

THE NARCO NATION FLOODING OUR STREETS WITH POISON

Mexico, our third-largest trading partner, teeters on total collapse. Today's drug cartels fuel a mass epidemic that's murdered hundreds of thousands of Americans and Mexicans alike—and it's only getting worse. Trump may have sealed the border, but drugs are still pouring through weak points—here's how to stop the carnage.

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In just 60 days, President Trump delivered on his campaign promise to close the border to illegal aliens and deport criminals *en masse*. Now he faces an even bigger challenge: Cutting off the pipeline of deadly drugs entering through the southern border's most "secure" points of entry—and reckoning with the mafia that's conquered our southern neighbor.

The drug crisis has never been worse. In 1981, just 3.4 of every 100,000 American males died from drug-induced causes. Today it's 47.2—and climbing.

108,000 Americans died from drug overdose in 2023, an all-time high—70% of them from opioids. While drug-related deaths fell in 2024, experts fear it may only be a brief respite before the carnage returns.

The United States leads the world in illegal drug demand even after a generation of "Just Say No" messaging meant to cut consumption. Decades ago, it was Mexican marijuana and methamphetamines or Colombian cocaine surging across the border. In the past five years, synthetic opioids—such as deadly fentanyl and even deadlier nitazenes—have conquered the black market, finding a massive market pre-addicted to American-made prescription opioids such as Oxycontin and Vicodin, further devastating countless communities.

Americans consume four times as many opioid doses as Britons: 50,000 pills per one million people every day. In Kermit, West Virginia, nine million opioid pills flooded a town of just 400 residents in two years, driven in part by doctors who over-prescribe painkillers, a glut of drug advertisements—banned in all but one other country, New Zealand—and our country's pervasive pill-popping culture.

Then there's Mexico's descent into Taliban-style warfare.

The American public pays scant attention to what happens south of the Rio Grande. Yet in the course of 19 years, Mexico's own War on Drugs has descended into a full-on criminal insurgency while its **drug traffickers**

have evolved into paramilitary organizations armed to the teeth with high-power weaponry. This is mass violence to rival anything our troops experienced in the War on Terror, and it's spilling over into Texas, Arizona, and beyond.

For decades, we've heard about Mexico's infamous drug cartels, which rake in perhaps \$30 billion from the U.S. black market annually, itself worth some \$60 billion. In the 1970s and '80s, these "cliques" or gangs resembled the Italian Mob—secretive crime syndicates operating underground with numerous business fronts. They've since evolved into highly sophisticated corporate conglomerates with complex supply chains stretching from the Andes to Chicago. Think of Walmart or Amazon, if they employed private armies the size of those in Namibia or Botswana, but far better equipped.

Restoring America's greatness also means restoring our people's health. But it also means reckoning with the narco-state at our south border—up to and including military intervention.

From Marx to Meth

This evolution began with the end of the Cold War and the birth of free market democracy in Latin America.

The end of international communism brought a new entrepreneurial spirit to Mexico as well as its first billionaires. Many of today's drug tycoons in Latin America, in fact, are the sons of Cold War communist guerrillas. The dominant socialist Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) abandoned state control and privatized numerous sectors, and the national economy jumped from \$377 billion in 1991 to \$742 billion by the new millennium. A year before NAFTA was signed in 1994, U.S.-Mexico trade totaled \$81 billion annually. By 2000 it was \$248 billion annually, skyrocketing to \$800 billion in 2023—an 886% increase in three decades. Mexico remains one of our top trading partners.

All that commerce made smuggling drugs across the border significantly easier for the cartels, which devised endlessly clever ways to hide shipments of cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and methamphetamines in the endless line of trucks rumbling across the ports of entry connecting the two nations.

This marked a new era for the cartels, which refer to themselves collectively as *El Narco*, their underworld employees as “the movement.” Civilians call them *narcotraficantes*. This is an entire subculture with its own clothing, music, and bizarre cults deeply embedded into the fabric of countless towns and villages across Mexico’s “Golden Triangle,” the prolific drug-producing northwestern states of Durango, Chihuahua, and Sinaloa.

Like the Sicilian countryside that birthed the Italian Mob, the Golden Triangle is desolate, lawless, and interrupted by the vast Sierra Madre mountains. Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán hailed from a tiny Sinaloan hamlet. “Boss of Bosses” Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo began his career as a cop in Culiacán, Sinaloa’s state capital.

It’s here that Mexican marines and poppy farmers play a dangerous game of cat-and-mouse, with the marines burning poppy “gum” fields and *gomeros* replanting them. Despite the military’s efforts, **Mexico remains the world’s third-largest producer of illegal poppy.**

Just as Communist China fuels fentanyl production today, Chinese immigrants kickstarted the Golden Triangle’s illegal opium trade after the U.S. restricted poppy production in 1914. Mexican rumrunners, looking for a new revenue stream, brutally forced them out after Prohibition sales dried up in 1933. But it wasn’t until the 1960s that drugs, especially marijuana, went from a niche to a hot commodity, transforming these modest pot-growing peasants into the powerful drug lords that rule entire regions today.

