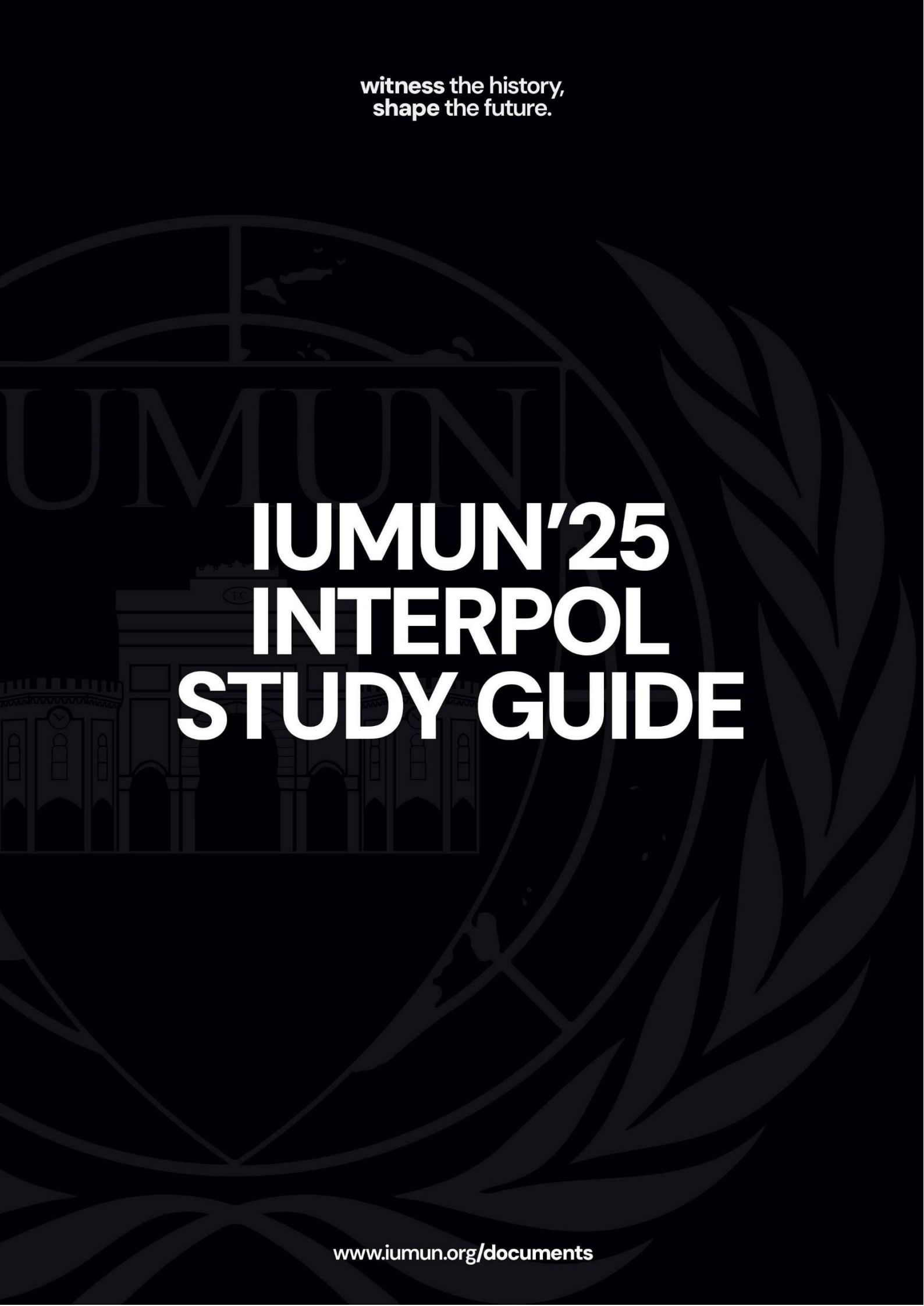


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# IUMUN'25 INTERPOL STUDY GUIDE

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## LETTER FROM THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERALS

**Dear Delegates,**

Welcome to IUMUN'25 Conference INTERPOL committee. We, Yiğit Ödül and Ata Miraç Kılınçarslan, as the Under Secretary Generals of this committee are honoured and excited to see that how deep you can go on the political analysis and diplomatic debates in this committee. Because we have a global crisis and these two factors will lead us to the permanent resolution.

INTERPOL plays a pivotal role in the enforcement of international criminal law. It engages with facilitating international police cooperation, addressing traditional crimes, and ensuring global security. This time, we will try to tackle a global health crisis: Fentanyl. It has crossed the local borders and circumnavigated the World. It engages with drug production, illegal trade and organized crime. You dear delegates, will be tasked with capturing those who commit this crime.

While you are in the process, you should know your limits. Because at the same time, you are representing your country and as well those who you will work with. So, you must not transgress the diplomatic language and stay within the borders of official debate. Diplomacy, strategic thinking, solidarity and collaboration will be the key factors for you.

