



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY **OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

OIG-26-23

August 20, 2026

FINAL REPORT

ICE Homeland Security Investigations Hindered in Countering Fentanyl Entering the United States





DHS OIG HIGHLIGHTS

ICE Homeland Security Investigations Hindered in Countering Fentanyl Entering the United States

August 20, 2026

Why We Did This Audit

Fentanyl is a highly addictive synthetic opioid manufactured in laboratories and distributed across the country to be sold on the illegal drug market. Illicit fentanyl is a main driver of the overdose crisis in the United States. HSI plays a pivotal role in disrupting the supply of illicit opioids, including fentanyl, at every point in the drug supply chain.

We conducted this audit to determine the extent to which ICE HSI's technologies, intelligence, and information sharing counter fentanyl entering the United States.

What We Recommend

We made four recommendations to improve ICE HSI's ability to counter fentanyl entering the United States.

OIG Access

ICE provided timely responses to our requests for information and did not delay or deny access.

What We Found

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations' (HSI) technologies, intelligence, and information sharing **did not effectively enable it to counter fentanyl entering the United States**, based on our audit, which included interviews with 100 HSI agents across the country. Given HSI's unique role in disrupting fentanyl supplies into the United States, failure to address these issues may lead to an increase in illicit fentanyl available to the public and additional overdose deaths. We found:

- **HSI's technologies did not meet the needs of agents and analysts conducting fentanyl investigations.** HSI users did not widely adopt analytical tools due to technical limitations, and HSI, after spending millions to develop these tools, decommissioned them 3 years after launch.
- HSI's counter-fentanyl mission was hindered by delays in agents obtaining funds to purchase information and evidence (i.e., drugs) during an investigation; a lack of independent authority to investigate fentanyl-related offenses; and low, inconsistent referral of fentanyl cases from U.S. Customs and Border Protection to HSI.
- **As ICE shifted priorities toward immigration enforcement, HSI's level of effort on fentanyl declined from fiscal years 2024 to 2025.** Fentanyl investigations decreased by 24 percent, investigative hours spent countering fentanyl decreased by approximately 30 percent, and fentanyl seizures decreased by 39 percent.

ICE Response

ICE concurred with all four recommendations. Appendix C contains ICE's response in its entirety.



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Background

Synthetic opioids, including fentanyl, are highly addictive, laboratory-manufactured substances. Cartels and transnational criminal organizations produce fentanyl and smuggle it into the United States, primarily through Mexico. More than 90 percent of interdicted fentanyl is stopped at ports of entry (POE), where cartels attempt to smuggle it primarily in vehicles driven by U.S. citizens. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, fentanyl and other synthetic opioids are the most common drugs involved in overdose deaths. In 2024, more than 48,000 deaths in the United States were attributed to fentanyl. The President issued an executive order in December 2025 designating illicit fentanyl and its precursor chemicals¹ as weapons of mass destruction.²

The Department of Homeland Security is responsible for combating cartels and transnational criminal organizations smuggling fentanyl into the United States. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) play key roles in these enforcement efforts. ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) is responsible for tracking, investigating, and preventing illegal drugs from entering the United States. HSI special agents work closely with CBP officers and U.S. Border Patrol agents at and between the POEs, respectively, to identify and seize illicit opioids, and to investigate those organizations attempting to introduce illicit contraband into the United States. HSI counters fentanyl and its precursors by targeting laboratories, identifying smuggling routes, and collaborating with law enforcement partners to investigate smuggling operations at the border and within the United States. HSI conducts investigations under Title 19³ of the United States Code (U.S.C.) or with authorization from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)⁴ under Title 21.⁵

In September 2023, HSI released the *HSI Strategy for Combatting Illicit Opioids*, designed to strengthen the United States' response to illicit opioid trafficking and provide a foundation for countering the overdose epidemic. HSI's strategy includes the following goals:

- reduce the domestic and international supply of illicit opioids;
- attack the enablers of illicit opioid trafficking; and

¹ A precursor chemical is any chemical substance that may be used to manufacture narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances such as fentanyl and fentanyl analogs.

² Executive Order 14367, *Designating Fentanyl as a Weapon of Mass Destruction*, December 15, 2025.

³ Title 19 grants DHS, including ICE, enforcement authority of customs officers. Specifically, 19 U.S.C. § 1595a(c)(1)(B) gives DHS, including ICE, the ability to seize any controlled substance that is unlawfully imported.

