



**U.S.
Drug Enforcement
Administration**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Press Release

DEA Enforcement Action Reveals Criminal Drug Networks Are Harnessing Social Media and Smartphone Applications to Flood the United States with Deadly Fentanyl, which is Driving the National Overdose Epidemic

DEA Seizes Enough Fentanyl in 2021 to Provide A Lethal Dose to Every American; Recent DEA Public Safety Surge Results in the Seizure of Over Eight Million Fake Prescription Pills

WASHINGTON – As U.S. overdose deaths reach a devastating new height, claiming a new victim every five minutes, the Drug Enforcement Administration has revealed a direct link between fentanyl-related overdose deaths and criminal drug networks in Mexico. These groups are harnessing social media platforms to bring drugs laced with fentanyl and fake prescription pills into American homes with one click on a smartphone. In a Washington, D.C., press conference, DEA Administrator Anne Milgram announced the results of a public safety surge that lasted from September 29, 2021, through December 14, 2021. The surge targeted criminal drug networks that are harnessing the anonymity and accessibility of social media apps to push deadly drugs into American communities.

DEA officials warn that criminal drug networks in Mexico are mass-producing deadly fentanyl and fentanyl-laced, fake prescription pills, using chemicals sourced largely from China. These fake prescription pills are designed to appear nearly identical to legitimate prescriptions—such as Oxycontin®, Percocet®, Vicodin®, Adderall®, Xanax®, and other medicines—and have been found in every state in the country.

In September, the DEA issued its first Public Safety Alert in six years to warn the public about the alarming increase in the availability and lethality of fake prescription pills in the United States. These fake prescription pills often contain deadly doses of fentanyl. DEA has determined that four out of ten DEA-tested fentanyl-laced, fake prescription pills contain at least two milligrams of fentanyl—an amount that is considered to be a lethal dose.

Today's announced public safety surge demonstrates that the United States is facing unprecedented levels of fentanyl in our communities. This year alone, DEA has seized enough fentanyl to provide a lethal dose to every American. Much of this fentanyl is in the form of fake prescription pills. In 2021, DEA has seized a staggering 20.4 million fake prescription pills.

During the recent public safety surge, 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. 32 cases have direct ties to the major Mexican drug networks that are mass-producing and distributing 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."

DEA launched the *One Pill Can Kill* campaign to inform the American public of the dangers of fake prescription pills. The only safe prescription medications are ones prescribed by a trusted medical professional

that you get from a licensed pharmacist. All other pills are unsafe and potentially deadly. For more information, visit DEA.Gov/onepill.

“This holiday season,” Milgram said, “every parent, family member and friend should take a few minutes to share a simple message: One Pill Can Kill. Know that DEA remains relentless in our commitment to take down the criminal drug networks that threaten the safety and health of American communities.”

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