



EXAMINING MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL DRUG TASK FORCE OPERATIONS IN ILLINOIS



Examining multi-jurisdictional drug task force operations in Illinois

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Key findings

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) held two focus groups with representatives of 19 multi-jurisdictional drug task forces and metropolitan enforcement groups serving 62 counties across Illinois. Participants discussed drug task force goals, priorities, operations, collaborative efforts, funding, and successes and challenges. Key findings based on comments from focus group participants include:

- Drug task forces are not confined to individual county borders and work undercover with confidential informants to purchase drugs and arrest drug dealers.
- Drug task force officers provide community education and sometimes offer assistance to local police on non-drug crime, such as homicide.
- Drug task force officers are extensively trained. Many find the job to be challenging and dangerous, but rewarding.
- Strategic priorities change over time, based on local trends in criminal drug activity. Local drug trends are identified in street-level investigations, and with input from local and federal law enforcement agencies.
- Drug task forces have experienced reductions in federal grant funding, local police resources, and personnel.
- While they are a source of funding, drug task force seizures of large assets are rare. In addition, little money is recouped from court fines of drug offenders.
- Operating costs are high due to salaries with benefits, undercover drug buys, fuel, vehicle maintenance, the need for technology such as cell phones, video cameras, and radios, and litigation insurance.
- Drug task forces collaborate with local prosecutors, parole agencies, federal criminal justice agencies, treatment providers, and pharmacies.
- Increasing amounts of evidence needed to prosecute a case create significant challenges to the drug task forces.

ICJIA also examined data on Illinois drugs task forces. The following are key findings based on available data.

- In 2011, a higher percentage of the drug task force arrests were felonies (89 percent) compared to the percentage of other law enforcement agency arrests for felonies (49 percent).

- Drug task forces made more controlled substances arrests than cannabis arrests, while other law enforcement agencies made more cannabis arrests.
- Drug task forces make more arrests for drug manufacture and delivery than drug possession, while other law enforcement agencies made more arrests for drug possession.
- The five-year average (2007 to 2011) of cannabis seized by drug task forces was 53.5 million grams and 336,168 grams of controlled substances.
- The five-year average (2007 to 2011) of weapons seized by drug task forces was 879 weapons per year.
- The five-year average (2007 to 2011) value of forfeitures—cash and property—for the drug task forces was \$4.3 million.

Introduction

Local police departments across the country struggle to fight drug crime without dedicated resources. Drug task forces were designed to combine resources of many local police departments and provide services across jurisdictions. Illinois' metropolitan enforcement groups (MEGs) and multi-jurisdictional drug task forces are charged with combating mid-level drug crime, including drug distribution and sales. MEGs and task forces are staffed by officers representing federal, state, county, and local police agencies. Officers often work undercover, using confidential sources, to purchase drugs in order to gather the intelligence to make arrests.

In Illinois in the 1970's, MEGs were developed through the Intergovernmental Drug Enforcement Act [30 *ILCS* 715/1]. MEG policy boards play an active, formal role in the management of operations. MEG policy boards are required to include an elected official and the chief law enforcement officer (or their designees) from each participating unit of government. An elected official from one of the participating agencies must be designated to act as financial officer of the MEG to receive operational funds. MEG operations are limited to enforcing drug laws and certain weapons offenses, as well as the investigation of street gang-related crimes (Adams, 2012).

Multi-jurisdictional drug task forces began in the 1980's through the organizational authority from the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act [5 *ILCS* 220/1]. Drug task force policy boards are not governed by legislated structure or composition requirements or restricted by statute in their scope of operations the way MEGs are (Adams, 2012). In this report, MEGs and multi-jurisdictional drug task forces will be referred to as "drug task forces."

Twenty-two drug task forces operate in Illinois. The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) supports these task forces with federal Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grants. In state fiscal year 2011, ICJIA funded 19 drug task forces (*Figure 1*). In 2011, ICJIA funded 208 drug task force officers and 19 support staff. Three drug task forces receive the majority of their funding through the Illinois State Police.

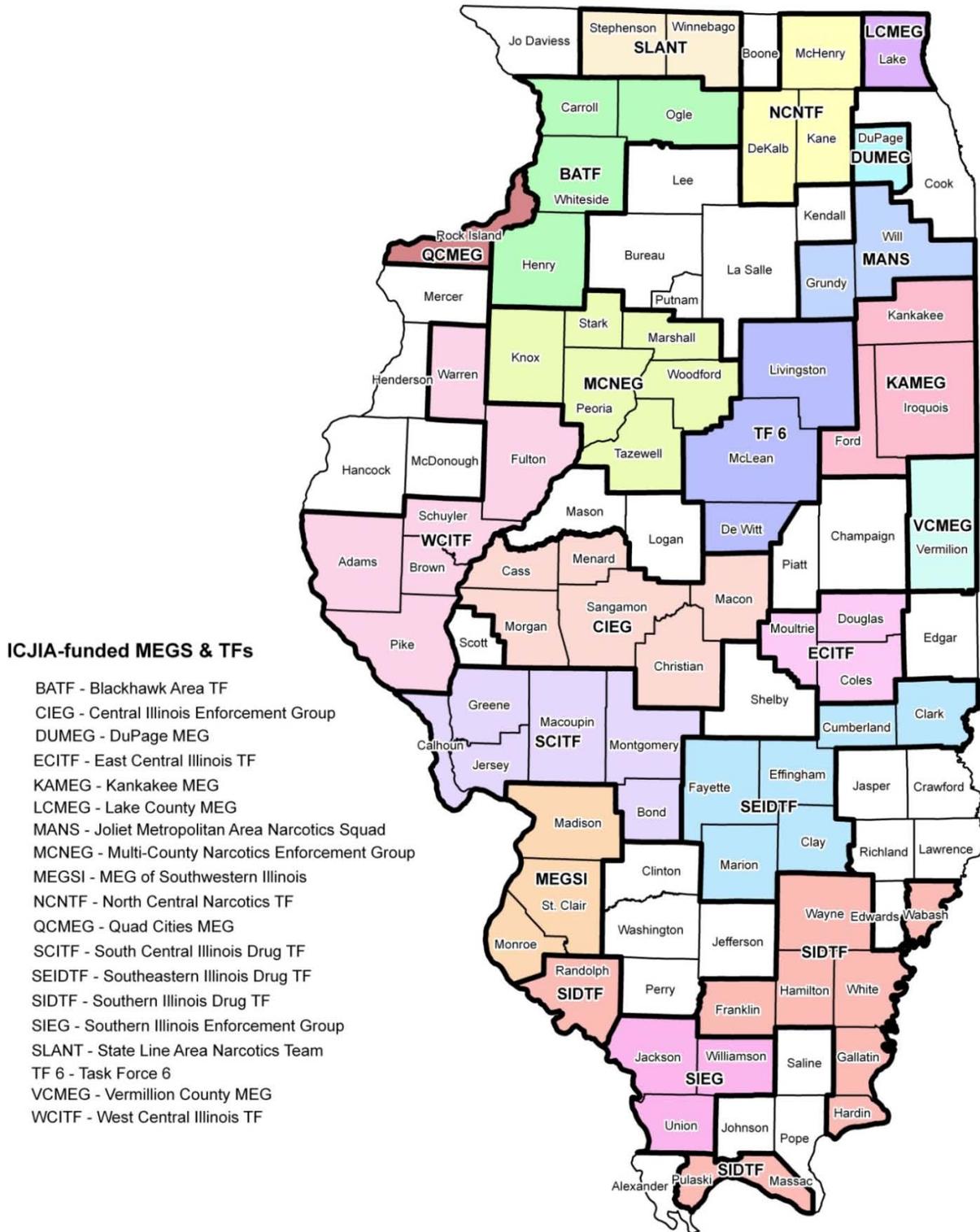
In order to study drug task force operations, ICJIA researchers conducted two focus groups comprised of officers working on ICJIA-funded drug task forces.

The goals of the focus groups were to:

- Provide general information on drug task forces in a published report.
- Identify programmatic issues that can help establish performance measures and strategic priorities.

Focus group participants offered information on drug task force goals and priorities, the identification of drug trends, operations, funding, collaboration, and success.

Figure 1
ICJIA-supported drug task forces in Illinois, 2011



Literature review

The crippling costs of drug crime can be seen throughout the criminal justice system. In addition, family disintegration, unemployment, domestic violence, and child abuse are associated with drug abuse (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2011). Law enforcement agencies throughout Illinois are combating the problem of illegal drug use and distribution through multi-jurisdictional drug task forces. By pooling resources and personnel, these task forces can cover a larger geographical area and directly impact mid-level drug activity.

