



# 2018–2023



## The Continued Illicit Fentanyl Threat

Illicit fentanyl continued to be in the public spotlight in 2018. Cases of illegal drugs laced with fentanyl increased across the nation, resulting in a corresponding increase in the death toll. DEA and its partners brought new approaches to bear in disrupting illicit fentanyl networks and better educating the public on the dangers of this corrosive national threat.

## Emergency Scheduling of Fentanyl (2018–2023)

On February 6, 2018, DEA published a temporary order in the Federal Register placing nine fentanyl-related substances in Schedule I of the CSA based on their imminent hazard to public safety. This temporary order was in effect until February 6, 2020. Congress extended this temporary control order multiple times. On April 13, 2023, DEA published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the Federal Register that would permanently place these nine substances in Schedule I of the CSA, making permanent the regulatory controls and sanctions applicable to Schedule I substances.

## Illegal Fentanyl Dominates the U.S. Illicit Drug Market (2019–2023)

After 2019, a dramatic nationwide shift from organic to synthetic opioids saw heroin seizures steadily decline and fentanyl seizures skyrocket. In 2022, DEA seized more than 50.6 million fake pills laced with fentanyl, a 100 percent increase over 2021. Mexican cartels aggressively supplied fentanyl to U.S. markets in pills purposefully manufactured to resemble prescription medication. The fake pills coupled with fentanyl's potency led to the spike in deaths. In 2015, 52,404 Americans died of drug poisoning; in 2021, 106,699 died. According to the CDC, in 2022, 110,757 people died from drug overdoses. In 2023 seven out of ten fake pills contained potentially lethal doses of fentanyl.

Nearly all fentanyl in the U.S. originated from Mexico, mostly trafficked by the Sinaloa and Jalisco Cartels. The Sinaloa Cartel has continuously worked on improving production methods. The first fentanyl seizure in Mexico occurred in 2005, with the first clandestine production laboratory discovered in 2006. In the years that followed, Joaquin Guzman-Loera and his sons (known as the “Chapitos”) recognized the potency of fentanyl to drive addiction. Limited only by the flow of Chinese precursor chemicals, fentanyl remained a concern. To address this, DEA adjusted strategy and focus. The Sinaloa and Jalisco Cartels were targeted as top operational priorities, with investigative and enforcement efforts targeting them,



DEA worked with Mexican officials and counterparts for years on the case of Joaquín Guzmán-Loera. The notorious drug kingpin was extradited to the United States in 2017.

their top-tier leadership and supply networks. As a result, thousands of cartel members and associates have been identified in more than 50 countries, and multiple enforcement operations have resulted in the arrest of hundreds of Sinaloa and Jalisco traffickers.

On April 14, 2023, DOJ and DEA announced the indictment of 28 members and associates of the Sinaloa Cartel, including the ruthless leaders of the Chapitos - Ovidio, Ivan, and Alfredo. Ovidio Guzmán, primarily responsible for expanding and modernizing the Sinaloa Cartel, was extradited to the United States on September 15, 2023, to stand trial.

### **Arrest, Prosecution, and Imprisonment of Joaquín Chapo Guzmán-Loera (2012–2019)**

The history of the Sinaloa Cartel predates the arrest of the Chapitos in 2023, with their father, Joaquín Chapo

Guzmán-Loera, playing a predominant role. Chapo escaped from prison in Mexico twice before being recaptured and extradited to the United States in January 2017. The trial against Chapo began in November 2018, and he was found guilty of all charges the following February. In July 2019 he was sentenced to mandatory life imprisonment plus 30 years.

The long investigation into Chapo took years of dedication and collaboration with Mexico. The notorious leader of the Sinaloa Cartel spent five decades trafficking drugs, and as a result Guzmán will spend the remainder of his life in Federal custody; he is currently incarcerated at the “supermax” ADX Federal Prison in Florence, Colorado.

In April 2012, a federal grand jury in the Western District of Texas returned a 14-count indictment against him and 23 other individuals responsible for the operation and management of the Cartel, charging them with racketeering, drug trafficking, money laundering, firearms

offenses, murder, kidnapping, and other violent crimes. The indictment, the result of a years-long, complex investigation led by DEA's El Paso Division, targeted high-ranking Sinaloa Cartel members operating during the bloody cartel war in Ciudad Juarez from 2007-2010.

The Sinaloa Cartel smuggled large quantities of marijuana, cocaine, and other drugs into the U.S. for distribution and laundered the illicit proceeds to fund further illegal activity. In an effort to maintain control of their operations, the cartel and its associates kidnapped, tortured, and murdered their rivals, as well as their own members who lost or pocketed assets belonging to the organization or were otherwise disloyal. The murders involved brutal acts of violence, often with public display of their victims along with banners bearing written warnings to those who would consider crossing the Cartel.

Following the return of the 2012 indictment, El Paso Field Division agents worked tirelessly to bring the defendants to justice, and conducted hundreds of defendant

interviews to assist other federal investigations and prepare for trial. The Division sought the extradition of Chapo Guzmán and 20 codefendants from Mexico. The extradition request for Guzmán was the basis for his successful surrender to the United States, where he was tried and convicted in the Eastern District of New York. In March 2022 two codefendants were convicted in El Paso federal court and sentenced to life in prison.

### Vice President and First Lady Visit DEA (2019)

U.S. Vice President Michael Pence visited DEA Headquarters on January 31, 2019, to thank the men and women of DEA for their work and dedication in federal drug law enforcement. This was the first time since 1988 that a vice president, then George H.W. Bush, visited DEA Headquarters. Bush also visited DEA Headquarters in 1991 and DEA's New York Division in 1989, but both times as sitting president.



Then Vice President Pence gave a speech thanking DEA employees saying, "It's amazing to think that every day men and women of the DEA serve on the frontlines of law enforcement here at home and in 69 other countries around the world..."



First Lady Melania Trump spoke at the 2019 Red Ribbon Rally and assisted in the award ceremony for DEA's Visual Arts Contest and Community Drug Prevention Awards.

First Lady Melania Trump joined DEA acting Administrator Uttam Dhillon on October 8, 2019, to celebrate the official launch of the 2019 Red Ribbon campaign dedicated to the memory of DEA Special Agent Kiki Camarena. In the infamous 1985 case, Camarena was kidnapped, tortured, and murdered in Mexico by drug traffickers. The first lady said, "I applaud the tough work that the Drug Enforcement Administration, alongside so many of our agencies, is doing in the fight against drug abuse. Agent Camarena's story is, unfortunately, all too common and I want to thank Mrs. Camarena and her entire family for choosing to share their story to help drive the changes needed. I hope my visit this morning helps to highlight the importance of Red Ribbon Week in schools and communities nationwide."

### **DEA's European Partnerships Grow (2019)**

DEA's European Region continued to pursue robust partnerships to counter transnational criminal networks, including teaming with European Union entities such

as Europol, Eurojust, and the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre–Narcotics (MAOC-N). Europol, a fusion analytical and operational coordination center for the exchange of law enforcement intelligence and operational data, saw rapid growth in capabilities and has become a key ally for DEA's European mission.

Established in 2007, MAOC-N serves as the premiere European law enforcement/military center for intelligence sharing and coordination/deconfliction center for maritime drug smuggling in the Atlantic and Mediterranean regions. In November 2019, Spanish authorities, in partnership with the DEA Lisbon and Madrid Country Offices and MAOC-N, interdicted a self-propelled semi-submersible containing approximately 3,570 kilograms of cocaine off the coast of Galicia, Spain.

### **Sentencing of Alaa Mohammed Allawi (2019)**

In October 2019, a federal judge in San Antonio sentenced Alaa Mohammed Allawi to 30 years in federal prison for

distributing approximately 245 kilograms of fentanyl, cocaine, methamphetamine, oxycodone and Xanax. One of the first fentanyl distribution cases using the dark web and decentralized digital currency (crypto) in the Southwest OCDETF Region, Allawi caused the overdose death of a U.S. Marine stationed at Camp Lejeune, North

Carolina, and serious injuries to two Grand Forks, North Dakota residents. Allawi arrived in the U.S. from Iraq in 2012 on a SQ1 visa granted based on his service as an interpreter for the Department of Defense while in Iraq.

The investigation began in 2015, when the San Antonio Police Department and the University of Texas at San



In May 2017, DEA executed a search warrant at Allawi's stash house. Agents found multiple kilograms of illicit drugs, pills laced with fentanyl, industrial-sized pill presses, and firearms.



Antonio Police Department investigated a surge in various prescription drugs found on campus and in student housing. Allawi, identified as the manufacturer and supplier of the pills, admitted purchasing fentanyl and industrial-sized pill presses from a dark net website called Alpha Bay, beginning in 2015. Allawi distributed approximately 850,000 pills via the dark web, including more than 350,000 fake oxycodone pills laced with fentanyl. Of the 24 defendants in this investigation, 13 were prosecuted in federal court. In addition, the judge entered a \$14.32 million judgment and ordered that Allawi forfeit his San Antonio residence, four vehicles, firearms and jewelry, and U.S. and cryptocurrency.

### Operation Shoes Off in Maine (2019)

In October 2019, DEA's Bangor, Maine Post of Duty office initiated the PTO/OCDETF investigation Shoes Off, targeting a large-scale polydrug trafficking organization distributing multi-kilogram quantities of fentanyl and methamphetamine into Greater Bangor and Aroostook County along the U.S./Canada border. The DTO was also responsible for procuring firearms through fraudulent means and exchanging them as payment for illegal drugs. At its peak of operations, the DTO was supplying Central and Northern Maine with approximately 30 to 50 kilograms of fentanyl and methamphetamine each month. As a result of the investigation six subjects were arrested and charged with Title 21 violations and making false statements while purchasing multiple firearms. The dismantling of the DTO was a significant catalyst toward the reduction in fentanyl and methamphetamine availability in Central and Northern Maine.

### Law Enforcement Agency Cooperation in Roswell, New Mexico (2019–2020)

In addition to above-the-national-average property and violent crime, the community of Roswell (and the surrounding six counties in the Pecos Valley region) served as a major transit point for cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamine. As a direct response to local law enforcement's requests for DEA assistance, and to further investigative

efforts throughout the region, the El Paso Field Division set up a Post of Duty office in Roswell in October 2019, which identified a highly sophisticated Roswell-based DTO responsible for the distribution of hundreds of pounds of methamphetamine.

