



U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection

# CBP STRATEGY TO COMBAT FENTANYL AND OTHER SYNTHETIC DRUGS



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# ETHOS OF U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION



**We** are the guardians of our Nation's borders.

**We** are America's frontline.



**We** safeguard the American homeland at and beyond our borders.

**We** protect the American people against terrorists and the instruments of terror.



**We** steadfastly enforce the laws of the United States while fostering our Nation's economic security through lawful international trade and travel.



**We** serve the American people with vigilance, integrity, and professionalism.



## FOREWORD

Across our nation, communities are suffering the scourge of an illicit synthetic opioid epidemic that is challenging law enforcement, healthcare, and social service resources. Fentanyl and other illicit synthetic drugs pose a significant threat to the American populace, Americans are dying every day. Whether finished heroin or increasingly potent synthetics such as fentanyl and its analogues, virtually all these opioids come across our international border, trafficked by transnational criminal organizations. As President Joseph R. Biden and Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas have directed, interdiction efforts must be coupled with demand reduction and treatment. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is positioned to lead the federal government's efforts to prevent these poisons from entering our country.



In Fiscal Year 2016, CBP seized only enough fentanyl to fill a child-sized backpack. Nine years later, in Fiscal Year 2023, CBP has seized more than 27,000 pounds: enough fentanyl to fill every inch of a tractor's trailer. CBP has developed and implemented several efforts in recent years to combat the trafficking of fentanyl and other illicit synthetics to include the 2018 *CBP Strategy to Combat Opioids* and the recent intelligence and data-based surge operations *Blue Lotus*, *Four Horsemen*, *Artemis*, and *Rolling Wave*. However, more must be done.

CBP is best positioned to take on this challenge: we use analytics, operations, and non-intrusive inspection technology enhancements to achieve results.

To do so, CBP's new Strategy to Combat Fentanyl and Other Synthetic Drugs will unite our agency around a common purpose and establish new lines of effort to address these growing challenges. This strategy will guide the next phase of our work to combat fentanyl and other synthetic drugs through a unified and whole-of-government approach, both domestically and internationally. That includes leveraging key partnerships at all levels: state, local, tribal, territorial, law enforcement, governments, commercial industries, and non-governmental partners, and the international community. CBP will continue to advance counter network operations to effectively target and interdict the organizations involved in smuggling synthetic drugs at each node of the supply chain, based on data-driven intelligence, and will deepen our international engagement to reduce supply at the source through joint operational efforts and diplomatic approaches.

CBP's commitment to combat fentanyl is unwavering. Through enhanced partnerships, relentless targeting, and scrupulous interdiction, CBP will lead a whole-of-government effort to fight the scourge of fentanyl and keep our communities safe.

Troy A. Miller  
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Commissioner  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection

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## Introduction

The United States is plagued by an unprecedented overdose epidemic, which has spared no corner of this country. At the heart of this scourge is illicit fentanyl,<sup>1</sup> which has proliferated and led to a rapid increase in the abuse of synthetics to include designer drugs, fentanyl and its analogues, heroin, methamphetamine, and xylazine, the latter of which is a tranquilizer used by veterinarians and is not approved for use in humans.

The prevalence of an increased supply and demand of synthetic drugs has dramatically impacted our communities. Since 1999, more than one million Americans have died from a drug overdose.<sup>2</sup> In 2021, synthetic opioids (other than methadone) were the main driver of drug overdose deaths. Nearly 88 percent of opioid-involved overdose deaths involved synthetic opioids.<sup>3</sup> From 2016 to 2021, fentanyl overdose deaths tripled from 5.7 percent per 100,000 in 2016, to 21.6 percent in 2021.<sup>4</sup> The availability of fentanyl throughout the United States has soared. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) seized 11,188 pounds of fentanyl (a 133 percent increase from FY 2020). Last year, in FY 2022, CBP seized 14,729 pounds of fentanyl.<sup>5</sup> As of September 2023,<sup>6</sup> fentanyl seizures were continuing to outpace the previous fiscal year.

CBP is the largest law enforcement agency in the United States, and is uniquely positioned to detect, identify, and seize illicit drugs from entering the country, thereby preventing these deadly substances from taking the lives of our friends, family, colleagues, and community members.

This *CBP Strategy to Combat Fentanyl and Other Synthetic Drugs* is intended to produce a strategy to achieve a whole-of-CBP approach against fentanyl and to position CBP to lead a whole-of-government effort against illicit synthetic narcotics. It builds on the foundation and accomplishments of the 2018 *CBP Strategy to Combat Opioids*. This refresh focuses on an ever-changing threat landscape and the proliferation of synthetic narcotics. It not only focuses on fentanyl and its analogues, but also methamphetamine and otherwise legal precursors which are increasingly being used for illicit purposes such as the production of fentanyl and its analogues. This 2023 strategy will align resources, enhance partnerships, and build on the successful enforcement intelligence and data-driven operations CBP executed in 2023, leveraging CBP's vast expertise and data holdings to disrupt the Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCO) responsible for the illicit production, distribution, and trafficking of illicit fentanyl, its analogues, and other synthetic drugs in the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document, when CBP mentions fentanyl, an opioid, it is referring to the illicit use of fentanyl. Fentanyl itself is a controlled substance that is a legal pharmaceutical when used for medical purposes to treat severe pain. However, fentanyl has been misused and abused leading to an unprecedented number of overdose deaths. Often, users are poisoned as they are not even aware that the substances they are using contain fentanyl.

<sup>2</sup> "Drug Overdose Deaths." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, August 22, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/deaths/index.html>, accessed September 3, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Tsai, Brian. "Fentanyl Overdose Death Rates More than Tripled From 2016 to 2021." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, May 3, 2023. <https://blogs.cdc.gov/nchs/2023/05/03/7338/>, accessed September 3, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> "Drug Seizure Statistics FY2022" U.S. Customs and Border Protection, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/drug-seizure-statistics>, accessed on September 28, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Note: This strategy was written prior to the end of FY 2023, thus the year-end statistics were not available.

## Background

When the 2018 *CBP Strategy to Combat Opioids* was developed, fentanyl production was limited to China. However, the production of fentanyl has since expanded to other countries like Mexico (a source country) and numerous transit countries around the globe, making it more challenging to stem the flow of illicit drugs into the United States. This problem is compounded by the fact that many precursors are used for legitimate purposes and may be legally imported and exported, making it difficult to enforce the movement of these chemicals. By targeting suspicious locations and recipients that demonstrate patterns of illicit activity, CBP can disrupt the supply chain of illicit fentanyl and its analogues, methamphetamine, and other synthetic drugs.

