



Washington/Baltimore HIDTA Frederick County, Virginia Threat Assessment August 2016

Washington/Baltimore



HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING AREA

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Executive Summary

Frederick County is the northernmost county of Virginia. Four counties of West Virginia border it to the north and west, and Clarke, Warren, and Shenandoah Counties border it to the east and south. Frederick County is included in the Winchester, VA-WV Metropolitan Statistical Area, which is also included in the Washington-Baltimore-Arlington, DC-MD-VA-WV-PA Combined Statistical Area. Frederick County has a population of 83,199, a 6.2 percent increase over the last five years. The largest city in Frederick County is Winchester, the county seat, with a population of 27,284. While there are only two other incorporated towns in Frederick County (Middletown and Stephens City), there are 49 unincorporated communities.

The area is a significant center of illegal drug production, manufacturing, importation, or distribution.

Frederick County is a significant center of illegal drug importation and distribution as evident by the number of state and federal drug investigations and prosecutions. The availability of drugs within Frederick County is increasing along with the presence of DTOs with ties to international and domestic source areas and distribution sites throughout the region.

Heroin, pharmaceuticals, cocaine, methamphetamine and synthetic drugs are priority drug threats in the county. Methamphetamine production is a problem in Frederick County. Numerous DTOs operate in Frederick County. African-American DTOs are present in Frederick County, which are primarily involved with street level, mid-level and wholesale distribution of crack cocaine and heroin. Caucasian American DTOs are present in Frederick County, which are primarily involved with street level, mid-level and wholesale distribution of heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine. Mexican DTOs are present in Frederick County, which are primarily

involved with street level, mid-level and wholesale distribution of cocaine, methamphetamine, pharmaceuticals, and synthetic drugs.

State, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies have committed resources to respond to the drug trafficking problem in the area, thereby indicating a determination to respond aggressively to the problem.

State and local law enforcement agencies have committed resources to respond to the drug trafficking problem in Frederick County. Through their efforts, there is a clear indication of a determination to respond aggressively to the drug trafficking problem in the region.

The Drug Enforcement Administration has maintained an office in the Shenandoah Valley since 1997. This increase in personnel and resources was based upon several factors, to include surging heroin overdose deaths and injuries, and an increase in population. The Winchester RO is an active member of three drug and gang task forces in Virginia.

Drug-related activities in the area are having a significant harmful impact in the area, and in other areas of the country.

Drug-related activities occurring in Frederick County have far reaching implications, negatively impacting other parts of the country. The correlation between drug trafficking, drug abuse, drug-related deaths, and crime is evident throughout Frederick County.

Frederick County's location on the north-southwest corridor leading from Pennsylvania to the Southeast and Southwest Border from Florida to California makes the area a prime transshipment stop. The county is crossed by one of the major drug transportation corridors, Corridor A, identified by the National Drug Intelligence Center. Using this corridor, illicit drugs generally flow in a northerly direction from the southwestern areas of the United States, highlighting the route taken by traffickers on their way from the Southwest to the Virginia and Pennsylvania areas.

New York City, Houston, Philadelphia, California, Colorado, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. are the major source areas for drugs in Frederick County, but with the involvement of new groups, more drugs are being brought directly from outside of the United States borders, specifically Mexico.

In addition to the drug offenses themselves, the area experienced a significant amount of violent crime associated with the drug trade. Reasons for the relationship between trafficking and violent crime include competition for drug markets and customers, disputes among rivals involved in illegal drug markets, weapons proliferation, and disadvantaged communities where social controls are ineffective. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, 26% of violent crimes were committed by drug abusers. In 2015, there were 27 heroin-related deaths in the region.

The W/B HIDTA Threat Assessment concluded that the number of multi-state and international money laundering organizations, particularly those with connections to Mexico and Central America, operating in and around the W/B HIDTA region will increase.

A significant increase in allocation of Federal resources is necessary to respond adequately to drug-related activities in the area.

There are limited Federal investigative resources devoted to drug trafficking investigations in Frederick County. Such assets are needed to promote case coordination, intelligence sharing, and operational efficiency and effectiveness. Many communities in the county are suffering from the effects of the current economic state and do not have sufficient funding to launch new initiatives in response to escalating drug trafficking and addiction problems being seen in their jurisdiction.