⁴ The *Interagency Cooperation Agreement between the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Regarding Investigative Functions Related to the Controlled Substances Act* (June 18, 2009) grants the DEA the ability to authorize HSI agents to conduct drug investigations.

⁵ *The Controlled Substances Act*, codified at Title 21, authorizes the DEA to investigate narcotic and other controlled substances crimes. Specifically, 21 U.S.C. § 878(a) gives the DEA the power to conduct law enforcement functions.

- conduct outreach with private industry.

HSI relies on several resources to initiate investigations into suspected fentanyl production and trafficking. According to HSI officials, CBP drug seizure information referred to ICE is a primary source of information for new investigations. HSI and CBP have also been conducting joint operations to target fentanyl smuggling.⁶ Figure 1 depicts a fentanyl seizure in May 2023 resulting from HSI and CBP's coordinated efforts. Further, HSI leverages confidential informants (CI),⁷ whom HSI pays to assist in initiating and supporting investigations.

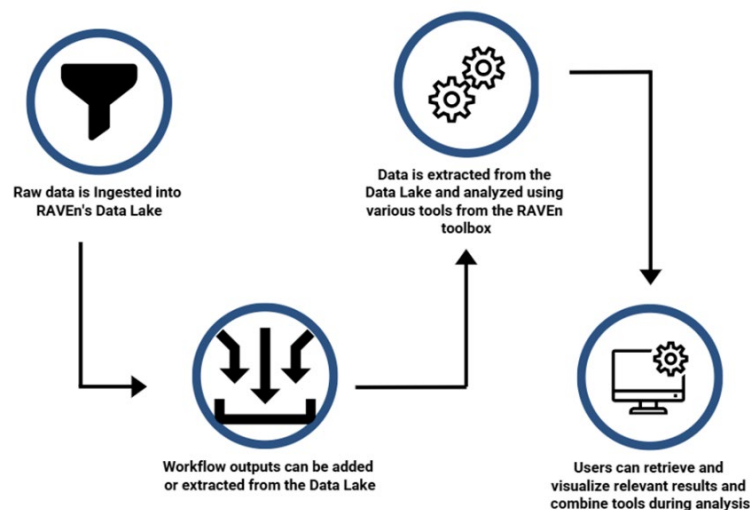
Figure 1. Joint HSI and CBP Fentanyl Seizure



Source: ICE press release

HSI's Innovation Lab develops new solutions to meet ICE's needs. In November 2022, the Innovation Lab deployed the Repository for Analytics in a Virtualized Environment (RAVEN) platform to provide a master investigative analytics database to link people, locations, assets, and attributes of investigative importance. The system is designed to host analytic tools to help support criminal investigations, including fentanyl cases. Figure 2 illustrates RAVEN's operational process.

Figure 2. Example RAVEN Workflow



Source: HSI's *Consolidated Operational Requirements Document for the Repository for Analytics in a Virtualized Environment (RAVEN) Platform*, May 2021

⁶ DHS operations to counter fentanyl include Chainbreaker, Hydra, and Pelican Bones.

⁷ A CI is a person who provides HSI with credible information concerning unlawful activity and works under the direction and control of an HSI special agent.



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HSI agents and CBP officers also use other tools to help detect and counter fentanyl, such as handheld drug-testing kits. CBP officers also rely on non-intrusive inspection technology at POEs to identify drugs entering the United States without physically opening vehicles or cargo. However, in a prior audit, we found CBP did not fully leverage its large-scale non-intrusive inspection systems to detect contraband coming into the United States.⁸

We conducted this audit to determine the extent to which ICE HSI's technologies, intelligence, and information sharing counter fentanyl entering the United States.

Results of Audit

Key Finding 1: HSI's Data Analytics Tools Did Not Assist in Countering Fentanyl

RAVEN analytical tools did not meet agents' and analysts' needs to help investigative efforts related to fentanyl. **From fiscal years 2022 to 2025, HSI spent more than \$150 million developing the RAVEn platform** to "improve on the capability of HSI to perform the investigative mission and close the gaps that impact HSI's investigative efforts." Yet, HSI users did not widely adopt RAVEn's analytical tools due to technical limitations. Interviews with agents and analysts identified areas where **RAVEN tools did not meet investigative needs**. Agents and analysts conducting fentanyl investigations in 6 of the 11 offices interviewed admitted abandoning the use of the platform's tools after realizing the tools did not assist with their efforts. Specifically, agents and analysts we interviewed told us that RAVEn tools:

- lacked the ability to connect to criminal networks;
- required substantial manual effort to search and import information;
- did not provide investigative leads after transitioning from the prior system to RAVEn; and
- "did not work" and "crashed," hindering investigations.

