

(U) Fentanyl Seized From Commercial Bus Passengers



DEA
BULLETIN



El Paso
Division



(U) This DEA Bulletin is based on preliminary reporting and may be subject to updating as additional information becomes available.

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(U) Event

(U//DSEN) On June 18, 2018, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Midland Resident Office (MRO) seized 2,889 dosage units of a substance that tested positive for the presence of fentanyl. MRO agents also seized approximately 1.5 kilograms of brown heroin. The illicit drugs had been in the possession of two bus passengers traveling from Los Angeles to Katy, Texas.

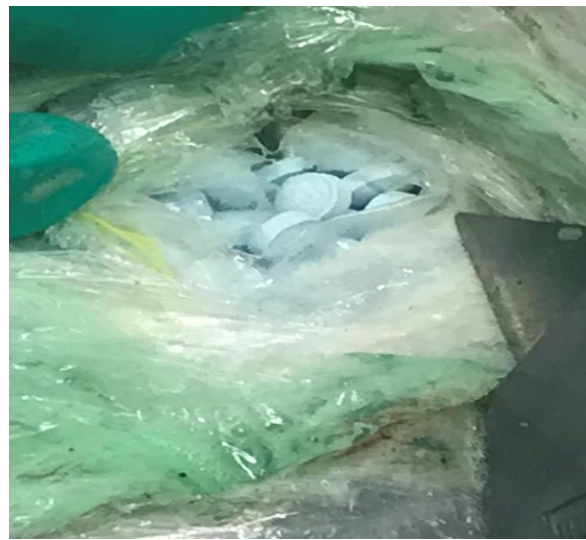
(U) Significance

(U//DSEN) This seizure is the first confirmed instance of fentanyl encountered within the DEA MRO area of responsibility. Because of extreme risks presented by fentanyl to first responders and bystanders when encountered in the field, the MRO posted an Officer Safety Bulletin using the West Texas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) to raise awareness among area federal, state and local law enforcement agencies throughout the Permian Basin.

(U) Details

(U//DSEN) On June 18, 2018, task force officers from the DEA MRO were conducting operations at a bus station in Midland, Texas. On the evening of June 17th, officers initiated consensual contact with passengers from a bus that had originally departed from Los Angeles at approximately 6:45pm.

(U//DSEN) Figure 1. Seized fentanyl tablets.



Source: DEA

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(U//DSEN) Officers identified a pair of Hispanic males who were traveling together from Los Angeles to Katy, Texas (a city just west of Houston and considered part of the greater Houston metropolitan area). The pair exhibited several common indicators associated with criminal activity (nervousness, evasive and/or inconsistent answers, confusion). Officers also noted two bags in the area where the pair were sitting on the bus. The pair both acknowledged ownership of one bag, but disclaimed ownership of the other.

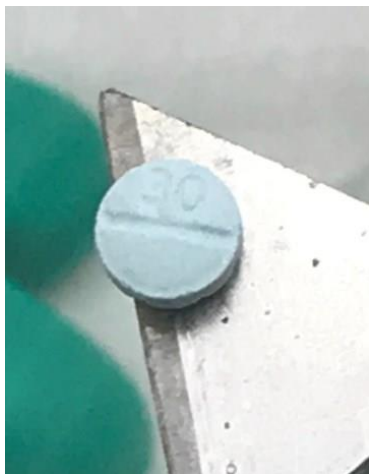
(U//DSEN) Officers continued consensual contact with the remaining passengers on the bus and eventually accounted for all of the bags except the one previously unclaimed. Officers removed both bags from the bus and a narcotics K-9 conducted a free-air search, where he alerted officers to the unclaimed bag. When officers searched the bag they discovered three cellophane-wrapped bundles stuffed between clothing and personal items. There was also a prescription medication bottle in the bag having on it the name of the younger of the two men.

(U//DSEN) Figure 2. Seized fentanyl and prescription medication.



Source: DEA

(U//DSEN) Figure 3. Close-up of fentanyl markings.



Source: DEA

(U//DSEN) The initial search of the two larger cellophane-wrapped bundles revealed a brown powdery substance presumed to be heroin. All three bundles were wrapped in layers of clear plastic household wrap with dish soap and pepper smeared between the layers. When officers opened the third bundle—which was smaller—they found it to contain what appeared to be several thousand small round blue pills. As officers noted the generally poor quality of the pressing of the pills (rough edges, shallow imprint of the numbers and letters) they recalled their recently completed training on fentanyl handling and immediately secured the evidence as suspected fentanyl. All further processing of the evidence was conducted using a vacuum hood apparatus at the MRO. The evidence was processed in accordance with fentanyl protocols and sent to the DEA South Central Laboratory for analysis.

(U//DSEN) On July 24, 2018, DEA MRO received the laboratory analysis report for the pills. A sample of the 2,889 pills had been found to contain acetylfentanyl (a fentanyl analogue); fentanyl; 4-anilino-N-phenethyl-4-piperidine (ANPP—a fentanyl precursor); acetaminophen; and dipyron. Acetaminophen is an over-the-counter pain reliever more commonly sold under the trade name Tylenol®. Although dipyron (also known as metamizole) is another

analgesic that is widely used in some countries, it is banned in the United States and other countries due to potentially harmful side effects.

(U//DSEN) The seized tablets had been clandestinely manufactured to pass as 30 milligram oxycodone, a commonly prescribed opioid pain reliever. However, as earlier mentioned, irregularities in the tablets alerted the officers to the potentially far riskier presence of fentanyl. This investigation is ongoing with no further information available.

(U//DSEN) Figure 4. Close-up of fentanyl markings.



Source: DEA

U//DSEN: Information marked (U//DSEN) indicates DEA reporting at the Law Enforcement Sensitive (LES) level.

(U) This product was prepared by the DEA El Paso Division. Comments and questions may be addressed to the Chief, Analysis and Production Section at DEA.IntelligenceProducts@usdoj.gov.



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