

**Statement of Gary R. Barksdale  
Chief Postal Inspector  
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Before the Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations  
United States House of Representatives  
July 16, 2019**

Good morning, Chair DeGette, Ranking Member Guthrie, and members of the Subcommittee. I appreciate this opportunity to testify on the United States Postal Service's efforts to combat opioids, including fentanyl, in both international and domestic mail.

My name is Gary Barksdale and I am Chief Postal Inspector for the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (Inspection Service), the law enforcement, crime prevention, and security arm of the United States Postal Service (Postal Service). In this role, I oversee all operations of the Inspection Service, including national headquarters, 17 field divisions, two service centers and a national forensic laboratory. These installations are staffed by over 1,200 postal inspectors, more than 550 postal police officers and nearly 600 support personnel. I am also the chairman of the Universal Postal Union's (UPU) Postal Security Group, which provides training, support materials and assistance to foreign posts; and spearheaded the development of standardized security guidelines.

Prior to my appointment to Chief in March of this year, I served three years as Deputy Chief Inspector at national headquarters and was responsible for several of the Inspection Service's functional areas: Criminal Investigations; Communications, Governance and Strategy; Security; and Contraband Interdiction and Investigations. I began my law enforcement career as a police officer in Chesapeake, Virginia, and was appointed as a Postal Inspector in 1999. I have served in our Los Angeles, Houston, and Phoenix Divisions, and throughout my law enforcement career, have conducted numerous criminal investigations of narcotics, identity theft, mail theft, robbery and assaults.

As detailed throughout my testimony, winning the battle against illicit drugs in the mail stream is a top priority for the Postal Service and the Inspection Service. Postal Inspectors work not only to remove drugs from the mail, but to investigate and arrest individuals and disrupt drug trafficking networks across the U.S. Internationally, the Inspection Service is working aggressively to stem the flow of illegal drugs entering the United States, as well as improving detection through advancements in the collection and receipt of customs advance electronic data (AED) as required by the Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment (SUPPORT) for Patients and Communities Act. These efforts include working aggressively with other law enforcement agencies and key trade partners to stem the flow of illegal drugs entering the United States.

The Inspection Service works in collaboration with federal agencies and state and local law enforcement to implement improved investigative techniques that significantly increase our ability to intercept dangerous opioids. From fiscal year (FY) 2016 through 2018, we achieved a 1,000 percent increase in international synthetic opioid parcel seizures and a 750 percent increase in

domestic parcel seizures related to opioids. These efforts and partnerships will be detailed throughout my testimony.

### **Contraband Interdiction & Investigations**

Battling synthetic opioids in the U.S. Mail is one of our highest priorities. To that end, nearly two years ago, we created an internal team of cross-functional subject matter experts specifically focused on narcotics trafficking through the mail, both international and domestic. We did so in recognition that the opioid crisis demanded a law enforcement response separate from our traditional criminal investigations group. The Contraband Interdiction and Investigations (CI2) team uses enhanced investigative methods, deploys resources as needed, and strengthens strategic partnerships to achieve significant improvements in our ability to seize fentanyl and synthetic opioids from the U.S. Mail. In addition to other actions, the Inspection Service, through our CI2 team, has developed and nurtured strategic partnerships, conducted investigations using cyber and analytic capabilities and invested in advanced technology.

#### ***Strategic Partnerships***

The Inspection Service investigates mail-related crime and works closely with other law enforcement agencies to share intelligence, coordinate cases and conduct joint enforcement operations to maximize our resources and impact. Relationships with partners such as the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Department of Justice (DOJ), and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) allow the Inspection Service to better advance its mission to enforce the laws that defend the nation's mail.

Inspection Service personnel are assigned full-time at the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), the DEA's Special Operations Division (SOD), the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Fusion Center, and CBP's National Targeting Center (NTC). Internationally, a Postal Inspector is now detailed at Europol in The Hague. The Inspection Service is also part of the Joint Criminal Opioid Darknet Enforcement (J-CODE) team, a DOJ sponsored initiative that seeks to combat online opioid trafficking. On a monthly basis, the Inspection Service and other federal agencies meet to share intelligence and strategies through the Heroin Availability Reduction Plan (HARP), which includes fentanyl.