Throughout the 1970s, Mexico exported marijuana in small quantities to American hippies who resold kilos as far away as Boston. But by 1980, jaded American users had graduated from pot, to heroin, then finally to cocaine—**exploding the underground drug market into an industry worth as much as \$100 billion at its peak.**

Cocaine, of course, originates in the jungled foothills of Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. Before Mexico became the cocaine superhighway it is today, Colombia’s chief wholesalers—the Cali and Pablo Escobar’s Medellín cartels—shipped most coke by sea and air to American buyers in Miami. Another Colombian, Griselda Blanco, soon cut out the middleman by establishing her own distribution networks *inside* the U.S. from her Miami headquarters. That is, until President Ronald Reagan and the South Florida Task Force crushed the Miami

operation in the mid-1980s. The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) helped Colombian National Police hunt down and shoot Escobar in 1993. By 1996, they’d dismantled the Cali cartel and arrested its leadership.

Ironically, this success paved the way for the much smaller Mexican cartels’ dramatic expansion. Reagan’s clean-up in Florida caused the Colombians to cut a deal with the Mexicans to route cocaine overland along with their heroin and marijuana shipments. Eventually, the Colombians—desperate to reduce exposure—abandoned their U.S. market altogether and began to sell directly to the Mexicans.

Mexican *narcotraficantes* quickly discovered that cocaine is far more profitable than marijuana. By the late 1980s, they were richer than ever. Cartels smuggled so much coke across the southern border that street prices actually *fell* amidst the Reagan DEA’s record drug confiscations. By 2000, the three principal cartels—Tijuana, Juárez, and the Gulf—consolidated the entire drug trade until they came to dominate even Colombia’s drug manufacturing, now reduced to a mere subsidiary.

Narcoville, USA

These powerful and incredibly wealthy illegal crime syndicates have cut deep inroads into the United States as far as Oregon and Maine. But the traffickers almost always enter through border communities like Kinney County, Texas (population 3,148).

I spoke with Sheriff Brad Coe, who battled a 5,000% explosion in illegal alien traffic under Biden. From 2021 to 2024, residents suffered 40–50 illegal crossings each month, he told me. **Then Trump took office, and crossings plummeted almost to zero**—Coe’s office has made just 2 arrests in all of 2025. But the drug epidemic still rages, even with the border closed.



Sheriff Brad Coe

This is a war that gets very little media attention. But it’s devastating border communities that have to grapple with an endless flow of narcotics that hits their neighborhoods first. “350 Americans are dying from fentanyl every day, enough to fill a Boeing 747. No one [in Washington] seems to care,” Coe laments. “But if a 747 were crashing every day, those people would be in an uproar.”

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The same cannot be said of Mexicans, who’ve been battling organized crime for nearly two decades... and losing.

Starting in 2006, the Mexican government launched a military crackdown on *El Narco* with its own War on Drugs. Observers expected the government to smash the *narcotraficantes* as the FBI did the Italian Mafia decades prior.

Instead, the cartels fought back—**unleashing a two-decade war that’s killed 400,000 Mexicans, disappeared 100,000 more**, murdered numerous cops and politicians, and displaced countless people from their homes. By 2008, some places experienced 500 murders each month, most of them in the Golden Triangle states. In 2009, Juárez overtook Mogadishu, Cape Town, and Baghdad as the **world’s murder capital**.

That violence is now spilling over into places like Kinney County.

In the 1980s, Sheriff Coe explained, border county police officers carried revolvers and wore the kind of dress uniforms you’d wear to an office. Now those same active-duty cops carry AR-15 rifles and wear BDU (battle dress uniform) combat camo and bullet-proof vests on patrol. “We now look like the military because we fight the war on drugs and the war on terror crossing over the border,” Coe said.

“We’re no longer the peacekeepers in our country, in our communities. We’ve reversed roles with the U.S. military. While the soldiers are overseas on peacekeeping missions, we’re doing it here.”

Dope State

Though few Americans seem to realize it, Mexico teeters as a failed state.

The old cartels have largely collapsed, replaced by ultraviolent successors such as Jalisco New Generation Cartel and the Cartel del Noreste battling one another and the government. **There are entire regions where cartels act as the *de facto* military regime** enforcing curfews, funding loyalty-buying welfare programs, and extorting taxes on the civilian populace.

In the border city Matamoros, for instance, the Gulf Cartel has established a *pax traficante* that’s kept residents largely safe from major shoot-outs... at the cost

of protection fees, or *cuotas*, levied on all businesses down to the humblest street vendor. “They even have a payment schedule where they offer discounts if you pay monthly or a yearly fee in advance,” one caterer recently told reporters.

Since there are only so many smuggling routes into America, controlling turfs (or plazas) is crucial—so cartels will pay a heavy price in blood and dollars to own them.

One of the deadliest groups is Los Zetas, which began as a group of elite Mexican Army soldiers trained in counter-insurgency tactics to battle the *narcotraficantes*... only to defect to the Matamoros Gulf Cartel, where they brutally expanded its influence. **The Zetas launched death squad tactics against their rivals: Beheadings, group executions, and torture**, which other cartels adopted out of necessity.

In 2010, the Zetas broke away to form their own rival cartel trafficking narcotics, prostitutes, and illegal guns from their headquarters just across the Texas border from Laredo. At its peak, **the Zetas boasted 10,000 soldiers** armed with Chinese AK-47s, Soviet RPG-7 rocket launchers, heavy machine guns, night-vision goggles, surveillance drones, **and even homebrew “tanks” called *monstruos***. This is a paramilitary force that routinely establishes roadblocks, ambushes Army convoys, and occupies entire towns.

