

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF

THE COALITION

THE NATIONAL NARCOTIC OFFICERS ASSOCIATIONS COALITION

WE MUST LIVE
IN JUSTICE SO NOTHING
IS WITHOUT

FALL 2023 VOL. 25, NO. 2

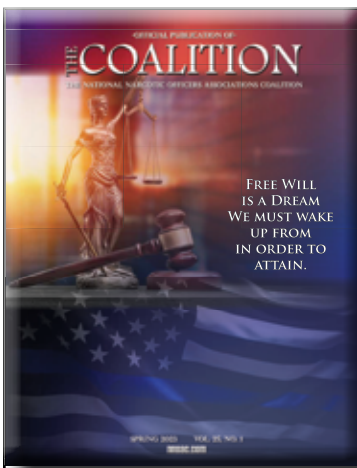
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Editor-in-Chief William Butka
wbutka@nnoac.com

Article editor
Patricia Kohl



The Coalition is published twice per year. Submit articles, photos, region reports, kudos, busts and other items of interest to: wbutka@nnoac.com

ARCHIVES

of past issues are available online
www.nnoac.com

Cover Considerations:

"Blessed are they who maintain justice, who constantly do what is right." - Psalm 106:3

*"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."
- Martin Luther King*

*"If it were not for injustice, man would not know justice."
- Heraclitus*

*"Imagination disposes of everything; it creates beauty, justice and happiness, which is everything in this world."
- Blaise Pascal*

The Coalition Publication Designer

jessica.manley@gmail.com

210-360-0694

special rates for non-profits

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2023 NNOAC EXECUTIVE BOARD



Ron Brooks
Senior Policy Advisor
California Narcotics Officers' Association (Retired)
 rbrooks@nnoac.com



Eric Brown
President
 Ohio HIDTA
 (740) 808-4189
 ebrown@nnoac.com



Tony Kestner
Vice President
 tkestner@nnoac.com



Dennis Lowe
Secretary
 Ohio Task Force Commanders Association
 740-901-1729
 dlowe@nnoac.com



Kevin Black
Treasurer
 NC Narcotics Enforcement Officers Association
 336-470-1187
 kblack@nnoac.com



Leland Sykes
Director at Large
 225-268-4360
 lwsykes@nnoac.com

*Engage
 in the
 dialog.*

*United
 We
 Stand!*



FULL YEAR OF EVENTS, PROGRESS & PLANNING

It has been a very full first year since being elected as your president of NNOAC. I am very proud to say that we have been involved in numerous discussions on the current position of drug enforcement in the United States. We have written countless letters on behalf of NNOAC and our partner associations to Congressional leadership and their committees on proposed legislation. It is probably an understatement to say that, at times, it is overwhelming and, to some extent, baffling. Many times we have thanked Brooks, Bawden & Moore for their representation of our Coalition, but now I have a greater appreciation of what they do day in and day out. If not for their strategy and approach, we would not have near the standing on Capitol Hill that we currently hold. We continue to monitor all aspects of criminal justice reform, in hopes that we can prevent ill-advised legislation for law enforcement and our country.

It is also thanks to all of you for the strong partnerships that have been

built across this nation, not only within your own organizations, but also with your Congressional leadership. Many times I have reached out to individual state associations and have received immediate response to issues and requests. So, thank you again...

The NNOAC Executive Board continues to track all of the state association conferences across the United States, and the reports from the regional directors are always emphasizing how outstanding and productive these meetings continue to be. We (NNOAC) receive numerous invitations to attend these conferences, and we always appreciate the offers to be present and speak. Many times it is hard for me to schedule so many conferences for myself, but we will always try to send someone to

" What you do is important. Never forget that. There are a lot of people out there who are grateful for the work that you do because you are still saving lives. "



President's Message, cont.

represent the National Narcotics Officers Association Coalition.

I am very pleased to announce the complete overhaul of NNOAC's website. This has been a topic of discussion for quite some time now, but, as many of you know, it can be cost prohibitive and labor intensive. When anyone first hears of NNOAC or your association, the first place they go to is a website. The first impression of our Coalition is critical and can be the key to our success, and we have hit the mark with what has been created and is being maintained. Please take the time to visit the website at www.nnoac.com and give us your feedback. This site is only as good as all of you want it to be, so please weigh in!

Planning has already begun for our 2024 NNOAC Delegates Meeting and Conference. We will be in Washington, D.C., at the Hilton Washington D.C. Capitol Hill on February 5th thru 7th. We ask that all of you make every attempt to attend. It goes without saying how important these meetings and conference are to our mission as an organization and to drug enforcement across the country. Everyone is aware of the critical time we are in as law enforcement in the United States. This is the opportunity to take our important message to Capitol Hill and educate the leaders of the nation on what is "really" happening in the communities that we serve.

Stay the course!

SAVE THE DATE

2024 NNOAC

Delegates Meeting & Conference

FEBRUARY 5 - 7, 2024

Washington, D.C.

Hilton Washington D.C. Capitol Hill

Please note Delegates Meeting will be held on Monday morning at 8:00 am with speakers to follow on both Monday & Tuesday.

Capitol Hill visits will be scheduled on Wednesday.

Additional details will be provided in a subsequent announcement.

CALLED TO SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATE IN THE NNOAC MISSION?

PARTNER WITH US!

The NNOAC partners program attracts companies interested in legislative support on relevant issues, subject matter expertise in the areas of narcotics enforcement and impairment and exposure to a nationwide audience to position products and services.

*NNOAC offers attendance, networking and speaking opportunities at its annual Delegates meeting, advertising and articles in its publication *The Coalition* and individualized programming to complement partner objectives.*

We offer three tiers of participation or can develop an entirely customized program. Please contact Laura Milford at lmilford@nnoac.com or 858.602.6050 to discuss partnership opportunities.

National Narcotics Officers' Associations' Coalition 2024 Partnership Program



Premier \$20,000+

Program elements uniquely curated for each Premier Partner

Tier 1 \$10,000

- 3 registrations for Annual Delegates Meeting
- 15-minute remarks during plenary session
- Preferred seating at Delegates Meeting lunch
- Promotion in outreach to Delegates prior to February meeting
- Delegates meeting registration list
- Collaboration/support on legislative positioning
- Quarterly email distribution or webinar promotion
- Full page ad and article in *The Coalition* (2 – 3 issues annually)
- Company description and linked logo on NNOAC website

Tier 2 \$7,500

- 2 registrations for Annual Delegates Meeting
- 10-minute remarks during plenary session
- Promotion in outreach to Delegates prior to February meeting
- Delegates meeting registration list
- Semi-annual email distribution or webinar promotion
- Half page ad and article in *The Coalition* (2 issues annually)
- Company description and linked logo on NNOAC website

Tier 3 \$5,000

- 1 registration for Annual Delegates Meeting
- 5-minute remarks during plenary session
- Promotion in outreach to Delegates prior to February meeting
- Delegates meeting registration list
- Annual email distribution or webinar promotion
- Quarter page ad article in *The Coalition* (2 issues annually)
- Company description and linked logo on NNOAC website

Supplemental Sponsorships

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| • Monday lunch (2 available) | \$5,000/includes 10-minute lunch presentation |
| • Monday evening mixer (3 available) | \$2,500/includes intro and remarks at event |
| • Tuesday lunch (2 available) | \$5,000/includes 10-minute lunch presentation |
| • Tuesday evening mixer (3 available) | \$2,500/includes intro and remarks at event |

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2023 NNOAC PARTNERS

The financial support and subject matter expertise our corporate partners provide are invaluable to NNOAC. Our current corporate partners are listed below.

**Please visit their websites to learn more
about their missions, products and services.**

<i>Partner</i>	<i>Website</i>
Partnership for Safe Medicines	www.safemedicines.org
Altria	www.altria.com
Brooks Bawden Moore	www.bbm-dc.com
Thermo Fisher Scientific	www.thermofisher.com
FirstNet Built With AT&T	www.firstnet.com
Zinatt	www.zinatt.com
Revir Technologies	revir.ai
National HIDTA Directors Association	hidadirectors.org



NNOAC Insight

The Official Position of the National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition

February 2023

HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING AREAS (HIDTA) PROGRAM FY 2024 APPROPRIATIONS

The 40 state narcotic officers' associations and more than 50,000 law enforcement officers represented by the NNOAC strongly urge the Congress to continue to support the proven effective High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) Program within the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), provide FY 2024 funding with associated language allowing for a dedicated funding increase to all 34 HIDTAs baseline budgets.

Through cooperation and collaboration with Federal, State and local law enforcement - collaboration that is assured because of the structure of the HIDTA program within ONDCP ensuring equal representation among all partners - the HIDTA program has achieved significant results. HIDTA's performance measurement system indicates that in calendar year 2021:

- HIDTAs investigated **8,676 drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) /money laundering organizations (MLOs)** and were successful in disrupting or dismantling **3,155**. The majority (**60 percent**) of the DTOs/MLOs were **international** or **multi-state** operations.
- HIDTAs dismantled **55 methamphetamine lab operations**, a significant decline from past years reflecting a successful strategy against the dangerous domestic methamphetamine labs and the shift of methamphetamine production from the U.S. to Mexico.
- HIDTAs were involved in the seizure of approximately **2,933 tons of marijuana plants and product, 194 tons of cocaine, 195 tons of meth, 4.3 tons of heroin and 9.8 tons of fentanyl powder, and a ton of prescription narcotics.**
- HIDTAs have **subject deconfliction systems** to ensure that information is shared and that potential conflicts between agencies investigating the same organizations or subjects are resolved. HIDTAs submitted over 1.1 million items of information on drug trafficking suspects for subject deconfliction.
- HIDTAs have **event deconfliction systems** that alert agencies when there are **tactical operations planned** for the same general location and timeframe. This helps **prevent conflicts** between different operations for officer safety purposes. HIDTAs **deconflicted 287,221 tactical operations from 3,972 law enforcement agencies.**
- HIDTAs **apprehended more than 33,577 fugitives, made 96,966 arrests, and took 31,136 firearms off the street.**
- There are more than **23,286 federal, state, and local** law enforcement officers, analysts and support personnel from more than **3,972 different agencies** involved in the HIDTA program. Seventy-two percent of the participants are from state, local, or tribal agencies.
- HIDTAs are involved in **prevention through training, partnering, sponsorship and community outreach.**

The HIDTA program gives federal, state, local and tribal criminal justice leaders a **balanced and equal voice** in determining the priorities and initiatives required to address the emerging threats unique to their regions. The 33 HIDTAs are located in 50 states plus Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia, and include 65.5 percent of the U.S. population. The HIDTA program is administered by the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The placement of the HIDTA program within ONDCP provides for a neutral, non-agency biased environment that is not mired in bureaucracy or directed by a single federal agency. HIDTA is an innovative and unique program that is essential in addressing the opioid crisis facing this country. The HIDTA program does not duplicate but enhances drug law enforcement efforts nationwide.

HIDTAs address regional drug problems based upon a unique **threat assessment process**. Each HIDTA develops its own strategy consistent with the National Drug Control Strategy. Executive Boards implement their strategies by funding formal initiatives like task forces which can best address identified drug threats. Each initiative is annually assessed based on measurable outputs (HIDTA's one-of-a-kind **Performance Management Process**). HIDTA-funded

multi-agency task forces are co-located with over 23,000 federal, state and local law enforcement investigators/officers and support staff. This coordination is highly unique among federally supported law enforcement initiatives and ensures a substantial return on investment for the federal taxpayer. In 2021, the HIDTA National Program shows \$100.84 for every dollar invested in the Program by Congress. Any participating law enforcement agency, whether it is federal, state or local, may lead a HIDTA task force, which also is a unique concept.

HIDTA Executive Boards, comprised of an equal number of federal and state/local law enforcement executives, meet regularly to manage each HIDTA. The HIDTA structure creates a level playing field among federal, state and local partners who understand all aspects of law enforcement and put the interests of the HIDTA above their own. This partnership concept does not exist in any other program. Executive Boards hire directors who are highly experienced law enforcement professionals. Directors act as neutral brokers for participating agencies and are charged with carrying out the collective policy decisions of their executive boards.

Oversight of the HIDTA initiatives is provided by participating agencies and by a structured self-review managed by the executive board. Individual HIDTA's management annually completes fiscal and performance audits. Additionally, ONDCP sends regularly scheduled formal review teams to each HIDTA and has contracted a firm to audit HIDTA fiduciaries. The U.S. Government Accountability Office has also reviewed the program on several occasions. This structure assures performance tracking and accountability assuring each HIDTA is as efficient and effective as possible both operationally and fiscally.

HIDTA's most important contribution to the nation is the set of partnerships it has nurtured among participating agencies to drive results in drug enforcement. These partnerships, developed over years, have become an institutionalized part of the program. This has led to efficiencies and leveraging of resources among its participants.

HIDTA Accomplishments: A Model of Demonstrated Success

Another cornerstone of the HIDTA program is the initiation and promotion of innovative methods and ideas in enforcement and information sharing. The evolution of the HIDTA intelligence subsystem exemplifies this approach. HIDTA program requirements include maintenance of **intelligence support centers within each HIDTA**, and co-location of federal, state and local agencies. The result has been intelligence sharing on an unprecedented scale related to drug trafficking threats.

The **HIDTA.net/RISS.net/LEO** information system architecture electronically links each HIDTA. Each HIDTA has direct access to multiple agency and commercial databases and provides a full range of analytical services. HIDTA intelligence support centers (ISCs) now stand as prime examples of interagency cooperation, collaboration, and coordination. HIDTA ISCs played an integral role in the investigation of the terrorist attacks on "9/11" and because of their relationships were able to obtain critical information in a very timely manner. HIDTAs routinely partner with state and local fusion centers; in some cases they are collocated.

HIDTA Executive Boards have the flexibility to adapt to emerging needs. Two examples of that quick adaptation relate to the ongoing fentanyl and heroin crisis:

Overdose Response Strategy (ORS): HIDTA believes in investing in partnerships to build safe and healthy communities. The Overdose Response Strategy (ORS) is an innovative platform designed to enhance public safety and public health partnerships and inter-agency collaboration across 50 states, as well as enhancing prevention efforts with the overarching goal of reducing drug overdose deaths.

Overdose Mapping (ODMAP): The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) funded the Washington/Baltimore HIDTA to develop ODMAP and provide it free of charge to first responders and government agencies. As of the end of 2021, over 4000 agencies in 50 states are entering data into ODMAP and receiving real-time updates and spike alerts.

We are in the middle of the worst drug epidemic in our nation's history. Drug-related deaths are at an all-time high. Collaborative multi-jurisdictional drug enforcement efforts have not been adequately supported over the past several years. Ensuring adequate funding for the HIDTA program in FY 2024 is critical to targeting the most significant drug trafficking organizations that are killing people in our communities every day.



2023 NATIONAL HIDTA AWARDS



The Office of National Drug Control Policy 2023 National HIDTA Awards recently released their recipients. I have highlighted two task forces. Task Force Of The Year, South Florida, Major Case Initiative DEA HIDTA Group 44 and Outstanding Investigation, South Texas HIDTA, Brownsville HIDTA Task Force. The Coalition wants to continue the great work our narcotic officers perform on a daily basis.

Thank you, Bill Butka

NATIONAL HIDTA AWARDS 2023 – TASK FORCE OF THE YEAR

The National HIDTA announced their award recipients for 2023 in June. The Coalition magazine highlighted two awards that speak for themselves. The dedication of the agencies and investigators in the units is reflected in the work they have performed, which resulted in a successful removal of drugs that kill our citizens in the United States and abroad. The following investigation is representative of what is happening everyday in our country.

The DEA Miami Field Division HIDTA Group 44, supported by the South Florida HIDTA Major Case Initiative, continued to investigate the illicit finances and money laundering activities of a narco-terrorist organization and their global financial and criminal support network.

This Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF), Priority Target Organization (PTO), Consolidated Priority Organization Target (CPOT), and Five Eyes Law Enforcement Working Group (FELEG) investigation is focused primarily on money exchange house owners located in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. These entities, particularly those that are operated by Pakistani nationals, work with Lebanese nationals in laundering illicit proceeds from various places (including the United States, Europe, and Australia) to multiple South American countries (including Colombia, Brazil, and Paraguay).

The investigation has revealed an extensive system of money launderers and couriers tied to the global criminal and financial support network. These networks subvert banking regulations by creating false invoices and also use them to avoid customs laws and taxes when exporting/importing goods.

A total of 21 federal seizure warrants were executed on bank accounts located primarily in Florida, New York, and New Jersey. Investigative results to date include seizures of over \$6 million in U.S. currency; 5,300 kilograms of cocaine; one kilogram of opium; 90 kilograms of heroin; and one kilogram of methamphetamine; as well as 24 federal indictments and four Provisional

Arrest Warrants executed in Australia, England, and Cyprus. In addition, the investigation has resulted in 31 Office of Foreign Asset Control designations; two CPOTs nominated and extradited, one of whom was extradited from Paraguay in 2022; and numerous wiretaps – initiated in Australia, Paraguay, Colombia, France, England, Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark, and The Netherlands – that were instrumental in identifying this transnational narco-terrorist organization and its acquired illicit wealth.



NARCOTICS UNIT OF THE YEAR

Texas Narcotics Officers Association

2022 TNOA Nomination – Narcotics Unit of the Year

Nominee: DEA Galveston Resident Office Task Force Group D-24

The nominee, the DEA Galveston Resident Office (GRO) Group D-24 is made up of 10 participating state and local police and sheriff's departments within the greater Galveston-Houston, Texas, area; four (4) DEA Special Agents; one (1) DEA Intelligence Analyst; one (1) Houston HIDTA Intelligence Analyst; one (1) Galveston County Sheriff's Office Intelligence Analyst; one (1) contractor financial investigator; and one (1) contractor analyst from the Texas National Guard.

The combined efforts of the GRO D-24 members have led to several locally and nationally recognized drug and money seizures in the Houston, Texas, area. The GRO's strengths are our state and local partners and the ability to bring the years of experience, to maintain strong working relationships with state and federal prosecutors, and to utilize the federal resources to enhance narcotics investigations in ways that significantly impact the Texas communities, the DEA, and the citizens of the United States.

The work conducted in these investigations and the ability to equitably share asset seizures among the participating agencies in a fair manner have been positively received by all the Chiefs and Sheriffs who have officers assigned to the GRO D-24.

Below are several narcotics investigations worked by the GRO D-24 and the statistical results achieved, which reflect on the combined collaborative efforts, with support from Houston HIDTA, OCDETF case designations, and community responses to drug trafficking, to dismantle the illegal sale of pharmaceutical/prescription pills, and to defeat the Mexican Drug Cartels that engage in illegal fentanyl distribution and fentanyl/synthetic drug poisonings that contribute to deaths.

Arrests: 174

Currency/Assets seized (FY22): \$5 million

Professional achievement: One (1) Investigation pending – DEA 2022 case of the Year – and included as one of DEA's most significant investigations in DEA's 50th Year Anniversary Book

Other Agencies recommending: DEA Houston Field Division; Houston HIDTA; United States Attorney's Office, Southern District; and Eastern District of Texas Narcotics Sections

Below are several notable Calendar Year 2022 investigations, lead primarily by Task Force Officers from the State of Texas assigned to GRO D-24:

OCDETF Operation Wrecking Ball

The DEA Galveston Resident Office (GRO D-24), along with its local, state, and federal counterparts, conducted an investigation into the Guajardo Transnational Criminal Organization (TCO) operating as a sub-cell of the Gulf Cartel. The Guajardo TCO, which was based out of Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, was responsible for the smuggling and distribution of cocaine, heroin, and fentanyl into and through the United States.

During 2020, GRO D-24 members targeted the organization by utilizing numerous traditional and non-traditional tools that included 30 Title-III telephone wiretaps, 51 pen registers, and 57 geo-location pings. As a result of the cumulative investigative methods, GRO D-24 agents, working in conjunction with the United States Attorney's Office, obtained a 43-count Indictment against 57 co-conspirators working for the Guajardo TCO residing in Texas, Virginia, Washington D.C., New Jersey, Georgia, Massachusetts, Florida, and Mexico.

During 2021, GRO D-24 members subsequently arrested 54 co-conspirators and simultaneously executed 25 federal search warrants through a massive nationwide takedown, thus effectively dismantling the Guajardo TCO and dealing a major blow to the Gulf Cartel's infrastructure.

During 2022, 49 out of the 54 either pled guilty or were found guilty during a jury trial. Several proffer interviews of defendants by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas contributed to the guilty pleas and sentencing being obtained. Throughout the investigation, including on the day of the takedown, GRO D-24 members seized a total of 124 kilograms of cocaine, 13 kilograms of fentanyl, 3 kilograms of heroin, and \$4,651,990.00 in United States currency.

OCDETF Operation Twisted Tea

The GRO D-24, along with its local, state, and federal counterparts, conducted an investigation into the Solis-Garcia Transnational Criminal Organization (TCO) a sub-cell of Los Metros operation of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel. The Solis-Garcia TCO, which was based out of Tamaulipas, Mexico, was responsible for the smuggling and distribution of cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, fentanyl, and marijuana into and through the United States.

During 2021, GRO D-24 members targeted the organization by utilizing numerous traditional and non-traditional tools that included 37 Title-III telephone wiretaps, 67 pen registers, and 80 geo-location pings. As a result of the cumulative investigative methods, GRO agents, working in conjunction with the United States Attorney's Office, obtained a 105-count Indictment against 65 co-conspirators working for the Solis-Garcia TCO residing in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Mexico.

In March of 2022, GRO D-24 members coordinated the arrests of 57 co-conspirators and simultaneously executed 28 federal search warrants through a massive nationwide takedown, thus effectively dismantling the Solis-Garcia TCO and dealing a major blow to the Jalisco New Generation Cartel's infrastructure.

Throughout the investigation, including on the day of the takedown, GRO agents seized a total of 158 kilograms of cocaine, 142 kilograms of methamphetamine, 6 kilograms of heroin, 18 kilograms of fentanyl, 526 kilograms of marijuana, and \$1,528,937.00 in United States currency.

Other Notable Calendar Year 2022 Investigations by GRO D-24:

During 2022, GRO D-24 members targeted a significant fentanyl pill distribution network involved in pressing prescription pills with fentanyl. This investigation has locally impacted the community and has saved many lives that would have been lost to the fentanyl-laced pills being distributed in the greater Houston and Dallas, Texas, areas. During the 2022 investigation, GRO D-24 members made 9 Arrests, seized \$159,000.00 in United States currency, 25 firearms, 235 kilograms of fentanyl-laced pills, 10 kilograms of methamphetamine, 65 kilograms of MDMA pills, and 45 kilograms of oxycodone/counterfeit controlled pharmaceutical pills.

In 2023, GRO D-24, working in conjunction with DEA Houston Field Division Diversion, culminated a 2022 investigation targeting illegal pharmaceutical and prescription pills by conducting a significant arrest operation. From January 31, 2023, through February 7, 2023, the GRO D-24 and Diversion conducted a joint takedown operation resulting in nine (9) arrests and the seizures of \$7,550,152.38 in U.S. currency/bank accounts, four (4) real properties, 25 vehicles, 28 firearms, 149,524 dosage units of pharmaceutical controlled substances, 15,023 ml of morphine and promethazine with codeine, and 2,236.9 grams of marijuana, 69 grams of cocaine. They also obtained three (3) Pharmacy Surrenders for Cause in the greater Galveston-Houston area. An additional seizure was made from a bank account in the amount of \$582,881.28 in U.S. dollars from an associated, already federally indicted and arrested target related to illegal prescription pill distribution and illegal pharmacy activities in the greater Galveston-Houston, Texas, area.

The Objectively Reasonable Officer AKA Callahan's Corner



By John M. "Mike" Callahan, Jr.

Originally published on Police1.com and reprinted with permission.

NINTH CIRCUIT IN SPLIT DECISION REJECTS QUALIFIED IMMUNITY FOR LAPD COP WHO SHOT, KILLED OFFENDER BEATING ANOTHER OFFICER

Dissenting judge highly critical of fellow judges concluding: "the rule of law [they treat] as clearly established ... could well make the difference in whether officers like Agdeppa and Rodriguez make it out of a violent altercation alive." - Apr 12, 2023

On October 29, 2018, Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Officers Edward Agdeppa and Perla Rodriguez were dispatched to a fitness gym in Hollywood, California on a complaint of a trespasser causing a disturbance. Both officers activated their body-worn cameras and an employee directed them to the men's locker room where they encountered Albert Dorsey.

Dorsey was naked, 6' 1" and weighed 280 lbs. Agdeppa was 5'1", 145 lbs and Rodriguez was 5'5", 145 lbs. Dorsey was repeatedly ordered to turn off music from his phone, get dressed and leave. He refused and raised his middle finger at the officers. Agdeppa attempted to handcuff Dorsey with

the help of Rodriguez but Dorsey resisted. Agdeppa was able to get one cuff on Dorsey during the ensuing struggle but failed to cuff the other wrist. They applied arm, finger and wrist locks without success.

