

Opening Statement of Senator Tom Carper
HSGAC Roundtable: Preventing Drug Trafficking through International Mail

Tuesday, April 19, 2016

As prepared for delivery:

Let me begin by thanking everyone for joining us today to discuss international mail security and how we can work together to counter drug trafficking through our mail system. Most of us would agree that we should be doing everything that we can to combat the flow of illegal drugs into our country – whether they are smuggled by people; hidden in vehicles, boats or airplanes; or arrive through mail shipments.

The Drug Enforcement Administration, which is represented here today, has reported that most of the synthetic drugs present in the U.S. market entered our country via overseas shipments routed through international mail service or private shippers.

I am encouraged to hear that our Customs and Border Protection officers are already intercepting and seizing large shipments of synthetic drugs and other illegal items that are bound for the U.S. However, we know that there are still far too many of these drugs available on our streets, and it's imperative that more be done to intercept them.

I look forward to hearing more today about the existing processes and procedures to screen mail and cargo and to learn how we can do an even better job of finding these items before they reach American consumers.

One of our challenges is to make sure that nations of the world exchange advance electronic data with one another in order to make the screening of inbound international mail more effective. While the U.S. Postal Service provides advance electronic data to foreign countries about mail originating in the United States, foreign nations do not always reciprocate and provide us with similar information that we need. This failure to share makes it harder for CBP to do its job when mail and mail cargo arrive here.

So, I'd like to hear from our panelists, particularly the State Department and the Postal Service, on this issue. We need to find a way to get advanced data into the hands of our security screeners and close this loophole for drug traffickers. I'd also like their thoughts on how Congress can help in this effort and what can be done in the meantime.

As many of you know, protecting and improving the mail system in this country has been one of my major priorities since I came to the Senate 15 years ago. The Postal Service is of paramount importance to our economy. It is the lynchpin of a \$1.4 trillion mailing industry that employs 7.5 million people in this country.

Clearly, the Postal Service has an important role to play in preventing the flow of illegal drugs and contraband into the U.S. Yet, it is facing insolvency if Congress does not get off its duff and pass comprehensive postal reform to enable the Postal Service to survive and thrive again. We need to stabilize the Postal Service's finances not only so it can address international mail security but – even more important – to enable the Postal Service to carry out its core mission of providing the American people with reliable mail service. Quite simply, without a financially

viable Postal Service, not only will there be no delivery of illegal drugs through our international mail, there will be no delivery of international or domestic mail either. That might be seen by some as a victory in the fight against illegal drugs in this country, but it comes at a very high price.

With that, let me again welcome our panelists today. We look forward to a productive conversation on how we might strengthen our process for screening international mail.