

Operation Blues Brothers  
USAO DC Press Conference  
November 20, 2023  
DEA Administrator Milgram Remarks as Prepared

Fentanyl is the greatest threat to Americans today. It is devastating families across our country and killing Americans from all walks of life. And it is the leading cause of death for Americans between the ages of 18 and 45.

That hit home for us here in Washington D.C. on April 6, 2021. On that day, a young woman named Diamond Lynch took a pill—one pill—and died almost immediately. That pill looked like a Percocet but it was not; it was fentanyl. Diamond Lynch was 20 years old at the time. She was planning her son's 1-year old birthday party when she was killed.

After Diamond's tragic death, DEA worked with our local partners to track down the two individuals involved with providing her with the pill—Larry and Justice Eastman. Those two individuals are now sentenced and in prison.

But we didn't stop there.

The Drug Enforcement Administration is actively targeting every single aspect of the global fentanyl supply chain—so that we can put an end to the most devastating drug crisis our country has ever seen.

So DEA identified the Eastman's source of supply and the people whose business it was to transport fentanyl from Los Angeles to D.C. Those individuals have been charged.

DEA identified additional distributors of fentanyl in Los Angeles and the people whose business it was to get fentanyl from Mexico. Those individuals have been charged.

DEA identified additional sources and distributors in L.A., San Diego, and D.C. Those individuals have been charged.

Today, 25 defendants are charged and in custody as a result of the investigation into Diamond Lynch's death.

Together, these individuals sent more than a million fentanyl pills over the course of a year into the Washington, D.C. area. These pills are deadly and they are profitable. A dealer in L.A. pays 30 cents for one pill and sells it for \$3, the dealer in D.C. pays \$3 for one pill and sells it for \$30.

The criminals make so much money off of each sale, that don't mind if they kill their customers in the process.

Especially because when it comes to modern drug conspiracies like this one, most of the people involved have never met in person.

Let's talk for a minute about how this is even possible.

Almost every single defendant in this case used Instagram.

- They used Instagram to find their sources of supply.
- They used Instagram to find new avenues of distribution.
- They used Instagram to pick the color of their pills, the amount, the price.
- They used Instagram to coordinate shipments and work out how they would get paid.

This fentanyl distribution conspiracy—which started with pills sourced in Mexico and spanned across the United States—would not have been possible without Instagram.

By the same token, these indictments, these arrests, and our ability to dismantle this conspiracy would not have been possible without lawful access to those Instagram messages. Thanks to the hard work of law enforcement agents and prosecutors, DEA and its partners were able to obtain warrants and build out a case that pursued every aspect of this network.

But this kind of work to protect the public will become increasingly difficult—if not impossible—if social media companies implement “warrant-proof” end-to-end encryption, that simply turns the lights off and looks the other way while criminals use these platforms to spread poison in our communities. Meta, the company that owns Instagram, announced in August that it intends to do just that.

This is the unprecedented threat we are dealing with. And it is the reason why 110,757 Americans died from drug poisonings last year alone.

DEA will turn over every stone, and follow every lead, until we end this crisis. And we ask our partners in the private sector to do the same. We must do more—we must all do more—to end the fentanyl crisis once and for all.

I want to thank the men and women of DEA’s

- Washington D.C. Field Division
- L.A. Field Division, and
- San Diego Field Division

Our law enforcement partners on this case

- U.S. Postal Inspection Service
- ATF
- Metropolitan Police Department

And our prosecution partners in the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia, whose prosecutors have worked tirelessly on this investigation.

Today's charges continue DEA's work to target the global fentanyl supply chain. We will not relent, until this crisis ends. And we will continue to work tirelessly to achieve justice for Diamond Lynch and for the hundreds of thousands of lives lost to fentanyl.