The U.S. drug problem

Drug crime manifests in a number of ways. In 2007, 83 percent of drug-related arrests in the U.S. were for possession and 17 percent were for illegal sale or manufacture (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2007). In addition, crimes are often committed to obtain money to buy drugs. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that in 2004, 17 percent of state inmates had committed a crime for money to buy illegal drugs (2006). Finally, crimes are committed as a result of drug users' impairment. The 2004 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Facilities indicated that 32 percent of state prisoners were under the influence of illegal drugs at the time of their offense (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). Forty-six percent of offenders on probation reported being under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of their offense (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006).

One in four violent offenders committed the offense while under the influence of drugs (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). Violence associated with the drug trade also stems from drug distribution. Organized street gangs have control over the sale of the majority of illegal drugs within the United States. Violence is often used by gangs as a means of organizational discipline or to resolve territorial disputes (Fagan & Chin, 1990).

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the United States spends an average of \$600 billion a year in drug abuse-related costs (2011). Health costs include funding for counseling for substance abuse and addiction, as well as medical treatment for overdoses. Drug overdose is a leading cause of unintentional death, second only to motor vehicle deaths (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010). Furthermore, there is a high co-morbidity rate between drug abuse and mental health disorders such as antisocial personality disorder, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder (Regier, Farmer, Rae, Locke, Keith, Judd, & Goodwin, 1990). Often, people suffering from mental disorders use drugs to cope with and alleviate their symptoms.

Combating the drug problem

For decades, federal and local law enforcement agencies have battled manufacturing, distribution, and sale of drugs in the United States. The government began its war on drugs in the 1970s, when drug use increased throughout the country. In 1973, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) was created to enforce federal drug laws and combat drug crimes abroad. The DEA's main focus is to reduce interstate and international drug trafficking, as well as reduce the growth, manufacture, and distribution of drugs on a large scale ("DEA Mission Statement").

In the late 1970s, local police forces began to develop specialized drug units to focus on arresting drug dealers, interrupting low-level drug markets, and reducing the number of drugs available on the streets (Smith, Novak, Frank, & Travis, 2000).

Drug task force development

Local police departments have jurisdictional restraints rendering them unable to address drug markets extending through multiple jurisdictions, cities, and counties (Smith et al., 2000). Multi-jurisdictional drug task forces and metropolitan enforcement groups were created in the late 1970s to local agencies in the fight against drug crime (Smith, 2000).

Drug task force operations

Drug task forces are specialized units of law enforcement charged with drug investigation and enforcement efforts. Task forces have the ability to serve multiple geographical regions and investigate drug crimes that go beyond jurisdictional boundaries, targeting mid- to upper-level suppliers and dealers. Drug task forces play a critical role in “ensuring that the full spectrum of the drug market is targeted by law enforcement,” (Olson, 2004, p.181). In the 1988, the Byrne Formula Grant Program was created by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, providing funds to state and local governments for the creation or enhancement of drug task forces (Olson, Albertson, Brees, Cobb, Feliciano, Juergens, Ramker, & Bauer, 2002). By the late 1990s, more than 1,000 drug task forces were operating within the United States (Reno, Fisher, Robinson, Brennan, & Travis, 1998).

There are two main approaches to drug control efforts in the U.S.—demand reduction and supply reduction. Demand reduction focuses on drug prevention, deterrence, and treatment. Law enforcement offers some demand reduction programs such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) (Olson, 2004). Supply reduction consists of crop eradication, interdiction, reducing drug production and cultivation, seizing large numbers of drugs and assets, conducting systematic investigations, interrupting supply lines, and prosecuting drug organizations, suppliers, and distributors (Moore, 1990). Drug task forces use supply reduction techniques to combat drug markets (Olson, 2004).

Drug task forces are able to concentrate on higher level drug markets and more lethal drugs. Local police departments tend to have higher arrest rates for marijuana, while drug task forces target more hazardous substances such as cocaine, heroin, LSD, and methamphetamine (Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 2003). Drug task forces conduct lengthy investigations focusing on felony drug sale and delivery, while local police arrests are more commonly for misdemeanor drug offenses (Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 2003). As a result of their comprehensive investigations and higher-level targets, drug task force arrests are more likely to result in convictions and prison sentences than arrests of local police departments (Olson, 2004). According to Olson, “cases developed by task forces are stronger in court, since they tend to be more planned, often involve hand-to-hand/controlled buys, and also frequently involve video and audio-surveillance of transactions” (2004, p. 195).

Drug task force evaluation

Since drug task force arrests often span multiple departments and jurisdictions, confusion arises on who to credit for an arrest and who reports the arrests to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) data system (Olson, 2004). Often drug task forces will conduct investigations and leave the arresting procedures up to local law enforcement. When more than one department is involved in arresting individuals in the investigation, the problem of who receives credit emerges. In addition, crimes may be under-reported or never reported by the departments, or over-reported when more than one department reports the same arrest (Olson, 2004).

Evaluating drug task forces also is challenging. The most appropriate way to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of these task forces is a topic of debate amongst researchers (Smith et al., 2000). It is not possible to distinguish between reduction effects of drug task forces and other measures. Therefore, attributing a reduction in drug availability and crime specifically to drug task forces is difficult (Olson et al., 2002). Furthermore, comparing the quality and quantity of arrests made by drug task forces and local police departments does not provide an accurate measure of success for either entity (Olson, 2004). Drug task forces tend to have lower arrest rates than local police departments, and target different offenses. Drug task forces that remove fewer higher-level distributors likely have a greater effect on the drug market than removing a large number of low-level offenders and users (Olson, 2004).

Combating drug crime in Illinois

The transportation and sale of drugs is a significant problem in Illinois, particularly in Chicago. Chicago is a major transshipment and distribution hub for drugs in the Midwest, in part because of its central location and its multi-faceted transportation infrastructure (National Drug Intelligence Center, 2001). Illinois has a vast network of trains and highways, the nation's largest trucking center, and one of the largest airports in the United States—O'Hare International Airport (National Drug Intelligence Center, 2001). Drugs are continuously shipped into, and through, Chicago. Illinois is classified as a "High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area" by the Office of the National Drug Control Policy (2010). Illegal drugs and other illicit substances are commonly disguised and packaged with legal materials and funneled into the state. The majority of the drugs that enter Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and other nearby states pass through Chicago where they are broken down into smaller quantities and distributed (National Drug Intelligence Center, 2001).

Treatment options are limited for drug offenders in need across Illinois. As a result, many offenders are continuously arrested by law enforcement.

Drug task forces in Illinois

The fight against drug crime places a heavy burden on local police and the court system. In 2009, more than 95,000 drug arrests were recorded in Illinois (Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 2010). Local law enforcement agencies rely upon drug task forces to establish innovative and strategic ways to reduce the number of drug crimes and illegal substances available on the streets.

Illinois drug task forces target larger quantities and more dangerous substances than local police. Arrests by Illinois drug task forces are more likely to involve controlled substances such as cocaine or heroin, while local law enforcement arrests are predominantly for marijuana violations (Adams, 2012). In addition, arrests made by drug task forces in Illinois frequently involve distribution and sale of illegal substances.

Arrests made by drug task forces in Illinois are more likely to result in multiple charges and successful convictions. In a study conducted by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority in 2003, 40 percent of arrests made by drug task forces resulted in more than one charge and 90 percent of arrests resulted in a conviction.

Methodology

There were two sources of data used for this report—drug task force data including arrest data and qualitative data obtained through focus groups.

Drug task force data

Two sources of drug task force data were examined. The drug task forces' quarterly data reports submitted to ICJIA as a grant requirement and drug arrest data derived from criminal history record information (CHRI) were used. CHRI were submitted by law enforcement agencies in those counties with drug task forces to the Illinois State at the time of arrest. Therefore, this report examines arrests made by both drug task forces and other law enforcement agencies.

ICJIA has established an in-house computer linkage to certain elements of the state's Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) System through a cooperative agreement with the Illinois State Police. CHRI is the central repository for offenders' arrest and conviction history. ICJIA is able to obtain arrests for specific charges and agencies. CHRI data were used to obtain drug task force arrests and then subtracted those arrests from comparable arrests in drug task force counties thereby creating drug arrest statistics for other law enforcement agencies.

Focus groups

ICJIA held two focus groups with a total of 19 participants. Focus groups are open-ended, group discussions guided by a moderator to obtain collective views on a topic. Focus groups allow for input from a number of individuals in a relatively short period of time. Participants were brought together and asked to speak about their experiences working in drug task forces. Participants were asked to provide informed consent to complete a brief survey and answer focus group questions. In order to document the experiences of focus group participants, the discussion was audio-recorded. Participants included representatives from all ICJIA-funded drug task forces (*Table 1*).