Throughout the conference, our mission is to bolster your hard work and guide you to the successful end. But this doesn't mean that we will tell you everything, on the contrary, you will do the big part of the job.

Best Regards,

**Under-Secretary-Generals**  
**Yigit ÖDÜL and Ata Miraç KILINÇARSLAN**

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## 1.INTRODUCTION

INTERPOL, officially known as the International Criminal Police Organization, is the world's largest international police organization, and has 195 active member countries. INTERPOL eases the cooperation among national police forces to prevent international crimes such as illicit drug and human trafficking, terrorism, cybercrimes, and monetary fraud by providing resources, intelligence, and operational support.

Through acute discussions, strategic decision making, and cooperative efforts, you will explore complex international health and public security issues and work towards effective solutions as the representatives of important countries related to the issue.

By participating in this committee, you will get the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of international law enforcement processes, you will enhance your diplomatic negotiation skills and strengthen your ability to respond quickly and effectively to dynamic crises and scenarios.

The agenda item addresses the issue of the global spread of fentanyl which especially increased in the United States and affected millions of lives. Delegates will represent countries that are critically involved in the production, trafficking, and combating of this dangerous opioid drug. The main purpose of this committee is developing effective solutions to prevent illicit fentanyl trafficking, recreational use of it, reduce its global impact, and enhance international cooperation through INTERPOL's effective mechanisms.

Your efforts in this committee will be crucial in establishing effective international responses, helping to ensure public health, security, and global stability. As delegates you will improve negotiation, conflict resolution, and policymaking abilities while addressing this real-world crisis that has health, economic and safety wise consequences.

We eagerly anticipate your participation and wish you a productive and meaningful experience at IUMUN25!

## 2. TERMINOLOGY

**Red Notice:** A Red Notice is a request to law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender, or similar legal action. It is based on an arrest warrant or court order issued by the judicial authorities in the requesting country.

**I-24/7:** This is the technical network that links law enforcement in all member countries and enables authorized users to share sensitive and urgent police information with their counterparts around the globe.

**Intelligence:** Information concerning an enemy or possible enemy or an area also: an agency engaged in obtaining such information

**Surveillance:** Close watch kept over someone or something (as by a detective)

**Extradition:** The surrender of an alleged criminal usually under the provisions of a treaty or statute by one authority (such as a state) to another having jurisdiction to try the charge

**Collateral Damage:** Injury inflicted on something other than an intended target specifically: civilian casualties of a military operation

**Sting Operation:** A deceptive operation designed to catch a person attempting to commit a crime. A typical sting will have an undercover law enforcement officer, detective, or co-operative member of the public play a role as criminal partner or potential victim and go along with a suspect's actions to gather evidence of the suspect's wrongdoing.

**Jurisdiction:** The power, right, or authority to interpret and apply the law.

### **3.HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1. The Origins of the Opioid Pandemic**

In the 1990s, intense marketing of newly formulated prescription opioid medications such as OxyContin launched by Purdue Pharma and an effective pain advocacy campaign promoting better pain management led to a surge in opioid use in the United States. As an example, OxyContin was a long-acting drug and a very potent painkiller. Purdue Pharma had knowingly underestimated the risk of addiction of this drug and did aggressive marketing towards the drug. Moreover, these sorts of drugs were said to be 'safe and effective' when being introduced to the professionals. Research from the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows that prescription opioid sales in the United States multiplied by four from 1999 to 2010. This has resulted in an addicted response to these sorts of drugs by needing higher doses to suppress the pain after operations or chronic discomfort. Related to this, opioid misuse and opioid-related overdose deaths increased. Between 1999 and 2010, the opioid-related overdose death rate in the United States doubled from 2.9 to 6.8 deaths per 100,000 people. This initial surge in opioid-related deaths is often referred to as the first wave of the recent opioid crisis.

Back in 1961, there used to be a policy about opioid containing drugs, an early prescription drug monitoring program that required physicians to use a state issued triplicate form when prescribing schedule II-controlled substances which includes many opioids. Three copies being kept, one by the physician, one by the pharmacy and one by the state drug monitoring agency, were effective in detecting and investigating any sorts of irregularities in the usage of the medicine. California was the first state to adopt this monitoring program, being followed by the states Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New York, and Texas until 1988. After switching to electronic monitoring systems, all these programs ended. In 1996 when Purdue Pharma launched their new drug OxyContin, five states were actively applying the triplicate system, except Indiana and Michigan, and these five states were mentioned in Purdue Pharma internal documents as important barriers to OxyContin prescribing, with lower prescribing thus lower profit. In these documents it was said that less marketing was targeted to triplicate

states, in one of the documents being said that ‘the product (OxyContin) should only be positioned to physicians in non-triplicate states.’ As a matter of fact, triplicate states had some of the lowest OxyContin acquisition rates in the country. On the other hand, for the rest of the country, the usage of the drug was slowly turning into abuse, making it the first wave of opioid pandemic. Later on, addicted people who couldn’t get prescriptions or who were in search of something stronger got in search for heroin which is cheaper and easier to access by the beginning of 2010s, making it the second wave of the pandemic with many overdose death cases.