One officer described RAVEn as "atrocious," and another stated the platform hindered drug investigations instead of helping them.

RAVEN tools were underutilized by HSI's approximately 6,800 agents and analysts. The most-used tool within RAVEn was Lead Tracker.⁹ After initial deployment, only 757 unique users had access to the Lead Tracker tool in FY 2022. By FY 2025, as deployment expanded, 4,491 unique users accessed Lead Tracker, still only accounting for approximately 66 percent of all potential

⁸ [OIG-25-27, CBP's Detection Capabilities at U.S. Ports of Entry Risk Missing Contraband, June 16, 2025.](#)

⁹ HSI's Lead Tracker creates, tracks, and reports on early-stage investigative leads. It is also used to capture lead referrals and outcomes.



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users. RAVen's primary investigative analytics tool, Collaborate, Organize, Research, Explore,¹⁰ also saw low usage. At launch in November 2022, this tool had approximately 1,090 unique users, but its total number of users only increased to 2,271 by FY 2025. Technical limitations led to low RAVen usage rates and slowed fentanyl investigations as agents and analysts manually conducted investigative efforts automated in the prior system.

Delays in deploying RAVen tools to the field limited the usefulness of the tools. According to HSI officials, leadership-directed priorities delayed the deployment of certain tools to the field. Additionally, one ICE official noted the agency's current operating environment is heavily focused on other programs, and these competing priorities challenged HSI's ability to deliver RAVen's intended tools on schedule.

In 2025, HSI began decommissioning tools within RAVen, only 3 years after launching the platform to the field offices, to prepare for a transition to a new contracted analytics system. According to HSI Innovation Lab officials, HSI's efforts to acquire a new analytics system are focused on commercially available products due to the lengthy development timelines and costs associated with Government-developed technology. HSI estimates ongoing operating costs for RAVen's data repository¹¹ will exceed \$31 million and that an additional \$39 million will be required for the newly contracted analytics system during FYs 2025 and 2026.

Recommendation 1: We recommend the Executive Associate Director for Homeland Security Investigations develop and implement a process that evaluates capabilities of future analytic tools prior to their implementation to ensure they properly address the requirements of agents and analysts conducting investigations.

Key Finding 2: HSI's Approach to Intelligence and Information Sharing Adversely Impacted Fentanyl Investigations

HSI Delays in Funds Disbursement Hindered Investigations

HSI did not provide timely funds for agents to purchase information or evidence (e.g., drugs), which limited their ability to pursue fentanyl investigations. When HSI agents do not have immediate access to necessary funds, investigations may be compromised, and leads may be lost. Agents in 8 of the 11 HSI field offices

One agent stated delays result in the loss of investigative leads for drugs because, "if [agents] don't buy it, someone else will."

¹⁰ Collaborate, Organize, Research, Explore was intended to help users search multiple data sources, analyze HSI's data holdings, and collaborate and build cases virtually, within a single tool.

¹¹ According to the Innovation Lab, RAVen will remain as HSI's data repository going forward, but the analytical tools housed within RAVen will be replaced by a new system using an outside contractor.



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where we conducted interviews reported issues with **insufficient funding on hand to initiate purchases of information or evidence**. In one office, agents waited more than 2 months to receive the funding needed to purchase evidence as part of an active investigation. Agents explained they cannot plan controlled purchases or negotiate with dealers without funds readily available, as dealers typically require payment at the time information or drugs are exchanged. Similarly, HSI may need to provide funding to CIs, who then purchase fentanyl pills directly from dealers.

The *HSI Informants Handbook*, dated August 2, 2012, requires CIs to be paid for information and evidence in a timely manner. However, HSI does not have policies or procedures in place to ensure agents can obtain funding for purchases of information or evidence as quickly as possible.

Recommendation 2: We recommend the Executive Associate Director for Homeland Security Investigations develop and implement procedures for ensuring timely availability of funds to Homeland Security Investigations special agents for purchases of information and evidence.