Table 1
Illinois drug task forces participating in focus groups

Drug task force	County(ies) represented
Blackhawk Area TF	Carroll, Henry, Ogle, Whiteside
Central Illinois Enforcement Group	Cass, Christian, Macon, Menard, Morgan, Sangamon
DuPage MEG	DuPage
East Central Illinois Enforcement	Coles, Douglas, Moultrie
Joliet Metropolitan Area Narcotics Squad	Grundy, Will
Kankakee MEG	Kankakee
Lake County MEG	Lake
MEG of Southwestern Illinois	Madison, Monroe, St. Clair

Multi-County Narcotics Enforcement Group	Knox, Marshall, Peoria, Stark, Tazewell, Woodford
North Central Narcotics TF	DeKalb, Kane, McHenry
Quad Cities MEG	Rock Island
South Central Illinois Drug TF	Bond, Calhoun, Green, Jersey, Macoupin, Montgomery
Southeastern Illinois Drug TF	Clark, Clay, Cumberland, Effingham, Fayette, Marion
Southern Illinois Enforcement Group	Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Wabash, Wayne, White
Southern Illinois Drug TF	Randolph
State Line Area Narcotics Team	Stephenson, Winnebago
Task Force 6	DeWitt, Livingston, McLean
Vermillion County MEG	Vermillion
West Central Illinois TF	Adams, Brown, Fulton, Pike, Schuyler

The focus groups addressed:

- Drug task force goals, objectives, and strategic priorities,
- Identification of local problems and needs,
- Measuring effectiveness or success,
- Collaboration with local police departments, probation, parole, service providers, and others,
- Drug task force operations compared to local police responses,
- Changes to drug task forces in the past decade, and
- Recommendations for other drug task forces, as well as agencies wanting to start a drug task force.

On June 10, 2011, the first focus group was held with nine adult male participants. The focus group convened at ICJIA headquarters in Chicago and lasted one hour and 36 minutes. Participant ages ranged from 36 to 49 years old, with an average age of 44. The individual participants identified their race as white (seven), Asian (one), and black (one). One participant identified his ethnicity was Hispanic/Latino. The participants averaged six years on a drug task force and 19 years with their law enforcement department.

On June 17, 2011, the second focus group was held with 10 adult participants, one female and nine males. This focus group convened in a meeting room at the Illinois State Library in Springfield and lasted one hour and 12 minutes. Their ages ranged from 39 to 51 years old, with an average age of 44. All participants identified themselves as white, non-Hispanic. Participants averaged eight years on a drug task force and 18 years with their law enforcement department.

Findings

Drug task force data summary

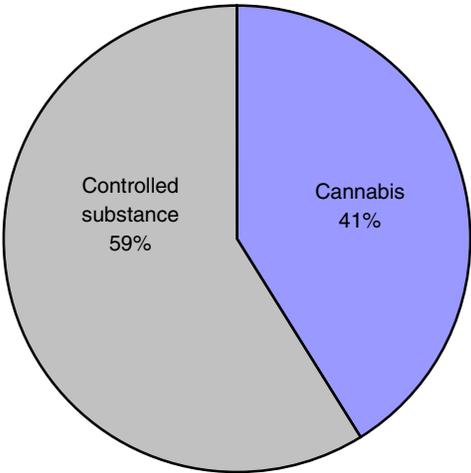
The following section compares arrests of drug task forces and other law enforcement agencies. In addition, drug task force drug seizures, weapon seizures, and forfeitures of property and cash are examined. In 2011, drug task forces made a total of 3,273 arrests which are examined by offense class, offense type, and drug type.

Arrests by drug type

Figure 1 and figure 2 indicate percent of arrests by offense type for drug task forces and other law enforcement agencies. In Illinois, the *Cannabis Control Act* [720 ILCS 550] prohibits the possession, sale and cultivation of marijuana, while the *Controlled Substances Act* [720 ILCS 570] prohibits the possession, sale, distribution or manufacture of all other drugs including cocaine, hallucinogens, and opiates. Violations of the *Illinois Controlled Substances Act* are considered to be the most serious and mostly classified under Illinois law as felonies carrying prison sentences of one year or more. Cannabis offenses are mostly classified as misdemeanors carrying jail terms of less than a year.

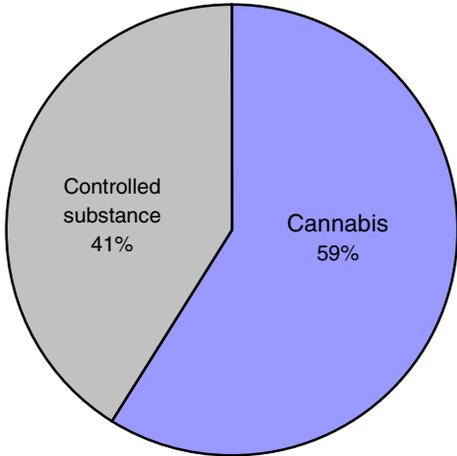
In 2011, drug task forces made 41 percent of their arrests for cannabis (n=1,333) and 59 percent for controlled substances (n=1,940). In comparison, other law enforcement agencies made 59 percent cannabis arrests (n=11,855) and 41 percent controlled substance arrests (n=8,195).

Figure 1
Percent of arrests by drug task forces by drug type, 2011



Source: Drug task force data reports to the ICJIA

Figure 2
Percent of arrests by other law enforcement agencies by drug type, 2011

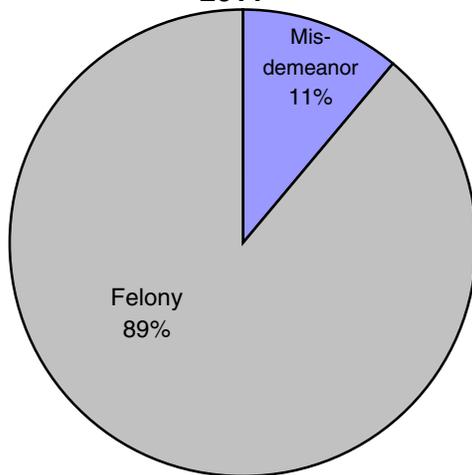


Source: CHRI data as interpreted by ICJIA

Drug arrests by offense class

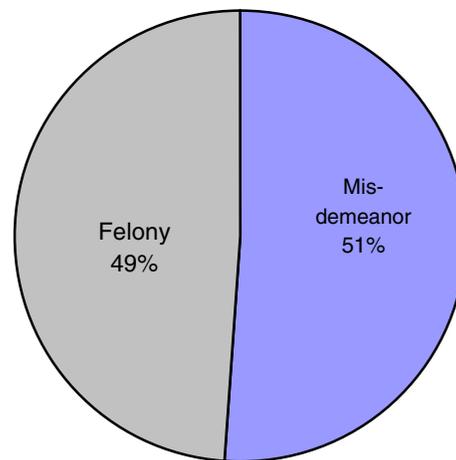
In 2011, the percentage of felony drug arrests was higher for drug task forces than other law enforcement agencies. Eleven percent of drug task force arrests for drugs were for misdemeanors (n=347) and 89 percent felony arrests (n=2,926). Other law enforcement agencies made 51 percent misdemeanor arrests (n=10,265) and 49 percent felony arrests (n=9,785). *Figure 3* and *figure 4* compare the percent of arrests by offense class for drug task forces and other law enforcement agencies.

Figure 3
Percent of drug arrests by drug task forces by offense class, 2011



Source: Drug task force data reports to the ICJIA

Figure 4
Percent of drug arrests by other law enforcement agencies by offense class, 2011