In November 2020, a large-scale takedown led by DEA resulted in the arrest of 17 individuals, and the seizure of large amounts of methamphetamine, firearms, vehicles, and cash. This followed an operation that made nine arrests and netted 120 pounds of methamphetamine. Days later, the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) led a second operation where 82 individuals were arrested on state felony drug trafficking charges. Other agencies who worked with DEA include the Roswell PD, HSI Roswell, FBI Roswell, ATF Roswell, New Mexico State Police, Chavez County Metro Narcotics Task Force, Pecos Valley Drug Task Force, and the Lea County Drug Task Force. "DEA agents joined forces with local, state, tribal, and other federal law enforcement agencies in the region," said SAC Kyle W. Williamson. "We are proud to work with our partners, leveraging our respective resources to pursue those who threaten our communities."

### Teamwork Disrupts Milwaukee to Cincinnati Drug Trafficking Ring (2018–2019)

In July 2018, DEA's Cincinnati Resident Office (CRO) began an investigation into the Derrick Bryant DTO, known for distributing multi-kilogram quantities of cocaine and fentanyl throughout southern Ohio. Monitoring operations identified Jesus Bojorquez, a Milwaukee-based drug trafficker with criminal associates in Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Nashville, as Bryant's primary source of supply. Soon the scope of the investigation increased to 30 additional coconspirators and several other locations. Through a series of enforcement activities linked to the Bryant DTO, investigators seized 42 pounds of methamphetamine and more than \$158,000.

On October 22, 2019, investigators with court authorization intercepted calls between Bryant and Bojorquez as they discussed freezing the distribution network and moving the

drugs to safer locations. Acting quickly the CRO obtained search warrants for seven locations in Cincinnati associated with Bryant while the Milwaukee District Office (MDO) obtained a search warrant for a Bojorquez-controlled location. On October 24, members from CRO, MDO, and state, local, and federal partners executed eight federal search warrants in Cincinnati and Milwaukee. Both men and six other associates were arrested, and approximately 48 kilograms of cocaine, seven kilograms of suspected fentanyl, cash, weapons, and seven vehicles were seized.

### **DEA Laboratory System Expands as Fentanyl Spreads (2018–2023)**

DEA's Office of Forensic Science oversaw renovations at the Training Academy to increase the capacity of the Basic Forensic Chemist Class from 8 students to 12. In 2023, the STRL expanded to create a new wing of laboratory space, which will house the Method Development and Technology Transfer Team. In FY 2021, DEA received \$50 million in appropriations funding for a new laboratory in New Hampshire to help combat the region's raging opioid epidemic. In late 2023, while awaiting construction of the permanent facility, which will house both chemistry and friction ridge disciplines, the Forensics Division established a small, temporary laboratory in DEA's Manchester District Office to analyze drug seizures from the New England Field Division.

### **New DOJ Policies (2020–2021)**

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, national sentiment flared in response to the death of George Floyd, a 46-year-old African American man who died in police custody.

To support local law enforcement agencies, Attorney General William Barr temporarily granted DEA agents the ability to perform other law enforcement duties as deemed necessary. These additional tasks included the authority to lawfully help during major sporting events and other large gatherings, disaster relief, and to support federal counterparts in the aftermath of serious crimes. Under this temporary authority, DEA deployed hundreds of agents to cities across America. Agents from multiple divisions

assisted local law enforcement to protect against threats to public safety.

### **Investigation and Indictment of former Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro Moros (2020)**

In March 2020, a series of landmark indictments was unsealed against former Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro Moros. The indictments, from various U.S. jurisdictions including the Southern District of New York, the District of Columbia, and Southern District of Florida, charged the former Venezuelan president and 14 other Venezuelan officials with intentionally providing military and political protection to support the drug cartels in Venezuela. In exchange for this protection, the cartels paid millions of dollars to Maduro and his cronies, which the indictments sought to seize. The New York cases were investigated by DEA's SOD Bilateral Investigations Unit (BIU), New York Strike Force, and Miami Field Division. The Florida cases were led by DEA's Orlando District Office, and supported by the OCDETF program and the Criminal Division's Office of Enforcement Operations.

### **St. Louis Field Division and a Deadly Dose (2020)**

St. Louis Field Division agents, along with local law enforcement, arrested Markquis Bryant on March 26, 2020, shortly after the COVID-19 lockdown was declared nationwide. Bryant, a convicted murderer, was arrested after he sold fentanyl to a Florissant, Missouri man who was found dead in his home early the next morning by his father. During the execution of a federal search warrant investigators found five firearms as well as heroin, fentanyl, crack cocaine, and paraphernalia consistent with drug sales. In June 2022, Bryant was found guilty on one count of distribution of a controlled substance and sentenced to 17 years in prison.

### **Operation Snowfall (2018–2020)**

On June 24, 2020, DEA Task Force 5 and the BPD/SIU executed the final enforcement action in support of Operation Snowfall, which began in December 2018. The

investigation targeted gang members Matthew Drayton and Kenji Drayton, as well as Fidelis gang member Arthur Hodges, who operated a violent crack cocaine distribution organization in the Fidelis Way housing development in the Brighton neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts. The initiative identified apartments taken over for drug purposes during the pandemic and traced the conspirators to a larger narcotics operation. Twenty-four federal arrest warrants were obtained. Subjects named were often affiliated with violent Boston gangs, many with previous firearm and/or drug arrests. The operation concluded with 36 arrests and the seizure of firearms, crack cocaine, oxycodone, luxury jewelry, and nearly a million dollars.

The investigative team faced the new challenge of managing a wire room and orchestrating a final enforcement operation during the global COVID-19 pandemic. The team exhibited creativity and tenacity in addressing the dangers presented by COVID-19, creating protocols and best practices to avoid exposure of investigative personnel. Enforcement briefings, evidence processing, and initial prisoner intake and court process were all conducted with socially-distanced procedures. As a result of these forward-thinking efforts, this investigation and the complex final enforcement operation were conducted safely and without any outbreak or evidence of COVID-19 exposure.

Boston Police Commissioner William G. Gross recognized the significance of this investigation, commenting, “This operation will greatly improve quality of life for our neighborhoods and protect the health and safety of those affected by drug addiction.”

## Operation LeGend Results in 500 Arrests, Including 37 Murder Suspects (2020)

In July 2020, Operation LeGend was a federal partnership with local Kansas City law enforcement designed to address the area’s dramatic increase in violent crime. The operation honored the memory of four-year-old LeGend Taliferro, one of the youngest fatalities during a record-breaking year of homicides and shootings. His suspected murderer was arrested during the operation. During the starting announcement on July 8 through September 16, homicides in Kansas City were down 22 percent, nonfatal shootings were down 24 percent, and aggravated assaults were down 44 percent compared to the 10 weeks prior.

“Our aim during this operation in Kansas City was to provide support wherever we could to combat violent crime, especially if it is drug related,” explained SAC William J. Callahan, head of the St. Louis Field Division. Twelve DEA agents were deputized to work with USMS.



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They supplemented six teams and participated in the capture of 170 state, local, and federal fugitives, including four DEA fugitives. DEA in St. Louis, Omaha, Denver, New Orleans, and Dallas deployed agents as well as the agents in the Kansas City District Office, and were credited with making 35 state arrests and 33 federal arrests, in addition to seizing 99 firearms and \$584,000. Drug seizures and buys included 4.5 kilograms (kg) of heroin, more than a kilogram of fentanyl, 45.5 kg of methamphetamine, two kg of cocaine, and a variety of prescription and counterfeit pills.

### Operation Crystal Shield (2020)

DEA announced Operation Crystal Shield on February 20, 2020, in response to the nationwide resurgence of methamphetamine. Crystal Shield targeted the routes and hubs used by Mexican cartels to distribute methamphetamine, giving DEA a mechanism to attack the cartels through direct investigative and judicial action. “As the drug threat evolves, we must continue our attack on multiple fronts,” said DEA acting Administrator Uttam Dhillon. “We recognize many parts of the country are being flooded with extremely cheap, pure methamphetamine, and we are committed to stemming the flow of this deadly drug before it reaches our neighborhoods and communities.”

Operation Crystal Shield targeted eight major methamphetamine distribution hubs (Atlanta, Dallas, El Paso, Houston, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Phoenix, and St. Louis), surging enforcement efforts while increasing information and intelligence sharing to disrupt significant DTOs. These eight field divisions accounted for approximately 75 percent of all DEA domestic methamphetamine seizures (over 80,000 pounds in FY 2019).

The high potency and purity of the methamphetamine smuggled into the U.S. coupled with low prices led to a significant rise in overdose deaths in the years leading up to Operation Crystal Shield. According to CDC, in 2017, 10,333 Americans died from psychostimulant use (a category which includes methamphetamine, MDMA, and other amphetamines). This was a 37 percent increase from 2016 and a 543 percent increase since 2005. DEA sources indicated that people addicted to opioids were

turning to methamphetamine as a perceived less lethal alternative to heroin or fentanyl. Total nationwide methamphetamine seizures increased 127 percent between FY 2017 (49,507 pounds) to FY 2019 (112,146 pounds). Liquid methamphetamine solution was increasingly smuggled across the Southwest border to be converted into crystal methamphetamine in domestic conversion labs. Because the methamphetamine was often found in polydrug loads, alongside cocaine, heroin, and fentanyl, DEA committed to stopping drugs before they were smuggled across the border by targeting not only methamphetamine shipments, but also all polydrug shipments.