Area Profile

Frederick County is the northernmost county of Virginia. Four counties of West Virginia border it to the north and west, and Clarke, Warren, and Shenandoah Counties border it to the east and south. Frederick County is included in the Winchester, VA-WV Metropolitan Statistical Area, which is also included in the Washington-Baltimore-Arlington, DC-MD-VA-WV-PA Combined Statistical Area. Frederick County has a population of 83,199, a 6.2 percent increase over the last five years. The largest

city in Frederick County is Winchester, the county seat, with a population of 27,284. There are only two other towns in Frederick

County (Middletown and Stephens City) in the county but, there are 49 unincorporated communities.



The county is an integral part of the greater metropolitan region with numerous major interstates and state route passing through the county. DTOs use many of these routes to source drug cities. Frederick County is traversed by I-81 and I-66, both major highways carrying millions of vehicles each month from Canada to Tennessee. Many drug traffickers and organizations as well as other regional, national, and international DTOs transport their illegal drug shipments by private and public conveyances using I-81.

New York City, Georgia, North Carolina, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. are the major source areas for drugs in Frederick County, but with the involvement of new groups, more drugs are being brought directly from outside of the United States borders, specifically Mexico.

Priority Drug Threats in Frederick County

	Priority 1 Drug	Priority 2 Drug	Priority 3 Drug	Priority 4 Drug	Priority 5 Drug
DEA Winchester Resident Field Office	Heroin	Pharmaceuticals	Synthetic Marijuana	Cocaine	Methamphetamine

Source: W/B HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey

Cocaine

Cocaine is highly available and a priority drug threat to Frederick County. Hispanic and Mexican DTOs, largely with ties to and/or based in North Carolina, supply wholesale amounts of cocaine. Retail distributors, generally Hispanic, come from nearby urban centers to include Baltimore, MD and Washington, DC. Independent traffickers dominate cocaine distribution at the retail level. Cocaine is transported along local highway interstates via private vehicles in hidden compartments. Cocaine is also shipped to the area via mail and express parcel delivery services. Blue Ridge Poison Control statistics for the western region of Virginia reported 29 cocaine incidents for 2014.

A current OCDETF international cocaine investigation began in 2013. The investigation involved the importation of cocaine from Colombia to the Dominican Republic, then by go-fast boats to Puerto Rico and ultimately to the Shenandoah Valley area of Virginia including Frederick County via the U.S. Postal Service. The Puerto Rico-based source of supply was a resident of Mount Jackson, in Shenandoah County until 2012 when he returned to Corozal, Puerto Rico. He had a previous federal conviction for money laundering in Puerto Rico where he was arrested by the FBI with 1.3 million dollars of Colombian cartel drug money. Following his

release from prison, he established distribution networks in Winchester, New York, and Boston. The DEA Winchester RO developed a confidential source into the main Shenandoah County-based distributor, and began making controlled purchases of cocaine at the end of 2013. Working in conjunction with the Northwest Virginia Regional Gang Task Force, BATF, ICE, the US Postal Service, the Special Operations Division and DEA Puerto Rico, the Winchester RO was able to uncover the methods used by this organization to communicate and move drugs to and money from the Winchester area. A total of eight controlled buys were conducted, in amounts ranging from one ounce to 12 ounces, and two assault rifles with obliterated serial numbers were also purchased. In December 2014, the Winchester RO initiated a Title III wire intercept on the cellular telephone utilized by the subjects. The wire intercept yielded intelligence that allowed agents to determine who the other sub-distributors in Virginia were as well as the ability to track shipments of money from the subjects in Puerto Rico. Agents learned that drugs were stored at a residence in nearby Woodstock, Virginia. On February 18, 2015, an arrest was made by DEA in Winchester with 20 ounces of cocaine and a 9 mm handgun. A subsequent search of the subject's residence in Shenandoah County led to the seizure of more than \$20,000 in cash, as well as numerous receipts showing where drug proceeds had been shipped to other organizational members in the past. It is estimated that five to six kilograms of cocaine were received from 2014 to his arrest in 2015. Indictments for the co-conspirators will be forthcoming later this year.

Crack Cocaine

Crack cocaine is readily available and inflicts harm to Frederick County. Cocaine is converted into crack by traffickers in Frederick County and is a problem for the county.

DEA reports local traffickers usually convert cocaine into crack cocaine locally, and supplies are also transported to the area from neighboring urban centers such as Baltimore, MD and Washington, DC. African American DTOs dominate the distribution of crack cocaine at the retail and wholesale levels in the region.

