U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Inspector General
Evaluation and Inspections Division

Review of the Drug Enforcement Administration's El Paso Intelligence Center

June 2010

I-2010-005

EXECUTIVE DIGEST

INTRODUCTION

The border between the United States and Mexico presents a long-standing challenge to U.S. law enforcement. Criminal organizations smuggle illicit drugs, undocumented aliens, and other contraband across the border into the United States, and cash and weapons into Mexico.

The El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) is a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) led and funded intelligence center, located in El Paso, Texas, near Juarez, Mexico. EPIC focuses its programs on the collection and dissemination of tactical intelligence.[1] EPIC provides federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies information they can use in investigations and operations that target smuggling and other criminal activities.

When it was established in 1974, EPIC focused primarily on Mexican heroin traffickers and illegal alien and weapon smugglers. EPIC's focus today is broader, providing an intelligence resource that targets a wider range of criminal activity. EPIC's mission has evolved in response to a shift in focus to Southwest border smuggling and associated violence, and the need for improved collaboration and timely information sharing among law enforcement and intelligence agencies. EPIC currently hosts representatives from 21 different agencies and provides information to over 19,000 law enforcement officers and analysts who are approved EPIC users.

This review by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) examined the roles and functions of EPIC and its analysis and dissemination of intelligence in support of federal, state, and local law enforcement investigations and interdiction operations. In this review, we interviewed representatives of investigative agencies that obtain intelligence from EPIC. We also conducted site visits at EPIC and several law enforcement agencies along the Southwest border and elsewhere, analyzed EPIC data and its performance measures, and reviewed U.S. national counter-drug strategy and policy materials. In addition, we administered a nationwide survey of EPIC users to obtain their perspectives on EPIC's products and services.

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[1] Tactical intelligence is information on which immediate enforcement action – arrests, seizures, and interdictions – can be based.

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RESULTS IN BRIEF

Our review found that EPIC is highly valued by its partner agencies and users, and that its users find its products to be valuable and useful. However, we identified several significant weaknesses that have prevented EPIC's operations and programs from being as effective as they could be.

We found that EPIC does not have an effective program or strategy to inform users and potential users about products and services that could assist them. Further, we found that EPIC did not adequately support several key interdiction programs and, as a result, its service to users was at times disrupted or diminished for periods of time.

As a multi-agency intelligence center, EPIC relies upon its diverse federal and other members for staffing and access to external sources of law enforcement information and intelligence. We believe that the lack of an up-to-date agreement between EPIC and its participating members has contributed to coordination problems, such as member agencies not sustaining programs, sharing information, or contributing resources to EPIC.

We also identified two EPIC programs that were not fully implemented because EPIC could not require the law enforcement participation necessary to execute these programs. First, EPIC has not developed the National Seizure System into a comprehensive database into which all drug seizures are reported nationwide.[2] Rather, reporting seizure information into the system is optional for most federal, state, and local agencies. As a result, intelligence products based on this data may be incomplete or inaccurate. Second, EPIC has not established itself as the hub for the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program. The HIDTAs, which coordinate drug control efforts among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, operate as 32 autonomous task forces and allied intelligence centers.

Further, EPIC's coordination with federal and state intelligence organizations across the country is inconsistent. For EPIC to more efficiently disseminate information, it should have contacts in key intelligence centers and ensure that those contacts are aware of EPIC's products and services and how to access them.

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[2] The National Seizure System is a repository for information on drug, clandestine laboratory, and other contraband seizures such as chemical precursors, currency, and weapons. The system also contains information on methods of concealment, seizure locations, people, organizations, and transportation, and is used in federal, regional, state, and local law enforcement analyses and policy development.

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We also found that as the number of participating agencies at EPIC increased overall, federal agencies submitted fewer requests to EPIC for information, as measured by EPIC Checks, between fiscal year (FY) 2005 and FY 2009. By contrast, the total number of requests for information submitted to EPIC by state and local law enforcement has steadily increased.

We are concerned about the decline in the use of EPIC by Department components at a time when the Department has increased its focus on combating smuggling and its associated violence on the Southwest border. In light of this, use of EPIC by Department components should be increasing, particularly by the DEA and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

We also found that EPIC does not analyze information from several of the unique sources it possesses and, as a result, may be overlooking drug trafficking trends and patterns that could assist interdiction investigations and operations. In particular, EPIC conducts limited analyses of drug seizure information and does not analyze fraudulent documents and certain tactical information it collects on the activities of drug traffickers. Further, the information that EPIC maintains on Southwest border drug trafficking organizations is not always current.

In addition, EPIC is not managing the performance of its programs through objective performance measures and by collecting user feedback.

To address these issues and to improve EPIC's utility to the law enforcement and intelligence community, we make 11 recommendations to EPIC in our report.

We discuss these findings and recommendations below.

EPIC users report high satisfaction with its products and services, but they also report needing more information about EPIC and improved access to its Portal.

We surveyed law enforcement personnel and analysts within the Department, other federal agencies, and state and local agencies that are users of EPIC.[3] Based on the responses of the 765 individuals who returned the survey (out of 2,499 sent), we found significant satisfaction among the users of EPIC products. Most federal, state, and local

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[3] We did not survey law enforcement personnel who had never established accounts at EPIC.

personnel who responded stated that they viewed EPIC products and services as fully meeting their criteria for timeliness (76 percent), accuracy (82 percent), relevance (80 percent), and immediate usability (74 percent).

However, the results of the survey, along with interviews we conducted, indicated that EPIC does not have an effective program or strategy to publicize and promote its products and services. For example, we found that EPIC's online information system for its users, known as the Portal, was not frequently used to request information from EPIC, although it provided quick access to non-case-specific information and could be a powerful law enforcement tool. Only 24 percent of EPIC's users had registered Portal accounts, and few requests for information were submitted through the Portal. Our survey results indicate this is due in large part to users being unaware of the Portal or not knowing how to use it.

EPIC has not adequately staffed several key interdiction programs or ensured that member agencies collaborate effectively to sustain programs and share information.

We found that EPIC did not sustain staffing for several key interdiction programs and, as a result, service to its users was disrupted or diminished for periods of a year or more. A lack of agency participation caused EPIC's Fraudulent Document Unit to be unstaffed and therefore unable to serve users from December 2007 to January 2009, and EPIC's Air Watch program was unstaffed for approximately 9 months of 2007. In addition, EPIC did not maintain a consistent level of staffing and support to sustain its participation in a maritime intelligence group, and the number of tactical reports EPIC contributed to the group decreased from 2,010 to 819 (59 percent) between FY 2007 and FY 2008. Because EPIC is the agency with the strongest information gathering capability for certain maritime drug smuggling corridors to the United States, the failure to fully staff and support this group likely hindered drug trafficking interdiction efforts.

In addition, EPIC's existing multi-agency agreement – the 1999 Principals Accord – does not reflect EPIC's current membership and missions. Further, EPIC does not use the Principals Accord effectively to resolve issues that arise in EPIC's multi-agency setting, such as ensuring that priorities are agreed upon so that programs are sustained and that member agencies meet expectations for participation and information sharing.

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We identified two other programs that were not fully implemented because national policy was lacking and because EPIC did not have the operational control to require the law enforcement participation necessary to execute these programs. First, we found that EPIC's process for aggregating drug seizure information does not provide for comprehensive analyses of drug trafficking activity. EPIC has not produced a complete record of drug seizures nationwide because of incomplete reporting into the National Seizure System. Only five federal agencies are required to report their seizures to the system, and only seizures over threshold amounts must be reported.[4] Similarly, state and local law enforcement agencies are not required to report drug seizures, and the number of different state and local agencies that reported drug seizure events directly into the National Seizure System during FY 2008 represented only about 1 percent of law enforcement agencies nationwide.

Recently, EPIC has begun importing more complete seizure information to the National Seizure System by gathering such information online from agencies. While this effort will increase the amount of data EPIC collects, EPIC is just beginning this process of working with state and local agencies willing to transmit seizure data through the Portal. EPIC also allows individual users to report seizure information through the Portal. However, only 24 percent of EPIC users have active online accounts, indicating that the Portal is not yet a system that individual users rely upon to report drug seizures to EPIC.

We also found that EPIC is not yet the "hub for the HIDTAs," which was defined as one of EPIC's five functions in its 1999 Principals Accord and addressed in the 2000 General Counterdrug Intelligence Plan (the Plan).[5] The Plan stated that EPIC should serve as a hub by "centrally receiving and sharing drug-movement-related information developed by

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[4] The DEA, FBI, Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Coast Guard are required to report drug seizures over specific threshold levels.

[5] *The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988* and the *Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Reauthorization Act of 1998* authorize the Director of the ONDCP to designate areas within the United States as High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas if they demonstrate serious drug trafficking problems with an impact in other areas of the country. Currently, the HIDTA program includes 32 HIDTAs that receive federal funding for infrastructure and joint initiatives that facilitate cooperation and information sharing among federal, state, and local law enforcement organizations. Each HIDTA is led by an Executive Board comprising a representative from each federal, state, and local agency that has a member permanently assigned to the HIDTA Task Force in that HIDTA region. Neither EPIC nor the DEA exercise the control that would be needed to standardize the exchange of drug-movement-related information between EPIC and the HIDTA intelligence centers.

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the HIDTA Intelligence Centers" as well as by "ensuring that EPIC's Watch and relevant database checks are a standard part of appropriate HIDTA operational protocols."[6] While EPIC has made some effort to serve as an information hub for the HIDTAs, for example by making information from the Arizona HIDTA about traffic stops available to other HIDTAs, EPIC has not been able to establish itself broadly as an information hub for the HIDTA program. EPIC lacks policy-setting authority over the 32 regional HIDTAs, and no policy requires the HIDTAs to provide drug-movement-related information to EPIC or to ensure that contacting EPIC is incorporated into their operational protocols. Consequently, EPIC cannot provide the regional HIDTAs with information by connecting their individual databases and providing them access to federal databases. The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) funds and oversees each individual HIDTA's budget and counterdrug plan, and approves task forces formed by each HIDTA to ensure their efforts support national drug control strategy. Beyond this level of oversight by the ONDCP, the HIDTAs are largely autonomous entities.

EPIC's coordination with federal and state intelligence organizations is inconsistent.

EPIC does not maintain an up-to-date list of key intelligence and fusion centers and their points of contact and does not know if it has users in each center. Of the 107 intelligence and fusion centers we identified, 23 did not have staff authorized to use EPIC. For EPIC to efficiently disseminate its information, it should have contacts in each key intelligence center throughout the country and ensure that those contacts are aware of EPIC's products and services and how to access them. Further, we found that some members of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces were not aware of EPIC's Crime-Terror Nexus Unit, whose products could provide support for the work of the Joint Terrorism Task Forces.

We compared EPIC's mission, key products and services, customer base, and geographic focus with other national counterdrug intelligence centers identified in the 2000 General Counterdrug Intelligence Plan, and we found that EPIC generally complements the other national centers.[7]

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[6] The Watch is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to respond to information requests from EPIC users for simultaneous searches of 11 databases that can be used to support investigations.

[7] The Plan was published by a White House task force in February 2000 to clarify and make systemic improvements to U.S. drug intelligence and information programs. The four national counterdrug intelligence centers identified in the Plan were the El Paso Intelligence Center, in El Paso, Texas; the National Drug Intelligence

(Cont'd.)

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However, there is overlap in some program areas. For example, we noted that the case support provided by EPIC's Asset Identification Unit overlaps with the case support that the Department of the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network provides.[8] Both entities research assets owned by or connected to suspects of investigations and their associates.

When we compared EPIC with other multi-agency centers having counterdrug intelligence responsibilities, we found increasing potential for overlap in certain areas. For example, while EPIC continues its efforts to establish itself as the HIDTA hub, the HIDTAs are becoming more involved with the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Fusion Center in the exchange of drug trafficking investigative information. With the emergence of new centers and EPIC's expansion into program areas that were not addressed in the Plan, there is an increased likelihood for duplication of effort among the centers. Therefore, updated guidance on the roles and missions of these various counterdrug intelligence centers is needed.

Our review also found that the number of inquiries to EPIC from Department of Justice components, as measured in the number of times EPIC conducted simultaneous searches of its databases by request, decreased significantly between FY 2005 and FY 2009.[9] At the same time, the total number of requests for information submitted to EPIC by state and local law enforcement doubled, rising from about 25,000 requests in FY 2005 to almost 55,000 requests in FY 2009. We are concerned about the decline in the use of EPIC by Department components over the last several years because, during this same time, the Department significantly increased its activities related to combating smuggling and its associated violence along the Southwest border.

EPIC does not sufficiently analyze some of its information for patterns and trends that could aid interdiction efforts.

Although EPIC maintains access to large amounts of information in its own and other federal databases, we found that EPIC does not

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Center, in Johnstown, Pennsylvania; the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network in Vienna, Virginia; and the Crime and Narcotics Center in Langley, Virginia.

[8] After our review was complete, EPIC renamed the Asset Identification Unit the Financial Targeting Unit.

[9] This does not include information obtained from EPIC that did not entail EPIC simultaneously searching its databases or instances in which users viewed or obtained information from EPIC's Portal without submitting an information request to EPIC.

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analyze several of its unique data sources. As a result, EPIC may be overlooking trends, patterns, and connections that would assist EPIC users in conducting interdiction activities effectively and safely. We identified three examples of missed analytic opportunities within datasets that EPIC manages.

First, EPIC maintains the National Seizure System database, but does not analyze it to identify drug trafficking patterns and trends. EPIC generates reports that merely aggregate data entered into the system and provide only limited analysis of the data.

Second, EPIC does not analyze its repository of U.S. birth certificates, passports, and other documents suspected of being fraudulent or fraudulently obtained to identify patterns in their use by traffickers. While EPIC's Fraudulent Document Unit responds to law enforcement requests to evaluate the validity of individual U.S. documents, the unit does not have the staffing or technical resources to identify trends and patterns in these documents.

Third, EPIC does not fully analyze the information it collects on the activities of drug traffickers to identify trends and patterns. EPIC manages a program that collects information on the activities of traffickers and disseminates the information to federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies for their immediate use in interdiction activities. However, EPIC does not review and analyze the information so that trends and patterns that might have value to future operations can be identified.

We also found that EPIC users consider the information in a key report that EPIC issues – the Gatekeeper report – to be out of date. EPIC is the only intelligence center that produces and widely disseminates reports that summarize the hierarchy, methods, and activities of the major organizations controlling the drug smuggling corridors between Mexico and the United States. Because the Gatekeeper reports are updated infrequently, they are used by investigators as reference material rather than in their day-to-day operations.

EPIC is not managing the performance of its programs through effective performance measurement or collection of user feedback.

We found that EPIC lacks measurable performance indicators for many of its programs and does not systematically collect user feedback. Of 18 EPIC programs we identified, only 11 had associated performance measures within EPIC's strategic plan. Of the 11 programs with

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performance measures, EPIC had systems and processes in place to track the performance of only 7.

EPIC unit chiefs we interviewed were generally unaware of their programs' performance measures and were not using them to evaluate operations. In addition, EPIC does not systematically solicit feedback from its users and does not keep its users regularly informed of program changes. Further, when it established new programs, EPIC did not consistently define the purpose, scope, and objectives of the programs or develop a plan for implementing them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve EPIC's utility to the law enforcement and intelligence community, we recommend that:

1. EPIC expand its outreach and education program to promote the use of its products and services, including information about how to use the EPIC Portal.

2. EPIC update its Principals Accord or adopt a comparable multi-agency framework that formalizes each member's roles and responsibilities for implementing and sustaining EPIC's programs and that provides a process for resolving differences that may arise.

3. EPIC promote more complete reporting of drug seizure data to the National Seizure System through the EPIC Portal and traditional methods.

4. The Office of the Deputy Attorney General work with the ONDCP to establish policy or guidance requiring HIDTAs to implement data and information sharing provisions to establish EPIC as their hub for seizure and drug movement information.

5. EPIC establish points of contact at all national, regional, state, and local fusion centers to enhance information sharing and use of EPIC's services and products.

6. EPIC issue more substantive analytical products based on the seizure data collected in the National Seizure System.

7. EPIC assess the feasibility of analyzing digitally scanned fraudulent documents to identify trends in both sources and

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patterns of fraudulent document use, and of providing the data to other intelligence centers for their use.

8. The DEA assess the feasibility of enhancing the capability at EPIC to analyze tactical information to identify links, trends, and patterns in drug trafficking activity in support of interdiction operations and investigations.

9. EPIC examine new approaches for making Gatekeeper information more current and accessible.

10. EPIC develop performance metrics for all of EPIC's programs and operations that define relevant and objective standards, and use the metrics to evaluate program effectiveness.

11. EPIC expand its existing mechanisms to systematically collect feedback on EPIC's products and services from users.

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Introduction

The border between the United States and Mexico presents a long-standing challenge to U.S. law enforcement. Criminal organizations smuggle illicit drugs, undocumented aliens, and other contraband across the border into the United States, and cash and weapons into Mexico. In its June 2009 National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) estimated that 90 percent of the cocaine in U.S. drug markets transits through the Mexico and Central America corridor. Additionally, the 2010 National Drug Threat Assessment stated that "Mexican drug trafficking organizations continue to represent the single greatest drug trafficking threat to the United States."

In 1974 the Department of Justice (Department) published a study, *A Secure Border: Analysis of Issues Affecting the United States Department of Justice,* that detailed drug and border enforcement strategies and programs. The study recommended that the Department establish an interagency border intelligence center to:

1. consolidate, analyze, and disseminate on request all-source data regarding border-related violations;

2. identify conspirators and the scope and method of their activities;

3. assess and evaluate border conspiracy operations; and

4. develop and maintain coordination with the Southwest border enforcement agencies so that a prompt response can be mounted for "hot" intelligence items developed by one agency that fall under the responsibility of another.

In response to that study, the Department established the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) in El Paso, Texas. Led by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), EPIC is intended to serve as a tactical intelligence center, supported by databases and resources from member agencies.[10] EPIC provides tactical information to federal, state, local, tribal, and international law enforcement agencies conducting interdiction activities, particularly along the Southwest border. EPIC's stated mission is to support U.S. law enforcement and interdiction

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[10] Tactical intelligence is information on which immediate enforcement action – arrests, seizures, and interdictions – can be based.

components through the timely analysis and dissemination of intelligence on illicit drug and alien movements, and on criminal organizations responsible for these illegal activities, within the United States, on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, across the Caribbean, and from other points of origin within the Western Hemisphere en route to the United States.

The 2000 General Counterdrug Intelligence Plan issued by a White House task force identified EPIC as one of four primary national-level centers with drug intelligence responsibilities.[11] Further, the Plan stated that "EPIC will be strengthened as the principal center for operational and investigative intelligence analysis of illicit drug movements in support of interdiction activities and U.S. law enforcement." The ONDCP's 2009 National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy refers to EPIC as the "DEA's most important intelligence sharing organization focusing on the Southwest border."