### Fresno/San Francisco Field Division Responds to Fentanyl Crisis (2020)

In March 2020, DEA Fresno, California began an investigation into a suspected fentanyl poisoning at a local high school. This case led to the creation of the Fentanyl Overdose Resolution Team (FORT), a multiagency group consisting of DEA, HSI, and the Fresno Police Department. Since its inception, the group responded to over 160 fentanyl poisonings, 80 of which were fatal. FORT worked closely with victims’ families, often leading to continued partnerships to conduct fentanyl awareness education throughout the community. In addition, FORT coordinated



As part of Operation Crystal Shield, agents from DEA’s Lafayette Post of Duty seized 150 pounds of marijuana and 27 to 30 pounds of crystal methamphetamine.

with news media in California's Central Valley. The group made over 70 federal arrests and seized hundreds of thousands of fentanyl-laced fake pills, powder, and other illegal drugs. FORT leadership was contacted by other law enforcement agencies to assist in starting a FORT-model team in their areas.

### **New Jersey Task Force Seizes \$5.7 Million in Drug Proceeds (2019–2020)**

Starting in 2019, members of DEA New Jersey Field Division's Task Force Group 2, in collaboration with the Louisville Resident Office and the Guadalajara Resident Office, investigated a Chinese money laundering organization with ties to Hong Kong and Mexico, operating within the greater New Jersey area.

Following a stakeout of several money pickups, the operation identified Ramon Suero as a high-level drug trafficker operating in the New Jersey area. The investigation further identified Jai Liang Zheng and Dianxin Jiang as two high-level Chinese money launderers. In July 2020, Jia Liang Zheng and accomplices were arrested and in August, Dianxin Jiang was arrested, resulting in a \$1.5 million seizure of drug proceeds. In October, Ramfis Minaya and Jonathan Veras-Rodriguez, members of the DTO, were arrested and approximately \$5.7 million was seized.

### **Snapchat Dealer Markets to College Students (2020)**

Starting in October 2020, DEA's Buffalo District Office Tactical Diversion Squad investigated a drug distribution operation at the State University of New York at Buffalo. The operation openly advertised its services to the co-ed population by posting a menu of available items and prices in code on Snapchat. Students would pay online or via peer-to-peer money transfers. Available products included Xanax, fake Adderall containing methamphetamine, fake oxycodone containing fentanyl, cocaine, LSD, ecstasy, ketamine, marijuana, and psilocybin mushrooms.

In a package sent to Leonard Abramov, agents found 30mg fake Adderall pills similar to those he had purchased previously. The counterfeit Adderall pills tested positive

for methamphetamine. On May 5, 2021, coordinating with the Amherst Police Department and ICE-Enforcement Removal Operations, a search warrant executed on Abramov's residence produced 580 counterfeit Xanax tablets, MDMA, psilocybin, LSD, various THC and hashish products, a money counter, scales, three laptop computers, one tower computer/hard drive, an external hard drive, oxycodone, and cocaine. Seizure warrants were issued on Abramov's banking and investment accounts. Abramov was arrested for possession with intent to distribute 50 grams or more of methamphetamine and marijuana.

### **New Jersey's Sleeping Giant Seizes Millions (2018–2020)**

In 2018, DEA's Special Operations Division created Project Sleeping Giant, which supported field investigations using an interagency task force approach to disrupt and dismantle Chinese Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) and their connected networks. In October 2020, as part of the project, DEA's New York Field Division uncovered key intelligence that led to the investigation of Chinese TCOs' direct role in a money laundering and drug trafficking operation. They seized approximately \$7.2 million and assisted other divisions in the seizure of approximately \$7 million. This investigation also led to the seizure of 3,000 pounds of marijuana, 36 kilograms of fentanyl, and 50 pounds of methamphetamine.

### **Arrest of Canadian Consolidated Priority Organization Target (CPOT) Arden McCann, Darknet Operation Disruptor (2018–2020)**

CPOT Arden McCann was arrested in August 2018. DEA's Atlanta Field Division, CIU, DEA's New Haven Tactical Diversion Squad, DEA's Fort-Worth Tactical Diversion Squad, DEA's Atlanta-Carolinas HIDTA Group 4, DEA's Ottawa Country Office, and the DEA Intelligence Division's Atlanta-based Document and Media Exploitation team, along with many other law enforcement partners worked in concert to identify and track the prolific sales of this previously unknown online trafficker. Sales included fentanyl,

carfentanyl, and other fentanyl analogues, along with alprazolam, over various dark web markets including Alpha Bay, Wall Street, and Empire markets. The products were sent to re-shippers located in the continental United States, who then shipped the products to the actual purchasers. However, CIU was able to trace the sales and linked the activities to multiple overdose deaths in the United States and Europe. They located and seized Bitcoin wallets with the proceeds of the sales totaling \$84,600. Defendant McCann was named in a superseding indictment in 2020 adding additional quantities and co-conspirators. In 2023 he pleaded guilty.

### **Jalisco New Generation Cartel (2020)**

On October 8, 2020, DEA seized approximately 880 kilograms of methamphetamine. The global pandemic caused some cartels to adjust how they moved illicit drugs, forcing DTOs to risk transporting larger polydrug shipments. Agents from DEA's Dallas Field Division stopped a tractor-trailer in Denton County, Texas, just north of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. A drug detection K9 alerted for the presence of drugs, which led to the discovery of bundles of methamphetamine concealed under the false floor in the bed of a refrigerated tractor-trailer. "This staggering seizure of methamphetamine and heroin has undoubtedly saved lives and hurt the pocketbooks of this transnational criminal organization," said Eduardo A. Chávez, SAC of DEA's Dallas Field Division. The seizure accounted for approximately \$45 million in revenue denied from the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG).

For decades, going back to the Rafael Caro-Quintero days, Guadalajara, Jalisco, was Mexico's epicenter for drug trafficking. Over time, cartel leadership changed hands. In 2010, following a series of high-level arrests, an ambitious and ruthless individual, Nemesio Ruben Oseguera-Cervantes, became frustrated about being passed over for a leadership role and started CJNG. After a bloody war in some of Mexico's most prominent drug trafficking areas, CJNG became Mexico's most violent drug cartel. CJNG was one of the five most dangerous TCOs in the world, known for violence and murder. Successful operations to

stop CJNG were a DEA-wide effort, but they began when DEA's Los Angeles Field Division and Guadalajara Resident Office started a small investigation into the group. The field division initiated court-authorized BlackBerry (an emerging technology at the time) wiretaps which became the guide for hundreds of other successful BlackBerry cases throughout the federal government.

CJNG's tentacles reached into Alpine, Texas, in 2022, when the Alpine Resident Office, along with U.S. Border Patrol and HSI, were conducting surveillance on Jose Parada-Alarcon's ranch on the U.S./Mexico Border. Agents observed a vehicle illegally traveling from Mexico towing a stock trailer covered with a tarp onto the ranch, and armed gunmen traveling on foot onto the ranch. Ultimately Prada-Alarcon, the ranch owner, was arrested after agents seized 6.5 tons of marijuana, numerous vehicles, and weapons. He allegedly admitted to being paid to store and conceal marijuana on his ranch. Ramos-Hernandez allegedly worked for Sergio Menchaca-Chavez, Jr., who was identified as having command and control over Ojinaga, Mexico, and a direct link to CJNG CPOT Nemesio Ruben Oseguera-Cervantes.

Over the next decade, Los Angeles agents would use BlackBerry intercepts, confidential informants, and other investigative techniques to seize several tons of cocaine, methamphetamine, fentanyl, heroin, and more than \$10 million. More importantly, Oseguera-Cervantes and several of his associates were indicted. The investigation led to more than 40 high-level indictments, including eight CPOT targets. The agents involved would go on to win the DEA Administrator's Award, be nominated for the Attorney General's Award, and receive many other professional accolades. The Los Angeles Field Division's investigation into CJNG is one of DEA's most successful, noteworthy, and largest cases.

### **United States and Mexican Law Enforcement Dismantles Transnational DTO (2020)**

On July 7, 2020, United States and Mexico law enforcement announced significant actions against a prolific transnational DTO operating in Nogales, Sonora, along

the U.S.-Mexico border. A few weeks earlier, with bilateral cooperation between the two countries, Mexico's Attorney General's Office, *Fiscalía General de la República*, conducted a significant enforcement action resulting in the arrest of five people and the seizure of 120,000 fentanyl-laced pills, 15 pounds of methamphetamine, 17 pounds of heroin, 15 pounds of cocaine, and assorted weapons. In addition, seven U.S.-based coordinators and operators with alleged ties to the same DTO were arrested and indicted in the United States. "Transnational drug trafficking organizations pose an unprecedented public safety threat to both the United States and Mexico," said Attorney General Merrick Garland. "These coordinated law enforcement actions demonstrate the success our countries can have when we work together to meet that threat."

### **Pandemic Demands New Work Plans (2021)**

The COVID-19 pandemic changed how DEA's operations were conducted, but it did not stop the work on countering illicit drug trafficking. While DEA complied with COVID-19 quarantine and social distancing protocols, the work continued under an expansion of the pilot program of work-from-home tech which had been debuted earlier in the 2010s. This program allowed support staff to continue supporting operations while providing space for in-person critical activities. Educational efforts continued under the 2021 Lunch and Learn Web series, pioneered by DEA's Washington Field Division.

### **AGEO Mercury 2013–2021**

An Attorney General Exempt Operation (AGEO) is an investigative and operational tool DEA employs to dismantle and degrade the money-laundering financial infrastructure of TCOs. An AGEO named Mercury began in December 2013, with a total of 100 financial transactions, that focused on understanding the scope of the Henry Carrollo-Ramirez drug trafficking and money laundering organization (DMLO) based in Cucuta, Colombia. The group sent cocaine from Colombia to Puerto Rico and Europe as well

as laundered drug proceeds from the United States and Europe to Colombia.

Further operations conducted under AGEO Mercury led to spinoff investigations by multiple DEA domestic offices and foreign law enforcement partners that resulted in the identification and arrest of multiple violators and the seizure of large amounts of drugs and drug proceeds in the United States, Caribbean, Europe, and Colombia. Operation AGEO Mercury concluded in June 2021. The New England Field Division and law enforcement partners seized approximately \$21,226,395 in assets/currency, 8,765 kilograms of cocaine, 22 kilograms of heroin, 4 kilograms of fentanyl, 203 kilograms of marijuana, 8 firearms, and two sailing vessels. These successful joint investigative activities led to the complete dismantling of the organization.

