

These considerations will apply to any outfit subdivided functionally or geographically. The negative effects grow in proportion to the size of the outfit as well. A small police department, where everyone knows everyone else, should have no problem at all. Many larger departments have a headquarters detective staff which can cross precinct lines at will to pursue a case. Travel within a city is therefore not a consideration. This may seem to be the perfect solution. State and federal agencies, because of greater distances and the cost of air fare, cannot adopt that solution as standard procedure.

Moreover, something is lost. The "gut feeling" makes no sense when transmitted through formal channels and is not justification for a thousand-mile trip to check it out. Of course, there is always the informal channel, which the British call the "old boy network"—a telephone call to a friend and colleague in the other city. Many police administrators frown on this practice, and many operational manuals fairly bristle with prohibitions against it. This is probably because the results remain informal and are seldom reported properly, and the upper echelon loses control on both ends.

The Drug Enforcement Administration is a relatively small agency scattered around the world. The DEA special agent is trained to think in terms of the international traffic and distant sources of supply. That is his only business. Correspondence which crosses state lines and international borders is not only daily routine; it is the substance of the best case files and a goal to be sought in every new investigation. The experienced DEA supervisor has probably been transferred often enough and far enough to lose any provincial outlook. As a result of his travels he can often include within his formal communications a very efficient "old boy network." Thus DEA may have reduced the negative interface factors to the achievable minimum.

Nevertheless, intelligence turns up an occasional drug trafficking organization, which is spread across both domestic and foreign DEA Regions, of such importance that it deserves maximum effort. No single region can take command of the entire investigation, and routine correspondence, however reliable, is too cumbersome. A small, full-time group under a single supervisor with freedom to travel as indicated by the leads is the most effective approach. The police department with the central detective staff had the solution all along.

DEA calls such a group a Central Tactical Unit. "Central" connotes responsibility only to DEA Headquarters in Washington. So far, five CENTAC units have been created, each handling a different organization dealing in an identifiable dosage form of one drug. The first criterion for selection of an organization is that its contraband drug appears in such quantities as to constitute a threat to communities throughout the United States. The second criterion is that termination of the organization's activity would

significantly reduce the availability of that drug within the communities. Nothing less would justify the cost of a CENTAC operation.

By the time these two criteria are met, the drug is well known on the illicit market and many purchases and seizures have already been made. Street intelligence plus forensic analysis of the evidence will indicate some common source. An examination of the files will make it possible to piece together an outline of the organization's structure.

A profit-oriented enterprise outside the law such as a drug trafficking network operates entirely by the principles of laissez-faire economics. If it is not profitable, it will disappear; if it is, it will grow at an amazing pace; there is no other kind. The original financiers thereby achieve an executive status removed by several layers from substantive violations. These men at the top will never be prosecuted for possession or sale of drugs. The only technique at our disposal is to make use of federal conspiracy statutes.

The mission of a Central Tactical Unit is to examine, select, and develop the physical and documentary evidence in such a way as to bring forth the witnesses to a conspiracy. CENTAC 4 was the first of these units to conclude its operations. Though no two units are alike, its story may serve as an example of how such tactical operations are undertaken.

The target was the minibennie, the small amphetamine tablet which was appearing in every region of the United States. The first minibennies were encountered in April 1970. They met with rapid acceptance by drug users. Production in clandestine laboratories was almost continuous after that. By mid-1974 a total of 58 million minibennies had been seized by law enforcement agencies.

DEA's Special Testing and Research Laboratory in Virginia has perfected a procedure of microscopic examination and measurement of tablets similar to ballistics. The punches and dies of a tableting machine can be positively identified from a sample of the tablets. The chemist can say that all exhibits in a list of cases came from one machine, though he has no idea where that machine might be. DEA encourages all law enforcement agencies to send samples of illicit tablets to the Special Testing Laboratory.

The submitting agency receives a reply from the lab with the results: whether the manufacturer can be identified, whether it is a previously encountered clandestine source, or whether it is a new prototype.

The more samples on file from a particular machine, the more intelligence is compiled on distribution routes, associated dealers, common wholesalers, transshipment points, and possible conspiracy evidence. All of this, by the way, is available to the submitting agency if it wishes to pursue the investigation.

In the latter part of 1973, DEA Headquarters was studying the intelligence on the minibennies with a sense of urgency. Two new machines had begun