

**Committee:** UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)

**Topic:** The Rising Global Fentanyl Epidemic



**Theme of AUSMUN 2024**

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The theme for this year's AUSMUN is "Forging Tomorrow with Yesterday's Lessons". Dating back to 500 BC, great minds such as Confucius have spread this ideal: "Study the past, if you would divine the future". During a typical Model United Nations conference, delegates are expected to learn from their country's past and, in many cases, actively rewrite it. Historical knowledge when used effectively can lead to informed decisions; by reflecting on what has and has not worked in the past, collectively we are able to gain perspective on current and future policy. We encourage delegates to keep this ideal in mind while wrestling with the nuances and complications inherent in the ideas of modern day problems.

AUSMUN is committed to actively serving its community and combating pressing issues. As we continue to expand in numbers, we further seek to expand our positive impact on the world around us. We are proud to announce that we have partnered with Dress for Success, a non-profit organization that enables women to become economically independent by offering professional clothing, a network of support, and the resources necessary for both personal and professional growth. By participating in AUSMUN 2024, in addition to debating "model" policy, you are actively bettering society and changing the world.

The 2024 AUSMUN board is honored to host all delegates for our largest conference yet. We cannot wait to see what delegates bring forward to each committee in their efforts to embody values of collaboration and this year's theme. Looking twenty twenty-forward to seeing you!

## **Rationale**

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The last three decades have seen an extreme rise in fentanyl related deaths. These events have had far-reaching consequences for international health, security, and human rights. This synthetic opioid, originally created as a painkiller for extreme cases, is a leading cause of drug overdoses worldwide, and delegates present must discuss the causes and effects of this issue, as well as potential solutions, to save lives. Due to the illegal creation and transportation of drugs becoming increasingly accessible through the lucrative business of drug trafficking, this deadly opioid has made its way into drug circles around the world.. In America, over 150 people die every day from opioid overdoses, primarily attributed to fentanyl (CDC). Understanding how fentanyl is manufactured and distributed will help people understand how to resolve the threats it poses to the average citizen and the world as a whole. It is the job of this committee to consider the intricacies and history of this substance while assessing solutions to this issue.

## **Background**

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Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid painkiller with potent addictive and deadly properties. In fact, it is said to be 100 times stronger than morphine and 50 times more than heroin (DEA).

The drug was first created in 1959 by Belgian Doctor Paul Janssen as a surgical analgesic drug with the intention of acting as a hospital-grade painkiller. Historically, the drug has been rolled out to chronically and/or terminally ill patients, and due to its strength, it was very effective but tedious to administer (Fentanyl Analogs | PNNL). Closer to its creation in the

1950s, fentanyl was typically prescribed as a patch or a lozenge, leading to issues of chemical residue affecting unsuspecting children and animals. The drug is a large contributor to the third wave of the opioid epidemic, one with an extreme number of overdoses. The opioid epidemic has had three waves, the first being from prescription opioids in the late 1990s, the second from heroin in the early 2010s, and the third from non-prescription fentanyl. This is because fentanyl is not always sold independently. It is often combined with or diluted into other drugs such as cocaine, heroin, and pills (CDC).

The prevalence of fentanyl in developed and developing countries stems from several large-scale sources. The majority of fentanyl is manufactured in China and has been trafficked through international mail services throughout the last several decades (DEA). However, the governments of China and Hong Kong have placed restrictions on fentanyl trafficking, leading to increased market systems in Mexico as an alternative source. Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) are diversifying their supply sources, leading fentanyl to become increasingly prevalent in America in increased quantities. Fentanyl has often been smuggled across borders in low-concentration but high-volume amounts.

Many streams of transport are involved in the transport of fentanyl around the world. After it's trafficked out of East Asia, fentanyl is typically shipped out to Mexico, where the cartels, large scale Mexican gangs, traffic it to the southern border of the United States (Customs and Border Protection). U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has worked diligently to increase protection of the southern US border against the high influx of fentanyl being shipped in, utilizing technologies like X-rays to assist in interception efforts. Nations on the Pacific also call for international cooperation to patrol air and maritime traffic (Customs and Border

Protection). The Border Patrol Commissions of the United States and South Korea have worked together to cooperate in this initiative and are looking to other nations to join in.

These cartels, such as the Sinaloa Cartel and Jalisco Cartel, are producing and distributing fentanyl across the US-Mexico border by the ton. Many cartels in recent years have started selling fentanyl because of the high profit margin, with fentanyl being very cheap to produce. These cartels have set up a complex webs of distribution with many cartels buying their products from China or producing it themselves. This mass drug operation has left the American population decimated with one of the largest ongoing drug crises.

