



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF

**TERRANCE C. COLE
ADMINISTRATOR
DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AND
RELATED AGENCIES
UNITED STATES SENATE**

FOR A HEARING ENTITLED

**“A REVIEW OF THE PRESIDENT’S FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET
REQUEST FOR THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION; THE
DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION; THE UNITED STATES
MARSHALS SERVICE; AND THE BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO,
FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES”**

PRESENTED

MAY 12, 2026

**Statement of Terrance C. Cole
Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration
U.S. Department of Justice**

**At a Hearing Entitled,
“A Review of the President’s Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request for the Federal
Bureau of Investigation; the Drug Enforcement Administration; the United
States Marshals Service; and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and
Explosives”**

**Before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science
United States Senate**

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Introduction

Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Van Hollen, and distinguished members of the subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Drug Enforcement Administration’s (DEA) Fiscal Year 2027 Budget request.

It is an honor to appear before you during National Police Week as we recognize the sacrifice of law enforcement officers across the country and remember those who have given their lives in the line of duty.

DEA’s mission is simple, protecting Americans and saving American lives. Today, that mission is defined by one threat above all others -- fentanyl. The Sinaloa Cartel and Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generation (CJNG) are driving a global synthetic drug supply chain that is killing Americans at historic levels.

The President’s budget includes a \$362 million dollar increase for DEA, focused on hiring Special Agents and an upgrade to our technology and data infrastructure. This request reflects both the scale of the threat posed by cartels and foreign terrorist organizations to the American people and the results DEA is delivering. DEA takes its responsibility to the taxpayer seriously. We are an aggressive, forward-leaning, law enforcement agency actively targeting the cartels and networks driving this threat. In many respects, DEA leads the fight against the cartels and designated terrorist organizations responsible for the fentanyl crisis. Our work represents a strong return on investment for the American taxpayer, with resources aligned to achieve the greatest operational effect.

Today, 81% of DEA's budget is committed to fixed costs, primarily personnel and facilities. The remaining funding supports the operational core of our mission, including investigations, intelligence, and the tools our workforce depends on. For years, the operational demands of the mission have outstripped available resources limiting our ability to invest in our aging infrastructure and critical technology at a time when cartels are becoming increasingly sophisticated and adaptive. As we grow and sustain our workforce to meet mission challenges, the pressure on operational and modernization funding intensifies. The President's budget allows DEA to effectively sustain its workforce, maintain momentum, modernize infrastructure, and enable our personnel to protect the American people in an ever-evolving threat environment.

Threat Environment and Mission Demand

DEA is confronting sophisticated, global adversaries. The Sinaloa Cartel and CJNG are designated terrorist organizations operating as networked enterprises that continuously adapt their production, trafficking, and financial methods to evade law enforcement. The pace of the threat is accelerating, and the demands on DEA are unrelenting. To meet that challenge, DEA must do two things simultaneously:

- Hire the right people with the right skills
- Equip them with a modern IT and data infrastructure capable of evolving with the speed of the threat.

The President's Budget supports both.

In more than 30 years of public service, I have seen communities confront a range of threats, but the scale and impact of the fentanyl crisis is unlike anything we have encountered. After peaking at more than 110,000 overdose deaths in 2023, the United States saw a decline to roughly 70,000 deaths by the end of 2025 – a reduction of 36%. That progress matters, but it does not change the reality on the ground. Cartels and foreign terrorist organizations in Mexico and South America continue to drive this crisis, and Americans are still dying every day.

By increasing our agent workforce, DEA can respond swiftly to the most urgent threats, and by modernizing our technological infrastructure, we equip ourselves with advanced tools to enhance effectiveness and efficiency.