A recent investigation shows subjects began travelling to Winchester, Virginia from Baltimore, MD in late 2012 for the purpose of distributing crack cocaine. In early 2013, as heroin became more popular in the area, subjects began bringing multiple ounce quantities of heroin to Winchester to distribute. These subjects would travel to Winchester twice per week, stay for a day or two, and then return to Baltimore to resupply. The Baltimore sources of supply befriended and recruited established Winchester based drug distributors for the crack cocaine and heroin sales. From 2012 until October 2014, multiple controlled buys were made from members of this organization, and numerous witnesses were interviewed. Many of these witnesses reported seeing the Baltimore traffickers with firearms while they were in Winchester. Most of these subjects were arrested for various state drug charges during the investigation, but would continue to distribute drugs as soon as they were released. In October 2014, all three targets, as well as two Winchester residents, were indicted and arrested on federal charges for Conspiracy to Distribute more than 1,000 grams of heroin and more than 280 grams of crack cocaine in the Western District of Virginia. Targets 1 and 2 were also charged with firearms violations. In January 2015, a superseding indictment was handed down, charging several other Winchester-based distributors in the Conspiracy, as well as adding additional drug and Money Laundering charges. All eight defendants in this investigation pled guilty and have been sentenced, to include Target 1, who was sentenced in May 2016 to 13 years and nine months in prison. A statement of facts signed by Target 1 estimates that the ring distributed between 10 kilograms and 30

kilograms of heroin between 2009 and mid-2014. The co-conspirators also received and distributed between eight kilograms and 25 kilograms of crack cocaine. As stated in the prosecutor's memo, "It should be noted that [Target 1] had no personal or family ties to Winchester. Rather, Winchester was simply an attractive victim for his predatory heroin distribution." The arrests in this case effectively ended the availability of larger quantities of heroin available for purchase in the Winchester, VA area. Before their arrests, this organization had a significantly negative impact in the Winchester area and used violence and threats of violence to conduct their drug trafficking business. Many of the members acquired and sometimes carried firearms.

Heroin

Heroin is highly available and the priority drug threat to Frederick County. Heroin inflicts extreme harm on the county and is more available in the county compared to a year ago.

Since 2012, heroin use and trafficking has risen to epidemic levels, with both the advent of more organized drug trafficking organizations and an explosion in overdoses. Recent data from NWVRDGTF shows in 2012, 1 overdose death and 18 hospitalizations were reported as a result of heroin use in the region covered by the task force. 2013 data shows the beginning of the overdose epidemic in that 21 deaths and 100 hospitalizations were reported in the region. In 2014, 33 deaths and 73 hospitalizations were reported. In 2015, data shows 27 overdose deaths and 55 hospitalizations.

Heroin trafficking in the region has evolved over the past two years. The heroin in the upper Shenandoah Valley was once exclusively supplied by users/distributors (an "end-user" market). End users pooled their money and sent one or more people by vehicle to Baltimore, MD to buy heroin for the group's use along with limited re-distribution. Increasingly, however,

established heroin traffickers from Baltimore have supplanted the former end-user market. While the majority of the region's heroin problem is concentrated in the City of Winchester and Frederick, increasingly overdoses and drug transaction are creeping southward into Warren and Shenandoah counties. Users travel major roads to Baltimore and back to purchase heroin; Baltimore-based traffickers use the same roads to transport heroin to Northwest Virginia.

In July 2015, the DEA Winchester RO provided lead information concerning a Baltimore heroin supplier to the Baltimore County Police Department. The information resulted in the arrest of an African American for heroin distribution charges. He was sentenced to 25 years for selling heroin that led to 6 overdoses and 3 deaths.

From December 2015 and January 2016, the NWVRDGTf responded to four non-fatal overdose incidents in the Winchester area. Heroin traffickers were identified as the sources of supply for these incidents and were known to share one address in common. Blood samples obtained from three of the four victims returned positive for fentanyl. Agents continue to interview the victims and the witnesses in the four overdose incidents. The source of supply is believed to be a female in the West Virginia area. The Winchester RO is working closely with the West Virginia State Police, FBI Martinsburg and the Eastern Panhandle Task Force in this investigation. Of note, recent reporting indicates a significant increase of fentanyl-related deaths in Maryland in the past two years. As the heroin in the Shenandoah Valley is primarily sourced from that state, it is reasonable to assume more fentanyl and fentanyl-laced heroin will make its way to the Winchester RO area.