The sections below provide background on EPIC's staffing, users, and budget; its management structure; and its operational capabilities. A description of the purpose and scope of this Office of the Inspector General (OIG) review then follows.
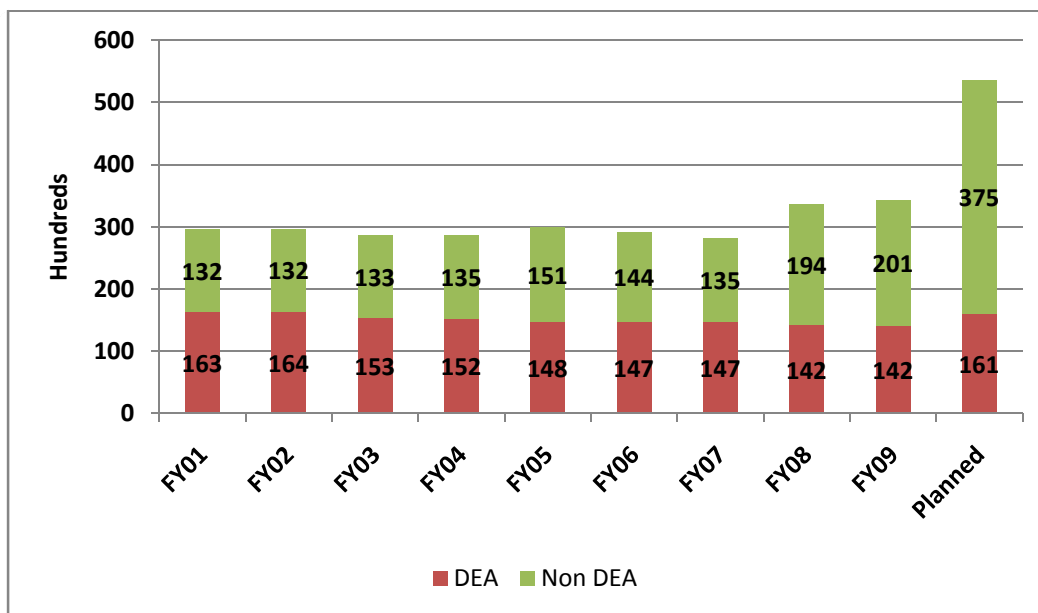
EPIC's Staff, Users, and Budget

Staffing. Twenty-one agencies maintain staff at EPIC. As of August 2009, EPIC had 343 investigative, analytic, and support staff on site. One hundred and sixty were from the Department, 81 were from other federal agencies, 6 were from state and local agencies, and 96 were contractors.

Staffing at EPIC increased 22 percent from fiscal year (FY) 2007 to FY 2009. In the next several years, up to 193 additional Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, and Department of Defense personnel are slated to be assigned to EPIC to support its expanding programs and new initiatives. Full implementation of these expansions and initiatives would increase staffing at EPIC by 56 percent. Ninety percent of these additional personnel would come from agencies other than the DEA. Figure 1 depicts staffing trends and projections at EPIC.

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[11] The other three national counterdrug intelligence centers identified in the plan were the National Drug Intelligence Center, in Johnstown, Pennsylvania; the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network in Vienna, Virginia; and the Crime and Narcotics Center in Langley, Virginia.

Figure 1: EPIC Staffing, FY 2001 – Planned

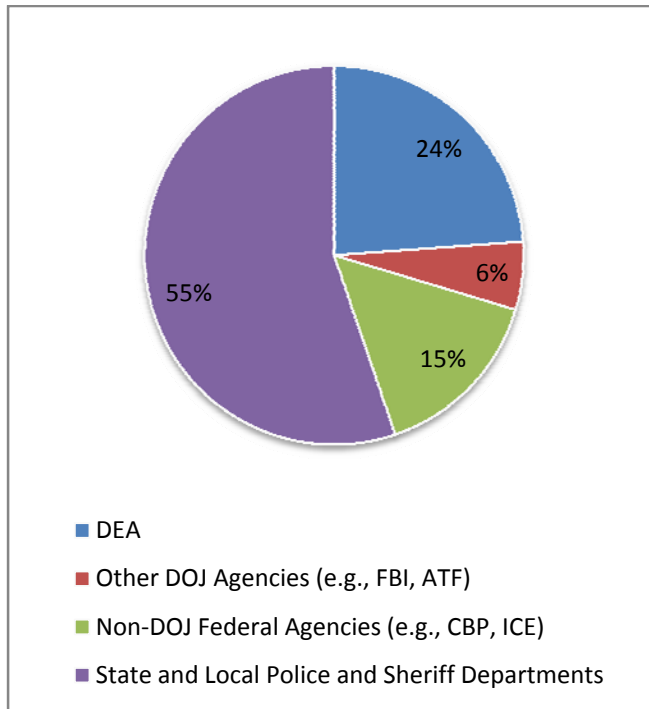| Fiscal Year	DEA	Non DEA
FY01	163	132
FY02	164	132
FY03	153	133
FY04	152	135
FY05	148	151
FY06	147	144
FY07	147	135
FY08	142	194
FY09	142	201
Planned	161	375

Source: EPIC and OIG analysis.

Users. EPIC supports more than 19,000 individual users and also provides information to a wider population of law enforcement users through High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) intelligence centers, state and local fusion centers, and other federal centers.[12] Appendix II contains a list of national and regional intelligence centers that have responsibilities related to drug trafficking and with which EPIC shares information. For officers or analysts to become EPIC users, they must contact EPIC and request access to EPIC information. EPIC requires that applicants include their supervisor's and security manager's contact information in their applications. For an application to be approved, the security manager must verify that the applicant's parent agency has the applicant's fingerprints on file. EPIC informs the applicant's supervisor of the application so that the supervisor can contact EPIC if the applicant should not be provided access. EPIC has historically required state and local users to follow this process and

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[12] *The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988* and the *Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Reauthorization Act of 1998* authorize the Director of the ONDCP to designate areas within the United States as High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas if they demonstrate serious drug trafficking problems with an impact other areas of the country. Currently, the HIDTA program includes 32 HIDTAs that receive federal funding for infrastructure and joint initiatives that facilitate cooperation and information sharing among federal, state, and local law enforcement organizations in an effort to reduce drug trafficking.

began applying it to federal users in 2006. Figure 2 shows the distribution of EPIC users by agency type.

**Figure 2: Distribution of EPIC's Users
by Agency Type, FY 2009**

- DEA
- Other DOJ Agencies (e.g., FBI, ATF)
- Non-DOJ Federal Agencies (e.g., CBP, ICE)
- State and Local Police and Sheriff Departments

Source: OIG analysis.

Budget. The DEA provides most of EPIC's non-salary, operational funding. It contributed $18 million (92 percent) of the FY 2009 budget of $19.6 million.[13] The remaining $1.6 million (8 percent) was paid by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services; intelligence agencies; federal, state, and local asset forfeiture funds; the Department of Transportation; and the HIDTA program for projects these agencies conducted at or with EPIC. Figure 3 shows EPIC's operational budget and the share that the DEA funded from FY 2005 to FY 2009. Between FY 2005 and FY 2009, other agencies' contributions to EPIC's operational budget declined from $3.1 million to $1.6 million, even as these other agencies increased the number of staff they assigned to EPIC.

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[13] Each agency represented at EPIC assumes the salary and benefit costs of its own employees.

Figure 3: EPIC's Operational Budget and Percentage of DEA Funding, FY 2005 – FY 2009
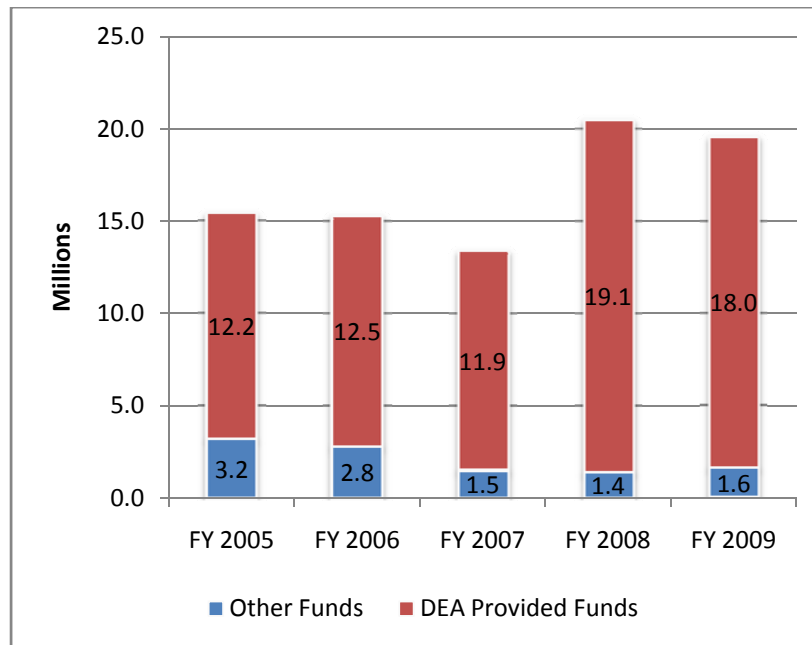
Source: OIG analysis.

EPIC's Management Structure

EPIC's management structure is defined in its Principals Accord (Accord), which sets forth EPIC's mission statement, objective, functions, membership, staffing, and management principles. The Accord defines three levels of membership for agencies affiliated with EPIC.

- Principal Members are "federal agencies that directly support the national effort in the coordinated drug intelligence process by offering intelligence information and a minimum of seven personnel to EPIC."[14]

- Participating Members are "any federal agency that directly supports the national effort in coordinated drug intelligence but that provides less than seven personnel to EPIC."

- Associate Members are "any criminal justice agency, as well as State and Local agencies, involved in the investigation and

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[14] As of August 2009, Principal Members are three Department components (the DEA, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the FBI) and three components of the Department of Homeland Security (Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Coast Guard).

enforcement of controlled substance laws and covers those agencies with written agreements with EPIC prior to the implementation of the Accord."

A Principals Group of six Intelligence Chiefs from Principal Member agencies provides "internal interagency management and coordination," oversees EPIC operations, and is responsible for approving new members and making changes in agencies' membership status. EPIC's Director oversees the center's operations, presents requests for EPIC membership additions or changes to the Principals Group, and serves as chairperson of the Principals Group. The Accord calls for EPIC's Director to report to the DEA's Chief of Intelligence; thus, the EPIC Director has always been a DEA employee. The position of Deputy Director may be occupied by a representative from any agency and is currently held by a representative of the Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

EPIC's Operational Capabilities

The EPIC staff is organized into three operational sections that provide intelligence support to the field: the Watch, Tactical Operations, and Research and Analysis.[15] Figure 4 shows EPIC's organizational and DEA reporting structure.

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[15] Other EPIC sections that provide administrative and technical support to operational units include: (1) the Information Management Section that maintains EPIC databases and applications, (2) the Communications Management Unit that maintains the flow of electronic information between EPIC and other law enforcement agencies, and (3) the Database Management Unit that reviews drug seizure data entered into the National Seizure System.

Figure 4: EPIC Operational Reporting Structure

Note: After our review was completed, EPIC reported that it had renamed the Asset Identification Unit the Financial Targeting Unit and renamed the Predictive Analysis Unit the Predictive Analysis and Targeting Unit. EPIC also stated that it moved its Maritime Intelligence Program from the Tactical Operations Section to the Research and Analysis Section.

Source: EPIC.

Watch Section

The Watch Section is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to respond to requests from EPIC users for information to support their investigations. EPIC responds to requests by performing "EPIC Checks," which are simultaneous searches of four databases that EPIC owns and seven additional databases that EPIC can access.[16] The following databases are included in an EPIC Check (see Appendix III for descriptions of the databases):

Internal Databases

- EPIC 10 Database
- EPIC Law Enforcement Information Search and Analysis (ELISA)

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[16] After the completion of this review, EPIC reported that it had added the Drug Precursor Database, the DEA's License Plate Reader Database, and the DEA's Analysis and Resource Tracking System.

- EPIC Internal Database
- National Seizure System

External Databases

- DEA's Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Information System
- Department of Homeland Security's Treasury Enforcement Communications System II
- FBI's National Crime Information Center System
- CBP's Central Index System
- Federal Aviation Administration's Aircraft Registration System
- Federal Bureau of Prisons' SENTRY
- United States Marshals Service's Warrant Information Network

The Watch Section's General Watch provides tactical intelligence support to law enforcement and interdiction personnel conducting criminal investigations and interdiction operations. In response to requests by law enforcement officers, the General Watch also posts EPIC Lookouts, which alert law enforcement officers to be on the lookout for specific individuals, vehicles, and vessels that are of interest to law enforcement. In addition, when the General Watch receives information about drug seizures, EPIC staff enters it in the National Seizure System, which is the repository for the reporting of drug seizures within the United States.[17]

EPIC receives requests for information through its General Watch from users in the Department of Justice, from other federal agencies, and from state and local law enforcement officers. Users may also obtain information from EPIC by contacting analysts within EPIC directly. If these analysts conduct EPIC Checks, the requests will be counted in EPIC's database of requests for information. The number of EPIC Checks performed on behalf of Department components, other federal agencies, and state and local agencies is depicted in Figure 5.[18]

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[17] The National Seizure System, which contains information on seizure events since 2000, is used in federal and regional drug trafficking analyses, and in the development of drug policy. (Seizure information from the 1970s through 1999 is maintained in the EPIC Internal Database.) The DEA, FBI, CBP, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Coast Guard are the only agencies required to report drug seizures to the National Seizure System, and they must do so only if the amounts seized meet specific threshold levels.

[18] The information in Figure 5 does not include requests for information that did not result in a simultaneous search of the EPIC databases or instances in which users viewed or obtained information from EPIC's Portal without submitting an information request to EPIC.

**Figure 5: Requests for Information by Agency Type,
FY 2005 – FY 2009**
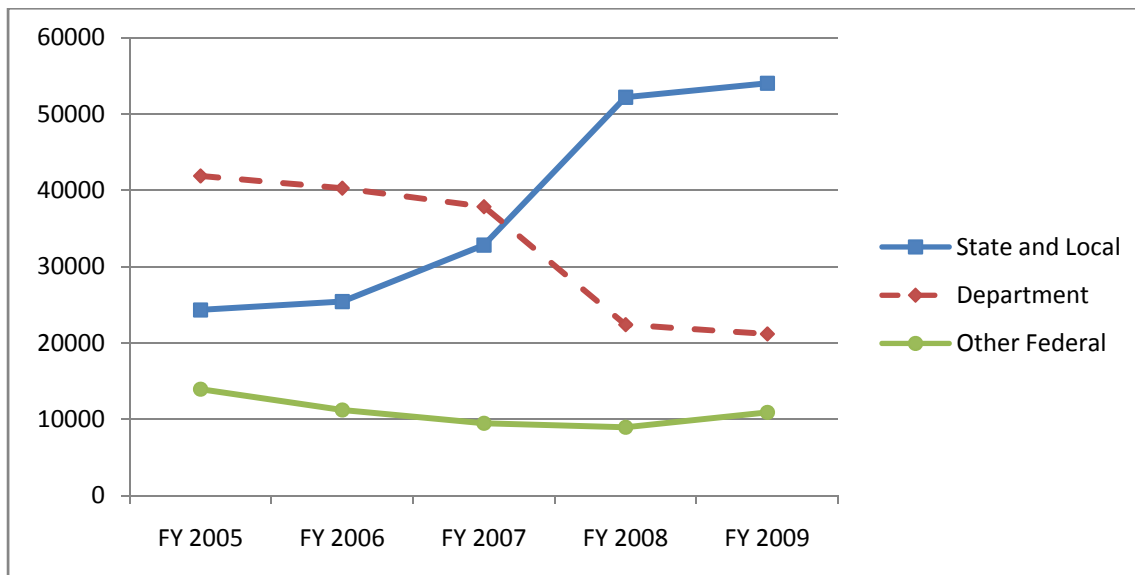
Source: EPIC.

The portion of requests for information attributable to each of these groups has shifted significantly in the last 5 years. Since FY 2005, the number of requests for information submitted by Department users has been decreasing, falling from about 40,000 in FY 2005 to about 20,000 in FY 2009. Requests from non-Department federal users, who have always made the fewest number of requests for information from EPIC, have trended slightly downward. Meanwhile, the total number of requests for information submitted to EPIC by state and local law enforcement has steadily increased, rising from about 25,000 requests in FY 2005 to almost 55,000 requests in FY 2009. In FY 2009, state and local law enforcement generated 60 percent of EPIC's 89,932 requests for information.

In addition to the General Watch's activities, three units within the Watch provide specialized investigative support to law enforcement and interdiction agencies. The Maritime Intelligence Unit supports maritime interdiction agencies, such as the Coast Guard, by conducting EPIC Checks on individuals on vessels boarded because of their suspected involvement with smuggling. The EPIC Gun Desk supports the disruption of illegal weapons trafficking by compiling information on weapons seizures and querying databases for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' (ATF) field personnel and participants at EPIC. The Military Sealift Command conducts EPIC Checks on non-military personnel, such as crew, contractors, and visitors, scheduled to board or work on U.S. cargo and other vessels.

Tactical Operations Section

The Tactical Operations Section operates EPIC's programs to collect information along certain sections of the Southwest border, the Caribbean, and Eastern Pacific, and disseminates the information to appropriate law enforcement agencies. As part of its maritime program, EPIC participates in a maritime intelligence group that works collaboratively to collect and share information used to interdict contraband being smuggled into the United States. The agencies in this group target different geographic areas. When one of these agencies collects tactical information based on the maritime movements of drug traffickers, it creates tactical reports and circulates them to other members of the group for verification. The group provides these reports to U.S. law enforcement agencies engaged in maritime drug interdiction to assist them in planning operations and directing resources to specific threats.

The Tactical Operations Section also manages EPIC's beacon tracking program and Air Watch. The beacon tracking program continuously monitors beacons used by law enforcement personnel, either for their own safety or to assist them in tracking suspects of their investigations. EPIC's Air Watch supports aviation- and aircraft-related investigations by providing information on aircraft, pilots, and passengers suspected of having links to criminal activity, and by issuing EPIC Lookouts on movements of suspect aircraft and pilots.

Research and Analysis Section

EPIC's Research and Analysis Section produces reports on smuggling practices and seizure trends, and provides specialized support to investigations. Within this section, the Southwest Border Unit researches and produces reports on drug trafficking organizations, known as "gatekeepers," that control contraband smuggling routes along the U.S.-Mexico border. EPIC's "Southwest Border Gatekeepers" report is the only continuously maintained summary of the hierarchy, methods, and activities of the major players operating along the border between Mexico and the United States. The following four additional units provide other types of specialized support.

EPIC's newly established Predictive Analysis Unit produces reports summarizing drug seizures along routes identified as drug smuggling corridors and provides these reports to interdiction agencies.

The Asset Identification Unit researches commercial, federal, and open source databases to identify properties, businesses, vehicles, and

financial assets owned by individuals who are under investigation for drug trafficking and money laundering.

The Crime-Terror Nexus Unit conducts research and analysis on individuals under investigation by law enforcement to determine whether criminal proceeds are used in support of terrorism.

The Fraudulent Document and Tactical Bulletin Unit provides two distinct types of services. The Fraudulent Document Unit examines seized U.S. documents such as passports and birth certificates suspected of being fraudulent or fraudulently obtained. The Tactical Bulletin Unit reviews information contained in drug seizure reports and creates bulletins on drug transportation trends and practices that have implications for officer safety or that could assist law enforcement in drug interdiction. This unit disseminates the tactical bulletins to over 800 law enforcement personnel.

Additional EPIC Functions

Liaison. EPIC allows representatives of 21 (primarily federal) agencies to share intelligence and investigative leads, and to coordinate Southwest border interdiction operations. EPIC also facilitates tactical information sharing between U.S. agencies and the governments of Colombia and Mexico through liaisons embedded at EPIC.

EPIC Portal. The EPIC Portal, established in 2006, provides users online access to certain EPIC information and databases. Through the Portal, users can:[19]

- request EPIC Checks from the General Watch (EPIC responds to requests by e-mail),
- search the databases that EPIC owns (EPIC 10, the EPIC Internal Database, ELISA, and the National Seizure System),
- enter seizure events into the National Seizure System,
- display the location of drug seizure events by state and county,

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[19] After our review was completed, EPIC reported that it had added access to two additional resources to the Portal: (1) the Drug Precursor Database and (2) the capability to access OneDOJ. The Department's OneDOJ Database is a repository for law enforcement information such as open and closed case documents, investigative reports, witness interviews, criminal event data, criminal history and incarceration information, and identifying information about individual offenders. It allows Department and regional criminal law enforcement users to share information internally with other investigative components.

- display seizure event information on a map, and

- obtain 34 standard reports and EPIC published reports.

Interdiction Training. EPIC provides training to personnel in other law enforcement agencies that conduct interdiction operations. The courses, mainly tailored to the needs of state and local law enforcement, cover the interdiction of passenger vehicles on highways, the interdiction of commercial vehicles on highways, and interdiction in public spaces such as airports, hotels, and conveyances such as aircraft, buses, and trains. In FY 2008, EPIC conducted 29 courses throughout the United States for 3,027 officers.

Acts as Law Enforcement Interface for the Federal Aviation Administration. After the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) law enforcement authority was transferred to the Transportation Security Administration following the *Homeland Security Act of 2002,* EPIC assumed responsibility for providing information from its databases to the FAA when the FAA needs information about suspicious activity involving aircraft.