The NTC and Inspection Service work to target incoming international parcels containing drugs based on intelligence and analytics. The Inspection Service identifies the International Service Center (ISC) where the parcel will be processed, and this and other relevant information is shared with CBP to locate the parcel. Once located, Postal Inspectors coordinate with their federal and state partners for investigative attention as appropriate. This program is now in place at all five ISCs (New York, Miami, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles).

We also work with state and local law enforcement to share intelligence and conduct joint operations, including several Inspection Service sponsored task forces. The Inspection Service partners with High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) and other state and local task forces across the country to coordinate investigations. These relationships facilitate communication and data sharing that enable the identification of drug trafficking organizations, which would not be possible without interagency cooperation.

## ***Analytics and the Dark Web***

The Inspection Service launched a Cyber and Analytics Unit to enhance investigative techniques and analytics to better utilize data to target both international and domestic parcels. Due to many illicit dark web vendors relying on physical delivery networks for their products, the Inspection Service is involved with dark web investigations into vendors and the takedown of their illicit marketplaces. The goal of the cybercrime program is to remove contraband, including narcotics, from the U.S. Mail and to disrupt and dismantle the underground marketplaces.

Our Cyber and Analytics Unit uses past and current data from a variety of sources, including CBP seizure data, to improve our investigative efforts and develop leads. The Cyber and Analytics Unit uses a variety of sources to detect synthetic opioids within the U.S. Mail through the use of statistics, data modeling, analysis, investigation and intelligence.

## ***Technology***

### Tru-Narc®

Quickly and safely identifying unknown and potentially dangerous substances such as fentanyl is a top priority for the Inspection Service. To protect our field inspectors and deliver reliable results, we have invested in TruNarc® handheld narcotic analyzers. TruNarc® devices enable our inspectors to scan more than 450 suspected controlled substances in a single, definitive test. This technology reduces the risk of accidental exposure by our inspectors, Postal Service employees and laboratory personnel.

### Opioid Detection Challenge

As part of the comprehensive government effort to address the opioid crisis, the Inspection Service has joined the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T), CBP, and the ONDCP in seeking new tools and technologies to detect opioids in parcels without disrupting processing at the ISCs and express consignment facilities. The Opioid Detection Challenge is a \$1.55 million global prize competition for rapid, nonintrusive detection tools that will help find illicit opioids in international mail. Eight finalists have been chosen from among 83 submissions from U.S. and international innovators to develop prototypes during the next phase of the challenge, which is expected to conclude with live testing of the technology this summer. A winner is expected to be selected in the fall.

## **Seizures**

Postal Inspectors interdict and seize thousands of illegal drug shipments in the mail. Thus far in FY 2019, we have seized 185 synthetic opioid parcels, 153 of which were in the domestic mail stream. We have also seized 363 parcels containing heroin, 961 containing cocaine and 1,237 containing methamphetamines. Our current synthetic opioid and fentanyl seizure statistics represent a decrease in international seizures related to synthetic opioids and fentanyl, while domestic seizures are trending up. This shift may suggest synthetic opioids are increasingly entering the country through means other than international mail before being distributed through the domestic Postal Service network, the express consignment carriers, or traditional drug distribution networks. The Inspection Service will continue to work to interdict and seize any illicit

substance in the mail stream and to arrest those who abuse the U.S. mail system, whether originating internationally or domestically.

### **Improvements in AED Performance and CBP Capture Rates**

In 2018, Congress enacted the *Synthetics Trafficking and Overdose Prevention (STOP) Act* as part of the comprehensive *SUPPORT Act*. That legislation required the Postal Service to receive AED on at least 70 percent of aggregate inbound package shipments, including 100 percent of shipments from the People's Republic of China, by December 31, 2018, and on 100 percent of all inbound international shipments by December 31, 2020. AED includes the sender's full name and address (including full business name), the recipient's full name and address, the stated content description, unit of measure, and the quantity, weight, value, and date of the mailing.

