



APRIL 19, 2016

ROUNDTABLE – PREVENTING DRUG TRAFFICKING THROUGH INTERNATIONAL MAIL

UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY & GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

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Chairman Ron Johnson (R-WI) [\[view pdf\]](#)

Senator Thomas R. Carper (D-DE) [\[view pdf\]](#)

WITNESSES

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Chairman Johnson Opening Statement
“Preventing Drug Trafficking Through International Mail”

Tuesday, April 19, 2016

As submitted for the record:

Good morning and welcome. The purpose of today’s roundtable is to examine the problem of synthetic drugs entering our country through international mail, and steps that can be taken to strengthen customs screening procedures.

Our committee has done extensive work examining the lack of border security, and also to understand the nation’s drug crisis, including two hearings last week. Today, we will look at another source of this crisis—drugs entering through our ports of entry that are shipped directly to customers by international shippers, including the U.S. Postal Service.

First, we will look at the problem of synthetic drugs and how they are contributing to our nation’s drug crisis. Synthetic drugs are created with manmade chemicals to mimic the effects of other illicit drugs. The large majority of these chemicals are made in Chinese labs before being sent into the United States in bulk quantities for final assembly into individual dosages. The chemicals are cheap to manufacture and can be ordered online, resulting in a huge return on investment for drug dealers. Less than \$5,000 of raw ingredients can earn \$250,000 or more on the street in the United States.

These drugs present a growing risk to public health and safety. Last year, poison control centers recorded a record number of calls related to synthetic marijuana, more than double the number of calls from the previous year. Fentanyl, a painkiller 25 to 40 times stronger than heroin, is being produced by these same Chinese labs and imported into the United States to be cut with heroin or to be sold on the streets as other narcotics. It is causing overdoses around the country. In my home state of Wisconsin, fentanyl has killed 30 people since December in Milwaukee County alone.

Second, we will examine the international shipping and screening process to understand how the mail and international shipping is being used by drug traffickers. Once drugs are purchased online, they are mailed through foreign postal systems, delivered within the United States by the U.S. Postal Service, or shipped into the country through a private carrier, like UPS, FedEx or DHL. While private carriers know their customers and are able to work with federal agencies to prevent drugs from reaching their destinations, the U.S. Postal Service is compelled by treaties on international mail exchange to deliver mail on behalf of foreign posts. Because they cannot control which individuals use these international services, the Postal Service can become an unwitting drug courier.

Third, I ask that we continue to work together to identify what can be done to solve this problem and to help prevent these dangerous drugs from getting into our country. Today’s roundtable follows oversight letters that Ranking Member Carper and I sent to federal agencies last month on improving the security and screening of mail coming into the United States. I have asked

today's participants to join the committee in a discussion of how we can all work together to improve mail screening and give ourselves the best tools to keep these dangerous drugs off the street.

Thank you for joining us today. I look forward to our discussion.

Opening Statement of Senator Tom Carper
HSGAC Roundtable: Preventing Drug Trafficking through International Mail

Tuesday, April 19, 2016

As prepared for delivery:

Let me begin by thanking everyone for joining us today to discuss international mail security and how we can work together to counter drug trafficking through our mail system. Most of us would agree that we should be doing everything that we can to combat the flow of illegal drugs into our country – whether they are smuggled by people; hidden in vehicles, boats or airplanes; or arrive through mail shipments.

The Drug Enforcement Administration, which is represented here today, has reported that most of the synthetic drugs present in the U.S. market entered our country via overseas shipments routed through international mail service or private shippers.

I am encouraged to hear that our Customs and Border Protection officers are already intercepting and seizing large shipments of synthetic drugs and other illegal items that are bound for the U.S. However, we know that there are still far too many of these drugs available on our streets, and it's imperative that more be done to intercept them.

I look forward to hearing more today about the existing processes and procedures to screen mail and cargo and to learn how we can do an even better job of finding these items before they reach American consumers.

One of our challenges is to make sure that nations of the world exchange advance electronic data with one another in order to make the screening of inbound international mail more effective. While the U.S. Postal Service provides advance electronic data to foreign countries about mail originating in the United States, foreign nations do not always reciprocate and provide us with similar information that we need. This failure to share makes it harder for CBP to do its job when mail and mail cargo arrive here.

So, I'd like to hear from our panelists, particularly the State Department and the Postal Service, on this issue. We need to find a way to get advanced data into the hands of our security screeners and close this loophole for drug traffickers. I'd also like their thoughts on how Congress can help in this effort and what can be done in the meantime.

As many of you know, protecting and improving the mail system in this country has been one of my major priorities since I came to the Senate 15 years ago. The Postal Service is of paramount importance to our economy. It is the lynchpin of a \$1.4 trillion mailing industry that employs 7.5 million people in this country.

Clearly, the Postal Service has an important role to play in preventing the flow of illegal drugs and contraband into the U.S. Yet, it is facing insolvency if Congress does not get off its duff and pass comprehensive postal reform to enable the Postal Service to survive and thrive again. We need to stabilize the Postal Service's finances not only so it can address international mail security but – even more important – to enable the Postal Service to carry out its core mission of providing the American people with reliable mail service. Quite simply, without a financially

viable Postal Service, not only will there be no delivery of illegal drugs through our international mail, there will be no delivery of international or domestic mail either. That might be seen by some as a victory in the fight against illegal drugs in this country, but it comes at a very high price.

With that, let me again welcome our panelists today. We look forward to a productive conversation on how we might strengthen our process for screening international mail.