Dorsey became more combative and both officers' bodycams were knocked to the floor. The cameras were now ineffective in filming the encounter but continued to record the audio portion of the violent struggle. Dorsey was repeatedly told to stop resisting but instead broke free. Both Agdeppa and Rodriguez deployed their TASERS upon Dorsey to no avail.

Dorsey hit Agdeppa in the face several times and "knocked him backward into a wall, disorienting him and causing him to drop his TASER." Upon recovering from the attack, Agdeppa saw Dorsey "straddling" Rodriguez and 'pummeling' her head and face with a 'flurry of punches' as she lay on the floor in a fetal position." Agdeppa believed that Dorsey was attempting to kill Rodriguez. He drew his service firearm and ordered Dorsey to stop [1] but Dorsey continued to hit Rodriguez. Agdeppa fired five shots at Dorsey from between six to eight feet away. Dorsey died from his wounds.



continued on next page

Split Decision, cont.

Agdeppa was sued for unreasonable use of deadly force. The district court denied Agdeppa's motion for summary judgment on qualified immunity grounds, and Agdeppa appealed. In a split (2-1) decision, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed, rejected Agdeppa's qualified immunity defense and permitted the case to proceed toward trial. [2]

THE NINTH CIRCUIT MAJORITY OPINION

The majority opinion focused, with approval, on a section of a report of the shooting issued by the Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners (LABPC). The report found that "the officers' [pre-shooting] tactics warranted a finding of Administrative Disapproval, and that Agdeppa's use of deadly force was unreasonable."

The report concluded, "Once the officers had initiated physical contact with [Dorsey], it was readily apparent that [Dorsey's] greater size and strength, in concert with his noncompliant behavior, would make it difficult, if not impossible, for the officers to accomplish their goal of handcuffing him. At that time during the incident, there was no exigency that required the officers to stay physically engaged with [Dorsey]. Nevertheless, the officers did not take the opportunity to disengage from their physical struggle and redeploy in order to allow for the assembly of sufficient resources."

The majority moved on and concluded that there was a factual discrepancy between Agdeppa's claim that Dorsey was straddling Rodriguez while beating her, when he shot him from a distance of six to eight feet away and a security guard's claim that Dorsey was holding Agdeppa's arm when the shots were fired. The majority seized on this alleged discrepancy despite its further observation that the LABPC report reflects that "the gym's surveillance video shows that one of the guards was not present in the locker room at the time of the shooting and the other was 'in the process of exiting the locker room.'" In a footnote, the majority comments, "Whether the guards' testimony is ultimately deemed credible will be a question for the fact finder."

Regarding this factual dispute and others [3] not discussed here, the majority concluded, "pervasive disputes of material fact make this case a textbook example of an instance in which summary judgment was improper." [4]

THE FAILURE TO PROPERLY WARN DORSEY BEFORE SHOOTING HIM

The majority stated that, "our case law [required] Agdeppa to give a deadly force warning if doing so was practicable." The majority observed that Agdeppa never claimed that he had no time to give a warning and stated that at "no point did Agdeppa [actually] warn Dorsey that he was escalating to the use of his firearm." The majority recognized Agdeppa's claim that he told Dorsey to "stop" [5] before shooting him but dismissed it because it was not audible on the officers' cameras. Moreover, the majority indicated that even if Agdeppa could prove that he told Dorsey to "stop" prior to shooting him, that this command alone would be insufficient to warn Dorsey of impending deadly force.

The majority explained, "Because the officers had tased Dorsey at least five times, a command to "stop" would have done nothing to warn Dorsey that Agdeppa was preparing to ramp up to use deadly force." The majority suggests that an officer's warning of impending deadly force must specifically inform the offender that deadly force will be used unless life-threatening action is immediately ceased.

THE DISSENT

The dissenting judge began by noting that it is "undisputed that a violent struggle ensued in the locker room" and the officers "were unable to get control of Dorsey, who became increasingly aggressive." The dissent observed that Dorsey was able to break free from the officers, causing both officers to unsuccessfully deploy their TASERs.

The dissent observed further that, "[t]he audio recordings confirm that the struggle escalated after the taser deployments. ... [and] the officers are then heard groaning and crying out in pain as the sounds of banging and thrashing increase in volume and intensity. Just before Agdeppa fired the fatal shots, we hear the most intense shouts of pain from the officers amidst loud crashing noises."

The dissent further noted that Agdeppa saw Dorsey straddling Rodriguez while "pummeling" her with multiple punches while she lay down in a fetal position. Agdeppa believed that Dorsey would kill her if not stopped and "It was at this point that [he] fired the fatal shots."

continued on next page

Split Decision, cont.

The dissent criticized the majority's reliance on the LABPC report by stating that it "faulted the officers for not using greater de-escalation techniques earlier in the encounter, [but] 'concluded that [the] available evidence supports that [Agdeppa's] belief that there was an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury at the time of the [shooting] was objectively reasonable."

The dissent was also highly critical of the majority regarding the alleged factual discrepancy regarding how far away Dorsey was from Agdeppa when he was shot. The dissent observed, "the majority opinion is purporting to identify a supposedly critical factual dispute based on what Witness F observed at the exact moment of the shooting, but a careful reading of the BOPC report shows that based on video surveillance, Witness F was no longer even in the locker room at that exact moment, having exited just immediately before."

The dissent was particularly critical of the majority's belief that it was practicable for Agdeppa to warn Dorsey that deadly force was about to be used. Likewise, the dissent criticized the majority suggestion that such a warning must be so specific and precise that the violent offender has no doubt that deadly force will be used if life-threatening conduct is not immediately stopped.



The dissent concluded by stating, "the dangers of today's decision are especially ominous. At what microsecond interval in the final heated moments of this escalating confrontation was Agdeppa somehow legally required to hit the "pause button" and recite some yet-undisclosed, court created warning script? ... and the rule of law it treats as clearly established on these facts could well make the difference in whether officers like Agdeppa and Rodriguez make it out of a violent altercation alive."

LESSONS LEARNED

- Notwithstanding the extreme danger faced by officers when confronting violent offenders, there are some federal judges that are philosophically opposed to granting qualified immunity before a jury trial, particularly when the offender is killed in the confrontation.
- The majority was quite willing to disregard the Supreme Court's direction to avoid 20/20 hindsight and instead concentrate on the moment surrounding the actual shooting. [6] By focusing on alleged pre-shooting errors, they indicate that the officers should have disengaged, retreated from the locker room and waited for sufficient backup. In this case, doing so was not at all practical and amounted to judicial second-guessing at its very best.
- The Supreme Court has ruled that in deadly force situations, a warning must precede the use of lethal force, if feasible. [7]
- To avoid the kind of judicial second-guessing found in the majority opinion, officers who have time to warn a violent offender of the impending use of deadly force should specify the kind of force about to be deployed, e.g., "Drop the knife or I will shoot you."

Split Decision, cont.

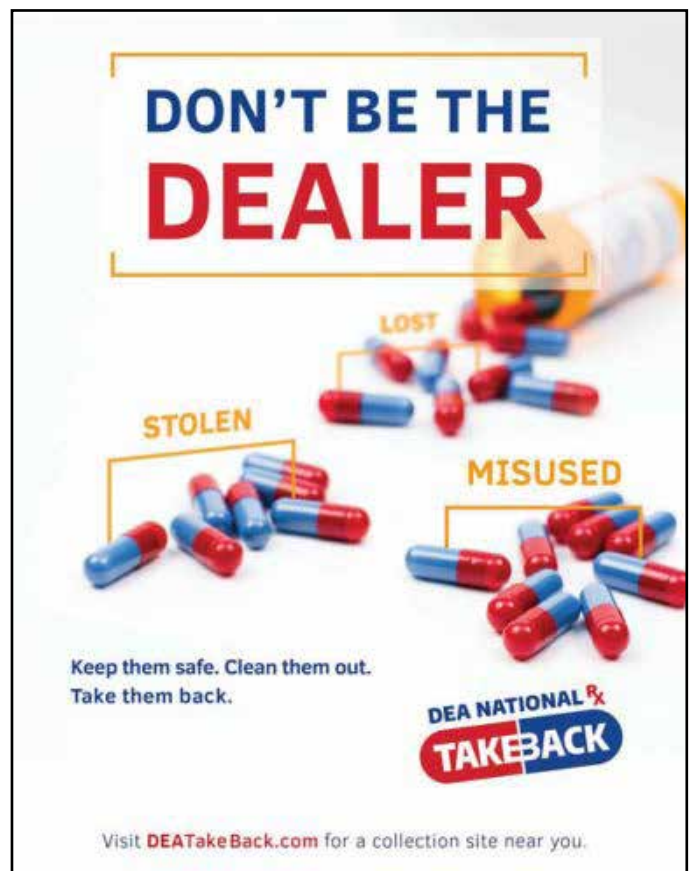
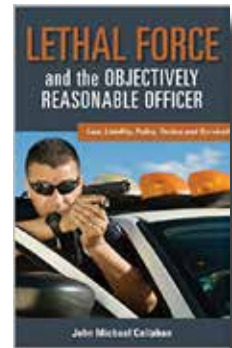
REFERENCES

1. Agdeppa's claim that he told Dorsey to stop before shooting him was not audible on the still functioning audio part of the officers' body-worn cameras that had fallen to the floor. Video was also still operating but not focused on anything relevant.
2. *Smith v Agdeppa*, (N0. 20-56254) (9th Cir. 12/30/22).
3. The other alleged factual discrepancies are significantly less persuasive in the opinion of the author. See link for full court opinion: LAPD Police Shooting case.pdf
4. In legal matters involving pretrial motions for summary judgment based upon defense assertions of qualified immunity, the appellate court will deny the motion when there are material fact disputes between the parties. When material factual disputes exist, it is for juries during trial to decide which side of material disputed facts is correct. There are other alleged factual discrepancies mentioned by the majority which are not discussed in this review.
5. Pummeling Officer Rodriguez.
6. See *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386, 396 (1989). "The reasonableness of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight."
7. See *Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1, 11-12 (1985). The Supreme Court in *Garner* required "some warning", "where feasible." The Court did not elaborate on the specificity or actual wording of the warning.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Michael Callahan served in law enforcement for 44 years. His career began as a special agent with NCIS. He became an FBI agent and served in the FBI for 30 years, retiring in the position of supervisory special agent/chief division counsel. He taught criminal law/procedure at the FBI Academy. After the FBI, he served as a Massachusetts Deputy Inspector General and is currently a deputy sheriff for Plymouth County, Massachusetts. He is the author of two published books on deadly force and an upcoming book on supervisory and municipal liability in law enforcement.

Contact Mike Callahan.



MY LADY JUSTICE

By Wayne H. Stinnett - Past President Association of Oklahoma Narcotic Enforcers

We have all walked into a courthouse or courtroom and seen a portrait or sculpture of a woman that is blindfolded holding a set of scales and sometimes a sword. We recognize that figure as representing “justice.”

Merriam-Webster defines “justice” as “the maintenance or administration of what is just especially by the impartial adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited rewards or punishments.”

Further research finds that Merriam-Webster defines “just” as “having basis in or conforming to fact or reason” or “acting or being in conformity with what is morally upright or good.”

I have sort of a hard time reconciling the way I’ve seen Lady Justice portrayed in those portraits compared to the way I picture how the representation of “justice” looks. Especially in the current state of our nation today.

Today we are told that our justice system is biased, or that justice is in the pocket of the highest bidder, or that our justice system has been weaponized to strike at one side of the political aisle or the other.

I personally don’t believe that.

My Lady Justice is blind to bias, prejudice, creed, religion, race, color, status, position, and politics. But she sees the hearts of mankind.

She is blindfolded, but she is not blind to greed, influence

or deception.

My Lady Justice is not the frail willowy slender ethereal figure seen in most portraits or depicted by the sculpted figures sometimes displayed in courtrooms.

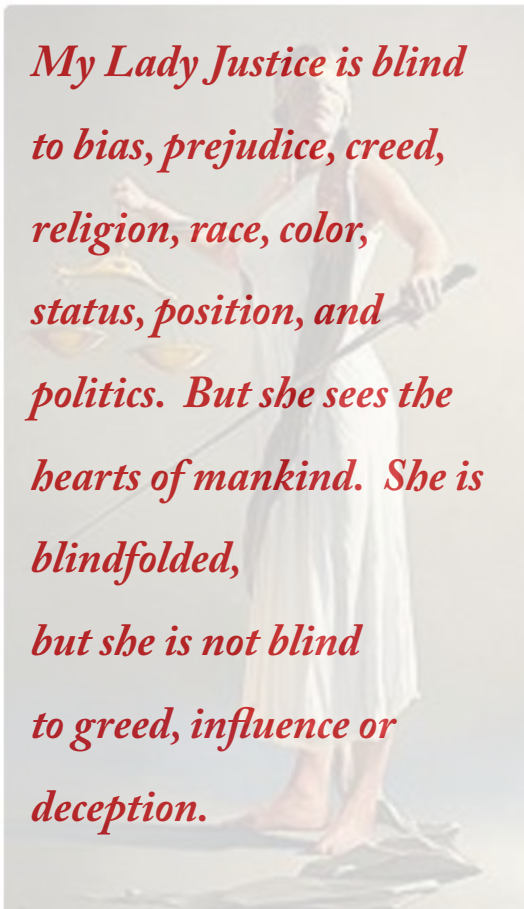
My Lady Justice is a strong tireless warrior fighting a never ending battle to maintain balance, equity, and fairness under the law. She wields a double edged sword so she can take the battle in any direction. She fights against those that would use their power or position to twist the law in order to overwhelm the weak. She also battles those that would use their position or circumstance to bind the abilities of those entrusted to stand in the gap between those that would do evil and the innocent.

She favors no one.

Her war is ceaseless. The battle never ends. She bears the scars of countless wounds inflicted upon her. Yet she continues to fight. Her victories are sometimes short-lived, because mankind has a short memory and is easily swayed. Still she battles on. Never yielding to the barriers set before her or the burdens placed upon her. She is constant and un-wavering, weathering the storms as mankind struggles to and fro.

Justice is not biased. Nor can it be purchased. Rules and laws can be abused, systems may be weaponized, but not the true concept of justice.

Those weaknesses are in the realm of mankind. Men



My Lady Justice is blind to bias, prejudice, creed, religion, race, color, status, position, and politics. But she sees the hearts of mankind. She is blindfolded, but she is not blind to greed, influence or deception.

and women can let their own biases influence what they do and how the rule of law is enforced. Men and women's decisions and actions can be purchased, but not justice. Mankind can and will abuse position or influence to twist and adulterate the system. Whether it be politically corrupt judges and prosecutors who use their positions to attempt to legislate for their own profit or political gain, or law enforcement officers that allow their personal beliefs or desires to dictate their actions. But that's not justice.

In the last 8 years I've been placed in the position to have to arrest 7 law enforcement officers in the prosecutorial district in which I work. Seven careers sacrificed and ruined. Seven lives and families disrupted. Seven Men who forgot their oaths and failed the cause they swore to uphold, and in doing so betrayed those they promised to serve and protect.

Seven men too many.

The question is how many of us in law enforcement remain willing or able to look beyond our personal bias, or forego personal gain or benefit in order to stand by the ideals and principles we were sworn to uphold. Will we allow persons with influence or position to sway our actions from what our oath demands of us?

While writing this I keep thinking of a scene from a movie made in the 80's titled "Extreme Prejudice." (With me there's always a movie) The movie is a bit cheesy, but I still like it.

In the scene Nick Nolte's character, Jack Benteen, a Texas Ranger, is talking with Powers Boothe's character "Cash Bailey", a old friend who has become a drug dealer along the US-Mexico border. Bailey is trying to buy off Benteen. Nolte's character makes the statement: "You can buy me, Cash. Hell, you always could. But you can't buy the badge, and one without the other ain't no goddamn good."

There is a concept in that statement that the badge, the law, that justice is constant. Benteen understands that the badge represents something bigger than himself. Something that must inspire unflinching trust beyond what may benefit him.

If anything, it is the man, not the badge, not justice, that fails.

The media broadcasts stories of men and women in law enforcement that fail daily, dishonoring themselves by ignoring their commitment, and giving the impression that all have failed.

However, I remain confident and assured that the overwhelming majority of men and women that I continue to work with, my brothers and sisters in law enforcement, remain true to their oaths.

As law enforcement officers we took oaths that clearly stated we would set aside our personal biases, that we would not allow personal benefit or position to influence our decisions or actions.

We must not fail.

My Lady Justice remains steadfast. She is at war, but not defeated. Not as long as we choose to stand with her and fight beside her.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wayne Stinnett

Chief Investigator

12th District Attorney's Office

Rogers, Mayes, and Craig Counties

Wayne served as a Reserve Deputy with the Rogers County Sheriff's Office for a couple of years in the early 1980's. He began his fulltime law enforcement career in 1989 with the Claremore Police Department, where he served for over 25 years. During his career Wayne was assigned to the Investigations Division for 23 years. During that time Wayne was the Sergeant for the Investigations Division for 20 years. While serving with the Claremore Police Department Wayne was also assigned to the 12th District Attorney's Drug Task Force, The Tulsa Metro Area Gangs Task Force, and served as a Special Deputy U.S. Marshal for the Violent Crimes Task Force for the Northern District of Oklahoma.

Wayne retired from the Claremore Police Department on December 31, 2014 and took the Chief Investigator's position with the 12th District Attorney's Office, serving Rogers, Mayes, and Craig Counties on January 5, 2015 where he remains today.

Wayne has served as the President of the Association of Oklahoma Narcotic Enforcers twice, and currently serves as the NNOAC Regional Director for the South Central Region of the United States.

Intelligent Fingerprinting for Drug Testing in the Workplace

By Drug-Free America Foundation

"More and more studies are now researching the efficacy of the fingerprint testing method, including a 2019 National Institute of Health (NIH) study, which found that most tests had an accuracy rating of above 90%, compared with other collecting methods.."

Some workplaces in the UK are turning to a unique company with a fascinating new and noninvasive way to test for drugs in the workplace -- Intelligent Fingerprinting. Using the company's Drug Screening Cartridges, their DSR-Plus portable reader can produce results in as little as ten minutes. The cartridges work by detecting target drugs and their metabolites (substances produced by the body when a drug metabolizes) within tiny traces of sweat in fingerprints (Intelligent Fingerprinting, 2023). The system will generally pick up on drugs used within the past 23 hours, with some exceptions.

More and more studies are now researching the efficacy of the fingerprint testing method, including a 2019 National Institute of Health (NIH) study, which found that most tests had an accuracy rating of above 90%, compared with other collecting methods such as blood or urine. This new technology appears promising for the future of workplace drug testing (Hudson et al., 2018).

Potential benefits of this testing method include:

- **Quick results**
- **Minimal training to administer**
- **Easy implementation (can be conducted anywhere)**
- **No collection or disposal concerns (leading also to reduced environmental waste)**
- **Can be done immediately following workplace incidents, or for reasonable cause**

The company has gained accreditation with the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) and is currently working on getting FDA approval in the US, while their confirmation test cartridge is already an approved FDA medical product, and their UK production site is FDA registered.

Of course, all companies should have a comprehensive drug-free workplace policy that outlines what happens should any drug test return positive results, how those results will be confirmed, and subsequent actions that may be taken by the employer.

Resources:

1. Fingerprint Drug Testing A Revolution for Workplace Drug Screening White Paper 2 | Intelligent Fingerprinting. (n.d.). Retrieved August 3, 2023, from <https://www.intelligentfingerprinting.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Workplace-Drug-Testing-White-Paper.pdf>
2. Palletways adopts drug testing solution from Intelligent Fingerprinting | Business Weekly | Technology News | Business news | Cambridge and the East of England. (n.d.). <https://www.businessweekly.co.uk/news/palletways-adopts-drug-testing-solution-intelligent-fingerprinting>
3. Hudson, M., Stuchinskaya, T., Ramma, S., Patel, J., Sievers, C., Goetz, S., Hines, S., Menzies, E., & Russell, D. A. (2019). Drug screening using the sweat of a fingerprint: lateral flow detection of Î⁹-tetrahydrocannabinol, cocaine, opiates and amphetamine. *Journal of analytical toxicology*, 43(2), 88â€“95. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jat/bky068>



***FOR INFORMATION ABOUT OUR SUPERVISOR AND EMPLOYEE ONLINE TRAINING COURSES THROUGH THE DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE PROGRAM PLEASE CLICK HERE.**

NATIONAL DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE ALLIANCE

As the workplace division of Drug Free America Foundation, NDWA's mission is to be a national leader in the drug-free workplace industry by directly assisting employers and stakeholders, providing drug-free workplace program resources and assistance, and supporting a national coalition of drug-free workplace service providers.

For more information and drug-free workplace resources, visit NDWA at www.ndwa.org



2023/24 NNOAC REGIONAL DIRECTORS

Northwest Region - Rich Wiley

Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon,
Washington, and Wyoming

509/342-0427

rwiley@nnoac.com



Great Lakes Region - Jonathon Edwards

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania

Ohio Task Force Commanders Association

740/901-1729

jedwards@nnoac.com

Midwest Region - Andy Johnson

Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, Minnesota,
South Dakota, and Wisconsin

507/304-4904

ajohnson@nnoac.com

Northeast Region - Nitin Daniels

Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, New
Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Rhode
Island, and Vermont

973/479-1820

ndaniels@nnoac.com



South Central Region - Wayne Stinnett

Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri,
Oklahoma, and Texas

918/923-4960

wayne.stinnett@dac.state.ok.us

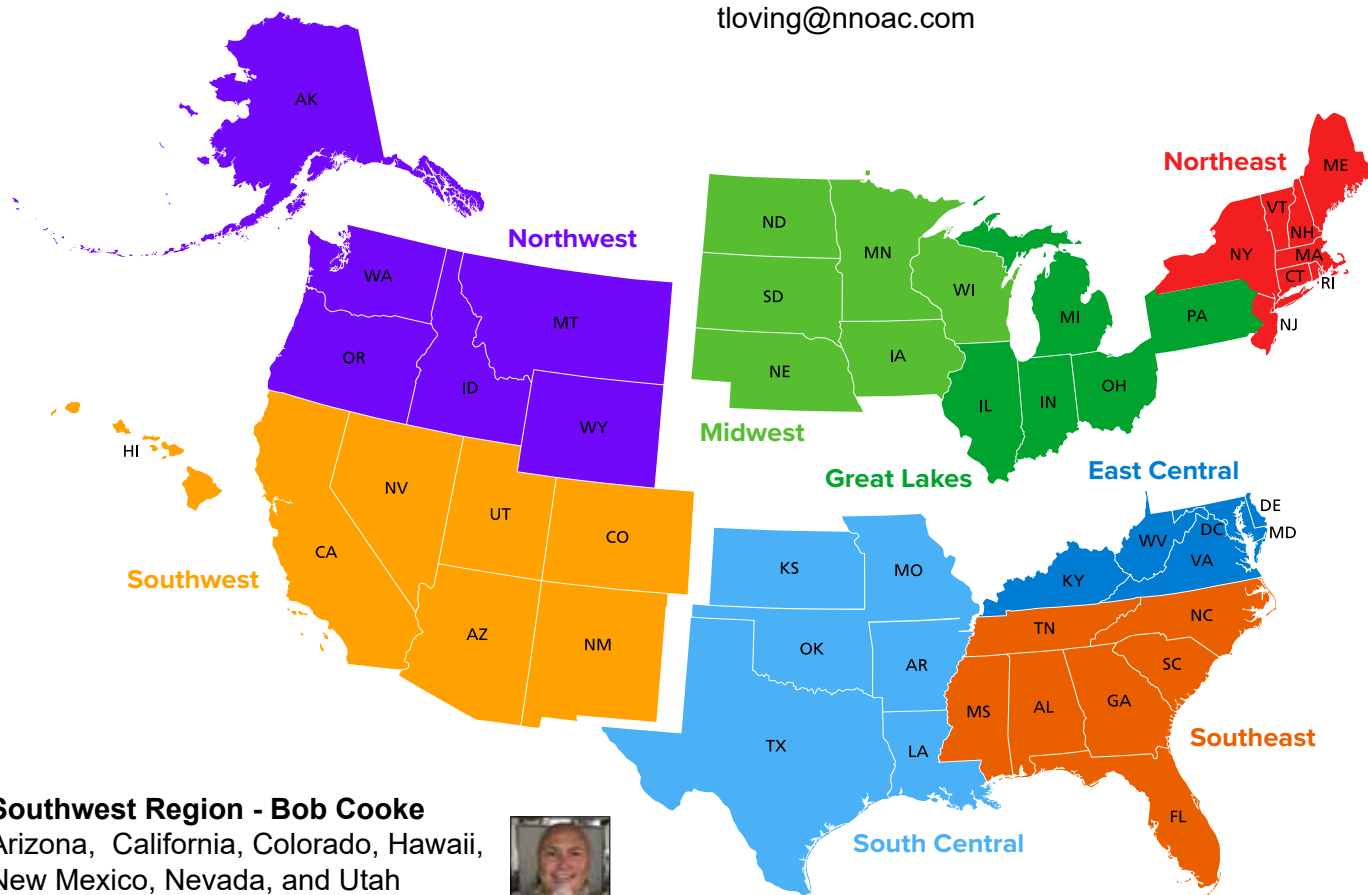


East Central Region - Tommy Loving

Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, District of
Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey

270/843-5343

tloving@nnoac.com



Southwest Region - Bob Cooke

Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii,
New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah

408/472-8409

bcooke@nnoac.com



Southeast Region - T. Gene Donegan

Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, North
Carolina, Tennessee, and South Carolina

615/509-3738

tdonegan@nnoac.com





NATIONAL NARCOTIC OFFICERS' ASSOCIATIONS' COALITION

REGIONAL DIRECTORS' REPORTS

Northwest Region - Richard Wiley

Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming

509/342-0427

rwiley@nnoac.com

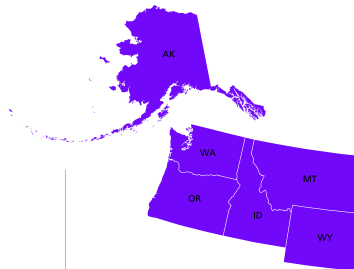
Oregon - According to the 2024 Oregon-Idaho HIDTA threat assessment, fentanyl is quickly overtaking methamphetamine as the primary drug in Oregon. Law enforcement agencies have seized counterfeit pills and an increased amount of fentanyl powder. Despite this, methamphetamine continues to be a major contributor to half of all drug-related deaths in Oregon, as reported by the Oregon Health Authority.