In addition to its efforts to reach these AED thresholds, the Postal Service has prioritized capturing 100 percent of CBP hold requests as part of its strategy to combat illicit drugs in the mail.

#### ***Secure AED on 100 Percent of Inbound Shipments***

The volume of inbound packages with AED has improved from 26 percent in October 2017 to approximately 60 percent in May 2019. The Postal Service has specifically targeted efforts to increase AED on inbound shipments from the People's Republic of China, where the volume of packages with AED has increased from 32 percent in October 2017 to approximately 85 percent in May 2019. This represents a significant improvement within a relatively limited period of time.

To work towards obtaining AED on 100 percent of inbound package shipments, the Postal Service continues to collaborate with foreign postal operators (FPOs) through the use of data-sharing arrangements and capacity-building efforts both bilaterally and as part of existing UPU technical development outreach efforts. The Postal Service requires AED as a condition of providing bilaterally negotiated package rates and has prioritized obtaining AED from the largest volume FPOs, which collectively account for more than 90 percent of all inbound volume. The Postmaster General sends monthly letters to top volume FPOs that reflect their recent AED performance and requests an update regarding their current efforts and timelines. The most significant hurdle to obtaining AED is that the Postal Service does not control the provision of AED from FPOs. Ultimately, it is necessary for the FPOs to provide the data.

The Postal Service also continues to emphasize the importance of AED in its multilateral relationships by working closely with organizations that support international postal operations, such as the UPU, the International Postal Corporation, and the Kahala Posts Group, to improve international data quality and to facilitate the transmission of the data.

With the support of the United States, new binding UPU Convention Regulations were approved at the April 2019 session of the Postal Operations Council, the UPU body responsible for technical and operational matters. These regulations will require, rather than recommend, transmittal of AED on parcels and small packages exchanged among FPOs. The regulations become effective on January 1, 2021, consistent with the statutory requirement for 100 percent AED on all inbound international shipments received after December 31, 2020.

## ***Capture 100 Percent of CBP Hold Requests***

Over the past several years, the Postal Service and Inspection Service have significantly improved coordination with CBP and developed processes to ensure we take action on CBP requests to hold packages for inspection. The Postal Service has made significant strides in the capture of CBP hold requests, reaching a 93 percent success rate. The Postal Service will continue to focus on this initiative until 100 percent of hold requests are captured. The Postal Service developed and deployed technologies to improve interception capabilities at its ISCs, in processing facilities that typically handle international volume, and, most recently, at more than 30,000 delivery units. This allows the Postal Service to act on hold requests at different points throughout its network. As the Postal Service continues to advance mail sorting technology, these successes will grow.

## **Employee Prevention and Safety Programs**

Employee safety has always been a top priority for the Postal Service. The organization is continuing that focus by reinforcing employee safety programs, engaging in comprehensive awareness campaigns that include training and safety protocols and deploying communications to all Postal Service employees.

In addition to training and awareness campaigns, the Postal Service has also taken extra steps to protect employees from accidental exposure to opioids in the mail by deploying naloxone (brand name Narcan®) nasal spray as an emergency first response measure at key facilities across the nation, including mail processing plants, national distribution centers, ISCs, Post Offices and specific customer service locations.

To complement the Postal Service's efforts, the Inspection Service has developed formal guidelines for Inspection Service employees handling fentanyl that are consistent with the policies and practices of the DEA, ONDCP and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Inspection Service also developed and distributed a reference aid entitled "Fentanyl and Fentanyl Compounds: Special Considerations and Best Practices for Safely Handling Controlled Substances."

## **Conclusion**

The Postal Service takes seriously its mission to protect the security and sanctity of the U.S. Mail. Throughout every level of the organization, winning the battle against illicit drugs in the mail stream is a top priority. As the Postal Service carries out its mandate to bind the nation together through its universal service obligation, it will continue to work aggressively to address this crisis.

As it has done throughout its history, the Postal Service is committed to taking all necessary actions to combat criminal use of the mail as it continues to provide reliable and efficient service to the American public.

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