Backup Beacon Monitoring Agency for the Joint Interagency Task Force-South. If the Joint Interagency Task Force-South, which detects and monitors illicit air and maritime targets, is unable to maintain continuous beacon monitoring (for example, because of an evacuation due to weather), EPIC adds the task force's beacon signals to its own system and monitors them until the task force is once again able to perform this function.

Purpose and Scope of the OIG's Review

In this review, the OIG assessed EPIC's analysis and dissemination of intelligence in support of law enforcement interdiction operations, activities, and investigations; which agencies are using EPIC and how EPIC is supporting these agencies' investigations and operations; and whether there are opportunities for EPIC to expand its user population. We also examined the utility of EPIC's products and services through a survey of EPIC vetted users. We conducted our fieldwork from March to September 2009 and focused on EPIC's operations between FY 2005 and FY 2008. More details on our methodology are discussed in Appendix I.

We found that EPIC is highly valued by its partner agencies and users, but users also report needing more information about EPIC and improved access to its online information system. In addition, we identified several weaknesses that have prevented EPIC's operations and programs from being as effective as they could be. EPIC did not adequately staff some key interdiction programs and, as a result, its service to users was disrupted or diminished. EPIC also did not develop the National Seizure System into a comprehensive database of drug seizures nationwide or establish itself as the hub for the HIDTA program. Further, EPIC did not coordinate consistently with other intelligence centers. We also found that EPIC does not analyze significant information and, as a result, may not be identifying drug trafficking trends and patterns that could assist interdiction activities. Further, EPIC is not managing its programs through effective performance measurement or collection of user feedback.

EPIC users report high satisfaction with its products and services, but they also report needing more information about EPIC and improved access to its Portal.

We surveyed law enforcement personnel and analysts within the Department, other federal agencies, and state and local agencies who are users of EPIC, and found that those who had used EPIC's products generally rated the quality high and reported the products were valuable to their operations. However, we also found that users need more information about EPIC and improved access to its Portal.

We sent 2,499 surveys to EPIC users asking about their experiences with EPIC and their views about the value and quality of EPIC's products and services.[20] We received 765 responses that we were

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[20] We summarize the results in this section and provide more detail on the results in Appendix IV. Our survey methodology is summarized in Appendix I.

able to analyze. It is important to note that we did not survey law enforcement personnel who had never established accounts at EPIC.[21]

Survey respondents who had used EPIC's products generally rated the quality high and reported the products were valuable to their operations. Sixty-two percent of respondents stated that EPIC's products and services had been "very helpful" in supporting their operations, while 34 percent indicated these had been "somewhat helpful." Only 4 percent of the 638 respondents who answered this question indicated that EPIC products and services had been "not very helpful" or "not helpful at all." We asked respondents who reported that an EPIC product or service added "little value" or "no value" to their operations to explain the reason for this. Overall, few respondents reported that EPIC's products and services had diminished value because of a shortcoming in the product; rather, the primary reasons were that the respondents had not used the product or service (either because they were unaware of it or because they did not know how to use it) or that the product did not apply to their mission.

When asked to evaluate EPIC's products and services based on four specific criteria – accuracy, relevance, timeliness, and actionability – a large majority of respondents rated EPIC's products and services highly on all four. See Table 1.

Table 1: Percentage of Respondents Reporting that EPIC Products and Services Fully Met Their Criteria

Criteria	Products and Services Fully Met Criteria
Accurate	82%
Relevant	80%
Timely	76%
Actionable	74%

Source: OIG survey.

In response to our question about whether there were additional comments about EPIC, many survey respondents stated that EPIC could improve the utility of its products and services to law enforcement by providing more information about these products and how to access them. For example, respondents stated, "EPIC needs to get out into the field to educate local, state and federal agencies of its existence and what valuable services it does provide," "I feel that I don't know enough about

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[21] EPIC users represent about 2 percent of all law enforcement personnel in the United States.

EPIC and therefore I was not using it to its fullest potential," and "I would like to use EPIC to support investigations but am not sure in what areas EPIC can and will support other [agencies'] investigations."

EPIC senior managers told us that EPIC does not have a formal marketing program and relies on presentations made during the drug detection and interdiction training sessions it conducts to expose federal, state, and local partners to its products and services. In FY 2008, EPIC provided interdiction training to approximately 3,000 officers. Our survey showed that 16 percent of survey respondents indicated they first learned of EPIC through its interdiction training, while over 50 percent reported they learned about EPIC through other training or from coworkers.

We also asked in our survey about why EPIC users were not using EPIC's Portal. During our review, EPIC managers told us that their vision was to significantly expand the use of EPIC's Portal for customers to access EPIC information. However, only 4,638 (24 percent) of EPIC's 19,416 users had active Portal accounts as of July 2009, and in FY 2008 only 2 percent of the requests EPIC received for information were submitted through the Portal. Our survey of 765 users indicated that the primary reasons that Portal usage remains low are that users need additional information about what the Portal provides or training in how to use the Portal (90 respondents) and because users find obtaining and maintaining active accounts is difficult (53 respondents).[22]

Overall, our results indicate that EPIC has the opportunity to improve its utility to the law enforcement and intelligence community by increasing its outreach efforts, and particularly by improving the accessibility of the EPIC Portal.

Recommendation

We recommend that EPIC:

1. Expand its outreach and education program to promote the use of its products and services, including information about how to use the EPIC Portal.

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[22] EPIC provides little training and information to its users about how to use the Portal. EPIC Portal training consists of a computer-based training module hosted on the Portal itself that describes the Portal's capabilities, components, and applications. In addition, during FY 2009, EPIC staff trained 48 users during 6 sessions on the Portal given at EPIC and 59 users during 3 off-site sessions. EPIC stated that users also can call or e-mail to request assistance and training.

EPIC has not adequately staffed several key interdiction programs or ensured that member agencies collaborate effectively to sustain programs and share information.

We found that EPIC could not sustain staffing for several key interdiction programs, and as a result, service to its users was disrupted or diminished for approximately a year. We found that EPIC's programs to help investigators identify fraudulent documents was unstaffed from December 2007 to January 2009, and its program to provide investigators with information pertaining to pilots, suspect aircraft, and aircraft movements was unstaffed for approximately 9 months of 2007.

Further, EPIC did not maintain a consistent level of staffing and support for its efforts to collect information on the maritime activities of drug traffickers, with a result that EPIC's contributions to a maritime intelligence group decreased 59 percent between FY 2007 and FY 2008. Because EPIC is the agency with the strongest collection capability for certain maritime drug smuggling corridors to the United States, the failure to staff and support this group likely hindered drug trafficking interdiction efforts.

We also identified two programs that were not fully implemented because national policy was lacking and because EPIC did not have the operational control to require the law enforcement participation necessary to execute these programs. First, EPIC's process for aggregating drug seizure information into a comprehensive database into which all drug seizures are reported nationwide has not produced a complete database of seizures. Second, EPIC has not established itself as the hub for the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program, which coordinates drug control efforts among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies through 32 task forces and allied intelligence centers.

In addition, EPIC's coordination with other federal and state intelligence centers is inconsistent. Specifically, EPIC does not maintain an up-to-date list of key centers and their points of contact, and cannot ensure it has users in each center. We also found that some members of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces were not aware of EPIC's Crime-Terror Nexus Unit, whose products could provide direct support to the Joint Terrorism Task Forces. We discuss these shortcomings in the following sections.

EPIC's Fraudulent Document Unit was unstaffed for more than a year.

EPIC did not maintain staff in its Fraudulent Document Unit between December 2007 and January 2009, and as a result the unit developed a backlog of 7,000 unexamined documents and did not provide support to law enforcement officers who contacted EPIC for information during this period. The Fraudulent Document Unit supports law enforcement agencies through its examination of U.S. documents, such as passports and birth certificates that are fraudulent or are authentic but were obtained or used fraudulently. Prior to December 2007, the unit received and verified documents for authenticity and stored them on microfilm. In December 2007, the unit's three Department of Homeland Security (DHS) staff retired or were reassigned by DHS and were not replaced, leaving the unit without personnel and unable to respond to user requests.

In January 2009, DHS's Customs and Border Protection agency assigned three analysts to the unit, and the unit resumed responding to law enforcement officers who requested assistance in assessing documents. However, according to the Unit Chief, as of fall 2009 the unit still lacked sufficient staff to respond to these requests on a timely basis, to examine the 20 to 150 new documents received each week, and to examine the documents in the backlog.

EPIC's Air Watch was unstaffed for 9 months.

EPIC also was unable to maintain continuous staffing of its Air Watch. Before 2007, the Federal Aviation Administration provided staff to support the Air Watch. In 2002, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was formed, and the FAA positions were converted to TSA positions. In 2007, the TSA removed its personnel from EPIC and, as a result, EPIC could not provide specialized information in support of investigations involving aircraft or pilots until 2008 when EPIC staffed the unit with Air National Guard personnel. During the time when the Air Watch was unstaffed, EPIC continued to provide investigators with information from EPIC's databases, including the FAA's Aircraft Registration System, when requested, but could not provide specialized support such as information on suspect aircraft movements or additional analysis. Customs and Border Protection's Air Marine Operations Center, located in San Diego, California, provided this specialized support while EPIC could not.

<u>EPIC did not maintain staffing sufficient to sustain its contributions to a maritime counterdrug intelligence group</u>.

EPIC also did not maintain a consistent level of staffing and support to a maritime intelligence group in which it participates. EPIC is one of five agencies in a maritime intelligence group that collects information on the maritime movements of drug traffickers in the corridors to the United States and provides information to law enforcement agencies so they can interdict vessels suspected of being used to smuggle contraband into the United States.

Because, of the agencies in this maritime group, EPIC is the federal entity with the strongest collection capability for certain corridors to the United States, it is important that EPIC fully maintain its collection efforts and participation in the group. In a memorandum to us, an analyst from an agency providing oversight of the maritime intelligence group wrote:

> EPIC's value in the program extends beyond sheer volume and quality of reporting. While Joint Interagency Task Force-South has focused on attacking the source and departure zones EPIC has often been the sole-source of effort directed against the arrival zones, several steps closer to the Southwest border . . . .

Noting that EPIC has the primary role for collecting information in this region, another analyst we interviewed stated that "if they don't [collect] it, nobody else will." As Figure 6 on the next page shows, EPIC has been a major contributor to the group. In FY 2008 EPIC credited its maritime collection efforts with contributing to 41 arrests and the seizure of 11 vessels and 30.5 metric tons of cocaine.

However, from FY 2005 through FY 2008, the number of tactical reports EPIC contributed to this maritime intelligence group decreased from 2,330 to 819 (65 percent) (see Figure 6). In that time, it decreased its relative contributions to the group from 42 percent to 25 percent, based on total tactical reports. EPIC also failed to meet its internal performance measure goal of issuing five drug movement alerts per month, issuing only nine for FY 2008. It also failed to meet its target of identifying three major maritime drug transportation groups for FY 2008, identifying only one.

Figure 6: Contributions of Tactical Reports to a Maritime Intelligence Group by Agency
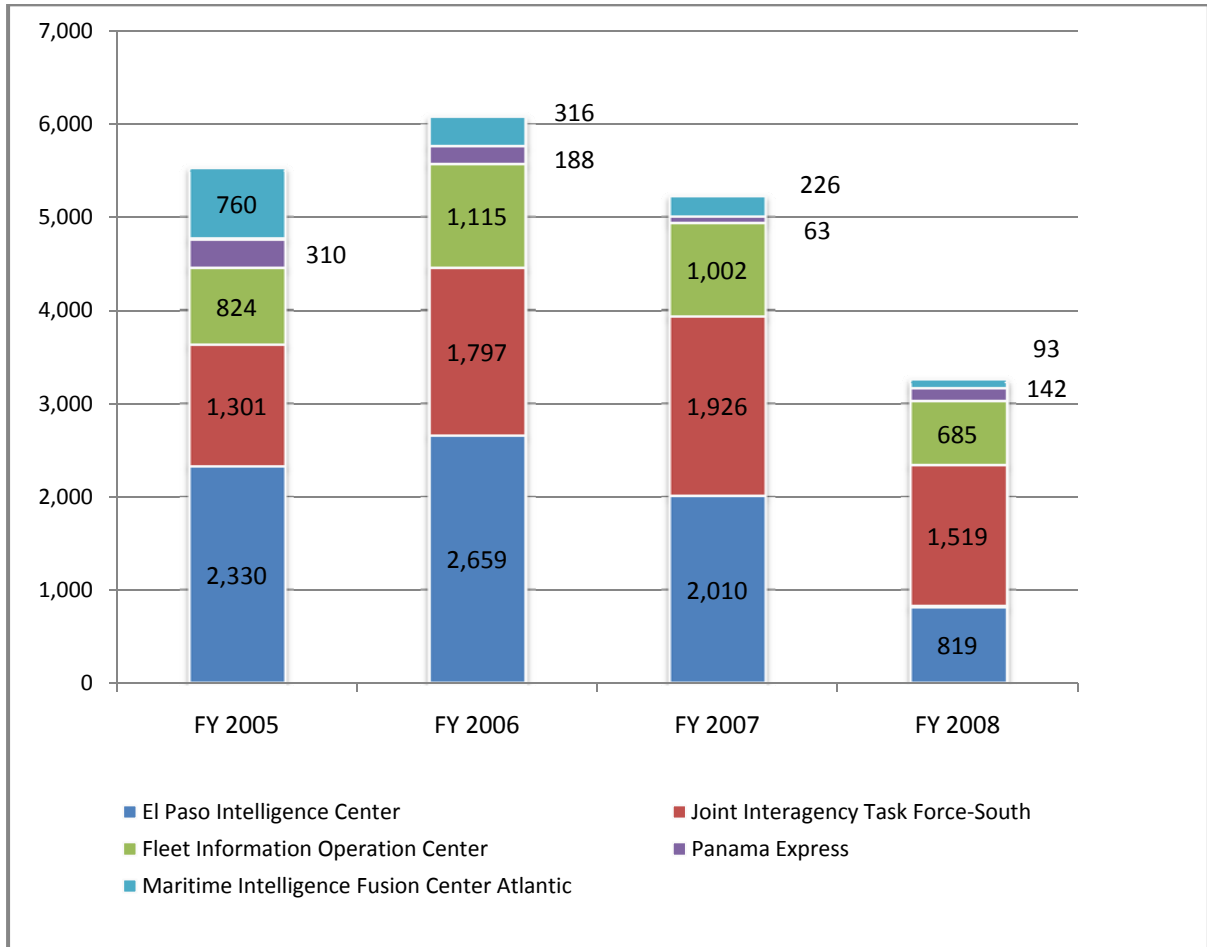
Source: EPIC.

EPIC's maritime intelligence managers and staff told us that the decrease in tactical reports was due to changes in drug trafficking methods that hampered the collection of information on maritime drug movements, and additional factors specific to EPIC that are described below. As Figure 6 shows, the overall output of the group has decreased since 2006.

Additional factors and EPIC's management decisions further contributed to EPIC's decline in productivity. According to written information provided by EPIC, EPIC shifted personnel from its maritime to its land-based program due "to an increase in reported violence along the Southwest border." EPIC's Director noted that EPIC staff who collect information on maritime and land-based drug trafficker movements come from the same limited pool. The Director said he decided how much of

their limited time to allocate to each collection activity based on where the manpower was likely to have the greatest and most immediate value. Further, four staff members supplied by the DEA left EPIC during FY 2008 and were not replaced for approximately 8 months. EPIC also experienced equipment problems for a period of time in FY 2008.

Analysts from one of the other agencies in the maritime intelligence group stated they noted a "drop-off" in the quality and quantity of EPIC's contributions and in the frequency with which EPIC staff provided information to them beginning in 2008. One analyst stated that while this decrease in EPIC's contributions did not cause the mission to collapse, it adversely affected the strength of individual interdiction cases.

<u>EPIC's Principals Accord is outdated, is not used effectively, and does not define the roles and responsibilities of its member agencies</u>.

EPIC lacks a current, coordinated multi-agency agreement that clearly delineates the roles, responsibilities, and contributions of its member agencies. EPIC does maintain bilateral Memoranda of Understanding with agencies in every state and with several federal agencies, foreign governments, and agencies. EPIC's Principals Accord no longer effectively serves as a multi-agency agreement that defines member agency participation, does not establish program goals and priorities, and does not ensure regular meetings and collaboration among the partners. We believe that the absence of a current multi-agency agreement has contributed to problems with the continuity of EPIC's programs and agency collaboration. While EPIC relies on its member agencies to staff, implement, and sustain EPIC programs, EPIC's 1999 Principals Accord is outdated, no longer reflects EPIC's current membership or the scope of EPIC's operations and missions, and does not provide a decision making process where issues can be decided. Although a majority of member agencies at EPIC collaborate effectively, several EPIC officials informed us of instances where a member agency did not share information or contribute resources, leaving EPIC without an agreed upon method for resolving the dispute.

The Principals Accord calls for regular meetings of the Principals Group, but does not establish a schedule for how frequently the meetings should be held. We requested information regarding previous Principals Group meetings, but we did not receive any documentation from EPIC. EPIC's senior management told us that these meetings had not been held in "at least several years." We were also informed that EPIC's Director communicates with members of the Principals Group informally rather than through a formal process that ensures adequate collaboration.

In March 2009, EPIC's Deputy Director acknowledged that EPIC lacked an interagency guide and that the Principals Accord needed to be updated. EPIC reported that 3 years ago it started the process of formulating a replacement document that would establish a steering group to provide oversight of EPIC. According to EPIC, in April 2010 the Interdiction Committee agreed to "facilitate discussions at the Department level" that would establish the steering group.[23]

As a result of the lack of an effective multi-agency agreement, EPIC has been unable to sustain several key programs or to resolve differences that arose in the course of operating as a multi-agency center.

Recommendation

We recommend that EPIC:

2. Update its Principals Accord or adopt a comparable multi-agency framework that formalizes each member's roles and responsibilities for implementing and sustaining EPIC's programs and that provides a process for resolving differences that may arise.

<u>EPIC's process for capturing drug seizure information has not produced a comprehensive database nationwide</u>.

EPIC responded to the directive in the 2000 General Counterdrug Intelligence Plan (the Plan) to establish a process to aggregate federal, state, and local drug seizure information into one system to enable analyses of drug trafficking activity by creating the National Seizure System database. However, the process that EPIC established for agencies to report seizure data has not produced the comprehensive database envisioned in the Plan. Unlike the ONDCP's annual National Drug Control Strategy, which guides U.S. efforts and national priorities for reducing illegal drug use and disrupting the illegal drug market, the Plan provides direction and assigns tasks to U.S. counterdrug law enforcement and intelligence entities, including EPIC. The Plan called for:

> the Counterdrug Intelligence Executive Secretariat, in cooperation with EPIC and its various points-of-contact, HIDTA intelligence centers, the DEA, and Regional

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[23] The Interdiction Committee is a multi-agency body of federal agencies involved in drug interdiction efforts. It is chartered by the ONDCP to discuss and resolve issues related to the coordination, oversight, and integration of international, border, and domestic interdiction efforts.

Information Sharing System, to coordinate the development of a process to capture drug seizure data at the state and local level.

The National Seizure System EPIC maintains is not a complete record of drug seizures made by U.S. law enforcement, and as a result, intelligence products based on analysis of the seizure data contained in this system may be incomplete or inaccurate.

EPIC's National Seizure System is not a complete record of drug seizures made by U.S. law enforcement.

Although many federal law enforcement agencies may make or be involved in making drug seizures, only five are required to report information to EPIC's National Seizure System: the DEA, FBI, CBP, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Coast Guard.[24] Further, these five are required to report only seizures above threshold levels established by the DEA, even though the National Seizure System accepts seizures of any drug quantity.[25] Based upon information provided by EPIC, we found that only the five required federal agencies and an additional four (ATF, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and Postal Inspection Service) had supplied data to the system in FY 2008.