### **Operation Angels Envy (2021)**

From 2019 to 2021, DEA's Washington Division HIDTA Group 12 investigated international and domestic cells of the Sinaloa Cartel as part of Operation Angels Envy. During this investigation, Sinaloa cells were identified and dismantled in Washington, DC, Maryland, Virginia, Ohio, Missouri, New England, California, Mexico, and elsewhere. Seizures included approximately 473 pounds of methamphetamine, 42 kilograms of fentanyl, nine kilograms of heroin, 129 kilograms of cocaine, 5,100 pounds of marijuana, \$5.3 million, and \$700,000 in jewelry and assets. In addition, approximately 30 individuals were federally indicted, including several allegedly responsible for the November 2019 shooting death of Dayton, Ohio Resident Office TFO Jorge DelRio, remembered on DEA's Wall of Honor.

### **El Paso Field Division Dismantles Clandestine Lab Containing Fentanyl-Laced Pills (2021)**

In February 2021, DEA Albuquerque District Office Task Force agents learned a member of an Albuquerque DTO ordered a pill press machine with the capabilities of producing several thousand pills an hour. During the following months, agents conducted multiple controlled purchases of methamphetamine, blue fentanyl-laced pills, and yellow



Special Agent in Charge of the Washington Field Division, Jarod Forget, talks about the One Pill Can Kill Awareness Campaign during a Lunch and Learn session.

fentanyl-laced pills from the DTO. As a result of these controlled purchases, agents applied for and received a federal search warrant for five locations. Agents seized approximately 59,840 fentanyl-laced tablets, 1 kilogram of fentanyl powder, 14 kilograms of methamphetamine, 15 kilograms of binding material, 1.3 kilograms of cocaine, 2 ounces of heroin, 2.5 kilograms of marijuana, along with weapons, vehicles, and cash. Agents also located the active fentanyl lab controlled by the DTO. The El Paso Special Response Team (SRT) responded to the scene to recover evidence from the location and process the lab. El Paso SRT/Clan Lab agents and chemists from DEA's South Central Laboratory located the pill press, powder granulator, powder mixer, supplies, and equipment used to manufacture the deadly fentanyl tablets.

### Sioux City and Meth Masks (2021)

In February, 2021, DEA special agents and task force officers from the Sioux City Resident Office of Omaha's Field

Division found three large fiberglass decorative masks, one as large as four feet tall, plus three smaller ones. Shipped directly to a conversion lab from Mexico, they concealed methamphetamine, secreted in wax-like form between layers of the fiberglass. The process for conversion included boiling the wax in mineral water, pouring it through cheesecloth and separating the wax from the liquid containing the methamphetamine salts. After drying, it returned to a crystalline form. The methamphetamine was 99 percent pure. Denny Rodriguez was arrested on June 2, 2021 and sentenced to 176 months in federal prison.

### Silk Road and the Dread Pirate Roberts (2011–2021)

The advent of decentralized digital currency, like Bitcoin, changed the way that worldwide financial transactions take place. Unfortunately, it didn't take criminals long to find illicit ways to exploit this burgeoning technology. Silk Road, a dark web marketplace designed to facilitate



Three smaller masks seized and found to contain methamphetamine.

illegal transactions, only accepted payment in Bitcoin, which complicated the tracking of incriminating financial trails. Silk Road, only accessible on the dark web via a TOR Browser, concealed a user's true IP address by spreading communications over a series of computer relays, making the identification of network users and dark web network traffic practically impossible.

Silk Road users found a sprawling black-market bazaar where unlawful goods and services were bought and sold, including a range (13,000 listings in its prime) of illegal drugs like cannabis, ecstasy, opioids, precursors, prescriptions, psychedelics, and stimulants. In its roughly two-and-a-half years in operation, several thousand drug dealers and other unlawful vendors distributed hundreds of kilograms of illegal wares to over 100,000 buyers, and laundered hundreds of millions of dollars. Silk Road advertised computer-hacking services, the selling of malicious software and pirated media, and offers to produce forged driver's licenses, passports, Social Security cards, utility bills, credit card statements, and car insurance records, among other criminal activity. The United States Postal Service would unwittingly ship these goods to purchasers.

The operator of Silk Road was known only by the alias of the Dread Pirate Roberts (a moniker from the classic movie *The Princess Bride*). DEA's New York OCDETF Strike Force Group Z-52 began an undercover operation in June 2011. They carefully set up a Bitcoin wallet and made 16 successful drug purchases that included heroin, cocaine, crack cocaine, Percocet, Adderall, and Oxycontin.

Investigations uncovered the Dread Pirate Roberts was an alias for Ross William Ulbricht, arrested on October 1, 2013. A virtual wallet containing approximately 29,655 bitcoins was seized and around October 25 an additional 173,991 in bitcoins were seized in a connected civil action against Silk Road for money laundering. All told, Silk Road generated sales of more than \$183 million and \$13 million in commissions, based on the Bitcoin value at the time of the transactions. It's important to note that with the wild fluctuations in the value of digital currency the numbers have been reported as high as \$1.2 billion in sales with \$80 million in commissions.

In 2015, Ulbricht was convicted of engaging in a continuing criminal enterprise, distributing narcotics, distributing narcotics by means of the internet, conspiracy to distribute narcotics, conspiracy to commit money laundering, conspiracy to traffic fraudulent identity documents, and conspiracy to commit computer hacking. He was sentenced to life in prison without parole and ordered to pay \$183 million in restitution. Silk Road was cut off from public access, the webpage displaying the DOJ message, "THIS HIDDEN SITE HAS BEEN SEIZED."

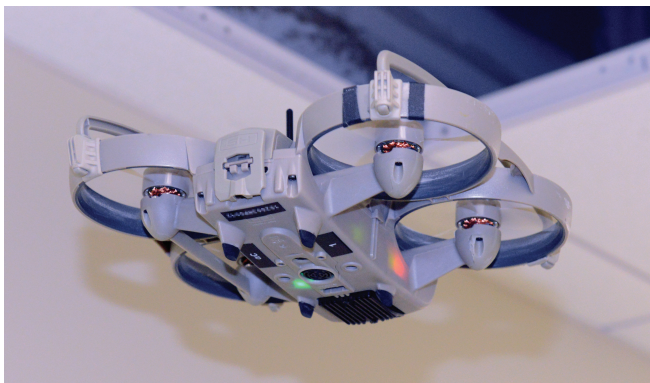


The Silk Road marketplace was seized and removed public access to thousands of criminal vendors.

With Operation Tornado, DEA's SOD pursued other individuals associated with Silk Road, resulting in the seizure of 173,991 more bitcoins. As with most OCDETF investigations, the operation was coordinated with FBI and a wide array of multiagency partners. In 2021, a newfound trove of Silk Road bitcoins stolen in 2013 were seized from a hacker. Valued at \$3.8 billion, the bitcoins were used to cancel out Ulbricht's \$183 million in restitution.

## Aviation Division Thrives on Multiple Fronts (2015–2021)

In 2015, DEA's Aviation Division's Tactical Helicopter Section (THS) expanded its mission support to domestic offices, SRTs, and the Domestic Cannabis Eradication and Suppression Program. One of its most successful operations



DEA's Aviation Division and Houston Field Division hosted DEA's first indoor drone course for DEA-certified Remote Pilots in Command.

eradicates more than 500,000 marijuana plants each season in the United States. Planting of large-scale marijuana operations in national forests and public lands have caused deforestation, erosion, contamination of water sources, and wildlife poisonings. Among many assistance efforts, THS has provided an overhead enforcement presence as well as external load capabilities, which have reduced manpower requirements with harsh pesticides and chemicals. THS

also has played an active role in disaster relief, providing air support for enforcement, rescue, and relief operations.

DEA's drone program became operational in March 2021. DEA created an advanced program for training remote pilots and deploying drones in tactical support of operations. The program, which uses both indoor and outdoor drones, has been highly successful from the beginning.

### Launch of Operation Engage (2021)

On February 24, 2021, DEA launched the Operation Engage community outreach initiative, which targeted the top local drug threat in each DEA field division nationwide. Within this initiative, each field division could identify its most challenging area based on drug threat data, designate a city or region, and focus evidence-informed substance use prevention and community outreach efforts. This differed from DEA's 360 Strategy in that it did not exclusively focus on opioids, providing flexibility to the field divisions to align their local outreach strategies with their top drug threats and enforcement efforts.



A Kansas City District Office TFO investigator talks to children attending the DEA Educational Foundation's Youth Dance program, in partnership with Operation Engage, at the *Kansas City Kansas Police Athletic League*, August 2022.

## DEA Flies Pride Flag for the First Time (2021)

June is Pride Month, when the world’s LGBTQIA+ communities come together and remember the history and struggle for equal rights and recognition. Events celebrating diversity are held worldwide. Originally created to mark the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots that occurred on June 28, 1969, the purpose of Pride Month has expanded in the decades since. The rainbow-striped Pride flag is one of the symbols of this struggle. While DEA has observed Pride Month since it was first commemorated by presidential proclamation in 2009, 2021 marked the first time that the Pride flag was flown at DEA Headquarters.

## Launch of One Pill Can Kill Campaign (2021)

On September 27, 2021, DEA issued a public safety alert, warning the public of the alarming increase in the lethality and availability of fake pills containing fentanyl and methamphetamine. Officials reported a dramatic rise in the number of counterfeit pills containing at least two milligrams of fentanyl, a deadly dose. This coincided with the launch of DEA’s One Pill Can Kill public awareness campaign to educate the public about the dangers of counterfeit pills. DEA urged all Americans to be vigilant and aware of the dangers and to take only medications prescribed by a medical professional and dispensed by a licensed pharmacist.



One Pill Can Kill campaign was launched in 2021 to bring attention to the dangers of fake and counterfeit pills.

DEA Administrator Anne Milgram sounded the alarm. “Counterfeit pills that contain these dangerous and extremely addictive drugs are more lethal and more accessible than ever before. In fact, DEA lab analysis reveal that two out of every five pills with fentanyl contain a potentially lethal dose. DEA is focusing resources on taking down the violent drug traffickers causing the greatest harm and posing the greatest threat to the safety and health of Americans,” Milgram said.

