

August 21, 2019

21st Century Drug Trafficking Advisories on Fentanyl and Other Synthetics

Introduction

This series of private sector advisories on illicit fentanyl, fentanyl analogues, and other synthetic opioids focuses on U.S. whole-of-government efforts to combat fentanyl trafficking, highlights the risks to U.S. and international businesses and supply chains, and demonstrates the Administration's commitment to pursue those involved, directly and indirectly, in fentanyl trafficking resulting in the death of Americans.

Domestic and foreign businesses not only can take individual measures to protect themselves from inadvertent involvement in facilitating fentanyl production. They also can collaborate to help protect their platforms from being exploited by those involved in facilitating fentanyl production and trafficking activity, and avoid unnecessary reputational risk and potential liability both for themselves and their employees.

In 2017, there were more than 47,500 drug overdose deaths involving opioids in the United States, and more than 28,400 of these deaths involved a synthetic opioid such as illicit fentanyl or one of its analogues, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

What You Need to Know

Almost all of the illicit fentanyl causing American deaths is produced outside of the United States, the vast majority originates in China, and is trafficked across the Nation's borders and, increasingly, through the international mail and express consignment carriers.

Private sector businesses' platforms are vulnerable to being exploited by Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) in their production, trafficking, and distribution of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. They can and should be a critical partner in this fight.

Building a shared understanding between the public and private sector of the evolving nature of the 21st century drug threat will refine the Federal government's response to this crisis as delineated in President's Trump's [2019 National Drug Control Strategy](#) and [Initiative to Stop Opioid Abuse and Reduce Drug Supply and Demand](#) in order to drastically reduce the number of Americans losing their lives to drug abuse.

[Tab A: Manufacturing](#)

This advisory describes the unique characteristics of manufacturing illicit synthetic opioids, to assist stakeholders in combatting the scourge of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. It also highlights typologies and red flags associated with international or domestic clandestine laboratory synthesis (including lab equipment and fentanyl precursor chemicals); international or domestic diversion; and pill presses/tableting machines, encapsulating machines, and binding agents.

[Tab B: Marketing](#)

This advisory raises awareness about the marketing and sale of illicit fentanyl via vulnerable and unsuspecting private sector digital platforms, including social media, e-commerce sites, and online forums. It helps the private sector identify and combat fentanyl marketing by highlighting typologies and red flags associated with U.S.-based Clearnet websites and platforms, Darknet marketplaces, foreign-based Clearnet websites, and sales of pill presses and pill press parts.

Tab C: Movement

This advisory increases awareness about the entities at each stage of the illicit fentanyl and synthetic opioids supply chain, including information that can help identify and prevent the movement of these drugs into the United States and during domestic distribution. It highlights typologies and red flags associated with international trafficking methods from source countries to the United States and bordering countries; transportation/trafficking methods from Latin America to the United States; domestic fentanyl trafficking through U.S. mail and private shipping companies; and the masking of illicit activities.

Tab D: Money

This advisory alerts financial institutions to help them detect and report illicit financial schemes and mechanisms related to the trafficking of fentanyl, fentanyl analogues, and other synthetic opioids. It also highlights typologies and red flags associated with the sale of these drugs by Chinese or Mexican suppliers; methods used by Mexican DTOs and other Transnational Criminal Organizations to launder the proceeds of fentanyl trafficking; and financial methodologies associated with the sale and procurement of fentanyl over the internet by purchasers located in the United States.

These advisories are the result of a collaborative effort between the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the National Security Council, the Department of Treasury, the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, the Department of Justice, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement/Homeland Security Investigations, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Department of State, Health and Human Services, and the Food and Drug Administration.