The Winchester RO and NWVRDGTf began a multi-jurisdictional investigation in April 2014. Over the course of several months, investigators and agents conducted interviews with heroin overdose victims to determine their sources of supply. Many of those interviewed

reported that they travel to Baltimore, often on a daily basis, to purchase at least gram quantities of heroin. Some individuals traveled multiple times per day, and reports include purchases between 30 to 100 grams of heroin at a time. Many of those interviewed reported that upon return to the Winchester area, they sold enough heroin to make the money to return to Baltimore the next day. As a result of these interviews, the commonly identified, Baltimore-based heroin source of supply for multiple overdoses was Target 1, who ran a large-scale drug trafficking organization with sub-distributors operating in the Winchester and the Martinsburg, West Virginia areas. Intelligence and direct evidence indicated that Target 1 was distributing one to two kilograms of heroin on a monthly basis. Throughout this investigation, law enforcement partners included the West Virginia State Police's Eastern Panhandle Task Force (Martinsburg, West Virginia), FBI-Martinsburg, DEA Baltimore, FBI Baltimore, FBI Winchester, as well as the Baltimore County Police Department and Baltimore Police Department. Locally identified sources of supply for these overdoses were identified, arrested and charged in the Western District of Virginia. All defendants cooperated and were sentenced in US District Court ranging from 72 months to 210 months incarceration. On April 7, 2016, Target 1 was sentenced to 25 years incarceration. Target 2, who pled guilty to the same charges as Target 1, was sentenced on June 15, 2016 to 31 years in prison. The significance of this case is shown in the dramatic drop of heroin overdoses soon after Target 1 was arrested in October 2014. Specifically, in the months before his arrest, overdoses, both non-fatal and fatal, totaled 13 in September 2014 and 10 for October 2014. Overdose deaths and injuries dropped to four in November 2014, indicating a direct correlation with the removal of Target 1 as a source.

On April 23, 2016, the NWVRDGTF and DEA responded to a double overdose incident in Winchester; one fatal overdose and one non-fatal overdose. The investigation identified a

West Virginia resident as the source of supply for the heroin in these overdoses. Agents contacted the Eastern Panhandle Drug Task Force in Martinsburg, West Virginia and requested their assistance with a search warrant was executed on Target 1's residence. The Winchester RO was also contacted by FBI-Winchester and advised one of the victims had ties to an ongoing human trafficking investigation they were conducting. Agents also learned Target 1 was the suspected source of supply in another non-fatal overdose in Strasburg, Virginia in 2015. Target 1 was arrested at the end of May 2016 in Ocean City, Maryland and charged with several crimes related to human trafficking and possession of heroin with the intent to distribute. It is believed Target 1 is the pimp for prostitution of several females, but also uses them to transport heroin and other narcotics along the East Coast. As a result of this investigation, the Winchester RO joined the I-81 Corridor Human Trafficking Working Group consisting of members of the Winchester FBI and law enforcement agencies from Shenandoah Co., Frederick Co., Clarke Co, City of Winchester, town of Strasburg, and Winchester Medical Center medical personnel as well as local and Federal prosecutors' offices. The group meets on a monthly basis to address and coordinate investigations involving human trafficking, which goes hand in hand with drug distribution, general crime and illegal immigration cases.

Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine is readily available and a priority drug threat in Frederick County. Methamphetamine production is a problem for Frederick County.

Crystal methamphetamine is the variety that is sold most frequently and is commonly produced using the "one pot" method. Hispanic traffickers (largely Mexican traffickers) control distribution at the wholesale level, while Caucasian and independent traffickers are responsible for distribution at the retail level. The crystal methamphetamine available in the area is of

Mexican origin, which is primarily obtained from wholesale suppliers located in North Carolina and Georgia. Methamphetamine is transported via private vehicles or shipped via mail and express mail/parcel delivery services. There is also a suspected link to the Hispanic street gang Sureños or SUR 13, affiliated with the Mexican Mafia, in two recent Shenandoah County investigations.

Blue Ridge Poison Control statistics for the western region of Virginia, which includes the Winchester Resident Office AOR, reported 29 methamphetamine incidents for 2014.