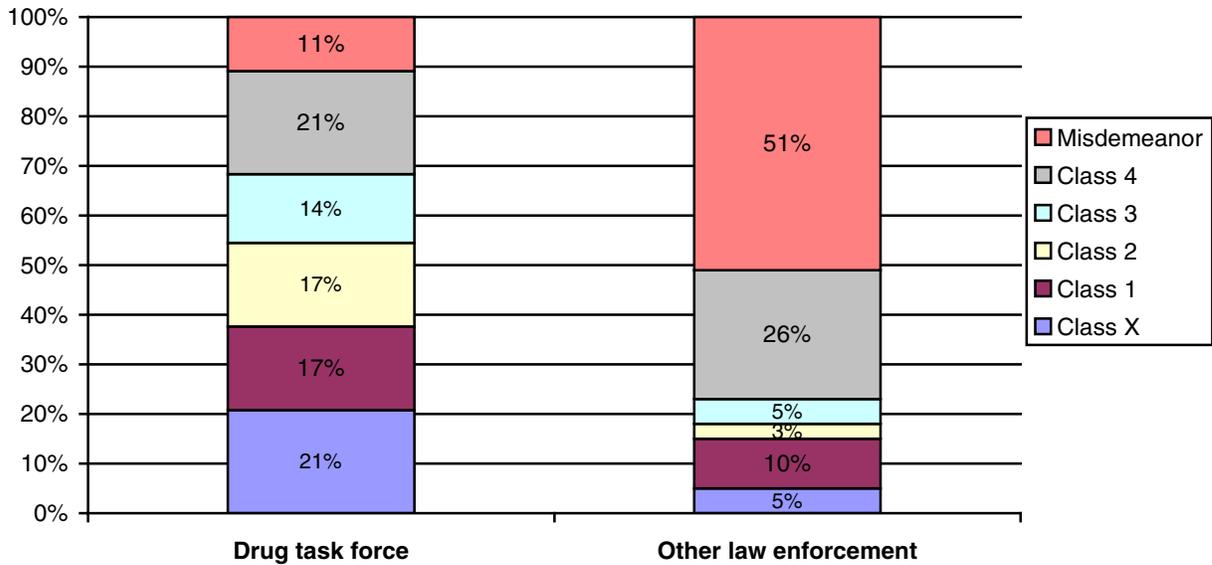


Source: CHRI data as interpreted by ICJIA

More of drug task force arrests were for Class X felonies, the most serious offense class, and fewer arrests for Class 4 felonies, the least serious felony offense class, than other law enforcement agencies. Of all the arrests made by drug task forces in 2011, 21 percent were Class X felonies (n=688). A total of 17 percent of arrests were for Class 1 felonies (n=546), 17 percent were for Class 2 felonies (n=545), 14 percent were for Class 3 felonies (n=464), 21 percent were for Class 4 offenses (n=683) and 11 percent were for misdemeanors (n=347).

Other law enforcement agencies had 5 percent Class X felony drug arrests (n=929); 10 percent Class 1 felonies (n=2,049); 3 percent Class 2 felonies (n=522); 5 percent Class 3 felonies (n=991); and 26 percent Class 4 felonies (n=5,294) and 51 percent were misdemeanors (n=10,265). Overall, 55 percent of drug task force arrests were for the most serious felonies (Class X, 1, and 2) compared to only 18 percent for other law enforcement agencies. *Figure 5* indicated the percent of drug task force and other law enforcement drug arrests by offense class.

Figure 5
Percent of drug task force and other law enforcement drug
arrests by felony offense class, 2011

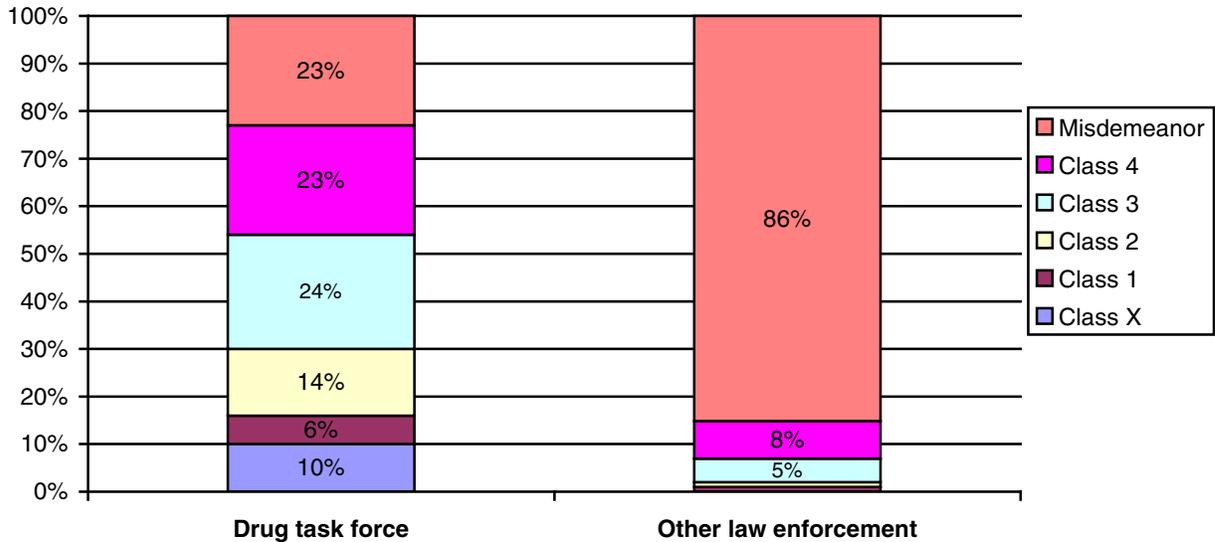


Source: Drug task force data reports to ICJIA; CHRI data as interpreted by ICJIA

These patterns were consistent for both cannabis and controlled substance arrests. Overall, 30 percent of task force cannabis arrests were for the most serious felonies (Class X, 1, and 2) compared to only 2 percent for other law enforcement agencies. In 2011, more cannabis arrests made by drug task forces were for more serious felonies than other law enforcement agencies. Ten percent of drug task force cannabis arrests were class X felonies (n=136), 6 percent Class 1 felonies (n=81), 14 percent Class 2 felonies (n=180), 24 percent Class 3 felonies (n=315), 23 percent Class 4 felonies (n=311), and 23 percent misdemeanors (n=310).

In 2011, there were no cannabis arrests by other law enforcement for X felonies, 1 percent Class 1 felonies (n=132), 1 percent Class 2 (n=114), 5 percent Class 3 (n=578), 8 percent Class 4 (n=840) and 86 percent misdemeanors (n=10,159). *Figure 6* provides the percent of drug task force and other law enforcement cannabis arrests by offense class.

Figure 6
Percent of drug task force and other law enforcement cannabis
arrests by offense class, 2011

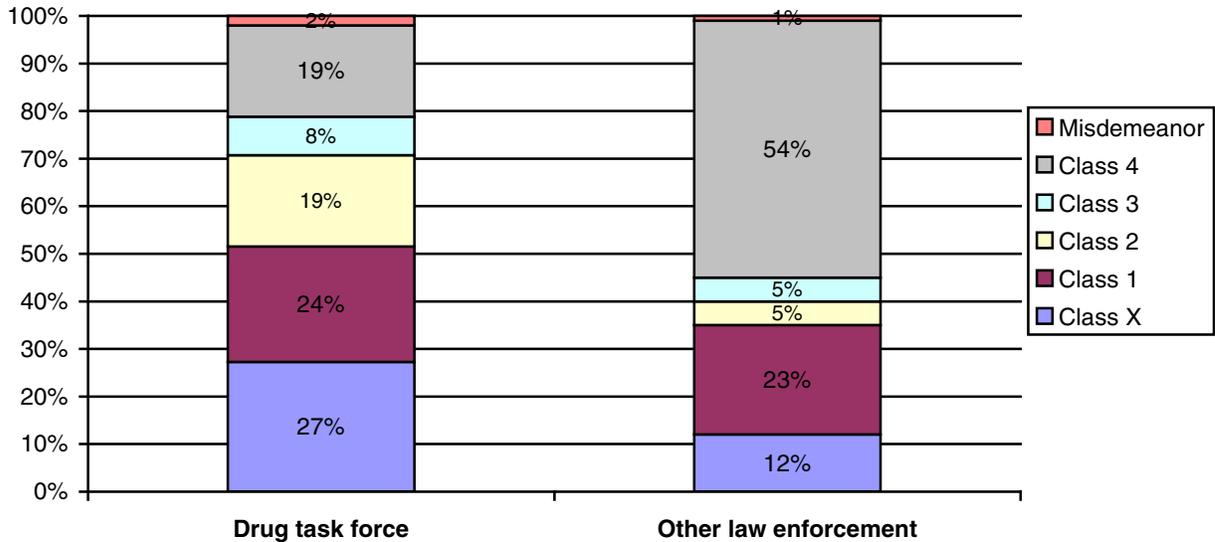


Source: Drug task force data reports to ICJIA; CHRI data as interpreted by ICJIA

In 2011, most controlled substance arrests made by drug task forces were for more serious felonies than other law enforcement agencies. Overall, 70 percent of task force controlled substance arrests were for the most serious felonies (Class X, 1, and 2) compared to only 43 percent for other law enforcement agencies. Many of drug task force controlled substance arrests (27 percent) were Class X felonies (n=522). Twenty-four percent of controlled substance arrests were Class 1 felonies (n=465), 19 percent Class 2 felonies (n=365), 8 percent Class 3 felonies (n=149), 19 percent Class 4 felonies (n=372), and 2 percent misdemeanors (n=37).

Twelve percent controlled substance arrests made by other law enforcement agencies were Class X felonies (n=977), 23 percent Class 1 felonies (n=1,917), 5 percent Class 2 felonies (n=408), 5 percent Class 3 felonies, 54 percent Class 4 felonies (n=4,404), and 1 percent misdemeanors (n=106) and). *Figure 7* provides the percent of drug task force and other law enforcement controlled substance arrests by offense class.

Figure 7
Percent of drug task force and other law enforcement controlled substance arrests by offense class, 2011

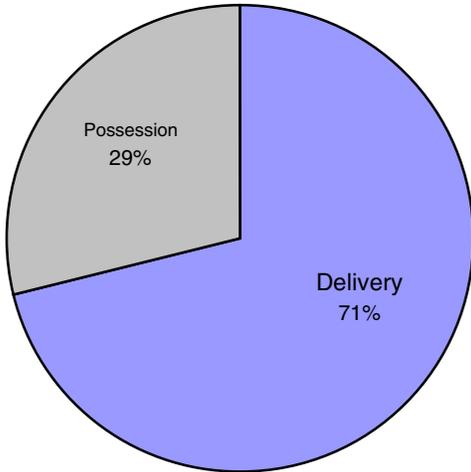


Source: Drug task force data reports to ICJIA; CHRI data as interpreted by ICJIA

Arrests by offense type

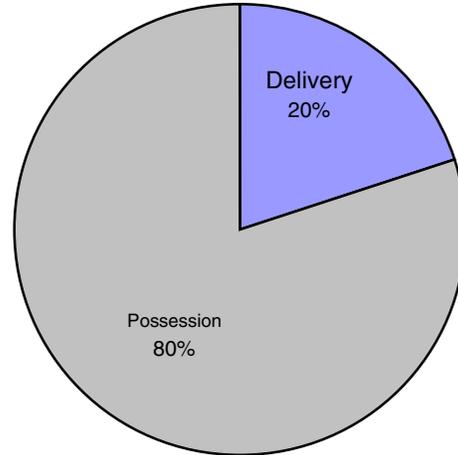
Figure 8 and *figure 9* show the percent of possession and delivery arrests by drug task forces and other law enforcement agencies. Arrests for manufacture and delivery of drugs—controlled substance or cannabis—are considered more serious than drug possession. Collectively, drug task forces made more arrests for drug manufacture and delivery than drug possession. In 2011, collectively drug task forces made 71 percent of their arrests for delivery (n=2,384) and 29 percent of their arrests for possession (n=970). In comparison, other law enforcement agencies made 20 percent of arrests for delivery (n=3,928) and 80 percent for possession (n=15,884).

Figure 8
Percent of arrests by drug task forces by offense type, 2011



Source: Drug task force data reports to the ICJIA

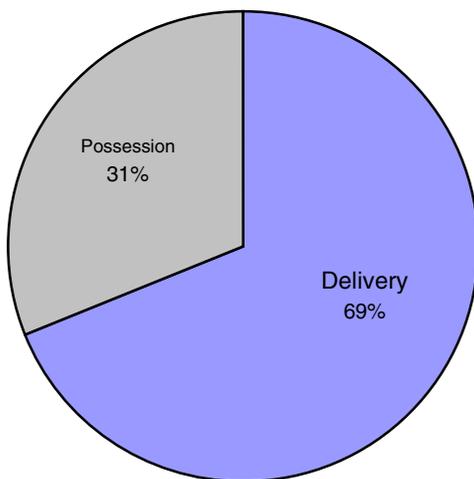
Figure 9
Percent of arrests by other law enforcement agencies by offense type, 2011



Source: CHRI data as interpreted by ICJIA

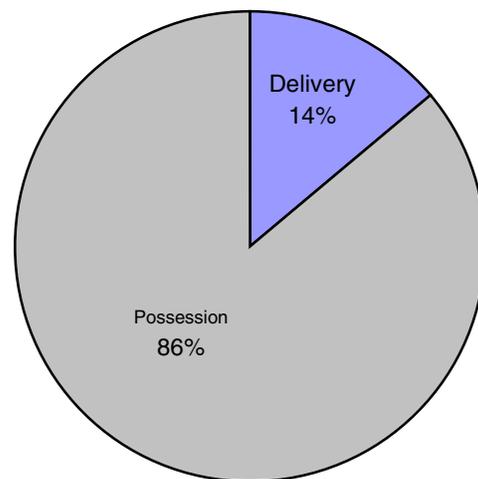
Figure 10 and *figure 11* indicate the percent of cannabis arrests by offense type for the drug task forces and other law enforcement agencies. In 2011, drug task forces made 69 percent of cannabis arrests for manufacture or delivery (n=920) and 31 percent for possession (n=413). In comparison, other law enforcement agencies made only 14 percent of their cannabis arrests for manufacture or delivery (n=1,660) and 86 percent for possession (n=10,195).

Figure 10
Percent of cannabis arrests by drug task forces by offense type, 2011



Source: Drug task force data reports to the ICJIA

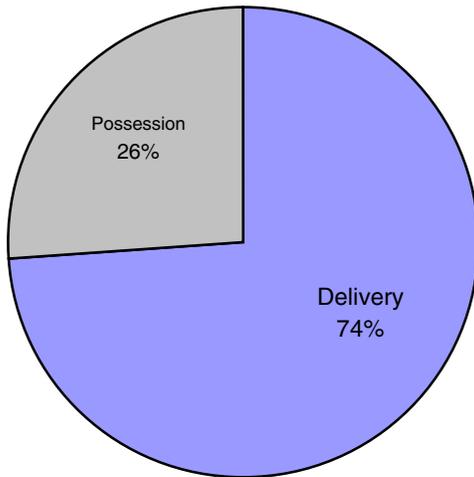
Figure 11
Percent of cannabis arrests by other law enforcement agencies by offense type, 2011



Source: CHRI data as interpreted by ICJIA

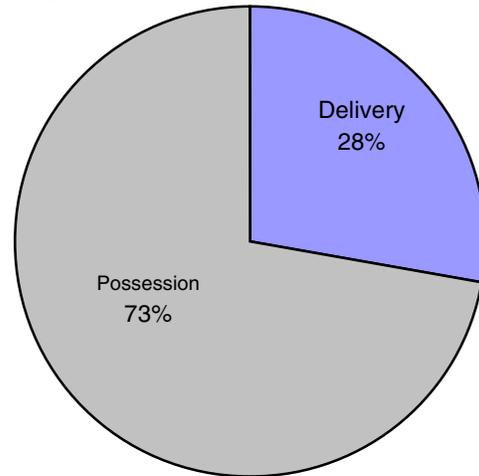
Figure 12 and figure 13 depict the percent of controlled substance arrests by offense type for drug task forces and other law enforcement agencies. Similarly, in 2011 drug task forces made 74 percent of their controlled substance arrests for manufacture or delivery and 26 percent for possession. In comparison, other law enforcement agencies made 28 percent of their controlled substance arrests for manufacture or delivery and 73 percent for possession.

Figure 12
Percent of controlled substance arrests by drug task forces by offense type, 2011



Source: Drug task force data reports to the ICJIA

Figure 13
Percent of controlled substance arrests by other law enforcement agencies by offense type, 2011

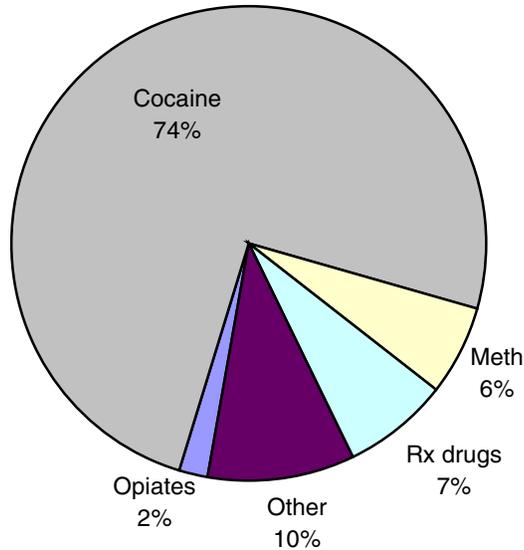


Source: CHRI data as interpreted by ICJIA

Drug seizures

Figure 14 shows the 5-year average (2007 to 2011) of the percent controlled substance seizures by type. The five-year average of cannabis seized by drug task forces was 53.5 million grams per year. A five-year average is provided because there can be much fluctuation in seizures from year to year. During that time period, an average of an additional 35,598 cannabis plants were seized per year. The five-year average of controlled substances seized by drug task forces was 328,736 grams. Of controlled substances seized, the majority (74 percent) was cocaine or crack cocaine (243,957.50 grams). Other includes hallucinogens, club drugs, date rape drugs, and other drug types.