This 2023 strategy update supports the Administration's focus on combating the fentanyl crisis plaguing our country. In President Biden's 2023 State of the Union address, he emphasized the need to stop fentanyl production and trafficking, the need for more drug detection equipment to inspect more cargo, and the need to stop pills and powder at the border.<sup>7</sup> The President's declaration has led to a concerted effort across the U.S. government to adopt a holistic strategy to halt the rising death toll resulting from the opioid epidemic. CBP's mission is to "protect the American people, safeguard our borders, and enhance the Nation's economic prosperity."<sup>8</sup> CBP is one of the primary interdiction agencies in America's fight against this epidemic. CBP leverages its air, land, and sea resources, as well as its partnerships with key public and private sector stakeholders in the United States and abroad, to thwart TCOs and the illicit synthetic drug trade market and supply chain.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Director, Dr. Rahul Gupta, said in a recent statement that the continued fight to thwart fentanyl trafficking will include the Biden Administration's plans to build a comprehensive strategy to address potential gaps in detecting and interdicting fentanyl and its analogues at U.S. borders. He noted the Administration is taking significant actions "to double down on our efforts to go after drug traffickers, [and] provide new technology to seize illicit fentanyl."<sup>9</sup> This strategy represents one mechanism to protect Americans from overdose deaths, by targeting the supply chain and preventing illicit synthetic narcotics from entering the country.

*CBP is the frontline against those engaged in the production, trafficking, and distribution of fentanyl and other synthetic drugs. That said, we will focus our intelligence, targeting, and operational resources against the supply chain to prevent negative impacts to our workforce, communities, and country.*

*-Troy A. Miller, Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Commissioner*

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<sup>7</sup> Biden, Joseph R. "Fact Sheet: In State of the Union, President Biden to Outline Vision to Advance Progress on Unity Agenda in Year Ahead." The White House, February 7, 2023. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/02/07/fact-sheet-in-state-of-the-union-president-biden-to-outline-vision-to-advance-progress-on-unity-agenda-in-year-ahead>, accessed March 27, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> "About CBP." U.S. Customs and Border Protection, August 21, 2023. <https://www.cbp.gov/about>, accessed September 1, 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Gupta, Rahul. "Release: Dr. Rahul Gupta Releases Statement on CDC's New Overdose Death Data." The White House, February 15, 2023. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/briefing-room/2023/02/15/release-dr-rahul-gupta-releases-statement-on-cdcs-new-overdose-death-data/>, accessed March 28, 2023.

A whole-of-government approach to tackling this opioid epidemic was solidified in the Biden Administration's 2022 *National Drug Control Strategy*, which called for a deliberate effort to commercially disrupt the global illicit fentanyl production, distribution, and trafficking supply chain. The main objectives of the U.S. government strategy focus on 1) disrupting supply; 2) increasing awareness; and 3) partnerships to address this threat.<sup>10</sup>

The White House approach to disrupting the supply chain for fentanyl and other synthetic drugs calls for whole-of-government execution along four lines of effort:

- Denying access to precursor chemicals;
- Denying access to pill pressers and parts;
- Disrupting the ability to move raw materials, manufacturing machinery, and finished fentanyl; and,
- Disrupting the flow of financial benefits from the production and trafficking of fentanyl.

The *National Drug Control Strategy* focuses on several endeavors, but the main efforts for CBP, reflected in this *CBP Strategy to Combat Fentanyl and Other Synthetic Drugs*, are to:

- Reduce the synthetics supply domestically;
- Reduce the synthetics supply internationally; and
- Use data and information sharing innovatively to combat synthetic drugs and their analogues.

These lines of effort are supported by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and amplified in this *CBP Strategy to Combat Fentanyl and Other Synthetic Drugs*. DHS is focusing on, among other things, increasing seizures of precursor chemicals and identified chemicals of concern used to manufacture fentanyl and its analogues, as well as leveraging CBP's Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII) technology and CBP's Threshold Targeting Program to combat the fentanyl and illicit synthetic supply chain, consistent with CBP's layered enforcement approach.

*"Fentanyl is one of the greatest challenges that we are facing as a country, and our efforts are multipronged in addressing the traffickers who peddle in death and destruction. We are using all our resources, all our capabilities, and our tremendous creativity to guarantee traffickers will not get ahead of us. We will not stop our efforts until we eliminate the scourge of fentanyl and other contraband that is causing so much harm in our communities."*

*-Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security*

<sup>10</sup> "National Drug Control Strategy." The White House, Executive Office of the President, Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2022.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/National-Drug-Control-2022Strategy.pdf>, accessed August 2, 2023.

<sup>11</sup> "Secretary Mayorkas Delivers Updates on DHS Campaign to Stop Fentanyl Through Interdiction and Supply Chain Disruption." Department of Homeland Security, July 13, 2023.

<https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/07/13/secretary-mayorkas-delivers-updates-dhs-campaign-stop-fentanyl>, accessed September 12, 2023.

## Purpose

This 2023 strategy enables CBP to develop a whole-of-government and international effort to anticipate, identify, mitigate, and disrupt illicit synthetic drug producers, suppliers, and traffickers. CBP serves as the nation's frontline of defense against contraband moving via clandestine means across our borders and throughout the interior of the United States. This comprehensive approach will bring the unique, formidable, and wide-ranging capabilities and authorities of CBP to bear on the illicit synthetic drug trade and build capacity and collaboration with our partners—domestic and international—to ensure the safety of Americans. The mission and vision statement for this strategy are below.

## Mission Statement

*To protect Americans from fentanyl and other illicit synthetic drugs through coordinated intelligence, enhanced targeting, and focused law enforcement actions.*

## Vision Statement

*CBP leads national and international efforts to defeat fentanyl and other illicit synthetic drug production, distribution, and trafficking.*

# STRATEGIC GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND MEASURES

## Goal 1: Promote collaboration and information-sharing to combat illicit synthetic drug networks.

To defeat TCOs and other drug syndicates, CBP will collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders to increase seizures of illicit synthetic drugs and to disrupt the supply chain. One agency cannot win this fight alone. The key to combating the TCOs who dominate the illicit synthetic drug market is to improve information-sharing and cooperation among law enforcement, the trade community, and other key stakeholders.



*At the Memphis forward operating lab, CBP forensic scientist Shelby Stotelmyer, left, examines, and extracts an unknown substance that was concealed inside a parcel selected for examination by CBP Officer Michael Hughes, shown here.*

*CBP photo by Jerry Glaser*

CBP will leverage and improve the interagency network that it gathers information from, and shares information with, to produce actionable intelligence. CBP will further expand its partnerships with public and private agencies to receive and analyze their data related to the shipment of precursor chemicals, mis-manifested shipments, suspicious commodities, source and transit countries for chemicals, pill presses, pill press parts, die molds, and other equipment used to manufacture fentanyl, its analogues, and other illicit synthetic drugs. Robust collaboration and information-sharing will enable CBP to recognize changing tactics, techniques, and procedures of illicit synthetic drug networks.

**Objective 1.1:** *Strengthen the information sharing between intra-agency, interagency, international, and key external stakeholders.*

**Measure:** *Critical information elements shared on a timely, and consistent basis.*

CBP will leverage federal, state, and local partnerships with U.S. Attorney Offices around the country who have more detailed information at the state and local level to support network illumination. CBP is piloting efforts with Portland Oregon; Oakland, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, California to share information about TCOs linked to illicit narcotics. If this pilot is successful, CBP will look to expand similar efforts to other operational corridors.