Other nations, such as Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Austria, are beginning to see the prevalence of fentanyl. In recent years, there has been a slight increase in opioid use throughout Europe, but it shows no signs of snowballing into a crisis like in America. Estonia, a small Baltic European country, has already been through a fentanyl epidemic, but they stopped fentanyl from getting on the streets through brute force, with Estonian police busting labs and seizing imports. The drug problem in Estonia is not over; Estonians have just moved to abusing other synthetic drugs. Most of these drugs are stimulants like alpha-PVP (Bath Salts) and amphetamines, with a lot of the use of these drugs coming from the mixing of multiple drugs.

## **Contemporary Evidence**

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The most extreme effects of overdosing on fentanyl include coma or respiratory failure, often leading to death. Although the drug was invented as a medical prescription, it has begun to spread rapidly throughout illegal drug markets in the years following its conception. The United States has been impacted the most heavily by illegal consumption, with the second highest

overdose death rate in the world behind Canada (NIH). More people die from ingesting fentanyl in the U.S. than in any other country. 73,654 of the 100,105 overdose deaths in the U.S. in 2022 occurred from fentanyl use (USA Facts, NSC). This number is more than twice that of the 2019 statistic, 36,359 deaths (USA Facts). The fear is that these numbers will continue rising in years to come, and that illegal distribution will increase throughout the world.

Illegal fentanyl is primarily used to dilute other drugs like heroin or cocaine in order to make them more potent and more cheap to produce. Precursors used to synthesize the drug are primarily manufactured in China (USDT). The term “precursors” can be defined as chemical mixtures that typically do not have intoxicating effects but can be manipulated to produce hard drugs (Agency of Medicines). Clandestine groups also transport precursors to China from India (DEA). Next, these base chemicals are shipped across the Pacific Ocean to Canada, the U.S., and Mexico, where they are manufactured in secret. Then, the majority of the finished product is often smuggled from Canada and Mexico into the U.S., while smaller amounts remain for domestic distribution. Drug cartels are able to sell manufactured fentanyl in America for a markup price of ten to twenty times what they are worth outside the border (Pulitzer Center). Although the Canadian and Mexican governments do not profit from the sale, the Chinese government “directly subsidizes the manufacturing and export of illicit fentanyl materials and other synthetic narcotics through tax rebates” (Select Committee).

Laws such as the FEND Off Fentanyl Act and End Fentanyl Act are being employed to help fight this issue in the U.S.. Awareness is also rising around the world, acting as a public buffer to educate people about the danger. However, few regions have yet to make substantial efforts to combat the problem through law. At this moment, the main line of defense for most nations is border patrol to identify when drugs are being smuggled over borders. In 2022, the

United States urged other countries in the UN to help with international containment during the Committee on Narcotic Drugs (White House).

## **Directive**

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In many nations throughout the world, the synthetic opioid fentanyl has been increasing in its illegal severity, creating a global danger for people worldwide. The international community must work together to address this issue and save the lives of the millions affected by this epidemic, as well as pinpoint where the problem largely stems from. This committee must work collaboratively to write resolution papers that present effective and realistic solutions to curb the ever-growing opioid epidemic. Here are some questions to consider when researching this important and delicate issue to be prepared to debate during the conference:

1. How is fentanyl affecting your delegation? What does your delegation fear for the future?
2. Which solutions to the spread of opioids has your delegation supported in the past? Have these solutions succeeded or failed?
3. What further resources should be available to victims of the fentanyl epidemic? Think about rehabilitation options for addicts.
4. Should treatments like NARCAN be more accessible in areas that struggle with fentanyl?
5. What efforts should be made to cut off the production and distribution chain of fentanyl?
6. How should rights to prescription fentanyl use be protected so that necessary prescription medical use is not hindered?

7. Should there be punishment for countries allowing the production and/or distribution of fentanyl? What reparations would be suitable while still allowing these countries to prevent issues like this in the future?
8. If fentanyl is completely erased from the drug market, what will take its place? How do we stop this cycle?

### Resources for Delegates

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- [Understanding The Opioid Crisis](#)
- [Fentanyl Awareness](#)
- [Fentanyl Crisis Wave 4](#)
- [Wikipedia Fentanyl Overview](#)
- [Fentanyl Drug Facts](#)
- [Genetics and Substances Disorders](#)

### Delegations

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1. **Austria** - A developed fentanyl market has been established in Austria for two decades. Austria is one of the few European countries with a prescription opioid rate higher than America's. An increasing consumption trend of buprenorphine, morphine, oxycodone, and fentanyl has been observed in Austria. The prevalence of drug culture in Austria is alarming to the nation and its allies.

