

Arizona's Counter Narcotics Alliance

Introduction

Arizona's Counter Narcotics Alliance (CNA) is a multi-jurisdictional drug task force that consists of 18 participating agencies, including law enforcement and prosecution agencies, the Arizona High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (AZHIDTA), and the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base (DMAFB) operating in the Pima County metropolitan area. Each agency compliments the task force through staffing, assisting with facilities or administrative processes, such as record keeping. The organizations committed to the CNA each have an active role in the collective success of the task force.

The CNA was founded in January 2003 and is the successor to the Metropolitan Area Narcotics Trafficking Interdiction Squad (MANTIS) in southern Arizona. CNA, with its own structure and ideals, developed a mission to match:

Drug enforcement in the Pima County and Tucson metropolitan area will be conducted in a concerted effort in order to maximize the available resources. The enforcement issues will be addressed from the street level through the international level through the cooperation of local, state, and federal agencies, to include AZHIDTA initiatives. This alliance will be an interrelated drug and anti-terrorism enforcement effort that shares resources and intelligence in the successful interdiction of illegal narcotics.

The CNA is an investigative initiative that also conducts interdiction operations and financial investigations when appropriate. The CNA task force has a successful track record, evident in its yearly outputs and achieved goals. It employs all methods of narcotic investigation and interdiction, ranging from undercover street enforcement to Title 3 intercepts, both at the local and international drug trafficking organizations (DTO) and money laundering operations (MLO) levels.

Task Force Demographics

Geographically, Pima County encompasses 9,342 square miles and has an estimated population of one million. The areas of Tucson, Oro Valley, Marana, South Tucson, and Sahuarita lie within its boundaries, as do areas of Tohono O'Odham and Pasqua Yaqui Indian Reservations. Situated in southern Arizona and on the Mexico-United States border, there is significant clandestine drug smuggling activity in this location. The combination of Arizona's proximity to Mexico and the span of unprotected border and remote desert regions make Tucson an ideal area for stash housing. Consequently, this significantly and negatively impacts Arizona's violent crime and property crime rates.

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) intelligence has estimated that 90 percent of all the illicit narcotics entering the United States pass through the southwest border. Of the four states bordering Mexico, AZHIDTA's post seizure analysis ranks Arizona as second highest in terms of volume of drugs being smuggled into the United States. Arizona's proximity to the border makes the CNA a first line of defense against the growing narcotics activity throughout the United States. As such, the CNA seizes and

interrupts a broad range of narcotic activities involving marijuana, cocaine, heroin, meth, crack, and pharmaceutical drugs.

The Organization

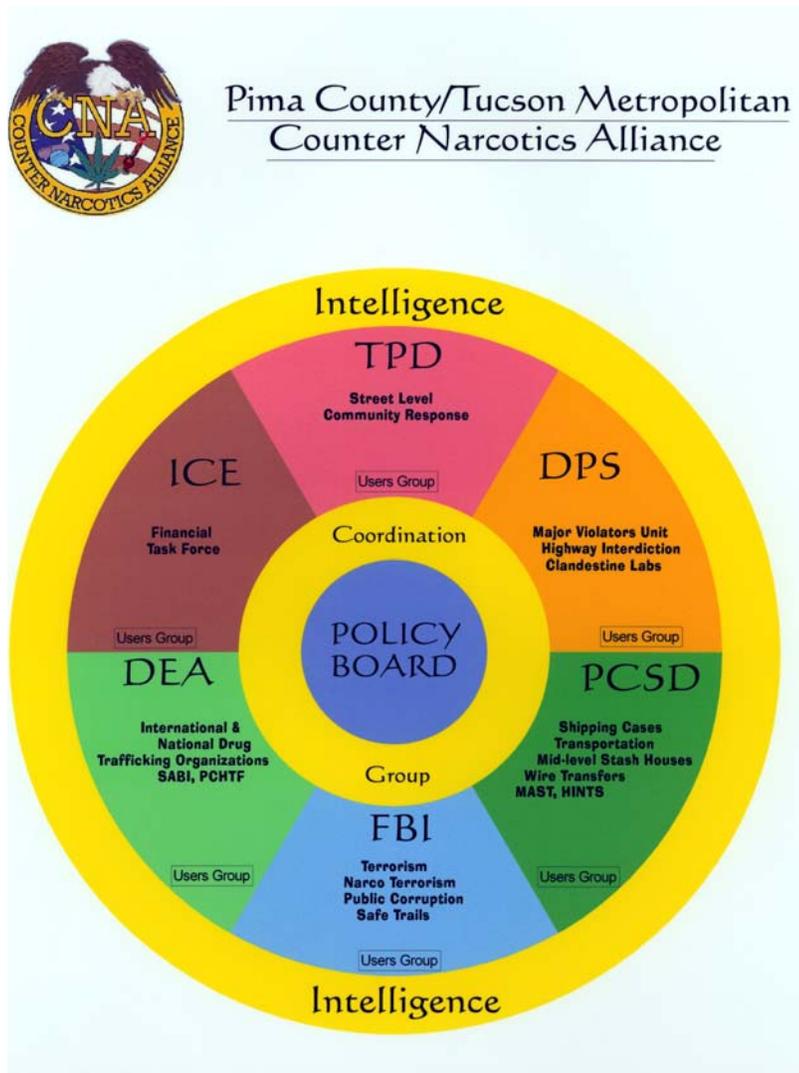
The CNA has three characteristics that drives its success:

