

DOJ and DEA Announce Charges against Chapitos in the Latest Actions to Disrupt Flow of Illegal Fentanyl and Other Dangerous Drugs

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(Remarks As Prepared)

Thank you, Attorney General Garland and Deputy Attorney General Monaco.

Fentanyl is the greatest threat to Americans today.

It kills more Americans between the ages of 18 to 45 than terrorism, than car accidents, than cancer, than COVID. And the number of children under 14 dying from it has increased at an alarming rate.

At DEA, we decided to proactively target the criminal network that is most responsible for the fentanyl flooding our communities. We looked at our data and the answer was clear—most of the fentanyl in the United States comes from the Sinaloa Cartel.

The DEA and our law enforcement partners took down the previous leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, Chapo Guzman, or “El Chapo,” who is now serving a life sentence in a U.S. prison for his crimes.

But El Chapo’s sons, Ovidio, Ivan, and Alfredo, known as “Los Chapitos,” became the new leaders of the Sinaloa Cartel.

They inherited a global drug trafficking empire and they made it more ruthless, more violent, more deadly, and they used it to spread a new poison—fentanyl.

Let me be clear: The Chapitos pioneered the manufacture and trafficking of the deadliest drug our country has ever faced, and they are responsible for the massive influx of fentanyl into the United States.

As a direct result of their actions, we have lost hundreds of thousands of American lives.

And so the DEA proactively targeted the Chapitos network and followed it across the globe.

To China, where the Chapitos partner with Chinese chemical companies and brokers to acquire fentanyl precursors, the ingredients necessary to make fentanyl.

To Central America, where the Chapitos work with brokers who help transport fentanyl precursors from China to Mexico.

To Mexico, their home base, where the Chapitos run secret laboratories, transform fentanyl precursors into fentanyl powder and pills, and smuggle it into the United States—by land, by air, by sea, by underground tunnel.

And in the United States, where the fentanyl makes its way from stash houses near the southwest border, across our country, reaching both coasts and everywhere in between, and killing Americans from all walks of life, in every state and in every community in America.

The Chapitos control this global criminal enterprise, and they use ruthless violence to protect it. Indeed, death and destruction are central to their whole operation.

To dominate the fentanyl supply chain, the Chapitos kill, kidnap, and torture anyone who gets in the way. In Mexico, they've fed their enemies alive to tigers, electrocuted them, waterboarded them, and shot them at close range with a .50 caliber machine gun.

To drive addiction, the Chapitos hide fentanyl in pills that look like Oxycodone, Xanax, or Percocet. They mix fentanyl in with cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine. All to induce Americans to take fentanyl without knowing it and to get hooked on it.

Every day we at DEA hear devastating stories of Americans who took a pill thinking it was legitimate prescription medication— not knowing there was fentanyl inside—and they died. And we are working tirelessly with families who have lost loved ones to raise awareness. Because many Americans don't know about the dangers of fentanyl.

But the Chapitos know. They know their product is deadly. These are people who gave fentanyl to a man, watched him die, and then sent that same batch of fentanyl to the United States.

They know that they are poisoning and killing Americans. They just don't care because they make billions of dollars doing it. Their greed is shocking and without bounds.

Today's indictments strike a blow against the Chapitos and the global network they operate, a network that fuels violence and death on both sides of the border.

Seven members of that network have now been arrested pursuant to this investigation—in Colombia, Greece, Guatemala, and the United States. Ovidio was arrested earlier this year by military officials in Mexico.

I want to thank the 32 DEA Field Offices and our law enforcement partners that worked here in the United States and abroad and who worked tirelessly on this investigation. And in particular the men and women of the DEA's Special Operations Division Bilateral Investigation Unit.

Today's indictments are only the beginning. This case should send a clear message to the Chapitos, the Sinaloa Cartel, and criminal drug networks around the world that the men and women of the DEA will relentlessly pursue you to save American lives and to protect the national security of the United States of America.