Multiple DEA Enforcement Surges

Narco-terrorists are global, they are ruthless, and they are increasingly sophisticated. The drugs that end up in American communities start in places beyond our borders. Every step we take to combat them is met with escalation. The days of clandestine laboratories creating small, improvised batches of dangerous synthetic drugs are gone. The drug trade is more dynamic than ever. Chemists are being recruited by cartels to oversee industrial-scale manufacturing operations. The cartels no longer resemble guerilla fighters, but rather professional soldiers equipped with high-grade military weaponry.

DEA is committed to confronting these threats with everything we have. Our efforts have included targeted enforcement surges against the most dangerous public safety, public health, and national security threats to Americans:

Sinaloa Cartel Networks & Jalisco New Generation Cartel

The Sinaloa and CJNG foreign terrorist organizations are made up of tens of thousands of members operating in more than 40 countries, these cartels drive addiction, overdoses, and violence in communities nationwide. To take the fight to these global networks, DEA executed one-week surges across our 26 domestic field divisions and seven foreign regions. These surges resulted in the arrest of over 1,300 individuals, 40,000 kilograms of drugs, 1.9 million counterfeit pills, hundreds of firearms and millions in assets seized. These enforcement efforts apply constant pressure on cartels and FTOs, and they represent just one of the ways the DEA is approaching this threat.

Fentanyl Free America Campaign & Related Surges

DEA's *Fentanyl Free America* initiative integrates enforcement with prevention and public awareness to address both the supply and demand sides of the crisis. We've expanded public engagement to raise awareness about the dangers of fentanyl and prevent overdose deaths utilizing partnerships with NFL Alumni Health, NASCAR, MLB, and significant national organizations.

Across three coordinated enforcement surges, DEA and its partners removed nearly 10 million fentanyl pills, 6,200 pounds of fentanyl powder, more than 4,400 firearms, and \$193 million in currency and assets, while making more than 8,000 arrests.

The integrated approach of *Fentanyl Free America* reflects how DEA is adapting to the current threat environment by combining operational pressure with prevention to achieve lasting results.

A Whole-of-Government Approach to Combat Crime and Terrorism

The scale of the threat requires a coordinated, whole-of-government approach. DEA works alongside our federal, state, and local partners to target the criminal networks driving drug trafficking, violent crime and instability in communities across the country.

City Surges

Under President Trump's leadership, federal law enforcement resources have been strategically deployed to key cities such as the District of Columbia and Memphis, Tennessee, marking the beginning of a broader initiative to address crime nationwide. DEA's collaboration in efforts like the D.C. Safe & Beautiful Task Force and the Memphis Safe Task Force illustrates the vital role of coordinated action in safeguarding communities and enhancing public safety. These operations, which have led to thousands of arrests, the removal of dangerous firearms, and the recovery of missing children, demonstrate the power of unified law enforcement in confronting crime and drug-related threats. DEA was directly involved in nearly a quarter of all arrests in Memphis. This operation also yielded several seizures of fentanyl, cocaine, and meth. DEA's active participation

not only amplifies these successes but also reaffirms our commitment to protecting neighborhoods and supporting those most at risk.

Homeland Security Task Forces

The Homeland Security Task Force (HSTF) further strengthens this coordinated approach by integrating intelligence, operations, and resources across agencies.

DEA has a critical role in the HSTFs, contributing deep expertise on cartel networks and drug trafficking – supporting investigations and ensuring alignment across jurisdictions. Since the initiation of the HSTFs, DEA has sponsored more than 70% of all HSTF investigations, provided personnel to the National Coordination Center (NCC), and our Special Operations Division has collaborated directly with the NCC to ensure timely coordination and de-confliction. The structure allows the federal government to apply pressure across multiple points in the network simultaneously, improving efficiency and increasing the overall impact of enforcement actions. President Trump understands the threat has changed, therefore, how the threat is attacked must also change – and DEA is meeting that call.