CBP will also work with the postal service and express consignment carriers, air carriers, and other logistic companies to share information about suspicious commodities, potential transit routes that bad actors are leveraging, and other data that can help thwart the supply chain of fentanyl and other illicit synthetic drugs and related manufacturing parts by shutting down illicit shippers and sellers and providing insights into modes of transportation.<sup>12</sup>

In safeguarding U.S. borders, CBP is the leading agency in encounters of new and novel synthetic drugs and precursors through its varied seizures. CBP is investing in a scientific National Opioid and Fentanyl Attribution Intelligence Learning (NO FAIL) Team to develop a whole-of-government joint fentanyl profiling program. This partnership links CBP's Laboratories and Scientific Services (LSS), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Office of Forensic Sciences, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Forensic Chemistry Center scientific assets in information sharing through a collaborative communication network. Each agency taps into its unique mission, contributing in-depth scientific and intelligence characterizations of fentanyl from supply chain products to manufacturing origination to transit, interdiction and testing. Linking real-time data from multiple sources results in a stronger high intelligence value product.

*U.S. Navy officers from Naval Station Mayport board a flight with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Air and Marine Operations on July 23 in Jacksonville, Florida. Onboard the P-3 Long Range Tracker, the two entities discussed future operations and strengthened their partnership.*

*CBP photo*



CBP will increase its intelligence-based indications and warnings function to ensure direct and immediate access to mission critical reporting for front line officers and agents at all classification levels, providing unprecedented access to information and intelligence sharing with intra-agency, interagency, and international partners, as needed, to enable tactical, operational, and strategic effects. CBP's Southern Border Intelligence Center will serve as the single focal point for identifying intelligence requirements across the southern border and ensuring information sharing across all CBP partners within the region.

<sup>12</sup> Homeland Security Investigations. "Strategy for Combatting Illicit Opioids," September 20, 2023, pg. 14.

**Objective 1.2:** Partner with federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial agencies to enhance targeting to increase seizures of illicit synthetic narcotics, leading to post seizure analysis and further network development.

**Measure:** Increase in targeted enforcement actions, seizures, and prosecutions.

CBP will increase participation with the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA),<sup>13</sup> non-profits, and national organizations representing law enforcement, mayors, city managers, governors, tribal nations, first responders, and other key stakeholders to better target synthetic drugs. CBP will then share that information via the National Network of Fusion Centers, the Homeland Security Information Network, and the HIDTA Domestic Highway Enforcement Network. CBP will leverage fellowships at the National Targeting Center (NTC) to focus combined resources and information on targeting and seizing fentanyl and other illicit synthetic narcotics and their precursors entering the country via cargo or cross-border smuggling in privately owned vehicles, in commercially owned vehicles, or via pedestrians. CBP will also enhance relationships with federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement agencies, and organizations by sharing information that will help these entities identify, target, and seize fentanyl, it's focus on sharing information, data, and intelligence, as appropriate, with state, local, tribal, and territorial partners – direct collaboration that may lead to organic increases in targeting and enforcement actions. CBP must also seek enhanced engagement with prosecutorial partners to create additional legal pathways to disrupt illicit supply chains.



U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers at the Nogales Commercial Facility seized nearly \$4.6 million in fentanyl and methamphetamine totaling close to 650 pounds on Saturday, January 26, 2019, from a Mexican national when he attempted to enter the United States through the Port of Nogales. The

<sup>13</sup> Created by Congress in 1988, the HIDTA Program coordinates and assists federal, state, local, and tribal law agencies to address regional drug threats with the purpose of reducing drug trafficking and drug production in the United States. The HIDTA Program oversees 33 regional HIDTAs in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia. Nationwide, the program comprises more than 900 investigative, interdiction, and intelligence-sharing initiatives. Regional HIDTAs also collaborate closely with public health partners on innovative strategies to reduce fatal and non-fatal overdoses and substance use. See “High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program.” The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/grant-programs/hidta>, accessed September 4, 2023.

To aid targeting efforts, CBP will partner with the FDA and the DEA, at the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) to establish a joint Intelligence National Threat Response – El Paso Illicit Drug (INTREPID) Laboratory in El Paso, Texas. This partnership will provide actionable intelligence, scientific support, and research to the intelligence community and other federal agencies to develop a whole-of-government approach. The approach will include a centralized fentanyl profiling program and sustainable partnerships collocated at the INTREPID Laboratory to deliver and share high-value intelligence and information with federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial partners. CBP, FDA, and



*U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers at the Otay Mesa commercial facility seized more than 3,100 pounds of methamphetamine, fentanyl powder, fentanyl pills, and heroin as part of the second largest methamphetamine bust along the southwest border in the history of the agency, based on information developed by DEA, working jointly with HSI.*

*CBP photo*

DEA will work together to provide in-depth chemical analysis, link seizures, and identify country of origin of the seizures through CBP's unique capability to geo-source through the analysis of pollen. This information will deliver a deeper understanding of drug trafficking and distribution, which can then be leveraged to support law enforcement operations and investigations. CBP will partner with law enforcement partners at all levels to provide geospatial analytic support, providing full motion video and imagery analysis to law enforcement operations. CBP will use best practices identified and successfully utilized to combat terrorism to develop and deploy targeting rules for high threat entities entering or departing the United States.

**Objective 1.3:** *Engage international and industry partners to disrupt the supply chain, to include de minimis<sup>14</sup> and e-commerce shipments.*

**Measure:** *Increased interdiction of illicit synthetic supply chain globally as a result of partnerships with the international community.*

Fentanyl and other synthetic drugs are a global problem. To successfully combat this problem, CBP will engage in bilateral engagements with source countries (where target chemicals, drugs, or materials are produced) and transit countries (which serve as a hub to move illicit synthetic narcotics). CBP's attachés and other personnel posted outside the United States will engage frequently with their partners to share information on source and transit countries to help thwart the illicit synthetic drug supply chain. This bilateral engagement will include, but is not limited to, India, China, Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala, Bolivia, Venezuela, Canada, Colombia, South Korea, and a number of European partners.

CBP will develop training and advisory resources to offer to foreign partners to build their capacity for targeting and disrupting the movement of synthetic drugs through the supply chain. CBP will work with foreign partners to assess and identify their needs for operations, equipment, technical assistance, and overall capacity to target, detect, and interdict illicit synthetic materials, which will allow for tailored support to each partner to address their specific needs.

CBP will actively participate in multi-lateral engagements and partner with the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, to focus on scheduling and resolutions consistent with the three international drug treaties which are in effect (signed in 1961, 1971, and 1988). CBP will work closely with the International Narcotics Control Board and the North American Drug Dialogue with Canada and Mexico. These bilateral and multilateral engagements will improve the targeting and sharing of data to intercept chemical precursors.

