

*United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
(UNODC)*



*Strengthening
International Security
and Cooperation to
Combat Fentanyl.*

Moderator: Ana Marene Garrido Balbuena

Director: Emilio Huerta Zamora

I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime. It was established in 1997 and it was founded to address complex challenges related to drug trafficking, organized crime, terrorism and corruption. It provides research, data collection and policy advice to the states. In addition, they also provide technical assistance and building initiatives. Furthermore, this organization promotes cooperation through international conventions such as the United Nations convention against Organized Crime and its protocols by advocating for a human rights based approach. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime aims to enhance the rule of law and to foster sustainable development worldwide (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023).

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Health Organization (WHO), have collaborated with member states to enhance monitoring and regulation of synthetic opioids. The global increase in the illicit use and distribution of fentanyl has emerged as a serious threat to public health and international security. Fentanyl, an extremely potent synthetic opioid, it's 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine, and is responsible for a dramatic increase in overdose deaths in several parts of the world. Its effortless manufacture, high profitability and ability to evade legal controls, have made fentanyl a preferred option for criminal organizations.

This production and trafficking of fentanyl has not only increased mortality but also destroyed communities and increased the burden on health services. Health services and criminal justice systems have been the most affected social factors by this issue (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023). In addition, the transnational nature of fentanyl trafficking has demonstrated the inadequacy of individual country responses, highlighting the need for strong and coordinated international response. Regulatory efforts are what countries are now suffering from because of issues with regulation regarding what comes in and out of their countries (International Narcotics Control Board, 2022). However, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime plays crucial roles in coordinating global efforts to combat fentanyl trafficking through technical assistance programs, training and support in the implementation of legal frameworks.

Fentanyl was first synthesized by Dr. Paul Janssen in 1960 and was introduced into medical practice as an analgesic and anesthetic in the 1960s. By the 1980's illicit production of fentanyl began to emerge, which led to gigantic outbreaks and overdoses (U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, 2020). The situation worsened in the 2000s as the opioid crisis in the United States intensified. Illegally manufactured fentanyl started to flow the market, often mixed with heroin or sold as prescription pills. Between 2013 and 2016, the number of fentanyl related overdose deaths in the U.S increased by 540%. This period highlighted the need for stronger international control and cooperation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). In response to the growing threat, international efforts have been made to combat the fentanyl crisis.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime seeks to strengthen national capacities and foster international cooperation. In this context, it is imperative that member states work together to share information, develop joint strategies and improve interdiction and treatment capabilities (United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, 2023). Effectively tackling fentanyl, requires a multifaceted approach, ranging from supply and demand reduction to harm minimization and support for those affected. This includes not only border control efforts, prevention, rehabilitation and treatment programmes for victims. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in collaboration with other international agencies and national partners, is committed to leading this effort to reduce the devastating impact of fentanyl on global communities (World Health Organization, 2021).

One of The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime biggest features is the ability to generate data and reports that help member states understand the magnitude and nature of drug and crime problems. Moreover, they facilitate international cooperation through forums and meetings in Vienna, Austria, where common strategies are discussed (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023). However the office faces several limitations that affect its effectiveness. One of the main limitations is financial dependence on voluntary states, this continues limiting the programs and operations. Furthermore, while The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime can advise and recommend solutions, it doesn't have the authority to impose sanctions or enforce obedience for their recommendations (International Narcotics Control Board, 2022).

Harm caused by drug trafficking of fentanyl, is a pressing issue that contributes to many ongoing global crises. This range from instability and violence to the disregard for the environment to often violations that weaken the law to the worsening health of millions (U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, 2024). Besides, this is a relevant issue for the youth as the main victims of fentanyl range from 18 to 49. For many reasons, drug trafficking is a relevant global issue that needs international cooperation to find solutions.

II. HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

Ever since the rise of drugs in the early twentieth century, there have been many international efforts to combat drugs and narcotic misuse; this included limitations on the manufacturing and possession of many hallucinogens such as opium, heroin and cocaine. In the following years the “Hague convention” was the first international effort to set limitations and rules on the supply of drugs (United Nations Treaty Collection, n.d.). The Hague convention also helped establish many early treaties such as the International Opium Convention, the first treaty establishing rules against drug supply. Nonetheless, these treaties were contradictory, as in Britain, the use of prescribed heroin was common, and due to international wars these treaties served no major effect. However, in the decades following the war, the United Nations was pressured on creating a more centralized global prohibition on drugs, and with the rise of consumption of narcotics in the U.S the 1961, UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs was established (*A Short History [...]*, n.d.). This organization aimed to formalize the guidelines for global prohibitive legislation and a controlled schedule based on the medical risk of different drugs. All of the member states in the UN, at the time signed the 1961 convention, and would follow its guidelines gradually over the following years. In 1964, a Dangerous Drugs act would ratify the 1961 Convention banning the use of new drugs such as Cannabis and LSD.

When the new decade arrived, however, new studies showing the true nature of narcotics was beginning to be unraveled. Once again, the media-driven anxiety and international pressure pushed politicians towards stricter drug policy. Furthermore, in 1970 a new bill was introduced to parliament called the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA), it was created by James Callhan, the

Secretary of Labour Home. Parliament, with a desire for tightening laws regarding drug use, and with the claims of the true danger of narcotics to the body, was enough for this controversial bill to be approved in 1971. Even with a troublesome history, the MDA is still the foundation and guideline for drug policies around the world for the last fifty years. The MDA was not the only effort done by the U.S Government to lower the use of narcotics, but it also started the war on drugs. This meant that over this decade there would be an exponential increase in penalties, enforcement, and incarceration on anyone found in possession or consumption of drugs not permitted by the MDA (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024). Even if the war on drugs had little effect on stopping illegal narcotic consumption and manufacturing, its effects are still being seen today. Huge propaganda by the U.S Government during the war on drugs, changed drug culture drastically around the world, and we still see the effects of the propaganda in our own culture today (Leadership Council on Civil and Human Rights, 2021).

The emergence and crisis of fentanyl on a global level is due to a series of factors and events that have evolved since the beginning of the 21st century. In the 1990s, growing concerns about pain management led to an increase in opioids prescribed in the United States. That concluded in aggressive campaigns by pharmaceutical companies that promoted the use of opioids for chronic non-cancerous pain (Van Zee, 2009). This trend resulted in an epidemic of addiction to prescription opioids, setting the stage for the abuse of more potent opioids like fentanyl. As authorities began to more strictly regulate opioid prescribing in the mid-2000s, users and traffickers turned to more accessible and affordable illicit alternatives (Jones, 2018).

Since the early 2000s, the global drug landscape has undergone significant changes, particularly in the spike of the production of various substances. Starting from 1999, most countries suffered an all time high level of cocaine addiction, as supplies increased and so did consumption in places like the U.S or Europe (*Global Illicit Drug [...]*, n.d.). Some of the biggest producers in the 90's, like Colombia, increased their operations by 67% in the new decade. This decade also saw more ways to traffick the product to Western Europe and North America as massive cargo or smugglers across Central America and Mexico allowed for more product to be imported. All of this contributed to more demand, which led criminal organizations to generate more supply and experiment with newer drugs.

Along with the increase of crime, 2000's also brought along the emergence and rise of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. Initially, the use of fentanyl was primarily limited to medical applications as a powerful analgesic to treat severe pain, especially with cancer patients. However, around 2010, reports began to emerge about the illicit use of fentanyl, that included clandestine laboratories producing unauthorized versions of the opioid (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2021). The effortlessness with which fentanyl can be made and synthesized, as well as the over abundance of opium in the drug markets, concluded its high profitability for it to be a common drug choice for criminal organizations.