The Mexican military may be fighting back, but perversely, each fighter they kill effectively strengthens rival cartels in this all-out war. Eliminating top leaders doesn’t end the violence; it creates a power vacuum for local *capos* to seize control or form new splinter groups. And the cartels respond to Army offensives by shooting civilians... or worse. In 2011, Zetas kidnapped 122 bus passengers crossing the Texas border and forcibly recruited some. The rest were forced to fight to the death with sledgehammers. Their bodies were buried in unmarked graves with their skulls bashed in. The murderers weren’t convicted until August 2024.

All of this is compounded by corruption that runs all the way through Mexico City. The Sinaloa Cartel kingpin El Chapo (“Shorty”) allegedly bribed his way out of the country’s toughest maximum-security prison in 2001. The recipient: President Vicente Fox, the ex-Coca Cola executive who came into office declaring “war on crime.” Now Fox is a “vocal advocate” for legalizing every class of narcotic to combat the cartels.

El Chapo later bribed President Enrique Peña Nieto \$100 million, according to a witness at the drug lord’s 2019 U.S. trial. Nieto took the money but declined to call off the manhunt for El Chapo... because he’d demanded **\$250 million**, the witness said.

Nieto's successor, the far-left Andrés Manuel López Obrador—popularly known as AMLO—took office with a much-touted “hugs, not bullets” policy toward the cartels. Instead of fighting them, the Mexican government would expand social programs and offer amnesty to organized crime. His assumption was that organized crime is driven by economic inequality and lack of education. American leftists celebrated his “progressive” approach.

Violence skyrocketed.

Later reports suggest that AMLO held a bizarre fondness for El Chapo's Sinaloa Cartel, considering them “a sort of Robin Hood . . . a social benefactor for the entire Pacific Coast” for paying off the local poor, Escobar-style. But the Mexican nationalist didn't mince words when savaging Americans.

“Here, we do not produce fentanyl, and we do not have consumption of fentanyl,” AMLO scolded the Biden administration in 2023. “Why don't they [Americans] take care of their problem of social decay?”

Cartel Commuters

U.S.-Mexico Border Crossings



Biden's unprecedented open border certainly enabled drug smuggling on an unbelievable scale. But even with the border locked down since Trump's return, drugs are still sifting through. Why?

It may sound counterintuitive, but a huge portion—if not the lion's share—of these drugs *aren't* smuggled across the emptiest parts of the 2,000-mile Mexican border, as most imagine, but **through the 26 land ports of entry connecting the two nations**. In contrast, most illegal aliens cross the border *between* ports of entry. Sealing the border and finishing the wall make that problem more manageable by funneling most illegal crossings into a handful of heavily patrolled areas.

Yet these ports of entry are surprisingly vulnerable to smugglers stashing meth, fentanyl, cocaine, and other narcotics in their vehicles, since it's faster and more efficient to risk detection by CBP agents than crossing rough terrain in the desert.

“The ports of entry have always been a focal point for drug smuggling because of the sheer volume of vehicles coming through,” Sheriff Coe, who spent 30 years with the Border Patrol, explained. Even with the Border Patrol's 33 interior checkpoints, “it's stretched the ports of entry very thin, especially in huge ports like Laredo.”

In parts of Arizona, the wait times are over 2 hours to cross through because of a lack of personnel. That's to the cartels' advantage. “It's a game of cat and mouse,” Coe told me. “If they [mules] weren't getting through, the drug traffic would be absolutely zero.”

It comes down to numbers. For law enforcement, the goal is to catch as many shipments as possible to raise prices on narcotics inside the U.S., hurting demand. Traffickers realize this. Instead of fully loading one or two trucks as they might have done decades ago, they split shipments across hundreds or thousands of vehicles. **Cartels count on as much as 22% of their product being seized and so many mules arrested by customs agents—but the bulk will make it through undetected.**

Loss is baked into their highly lucrative business model.

Former Pinal County, Arizona Sheriff Mark Lamb likened it to annual thefts from big box retailers. “When you look at their bottom lines, it's actually cheaper for Wal-Mart or Home Depot to allow some shoplifting than pay to stop all of it, even if it costs them billions of dollars,” he told Restoration News. “It's the same thing with the drug cartels.”

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Lamb believes it's also evidence we aren't making enough of a dent in their profits to stop the cartels shipping drugs through the most secure entry points into America. “If we don't hit the source aggressively, we'll never stop the deluge,” he argues. Coe agrees: “If we were catching more, the prices of narcotics would not be so low as they are now.”