- The organization's network design;
- Use of the intelligence driven model; and
- Use of the facilitation management model.

Network Design

The *network design* of CNA encourages cooperation instead of competition, ensures an equal level of support for all operating groups, and minimizes the need for redundant communication. Daily operations and planning are handled at the lowest possible level, in which cooperation is at its best.

Structurally, the design places policy decisions and directions under the authority of the Executive Policy Board. The board is comprised of law enforcement chief executive officers (CEOs) from all of the participating jurisdictions, with seven members



serving as voting members. The board meets monthly to review progress reports from administrative, operational, and intelligence operations, as well as to address policy issues and provide direction to the organization through the CNA commander.

A second aspect of the networking design is the *coordination group*, which serves as the repository for centralized resources such as asset management, procurement, finance, fleet management, facilities, and liaison offices, etc. Coordination group members report directly to the CNA Commander, serving as the commander's support staff.

The remaining six *operating sections* are each headed by a lieutenant for state and local agencies and a group supervisor for federal agencies. Each section is committed to responsibilities and activities that are fulfilled on a daily basis, as well as committed to doing work on a variety of larger investigations that require extended resources. For each section, officers or agents from different agencies are assigned to each section to eliminate territorialism and to provide a rich atmosphere of talent and skills from a number of different areas.

The outer *intelligence ring* emphasizes the organization's philosophy to operate as an intelligence driven force. The intelligence function is managed by the coordination group that is in charge of area scanning, target identification/target development, and case support on active cases.

Intelligence-Driven Model

The CNA operates as an intelligence-driven organization, in which DTO targets are first identified through a combination of intelligence gathering and crime analysis. The decision of whom and/or what will become an active target is determined by an assessment process conducted by the CNA command group. Once the target properties are agreed upon, the commanders jointly create a response strategy and assign resources to the operation. The focus of these decisions is always based on CNA's understanding of the threat the target poses to the community.

Intelligence plays a critical role in this process by providing essential background information on the DTO or target and its activities and the opportunity to address the problem. This method focuses on choosing investigations based solely on community interest and serves to manage other motivators such as those urged by informants, and/or the promise of a bigger drug load. CNA moves to prioritize organizational goals for the community, ranging from geographical concerns to drug type priorities, and intelligence is used to focus on those offenses.

Facilitation Management Model

A policy board, which leads the organization, arranges the task force priorities. Each sponsoring jurisdiction, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Tucson Police Department (TPD), the Pima County Sheriff's Department (PCSD), and the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS), has committed to a specific level of activity based on each agency's area of expertise. Section commanders are in charge of reporting to their home jurisdictions for administrative purposes and are responsible for determining productivity measures of the board. Operationally, the CNA commander's role is to serve as a conduit between the board and the operating sections by facilitating communication between the section heads and by being a resource manager that

enables task force operations. As such, the CNA commander has no direct authority over the six section heads. The commander's assignment is to serve the group as a facilitator aligning the efforts of the organization in order to accomplish the policy board's directives. Similarly, the section heads work with the CNA commander to achieve organizational goals.

The CNA commander and the section heads review all active cases and identify investigative priorities that will require the commitment of more than one group. Once the priorities are established, the group creates a strategy to attack the target and to assign a primary investigative group, which depends on the tactics required and the resources needed for the strategy.

