

**Chairman Johnson Opening Statement  
“Preventing Drug Trafficking Through International Mail”**

**Tuesday, April 19, 2016**

*As submitted for the record:*

Good morning and welcome. The purpose of today’s roundtable is to examine the problem of synthetic drugs entering our country through international mail, and steps that can be taken to strengthen customs screening procedures.

Our committee has done extensive work examining the lack of border security, and also to understand the nation’s drug crisis, including two hearings last week. Today, we will look at another source of this crisis—drugs entering through our ports of entry that are shipped directly to customers by international shippers, including the U.S. Postal Service.

First, we will look at the problem of synthetic drugs and how they are contributing to our nation’s drug crisis. Synthetic drugs are created with manmade chemicals to mimic the effects of other illicit drugs. The large majority of these chemicals are made in Chinese labs before being sent into the United States in bulk quantities for final assembly into individual dosages. The chemicals are cheap to manufacture and can be ordered online, resulting in a huge return on investment for drug dealers. Less than \$5,000 of raw ingredients can earn \$250,000 or more on the street in the United States.

These drugs present a growing risk to public health and safety. Last year, poison control centers recorded a record number of calls related to synthetic marijuana, more than double the number of calls from the previous year. Fentanyl, a painkiller 25 to 40 times stronger than heroin, is being produced by these same Chinese labs and imported into the United States to be cut with heroin or to be sold on the streets as other narcotics. It is causing overdoses around the country. In my home state of Wisconsin, fentanyl has killed 30 people since December in Milwaukee County alone.

Second, we will examine the international shipping and screening process to understand how the mail and international shipping is being used by drug traffickers. Once drugs are purchased online, they are mailed through foreign postal systems, delivered within the United States by the U.S. Postal Service, or shipped into the country through a private carrier, like UPS, FedEx or DHL. While private carriers know their customers and are able to work with federal agencies to prevent drugs from reaching their destinations, the U.S. Postal Service is compelled by treaties on international mail exchange to deliver mail on behalf of foreign posts. Because they cannot control which individuals use these international services, the Postal Service can become an unwitting drug courier.

Third, I ask that we continue to work together to identify what can be done to solve this problem and to help prevent these dangerous drugs from getting into our country. Today’s roundtable follows oversight letters that Ranking Member Carper and I sent to federal agencies last month on improving the security and screening of mail coming into the United States. I have asked

today's participants to join the committee in a discussion of how we can all work together to improve mail screening and give ourselves the best tools to keep these dangerous drugs off the street.

Thank you for joining us today. I look forward to our discussion.