A significant volume of precursor chemicals used to produce illicit synthetic narcotics originates from China and India.<sup>15</sup> These precursors are multi-use in the chemical industry and often legal, making them difficult to intercept. CBP will increase the use of international tools such as the International Narcotics Control Board's Pre-Export Notification and the International Operations on New Psychoactive Substances Incident Communication System (IONICS). CBP is the world's leading contributor to providing information into the IONICS database. IONICS serves as a force multiplier because it is used by more than 50 countries. Sharing information with the international community will provide CBP with a broader understanding of drug patterns.

Additionally, CBP will leverage the World Customs Organization (WCO) to promote international standards, raise awareness, and encourage foreign partners to partner in the efforts toward countering synthetic drugs. The WCO provides a structure and mechanism through which to engage with the customs administrations of 185 member countries toward concrete outcomes related to synthetic drug policies, operations, and enforcement. Similar to the use of the IONICS database above, CBP will also

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<sup>14</sup> Section 321, of the Tariff Act of 1930, as amended, 19 USC §1321 ("Section 321") is the statute that authorizes an exemption from duties and certain taxes for low value importations where the applicable statutory and regulatory conditions are met. Such importations subject to a duty/tax exemption under Section 321 are colloquially referred to as "de minimis" shipments. *De minimis* provides admission of articles free of duty and of any tax imposed on or by reason of importation, but the aggregate fair retail value in the country of shipment of articles imported by one person on one day and exempted from the payment of duty shall not exceed \$800. The *de minimis* threshold was previously \$200 but increased with the passage of the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act.

<sup>15</sup> "The Flow of Precursor Chemicals for Synthetic Drug Production in Mexico." InSight Crime Analysis and Investigations of Organized Crime, pgs. 46, 51.

use the WCO's Customs Enforcement Network (CEN) seizure database system to focus on CBP intelligence sharing and monitor any reports of synthetic drug seizures made by international partners. In doing so, CBP will gain further information on routes and trends reported by international partners. CBP will seek partnerships with private industry trade groups and multilateral forums to increase the prioritization of fentanyl within the trade community – focusing engagements with industry partners to illuminate previously unidentified opportunities to leverage authorities and resources to disrupt fentanyl and chemical supply chains.



A group of CBP Officers walk up a ladder to board a cargo container ship. The CBP Officers are part of a large team that are dispersed throughout the ship to search and inspect it.

CBP photo by Josh Denmark.

To better tackle the challenge related to *de minimis* shipments, valued at \$800 or less, CBP will offer an air cargo examination course for its field personnel so they can more effectively target and examine illicit cargo entering the United States. The passage of the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015 created a situation where bad actors can take advantage of the increase in value of shipments that could pass duty-free through simplified procedures, when the value was raised from \$200 to \$800. As a result, illicit drug marketers routinely mislabel their shipments making it more challenging to discover low-value illicit products. By raising awareness regarding the threat *de minimis* shipments pose to our national security, CBP will have a workforce that has the knowledge and skills to identify more readily suspicious *de minimis* shipments. CBP will also leverage its domestic and international trade stakeholders, including the Commercial Customs Operations Advisory Committee (COAC) to actively assist CBP in securing the legitimate supply chains and identifying potential illicit activities.



*U.S. Customs and Border Protection Office of Air and Marine officers train for night operations at sea off the coast of Florida.*

*CBP photo by Glenn Fawcett*

## **Goal 2: Produce actionable intelligence for targeting illicit synthetic drug networks.**

The increasingly dynamic and complex nature of the international illicit drug trade is a shared responsibility that requires CBP to collaborate with stakeholders to gather information that results in actionable intelligence and products. These products can then be used to drive joint operations as well as inform policy makers, agency leadership, fusion centers, international and industry partners, and the intelligence community. The information will lead to intelligence and data-driven interdiction operations through the identification of tactics, techniques, procedures (TTPs) and the flow of drug trafficking, including the activity of TCOs and the reality of a globalized supply chain for illicit narcotics, precursor chemicals, and pill press materials.

Frontline personnel will continually receive intelligence training to support their role as collectors to capture selector data in systems of record so that the raw information can be further exploited for intelligence and investigative purposes. In turn, the frontline must leverage the CBP Intelligence Enterprise and actionable intelligence to inform targeting decisions.

This goal focuses on identifying the global illicit synthetic drug supply chain for chemical precursors, xylazine, fillers, and pill press materials. It also supports strengthening intelligence collection and enforcement efforts, using interagency and international coordination, against TCOs, with a focus on fentanyl and other narcotics trafficking. Agencies CBP will coordinate with include, but are not limited to: Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Department of Homeland Security Headquarters (DHS), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), Department of Defense (DoD), Department of State (State), Department of the Treasury (Treasury), and the United Nations (UN).

**Objective 2.1:** *Increase education of chemical distribution and shipping methods.*

**Measure:** *Identification and dissemination of global illicit synthetic drug supply chain and chemical precursor information including chemical manufacturers, shippers, and vendors.*

This objective focuses on enabling a risk-based enforcement to increase operational effectiveness and enhance processes to support investigative efforts. Due to the rapid growth of e-commerce as a method of importing, CBP is changing the way it does business and placing more emphasis on technology, intelligence, and staffing methodologies to better account for the e-commerce industry and allow for more effective targeting, enforcement, and deterrence. These changes will create a more agile, dynamic workforce that uses state-of-the-art techniques and technology to better identify and target high-risk shipments. CBP will also work with its federal and international partners to provide intelligence and information that can assist in shutting down internet and dark web sites that sell illicit synthetic drugs and manufacturing materials.

CBP's partnerships with the international trade community will aid in the identification of new trends and data regarding shipping routes. This information will enhance the ability to identify, target, and interdict key product formulation ingredients, precursor shipments, fentanyl, or other illicit synthetic drugs at Ports of Entry (POEs) via air, land, or sea. CBP will leverage the Office of Public Affairs and the Office of Congressional Affairs to increase the dissemination of information and statistics on the threat of fentanyl, the exploitation of illicit supply chains and current deficits in enforcement capabilities.

CBP's Office of Trade Relations serves as a point of contact for the international trade community and is responsible for industry engagement, information dissemination, and solicitation of input from both trade and partner governments. CBP will offer training to its partners such as broker, carrier, importer and exporter trade associations to teach them how to identify primary ingredients/chemicals used to make illicit synthetic narcotics. Other associations such as the National Association of Chemical Distributors could provide valuable information to CBP on the international and domestic shipping routes for precursor chemicals.

CBP continues to support operations that identify precursor chemicals sent in the *de minimis* environment, often concealed within large, master carton shipments. Master carton smuggling is when CBP receives a transactional manifest data for an exterior package, but within this package are multiple, individual packages with various commodities bearing preprinted domestic last mile carrier labels destined to multiple consignees. This presents unique challenges within the *de minimis* realm as CBP lacks visibility on the true parties to the transactions. This smuggling tactic impacts CBP's ability to segment risk against the real recipients of the shipments.