The number of drug seizures made by federal agencies that are not required to report is not known. To determine whether these agencies are making drug seizures that are not being reported, we conducted telephone interviews with representatives from three federal agencies that had not reported seizures directly in the National Seizure System during FY 2008 and that seemed likely to conduct drug seizures. The three agencies we contacted were the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Food and Drug Administration. We asked officials from these agencies whether their agencies seized drugs, how they reported the seizures, and into what system. The official from the

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[24] Using the July 2006 Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, *Federal Law Enforcement Officers, 2004,* we identified a number of federal agencies that could reasonably be expected to have seized drugs in the conduct of their law enforcement operations but that, according to EPIC, reported no seizures directly to the National Seizure System in FY 2008. A copy of this reference may be found at bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/fleo04.pdf.

[25] In 2001, the DEA established quantities of drugs seized that are required to be reported. These quantities are listed on the *2001 Drug Threshold Weights and Equivalents.* Examples of substances and threshold amounts over which seizures must be reported are cocaine, 500 grams; hashish, 1 kilogram; heroin, 100 grams; marijuana, 25 kilograms or 50 plants; and methamphetamine, 250 grams.

Bureau of Indian Affairs stated that his agency seizes drugs "daily – somewhere, we are always seizing drugs." In contrast, an official from the Fish and Wildlife Service stated that his agency rarely seizes drugs. The official from the Food and Drug Administration said that agency occasionally seizes illegal drugs in the course of other investigations.

The representatives of the three agencies told us that when they seize drugs, they submit them to another federal agency such as the DEA or CBP, either directly or through a task force, and do not know whether those agencies report the seizures into the National Seizure System. One believed incorrectly that the National Seizure System did not accept seizures below the thresholds.

Based on this anecdotal information, we believe that drug seizures are being made by federal agencies not required to report them. While it is likely that many federal seizures above the thresholds are reported indirectly to the National Seizure System through other agencies or task forces, the lack of a requirement to report makes it difficult to determine whether this information is reported or to ensure that it is reported.

In addition, there is no requirement for state and local agencies to report their drug seizure information to EPIC's National Seizure System database. EPIC accepts seizure information in a wide range of formats, such as facsimiles that EPIC personnel enter into the National Seizure System and electronic transfers of data submitted through the Portal. However, we could verify only that 209 (1 percent) of the approximately 17,876 state and local agencies and task forces nationwide had reported information directly to the system during FY 2008.[26]

An EPIC manager noted that there is little incentive for state and local agencies to report seizures. The manager said that "it is difficult to enlist the locals to cooperate because it requires them to put limited resources to this effort at a time when resources are short, and it's not clear to them what they will get back from their effort." He also noted that local police sometimes view themselves as intelligence consumers, rather than intelligence collectors and reporters.

A problem within EPIC also may have caused the National Seizure System to be incomplete. When we compared selected data reported to

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[26] This does not mean that all seizures by these agencies were not reported to the National Seizure System. Seizures may be consolidated and reported through federal agencies such as the DEA, or through individual state or local agencies, or through task forces such as HIDTAs whose officers were involved in the operations.

the National Seizure System with data in another DEA drug seizure database, we found evidence that National Seizure System data was incomplete. For the comparison, we used the Federal-wide Drug Seizure System, which automatically receives data from the National Seizure System about seizures above established thresholds. Because the National Seizure System contains data on all seizures reported to EPIC regardless of size, the aggregate quantities in the National Seizure System should be greater than or equal to those in the Federal-wide Drug Seizure System. However, we found several instances in which reported seized quantities of the drug MDMA were higher in the Federal-wide Drug Seizure System than the amounts reported in the National Seizure System.[27] For example, the National Seizure System reported 20,000 fewer dosage units of MDMA seized in Michigan than were reported in the Federal-wide Drug Seizure System for the same time period. EPIC personnel could not explain why National Seizure System seizures amounts were less than Federal-wide Drug Seizure System totals.[28]

As of March 2010, the ONDCP was planning to begin a "census" by the end of 2010 of the data in drug seizure databases maintained by law enforcement agencies to track their drug evidence. These databases are presumed to be fairly complete because they are used to track evidence that may, for example, form the basis of criminal cases. The census would compare the seizure information in the individual databases with the information in the National Seizure System and would enable the ONDCP to assess how incomplete the national system is and to what extent analyses conducted based on information in the National Seizure System may be flawed.

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[27] MDMA stands for methylene dioxymethamphetamine, a drug commonly referred to as ecstasy. In 2003, the totals of MDMA recorded in the Federal-wide Drug Seizure System for Michigan were 83,586 dosage units compared with 63,430 in the National Seizure System. In 2004, the totals of MDMA recorded in the Federal-wide Drug Seizure System for Michigan were 70,309 compared with 35,672 recorded in the National Seizure System. Additionally, the Federal-wide Drug Seizure System quantity of MDMA seized in Washington, Vermont, and Montana for 2003 to 2006 was 335,513 dosage units greater than the quantity reported in the National Seizure System for the same states over the same time period.

[28] After our review was complete, EPIC managers stated that this type of discrepancy may be less likely to occur after the DEA and EPIC complete the retirement of the Federal-wide Drug Seizure System. They noted that a full-time data analyst will be hired to review the quality of data before, during, and after the process of migrating Federal-wide Drug Seizure System information to the National Seizure System. Although EPIC reported that this process is under way, a draft plan for the migration is not expected until August 2010.

When we asked an ONDCP research analyst about the ramifications of the National Seizure System being incomplete or inaccurate, he stated that for the United States to not have a complete record of its drug seizures in one system is "an opportunity lost." For example, the CBP uses state and local seizure information from the National Seizure System to track and quantify the amount of drugs successfully smuggled into the United States and thus to identify and then address vulnerabilities at the border. Such analyses would be more accurate if the National Seizure System provided a complete picture of drug trafficking in the United States and of law enforcement's efforts to address trafficking.

EPIC's management of the National Seizure System does not facilitate collection of the data needed to fully support tactical analyses.

The National Seizure System database is structured to collect approximately 140 separate pieces of information, in 7 broad categories, for each drug seizure event reported. All seven of the categories include both mandatory data fields and optional data fields, such as the state of vehicle origination, drug concealment area, vehicle model, and commercial carrier name. Having too many required fields may make reporting so onerous that fewer agencies will report. However, ensuring that key fields are populated with data is essential for comprehensive analysis based on that information. An ONDCP research analyst told us that information from many of the optional data fields would be useful for identifying trends and predicting patterns of drug trafficking, but because the fields are frequently left blank, the analyses based on them are limited.

To illustrate the impact of these gaps in reporting, EPIC presented information in one intelligence report based on reported drug seizures that occurred in July and August 2009. In 11 of 36 (31 percent) reported seizures, the "drug concealment area" field was not populated, and in 6 of 32 (19 percent) seizure reports, the "vehicle model" field was left blank. Complete information is important for forming the national picture of drug trafficking trends and patterns, as well as to effectively support tactical intelligence needs.

A National Drug Intelligence Center research analyst who develops the center's Inter-Agency Assessment of Cocaine Movement report told us that his analysis relies on the "location of origination" field, which is an optional field in the National Seizure System. The report is intended to show the geographic patterns drug traffickers use to move cocaine within the United States. If the origination field is blank, the data cannot be used to determine patterns of trafficking. The analyst stated that

missing data in this field "directly affects the report's accuracy and utility."

EPIC is enhancing the completeness and utility of drug seizure data in the National Seizure System.

EPIC managers told us that they are working with the CBP to import CBP, ICE, and other Department of Homeland Security agencies' seizure information now stored in the Treasury Enforcement Communication System II (TECS II) database into the National Seizure System.[29] EPIC plans to import seizure information from FY 2005 through FY 2009 and to link the systems so that future seizures recorded in TECS II are regularly transferred to the National Seizure System. In February 2010, EPIC managers told us that they had a commitment from the CBP to do this, but that the matter was "under legal review" at the CBP and no date had been specified for the completion of the effort.

Traditionally, agencies report their seizure information to the National Seizure System by calling the EPIC Watch and providing the information associated with their seizure event over the telephone. We found that several state and local entities have begun to transmit their seizure information through the EPIC Portal. As of August 2009, the Arizona and Florida HIDTA intelligence centers each began transmitting about 100 interdiction seizures a month to the National Seizure System, and the California Department of Justice and agencies in Tennessee and Arkansas began transmitting clandestine laboratory seizure information to EPIC's system. EPIC also expected to begin receiving data from the Texas Department of Public Safety through the Portal.

We believe the EPIC Portal has the potential to streamline reporting to, and improve the completeness of, the National Seizure System. However, as previously mentioned, only 4,638 (24 percent) of EPIC's 19,416 users had active Portal accounts as of July 2009, and in FY 2008 only 2 percent of the requests EPIC received for information were submitted through the Portal. In addition, many interviewees and survey respondents reported that they needed more information and training before they could rely on the Portal.

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[29] TECS II is the Department of Homeland Security's automated indexing system of case files and investigative case information that is used to record seizure data.

Recommendation

We recommend that EPIC:

3. Promote more complete reporting of drug seizure data to the National Seizure System through the EPIC Portal and traditional methods.

EPIC is not yet operating as the "hub" for the HIDTA program.

We found that EPIC is not yet the "hub for the HIDTAs," which was defined as one of EPIC's five functions in its 1999 Principals Accord and contained in the 2000 General Counterdrug Intelligence Plan. The Plan stated that EPIC should serve as a hub by "centrally receiving and sharing drug-movement-related information developed by the HIDTA Intelligence Centers" as well as by "ensuring that EPIC's Watch and relevant database checks are a standard part of appropriate HIDTA operational protocols." We found that, although as of August 2009 all HIDTAs had staff approved to use EPIC, EPIC was not yet receiving and incorporating all HIDTA drug seizure data into its seizure system and that EPIC Checks were not a standard part of operational protocols for all HIDTA intelligence centers. In addition, we found that EPIC lacks the authority to direct the actions needed to make itself a hub. Consequently, the 32 regional HIDTAs still lack the national perspective EPIC was intended to provide by connecting their individual databases and providing them access to federal databases.

We found during our interviews that HIDTA managers and analysts did not view EPIC as a hub. For example, one manager in the Southwest region HIDTA we visited stated that "EPIC has the potential to make a good hub because of the network of centers and agencies that draw information from it, but EPIC is not there yet." In addition, a manager from a different HIDTA stated that he did not view EPIC as a hub for the HIDTAs, although he thought that EPIC was a hub for the Domestic Highway Enforcement Program.[30] EPIC's Director told us that he is "fighting an uphill battle" to become the hub for the HIDTAs and that EPIC needs the ONDCP's support in publishing a "policy endorsement" establishing EPIC in that role. While the HIDTAs are largely autonomous, the ONDCP controls their budgets and can direct their activities to ensure they support national drug control strategy.

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[30] The Domestic Highway Enforcement Program coordinates information and resources for enforcement and interdiction operations conducted by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies along key drug transportation corridors.

We observed that the HIDTA intelligence centers do not consistently request information from the EPIC Watch as a standard operational protocol as directed by the Plan. In our survey, 54 of the respondents reported being assigned to a HIDTA, and only 13 of the 54 reported that they used EPIC because they were required to. This suggests that the existence of a protocol was not a major reason for HIDTA analysts to use EPIC.

Only one of the three HIDTA intelligence centers we visited incorporated EPIC Checks into its standard protocol by including it as an option on its information request form. An analyst in this HIDTA intelligence center informed us that she submitted EPIC Checks every day and viewed EPIC as a unique "one-stop shop for getting the most information on targets." Other analysts in the same center reported having a "good overall relationship with EPIC." Analysts at another HIDTA intelligence center we visited said they submitted approximately 7 to 10 requests for information to EPIC each week. In contrast, at a third HIDTA intelligence center we visited, in the Southwest region, analysts reported having a very limited relationship with EPIC. They said they did not routinely contact EPIC to gather information and did so only when the subject or the nature of the information they sought reached outside their HIDTA region.

We asked EPIC's Director about the status of EPIC's effort to establish itself as the hub connecting the HIDTAs in August 2009. At that time he stated that "the first spoke" would be established soon, when the Southwest Border-Arizona Regional HIDTA intelligence center electronically sent EPIC 5,000 records of Domestic Highway Enforcement Program traffic stops for EPIC to host so that the information would be more accessible to other HIDTAs and law enforcement agencies participating in the program. In April 2010, EPIC managers reported that the data transfer of Arizona Domestic Highway Enforcement Program traffic stops information did not begin until November 2009 and was completed in January 2010. According to a manager at the ONDCP, connecting information collected by the HIDTAs through EPIC is important because HIDTA data is not aggregated in a way that can provide a national perspective, and as a result HIDTAs generally "only see what's in their own backyard."

Recommendation

We recommend that the Office of the Deputy Attorney General:

4. Work with the ONDCP to establish policy or guidance requiring HIDTAs to implement data and information sharing provisions to

establish EPIC as their hub for seizure and drug movement information.

EPIC's coordination with federal and state intelligence organizations is inconsistent.

EPIC does not coordinate with other intelligence centers in a consistent and structured manner. We found that of 107 intelligence and fusion centers we identified, 23 did not have staff that had been approved to use EPIC services.[31] EPIC's Director stated that due to the large number of law enforcement agencies within the United States, he believed it is more efficient for officers and analysts to use regional intelligence centers if they had access to one and then for analysts in the regional centers to submit requests to EPIC. However, we believe for this model to work, EPIC must be aware of which regional centers are central to intelligence dissemination to state and local law enforcement agencies and to have points of contact at these centers. EPIC must also ensure that those points of contact are aware of EPIC's products and services and how to access them.

EPIC's Director also acknowledged that the "proliferation of intelligence and fusion centers makes it difficult for EPIC to maintain up-to-date points of contact in every center." Further, EPIC cannot ensure that it has users in all centers because EPIC tracks its users by their parent agency rather than by the affiliation they may have to an intelligence center. To illustrate this issue, we reviewed EPIC's user list to identify which intelligence centers were represented. We then provided EPIC with a list of the intelligence centers that appeared to lack an EPIC user and asked EPIC to confirm the information. The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Fusion Center was among the centers we did not find associated with any user on EPIC's list. EPIC told us it could not confirm that the OCDETF Fusion Center had an EPIC user. However, we found the names of two analysts from this center on EPIC's user list under their agency affiliations – the DEA and FBI.

Further, some members of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces whose work is directly related to EPIC's specialized research units were not aware of EPIC's services. For example, EPIC's Crime-Terror Nexus Unit develops intelligence products related to terrorism activities, but of the five FBI Special Agents assigned to three different Joint Terrorism

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[31] Our list of 107 intelligence centers consists of state fusion centers approved by the Department of Homeland Security, HIDTA intelligence centers, and the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Fusion Center.

Task Forces we interviewed, only the two agents in the El Paso area were aware of and routinely received information from EPIC. The other three agents told us they were not aware that the Crime-Terror Nexus Unit existed and did not use EPIC. One of these FBI Special Agents stated that he had "zero contact with EPIC."

Recommendation

We recommend that EPIC:

5. Establish points of contact at all national, regional, state, and local fusion centers to enhance information sharing and use of EPIC's services and products.

EPIC generally complements other drug intelligence centers, but some overlap exists as the roles of the centers have changed and new centers have been established.

The 2000 General Counterdrug Intelligence Plan was published by a White House task force in February 2000 to clarify and improve U.S. drug intelligence and information programs. The Plan assigned specific roles to EPIC, the National Drug Intelligence Center, and the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network to improve their effectiveness as national centers.

In this review, we compared EPIC's mission, key products and services, customer base, and geographic focus with the other national counterdrug intelligence centers identified in the Plan. We concluded that EPIC is generally complementary to these other centers, but we noted overlap in an individual program area.

EPIC and the National Drug Intelligence Center both receive information from other centers, law enforcement agencies, and databases, and use the information to support law enforcement organizations with drug interdiction responsibilities. However, EPIC alone disseminates tactical information for immediate use in the field, such as through EPIC Checks. In contrast, the National Drug Intelligence Center serves a strategic role by analyzing data to develop national and regional Drug Threat Assessments that the ONDCP can use in developing the national drug control strategy and that HIDTAs can use in developing their own drug threat assessments.

In comparing EPIC to the Department of the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, we also noted overlap in the case support provided by EPIC's Asset Identification Unit. The 2000 Plan assigned the

Financial Crimes Enforcement Network as the principal center for investigative support to law enforcement on cases involving narcotics-related financial crimes.[32] However, both EPIC and the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network provide investigative support by researching law enforcement, commercial, and financial databases to identify assets owned by or connected to targets of investigations and their associates.

Since publication of the 2000 Plan, the OCDETF Fusion Center has emerged as a key drug intelligence center. While EPIC has been unable to establish itself as a hub for the exchange of drug seizure information with the HIDTAs as specified in the Plan, managers at the National Drug Intelligence Center and in the OCDETF Program Office told us that some HIDTAs are now looking to exchange investigative information with the OCDETF Fusion Center, potentially establishing that Center as a parallel information hub for the HIDTAs. These parallel processes are occurring separately from each other and without coordination among the HIDTAs, ONDCP, EPIC, and the OCDETF Fusion Center.

To avoid duplication and overlap, we believe that as new intelligence centers emerge and existing centers like EPIC expand into other program areas, it is essential that an updated General Counterdrug Intelligence Plan or other policy document guide the roles and missions of the various entities.

<u>The use of EPIC by Department components has declined since 2005, although the use of EPIC by state and local law enforcement agencies has increased</u>.

The Department's use of EPIC has declined since FY 2005, dropping significantly between FY 2007 and FY 2008. In contrast, state and local law enforcement agencies' use of EPIC has steadily increased each year since FY 2005 and significantly spiked upward from FY 2007 to FY 2008 (see Table 2). Use by federal agencies outside the Department of Justice declined gradually from FY 2005 to FY 2008, but increased slightly from FY 2008 to FY 2009. These non-Department federal users of EPIC are primarily from the Department of Defense and specific components of the Department of Homeland Security.

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[32] After our review was complete, EPIC renamed the Asset Identification Unit the Financial Targeting Unit.

Table 2: Requests for Information by Agency, FY 2005 – FY 2009

	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	% Change FY 2005-2009
Department of Justice agencies						
ATF	575	566	604	772	697	21%
DEA	38,692	37,177	34,520	20,101	19,368	-50%
FBI	2,331	2,182	2,451	1,184	787	-66%
USMS	296	364	286	342	329	11%
EPIC	1,294	590	1,907	1,556	2,475	91%
Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agencies						
CBP	2,889	1,699	1,523	881	2,150	-26%
ICE	2,993	2,408	2,652	1,738	2,322	-22%
Coast Guard	1,642	1,567	1,387	3,082	3,438	109%
Other DHS agencies	606	486	356	280	211	-65%
Other federal agencies	5,825	5,072	3,573	2,978	2,782	-52%
Total federal	57,143	52,111	49,259	32,914	34,559	-40%
State, local, and HIDTA	24,343	25,441	32,842	52,211	54,040	122%
Other	291	294	638	1,080	1,333	358%
TOTAL	**81,777**	**77,846**	**82,739**	**86,205**	**89,932**	**10%**

Source: EPIC.

The decrease in EPIC use by the Department is a result of significant drops in use by the DEA (a 50-percent reduction from FY 2005 to FY 2009) and the FBI (a 66-percent reduction from FY 2005 to FY 2009). Use by ATF increased 21 percent between FY 2005 and FY 2009, and use by the United States Marshals Service (USMS) increased 11 percent in the same period. However, these two components generate only a small percentage of the requests for information from EPIC.

When we asked EPIC managers why Department users' requests for information had declined, they attributed the decline to four possible contributing factors. First, in 2006, EPIC began requiring federal users to go through EPIC's approval process before they could receive EPIC information – a requirement that had previously applied only to state and local users. EPIC managers told us that many federal users complained about this requirement and that it may have caused some not to use EPIC or to circumvent EPIC's Watch by contacting EPIC analysts informally. The latter method allows users to obtain the information without requests being registered in EPIC's database. Similarly, as of

mid-2007, users can submit data requests that do not require immediate response to a central point within EPIC. Depending on the nature of the requests, the central point assigns them to the relevant office to be addressed. The 171 requests received through the central point in FY 2008 and the 560 received in FY 2009 are not counted in EPIC's database.

