United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

ISSUE: Combating the fentanyl crisis and weakening trafficking networks.

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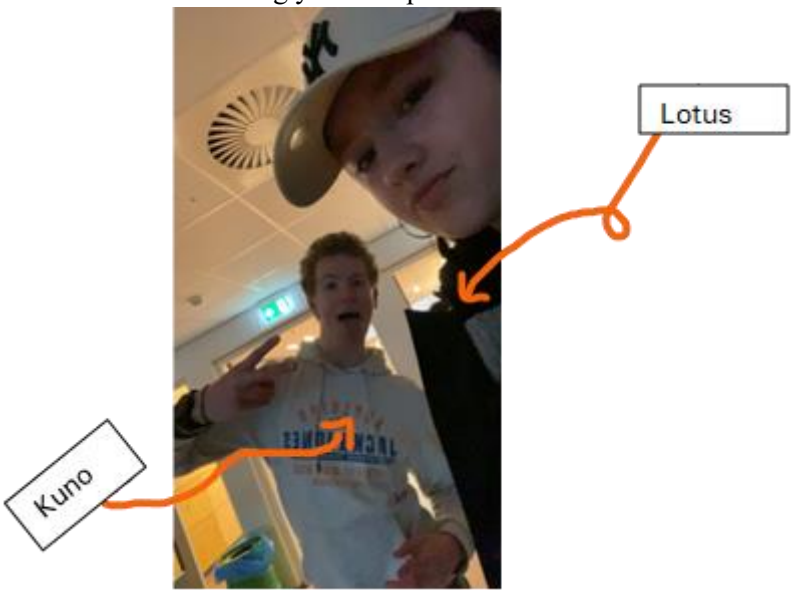
Introducing your chairs

Hi delegates! I'm Kuno, 17 years old and I live near Amersfoort. I'm honored and very excited to be your chair in UNODC this first edition of SGAMUN, together with my good friend Lotus. I study at Farel College and have the honour of serving as one of the Secretaries General of FAMUN 2026. I have done quite a few MUN's in my time, this will be my 3rd time as chair, and love to help others with anything ranging from resolution writing, public speaking and debate. If you as a first-time delegate have any question about anything at all regarding this years' SGAMUN, please don't hesitate to email me at kunodeelstra@gmail.com or call me at +31 6 10623151. I hope that you'll join my wonderful deputy Lotus and me in making UNODC, and SGAMUN as a whole, into a great success. I look forward to meeting you in September!



Hii all! My name is Lotus, and I'm absolutely thrilled to be your deputy chair of UNODC at SGAMUN '25! It's a true honour for me to be your chair at this conference together with Kuno, a great friend I've shared some MUN conferences with!

I'm from Amersfoort and have lived there my whole life, usually surrounded by great people, decent coffee, and way too much rain. Outside of school, you'll probably find me playing soccer or at the gym (though half the time I'm figuring it what I'm actually doing there).

I joined my first MUN when I was 12 years old, without really knowing what to expect. Since then, I've attended five conferences, and each one has taught me something new.

For me, this will be the first time chairing, so I am extremely thrilled, as well as nervous to be guiding this weekend. I'm now looking forward to seeing a MUN conference from a different side and helping others get the most out of it too.

Can't wait to meet all of you, hear your ideas, and create a great atmosphere together at SGAMUN '25!

Introduction

In the United States, an estimated 645.000 people died from opiods between 1999 2021. The amount of deaths per year have increased tenfold between 1999 and 2021. [1] Although North America is definitely the part of the world where opiod use is most prevelent, opiod use is also extremely prevelent in oceania and South-West Asia, followed shortly by the rest of the world [2]. Opiods are drugs that can ease pain and make a person feel happy and relaxed, one of these opioids is fentanyl. Fentanyl is similar to heroin or morfine (other opioids), but it is a lot more powerful, with its effects also starting much more quickly. [3] With that added power, it also means that it is very dangerous in large doses, 2 mg is a lethal dose for most people. For reference, that is the amount of fentanyl (white powder) next to this US penny. A penny is less than 2cm in diameter. [1] Fentanyl is produced in a lab, and is meant to be used as a strong pain-killer. Due to its ease of production and potency it can also be mixed in with other drugs, often in too high doces. Illegally made fentanyl is now a main driver of the overdose and addiction crisis in the United States. Like other opiods and most drugs in general, it is addictive, especially when not used as prescribed by a health professional. Using it repeatedly, will create dependence, which makes it that a persons' will grow used to the drugs' presence. The person will only feel normal when having taken the drug, this also leads to extremely unpleasant withdrawal symptoms when an addict stops using it. [3]

Definition of key terms

Opioids
Opiods are painkillers, they can range from very strong to quite moderate. They are used by physisians to lessen (cronic) suffering in patients, but they can also be aquired by illigal ways, when a user wants to experience its effects. [1]

Fentanyl
Fentanyl is a type of opiod. It is very powerful and is synthesised to resemble other opioids like heroin and morphine. It is relatively easy to produce, and is a main driver of the opioid crisis in the United States, as well as other countries. [3]

Withdrawal
Withdrawal refers to the effects that quiting a drug of addictive substance has on a body. For withdrawal from fentanyl, people can experience things like diarrhea and vomiting, nausea, mucsle or bone pain, anxiety, sweating and chills. [4]

Rehabilitation
According tot he WHO rehabilitation can be defined as “a set of interventions designed to optimize functioning and reduce disability in individuals with health conditions in interaction with their environment”. [5] In the context drugs this means preparing someone to be able to stop substance misuse. [6]

Precursor chemicals
When talking about drugs, they are simply the chemicals that are used to make the drugs. Countries fighting drug supply often focus on regulating these chemicals. [7]

General Overview

The Rise of Fentanyl as a Global Threat

The fentanyl crisis has become one of the most urgent global challenges in the field of drug control and public health. While opioids as a category have been present for decades, fentanyl has reshaped the scale and speed of the crisis due to its extreme potency, ease of manufacture, and the global networks that distribute it. Unlike plant-based opioids such as heroin, fentanyl is fully synthetic, which makes it less dependent on agricultural cycles and easier to produce in concealed laboratories. This has enabled organized crime groups to scale production rapidly and adapt supply routes to changing enforcement patterns.

Human Impact and the Risk of Contamination

The human cost is staggering. Overdose deaths linked to fentanyl have risen sharply in North America, but the impact is spreading globally. Oceania and parts of South-West Asia already report high prevalence of opioid misuse, and the appearance of fentanyl in Europe and other regions suggests the crisis is no longer confined to the United States. In many cases, fentanyl is mixed into other substances—such as counterfeit pills, heroin, or even stimulants—often without the user's knowledge. This practice makes the drug especially deadly, as even a trace amount can cause a fatal overdose. The crisis is thus not only a problem of addiction, but also one of contamination of wider drug markets.

Supply Chains and Criminal Networks

From a supply-chain perspective, several major actors drive the fentanyl trade. Precursor chemicals are largely sourced from manufacturers in China and, increasingly, India. These substances are shipped—sometimes mislabeled—to Mexico, where powerful cartels such as the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) operate clandestine laboratories to synthesize fentanyl at scale. The cartels then oversee smuggling into the United States and beyond, relying on well-developed trafficking routes. Profits are laundered through transnational financial networks, often also linked back to Chinese intermediaries. This combination of chemical suppliers, organized crime groups, and financial facilitators forms a resilient global supply chain that enforcement agencies struggle to dismantle.

Government and International Responses

Governments and international organizations are responding on multiple fronts. Law enforcement efforts focus on disrupting precursor chemical flows, dismantling production labs, and intercepting shipments across borders. Countries like the United States have intensified cooperation with China, India, and Mexico to enhance monitoring of precursor exports. At the same time, international coalitions such as the UNODC and the recently established Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats seek to harmonize regulations and promote intelligence sharing between states. The challenge lies in balancing these enforcement measures with broader health and social strategies that address the root causes of demand.

Public Health and Harm Reduction Approaches

Public health responses are equally critical. Combating fentanyl addiction requires investment in rehabilitation and treatment services, including access to opioid substitution therapies and psychosocial support. Reducing stigma around addiction and increasing public awareness of the risks of fentanyl contamination are essential to encourage people to seek help early. Harm-reduction measures, such as the distribution of naloxone (an overdose-reversal drug), testing strips, and supervised consumption facilities, have also shown effectiveness in lowering overdose deaths. These approaches recognize that enforcement alone cannot solve the crisis—tackling demand and protecting vulnerable populations are equally necessary.

The Need for a Comprehensive Strategy

The fentanyl crisis highlights the increasingly synthetic and globalized nature of the drug trade. Unlike past waves of drug epidemics, this one is fueled by industrial-scale chemical production, sophisticated

criminal logistics, and online distribution networks that reach directly into communities. Combating it will therefore require not only stronger national policies but also genuine international cooperation that addresses both the supply and demand sides. Weakening trafficking networks while supporting treatment and prevention offers the most promising way forward.

Major parties involved

1. Chinese Precursor Suppliers & Brokers

Chinese chemical companies and brokers export key precursor chemicals (like NPP and ANPP) used to synthesize fentanyl. Many operate in legal gray zones, while Chinese money laundering networks move cartel profits through underground exchanges.

2. Mexican Cartels – Producers and Traffickers

The Sinaloa Cartel and Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) dominate fentanyl production and trafficking. They import precursors, run clandestine labs, and smuggle fentanyl into the U.S. Other cartels like Juárez and Gulf also play roles.

3. Emerging Precursor Sources

India is becoming a major supplier of fentanyl precursors, often mislabeling exports to evade controls.

4. The United States – Distribution & Enforcement

Fentanyl is distributed through domestic networks and online sales. U.S. agencies (DEA, FBI, CBP, DOJ) lead interdiction, seizures, and international coordination efforts. [7]

Previous attempts to solve the issue

The most recent resolution passed was resolution 78/131. Its key points are to urge member states to strenthen action against illicit manufacture, trafficking and use. It also calls for more cooperation between countries, as well as highlighing the inportance of science-based policies.

Possible solutions

Strengthen precursor chemical controls

Ensuring precursor chemicals are harder to obtain for criminals will obstruct production of fentanyl.

Enhance rehabilitation and treatment access

Making care available to those who need it will dampen the demand.

Expand intelligende-sharing networks

Sharing information more efficiently will help cut down on global criminal activities

Appendices/Bibliography

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