Figure 14
Percent controlled substance seizures
by drug type, 5-year average (2007-11)

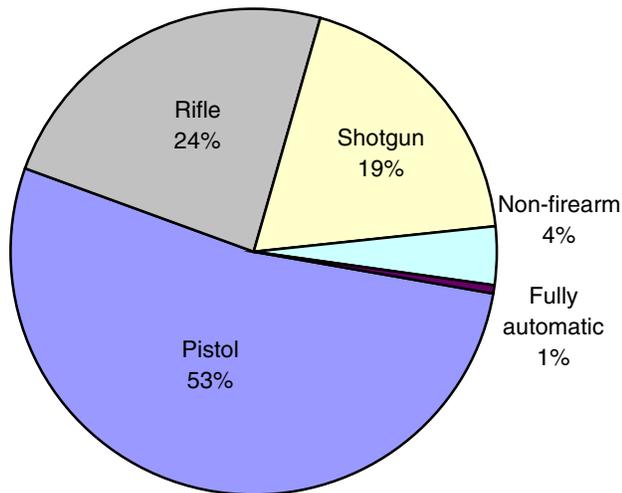


Source: Drug task force data reports to the ICJIA

Weapons seized

Figure 15 depicts the five year average (2007 to 2011) of the percent of weapon seizures by weapon type. The five-year average of weapons seized by drug task forces was 879 weapons per year. Over half of the weapons seized (53 percent) were pistols followed by rifles (24 percent), and shotguns (19 percent).

Figure 15
Percent weapon seizures by weapon
type, 5-year average (2007-11)



Source: Drug task force data reports to the ICJIA

Forfeitures

The five-year average (2007 to 2011) value of forfeitures—cash and property—for the drug task forces was \$4.3 million. During that time period, individual task force forfeitures ranged from \$17,000 to \$1.6 million per year. The five-year average cash forfeitures for all drug task forces equaled \$3.4 million. The individual task force forfeitures ranged from \$4,000 to \$1.8 million. The five-year average of non-cash forfeitures for all drug task forces, such as property and vehicles, was \$860,000. The range of non-cash forfeitures during that time period for individual drug task forces was \$0 to \$253,000.

Focus group results

This section of the report offers a summary of the responses from participants from the two focus groups. Participants represented 19 drug task forces covering 62 Illinois counties. Participants discussed drug task force goals and priorities, operations, funding, budget, collaboration, and success. Quotes are sometimes offered to provide the thoughts of focus group participants in their own words.

Goals and priorities

Participants agreed that the goals of the drug task forces were to reduce drug crime, also impacting gangs, guns, and related violence in communities. Participants also seek to educate the community and local law enforcement.

Some drug task forces are overseen by policy boards that meet every two or three years with task force personnel and local police chiefs to formulate goals.

Strategic priorities

Strategic priorities are based on trends in drug crime in a particular area and specify which drugs and crime will be the focus of the drug task force. While drug task forces are mandated to focus on gang, gun, and drug crimes, they are allowed autonomy to define their own goals, objectives, and directions based on geographical needs.

One officer reported that his drug task force determines what issues each town is facing, and then develops a general enforcement plan that would encompass those issues. The plan is adjusted as the drug market changes.

Priorities differ across Illinois. Combating methamphetamine is an objective in southern, rural parts of the state. Some drug task forces cover both rural and urban areas, and reported that their priorities differ by area.

Drug problems change over time. One participant said methamphetamine (meth) labs were a significant problem that decreased with anti-drug legislation. Over time individuals found new ways to make meth, and meth labs increased again.

Another community experienced an increase in heroin overdoses. Police chiefs and policy board members encouraged the drug task force to address that problem. In response, the drug task force developed a “multi-jurisdictional, multi-method enforcement effort that included educating legislators, educating the public, talking in schools, enforcing, [and] trying to identify and put cases [*sic*] on heroin dealers.”

One focus group participant expressed that the economy has affected drug trends. Individuals sell drugs, often their own prescription drugs, as a way of making money. The officer said, “You’re seeing people selling pills just to make some extra money because they don’t have jobs.” Sometimes communities will see a rise in illegal use and abuse of household products, such as bath salts. Several drug task force members mentioned the difficulties in combating illegal use of household products and synthetic drugs sold legally. Prosecutors struggle to find charges for individuals abusing those products. In addition, manufacturers will tweak the product slightly to change the chemical makeup in order to get around new anti-drug laws.

Focus group participants discussed how other crime trends influence their priorities. A correlation was noted between property crimes in certain areas and drug crime. Residential and motor vehicle burglaries are often committed by addicts who needed money to buy drugs.

Identifying local drug trends

Focus group participants indicated that the drug task forces are street-level units that are “intimately connected to their communities.” They identify local trends through street-level investigations, and input from local police agencies and federal police agencies.

Investigations and intelligence

One focus group participant said, “You learn what the problem is based on what you hear and see on the streets.” Said another officer, “We are always looking at trends and seeing what we need to do to address those, sometimes before the chiefs even realize there’s an issue in their town.”

The officers said they were constantly developing intelligence. They gather information by immersing themselves in the community they serve, working with local police departments, talking to local residents, confidential sources, and individuals who are suspected of certain crimes. The officers agreed that confidential sources can be the best source of information on drug trends.

Local community input

Drug task forces learn about local drug trends and issues from local police departments and more formally through policy boards of local chiefs and sheriffs in their jurisdictions. Participants reported that often police chiefs ask the drug task force for information on drug trends in their community.

Members of the criminal justice, health, and school communities also contribute to drug task force information gathering. Participants reported receiving assistance from judges, state’s

attorneys, probation and parole officers, and doctors and nurses in local hospitals. Local drug treatment facilities also help guide drug task forces with usage and admission trends. Pharmacists were also mentioned as a source of drug information.

Federal agency input

Drug task forces also get input from federal agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Some of the drug task forces have federal agencies and officers assigned to assist them. Others have a federal contact, or consult intelligence bulletins.

Drug task force operations

Drug task forces carry a chain of command, and all officers must follow rules and regulations. Participants said cases require many hours of surveillance and planning. Following legal procedures and completing proper paperwork also are time-consuming. That time is wasted if an undercover operation ultimately cannot be executed or if the prosecutor decides not to prosecute the case.

Multijurisdictional nature of the job

While local police departments are bound by their borders and are not equipped to control drugs flowing into and out of their towns, drug task forces have the flexibility to work in multiple jurisdictions and across borders. The collaboration of drug task force units and local police agencies is a necessity when working drug cases. Sometimes cases involve shipments from city to city. The two entities will work together to make the arrest. Drug task force officers stay connected through wireless voice radio systems that work in and out of the state.

Gathering intelligence

Most officers in drug task forces go undercover and must alter their physical appearances. Once an undercover officer is exposed, criminals share their physical descriptions.

Confidential sources introduce officers to drug dealers, so they can execute undercover drug buys off the street. Focus group participants explained how confidential sources are obtained. For example, after a routine traffic stop, a local police officer may contact the drug task force and say, "I stopped a guy whose driver's license is revoked and he says he has information about a drug dealer on 123 Main Street."

The drug task force officer would interview the informant and determine whether the individual is a viable confidential source. The officer would later take that information and attempt to purchase drugs with the confidential source from the drug dealer. Officers will make three purchases before conducting an arrest operation. Money spent on those transactions is not recovered.

Undercover officers may have difficulties getting introduced to their targets by their informants. Said one officer, “You’ll have a target just flat out say, ‘I don’t know you. I’m not going to deal with you.’ Or they’ll just tell the informant, ‘Don’t bother bringing anybody over to the house. I’ll deal with you.’”

Drug task forces are called in to work on cases where state or local police find a significant amount of narcotics during a traffic stop. Individuals delivering the drugs may become informants, offering leads to drug distributors. Officers use this strategy to work up the chain, get to the next level of dealing and distribution, and order more drugs. These operations can last up to a couple of days.

Officers gather intelligence from individuals working at hotels, Federal Express, and UPS. Search warrants are executed at locations where drugs have been purchased. Officers also subpoena phone records and track cell phone calls.

Assistance on non-drug crimes

Drug task force officers provide assistance to local police departments on other crimes in addition to drug crime. Officers reported providing support and technology—cell phone tracking and Global Positioning System (GPS)—for homicide cases and other situations in which local police needed assistance.

Providing drug education

Participants reported offering drug awareness outreach and education to schools, probation offices, and local legislators, as well as at other public forums. Drug task forces also offer drug education to probation officers. Many respond to media requests. One officer taught a course on drug crime investigation to the Illinois Homicide Investigator’s Association.

Drug task force officers

Focus group participants discussed their training for the job, overtime work, as well as how the job can be both rewarding and dangerous.