Information on the final destination of master carton shipments will be shared with investigative partners for further action. In addition, investigators will share data to help identify precursor consignees, brokers, shippers, and manufacturers as well as changing cargo trends and supply routes.

CBP's pollen analysis (palynology) program, which tests trace amounts of pollen and spores, provides scientific information for intelligence products. For example, by testing border seizures of bulk fentanyl bricks, LSS palynologists identified evidence that fentanyl manufacturing had shifted from solely in China to specific regions in Mexico.

CBP Forward Operating Laboratories and regional laboratories gather unique identification information on bricks, pills, synthetic drugs, and additional chemicals of potential interest from CBP seizures and distribute this information to CBP intelligence enterprise and external counterparts. One example is the Scientific Trends Open Network Exchange forum which includes public health officials and law enforcement, including HIDTA and Domestic Highway Enforcement groups, to facilitate TCO linkages and



CBP Officers seized a truckload of methamphetamine, fentanyl, and heroin at a commercial facility in Otay Mesa, California.

CBP photo

actionable intelligence. CBP will also work with industry and U.S. Patent officials to identify potential violators and violations which may afford additional opportunities for disruptions and enforcement actions.

**Objective 2.2:** *Target movement of manufactured goods supporting the production of fentanyl and other synthetic drugs.*

**Measure:** *Increase in the interdiction of chemicals, pill presses, lab equipment, and pill press parts diverted for synthetic drug production.*

Due to the rapid growth of e-commerce as a method of importing and *de minimis* cargo, CBP is placing more emphasis on small, low-value packages that may be used to send illicit drugs and manufacturing materials. This increased focus is the result of evidence-based data showing that most of CBP's precursor seizures are from unmanifested or mis-manifested *de minimis* shipments that include preprinted domestic labels. CBP will begin to address these types of issues and instances of narcotics smuggling with progressive enforcement action beyond seizure, to include penalties, liquidated damages, denial of landing rights, and Landed Quantity Verifications.

Seizure data and intelligence reporting has shown that an increasing volume of pill presses and die molds are being imported to the United States from other countries for illicit purposes. As a result, CBP will focus its targeting efforts to thwart these imports and identify potential milling operations within the United States. CBP is uniquely positioned to thwart the movement of pill presses, die molds, encapsulating machines, and spare parts used to transform illicit powder fentanyl into lethal pills by leveraging private sector data, data and intelligence collected through DHS, and partnerships with our investigative federal partners. To improve upon and develop innovative methods for these targeting efforts, CBP will use aggregated data with trained models and visualization tools to identify these products. These efforts are designed to aid CBP in its efforts to disrupt the supply and movement of fentanyl and other narcotics into the United States, and to dismantle the criminal networks that profit from this activity by providing data and analytics that can identify high-risk targets. CBP will also seek to invest in artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities to develop deep learning algorithms informed on detection of precursors and pill presses and parts to increase efficiency and effectiveness of enforcement efforts.

CBP's NTC, Office of Intelligence (OI), and the National Threat Analysis Division (NTAD) are able to use this information in their aggressive targeting and analysis program. These offices will also tailor their targeting rules and coordinate with CBP field components, other government agencies, and international partners to intercept suspect shipments while enhancing and directly supporting new and active criminal investigations. CBP plans to develop regulatory and reporting requirements for operators, to include *de minimis* carriers and cargo, and establish Narcotics Enforcement Agreements with express consignment carriers. CBP will also increase engagement with express consignment carriers, the United States Postal Inspection Service, and private courier parcel delivery services to exchange information that will aid in identifying the transit routes of precursors, pill presses, and pill press parts. CBP will maximize its capabilities to conduct in-depth post-seizure analysis of pill presses and associated parts to further determine supply routes and interdiction opportunities and will seek to embed intelligence professionals at express consignment facilities.

Violators use transit companies to ship illicit drugs through multiple countries before reaching its final destination. Enhancing partnerships with commercial shippers as well as the international trade community will strengthen the flow of information to aid in targeting and interdiction efforts.

CBP will continue to leverage developments in commercial artificial intelligence applications. These developments will improve the identification and screening of containers and express consignment packages for mislabeled and misidentified goods. This application will help provide robust information to detect anomalous shipping patterns.

CBP will also expand the Section 321 *De Minimis*-focused Data Pilot to assess the technical requirements to receive additional, advanced data from non-traditional trade partners, which would enhance the ability to assess risk and interdict illicit shipments in the small package environment, while facilitating cross-border e-commerce.

**Objective 2.3:** *Establish robust mechanisms to identify and track suspicious commodities, disseminate actionable intelligence, and report results.*

**Measure:** *Number of mechanisms established to identify and track suspicious commodities, disseminate actionable intelligence, and report results.*

CBP's analytical methodology centers on providing timely and actionable intelligence to our frontline officers and agents, decision makers, and partners to interdict suspicious commodities. To strengthen CBP's intelligence posture in responding to the complex border threat environment, CBP's Intelligence Enterprise was established in 2017 as a cohesive, threat-based, data-driven, and operationally focused effort to leverage the collective intelligence capabilities, predictive modeling, and expertise across CBP's operational components.

CBP's OI will identify priority collection requirements, conduct comprehensive analysis, and provide analytic products and intelligence briefings for partners across the state, local, tribal, and territorial environment, throughout CBP, DHS and the broader Intelligence Community to fully inform all partners of new trends, patterns, and emerging threats in the synthetic narcotics environment. CBP will develop a mechanism to standardize intelligence collection requirements to focus resources on developing a shared common understanding of the threat environment. Furthermore, CBP will partner with the Intelligence Community to automate intelligence reporting tear lines at the law enforcement sensitive level, ensuring rapid dissemination of actionable intelligence to CBP's frontline personnel and operational partners.

CBP will create a new interactive dashboard to enable near real-time identification of suspicious commodities to target. By collecting and analyzing global supply chain data, CBP and its partners will have a better understanding of illicit manufacturing and transportation of fentanyl and other synthetic drugs. With a more coherent understanding of these criminal networks and their production efforts, CBP can more effectively target and disrupt their operations.

CBP will establish a national, uniform method of analyzing seizure data of fentanyl, precursors, pill presses, pill press die sets, and other illicit *de minimis* cargo to identify violators. This seizure data will also be used to inform CBP field personnel and overseas industry partners about preprinted domestic labels to aid in identifying and interdicting these shipments prior to entry into the United States. CBP will also use its enforcement authority to deny entry, seize merchandise, and penalize parties who facilitate the shipment of illicit cargo as well as those that violate advance cargo information and manifesting requirements.