Pharmaceuticals

Pharmaceuticals are highly available and a priority drug threat to Frederick County. DEA reports that pharmaceuticals inflicts extreme harm on the county. The illegal use of diverted prescription drugs has increasingly become a problem as the drugs are more available than in previous years. Other primary methods of drug diversions being reported are illegal sale and distribution by health care professionals and workers, “doctor shopping”, internet pharmacies, employee theft, and trafficking by organized groups. Drug seekers commonly forge or alter prescriptions and have been known to pose as physicians in an attempt to call in false prescriptions to unwitting pharmacies. The same individuals have been known to travel to neighboring states to obtain and fill prescriptions.

One distributor who sells Percocet and Hydrocodone reportedly is supplied in part by a doctor in Florida. In addition, in November 2015 DEA and the Northwest Virginia Regional Drug and Gang Task Force prevented the armed robbery of Schedule II through Schedule V pharmaceutical controlled substances that were slated for delivery to Valley Health's Winchester Medical Center.

Synthetic Drugs

Synthetic drugs are readily available and a priority drug threat in Frederick County. DEA reports that synthetic marijuana is sold on the streets by dealers who obtain the drug in New York. The dealers reportedly buy the drug from New York convenience stores and smoke shops that are run by Middle Eastern males. Bath salts are also available in the area.

In September 2015, two females in the region overdosed on an unknown substance; one of the overdoses was fatal. Law enforcement investigation indicated that the women had ingested "Smarties" candy treated with Flubromazolam, an unscheduled benzodiazepine. Both females had purchased the "Smarties" from an individual who reportedly bought them via the internet.

Drug Trafficking Organizations

Many DTOs operate in Fredericks County. The W/B HIDTA Threat Assessment concluded that the number of multi-state and international DTOs, particularly those with connections to Mexico and Central America, operating in and around the W/B HIDTA region will continue to increase.

Drug Trafficking Organizations in Frederick County

Group Characteristics	Primary Drug(s) Trafficked	Role		
		Street Level	Mid-Level	Wholesaler
African American	Crack Cocaine	✓	✓	✓
	Heroin	✓	✓	✓
	Cocaine			✓
Caucasian American	Cocaine			✓
	Heroin	✓	✓	✓
	Methamphetamine	✓	✓	✓
Mexican	Cocaine		✓	✓
	Methamphetamine	✓	✓	✓
	Methamphetamine	✓		
	Pharmaceuticals		✓	
	Synthetic Drugs	✓	✓	✓

Source: 2016 W/B HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey, DEA

African-American Groups

African-American DTOs are present in Frederick County, which are primarily involved with street level, mid-level and wholesale distribution of crack cocaine and heroin.

Caucasian American

Caucasian American DTOs are present in Frederick County, which are primarily involved with street level, mid-level and wholesale distribution of heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine.

Mexican Groups

Mexican DTOs are present in Frederick County, which are primarily involved with street level, mid-level and wholesale distribution of cocaine, methamphetamine, pharmaceuticals, and synthetic drugs.

Drug Abuse and Violent Crimes

The correlation between drug trafficking, drug abuse, and violent crime is evident throughout Frederick County.

Violent Crimes

Drugs are related to violent crime through the effect they have on users' behavior, generating violence and other illegal activity in connection with drug trafficking. National data show that trafficking in illegal drugs tends to be associated with the commission of violent crimes, and this pattern holds true in Frederick County. In 2014, there were 89 violent crimes in Frederick County, an increase from 69 in 2013.

Reasons for the relationship between trafficking and violent crime include competition for drug markets and customers, disputes among rivals involved in illegal drug markets, weapons proliferation, and disadvantaged communities where social controls are ineffective. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, 26% of violent crimes were committed by drug abusers.

Property Crimes

Generally, property crimes "shock the conscience" of society less than violent crimes against persons. Recent data indicates that 24.7 percent of drug abusers admitted to committing property crimes. WCNTF reports that robberies and burglaries for pharmaceuticals are a problem for the county. In 2014, there were 1,496 property crimes in Frederick County an increase from 1,341 in 2013.

