

The Fight Against Fentanyl

A Billion Dollar Budget Plan to Protect American Families

A Note from the Chair:

“There is a plague afoot in our nation, a plague of drug addiction and death the likes of which this country has never witnessed before.”

U.S. Senator Chris Murphy (3/29/23)
Chair of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee

THE PROBLEM:

In less than a decade, the number of deaths attributed to synthetic opioids (of which fentanyl accounts for 90%) has increased by nearly 200% — from roughly 65 people a day to 192 people a day. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were more than 56,000 deaths involving synthetic opioids in 2020. In 2021, that number increased by 25% to over 70,000 American lives lost.¹ The ease and low cost of production of illicitly manufactured fentanyl makes it an attractive commodity to transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) trafficking in humans, narcotics, and weapons. Its potency combined with availability has made it one of the deadliest drugs in existence. Fentanyl is up to 50x stronger than heroin and 100x stronger than morphine. Just two milligrams, roughly the size of few grains of salt, can lead to a fatal overdose.² Other drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine are frequently adulterated with fentanyl, made into pills and sold in communities in every state in our country.

¹ Wide-ranging online data for epidemiologic research (WONDER). Atlanta, GA:: CDC, National Center for Health Statistics; 2021. Available at <http://wonder.cdc.gov>.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, https://www.cdc.gov/stopoverdose/fentanyl/pdf/Fentanyl_Fact_Sheet_508c.pdf.

STATE OF PLAY:

Two agencies within the Department of Homeland Security play critical roles in combatting fentanyl and related TCO trafficking — U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). CBP is responsible for securing our borders and facilitating legitimate trade and travel at ports of entry. When CBP identifies or interdicts illicit goods at the ports, HSI steps in to disrupt TCOs and investigate the origins of the seizure in order to ensure prosecutions occur and smuggling schemes can be identified.

As Chairman of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, Senator Murphy is laser-focused on writing a budget that scales up DHS capabilities to stop the importation of fentanyl into the United States. For the first time ever, he secured dedicated funding in the FY23 omnibus spending bill to expand CBP's outbound operations that deny TCOs their "profits" and work toward disrupting their business operations (which rely on weapons trafficked across the southern border from the U.S. to Mexico). The connection between firearms and fentanyl is clear and a key part of the business operations of TCOs. The FY23 budget also included funding to hire more CBP personnel, strengthen non-intrusive inspection (NII) systems, and expand HSI investigations. While the number of deaths is rising, the number of seizures is reaching record highs thanks to these investments. In FY22, CBP seized 14,700 pounds of fentanyl compared to 13,900 pounds seized in just the first half of this fiscal year. CBP is on track to nearly double the number of seizures by the end of FY23. More than 90% of fentanyl seizures made so far this fiscal year have come at ports of entry and international mail facilities in the U.S.

THE PLAN:

This comprehensive, five-pronged plan builds on recent progress and accelerates efforts within DHS to take a significant leap forward in the fight against fentanyl and the TCOs trafficking in narcotics, humans, and firearms. The table below identifies nearly a billion dollars in new investments for the Department of Homeland Security to increase existing capabilities, fully deploy previously funded assets, and expand current efforts to improve the accuracy and efficiency of scanning. Of this amount, \$605.4 million would:

- **Protect American Families** through improved detection and seizure of fentanyl at ports of entry and international mail facilities to prevent entry into the U.S.
 - **Goal: Increase the percentage of incoming passenger vehicles scanned from 40% to 65%**
 - \$122M for 500 additional CBP Officers at ports of entry, additional intelligence analysts, and new canine units
 - \$208M for additional non-intrusive inspection equipment
 - \$32.4M for forward operating labs at ports of entry to accelerate the identification of narcotics seized and the collection of forensics and for a joint Fentanyl Signature Lab with DEA and the Food and Drug Administration.
- **Dismantle Smuggling Networks Operated by TCOs by Increasing the Investigative Footprint of Homeland Security Investigations (HSIs)**
 - Goal: To support and expand cost effective approaches with proven track records of success.
 - \$24M to support expansions of key HSI Task Forces, such as the Fentanyl Abatement and Response Team (FAST) in San Diego, to target fentanyl collaboratively with state, federal, and local partners.
 - Ensure that HSI has the appropriate statutory authority to prioritize narcotics-related investigations at the border.
 - \$54M to support over 200 new HSI Agents and 100 support staff who are critical to the investigative mission at key locations including California and Arizona and where Non-Intrusive

Inspection (NII) capabilities will be deployed, to ensure a cadre of well-trained agents are prepared to respond to geographic areas where most of the fentanyl is interdicted.