Mandatory DEA Approval Limited HSI's Ability to Investigate Fentanyl Cases

HSI lacks independent Title 21 authority to investigate fentanyl-related offenses, which limited its ability to conduct timely and effective criminal investigations into fentanyl smuggling. Although HSI's mission involves investigating the illegal movement of contraband, including drugs, into, out of, and through the United States, 21 U.S.C. authorizes the DEA to investigate controlled substances. As a result, HSI special agents must request this authority from the DEA, which grants it to a limited number of HSI personnel and restricts its use to cases with a clear nexus to ports of entry or international shipping and mail facilities.

The required process complicates investigations and leads to missed opportunities. It requires agents to regularly submit investigative information and operational plans to the DEA for approval. According to an HSI agent, **the lack of Title 21 authority presents "serious red tape issues,"** and the DEA can make the process burdensome, thereby slowing investigative efforts. Another agent explained the process for obtaining DEA approval creates an additional step for investigators. In one example detailed in a HSI draft report on Title 21, the DEA provided final approval 50 days after HSI submitted a controlled delivery request. The delays resulted in pausing the operation, losing the CI's cooperation, and preventing HSI from advancing the investigation against the transnational criminal organization.

The *DHS Appropriations Act of 2024*¹² mandated that HSI assess and report on how the lack of full Title 21 authority hindered its ability to combat transnational criminal organizations profiting from fentanyl and other synthetic drugs entering the United States. However, in May 2025, the

¹² *Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2024*, July 27, 2023.



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DHS Deputy Secretary requested approval to discontinue work on the report, citing relevancy concerns and a change in the administration.

After concluding our audit fieldwork on May 7, 2026, we intended to recommend that ICE request Title 21 authority without having to go through the DEA. On May 26, 2026, the Attorney General's office released a memorandum authorizing HSI to utilize Title 21 authority to assist the Department of Justice in enforcing the *Controlled Substances Act*. ICE shared this memorandum with our office on June 4, 2026. As a result, we are not making a recommendation related to Title 21.

Inconsistent Guidance Adversely Impacted Referral of Fentanyl Leads to HSI for Investigation

CBP did not always refer fentanyl seizures to HSI, thereby limiting HSI's ability to pursue fentanyl-related leads. HSI special agents from 5 of the 11 HSI field offices we interviewed reported instances in which **CBP referred fentanyl-related seizures to other agencies without notifying HSI**. Additionally, one of the offices provided referral information showing CBP conducted 95 pill press¹³-related seizures between October 2023 and April 2024 and sent 9 (about 10 percent) of those referrals to agencies other than HSI.

According to a CBP and ICE memorandum from May 2006,¹⁴ CBP officers and U.S. Border Patrol agents must notify ICE if they seize drugs in quantities exceeding personal use. The memorandum further states that although Border Patrol provides the DEA the right of first refusal on drug-related apprehensions and seizures, CBP must notify ICE of all such referrals. Additionally, CBP and ICE should pursue every feasible opportunity at the local level to promote cooperation and coordination on case referrals.

CBP is responsible for initiating referrals to HSI, and HSI would not be aware of all referrals provided to other agencies. We could only obtain examples HSI identified during investigative efforts of referrals provided to other agencies. According to a CBP official, other agencies may request that CBP inspect specific shipments, and in those cases CBP shares information directly with the requesting agency and will make a seizure referral for the specific agency. However, the memorandum requires that ICE still receive notification of those referrals.

HSI and CBP did not consistently coordinate referrals at the local level because the 2006 memorandum is outdated. CBP updated its *Seized Asset Management and Enforcement Procedures Handbook* in March 2026 and requires CBP seizing officers to refer incidents to HSI

¹³ Pill presses and their parts (e.g., tableting machinery, die sets, and molds) are imported to the United States illegally to make fentanyl pills.

¹⁴ CBP and ICE Memorandum, *Guidance on Referral Coordination for U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, May 10, 2006.



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for criminal prosecution. However, CBP officials noted each POE has standard operating procedures for lead referrals, and the procedures vary based on the POE's geographical location and the circumstances of the referral. CBP officials added HSI is not required to notify CBP of referral resolutions, which leads to missed opportunities. Additionally, DHS did not establish a department-wide initiative defining how its components should work together to combat the fentanyl epidemic. As a result, disagreements regarding referrals were typically handled at the local level.

Recommendation 3: We recommend the Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection evaluate the impact of recent Executive Order actions and update the memorandum for investigative referrals between Homeland Security Investigations and U.S. Customs and Border Protection to ensure coordination on referrals.