The situation worsened in the market in 2013, when deaths from overdoses of synthetic opioids, mainly fentanyl, began to increase dramatically in the United States and Canada. This increase was attributed to the mixing of fentanyl with heroin and other powerful drugs, often without users knowledge, raising the risks of fatal overdoses (Drug control strategies of United States law enforcement, 1990). Criminal organizations leveraged the global trading network and dark web platforms to distribute fentanyl and its similar drugs, which made detection and intervention by authorities difficult. Furthermore, with the age of the internet, accessibility and electronics have made the purchase methods for drugs such as fentanyl and many others easier than ever. This in turn has made it a challenge for authorities to track these illegal activities as the typical dealer selling fentanyl does not fit a specific profile on the internet (*Combating the Opioid [...]*, 2024). At the same time, countries such as Mexico and China, emerged as key points in the production and distribution of these synthetic opioids.

The reality of fentanyl and drug related crimes today is much more intense and violent than ever before, as it remains a persistent and multifaceted threat to global public health and safety. Despite international efforts to control fentanyl production and trafficking, the number of overdose deaths continues to rise. In 2021, more than 100,000 drug overdose deaths were recorded in the United States with synthetic opioids as the leading cause (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2022). Additionally, the number of arrests and seizures related to fentanyl has taken a spike in the last couple of years, and around 2400 pounds of fentanyl are seized every single year, with this metric also growing (*Combating the Opioid [...]*, 2024). The situation is equally

worrying in other regions, such as Europe and Asia, where increases in the availability and use of fentanyl have been reported. The global response has included measures such as implementing stricter controls on chemicals used to make fentanyl and enhancing international cooperation to track and dismantle trafficking networks.

In the early 2010s, illicit fentanyl manufacturing and trafficking began to expand significantly. Criminal organizations, taking advantage of weaknesses in the regulation of chemical precursors and the ease of production of fentanyl, establish clandestine laboratories in countries such as Mexico and China. Those countries became the main suppliers of fentanyl to the United States and global markets (United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, n.d.). The growing demand for synthetic opioids and the ability to distribute them through different and protected channels such as the dark web and international mail, complicated the security efforts by governments.

Furthermore, the initially fragmented global response and lack of effective cooperation between countries allowed the problem to expand without significant restrictions. These factors, combined with limited addiction treatment and a lack of coordinated policies ended in the fentanyl crisis facing the world today (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Another important factor contributing to the fentanyl crisis was the evolution of international drug policies. Throughout the 2000s and 2010s, there was an increasing focus on criminalization and “action on drugs” policies, which in many cases proved ineffective and with no consequences. These policies often prioritized repression and incarceration over prevention and treatment. This led to overloading of the prison systems all over the world and failing to address the roots of the addiction problem. Furthermore, drug trafficking networks quickly adapted to new law enforcement tactics, expanding their distribution routes and methods to evade controls (World Health Organization, 2023). This dynamic underscored the need for a more balanced approach that combined supply reduction with demand strategies and public health support.

The fentanyl crisis is the result of a convergence of factors that developed over the past two decades. Despite global efforts to combat fentanyl trafficking, criminal networks have demonstrated remarkable resilience aggravating the global public health crisis (National Institute

on Drug Abuse, 2022). The increasing prevalence of overdose deaths emphasizes the urgent need for a comprehensive strategy that combines effective regulation, international cooperation, and a public health focused approach to addiction treatment and prevention. Only through a coordinated multifaceted effort can the complexity of the fentanyl crisis be adequately addressed and its devastating impact on society reduced (Drug Control Strategies Of United States Law Enforcement, 1990).

III. CURRENT SITUATION

The fentanyl crisis has reached alarming levels globally, driven by the significant increase in the production and trafficking of synthetic opioids. According to The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, World Drug Report 2022, synthetic opioids, especially fentanyl, have been responsible for a growing number of overdose deaths in various regions of North America. In 2022, California had the most deaths from fentanyl with the total being 6,453; Florida with 5,083 and New York with 4,950, had the second and third most total deaths (USA Facts, 2023). The continued manufacturing of synthetic drugs culminates in the issues that are globally faced today. The solidification of markets for such drugs, as the trafficking of methamphetamines and a newfound popularity of fentanyl world wide from the 2010's, have culminated in the issues we face this new decade.