## Cocaine Purposely Laced with Fentanyl (2021)

In September 2021, at a party in Fairfax, Virginia, six individuals consumed cocaine unknowingly laced with a lethal amount of fentanyl. All six suffered overdoses and were shipped to local hospitals. Five of the individuals survived; the sixth person died. As a result of a joint investigation by DEA’s Washington Field Division and the Fairfax County Police Department, Michael Vaughn was discovered to have intentionally added the lethal fentanyl. Upon arrest, an additional 60 grams of powdered fentanyl was confiscated. Vaughn, convicted of Distribution of Fentanyl Resulting in Death and Serious Bodily Injury, and Possession with Intent to Distribute Fentanyl, was sentenced to 30 years in prison.

## Fentanyl Public Safety Surge, Phoenix Field Division (2021)

Between September 29 and December 14, 2021, DEA initiated a nationwide law enforcement surge to address the alarming increase in the availability of fentanyl-laced fake pills. The surge targeted criminal drug networks that harnessed the anonymity and accessibility of social media applications to push these deadly drugs into communities. During the surge, the Phoenix Field Division seized over three million fentanyl pills, 45 kilograms of fentanyl powder, 35 firearms, and made over 40 arrests. Overall, DEA and law enforcement partners seized more than 1,500 pounds of fentanyl and over eight million fake prescription pills. The seizures were directly linked to at least 46 overdoses and 39 overdose deaths. At least 76

of the cases involved drug traffickers using social media applications, including Snapchat, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Thirty-two cases had direct ties to the major Mexican drug networks that mass-produce and distribute fentanyl.

“Mexican criminal drug networks are harnessing the perfect drug trafficking tool: social media applications that are available on every smartphone,” said DEA Administrator Anne Milgram. “They are using these platforms to flood our country with fentanyl. The ease with which drug dealers can operate on social media and other popular smartphone apps is fueling our nation’s unprecedented overdose epidemic.”

### Franklin Mountain Lit Red for Red Ribbon Week (2021)

To commemorate Red Ribbon Week, Fire Prevention Week, and National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, DEA’s

El Paso Field Division and community firefighters, businesses, and nonprofits partnered to light the iconic star on the Franklin Mountains in red. DEA commemorates Red Ribbon Week each October 23-31, when the agency asks students, teachers, and the entire community to make the pledge to lead drug-free lifestyles, in memory of Special Agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena.

“All the agencies who collaborated to light the star red want our community to be El Paso Strong, and that means living safe, healthy lifestyles,” said Greg Millard, Acting Special Agent in Charge of DEA’s El Paso Field Division.

### DEA Museum Renovations and the Traveling Exhibit Back on the Road (2021–2023)

In 2021, after more than two years of careful work during the pandemic, the DEA Museum reopened on November 4th. The original museum, which debuted in 1999, was



There is a star on the Franklin Mountains that illuminates El Paso year-round. During Red Ribbon Week, it shines red. Photo by Brian Wancho. Used with permission.

reimagined to engage and educate the public in a more contemporary space, featuring interactive exhibits and installations, with hands-on activities, artifacts, and diverse personal histories that highlight the long, dynamic history of drug use, misuse, and law enforcement in America. The new Museum, located at DEA Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, boasts more than 40 hands-on activities, 180 artifacts, a changing exhibit space, and an education room outfitted with distance learning technology.

Exhibits on the science of opium, marijuana, cocaine, and synthetic drug addiction also empower visitors with knowledge of different drugs and their risk factors.

Another key component of the Museum’s renovation was the redesigned Wall of Honor, which recognizes those who gave their lives to combat drugs and make our communities safer. The wall is illuminated 24 hours a day, every day, and an annual Memorial Service is held every May.

During the pandemic the DEA Museum’s traveling exhibit, *“Drugs: Costs and Consequences,”* was also renovated. Serving as a springboard for community conversations about illegal drugs and their costs to the environment, human health, public safety, family life, and the health of children, 21 venues have hosted the exhibit since 2002. More than 20 million people have visited the exhibit including large numbers of school children and families. Updates to the exhibit include the use of QR codes, new videos and artwork, and Spanish translations. The renovated exhibit was presented in Charleston, West Virginia; Albany, Georgia; and, Houston, Texas through 2023, with strong collaboration from the DEA Educational Foundation.

## Country Office in Kyiv, Ukraine Opens (2021)

In June 2019, Congress approved the opening of DEA’s Kyiv Country Office (CO). The Kyiv CO opened in April



In the renovated DEA Museum, visitors can explore the history of opioids, marijuana, cocaine, and synthetic drug use in the United States.

2021. In 2016, prior to the opening, in coordination with the Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, members of the former DEA FAST Team traveled to Kyiv to provide tactical operations training to Ukrainian police forces involved in counter-narcotic operations. The training consisted of five weeks of classroom lectures regarding tactical planning, thought processes, and methodologies as well as field exercises where the units were able to practice and implement their new skills. U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch and DEA European Regional Director James Allen were present for the final exercise and subsequent closing ceremony.

### **Class Action/EEO Lawsuit Settled (2022)**

In April 2022, DEA reached a settlement in the nearly 30-year-old *Garcia v. Department of Justice* class action lawsuit brought on behalf of female special agents who were not selected for overseas assignments between 1990-1992. The case, filed in 1993, had been the longest pending case at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. DEA is committed to promoting the advancement of women, and recognizes the efforts of many women across the agency that are relentlessly working to protect the safety and health of communities.

### **Investigation Targets Javier Gonzalez/ Jose Duprey DTO (2021–2022)**

In November 2021, DEA's New Haven District Office Task Force, along with approximately 200 federal, state, and local counterparts, joined in an OCDETF Title III investigation targeting the Javier Gonzalez/Jose Duprey DTO based in Waterbury, Connecticut. On May 25, 2022, they executed 11 federal search warrants and 15 federal arrest warrants across Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey. Sixteen individuals were arrested. Approximately 40 kilograms of fentanyl, 5.5 kilograms of heroin, six kilograms of cocaine, \$475,000 in narcotics proceeds, approximately \$600,000 in jewelry, four loaded handguns, and five vehicles were seized. "Fentanyl, heroin, and cocaine are causing great damage to our communities and DEA's

top priority is to aggressively pursue anyone who distributes this poison in order to profit and destroy lives," said DEA SAC Brian Boyle. "Let these arrests and seizures be a warning to those traffickers who are distributing drugs to the people of Connecticut. The DEA and its local, state and federal partners will do everything in our power to bring you to justice."

### **Operation Shamm Xanny (2022)**

From 2016 to 2022, DEA's Baltimore Tactical Diversion Squad Group 50, with the help of the Virtual Currency Unit, took down a large counterfeit Xanax DTO. The operation resulted in the seizure of approximately \$18 million in crypto currency, \$1.5 million in U.S. currency, \$1 million in computer hardware, a 20-station pill press, large amounts of alprazolam (purchased from China), other drugs (including fentanyl), 11 weapons, and 2 vehicles. With the additional assistance of DEA Memphis and Orlando District Offices, Baltimore DO Group 50 subsequently located and seized over \$132.55 million from two virtual wallets (ledgers) containing 2,932 bitcoins.



In January 2018, DEA's Baltimore Tactical Diversion Squad seized a 20-station pill press capable of making 24,000 pills per hour.

## Post Office Pill Seizure (2022)

The New York Division Group D-21, working with HSI, the U.S. Postal Investigative Service, NJ State Police, and Hudson County, NJ District Attorney Office investigators, shut down an industrial-sized illicit pill manufacturing lab on Staten Island. In July 2022, after a K9 drug alert, the team observed the drop-off of over 33 parcels to be mailed. After intercepting the parcels and discovering thousands of pills in heat-sealed envelopes, a search warrant was executed at the residence of Jesus Amparo. The pill manufacturing lab included two industrial pill presses, packaging, powdered fentanyl, three different pill types, as well as several precursor binding powders.

## 115 Kilograms of Cocaine Seized from a Container Ship (2022)

In August 2022, the Wilmington, Delaware Resident Office of DEA's Philadelphia Field Division received intelligence from the Cartagena Resident Office that allowed it to seize 115 kilograms of cocaine from the bottom of a container ship. The kilograms, secreted in a parasitic device that was concealed in a secured compartment under the ship, could only be accessed by scuba divers. The container ship, the *Spirit of Auckland*, departed Cartagena, Colombia, in route to the Port of Philadelphia, when the seizure occurred. The ship's ultimate destination was Australia.

## Tableting Machine Seizure with Lead Passed from HSI (2022)

In winter of 2022, DEA's Westchester, NY Resident Office, in coordination with the SDNY, White Plains Division, investigated and arrested Roger Quiman. Working off information from a tip from HSI, the team traced the delivery of a package of microcrystalline, a binding agent during the tablet pressing process, to Quiman's residence. The suspect then delivered heavy packages to a storage unit where a power line was run, and he was observed exiting with a full backpack. After executing a search warrant on both the residence and storage unit, the agents seized five handguns (one with a removed serial number), one vehicle,



With the help of the Delaware State Police scuba team anchored to the side of the *Spirit of Auckland*, agents from DEA's Wilmington Resident Office seized 115 kilograms of cocaine.

two tableting machines illegally imported from China, and thousands of fake Xanax and oxycodone pills, in addition to approximately 12 kilograms of powdered fentanyl.

## Drugs, Guns, and Cash Confiscated in RV Operation (2022)

Drug couriers diversify delivery methods in response to prior seizures. In 2022, DEA's Seattle Field Division, in coordination with FBI, CBP, HSI, and Seattle police, seized two RVs packed with methamphetamine and fake pills that were being driven up I-5 from California to Washington. The drugs, guns, and cash totals seized by law enforcement were significant: 1,026 pounds of methamphetamine; more than 9 kilograms of fentanyl powder and 330,000 fentanyl-laced pills; 25 kilograms of

cocaine; and 20 kilograms of heroin. Law enforcement seized 110 firearms and more than \$1 million in cash. The defendants were charged with conspiracy to distribute controlled substances and possession of controlled substances with intent to distribute.