Second, EPIC managers stated that since 2006, EPIC has increased the information it has provided informally through other programs, which has met information needs of some of these federal users in the field. Third, the increase in task forces combining state and federal personnel may be providing federal users a way to get EPIC information through state users rather than by calling the EPIC Watch directly. Fourth, EPIC personnel informed us that users may be obtaining information they want through the EPIC Portal rather than by submitting requests for EPIC Checks. The Portal allows users to search the four databases that EPIC owns and to obtain a variety of reports, but it does not provide access to seven additional databases that are included in an EPIC Check.

We asked the FBI why its use of EPIC had decreased because it has historically used EPIC more than any agency other than the DEA. FBI officials stated that the FBI submitted fewer requests for information between FY 2005 and FY 2009 because of the establishment of the OCDETF Fusion Center and other fusion centers and analytic entities that "enhance the flow of operational intelligence within the criminal and national security programs." FBI officials stated that the FBI's requests to these entities increased as its requests to EPIC decreased.

EPIC managers also stated that the corresponding increase in use of EPIC by state and local law enforcement reflects EPIC's greater emphasis on recruiting new users during the interdiction courses it conducts for state and local law enforcement officers.

However, we are concerned about the decline in use of EPIC by Department components, especially at a time when the Department has increased its focus and allocated substantial resources to combating smuggling and its associated violence on the Southwest border. For example, according to congressional testimony, at the end of FY 2008, the DEA had 1,203 authorized Special Agent positions in domestic offices with responsibilities for the Southwest border. This represents

approximately 23 percent of the DEA's total Special Agent workforce.[33] The Department's January 2010 *Strategy for Combating the Mexican Cartels* states as an objective increasing intelligence and information sharing among law enforcement agencies in the United States and Mexico. In light of the increase in Southwest border violence, use of EPIC by Department components should be increasing, particularly by key components such as the DEA and FBI. Law enforcement agencies must have the ability to access, link, and interpret voluminous intelligence information from as wide a community as possible.

EPIC's Director told us that he is concerned about the indication that federal use of EPIC has decreased and that EPIC is "on the training road" and is conducting outreach and marketing to federal users.

EPIC does not sufficiently analyze some of its information for patterns and trends that could aid interdiction efforts.

EPIC collects, maintains, and stores information extracted from multiple databases and other sources, but may be overlooking trends, patterns, and connections within the data because it conducts only limited analysis of datasets that are unique to EPIC. The 2000 General Counterdrug Intelligence Plan states that "EPIC will provide regional analysis to identify drug trafficking trends and patterns associated with those regions, and will issue timely reports as appropriate."

When we asked law enforcement personnel and analysts we interviewed how EPIC could improve its support to them, several stated that EPIC could better meet their needs if it conducted more analysis of the information it collects. For example, two DEA employees in different field offices stated that EPIC could improve its support to them by providing more analysis that would support cases. Similarly, when asked in what ways EPIC could improve support, one FBI analyst stated that her agency could use more trend analysis in its case support. Further, an intelligence agency representative told us that EPIC is not analyzing important information that could be used to identify trends and patterns in drug trafficking along the border. Another intelligence agency representative suggested providing EPIC analysts with software to identify links in information so that they did not miss connections between related information and could provide a faster, more advanced product to EPIC's users. Also, in explaining why the FBI's use of EPIC

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[33] The Special Agent in Charge of the El Paso Division, DEA, before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, concerning "Violence Along the Southwest Border," March 24, 2009.

has decreased while its use of other fusion centers has increased, FBI officials stated that "requests for information into the OCDETF are most valuable as the mission of the OCDETF Fusion Center is to collect and analyze all-source information and through incisive analysis, produce intelligence products in support of multi-agency, multi-jurisdiction investigations."

While certain analyses fall within EPIC's mission of providing tactical intelligence, EPIC may not be the best facility for analyzing all of the data that it collects. In some cases, getting the most from EPIC's data may be accomplished by EPIC's sharing the information with other centers rather than undertaking the analysis directly. We believe it is important for EPIC to determine whether other centers may be better prepared to analyze information and, if so, to forward the information to them.

EPIC does not analyze National Seizure System data to identify drug trafficking patterns and trends.

EPIC's reports generate aggregate data entered into the National Seizure System but do not synthesize or provide any analysis of the data. EPIC's National Seizure System can produce 14 standard reports, such as the Top 10 Seizures per Contraband, Seizures by Agency, and the U.S. Seizure Details report that produces information about drug seizures such as type of drug, times, locations, and methods. Similarly, the EPIC Portal enables users to display the locations of seizure events recorded in the National Seizure System geographically so that possible relationships among seizures can be seen. However, it does not provide any analysis of the data.

During summer 2009, EPIC formed a Predictive Analysis Unit to assist state and local law enforcement agencies with their interdiction activities along suspected trafficking routes.[34] The unit provides reports called Intelligence Notes that are based on National Seizure System information. The notes are intended to provide "predictive intelligence" to help agencies connect highway traffic stops to major drug trafficking activities and organizations. Being able to make that connection would allow trafficker patterns and routes to be identified and would help agencies plan coordinated interdiction operations. However, the notes are simply a report of law enforcement drug seizures from the National

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[34] After our review was completed, EPIC renamed the Predictive Analysis Unit the Predictive Analysis and Targeting Unit and stated that the unit will provide much of the Research and Analysis Section's trend-based reporting.

Seizure System, with only limited analysis that could be used to predict trends and patterns in trafficking activity.

EPIC plans to expand the capabilities of the Predictive Analysis Unit. EPIC's Deputy Director stated that he envisions this unit conducting "post seizure analysis" to identify the point at which drugs entered the United States and to determine the reasons for the failure to interdict the drugs at the border.

Recommendation

We recommend that EPIC:

6. Issue more substantive analytical products based on the seizure data collected in the National Seizure System.

EPIC does not identify trends and patterns in the use of documents suspected of being fraudulent or fraudulently obtained.

EPIC cannot electronically search its catalog of 1 million archived fraudulent documents and does not analyze this repository of current documents to identify trends and patterns in fraudulent document use. For officers who must quickly evaluate a document's authenticity during a traffic stop or at a U.S. port of entry, it is important to be able to reference an updated database of seized documents that can be searched and compared to documents seized from the field. In addition, because fraudulent documents are often used repeatedly, identifying trends and patterns in how, when, and by whom they are used could be a valuable source of information for law enforcement. EPIC is unable to electronically search the documents in its repository because they are stored on microfilm, which is not a searchable format. Further, at the time of our review EPIC could not search these documents manually, because the unit's microfilm reader was not working.

EPIC has developed a plan to transfer the 1 million documents on microfilm to a digital format that will map every data field in each document to a corresponding field in a database through which the documents can be searched, retrieved, and analyzed. EPIC management told us that as of February 2010, the equipment needed to complete this project had been ordered and that the documents would be scanned into the new format by September 2010. This would allow EPIC to compare documents already in its repository to those it receives in the future. EPIC's plan also includes the hiring of data entry personnel to speed processing time and increase the accuracy of data entry for the archive.

Until the documents are available for analysis, front line law enforcement officers will not receive immediate assistance in determining whether a suspicious document is fraudulent based on EPIC's document repository. EPIC is also not able to conduct analysis of newly seized documents. We note that after EPIC has completed this database, it will have the potential to provide law enforcement personnel valuable tactical information and analysis when specifically requested. But according to an OCDETF program manager, the data also could serve a wider purpose of supporting investigations and being used in analysis if EPIC shared the data with intelligence centers, such as the OCDETF Fusion Center, that have a greater focus on analysis. If EPIC's fraudulent documents database was incorporated into the OCDETF Fusion Center's data system, connections between use of fraudulent documents and OCDETF cases could be identified.

Recommendation

We recommend that EPIC:

7. Assess the feasibility of analyzing digitally scanned fraudulent documents to identify trends in both sources and patterns of fraudulent document use, and of providing the data to other intelligence centers for their use.

EPIC is not fully analyzing tactical information it collects to identify drug trafficking patterns and trends.

We found that EPIC operates a program that collects certain tactical information on the activities of drug traffickers and reports this information to law enforcement and intelligence agencies, but does not fully analyze the information to identify trends and patterns.[35] Currently, the information EPIC collects is used almost exclusively for its immediate intelligence value and to warn law enforcement of immediate threats they may encounter in their investigations and operations.

In March 2009, the DEA assigned a Reports Writer at EPIC to review the summaries of this information as it is collected, to author Intelligence Information Reports, and to send the reports to the Intelligence Division at DEA Headquarters. The Intelligence Division

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[35] Tactical intelligence is information on which immediate enforcement action can be based. In the case of this EPIC program, it is perishable and time sensitive in that it requires immediate action as soon as it is collected. The specific tactical information that is referred to in this section is law enforcement sensitive, and we do not identify it here.

then disseminates the information to members of the intelligence community and may incorporate it into DEA reports, such as the Drug Intelligence Bulletins. Initially, the Reports Writer generated approximately 10 reports a month, but from January 1 through March 31, 2010, the Reports Writer generated approximately 61 reports a month.

So far, this initiative has generated reports of drug trafficker activities that are disseminated to the intelligence community, rather than analyses of the information collected by the program to identify trends and patterns in drug trafficking and drug trafficker activity. A Department of Defense official from Joint Task Force-North told us that analyzing the information collected through this program to identify trends and patterns could aid interdiction efforts. Similarly, an agency representative assigned to EPIC suggested that adding a trained "collection manager" to analyze and track patterns could strengthen this program.

EPIC officials told us that EPIC plans over the next 2 to 3 years to significantly expand the program that collects this tactical information. As the program expands and more information is collected, there will be a greater opportunity to identify links, trends, and patterns in this information. By not analyzing information EPIC collects to identify patterns and trends, EPIC is missing opportunities to assist law enforcement agencies conducting interdiction operations along the Southwest border and to better analyze trends and patterns in drug trafficking activity.

Recommendation

We recommend that the DEA:

8. Assess the feasibility of enhancing the capability at EPIC to analyze tactical information to identify links, trends, and patterns in drug trafficking activity in support of interdiction operations and investigations.

EPIC does not regularly update Gatekeeper reports.

EPIC managers and other interviewees told us they were concerned that the information in EPIC's Gatekeeper reports was not up to date. EPIC intends for the Gatekeeper reports to be thorough descriptions of the current hierarchies, methods, and activities of the drug, weapon, and alien traffickers (referred to as gatekeepers) controlling the trafficking corridors between Mexico and the United States. The more current the

information is, the better it can support active investigations. However, the information in the reports becomes outdated quickly because traffickers are incarcerated, killed, or develop new smuggling methods.

During our interviews with EPIC users, we found that users valued Gatekeeper reports as historical references but considered them to be out of date and did not use them in their day-to-day operations. Our survey results indicated that Gatekeeper reports were not used extensively – 68 percent of respondents reported "no opinion" when asked about Gatekeeper reports.

EPIC published its last complete Gatekeeper report on Southwest border corridors in April 2007. EPIC's practice had been to complete an update on every corridor before publishing them collectively in a single comprehensive report. At the time of our fieldwork, EPIC was in the midst of changing its process and planned to publish four smaller reports with each covering one of four regions of the border. In April 2008, EPIC published the first of these smaller reports, the Arizona Corridors Report, and in 2009 EPIC was drafting a report covering West Texas and Southern New Mexico.

An EPIC manager told us that it took 6 to 9 months to update information about each individual region. At that rate, we determined that the information about each region would be updated only every 2 to 3 years, and the material in the reports would likely quickly be outdated.

In addition to the full reports, EPIC also disseminates daily updates of Gatekeeper information through: (1) briefings at EPIC and (2) electronic messages to investigators working on Mexican drug trafficker cases, as well as certain DEA, FBI, and Department of Homeland Security managers. However, the information from these daily updates is not reflected in the Gatekeeper report until EPIC produces the next version, which may not occur for years.

A possible solution for ensuring that all Gatekeeper information is current and accessible could be to use widely available technology that allows for the integration of new information into an existing framework as other intelligence operations have done. For example, in September 2008, the FBI set up a secure, internal "wiki" using the same freely editable webpage software used by Wikipedia that allows agents and analysts to share information and subject matter expertise.[36] This wiki

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[36] Wikipedia, www.wikipedia.org, was created in 2001 and is a free-content Internet encyclopedia that allows anyone with Internet access to contribute, edit, and collaborate on information posted on the site.

also links to the Director of National Intelligence's secure, internal wiki, Intellipedia, enabling information sharing between intelligence and law enforcement personnel.

We believe that, as an alternative to EPIC internally updating and publishing the Gatekeeper reports, EPIC staff could use wiki software to manage the sharing of this important information. By promoting timely updates from a broad range of selected investigators and analysts, as well as integrating information from daily updates of Gatekeeper information, EPIC could provide current information to users. As a first step, EPIC should consider a secure webpage application, as the FBI and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence have done, to enable contemporaneous production of updated Gatekeeper reports. Establishing secure, up-to-date online Gatekeeper information on drug traffickers and their activities could improve EPIC's support of interdiction operations and investigations.

Recommendation

We recommend that EPIC:

9. Examine new approaches for making Gatekeeper information more current and accessible.

EPIC is not managing the performance of its programs through effective performance measurement or collection of user feedback.

We found that EPIC's FY 2008 to FY 2013 Strategic Plan does not include objective measures of the performance of its programs. Moreover, EPIC does not have documentation for all planned programs. As a result, EPIC cannot ensure its programs are performing adequately and meeting defined objectives.

EPIC's Strategic Plan includes 65 performance measures, but in many cases these measures do not reflect current operations or actual program constraints. In addition, EPIC managers we interviewed did not use the measures to monitor the performance of their programs or identify areas for improvement. In none of our initial interviews with EPIC managers, supervisors, or personnel did they tell us that they had performance measures for their programs when we asked questions pertaining to oversight or criteria used to ensure program effectiveness.

Of the 16 current and 2 developing EPIC programs we identified, EPIC had performance measures for only 11 of these programs in its FY 2008 – FY 2013 Strategic Plan. When we requested data to determine

whether EPIC had measured performance for these 11 programs in FY 2008, EPIC could provide the data to show whether the measure was achieved for only 7 programs.

When we asked EPIC program supervisors and personnel about the Strategic Plan performance measures in follow-up interviews, supervisors told us that they were unaware of their own programs' performance measures, or that the wording of the measures did not allow for an accurate measurement of program performance, or that the measures themselves were unrealistic given the constraints facing the programs.

For one performance measure, we found that EPIC had accidentally deleted the database used to track the measure, and when the database was re-created, the fields that tracked the information necessary to show whether the performance measure was achieved were not included. In another example, a program performance measure did not accurately reflect the operation of a unit that monitors signals from tracking devices that law enforcement personnel have placed on targets they are investigating. The performance measure for this beacon tracking program states that EPIC "will disseminate beacon movement intelligence to case agents within 5 minutes of the beacon movement notification." When we reviewed EPIC's data to determine how successful the program had been, we found that only 15 percent of EPIC's notifications had been made within 5 minutes during FY 2008. EPIC managers stated that the 5-minute standard applied only to cases in which a case agent had requested notification, even though the performance measure was worded as though it covered all cases. Further, regarding the 15 percent of the notifications made within the 5-minute standard, EPIC managers told us they believed all of those notifications had actually been immediate. However, EPIC did not measure when notifications actually occurred, so there was no documentation to support the managers' belief.

Another performance measure stated that the Fraudulent Document and Tactical Bulletin Unit "will attend the quarterly Consolidated Counterdrug Database meeting and provide EPIC's input to the process."[37] When we inquired about the measure, EPIC management responded that:

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[37] The Consolidated Counterdrug Database captures details of maritime drug seizures in the maritime regions between South America and the United States submitted by U.S. and foreign counterdrug agencies. Multi-agency meetings are held quarterly to review interdiction cases and vet information to be added to the database.

attendance at the Consolidated Counterdrug Database meetings was a historical function performed by a cell of the EPIC Transportation Unit, which was disbanded in approximately January 2007. This function did not apply to the Fraudulent Document and Tactical Bulletin Unit as it is not related to their current mission and functions.

In addition, a program that had only recently been reconstituted after being out of operation for over a year still had two performance measures in the current Strategic Plan for the year the program was not in operation.

We also found that EPIC does not systematically seek customer feedback on its products and services. EPIC's Strategic Plan states that one of EPIC's "key external challenges" is to develop a "measurement tool for customer satisfaction." EPIC has not accomplished this. We asked EPIC managers how they measure customer satisfaction and found that neither EPIC nor individual sections within EPIC had a system to gauge whether EPIC's products and services are meeting customer demands. Instead, EPIC relies on receiving sporadic unsolicited feedback, or the fact that more agencies are participating in EPIC, to show that EPIC is meeting needs.

Further, as EPIC has established new programs, it has not done so consistently with a defined purpose, scope, and objectives. For example, although EPIC was in the early stages of implementing the License Plate Reader Program, it did not have documentation for it.[38] When we sought documentation we were referred to a program manager at DEA headquarters who summarized the program's plans in an e-mail. In addition, we learned through interviews that EPIC will expand its tactical intelligence collection program to cover more of the Southwest border, but EPIC did not have a written plan for how this would be accomplished or, as discussed previously, how the additional intelligence collected would be analyzed.

EPIC has grown rapidly in recent years and, as noted in the Background section of this report, will continue to grow by adding agency participants, new programs, and staff, and by expanding the size of its facility. These expansions are associated with significant financial

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[38] The DEA's License Plate Reader Program places optical character recognition devices along key areas of the Southwest border to help locate vehicles suspected of transporting bulk cash, drugs, weapons, and other illegal contraband. The DEA plans to base this program at EPIC and to staff it with 19 contractor analysts to monitor data generated by the readers.

resources.[39] It is important that EPIC ensure its growing programs expend resources prudently, efficiently, and with a focus on EPIC's priority missions. This requires that EPIC establish meaningful performance metrics for its programs and that it evaluate and measure its overall effectiveness on the basis of its performance and the needs of its users.

Recommendations

We recommend that EPIC:

10. Develop performance metrics for all of its programs and operations that define relevant and objective standards, and use the metrics to evaluate program effectiveness.

11. Expand its existing mechanisms to systematically collect feedback on its products and services from users.

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[39] The President's FY 2011 budget for the Department includes $54 million to expand the EPIC facility by about 20,000 square feet.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

EPIC was established as the DEA's Southwest border intelligence center and has emerged as a valuable resource, not only for the DEA, but for other federal agencies and state and local law enforcement agencies seeking intelligence information to support their Southwest border operations.

We found that EPIC is highly valued by its partner agencies and users, and that users find its products and services timely, accurate, relevant, actionable, and valuable. However, we identified several significant weaknesses that have prevented EPIC's operations and programs from being as effective as they could be.

EPIC lacks a formal program to inform users and potential users about products and services that could assist them. Further, we found that EPIC has not sustained effective operation of some key programs and has not ensured that it coordinates effectively with member agencies. As a result, EPIC's service to users has been disrupted or diminished for periods of time in several areas.

EPIC's 1999 Principals Accord does not reflect EPIC's current membership or missions and is not used effectively to resolve issues that arise in EPIC's multi-agency setting, such as ensuring that priorities are agreed upon so that programs are sustained and member agencies meet expectations for participation and information sharing. We believe that with an updated agreement that defines relationships, protocols for communication and the exchange of information, and that identifies a collaborative governance structure and process to address coordination issues, EPIC could be a more effective and efficient center for the exchange of information and intelligence, and could improve its ability to analyze data from the multiple sources that it accesses.

We also found that EPIC has not accomplished two of the five functions in its Principals Accord that were contained in the 2000 General Counterdrug Intelligence Plan. First, EPIC's process for aggregating drug seizure information has not produced a comprehensive database of drug seizures nationwide because of incomplete reporting into the National Seizure System. As a result, intelligence products based on the data may be incomplete or inaccurate. Second, EPIC has not become, as envisioned, the hub for the HIDTA program.

Further, EPIC's coordination with federal and state intelligence organizations across the country is inconsistent. For EPIC to more

efficiently disseminate information, it should have contacts in key intelligence centers, and ensure that those contacts are aware of EPIC's products and services and how to access them.