### **3.2. The Rise of Fentanyl**

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid typically used to treat patients with chronic severe pain or severe pain following surgery, first synthesized in Belgium in 1960 by Dr. Paul Janssen at Janssen Pharmaceutical. Fentanyl was introduced as an intravenous analgesic in 1963 in Europe, later in 1968 in the United States and is 100 times stronger than morphine. Typically used to manage severe chronic pain and intraoperative anaesthesia, fentanyl has a legitimate medical use. Since prescribed fentanyl such as intravenous injections, transmucosal and sublingual formulations, nasal sprays and transdermal patches are open to misuse, these should be monitored closely. In recent years, the abuse of fentanyl has reached epidemic rates, driven by its availability on the dark web, low cost, and frequent contamination with other drugs without the user’s knowledge. This caused a sharp rise in overdose deaths globally, with the U.S. and parts of Europe experiencing severe impacts. Abuse and misuse differ, the misuse of fentanyl goes back to the 1970s, by anaesthesiologists and surgeons in the medical stage of it. These occurrences were often unintentional and were facilitated by the drug’s easy access in hospitals. However, the dramatic rise in fentanyl related overdose deaths today is primarily related to its illegal abuse. Epidemiological and forensic reports from the last two decades indicate a significant rise parallel to the overdose death cases in the illicit use of fentanyl and its potents, especially in North America and Europe. As mentioned before, evidence shows that fentanyl is frequently mixed with other drugs such as heroin to enhance effects and reduce costs. Its accessibility through illegal channels, low cost, and extreme potency have made it a major drug of abuse worldwide.

### 3.3. Pharmaceutical Companies and The First Wave of The Crisis

As mentioned above, medications such as Purdue Pharma's OxyContin were aggressively marketed towards the public eye, claiming that the semi-synthetic opioid made with a synthetic version of morphine was 'harmless but effective' because it was a long-acting drug so it released its active ingredient slowly. It was partially true; it was definitely effective but not quite harmless. The time-release effect could be defeated by crushing and snorting the drug, or smoking it, or by adding water and injecting it, all for an instant heroin-like high. After the marketing strategies the sales of the drug soared, so did the number of people pass from overdoses. Federal regulators accused Purdue Pharma of misleading consumers when it asserted that OxyContin was less likely than traditional narcotics to be abused. A series of lawsuits followed. In 2007, Purdue paid out one of the largest fines ever, 600 million dollars, levied against a pharmaceutical firm for misleading the public about how addictive the drug OxyContin was compared to other pain medications. This situation contributed to the start of an opioid pandemic in North America, being the first wave of synthetic opioids' abuse which is still ongoing and a major problem for societies.

When it comes to companies that contribute to the fentanyl crisis, I don't think we can go on without mentioning Chinese companies that had been applied tariffs. According to DEA's investigations, seven companies were charged mainly with attempted importation of fentanyl precursors or fentanyl trafficking and international money laundering. To get started with, Hebei Shenghao Import and Export Company, based in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province, China, is charged with fentanyl trafficking conspiracy along with Chinese nationals Qingshun Li, 29, who allegedly negotiated the sale of precursor chemicals and maintained a bank account to receive payments; Qingsong Li, 32, and Chunhui Chen, 33, who allegedly maintained cryptocurrency wallets to send payments for precursor chemicals; and Chunzhou Chen, 30, who allegedly received Western Union payments on behalf of Hebei Shenghao. Next, Lihe Pharmaceutical Technology Company, based in Wuhan, Hebei Province, China, is on trial on charges of fentanyl trafficking conspiracy and international money laundering, along with Mingming Wang, a 34-year-old Chinese national who allegedly owned three bitcoin accounts shared by Lihe Pharmaceutical's sales representatives, and Xinqiang Lu, a 40-year-old Chinese

national who allegedly received money on behalf of the company through Western Union. Then there's Henan Ruijiu Biotechnology Co., located in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, China, which was charged with attempted importation of a precursor to fentanyl and attempted international money laundering, along with Yongle Gao, a 30-year-old Chinese national who allegedly was the registered owner of a bitcoin wallet associated with Henan Ruijiu. Following that, the Xiamen Wonderful Biotechnology Co., located in Xiamen, Fujian Province, China, was charged with attempted importation of a precursor to fentanyl and attempted international money laundering, along with Guo Liang, a 34-year-old Chinese national who allegedly was the registered owner of a bitcoin wallet associated with Xiamen Wonderful. Not the last but there's also Anhui Ruihan Technology Co., located in Hefei, Anhui Province, China, which was charged with attempted importation of a precursor to fentanyl and attempted international money laundering.