## Heroes Fully Identified on Wall of Honor (2022)

DEA has long honored its fallen employees with their names as part of the Wall of Honor. When the agency moved Headquarters to Arlington in the mid-1990s, the format of these plaques changed to include an image. However, eight plaques were incomplete with placeholder images of badges. In 2005, intensive research efforts by retired Special Agent Richard “Rick” Barrett and retired Congressional Affairs staffer Colleen Whelan resulted in 7 out of 8 of the remaining images being located. The final image, of FBN Agent Andrew P. Sanderson, was added with honor in 2022 to complete the new display of bronze plaques with an information kiosk telling the tales of each of the 87 on the Wall.

## New Initiatives For Community Outreach (2022)

As fentanyl flooded the country, DEA Administrator Anne Milgram sounded the alarm and became laser-focused on eliminating the trafficking, violence, and deaths associated with this drug. Vowing to defeat the two TCOs (Sinaloa and Jalisco) primarily responsible for the record increase of fentanyl and methamphetamine that was killing Americans and hurting families and communities, DEA’s efforts to raise awareness and educate the public about the deadly drug increased. Two new initiatives brought media attention and new connections with external partners and families who lost loved ones.

## Family Summit on the Overdose Epidemic

Recognizing the importance of working with nonprofits and local voices, DEA Headquarters hosted the first Family Summit on the Overdose Epidemic in June 2022. This summit drew together more than 80 parents of family-led

nonprofit organizations across the U.S. to identify areas for collaboration, building and reinforcing existing partnerships. Information exchanges included brainstorming on how DEA, CDC, SAMHSA, and other federal agencies and national partners could provide support, learning about local efforts, the scope of current drug threats, and requesting assistance in spreading awareness of the One Pill Can Kill campaign. As stated by Administrator Anne Milgram, “We know law enforcement alone isn’t enough.... these families have turned grief into resolve to prevent other families from experiencing this kind of tragedy.” Family summits in individual communities were also planned through community outreach in those cities, and a second National Family Summit was held in September 2023.

## Faces of Fentanyl Exhibit

To recognize individuals who lost their lives due to fentanyl poisonings, Administrator Milgram created *Faces of Fentanyl*, an exhibit at DEA’s Headquarters. Family members and friends contributed photographs of loved ones, and the exhibit grew to more than 5,000 faces, underscoring the problem and loss. By the summer of 2023, seven out of ten illicit pills were laced with a deadly dose of fentanyl and more than 110,000 Americans lost their lives due to fentanyl-related poisonings.



The tree in the DEA Family Summit logo represents coming together, working together, and creating common ground. Each bird in the logo represents an individual family or family group that has lost a loved one to fentanyl or other drug. The message the logo intends to send is the importance of coming together — that no matter where these families are in their grief journey, there will always be common ground to come together, receive support, and collaborate together toward common goals.



The Faces of Fentanyl exhibit continues to grow as families submit images and stories of their lost loved ones. Administrator Milgram and United States Attorney General Merrick Garland visit the exhibit during the 2023 Family Summit.



The exhibit connects the loss to the variety of forms of fentanyl as referenced in the One Pill Can Kill campaign. The exhibit has been extensively covered by American media, and families come from around the country to honor their loved ones on the wall. The idea spurred division-specific versions of the exhibit.

### Rafael Caro-Quintero Arrest (2022)

On February 7, 1985, Special Agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena-Salazar was kidnapped, tortured, and murdered by five drug traffickers near the U.S. Consulate in Guadalajara, Mexico. Rafael Caro-Quintero (AKA RCQ) targeted Camarena and ordered his abduction because of Camarena’s success in taking down Rancho Buffalo, a huge marijuana grow farm in Mexico. At the time, this was the largest seizure in Mexico, and it was owned by RCQ. Special Agent Camarena worked undercover and infiltrated the Guadalajara Cartel. RCQ was first arrested in April 1985 while hiding in Costa Rica then extradited to Mexico on charges related to his involvement in Camarena’s murder. He was convicted in Mexico and sentenced to 40 years in prison. However, in a midnight decision in August 2013, a Mexican appellate court released RCQ on procedural grounds. A week later an arrest warrant in Mexico was issued; however, RCQ had gone into hiding. After over five years of a manhunt, the U.S. government announced that FBI had added RCQ to its “Top Ten Wanted Fugitives List” and the reward for his capture increased from \$5 million to \$20 million.

During a nine-year period, there were 12 failed operations to recapture RCQ. The challenges to his recapture seemed insurmountable due to high-level of government corruption, an insular community protecting RCQ, and a challenging relationship period between the United States and the government of Mexico. In April 2021, the Mexican Navy attempted the thirteenth capture operation against RCQ; however, the operation was compromised. DEA Mexico, after evaluating the previously failed operations, developed new procedures to ensure the integrity of information. The first step was to find the leak(s) of the thirteenth operation through collecting law enforcement intelligence via technology exploitation and confidential sources. DEA

Mexico convinced the Mexican Navy to reduce the personnel involved in the investigations. Additionally, DEA coordinated various diversion operations to normalize the Mexican Navy’s increased presence in the target area. The final key to success was a well-placed confidential source that was recruited via a domestic-based Task Force Officer responding to a duty call.

On July 15, 2022, the Mexican Navy, in partnership with DEA Mexico, launched Operation Red Ribbon to a remote area in Sinaloa, Mexico. Due to the limited team, various ruses, and a well-placed confidential source, Rafael Caro-Quintero was captured. Fourteen Mexican military personnel died in a helicopter accident during the execution of the operation. Attorney General Merrick Garland expressed our government’s deep gratitude to Mexican authorities for Caro-Quintero’s arrest and offered condolences for the Mexican military personnel who perished. At the time of the arrest, DEA Administrator Anne Milgram said, “For more than 30 years, the men and women of DEA have worked tirelessly to

**REWARD**  
OF UP TO  
**\$20,000,000 USD**  
FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO THE ARREST AND/OR CONVICTION OF:  
**Rafael Caro-Quintero**  
**1-800-CALL-FBI**  
Call TOLL FREE FROM USA  
Submit Tips @ [Tips.fbi.gov](https://tips.fbi.gov)

For nine years Rafael Caro-Quintero evaded authorities but was finally recaptured on July 15, 2022.

bring Caro-Quintero to justice. Today’s arrest is the result of years of your blood, sweat, and tears. Without your work, Caro-Quintero would not face justice.” His trial is proceeding in the United States District Court.

### Former Honduran President Extradited to the United States (2022)

Arrested on February 15, 2022, former Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernandez-Alvarado (AKA JOH) was extradited to the United States on April 21, 2022. Once one of the strongest political leaders in Central America, Hernandez arrived in handcuffs and under heavy guard. He was indicted by a grand jury in the SDNY by the SOD BIU in January 2022 on cocaine conspiracy and weapons-related charges. The SOD BIU, in conjunction with SDNY, DEA’s New York Field Division, and DEA’s Tegucigalpa Country Office, spent years investigating, charging, prosecuting, and convicting major Honduran drug traffickers and high-ranking officials. This included the prosecution of Hernandez’s brother, Juan Antonio Hernandez, who was convicted and sentenced to life in prison in 2021.

Hernandez-Alvarado served for approximately eight years as president of Honduras as well as president of the National Congress of Honduras. To help finance his political ambitions, Hernandez received millions of dollars from multiple DTOs operating in Honduras, Mexico, and elsewhere, including from the former leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, Chapo Guzmán. SDNY prosecutors alleged that from 2004 to approximately 2022, Hernandez participated in a violent drug-trafficking conspiracy to facilitate the importation of over 500,000 kilograms of cocaine into the U.S. Hernandez stands accused of providing his brother and other drug traffickers protection from arrest and investigation in Honduras, the sharing of information that enabled safe passage for large cocaine shipments, and political protection from extradition to the United States. If convicted on all charges, Hernandez is facing 40 years to life in prison. Attorney General Merrick Garland stated “We allege that Hernandez corrupted legitimate public institutions in the country - including parts of the national police, military, and national Congress.”



Honduran Immigration authorities processed former Honduran president, Juan Orlando Hernandez-Alvarado prior to his departure from Honduras to the U.S. on a DEA aircraft.

## Albany, New York Dismantles Violent Marijuana DTO (2022)

In a significant joint investigation, New York Field Division's Albany District Office and ATF identified Dwight Singletary, head of a New York DTO, for distributing thousands of pounds of marijuana monthly throughout the New York area via a small pack-and-ship business in Fresno, California. The Singletary DTO was comprised of former prison inmates and gang members, some of whom travelled from New York to California to facilitate the illegal activity. This three-year investigation resulted in the indictment of 24 defendants (a 99-count indictment) and seizure of 550 pounds of packaged marijuana, real estate valued at \$2.5 million, jewelry valued at \$1 million, several luxury vehicles, weapons, components to construct rifles, and \$260,000 in U.S. currency. The investigation culminated on June 15, 2022, when the Albany District Office had over 400 members of DEA, ATF, FBI, New York State Police, Colonie PD, Troy PD, Albany PD, Schenectady PD, and Saratoga County Sheriff's Office conducted simultaneous warrants in New York and California. Revenue denied to this DTO totaled approximately \$4.5 million.

## Imperial County Enforcement Group 51 Takes Down Methamphetamine Conversion Lab (2022)

On November 3, 2022, investigators of the San Diego Field Division/Imperial County District Office working with the Riverside County Sheriff's Office SIB conducted four simultaneous search warrants throughout the Desert Hot Springs area of Riverside County under Operation Mexicali Voodoo. The warrants, obtained through state court-authorized wiretaps and countless surveillance hours, identified a massive clandestine methamphetamine conversion lab containing 922 pounds of finished methamphetamine and 792 gallons of methamphetamine suspended in solution which, if processed, would have yielded 3,960 pounds of methamphetamine. The enforcement operations also led to the seizure of 19 firearms and the arrests of Jose De Jesus Gallo Salazar, Arnoldo Rodriguez Camacho, and

Jose Alberto Espana Paul. Paul was the only one at the lab during the execution of the warrant. Others involved in the lab were arrested at the three other locations that were hit simultaneously.