The largest of these issues could be identified as the increasing availability of inexpensive means to distribute and manufacture these substances, along with the stronger hooks these drugs are able to provide to make this cheap investment reap huge profits (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023). This is due to the fact that most world wide networks lack specific regulations for covering the distribution of basic chemicals, which increases the accessibility of wide range distribution networks that are required in order for the manufacturing process of drugs (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023). This problem is not only limited to a single region; Europe and Asia are also experiencing an increase in deaths related to opioids and providing difficulty for the legal network to control the current situation. Europe experienced 6,100 opioid related deaths in 2021.

Given the wide variety of the legitimacy of these chemicals, many are used for pharmaceutical processes and medicines. Furthermore, the primary tools needed to manufacture these illicit substances are widely available to an industrial scale and at a very accessible price. Criminals have been found to have used this kind of equipment and obtained it from several legal means, such as manufacturers or the internet, making it harder to track and regulate. Calls for action are frequent, but very few countries have implemented fitting measures for these issues, but they are rare and few in between, and a real answer for trafficking hasn't been found.

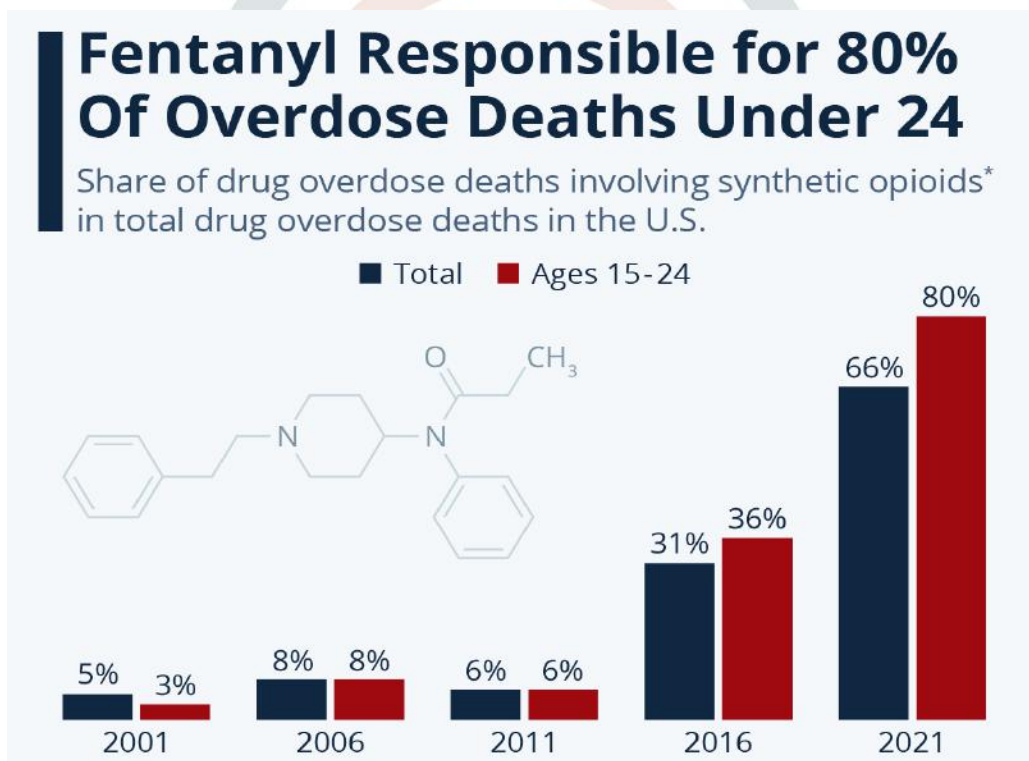
Alongside this, the movement of these goods has also been expanded by traffickers, as internet trafficking and encrypted messages make it faster to sell these products in bigger amounts than ever before. Through this means, suppliers can exchange information and make transactions online, facilitating the trade of drugs and chemicals that was never possible before, and making it almost impossible to track by law enforcement.