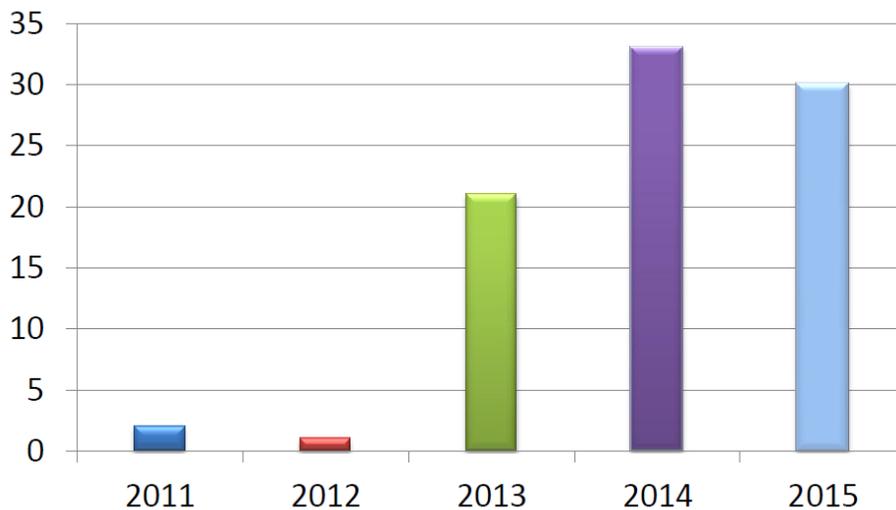
There is substantial evidence that property crimes, particularly thefts of all types committed by drug users and dealers, have significant negative effects on the communities of

Frederick County. Along with the increase in heroin use, there is a large number of thefts and robberies that are related to addicts trying to get money to support their addiction. Victims of these crimes are directly affected, but non-victims also suffer the effects of these crimes as their property and car insurance premiums are raised. The cost to the business community, in the form of higher purchase prices, is often passed onto consumers of every type of commodity sold in the local economy.

Drug Abuse

In 2015, there were 27 opiate-related deaths in the region.

Opiate Overdose Deaths



Most recent data from the Blue Ridge Poison Control for the western region of Virginia, which includes the Winchester Resident Office AOR, reported 29 methamphetamine incidents.

State reporting on fatal prescription opioid only overdoses in 2014 indicated that there were 38 such deaths. This represents approximately eight percent of the fatal prescription opioid only overdoses in Virginia in 2014. Frederick County had more than twice as many overdose

deaths as any other county in area. In 2014, 2.25 times as many people died from prescription opioid overdoses than died from heroin overdoses.

Money Laundering/Currency Movement

The W/B HIDTA Threat Assessment concluded that the number of multi-state and international money laundering organizations, particularly those with connections to Mexico and Central America, operating in and around the W/B HIDTA region will increase. This may require additional bulk smuggling operations to move large amounts of cash or money laundering organizations to move the illegal proceeds into what appear to be legitimate funds.

Drug traffickers in Frederick County employ basic money laundering methods like bulk shipment of cash, structured deposits, and wire remittances. Drug proceeds are used to purchase businesses, clothes, jewelry, cars, as well as for gambling, social, and sporting events. Some drug dealers in the area own businesses. Money launderers will usually operate cash based businesses such as gas stations, used car lots, restaurants/bars, and construction companies. In this reporting period, one drug trafficker ran a charitable organization which was used to launder drug proceeds.

Traffickers use the extensive transportation network in Frederick County to move bulk cash via highways, aircraft, and shipping using legitimate couriers and parcel services to transport numerous packages with small amounts of cash in each package. Distributing the cash in several packages reduces the impact a single seizure has on the organization. Large quantities of cash are sometimes concealed in hidden compartments built into cars and trucks to transport drugs.

State and Local Drug Enforcement and Intelligence Resources

State and local law enforcement agencies have committed resources to respond to the drug trafficking problem in Frederick County. Through these efforts, there is a clear indication of a determination to respond aggressively to the drug trafficking problem in the region.

Drug Enforcement Administration

The Drug Enforcement Administration has maintained an office in the Shenandoah Valley since 1997. On October 1, 2014, the office was upgraded to a Resident Office (RO). This increase in personnel and resources was based upon several factors, to include surging heroin overdose deaths and injuries, and an increase in population. The Winchester RO is staffed currently by one Resident Agent in Charge, four Special Agents, one Task Force Officer, one Intelligence Analyst, one Financial Investigator and an Administrative Assistant. The Winchester RO is an active member of three drug and gang task teams in Virginia.

