

## **Closing the Pipeline: America's Opioid Misuse Epidemic**

Tuesday, Nov. 1, 2016

This week, the National Association of State EMS Officials joined Americans for Securing All Packages in the fight against America's opioid epidemic. Opioid overdoses claimed more American lives in 2014 than the HIV/AIDS epidemic at its peak in 1995, and first-responders are increasingly at risk as the public health crisis evolves. [Eleven SWAT officers in Connecticut](#) and [two detectives in New Jersey](#) were recently hospitalized for overdose symptoms after just coming in contact with synthetic drugs while responding to emergency calls.

Each day, nearly one million packages are shipped to the United States from foreign posts without advance security data that would allow law enforcement to track and stop synthetic drugs. This vulnerability in the postal system is fueling the epidemic by making it easy for powerful, deadly substances like fentanyl, [U-47700](#) ("Pink") and carfentanil to reach U.S. shores.

Americans for Securing All Packages (ASAP) is committed to closing the loophole that allows deadly drugs to reach American communities through the global postal system. To underscore the immediate need to close this loophole, we compiled a snapshot of recent news, facts, and updates related to the epidemic below.

### **Reports & Studies**

A recent Vice News [report](#) examined the trafficking and use of potent synthetic drugs that are ravaging communities across America, including Ohio's Hamilton County, a region which experiences 20-25 overdoses each day on average.

Additionally, a recent episode of Viceland's [Dispatches: Black Market](#) takes a look at how the dark net is revamping the global drug trade, bringing lethal drugs directly to Americans' doorsteps through the global postal system with just a credit card and click of a mouse.

### **Executive Action**

This week, the Food and Drug Administration released its [Opioids Action Plan: A Midyear Checkup](#), detailing FDA Commissioner Robert Califf's recent tour of regions disproportionately impacted by the epidemic including West Virginia and Kentucky. The report also outlined milestones the Administration has reached in curbing the epidemic, including strengthened warning and safety information [for immediate release opioids](#) and [supporting increased access to naloxone](#).

### **Legislative Action**

Bipartisan support continues to build for the [Synthetics Trafficking & Overdose Prevention \(STOP\) Act](#), with six Senators cosponsoring Senator Portman's bill and 15 in the House of Representatives signing on to Rep. Tiberi's legislation. The STOP Act would require shipments sent through foreign postal services to include the advance electronic information that law enforcement agencies need to track and stop dangerous packages – including deadly, synthetic opioids.

On Thursday, Oct. 27, West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine and Kentucky Attorney General Andy Beshear convened at the New Life Church in Huntington, West Virginia [to discuss strategies for fighting the opioid epidemic in all three states](#).

On Wednesday, Oct. 26, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) released a [press release](#) urging the Department of Justice to increase enforcement efforts to keep addictive painkillers from entering communities in Vermont and across the nation. Additionally, Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin recently teamed with state health officials to [propose limits](#) to the amount of painkillers doctors can prescribe patients. The proposal is part of the governor's larger plan to tackle Vermont's opioid crisis.

Arizona Governor Doug Ducey signed an executive order that will [prohibit millions of Arizonans](#) from filling initial prescriptions for more than seven days' worth of opioids at a time. The Governor introduced the act in conjunction with the Angel Initiative, a new pilot program from the Phoenix Police Department's Maryvale-Estrella precinct. According to Governor Ducey's website, the program encourages those battling addiction to turn drugs over to law enforcement and request treatment without fear of prosecution.

Legislators in Pennsylvania [passed five bills](#) to fight the "plague of addiction" facing the state where 3,383 residents died from opioid overdoses last year. The bills will add restrictions on longer-term opiate prescriptions and prescriptions to minors, and will improve education and patient oversight.

### Thoughts on the Epidemic

"Nowadays, you don't have to wait for the poppy plant to harvest," [Manatee County Sheriff's Office Captain Todd Shear said](#) in a recent meeting with Sen. Marco Rubio and Rep. Vern Buchanan.