We also found that as the number of participating agencies at EPIC increased overall, federal agencies submitted fewer requests to EPIC for information, as measured by EPIC Checks, between FY 2005 and FY 2009. By contrast, the total number of requests for information submitted to EPIC by state and local law enforcement has steadily increased.

In addition, although EPIC's mission is to conduct analyses and to disseminate information, EPIC does not analyze some information that it uniquely collects. As a result, EPIC may not be adequately identifying trends and patterns in drug trafficking activity that could be used to increase the effectiveness and safety of drug interdiction operations. In instances where EPIC is not the appropriate center for analyzing the information it collects, EPIC should ensure that it shares the information with the appropriate intelligence centers.

Additionally, EPIC is not managing the performance of its programs through objective performance measures and by systematically collecting user feedback. We believe that EPIC should develop performance metrics for the entirety of EPIC's programs and operations that define relevant and measureable standards. EPIC also should develop a mechanism to systematically collect feedback from users on its products and services.

To improve EPIC's utility to the law enforcement and intelligence community we recommend that:

1. EPIC expand its outreach and education program to promote the use of its products and services, including information about how to use the EPIC Portal.

2. EPIC update its Principals Accord or adopt a comparable multi-agency framework that formalizes each member's roles and responsibilities for implementing and sustaining EPIC's programs and that provides a process for resolving differences that may arise.

3. EPIC promote more complete reporting of drug seizure data to the National Seizure System through the EPIC Portal and traditional methods.

4. The Office of the Deputy Attorney General work with the ONDCP to establish policy or guidance requiring HIDTAs to implement data and information sharing provisions to establish EPIC as their hub for seizure and drug movement information.

5. EPIC establish points of contact at all national, regional, state, and local fusion centers to enhance information sharing and use of EPIC's services and products.

6. EPIC issue more substantive analytical products based on the seizure data collected in the National Seizure System.

7. EPIC Assess the feasibility of analyzing digitally scanned fraudulent documents to identify trends in both sources and patterns of fraudulent document use, and of providing the data to other intelligence centers for their use.

8. The DEA assess the feasibility of enhancing the capability at EPIC to analyze tactical information to identify links, trends, and patterns in drug trafficking activity in support of interdiction operations and investigations.

9. EPIC examine new approaches for making Gatekeeper information more current and accessible.

10. EPIC develop performance metrics for all of its programs and operations that define relevant and objective standards, and use the metrics to evaluate program effectiveness.

11. EPIC expand its existing mechanisms to systematically collect feedback on its products and services from users.

APPENDIX I: METHODOLOGY OF THE OIG REVIEW

We conducted in-person and telephone interviews of personnel at EPIC and in the Washington, D.C., area, conducted site visits to interview EPIC's customers and federal partners, administered a survey to EPIC users, and performed data analysis and document reviews.

Interviews

Washington, D.C., area interviews. We conducted interviews with personnel at Headquarters components of the Department of Justice including the Drug Enforcement Administration; Federal Bureau of Investigation's Joint Terrorism Task Force; Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Program; Justice Management Division; and the National Drug Intelligence Center. We interviewed officials from the Department of Homeland Security, including Customs and Border Protection and the Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement. We also conducted interviews with personnel at headquarters components of the National Security Agency, Central Intelligence Agency, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

El Paso Intelligence Center. During the course of fieldwork, we conducted interviews at EPIC with the Director, Deputy Director, Section Chiefs, Unit Chiefs, and personnel from the General Watch, Tactical Operations, and Research and Analysis sections. We also interviewed representatives from EPIC partner agencies embedded at EPIC and personnel performing database and collections management support functions.

Site visits. We conducted site visits to El Paso, Texas; San Diego, California; and Miami-Key West, Florida. During site visits, we interviewed personnel from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and FBI Joint Terrorism Task Forces; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Customs and Border Protection; Drug Enforcement Administration; and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. We also interviewed state and local law enforcement officers with the Las Cruces Police Department; the San Diego Police Department and Sheriff's Office; the Florida Department of Law Enforcement; and the Florida Highway Patrol.

Intelligence centers. We conducted interviews with personnel at the National Drug Intelligence Center; Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Fusion Center; Customs and Border Protection's Air and Marine Operations Center; Joint Interagency Task Force-South; Joint

Task Force-North; and High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area regions in California, Florida, Texas, and Maryland.

Data Analysis

We analyzed EPIC's requests for information over time to identify patterns in agencies' use of EPIC, and also analyzed EPIC's list of users to determine the distribution by type of agency and EPIC account. Further, we examined a list of reported seizures for FY 2009 to identify the agencies whose data was entered into National Seizure System. In addition, we analyzed EPIC's budget information to see whether the share of EPIC's budget funded by the DEA had changed over time.

EPIC Customer Survey

We surveyed a random sample of EPIC's users to assess their perceptions of EPIC products and their value. We classified each of EPIC's 19,416 users into one of three agency categories: Department of Justice (29 percent), other federal (17 percent), and state or local (54 percent) using their e-mail addresses and agency names. We eliminated 696 because we could not determine the user's agency, the user worked at EPIC, the user was from a foreign government, or the user had access only to the EPIC Portal. From the 18,720 users remaining, we randomly selected a total of 2,442 users proportionally from the three agency categories. Within each agency category we drew half the users from those who had access to the EPIC Watch only and half from those who had access to the EPIC Portal and Watch. We did this to increase our likelihood of getting adequate responses from recent EPIC users because to maintain Portal access users must have logged on within the last 3 months. To capture responses from EPIC users embedded in intelligence centers, we selected an additional 57 users of EPIC who were assigned to intelligence centers.

Document Review

We examined the 2000 General Counterdrug Intelligence Plan, the National Southwest Border Counter Narcotics Strategy, the 2009 National Drug Threat Assessment, and the 2009 National Drug Control Strategy. We reviewed EPIC's FY 2008–FY 2013 Strategic Plan, EPIC Charters, and the 1999 Principals Accord. In addition, to understand how EPIC supports law enforcement customers and partners within the intelligence community, we analyzed EPIC's products by each EPIC section. These included examples of intelligence products, training materials, internal procedures, performance measure requirements, and agreements with EPIC partners.

APPENDIX II: NATIONAL AND REGIONAL INTELLIGENCE CENTERS WITH COUNTERDRUG RESPONSIBILITIES

Department of Justice Centers

1. The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Fusion Center collects and analyzes all-source drug and drug-related financial investigative information to support coordinated multi-jurisdictional investigations that are focused on disrupting and dismantling the most significant drug trafficking and money laundering organizations.

2. The DEA's Special Operations Division produces comprehensive analyses of data revealing the activities and organizational structures of major drug-trafficking and drug-related money laundering organizations. Through court-approved Title III electronic interceptions, it assists multi-jurisdictional investigations by targeting the command and control of these illicit organizations.

3. The National Drug Intelligence Center "provides strategic drug-related intelligence, document and computer exploitation support, and training assistance to the drug control, public health, law enforcement, and intelligence communities" to reduce and deter drug trafficking and drug-related crime.

Non-Department of Justice Centers

1. The Central Intelligence Agency's Crime and Narcotics Center supports and conducts operations to counter illicit drug activities, transnational crime, and war crimes by providing targeting assessments of key individuals and criminal organizations to law enforcement in the field. The center also provides U.S. policy makers with analyses of long-term trends of the drug trafficking and organized crime affecting U.S. national security.

2. Customs and Border Protection's Air and Marine Operations Center "deters, sorts, tracks, and facilitates the interdiction of criminal entities throughout the Western Hemisphere, by utilizing integrated air and marine forces, technology, and tactical intelligence."

3. Joint Interagency Task Force-South conducts "interagency operations against illicit trafficking through the detection and monitoring of illicit air and maritime targets and facilitate interdictions and information sharing in support of the national and regional security."

4. Joint Task Force-North is a joint service command within the Department of Defense that supports federal law enforcement agencies with the identification and interdiction of suspected transnational threats within and along the approaches to the continental United States.

5. Border Patrol and CBP Border Intelligence Centers perform intelligence functions to support their field offices and law enforcement personnel.

6. Financial Crimes Enforcement Network detects and deters criminal activity and safeguards financial systems from abuse by promoting transparency in the United States and international financial systems. It supports law enforcement, intelligence, and regulatory agencies by sharing and analyzing financial intelligence.

7. High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas maintain intelligence centers that provide tactical, operational, and strategic intelligence support to the HIDTA executive board. They also develop regional threat assessments and target de-confliction.

8. State fusion centers exist in many states and large cities to share information and intelligence within their jurisdictions as well as with the federal government. As of July 2009, the Department of Homeland Security had identified and designated over 70 fusion centers.

APPENDIX III: DATABASES QUERIED IN AN EPIC CHECK

EPIC-Owned Databases

EPIC 10 Database (EPIC 10) – Tracks requests for inquires sent to EPIC and records points of contact information and summary results.

EPIC Law Enforcement Information Search and Analysis (ELISA) – Tracks requests for inquires sent to EPIC through the EPIC Systems Portal and records points of contact information and summary results.

EPIC Internal Database (EID) – EPIC's legacy repository for seizure information relating to drug trafficking from the 1970s through 1999, and other current bulk seizures information. It also contains current EPIC Lookout information.

National Seizure System (NSS) – Current repository for seizure information from 2000 to the present regarding drugs, weapons, and currency seized above federal threshold limits.

Drug Precursor Database (DPD) – Contains pseudoephedrine sales violators from the state of Tennessee.

External Databases

DEA's Narcotics and Dangerous Drug Information System (NADDIS) – Automated indexing system of DEA case files and investigative case information.

Department of Homeland Security's Treasury Enforcement Communication Systems II (TECS II) – Automated indexing system of case files and investigative case information.

FBI's National Crime Information Center System (NCIC) – Index of criminal justice information concerning crimes and criminals of nationwide interest. Includes information concerning wanted persons, missing persons, stolen property, and criminal histories. Only the Wants and Warrants File is checked during the EPIC Check.

CBP's Central Index System (CIS) – Contains identifying information on individuals of interest because they have violated immigration laws or are immigrating to the United States.

<u>FAA's Aircraft Registration System</u> (ARS) – Contains current information on all aircraft registrations, aircraft owners, and pilot licenses in the United States.

<u>Federal Bureau of Prisons' SENTRY System</u> (SENTRY) – Contains information on all federal prisoners incarcerated since 1980.

<u>USMS's Warrant Information Network</u> (WIN) – Contains fugitive and warrant information and records of information collected during U.S. Marshals Service investigations.

<u>DEA's License Plate Reader Database</u> – Stores vehicle license plate information captured from specific locations along the Southwest border.

<u>DEA's Analysis and Resource Tracking System</u> (DARTS) – Contains information on phone numbers, push-to-talks, Internet addresses, vehicle information, and business information.

APPENDIX IV: RESULTS OF OIG SURVEY OF EPIC CUSTOMERS

We conducted a web- and e-mail-based survey of a random sample of EPIC users to assess their perceptions of EPIC's products and services and their value to users. Survey recipients were notified that the OIG intended to assess their usage of EPIC's products and services, opinions about the value of EPIC's products and services, reasons for going or not going to EPIC for certain information, and ideas for how EPIC could enhance its support to the law enforcement and intelligence communities. We sent invitations to participate to 2,499 members of the chosen sample. Seven hundred sixty-eight users responded to the survey, although three surveys were excluded from analysis because respondents were assigned to EPIC.

Note: Some percentages do not add to 100 because of rounding.

Respondent Information

1. What type of government organization do you work for? (Select one.)

	Number	Percentage
U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)	239	31%
Federal government other than DOJ	150	20%
State	209	27%
Local (City or County)	165	22%
Tribal law enforcement	2	0.3%
Total	**765**	**100%**

N=765

2. Are you assigned to an Intelligence or Fusion Center?

	Number	Percentage
Yes (please choose the one that fits best)	181	24%
No	584	76%
Total	**765**	**100%**

N=765

If you answered Yes, please choose the center that fits best:

	Number of Responses	Percentage
Parent agency's intelligence resource, such as a Field Intelligence Group	18	10%
HIDTA Intelligence Support Center or Law Enforcement Support Center	54	31%
State Fusion Center	48	27%
Border Intelligence Center	3	2%
National Drug Intelligence Center	2	1%
Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Fusion Center	1	1%
DEA Special Operations Division	2	1%
Other (specify)	49	28%
Total	**177**	**100%**

N=177

Only 177 of 181 Respondents who provided a response for Question 2 answered this question.

3. Which of the following best describes your current duties?

	Number of Responses	Percentage
Conduct investigations	309	41
Conduct interdiction activities	123	16
Provide ongoing analysis to support investigations	177	23
Provide tactical information upon request	28	4
Other (specify duty)	125	16
Total	**762**	**100%**

N=762

125 Respondents chose "Other" in Question 3 and provided answers in their own words. The OIG categorized information within their answers as follows:

	Responses
Support	54
Administrative	32
Interdiction	23
Investigations	7
Cannot tell from answer	7
Other	2
Total	**125**

4. What type of law enforcement operation(s) are you currently _most_ involved with? (Select one.)

	Number of Responses	Percentage
Traffic or highway enforcement	130	17
Drug trafficking	413	54
Human trafficking	18	2
Gun trafficking	14	2
Money laundering	35	5
Gang activity	22	3
Terrorism	24	3
Other (specify)	106	14
Total	**762**	**100%**

N=762

106 respondents chose "Other" in Question 4 and provided answers in their own words. The OIG categorized information within their answers as follows:

	Responses
General investigations/all or more than one choice	42
Other investigations/work	28
Duties do not support specific investigations	8
Cannot tell from answer	8
Interdiction and/or traffic enforcement	6
Drug	6
Fugitive	5
Immigration	3
Total	**106**

EPIC Utilization and Perceptions

5. From what source did you first learn about EPIC? (Select one.)

	Number of Responses	Percentage
EPIC training	124	16%
EPIC e-mail notification	8	1%
Conference or briefing presentation by _EPIC_ personnel	74	10%
Conference or briefing presentation by _non-EPIC_ personnel	50	7%
New law enforcement position training	123	16%
New intelligence analyst position training	73	10%
Co-worker or peer	175	23%
Other (specify)	74	10%
Don't recall	64	8%
Total	**765**	**100%**

N=765

6. Have you ever used EPIC? (If No skip to Question 8.)

	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes	679	89%
No (Skip to Question 8)	86	11%
Total	**765**	**100%**

N=765

7. How often do you use EPIC?

	Number of Responses	Percentage
Very often (Skip to Question 10)	133	20%
Sometimes (Skip to Question 10)	358	52%
Rarely (Skip to Question 10)	170	25%
It's been longer than 3 years since I have used EPIC (Please specify why)	22	3%
Total	**683**	**100%**

N=683

8. Please select the reason(s) that you have not been using EPIC, from the following list. (Check all that apply.)

	Number of Responses
I am required to use other intelligence resources	30
EPIC does not have the information I need or use	14
I feel more confident in the accuracy of the information provided by my parent organization's internal intelligence center or division	21
EPIC can't provide information quickly enough to be useful to me	19
EPIC information is difficult to access or obtain	44
EPIC does not provide enough analysis with the information	8
Other (Specify)	103

N=765

Respondents could select more than one response.

Respondents who chose "Other" in Question 8 provided answers in their own words. The OIG categorized information within their answers as follows:

	Responses
Don't or haven't yet needed EPIC information	22
Unfamiliar with EPIC products	20
Not applicable to job	16
No access/access issues	8
Do use EPIC	8
No specific reason	6
Other source used	5
EPIC information is not good or useful	4
Use EPIC indirectly	3
EPIC's dissemination does not meet needs	2
Other	1

9. **Which of the following sources of law enforcement information or intelligence do you use instead of EPIC? (Check all that apply.)**

	Number of Responses
Parent agency's intelligence resource such as a Field Intelligence Group	53
HIDTA Intelligence Support Center or Law Enforcement Support Center	60
State Fusion Center	48
Border Intelligence Center	19
National Drug Intelligence Center	7
Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Fusion Center	10
DEA Special Operations Division	28
Other (specify)	53
No source used	47

N=765

Respondents could select more than one response.

If you have never used EPIC or have not used EPIC within the last 3 years, Questions 10 through 21 do not apply. Please skip to Question 22.

If you have used EPIC within the last 3 years – please proceed to Question 10.

10. What are the main reasons you use EPIC as a resource? (Check all that apply.)

	Number of Responses
I am required to use EPIC by my agency	175
Convenience	137
Can get multiple database checks at the same time (one-stop shop)	402
Confidence in the accuracy of EPIC's info	74
EPIC is the only source of the information	70
Other (specify)	45

N=765

Respondents could select more than one response.

Respondents who chose "Other" in Question 10 provided answers in their own words. The OIG categorized information within their answers as follows:

	Responses
Data	14
Can't tell from answer	10
Requested by office	9
Other	7
NSS & seizure info	6
Best/trusted source of info	4
Air Watch	2
Confidential source establishment	2
Border Activity	2
Verification	2
Deconfliction	1
Bulletins	1
EPIC is fast	1

11. In your opinion, which of the following law enforcement operations do you believe benefit the most by using EPIC's products and services? (Check all that apply.)

	Number of Responses
National law enforcement	369
Regional law enforcement	276
Southwest border	314
Traffic or highway enforcement	331
Drug trafficking	500
Human trafficking	177
Gun trafficking	167
Money laundering	228
Gang	127
Terrorism	164
Don't know	46
Other (specify)	4

N=765

Respondents could select more than one response.

Value of EPIC's Products and Services

12. Of the following list of EPIC products and services that you have used, how would you rate their value to your operation(s)? (If you have not used the product or service please check "No opinion.")

(We asked respondents to report how valuable 10 specific EPIC products and services had been to their operations. The table below summarizes these results)

Value of Product or Service	Percent Reporting Great or Some Value	Percent Reporting Little or No Value	Percent Reporting No Opinion
Calling the Watch	82%	4%	15%
Tactical Bulletins	68%	6%	27%
Lookouts	66%	4%	30%
E-mailing the Watch	60%	6%	34%
EPIC Portal	53%	7%	40%
Asset Identification	42%	7%	52%
Aircraft or Pilot Information	36%	6%	58%
Tracking Beacons	29%	6%	66%
Maritime Information	27%	8%	66%
Gatekeeper Report	26%	7%	68%

Note: Rows may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: OIG survey.

13. If you selected "No value" or "Little value" for any of the above products and services, please explain why.

Respondents provided answers to Question 13 in their own words. The OIG categorized information within their answers as follows:

	Number of Responses	Percentage
Not aware of/haven't used	63	42%
Doesn't apply to need	34	23%
Portal deficiencies/tactical limitations	13	9%
Quality of timeliness of EPIC data	10	7%
Unaware of FDIN value	9	6%
Can't tell meaning of comment	9	6%
EPIC unresponsive/difficult to access	5	3%
Assorted comments	3	2%
EPIC is duplicative	3	2%
Service is unavailable	2	1%
Total	**151**	**100%**

N=151

14. Overall, how would you rate the timeliness, accuracy, actionability, and relevance of the EPIC products and services you have used?