### **3.4. Cartels Take Charge**

China was the dominant source of fentanyl smuggled into the United States until the authorities banned production of all fentanyl variants in 2019, yet China is still the leading manufacturer of the precursors. Most of the fentanyl smuggled into the U.S. from Mexico is made from precursors which originate from China. The ones who smuggle this synthetic opioid into the U.S. are the Mexican drug cartels who excel in combining precursors; the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel. These cartels manage most of the production and distribution networks, often depending on U.S. citizens on trafficking their products across the border. Between 2019 and 2023 most of the traffickers were U.S. citizens. In October 2023, the Sinaloa Cartel aimed to publicly announce that they were moving away from fentanyl smuggling amongst an intensifying crackdown on its operations by the U.S. and Mexican authorities. As one of two major suppliers, this would be a huge shift, but it remains unclear how real or effective Sinaloa's transition will be. According to court documents, Ivan Guzman Salazar, Alfredo Guzman Salazar, Ovidio Guzman Lopez, and their co-conspirators allegedly controlled extensive, multi-faceted, and international operations covering the fentanyl trade. Through these efforts, the Chapitos, top lieutenants and leadership of the Sinaloa Cartel, and the Sinaloa Cartel allegedly reaped hundreds of millions of dollars in profits by flooding the United States with fentanyl. On February 6, 2025, narcotics, money laundering

and firearms charges were unsealed against four of the Chapitos; Ivan Guzman Salazar, Alfredo Guzman Salazar, Joaquin Guzman Lopez, and Ovidio Guzman Lopez in Northern District of Illinois. In District of Columbia, same charges were unsealed against Nestor Isidro Perez Salas, aka Nini, 31, allegedly one of the Chapitos' lead sicarios, or assassins, also held accountable for alleged conspiracy of distributing and manufacturing cocaine for unlawful importation into the U.S., using a firearm in furtherance of the alleged drug trafficking offense, and killed, intended to kill, threatened, and caused bodily injury to another in order to intimidate a government witness and informant.

### **3.5. Globalisation and the Dark Web**

The globalisation of fentanyl is not only a threat to the United States but also is a threat to the whole globe. This synthetic opioid, originally developed for medical purposes, is becoming a global crisis due to illegal production and distribution. As mentioned in 4.1 before, this synthetic opioid was originally synthesized in order to ease the discomfort that's felt post-operation or while dealing with chronic diseases or cancer in 1960. For years it was used only in hospitals and by cancer patients as a potent painkiller. It's still in medical use for anaesthesia and chronic pain management. By the beginning of 2010s Mexican cartels and Chinese pharmaceutical companies had leaned towards illicit fentanyl production. Fentanyl was quite profitable for opioid producers because even small amounts could be deadly. Counterfeit pills or adulterated heroin containing fentanyl began to be sold in the United States. This period had started the third wave of the opioid crisis in the United States. Apart from these cartels' and pharmaceutical companies' importance on fentanyl's globalisation, another phenomenon of great importance is the dark web. To get started with, the dark web is part of the internet that isn't visible to search engines and requires the use of an anonymizing browser called Tor to be accessed, resulting in the dark web being a hotbed for criminal activity. Originally developed by American intelligence agencies for encrypted communication, the dark web technology has made stopping the flow of deadly drugs much more complicated than it was when the authorities were trying to stop earlier waves of drug overdoses. Internet sales have allowed powerful synthetic opioids such as fentanyl — the fastest-growing cause of overdoses nationwide — to be easily accessible in nearly every region of the country, as they arrive in small packages in the mail. The problem of dark web

sales appeared to have been abolished in 2013, when the authorities took down the most famous online marketplace for drugs, known as Silk Road. But since then, countless successors have appeared, making the drugs available to tens of thousands of customers who would not have had access to them otherwise. Dark net drug markets first gained attention six years ago with the rise of the Silk Road. A retired Prosecutor said, “the dark web has become such an important source of distribution for this sort of deadly drug.” She added “it has enabled distribution channels that previously didn’t exist.” Researches indicate that the leading darknet market website had more than 21,000 listings for opioids and more than 4,100 for fentanyl and similar drugs, from dozens of dealers. Many of those listings include things such as pills, powders and nasal sprays. These illicit markets enabled by the dark web have made stopping the flow of these drugs much more complicated than it was when the authorities were trying to stop earlier waves of drug overdoses. The authorities have tried to bring an end to the problem by introducing legislation in Congress that would tighten the requirements on information gathered by the Postal Service. In 2017, Postal Service officials said they were working to collect information on more packages coming from China. Despite all the measures taken, it is debatable how much this crisis, which is spreading worldwide, can be prevented from spreading more rapidly through the dark web.

## 4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### 4.1. Human Rights Compliance, Data Processing and Surveillance

Historically, imprisoned people were often perceived as those who committed immoral acts against other people and deserved to see ill-treatment. Several examples can be counted such as prisoners of war, death penalty inmates etc. However, in the modern world, international law prohibits ill-treatment of prisoners as a primary condition, a standard that INTERPOL also accords. After World War 2, when the new international order was being established, states merged and published the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As it is stated in Article 5, “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” Or we can mention about European Convention on Human Rights Article 3, which states as, “No one may be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment.”

