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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wisconsin DOJ Employee Honored with Top HIDTA Award

MADISON, Wis. – Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul today announced that Wisconsin Department of Justice, Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) Special Agent Jeff Hale was awarded the Special Agent John "Jay" Balchunas Memorial Achievement Award this year, the top award for a drug investigation from the North Central High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA).

“Congratulations and thank you to DCI Special Agent Jeff Hale for his hard work and substantial contributions to the takedown of a significant drug-trafficking operation that was supplying large quantities of narcotics to the Milwaukee area,” said AG Kaul. “Time-intensive cases like this one, in which investigators work up the supply chain of large drug-trafficking conspiracies, have a sustained, positive impact in the fight against the drug epidemic.”

DCI Special Agent Hale was given the Special Agent John "Jay" Balchunas Memorial Achievement Award for his significant investigative work from March to September 2020 on a [drug trafficking operation](#) that supplied multi-kilogram quantities of cocaine and marijuana each month in the Milwaukee area. On September 22, 2020, due to the work of Special Agent Hale with the North Central HIDTA Opioid Task Force, 26 search warrants were executed in Milwaukee and California resulting in 26 arrests, seizure of 41 guns, 750 grams of heroin, hundreds of THC vape cartridges and edibles, and \$232,139. The Eastern District of Wisconsin United States Attorney’s Office is prosecuting the case.

About Special Agent John "Jay" Balchunas Memorial Achievement Award

Special Agent John "Jay" Balchunas Memorial Achievement Award was established in 2005 to recognize exemplary integrity, dedication and professionalism of law enforcement personnel assigned to the North Central HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) Task Force. [John "Jay" Balchunas](#) was killed in 2004 while working in his capacity as a Special Agent supporting an FBI operation, and was assigned to the Milwaukee HIDTA Heroin Initiative as a Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force Officer.

About HIDTA

The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program, created by Congress with the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, provides assistance to Federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies operating in areas determined to be critical drug-trafficking regions of the United States. This grant program is administered by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). There are currently 28 HIDTAs, which include approximately 18 percent of all counties in the United States and 66 percent of the U.S. population. The North Central HIDTA region encompasses both Wisconsin and Minnesota.