



Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York
Bridget G. Brennan, Special Narcotics Prosecutor

For Immediate Release
January 5, 2023

www.snpnyc.org
[@snpnyc](https://twitter.com/snpnyc)

Contacts:

Special Narcotics Prosecutor's Office
Kati Cornell
(212) 815-0525

DEA New York Division
Erin McKenzie-Mulvey
(212) 337-2906

**DEA New York and NYC's Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor
Seize Record Amounts of Fentanyl-Laced, Fake Prescription Pills and
Fentanyl Powder During 2022**

*Most Dangerous Drug to Ever Hit the Streets Leads to over 2,300 Fatal
Overdoses in NYC*

NEW YORK CITY – The Drug Enforcement Administration, New York Division and New York City's Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor announce record amounts of fentanyl-laced, fake prescription pills and fentanyl powder seized in New York during 2022.

"Thousands of New Yorkers are mourning precious lives claimed by deadly fentanyl last year." **Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan** said. "Fentanyl saturates the illegal drug supply in New York City and is a factor in roughly 80% of overdose deaths. Even casual or occasional illegal drug use could be fatal, and with an explosion in counterfeit pills containing fentanyl, a single tablet purchased online or on social media could be deadly."

The DEA's New York Division, which covers the State of New York, has seized 1.9 million fentanyl-laced, fake prescription pills (a 152% increase from 2021) and 1,958 pounds of fentanyl, which is the equivalent of 72 million lethal doses. In addition, nearly 30,000 pounds of cocaine, over 700 pounds of heroin, and 1,800 pounds of methamphetamine were seized in 2022.

DEA Special Agent in Charge Frank A. Tarentino III said, "To put that into perspective, throughout 2022 we seized enough deadly doses of fentanyl in New York for more than three times the population of New York State. A deadly dose is just two milligrams of fentanyl and laboratory analysis shows that six out of ten fentanyl-laced, fake prescription pills are lethal. New York has always been a hub for drug trafficking organizations feeding New York City and the Northeast and we are lasered-in on cutting off the head of the snake by defeating the two Mexican drug cartels responsible – the Sinaloa and Jalisco (CJNG) Cartels."

In 2022, cases handled by the [Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor \(SNP\)](http://www.snpnyc.org), in conjunction with its local, state and federal partners, resulted in the seizure of over 950,000 counterfeit pills containing fentanyl, an increase of more than 425% over 2021. Mexican drug cartels are increasingly pressing fentanyl into counterfeit pills designed to look like blue M30 oxycodone pills, or in a multitude of colors.

More than 3,000 fatal overdoses occurred in New York City in the 12 months ending in July of 2022, according to estimates by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Approximately 8 in 10 of these deaths are due to fentanyl, or more than 2,300 deaths.

SNP seeks to save lives and disrupt narcotics trafficking at the highest level possible by working in close collaboration with DEA New York Division, the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force (NYDETF), the New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force, the New York City Police Department, the New York State Police, the city's five elected District Attorneys, and other partners.

In December of 2022 alone, SNP cases conducted with the NYDETF and other partners resulted in the seizure of approximately 175,000 fentanyl pills, according to preliminary data. An analysis of significant investigations by SNP and DEA's New York Drug Enforcement Task Force (NYDETF) during this period reveals striking similarities. Defendants resided out of state, with the majority from the West Coast; large quantities of fentanyl pills and powder were transported together for distribution in New York City; vehicles used in transporting fentanyl had out-of-state license plates; and the loads of narcotics were worth a million dollars or more.