Task force officer training

Training is a necessity to prepare drug task force officers, keep them safe, and protect against liability. Most drug task forces send new officers to a two-week basic narcotics course offered by the DEA, where officers learn about drugs and the effects on individuals and the community. In addition, they are trained in the field by other agents. A probationary period and on-the-job training follows. Officers learn how to conduct interrogations and apply and execute search warrants. In addition, an increasing number of officers have college degrees.

Due to the extensive training and hands-on experience required for the job, drug task force officers are highly regarded. A focus participant explained. “[An officer] will get more experience in three weeks in my unit they will in a thirty year career in their department. By far, in three weeks, they make more connections because they are working with other local officers;

they're working with states attorneys; they're working with judges. Judges see them on a weekly basis and know who they are. So, these officers are the most highly trained and most experienced officers in their department, by far."

Officers said that drug task force officers often move to command positions, such as sergeants and chiefs in local and state police departments.

Safety on the job

Focus group participants discussed the dangers of being a drug task force officer. "Narcotics enforcement is the most dangerous thing you can do in law enforcement because an undercover officer is posing as a bad guy with money to purchase narcotics," said one. "It is a highly technical and highly dangerous endeavor."

Officers may have thousands of dollars on them to purchase drugs, and because others on the street see him or her as a criminal, buying drugs, they are always close to a "violent encounter where [the drug dealer] decides he's just going to take [the undercover officer's] money rather than actually sell [them] drugs."

Overtime work

Many of the officers in the focus groups said the job requires overtime work, with investigations, undercover drug deals, and search warrants served at all hours of the night. Local police officers dedicated to drug task forces are paid by their respective departments, many of which cannot afford overtime wages. Said one officer, "There are a lot of guys in the unit that have a lot of heart and they'll donate a lot of time."

Rewarding employment

In the focus groups, officers described the job on a drug task force as rewarding, interesting, and important. When investigating drug crime, officers can be proactive. An officer explained, "So much of law enforcement is reactive, after the crime happened, whether it's a speeding ticket or a homicide." The officer explained that in narcotics, officers play an active role in the crime that is going to send that person to prison.

Others liked that you can see the difference they make in the neighborhoods they serve. In other law enforcement positions real impact is hard to see. One officer said, "If you can close that [drug] house in that neighborhood even for a day, that's one day that that neighborhood is safer."

The focus group participants discussed the closeness among officers in the drug task force units. One officer explained that it is a tight knit group who work together a lot and rely on each other.

Officers talked about how they are well regarded among other law enforcement. The job also has some mystery because other officers do not know the details of what they do. One officer shared that he was doing interviews for officers for the drug task force and a young man was interviewed. When asked why he wanted to join the drug task force, he said, "They don't make movies about patrol."

Funding and costs

In recent years, federal funding has been reduced and further reductions are anticipated in coming years. However, drug task forces need enough personnel and resources to conduct their operations safely and effectively.

Reductions in funding

Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grants fund a large portion of Illinois' drug task forces, but with both federal and state funding reductions, many task forces are being forced to cut their budgets. As a result, drug task forces have had to reduce officer headcount. Local police sometimes dedicate an officer to the drug task force, but for budgetary reasons in recent years many officers have been re-assigned to patrol.

One participant said his drug task force has lost five officer positions over the year. Federal agencies also have decreased the number of officers dedicated to state drug task force assistance. With these priority shifts, the burden on drug task officers to address drug crime in the state is even greater. "The demands of the chiefs and the sheriffs don't change," said one officer. "They still want the same results."

Recovering funds

Drug task forces can recover some money through seizure of assets, such as money and computers, or through money obtained from collected criminal fines. However, seizures are rare and money from fines is not typically shared with the drug task forces. Those drug task forces who were getting money from fines through drug cases have experienced reduction or elimination of funding. These funds have been rerouted to other state and local entities.

Asset seizures

Drug task forces reported spending more on an average case than they are able to recoup in seizure of money or assets. One officer feared there is a perception that drug task forces are able to seize large amounts of money, generating their own revenue, which is rarely the case. A large seizure may happen only once per year. In addition, assets gained through monetary and equipment seizures are often shared by drug task forces with local and county law enforcement.

"It's hit or miss," he said. "With a search warrant, you may walk into a half of kilo of cocaine and fifty thousand dollars, or you may find two twenty dollar rocks and the guy's got a ten dollar bill in his pocket. You just never know."

In rural areas, it is rare to encounter established drug dealers with a lot of money or property and there are typically no seizures in methamphetamine cases, officers reported. In addition, criminals know how to hide their assets so they are not seized. One officer explained, "These guys are highly experienced, and so when they're purchasing their vehicles, they're putting it in the names of their girlfriends, they're putting it in the names of their dad and mom."

Operating costs

Operating costs of drug task forces include officer salaries and benefits, undercover drug purchases, maintaining vehicles, purchasing gas and technology, and insuring against law suits.

Undercover drug purchases

Each drug task force uses funds to purchase drugs during undercover drug buys. One officer said that \$700 is spent on average on undercover cases. Drugs are purchased multiple times before an arrest is made and the price of drugs has increased over time.

Technology and equipment

Technology continues to improve, and become more expensive. Computers, tracking technology, video, and audio are required to build enough evidence to prosecute and convict an offender.

Officers require cell phones with unlimited text messaging to contact drug dealers during undercover operations. Technology that extracts data from cell phones, including deleted messages, also is expensive. In addition, it can cost hundreds of dollars to listen in on cell phones of drug targets.

Drug task force officers need radios and a backup for radios when they are in areas where radios do not work. At one time, the Illinois State Police were able to supply the drug task forces with wireless voice radio systems, but it no longer has the funds to do that.

Other operational costs include vehicle maintenance and fuel costs. Vehicles are used for undercover work. When possible suspects learn about officers driving a certain type of car, the car needs to be changed. Used cars are purchased for undercover work. In addition, drug task forces often cover large areas spanning multiple counties, and fuel costs can be high.

Protecting against lawsuits

While the State of Illinois insures individual officers against lawsuits, it does not insure drug task force unit officers. Therefore, drug task forces must shoulder the cost of insurance to protect themselves in the event of a lawsuit, which could quickly rack up thousands in legal defense fees and other court costs.

Collaboration

Drug task force officers collaborate with others within the criminal justice system and the community, including police, prosecutors, and parole; federal criminal justice agencies; treatment providers; and pharmacies.

Collaboration with local police departments

Drug task forces work closely with local police departments. Local police departments often assign an officer to work with the drug task force and are paid by that department. In return, drug

task force officers provide assistance to local police departments on drug crime. Local police departments offer tips and leads on cases for the drug task force to investigate. Drug task force seizures of equipment and money are often shared with local police departments.

Collaboration with prosecutors

After an arrest is made, a prosecutor must decide whether there is enough evidence to move forward with the case. Standards for evidence are high, often creating frustration for drug task force officers who spend a great deal of time and effort pursuing and building a strong case.

Some prosecutors want videotaped evidence of undercover drug buys, as well as a confession, both of which can be difficult to obtain, officers said. In addition, Illinois laws on eavesdropping make it harder for the drug task forces to collect evidence because warrants are needed to audio-record.

In some Illinois counties, drug prosecution units work with drug task forces to prosecute offenders and conduct forfeitures. In fiscal year 2011, eight drug prosecution units were funded by ICJIA to work with drug task forces (Adams, 2012). Seven counties had a designated drug prosecution unit—Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, St. Clair, and Will. In addition, the State’s Attorney’s Appellate Prosecutor oversaw drug prosecutors in 11 counties: Champaign, Jefferson, Kankakee, Macon, Madison, McLean, Peoria, Rock Island, Sangamon, Tazewell, and Winnebago (Adams, 2012).

Collaboration with parole

Some drug task forces have relationships with parole departments —assisting with “sweeps” or compliance checks when officers search residences for drugs. When sentenced to parole, parolees sign a consent allowing parole agents to enter their home. Due to high caseloads, parole agents find it difficult to visit and arrest parolees who are not in compliance with court orders. Officers reported having great success with parolee sweeps. In addition, sometimes parole officers grant the drug task force’s permission to approach certain parolees as informants.

Collaboration with federal agencies

Drug task forces work with federal agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). These agencies receive intelligence from the drug task forces. At times, federal agencies will pursue the cases state’s attorneys decide not to prosecute. Officers reported a positive and fruitful relationship with these agencies.

Collaboration within the community

Drug task forces collaborate with drug treatment facilities, including forming partnerships to advocate for funding for offender treatment. While some treatment facilities will not communicate with drug task force officers for fear of violating Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) rules, officers said they are only interested in gathering information

on general trends in drug use, including user demographics and where the drugs are being obtained. In addition, some officers share information with treatment providers. For example, a drug task force learned that 100 pounds of drugs were brought into a town, and they were only able to seize 30 pounds. Treatment providers benefitted from knowing those drugs were available in the immediate area.