INTERPOL has also adopted this understanding and has taken care to act accordingly throughout its history. In the Articles 2 and 3 in its constitution, it foresees a prohibition of ill treatment related to the political, religious, military or ethnic choices of the convict. And it suggests an execution of the operations based on the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

But what is torture, torture according to who and what? INTERPOL behaves accordingly to UNCAT Article 1, which briefly describes the term torture like this: “The term ‘torture’ refers to the deliberate infliction of great pain or suffering on a person by a public official (or a person acting with the public official’s approval or acquiescence) — to obtain, punish, intimidate, or coerce information or a confession from him or her or from a third person. This suffering may be physical or mental.” For an act to be considered torture, the act must have caused physical or mental harm intentionally. On the other hand, the act must have been committed by a public official (police, soldier, intelligence officer, etc.) to gain a benefit for himself or herself.

#### 4.1.1. How is INTERPOL supervised in this regard?

There are two bodies that are responsible for INTERPOL’s policies on human rights, torture and ill-treatment. The first is *the Rules on the Processing of Data*, as a rules of procedure, it is

designed to ensure that all data entering the INTERPOL system — particularly red notice requests — complies with human rights. The second is the *Commission for the Control of INTERPOL's Files (CCF)*. This commission works on to detect whether there is a sign of torture in official files of the INTERPOL. The CCF is a body open to complaints from any individual, institution, or state. After receiving a complaint, an investigation is initiated into the necessary bulletins and, as a result of the investigation, the commission may request that the file be deleted or the search be stopped. It also has the authority to dismiss complaints. For instance, in 2017, the CCF rejected a complaint about a person wanted by Azerbaijan with a red notice, due to considerable reports that the person was not entitled to a residence permit in Germany and that he could be subjected to serious torture in his country upon his possible return.

Another human rights sensitivity of INTERPOL is revealed in the process of extradition of criminals. The CCF functions as an independent *oversight* body, and INTERPOL can also reject extradition requests. If there are serious concerns about the judicial independence of the state requesting the extradition of the criminal, or about the criminal being subjected to torture, inhuman or ill-treatment during the judicial process, or not receiving a fair trial, INTERPOL rejects these requests. In this regard, international agreements such as the European Convention on Human Rights or UNCAT, which determine the steps to be followed in these processes, are generally followed. Apparently, INTERPOL can reject the extradition of criminals in case of being accused of being a political criminal.

#### **4.2. What is important for INTERPOL? State sovereignty or international community security?**

In its operations, INTERPOL commits to be respectful to local legislative authorities. But situations like the fentanyl crisis are transnational issues and to be that much respectful to local processes can be a waste of time. In these kinds of problems, INTERPOL generally forms a special task force amongst the member countries and executes coordinated operations. What is important in this point is that INTERPOL must be careful about not harming international law and human rights while making operational plans. Therefore, as the first step in resolving the fentanyl crisis, our recommendation to our delegates is that no state

should be directly accused without being completely certain. Although drugs are not among the crimes it covers, INTERPOL is guided by the philosophy of the Responsibility to Protect principle. Because this philosophy states that first, the crime must be committed by the state and then all legitimate means must be exhausted to solve the crime. However, if these are done, the issue becomes open to the intervention of the international community.

INTERPOL foresees a balance between these two separate concepts. In its constitution Article 2 it states that INTERPOL shall contribute to the law system of their members by moving within the framework of their rules. For example, in the Operation Lionfish Hurricane, which was operated with the coordination of member states, INTERPOL captured nearly 615 tonnes of drugs in 31 different countries. There are some examples of mass collaboration in similar organized crimes.

There is no recorded operation that has been made illegally according to a state's rules. Because INTERPOL does not have that kind of authority. Furthermore, INTERPOL has no police force, because of this, INTERPOL is just a platform where countries get together and discuss international criminals. In this case, the critical point is the trueness of intelligence. Countries must be cautious about it.

#### **4.3. Reliability of Intelligence**

Reliability of Intelligence is a critical point in operations. Because a false or incomplete intelligence or a misunderstanding can lead INTERPOL into a comprehensive criminal crisis.

INTERPOL is a volunteer-based organization. Which means it does not force its members to establish an independent office on their territories. But it is essential for member states to form a National Central Bureau which works for INTERPOL and is affiliated with the state.

INTERPOL must be aware of ethical values while gathering intelligence and this makes the process harder. For example, until being sure about individuals' data, INTERPOL cannot share it with third parties.

