



County of Tulare

HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING (HIDTA)

OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY

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Drug trafficking in Tulare County continues to increase. The geographic and economic features attracting worldwide attention to Tulare County also attract marijuana cultivation/trafficking interests. Lack of education, low income and high unemployment provide a large workforce for persons seeking to staff marijuana cultivation/trafficking operations. Marijuana cultivation/trafficking organizations use Tulare County public lands, and the National Park land, to conceal the cultivation of marijuana because of the isolated mountainous regions.

The continued rise in marijuana value promotes increased violence among marijuana cultivation/trafficking cartels. The result of this large cash crop is that illegal growers continually modify their techniques to avoid detection by law enforcement. Grow sites are more numerous but much smaller in size and Growers utilize a variety of chemicals and fertilizers to assist the plants, displaying little regard for the environment or the dangers that these chemical pose to humans and wild life.

Tulare County relies on support from the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program to combat drug trafficking. In the FY2011 proposed budget, HIDTA is reduced \$29 million, or approximately 12%, (\$239 million to approximately \$210 million). This dramatic reduction would seriously impair a highly-successful program that has made major contributions to disrupting and dismantling international, multi-state and local drug trafficking organizations operating out of and affecting our state and region.

The HIDTA Program is a unique partnership between federal, state and local law enforcement agencies that has a demonstrated history of efficiency, effectiveness and innovation. The CVC HIDTA achieved a return on investment (ROI) of \$6,166 in illegal drugs, cash and assets taken from traffickers for every \$1 of HIDTA funds expended.

During calendar year 2009 the Tulare County Sheriff's Department eradicated over 200,000 marijuana plants from 66 grow sites. Marijuana investigations in Tulare County resulted in the arrest of 54 suspects and seizures of 36 weapons. The team served approximately 20 search warrants throughout the season stemming from marijuana investigations.

The effect of the proposed 12% budget reduction would eliminate all special programs for which this HIDTA is significantly involved including the Domestic Marijuana Eradication (DME) and Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE) Initiatives both of which operate with CV HIDTA support in several counties in the Central Valley. The reduction of each HIDTA's baseline by 12% would take

its toll. However, because the CV HIDTA has received almost ½ of it's funding through the past several years from what is identified in the HIDTA budget as supplemental funding the impact on the CV HIDTA is catastrophic, potentially resulting in a cut of almost half our budget. In the CVC HIDTA, we would be forced to eliminate several drug task forces and numerous positions.

Without funding and support from HIDTA programs Tulare County's efforts would be greatly strained with projected significant reduction in seizures, arrests and eradication and we are asking for level funding for FY2011.

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