"Nowadays, you can just pick up the phone and call 1-800-CHINA and you can have it delivered to your front door."

"This stuff is so powerful that if you touch it, you could go into cardiac arrest," [Park City Police Chief Wade Carpenter told NBC News in a recent interview](#). "The problem is if you have a credit card and a cell phone, you have access to it."

"Effective targeting not only enables Customs and Border Protection to detect and address potential risks before a shipment arrives at a port of entry, but it also enables CBP to separate low-risk and legitimate shipments from those that require additional scrutiny," said [U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Gil Kerlikowske](#) in a recent testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade.

"For every emergency response, our first responders need to be equipped with the right tools, such as naloxone, and be prepared for whatever they may find in this unpredictable landscape that is taking a toll on our resources," [said Keith Wages, President for the National Association of State EMS Officials](#). "We support many ways to end the toxic dependence on opioids, and look forward to working with Americans for Securing All Packages to address the unregulated pipeline that allows drugs to reach American soil through the global postal system."

### In the News

#### **Naloxone deployed 18k times on opioid overdose victims in NJ since 2014 (Becker's Hospital Review 10/27)**

Since 2014, New Jersey emergency medical technicians and police officers have administered the anti-opioid overdose drug naloxone, also known by its brand name Narcan, more than 18,000 times, according to data compiled by the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety and relayed by NJ Advanced Media. Thus far in 2016, Narcan has been deployed an average of 21.8 times a day, putting it on pace to be used almost 8,000 times by the end of the year. New Jersey's Narcan usage figures don't

exactly mirror the number of overdoses in the state, as many overdose victims often require multiple doses of the drug. [Link](#)

### **Why the Opioid Crisis is an issue of Homeland Security (Huffington Post 10/24)**

Every day, the epidemic is killing 78 Americans and it is creating enormous risk for our next commander in chief who will be in charge of handling this crisis. So, why is a security expert like me [Juliette Kayyem] concerned about drug abuse? Our homeland defenses are focused on risk planning - terrorism is a threat, but so are hurricanes and tornados, oil spills and border controls, and public health risks like Zika and, clearly, synthetic drugs. Our nation's security is about calculating risks to all-hazards and supporting those who are trained to protect our citizens. Simply put, the drug epidemic is challenging our overall response capacity and we haven't closed the gaps in our postal system that brings the drugs here. [Link](#)

### **7 drug overdoses reported over 1-day period in Paterson (NJ.com 10/21)**

Seven people overdosed on drugs in a 24-hour period Thursday in Paterson – four of them in a one-hour period in a park on Ward Street, authorities said Friday. The four were found together near a U.S. Post Office...Though toxicology reports were not available, Paterson Police Director Jerry Speziale suspects the overdoses are symptomatic of a larger problem involving powerful and fast-acting synthetic pain medications. "Fentanyl and carfentanil are increasingly apparent and becoming a national problem," Speziale said Friday. "Many toxicology reports come back with what is categorized as polypharm, which means there's a combination of heroin, fentanyl and other opioids." [Link](#)

### **White Lake man, 19, dies from injecting 'dark web' opioids (Detroit Free Press 10/18)**

A 19-year-old White Lake man died after reportedly injecting synthetic opioids purchased from China on the so-called "Dark Web." [...] White Lake Police Det. Edward McNulty said police found evidence at the scene and determined the drugs were shipped by DHL from a providence in China. [Link](#)

### **Pink: Stronger Than Heroin, But Legal in Most States (NBC News 10/15)**

Pink, better known by chemists as U-47700, is eight times stronger than heroin, and is part of a family of deadly synthetic opioids, all of them more powerful than heroin, that includes fentanyl, carfentanil and furanyl fentanyl. By themselves or mixed with other drugs, in forms ranging from pills to powder to mists, they're killing thousands of people across the country, say law enforcement and health officials. The powerful, ersatz opioids are part of a surge of synthetic drugs, including bath salts and mock-ups of ecstasy, being shipped into the U.S. from China and other nations. [Link](#)