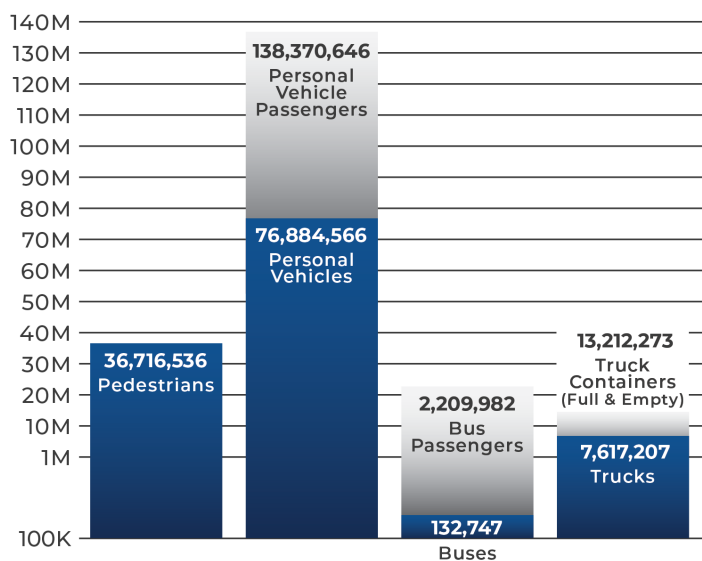


Sheriff Mark Lamb

The U.S.-Mexico border's 26 ports of entry handle an **average of 765,000 crossings each day**, the vast majority of them personal vehicles—roughly 215 million per year. **This is where about half of all illegal drugs confiscated nationwide are found**, squirreled away in secret compartments, car mufflers, false floors, remote-controlled cars, and most disturbingly “blind mules”—drugs hitched to unsuspecting cars by magnet and recovered across the border by smugglers tracking GPS locators.

All of these methods and more have been discovered by customs agents doing routine inspections. Yet just 1–2% of all private passenger vehicles and 15–17% of commercial vehicles are inspected at land borders nationwide. That's exacerbated by the fact that not all drug smugglers *look* like TV villains: 82% are U.S. citizens, the average smuggler's age is 38, and 43% had no prior criminal history. Just 6% were career offenders. Less than half are Hispanic (44%); the other half are black (28%) or white (26%).

Annual Crossings at U.S.-Mexico Land Ports of Entry (2024)



Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Border Crossing Data

Not every vehicle gets the same scrutiny, of course; but in many places the rate of secondary inspections—vehicles flagged for suspicious activity—has gone *down*. In El Paso, for instance, officers performed secondary inspections of 18% of passenger vehicles in 2015 but just 3.2% in 2021.

That's changing—the Securing America's Ports Act (H.R. 5273), which President Trump signed into law days before leaving office in Jan. 2021, ordered the Homeland Security Department to chart a path toward 100%, non-intrusive inspection rates. But evolution is

slow, with the latest reports targeting rates of 40% and 72% for passenger vehicles and commercial trucks in 2024, respectively.

Flooding the Zone

It's an old saw that law enforcement agencies *always* need more personnel. Yet the federal government spent \$44.5 billion on drug control and interdiction in 2024, double what it spent in 2012—and perhaps more than Mexican drug cartels earn from narcotics sales in the United States.

This spending goes far beyond CBP or the equally famous Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). The Defense Department, for instance, lobbied the Biden White House in 2024 for \$88 million to fund Counter-Ilicit Drug Trafficking operations in foreign countries, providing “training and equipment to national-level security forces of foreign countries for purposes of building capacity of partner nations.” The U.S. Postal Service spends tens of millions of dollars annually inspecting mail for narcotics. The Interior Department oversees “counterdrug efforts” on Native American reservations while the State Department funds anti-fentanyl interdiction abroad. The U.S. Marshals

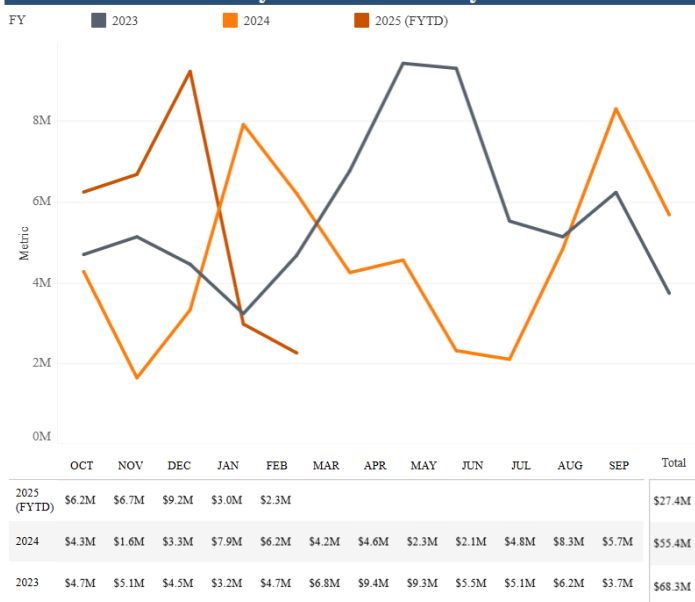
2024 US Drug Control Budget by Agency

Agency	FY 2024 Continuing Resolution Allocation
Health & Human Services Dept. *Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services	\$20,458,300,000
Justice Dept. *Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)	\$10,148,600,000
Homeland Security Dept. *Customs & Border Protection (CBP) *U.S. Coast Guard	\$6,933,400,000
Veterans Affairs Dept.	\$1,375,500,000
Federal Judiciary	\$1,285,400,000
Defense Dept. *Drug Interdiction & Counterdrug Activities	\$1,170,300,000
Housing & Urban Development Dept.	\$954,100,000
Office of Natl. Drug Control Policy	\$471,100,000
State Dept.	\$351,300,000
Education Dept.	\$71,800,000
U.S. Postal Inspection Service	\$71,700,000
Court Services & Offender Supervision Agency for D.C.	\$70,800,000
Treasury Dept.	\$63,600,000
Transportation Dept.	\$42,500,000
AmeriCorps	\$40,300,000
Labor Dept.	\$32,000,000
Agriculture Dept.	\$24,900,000
Interior Dept.	\$23,400,000
Appalachian Regional Commission	\$13,000,000
	\$43,602,000,000

*Denotes key sub-agency

Source: National Drug Control Budget: FY 2025 Funding Highlights

FY Fentanyl Seizures Value by Month



Value of fentanyl seized along the southern border. Source: Customs and Border Protection.