Meanwhile, there has been a decline in heroin availability and seizures, as the demand for fentanyl goes up. It's believed cocaine availability has increased in Oregon, due to the increased seizures by HIDTA teams. Additionally, Oregon remains a source of high-quality marijuana and extract products for the nation.

Idaho –Marijuana and heroin have always had a foothold in Idaho as a drug choice, but the drugs of choice now are clearly methamphetamine and fentanyl. This is not a total surprise, as fentanyl made its debut in the state in years and has since slowly outpaced every other controlled substance. Liquid fentanyl was being shipped to Idaho homes from China as a mail order product and was extremely easy to get. Based on drug seizures, drug-related deaths, interviews and surveys conducted in 2022, Idaho's most significant drug issues are methamphetamine and fentanyl .

Already, 2023 has shown a significant rise of 12% in drug-related overdose deaths. A survey conducted in Idaho reports that more than 9.36% of Idaho residents report using illicit drugs, and the national average reflects 8.82 %. While 8.87% of Idaho residents use weed, 1.46% use cocaine and 0.33% heroin.

Things do not change rapidly in the Gem State, which



suits its residents most of the time. With COVID behind us and a very large influx of new residents to the state, there is a large demand for narcotics in the small communities that are building homes as fast as they can be erected due to the housing crisis and the need for

out-of-state construction workers who bring their appetite for illegal drugs to help keep them working with area demands.

The drug issues are devastating the Idaho communities and the communities around us, as well; and it is very apparent that no community is exempt from these drug problems, despite what some political leaders would have you think.

The Biden Administration has maintained open border policies since his first day in office, and that contributes to the issue mentioned above in every way. Not only is it easier for cartels and their associates throughout the states to smuggle in drugs; again, the influx of people and required homes for them mean more work, long hours, and transient construction laborers. These situations are creating a demand for narcotics and resulting in higher crime. The CDC reports a 5-fold increase in drug-related overdose deaths in the United States in the past two decades with opioids – and synthetic opioids have been the number one reason.

Additionally, Idaho is considering adopting 14 full Oregon counties. Oregon residents of the 14 counties want to be redistricted to Idaho in order to break away from the liberal policies of the larger cities, along with higher crime, poor drug enforcement, and bans on police.

This could add to Idaho's issues, as more liberal laws from Oregon – such as the desire for legalized marijuana – begin to bleed into Idaho with the new counties. This is a hot topic every year with our legislatures, as more and more people want this to become legal; and, as a state, we

are surrounded by legalized states, which makes the fight harder every year.

Idaho's Governor Brad Little has launched an operation "Esto Perpetua" strictly aimed at the Idaho drug Issues. He called methamphetamine and fentanyl "the most serious and growing drug threats in Idaho... And there is a direct tie to the loose border with Mexico." (<https://www.ktvb.com/article/news/local/capitol-watch/live-at-130-pm-gov-little-kicks-off-anti-drug-smuggling-operation-esto-perpetua-idaho/277-e5e7fc0a-9451-4d3d-931b-2eb06834fe9c>) Coupled with a million-dollar boost and zero tolerance in drug laws, Idaho is clearly planning on grappling with the meth and fentanyl trade in Idaho.

Washington – Unfortunately, fentanyl and methamphetamine are more prevalent than ever, and prices are very low. Overdose deaths are through the roof and law enforcement is trying to respond with reduced resources and staffing. The major metropolitan areas, especially in the Puget Sound region, are just not safe. The quality of life for our citizens is deteriorating rapidly and our community leaders are not willing to take a sober look at what's happening and make the needed course changes to turn the tide.

Washington law enforcement agencies are struggling with staffing issues. It's becoming increasingly difficult to staff drug task forces and other specialty units. Detectives are being pulled from investigations and sent back to patrol, just to cover calls for service. Agencies are struggling to find quality applicants. The state fosters an environment where officers question daily whether their politicians will have their back, if they're involved in a critical incident.

The Governor's office has advised the Byrne Grant advisory committee to develop a new strategic plan for use of the state grant dollars. Historically, a large portion of these funds have been used to support multi-jurisdictional drug task forces. The committee has been stacked with non-law enforcement members and is now working to take funding away from the task forces entirely. The state of Washington provides no state funding to these task forces and is now taking away the last grant opportunity these units have. The Department of Commerce has received guidance from BJA, now allowing these grant funds to be used for election integrity initiatives, so we are concerned that is where all the funding will go.

Many politicians in Washington do not view drug law

enforcement as an important aspect of addressing addiction and crime. Our homeless problem and skyrocketing crime can be directly attributed to illicit drug usage. Law enforcement could make a significant, positive impact on the narcotic supply chain by addressing the organized crime behind it, if there were even moderate support. One must ask – exactly how bad will it have to get before we have had enough?

The Washington State Narcotics Investigators Association held their 2023 WSNIA Training Summit and Vendor Show in April. Over 500 officers from throughout the northwest, Alaska and Canada were in attendance. World-class instructors provided investigative training, officer safety, personnel wellness, and other topics during the four-day summit. The 2024 WSNIA Summit will be held April 7th through 11th at the Coeur d'Alene Resort in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. For more information, please visit www.wsni.org.

Midwest Region - Andy Johnson
Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, Minnesota,
South Dakota, and Wisconsin
507/304-4904
ajohnson@nnoac.com

Hello, everyone! My name is Andy Johnson, and I am your new Midwest Regional Director. I am honored and humbled to be considered, let alone appointed, by the NNOAC Executive Board to fulfill this position. I promise that I will represent my region with honor, respect, and dignity.

Aside from being a police officer for over 22 years, I am also the President of the Minnesota State Association of Narcotics Investigators (MSANI). MSANI was honored to have just held its 36th annual conference.

For the past several weeks, I have been pondering and struggling, trying to decide what topics to cover for this issue of The Coalition. Do I talk about the massive amounts of methamphetamine that continue to pour into the Midwest? How about the fact that Minnesota just legalized marijuana and was the first state to legalize all drug paraphernalia and the residue therein? Or do I discuss the fentanyl that is devastating our communities and families?

Unfortunately for the Midwest region – and much of the country – violence is what has been occupying the majority of officers' energies. In 2022, the City of Minneapolis



NATIONAL NARCOTIC OFFICERS' ASSOCIATIONS' COALITION

REGIONAL DIRECTORS' REPORTS

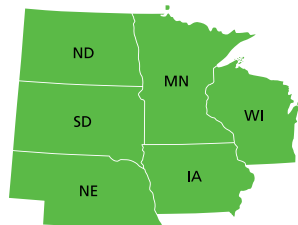
had in excess of 6,100 stolen cars; these stats include both “carjacked” and stolen vehicles. According to the Minnesota Star Tribune, as of July 16, 2023, Minneapolis had 4,700 stolen and/or carjacked vehicles, a 70% increase from the same time last year. (I should clarify that carjackings specifically are down 43% compared to this time last year!)

In 2022, Minneapolis’ shot-spotter system documented more than 17,500 rounds fired. As of July 24, 2023, the Minneapolis shot-spotter system documented over 8,600 rounds fired, a 27% decrease compared to 2022. The decrease is due to the hard work and partnership of the several Federal, State and Local agencies that have partnered with Minneapolis Police in an effort to get their city back and curb the violence.

Sorry, Dennis Lowe, but I’m going to steal Illinois from you for a minute. In Chicago, during the July 7th, 2023, weekend, 27 people were shot. CBS News reported that in June 2023, Chicago had 66 murders, down 1.5% compared to June 2022. The sad and scary part is that the news was touting this as a victory. Since when has 66 murders in 30 days been considered a victory?

Sadly enough, in the first seven months of 2023, the violence has been directed at our brothers and sisters in uniform. According to my research, in the Midwest region alone (Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota & Wisconsin), 12 law enforcement officers have been shot and an additional 6 were killed in the line of duty; 4 of those heroes were from Wisconsin alone. These numbers are terrifying for any region, let alone the less-populated Midwest region.

Even more concerning than the violence itself is that the line-of-duty deaths show an increase in ambush-style attacks. In the 2022 “Officers Shot and Killed in the Line of Duty Report”, the FOP describes an “ambush attack” as when an officer is struck by gunfire without any warning or opportunity to defend themselves.



Most recently, on July 14, 2023, three (3) Fargo, North Dakota, police officers were ambushed and shot while working a motor vehicle crash scene. Officer Jake Wallin was fatally wounded and two (2) other officers were critically injured. Evidence showed that the suspect parked and waited for the officers to arrive on scene before opening fire on them. The suspect, who was fatally shot by a fourth officer, had multiple firearms and many rounds of ammunition in his possession.

On May 6, 2023, near Glenwood City, Wisconsin, Deputy Katie Leising was shot and killed on a traffic stop while investigating an impaired driver. Deputy Leising had been on scene with the suspect for several minutes before he shot her and then took his own life. For all intents and purposes, this was a “routine” impaired driving stop prior to Deputy Leising being ambushed.

The month prior, on April 8, 2023, Chetek, Wisconsin, Officer Emily Breidenback and Cameron, Wisconsin, Officer Hunter Scheel were both shot and killed on a traffic stop, after exchanging gunfire with a subject who was wanted for a child support warrant and who had a long, documented history of mental health issues and hatred towards law enforcement.

On April 15, 2023, in Cyrus, Minnesota, three (3) law enforcement officers were shot by a suspect sitting at his kitchen table, after he was advised that he was being arrested for domestic assault. Pope County Deputy Josh Owens died on his 44th birthday.

I could continue but, unfortunately, we all get the point. Amazing men and women are being injured, killed, and even targeted at an alarming rate.

I apologize that my introductory Director’s Report shifted away from the current drug trends, but I felt that

this topic needed to be my focus. It needs to be discussed, and I believe that this topic also brings up additional talking points. We, as law enforcement, need to continue to be there, both physically and emotionally, for our fellow brothers and sisters.

I know it doesn't always feel like it, but I can tell you that I have personally witnessed that the silent majority supports you and recognizes the sacrifices you make on a daily basis to ensure their safety.

Please know that I am with you and that I pray for your safety. God speed, and keep up the good work!

**Southwest Regional
Director's Report
By Bob Cooke**

Arizona, California, Colorado,
Hawaii, New Mexico, Nevada,
and Utah

408/472-8409

bcooke@nnoac.com

The National Narcotic Officers' Association Coalition (NNOAC) holds an annual meeting of state associations and their representatives in Washington, DC. This year the NNOAC Delegates meeting was held from Feb 5-8, 2023. Our Southwestern states were well represented.

Our NNOAC struggled during Covid, and we bounced back for this event, with more than 160 law enforcement professionals in attendance from all over the country. Prior to our Congressional Hill visits, the NNOAC hosted many interesting and relevant guest speakers at the host hotel, the Hilton Washington DC Capitol Hill. Speakers included Hugh Clements, Director, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services Director (COPS); Steve Dettelbach, Director, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; DEA's Chief of Operations, the US State Department International Narcotic Law; Carry Huffman, Acting Deputy Commissioner of US Customs and Border Protection; Paul Abbate, Deputy Director of the FBI; and other agencies' executives and leaders. The focus was on partnerships, priorities, and strategies.

Dr. Rahul Gupta, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, spoke about the ONDCP's drug policy strategy and the huge issue of Fentanyl availability,

poisonings, and deaths. His presentation sparked some questions about harm reduction, treatment, and enforcement. The Fentanyl crisis is far from over. I was hoping to hear that the Drug Czar and Border Czar will meet to discuss a strategy to work the crisis together.

Karhlton Moore, Director, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Department of Justice, gave us an update on the *BJA Priorities and Law Enforcement Assistance Resources*. The Byrne Justice Assistance Grant program is vital to the survival of multi-jurisdictional task forces and special investigative teams.

Kent Shaw, Executive Director of the Western States Information Network and Chair of RNPG, gave us an update of RISS projects and resources, including the Money Counter Network. Mike McDaniel, President, National HIDTA Directors Association, gave us an update of the HIDTA program and priorities.

Sean McStravick, Assistant Inspector in Charge, Contraband Interdiction and Investigations, United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), spoke about their priorities and partnerships with state and local agencies and the expansion of their task force officer program.

In addition, five (5) members of Congress came speak to us, and they all took questions and offered their encouragement to the programs we support.

All the guest speakers and agenda are attributed to the hard work and reputation of the Brooks, Bawden, Moore (BBM) staff. We had 4-5 members of the BBM with us every day.

The most noteworthy participants were the people from your state associations who attended and listened – and then contributed by going to the Houses of Congress to meet with our state Congress members and staff. Those meetings make a difference for your agencies' funding and communities' safety.

I am the Southwestern States' Regional Director for the NNOAC. These states consist of Arizona, Colorado, California, Nevada, Utah, Hawaii, and New Mexico. All Southwestern State Associations except New Mexico had representation this year! (The New Mexico Narcotic Officers' Association has formed again and will rejoin the NNOAC in DC next year.). This was the first year that Hawaii was able to attend the NNOAC Delegates meeting.



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Our individual state associations focus on all aspects of training, public safety policies, and officer safety. Never has every state had the same drug issue – Fentanyl – and the crimes associated with its importation and distribution.

I urge you to visit your state association's website for information on events, training, and fundraising. They are as follows:

Arizona Narcotic Officers' Association

www.aznoa.org

California Narcotic Officers' Association

www.CNOA.org

Colorado Drug Investigators Association

www.CDIA.us

Nevada Narcotic Officers Association

www.nnoanv.com

Utah Narcotic Officers' Association

www.unoa.org

Hawaii Narcotic Officers' Association

currently working on website.

New Mexico Narcotic Officers' Association

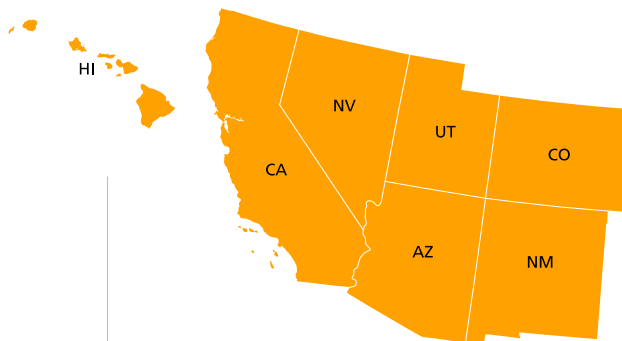
website pending.

Please get involved with your state association and stay engaged.

Bob Cooke

NNOAC Regional Director

The world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it. – Albert Einstein



South Central Region - Wayne Stinnett

Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas

918/923-4960

wayne.stinnett@dac.state.ok.us

As I'm writing this in late August 2023, all of the associations in the South Central Region have held their conferences and have reported great responses to the training opportunities each association offered. I know plans are already being made to make each association's 2024 training conferences successful.

The South Central Region of the United States continues to see the effects of an open Southwest border, as illicit drugs pour into the country. The abundance of methamphetamine across the region continues at a level that's hard to comprehend. I know I'm an "old guy" now, but the price per pound is currently less than what I used to pay for an ounce, "back in the day."

There is also continued increase in the presence of cocaine, which coincides with a report by CNBC in March of 2023 that "Cocaine production is at its highest level on record."

Fentanyl continues to contribute to the number of overdose deaths across the region. According to US News and World Report, in the United States over a 12-month period ending in August 2022, fentanyl claimed 107,000 lives. Quoting Merianne Rose Spencer with the CDC,

“This is equivalent to a plane with nearly 300 people aboard crashing every day.”

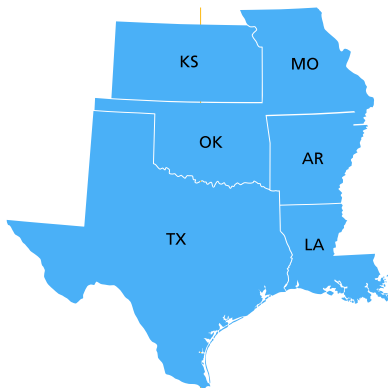
Adding to the mix is the overwhelming availability of high-potency THC marijuana and marijuana products across the region, specifically Oklahoma, which has become the epicenter for marijuana across the region, if not for the country.

Combine with that the associated crime that goes hand in hand with drug abuse, and it would seem that the need to support active law enforcement efforts – financially and through legislation – would be a given.

However, what we continue to see from legislators in Washington, DC, are bills like the SAFE Banking Act of 2023 and the FAIR Act of 2023 – both of which would have detrimental effects on law enforcement’s ability to attack the drug proceeds of drug dealers, cartels, and TCO’s; this makes it more profitable for them to ply their trade and further legitimizes the sale of controlled substances across the country.

During this time, when most of the emphasis regarding drug abuse is pointed toward treatment and decriminalization of illicit drugs, it is easy to become complacent or adopt a “laissez faire” attitude about taking a stand regarding the importance of enforcement and being outspoken about the dangers of drug abuse and its associated crime. As human beings, we have short memories. We tend to forget that when you remove the consequences of an activity, the result is that that activity increases. But, as we in law enforcement know too well, treatment without enforcement is impotent.

According to a study performed by the University of Boston, it takes, on average, 6.9 attempts at treatment to achieve sustained sobriety. However, 60 to 70 percent of those who begin treatment drop out within the first 2 to 3 months. But those individuals’ failures aren’t factored into the success rate of treatment. Consequently, the statistics regarding the success of treatment are inflated. These inflated figures feed a false narrative that enforcement isn’t necessary, but treatment is. (Read Brian Surber’s book, “Injustice for All: The (Familiar) Fallacies of Criminal Justice Reform”.



These facts emphasize the importance of having ongoing communication with our legislators at both the state and federal levels. Law enforcement in the United States does a tremendous job. We understand how to combat crime and the criminal elements within our communities and jurisdictions in order to protect those unable to protect themselves. What law enforcement doesn’t do so well is communicate solutions to the problems we deal with to those elected officials

who propose and enact legislation that addresses the issues we see on a daily basis. Theodore Roosevelt is quoted as saying, “Complaining about a problem without posing a solution is called whining.” I don’t want to accuse the men and women of law enforcement of being whiners, but on the whole we typically don’t win the information war on most issues on which we have substantive information.

This is important to remember as we prepare to attend the 2024 NNOAC Conference in Washington, DC. While there, we will have opportunities to express our views and concerns with each of our legislators. We will be able to use our unified voice to attempt to offer solutions and make a difference. NNOAC was founded for such a purpose. Even if you hadn’t read Brian’s book, each of you, due to your experience in law enforcement, is a subject matter expert. You have more knowledge – and a better understanding – of how the rampant abuse of controlled substances affects the communities you serve than any of the legislators who enact laws that govern and control those drugs and the criminals that deal them. Consequently, we must make the effort to educate our lawmakers and make them aware of our position on legislation that we believe will harm our fellow citizens and inhibit our ability to protect those we have sworn to serve.

There is no doubt that the trip to Washington, DC, is expensive. But the continued cost of not using your voice as a representative of law enforcement in your state, our region, and the country continues to be much greater.

I look forward to seeing everyone in D.C. I want to thank each of you that is planning to attend the NNOAC conference and meet with your Senators and Representatives, for making the effort to make a difference.

Hey... Let’s be careful out there! – Sgt. Phil Esterhaus (Michael Conrad)



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Southeast Region - T. Gene Donegan

Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, and South Carolina

615/509-3738

tdonegan@nnoac.com

The majority of the areas are being plagued with the same drug issues, although some areas are being hit harder with specific drug problems than other areas. Last year we consistently saw an increase in methamphetamine in rural areas of the Southeast, but this year we are seeing larger amounts coming in to the larger cities, as well.

Crystal Methamphetamine

The Southeastern region continues to see a steady flow of crystal methamphetamine into this area. We are seeing large shipments of methamphetamine and fentanyl-laced methamphetamine delivered by FedEx and UPS shipping services to different locations throughout the Southeastern United States. The majority of the shipments are coming from California to various addresses on the same date.

As an example, the Metro Nashville Police Department intercepted approximately 500 pounds of methamphetamine and fentanyl-laced methamphetamine in one day. These parcels would be delivered to various locations throughout the city and the organization would

have lower-level suspects travel around, collecting the parcels. The suspects would then take the drugs back to a central location to be distributed.

In the past year, agents at the Metro Nashville International Airport have intercepted and made arrests with seizures of over 100 pounds of crystal methamphetamine. (I will give further details on the use of the international airports later in this report.)

Marijuana

The Southeastern region continues to see high-grade marijuana being shipped in from source states, such as California, Colorado, Oregon and Washington. Tennessee and Georgia are the only states in the Southeastern Region that do not have any form of legalized, decriminalized or medical marijuana. These states are target areas for shipments of large amounts of marijuana, and law enforcement has seen an increase of marijuana being shipped to these locations. I believe we will see more of these illegal shipments and illegal grow operations with the future push to decriminalize and federal legalization. Unfortunately, many believe that legalization of drugs will cure the problems associated with drug use. The reality is that we will continue to have illegal grows and illegal transportation and shipping due to those unwilling to pay any type of taxes.

This region has seen a continuous trend of smuggling of illegal drugs/





currency through international airports in the larger cities. This trend appears to have grown since the COVID pandemic. The following are a few examples of seizures from the Metro Nashville International Airport (BNA).

February 27, 2023:

Agents encountered a subject, possessing an Alabama

driver's license. The subject was in possession of one piece of luggage. A K-9 indicated to the presence of an odor of a controlled substance. Agents requested consent to search the luggage and the suspect responded, "yeah, sure go ahead". Agents recovered 11 pounds of blue M30 pills which are consistent with counterfeit pills that are actually fentanyl and are regularly causing overdoses and deaths.

May 3, 2023: Seven individuals on a flight from Los Angeles were stopped and officers found that each had a checked bag containing 10 kilograms of cocaine – for a total seizure of 70 kilograms of cocaine.

In the past 12 months officers have seized approximately 1,000 pounds of marijuana at the BNA airport.



**Northeast Regional Director's Report
By Nitin Daniels**

Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont

973/479-1820

ndaniels@nnoac.com

As we slowly transition into the Fall season, our first holiday is coming up. LABOR DAY HOLIDAY – To recognize the many contributions workers have made to America's strength, prosperity, and wellbeing. Our First Responders play a great role for this definition. That leaves us with the thoughts of how we performed during the past eight months. As some

politicians look to defend the use of drugs and, in fact, make them legal, they do NOT realize the consequences and the results we currently have in states with legalized drugs. Truth and facts fall upon these deaf and blind folks. But law enforcement is resilient and will pull through these times.

Talking about law enforcement, the term "Police Reform" should really be "Excellence in Policing". Every law enforcement agency should strive to be the best in the nation; and this can only be achieved through discipline, training, and expectations. Unfortunately, not every Chief or head of the agency has that priority. Some choose the status quo, get their time in, and retire. I admire a leader who is just and fair and wants the best employees in



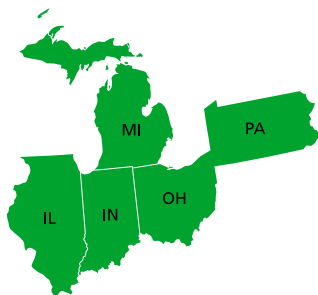
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his agency – a leader who is proud of his team and credits his team for the accomplishments, not himself or herself. I have seen it too often. I remember, in my days as a young detective, a senior detective taking credit for the work that my partner and I did. And I still see those folks out there.