The importance of addressing this crisis lies not only in the number of lives lost, but also in the socioeconomic impact around the world. The increase in overdose deaths has resulted in increased healthcare costs, less productivity and a significant burden on criminal systems. In the United States the total care for patients who experienced an opioid overdose resulted in \$1.94 billion in annual hospital costs, in more than 647 healthcare facilities nationwide (*Opioid Overdoses Costing [...]*, 2019). The World Drug Report 2023, highlights that the economic costs associated with drug abuse, including direct and indirect costs, are enormous, and continue to affect the economic and social development in countries; in the U.S. is estimated at \$634 billion dollars by opioid overdose (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2023). Additionally, the impact on communities is devastating, with families broken up and demand for addiction treatment and support services increasing.

Discussing and resolving this crisis is crucial, not only to save lives, but also to stabilize communities and reduce the global economic crisis. It is essential that policies are based on concrete data and scientific evidence to design correct interventions. The modern era has brought forth new networks of drug trafficking using various means that are able to escape most enforcing networks, making the dangers of drugs all the more present as we move forward. It is

imperative to reconsider new ways to deal with this issue. This needs international cooperation and innovative strategies, including new technologies and more enforcement in prevention measures. Furthermore, increased public awareness and education about the risks of fentanyl can play a critical role in reducing this global contingency.

According to the World Drug Report 2023, harm reduction strategies such as exchange programs have been effective in reducing overdose deaths (UNODC, 2023). The fentanyl overdose crisis has severely impacted young people with a significant number of deaths among people under the age of 24. As well, there has been an alarming increase in this age group, primarily contributed from fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. These deaths underline the urgent need for interventions and harm reduction policies to ensure the safety and protection of young people in this expanding crisis (UNODC,2023).



(Zandt, 2023)

All of this has incited discussion for a new network or a strengthening of already existing networks to more properly combat the new issues arising in this new decade. The escalating crisis of fentanyl with record overdose globally, highlights the urgent need for comprehensive strategies. Strengthening global networks and innovating new methods of intervention are key to addressing the complexities of modern drug trafficking (UNODC, 2023). By using new technology and enhancing public awareness, fostering collaborative efforts, it can develop new effective responses to the impact of fentanyl world wide. Recent data indicates that international collaborations have shown promise in disrupting supply chains and reducing fentanyl-related harms (UNODC, 2023).

IV. UN ACTIONS

The United Nations has taken significant steps to combat the fentanyl crisis through the regulations constantly set by the members of The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, focusing on international cooperation and evidence-based interventions to address this ever pressing issue. In March 2018, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) placed two precursors of fentanyl, NPP and ANPP which are other two synthetic opioids, that have recognized their role in the illicit production of fentanyl. This measure aimed to restrict the availability of these chemicals and disrupt the supply chain of synthetic opioids (UNODC, 2018). In 2017, The UNODC initiated a Global Program on synthetic drugs to address the rapid increase in synthetic drug production and prohibition. This program aims to provide member states with the tools and knowledge needed to detect and interdict synthetic drugs, as well as to develop national and regional strategies to tackle the issue effectively (UNODC, 2017).

The Global Program also emphasizes the importance of public health approaches, it includes the provision of treatment and rehabilitation services for those affected by synthetic drug use. Most recently, in response to the escalating opioid crisis, The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime launched a comprehensive strategy in 2022 to combat opioid misuse with a particular focus on fentanyl. This strategy includes measures to enhance data collection and analysis, improve cross-border cooperation and support the development of national action plans

to reduce the availability and demand for opioids. The strategy also highlights the need for international collaboration to disrupt the supply chains of synthetic opioids and to enhance the capabilities of law enforcement agencies world wide (UNODC, 2022).

By implementing these strategies and programs, The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has been instrumental in coordinating international efforts to combat the fentanyl crisis. These actions underscore the importance of a multifaceted approach that includes legal, health and enforcement measures to effectively address the complex challenges posed by synthetic drugs. As previously mentioned, The UNODC Synthetic Drug Strategy reinforces efforts to combat the fentanyl crisis by focusing on reducing both supply and demand. This strategy includes promoting international standards for treatment, improving forensic science capabilities and enhancing monitoring on research on synthetic drugs (UNODC, n.d).