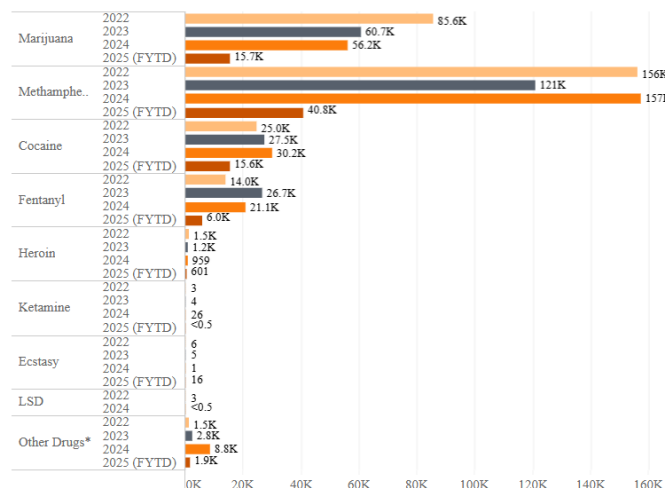
Service, part of the Justice Department, counters drug trafficking and money-laundering, as does the IRS. And of course, numerous agencies, from the Veterans Affairs Department to the Food & Drug Administration fund anti-opioid addiction campaigns nationwide. All are hungry for ever-bigger budgets.

Since 2023, CBP officers stationed at the 26 southern ports of entry have confiscated almost 48,000 pounds of fentanyl—that's **2.5 billion lethal doses**—worth \$151 million. That's virtually all of the fentanyl seized by CBP nationwide.

Even that pales next to the **157,000 pounds of methamphetamine seized** last year, 90% of which was caught at land ports of entry on the southern border. Two decades ago, most meth was manufactured in small domestic chem labs until Congress tightened distribution of pseudoephedrine, a key precursor, in 2005. Mexican cartels filled that void. **Today, almost all of the meth sold in America was manufactured in Mexico.** Cartels have also switched to using synthetic precursors, creating cheaper, more potent narcotics—which are increasingly mixed with fentanyl to boost potency even higher.

The exception seems to be illegal marijuana from the cartels, which is far less deadly but far more prolific than fentanyl *despite* many states decriminalizing weed in the past two decades. Even in the mid-to-late 2000s, close to 80% of marijuana seized was found between ports of entry on the southern border, particularly around Tucson, Arizona. Recent statistics show the same: Just 32% of marijuana was confiscated at the

FY Comparison by Drug Type and Drug Seizure Weight (lbs)



Overall drug seizures at land ports of entry at the U.S.-Mexico border. Source: Customs and Border Protection.

southern border last year while 64% was seized by CBP's coastal and interior agents, who operate within 100 miles of any U.S. border.

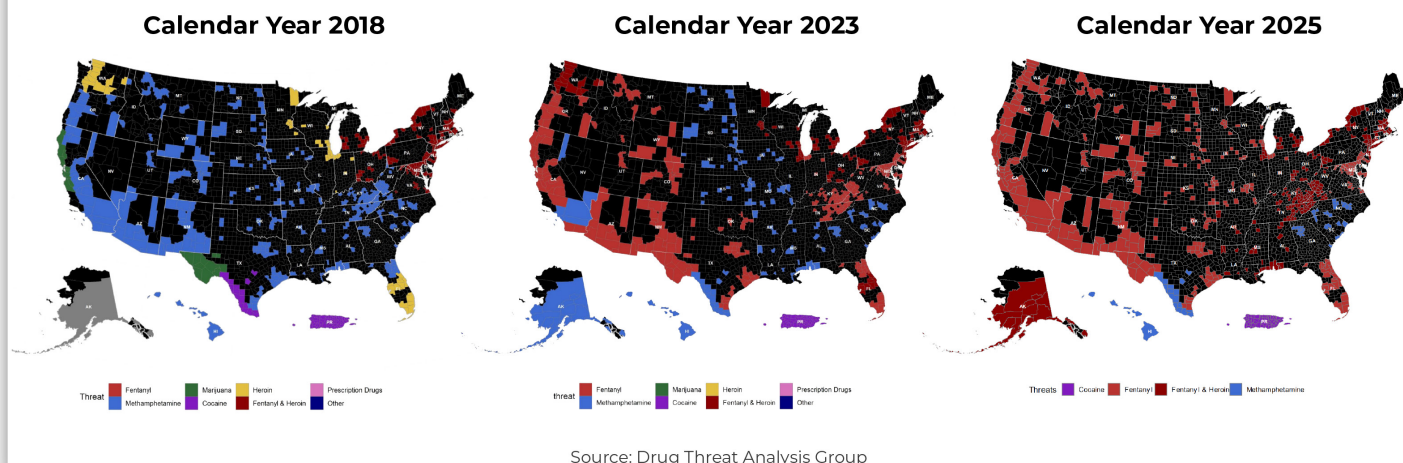
These are just the drugs seized by federal authorities, of course. With so many vehicles to inspect, it seems inevitable that some drugs will slip the net—but no one knows how much makes it through.

