



## DEA BULLETIN



# (U) Suspected Fentanyl Powder Concealed in Wax Candles

(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 July 13-14, 2018, subsequent to interdiction traffic stops in Newington, New Hampshire, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Portsmouth Tactical Diversion Squad (TDS) and the New Hampshire State Police (NHSP) Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) seized approximately 500 grams of suspected fentanyl in powder form that was concealed within wax candles.

## (U) Significance

(U//DSEN) The transportation of suspected fentanyl by drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) poses a concrete danger to law enforcement officers. Moreover, this concealment method had only been observed by the DEA Portsmouth once before, in November 2017.

## (U) Details

(U//DSEN) On July 13, 2018, DEA reporting revealed that a known fentanyl distributor in the Rochester, New Hampshire, area was coordinating a trip to Massachusetts to acquire 25 “fingers” (a finger is approximately 10 grams) of fentanyl. DEA Portsmouth TDS obtained a description of the vehicle and

(U//DSEN) Figure 1. A wax candle containing fentanyl in powder form.



Source: New Hampshire State Police  
Mobile Enforcement Team

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license plate, as well as, information that the Methuen, Massachusetts,-based DTO regularly used candles to conceal and smuggle its drugs. Although there are countless ways to smuggle drugs, this information was of particular interest and consistent with other information that the DEA Portsmouth TDS received concerning the Massachusetts-based DTO using the same concealment method.

(U//DSEN) DEA Portsmouth TDS personnel established surveillance on Interstate 95 North at a known drug stash house in Methuen. During the surveillance period, a target vehicle was observed arriving at the stash house and departing shortly thereafter. After departing and passing into New Hampshire, an interdiction traffic stop of the target vehicle was done by the NHSP. During routine questioning the sole occupant appeared uncharacteristically nervous, could not identify the registered owner of the vehicle, and could not provide details of his preceding travel itinerary. The driver denied consent to search the vehicle, so an NHSP K-9 performed an exterior sweep the vehicle which resulting in a positive alert for the presence of drugs. During the subsequent search of the vehicle, NHSP troopers seized two candles from the center console. A probe of the candles resulted in the discovery of 34 small plastic baggies. Each baggie contained a brown powdery substance (fentanyl). The weight of the fentanyl was approximately 340 grams.

(U//LES) Figure 2. Two wax candles found to contain fentanyl in powder form.



Source: New Hampshire State Police Mobile Enforcement Team

(U//LES) Figure 3 and Figure 4. The contents of the wax candles that contained presumed fentanyl in powder from the seizure on July 13, 2018 (340 grams of presumed fentanyl).



Source: New Hampshire State Police Mobile Enforcement Team

(U//DSEN) On July 14, 2018, DEA reporting revealed that the same fentanyl distributor was aware of the previous night's seizure and was coordinating another trip to Massachusetts to acquire fentanyl fingers to replace the seized shipment. DEA Portsmouth TDS personnel once again initiated surveillance of the target vehicle and observed it arriving and departing from the same stash house as it had done previously. After an interdiction traffic stop was done by the NHSP, the vehicle's occupants appeared uncharacteristically nervous during routine questioning, could not identify the registered owner of the vehicle, and could not provide details of their preceding travel itinerary. In addition, NHSP troopers observed small punctures marks, consistent with needle use, along both occupants' wrists. The driver consented to a vehicle search that resulted in a positive alert by an NHSP K-9 for the presence of drugs. During a subsequent search of the vehicle, NHSP troopers seized a candle from the backseat area. A probe of the candle resulted in the discovery of 15 small plastic baggies, each containing a brown powdery substance (believed to be fentanyl) packed in a glass jar further concealed within the candle. The weight of the presumed fentanyl was 160 grams.

(U//LES) Figure 5 and Figure 6. A wax candle and its contents from the seizure on July 14, 2018 (160 grams of believed fentanyl in powder form).



Source: New Hampshire State Police Mobile Enforcement Team

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

(U) This product was prepared by the DEA Boston Field Division. Comments and questions may be addressed to the Chief, Analysis and Production Section at [DEA.IntelligenceProducts@usdoj.gov](mailto:DEA.IntelligenceProducts@usdoj.gov).



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