## 5. POSITIONS OF RELEVANT STATES

### 5.1. Main Producers

#### 5.1.1. China

Until recently, China has been the primary source of illicit fentanyl, its precursors and analogues, playing a crucial role in the global fentanyl trade through China's massive pharmaceutical and chemical manufacturing sector with thousands of companies producing a wide variety of chemicals, including fentanyl and its precursors; many of these companies use various ways, including darknet and online marketplaces for shipping deliveries straight to customers. Before 2019, Chinese firms could easily manufacture, sell and ship fentanyl and its analogues legally due to the loopholes they had exploited both in Chinese and international law. After the regulations in the Chinese law in 2019, Chinese firms have stopped producing and trading readymade fentanyl, but they have rather focused on manufacturing and distribution of its precursors since the heavy regulations do not include precursors of fentanyl. These precursor chemicals are mostly exported to Mexico from China and while they operate, they tend to use disguise to not face any sort of legal backlash.

#### 5.1.2. Mexico

Mexico plays an important role in the production and trafficking of opioids, especially fentanyl, which contributed significantly to the opioid crisis in the United States. Cartels in Mexico, especially the Sinaloa Cartel and La Nueva Familia Michoacana, are heavily involved in the opioid business. Whilst the Sinaloa Cartel imports the precursors from China and processes them into fentanyl in clandestine labs; LNFM, which was formed in 2011, takes on the illegal drug trafficking, including the distribution of fentanyl. The cartels have various methods to conceal and transport the drugs through the Mexico-United States border, such as hidden departments and blind mules. Blind mules are people who carry drugs into a country, region or area without their knowledge; the ones related to the cartels know what they're carrying and how much, but some have been tricked into the situation. In response to this situation, the United States has put several measures into action. One of these few measures are tariffs; imports from China, Mexico, and Canada are under strict tariffs aiming to pressure these nations to take more significant action on the distribution of fentanyl into

the United States. In response to this tariffs Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum emphasized national unity and the country's sovereignty. She stressed the importance of dialogue and respect in maintaining strong bilateral relations and took measures to increase cooperation on border security and combating fentanyl trafficking.

### **5.1.3. India**

India has taken a critical role in the fentanyl crisis throughout the time along China, mainly through the production and trade of precursor chemicals carrying importance for synthesizing this synthetic opioid. Mexican drug cartels have established networks to import synthetic drug precursors from India, facilitating the production of fentanyl in clandestine labs. Using these precursors Mexican cartels, including Sinaloa Cartel, produced and trafficked large amounts of fentanyl into the United States. This year in January federal prosecutors of the U.S. charged two Indian pharmaceutical companies, Raxuter and Athos, with sneaking fentanyl precursor chemicals into the United States and Mexico. Raxuter founder and senior executive Bhavesh Lathiya was arrested in New York City. These two companies are said to employ deceptive practices, such as mislabelling packages and falsifying customs forms in order to evade detection. These latest charges of Indian companies emphasize a broader strategy to contend with the opioid crisis by targeting international sources of precursors.

## **5.2. Most Affected Countries**

### **5.2.1. United States**

Being the epicentre of the crisis, the U.S. has lost 110.000 citizens to drug overdoses, 70% of them being caused by synthetic opioids. Illicit fentanyl mixed with heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine or pressed into counterfeit prescription pills, usually by Mexican cartels, are made accessible. Fentanyl being 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine made it cause a sudden overdose death in most cases. Most affected regions in U.S. are West Coast (California, Oregon, Washington), Southwest (Arizona, Texas, New Mexico), Northeast (New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania), Midwest (Ohio, Michigan, Illinois). Government response to this situation includes crackdowns, prohibitions on

suppliers, pressure on Mexico to demolish cartels, harm reduction programs and broadening drug treatment facilities.

### **5.2.2. Canada**

Particularly in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario, Canada has faced a fentanyl epidemic too. In 2022, fentanyl was involved in 75% of overdose death cases. British Columbia declared a public health emergency due to overdose deaths since Western Canada was affected most. Even carfentanil, an even far more stronger fentanyl analogue, has been found in Canadian drug supplies. Similar with U.S., fentanyl is mixed into cocaine, heroin and counterfeit prescription pills in Canada, which made this opioid accessible. Most people also overdosed for the reason that they did not know their drugs contained fentanyl. Until 2019, when the regulations tightened, large quantities of fentanyl were imported directly from China. Canadian Government took action upon this issue such as supervised injection sites in major cities, free naloxone distribution and opioid substitution therapies and border crackdowns on fentanyl shipments.

### **5.2.3. Germany**

Germany has one of the largest opioid substitution treatment programs in the EU yet it doesn't quite put an end to the usage and trade of opioids thus serving as a transit and consumer country. Being a key point for logistics makes the country vulnerable to smuggling from the Balkans and via shipping routes. After the government seized 35 tonnes of cocaine in 2023, it was highlighted that the country is a major transit point. An Albanian-led network smuggling cocaine and cannabis through Germany, Italy and the Netherlands has been dismantled in a joint operation, with 35 people arrested and more than €1 million in cash seized. Germany has cooperated with some countries in South America in order to combat drug trafficking, including through information sharing and joint training programmes. Darknet markets also play a growing role in opioid distribution. Although heroin remains the predominant illicit opioid, the use of synthetic opioids is increasing, contributing to a slightly higher number of opioid overdose deaths in the country.

