China is one of the world's top producers of the precursor chemicals used to manufacture methamphetamine and fentanyl, as well as the chemicals used to process heroin and cocaine. There are approximately 160,000 chemical companies in China. Most of the chemical production is intended for legitimate use, illicit drug manufacturers directly source or divert their chemicals from China for their drug production. Combating illicit fentanyl is a top priority for DEA. DEA has maintained a liaison presence in the People’s Republic of China, including having an office in Beijing for the last three decades. DEA’s office in Beijing has direct engagement with drug control officials from China’s Ministry of Public Security, Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB). DEA’s well-established relationship with Chinese drug control authorities is a primary significant bilateral mechanism for addressing the threat from the shipment of illicit fentanyls, their precursors, and other synthetic drugs to the United States and elsewhere. The United States Government has also engaged China through two bilateral fora on law enforcement and counter-narcotics matters: first, the Law Enforcement and Cybersecurity Dialogue (LECD), which is co-chaired by the Attorney General, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Chinese Ministry of Public Security; and second, the U.S.-China Joint Liaison Group (JLG) on Law Enforcement (now re-cast as the LECD Senior Officials Meeting or “LECD-SOM”), a sub-ministerial group co-chaired by the Department, the Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), and DHS.

The Chinese fentanyl threat is linked to Mexico which is the primary producer and supplier of heroin to the United States. The Department of Justice and DEA have engaged with the Government of Mexico to address this issue. DEA has developed a U.S.-Mexico bilateral heroin strategy to increase intelligence sharing, coordination of investigations, training, sharing of forensic information, and the control of precursor chemicals. DEA’s Mexico City Country Office has engaged the interagency within the U.S. Embassy through creation of a Heroin Fentanyl Working Group (HFWG). In early 2016, this forum became part of the Office of National Drug Control Policy’s (ONDCP) Heroin Availability Reduction Plan (HARP) implementation as a video teleconference, co-chaired by Mission Mexico and ONDCP and regularly attended by the National Security Council, DEA, the Department of Defense (DOD), and the Department of State Bureaus of Western Hemisphere Affairs and INL. The HFWG has allowed the Federal government to speak with one voice and maintain critical security relationships with our Mexican partners.

DEA uses its regulatory authority to place many synthetic substances into the Controlled Substance Act (CSA), pursuant to our temporary scheduling authority. Once a substance is temporarily placed in Schedule I, DEA moves towards permanent control by requesting a scientific and medical evaluation, and a scheduling recommendation, from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). DEA also has the Fentanyl Signature Profiling Program (FSPP) to provide real-time data from the in-depth analyses of seized samples and unique science-based forensic investigative leads on seizures where linkages were unknown or only suspected.

DEA continues to engage the Government of China and others in our efforts to stem the flow of fentanyl and fentanyl precursors, which are fueling the national opioid epidemic. DEA is committed to working with our interagency and international partners in targeting, indicting, and arresting the leadership of criminal networks, both foreign and domestic.