Timeliness: Information was received in time for it to be useful		
	Number of Responses	Percentage
Does not meet the criteria	8	1%
Barely meets the criteria	21	3%
Somewhat meets the criteria	106	17%
Fully meets the criteria	477	76%
No opinion	20	3%
Total	**632**	**100%**

N=632

Accuracy: Information was correct		
	Number of Responses	Percentage
Does not meet the criteria	7	1%
Barely meets the criteria	6	1%
Somewhat meets the criteria	73	12%
Fully meets the criteria	517	82%
No opinion	29	5%
Total	**632**	**100%**

N=632

Actionable: Information was immediately usable in my work		
	Number of Responses	**Percentage**
Does not meet the criteria	12	2%
Barely meets the criteria	10	2%
Somewhat meets the criteria	106	17%
Fully meets the criteria	464	74%
No opinion	36	6%
Total	**628**	**100%**

N=628

Relevance: Information was applicable to my work		
	Number of Responses	**Percentage**
Does not meet the criteria	5	1%
Barely meets the criteria	3	1%
Somewhat meets the criteria	97	15%
Fully meets the criteria	505	80%
No opinion	21	3%
Total	**631**	**100%**

N=631

15. If you selected "does not meet" or "barely meets" for any of the above criteria, please explain why.

Respondents provided answers to Question 15 in their own words. The OIG categorized information within their answers as follows:

	Number of Responses	**Percentage**
Takes too much time to get	17	40%
Information was inaccurate, incomplete, or out of date	8	19%
Can't tell what response means	6	14%
EPIC employee incompetent or unprofessional	3	7%
No value added	3	7%
Never received response	2	5%
No standard format for responses	2	5%
Difficult to get info from EPIC	2	5%
Total	**43**	**100%**

N=43

16. **How helpful have EPIC's products and services been in supporting your law enforcement operations?**

	Number of Responses	Percentage
Very helpful	394	62%
Somewhat helpful	218	34%
Not very helpful	20	3%
Not helpful at all	6	1%
Total	**638**	**100%**

N=638

17. **Are you aware of the secure internet connection known as the EPIC Portal? (If "No" skip to Question 21.)**

	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes	433	68%
No	207	32%
Total	**640**	**100%**

N=640

18. **Have you ever used the EPIC Portal? (If yes, skip to Question 20.)**

	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes	261	59%
No	181	41%
Total	**442**	**100%**

N=442

19. Please select the reason(s) that you have not used the EPIC Portal, from the list below. (Check all that apply.)

	Number of Responses
I have never received training on the Portal	89
User ID/password expired	28
I prefer to speak with a person	21
Too difficult to get user ID and password	18
Don't know	12
Information I need is not available through the Portal (specify)	4
Other (specify)	34

N=765

Respondents could select more than one response. Additionally 4 respondents specified information they need including: money laundering, no instructions on Portal, parameters unavailable, and the Portal offers nothing useful.

Respondents who chose "Other" in Question 19 provided answers in their own words. The OIG categorized information within their answers as follows:

	Responses
Other	10
Access issues	7
Don't have internet access when info needed	5
Not aware of	3
Don't find it useful	3
Easier to call Watch	3
Haven't needed it	2
Don't know how	1
Total	**34**

20. What additional comments do you have about the EPIC Portal?

Respondents provided answers to Question 20 in their own words. The OIG categorized information within their answers as follows:

	Number of Responses
Not user friendly	24
Positive comments	14
Need more info or training	12
Doesn't have needed information	6
Slow response	4
Password/access problems	3
Other	3
Format of responses inconsistent	1
Total	**67**

21. **Which of the following sources of law enforcement information or intelligence do you use in addition to EPIC? (Check all that apply.)**

	Number of Responses
Parent agency's intelligence resource such as a Field Intelligence Group (FIG)	257
HIDTA Intelligence Support Center (ISC) or Law Enforcement Support Center	322
State Fusion Center	203
Border Intelligence Center	76
National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC)	178
Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Fusion Center	171
DEA Special Operations Division (SOD)	296
Other (specify)	79
Do not use any other source in addition to EPIC	50
Don't know	14

N=683

Number of responses equals more than 683 because of multiple responses.

Final Comments about EPIC

22. **Do you feel that EPIC is doing enough to inform the law enforcement community about its products and services?**

	Number of Responses	Percentage
Yes (Skip to 24)	428	56%
No	192	25%
Don't know (Skip to 24)	141	19%
Total	**761**	**100%**

N=761

23. In your opinion, what is the best way for EPIC to inform the law enforcement community about its products and services? (Select one.)

	Number of Responses	Percentage
EPIC representatives making presentations about its products and services to agencies	98	50%
EPIC producing printed information about EPIC's products and services	28	14%
EPIC posting information about its products and services on law enforcement websites and portals	52	26%
Other (specify)	13	7%
Don't know	6	3%
Total	**197**	**100%**

N=197

24. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions about EPIC that were not covered by the previous questions?

Respondents provided answers to Question 24 in their own words. The OIG categorized information within their answers as follows:

	Number of Responses	Percentage
Positive comments	46	15%
Need more EPIC information/training	36	12%
Specific suggestion	28	9%
Bad customer service	6	2%
EPIC not necessary or useful	3	1%
Access/password issues	3	1%
Other	2	1%
EPIC has improved	1	0.3%
Total	**125**	**100%**

N=300

U.S. Department of Justice   66
Office of the Inspector General
Evaluation and Inspections Division

APPENDIX V: ACRONYMS

ATF   Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

CBP   Customs and Border Protection (DHS)

DEA   Drug Enforcement Administration

DHS   Department of Homeland Security

EPIC   El Paso Intelligence Center

FAA   Federal Aviation Administration (Department of Transportation)

FBI   Federal Bureau of Investigation

FDIN   Federal Drug Interdiction Number

FinCEN   Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (Department of the Treasury)

FY   Fiscal year

HIDTA   High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area

ICE   Immigration and Customs Enforcement (DHS)

MDMA   Methylene dioxymethamphetamine (Ecstasy)

NADDIS   Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Information System

NDIC   National Drug Intelligence Center

NSS   National Seizure System

OCDETF   Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force

OIG   Office of the Inspector General

ONDCP   Office of National Drug Control Policy

TECS II   Treasury Enforcement Communications System II

USAO   United States Attorney's Office

USMS   United States Marshals Service

APPENDIX VI: THE OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL RESPONSE TO DRAFT REPORT

Michael D. Gulledge
Assistant Inspector General for Evaluation and Inspection
Office of the Inspector General
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Mr. Gulledge:

The Office of the Deputy Attorney General (ODAG) very much appreciates the opportunity to review and respond to the Office of the Inspector General's draft audit report entitled, "A Review of the El Paso Intelligence Center" (hereinafter, "Report").

The flow of human trafficking and narcotics north into the United States, along with smuggling of illegal firearms and criminal monetary proceeds south out of the United States, has had a devastating effect on the United States and Mexico, particularly along the Southwest Border. Among the Department's most important priorities is to increase U.S. pressure on drug trafficking organizations by targeting illegal arms trafficking, the flow of narcotics into the United States, the movement of bulk currency, and gang affiliations with Mexican drug cartels. Key to our operational success is the collection and sharing of intelligence, which enables U.S. law enforcement to be guided by current and robust intelligence resources, as it works diligently on both sides of the border to stem the flow of illicit drugs and assist the Government of Mexico in breaking the power and impunity of the drug cartels.

The El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) is a national tactical intelligence center that focuses its efforts on supporting law enforcement efforts in the Western Hemisphere, with a significant emphasis on the Southwest Border. Through its 24-hour Watch function, EPIC provides immediate access to participating agencies' databases to law enforcement agents, investigators, and analysts. This function is critical in the dissemination of relevant information in support of tactical and investigative activities, deconfliction, and officer safety. EPIC also provides significant, direct tactical intelligence support to state and local law enforcement agencies, especially in the areas of clandestine laboratory investigations and highway interdiction.

The Report documents the important role that EPIC serves in providing the tactical intelligence necessary to fight criminal organizations engaged in wide range of criminal activity, particularly along the Southwest Border. And, while the review found that EPIC is highly valued by its partner agencies and users, the Report also recommends certain steps to make EPIC an even more effective and valuable law enforcement resource.

For instance, the Report contains one recommendation focused on improving the information sharing relationship between EPIC and the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program. The Report recognizes that neither EPIC nor DEA exercise the control necessary to standardize the exchange of drug-movement-related information between EPIC and the HIDTA intelligence centers. It is the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy who is authorized to designate an area within the United States as a HIDTA. Each HIDTA, in turn, is led by an Executive Board comprised of a representative from each federal, state, and local agency that has a member permanently assigned to the HIDTA Task Force in that HIDTA region. Currently, there are 32 HIDTAs that receive federal funding for infrastructure and joint initiatives that facilitate cooperation and information sharing among federal, state, and local law enforcement organizations.
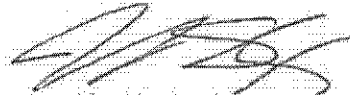
Thus, the Report recommends:

4. The Office of the Deputy Attorney General work with the ONDCP to establish policy or guidance requiring HIDTAs to implement data and information sharing provisions to establish EPIC as their hub for seizure and drug movement information.

We concur with the recommendation. The Office of the Deputy Attorney General will work with the ONDCP to establish EPIC as the hub for HIDTA Intelligence Support Centers.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Shasky Calvery
Senior Counsel

APPENDIX VII: OIG ANALYSIS OF THE OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL RESPONSE

The Office of the Inspector General provided a draft of this report to the Office of the Deputy Attorney General for its comment. The ODAG's response is included in Appendix VI to this report. The OIG's analysis of the ODAG's response and the actions necessary to close the recommendation are discussed below.

Recommendation 4. The Office of the Deputy Attorney General work with the ONDCP to establish policy or guidance requiring HIDTAs to implement data and information sharing provisions to establish EPIC as their hub for seizure and drug movement information.

Status. Resolved – open.

Summary of the ODAG Response. The ODAG concurred with the recommendation and noted that neither EPIC nor the DEA exercise the control necessary to standardize the exchange of drug-movement-related information between EPIC and the HIDTA intelligence centers. ODAG stated that it will work with the ONDCP to establish EPIC as the hub for the HIDTA Intelligence Support Centers.

OIG Analysis. The ODAG response is partially responsive to our recommendation. However, the ODAG did not provide any specifics about the actions it plans to take to establish EPIC as the hub for the HIDTA Intelligence Support Centers. Please provide the OIG a description and a timeline for implementation of the actions planned to establish EPIC as the seizure and drug movement information hub for the HIDTA Intelligence Support Centers.

Please provide the OIG with information about what actions ODAG plans to take to address the recommendation, or the status of any actions taken, by August 31, 2010.

U. S. Department of Justice
Drug Enforcement Administration

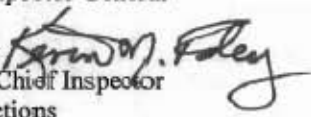*www.dea.gov*   Washington, D.C. 20537

JUN 0 1 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Michael D. Gulledge
           Assistant Inspector General
             for Evaluation and Inspections
           Office of the Inspector General

FROM: Kevin M. Foley
           Acting Deputy Chief Inspector
           Office of Inspections

SUBJECT: DEA's Response to the OIG's Draft Report: *Review of the El Paso Intelligence Center*

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has reviewed the Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) draft audit report, entitled: *Review of the El Paso Intelligence Center, A-2009-001.* DEA acknowledges OIG's efforts in conducting a thorough review of the DOJ managed, multi-agency intelligence center which serves as a tactical intelligence resource for federal, state, local and international law enforcement agencies on a wide range of criminal threats. DEA concurs with recommendations 1 - 3 and 5 - 11, and will take the necessary steps to implement the recommendations. The Office of the Deputy Attorney General responded separately to recommendation 4.

The El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC or the "Center") is a national tactical intelligence center that was initially established to assist law enforcement in addressing Southwest border related issues. During its 36- year history, EPIC's focus and reach have expanded beyond the Southwest border to encompass the entire Western Hemisphere. However, the Center retains its "tactical" orientation – providing time sensitive information that can be acted upon immediately by end users. This tactical focus distinguishes EPIC from investigative support centers or organizations that seek to inform policy through strategic analysis. Although DEA has been responsible for the management of EPIC since its inception, EPIC is a true multi-agency center that remains heavily dependent on a variety of agencies for data, staffing and participation.

DEA appreciates that the draft audit report reflected the results of an OIG survey which found that EPIC is highly valued by its partner agencies and users. Specifically, the survey results noted that EPIC users reported high satisfaction with the products and services that EPIC provides. Those users also reported the products to be timely and valuable to their operations. While DEA remains

committed to ongoing process improvements at EPIC and will work to implement the recommendations made by the OIG, EPIC believes that customer satisfaction is the key to the center's continued success.

DEA provides the following response to the OIG's recommendations:

Recommendation 1. EPIC implement an outreach and education program to promote the use of its products and services, including information about how to use the EPIC Portal.

DEA concurs with the recommendation, but believes that this recommendation might more appropriately read "EPIC expand its outreach and education program . . ." While DEA acknowledges that EPIC should improve it's outreach program to educate and promote EPIC's services and products, DEA offers that the current marketing strategy has resulted in significant growth in the number of users of EPIC. Since its inception, EPIC has made extensive efforts to market the utility of its products and services. Evidence of this is supported by the over 25,000 vetted users who have access to EPIC (an increase of 6,000 users since the OIG's visit to EPIC). Moreover, EPIC hosts an average of over 8,000 visitors annually to provide informational briefings. It is also noteworthy that the total number of vetted users is an under-representation of the actual number of individuals from the law enforcement community that are aware of and use EPIC resources on a daily basis. In many cases, one user satisfies the information requirements of an entire department, squad or unit. Additionally, the EPIC State and Local Programs Unit provides an average of 25 to 30 interdiction-oriented training sessions annually, at locations throughout the country. These training sessions routinely provide 3,000 to 5,000 law enforcement officers annually with detailed information about EPIC. EPIC has consistently promoted its capabilities to the law enforcement community and continuously markets its services. The increased use of EPIC services and its rapidly growing user base, clearly supports EPIC's existing marketing capabilities. The Center is on track to process more than 100,000 queries during fiscal year 2010.

DEA will explore new opportunities to expand the marketing of EPIC and will also develop a program of expanding customer usage of the EPIC Systems Portal.

Recommendation 2. EPIC update its Principals Accord or adopt a comparable multiagency framework that formalizes each member's roles and responsibilities for implementing and sustaining EPIC's programs and that provides a process for resolving differences that may arise.

DEA concurs with the recommendation. Since September 11, 2001, the information sharing landscape has changed and there has been a rapid expansion of intelligence centers, including approximately 72 state fusion centers, which are funded at least in part by the DHS. As recently as five years ago, there were three (3) federal tactical intelligence centers - EPIC, the Border Field Intelligence Center (BORFIC), and Joint Task Force-North (JTF-N) - within two miles of one another in El Paso, Texas and plans to construct a fourth center - the Border Interdiction Support Center (BISC) - in the same city. It was not possible to update EPIC's Principal's Accord without resolving the overlapping missions and functions of these centers. Fortunately, through a concerted multi-year effort, DEA and its partners have made progress in this area. The BORFIC and its capabilities have been incorporated into EPIC. JTF-N is currently negotiating to merge its intelligence functions into EPIC. Plans to establish the BISC are no longer being considered. The

process of formulating a replacement document that would establish a steering group to provide oversight of EPIC has already been initiated. DEA will keep the OIG informed of the outcomes of these ongoing efforts to update the Center's charter and provide a multiagency framework that formalizes each member's roles and responsibilities for implementing and sustaining EPIC's programs and that provides a process for resolving differences.

Recommendation 3. EPIC promote increased reporting of drug seizure data to the National Seizure System through the EPIC Portal and traditional methods.

DEA concurs with the recommendation. Despite the clear utility of having a single national database that contains all available information on contraband seizures, EPIC does not have the authority to direct mandatory reporting regarding the seizure of drug, currency, weapons or other contraband into the National Seizure System (NSS). However, DEA has successfully required federal agencies to provide data on drug seizures under the Federal Drug Identification Number (FDIN) Program for above-threshold seizures. This was accomplished by requiring an FDIN number on all federal drug seizure exhibits as a prerequisite for DEA's laboratories to provide forensic analysis. Similarly, while DEA cannot compel state or local authorities to provide information on drug seizures (these agencies typically analyze their own drug exhibits), we have provided incentives such as Business Intelligence System, Geo-spatial Information System, and Link Visualization tools for agencies that voluntarily comply. Expanding this model to include other types of contraband, including weapons and currency, will require new mechanisms that either compel or provide sufficient incentives for participation. Such authority for federal reporting must be established at the Department level for each of the federal departments involved in the seizure of these types of contraband. Similarly, EPIC has no authority to mandate High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) task forces to report or coordinate through EPIC - that authority rests with ONDCP alone. However, DEA believes that ONDCP's budget certification authorities and the grant making process could be effectively used to mandate federal, state and local agency reporting into the NSS at EPIC. While EPIC does not have the requisite authority to compel reporting, EPIC has already established and will continue to manage the NSS as the most comprehensive database of contraband seizures currently available.

Recommendation 4. The Office of the Deputy Attorney General work with the ONDCP to establish policy or guidance requiring HIDTAs to implement data and information sharing provisions to establish EPIC as their hub for seizure and drug movement information.

This recommendation has been responded to separately by the Office of the Deputy Attorney General.

Recommendation 5. EPIC establish points of contact at all national, regional, state, and local fusion centers to enhance information sharing and use of EPIC's services and products.

DEA concurs with this recommendation. EPIC already has long standing points of contact established with numerous national, regional, and state intelligence centers; however, the number of intelligence centers across the U.S. has increased tremendously over the past several years. In particular, approximately 72 DHS funded state-level Intelligence Fusion Centers have been established since September 11, 2001. In most instances, EPIC plays no role in the establishment of these intelligence centers and only becomes aware of their existence when elements within these

centers contact EPIC for information and support. EPIC has begun working with the DHS, Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A), to assure more complete connectivity. As a result of the enhanced EPIC – I&A effort, a single "Request for Information Collection Scheme" has been adopted to effectively transfer the responsibility of the EPIC Collection and Requirements Unit to the DHS Homeland Intelligence Support Team (DHS HIST) which is co-located at EPIC. This action has directly connected the EPIC Collection Management Unit with the 72 DHS managed and funded state Intelligence Fusion Centers.

In an effort to enhance information sharing, EPIC will continue working with the established points of contact and will seek to establish new points of contact for any remaining intelligence centers.

Recommendation 6. EPIC issue more substantive analytical products based on the seizure data collected in the National Seizure System.

DEA concurs with this recommendation. Satisfying this requirement requires commitment from our federal partners in populating the NSS and staffing the Research and Analysis Section. However, EPIC has already established a Predictive and Targeting Unit dedicated to the analysis of the intelligence routinely acquired by EPIC via the NSS. This unit will be engaged in identifying the point of entry of contraband into the U.S. and determining the reasons for failure to interdict the drugs or other illegal items at the border. EPIC will continue to collect and analyze data, but will retain its tactical focus and provide analysis that assists front line interdictors and investigators. It is anticipated that other organizations will use the information collected by EPIC to provide strategic level analysis that informs national policy.

Recommendation 7. EPIC assess the feasibility of analyzing digitally scanned fraudulent documents to identify trends in both sources and patterns of fraudulent document use, and of providing the data to other intelligence centers for their use.

DEA concurs with this recommendation. The Fraudulent Document discipline is a specialized analytical process. During late December 2008, two critical analysts assigned to the unit retired and other key unit personnel were reassigned by DHS. In January 2009, a comprehensive assessment was conducted of the Fraudulent Document Unit and as a result between June and October 2009, senior management at EPIC relocated the fraudulent document initiative to the General Watch. Since that date, progress has continued in an effort to re-establish the program and improve EPIC's capabilities to assess the information held.

EPIC recently developed a capability on the NSS to capture information obtained from seized documents, including fraudulent documents. The protocol is to electronically scan the documents and map the data elements to the appropriate fields in the NSS. This project is on schedule and once completed, users will be able to leverage the Business Intelligence System, the Geo-spatial Information System, and the Link Visualization tools on the ESP to identify trends and patterns in the use of documents suspected of being fraudulent or fraudulently obtained.

Recommendation 8. The DEA assess the feasibility of enhancing the capability at EPIC to analyze tactical information to identify links, trends, and patterns in drug trafficking activity in support of interdictions operations and investigations.

DEA concurs with this recommendation. EPIC manages and conducts a program which collects tactical information on the activities of drug traffickers and provides the information to law enforcement and interdiction agencies for immediate action. Intelligence acquired by means of this operation is highly perishable tactical intelligence. As such, it is constantly analyzed by trained DEA Intelligence Research Specialists (IRS) for key actionable information. Following this analysis, the intelligence is sent to select U.S. law enforcement agency personnel to facilitate interdiction or other enforcement action. Analysis is performed to enhance interpretation of the information for tactical application, but additional resources will be required to conduct trend analysis. DEA has placed a Reports Officer at EPIC to prepare summaries of this information and develop Intelligence Information Reports (IIR) that can be used to prepare trend analysis. Since March 2009, over 600 IIRs have been produced based on the tactical intelligence from the operation.