As I watch the commercials on television, all I see are athletes promoting products. Wouldn't it be great for our kids to watch an excellent teacher, engineer, astronaut, scientist, a police chief, a fire chief, a nurse, a lawyer, a doctor, or others who truly make a difference in society? Athletes get paid millions of dollars every year – while most of us struggle to get a raise to stay current with the cost of living. Some of us have to work a second job. We have created a society of dreams where the kids believe they are going to be superstar athletes.

We are currently seeing ghost guns and ghost cars in the streets. The numbers of ghost guns, aka PMF (Privately Made Firearms), are increasing. And so are



ghost cars, which are vehicles that have fake and counterfeit plates or registration plates covered with tints. I see reports of crimes where these vehicles are involved. The motor vehicle violations may SEEM trivial to some, but killers have been caught due to these violations. Serial killers Son of Sam and Ted Bundy and terrorist Timothy McVeigh are among them.

Training is the key, but the training does NOT have to be expensive. There are a lot of low-cost or free training sessions available to make your officers more knowledgeable and better officers. Just because a training company charges a large amount of money does not make them better. The New Jersey Narcotic Enforcement Officers Association provides excellent training for very little or no cost. We are driven to provide the best training to all our active law enforcement officers. New England and New Jersey associations completed their conferences recently.

The Northeast Region wishes you all the very best and

thank the NNOAC for the great work.

Great Lakes Region - By Jonathon Edwards

Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania,
New York

800/558-6620

jedwards@nnoac.com

I am pleased to serve as the Great Lakes Regional Director for NNOAC. I may be a familiar to some of you, but I will share a little about me for those who may not know me. I have served as a law enforcement officer for 21 years and serve as a board member of the Illinois Drug Enforcement Officers Association. I have spent the majority of my career in investigative assignments. I have been assigned as the commander of a multi-jurisdictional drug task force and a child death investigative task force, and I have served as an investigator in units focused on violent crime and drug enforcement. In my current

assignment, I oversee a statewide drug and human trafficking enforcement program.

Issues currently facing the Great Lakes Region are not unique to the region. States comprising the region continue to battle drug distribution at varying levels. We continue to target those intent on profiting from the plight of others. We continue to refine our efforts in consideration of court rulings and new legislative mandates and limitations.

In Illinois, our state, local, and federal agents and officers face a challenging legislative environment. While we recognize the importance of protecting the rights of the accused, we have ventured into potentially dangerous territory with some of our more recent legislation. With the recent decision of the Illinois Supreme Court regarding the Illinois SAFE-T ACT, there are concerns regarding the potential negative side effects from the elimination of cash bail and pre-trial detention for many offenses. Ironically, non-criminally inclined citizens in some of the

poorest areas we serve will likely bear the brunt of the side effects. They are the forgotten ones – the ones many of our legislators try to convince you they care about the most. They will continue to have their existence compromised by questionable, if not reckless, legislation. With no fear of consequence, it will prove much more challenging to deter those who are intent on committing criminal acts, to include offenses related to drug distribution. They will continue to wreak havoc on the communities they call home – and some they do not. At a time when we are faced with record numbers of fatal and non-fatal overdoses, our legislators – some, not all – must do better. Some claim that they care, but they demonstrate that they do not. Some members of the general assembly have legislated an unbalanced system, giving more consideration to the accused than to their victims. Remember, if you are not inclined to break the law, this does not apply to you! This legislation is only intended to provide additional rights to the accused, perhaps to a fault. I believe strongly in the protections provided in our constitution. Time will tell if our general assembly has gone too far.

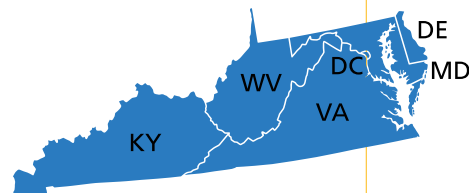
I have always said it is difficult to measure success in drug enforcement. We all subscribe to the collection of metrics and performance measures. They certainly do tell a story and can depict success or failure when paired with the appropriate context. The truth is that we cannot know the true measure of success, because it would involve measuring something that did not happen. You will never know the child who, because of you, did not have an opportunity to use drugs for the first time – because you worked a case against the person who may have been their source of supply. You will never know the mother or father who, because of your work, did not lose their child to a fatal drug overdose. I know I have spoken about the challenges we face legislatively, but the reality is that you will continue to work the problem just as you always have. You will continue to find a way, within the scope of the law, to address the flow of drugs into our communities. This is why I am proud to be a part of this group, proud to be a drug enforcement agent at my core.

We enjoy the company of creative thinkers and passionate problem solvers, perhaps more so than any

other area of law enforcement. Stay Safe!

East Central Region - Tommy Loving

Kentucky, West Virginia,
Virginia, District of
Columbia, Delaware,
Maryland, New Jersey
270/843-5343
tloving@nnoac.com



KENTUCKY

Addiction remains one of the most critical public health and safety issues facing the Commonwealth of Kentucky. This fact is revealed in the “2022 Overdose Fatality Report” (updated May 2023), from which the information below has been taken:

For the first time in four years, Kentucky has seen a decrease in drug overdose deaths, representing a 5% reduction since 2018. While 23 states reported fewer overdose deaths in 2022, Kentucky was one of only eight states that reported decreases of 100 or more deaths compared to 2021.

- In 2020, there were 1,964 overdose deaths.
- In 2021, there were 2,250 overdose deaths. This was a

14.5% increase from 2020.

- In 2022, there were 2,135 overdose deaths. This was a decrease of over 5% from 2021.

The Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP) states that, based on overdose cases autopsied by the Office of the State Medical Examiner (OSME) and toxicology reports submitted by Kentucky coroners, 90% of deaths in 2022 involved opioids. Illicit fentanyl continues to be the most prevalent drug contributing to overdose deaths, accounting for 72.5% nationwide in 2022. The overall number of overdose deaths in the Commonwealth was also worsened by the widespread availability of potent inexpensive methamphetamine.

The following data on drug types are based on identification through toxicology reports:

– Fentanyl was identified through toxicology in 1,548 drug overdose deaths, representing 72.5% of the total drug overdose deaths in 2022 and a decrease of 6.3% from the 1,652 drug overdose deaths for which fentanyl was identified through toxicology in 2021.

– Methamphetamine was identified in 1,069 drug overdose deaths, representing 50.1% of the total drug overdose deaths in 2022 and a decrease of 1.2% from the



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1,082 drug overdose deaths for which methamphetamine was identified through toxicology in 2021.

– Acetylfentanyl was identified in 453 drug overdose deaths, representing an increase of 75.6% from the 258 drug overdose deaths for which acetylfentanyl was identified through toxicology in 2021.

– Oxycodone was identified in 159 drug overdose deaths, representing a decrease of 21.3% from the 202 drug overdose deaths for which oxycodone was identified through toxicology in 2021.

– Heroin was identified in 49 drug overdose deaths,

representing a decrease of 47.3% from the 93 drug overdose deaths for which heroin was identified through toxicology in 2021

While overdose deaths are trending in the right direction, it is my opinion that the decreases are attributable to first responders and others equipped with “Narcan” rather than less availability of drugs in Kentucky. Our state, like all other states, is flooded with illegal drug flowing across the “Southwest Border”.

The Kentucky Narcotic Officers’ Association Training Conference will be held again in Lexington, Kentucky at the Downtown Lexington Hilton Hotel on September 6-7-8, 2023. We have found Lexington to be a very

Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of Kentucky State Police this year





welcoming city. Lexington's Mayor, who attended the opening ceremony last year, will be invited again this year. The Lexington Police Department and Chief Lawrence Weathers are also very supportive of our conference relocating from Louisville to their city.

The conference will open Wednesday, September 6, at 1:00 PM, with the opening ceremony, various awards, guest speakers, intel sharing and more. This year, in addition to awards for "Narc of the Year" East and West, we will have a category of Interdiction Officer and Analyst of the Year awards.

On Thursday, September 7, we will offer two training tracks:

Criminal M.A.P.P. Training – 8 hours

Conducted by Pennsylvania State Police Specialized Interdiction Unit Corporal Michael Vaccaro with Street Cop Training.

This course is designed to give students insight into how to take criminal interdiction a step further, and open student's eyes to things they have never seen before through looking at M.A.P.P (Motel, Airport, Parking Lot, Parcel) locations. This course will discuss and provide in-depth details on the common criminal trends and smuggling tactics used at these facilities and locations. The student will be educated on why and how drug trafficking organizations are exploiting major courier services to engage upon and operate their illegal businesses.

Students will focus on how to initiate a thorough

investigation at a hotel/motel, from establishing sources of information, common tactics to effecting an arrest, and further court proceedings. The airport interdiction section will demonstrate the level of interceptions at major airports through commercial air travel. The parking lot interdiction section will give students a perspective on how and what crimes are being conducted in public parking lots designed to blend in with normal everyday society.

This course will also provide students with the tools and resources to establish their own parcel interdiction program. This training course will provide detailed training using many visual resources to ensure that the student has a practical skillset to implement immediately. These methods will provide legal direction to ensure that all students have a thorough understanding of law and case law compliance to aid in all types of narcotic-opioid, wanted persons, and terrorism investigations.

Informant Management and Control – 8 hours

Conducted by Retired Detective/Reserve Dallas PD Officer Byron Boston with Professional Law Enforcement Training.



This course is designed to give students proven techniques and strategies to cultivate, maintain, and control informants. Confidential informants are critical tools for all levels of law enforcement investigations and officers must learn to properly cultivate and develop informants to be successful in their investigations. Historically, police agencies provide very little training to officers that manage informants. This practice often

leads to highly publicized scandals, which could include officers being disciplined, fired, or sent to prison for the way they handled their informant. One of the primary causes of informant scandals is the lack of written policies and procedures.

Students will be provided with sample policies, procedures, and informant agreements developed by Professional Law Enforcement Training to better prepare and prevent informant scandals.

This course will also utilize informant case studies to learn techniques to better assist students in minimizing risks associated with informant operations. These concepts will aid the students throughout all forms of narcotic-opioid, wanted persons, and terrorism investigations.



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On Friday, September 8, we will offer a four-hour block of training concluding our conference:

Under Fire – 4 hours

Conducted by Retired Weber County Sheriff's Office, Utah Lieutenant Nate Hutchinson.

On January 4th, 2012, Lieutenant Hutchinson was involved in a 13-minute gun battle after his narcotics team was ambushed while serving a knock and announce search warrant on a small marijuana grow house. During the gunfight, Lt. Hutchinson was shot five times while rescuing injured officers from the home. Lt. Hutchinson will provide a debrief of the search warrant, a detailed account of the gunfight, lessons learned in the aftermath, as well as the mindset that helped him survive the near fatal gunshot wounds and continue to fight until all his team had been pulled from the home.

In January 2023, Bowling Green-Warren County Drug Task Force and ATF investigators received information that a target and others were making an overnight trip to Atlanta, Georgia, to pick up an unknown quantity of methamphetamine. Accessing lawfully monitored GPS, detectives were able to locate the suspect vehicle as it traveled northwest from Atlanta. Physical surveillance was established east of Nashville, Tennessee. A second vehicle was identified as a possible follow vehicle. Detectives surveilled the two vehicles from Nashville on Interstate 65 with the assistance of DEA Aviation. Once in Warren County, a traffic stop was initiated by the Kentucky State Police interdiction team on the vehicle likely containing the methamphetamine. Following a



short pursuit, approximately 80 lbs. of methamphetamine was seized from the load vehicle. The follow vehicle was surveilled to a residence, at which time the occupants entered other vehicles and departed. KSP and detectives were able to stop and identify these subjects.

The driver and passenger of the load vehicle were arrested on state drug charges. During interviews, both passenger and driver identified the target, along with one other significant new member of the DTO, who had helped finance the shipment. Investigators later travelled to

Lawrenceville, Georgia, and obtained video surveillance from local businesses showing the occupants of the load vehicle and occupants of the follow vehicle meeting with each other.

A federal grand jury in Bowling Green, Kentucky, returned a six-count indictment on April 12, 2023, charging the six defendants with conspiring to possess with the intent to distribute methamphetamine and seven total defendants with methamphetamine trafficking related offenses.





Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of Kentucky



The Kentucky delegation at the Capitol on Hill Day NNOAC Feb 2023

NNOAC Legislative Update
Fall - 2023



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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FOR NNOAC MAGAZINE

August 2023

The 118th Congress has been off to a rocky start, with little hope for more productive outcomes through the rest of this year. Dysfunction and a lack of actual accomplishments have consumed the first half of 2023 amid a lot of bluster. Will this continue through the end of 2023? Will we see improvement in 2024? Will the politics of the 2024 election consume any attempt to accomplish anything in the next year and a half? Keep reading to find out!

Before we start looking into our crystal ball, let's dive right into the biggest open questions facing Congress. First up is whether the government will shut down at the end of September. Let's first rewind to see how we got to where we are. As most of you will recall, there was a fight over raising the debt limit in late May and early June. An agreement was reached that many thought would alleviate a good portion of the fighting over funding the Federal government and its programs by setting top-line numbers for fiscal year 2024 appropriations. However, it turns out there are now greater disagreements over the appropriations process and policy riders, leaving only a very narrow path to move the process forward.

The problem is that almost no one in Congress wants to stick to the spending limits. Republicans are working with a total number that's \$130 billion less than what was included

in the debt limit deal, and many are looking for more cuts. And Senate appropriators are going in the opposite direction, adding billions to the total. So, the chambers are billions of dollars apart on the total amount that can be spent. They're also working through contentious policy debates that are bogging down spending bill discussions, including debate on the border, on funding certain components of the Justice Department, and more. By the time this article is published, we will likely have a better understanding on whether a continuing resolution measure to keep the government operating passes or whether we will be in the middle of a federal government shutdown.

We have seen a glimpse from both sides on where they stand with funding key law enforcement programs. Both the House and Senate have recommended that the key DOJ grant programs such as Byrne JAG and COPS remain roughly level-funded, with slightly more funding for COPS in the House, and slightly more funding for Byrne in the Senate. The Senate Homeland Security appropriations bill is recommending slight decreases for the State Homeland Security Grant Program and the Urban Area Security Initiative program. And for HIDTA, both the House and Senate are recommending slight decreases compared to the FY 2023 enacted level. Where this all goes is anyone's guess, but any grant programs funded outside of the Byrne JAG formula grant and the COPS Hiring grant could be targets for cuts in the House. Several conservative House members are threatening to attempt to shut down the Department of Homeland Security unless certain conditions are met.

Both the House and the Senate have spent a lot of time discussing ways to address the flood of fentanyl coming into the U.S. and the continued high number of deaths due to fentanyl poisoning. At the end of 2022, Congress included a temporary extension of authority for the DEA to emergency schedule fentanyl analogues under Schedule I through 2024 in the FY 2023 Omnibus Appropriations Act.

This authority has repeatedly been temporarily extended over the past few years. In May, the House approved the HALT Fentanyl Act which would permanently place fentanyl-related substances into Schedule I, however the Senate has not acted on the measure.

When the House and Senate considered their respective bills to reauthorize programs for the Department of Defense, they included multiple provisions to target fentanyl. The House approved multiple provisions which would require the Secretary of Defense to develop a strategy to disrupt fentanyl trafficking and enhance counter-fentanyl cooperation with Mexico and enhance fentanyl threat reporting to include a review of U.S. laws and policies which may be facilitating fentanyl trafficking over the southern border. The Senate included similar provisions to develop a strategy to counter fentanyl trafficking, as well as enhance cooperation with Mexican defense officials to combat transnational criminal organizations, and to impose new sanctions and anti-money laundering penalties targeting illicit fentanyl and precursor chemicals from China.

Both the House and Senate have approved stand-alone bills targeting fentanyl, including revising the definition of what constitutes a foreign opioid trafficker, specifically to target Chinese entities and government officials that fail to take steps to prevent opioid trafficking. Additionally, the House approved legislation to carry out a study on the illicit financing and trafficking of synthetic drugs, and the Senate approved legislation to examine current policies with inspections at ports of entry and the government's ability to effectively detect illegal activity at the border.

Since we last wrote in the previous edition of The Coalition, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) continues to push for movement on marijuana reform. The SAFE (Secure and Fair Enforcement) Banking Act, which allows the marijuana industry access to banking services, has continued to gain support in the Senate. It appears to be

the most viable piece of legislation that could potentially move through Congress this year or next. Although this bill holds bipartisan support, the path forward is unclear. It's hitting roadblocks on both sides of the aisle. For example, Republicans have urged Democrats to leave the SAFE Banking Act as it is currently crafted, but some Democrats are working to expand the legislation to address expungements for non-violent cannabis related crimes. Adding these types of provisions could make it difficult for some Republicans to support.

Additionally, the Food and Drug Administration, under the Department of Health and Human Services, together with the Department of Justice are currently carrying out a review into marijuana to determine whether it should be rescheduled, descheduled, or remain in Schedule I. It has been reported that HHS will present President Biden with a federal cannabis scheduling recommendation in the near-term and could come by the time this article is published. BBM is closely tracking marijuana reform discussions on all fronts.

The perennial push to restrict the use of federal civil asset forfeiture once again has popped up in Congress, this time through the Fifth Amendment Integrity Restoration (FAIR) Act, which would eliminate the equitable sharing program. We continue to express concerns that the result of this legislation would shrink the number of multijurisdictional drug task forces focused on fentanyl, methamphetamine, and other drug trafficking networks; reduce local participation on federal task forces; and reduce cartel-related intelligence and information sharing capacity. The House Judiciary quietly brought up and approved the FAIR Act in mid-June. There is no timeline as to when the full House may consider this bill, or whether it has traction in the Senate.

As we discussed previously, privacy legislation and restrictions on big tech, including data aggregators remain a focus in Congress. Two problematic bills we are





watching are the American Data Privacy and Protection Act, which has not yet been reintroduced this Congress, and the Fourth Amendment is Not For Sale Act which would restrict law enforcement’s access to commercially available information that is routinely used to investigate violent crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, child sexual exploitation, and threats of mass violence. The data these bills would restrict are most useful after a crime occurs but before solid leads have been developed and probable cause can be determined. As such, this information serves as the building blocks of probable cause, which is then used to obtain a warrant where appropriate as the investigation progresses. Without access to this information, investigative timelines would increase, and law enforcement would have more difficulty identifying sources of public safety threats. The House Judiciary Committee unanimously approved the Fourth Amendment is Not For Sale Act in mid-July, despite strong opposition from law enforcement groups. It is unclear whether it will move through the House. Each of these bills, along with further restrictions on the use of asset forfeiture will significantly harm the ability of law enforcement to fund task forces and investigate drug crimes. We have also seen other similar legislation

introduced that would have similar effects on law enforcement’s access to key data that we are monitoring.

In closing, it will be crucial for you to become engaged and share your input and experience with local, state, and Federal policy makers as key reform discussions and efforts to address the drug poisoning crisis move through Congress. We must reiterate that any plan to address these deaths needs a law enforcement component, as recovery and prevention efforts alone will not solve this problem. Additionally, we must remind lawmakers that taking away key law enforcement tools will only hamper investigations into drug trafficking organizations. We encourage you to write to your local, state, and Federal representatives to express the importance of the programs that are important for your work and for your safety. Please contact us if you want more information on messaging or key contacts.

If you do not currently receive our weekly newsletter or our blog postings on breaking news and updates related to public safety issues, please email Josh Ledden at jledden@bbm-dc.com to get added to our distribution lists.

OUR TEAM



RON BROOKS
Partner
[BIO](#)

rbrooks@bbm-dc.com



BEN BAWDEN
Partner
[BIO](#)

bbawden@bbm-dc.com



CHRIS MOORE
Partner Emeritus
[BIO](#)

cmoore@bbm-dc.com



National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition 2023 Federal Priorities

Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program - \$519 million

Byrne JAG is a critical source of support for multijurisdictional task forces. Task forces are cornerstones of effective drug law enforcement that enable joint efforts against regional drug trafficking organizations that are connected to larger transnational crime groups. Byrne JAG funding has been slashed since FY 2010, resulting in fewer task forces at a time when drug overdose deaths have skyrocketed. Byrne JAG should be restored to the FY 2010 level of **\$519 million in FY 2024**.

Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) Program - \$55 million

RISS is a trusted cornerstone of law enforcement information sharing. RISS, which reaches nearly 10,000 agencies across the United States, is particularly helpful to small agencies that do not have in-house analytical or investigative support functions. RISS centers provide criminal intelligence analysis, officer safety, and deconfliction services that are critical to America's narcotic officers. RISS funding should be funded at no less than **\$55 million in FY 2024**.

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) Program

HIDTA provides essential support for drug enforcement across America. Results of HIDTA investments are clearly demonstrated through a comprehensive performance measurement program. HIDTAs support investigations into hundreds of regional and international drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) and money laundering organizations (MLOs). HIDTA should be funded at **a level in FY 2024 that allows for a dedicated funding increase to the baseline budgets of all 34 HIDTA's while retaining the HIDTA program within the Office of National Drug Control Policy.**

Pass Legislation to Permanently Schedule Fentanyl Analogues

Fentanyl and similar substances kill tens of thousands of Americans each year. While Congress recently extended the temporary emergency scheduling through 2024 of these substances under Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act, permanent scheduling should follow. Permanent scheduling – which the **Stopping Overdoses of Fentanyl Analogues (SOFA) Act** would do – would support continued aggressive enforcement against criminals who traffic in these poisons.

Protect Facial Recognition and Other Investigative Technologies

Investigative technology, including facial recognition, helps law enforcement be more accurate and efficient in investigating drug trafficking organizations. Overhyped fears about these tools ignore the reality that they are successfully used every day to protect Americans. We support responsible guardrails including human review of technology outputs. Congress should **oppose bans, moratoriums, or other undue limitations on the use of facial recognition and other investigative tools.**

Protect Access to Private Sector Digital Information

Protecting the privacy rights of law-abiding citizens is a top priority of law enforcement and members of Congress. Legislation to strengthen these protections is currently being considered by Congress, however we are concerned with proposed language that could hinder federal, state, and local law enforcement officers from using private sector services to support drug trafficking, money laundering, and other criminal investigations. Congress should **ensure law enforcement has access to important commercial data, oppose data retention and destruction mandates that could impact access to investigative data, and provide exemptions for companies working with law enforcement when considering data privacy legislation.**

Pass Legislation to Ensure Lawful Access to Digital Evidence

The “going dark” challenge impacts criminal investigations every day in America. This is when companies implement encryption on devices and apps without maintaining an ability to provide access to the system when a judge signs a warrant. That means drug traffickers, child exploiters, and other criminals have an easier time planning, executing, and covering up their activities. Congress should **ensure service providers can provide lawful access to digital evidence in response to a warrant, and should increase grants and training to build digital evidence capacity among all of law enforcement.**

Oppose Marijuana Legalization; Regulate CBD Products

Data show that youth drug use, seizures of black market marijuana, and marijuana-related emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and traffic deaths have skyrocketed in states that have legalized marijuana sales. **Congress should oppose any effort to legalize marijuana, including the MORE Act.** At the same time, Congress should ensure that CBD, which does not produce impairment, is subjected to a clear regulatory framework to protect consumer safety.

Support the National Guard Counterdrug Program & Training Schools

The National Guard Counterdrug Program (NGCDP) provides valuable support for the detection, interdiction, disruption, and curtailment of drug trafficking activities. NGCDP offers important analytical support to our operations and task forces, and provides our members with crucial aviation support. Additionally, high quality training is essential for all of law enforcement, and especially for drug enforcement operations. The National Guard Counterdrug Schools train tens of thousands of narcotic officers each year at its five nation-wide schools. Congress should fund the National Guard Counterdrug Schools at no less than **\$30 million in FY 2024 and ensure that curriculum content and instruction are determined by drug enforcement experts. Additionally, the National Guard Counterdrug Program should be fully funded at \$400 million to permit full staffing and ensure analytical personnel are in the field.**

Importation of Counterfeit Medications

Counterfeit drugs, especially counterfeit pills made with fentanyl, are having a devastating impact on the United States and they are a major contributor to the thousands of drug deaths our Country is currently experiencing. We believe that continuing to allow importation of these dangerous drugs will further weaken our borders, while also increasing the amount of substandard, adulterated, and counterfeit prescription drugs entering the United States, fueling criminal enterprises, and worsening the opioid crisis in our country. Congress should **reject any proposal that will increase the potential for more Americans to become harmed, addicted, or even killed by foreign-produced and marketed illegal drugs.**

Restrict Marketing of CBD/THC

It is the responsibility of private industry and our elected leaders to work with us to discourage the questionable practices and deceptive marketing tactics that illicit market producers and distributors of THC products use to entice and encourage impressionable young people to consume these dangerous substances. Children are increasingly threatened by the unscrupulous use of famous brand logos, characters, trademarks, and trade dress on THC-laced edible products. Proposed legislation creates liability for electronic commerce platforms for advertising, sale, or distribution of goods with counterfeit marks that “implicate health and safety.” Congress should also **include “famous” marks, a term already defined in U.S. code, to extend this protection and deter the sale of these copycat THC items which clearly “implicate health and safety” of children.** You can learn more about this issue from the Consumer Brands Association THC Copycat Edibles Toolkit, which can be found at the following link: <https://consumerbrandsassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/FINAL-THC-Packet.pdf>.

