



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Hearing Statement of Border Security & Enforcement Subcommittee Ranking Member Lou Correa (D-CA)

***Protecting the U.S. Homeland: Fighting the Flow of Fentanyl from the Southwest Border***

**July 12, 2023**

I would like to start by thanking Chairman Higgins for holding today's hearing on transnational criminal organizations and fentanyl. For today's witnesses from the White House, DEA, CBP, and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), I look forward to hearing your testimony about the Administration's actions to mitigate these threats.

We know transnational criminal organizations and the illicit supply of fentanyl are not new challenges. In fact, the number of fentanyl seizures began to increase in the summer of 2020 under the previous Administration. But the threat of fentanyl does not begin or end at the southern border.

We need to improve our public health response to this crisis and address the addiction plaguing our communities while providing support to those recovering. We also need to dismantle fentanyl supply chains, surging resources to conduct inbound inspections, and working to indict, arrest, and prosecute those engaged in this illegal business. That's why I was glad to hear about the Department's recent successes in Operations *Blue Lotus* and *Four Horsemen*, which seized nearly 10,000 pounds of fentanyl headed for our communities and resulted in 284 arrests.

I understand that the Department has used the insights gained from these two operations to launch the next phase of its campaign to target and prevent fentanyl from entering the United States. I hope our witnesses will share more about the two new operations, *Operation Artemis* and *Operation Rolling Wave*. To tackle transnational criminal organizations and fentanyl, we can't just focus on seizures. We also need to go after their profits and supply chains.

I am glad that, under this Administration, Homeland Security Investigations has continued *Operation Pelican Bones*—which seeks to disrupt the financial tools used by transnational criminal organizations to launder money— as well as *Operation Hydra*, which goes after the precursor chemicals needed to create fentanyl and *Operation Chain Breaker*, which targets the equipment needed to manufacture pills. Initiatives like these are critical to dismantle illicit networks and limit TCOs' financial access. But we also need to recognize that this is a global threat, and strong, collaborative partnerships with international partners are critical to dismantling transnational criminal organizations.

That's why this morning the Chairman and I introduced the bipartisan *Cooperation on Combatting Human Smuggling and Trafficking Act*, which would direct Homeland Security Investigations to expand its Transnational Criminal Investigative Units. These vetted and trained units of foreign law enforcement work with HSI to investigate transnational criminal organizations, aiming to stop human smuggling and the flow of dangerous drugs before they reach our borders.

I hope my colleagues across the aisle will continue to join me in calling for responsible action, like expanding these transnational criminal investigative units and putting more resources towards our ports

of entry, instead of throwing around harmful rhetoric about invading Mexico—one of our closest trading partners and a critical partner in the fight against transnational crime.

While I have focused primarily on the law enforcement actions we can take to dismantle transnational criminal organizations, we must recognize that this isn't only a border security challenge or law enforcement challenge. It's a public health challenge, as transnational criminal organizations seek to make record profits at the cost of American lives. There is widespread untreated addiction for drugs, leading some individuals to consume dangerous substances that may be laced with fentanyl. I hope our witness from the Office of National Drug Control Policy can speak to the Administration's strategy to reduce the demand for illicit drugs in our communities.

Again, I appreciate all of witnesses' willingness to appear today to discuss how we can increase our efforts to combat this serious threat. I welcome any suggestions about how Congress can help you accomplish your missions.

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