Key Finding 3: Competing Mission Priorities Led to a Significant Decrease in HSI Investigative Hours

In FY 2025, Department priorities shifted toward immigration enforcement.¹⁵ Accordingly, HSI prioritized immigration enforcement over fentanyl-related criminal investigations. Between FYs 2022 and 2024, agent hours dedicated to fentanyl investigations steadily increased. **But in FY 2025, these hours declined by more than 250,000 (approximately 31 percent) compared to FY 2024.** At the same time, immigration enforcement saw the largest increase across all investigative categories, rising more than 1.7 million hours (over 800 percent). Figure 3 illustrates the shift in investigative priorities.

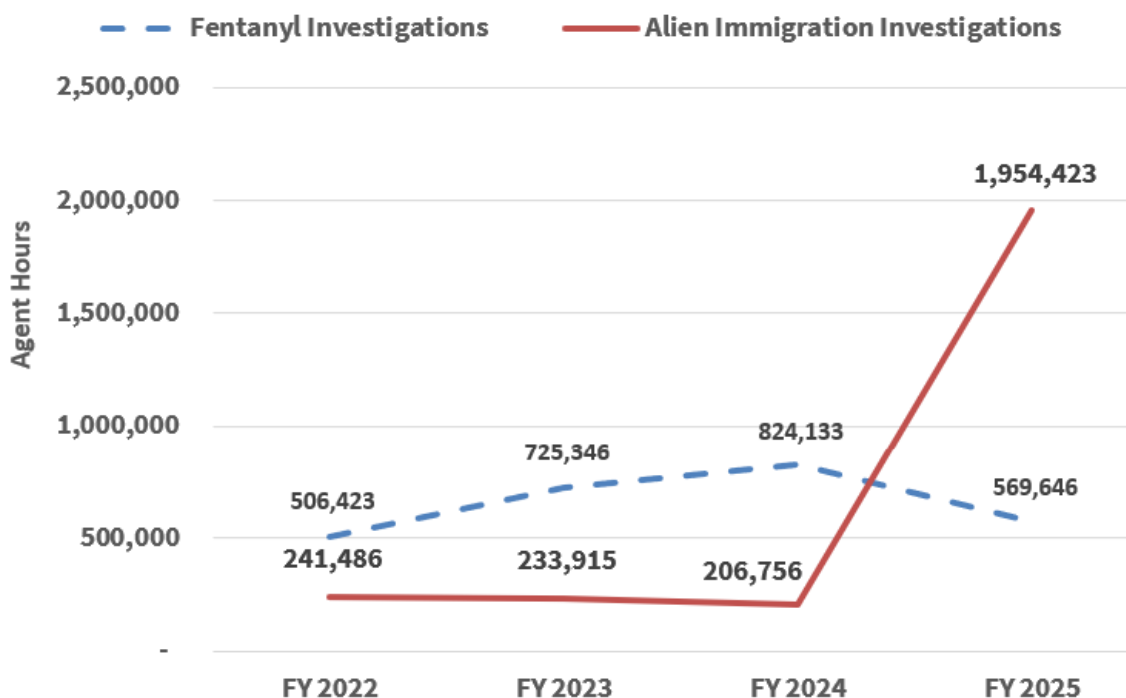
¹⁵ 8 U.S.C. § 1103 grants the DHS Secretary with the authorities and functions to administer and enforce immigration laws.



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Figure 3. Number of Hours HSI Agents Worked on Fentanyl Investigations Relative to Immigration Investigations, FYs 2022–2025



Source: DHS OIG analysis of hours HSI agents worked on investigations

HSI's Fentanyl Investigations and Seizures Decreased in FY 2025

As ICE dedicated more staff hours to immigration investigations, there was a corresponding reduction in fentanyl investigations and seizures. **In FY 2025, the number of fentanyl investigations initiated by HSI agents decreased by 24 percent** compared to the prior fiscal year. For example, the number of investigations initiated at one field office declined from a high of 30 in FY 2024 to only 13 in FY 2025. **HSI's fentanyl seizures also decreased by 39 percent in FY 2025** despite the DEA reporting several record-breaking fentanyl seizures¹⁶ in 2025. The DEA had an

¹⁶ Steffan W. Tubbs, *DEA Rocky Mountain Seizes Record 1.7 Million Counterfeit Fentanyl Pills in Colorado, Sixth-Largest U.S. Pill Seizure*, DEA (Nov. 17, 2025), <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2025/11/17/dea-rocky-mountain-seizes-record-17-million-counterfeit-fentanyl-pills>; Carlos A. Briano, *Largest Fentanyl Bust in DEA History: Authorities Seize Over 400 Kilograms of Fentanyl in Record-Shattering Operation*, DEA (May 8, 2025), <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2025/05/08/largest-fentanyl-bust-dea-history-authorities-seize-over-400-kilograms>.