Frederick County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Lenny Millholland has been extremely proactive in suppressing illegal drug trafficking in Frederick County. Frederick County Sheriff's Office has been a member of the Northwest VA Regional Drug and Gang Task Force since its inception in 1985. Frederick County dedicates three full time investigators to the drug task force to combat drugs in the area. Sheriff Millholland supports the task force by both assigning salaried personnel funded by his department, and also by sharing operational expenses for the task force. Frederick County and Sheriff Millholland have continuously demonstrated their proactive approach in combating illegal drugs in the region. Sheriff Millholland has recently implemented a program in which all patrol deputies carry Naloxone, and have attributed 4 saved lives from recent overdoses.

Northwest VA Regional Drug and Gang Task Force

The Northwest Virginia Regional Gang Task Force is comprised of nine participating jurisdictions with 28 expertly-trained and experienced narcotics and gang investigators assigned under the supervision of a VSP Task Force Coordinator. The task force consists of a team of specially trained and accomplished investigators assigned to gather intelligence and monitor activities of key members and associates of violent gangs, with the goal of arresting and prosecuting those responsible, ultimately dismantling organized criminal operations and discouraging additional gang presence in the region. During 2015, the task force initiated 874 cases and logged a total of 664 felony and misdemeanor arrests. The units collectively seized approximately 298.06 grams of heroin, as well as 79 grams of crack cocaine and 416 grams of powder cocaine. Investigators seized 547 grams of methamphetamine, and more than 3 kilograms of processed marijuana, as well as nearly 56 marijuana plants. During 2015, the task force seized \$72,650.46 and two vehicles. The combined “average street retail” value of the drugs seized during 2015 totaled \$755,829.00.

The Northwest Virginia Regional Drug and Gang Task Force which includes participation from the DEA developed and implemented a successful, comprehensive strategy to mitigate the local heroin threat. The strategy, hereafter referred to as the “Winchester Model,” includes stakeholders in enforcement, prevention, and the health sector (to include treatment providers). The collective efforts of these stakeholders have resulted in decreases in both lethal and non-lethal overdoses, down 23 and 18 percent, respectively, in the last year. There have also been increases in heroin-related arrests and seizures. One such high-profile arrest—the recent apprehension of a Baltimore heroin supplier—is indicative of the value of the Winchester Model.

Federal Resources Required

There are limited Federal investigative resources devoted to drug trafficking investigations in Frederick County. Such assets are needed to promote case coordination, intelligence sharing, and operational efficiency and effectiveness. Many communities in the county are suffering from the effects of the current economic state and do not have sufficient funding to launch new initiatives in response to escalating drug trafficking and addiction problems being seen in their jurisdiction.

Conclusions

The overall drug trafficking, drug abuse, and drug-related crime situation in Frederick County reveals substantial organized, criminal activity. The availability of drugs is increasing and will likely continue to do so in the foreseeable future. The emergence of new drugs in the area, such as pharmaceuticals, synthetic marijuana, and bath salts, pose substantial challenges for law enforcement agencies, the community, criminal justice system, and treatment programs in the region. The incidences of drug abuse and drug-related crime are rising.

The presence of violent DTOs, along with their growing sophistication and the increasing number of organizations tied to national and international sources of supply, pose a very real threat to the residents of Frederick County. DTOs are not only proliferating, but also becoming more aggressive in their marketing efforts, particularly those aimed at the youth and young adults of the area. The current state of the economy also makes criminal activity a more appealing alternative to many young adults. All too often they cannot find employment and turn to drugs for escape and easy money. The wide variety of DTOs operating in this region and the growing use of foreign languages and foreign nationals to protect these operations has added considerable complexity to drug enforcement, prevention, and treatment efforts.

Frederick County is in desperate need of enhanced investigative and intelligence resources given its strategic location on the East Coast and growing population. The proceeds of the thousands of drug transactions each day generate millions of dollars in the drug trade resulting in huge quantities of currency flowing out of the area with little or no disruption by law enforcement. A substantial amount of these funds are converted into valuable assets that sustain drug distribution operations and provide attractive status to drug dealers who seek to become the

“role models” for the youth in their neighborhoods. The identification and seizure of these monies is an essential element in any plan to affect impact on the drug situation in the region.

In summary, Frederick County has significant drug and crime problems and faces severe resource limitations, especially in light of the difficult fiscal constraints faced by the Virginia legislature and many local governments as they face shrinking revenues and growing deficits. Prompt action is required to ensure that the growing public safety and health threats do not cause irreparable damage to Frederick County.