- **Prevent Profits from Going to TCOs** through expansion of outbound capabilities to seize currency, weapons, and ammunition heading to Mexico.
 - **Goal: Build from FY23 funding to triple the number of locations with dedicated outbound operations from three to nine ports of entry to increase seizures of currency, weapons, ammunition, and other contraband being trafficked across the southern border to Mexico in connection with the fentanyl trade.**
 - \$355M for NII at targeted ports of entry
 - \$20M for 100 additional CBP officers dedicated to outbound operations
- **Fight Fentanyl Abroad**
 - Goal: To dismantle and disrupt fentanyl smuggling routes and to seize fentanyl by expanding our investigative footprint abroad, stopping fentanyl before it ever reaches U.S. shores.
 - \$26M to add approximately 10 additional Transnational Criminal Investigative Units (TCIUs), enhancing both the United States' and the host countries' ability to investigate and prosecute individuals involved in transnational criminal conduct.
 - \$10M for HSI to expand to nine additional locations abroad, including targeting geographical areas where precursors originate.
- **Safeguard Front-Line Agents, Officers, and Investigators**
 - **Goal: Ensure that tens of thousands of Departmental employees and the persons in their care are safe and healthy.**
 - Increase funding for critical personal protective equipment, decontamination, and life-saving medications that reverse the impact of an accidental exposure to fentanyl.
 - Increase funding for training to respond to accidental exposures in the workplace or the field.

The remaining \$345 million supports efforts to fully deploy and optimize existing NII systems through necessary civil work activities and development of Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning capabilities to improve the efficiency of NII and overall ability to identify and notify CBP officers of anomalies in NII images. Additionally, funding will expand capabilities at international mail facilities and express consignment facilities.

Execution of this plan will strengthen our nation's security and well-being, stem the flow of fentanyl into the U.S. and provide much-needed resources for the Department of Homeland Security to protect American families from the devastation fentanyl causes. The additional front-line officers and NII equipment alone has the potential to stop the entry of an additional 8,400 pounds of fentanyl into the U.S., approximately 57% of the total seized in FY22, along with thousands of additional pounds of other narcotics. While this plan focuses on DHS, this is a fight that extends beyond the Department. Other Federal departments and agencies have critical roles in regards to law enforcement, investigations, prosecutions, treatment and prevention that are outside the jurisdiction of DHS. Continued and strengthened partnerships, information sharing, and joint operations are essential to marshal the full resources of the Federal government, state and local partners, and foreign governments.

“Fentanyl is the single deadliest drug threat our nation has ever encountered. Fentanyl is everywhere. From large metropolitan areas to rural America, no community is safe from this poison. We must take every opportunity to spread the word to prevent fentanyl-related overdose death and poisonings from claiming scores of American lives every day.”

Administrator Anne Milgram
Drug Enforcement Administration

FY24 FENTANYL INITIATIVE

Outcome	Goal	Investment	Amount
Detection and Seizure to Prevent Entry into the United States	Increase the percentage of passenger vehicles scanned from 40% to 65%	29 Additional Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII) Systems	\$208,000,000
		500 additional CBP officers, mission support staff, and canine units	\$122,000,000
	Accelerate identification of narcotics seized with additional forward operating labs	Expand existing capabilities at 16 labs, create new labs at 8 ports of entry	\$24,300,000
		Build out Joint Fentanyl Signature Lab with DEA and FDA in El Paso	\$8,100,000
Dismantle Smuggling Networks Operated by TCOs	To support and expand smaller efforts that have proven to be effective, but need additional funding	Increase funding for Task Force Operations and Task Force Officers, which will help HSI work collaboratively with local, state, and federal partners	\$24,000,000
	As NII expands for CBP, the related investigations will expand and HSI will need corresponding Special Agent and Support Staff	Sufficient funding to support over 200 new agents and 100 new support staff for investigations at or near the border.	\$54,000,000
	Ensure Homeland Security Staff Investigations have the appropriate statutory authority to prioritize narcotics investigations at the border	Authorizing in nature	\$0
Build Outbound Capabilities to Seize Currency and Weapons Heading to Mexico	Build from FY23 funding to triple outbound capabilities to 6 ports of entry to increase seizures of items resulting from the sale of narcotics before leaving the U.S.	Adding 3 NII Systems	\$70,000,000
		Add 200 CBP officers	\$40,000,000
Fight Fentanyl Abroad	To disrupt, and seize fentanyl, and dismantle the TCOs trafficking it before it reaches the U.S.	Add approximately 10 additional Transnational Crime Investigative Units (TCIUs), enhancing both the United States' and the host countries' ability to investigate and prosecute individuals involved in transnational criminal conduct	\$26,000,000
		Increase funding to support expansion of HSI personnel to 9 additional locations abroad, including targeting geographical areas where precursors originate	\$10,000,000
Safeguard Front-line Officers, Agents, and Investigators	Ensure that Departmental employees and the persons in their care are safe and healthy	Increase funding for critical personal protective equipment, decontamination, and life-saving medications that reverse effects of an accidental exposure	\$19,000,000
Fully Deploy Previously Funded NII and Expand Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning Capabilities	Build from prior-year funding to both fully deploy existing NII and introduce new capabilities that improve detection of anomalies	Increase funding to deploy enhanced inspection capabilities at ports of entry and international mail and express consignment facilities	\$305,000,000
Delivering investigative analytical capabilities for special agents and criminal analysts.	The Repository for Analytics in a Virtualized Environment (RAVEN) is the DHS asset designated to consolidate this information and illuminate criminal networks	These additional funds are needed to ensure that RAVEN can continue to support critical investigations and further refine its core features to increase operational efficiency and expand access to staff abroad	\$40,000,000
Total (DHS-Wide)			\$950,400,000