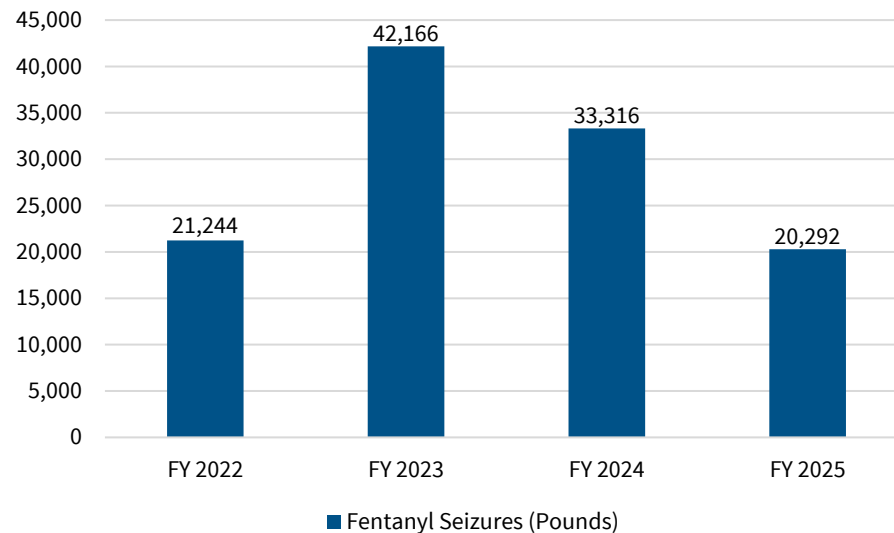


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approximate 25 percent increase in fentanyl powder seizures.¹⁷ See Figure 4 for a breakdown of seizures conducted by HSI.

Figure 4. HSI Seizures of Fentanyl, FYs 2022–2025



Source: DHS OIG analysis of HSI seizure reports

With ICE dedicating more staff hours to immigration investigations, staffing hours for fentanyl investigations declined. During interviews with agents from 11 HSI field offices, agents in 9 offices reported that the shift in priorities toward immigration enforcement reduced capacity on fentanyl investigations. Agents reported:

- An “all hands-on deck” environment, with the office largely working immigration priorities since January 2025.
- At one office, approximately 99 percent of HSI’s work was dedicated to immigration, leaving almost no capacity for fentanyl investigations.
- A drug investigation team of seven agents was reduced to “two to three” because personnel were reassigned to work on immigration cases.

Recommendation 4: We recommend the Executive Associate Director for Homeland Security Investigations conduct a review of staffing levels to ensure an appropriate level of coverage commensurate with the relative priority of fentanyl investigations.

¹⁷ The DEA seized nearly 8,000 pounds of fentanyl powder in 2024. In 2025, DEA seizures of fentanyl powder increased to nearly 10,000 pounds.



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Appendix A: Objective, Scope, and Methodology

The objective of this audit was to determine the extent to which ICE HSI technologies, intelligence, and information sharing counter fentanyl entering the United States.

To answer our objective, we reviewed Federal laws and regulations, DHS and ICE policies and guidance, Memoranda of Agreement, ICE reports associated with countering fentanyl, and DHS OIG and U.S. Government Accountability Office reports to identify relevant prior findings and recommendations. We analyzed ICE operations and systems used to counter fentanyl. We used documentary, physical, and testimonial evidence to evaluate whether ICE effectively uses technologies, intelligence, and information sharing to counter fentanyl. We assessed ICE HSI systems and evaluated the challenges, data accuracy, and reliability of the systems. Specifically, we reviewed data from ICE's Investigative Case Management System and observed a demonstration of RAVen tools.