- December 27, 2022: SNP's Investigators Unit and members of NYDETF Group T-22 seized approximately 20,000 multi-colored fentanyl pills and over 6 pounds of powdered fentanyl concealed in a cardboard diapers box. The fentanyl, estimated to carry a street value of \$1.3 million, was recovered from a Ford Bronco with Florida license plates. The seizure and arrest occurred in a Wendy's Parking Lot at 5805 Broadway in the Bronx. Defendant SERGIO VELASQUEZ, of Manassas, Va., allegedly had his 12-year-old daughter with him in the vehicle. He is charged with Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First and Third Degrees and Unlawfully Dealing with a Child in the First Degree.
- December 19, 2022: Defendants MARTIN VILLANUEVA-FLORES, of Visalia, Calif., RICARDO TORRES, of Grandview, Wash., and FRANCISCO VALDEZ, of Spokane, Wash., were arrested during a sale of fentanyl to an undercover officer in a parking lot of the Sheridan Hotel, located at 1440 Sheridan Boulevard in the Bronx. Members of NYDETF Group T-23 recovered approximately 50,000 multi-colored fentanyl pills marked M30 and over 13 pounds of fentanyl in powder form from a suitcase that TORRES retrieved from a GMC Sierra HD Denali. Agents and officers also recovered a semi-automatic pistol from the vehicle, which bore California license plates and was registered to VALDEZ. All three defendants are charged with Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree. VALDEZ is also charged with Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Second Degree. The fentanyl carried an estimated street value of \$2.8 million.
- On December 7, 2022, members of NYDETF Group T-12 arrested one man in Lower Manhattan and recovered approximately 50,000 fentanyl pills worth up to \$1 million from inside a vehicle. The pills were contained in nine tightly bound packages inside a cardboard box. Four packages contained light blue fentanyl pills marked with M30 and five packages contained multicolored fentanyl pills marked with M30. DAVID CARRANZA, of Pixley, Calif., is charged with Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the First and Third Degrees.

"Seizing illegal narcotics is integral to the NYPD's mission of protecting our city and its people," said **Police Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell**. "I commend our NYPD investigators, New York City's Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor, the DEA, and all of our law enforcement partners for their herculean work this year – and I know that through our continuing collaboration we'll gain even more momentum holding criminals accountable and keeping New Yorkers safe in the year ahead."

New York State Police Acting Superintendent Steven A. Nigrelli said, "I commend the diligent efforts of all the partners involved in the record amount of seizures of these lethal drugs over the past year. Each arrest, each seizure is saving lives and decreases the additional crime that surrounds these illegal and dangerous drug operations. There is zero tolerance for those who sell deadly, illegal drugs,

and we will continue to aggressively target and disrupt these trafficking organizations and put those responsible behind bars.”

Nationwide, DEA seized over 50.6 million fentanyl-laced, fake prescription pills and more than 10,000 pounds of fentanyl powder this calendar year. The DEA Laboratory estimates that these seizures represent more than 379 million potentially deadly doses of fentanyl, which is enough deadly doses of fentanyl to kill every American.

Most of the fentanyl trafficked by the Sinaloa and CJNG Cartels is being mass-produced at secret factories in Mexico with chemicals sourced largely from China. In 2021, the DEA issued a Public Safety Alert <https://www.dea.gov/alert/sharp-increase-fake-prescription-pills-containing-fentanyl-and-meth> on the widespread drug trafficking of fentanyl in the form of fentanyl-laced, fake prescription pills. These pills are made to look identical to real prescription medications—including OxyContin®, Percocet®, and Xanax®—but only contain filler and fentanyl, and are often deadly. Fake pills are readily found on social media. No pharmaceutical pill bought on social media is safe. The only safe medications are ones prescribed directly to you by a trusted medical professional and dispensed by a licensed pharmacist.

Just last month, DEA alerted the public <https://www.dea.gov/alert/dea-laboratory-testing-reveals-6-out-10-fentanyl-laced-fake-prescription-pills-now-contain> to a sharp nationwide increase in the lethality of fentanyl-laced fake prescription pills. DEA laboratory testing in 2022 revealed that six out of ten fentanyl-laced, fake prescription pills contained a potentially lethal dose of fentanyl. This is an increase from DEA’s announcement in 2021 that four out of ten fentanyl-laced, fake prescription pills contain a potentially deadly dose.

DEA is now providing a regularly updated counter at <http://www.dea.gov> to track approximate amounts of fentanyl pills and fentanyl powder seized by DEA.

DEA has created a Faces of Fentanyl memorial to commemorate the lives lost from fentanyl poisoning. To submit a photo of a loved one lost to fentanyl, please send their name, age, and photograph to fentanylawareness@dea.gov, or post a photo and their name to social media using the hashtag #JustKNOW.