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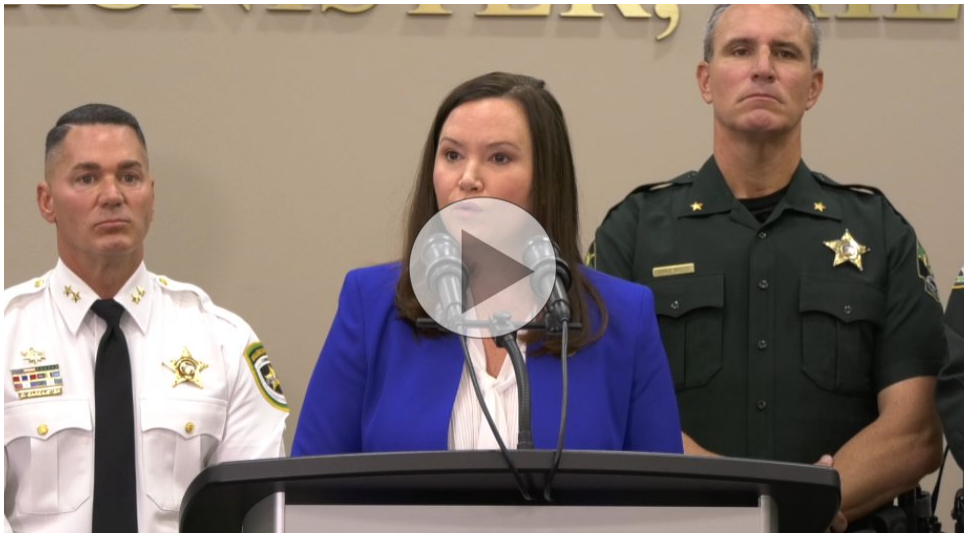
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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Hosts Security Briefing with LEOs, Former Federal Officials, Families Against Fentanyl



Attorney General Ashley Moody, former U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration Acting Administrator Uttam Dhillon, former Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy Jim Carroll, Families Against Fentanyl Founder James Rauh and law enforcement leaders from across the state today held a security briefing to discuss the growing threat posed by fentanyl. With record quantities of the substance in circulation nationwide, the constant flow of the drug across the southwest border, the low cost of production and its sheer lethality, fentanyl poses a major threat to the public. Fentanyl is already the leading cause of death for Americans ages 18 to 45. There is also growing concern that fentanyl could be weaponized. In July, Attorney General Moody called for the synthetic opioid to be classified as a weapon of mass destruction.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “For years, we have sounded the alarm about fentanyl overdoses claiming a record number of American lives, but there is growing concern that this synthetic opioid could also be weaponized due to its lethality and the massive amount being brought into the country across the southwest border. Today, I held a briefing with Florida law enforcement leaders, former federal officials and Families Against Fentanyl to strategize about how Floridians can help us stop the astronomical death toll caused by this deadly synthetic substance.”

Former DEA Acting Administrator Uttam Dhillon said, “Our country is in the midst of a national crisis: record-high drug-related deaths, driven by illicit fentanyl. It’s clear that the status quo isn’t

working, and unprecedented action is necessary to turn this deadly tide. Declaring illicit fentanyl a weapon of mass destruction is exactly the kind of bold action that can stem the flow of illicit fentanyl into the United States. Attorney General Moody should be commended for calling upon the Biden Administration to implement this important policy."

Families Against Fentanyl Founder James Rauh said, "As both a father who lost my son, Tommy, to fentanyl poisoning, and as a chemist by trade, I know firsthand the threat posed by illicit fentanyl to American families and national security. Members of local law enforcement, a bipartisan group of U.S. congress members, and dozens of federal officials spanning Democratic and Republican presidential administrations all agree that illicit fentanyl should be declared a weapon of mass destruction. I commend Attorney General Moody for the tremendous leadership she has shown in calling upon the Biden Administration to take this action. It would activate unused and under-used resources to fight this scourge, stopping illicit fentanyl before it enters the United States."