Commodities brokers may elect to file advance cargo information for shipments (which becomes part of the manifest). Bad faith actors may leverage this system to engage in master carton smuggling knowing there are limitations on CBP's penalty authority against brokers and parties who file this advance cargo information. Specifically, the law permits those receiving manifest information from another party (e.g., brokers) to "present information on the basis of what that party reasonably believes to be true [...] [w]here the presenting party is not reasonably able to verify the information."<sup>16</sup>

Currently, CBP refers suspicious shipments to HSI and other agencies, but has little visibility on the status of those shipments. To address this shortcoming, CBP will develop a robust referral system that houses cargo and passenger data but will also include the investigative status of those referrals and whether they resulted in any seizures, warrants, arrests, and/or prosecutions.



A CBP officer conducts roving patrol of preprimary operations at the busiest trade crossing on the northern border, Detroit, Michigan.

*CBP photo by Kris Grogan*



Yuma Sector Border Patrol Agents patrol the Colorado River near Yuma, AZ. U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

*CBP photo by Jerry Glaser*



A CBP K9 team looking for narcotics completes its inspection at a train yard north of Detroit, Michigan.

*CBP photo by Youssef Fawaz*

<sup>16</sup> See 19 CFR 122.48a(c)(5).

CBP will also leverage interagency resources already assigned to CBP's NTC to combat illicit fentanyl and chemical precursors by creating effective operational mechanism to share case information amongst members to convert that information into actionable operational outputs and improve coordination internally and with international partners. The interagency task force will further identify opportunities for international cooperation efforts, with a particular focus on Mexico. In addition, CBP will work closely with the intelligence community to enhance collections and reporting to produce actionable intelligence to better target TCOs involved in the illicit synthetic drug market and to track the transcontinental movement of fentanyl and precursors to include determining the mode and pathway of entry into the United States. CBP will also utilize its organic human intelligence capabilities to further identify illicit actors and illuminate previously unidentified vulnerabilities in the supply chain.

**Goal 3: Conduct coordinated and unified intelligence and data-driven operations to target the production, trafficking, and distribution of illicit synthetic materials.**

The U.S. government cannot wholly prevent criminal activity, including fentanyl smuggling. However, it can affect the ability of TCOs to operate by disrupting and degrading their networks. As these TCOs lose the ability to operate, the supply of fentanyl entering the United States should decrease and the market should be disrupted.

**Objective 3.1:** *Improve detection of synthetic drugs, their precursor chemicals, product signatures, and other production material.*

**Measure:** *Availability and readiness of enhanced detection and testing capabilities at the point of interdiction.*

CBP, with the support of Congress, has made significant investments and improvements in its drug detection and interdiction technology. CBP officers and agents use a variety of technologies as well as narcotic detection canines to detect illicit drugs, including illicit opioids, at and between POEs, International Mail Facilities (IMF), and Express Consignment Carriers (ECC) facilities.

Since 2017, CBP's Office of Field Operations (OFO) National Canine Program, in coordination with LSS, effectively added fentanyl as a trained odor to OFO's deployed narcotic detection canine teams. All concealed human and narcotic detection canine teams across OFO's operational environments have completed fentanyl training and are working at POEs and IMFs to examine millions of foreign mail shipments coming into the United States from all parts of the world. These canines have been a huge asset in helping to detect narcotics.



*Scientific Services (LSS) is the forensic and scientific arm of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), providing forensic and scientific testing in the area of Trade Enforcement, Weapons of Mass Destruction, Intellectual Property Rights, and Narcotics Enforcement. Laboratories and Scientific Services coordinates technical and scientific support to all CBP Trade and Border Protection activities. Seen here is LSS at the Springfield, Virginia location.*

*CBP photo by Donna Burton*

To improve its drug detection capabilities, CBP has invested in NII technology, which is used to identify fentanyl and other synthetic drugs without the need to open each package. CBP will deploy large-scale imaging systems to detect anomalous material (that may indicate the presence of illegal narcotics and illicit drugs) hidden within passenger belongings, cargo containers, commercial trucks, rail cars, privately owned vehicles, and ECC and international mail parcels. CBP will also seek opportunities to enhance the deployment and utilization of small scale NII to eliminate vulnerabilities and maximize screening capabilities at all locations to both supplement and fulfill gaps where large scale equipment isn't optimal.



*Students and their canine counterparts go through training at the CBP Canine Training Facility El Paso, Texas. The students train for a variety of environments to be prepared for their eventual duty assignments.*

*CBP photo by James Tourtellotte*

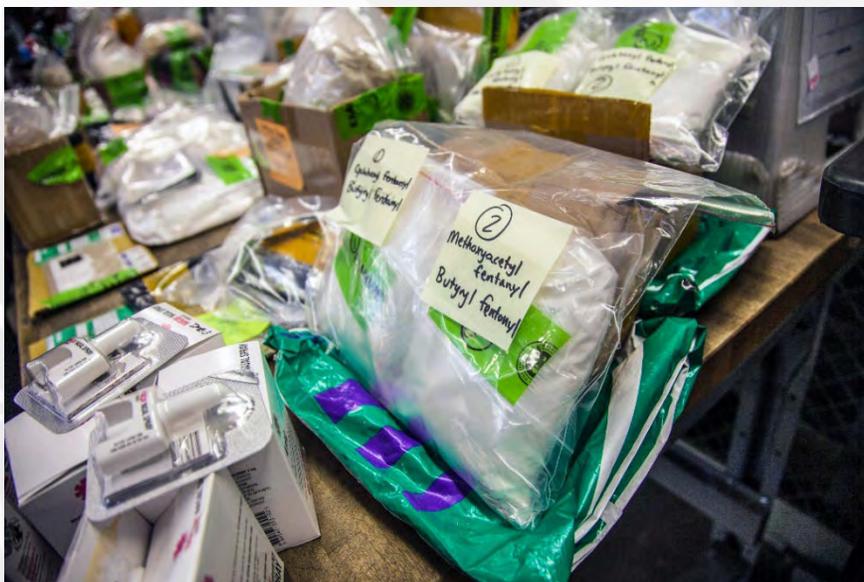
Shifting methods of smuggling and the increasing sophistication in the concealment of synthetic drugs coming across the border means that the identification of suspect substances has become more difficult, increasing the reliance on intelligence, data, and technology. For narcotics seized through the international mail and at ECC facilities, CBP officers use various field-testing devices such as Raman and infrared technologies, and an immunoassay narcotic test kit to screen suspected controlled substances and obtain chemical information safely and rapidly. CBP officers can transmit sample chemical data to the LSS Teleforensic Center's Narcotics Reachback for interpretation and verification of instrument identification.

CBP increased its ability to swiftly identify suspected drugs by positioning agency laboratory scientists on-site at IMFs and POEs in Forward Operating Laboratories (FOL). Establishing FOLs, collocated with CBP's enforcement operations, unifies efforts and provides forensic drug, fingerprint, and digital capabilities. These scientists provide real-time key chemical determinations for quicker law enforcement actions, prosecutions, and timely intelligence information.

