

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 5, 2023

His Excellency Andrés Manuel López Obrador  
Presidente Constitucional de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos  
Plaza de la Constitución  
Centro Histórico de la Cdad. De México, Centro, Cuauhtémoc  
06066 Ciudad de México, CDMX, México

Dear President López Obrador,

We write out of deep concern regarding an outrageous statement you made on March 9, 2023, stating that Mexico does not produce or consume illicit fentanyl, and it is a “U.S. problem.”<sup>1</sup> These statements are at variance with the facts. Mexico’s role in the production and distribution of illicit fentanyl is impossible to ignore, and it has caused death and destructions on both sides of our border. We demand that you retract your statement and that you commit to working collaboratively with our country to combat the fentanyl trade.

In 2022, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) seized 18,872 pounds of fentanyl at the southern border.<sup>2</sup> This is illicit fentanyl coming from Mexico into the United States, not the other way around. Additionally, just last month, your own soldiers seized nearly 630,000 fentanyl pills, 282 pounds of powdered fentanyl, and approximately 220 pounds of what was suspected to be methamphetamines in northwestern Mexico close to where Sinaloa Cartel is based.<sup>3</sup> In the same city, in 2021, the army raided a laboratory that they estimated produced 70 million fentanyl pills every single month for the Sinaloa cartel.<sup>4</sup> Illegal fentanyl is the driving force behind the staggering increase of overdose deaths in the United States and criminal organizations based in Mexico are the primary driver of the phenomenon and this horrifying statistic. This is why Mexican nationals and Mexican-origin networks have been designated by the U.S. Dept of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control for trafficking<sup>5</sup> and have been subject to Department of Justice investigations for connections to American overdose deaths.<sup>6</sup>

But it is not only Americans who are dying from the production of fentanyl in Mexico. So, too, are Mexicans. According to Mexican government sources, demand for fentanyl in Mexico has been growing since 2017.<sup>7</sup> A 2019 study in the border city of Tijuana showed that 93% of samples of methamphetamines and heroin there contained some fentanyl, mirroring the same mixing that causes so much death in the United States. A separate investigation, this time performed by the LA Times, discovered that 71% of 17 pills tested in northern Mexican pharmacies came up positive for illegal drugs, including fentanyl and meth.<sup>8</sup> Given the severity of the rise in Mexican deaths from illicit drugs, by 2022, Mexico’s forensic medical services in Mexicali state began to implement rapid tests to identify drug use among those autopsied. Between June and August 2022, fentanyl showed up in 1/3 of all cases. Fentanyl is now the second most popular drug in Mexicali.<sup>9</sup> Insight Crime statistics highlight the growing rate of the fentanyl epidemic in Mexico, noting “In Tijuana, Prevencasa has responded to around 500 fentanyl overdoses in the last couple of years, including dealing with six overdoses in just one morning. In

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2023-03-09/mexican-president-to-us-fentanyl-is-your-problem#:~:text=March%209%2C%202023%2C%20at%201%3A47%20p.m.&text=MEXICO%20CITY%20\(AP\)%20%E2%80%94Mexico's,enormous%20evidence%20to%20the%20contrary.](https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2023-03-09/mexican-president-to-us-fentanyl-is-your-problem#:~:text=March%209%2C%202023%2C%20at%201%3A47%20p.m.&text=MEXICO%20CITY%20(AP)%20%E2%80%94Mexico's,enormous%20evidence%20to%20the%20contrary.)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/drug-seizure-statistics>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fentanyl-drug-bust-mexican-soldiers-seize-pills-highest-capacity-synthetic-production-lab/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/mexico-fentanyl-epidemic-overdoses-26f735a54ce0ba075c394ce85aef03d0>

<sup>5</sup> <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1229>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdoh/pr/twelve-charged-cincinnati-connection-mexico-based-sinaloa-drug-cartel>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/648021/INFORME\\_PAIS\\_2021.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/648021/INFORME_PAIS_2021.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2023-02-02/mexico-pharmacy-fentanyl-laced-pills-meth>

<sup>9</sup> <https://insightcrime.org/news/fentanyl-hidden-killer-mexico/>

Mexicali, during the first eight months of 2022, 600 overdoses were attended to by organizations such as Verter, the Red Cross, and users trained to provide naloxone, a medication used to reverse the symptoms of opioid overdoses. This figure exceeds the total number of cases registered between 2019 and 2021.”<sup>10</sup> This trend mirrors other illicit drugs, such as cocaine, where Mexico morphed from a production and transit country to an eventual consumer country.

Mr. President, to say that Mexico is not a producer of fentanyl is to forget that just one month ago, you showed a fentanyl lab in “the Breaking Bad style” on public television that had been recently dismantled in Sinaloa state.<sup>11</sup> In this segment, you highlighted how chemical precursors—coming from Asia—were found at the site.

Our Government and the Government of Mexico need to work together to solve this problem to save both American and Mexican lives, but the first step is to recognize the significant role Mexico plays in manufacturing the drug from precursor chemicals, frequently sent from China. Only when the problem is properly diagnosed can we design and implement a plan to solve it.

Sincerely,



BRYAN STEIL  
Member of Congress



KELLY ARMSTRONG  
Member of Congress



LANCE GOODEN  
Member of Congress



DAN CRENSHAW  
Member of Congress



JACK BERGMAN  
Member of Congress



NANCY MACE  
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BARRY MOORE  
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TOM TIFFANY  
Member of Congress



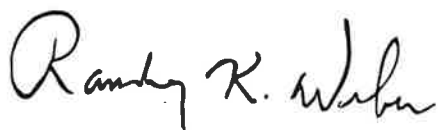
GLENN GROTHMAN  
Member of Congress



LAUREN BOEBERT  
Member of Congress

<sup>10</sup> <https://insightcrime.org/news/fentanyl-hidden-killer-mexico/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.forbes.com.mx/amlo-muestra-laboratorio-de-fentanilo-estilo-breaking-bad-decomisado-en-sinaloa/>



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