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The mean streets of Boston in the 1970s played host to a nefarious underworld of pimps, pushers, and addicts, and Paul "Sully" Doyle was there. From Kenmore Square hippies to South Boston junkies to Combat Zone prostitutes, this undercover operative with the federal Drug Enforcement Administration met every type of unsavory character in town in his fight to bust violent rings of dope, coke, and smack dealers during a turbulent era in the city's history.

Now Special Agent Doyle bluntly chronicles the riveting, true stories from his years on the inside. Known on the street by his alias, "Paulie Sullivan," he recalls his rookie days, trying to infiltrate the criminal drug world under the tutelage of his veteran partner, through his coming of age as an experienced narc-sharing his keen observations on ruined lives, personal peril, and government red tape along the way. A former prizefighter not at all shy about punching his way out of trouble, the author divulges a candid, worm's-eye-view of the drug war with all its blemishes and glories. With abiding humanity and graphic detail, the memoir richly describes exploits with junkie stool pigeons and hooker informants, college burnouts and Chinatown mobsters, ghetto pimps and violent thugs, bureaucratic obstacles and uncooperative foreign governments, successful busts and brushes with death. Marijuana, cocaine, heroin, amphetamines, LSD-no illegal substance failed to tempt those seeking the ultimate high, resulting in the long nights, sudden danger, and uncertain outcomes that faced Sully and his partners.

Combining gripping action with perceptive commentary, this unvarnished snapshot of one agent's experiences undercover adeptly captures the violence, futility, and endless frustration of the war on drugs. As engrossing as a fiction thriller, Hot Shots and Heavy Hits provides a rare glimpse into a harsh world unknown to most of us.