



NATIONAL NARCOTIC OFFICERS' ASSOCIATIONS' COALITION
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March 14, 2022

The Honorable Maggie Hassan, Chair
The Honorable Rand Paul, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Spending Oversight
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

RE: STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD - SENATE HSGAC FIELD HEARING: "ADDRESSING THE EVOLVING THREAT OF ILLEGAL DRUG TRAFFICKING TO OUR COMMUNITIES"

Dear Chairwoman Hassan and Ranking Member Paul,

On behalf of the National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition (NNOAC), I would like to provide this statement for the record about policy responses to the evolving drug trafficking threat in America. Thank you very much for convening this hearing and highlighting the importance of addressing this issue.

At the outset, it is critical to acknowledge that substance use disorders and violent crime do not discriminate by political party, race, gender, economic status, or zip code. Everyone is affected, everyone is vulnerable, everyone is at risk.

While the recent announcement that over 100,000 Americans have died from drug poisonings during the past year was not news to our nation's narcotic officers, it was a shock to many in our society. Fentanyl, synthetic opioids, methamphetamine, and other deadly poisons are taking a huge toll on American lives and culture.

The illegal business enterprises that are manufacturing and distributing those poisons in each of our communities bear primary responsibility for killing our fellow citizens, and they remain the biggest threat to our collective well-being. The NNOAC and our law enforcement partners have been warning about this for years and urging aggressive law enforcement action, yet we have all but been ignored.

While policymakers have rightly pushed a lot more resources over the past decade into treating those who suffer from substance use disorders, we still have a skyrocketing death rate. Clearly, law enforcement – drug enforcement in particular – must be re-embraced and fully resourced so that we can play a more significant role in curtailing the threat to our country.

While we find inexcusable the relative ease with which Mexican cartels and transnational drug trafficking organizations transport drugs across our porous borders, we are simply stunned by the amount of control they are allowed to exert, and the control they have been allowed to wield over drug distribution and violent crime *inside* our borders when they arrive.

By our government's definition, Mexican drug cartels and transnational drug trafficking organizations meet the criteria to be designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and they should be treated as such. That would allow for more resources to be leveled against their deadly activities, and additional tools would enable their assets to be frozen and forfeited, causing major disruptions to their criminal enterprises.

Efforts to increase and improve border security, to identify and interdict illegal drug trafficking activity, and to prevent known criminals and their associates from entering our country must become an even greater priority. It is way past time for our government to take back control of our borders to keep drug traffickers, their poisons, and their criminal organizations out of our country.

Our government has the all the legal authority it needs to do what is necessary to protect our citizens. It is a matter of choice for our top policymakers in the administration and in Congress to prioritize resources for this purpose. Current data clearly show that policy and budget choices in recent years have gotten us nowhere, and in fact have made things worse. It's time to make different choices.

Our national drug policy is failing miserably. Changes to state and federal laws and policies – including legalization of some drugs – have made it easier for drug traffickers to avoid arrest and prosecution at the expense of thousands of American families that continue to be victimized by them. Yet, drug law enforcement is scorned and continually criticized for our efforts to protect our citizens.

Aggressive, smart, targeted drug enforcement is needed now more than ever. We must change course and pass laws that hold drug offenders accountable and keep chronic violators and repeat offenders away from the communities that they continue to victimize. We also must pass budgets that enable law enforcement to effectively investigate, interdict, and prosecute traffickers and efficiently share criminal intelligence and information.

Congress should ensure that federal grant programs including Byrne JAG are focused on enabling multijurisdictional task force efforts. Congress should also increase funding for the Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) program and the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program, both of which directly support local and state efforts to target drug trafficking in our communities.

Until our borders are secure, source countries are sanctioned for their complicity, and trafficking organizations and their actors are prosecuted and punished for their murderous activities, the flow of drugs into the United States will continue and our citizens and their families will continue to needlessly suffer tragic loss of human life.

It is time for Congress and our leaders to stop kicking the can down the road and start to get serious about re-investing in collaborative law enforcement efforts to stop the needless increases in drug deaths. Every day our NNOAC our members go to work trying to save lives and protect our

communities while often being ridiculed by those who oppose the very idea of enforcing laws that are designed to protect our citizens.

We ask that Congress step up and support our efforts, pass effective laws and policies that we need to reduce drug deaths, and finally bring an end to the terrible toll that drug trafficking organizations are inflicting on our country.

The NNOAC and our members know the ground truth in every community across the country. We want to serve as a resource to you and your colleagues as you evaluate legislative and policy options to address this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Bob Bushman
President
National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition