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DHS Officials Discuss Efforts to Combat the Opioid Crisis

ICE and CBP Officials Highlight Operations in Local Communities

WASHINGTON – Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials today participated in a hearing titled "Opioids in the Homeland: DHS Coordination with State and Local Partners to Fight the Epidemic." The hearing took place in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and was held by the House Committee on Homeland Security’s Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency.

During the hearing, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Director of Field Operations, Baltimore Casey Durst and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Special Agent in Charge, Philadelphia Marlon Miller discussed DHS efforts to both stop the flow of illegal opioids into American communities and dismantle criminal networks responsible for drug trafficking.

“HSI is committed to battling the U.S. opioid crisis,” said Miller in his written testimony. “HSI will continue to vigorously pursue the cartels that bring not only heroin and fentanyl to the U.S., but other narcotics that have a dangerous, and too often deadly, impact on our communities.”

“As America’s unified border agency, CBP plays a critical role in preventing illicit narcotics, including opioids, from reaching the American public,” said Durst in her written testimony. “CBP leverages targeting and intelligence-driven strategies, and works in close coordination with our partners as part of our multi-layered, risk-based approach to enhance the security of our borders and our country.”

CBP’s Office of Field Operations is extensively engaged in the interdiction of terrorists, narcotics, weapons, and currency. CBP works closely with local police forces, including the Pennsylvania State Police, on a number of opioid-related issues. CBP also works with local fusion centers which share information to detect, prevent, investigate, and respond to criminal and terrorist activity.

ICE works to target, investigate, disrupt, and dismantle criminal networks responsible for the manufacturing, smuggling and distribution of dangerous opioids. In Philadelphia, the ICE Homeland Security Investigations team is leading a Cyber Crimes Investigations Task Force charged with addressing the online opioid
traffickers. In May 2017, this task force arrested a narcotics trafficker near Philadelphia who acted as a large-scale domestic reshipper for a Chinese drug trafficking organization. To date, HSI Special Agents have attributed at least 39 overdose deaths to this drug trafficking organization. Also in 2017, HSI dismantled a dark net drug trafficking organization that operated what is believed to be two of the largest-ever clandestine fentanyl tableting laboratories in Pennsylvania.

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