## Prisoner Swap – Victor Bout for Brittney Griner (2022)

In 2022, Brittney Griner, WNBA All-Star, was arrested in Russia for possession of hashish oil in a vaporizer cartridge. Griner had a prescription for medicinal cannabis in Arizona and pleaded that she had no intent to break the law. She was sentenced in Russia to nine years in prison, fined 1 million rubles, and transferred to the IK-2 female penal colony. On December 8, the United States and Russia agreed to a prisoner exchange—Griner for international arms dealer Victor Bout. Bout's customers included warlords and rogue states, and in 2002 he was also wanted for money laundering. Eventually he fled to Moscow and was taken in and protected. Bout had been investigated by DEA for years, and was arrested in Bangkok, Thailand, on March 6, 2008. In 2012 he was sentenced to 25 years in prison for terrorism-related charges, but traded back to Russia in 2022 in exchange for Griner.

## DEA Laboratories Surge to Analyze Priority Drug Evidence (2022–2023)

To align with top DEA priorities, the laboratory system expedited drug evidence exhibits linked to the Sinaloa or CJNG cartels, Operation Overdrive, or Operation Justice. Between August 2022 and September 2023, periodic laboratory "surges" dramatically attacked the fentanyl and methamphetamine priority backlogs, resulting in significant reductions accomplished in short bursts of time: the August 2022 Fentanyl Pill Surge eliminated 93 percent of that backlog over a two-week period; the Methamphetamine Surge in October 2022 resulted in an 85 percent reduction of these priority exhibits; in April 2023, the Fentanyl Powder Surge saw the most efficient two-weeks of analysis in the laboratory system in a decade, reducing the fentanyl powder priority backlog by 99 percent.

## Joint INTREPID (Intelligence National Threat Response – El Paso Illicit Drug) Laboratory Established (2023)

In 2023, DEA's Forensics Division partnered with counterparts in CBP's Laboratory & Scientific Services and FDA's Forensic Chemistry Center to establish the first joint-agency fentanyl profiling initiative (known as the Joint INTREPID Laboratory) which leverages the combined expertise and unique skillsets of DEA, CBP, and the FDA to employ methodologies for the attribution of illicit fentanyl samples. The goal of the project is to develop long-lasting sustainable partnerships in a shared location (aligned with the El Paso Intelligence Center) to provide a more comprehensive and holistic picture of the illicit fentanyl supply chain in order to help defeat the criminal networks that traffic fentanyl.

## Opioid Use Disorder and DEA Diversion Control (2023)

DEA's Diversion Control Division continued to address the challenge of drug overdoses with a multipronged approach. This included expanding access to medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) to help those who are fighting to overcome substance use disorder by sustaining recovery and preventing overdoses. Access to MOUD expanded exponentially in 2023 with Congress's elimination of the DATA-Waiver Program. This program allowed clinicians to use buprenorphine to treat a substance use disorder, but also limited the number of patients a practitioner could have.

## One of the Largest Distributors of Cocaine and Leaders of Ruthless Violence Pleads Guilty (2023)

Dairo Antonio Úsuga David (AKA Otoniel) pleaded guilty January 25, 2023, to running a continuing criminal enterprise—the Colombian paramilitary and multibillion-dollar DTO Clan del Golfo. Úsuga David also pleaded guilty to related drug distribution charges. Úsuga David had been extradited from Colombia to the Eastern District of New York in May 2022. In addition to 20 years in prison, Úsuga David agreed to pay \$216 million in forfeiture money.

Attorney General Merrick Garland, DEA Administrator Anne Milgram, and others announced the guilty plea.

“With today's guilty plea, the bloody reign of the most violent and significant Colombian narcotics trafficker since Pablo Escobar is over. Úsuga David has now been held accountable for his leadership of the Clan del Golfo, which was responsible for trafficking tons of illegal narcotics from Colombia to the United States and incalculable acts of violence against law enforcement, military personnel, and civilians in Colombia and elsewhere,” stated U. S Attorney Breon Peace. On August 8, 2023 David Úsuga was sentenced to multiple 45-year sentences, running concurrently.

## Three-Year Investigation Nets 150 Arrests (2023)

On February 23, 2023, DEA's Phoenix Field Division, in partnership with the Arizona Attorney General's Office and the Tempe Police Department, announced the culmination of a three-year investigation targeting the Sinaloa Cartel. Over 150 individuals were charged and investigators seized more than 4.5 million fentanyl-laced fake prescription pills and other drugs and firearms as well as \$2 million. The seized drugs were valued at more than \$13 million, and the seized fentanyl represented more than 30 million potentially lethal doses.

## Genaro Garcia Luna Found Guilty (2023)

On February 21, 2023, Genaro Garcia-Luna, head of the Mexican Federal Investigative Agency from 2001-2006 and Secretary of Public Safety for all of Mexico from 2006-2012 was found guilty in the U.S. of engaging in a continuing criminal enterprise. Garcia-Luna took payments from the Sinaloa Cartel to aid and protect the cartel's drug trafficking activities. DEA learned of the payments in 2012. Houston OCDETF Strike Force agents initiated an investigation targeting Garcia-Luna and other high-level associates of the Sinaloa Cartel. After leaving office in 2012, Garcia-Luna moved to the Miami, Florida, area and opened

a consulting company. DEA's Houston Field Division investigation determined there wasn't sufficient evidence to bring charges, and the investigation was closed.

During January 2019, prosecutors in the Eastern District of New York successfully convicted Chapo Guzmán based in large part from testimony by former members of the Sinaloa and Beltran Leyva Cartels. Subsequently, the working group examining high-level corruption discovered evidence that re-opened the Houston Field Division's case, working jointly with DEA Mexico City and DEA's New York Field Division. Garcia-Luna was quickly identified as the highest-ranking government official to have received payoffs from the Sinaloa Cartel. He was then indicted in the Eastern District of New York in December 2019 and arrested on December 9, 2019, in Dallas, Texas. While serving as the Secretary of Public Security, Garcia-Luna was widely regarded as the second most powerful person in Mexico, eclipsed only by then-President of Mexico, Felipe Calderon. DEA administrator Anne Milgram, Breon Peace, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, and Ivan J. Arvelo, Special Agent-in-Charge, Homeland Security Investigations, New York, announced the verdict. Garcia Luna is expected to serve a minimum sentence of twenty years' imprisonment and a maximum of life in prison.

### **Matriarch Sentenced for Role in Violent DTO (2023)**

From 2006 until 2015, Erlinda Ramos-Bobadilla, AKA Chinda, served as a leader in the Montes-Bobadilla DTO, otherwise known as Los Montes, one of the most significant DTOs in Honduras. The Los Montes DTO, based in the town of Francia on the northeastern coast of Honduras, received clandestine maritime and air shipments of cocaine from sources in South America, which were then transported inland through Honduras into Guatemala and Mexico, then into the United States. Ramos-Bobadilla and her family led a DTO that left murder, corruption, violence, and terror in its wake, and in 2015, Ramos-Bobadilla and five coconspirators were indicted by the Eastern District of Virginia with conspiracy to import and distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine. In March

2023 Ramos-Bobadilla was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison. DEA's Washington Field Division investigated the case with assistance from FBI, ICE, and other law enforcement including the Honduran police.

### **Native American Program Collaborations with Phoenix Field Division (2023)**

DEA's Equal Employment Opportunity Special Emphasis Programs (SEP) provides information to dispel stereotypes associated with different cultures by promoting education, training, and special commemorative observances and events. In 2023, the EEO/SEP team in collaboration with the Phoenix Field Division hosted a Native American History Program in Phoenix, Arizona. The in-person/virtual program, hosted by SAC Cheri Oz, included presentations by Diversion Investigator Brian Meek and Task Force Officer Preston Brogdon. It was the first time an SEP event was hosted at a field division and broadcasted DEA-wide.

### **Nurse Practitioner Sentenced to 30 Years (2023)**

On June 15, 2023, former Advanced Nurse Practitioner Jessica Joyce Spayd in Anchorage, Alaska was sentenced to 30 years in jail for illegally prescribing and dispensing opioids outside the scope of legitimate medical practice that resulted in the deaths of five people between 2014 and 2019. Trial evidence showed Spayd prescribed and dispensed 4.5 million dosages of opioids in just over five years, including fentanyl, methadone, oxycodone, and hydro-morphone. Many times, she combined those prescriptions with prescriptions for other dangerous drugs like valium and muscle relaxers, known as the "holy trinity," greatly increasing the chances of overdose death. She ignored warnings from patients' family members, pharmacists, and other medical providers, and defied thousands of warning letters sent by insurance companies about the dangers of her practices. "Spayd callously abused her dispensing authority, while fueling the opioid epidemic and poisoning our communities in the process," said SAC Antony Jung of the FBI's Anchorage Field Office.

## Leader of Fentanyl Trafficking Organization Sentenced to 30 Years (2023)

A Battlefield, Missouri, man was sentenced to 30 years in federal prison without parole on June 21, 2023, for leading a conspiracy that distributed nearly 38 kilograms of fentanyl in southwest Missouri that resulted in several overdose deaths. James D. Collins, responsible for fentanyl distribution, transported at least 300 grams by vehicle from either St. Louis, Missouri, or Chicago to Springfield twice a week in late 2019 through part of 2020. He then distributed fentanyl to co-conspirators, two of whom were also charged in the conspiracy. Collins admitted to investigators that he had been dealing with his source of supply for 10 years. On April 17, 2020, law enforcement officers executed a search warrant at Collins' residence, where they found a large plastic bag containing 331.1 grams of fentanyl. More than 700 grams of fentanyl were seized during the conspiracy. According to court documents, multiple overdose deaths resulted from Collins' distribution of fentanyl. After he was incarcerated in the Greene County Jail, Collins bragged to his cellmate about these overdoses.

## Senior FARC Commander Pleads Guilty (2023)

On August 14, 2023, Martin Leonel Perez Castro pleaded guilty in Brooklyn to conspiracy to distribute cocaine internationally, with intent to import it into the United States. Perez Castro, the commander of the FARC 30<sup>th</sup> Front, a group that operated in southwestern Colombia, was extradited to the Eastern District of New York in June 2022. In October 1997, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright designated the FARC as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. After the government of Colombia and FARC entered into a peace accord in 2016, FARC formally dissolved. On November 30, 2021, Secretary of State Antony Blinken revoked FARC's FTO designation. (Perez Castro's conduct occurred prior to the 2016 peace accord.) As part of his plea, Perez Castro took responsibility for the distribution of more than 75,000 kilograms of cocaine.

