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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 Todd Higgins was one of two given 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).

“The men and women in DOJ’s Division of Criminal Investigation regularly go above and beyond to keep our communities safe,” said AG Kaul. “Through the integral role he played in dismantling a major drug-trafficking network, Special Agent Higgins has had a real, positive impact on public safety.”

DCI Special Agent Higgins was given the Special Agent John "Jay" Balchunas Memorial Achievement Award, alongside his United States Department of Homeland Security partner, for his significant work on [Operation Island Hopper](#), which resulted in charges against 26 defendants in federal court with trafficking at least five kilograms or more of cocaine as well as distributable quantities of heroin and fentanyl in the Eastern District of Wisconsin. Several of the defendants were also charged with money laundering and firearms offenses related to drug trafficking.

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

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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.