To view NNOAC’s detailed position papers,
scan the QR code below.



click or scan

SANTA MUERTE - "THE SAINT OF DEATH" FOR MEXICAN CARTELS AND GANGS

By Robert Altimonte

The Mexican Cartels have used prayer for protection from their enemies, including law enforcement officers, for some time. However, over the last several years, it seems that they have increased their devotion to Santa Muerte, a deity who looks like the grim reaper. As an instructor on the Mexican Cartels, I am seeing more cases throughout the United States, where drug traffickers are using Santa Muerte to protect them and their drugs from law enforcement officers.

Officers need to be aware of the significance of Santa Muerte. Even though Santa Muerte is used by many criminals, her mere presence is not probable cause for search or arrest. When an officer encounters Santa Muerte on a traffic stop or on a search warrant, the officer should remember that they may possibly be encountering a dangerous person involved in criminal activity. They should proceed carefully. If, during the conversation with the driver, the officer notices comments or statements made by the driver that do not make sense or are false, then the presence of Santa Muerte becomes an additional indicator that there may be drugs or other contraband in the vehicle, which would then lead the officer to ask for consent to search or run a canine on the vehicle.

When conducting search warrants, officers may encounter a shrine or altar for Santa Muerte and other Icons or Saints. Very often, police officers are hesitant to approach these because of fear of the supernatural or for superstitious reasons. Unfortunately for those officers, they may be missing evidence, as subjects like to hide the drugs near the altar and, in some cases, within the altar. Another important thing they may be missing is evidence where a hex has been placed on an officer, prosecutor, witness, or judge. Some officers may dismiss evidence of a hex as "hocus pocus." However, the concern is not regarding any supernatural aspect of a hex or spell; rather, the concern is to what lengths will they go to make the hex come true?



ORIGIN OF SANTA MUERTE

Santa Muerte looks like a female Grim Reaper; in many cases, she is dressed very similarly to the Virgin Mary. Santa Muerte will be holding a scythe or Sycle in one hand and either the Globe of the World or the Scales of Justice in the other hand.

There are different thoughts on where and when Santa Muerte originated. Some people believe that Santa Muerte began in Mexico's slums and prisons. Others believe her origin goes back to the pre-Christian beliefs of the Aztec god of death, Mictlantecuhtli, who ruled the underworld. Mictlantecuhtli had a skull face very similar to Santa Muerte. The Aztecs would sacrifice human beings to Mictlantecuhtli. Some Santa Muerte worshippers in Mexico and in the United States have sacrificed human beings to Santa Muerte as an offering.

Her followers – criminals, as well as people not involved in criminal activity – believe that the entire world and its population is her domain and that she will one day come for each of us, similar to the Angel of Death. She will use the Scythe to take us. Then she will look at the Scales of Justice to determine whether she takes us to Heaven or to Hell. That determination is based on, did you worship her? Did you leave her gifts?

Now, here is the thing that is most troubling about the

Mexican Cartels and Gangs who worship Santa Muerte. The Cartels believe that it does not matter that they have chosen a life as a criminal. They do not think it matters that they have brutally tortured and beheaded people. They believe that, despite murdering all those people, the fact that they worshipped Santa Muerte will guarantee that she will take them to Heaven! So, one must wonder... where is the deterrent for them to not commit these murders? There is none. We must keep in mind that the people who are involved in this type of criminal activity have no morals or ethics and see nothing wrong with killing their enemy. The other thing that makes these Cartels and Gang members dangerous is that they are not afraid to die – again, because they know that Santa Muerte is taking them to Heaven.

As demonstrated by the following examples, law enforcement officers need to be aware of the use of Santa Muerte by all types of criminals in the United States.

MEXICAN CARTEL MURDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Father Sacrifices Son to Santa Muerte in California

On September 14, 2018, I received a call from an Orange County Prosecutor regarding a murder case. This prosecutor had attended a presentation that I had given in the City of Industry, outside Los Angeles. She advised me that she was going to have a detective call me about a murder case involving Santa Muerte. She went on to tell me that a 6-year-old little boy by the name of Nathan Sanchez had been brutally stabbed to death by his own father! The detective told me that they had learned that the father, 38-year-old Alejandro Sanchez-Santoyo, had stabbed his son to death as an offering to Santa Muerte. The detective also told me that they had learned that the father was frequenting a Santa Muerte temple in Huntington Park,



California. Coincidentally I had been to a Santa Muerte Temple in Huntington Park a few months earlier. I sent a photo of the front of the temple to the detective and he later called me and told me that he had confirmed that the father was visiting the Santa Muerte Temple on a regular basis.

MEXICAN CARTEL BEHEADING IN CHANDLER, ARIZONA

Crisantos Moroyoqui-Yocupicio, 39, had pleaded no contest to second-degree murder in the death of 38-year-old Martin Alejandro Cota-Monroy at an apartment in the Phoenix suburb of Chandler on Oct. 10, 2010.

Cota-Monroy had stolen 400 pounds of marijuana and some meth from the Sinaloa Cartel, but told his bosses that the marijuana had been seized by Border Patrol. The Sinaloa Cartel learned the truth and hired men to kidnap him from Arizona and kill him in Nogales, Mexico.

Cota-Monroy was able to talk his way out of being killed, saying he would pay back the money and use his house for collateral. It turned out that the house did not belong to Cota-Monroy, and he fled to the Phoenix area, leading the cartel to hire assassins to go to Arizona and kill him. This time, the cartel members posed as friends and used Cota-Monroy's belief in Santa Muerte to get close to him in order to kill him.

The Sicarios or hitmen then used a large kitchen knife to behead Cota-Monroy, leaving his head and headless body on the living room floor. Investigators found a shrine to Santa Muerte inside the home where Cota-Monroy was beheaded.

THE CHICAGO SANTA MUERTE MURDER CREW

In 2010, a group of subjects who were Santa Muerte worshippers began their killing spree. One of the first cases occurred in 2010 with the discovery of three bodies in an abandoned vehicle. Two of the bodies were in the trunk and the other one was in the back seat. All three victims had their throats slashed and were nearly decapitated. In another case, four victims were found shot to death in the garage of a residence. The murderers were involved in drug trafficking, and they would set up drug deals with their victims. They would sell the victims ounces of methamphetamine and cocaine, gradually building up the trust of the victims. Then the Santa Muerte crew would negotiate for the sale of larger amounts of drugs. When

the Santa Muerte Crew would meet their victims to complete the sale of the drugs, they would arrive with wrapped items that appeared to be – but were not – drugs; then the Santa Muerte Crew would tie up their victims, take their money, and kill them.

In one case in 2014, the Chicago Police Gang unit was set up on surveillance on one of the suspects and followed him to an apartment complex. The Officers observed the suspects enter the apartment building and continued their surveillance from outside the building. A short time later, the Officers observed the subjects run out of the apartment building. At about the same time, the Officers heard a call come over the radio, indicating that shots had been fired at the same apartment building. The Officers chased the suspects, and one of the suspects then began firing a firearm towards the officers, striking one of the Officers in the leg. Officers returned fire and shot and killed the leader of the crew, Arturo Ibarra.

The Officers returned to the apartment building and found that three victims had their throats slashed. Two of the victims were dead, lying face down with their heads nearly decapitated and with their hands tied behind their backs. The third victim somehow managed to escape and went to the apartment across the hallway, banging on the door for help. As the door opened, the resident saw that the victim was covered in blood and assumed that he had been shot. That is why the call came in as shots being fired.

On August 28, 2017, I met with Cook County prosecutor Nina Ricci. She showed me several case photos related to the different murders committed by the Santa Muerte Murder Crew. Some of the photos were gruesome, reminding me of the type of Cartel violence in Mexico.

As I was looking at the photo of the crime scene in the apartment building where the three victims had their



throats slashed, I noticed that there was a dresser chest in the room that had several religious prayer candles on top of it. There were various candles that you might see in a Church which included Jesus Christ, The Virgin Mary, Santo Nino de Atocha, and Saint Pope John Paul II.

As I continued to examine this same photo, I saw that there were three prayer candles on the floor against the wall, next to the same dresser chest and near the feet of one of the murder victims. I took a closer look at these three candles and noticed that these candles were different than the ones on top of the dresser. These three prayer candles were Santa Muerte candles! I mentioned this to the prosecutors, and I told them that I believed all

the candles on top of the dresser belonged to the victim(s), but that the Santa Muerte candles on the floor belonged to the subjects who committed the murders. One of the prosecutors then stated, “Three Santa Muerte candles and three victims”! I believed that the Santa Muerte Murder Crew were going to kill their victims anyway, but I also believe that they also made their victims’ death an offering to Santa Muerte.

SANTA MUERTE ATTEMPTED HUMAN SACRIFICES / MURDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

On 9/20/2013, Loco Park Norteno gang member Jose Navarro attempted to murder Sureno gang member Ivan “Monstro” Ortega in the city of Watsonville by shooting him. Jose Navarro, who was known to the victim, approached Ortega while he was sitting in his parked car. Navarro shot Ortega before he was able to get out of the car. As Ortega got out of the car, Navarro pointed the gun at Ortega’s chest and attempted to shoot again, but the gun malfunctioned. Navarro then panicked and ran, but was eventually located by the police and placed under arrest. While in jail, awaiting his trial, Navarro made a phone call



to an associate, telling him how Santa Muerte was involved in the shooting:

JAIL PHONE CALL RECORDING

Navarro: “Yeah man! For real! You know what happened man? You know what happened man?”

Associate: “Really? Tell me”

Navarro: “I had already told my Santa Muerte that she had to take me to someone and that I had to kill. If I didn’t kill him, that they would turn me in man, and that’s how it happened. That’s why I’m telling you, don’t play with Santa Muerte, because it’s not a game. You don’t believe that she exists or that – but, for real, man. Everything has fucking consequences, bro.”

ATTEMPTED HUMAN SACRIFICE TO SANTA MUERTE IN TENNESSEE

On December 26, 2017, some friends were gathered inside a small trailer in Clarksville, Tennessee, and they were preparing dinner. Bernardino Molina was cutting fish, when he began to cry. With tears rolling down his face, he looked at Jose Raul Mendez and said, “You are about to die! We are going to sacrifice you to Santa Muerte!” Molina then yelled at the other people in the trailer to lock the door

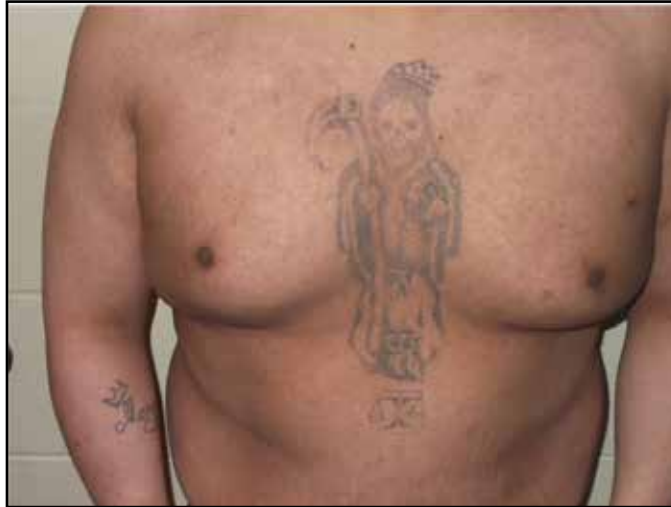
and windows! Mendez ran to a bedroom and attempted to crawl out of the window, but he was stopped, punched and stabbed on the arm and head. He managed to escape from them and ran to another bedroom where he barely managed to escape out the window. The subjects then ran out of the trailer to look for him, but Mendez hid under a different trailer until the police arrived and arrested everyone.

SANTA MUERTE AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING WITH ATTEMPTED HUMAN SACRIFICE

Between 2019 and 2021, a Mexican Cartel fraudulently obtained work visas for over 500 migrants from Mexico and South America to work the farms in Georgia. These migrants thought they were coming to the United States to live the American Dream, but their dream would soon turn into a nightmare. As soon as the migrants arrived, their documents were taken away from them by the cartel and they lived in deplorable conditions. They were also forced to work for little or no pay and were treated badly.

One of the cartel leaders, Mendoza selected one of the female migrants to be his own personal slave. He would severely beat her and repeatedly rape her. One day, the

victim managed to run away and eventually found work as a nanny for a family. The victim was watching the children play in the front yard of their home when Mendoza drove up with his mother in the car. Mendoza then exited his car holding a knife in one hand and ran towards the victim. Mendoza began beating her on her face and head with his fist, and then he grabbed her by the hair and dragged her to his car. He then drove away while continuing to beat the victim. When this happened the children ran inside and told their parents what had happened. The parents called 911.



As Mendoza drove away with the victim in his car, he made a telephone call and told the person he was speaking to that he was going to have to kill her! Mendoza then took the victim to his home and threw her on the ground. There was a Santa Muerte shrine near where the victim was lying. Mendoza took some blood from the victim's bloody nose and placed some of her blood on the scythe of Santa Muerte. He then cut a piece of the victim's hair off and place it on the Santa Muerte shrine. He then took a photograph of the victim and wrote her name on the back of the photo before placing it underneath the statue of Santa Muerte. Mendoza was planning to sacrifice the victim to Santa Muerte!

As Mendoza was preparing to kill and sacrifice the victim to Santa Muerte, the SWAT team stormed the front door and rescued the victim. Mendoza was placed under arrest and in 2022 he was found guilty of aggravated kidnapping and other charges, and was sentenced to 30 years in federal prison.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIFFERENT COLORS

Santa Muerte candles and statues can be found in a variety of colors, to include red, black, white, purple, yellow, green, and other colors. People believe that each color serves a different purpose when praying to Santa Muerte. For example, many have said that the red color is for love, the white is for good luck, and the black is for protection.

When I train law enforcement officers, I tell them to just focus on Santa Muerte, not on the meaning of the

various colors. The reason for this is that the different colors mean different things to different people. There are other instructors who provide a list of the colors and their meanings. The problem I have with that is that I have seen other lists of the colors with different meanings. So whose list do you use? You must remember that Santa Muerte does not have a central leader or place where the colors originate, such as the Vatican. What I have

seen in Mexico – and even in the United States – is that everyone wants to be THE Santa Muerte temple, so there is a competition occurring.

"..THE DIFFERENT COLORS ARE BULLSHIT! IT IS A MARKETING STRATEGY SO THAT WE CAN SELL MORE SANTA MUERTE ITEMS."

I have visited the first public Santa Muerte shrine built in Mexico, in Tepito, Mexico, several times. I know the founder, whose name is Queta Romero. She also sells different colors of Santa Muerte statues and candles. One day I asked her what her thoughts were on the meaning of the colors. She only speaks Spanish, but basically her response was; "Robert, the different colors are bullshit! It is a marketing strategy so that we can sell more Santa Muerte items." Remember, even though she made this statement, she is a true believer in Santa Muerte. She then told me, "Just because you mistakenly used the 'wrong color' of Santa Muerte, Santa Muerte is still going to listen to your prayer!"

So, do not worry about the meaning of the colors, but rather focus on the fact that you have encountered Santa Muerte and what that signifies, or could mean, while conducting your investigation.

GOD BLESS US EVERY ONE.

ROBERT ALMONTE AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Robert Almonte was appointed in 2010 by President Barack Obama as the United States Marshal for the Western District of Texas, where he served for six years, until 2016. He had previously retired after 25 years with the El Paso, Texas, Police Department, having attained the rank of Deputy Chief. As the Deputy Chief, Robert oversaw the Major Crimes Bureau, which included the Homicide Unit, Crimes Against Persons Unit, Crimes Against Children Unit, Crime Scene Unit, as well as the gang and narcotics units. Robert spent 13 years of his career assigned to Narcotics, where he worked as a detective, sergeant, and commander. Robert served three terms as President of the Texas Narcotic Officers Association, as well as Executive Director. He also served as Vice President and regional director for the NNOAC.

Robert is recognized as an expert on Mexican Cartels and has been interviewed on this subject by “Good

Morning America”, “Fox and Friends”, “NBC News Today”, The New York Post, The Washington Post, News Nation, and various international news outlets. Robert continues to conduct extensive research on the Mexican Cartels by going into Mexico and conducting ride-alongs with different law enforcement agencies on the border. Robert has consulted for several prosecutors and law enforcement agencies regarding Mexican Cartel and Gang-related narcotics, human trafficking, and homicides in the United States.

Robert Almonte has trained thousands of law enforcement officers in the United States and Europe on the subject of Mexican Cartels. He has also been qualified as an expert witness in federal and state courts and has testified regarding Santa Muerte and other “patron saints” related to criminal activities.

He graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor’s Degree in Criminal Justice Administration from Park University.



CONVERSATIONS ABOUT COUNTERFEIT MEDICATIONS ARE HARD, BUT THEY'RE IMPORTANT

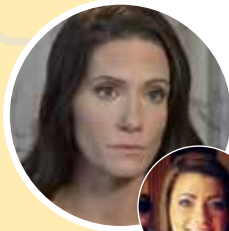
Talk to your community about the deadly consequences of counterfeit pills.

THIS IS WHAT SURVIVORS WISH THEY COULD HAVE SAID:



"Buying a pill online is just as dangerous as buying one off the street. You never know what's in them; your pill could be filled with poison."

Rachel Blado's son, Josh, died after taking a fake Xanax made with fentanyl. He bought pills online after he saw a TED talk claiming that online drug sellers with good reviews were safe.



"You cannot tell a counterfeit by looking at it. Don't buy a pill from a co-worker or friend."

Caroline DiVita's sister, Maggie, was killed instantly when she took what she thought was an oxycodone pill for her back pain.



"Just because it looks like a pill doesn't mean it's a safe pharmacy product. Criminals make fake pills with deadly ingredients and sell them for money. When your friend offers you a pill, ask yourself, 'Why do they have this?'"

Lisa Hicks' son, Joe, died after he pulled a muscle and a friend gave him fake painkillers.



Contact Sven Bergmann at 614-401-8010 for training, intelligence, support and materials. Email him at SBergmann@ventureglobal.com.

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COUNTERFEIT PILLS FACT SHEET

FAKE PRESCRIPTION PILLS • WIDELY AVAILABLE • INCREASINGLY LETHAL

DEA LAB TESTING REVEALS THAT
4 OUT OF EVERY 10 PILLS
WITH FENTANYL CONTAIN A POTENTIALLY
LETHAL DOSE



Counterfeit pills often contain fentanyl and are more lethal than ever before.

DEA officials report a dramatic rise in the number of counterfeit pills containing at least 2 mg of fentanyl, which is considered a deadly dose.

Drug traffickers are using fake pills to exploit the opioid crisis and prescription drug misuse. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports more than 100,000 drug overdose deaths in the United States in the most recent 12-month reporting period, the most ever recorded.

Fentanyl, the synthetic opioid most commonly found in counterfeit pills, is the primary driver in this alarming increase in overdose deaths.

Criminal drug networks are flooding the U.S. with deadly fake pills.

- Criminal drug networks are mass-producing fake pills and falsely marketing them as legitimate prescription pills to deceive the American public.
- Counterfeit pills are easy to purchase, widely available, often contain fentanyl or methamphetamine, and can be deadly.
- Fake prescription pills are easily accessible and often sold on social media and e-commerce platforms, making them available to anyone with a smartphone, including minors.
- Many counterfeit pills are made to look like prescription opioids such as oxycodone (Oxycontin®, Percocet®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), and alprazolam (Xanax®); or stimulants like amphetamines (Adderall®).



For more information about counterfeit pills, go to [DEA.gov/OnePill](https://www.dea.gov/OnePill)

Data as of December 2021



*Photos of counterfeit pills do not represent all available fake pills.

‘It’s crazy out there’: The reasons behind Oregon’s deepening drug crisis

By Conrad Wilson (Originally appeared on OPB.org in May, 2023 and is reprinted here with permission. The NNOAC is grateful for this in-depth article and excellent investigative reporting.)

Fueled by fentanyl, the number of overdose deaths in Oregon has soared since 2019. And while the surge in overdoses is part of a national problem, the state’s underfunded treatment system is struggling to provide local solutions

Editor’s note: *Throughout 2023, OPB is taking a deep look at the biggest social and economic challenges facing Oregon today — their origins, their impacts and possible solutions. This week we are looking at Oregon’s drug crisis.*



Some of the drugs, guns and cash confiscated by law enforcement in Oregon and Western Washington in a single month, April 2023. Drugs, especially fentanyl, are coming into the state in unprecedented quantities. Photos provided from Vancouver Police Department, U.S. Department of Justice, Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office and Oregon State Police.

- Kristyna Wentz-Graff / OPB

For years, Oregonians have reported some of the highest rates of substance use disorder in the nation on federal surveys. The opioid crisis is nearly three decades old and use of methamphetamine, long Oregon’s deadliest drug, has not abated. At the same time, the state consistently has among the lowest treatment availability in the country, according to surveys conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Fentanyl — a cheap, incredibly addictive synthetic opioid — has made all of those problems much worse.

More Oregonians are dying from drug overdoses than ever before. On average, three people die every day from an unintended drug overdose, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

“It’s crazy out there,” said Rick Treleven, the chief executive officer at BestCare Treatment Services, a recovery services provider based in Central Oregon. “This is a very dangerous time to be a drug addict in Oregon.”

Related: Fentanyl fuels string of deadly weekend overdoses in Portland

That could be said about most states right now. Oregon was not even among the states with the highest rate of overdose deaths in 2021, according to the most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But the size of the problem here has multiplied well beyond the state’s ability to manage it. And the explosion of fentanyl into communities across the state has pushed an already unstable, understaffed treatment system, drained by the pandemic, to a breaking point.



*A lethal dose of fentanyl is displayed on the point of a No. 2 pencil, in this image from the DEA’s “One Pill Can Kill” campaign.
- Courtesy of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration*

Fentanyl puts both those experimenting with drugs for the first time and longtime users at a much higher risk of overdose than most other drugs. People have died from a single dose, some without knowing they were consuming the drug.

“Fentanyl is increasingly being found in all sorts of drugs on the street so people may not know they’re getting it,” said Dr. Tom Jeanne, deputy state health officer and deputy state epidemiologist.

That’s because illicit fentanyl is often used to make illegal painkillers as well as recreational drugs.

“We are having an overdose epidemic like I’ve never seen and I’ve been in this field for over 40 years,” Treleaven said, speaking at an April meeting of the Opioid Settlement Prevention, Treatment and Recovery board, which is responsible for deciding how Oregon should spend the millions of dollars it’s receiving as part of settlements with drug companies that helped fuel the opioid crisis.

The U.S. Department of Justice summed up the scope of the fentanyl epidemic in an April announcement that it had charged the leaders of a major Mexican drug cartel for their role in importing fentanyl into the United States.

“Fentanyl is now the leading cause of death for Americans ages 18 to 49, and it has fueled the opioid epidemic that has been ravaging families and communities across the United States for approximately the past eight years,” the statement reads. “Between 2019 and 2021, fatal overdoses increased by approximately 94%, with an estimated 196 Americans dying each day from fentanyl.”

For years, China was the main supplier of illicit fentanyl, which people could purchase online and ship — like a package — to an address in the United States. Now, China is the primary supplier of the chemicals used to make fentanyl for drug cartels based in Mexico which ship the drugs into the United States.

“Fentanyl is now the leading cause of death for Americans ages 18 to 49..Between 2019 and 2021, fatal overdoses increased by approximately 94%, with an estimated 196 Americans dying each day from fentanyl.”



An authentic 30mg oxycodone pill, left, compared to a counterfeit pill containing fentanyl, in this image from the DEA’s “One Pill Can Kill” campaign.

- Courtesy of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

Knowing where the drugs are coming from has not been enough to stop their arrival. Despite the Justice Department’s recent high profile indictments, efforts to stop the fentanyl emergency at its source have largely failed. That leaves state leaders and health care providers trying to treat their way out of the problem. And that’s a task Oregon is unprepared to perform.

As of 2021, Oregon’s overdose death rate was in the bottom half of the 32 states that share that information with the CDC. But the fact that the state has so many barriers for people seeking treatment has health officials concerned, especially for the communities of color hit hardest by the rise in deaths.