"As a senior FARC leader, Perez Castro used violence, power, and notoriety to import tons of cocaine from Colombia into New York City," stated DEA Administrator Anne Milgram. "Today's guilty plea reflects DEA's unwavering commitment to hold all drug traffickers accountable and should send a clear message to drug networks across the globe that we will investigate and dismantle organizations that threaten the safety and health of the American people."

## Operation Sailfish (2023)

In 2023, DEA's Rocky Mountain Field Division, with the assistance of many federal, state, and local law enforcement partners accomplished the arrest, conviction, and life sentence of Bruce Holder of Grand Junction, Colorado, as a kingpin of an operation that sold tens of thousands of counterfeit oxycodone pills. The pills, originating in Mexico, were spiked with fentanyl and resulted in the death of a young man. Holder and his accomplices, including his immediate family, were accused of continuing to import and distribute these pills even after learning about the death.

## Back to School Drug Awareness and Education (2023)

As students returned to school in September, DEA's Washington Field Division urged families to have open conversations about the dangers of drug experimentation and use. In 2023, there had been a threefold increase in seizures of drugs containing fentanyl in the Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia areas. Jarod Forget, SAC of the field division said, "These numbers are alarming and emphasize the importance of having conversations with our loved ones about this lethal threat [fentanyl poisonings] that doesn't discriminate by age, gender, or location and affects us all, including kids in school." This field division alone seized over 8.3 million potentially deadly doses of fentanyl in 2022. That same year DEA seized more than 58 million fake pills containing fentanyl and more than 13,000 pounds of fentanyl powder. This amount represents approximately 387.6 million potentially deadly doses.

## Marijuana, DEA, and Legalization (2023)

Since 2012, when the states of Colorado and Washington were the first to pass legislation legalizing recreational use and sale of marijuana, 23 states, the District of Columbia, and Guam have all passed legislation legalizing recreational adult use of marijuana. An additional 15 states have approved medical marijuana. Only three states continue to keep marijuana fully illegal, and the remaining nine states have a variety of legislation severely limiting marijuana use and sale or allow CBD with THC. Federally, marijuana continues to be listed under Schedule I of the U.S Controlled Substances Act. On April 1, 2022, the House passed a marijuana decriminalization bill, and a few months later, senators introduced the Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act, which would decriminalize marijuana.

In October 2022, President Biden announced the pardoning of all prior federal offenses of simple marijuana possession and directed HHS and DOJ to review how marijuana is scheduled under federal law. On August 29, 2023, HHS recommended that DEA reclassify marijuana to a Schedule III controlled substance, a recommendation which DEA took under advisement.

## Operation Syndicate Green, Record-Breaking Marijuana and Money Seizures (2016–2023)

In the summer of 2016, Operation Syndicate Green began targeting an interstate marijuana trafficking organization that engaged in violence and other crimes in the Denver Metropolitan area. Over the years every phase of Operation Syndicate Green netted record-breaking marijuana and money seizures. A large-scale effort supported by numerous federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies throughout the Denver area, its investigators passed leads to DEA offices throughout the country. The Syndicate Green organizations distributed tens of thousands of pounds of marijuana outside Colorado; its illicit product was sourced by a vast network of Chinese marijuana growers producing thousands of pounds per month for illegal distribution.



This is one of many marijuana cultivation sites seized from a residential basement as part of Operation Syndicate Green.

Case agents identified leaders within the DMLO that used black market marijuana as a financial backbone to support Chinese organized crime that facilitated money laundering activities in support of human trafficking, and illicit drug distribution. Combined prosecution in federal and state court resulted in the charging of over 200 defendants with felony charges relating to their participation in the DTO. Agents and TFOs of the Rocky Mountain Field Division seized 99,495 marijuana plants, 3,922 pounds of finished marijuana product, and \$16.5 million in currency and assets.

## Record Collections for Take Back Day at DEA (2010–2023)

Since its inception in September 2010, National Prescription Drug Take Back Day has been a part of DEA's commitment to communities across the country. This initiative encourages citizens to remove unused, unneeded, or expired medications from their homes to help prevent misuse and the potential for drugs finding their way into the wrong hands. Over the years, DEA collected 13.7 million pounds of unwanted medications. By 2020 the collection expanded to more than 4,587 sites nationwide, including 33 Bureau of Indian Affairs sites. Each year the program has set a new record, and 2020 was no exception when 493 tons of expired, unused, and unwanted prescription medications were collected. On October 28, 2023 DEA and its law enforcement partners collected 599,897 pounds of

unnecessary medications at 4,675 collection sites nationwide with an all-time total of 17,900,351 pounds.

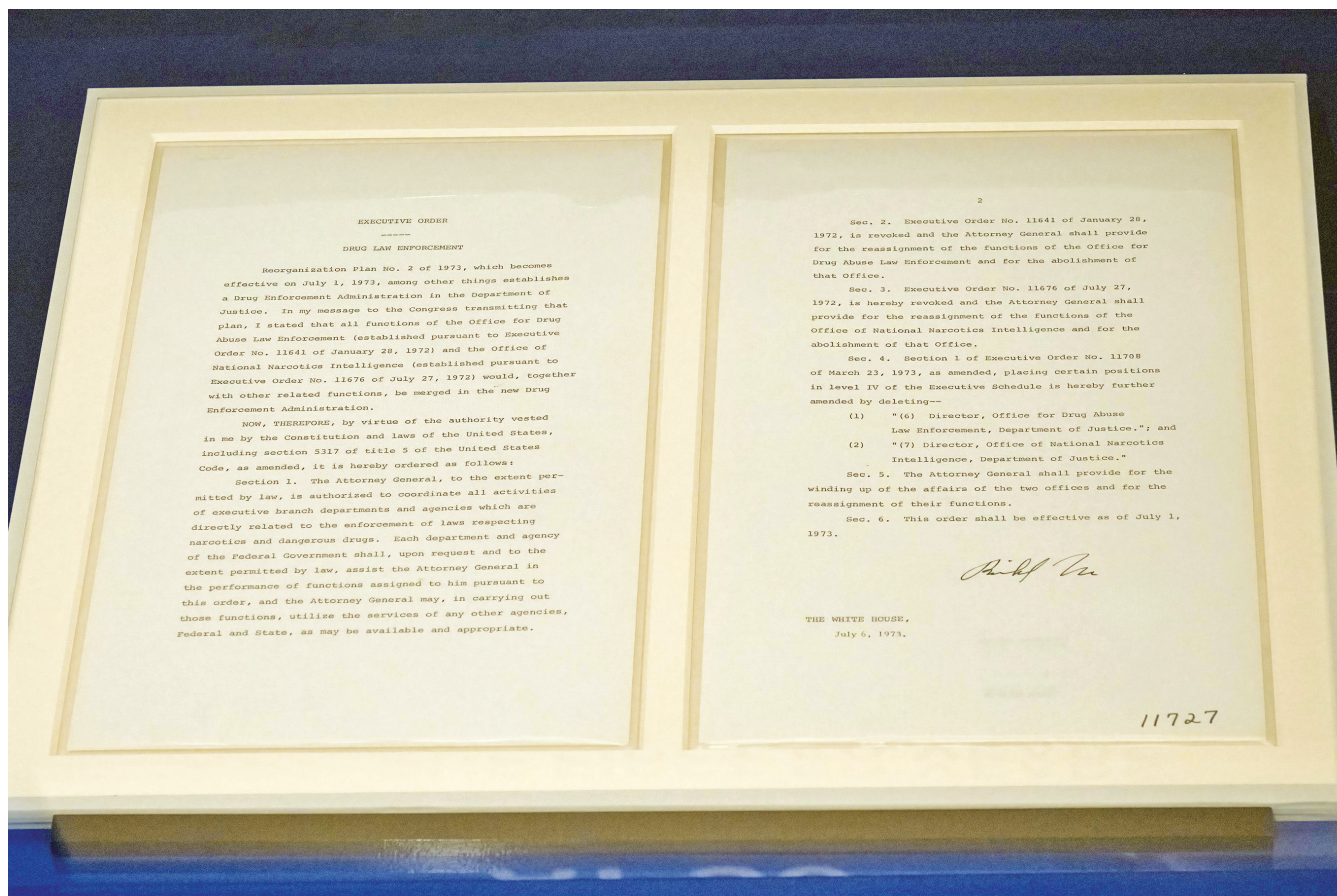
## 50 Years of Mission, Dedication, and Service (2023)

Throughout 2023 DEA commemorated and celebrated its 50-year history. On September 28, more than 500 dignitaries and special guests attended an event that included speeches by Administrator Anne Milgram and Attorney General Merrick Garland, congratulatory videos from former Administrators, a wreath laying at the DEA Wall of Honor, and displays by DEA's Headquarters offices.

During the anniversary year, the DEA Museum presented a panel discussion titled *Fifty Years of Partnerships and Collaborations*, and a lecture by former DEA Administrator Robert Bonner on the establishment of DEA

in 1973 and Richard Nixon's work to eliminate heroin in the country. Nixon's efforts included law enforcement, treatment, and diplomacy. Mr. Bonner noted that part of the former president's plan was the formation of DEA. Reorganization Plan Number 2 proposed the creation of a single federal agency to consolidate and coordinate the government's drug control activities. It was signed into law on July 1, 1973. The DEA Museum exhibited the document on loan from the National Archives as part of a new *50 Years of DEA* exhibit, which debuted in the Museum during the anniversary year.

DEA 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations also included numerous social media posts that educated the public on the long history of DEA's work, a special holiday ornament, and the creation of this history book to document key moments in the five decades of DEA's existence.



Executive Order 11727, signed by President Richard Nixon on July 6, 1973, created the Drug Enforcement Administration, the only single-mission federal agency. Courtesy, National Archives & Records Administration, Washington, D.C.