As concerning as these facts are, they don't paint the whole picture. CBP primarily operates along America's borders, so naturally almost all the drug interdiction data the agency reports come from its areas of operation—giving the impression that almost all drugs are discovered close to Mexico and Canada.

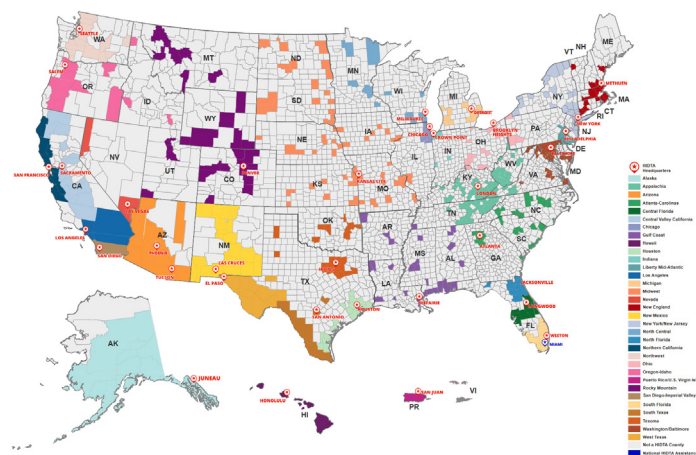
In fact, roughly half of all drugs confiscated by U.S. officials are discovered *inside* the country. The other half are seized across the 33 High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTAs) identified nationwide, only 5 of which touch the U.S.-Mexico border. The program, established by Congress in 1988, is administered by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, but it acts as a coalition of federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement to tackle drug trafficking and criminal activity in a given region. HIDTA claims credit for seizing 40,000 illegal firearms and confiscating \$18 billion in drugs and illegal currency from traffickers nationwide.

Data from HIDTA's Drug Threat Analysis Group illustrates the drug trade's rapid evolution. In 2018, methamphetamines were the most common "drug threat" identified by HIDTAs from California to North Carolina, though fentanyl had already proliferated the Northeast through Ohio, Michigan, and Virginia. Fast

Most Significant Drug Threats Identified by HIDTA Directors



forward to 2025, and **fentanyl—or fentanyl fortified with heroin—dominates virtually every HIDTA county in America, from Alaska to the Everglades.**



Another constant worry is corruption. From 2005 to 2012, 125 CBP employees—most of them stationed along the Mexican border—were convicted for smuggling drugs or illegal aliens across the border. In 2007, police arrested a customs officer for conspiracy to smuggle 240,000 pounds of marijuana worth \$288 million across the Paso Del Norte bridge in Texas. Reports suggest she infiltrated CBP specifically to facilitate drug smuggling.

In November 2024, a San Diego officer was sentenced to 23 years in prison for accepting bribes to allow methamphetamine and illegal aliens to sneak across a land port of entry. Prosecutors revealed that he was paid tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars to wave vehicles past his inspection station.

And as recently as February, authorities arrested a CBP officer in El Paso for human trafficking and drug smuggling, alleging that he admitted vehicles containing cocaine and illegal aliens bound for states as far away as North Carolina. In March, another officer was sentenced to 51 months in prison for accepting bribes from an illegal alien smuggling organization; he was caught by two undercover agents posing as illegal immigrants.

That isn't to suggest anything like widespread corruption among CBP's 26,000 officers, of course. But Mexican cartels are wealthy and ruthless, the incentives to bribe or threaten officers are high, and encounters between officers and cartel operatives are frequent—a formula that gives cause for deep concern.

Jobs, Joints, and Jefes

Amidst the chaos of insurgent warfare, the cartels keep on manufacturing the drugs that keep them afloat. The problem is that the drug industry is embedded in Mexico's economy. Experts believe narcotics have even helped stabilize the peso.

Thousands of jobs in rural areas depend on the blood money that in turn uplifts countless depressed small businesses in the Golden Triangle. Everyone knows smuggling is a quick, if risky, way to make \$1,000 or more with just a few hours' work. It's also a way to climb the career ladder. **Smugglers or "mules" start as young as 15 because they know that, as minors, they won't get prosecuted as harshly by American courts if caught** (and because U.S. prisons are overfull.) Many get kicked back across the Rio Grande. After a few years, they might be promoted to guides for other mules and eventually cartel lieutenants—after all, that's how El Chapo got his start.

Another wrinkle is the complexity of the illegal drug trade. From production to final sale, narcotics are bought and sold numerous times on the journey north. Andean coca farmers are paid \$1–\$3 per kilo of coca leaves. Chemists labor in jungle labs to process the leaves into the infamous white powder (cocaine hydrochloride) using kerosene, before selling it to the *narcotraficantes* for as much as \$2,000 per kilo. Sold wholesale, those kilos can net \$15,000–\$20,000 along the U.S.-Mexico border. From there, they're typically broken down into 3.5 gram baggies called "eightballs," which retail as high as \$300 apiece on American streets.