“Despite similar opioid misuse across all races and ethnicities, American Indian/Alaska Native and Black communities experience dramatically higher rates of overdose deaths compared to other racial and ethnic groups, and these inequities are continuing to worsen,” Rachael Banks, public health director at the Oregon Health Authority, told state lawmakers earlier this year. “These populations have been disproportionately impacted by systemic racism, social-economic-political injustices, and bias.”

Solutions to an international crisis are not easy to come by on the local level. Still, law enforcement and health experts in Oregon agree the state needs to support prevention, enforcement and treatment efforts simultaneously. Right now, most acknowledge, those efforts are falling short.

‘A brief moment of clarity’

On a cloudy spring morning several people gathered on the fifth floor of the Blackburn Center in east Portland, which offers temporary housing to people coming out of

detox. The center is operated by Central City Concern, a nonprofit that supports those experiencing homelessness through housing, medical care and substance use treatment.



Residents participate in a behavioral change meeting at the Blackburn Center in east Portland, May 5, 2023. The 80-bed center, operated by Central City Concern, provides housing for people in recovery, along with health care, employment counseling, addiction treatment and other support services.

- Kristyna Wentz-Graff / OPB

Most gathered that day were weeks or months into their recovery and were sharing what they were doing to stay sober. One person said caring for his cat helped him stay actively involved in his recovery. Another said he was looking for a new job so he could attend recovery meetings more frequently.

Lisa Greenfield, a peer case manager, leads the group. Greenfield said political leaders and policymakers need to center the voices of those who have lived experience. Right now, she said, there's still a stigma attached to people battling a substance use disorder and those in recovery.

Peer case manager Lisa Greenfield keeps a framed mugshot of herself in her office at the Blackburn Center in east Portland, May 4, 2023. "That's me in active addiction," she said. "I have that framed just to identify with my people to show them that you can recover. I'm just like them too."

- Kristyna Wentz-Graff / OPB



"Talking to the people who have lived experience and have been through the system" is really what's needed, she said.

Inside Greenfield's office there are bins filled with fentanyl test strips, safe injection kits and naloxone, a drug also known by its brand name, Narcan, that's used to reverse an overdose.

On the wall, there's a framed photo of her at age 23 — it's a mugshot.

"That's me in active addiction," she said. "I have that framed just to identify with my people to show them that you can recover. I'm just like them too."

Greenfield said she began using opioids when she was 17. By the time she was 24 she'd had enough. She remembers sitting on the floor of a bathroom, trying to shoot up.

"I couldn't, my veins were just all shot," she said. "I know it sounds really corny, but I had a moment of clarity, like just a brief moment of clarity and I just was like, 'what am I doing?'"

Greenfield said she called her aunt who met her and gave her bus fare to get to detox — a step she had taken before. This time she kept going — from detox, to a housing program that offered medication assisted recovery and ultimately to a job helping others make the same journey.

Greenfield has been in recovery for more than seven years.

Throughout the pandemic, she came to work in-person and is now seeing the deadly effects of fentanyl that are seemingly everywhere she looks.

"There's more overdoses than ever before and so we've had to install Narcan," Greenfield said.

Red metal boxes full of the overdose reversal drug are attached along the walls of the Blackburn Center like fire extinguishers. Greenfield said fentanyl has created

an environment where she and her colleagues are “constantly living and working in what is almost a fight or flight mindset.”

Overdose emergency kits are installed throughout the Blackburn Center in east Portland, May 4, 2023. The 80-bed center, operated by Central City Concern, provides housing for people in recovery, along with health care, employment counseling, addiction treatment and other support services.

- Kristyna Wentz-Graff / OPB

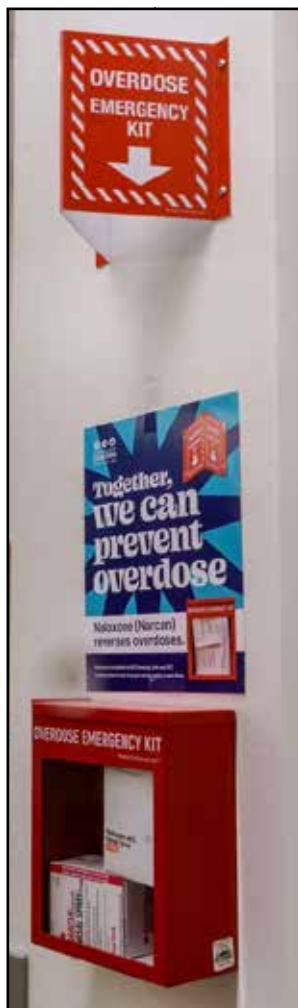
“Am I going to find a person overdosed on the street? Or is one of my clients going to overdose? That has been really hard,” Greenfield said. “I have reversed an overdose right outside of my office door.”

The trouble with fentanyl

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that’s 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Doctors use pharmaceutical fentanyl for treating severe pain, such as after surgery or for some patients with advanced cancers.

The illicit fentanyl crisis emerged around 2014, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. It’s part of what some health experts have identified as the third wave of the opioid epidemic. The first wave was driven by prescription pills and the second by heroin.

In 2019, a federal drug task force that operates in Oregon and Idaho seized 43 doses of fentanyl. Just three years later — in 2022 — they seized more than 32 million doses.



“Fentanyl is always the big question for everybody right now because it’s completely just crashed onto the scene over the last four years,” said Chris Gibson, executive director of the Oregon-Idaho High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). The program is one of 33 around the country funded by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.

“Back in 2018, we were looking at fentanyl as nothing,” Gibson said. “It wasn’t here.”

It’s here now, in staggering quantities.

And it’s cheap.

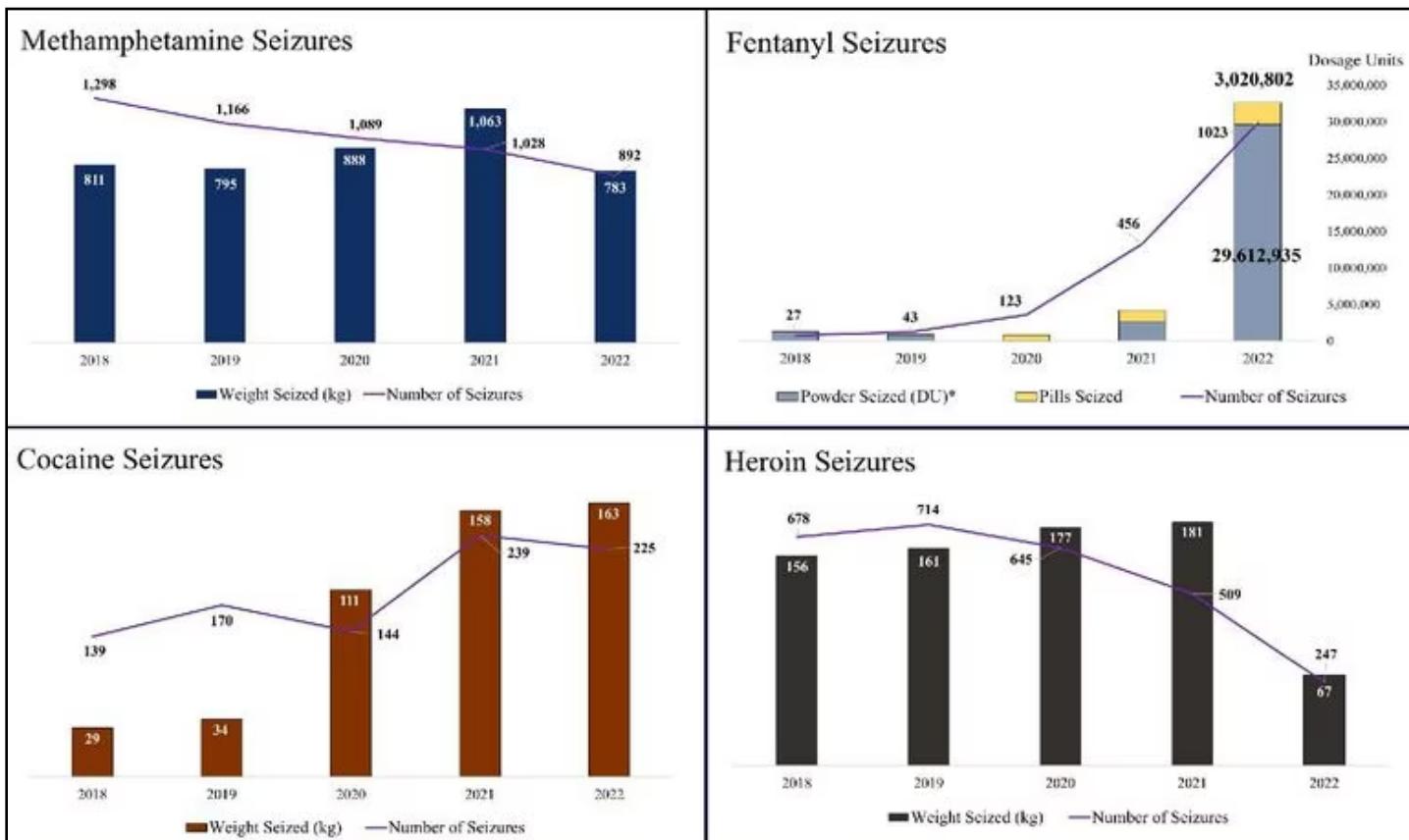
According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, it costs drug cartels roughly 10 cents to produce a fentanyl pill that can sell for \$10 to \$30. In a recent case out of Oregon, federal prosecutors said a 19-year-old was charged with selling powdered fentanyl as well as hundreds of fake prescription pills that contained illicit fentanyl for \$2 per pill.

“The price has really dropped dramatically,” said Steven Mygrant, an assistant U.S. Attorney in Oregon who has spent his career largely prosecuting drug crimes. “Supply, conversely, has skyrocketed. The natural consequence of that is that more people are dying.”

These provided photos show a makeshift fentanyl laboratory inside a storage unit in Vancouver, Wash., Oct. 13, 2022. The lab was part of a drug trafficking ring that brought fentanyl from Mexico, pressed it, and sold an average of 10,000 pills a week.

- Courtesy of U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Oregon





This graphic from the 2022 Annual Report of Oregon-Idaho High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), shows seizures of fentanyl, in both pill and powdered forms, rapidly outpaced other drug seizures in 2022. The report states “more than 423,690 kilograms, and 3,383,975 dosage units of all illicit drugs seized during 2022: Three million of which were counterfeit prescription pills containing fentanyl.”

- Courtesy of Oregon-Idaho High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area

From 2020 to 2022, fentanyl related prosecutions increased roughly 500% for Oregon’s U.S. Attorney’s Office. Meth and heroin cases have become less common, Mygrant said: “What was a two-headed monster, now fentanyl’s king.”

Fentanyl in the United States is mostly produced by two Mexican drug cartels: the Sinaloa Cartel, the country’s oldest drug trafficking organization, and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel.

“The Sinaloa Cartel operated as an affiliation of drug traffickers and money launderers who obtain precursor chemicals — largely from China — for the manufacture of synthetic drugs, manufacture drugs in Mexico, move those drugs into the United States, and collect, launder, and transfer the proceeds of drug trafficking,” the U.S. Department of Justice said in a news release in April announcing that members of the cartel had been charged with money laundering, fentanyl trafficking and witness retaliation, among others

Money laundering funds both the cartels in Mexico and those supplying the chemicals out of China, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

It also helps fund the production of chemicals required to make more fentanyl. And it allows Chinese nationals involved in the drug trade to access large amounts of money that they wouldn’t otherwise be able to withdraw due to China’s banking restrictions. Some Chinese nationals have helped the cartels get their profits across the southern border as goods to be sold in Mexico. That allows the cartels to convert their profits back into pesos and skirt tight Mexican banking laws that limit the amount of U.S. dollars that can get deposited monthly into accounts.

Anne Milgram, administrator of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, told a Senate committee in February the agency has mapped “the entire Sinaloa Cartel and Jalisco Cartel networks.”

Those networks extend onto American soil.

“We are targeting the drug trafficking organizations and gangs located in the United States that are responsible for the greatest number of drug-related deaths and violence,” Milgram stated.

In Oregon, law enforcement needs more people to do long-term investigations focused on “the ultimate source of supply,” HIDTA’s Gibson said.

“The reality of this is we’re treading water on the enforcement side,” he said. “There’s some really good case work that’s happening, good investigations that are happening. When you don’t have the people that are necessary, you can only do so much with those. And more and more cases are coming in and those start to pile up.”

The trouble with Measure 110

On Nov. 3, 2020, Oregonians passed Ballot Measure 110, making Oregon the first state to decriminalize the possession of small amounts of drugs. The second part of the measure aimed to increase funding for treatment, using money from cannabis tax revenues.

Since its passage, Oregon has struggled to fully implement the law. While possessing small amounts of drugs is no longer a criminal offense, the provision of additional treatment has lagged. Some police and prosecutors say Measure 110 is the reason behind a substance abuse crisis that appears out of control.



A man, 23, sits on the sidewalk in downtown Portland, preparing what he says is heroin, June 25, 2021. Measure 110, a drug treatment and recovery act, aims to connect drug users to treatment and recovery services, including housing assistance instead of serving time in jail for possessing small amounts of drugs.

- Kristyna Wentz-Graff / OPB

“Since Ballot Measure 110 passed, unequivocally, the price of fentanyl has, in Oregon, dropped precipitously, availability has increased exponentially,” Mygrant, the assistant U.S. Attorney said.

And some voters are fed up. A recent poll by DHM Research found nearly two-thirds of voters support bringing back criminal penalties for drug possession.

There’s little debate about whether the expansion of treatment options most voters anticipated would follow the passage of Measure 110 have fully materialized. They have not.

It’s also true that Oregon’s controversial decriminalization law passed at the same time fentanyl was taking the entire country by storm. Supporters argue that while Measure 110 is unique to Oregon, it cannot be blamed for a new wave of the opioid epidemic that has hit every state in recent years.

The spike in overdose deaths also coincided with the coronavirus pandemic, which destabilized the state’s health care systems, further reduced treatment options for substance-use disorder and created a perfect storm of isolation and social disruption that contributed to increased drug use. Overdose deaths spiked nationally during the pandemic.

“It’s important to recognize that the Measure 110 experiment came during a perfect storm,” said Dr. Andrew Mendenhall, CEO and president of Central City Concern. “Measure 110 has funded a lot of important programs in ways that we will start to feel the impact of over the next couple years.”

As those programs begin to roll out and the state begins to spend the approximately \$325 million it’s set to receive over the next 15 years as part of the settlements reached with pharmacies and drug companies responsible for fueling the opioid epidemic, Mendenhall is hopeful that services for those struggling with addiction will begin to catch up to the need.

“Let’s not forget criminalizing substance use disorder for the street level consumer who has a substance use disorder ... was not a successful strategy,” Mendenhall said.



A syringe is seen in a tent near the intersection of Southwest 12th Avenue and Southwest Columbia Street in downtown Portland, June 25, 2021.

- Kristyna Wentz-Graff / OPB

In hard numbers, experts say it's very hard to tell what effect Measure 110 is having. For years, Oregon's Criminal Justice Commission was able to use those charged with possession of a controlled substance to track people as they moved through the justice system. Since Measure 110 went into effect, the state agency that helps develop criminal justice policy no longer has that ability.

"We might have been able to talk about what percentage of folks received treatment previous to 110, at least in the criminal justice system area," said Ken Sanchagrin, the commission's executive director.

The data that was available was always imperfect and measured just a subset of people getting treatment, he said, but now that metric is gone.

"What would be necessary," to track the impact of the new measure, he said, "is for us or for others to partner with public health agencies to be able to track those individuals who are now receiving this new intervention to see what types of resources they're receiving."

Since Measure 110 went into effect on Feb. 1, 2021, law enforcement across the state has issued more than 4,700 violations to people with personal possession of drugs, such as meth or heroin, the two most common drugs cited. The citations vary wildly by county. As of April, law enforcement in Washington County issued 65 citations compared to Josephine County where police issued 910, according to data from the Oregon Judicial Department.

When someone is cited, they are given the number to

the Recovery Center Hotline, a service run by the nonprofit Lines for Life. They are supposed to call the hotline to be screened for problematic drug use or pay a fine. Proof of the screening is then supposed to be signed and returned to court. As of May 9, the service had received 1,112 calls, but just 189 people completed the screening. Only 37 people — less than 1% — cited for a Measure 110 violation had a substance use assessment signed and returned to the court by the end of April, according to the Oregon Judicial Department.

The trouble with treatment

While a new infusion of cash from the state's opioid settlements might help get more people into treatment, Oregon has long underinvested in substance use disorder treatment programs, experts say.

"Money was being invested, but the money that was being invested was really out of balance with community need more broadly," Mendenhall said. "That history of disinvestment has been long standing."

In 2008, Congress passed the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act. It prevented health insurance companies from providing lesser benefits for substance use disorder and mental health treatment than physical health.

"Prior to that it was very mixed and the rates that were being paid were lower than comparable rates for physical health services," Mendenhall said. "So that reduction meant that programs were themselves barely sustainable in terms of the rates that they were being paid."

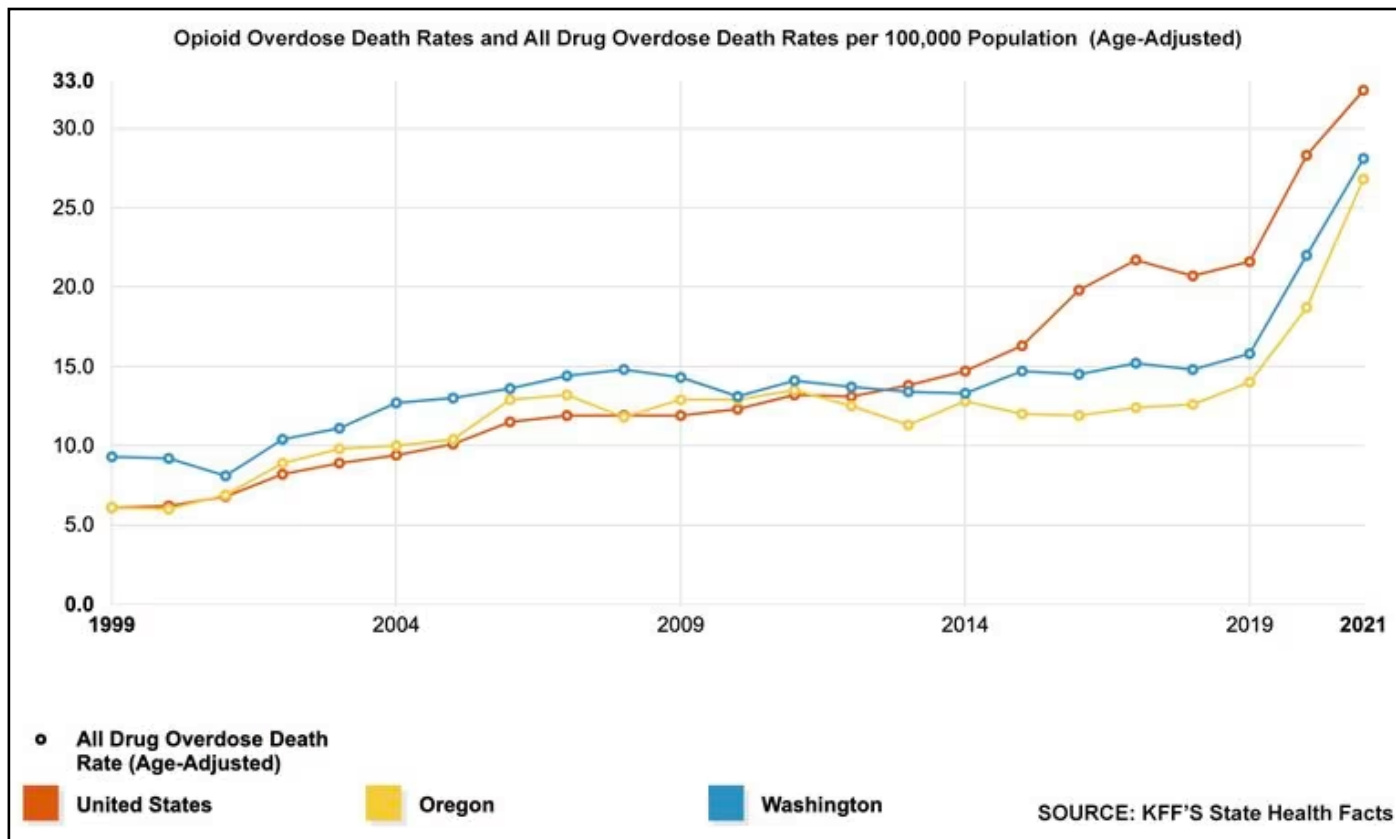
The passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010 also boosted support for treatment.

Despite those opportunities to catch up, the state hasn't.

"The most recent studies are telling us that Oregon has about 50% of the treatment access or treatment capacity that it needs to meet the population health needs of Oregonians more broadly," Mendenhall said, noting the shortage is in both residential and outpatient treatment.

And there aren't enough qualified providers to meet the need, even at current funding levels.

Central City Concern, for example, is down roughly a dozen drug and alcohol counselors. That means the organization is unable to serve roughly 400 people a year



Drug overdose rates for from 1999-2021, comparing the United States, Washington and Oregon. Data includes deaths from legally prescribed and illegally-made fentanyl, and is based on Kaiser Family Foundation analysis from the CDC and National Center for Health Statistics.

- Courtesy of Kaiser Family Foundation

who arrive seeking outpatient substance abuse treatment.

“We have people waiting,” Mendenhall said. “Substance use disorder is a condition where if people wait, people die.”

And even if they don’t die immediately, he said, people who don’t get help when they are ready for it, may no longer be ready when the help finally does arrive.

Another trend complicating treatment is poly-substance use. Essentially, people are using and becoming addicted to more substances, which makes treatment more difficult.

“Folks are coming in and they’re a lot sicker,” said John McIlveen, State Opioid Treatment Authority, Oregon Health Authority. “Issues are kind of compounding on top of each other and it’s making it more challenging to serve and treat the population.”

There’s also a lack of infrastructure, which includes everything from physical buildings to levels of treatment and support. Some people can go from detox to outpatient while others need detox and supportive housing or residential treatment which is even harder to come by. Treatment isn’t linear. Even in the best circumstances, someone can have a recurrence of use and may need to go to detox again. All of that takes capacity, communication and funding. And if there are also mental health issues at play, there needs to be a systematic way to get those addressed.

“We have to build infrastructure,” said Fernando Peña, executive director of NW Instituto Latino during an April meeting of the Opioid Settlement Prevention, Treatment and Recovery board. “We need to start thinking of builders of the system. Not funders of the system. If we just view ourselves as just funders we will fund what exists.”



Addiction is an alienating experience, so being able to connect to other teens with the same experience and being part of a community are integral pieces of recovery support at Harmony Academy in Lake Oswego, May 5, 2023. Harmony is a recovery high school, the first of its kind in Oregon, where young people 14-21 with substance misuse and co-occurring disorders can access a free education.

- Kristyna Wentz-Graff / OPB

And what exists isn't nearly enough. That's especially true when it comes to culturally specific treatment and recovery services, whether it be for communities of color or the LGBTQ+ community.

"When you see someone else who looks like you, thinks like you, knows the things that you've gone through, either trauma-wise or life experiences and you see on the other end that this person has been successful and has been able to sustain their recovery, it inspires hope," Amanda Ireland-Esquivel, executive director of Portland-based True Colors recovery, which offers peer mentoring services for LGBTQ+ adults new to recovery or struggling with recovery.

The nonprofit began less than one year ago and has already supported 100 people, Ireland-Esquivel said. Roughly 30% have improved their housing situation and 98% have stayed "crime free," she said.

Most recovery services programs in the state are based in the Portland metro area, Ireland-Esquivel said. She thinks more programs like hers need to exist in rural areas.

'The difference between life or death'

Solving Oregon's drug crisis will take more of everything — treatment options, trained professionals, prevention education, time and money.

Not all those things are in place. And yet, many people are working hard to change the current system to better support those in recovery and to prevent future tragedies.

During their time living in temporary housing at Central City Concern in Portland, participants work on securing long-term housing and establishing treatment. About a third of them go into residential treatment, a hospital, a shelter or housing, according to Central City Concern's data. But participants aren't required to say what they do next, so the outcome for about half of the people completing the program is officially "unknown," according to a spokesperson.

Greenfield, the peer case manager, said there isn't enough coordination and capacity between organizations to be able to get people into treatment — starting with detox centers that she said should be able to accept people "no matter what time of day it is." She said sometimes people are turned away because they're full or closed. If people use substances while in the program, they also need to go back to detox, further straining resources. She'd like to see more support for people at every phase of their recovery.

"They can get into detox, from detox, they can get into residential treatment, inpatient treatment. From there, they can get into a supportive housing program," she said. "If there was just this continuum of care just already in place, I think that we really could tackle some of what's going on."

In March, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved naloxone, the generic version of Narcan, as an over the counter drug making it widely available to anyone who wants to purchase it.