[Europe Opioid Crisis](#)

## [Domestic and International Opioid Crisis](#)

- 2. Canada** - Canada has one of highest fentanyl related overdose rates, similar to that of the U.S. Since 2016 there have been over 40,000 opioid related deaths in Canada. Chemical precursors to fentanyl made in China are smuggled into Canada through the mail system. They are then compounded into fentanyl and put into other drugs in Canadian labs.

### [Fentanyl - Canada](#)

### [Opioid Death in Canada: Changing Characteristics and Implications](#)

- 3. Canada Border Services Agency** - Illegal importation of fentanyl precursors is an ongoing issue for Canadian border protection. They are transported from China to Canada, along with from Canada to the U.S. The CBSA investigates, detects, and apprehends violators of the *Customs Act*, focusing on seizing illegal items that enter Canada.

### [Canadian Border Apprehension Statistics](#)

### [Federal Preventative Actions](#)

- 4. CDC** - The Center for Disease Control and Prevention works to protect the health and wellbeing of the American people. With over 100 Americans dying from overdose due to synthetic opioids everyday, the CDC has taken action to try to fight this growing drug epidemic. Recently, the CDC has launched a campaign to spread information and knowledge on fentanyl and related overdoses.



[Fentanyl Facts](#)

[Stop Overdose](#)

- 5. Colombia** - Fentanyl has been consumed in Colombia for years, and rising levels of it have been found in a popular cocktail of illegal drugs called “Tusi.”

Although Colombia is experiencing a drug crisis, fentanyl in Colombia has not been as prevalent concern as it has in the U.S. However, the government has reported efforts by the Sinaloa cartel to infiltrate the illegal drug market in Colombia.

[Colombian President Thinks UN Should Overhaul Drug-Fighting Method](#)

[Fentanyl Implications in Colombia](#)

- 6. Department of Homeland Security** - The Department of Homeland Security targets criminal networks with influence in America and actively works to dismantle organizations with a history of smuggling drugs into the US. The DHS has a particular interest where this opioid originates, such as China or Mexico, and wants to find ways to slow the spread of these illegal substances within the nation.

[How DHS Wants to Combat Opioid Smuggling](#)

[The DHS Strategy](#)

- 7. Drug Enforcement Administration** - The Drug Enforcement Administration works under the United States government to end the trafficking of deadly drugs

in order to protect people who lie at the source, the drugs' recipients, and the officers who enforce the DEA's work. The administration was founded in 1973, and while it began as a domestically focused organization, it's grown to work in international narcotic law enforcement, especially since the beginning of the fentanyl epidemic in the United States.

[Overview of Drug Enforcement Administration](#)

[Congressional Resolution to Crack Down on Fentanyl Pushed by the DEA](#)

- 8. Estonia** - Estonia has one of the most severe drug cultures in Europe. For over a decade up until 2017, Estonia had the highest rate of overdose deaths in the entire continent. The abuse of fentanyl is a strong factor to prominent drug use in the country. However, since 2018 the mortality rate has lowered and stabilized.

[Lessons from Estonia's Experience](#)

[The Fentanyl Epidemic in Estonia](#)

- 9. Guyana** - Guyana, located in South America, has become a transit country along illegal drug trafficking routes, which has made it increasingly vulnerable to the infiltration of dangerous synthetic opioids such as fentanyl. Its location in northern South America has made it a central hub for activities involved in the drug trafficking chain. While not being one of the major producers or consumers of fentanyl, Guyana, for the most part, is only involved in the transportation of fentanyl throughout the region.

[Guyana's Action on Drug Trade](#)

[Guyana BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS AND LAW](#)  
[ENFORCEMENT AFFAIRS](#)

**10. Honduras** - Honduras has historically been a crossroads of cocaine trafficking for South American countries trying to reach America. Their long lasting reputation of drug smuggling has built a drug culture in the country. Honduras authorities recently discovered nearly half a metric ton of fentanyl in shipping containers coming from the country.

[Honduras Seizes Nearly Half Ton of Fentanyl](#)

[Evaluation Report on Drug Policies](#)

**11. India** - The pharmaceutical industry in India is worth \$50 billion and legally produces opioids such as fentanyl for export around the world. Although it is not as prevalent a contributor as China or Mexico to the illegal drug epidemic, the nation has had some blame put on it in the past for the issue.