A single kilo of cocaine might ultimately generate \$100,000, a profit margin reaching 7,000%. More if dealers stretch supplies with baking soda or talcum powder. Many also spike eightballs with dangerous additives such as levamisole, a veterinary dewormer that can lead to necrotic tissue. **Levamisole is now found in 70% of all cocaine samples** in the United States.

The War on Us

Then there's fentanyl, a potent synthetic opioid developed in 1959 as an anesthetic. A decade ago, Chinese companies—with the full knowledge and quiet approval of the CCP—began selling fentanyl in America via the dark web and delivering it through the U.S. Postal System using false shipping labels. Selling fentanyl

"In my view, fentanyl is a chemical weapon," ex-DEA agent Derek Maltz told Congress in 2023. "The cartels are taking total advantage of weak security at the porous border, killing more Americans than any terrorist organization in the history of the country." And it's made possible by "Chinese criminals [who] are providing critical money-laundering services" and the "mass amount of chemicals to make the poison."

overseas isn't even a felony in China. The dictatorship only listed fentanyl as a Schedule I drug in 2019 after intense pressure from the first Trump administration. Yet the CCP ruthlessly hunts drug traffickers within China.

Chinese traffickers discovered it was more efficient to **sell fentanyl "precursors" and pill presses to the Sinaloa cartel** to produce them locally. A congressional investigation concluded that the CCP actually subsidizes this black market with tax rebates for the companies that manufacture these precursors.

The majority of fentanyl precursors come from China and enter the Pacific port of Manzanillo, whose international terminals are **run by a Chinese company**. (That same port is also the key hub for shipping arms to terror groups worldwide.) The same Chinese company operates a rail line to Kansas City, Missouri, with manufacturing stops in northern Mexico operated by thousands of Chinese nationals. Cartels take over distribution from there.

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Most don't (intentionally) ingest fentanyl directly; instead, it's a potency additive used to spike cocaine, heroin, and meth. It's so powerful, though, that dealers often kill their clients through overdose. 42% of illegal pills tested at DEA labs show at least some fentanyl traces. Two milligrams of fentanyl is enough to kill most people. From May to October 2024, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) confiscated enough of the junk to kill the entire U.S. population *twice over*.

One of President Trump's final, and underappreciated, actions in his first term was cracking down on illicit fentanyl deliveries through shipping companies such as FedEx and UPS. Every day, **3 million small packages—60% of them from China—enter the U.S. with little-to-no inspection** per an obscure 1930 law meant to speed up mail delivery (known as "*de minimis*"). Thanks to Trump's unsung work, fentanyl shipments from China dropped dramatically. Then Biden took office, relaxed the pressure on China, and imports soared once more. To this writer's knowledge, in four years Biden never once acknowledged the *de minimis* loophole.

The epidemic reached new heights under Biden, whose administration cancelled the border wall and **literally welded open 114 giant gates in the wall** (due, they said, to flooding). In 2020, Milwaukee became one of the hardest-hit cities in the nation, with a stunning 60 drug deaths per 100,000 people—more than twice the Wisconsin statewide average of 25 deaths per 100,000 people.

1 in every 44 Wisconsinites will die from drug overdose. Black and Native American Wisconsinites suffer the worst, with outrageously high death rates of 78 per 100,000 and 98 per 100,000 people, respectively. Men are more than twice as likely to die from overdose as women.

It's even worse in Arizona, where 1 in 34 people will die from overdose.

Nationwide, **it's 1 in 39 people.**

Many of these deaths are from first-time “experimenters” or people buying strong painkillers to treat chronic disease. Dealers sell brightly colored “rainbow fentanyl” that looks like candy. Consequently, calls to poison centers for fentanyl ingestion by kids is up 54 times compared with 2016.

These stories are *everywhere*.

Last year in Atlanta, a teen took what he thought was a Xanax pill; his mother found him dead with the pill still between his lips. In Raleigh, North Carolina, a pregnant mother was found dead from fentanyl poisoning in August. Last April, an 8-year-old Kentucky boy died from ingesting fentanyl hidden in strawberries at a school fundraiser. That same month, an Alabama man was arrested for stashing 176 fentanyl pills in Easter eggs.

In Utah, a 34-year-old mother of three stands accused of fatally poisoning her husband with fentanyl. In Anderson County, South Carolina last year, police discovered 1,000 pressed pills and an illegal gun in a home within walking distance of an elementary school. In Lynchburg, Virginia, cops busted a 47-person trafficking ring that smuggled in 48,000 pills—enough to kill 200,000 people.

In Washington, three children under 12 overdosed in a single weekend in 2023. Of a 2-year-old victim, the coroner said “the amount of pills was among the most she had ever seen in a child.”

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Let Them Eat Coke

Astonishingly, out-of-touch Democrats have positioned themselves as the *pro-decriminalization party* even as the carnage becomes undeniable.

The Left has adopted a shockingly apathetic approach to the drug crisis, with many groups—particularly the Soros-backed Drug Policy Alliance—agitating for “harm reduction” policies that stigmatize illegal drug use. The Drug Policy Alliance even opposed Biden’s proposal to reclassify fentanyl as a Schedule I controlled substance because it

perpetuated the Reagan-era War on Drugs. Not surprisingly, their “progressive” ideas proved a total disaster.