During our site visits, we observed ICE's daily operations, operations at the border and port, and CBP's mail inspection facilities. We also interviewed more than 100 agents and officials from the following offices:

- HSI's Narcotics and Contraband Smuggling Unit
- HSI Innovation Lab
- HSI Office of Policy
- HSI Data Management and Reporting Unit
- HSI Mexico City Attaché office
- CBP Office of Field Operations
- DHS Science and Technology Directorate
- U.S. Postal Inspection Service
- 10 HSI Special Agent in Charge offices

We also obtained and analyzed summary statistics on HSI's efforts to counter fentanyl including:

- lead referrals from CBP and CIs;
- number of investigations initiated;
- seizures for fentanyl; precursor chemicals; and pill presses, dye, and parts;
- enforcement activities, including criminal and administrative arrests; and
- hours agents worked on fentanyl and immigration investigations.



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We assessed internal controls related to ICE HSI technologies, intelligence, and information sharing countering fentanyl entering the United States. Based on our assessment, we identified areas for improvement with HSI's technologies to assist fentanyl investigation efforts, the controls to obtain intelligence to support investigations, and information sharing among DHS components. We identified internal control weaknesses in the body of this report. However, because our internal control assessment was limited to the audit objective, it may not have disclosed other internal control deficiencies that potentially existed.

We conducted this audit from March 2025 through May 2026 pursuant to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*, 5 U.S.C. §§ 401–424, and according to generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Three government shutdowns in FY 2026 significantly delayed our audit publication by more than 90 days.

DHS OIG's Access to DHS Information

During this audit, ICE provided timely responses to our requests for information and did not delay or deny access to information we requested.



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Appendix B:

Recommendations, Management Comments, and OIG Analysis

ICE provided management comments on a draft of this report. We included the comments in their entirety in Appendix C. We also received technical comments on the draft report from ICE and revised the report as appropriate. ICE concurred with all four recommendations, which we consider open and resolved. A summary of ICE's response and our analysis follows.

Recommendation 1: We recommend the Executive Associate Director for Homeland Security Investigations develop and implement a process that evaluates capabilities of future analytic tools prior to their implementation to ensure they properly address the requirements of agents and analysts conducting investigations.

ICE Response to Recommendation 1: Concur. ICE HSI's Cyber and Operational Technology Innovation Lab will create a clear, repeatable process to review new analytic tools before they are put into regular use. This process, once implemented, will ensure the tools address the requirements of agents and analysts conducting investigations. ICE's estimated completion date is June 30, 2027.

OIG Analysis: The corrective actions are responsive to the recommendation. This recommendation will remain open and resolved until we receive evidence that HSI's Innovation Lab has implemented processes to ensure new analytic tools address the requirements of agents and analysts conducting investigations.

Recommendation 2: We recommend the Executive Associate Director for Homeland Security Investigations develop and implement procedures for ensuring timely availability of funds to Homeland Security Investigations special agents for purchases of information and evidence.

ICE Response to Recommendation 2: Concur. ICE HSI is considering options for a process or other solution that, once implemented, will alleviate the underlying issue of ensuring timely availability of funds to HSI special agents for purchases of information and evidence. ICE's estimated completion date is June 30, 2027.

OIG Analysis: We acknowledge ICE is considering options for a process or other solution to address the recommendation. This recommendation will remain open and resolved until we receive evidence that ICE has implemented procedures to ensure timely availability of funds.

Recommendation 3: We recommend the Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection evaluate the impact of recent Executive Order actions and update the memorandum for investigative referrals between Homeland Security Investigations and U.S. Customs and Border Protection to ensure coordination on referrals.



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ICE Response to Recommendation 3: Concur. ICE indicated that although the Executive Associate Director for HSI already collaborates with entities, including CBP, HSI will lead efforts to evaluate and update existing policies and procedures for investigative referrals to ensure HSI is notified of all seizures that may warrant further investigation. As part of this effort, HSI will assess current procedures and the impact of recent Executive Order actions and identify any changes that must occur to align with existing policies and procedures to provide better clarity to the field, including clarifying roles and responsibilities for seizure notifications, standardizing referral processes across components, and issuing updated guidance to all relevant field offices. ICE's estimated completion date is June 30, 2027.

OIG Analysis: The corrective actions are responsive to the recommendation. This recommendation will remain open and resolved until we receive evidence that ICE has updated its policies and procedures to address investigative referrals between HSI and CBP to ensure coordination on referrals.

Recommendation 4: We recommend the Executive Associate Director for Homeland Security Investigations conduct a review of staffing levels to ensure an appropriate level of coverage commensurate with the relative priority of fentanyl investigations.

ICE Response to Recommendation 4: Concur. ICE HSI will review staffing levels, and determine and implement next steps, as needed, to ensure an appropriate level of coverage commensurate with the relative priority of fentanyl investigations. ICE's estimated completion date is June 30, 2027.