The FOLs are also a critical tool for partner agencies such as HSI to make law enforcement-controlled deliveries that could potentially lead to arrests and shutdown dealers and their networks. CBP will continue to expand its FOLs which have proven to be an effective and valuable part of CBP's ability to identify and seize controlled substances.

*A table full of fentanyl and other designer drugs seized by CBP sit on display at the International Mail Facility in Chicago, Illinois, November 28, 2017, as Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner is given a tour of CBP operations. U.S. Customs and Border Protection.*

*CBP photo by Kris Grogan*



Additionally, CBP will invest and expand its operations at the Southwest Regional Science Center (SWRSC) in Houston, Texas, and the Chicago Laboratory. The SWRSC is the LSS regional laboratory overseeing CBP's canine training aids and leads operational research of illicit drug odor signatures for the development of pseudo narcotics training aids. Renovations to the Chicago Laboratory are vital to the expansion of the pollen and country of origin program for palynologists, who determine the geographical origins and/or suspected travel routes of fentanyl and other seized substances.

**Objective 3.2:** *Exploit vulnerabilities in the illicit synthetic drug supply chain.*

**Measure:** *Number of TCO tactics and logistics diminished by targeted enforcement.*

CBP uses a multifaceted approach that combines advanced targeting and detection capabilities such as data integration, NII technology, canines, laboratory testing and scientific analysis, domestic and foreign partnerships, and intelligence and information sharing to target the flow of illicit narcotics entering the country. With the prolific manufacturing of fentanyl, CBP will increase targeting efforts on inbound and outbound signature pill ingredients, precursor chemicals, and pill presses and parts being transported from the United States to other countries such as Mexico. CBP's Office of Trade provides cutting-edge technology platforms to identify suspicious shippers, recipients, and locations that may be leveraging legal commodities for nefarious purposes.

CBP will explore the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning capabilities to identify threats based on prior seizure data and mining open-source information. CBP will continue to target signature pill ingredients and precursor chemicals shipped through the United States to Mexico and Canada. Through international government coordination, CBP will refer potentially high risk or suspicious precursor shipments to the Government of Mexico for independent enforcement action.

CBP will work with DEA, HSI, and state authorities to collect, analyze, disseminate, and leverage intelligence to increase controlled deliveries. In addition, CBP will work the U.S. Attorney's Office to reconsider prosecution thresholds since trace amounts of seized fentanyl can be deadly.

CBP will also continue to work closely with DEA and HSI to identify and target individuals importing and diverting pill press machines and associated parts used to produce illicit fentanyl, its analogues, and other synthetic narcotics. This whole-of-government approach aims to interdict and prosecute smugglers through interagency collaboration and a surge in resources, to include an increase in CBP's targeted inspections conducted by frontline personnel, canine units, and advanced technology.

**Objective 3.3:** Leverage law enforcement partnerships to disrupt TCO operations.

**Measure:** Increase in coordinated enforcement operations resulting in seizure of resources connected to illicit fentanyl trade such as chemical precursors, pill presses, laboratory equipment, bulk cash, and weapons.

Several Federal Agencies join forces to conduct enhanced enforcement operations for persons and vehicles traveling to Juarez, Mexico from El Paso, Texas at the Bridge of the Americas Inspection Station, Port of El Paso, Texas.

CBP photo



U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers seized a handgun and a little more than one pound of marijuana that were concealed inside a Trinidad-bound stereo receiver.

CBP Photo by Steve Sapp

Law enforcement agencies at all levels – federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial – work to combat the synthesis, production, and trafficking of illicit synthetic narcotics. However, traffickers continue to refine their methods and adopt new techniques of distributing drugs to the American people. CBP will continue to collaborate and strengthen relationships with national law enforcement organizations, the HIDTA Program, non-profits, and national organizations representing local, state, tribal, and territorial stakeholders. CBP will partner with other DHS components, strengthening their efforts on investigations of precursor chemical suppliers, illuminating the supply chain, and stopping the flow of precursors. The Southern Border Intelligence Center (SBIC) is CBP's intelligence focal point along the southern border. It integrates the CBP intelligence enterprise and interagency partners, allowing a focus on priority intelligence requirements. The SBIC will prioritize collection of shared intelligence resources, coordinating with CBP's international teams and working with foreign partners to disrupt the TCO networks within the southern border operational areas.

In addition to confronting TCO illicit drug manufacturing and trafficking activities directly, CBP must also pursue the financial enablers of this illicit activity to deny TCOs their ill-gotten proceeds, thus disrupting their ability to transfer working capital to fund illicit activities including procuring precursor ingredients, trafficking, bribery, and corruption.<sup>17, 18</sup> CBP will partner with HSI's National Bulk Cash Smuggling Center to strengthen the ability to seize TCOs' bulk cash and unlisted precursor chemicals as well as disrupt the illicit supply chains necessary to traffic synthetic opioids.

CBP will expand its partnerships in the financial environment, increasing collaboration with Homeland Security Investigations, the Department of Treasury, the Department of Commerce, and the Office of Foreign Assets Control to identify and disrupt illicit financial activity conducted by TCOs. CBP will also invest efforts to increase its financial intelligence capabilities, improving analytic capabilities to identify how criminal organizations move illicit proceeds through trade-based money laundering, cryptocurrency and bulk cash currency movements.

**Goal 4: Promote safe handling, protocols, and educational materials to protect the CBP workforce, families, and communities.**

CBP's workforce is its most valuable asset and protecting it is a priority. With the onslaught of fentanyl, its analogues, and other synthetic drugs flooding the border, it is more imperative than ever that CBP's workforce has the information needed to protect themselves, their families, and the community from potentially hazardous substances. As with all chemicals of concern and unknown substances, it is essential to mitigate the potential risk of exposure by understanding proper safe handling techniques, proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and awareness of available medical countermeasures if exposed.

CBP's personnel regularly handle, seize, test, transport, store, and destroy illicit fentanyl, its analogues, methamphetamine, and other synthetic drugs. Regardless of whether CBP personnel are on the frontlines or not, there is still a possibility that they may encounter deadly synthetic drugs. As a result, CBP will embark on an educational campaign that will benefit the CBP workforce, their families, and communities around the country.

**Objective 4.1:** *Implement a messaging campaign focused on protecting the workforce, their families, and the public from exposure to fentanyl and other synthetic narcotics.*

**Measure:** *Number of fentanyl/synthetic drug awareness campaign(s) tailored to the CBP workforce and to the public.*

With the rise of fentanyl seizures and other synthetic drugs at and between our POEs, it is imperative that CBP's workforce understands how to protect themselves from potential exposure. CBP will launch a messaging campaign aimed at promoting safe handling procedures of unknown substances. All personnel will be provided with information on how to stay safe if exposed to dangerous chemicals. The most recent version of CBP's Job Hazard Analysis and PPE Assessment regarding Exposure to Narcotics and Synthetic Opioids will continually be messaged and reinforced with CBP's workforce.

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<sup>17</sup> "2020 National Drug Threat Assessment." U.S. Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration, March 2021.