DEA’s Exponential Increase in Shared Intelligence

Since President Trump assumed office, and designated cartels as foreign terrorist organizations, fentanyl as a weapon of mass destruction, and empowered the entire federal government to work together like never before, the DEA’s intelligence has proven to be invaluable to the larger Intelligence Community. Our unique single mission positions DEA as the expert on cartel drug trafficking activities – and we are sharing this expertise and intelligence with our partners at unprecedented levels. This is fulfilling the President’s directive and is allowing for the entire federal government to attack these cartels and foreign terrorist organizations and their supply chains from multiple directions at the same time.

Increasing the efficiency of intelligence collection and dissemination requires updating and upgrading IT infrastructure. DEA is focused on adopting new systems and technologies across all our platforms so intelligence and investigative data can be more effectively utilized.

Disrupting the Threat at Its Source

DEA’s strategy extends beyond U.S. borders because the threat itself originates overseas. Cartels operate global supply chains that begin with precursor chemicals, move through production and trafficking networks and end in American communities. Disrupting these networks at their source is one of the most effective ways to reduce the flow of fentanyl into the United States. This approach allows DEA to apply pressure earlier in the supply chain, preventing drugs from ever reaching our borders. We are working tirelessly to strengthen our partnerships and leverage foreign cooperation to bring the fight to the cartels in their home countries.

Colombia

The DEA and Colombia have a longstanding operational partnership that is mutually productive in combatting cocaine trafficking and transnational cartels. In 2025, DEA and Colombian counterpart investigations resulted in 377 metric tons of cocaine seized and arrested 180 subjects on DEA provisional arrest warrants, a 24% increase from 2024.

But achieving these results carries much risk, and DEA appreciates the sacrifice of the men and women in Colombia. In August of 2025, 13 Colombian National Police members were killed and four more were injured during a coca-leaf extraction operation. This was a terrorist attack and underscored why DEA has made the Western Hemisphere a top priority.

Mexico

DEA's collaboration with the Government of Mexico and our direct counterparts has increased and we have seen positive results. Thanks to these relationships, 90 cartels members are now in the United States to face justice. Some of these members were high-ranking cartel members, like Abigael Gonzalez Valencia, aka El Cuini, co-founder of the violent Los Cuinis drug cartel; and Rafael Caro Quintero. Quintero is responsible for the death of DEA Special Agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena and his transfer to the United States was justice long overdue for every single DEA employee.

Further, at great cost to their own forces, in February, Mexican Authorities executed an operation to arrest Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, aka El Mencho, the head of CJNG. This operation resulted in dozens of Mexican officials killed, as well as El Mencho himself. Once again, this operation highlights the threat posed by these organizations and the importance of meeting the threat where it is, to keep it out of American communities.

Sensitive Investigation Units

Sensitive Investigation Units (SIUs) are a key component of DEA's international strategy. These vetted units allow DEA to work side by side with trusted foreign counterparts to conduct complex investigations targeting cartel networks. Currently, the DEA supports SIUs made up of 666 personnel in 15 countries. Because of their critical role, DEA has chosen to fund this program, using millions of dollars out of our budget to support and train these units. This is an investment that we will continue to make, because it is an investment in protecting America and stopping the threat before it reaches our borders. SIUs extend our operational reach and enable sustained pressure against criminal organizations in their areas of operation, improving the effectiveness of global enforcement efforts.

China

The majority of precursor chemicals and pill press machines used to manufacture deadly synthetic drugs, including fentanyl, are sourced from China, and the proceeds from these illicit sales are often laundered by Chinese criminal organizations.

DEA is committed to disrupting the criminal chemical supply chain enabling fentanyl and synthetic drug production by the cartels and foreign terrorist organizations. DEA, as part of the whole-of-government approach, has mapped the networks in China and India that are producing and trafficking precursor chemicals. The goal of this approach is to attack critical points in the supply chain, such as chemical brokers and transshipment points, as well as financial facilitators. This approach directly targets those supplying material support and hinders cartel regeneration after our enforcement operations disrupt activities.