OIG Analysis: The corrective actions are responsive to the recommendation. This recommendation will remain open and resolved until we receive evidence of ICE's actions.



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Appendix C: ICE Comments on the Draft Report

ICE's formal management response begins on the next page.



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

BY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

June 29, 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR: Joseph V. Cuffari, Ph.D.
Inspector General

FROM: Beth Baden **MARY E BADEN**
Acting Chief Financial Officer and
Senior Component Accountable Official
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Digitally signed by MARY E
BADEN
Date: 2026.06.29 15:21:30 -04'00'

SUBJECT: **Management Response to Draft Report: "ICE Homeland Security Investigations Hindered in Countering Fentanyl Entering the United States," (Project No. 25-022-AUD-ICE)**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft report. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) appreciates the work of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

ICE leadership is pleased to note OIG's positive recognition of the pivotal role played by ICE Homeland Security Investigations in disrupting the supply of illicit opioids, including fentanyl, at every point in the drug supply chain. ICE Homeland Security Investigations remains committed to combating the trafficking and distribution of fentanyl through robust enforcement, information sharing, and collaboration with federal, state, and local partners, including the Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and foreign law enforcement partners. These efforts include coordination of enforcement actions and information sharing to disrupt supply chains and hold criminal organizations and traffickers accountable for smuggling fentanyl into the United States, including through innovative collaboration under the Homeland Security Task Force. ICE Homeland Security Investigations and CBP also conduct joint operations to target fentanyl smuggling and ICE's Homeland Security Investigations' Innovation Lab will continue to develop new solutions to meet ICE's needs in this mission.

The draft report contained four recommendations with which ICE concurs. Attached find our detailed response to each recommendation. ICE previously submitted technical comments addressing several accuracy, contextual, and other issues under a separate cover for OIG's consideration, as appropriate.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you again in the future.

Attachment

**Attachment: Management Response to Recommendations
Contained in OIG 25-022-AUD-ICE**

OIG recommended that the Executive Associate Director for Homeland Security Investigations:

Recommendation 1: Develop and implement a process that evaluates capabilities of future analytic tools prior to their implementation to ensure they properly address the requirements of agents and analysts conducting investigations.

Response: Concur. The ICE Homeland Security Investigations Cyber and Operational Technology Innovation Lab will create a clear, repeatable process to review new analytic tools before they are put into regular use. This process, once implemented, will ensure the tools address the requirements of agents and analysts conducting investigations.

Estimated Completion Date: June 30, 2027.

Recommendation 2: Develop and implement procedures for ensuring timely availability of funds to [Homeland Security Investigations] special agents for purchase of information and evidence.

Response: Concur. The ICE HSI Investigative Services Division, Office of Administrative Operations, as well as HSI senior leadership, are considering options for a process or other solution that, once implemented, will alleviate the underlying issue of ensuring timely availability of funds to HSI special agents for purchase information and evidence.

Estimated Completion Date: June 30, 2027.

OIG recommended that the Director of ICE and the Commissioner of CBP:

Recommendation 3: Evaluate the impact of recent Executive Order actions and update the memorandum for investigative referrals between Homeland Security Investigations and U.S. Customs and Border Protection to ensure coordination on referrals.

Response: Concur. Although the Executive Associate Director for Homeland Security Investigations already collaborates with entities, including CBP, ICE Homeland Security Investigations will lead efforts to evaluate and update existing policies and procedures for investigative referrals to ensure Homeland Security Investigations is notified of all seizures that may warrant further investigation. As part of this effort, Homeland Security Investigations will assess current procedures and the impact of recent Executive Order actions and identify any changes that must occur to align existing policies and procedures

to provide better clarity to the field, including clarifying roles and responsibilities for seizure notifications, standardizing referral processes across components, and issuing updated guidance to all relevant field offices.

Estimated Completion Date: June 30, 2027.

OIG recommended that the Executive Associate Director for Homeland Security Investigations:

Recommendation 4: Conduct a review of staffing levels to ensure an appropriate level of coverage commensurate with the relative priority of fentanyl investigations.

Response: Concur. Homeland Security Investigations will review staffing levels, and determine and implement next steps, as needed, to ensure an appropriate level of coverage commensurate with the relative priority of fentanyl investigations.

Estimated Completion Date: June 30, 2027.



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

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