<sup>18</sup> "National Drug Control Strategy." The White House, Executive Office of the President, Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2022, pg. 12. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/National-Drug-Control-2022Strategy.pdf>, accessed August 2, 2023.

CBP will also leverage a new interactive dashboard<sup>19</sup> that will better inform the public, our partners, and key stakeholders about the dangers of fentanyl.<sup>20</sup> All personnel, regardless of their official duties, may encounter an unknown substance while at work or at home. As a result, all personnel need to understand how to properly handle unknown substances to mitigate unintended consequences. CBP will launch a new messaging campaign promoting awareness, safety, and education designed to dispel myths and provide facts about fentanyl, xylazine, and naloxone to CBP's workforce, their families, and the public.

**Objective 4.2:** *Train CBP's workforce in fentanyl safe-handling and naloxone use and administration.*

**Measure:** *Number of CBP law enforcement personnel trained to recognize signs of opioid exposure, safe-handling, and decontamination, first aid to include basic CPR and nasal naloxone.*



Fentanyl Bag Explodes in El Paso, CBP Officer Responds and administers lifesaving aid.

CBP photo

While the widespread use of fentanyl and other opioids has skyrocketed, so have the number of overdose deaths. However, a single dose<sup>21</sup> of naloxone can reverse the effects of fentanyl and save a life. CBP will develop a policy on the administration of nasal naloxone programs which will provide guidance on developing, implementing, and maintaining a nasal naloxone program for the CBP workforce. CBP sworn personnel will receive training on naloxone: what it is and how to safely administer it to others. This policy will comply with 6 USC § 216 Protection against potential synthetic opioid exposure<sup>22</sup> as well as other relevant authorities and policies.

<sup>19</sup> "CBP Drugs Dosage Value and Weight." U.S. Customs and Border Protection, August 31, 2023. <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/cbp-drugs-dosage-value-and-weight>

<sup>20</sup> "Statement from CBP Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Commissioner Troy A. Miller on New Data Tool to Aid in Fentanyl Fight." U.S. Customs and Border Protection, August 31, 2023. <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/speeches-and-statements/statement-cbp-senior-official-performing-duties-commissioner-0>, accessed August 31, 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Note: In some instances, it may take more than one dose to reverse the effects of opioids.

<sup>22</sup> "Synthetic Opioid Exposure Prevention and Training Act," U.S. Code 6 (2021), §216.

CBP will also ensure that field personnel, including seized property personnel, laboratory analysts, customs officers, Border Patrol agents, and Air and Marine interdiction agents and pilots have access to readily available naloxone.

The CBP Commissioner will designate the CBP Chief Medical Officer to ensure that CBP follows the 2020 Synthetic Opioid Exposure Prevention and Training Act, which specifies that effective protocols and procedures for safe handling of synthetic opioids such as fentanyl in the event of possible exposure.<sup>23</sup> It covers procedures for CBP officers, agents, other personnel, and canines. This Act also requires mandatory and recurring training on handling synthetic opioids and how to access and administer opioid receptor antagonists. The Chief Medical Officer will be responsible for centralizing CBP's approach for educating its personnel on the risks of opioids such as fentanyl, how to handle opioids, and how to respond after an exposure.

*U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers at the Nogales Commercial Facility seized nearly \$4.6 million in fentanyl and methamphetamine totaling close to 650 pounds on Saturday, January 26, 2019 from a Mexican national when he attempted to enter the United States through the Port of Nogales.*

*CBP photo by Jerry Glaser*



Because all CBP personnel have the potential to come in contact with unknown substances, CBP personnel are required to watch the award-winning CBP training video entitled "Fentanyl: The Real Deal." This video is also publicly available on YouTube.<sup>24</sup> CBP will continue to produce new videos to raise awareness about proper safe-handling. CBP's at-risk workforce will also be trained in the proper use of PPE and be provided the necessary PPE such as gloves, masks, protective eyewear, and disposable coveralls to protect themselves from potentially hazardous chemicals and drugs.

CBP will expand training and deployment of fentanyl immunoassay test strips to test the exterior of seizure packages. The immunoassay test strips can detect nanogram quantities of fentanyl and will further add a layer of safety to CBP's frontline workforce. Narcotic interdiction occurs in a CBP's varied work environments including POEs, mail and expressed consignment facilities, air cargo, and sea cargo warehouses to non-established settings, like remote field areas. Exposure to fentanyl poses challenges, unlike previous illicit narcotics, to normal health and safety considerations for CBP's workforce. CBP's Occupational Safety and Health will coordinate with LSS and the CBP Office of the Chief Medical Officer to identify applicable effective safety engineering recommendations for various operational situations, such as air monitoring, collection systems, and fentanyl safety hoods and snorkels.

<sup>23</sup> "Synthetic Opioid Exposure Prevention and Training Act." S.3345 116th Congress, United States Government, June 1, 2020, pgs. 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> "Fentanyl: The Real Deal." U.S. Customs and Border Protection, August 30, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Yc9ISaSKls>.

The CBP Commissioner will also issue a policy that specifies effective protocols and procedures for the safe handling of unknown substances and offer mandatory and recurrent training on the potential risk of opioid exposure, safe handling procedures for synthetic opioids (including the use of PPE), and how to access and administer naloxone. Together these efforts will help protect CBP personnel from potential harm of unknown substances.

## Conclusion

CBP's combination of interdiction and intelligence capabilities, complemented by its border search authorities, scientific services, NII equipment, and canine detection teams, places it at the forefront of the U.S. government's efforts to combat the fentanyl crisis. CBP will continue to collaborate with domestic and international partners to thwart the flow of illicit fentanyl by enhancing information-sharing efforts, producing actionable intelligence, targeting the synthetic supply chain, and protecting CBP's personnel (including canines) from exposure to fentanyl. Together we can make a difference in combating this scourge that is ravaging communities across the globe.



# U.S. Customs and Border Protection

## Appendix: Acronym List

Acronym	Definition
CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DoD	Department of Defense
ECC	Express Consignment Carriers
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FOL	Forward Operating Laboratory
FY	Fiscal Year
HIDTA	High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas
HSI	Homeland Security Investigations
IMF	International Mail Facilities
INTREPID	Intelligence National Threat Response – El Paso Illicit Drug
IONICS	Incident Communication System
LSS	CBP Laboratories and Scientific Services
NII	Non-Intrusive Inspection
NSC	National Security Council
NTAD	National Threat Analysis Division
NTC	National Targeting Center
ODNI	Office of the Director of National Intelligence
OFO	Office of Field Operations
OI	Office of Intelligence
ONDCP	Office of National Drug Control Policy

Acronym	Definition
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
POE	Port of Entry
SBIC	Southern Border Intelligence Center
SIP	Strategic Implementation Plan
SWRSC	Southwest Regional Science Center
TCO	Transnational Criminal Organization
UN	United Nations
USBP	U.S. Border Patrol
WCO	World Customs Organization