#### 5.2.4. Netherlands

Although the Netherlands is known for its tolerance-based drug policy, opioids are still illegal except for medical use. Opioid abuse is relatively low in the Netherlands, due in part to effective harm reduction policies. In some cities, heroin-assisted treatment (HAT) is offered to long-term heroin users. On the other hand, the Netherlands is a central hub for drug trafficking, including opioids, due to the Port of Rotterdam, the largest in Europe, and Schiphol Airport. Laboratories producing synthetic drugs have also been found to handle precursors to opioids. Fentanyl seizures are rare but increasing, particularly in the mail and parcel systems. In 2022, a Serbian-led group that was smuggling cocaine hidden in concrete panels to other European countries via the Netherlands and Belgium was dismantled. In the following year, 2023, Dutch authorities seized 59.1 tonnes of cocaine, making the Netherlands' position known as a major point of entry for drugs into Europe. After these cases the Netherlands has introduced comprehensive screening of containers arriving from Latin America and increased cooperation with international partners to strengthen port security.

#### 5.2.5. Belgium

Belgium has a growing opioid prescription problem, particularly with fentanyl patches and tramadol. Illegal heroin abuse continues but is not as common as in Southern and Eastern Europe. Belgium holds an important role for synthetic opioids' entrance to Europe. The Port of Antwerp is a major entry point for heroin and synthetic opioids from Latin America and Asia. Belgium has seen increasing seizures of fentanyl and its analogues, sometimes related to Eastern European networks. The use of multiple delivery services and the darknet for opioid trade is also increasing. Belgium seized a record 116 tonnes of cocaine in the Port of Antwerp, Europe's largest cocaine entry point, in 2023. The increase in drug trafficking has led to risen violence in Antwerp, including shootings and threats against port workers possibly from opioid trader gangs. In order to deal with this, Belgium is joining an alliance established on 24 January 2024, the EU Ports Alliance, which aims to improve port security through cooperation between governments, law enforcement and the private sector.

### 5.2.6. Italy

Italy's geographical position along the Balkan Route and its long coastline with important ports like Genoa, Naples, Bari and Gioia Tauro help explain why Italy is so involved in the European opioid trade. Despite the nation using opioids rather at a low rate compared to the north of Europe, heroin is still the most often used illegal opioid; synthetic opioids like fentanyl are causing increasing worries as well. Often working with Albanian and Turkish trafficking networks, Italian organised crime groups, especially the "Ndrangheta and the Camorra, are extensively involved in the import and distribution of drugs such as heroin and synthetic opioids. Recent instances include the seizure of carfentanil at Milan Malpensa Airport and the 2022 substance trafficking network in Naples connected to Balkan migrants. Italy's law enforcement keeps giving international cooperation top priority, supporting the European Ports Alliance to improve port security and Europol-led operations. Regarding policies, Italy keeps strong harm reduction initiatives including naloxone distribution, needle exchanges, and methadone and buprenorphine treatment. The nation was also among the first in Europe to ban fentanyl analogues as a preventive measure against next waves of synthetic opioid-related deaths. Although opioid-related mortality rates are still rather low in Italy, the government is stepping up monitoring of darknet markets and strengthening postal and maritime inspections to stop synthetic opioids from finding their way into the Italian and wider European market.

Since Europe has a far stricter opioid prescription system, it's easier to keep things under control as EUROPOL also keeps a close eye on fentanyl shipments to prevent the crisis from getting out of control.

## 6. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIONS AND NGOS ROLE

### 6.1. INTERPOL's International Partnerships

INTERPOL operates as a centre that connects agencies across all member countries in order to combat the global drug trafficking and crimes, INTERPOL heavily relies on strategic international partnerships. These cooperations are a necessity for data exchange and highly beneficial for INTERPOL to operate correctly to combat international crimes and run joint operations.

#### 6.1.1. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

INTERPOL closely cooperates with UNODC to address the international dimensions of illicit drug trafficking, due to their common concerns. This cooperation can be considered as a subsidiary agreement, while UNODC assists member countries with its judicatory role and technical capacity, INTERPOL takes more of an operational role towards law enforcement and beach process.

#### 6.1.2. World Customs Organization (WCO)

The WCO functions as a border goods monitoring organization which INTERPOL uses to detect illegal drug shipments and track suspicious cargo routes while providing training to customs officers in high-risk regions.

#### 6.1.3. Europol and Regional Police Bodies

In Europe, INTERPOL cooperates with Europol to carry out large scaled operations such as **Operation Pangea** in order to confront illicit online drug sales. Similar collaborations also exist with ASEANAPOL, AFRIPOL and AMERIPOL which are the other police bodies that operates in specific continents and regions.