[Indian Developments in Illegal Fentanyl \(Page 4\)](#)

[Modern Drug Conflict in India](#)

**12. International Narcotics Control Board** - The main goal for the INCB when it was formed was to ensure that drugs were limited to scientific and medical purposes. But with the rise of the illegal drug market, the INCB has the responsibility of monitoring governments control and restriction over chemicals used to manufacture illicit drugs. In response to the threat fentanyl brings on a

global scale, the INBC has previously attempted to have multiple precursors to fentanyl put under international control.

[Precursors INBC.](#)

[Opioids Project](#)

**13. Jalisco New Generation Cartel** - The Jalisco New Generation Cartel, or CJNG, is a Mexican cartel primarily known for smuggling drugs and cannibalism. The CJNG is the second most powerful cartel in Mexico and is considered to be one of the most dangerous due to their violent tactics and rituals. The CJNG holds significant influence in the production and trafficking of fentanyl in Mexico and is one of the groups responsible for smuggling the majority of fentanyl into the U.S. using American citizens to get it through the border.

[Forty-One Individuals Charged in Massive Poly-Drug Indictment Linked to Cartel | United States Department of Justice](#)

[Addressing Mexico's role in the US fentanyl epidemic | Brookings](#)

**14. Mexican Navy** - Most of the illegal fentanyl precursors that enter the U.S. are coming across the Pacific from China and through the hands of Mexican smugglers. Cartels synthesize these precursors into stand alone pills or mix them with other drugs. This branch of the Mexican military has been working overtime in order to apprehend other substances, such as cocaine and methamphetamine.

[President Obrador Wants Navy to Run Mexican Airports](#)

[Record Drug Seizures by Mexican Navy](#)

**15. Mexico** - Mexico has historically had a relatively low rate of fentanyl usage, but that number is on a steady rise. This increase is because of the location of Mexico on several drug trafficking routes to the United States. The presence of cartels, primarily in Mexico's northern region, is largely to thank for this. The nation has been working to crack down on drug trafficking and usage in this region but faces powerful backlash from cartels.

[Overview on Fentanyl Prevalence at US - Mexico Border](#)

[Mexico's Role in the International Fentanyl Epidemic](#)

**16. Ministry of Commerce of People's Republic of China** - China is the primary source of internationally trafficked fentanyl. The Chinese pharmaceutical industry is worth almost \$200 billion. In October 2023, China was indicted by the U.S. for their role in the issue, and in November 2023, the two governments started building a plan to alleviate the problem together.

[Chinese Indictment on Fentanyl](#)

[U.S. & China Attempt Cooperation on Fentanyl](#)

**17. Myanmar** - Myanmar, a strong ally of China, is located in the Golden Triangle region of drug production in China. This region consists of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar. Myanmar authorities reported sizing a massive haul of liquid fentanyl in 2020, the first discovery of the synthetic drug in the Golden Triangle. 3,700

liters of methylfentanyl was seized by police near Loikan village in Shan State in northeast Myanmar.

[Asia's Biggest-Ever Drugs Bust](#)

[How Did Myanmar Become a Major Supplier of Illicit Opium](#)

**18. Partnership to End Addiction** - The Partnership to End Addiction, formerly known as the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, is an organization known for its advocacy against illegal drugs and substance abuse. The organization strives to raise awareness to the dangers that fentanyl and other opioids bring; they specifically try to raise awareness amongst youth and vulnerable populations. They do this through policy advocacy, education campaigns and community outreach programs. The main goal of the Partnership is to empower communities to make well informed decisions in fighting against drug use.

[Our Expertise - Partnership to End Addiction](#)

[Fentanyl poisoning & counterfeit pills - Partnership to End Addiction](#)

**19. People's Republic of China** - Within China exists a lot of the earlier stages of fentanyl production before it's shipped outward. Fentanyl production is occasionally financed by several corrupt members of the Chinese government, which doesn't do much to curb the worldwide crisis brought by fentanyl. A lot of money laundering for cartels also occurs in China. Chinese criminal groups have close ties with fentanyl production and cartels.

[China's Overall Role in Allowing the Fentanyl Epidemic to Continue](#)

[Article that Goes In Depth on China's Support Towards the Fentanyl Epidemic](#)

**20. Public Health Agency of Canada** - Currently, 82% of opioid deaths in Canada involve the use of fentanyl, rising from just 44% in 2016. This is the highest rate of any country in the world. The *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* was passed to help fight the issue.