“This ‘Meet drug users where they are’ approach has regressed to a ‘Leave them where they are’ one,” writes Heritage Foundation senior legal research fellow Paul J. Larkin.

This extends far beyond marijuana. Every Democrat running for president in 2020 endorsed some form of drug legalization. Andrew Yang and Pete Buttigieg both **promised to decriminalize illegal opioids**. In 2024, Kamala Harris tried to woo the black vote with offers to legalize—and effectively subsidize—weed purchases.

Trump’s position is somewhat murkier. On the 2024 campaign trail, he endorsed Florida’s legalization ballot measure (Amendment 3), which netted 56% percent of the vote but fell short of the 60% threshold to become law. “As President, we will continue to focus on research to unlock the medical uses of marijuana to a Schedule 3 drug, and work with Congress to pass common sense laws, including safe banking for state authorized companies, and supporting states’ rights to pass marijuana laws, like in Florida, that work so well for their citizens.”

As President, though, his second administration announced it has “no action” planned on marijuana and blasted Washington, D.C.’s decriminalization policy for “open[ing] the door to disorder” and crime. In his first term, Trump upheld budget provisions to block D.C. cannabis sales. In his second, he’s signaled approval for granting cannabis businesses access to banking services. Pro-pot groups are already airing ads calling legalization “an ‘America First’ fight” in hopes of winning Trump’s support. Yet other advocates lament that while “the country was slowly but surely moving toward reclassifying marijuana under the Biden administration,” most of his nominees oppose any step toward legalization.

Trump Strikes Back



If Trump 1.0 was concerned about the drug epidemic, **Trump 2.0 is deadly serious about defeating it.** One idea he floated on the 2024 campaign trail: the death penalty for drug smugglers. “If you notice that every country that has the death penalty has no drug problem. They execute drug dealers,” he told reporters in February.

Leftists snickered, but he has a point. At least nine countries offer capital punishment for drug trafficking, most famously China, which has four times the population yet far fewer drug traffickers compared with the U.S.

Trump has used emergency powers to pressure Canada to take tougher action on the growing drug pipeline through our *northern* border, arguing “this failure to act on the part of Canada constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat.” His order has teeth: A 25% tariff on Canadian imports with the potential to go even higher if the Canadian government retaliates with its own tariffs—which it did a few weeks later in mid-March. His approach to Mexico is just as tough. Defense

“The cartels are waging war in America, and it’s time for America to wage war on the cartels,” Trump said in his March 4 State of the Union address, “which we are doing.”

Sec. Pete Hegseth has reportedly warned Mexican officials that “all options will be on the table” if they don’t do more to stem the flow of fentanyl over the border. In April, the President ordered the military to take control of federal lands along the Mexican border to “defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity” of the United States.

Under pressure, **the Mexican government surrendered 29 senior cartel leaders into U.S. custody**, including Rafael “Rafo” Caro Quintaro, who orchestrated the infamous kidnapping and murder of DEA agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena in 1985. Experts hailed it as “an immense hit on cartels.”

For her part, AMLO’s successor, President Claudia Sheinbaum, has wisely opted for bullets, not hugs, with a new security plan to infiltrate and disrupt cartel activities. “Mexico’s doing a really good job destroying meth labs with the Army, though it’s not being reported on,” Lamb told me. He’d like to see more U.S. forces help them.

So would Trump, apparently. “The cartels are waging war in America, and it’s time for America to wage war on the cartels,” Trump said in his March 4 State of the Union address, “which we are doing.”

Whereas past presidents centered their anti-cartel operations on the DEA and FBI, Trump is turning to military and intelligence assets to take the fight to the cartels’ heartland. He recently **deployed U.S. Army special forces to train Mexican marines in drug interdiction**, and continued a (sensible) Biden authorization to float CIA reconnaissance drones over Mexico—intelligence shared with Sheinbaum’s forces.

On his first day in office, Trump designated eight drug cartels and criminal syndicates—including Venezuela’s Tren de Aragua and El Salvador’s MS-13 gangs—Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) posing a national security risk to the U.S. Experts believe Trump will use this FTO designation to launch covert actions against cartel targets as he did in his first term with Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which he designed a Foreign Terrorist Organization eight months before assassinating chief Qasem Soleimani.

If military action seems extreme, consider that today’s cartels are toting weaponized drones, gatling miniguns, land mines, and even U.S. military Javelin anti-tank and -helicopter missile launchers instead of the pistols and Uzis of yore. **At least some of the Javelins may have come from our “donations” to Ukraine’s famously corrupt government**, though no one knows for certain.

Given their investment, the cartels won’t give up its multi-billion-dollar U.S. market without a fight. A military foray into Mexico could quickly come to resemble fighting the Taliban, with IEDs, car bombs, and hand grenades lobbed at American soldiers from guerrilla fighters and child-soldiers funded by some of the wealthiest criminal organizations in history. But the U.S. may have little choice but to intervene.

“I know it’s drastic,” says Sheriff Coe. “But the drug crisis requires drastic measures to get control of things. It’s time to step up our game and fight back—using the military, if necessary.”

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