

Drug Enforcement Administration

2025 NDTA

National Drug Threat Assessment

The National Drug Threat Assessment (NDTA) is DEA's annual strategic review of the threats posed by illicit drugs and associated transnational organized crime.

The 2025 NDTA is a valuable resource for all Americans, to save lives and to help inform their response to this crisis.

Mexican cartels' production, trafficking, and distribution of powerful illicit synthetic drugs, chiefly illicit fentanyl and methamphetamine, represent a dire threat to public health, the rule of law, and national security in the United States. These organizations produce and traffic multi-ton quantities of illicit drugs, engage in acts of violence and extortion, and orchestrate the flow of contraband and people through territories along the U.S.-Mexico Border.

Fentanyl overdose deaths have decreased but remain at dangerously high levels. Overall, drug overdose deaths are down 25 percent for the 12-month period ending October 2024 compared to the same time period in 2023. In the 12-month period ending October 2024, just over 84,000 Americans died from a drug overdose, underscoring the devastating effect the cartels have on the United States.

- ▶ **The Department of State, in February 2025, officially designated eight transnational criminal organizations as foreign terrorist organizations and specially designated foreign terrorists: the Sinaloa Cartel, Jalisco New Generation Cartel, Northeast Cartel, The New Michoacán Family, Gulf Cartel, United Cartels, Tren de Aragua, and Mara Salvatrucha.**
- ▶ **The Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation Cartels remain the dominant threats for the trafficking of illicit drugs into the United States.** These cartels maintain expansive procurement, distribution, and financial support networks across Latin America, China, and other countries, as well as control clandestine production sites in Mexico and smuggling routes into the United States.
- ▶ **Synthetic drugs like fentanyl and methamphetamine are the primary drivers of fatal drug overdose deaths nationwide.** Mexican cartels have capitalized on the relative ease of synthetic drug production compared to plant-based drugs to generate immense revenues.
- ▶ **Many Mexico-based fentanyl cooks are having difficulty obtaining some key precursor chemicals as demonstrated by declining fentanyl purity in 2024 and other indicators.** Currently powder fentanyl averages 11.36 percent purity while pills average a fentanyl content of 1.94 milligrams, both decreases from the previous year.
- ▶ **The increasing prevalence of fentanyl mixtures with street drugs like cocaine and heroin, as well as with dangerous adulterants like xylazine, are creating new challenges in fighting the fentanyl crisis.** Fake pills containing fentanyl remain a problem as DEA forensic analysis concluded that approximately 5 out of 10 fake pills contained a potentially lethal dose of fentanyl in 2024.
- ▶ **Methamphetamine is a persistent threat with overdose deaths continuing to rise.** Methamphetamine is often sold as fake pharmaceutical pills mimicking legitimate prescription Adderall or disguised as MDMA tablets.
- ▶ **Cocaine, primarily sourced from Colombia, remains a serious drug threat for the United States.** U.S.-based traffickers are intentionally adulterating cocaine with fentanyl to create a "super speedball."
- ▶ **Illicit drug sales generate billions of dollars annually in profit for Mexican cartels and other global criminal networks.** Mexican cartels launder their proceeds by smuggling bulk cash across the U.S.-Mexico border or through Chinese money laundering networks, money service businesses, front and shell companies, cryptocurrency, trade-based exchanges, and corrupt banking officials.

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