Related: Portland bar offers fentanyl testing strips and naloxone

House Bill 2395 in the Oregon Legislature, would also make it easier to access naloxone, protecting those who dispense it from liability and also decriminalize handing out drug testing strips in public. Testing strips can help users determine whether a drug, such as cocaine or a fake Oxycodone, contains illicit fentanyl. But they are not without limitations.

In December 2020, Jon and Jennifer Epstein's son Cal Epstein died from a fentanyl overdose after taking a pill made with illicit fentanyl. He was 18.

Before Cal died he Googled what would be a safe dose of “Oxy” for his weight and whether it might affect medication he was taking to treat his anxiety.



(Out of frame, left to right) Jon and Jennifer Epstein, with a photo of their son Cal at their Beaverton home, May 8, 2023. Cal died in 2020 from a fentanyl overdose after unknowingly taking a pill made with illicit fentanyl. They now share Cal’s story to help spread awareness, including advocating for school districts to teach lessons about the dangers of the drug.

- Kristyna Wentz-Graff / OPB

“He made a poor choice in reaching for an Oxy, but he was trying to be safe,” Jennifer Epstein said. “He was trying to make a good decision for himself, and the information wasn’t out there.”

She now works with the nonprofit, Song for Charlie, which aims to provide information about drug use for young people.

A survey the organization conducted in the fall of 2022 found, nationwide, teens weren’t aware just how dangerous fentanyl can be. Only about one-third of high school students understood the risks posed by illicit fentanyl and fake pills.

Jennifer Epstein watches a video about her child’s death from fentanyl, as she speaks on a panel for the Beaverton School District’s Community Conversation about Fentanyl event, May 18, 2023. Epstein’s son, Cal, who attended Beaverton schools, died in 2020 after unknowingly taking fentanyl. The district is one of the first in the country to have a fentanyl curriculum. They’ve made the program and resources free for all schools to use.

- Kristyna Wentz-Graff / OPB

“They actually listed fentanyl about as dangerous as cigarettes, because they just really don’t know,” Jon Epstein said.

According to the Lund Report, Oregon had the fastest growing rate of 15- to 19-year-olds to die from a drug overdose between 2019 and 2021.

Sharon Dursi Martin, is the principal at Harmony Academy, a charter school in Lake Oswego that’s the first in Oregon aimed at providing an education as well as recovery support for youth with substance use disorders.

“If you can intervene now, they have a power that they can change things and they can bring more people along with them,” Dursi Martin said. “It’s like we keep ignoring adolescents because it’s costly and it’s full of liability. It’s also full of hope. We can save lives.”

Dursi Martin, who is also in recovery, said when adolescents enter recovery, it’s profound.

“They tend to transcend once they have had all this experience and then they stop using drugs, they’re like, ‘well, what do I do now?’ And they have amazing potential,” she said. “They haven’t had all the consequences for the most part, yet. It’s healable and it’s changeable.”

Oregon is slowly moving towards a systemic approach to improve prevention education for kids.

The Epsteins have testified in favor of Oregon Senate Bill 238, which passed the House on May 19 and is now



headed to Gov. Tina Kotek’s desk for a signature. The bill requires the state to develop curricula about the dangers of fentanyl and other opioids. School districts are required to teach lessons on the topic starting in the 2024-2025 school year.



Jon Epstein at his Beaverton home, May 9, 2023. The couple lost their son Cal in 2020, when he died from a fentanyl overdose after unknowingly taking a pill made with illicit fentanyl. They now share Cal’s story to help spread awareness, including advocating for school districts to teach lessons about the dangers of the drug. Jon Epstein says “Most youth don’t know [about fentanyl], and for many youth, knowing could be the difference between life and death.”

- Kristyna Wentz-Graff / OPB

Both Epsteins want to see schools, along with public health and public safety become more nimble as the opiate crisis continues to evolve. The Epsteins have worked with the Beaverton School District, which launched an awareness campaign in the spring of 2021 called “Fake and Fatal” to educate students about the dangers of fake pills and fentanyl.

“Right now we’re talking about fentanyl, but ... other drugs are coming down the line that may be out there in six months or nine months, or a year from now,” Jennifer Epstein said



The CDC has published materials called One Pill Can Kill that parents, teachers and school districts can use. But she said the entire system, from schools to law enforcement to public health, needs to be able to pivot quicker with messages that range from prevention to harm reduction.

The Epsteins have used their family’s tragedy to bring about new awareness to fentanyl. Now they’re pushing for longer term prevention, to try to reduce the numbers of people affected by substance use disorder.

“The knowledge gap with kids is so large,” Jon Epstein said. “Most youth don’t know about fentanyl — especially in fake pills — and for many youth, knowing could be the difference between life and death.”

This examination of Oregon’s deepening drug crisis was written and reported by Conrad Wilson, edited by Lillian Mongeau Hughes, produced for the web by Meagan Cuthill and Bob Payne, with photos by Kristyna Wentz-Graff. This series exploring both the biggest problems facing Oregon and potential solutions is sponsored by the Oregon Community Foundation. And none of OPB’s journalism happens without you. Help us tell more stories like this one — and ensure stories like this reach as many people as possible — by joining as a Sustainer now.



If you know or think someone is struggling with addiction, ask them if you can help. Your concern might be just what they need to start their recovery journey, and your support could make all the difference in their success.



The legalization of marijuana creates new challenges for law enforcement and allows cartel-backed operations to expand into the homeland

By Dr. Kevin Sabet and Connor Kubeisy

The first stated goal of California's ballot measure to legalize recreational marijuana was to "take nonmedical marijuana production and sales out of the hands of the illegal market." This has inarguably failed. California's illicit market has blossomed and given cover to cartels to expand into the homeland, creating new challenges for law enforcement. As illustrated by California's failed experiment, legalization threatens public health, public safety, and the environment.

First, it is important to recognize the extent to which legalization has failed to eliminate the illicit market. In California, also the first state to legalize so-called "medical marijuana," two-thirds of sales remain in the illicit market. New York Governor Kathy Hochul estimated 2,500 unlicensed marijuana shops popped up New York City alone following legalization. And a 2022 report from Leafly, a pro-marijuana publication, estimated that 80% of sales in New Jersey, 60% of sales in Michigan, 55% of sales in Illinois, and 44% of sales in Nevada continue to occur in the illicit market. After more than a decade of "legal" sales, legalization is still not going as planned.

Many supporters of legalization have begun pointing fingers. In June 2023, a board member of the California Cannabis Industry Association attributed California's growing illicit market to "two fatal flaws: high taxes and local control." The industry regularly lobbies for lower taxes, aiming to improve their bottom line and increase their competitiveness with the illicit market.

However, reducing taxes on marijuana is incompatible with another oft-cited talking point for legalization: that it will generate billions in tax revenue, helping to fund everything from public schools to treatment programs. A state cannot simultaneously maximize tax revenue from the sale of marijuana while lowering taxes in an effort to displace the illicit market for it.

The industry's other target is local control, the policy that allows cities to ban the cultivation and/or sale of marijuana. In California, 68% of cities banned dispensaries. In Colorado, 72% of cities did; in New Jersey, it's 71%. Despite purported support for legalization, the opening of dispensaries in one's neighborhood remains controversial. Take Princeton, New Jersey, for example, where 75% of residents voted for Public Question 1, the statewide legalization ballot measure. Even so, after intense pushback from residents—who seemingly supported legalization in general—Princeton's City Council opted to ban dispensaries at the local level.

Like they have done in cities across the nation, the marijuana industry told Princeton: either our dispensaries must be able to freely promote and sell addictive products citywide, or illicit sellers will continue to supply a handful of current users. Princeton rightly blocked the industry from opening next door to its parks, churches, and schools. Though the industry claims otherwise, legislation cannot simultaneously preserve local control and eliminate the illicit market.

Even if taxes are lowered and local control is scaled back, legalization will nevertheless still fail to eliminate the illicit market. Perhaps not to the surprise of readers of *The Coalition*, criminal organizations often have a hand in more than just marijuana. They will remain in the community selling other drugs, such as cocaine, heroin, and meth—the legalization of marijuana will not reduce the demand for other drugs. Moreover, these organizations often have a hand in other crimes, ranging from gun smuggling to human trafficking. Dealers sell more than just marijuana, and they work for organizations that profit from more than just drugs.

But because legalization has failed to displace the illicit market for marijuana, it has instead provided new revenue to these criminal groups. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) said in their latest National Drug Threat Assessment, "Many polycrime and polydrug organizations are involved in domestic marijuana production, often establishing large-scale illicit grow operations in states that have legalized

marijuana.” Indeed, “Marijuana generates millions of dollars that furthers the scope of their criminal activity throughout the United States.”

From the roadway or in the air, these “large-scale illicit grow operations” look no different than licensed marijuana farms. Just as legalization has given cover to unlicensed retailers in New York City, it has given cover to unlicensed growers in “legal” states.

The U.S. Forest Service reported “the number of illegal grow sites increased dramatically” after California first legalized medical marijuana. In written testimony, the then-Assistant Director of Law Enforcement and Investigations for the Forest Service explained, “The attributes that make the lands of the National Forest System excellent producers of wildlife habitat and clean water are also prized by illegal marijuana growers.” Forests have everything illicit growers would need—fertile soil, ample water, a degree of privacy, and trails for transporting materials.

In May 2023, the National Park Service announced that they had found more than 10,000 marijuana plants, worth an estimated \$7 million, at a grow in Death Valley National Park. “Upon learning that they were discovered,” the National Park Service said, “the growers abandoned the site” in California, leaving “behind a damaged landscape, trash and hazardous chemicals.” It costs up to \$100,000 to restore an individual grow site, highlighting another cost of legalization.

Events like this have become all too common. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which oversees the Forest Service, “Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTO) have been identified as the key producers of marijuana on NFS lands. DTO activities are confirmed in 72 national forests and in all regions, except for Region 10” (Alaska). They estimate that approximately 80% of the marijuana grown on federal land is grown in the Forest Service’s jurisdiction.

Illicit grows and extraction labs have also caused wildfires, such as the 125,000-acre Dolan Fire in Los Padres National Park in California in 2020, which killed endangered condors, destroyed homes and a fire station, seriously injured firefighters, and cost nearly \$63 million to contain.

Adding to the problem is the fact that illicit grows often use toxic chemicals, such as carbofuran and methamidophos.

President Biden’s 2022 National Drug Control Strategy stated cartels “transport highly toxic insecticides, chemical repellants, and poisons, some of which are banned in the United States, for use at domestic marijuana grow sites.” Cartels blatantly disregard our drug laws; they could not care less about our environmental and chemical laws.

The U.S. Department of Justice confirmed law enforcement officers have been “injured during the eradication of illegal marijuana cultivation sites on public lands by exposure to powerful Mexican pesticides.” These chemicals also kill foraging animals, in addition to the animals and insects that eat their carcasses, causing downstream effects throughout the ecosystem.

However, remote federal and private lands are not the only places where illicit marijuana is cultivated. Criminal organizations also grow marijuana in residential neighborhoods, where they can tap into the community’s power supply. One policy that has exacerbated this issue is known as “home grow,” which permits individuals to grow their own marijuana plants.

In Colorado, most notably, medical marijuana patients can grow up to 99 plants. As expected, the DEA concluded in a 2016 intelligence report that Colorado’s home grow policy “has led to a proliferation of large-scale marijuana grow operations in hundreds of homes throughout the state. Much of the marijuana produced in large home grows is shipped out of Colorado and sold in markets where it commands a high price.” A single cartel member can register as a medical marijuana patient in Colorado and legally grow more than \$5 million worth of marijuana.

The illegal marijuana grown in “legal” states is often transported elsewhere, ranging from states where it is not legal to other countries. In FY 2019, the U.S. Postal Service seized 45,176 packages that contained more than 95,000 pounds of illicit drugs—marijuana accounted for 98% of the seized drugs. Prior to legalization, fewer than 8,000 seized packages contained marijuana. An inspector with the Postal Service said, “the majority of it that we seize, percentage-wise, is coming from states like California where it is legal.”

Because illicit marijuana is being increasingly grown domestically, there has been a reduction in seizures at international ports of entry, such as the U.S.-Mexico border. U.S. Customs and Border Protection seized 155,000 pounds of marijuana in FY 2022, down from 580,000

pounds in 2020, the furthest year on their public dashboard. Conversely, the number of marijuana plants seized by the DEA increased from 2.8 million in 2018 to 5.7 million in 2022, with most of it in California. Mexican cartels have moved their cultivation operations into the homeland.

Relatedly, many of these illicit cultivation sites are managed by foreign nationals and staffed by victims of human trafficking. The Oregon-Idaho HIDTA's 2024 Threat Assessment noted that "environmental degradation and forced labor trafficking remain a concern," adding that "threats of violence have been used to keep laborers onsite." They report that Mexican—and Chinese—drug trafficking organizations are involved in illicit marijuana cultivation operations in Oregon.

Some may be surprised to learn that foreign-produced drugs also cross our nation's other borders. At the Northern border, between the U.S. and Canada, transnational criminal organizations transport cocaine, marijuana, ecstasy, fentanyl, and meth. The U.S. is also an intermediary for drugs bound for Canada. Additionally, given its proximity to South America, the Caribbean border, which includes Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, serves as a transshipment point for drugs bound for Florida and the East and Gulf Coasts, as well as Europe and Africa. Though most foreign-produced drugs still cross the Southwest border, the nation's other borders have unique vulnerabilities, posing additional challenges for law enforcement.

In addition to pursuing illicit marijuana, wherever it may be, law enforcement now needs to respond to crimes related to dispensaries. A study from the University of Colorado, Denver, found crime increased by up to 1,452% in neighborhoods with dispensaries. A study in Oregon found legalization was associated with assault. Denver neighborhoods adjacent to marijuana businesses saw 84.8 more property crimes each year than those without a marijuana shop.

These neighborhood crimes help explain why communities, like Princeton, oppose the opening of dispensaries. The marijuana industry often responds by saying criminals are targeting the cash in dispensaries. They call for reforms like the SAFE Banking Act, which would shield the industry from selling a Schedule 1 drug and allow them to deposit their funds in banks—while opening the industry to billions in outside investments from the tobacco and alcohol industries.

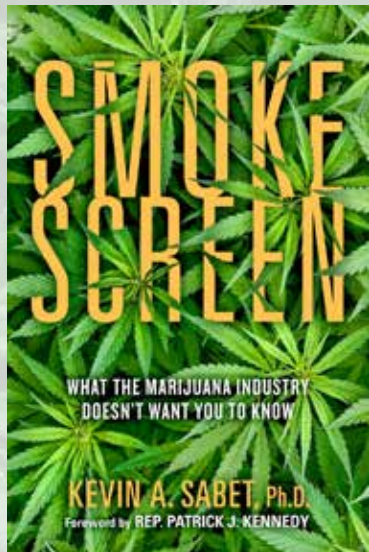
However, marijuana is often the target of criminals, not the cash in dispensaries. For example, in March 2023, criminals in Santa Cruz, California, stole "half a million dollars worth" of marijuana. The city of Denver announced in 2023 that "Marijuana businesses make up less than 1% of all businesses in Denver but account for approximately 6% of all reported business burglaries." Regardless of whether the SAFE Banking Act is passed, the products in dispensaries will remain the target of criminals, highlighting why they will continue to attract crime.

Of concern, the SAFE Banking Act could inadvertently allow cartels to launder their ill-gotten gains—from all illegal activities—through the marijuana industry and into our federal banking system. Eric Brown, the President of the National Narcotics Officers' Associations' Coalition, raised a similar concern, arguing "Opening U.S. financial services to illicit activities will only make a bad situation worse by laundering the proceeds of illegal activities."

These outcomes debunk the argument that legalization would free up law enforcement to focus on other crimes, insofar as they would be making fewer arrests for possession. Legalization spawns more crime and other challenges for law enforcement. Case in point, prior to "home grow" laws, there were no concerns about the legitimacy of marijuana plants in homes. Before dispensaries existed, officers did not need to investigate break-ins to them. Though legalization results in fewer arrests for possession, it is associated with increases in other crimes.

What's more, the legalization of marijuana is associated with increases in marijuana-impaired driving, as well as increases in crashes and fatalities due to these drivers. However, to date, technology has not been developed to allow law enforcement to measure accurately the level of impairment from THC, like how a blood test for BAC is indicative of impairment from alcohol.

For these reasons, numerous law enforcement organizations continue to oppose the legalization of marijuana at the federal and state levels. In North Dakota, where we led the effort that defeated the 2022 legalization ballot measure, our side was joined by the North Dakota Police Chief's Association, the North Dakota Peace Officers Association, and the North Dakota Sheriff's and Deputies Association. Ranging from the cartel next door to the impaired driver across the street, law enforcement groups recognize that legalization is a threat to public safety.



In summary, the marijuana industry now blames the thriving illicit market for marijuana on the policies that made legalization palatable to many skeptical voters. Acting out of self-interest, the industry wants to lower taxes and eliminate local control, arguing these measures are necessary to displace the illicit market. However, because the illicit market is often operated by transnational criminal

organizations that have a hand in much more than marijuana, any marijuana-specific policy change is unlikely to make a dent in the illicit market. At the same time, the marijuana industry continues to lobby for banking access, which could inadvertently open the door to cartels laundering their illicit funds through the industry. Rather than liberalizing our drug laws and promulgating policies that will increase demand, we should advance a drug policy that prioritizes prevention, treatment, and supply reduction.

The failure of legalization to displace the illicit market for marijuana has exacerbated crime. Nowhere is this more noticeable than in California, where supporters of legalization assured voters that the illicit market would be eliminated. “Legalization of recreational cannabis in California has likely invited more criminality connected to the production and transportation of the drug,” the Northern California HIDTA reported in 2022, “especially by DTOs and organized criminal groups.” These operations have been associated with “instances of human trafficking and smuggling, strong-armed robberies, home invasions, and murder.”

Marijuana is the only major illicit drug grown within the United States. The increase in its illicit cultivation has coincided with its state-level legalization, disproving the claims that legalization would eliminate the illicit market and free up law enforcement to focus on other crimes. Instead, legalization has given cover to transnational criminal organizations to expand their operations into the homeland, allowing them to generate millions to further their illicit activities. These cartel-backed operations, as an unintended consequence of legalization, create new

challenges for law enforcement and threaten public health and public safety, as well as the environment.

Smokescreen: What the Marijuana Industry Doesn't Want You to Know



“Smokescreen” examines the inside story behind the addiction-for-profit industry’s push for marijuana legalization. Containing first-person accounts from Dr. Kevin Sabet’s time in the Obama administration, to stunning revelations from whistleblowers speaking out for the first time, “Smokescreen” lays bare the unvarnished truth about marijuana in America, public health, and public safety instead of fear and rhetoric.

A leading drug policy advisor to everyone from county health commissioners to three U.S. presidents and Pope Francis, Sabet details how the marijuana industry is running rampant without proper oversight, leaving Americans’ health seriously at risk. The book features interviews with industry insiders who reveal the hidden dangers of a product they had once worshipped. It also contains insights from a major underground-market dealer who admits that legalization is hastening the growth of the illicit drug trade.

Most poignantly, “Smokescreen” details the tragic stories of those who have suffered and died as a result of marijuana use, and in many cases, as a result of its mischaracterization. Readers will learn how power brokers worked behind the scenes to market marijuana as a miracle plant in order to help it gain widespread acceptance and to set the stage for the lucrative expansion of recreational pot.



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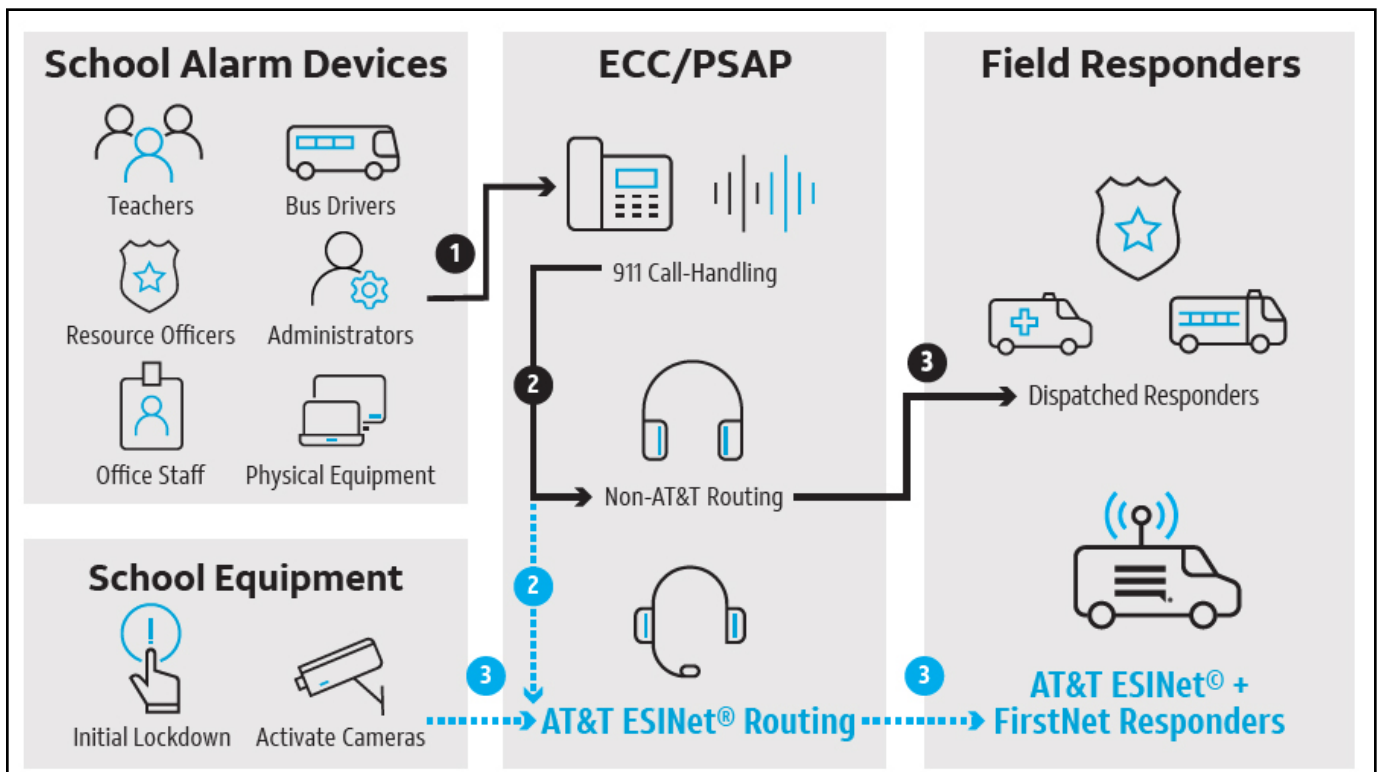
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- Track and manage your school bus fleets



Heroin and Fentanyl Seizures in Australia in the wake of COVID-19

Introduction

Australian demand for drugs in the post-COVID-19 environment has continued over the period 2021 to 2023, with record seizures of illicit substances bound for the Australian market being reported by police and border security agencies. These seizures have occurred both within Australia and in offshore transit and source locations and include heroin, methamphetamine and cocaine.

In December 2021, a shipping container from Canada was examined in the Port of Melbourne. The container was loaded with machinery, and authorities noted a number of discrepancies in the welding and painting that resulted in the machinery undergoing a secondary examination. Concealed inside the machinery were 30kg of methamphetamine and 11.2kg of pure powdered fentanyl.¹ This was the first interdiction of fentanyl of this scale to occur in Australia. The seizure is a solid indication that transnational crime organisations (TCOs) have identified the potential demand for synthetic opioids in the Australian market and are now seeking to supply synthetic opioids in bulk.

Source: Australian Broadcasting Corporation *AFP, ABF discover record fentanyl seizure in machinery sent from Canada to Melbourne, 22 August 2022*



Background

The Australian heroin market has traditionally been small, stable and centred in the south-eastern states of New South Wales and Victoria.

Usually, illicit heroin seized in Australia is of South East Asian origin². Individual source countries in South East Asia include Thailand, Laos and Myanmar. Australian authorities work closely with partner agencies throughout the region to identify smuggling routes and to conduct interdiction activities before concealed consignments of heroin enter commercial maritime and air cargo trade streams bound for Australia.

Some notable successes of Australian heroin interdiction include:

- December 2020 – 350kg of heroin in an air cargo shipment sent to Sydney from Malaysia with an estimated value of AUD\$156 million (USD\$104 million)³
- October 2021 – 450kg of heroin seized in a shipping container sent from Malaysia to Melbourne with an estimated value of \$140 million (USD\$93 million)⁴
- April 2023 – 336kg of heroin in a shipment from Malaysia to Brisbane with an estimated value of AUD\$268.8 million (USD\$179 million)⁵.