Former White House Drug Czar Jim Carroll said, "Joint cooperation of dedicated elected officials like Attorney General Moody with nonprofit leaders like James Rauh of Families Against Fentanyl is critical to reversing the sad trend of drug-related deaths in the United States. Ending the illicit fentanyl epidemic requires strong partnerships between leaders in both the public and private sectors. The action taken by Attorney General Moody in calling for illicit fentanyl to be declared a weapon of mass destruction, coupled with her passion for providing effective access to recovery services as seen in her recent announcement of a Florida partnership with treatment-finder Shatterproof, can guarantee a future in which our next generation of American leaders has the opportunity to achieve their full potential."

Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Mark Glass said, " Fentanyl is the deadliest drug in Florida killing nearly 3,000 people in just six months and these numbers continue to rise with no end in sight. Fentanyl is killing our children. It's killing our citizens. Let's stop this before it gets worse. Call 855-FLA-Safe to report suspicious activity."

Hillsborough County Sheriff Chad Chronister said, "Fentanyl is a violently dangerous drug that is responsible for thousands of deaths every year here in Florida. Unfortunately, the latest data from the CDC shows that our state has the second-most deaths related to drug overdoses. This is a battle that we, at the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, take on every single day. We will continue to work tirelessly through regular law enforcement operations and with our Attorney General to remove it from our streets."

Pasco County Sheriff Chris Nocco said, "Substance abuse and addiction are healthcare issues to which, unfortunately, law enforcement has been forced to be the primary responder. We see firsthand the way this impacts our communities with loved ones taken from their families and friends by the horrific drug fentanyl. We must continue to find ways for society to address this healthcare issue."

Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri said, "The impact fentanyl has had on our community – is that since 2019 in Pinellas County, about 1,300 people have died from opioid deaths….moms, dads, sisters, brothers, parents – people are affected by this every day."

Fentanyl is a highly deadly synthetic opioid. Just two milligrams can be lethal. More than 75,000 Americans died from overdose of synthetic opioids, mainly fentanyl, in the 12-month period ending in Feb. 2022. The substance is so toxic that it poses serious exposure risks. During a March mass-overdose event featuring several West Point Cadets in South Florida, two of the seven hospitalized from that incident suffered the drug's harmful effects just by performing CPR on others who intentionally used illicit drugs. The DEA and CDC issued guidance to first responders for preparing and protecting against exposure while responding to calls due to the hazard.

In a private security briefing, Attorney General Moody, Former DEA Acting Administrator Dhillon, Former Director of the WHONDCP Carroll, FAF founder James Rauh, Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Mark Glass, Hillsborough County Sheriff Chad Chronister, Pasco County Sheriff Chris Nocco, Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri, Citrus County Sheriff Mike Prendergast, Florida Police Chiefs Association President Keith Touchberry and Florida Sheriffs Association President and Hernando County Sheriff Al Nienhuis discussed ways fentanyl could be weaponized to expose thousands of people to the deadly substance in a single event.

For b-roll of the briefing, click here.

The historic number of overdose deaths from fentanyl demonstrate that, while U.S. Customs and Border Protection have interdicted record amounts of the substance, large quantities are still entering the U.S. The amount of fentanyl seized since February of last year could kill every man, woman and child in the country more than 11 times over—raising concerns over the potential that the synthetic opioid is being stockpiled in the U.S. July set the record for fentanyl seized at the border, with 2,100 pounds of the substance taken into custody—in other terms, enough to kill nearly half a billion people.

In July, Attorney General Moody called on President Biden to classify the substance as a WMD. The proposed action would require the Department of Homeland Security and the DEA to coordinate a response with other agencies, including the Department of Defense—as opposed to the federal government only treating the substance as a narcotics control problem.

To learn more, click here.