Recent Accomplishments

In 2006, the Counter Narcotics Alliance accomplished the following:

Law enforcement outputs:

- Cases opened - 2,348
- Arrests made - 1,441
- Assets seized - \$3,381,715
- DTOs Disrupted/Dismantled - 81
- MLOs Disrupted/Dismantled - 3
- Dismantled Meth Labs - 6

Training and information sharing:

- 50+ new agents attended the Basic Agent Training Program
- 12 quarterly Intelligence Bulletins were shared with partners throughout the region.
- 12 monthly target reports were developed and shared with uniformed neighborhood enforcement teams.

In addition to the organization's investigation and interdiction work, the CNA was instrumental in developing:

- A community-based Meth-Free Alliance program that consists of 400 volunteer members;
- A local multi-media, anti-meth campaign that reached in excess of 1,700 respondents;
- A meth-related property crime enforcement effort that helped to reduce meth-related crime in the areas of burglary, auto theft, and fraud by 30 percent cumulatively and achieved an 87 percent reduction in clandestine labs between 2005 and 2006 as shown in the Arizona Uniform Crime Report (UCR);
- A neighborhood revitalization program targeting drug impacted neighborhoods;
- An investigation/prosecution strategy boasting a 96-percent success rate; and
- New protocols for responding to property that is contaminated by clandestine drug labs.

Conclusion

Strong relationships among members are key to CNA's success. This is accomplished by through monthly meetings of the CNA commander and the section heads. Much of CNA's success comes from the commitment of its partnering agencies, the selection and training of staff, the support from the policy Board, the goodwill of the community, and the shared desire to improve the quality of life in the Pima County-Tucson metropolitan area.

Ripped from the Headlines



Tucson is making progress against meth, though drug hurdles remain, summit hears

Arizona Daily Star – 12/20/2006

PIMA COUNTY – The Tucson community has made progress in reducing the availability of methamphetamine and the crime that comes with it, authorities said Tuesday, but challenges remain in battling drug abuse, including an increase in heroin use.

Tucson Police Department Capt. David Neri, head of the interagency **Counter Narcotics Alliance**, said there have been a 45 percent reduction in meth availability and a 30 percent reduction in meth-related crime.

Chief Richard Miranda said the Police Department's success in cracking down on meth abuse also came after the Tucson City County passed ordinances that regulate the sale of products containing pseudoephedrine, which is found in cold medicine and can be used to manufacture meth.

Full article available at www.azstarnet.com.

68 pounds of meth seized in traffic stop

Arizona Daily Star – 01/31/2007

PIMA COUNTY – A man was arrested Monday after an officer conducting a traffic stop on Interstate 10 near Marana found 68 pounds of methamphetamine manufactured in Mexico in a pickup truck the man was driving, and official said. Joshio A. Amarillas, 18, was arrested on suspicion of violating federal narcotic charges.

Detectives from the **Counter Narcotics Alliance** arrived and found 68 one-pound bags in a four-inch compartment living the entire truck bed, Morlock said. An investigation determined that the methamphetamine was headed for the Phoenix metropolitan area where it would likely have gone to a stash house before being redistributed. Some of the drugs may have ended up in Tucson, Morlock said.

"We have identified this as being part of a major methamphetamine ring based in Mexico and we along with the DA are investigating," Morlock said.

Full article available at www.azstarnet.com.

Up to 3.5 tons of pot is seized from truck, business; 4 arrested

Arizona Daily Star – 02/09/2007

PIMA COUNTY – Investigators from the **Counter Narcotics Alliance** seized as much as 7,000 pounds of marijuana south of Downtown Thursday morning and arrested four people on drug charges, officials said.

Members of the multi-agency Counter Narcotics Alliance raided Bering-Belt & Chain Inc., 430 W. 22nd St., at about 8:30 a.m. and seized an estimated 5,000 pounds of marijuana, said Lt. Kelly J. Lane of the Tucson Police Department.

Earlier that day, around 6 a.m., police officers pulled over a black pickup truck with Sonoran License plates because the white trailer it was pulling had no lights, Lane said. The truck's driver and passenger appeared nervous, Lane said.

Officers said they found a firearm with its safety off and a magazine loaded with 40 rounds, along with marijuana debris on the floor of the truck.

When the officers searched the trailer, they found between 1,000 and 2,000 pounds of marijuana, Lane said.

The business appeared to be a marijuana-distribution point, and the drugs probably wouldn't have stayed there long before being moved again, Lane said.

Full article available at www.azstarnet.com.