[Fentanyl Statistics in Canada](#)

[State of Fentanyl Epidemic in Canada](#)

**21. Russian Federation** - Most of the clandestine synthetic drug production in Russia takes place in small-scale “kitchen labs.” Precursor chemicals are easy for Russian criminals to obtain. Stimulant drugs like amphetamines are often sent to Europe, suppressant opioids are sent to Asia, and both are consumed domestically. A specific rising concern within Russia is the use of 3-methylfentanyl, coined “China White,” or “Crocodile,” a powerful derivative of fentanyl.

[UNODC Drug Report on Russia](#)

[Russia Drug History & Current Situation](#)

**22. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** - This organization, also known as SAMHSA, works heavily to identify the many correlations that lie between substance abuse and mental health issues. They focus on identifying worldly and genetic factors that can lead to higher levels of

substance abuse. Their work also considers the fact that accidental overdoses occur from using minor drugs laced with illicit narcotics, especially fentanyl in recent years.

[Factors That Lead to Drug Abuse and Fentanyl Overdoses](#)

[Multiple Pages from SAMHSA With Information on Narcotics](#)

**23. TEVA Pharmaceuticals** - TEVA is a leading global pharmaceutical and has been involved in the production and distribution of many medications, including fentanyl-based products. Over the past decades, TEVA has implemented many measures of quality control and compliance protocols to ensure safe and responsible use of their products containing opioids. These products containing opioids have been used as painkillers specifically for late stage cancer. TEVA claims to be very devoted to maintaining safety while still providing these prescription drugs containing synthetic opioids.

[Teva Initiates Voluntary Nationwide Recall](#)

[Opioids Maker Teva Agrees to \\$4.25 billion Settlement](#)

**24. United States of America** - The largest number of people in the world die in the United States from fentanyl poisoning each year. President Biden has made statements supporting a new bill to increase border security with Mexico. America supports a global approach to ending this epidemic by implementing international supply control measures to protect nations around the world.

[Biden Statement on Border Security Bill](#)



## [Dimensions of the U.S. Fentanyl Crisis](#)

**25. U.S. Customs and Border Patrol** - The United States Customs and Border Patrol work diligently to curb the fentanyl epidemic in North America from its source, the US-Mexico border. This agency has had its workload increased in the last few years as an increase of fentanyl has flowed into the United States by cartel. The work they do directly on the border stops large amounts of fentanyl from entering the United States daily.

[Background on Customs and Border Patrol and What Their Work Looks](#)

[Like in Texas](#)

[The Steps Taken by Customs and Border Patrol to be Prepared Against](#)

[Fentanyl](#)

**26. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** - The US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is largely responsible for protecting the Health of American citizens, which can relate to production of food, prevalence of drugs, protection from disease, and so much more. The DHHS oversees a lot of drug overdoses in the United States and works to provide services to prevent usage of drugs in addicts. A lot of their work involves identifying the sources of fentanyl related deaths and ensuring that they can mitigate them.

[Strategies of DHHS Amidst International Fentanyl Crisis](#)

[Programs That the DHHS Provides in the USA](#)

**27. U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons** - Fentanyl has started to saturate the illicit drug supply in the United States, leading to unprecedented rates of fatal overdose.

Individuals who are incarcerated are particularly vulnerable, as opioid addiction is disproportionately higher in this population. Prisons have experienced a 600% rise in drug overdoses among inmates over the past several years, driven by the smuggling of fentanyl and other contraband through the mail service and officers.

[Bacon Introduces Bill to Keep Fentanyl out of Prisons](#)

[Detection and Prevention of Illicit Drugs in a Correctional Facility](#)

**28. U.S. Food and Drug Administration** - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, or FDA oversees the approval of substances such as food or drugs that Americans consume. This means that they have carefully analyzed all prescription opioid drugs in the United States and pay close attention to whether or not drugs are safe to be consumed due to possible contamination or other risks. They've increasingly cracked down more intensely on drugs due to mistakes that have been made with the approval of opioids in the past.

[History of FDA Rulings Involving Narcotics](#)

[How The FDA is Working to Target Narcotic Production and Use](#)

**29. Venezuela** - Venezuela is located in the Andean Region which is home to one of the largest heroin and cocaine bases in the world. Shipments of multi-ton quantities of cocaine are shipped to America and Europe via Mexico and Central America.

[Andean Region](#)

[Venezuela's Political Unrest Has Helped the Drug Industry](#)

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