Australian authorities also maintain a National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program. This program tests wastewater in a number of sewerage treatment sites across the country and provides insight into the patterns of drug consumption by the Australian population. This program is conducted as a collaborative partnership between the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, the University of Queensland and the University of South Australia. The National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program commenced in 2016 -17 and supports investigations as well as providing research data that reflect year-on-year trends in national drug consumption. One of the concerning trends that was identified in the 2023 report was the increase in the estimated street value of heroin consumption over the course of the six years that the National Wastewater Program has been running. The 2023 report identifies both an increase in estimated consumption of heroin (from 830kg in 2016 to 1077kg in 2021-22) and a corresponding increase in the overall value represented by street prices, up from AUD\$207.5 million (USD\$138 million) in 2016-17 to AUD\$538.5 million (USD\$358 million) in 2021-22.⁶

Significant seizure events in 2020 and 2021 (with activities in December 2020 and October 2021 alone representing 800kg of heroin eliminated from the market) removed hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of heroin before it reached Australian users. Consumption, however, remained relatively even over the timespan covered by these years. The National Wastewater Program recorded total heroin consumption for 2019 -2020 as 1021kgs.⁷ Consumption in 2020-2021 was estimated at 984kg⁸, despite a major seizure of 350kg in December 2020. Total consumption in 2021-22 was 1077kg⁹, despite the seizure of 450kg in October 2021. This reporting would suggest that the effects of the significant seizures events contributed to a deviation in consumption rates in 2020-21 of 37kg and in 2021-22 of 93kgs. The constraints of the National Wastewater Program are such that consumption is recorded at key sites and does not cover the entire population. However, an assessment can be made that the heroin market is both relatively stable in the face of record levels of disruption and that it remains resilient, persistent and profitable for TCOs to continue their investment in criminal activities.

The timeline of fentanyl in Australia

Prior to 2021, fentanyl trafficking into Australia was limited in scope, with all seized amounts being accounted for in packages of less than 30g.¹⁰

In late 2016, a South Australian trafficker set up a website on the Darknet called 'Friends of Fentanyl' and began making sales of small amounts to a specific customer base. To supply these sales, the trafficker began importing small quantities of fentanyl. These consignments were intercepted by authorities and resulted in the arrest of the trafficker and his partner in December 2016.

This example of small-scale importation and limited distribution was essentially the model of the fentanyl trade over the course of the five years leading up to 2021. The border seizure of 11.2kgs of fentanyl indicates that the potential for an Australian synthetic opioid market has been identified by TCOs and that at least one syndicate had diverted 11.2kg (more than 5 million doses) from the North American market to meet anticipated demand in Australia.

The confirmation of Canada as the source of the fentanyl aligns with recent announcements by Australia's border protection agency, the Australian Border Force, that Canada is now one of the top sources of drug imports to Australia.¹¹

There may be any number of reasons for this change in

source country and methodology. Given the substantial increase in the heroin market over the past six years, it is possible that TCOs are making an attempt to augment or synthesise Australian heroin supplies. A number of limiting factors apply to production and smuggling of heroin, including:

- agricultural investment in cultivating poppies, and the employment of workforces to tend and harvest an opium crop
- transporting refined product through countries where increasing levels of political instability add challenges to distribution efforts
- accessing legitimate cargo streams in the air and maritime space where Australian authorities have established partnerships that have resulted in significant seizures
- the need for illicit drug consignments to pass through a number of transit countries enroute to maritime and air cargo freight nodes increases the risk to the security of the consignment, and
- the requirement to co-opt, corrupt or coerce authorities and/or freight providers to ensure that the consignment arrives at the embarkation point, is inserted into legitimate streams of commerce and arrives safely to be on-forwarded to the destination market.

The potency of fentanyl means that smaller quantities produce greater yields or doses. This translates to a product that is easier to conceal than heroin blocks, which in turn, lessens the risk of detection and seizure. In the event that a TCO wished to minimise the exposure of their investment to these limiting factors, having the capacity to produce a synthetic opioid like fentanyl in a new source country (such as Canada) and being able to directly access sea cargo lanes to ship that product to an Australian market would seem to be both a logical and economical option.

I was able to visit Vancouver earlier this year to complete the Churchill Fellowship that I commenced in 2020 to gain a better understanding of synthetic opioid trafficking in the United States, Mexico and Canada. I arrived on 31 January 2023, which was the day that the British Columbia Government commenced a three-year provincial exemption from the *Canadian Drugs and Substances Act*. Under the terms of this exemption, adults will not be arrested or charged for the possession of illegal drugs including opioids (heroin, morphine and fentanyl), crack

and powder cocaine, methamphetamine and MDMA. A combined total of 2.5 grams of these substances may be possessed and will not be subject to seizure. This situation, and the recent and pending changes to drug decriminalisation in a number of US jurisdictions, may well have a flow-on effect for Australian drug markets. Where there is an existing demand for synthetic opioids on the west coast of Canada and the Pacific Northwest, it seems to be a reasonable assumption that TCOs will seek to produce drugs to meet demand in those markets. Across the Pacific, on the south-eastern coast of Australia, there is an expanding heroin market. Consumption in the Australian market is stable, even in the face of significant seizures. Australian authorities can safely assume that demand for heroin will continue. It appears that TCOs have come to this same conclusion and in December 2021, a syndicate diverted the significant quantity of more than 5 million doses of fentanyl that could have been supplied to the existing market in the United States and Canada.

It is likely that there will be further attempts to smuggle bulk quantities of synthetic opioids from the west coast of Canada to Australia. Authorities should now seek to develop a comprehensive understanding of the political, social and economic factors that will influence Canadian domestic drug supply chains, in the same manner that they have worked with our South East Asian partners to be able to identify, target and interdict these shipments. TCOs are well-resourced, nimble and adaptive. Our approach in law enforcement needs to be sufficiently agile to continue to challenge and counter efforts to spread the misery of fentanyl across the Pacific.

About the author:

Aaron Tucker attended the NNOAC Delegate's Conference in Washington DC in 2020 as a Churchill Fellow, as part of a visit program with law enforcement agencies in the United States and Mexico. He is an investigator for the Independent Commission Against Corruption in South Australia and a Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Australian Corps of Military Police. Aaron has served in the Southwest Pacific, Iraq, the Gulf States, Afghanistan and South East Asia in law enforcement and intelligence roles. This is his fourth article for *The Coalition*.

Heroin and Fentanyl Seizures in Australia in the wake of COVID-19

Endnotes

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The National Guard – Force-Multiplier in Countering Our Drug Crisis

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By *Miguel Alejandro Laborde*
July 12, 2023

U.S. Coast Guard members poses for a group photo with members from the Air Force and Army California National Guard on Coast Guard base Alameda, Calif. Oct. 25, 2022. District 11 Response and Enforcement hosted the Air Force and Army California National Guard as part of an ongoing partnership under the Counter-drug Task Force (CDTF). (U.S. Coast Guard photo by PO3 Hunter Schnabel)

To suggest that the Nation is reeling from a toxic combination of rampant crime, instability, eroding social cohesion and runaway drug abuse is to remind the public of the painfully and devastatingly obvious. Nonetheless, it is a harsh truth that must be reiterated lest we get distracted, unfocused and ignore or marginalize the problem. In fact, the sweeping epidemic of drug abuse here in 2023 shows virtually no indication of slowing – and the social and mental health disruption pushed upon our society from the pandemic has only exacerbated what was already a tough challenge. And, the indications based on provisional data for

2022, are that the level of drug overdose deaths in the U.S. is as high as it was in 2021 – itself a record-breaking year.

Fortunately, we don't have to create whole new bureaucracies or re-invent the wheel to address these issues in a meaningful way. To be perfectly honest, we've already got most of the appropriate counter-threat infrastructure in place – from legal authorities and criminal codes to treatment courts and law enforcement agencies. Additionally, we have robust technical capabilities, deep knowledge about drugs and drug crime, and a tried-and-tested playbook for planning and execution.

However, what we have not had to date is consistent support for some of the most important behind-the-scenes entities that have been diligently working on this problem-set in our communities. One of these players is the U.S. National Guard – and more specifically, the U.S. National Guard Counterdrug Program (NG CDP). It may be an eyebrow-raising revelation to most Americans that the National Guard plays a role in tackling the drug and organized criminal threat in the country. In fact, the role they play is quite active and consequential – Guardsmen and women are deployed across the land to support the nation's law enforcement agencies at all levels in stopping the deadly and exploitative activities of gangs, trafficking groups, and criminal networks.

What the National Guard brings to the drug and crime fight are DoD-centric skill sets, capabilities, and experiences, backed by their unique legal authorities to support law enforcement agencies in the field in a way that law enforcement agencies do not necessarily possess organically. In turn, National Guard counterdrug soldiers and airmen can later apply technical acumen, specialized approaches, and trial-tested procedures toward other defense missions, such as combatting terror networks or prosecuting counter-insurgency operations abroad. In this interesting

RealClear Defense

way, the efforts of NG CDP help enhance the effectiveness of the Guard itself, as well those who work closely with NG CDP personnel. Interoperability is enhanced, and this becomes a force-multiplier during responses to national emergencies such as flooding, hurricanes, or cyber-attacks on public utilities (think hackers or EMP).

Additionally, when performing counterdrug functions here at home, National Guardsmen and women are actively working a real threat to the U.S. homeland, and not simply performing simulated exercises. In fact, the dynamics and stress encountered during real-world action cannot be simulated, and it is best to train and test in these relatively low-risk events and then adapt tactics from lessons learned than to do so in combat. Whether discussing intelligence analysts working cases with investigative task forces or helicopter pilots flying air ops, Guardsmen and women maintain a high degree of core operational readiness as they work to actively tackle the drug threat. Given these cross-contributing factors, the National Guard counterdrug program is one of the more innovative and cost-effective elements we have in our national defense.

With the rising threat posed to America from a combination of narcotics trafficking, related criminal activity, resultant social instability and eroding public health, the need for consistent and robust funding for NG CDP is critical. Moreover, consistent, and more robust year-over-year funding for NG CDP will be increasingly imperative for a wide array of reasons – from accurate threat identification, long-term planning, and efficient program execution to personnel deployment, accurate budgeting, maintaining consistent operational tempo against the threat, and providing reliable and credible support to our nation's law enforcement agencies.

Fortunately, the 118th U.S. Congress – which has introduced a robust degree of legislation aimed at fentanyl and the larger drug problem – also seems to agree that NG CDP represents a key element in the counterdrug effort. For FY24, the House has recommended \$300,000,000 for NG CDP, which is significantly higher than the President's Budget Request. Of course, the Senate will be looking at this issue as well – and hopefully, the upper chamber will

also recognize the merit of NG CDP as a force for good against the distressing plight of organized drug crime and follow the House lead on supporting this program. Given the indiscriminate way that crime and addiction plague the nation, supporting this counter-threat effort really should not be another tiring exercise in partisanship.

Certainly, America's drug crisis is nothing new. It is a problem that we've struggled with for decades; we even tally up major levels of social damage, injury, poor health, property destruction and death every year from substances that are entirely legal for the adult population. And our substance abuse issue is not a problem that will ever be managed with one avenue of approach – it's going to take the right combination of community involvement, individual discipline, awareness, mentorship, and compassion to arrive at a level of acceptable containment.

But with the threat of narcotics imperiling the nation at record high levels, as well as related problems with border security, rising crime and eroding social stability, 2023 stands as a critical year to try and get ahead of these trends. It also stands as a vital year for policymakers in DC to fully support the NG CDP in their fight against the scourge of narcotics that is crushing our country. Formed and driven at root by the patriotic dedication of National Guardsmen and women, who work continuously to protect their communities and promote the wellbeing of America, the National Guard Counterdrug Program is an effective, contributive force-multiplier for our nation's overall health and national security. 2023 should be the year we dig in hard and support those who face down this terrible problem every day.

Miguel Alejandro Laborde is a former NCO in the 160th SOAR (A), and a subject matter expert on defense aviation programs, capabilities, and platforms, with decades' worth of experience in the aerospace industry supporting the joint force.

Courtesy of the United States Army National Guard Counterdrug Program

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How law enforcement can identify new and more threatening drugs

Isotonitazene, a nitazene analog opioid 20 times more potent than fentanyl, has moved into the Southern states and, more recently, along the Eastern seaboard

Mar 31, 2023

By Ron LaPedis

In 2021, there were 106,699 drug overdose deaths in the United States, with the rate of deaths involving synthetic opioids other than methadone increasing by 22%, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov). As those individuals addicted to opioids build tolerance, more and more powerful drugs are needed to satisfy their habit.

THE EMERGENCE OF NITAZENES

Without knowing the exact chemicals you are dealing with, it is hard to trace connections and sources. That's where Thermo Fisher Scientific's TruNarc Handheld Narcotics Analyzer comes into play. (Photo/Thermo Fisher Scientific)

Nitazenes were first developed about 60 years ago from synthetic compounds by researchers working on morphine alternatives. While a patent was obtained, it was abandoned because nitazenes had a high potential for overdose but no legitimate medicinal purpose.

The DEA reports that isotonitazene, a nitazene analog opioid 20 times more potent than fentanyl, has moved into the Southern states and, more recently, along the Eastern seaboard. After being detected in Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health issued a [health alert](#). Researchers have also identified [40 fatal overdoses](#) involving isotonitazene.

Similar to fentanyl and heroin, nitazene analogs are most commonly used intravenously and intranasally via spray or insufflation, but can also be smoked, vaporized or taken sublingually.

Nitazene analogs can appear in a variety of colors and preparations, including yellow, brown, gray, or off-white powders, and are most often sold as "heroin" or "fentanyl" in illicit drug markets. Nitazene analogs are sold online as powders, ready-to-use nasal sprays, or counterfeit pills

Alex Krotulski, associate director at The Center for Forensic Science Research and Education who works to identify emerging drugs, told [The Hill](#) that nitazenes are grossly underreported as they are not routinely tested for, and that his lab alone has had at least 1,000 identifications of nitazenes and estimates the drug may account for about 5% of the 100,000 fatal overdoses last year.

"Tranq" or xylazine, a non-opioid veterinary tranquilizer that is not approved for human use, has also been contributing to a growing number of overdose deaths in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

CAN YOU ID THAT DRUG?

Law enforcement officials quickly need to identify suspected narcotics in the field to help keep drugs and drug dealers off the streets. Unfortunately, fentanyl test strips cannot detect nitazene analogs, leaving law enforcement in the dark and possibly risking lives.

Just like your computer or car can be updated with the latest software, Thermo Fisher Scientific's [TruNarc Handheld Narcotics Analyzer](#), a Raman spectrometer used as a presumptive testing tool, can be updated as well. The v1.10 software adds the capability to detect isotonitazene and other nitazene analogs, along with more than 545 suspected controlled substances, in a single, definitive test. Because drug test samples can be scanned directly through plastic or glass, exposure is minimized, contamination is prevented, and evidence is preserved.

Specifically, the new library adds several nitazenes:

- Butonitazene
- Flunitazene
- Isotodesnitazene
- Isotonitazene
- Metodesnitazene
- Metonitazene
- N-Piperidinyl etonitazene
- N-Pyrrolidino etonitazene
- Protonitazene



In addition, the new library adds 10 more fentanyl analogs, plus 6 more norfentanyl precursors and 3 Bucinnazines (AP-237).

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Without knowing the exact chemicals you are dealing with, it is hard to trace connections and sources.

With the number of new drugs coming into the illicit marketplace in record time, it is important that whatever technology you use to identify them can be kept updated while maintaining chain of custody and ensuring court-admissible results. To achieve this, the TruNarc includes a “closed loop” library, preventing user modification while allowing manufacturer-supplied updates to be made on a regular basis to ensure users have access to the latest emerging threats.

For more information on Thermo Fisher Scientific's TruNarc Handheld Narcotics Analyzer, visit thermofisher.com/trunarc.

About the author

Ron LaPedis is an NRA-certified Chief Range Safety Officer, NRA, USCCA and California DOJ-certified instructor, is a uniformed first responder, and frequently writes and speaks on law enforcement, business continuity, cybersecurity, physical security and public/private partnerships.



Safer Narcotics Identification

Field-based presumptive narcotics, precursor and cutting agent testing

The use of illicit narcotics and opioids continues to skyrocket. Emerging lethal drugs like fentanyl and carfentanil threaten public safety.

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Find out more at thermofisher.com/trunarc

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Law Enforcement Suicide Prevention How to Use this Toolkit

A Law Enforcement Suicide Prevention Toolkit was developed and distributed to all Florida law enforcement agencies in October of 2007. This Toolkit was designed with input from many law enforcement officers, deputies, and troopers, as well as subject-matter experts to help you present suicide prevention training within your department, reduce the stigma associated with seeking help, and to encourage your officers to roll backup for each other.

The Florida RCPI has uploaded these resources to its Web site for your use. Digital copies of the printed materials that were provided in the Toolkit are here for download and printing. All have space for localization: your agency seal/logo; name; phone numbers and other contact information for EAP, Peer Support, CISM, Chaplaincy, Psychologists/Counselors/, etc.

You may produce as many copies as you like for free distribution within your agency or for other law enforcement agencies as long as you do not change the text or delete the credit. Some printers will need to see written proof that you have permission to print or copy these materials before they will proceed with the job; this page serves as that permission. You may add your agency's name, address, phone number, and Web site where space is provided.

You can research cutting edge articles on the issue of law enforcement suicide. PowerPoint presentations, model policies and procedures, best practices, research, and recommendations are included.

hotline numbers

<i>Copline</i>	1-800-267-5463
<i>National Suicide Prevention Lifeline</i>	1-800-273-8255
<i>Veterans Crisis Line</i>	1-800-273-8255
<i>Cop 2 Cop</i>	1-866-267-2267



Please browse through this information frequently to learn more about how to develop a strong program within your agency.

For more information, contact the partners who developed this kit:

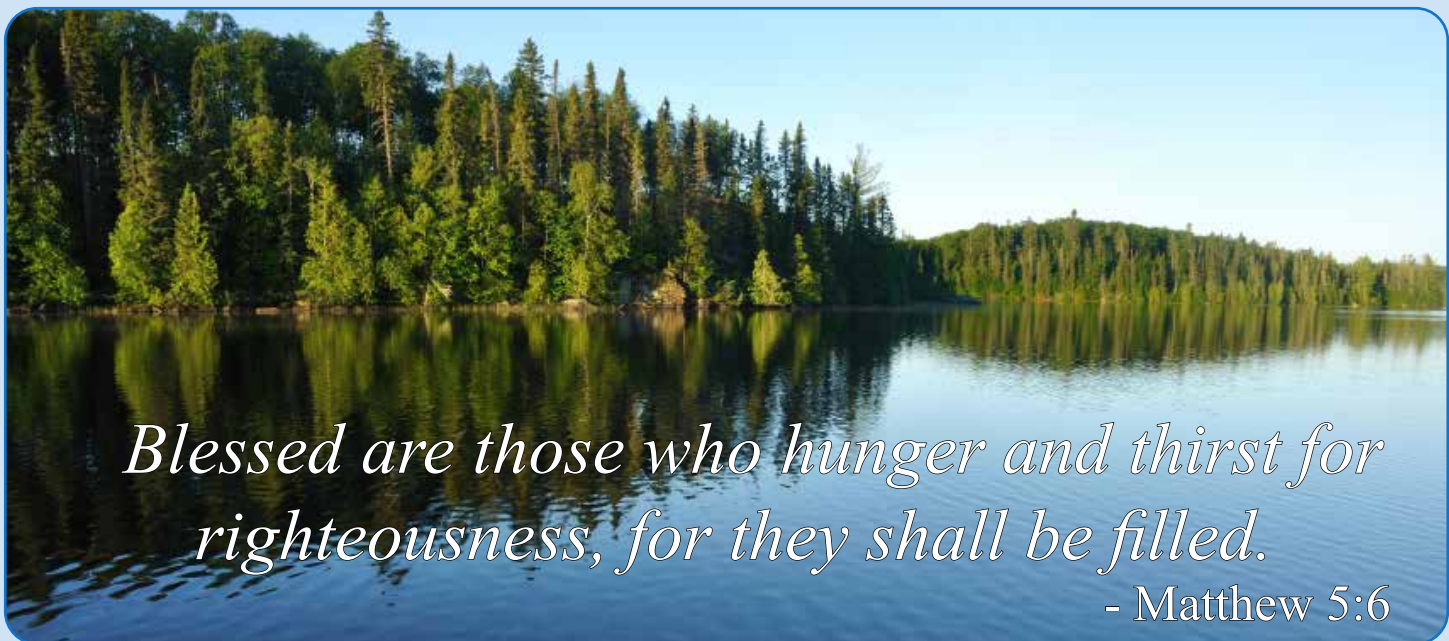
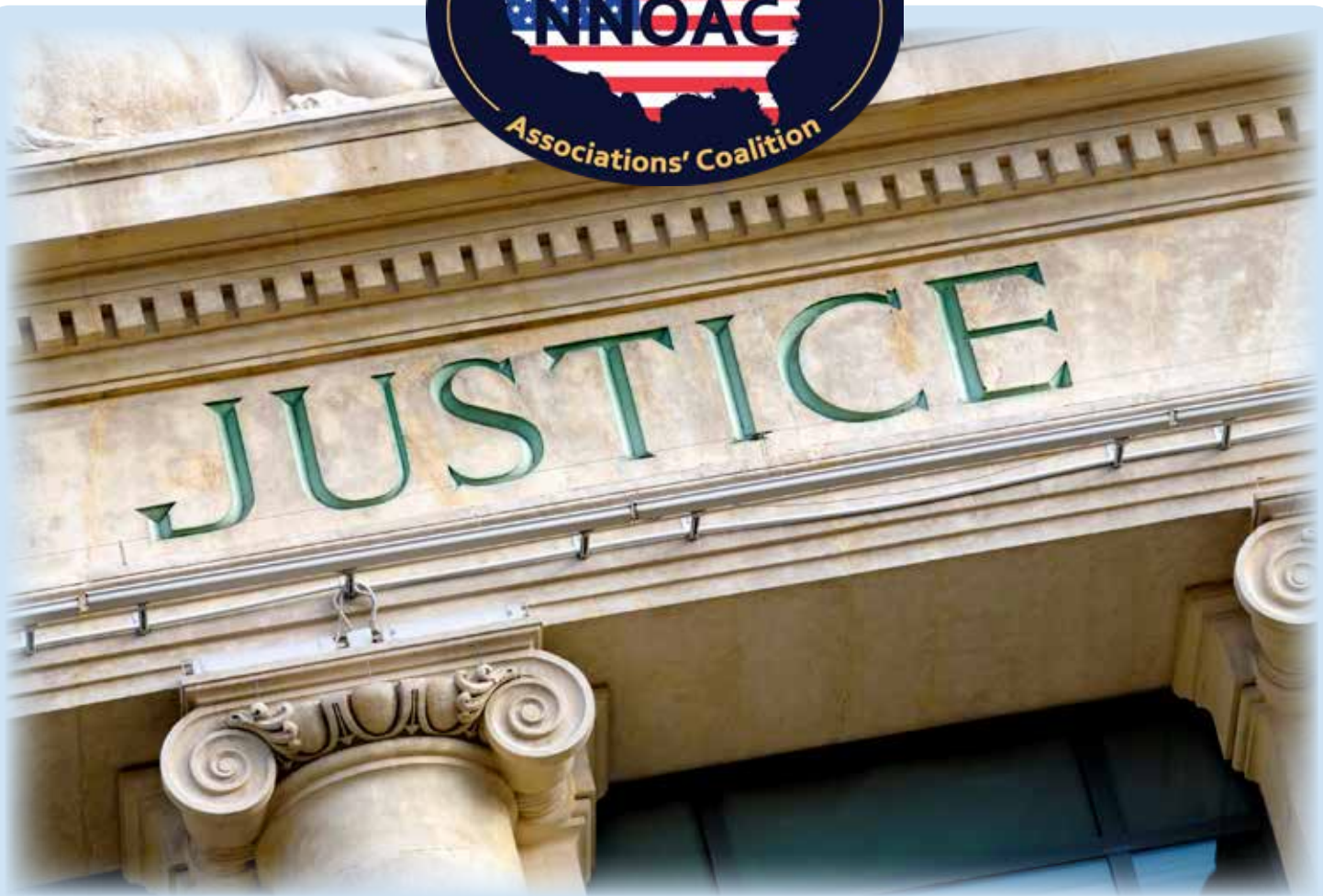
Regional Community Policing Institute (RCPI)
Executive Director Eileen LaHaie
(727) 341-4502
lahaie.eileen@spcollege.edu

Donna G. Schulz
Law Enforcement Coordination Manager
U.S. Attorney's Office, Middle District of FL, Retired
Donna.schulz@aol.com

Survivors of Law Enforcement Suicide
Executive Director Teresa Tate
AskT8@aol.com



BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice



*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness, for they shall be filled.*

- Matthew 5:6