The Predictive and Targeting Unit is now an official "stand-alone" unit within the Research and Analysis Section and is staffed by analysts from multiple agencies. This unit will become the entity that conducts trend and pattern analysis.

Recommendation 9. EPIC examine new approaches for making Gatekeeper information more current and accessible.

DEA concurs with this recommendation. As previously indicated, it is somewhat difficult to respond to this finding due the lack of specific identification of which "...EPIC users..." determined the report "to be out of date." With that limitation in mind, the following response is repeated:

The EPIC Gatekeeper Study was and is intended as a tactical intelligence publication for use by line-officers to provide an assessment of the criminal elements controlling key portions of the border smuggling network. While the initial publication was issued in 2007, with a subsequent expanded publication in 2008, updates have been prepared as new information became available. During the past two years, periodic publications on specific Gatekeeper Corridors have been distributed. In addition, key law enforcement management personnel have been provided numerous briefings on current Gatekeeper intelligence. Moreover, as intelligence regarding Gatekeeper subjects is developed it is immediately and routinely shared between EPIC analysts and tactical elements. Additional dissemination of current Gatekeeper intelligence has been provided via Reports Officers and IIR dissemination.

EPIC has and is continuing to disseminate newly developed intelligence related to the Gatekeepers and recently published a study focusing on U.S. domestic drug distribution networks linked to the Southwest Border. The OIG Review Team recommended the use of "wiki" software and secure internet technology to support the contemporaneous production of updated Gatekeeper-related reporting from a variety of external and internal EPIC sources. This is an interesting concept and will be considered by EPIC as a potential tool for the production and dissemination of Gatekeeper information. The primary concern EPIC has with the proposal is in validating the accuracy of the information being presented. This recommendation will be taken under consideration for possible future expansion of what EPIC currently considers a substantially effective dissemination process.

Recommendation 10. EPIC develop performance metrics for all its programs and operations that define relevant and objective standards, and use the metrics to evaluate program effectiveness.

DEA concurs with this recommendation. The EPIC Strategic Plan and performance metrics have been revised to reflect EPIC's current configuration; however, as EPIC is currently undergoing additional mission and organizational changes, the EPIC Strategic Plan will change and new metrics will be developed as necessary.

Recommendation 11. EPIC develop a mechanism to systematically collect feedback on its products and services from users.

DEA concurs with this recommendation but believes that the recommendation would be more accurate if it read "EPIC expand existing mechanisms to systematically collect feedback . . ." Although EPIC has repeatedly solicited customer feedback on the accuracy, utility, and need for revision of the Center's products and services, EPIC will again examine additional avenues of solicitation of feedback regarding the Center's effectiveness to the law enforcement. To a certain extent, we believe that the lack of customer feedback reflects satisfaction. We take special note of the OIG's use of a survey instrument that systematically gathered feedback and determined that EPIC customers were very pleased with the quality, timeliness and utility of the information and services provided by EPIC. EPIC will consider using a similar survey in our on-going assessments of the Center's activities. Other forms of customer feedback solicitations we are considering include:

- Revision of the course critique questionnaire provided to participants in EPIC's State and Local Liaison Training Program,
- Exit questionnaires for groups visiting the Center,
- An annual assessment questionnaire sent to all participating EPIC agency member Headquarters, National and State intelligence centers and intelligence fusion centers, and HIDTAs.

Documentation detailing DEA's efforts to implement each of the recommendations noted in this draft report will be provided to the OIG on a quarterly basis, until such time that all corrective actions have been completed. If you have any questions regarding DEA's response to the OIG's recommendations, please contact the Audit Liaison Team at (202) 307-8200.

APPENDIX IX: OIG ANALYSIS OF THE DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE

The Office of the Inspector General provided a draft of this report to the Drug Enforcement Administration for its comment. The DEA's response is included in Appendix VIII to this report. The OIG's analysis of the DEA's response and the actions necessary to close the recommendations are discussed below.

Recommendation 1. EPIC expand its outreach and education program to promote the use of its products and services, including information about how to use the EPIC Portal.

Status. Resolved – open.

Summary of the DEA Response. The DEA concurred with the OIG's recommendation that it use its outreach and education program to promote the use of its products and services, but stated that the recommendation should be reworded to recognize EPIC's current marketing efforts. Specifically, the DEA stated that the OIG's recommendation should be reworded to state, "That EPIC expand its outreach and education program . . . ."

The DEA stated that EPIC has continuously marketed its products and services, and that this resulted in a significant increase in the number of EPIC's approved users from about 19,000 to about 25,000 during the last year. The DEA commented that EPIC's outreach efforts had included hosting about 8,000 visitors at EPIC annually. The DEA further stated that EPIC provided information about its products and services during training events it conducted at locations throughout the country to about 3,000 to 5,000 law enforcement officers each year. The DEA specifically noted that the overall number of approved EPIC users is an under-representation of the actual number of individuals from the law enforcement community that are aware of and that use EPIC on a daily basis. The DEA stated that one approved user might satisfy the information requirements of an entire department, squad, or unit. The DEA stated that EPIC is on track to process more than 100,000 queries during fiscal year 2010.

The DEA further stated that it will explore new opportunities to expand the marketing of EPIC and will also develop a program to expand customer usage of the EPIC Portal.

OIG Analysis. The DEA's planned actions to explore new marketing opportunities and increase customer use of EPIC's products and services, including the Portal, are responsive to our recommendation. Further, the OIG recognizes that these planned actions are an expansion of EPIC's outreach and training efforts, and we therefore amended the recommendation from "implementing an outreach program" to "expanding its outreach program."

While we amended the wording of our recommendation to acknowledge that EPIC has conducted some outreach, we nevertheless believe that EPIC's outreach program needs significant improvement. During our review, we found that EPIC staff had principally provided information about EPIC's products and services to law enforcement in conjunction with interdiction training events it conducted each year. Yet, these efforts were not based on a plan that encompassed a comprehensive strategy targeting specific categories of actual or potential users. The outreach that EPIC is providing through its interdiction training targets only a relatively small population of state and local law enforcement organizations that are likely to already have an association with EPIC. The outreach EPIC conducts through interdiction training also does not reach the majority of state and local law enforcement organizations, many of which may be unaware of EPIC's capabilities.

While the DEA reported that EPIC had increased its number of approved users by nearly one-third, from about 19,000 to 25,000, this net increase in approved users still represents a very small segment of the law enforcement community – less than 1 percent of federal, state, and local law enforcement officers – that EPIC could potentially support, either directly or indirectly.[40] Similarly, we accept EPIC's statement that it hosts about 8,000 visitors each year and uses the opportunity of these visits to possibly increase the visitors' awareness of EPIC's products and services. However, describing products and services to a wide range of visitors, many of whom are not potential users, does not substitute for a targeted marketing effort to reach potential users not already aware of EPIC and its services.

The OIG agrees with the DEA's comment that the number of approved users is probably an under-representation of the actual

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[40] During this review, EPIC provided the OIG with a list of the names of its approved users that totaled 19,416 users as of July 2009. We did not verify the DEA's statement that, since then, the number of authorized users has increased by over 25 percent to 25,000 users (an increase of approximately 6,000 approved users). Further, we did not examine the composition of the additional 6,000 to determine whether they were federal, state, or local users.

number of individuals from the law enforcement community that benefit from EPIC. Yet, in light of the DEA's example that one approved user might satisfy the information requirements of an entire department, squad, or unit, we believe EPIC could greatly expand its impact and its efficiency by targeting individuals that can serve as points of contact in their agencies for information requests to EPIC and for dissemination of information and products from EPIC. A more targeted outreach and education program designed to establish points of contacts with agencies unaware of EPIC capabilities could also help EPIC better inform the intelligence and law enforcement communities about EPIC's capabilities.

Please provide the OIG with a detailed description, timeline, and intended audience of the actions planned to expand EPIC's outreach and education program to promote its products and services, including how to use the Portal, by July 30, 2010.

Recommendation 2. EPIC update its Principals Accord or adopt a comparable multi-agency framework that formalizes each member's roles and responsibilities for implementing and sustaining EPIC's programs and that provides a process for resolving differences that may arise.

Status. Resolved – open.

Summary of the DEA Response. The DEA concurred with the OIG's recommendation and stated that EPIC had previously initiated the process of formulating a document to replace its 1999 Principals Accord. The DEA noted that there had been a rapid expansion of intelligence centers nationwide since September 11, 2001, and that EPIC could not update the Accord until it had resolved overlapping missions and functions of other intelligence centers established in the El Paso area. According to the DEA, the capabilities of these other centers have been or will be incorporated into EPIC.

The DEA stated that the updated Accord will establish a steering group to oversee EPIC and will provide a multi-agency framework that formalizes each member's roles and responsibilities for implementing and sustaining EPIC's programs and that provides a process for resolving differences.

OIG Analysis. The actions planned by the DEA are responsive to the OIG's recommendation. Please provide the final version of the replacement document, or the status of planned actions, by July 30, 2010.

Recommendation 3. EPIC promote more complete reporting of drug seizure data to the National Seizure System through the EPIC Portal and traditional methods.

      Status. Resolved – open.

      Summary of the DEA Response. The DEA concurred with the OIG's recommendation. The DEA stated that EPIC does not have the authority to direct mandatory reporting of seizures of drugs and other contraband, but it will continue to manage the National Seizure System as the most comprehensive database of contraband seizures currently available. The DEA stated that it has successfully required federal agencies to provide data under the Federal Drug Identification Number Program on seizures above specified threshold amounts. The DEA stated that while it cannot compel state or local authorities to provide information on drug seizures, EPIC has provided incentives for reporting in the form of additional analytical tools available to agencies that voluntarily comply. The DEA stated that additional requirements for reporting seizures into the National Seizure System would have to be established at the federal Department level or by the Office of National Drug Control Policy through its budget certification authority. The DEA stated that it believes that the ONDCP's budget certification and the grant-making process could be used effectively to mandate federal, state, and local agency reporting to the National Seizure System at EPIC.

      OIG Analysis. The DEA's planned actions to expand the availability of analytical tools as incentives to promote voluntary reporting into the National Seizure System and to work with the ONDCP on budget and grant issues are responsive to the recommendation. Please provide the OIG with a description of how EPIC proposes to further develop and make available analytical tools and the timeline for implementation. Also, provide the DEA's plan for engaging the ONDCP to promote increased reporting into the National Seizure System by federal, state, and local agencies. Also, please identify how EPIC will monitor and measure progress in improving the completeness of federal, state, and local agency reporting into the National Seizure System. Please provide the requested information, or the status of planned actions, by July 30, 2010.

Recommendation 5. EPIC establish points of contact at all national, regional, state, and local fusion centers to enhance information sharing and use of EPIC's services and products.

Status. Resolved – open.

Summary of the DEA Response. The DEA concurred with the OIG's recommendation and stated that EPIC had already established longstanding points of contact with numerous national, regional, and state intelligence centers. The DEA stated that the number of state and local intelligence centers across the United States had increased in recent years, that EPIC exercised no role in the establishment of these centers, and that EPIC only became aware of the existence of some of these centers when they contacted EPIC for support. According to the DEA, EPIC recently took action to directly connect EPIC with the 72 state intelligence fusion centers managed and funded by the Department of Homeland Security. EPIC has now assigned responsibility for managing requests for information from these centers to a DHS unit at EPIC, the Homeland Intelligence Support Team, which has a direct automated connection to the DHS-funded centers. The DEA also stated that it will seek to establish points of contact for any centers where it lacks them.

OIG Analysis. The DEA's planned action to seek points of contact for centers where it lacks them is responsive to our recommendation. However, as the DEA noted, the number of intelligence centers has increased significantly over the past several years and is likely to continue to increase. Please provide documentation of EPIC's efforts to identify the universe of centers and a point of contact in each center and of how EPIC will update its information on centers and points of contact. Also, please describe how the DHS unit at EPIC is ensuring that EPIC is connected to the DHS-funded centers. Please provide the requested information, or the status of planned actions, by July 30, 2010.

Recommendation 6. EPIC issue more substantive analytical products based on the seizure data collected in the National Seizure System.

Status. Resolved – open.

Summary of the DEA Response. The DEA concurred with the recommendation and stated that it established a Predictive Analysis and Targeting Unit dedicated to the analysis of the intelligence EPIC routinely acquires via the National Seizure System. This unit will identify points of entry of contraband into the United States and determine the reasons interdictions fail at the border.

OIG Analysis. The actions described by the DEA are responsive to the OIG's recommendation. Please provide the OIG with examples of the analytic products created by the Predictive Analysis and Targeting Unit and a description of how and to whom EPIC will disseminate these products. Please provide the information, or the status of planned actions, by July 30, 2010.

Recommendation 7. EPIC assess the feasibility of analyzing digitally scanned fraudulent documents to identify trends in both sources and patterns of fraudulent document use, and of providing the data to other intelligence centers for their use.

Status. Unresolved – open.

Summary of the DEA Response. The DEA concurred with the OIG's recommendation and stated that EPIC recently developed a capability within the National Seizure System to capture information obtained from seized documents, including fraudulent documents. Once this capability is implemented, EPIC will scan and map the data elements in seized documents into the National Seizure System so that users will have access to these data. The DEA stated that this will allow users to identify trends and patterns in the use of documents suspected of being fraudulent or fraudulently obtained.

OIG Analysis. The actions planned by the DEA to map fraudulent document data to a database were described to the OIG during this review (see pages 36–37 of this report). While these actions will enhance users' access to the information contained in seized documents, the DEA response did not address the OIG's recommendation that the DEA assess the feasibility of EPIC conducting its own analyses to identify trends and patterns in the use of seized fraudulent documents. Also, the DEA did not address its assessment of the feasibility of providing the data to other intelligence centers for their use. Please provide the OIG with the assessments of the feasibility of EPIC analyzing digitally scanned fraudulent documents and of providing the data to other intelligence centers. Please provide the information, or the status of planned actions, by July 30, 2010.

Recommendation 8. The DEA assess the feasibility of enhancing the capability at EPIC to analyze tactical information to identify links, trends, and patterns in drug trafficking activity in support of interdiction operations and investigations.

Status. Resolved – open.

Summary of the DEA Response. The DEA concurred with the recommendation and stated that EPIC's Predictive Analysis and Targeting Unit will become the entity that conducts trend and pattern analysis on the data EPIC collects to provide information on the activities of drug traffickers to law enforcement and interdiction agencies for immediate action.

OIG Analysis. The DEA's planned actions are responsive to our recommendation. Please provide documentation (such as an internal EPIC directive or a DEA or EPIC teletype or standard operating procedure) that demonstrates that this new responsibility has been assigned to the Predictive Analysis and Targeting Unit, and provide examples of analytical products identifying trends and patterns, or the status of planned actions, by July 30, 2010.

Recommendation 9. EPIC examine new approaches for making Gatekeeper information more current and accessible.

Status. Resolved – open.

Summary of the DEA Response. The DEA concurred with the OIG's recommendation but commented that it could better respond if it knew the identification of users who believed the Gatekeeper report "to be out of date." The DEA emphasized that the EPIC Gatekeeper report "was and is a tactical intelligence publication for use by line officers to provide an assessment of the criminal elements controlling key portions of the border smuggling network." According to the DEA, the Gatekeeper report was initially published in 2007 and was expanded as a publication in 2008, and that updates and publications addressing specific Gatekeeper Corridors have been periodically published since. In addition, Gatekeeper intelligence is briefed often and shared immediately and routinely between EPIC analysts and tactical elements. The DEA commented that EPIC considers its internal process for disseminating Gatekeeper information to be timely and effective.

The DEA stated that it would consider the OIG's suggestion to explore the use of "wiki" software as a mechanism to maintain Gatekeeper information. The DEA stated that this recommendation

would be taken under consideration for possible future expansion of what EPIC considers to be a substantially effective dissemination process. Further, the DEA noted that its primary concern in using technology such as a "wiki" would be validating the accuracy of the information presented.

OIG Analysis. The DEA's planned action to consider the use of "wiki" software is generally responsive to our recommendation. Our conclusion that EPIC's Gatekeeper report could be more current and accessible is based on interviews with agents and analysts in the Southwest border area and at EPIC as well as on our survey results. During these interviews, agents and analysts generally commented that the Gatekeeper report was a good product, though some stated that its usefulness was often limited because it was not current. Several interviewees stated that the Gatekeeper report was useful to them primarily as a historical reference. This is not consistent with the DEA's intent that the Gatekeeper report be a "tactical intelligence publication for line officers." Also, our survey results indicate that the Gatekeeper report is not widely accessed or used by line officers, as the majority of respondents, many of whom had the capability to access the Gatekeeper report, nonetheless did not use or know of the Gatekeeper report.

Further, we noted that EPIC has increasingly used the dissemination of tactical reports to provide updates of Gatekeeper-type information, but that these tactical reports do not appear to be integrated into the Gatekeeper report in a way that would provide line officers a comprehensive view of the Gatekeeper Corridors. While the use of "wiki" software would present EPIC with challenges to ensuring the validity of data, we found during our review that the intelligence community is already using "wiki" software in its "Intellipedia," suggesting that these issues are not insurmountable. Our recommendation that EPIC examine new approaches for making Gatekeeper information more current and accessible is intended to benefit Gatekeeper's customer base – line officers and their organizations needing timely access to this type of information.

Please provide the OIG with the planned assessment of using "wiki" software or other approaches to make Gatekeeper information more current and accessible, or the status of planned actions, by July 30, 2010.

Recommendation 10. EPIC develop performance metrics for all of its programs and operations that define relevant and objective standards, and use the metrics to evaluate program effectiveness.

   Status. Resolved – open.

   Summary of the DEA Response. The DEA concurred with the recommendation and stated that EPIC's Strategic Plan performance metrics have been revised to reflect EPIC's current configuration. In addition, because EPIC continues to undergo additional mission and organizational changes, the DEA stated that EPIC's Strategic Plan will continue to change and new metrics will be developed as necessary.

   OIG Analysis. The actions taken and planned by the DEA are responsive to the recommendation. Please provide the OIG with the revised metrics from EPIC's Strategic Plan and the data that EPIC will use to measure whether it met its goals. Please provide the information, or the status of planned actions, by July 30, 2010.

Recommendation 11. EPIC expand its existing mechanisms to systematically collect feedback on its products and services from users.

   Status. Resolved – open.

   Summary of the DEA Response. The DEA concurred with the OIG's recommendation to systematically collect feedback from users and stated that it believed the recommendation should be revised to recognize EPIC's existing mechanisms for collecting feedback. However, the DEA stated that the OIG's recommendation should be reworded to read that "EPIC expand existing mechanisms to systematically collect feedback . . . ."

   The DEA stated that EPIC had repeatedly solicited customer feedback on the accuracy, utility, and the need for revision of its products and services, and that EPIC would examine additional avenues for soliciting feedback regarding its effectiveness to law enforcement. The DEA stated that the lack of customer feedback to EPIC reflects a general level of satisfaction. The DEA stated that EPIC would consider: (1) future use of a survey similar to the one the OIG used in this review to assess user opinions about the utility of EPIC's products and services, (2) revising the course critique questionnaire provided to participants in EPIC's State and Local Liaison Training Program, (3) using exit questionnaires for groups visiting EPIC, and (4) administering an annual assessment questionnaire to all participating EPIC agency members at

headquarters, at national and state intelligence centers and intelligence fusion centers, and at High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) intelligence support centers.

OIG Analysis. Although the DEA did not identify specific mechanisms that EPIC currently employs to systematically collect user feedback, the DEA did identify additional forms of customer feedback solicitations that EPIC would consider implementing. The additional mechanisms are responsive to our recommendation. The OIG also recognizes EPIC's planned actions to expand its collection of user feedback and has amended the recommendation from "implement mechanisms" to "expand existing mechanisms."

In particular, the OIG views EPIC's use of an annual assessment questionnaire to be completed by all participating EPIC agency members at headquarters, national and state intelligence centers and intelligence fusion centers, and HIDTAs to be a useful assessment mechanism. Please provide a description of the current methods and the new methods selected for systematically collecting user feedback on EPIC's products and services, EPIC's plan for collecting and analyzing the information, and examples of the completed analyses. Please provide the requested information, or the status of planned actions, by July 30, 2010.