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## **NEW THREAT ASSESSMENT: MEXICAN DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS INCREASE Foothold IN OREGON**

### **METH AND MARIJUANA WIDESPREAD**

(Salem, Oregon) Despite a dramatic disappearance of methamphetamine labs in Oregon, Mexican drug traffickers are increasing imports into the state, resulting in meth continuing to be Oregon law enforcement's greatest drug threat.

The just-released Oregon HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) 2010 Threat Assessment Report also explains that the methamphetamine being seized by law enforcement has switched from powder to the more potent and addictive form of "crystal meth."

"The threat posed from meth for Oregon and the Northwest is worse than all other illegal drugs combined," says Chris Gibson, Oregon HIDTA Director. "And this is happening despite more restrictions by the Mexican government on pseudoephedrine imports. The Mexican cartels are finding new and different ways to make Oregon a major customer."

Oregon HIDTA has identified 145 drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) and eight money laundering operations with foreign and domestic connections that are actively operating throughout Oregon.

Mexican DTOs dominate the transportation and distribution of meth, heroin, cocaine and Mexican-produced marijuana in the state.

Gibson says more Mexican drug trafficking organizations are using production facilities in South America and even California to avoid increased scrutiny in Mexico.

More than 90 percent of Oregon law enforcement surveyed this year reported that meth is their area's greatest drug threat, with 96 percent indicating that meth is the drug that contributes most toward violent and property crime.

The new Threat Assessment Report also says the availability of marijuana continues to increase in Oregon as production and trafficking have expanded. Potency is also stronger, with THC at the highest levels since testing began in 1976.

As medical marijuana cultivation has become more prevalent in the state, grow sites have become more lucrative targets for theft and violence.

“There is no question that the medical marijuana law in Oregon has resulted in extensive abuse, and it just keeps getting worse,” says Gibson. “It’s a law that continues to be exploited.”

Established by the Office of National Drug Control Policy in 1999, the Oregon HIDTA Program identifies and targets the most serious and prolific drug trafficking organizations operating in Oregon.

The organization fosters working relationships with more than fifty federal, state and local law enforcement agencies in its mission to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations.

The Oregon HIDTA reduces drug availability by creating intelligence-driven, multi-agency drug task forces aimed at eliminating or reducing domestic drug trafficking and the supply of drugs brought into the state.

Among other activities, the Oregon HIDTA conducts field operations and investigations, provides quality training to law enforcement personnel, and shares criminal intelligence with law enforcement.