidden in the dash/heat vent area of a different vehicle parked in the garage.

The main suspect dumped all of his cell phones and fled the area. He was arrested by the US Marshal's Office in Keyes, California, shortly thereafter.



Photo: Clark-Skamania Narcotics Task Force

### Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE) Corridor Projects

This year, Washington State is participating in two Corridor Projects: I90/I94/I82/I84 Corridor Project and the Northwest Public Safety Project. The I90/I94/I82/I84 Corridor Project goes from Seattle, Washington to Boston, Massachusetts. Participating states include: Colorado, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming, as well as Canada. The Northwest Public Safety Project runs along Interstate 5 (I-5) from the Washington-Canada border to the California-Mexico border and includes California, Oregon, Washington, and Canada. The Corridor Projects began Memorial Day weekend and will run through early October. States coordinate 2-3 day enforcement operations during this time period at least once a month, and do additional operations based on available personnel and funding to enhance traffic safety along the corridor.

Several highway operations took place during the Memorial Day and Fourth of July Day weekends. The following charts document activities during the holiday weekends.

#### Memorial Day DHE Emphasis

	I5	I90	I82	SR97
<b>Total Violator Contacts</b>	2,874	1,990	12	153
<b>Total Citations</b>	2,198	1,264	15	79
<b>Total Infractions</b>	4,128	2,782	15	174
<b>Aggressive Driving Citations</b>	546	323	0	14
<b>Reckless Driving Citations</b>	9	5	0	0
<b>Total Collisions</b>	83	48	0	0
<b>Fatal Collisions</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>DUI Arrests</b>	56	31	0	4
<b>Misdemeanor Drug Arrests</b>	43	14	0	6
<b>Felony Drug Arrests</b>	2	0	0	2
<b>Warrants</b>	13	5	0	0
<b>DWL Suspended Revoked</b>	57	30	1	3
<b>Stolen Recovered</b>	3	0	0	0
<b>Other Criminal Arrests</b>	78	34	1	4

Source: NW HIDTA

### July 4th DHE Emphasis \*

	I5	I90	SR97
Total Violator Contacts	16	16	38
Total Citations	94	94	14
Total Infractions	18	18	40
Aggressive Driving Citations	5	5	2
Reckless Driving Citations	4	0	0
Total Collisions	14	14	0
Fatal Collisions	14	14	0
DUI Arrests	0	14	0
Misdemeanor Drug Arrests	0	0	0
Felony Drug Arrests	0	0	0
Warrants	0	0	0
DWL Suspended Revoked	0	0	0
Stolen Recovered	0	0	0
Other Criminal Arrests	0	0	1

\*Note: No corridor activity reported to NW HIDTA for I-82  
 Source: NW HIDTA

### Watch Center YTD Stats