The measures mentioned in the previous strategy are designed to provide a comprehensive approach to the fentanyl problem, addressing the root causes and their consequences (United Nations : Office On Drugs And Crime, n.d.). The Synthetic Drug Strategy emphasizes the importance of data-driven policy and encourages Member States to adopt evidence-based practices in their drug control efforts. With efforts to stop manufacturing methods, harsher punishments for drug traffickers and an increasing international network, it is clear that the United Nations have made an effort to combat this problem on a world-wide scale. Furthermore, The UNODC collaborates with other international organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), to enhance global responses to the opioid crisis. This collaboration includes initiatives to improve access to medical treatment for opioid dependence, expand harm reduction services and to promote the regulation of chemicals used in the production of synthetic opioids (United States Department Of State, n.d.). As such, The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime participates in ongoing meetings aimed at strengthening international efforts to keep pace with the new challenges that are constantly emerging in this area.

By fostering international partnerships and promoting coordinated actions, The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime aims to create a unified global response to the fentanyl crisis, ensuring that effective measures are implemented to protect public health and safety (*Fentanyl*

Precursor Scheduling [...], 2024). This includes initiatives to improve surveillance systems, share intelligence across borders, and provide technical assistance to countries heavily affected by fentanyl trafficking. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime collaborative approach and aim to strengthen the overall capacity of countries to respond to the synthetic drug threat effectively and sustainably.

V. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Addressing the fentanyl crisis requires a multifaceted approach that includes enhanced international cooperation, stricter regulations on chemicals for opioids, improved public health interventions and comprehensive law enforcement strategies. The following proposals are implemented due to their wide-spread and international approach as well as their concise and multifaceted approach. These solutions are intended to slow down the rapid increase of drug trafficking and the restrain of the spread of fentanyl but also for enhancing global public health and safety.

1. Strengthening international partnerships and information sharing mechanisms to disrupt the global supply chains of synthetic opioids effectively (United States Department Of State, n.d.).
 - a. Utilizing already existing networks or organizations and updating them for modern threats to international security. This way it will be more difficult for smugglers and traffickers to create and distribute illicit substances and significantly decrease the scale of consumption worldwide.
 - b. Making communication between international partners stronger in order to reduce the spread of illicit substances in most countries. This will enhance the ability of developing countries to crack down on traffickers as they receive more international support and communications.

2. To effectively combat the production and distribution of fentanyl, it is crucial for governments to enhance regulation over the precursor chemicals used in its synthesis.

(Fentanyl Precursor Scheduling at the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs - United States Department of State, 2024).

- a. Countries would require stricter oversight of the manufacturing, distribution, and sale of these key chemicals, making it more challenging for traffickers to obtain them. A coordinated international response with shared data and monitoring systems would help identify and dismantle production networks. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).
 - b. Collaborative efforts between international authorities and governments can significantly weaken illicit production and distribution channels. Initiatives like the Global Coalition to Address Synthetic Drug Threats focus on fostering international cooperation to reduce the availability of dangerous synthetic drugs (United States Department Of State, n.d.)
3. Integrating public health measures, such as expanding access to treatment and harm reduction services. (Unvie, 2022).
- a. With an international effort to create safety nets for victims of addiction the effects of fentanyl could be more effective to deal with by world agencies. This should effectively minimize the damage of fentanyl on previous and current victims, reducing the mortality of the drug as well as the overall consumer market.

This could be achieved by making the access to this treatment very widespread and available to victims as well as widely promoted for general audiences.

VI. COUNTRIES INVOLVED

1. Dominion of Canada

Canada faces a significant opioid crisis, with fentanyl being a major contributor to opioid-related deaths. The Canadian government has responded with a comprehensive approach that includes public health interventions and campaigns, law enforcement efforts and international cooperation. Canada has expanded access to supervised consumption sites and increased naloxone (naloxone is a medication designed to rapidly reverse opioid overdoses) kits. In addition, more opioid substitution therapies to reduce

overdose deaths (Government of Canada, 2020). The country also collaborates with international partners to prevent the trafficking of synthetic opioids. This includes joint operations with U.S. agencies to monitor and intercept fentanyl shipments and working with The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to improve global regulatory measures. Canada has also increased public awareness campaigns to educate citizens on the dangers of synthetic opioids and the availability of life-saving interventions. Additionally, the government supports research initiatives aimed at understanding the evolving nature of the opioid crisis and developing more effective strategies to combat it.