This approach is demonstrating success. In April 2026, a one-week surge – led and coordinated by DEA – resulted in more than 228 arrests and the seizure of thousands of kilograms and thousands of liters of precursor chemicals. Last year, in March and May of 2025, DEA, working with our partners, successfully rerouted and seized a total of 95,000 kilograms of precursor chemicals that originated in China and were destined for the Sinaloa Cartel.

This is how to disrupt and dismantle cartels, by working together and attacking the entire supply chain. By seizing the precursor chemicals, we are depriving the cartels of the ability to produce dangerous synthetic drugs. The results are lives saved.

Targeting Financial Operations

Targeting the illicit finance and cryptocurrency networks used by the cartels to launder their revenue is essential to disrupting their drug trafficking operations.

Cryptocurrency

DEA has observed a sharp increase in the use of cryptocurrency to facilitate cartel money laundering. High-level cartel money brokers have increasingly turned to cryptocurrency as a fast and convenient means of moving illicit proceeds, adapting their methods to exploit the speed and reach of digital financial platforms. Cartels adapt quickly, and so must DEA. We are evolving just as aggressively to meet that threat. These efforts are producing significant results. In Fiscal Year 2025, DEA seized more than \$44 million in digital assets, and in Fiscal Year 2026, DEA has already seized more than \$145 million in digital assets. These figures reflect both the growing role of cryptocurrency in cartel operations and DEA's increasing ability to disrupt these financial networks, deny traffickers access to illicit proceeds, and strengthen the broader fight against transnational criminal organizations.

OFAC Sanctions

OFAC sanctions block cartel and foreign terrorist organization members from access to the global financial system, essentially isolating them from the legitimate economy so they are unable to move or hide their illicit profits. Under the leadership of President Trump, OFAC has sanctioned more than 200 targets in more than 25 actions that involved DEA. DEA has successfully pursued several high-profile, high-impact sanctions that have included an Iranian darknet administrator, an Indian online pharmacy, a Mexican congresswoman, and Mexican and Venezuelan entertainers with substantive social media followings. DEA's work with OFAC has also resulted in sanctions against leaders of La Nueva Familia Michoacana, a CJNG-linked drug trafficking and fuel theft

network generating hundreds of millions annually; sanctions against Cartel del Noreste operatives and affiliated casinos tied to money laundering and fentanyl trafficking; and sanctions against 23 individuals and entities connected to the Sinaloa Cartel. These actions reflect a sustained effort by DEA to apply constant pressure to the financial and operational infrastructure of organizations enabling cartel operations.

Forensics on the Frontlines

DEA leads not only in dismantling cartel and terrorist drug networks, but also in forensic science, with embedded labs across the country identifying emerging drug threats like carfentanil and xylazine. Through real-time collaboration with law enforcement, intelligence, and public health partners – including the Joint INTREPID Lab with CBP and FDA – DEA ensures swift response allowing us to quickly adapt, target evolving supply chains and deploy resources where needed. The GUARDS method standardizes analysis and accelerates threat detection more economically and thoroughly, keeping DEA and our partners ahead of evolving dangers and safeguarding American lives.

Conclusion

Fentanyl and synthetic drugs have fundamentally changed the nature of the illicit drug trade. Cartels now operate global supply chains capable of producing and distributing these substances at scale, with direct consequences for American communities. President Trump understands the gravity of the crisis, and through his budget, believes in the DEA's ability to lead the fight. To continue successfully combatting these cartels and foreign terrorist organizations, DEA must ensure we have the right people and tools to stay ahead of the ever-changing threat.

Through initiatives like *Fentanyl Free America* and our tireless work with foreign and domestic partners, DEA is utilizing our human and technological resources as efficiently and effectively as possible, but continued success requires continued investment.

Our work speaks for itself. It's a tremendous pleasure and honor to serve this great nation of ours, and I thank you for kindly allowing me the opportunity to talk about the critical, life-saving work the men and women of DEA do every day and why our mission is vital to protecting American lives.