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THE NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS DECLARING ILLICIT FENTANYL A WEAPON OF MASS DESTRUCTION

WHEREAS, the U.S. is in the midst of a national drug crisis that has claimed more than 100,000 lives in the past year¹; and

WHEREAS, illicit fentanyl analogues have represented the cause of the majority of those deaths; and

WHEREAS, data show illicit fentanyl is the number one cause of death among Americans between the ages of 18 and 45²; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. is intercepting record amounts of illicit fentanyl at our Nation's Borders³; and

WHEREAS, law enforcement is increasingly finding illicit fentanyl ⁴; and

WHEREAS, illicit fentanyl analogues are being trafficked by drug cartels and designated terrorist organizations; and

WHEREAS, two milligrams of fentanyl are enough to be fatal; and

WHEREAS, illicit fentanyl has the capacity to be repurposed as a chemical weapon and used to inflict a mass-casualty event; and

WHEREAS, illicit fentanyl and/or its analogues have already been used as a chemical weapon in the Moscow Theater Hostage Crisis of 2002⁵; and

¹ Garnett MF, Miniño AM. Drug overdose deaths in the United States, 2003–2023. NCHS Data Brief, no 522. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2024. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.15620/cdc/170565>.

² Spencer MR, Garnett MF, Miniño AM. Drug overdose deaths in the United States, 2002–2022. NCHS Data Brief, no 491. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2024. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.15620/cdc/135849>.

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. WISQARS—Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System. 2023.

National Center for Health Statistics. Mortality multiple cause files. 2023.

³ <https://immigrationforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Illicit-Fentanyl-and-Drug-Smuggling-at-the-U.S.-Mexico-Border.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.dea.gov/resources/facts-about-fentanyl>

⁵ <https://www.history.com/news/opioid-chemical-weapons-moscow-theater-hostage-crisis>



WHEREAS, a 2022 report issued by the United States Commission on Combating Synthetic Opioid Trafficking stated “illicit synthetic opioids have the effect of a slow-motion weapon of mass destruction in pill form;”⁶

WHEREAS, weapon of mass destruction designation of illicit fentanyl analogues has bipartisan support from leaders such Former Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy James W. Carroll; Former Acting Administrator of Drug Enforcement Administration and Former Director of the Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement At the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Uttam Dhillon; Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs Andrew Weber; Former Secretary of Homeland Security and Governor of Pennsylvania Tom Ridge; Former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency John Brennan; Former Acting Director and Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency Michael Morell; Former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. James Winnefeld, Jr.; Former Ambassador to Mexico and Argentina, Deputy Ambassador to Afghanistan, and Former Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs Ambassador Earl Anthony Wayne, Former Chief of Staff at the Department of Defense and Central Intelligence Agency Jeremy Bash; Former Congresswoman Mary Bono; Former White House Office of National Drug Control Policy Chief Medical Officer Dr. Roneet Lev; and Past President of the American Chemical Society Dr. Donna Nelson;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) supports all illicit fentanyl analogues being designated as a weapon of mass destruction;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the NSA welcomes legislation to affect that end;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the NSA encourages President Trump to use his executive ability to declare all illicit fentanyl analogues a weapon of mass destruction.

⁶ https://www.rand.org/pubs/external_publications/EP68838.html