

United States Department of Justice
DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION



DEA Task Force
OVERVIEW



DEA Task Force Overview

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) leads the battle against the use of illegal drugs in the United States. Established in 1973, this anti-drug agency combined the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD) and U.S. Customs Service drug agents to provide exclusive enforcement of federal drug laws. **The creation of State and Local (S&L) Task Forces is one way DEA force-multiplies investigative personnel to effectively enforce these laws.**

As drug trafficking increased nationwide, DEA recognized the need for a cooperative and coordinated drug enforcement effort with S&L counterparts. **This cooperation provides several advantages to all participating agencies: DEA is able to draw on the expertise of S&L law enforcement while sharing available resources, thereby increasing the investigative possibilities available to all. S&L officers can be deputized as federal drug agents, thus extending their jurisdiction; S&L participating agencies can receive an equitable share of forfeited drug proceeds derived from criminal investigations; and with the appropriate approval, DEA could pay overtime and investigative expenses for S&L agencies.**

A Brief History of the Concept:

The S&L program began in 1970 with a pilot Task Force created in New York City. This Task Force was composed of investigators from major S&L agencies, primarily the New York City Police Department and the New York State Police. Due to the complexity of drug problems in the region and the varied levels of drug trafficking, the New York City metropolitan area was ideal for federal, state, and local initiatives.

The success of the DEA New York Task Force provided the impetus for a combined creation of DEA's current S&L Task Force program. As an inducement to participate, DEA began to pay investigative overtime for the S&L Task Force Officers (TFOs), as well as investigative expenses such as payments to informants, "buy money," undercover vehicles, and surveillance equipment. When S&L funding was not available for new Task Forces, DEA Headquarters gave approval to establish "informal" Task Forces using existing divisional funds. Since these ad hoc Task Forces operated informally, no system existed to track their progress or to include them in DEA's budgetary planning. Therefore, the **Provisional Task Force Program** was created as a way to plan ahead, prudently using limited funding.

The 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act institutionalized the DEA Task Force Program, replacing informality with formal procedures and appropriations. The relationship between DEA and S&L Task Force participants is now formalized by a signed cooperative agreement, prepared by

DEA's Office of Chief Counsel and signed by S&L police executives and DEA officials. The DEA Task Force program has been a successful countermeasure to the ever-changing drug trafficking threat. DEA Task Force initiatives now include deputizations for High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) groups; Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigations; and case specific situations.

In 2022, the DEA S&L Task Force Program managed **379** state and local task forces, which included Program Funded, Provisional, HIDTA, and Tactical Diversion Squads. The difference between funded and provisional S&L task forces is that the financial support for funded task forces is provided by DEA headquarters and includes additional resources for S&L overtime. Provisional task forces are supported by the operating budgets of DEA field division offices, without resources from DEA headquarters, and do not include S&L overtime. These task forces are staffed by over **3,200 DEA Special Agents** and over **3,500 S&L officers**. Participating state and local task force officers are deputized to perform the same functions as DEA special agents.

Task Force OBJECTIVES:

Effective control of the illicit drug traffic depends to a large extent on **close cooperation among agencies at all levels of government. Collectively, S&L law enforcement agencies dedicate more resources to drug enforcement than does the federal government. It is, therefore, of major interest to DEA that S&L agencies be encouraged to expend their resources in line with national objectives, and that there be close interagency cooperation at all levels.**

The specific objectives of the S&L Task Force Program are to:

1. Disrupt the illicit drug traffic in specified geographic areas by immobilizing the highest levels of targeted violators and trafficking organizations.
2. Increase the effectiveness of participating agencies by providing extended on-the-job training to assigned officers and exposing them to the benefits of selective targeting.
3. Improve operational interaction among all agencies participating in the Task Force.
4. Encourage participating agencies to establish investigative priorities which emphasize those drugs posing the greatest danger to society.
5. Increase the effectiveness of drug law enforcement agencies in the local area that are not participating in the Task Force, by providing direct assistance, intelligence information and other support.
6. Provide for the development and maximum use of intelligence information through enhanced coordination.

Task Force BENEFITS:

Task Force Officers continue to function as local investigators, working for and meeting their parent agency mission needs but with:

- Federal Drug Agent Deputization
- Larger Community Impact
- Shared Manpower Force-Multiplier
- Combined Intelligence
- No Cost Training & Travel
- OCDETF Overtime Reimbursement
- Qualified Limited Immunity from Law Suits while Operating Under DEA Scope
- Available Office Space & Materials
- Complex Criminal Investigations
- Multiple Prosecution Venues
- Utilization of Global DEA Resources
- Firearms Training & Qualification
- Equitable Sharing of Asset Seizures

Task Force VACANCIES:

Denver Field Division Office (Centennial, CO)

- OCDETF Strike Force
- Tactical Diversion
- S&L Task Forces
- HIDTA Task Forces (subject to availability of funding)

Colorado Springs Resident Office

- S&L Task Force
- HIDTA Task Forces (subject to availability of funding)

Grand Junction Resident Office

- S&L Task Force
- HIDTA Task Forces (subject to availability of funding)

Montrose Post of Duty

- HIDTA Task Forces (subject to availability of funding)

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