Some drug task forces collaborate with pharmacists to gather intelligence. Pharmacists that are aware of certain trends in the community will notify officers of suspicious behavior. The officers also use the state's prescription drug database to alert them of drug activity.

Measuring success

Focus group participants felt they directly impact the quality of life in their communities. Officers reported feeling the most successful working in neighborhoods affected by drugs, making arrests and improving safety.

Measuring success by arrests

Many focus group participants agreed that drug arrests are not a good measure of success, as arrests are a small percentage of the work they do.

“The effect [of the drug task force] just can't be measured in numbers alone,” said one officer. “You have to be in touch with the community leaders, citizens, and other organizations to determine whether you are having an impact.”

Officers reported that actual time spent on fighting drug crime is not reflected in arrest statistics. One officer explained, “The case may be that we tried 16 deals that didn't [result in arrest] or that we spent five months on a wire case. That we spent all of our time working this group of five individuals and they're all arrested, but that's the only case we had because we worked it for 20 hours a day, five months in a row.”

Some arrests are more impactful than others. Arresting a major drug supplier can make a positive impact on a community. Another officer explained that an arrest of a person with ten grams of marijuana seems small, “but that statistic does not also capture that he was a gang member with a loaded gun who'd been involved in a drive-by shooting days earlier. That evidence gets handed over to the local detectives who are able to solve that crime.”

Although it was agreed that arrests are not the best measure of overall success of a drug task force, officers said they do experience personal gratification when making arrests and especially when cases are prosecuted.

Other measures of success

In the focus groups, drug task force officers discussed other ways they define and measure success including impacting the community and society as a whole.

Fulfilling critical community needs

Drug task forces were developed because local police agencies do not have the expertise or funds to conduct narcotics enforcement on mid-level basis. Most drug task forces cover multiple counties. Many of the local police departments have no officers dedicated to drug enforcement. In addition, local police do not have the funds to purchase drugs to make a case against dealers.

With budget cuts affecting law enforcement agencies throughout the state, departments must re-prioritize their officers. Rather than investigating drug cases, local police are needed to patrol their jurisdictions and respond to citizen calls. Drug task forces supplement the work of local agencies by handling drug crime in their areas. Even when a local police department attempts to investigate drug cases, they typically do not have the experience or resources to be successful. “They know that we’re there to pick up the slack,” said one officer.

Community appreciation

Community members are often demonstrative in their appreciation for the work of the drug task forces. One officer shared an experience in which a drug house was raided by his task force. “The neighbors came out and all started clapping as we we’re walking out of the house,” he said.

Judges and other members of the criminal justice community have expressed appreciation for drug task force efforts to combat drug crime, and the effect of those efforts on violent crime and gang crime in recent years.

Larger societal impact

Youth in the neighborhoods who observe older gang members and drug dealers may someday engage in the same behaviors. One officer explained the potential positive effects of an arrest and subsequent work with families and communities. “Maybe [a younger brother] is not going to go down that path after seeing that. And then maybe he won’t get involved in drug trafficking, he won’t get involved in the drive-bys, he won’t be putting drugs out there that are going to be affecting the rest of the community all because of that one instance. There’s no way we’re ever going to know.”

According to focus group participants, if drug crime goes unaddressed, it will have a greater negative effect on society. Officers explained that for each drug dealer, there may be hundreds of drug users who purchase from the dealer. Each drug user burdens families and costs in drug treatment, healthcare, public aid, criminal justice, and child welfare. One officer in the focus group said, “And if someone is not there to put the brakes on it that cost is going to be at least ten times or fifty times higher than it ever would be than just addressing it from an enforcement perspective in the first place.” Drug dealers may sell drugs openly and use weapons to protect their trade, so children are not allowed to play in the neighborhoods. Another officer said, “And the problem with what we do is that you don’t see the effects of what we did. Because the crime that was going to happen based on our arrest didn’t happen.”

Drug task force participants believed that through the work of the task force, other crimes are avoided. For example, a seized gun may prevent future crime. An officer explained that guns are

often stolen and then shared or rented and used by mostly gang members in multiple crimes. One drug task force officer shared an example of conducting a search warrant and finding explosives and military artillery, which were seized and the ATF called. In addition, one officer said that money obtained illegally from drug sales sometimes funds terrorist organizations.

Establishing a drug task force

Focus group participants were asked what advice they would give to jurisdictions that wanted to start a drug task force. Many officers said that any jurisdiction interested in establishing a new drug task force should join an existing task force and take advantage of decades of institutional memory. Most advised that it would be difficult and would take a lot of resources and funding to start.

According to focus group participants, any new drug task force would have to know that they would not make money or have enough resources and “it’s incredibly difficult just to operate.” Officers agreed that there is no money to be made from the drug task force. An officer felt that the jurisdictions wanting to start a drug task force think they will be seizing large sums of money and grabbing headlines, but it is not that easy.

Some officers said that it could be dangerous to start a new drug task force. An officer explained that without the proper resources and training, there is “potential injury and death to police officers because you don’t know what you’re doing.” In addition, if one drug task force fails, it could affect all of the other drug task forces and their funding. These jurisdictions would need enough staff with enough experience in drug crime to do it right.

Conclusion

ICJIA researchers held two focus groups with representatives of 19 multi-jurisdictional drug task forces and metropolitan enforcement groups serving 62 counties across Illinois. Participants discussed drug task force goals, priorities, operations, collaborative efforts, funding, and successes.

The main purpose of a drug task force is to reduce drug crime. Strategic priorities depend on the needs of a drug task force's community and drug trends. Drug trends are identified through investigations, as well as community and federal agency input. Communities may include local police, drug task force policy boards, hospitals, pharmacists, and drug treatment facilities.

Drug task forces are multi-jurisdictional and handle drug cases that often cross city and county borders. Officers work undercover using confidential sources and leads to purchase drugs, gather intelligence, and ultimately make arrests. Officers serve search warrants and sometimes seize assets. In addition, officers conduct drug education workshops to criminal justice professionals and the public. Drug task force officers obtain extensive training before starting work, as well as on the job. Due to their training and hands-on experience, officers are well regarded and often promoted to higher command positions.

Undercover work can be dangerous; however, due in part to training, few officers have been injured or killed. Many officers work overtime, but due to budget constraints, many of those hours are unpaid. The impact they make on drug crime in their communities is rewarding to the officers.

Federal and local funding have been reduced in recent years impacting the number of officers and resources available to fight drug crime. Budget cuts accompany ever-increasing demands, however. Operating costs include salaries and resources for undercover drug buys, vehicles, gas, radios, video recorders, and cell phones. In addition, the drug task forces must be insured against liability.

Drug task forces collaborate with state's attorneys, parole, federal agents, treatment facilities, and pharmacies. After an arrest is made by a drug task force, the decision is left to the state's attorney over whether to prosecute a case. Some officers expressed frustration with the amount of evidence required by the court and by juries for a conviction.

Some drug task forces work with parole to check parolees' residences for drugs and weapons. Drug task forces work with federal agencies, such as the FBI, DEA, ATF, and ICE. Drug task forces provide intelligence to federal agencies and also get assistance from them on cases. Treatment providers, pharmacies, and others in the community provide tips and leads to drug task forces.

While success is often measured by the number of arrests made, these officers did not believe that they are the best measure of drug task force success. Success is measured in different ways by drug task force officers, including the larger impact they make on society by making arrests,

seizing weapons, making neighborhoods safe, and potentially reducing violent crimes and impacting future generations.

Implications for policy and practice based on these focus groups include that the drug task forces could be better measured. When federal grants are awarded, quarterly progress reports are turned in to the administering agency, such as ICJIA, to measure progress. These reports currently require drug task forces to submit the following data:

- Number of investigations
- Number and value of non-drug seizures
- Number and value of forfeitures
- Amount of fines
- Number, location, and detail of meth labs seized
- Number and type of drug arrests
- Number, type and amount of drug seized
- Number and name of gang arrests
- Number and type of weapons seized
- Number and type of sentences

By adding more opportunity for narratives in these quarterly reports, as well as documentation on collaboration, more can be learned about the benefits or failures of these units. Information could be collected on other measures such as community education, arrest warrants, drug buys, new confidential informants, and trainings. The strategic planning process could be documented including input from policy boards, sheriffs, informants, and community representatives. In addition, there could be periodic surveys and/or focus groups to learn more about drug task force operations.

Finally, it would be beneficial to learn more about the prosecution of cases put forth by the drug task forces. Focus groups with prosecutors could enhance the work of drug task force officers in evidence gathering with the goal of achieving more successful prosecution rates.

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