2. People's Republic of China

China has been identified as a major source of chemicals used as precursors in the manufacture of synthetic opioids such as fentanyl. The Chinese government has taken significant steps to regulate these substances, including adding fentanyl-related substances to its list of controlled narcotics in 2019 (Fentanyl Precursor Scheduling at the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 2024). These regulatory measures are critical as they help to disrupt the supply chain of illicit fentanyl at its source. China also collaborates with international bodies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United States to enhance monitoring and enforcement actions against illegal trafficking of these substances. The cooperative efforts include sharing intelligence, conducting joint investigations and enhancing border controls to prevent the trafficking of fentanyl products and other synthetic opioids. Furthermore, China has increased its domestic law enforcement efforts, targeting illegal online sales and clandestine laboratories. China's role is crucial in the global fight against fentanyl, given its significant influence on the production and regulation of chemical precursors.

3. Republic of India

India is a key player in the global fight against fentanyl due to its role as a major producer of pharmaceutical chemicals, including those that can be used as precursors for fentanyl. The Indian government has implemented strict controls on the production and export of these chemicals to prevent their diversion into illicit channels (Fentanyl Precursor Scheduling at the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 2024). The Republic of India

collaborates with international regulatory bodies and law enforcement agencies to monitor and control the trade of precursor chemicals. In India, they have regulatory bodies like pension funds, insurance, securities and exchanges. This includes enhancing its chemical control policies and improving international cooperation through information sharing and joining actions to tackle the synthetic drug crisis from its root (United States Department Of State, n.d.). The Republic of India's measures are crucial for cutting off the supply chain of fentanyl at its origin and as a consequence reducing the availability of this deadly substance on the global market.

4. United Mexican States

The United Mexican States, also known as Mexico, plays a critical role in the fentanyl crisis as a production and trafficking country for fentanyl and its related substances. The country has seen an increase in clandestine laboratories producing synthetic opioids, which are then trafficked to the United States and other countries. To combat this, the United Mexican States has implemented stricter regulations on precursor chemicals and increased efforts to dismantle drug labs (United States Department Of State, n.d.). The Mexican government works closely with US authorities through initiatives such as the Merida Initiative, which provides funding and technical assistance for counternarcotics operations. In addition, Mexico is currently working with international agencies to strengthen its law enforcement capabilities and improve its legal framework to effectively combat drug trafficking. Cooperation between Mexico and other countries is essential to disrupt the complex networks involved in the production and distribution of fentanyl.

5. United States of America

The United States is one of the most critically affected countries by the fentanyl crisis, with synthetic opioids accounting for a significant proportion of overdose deaths. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), fentanyl and other synthetic opioids were involved in nearly 73% of all opioid-related deaths in 2019 (CDC, 2021). The severity of the crisis has led to a range of domestic and international measures by the U.S. government. Domestically, the U.S. has increased funding for treatment programs, expanded access to naloxone (a medication that reverses opioid overdoses),

and implemented prescription monitoring programs to curb the misuse of opioid medications. Internationally, the U.S. collaborates with countries such as China and Mexico to control the production and trafficking of fentanyl and its similar products. This includes joint operations, intelligence sharing and diplomatic efforts to strengthen global regulations (Unvie, 2022). These extensive efforts accentuates the United States important role in addressing the global fentanyl crisis.

6. Argentine Republic
7. Czech Republic
8. Federal Republic of Germany
9. Federal Republic of Nigeria
10. Federative Republic of Brazil
11. French Republic
12. Italian Republic
13. State of Japan
14. Kingdom of Belgium
15. Kingdom of Thailand
16. Kingdom of The Netherlands
17. Kingdom of Spain
18. Kingdom of Sweden
19. New Zealand
20. Republic of Austria
21. Republic of Colombia
22. Republic of the Philippines
23. Russian Federation

24. Slovak Republic
25. Switzerland (Swiss Confederation)
26. The Commonwealth of Australia
27. The Republic of South Africa
28. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

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