## **6.2. Dual and Multiple State Collaborations**

### **6.2.1. Dual Agreements**

The exchange of security at borders and drug offender returns and intelligence sharing procedures is facilitated through bilateral agreements between nations. The United States and Mexico have operated task forces and agreements since a long time to combat cartel activities that occur along their shared border. The long border between the USA and Mexico with their security challenges make these collaborations a necessity for countries that want to fight illicit drug trade.

### **6.2.2. Multiple Frameworks**

Multiple countries establish multilateral agreements through European Union Drug Strategy and Paris Initiative and ASEAN Drug Control Cooperation. The arrangements establish comprehensive structural frameworks which support collective decision-making processes. The established frameworks enable countries under threat to receive coordinated plans and warning systems and technical and social assistance.

### **6.2.3. Joint Operations and Shared Intelligence Hubs**

Operation Lionfish represents a joint international effort coordinated by INTERPOL which seized 1.6 billion USD worth of drugs across 31 countries throughout different continents. The real-time communication capabilities of shared intelligence hubs enable better coordination between routes which shortens response times and boosts operational success rates.

## **6.3. NGOs Contribution in Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking**

NGOs work together with countries and agencies that enforce drug trade regulations to implement prevention efforts and social awareness campaigns and rehabilitation programs.

### **6.3.1. Harm Reduction and Public Health**

Harm Reduction International together with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) work to decrease the financial burden that the opioid crisis places on people. The organizations distribute syringes and overdose prevention equipment and medical services to drug users who reside in nations with weak healthcare infrastructure. The organizations also run rehabilitation facilities and support services to help former drug addicts rehabilitate into their communities.

### **6.3.2. Awareness and Education**

The main organizations launch educational programmes in educational institutions and neighbourhoods to warn about the risks of fentanyl and other dangerous opioid drugs. The organizations work to stop drug use from spreading among the population.

## **6.4. Challenges in Coordination and Jurisdiction**

Despite the increasing international cooperation since the beginning of the increasing illicit trade of synthetic opioids, some important legal, operational, and political challenges hinder smooth coordination. Those challenges border the effectiveness of joint actions and create legal gaps that can be abused by organized crime groups.

### **6.4.1. Conflicts of Jurisdiction**

Every member country has their divergent procedures on criminal investigations, arrests, and prosecutions. A wanted suspect in a country might not be defined as a criminal due to their different definitions of crimes. These inconsistencies often delay the extradition processes or might cause the suspect to evade justice.

### **6.4.2. Sovereignty Concerns and Political Will**

Many states act cautious about allowing foreign agencies to operate within their borders due to sovereignty concerns. Also, political instability, corruption or lack of political will can cause weakening of international initiatives and selective enforcement.

### **6.4.3. Data Security and Information Sharing**

Effective international operations heavily rely on real-time data sharing and cooperation. However, laws on data protection in regions such as the European Union, border intercontinental sharing of sensitive information. Concerns on surveillance and misuse of sensitive data often prevents countries to cooperate completely.

### **6.4.4. Operational Disparities**

Not all the member countries have equal access to resources, training or technology. These disparities complicate joint operations; less equipped partners might slow down or put operations on risk. Smaller and developing members might struggle on border surveillance, prevention of illicit deliveries or investigation of complex smuggling networks without substantial external support.

### **6.4.5. NGO-Law Enforcement Conflicts**

Although NGOs contribute significantly to damage reduction and rehabilitation, their priorities might clash with the aims of those law enforcements. For instance, the act of protecting client confidentiality might limit the information sharing with local authorities which causes tension and insecurity. In conclusion, overcoming these coordinational and jurisdictionary challenges requires not only legal compatibility but also confidence building, technical support and long-term cooperation.

## **6.5.Future Perspectives on Global Cooperation**

Since the synthetic opioid smuggling networks grow stronger and sophisticated day by day, the international community must also improve their cooperation strategies. Future of global cooperation heavily relies on improvements in innovation, flexibility and comprehensiveness.

### **6.5.1.Development of Shared Digital Platforms**

One major perspective is the creation of real-time data hubs that law enforcement agencies, customs and public health authorities can upload/access information and data about drug trends, smuggling routes and criminal networks. Expansion and upgrade of INTERPOL's system and integration with national systems will play a critical role.

### **6.5.2.Regional Cooperation Models**

Regional institutions such as Europol, ASEANAPOL and AFRIPOL are expected to play a greater role in managing local responses. Bridging the gap between these bodies could allow more dynamic actions, especially in regions where various smuggling routes intersect.

### **6.5.3.Public-Private Sector Collaboration**

Day after day, technology companies, logistic firms, and financial institutions are playing increasingly important roles in detecting criminal activity. In the near future, collaboration between these private agencies may involve monitoring suspicious transactions, deliveries and online activities without violating privacy rights and principles

### **6.5.4.Capacity Building and Sharing of Resources**

To resolve the operational inequalities, it is expected from wealthier countries and international organizations to increase equipment and technical support towards developing countries. Equal distribution of resources will help close the gaps that are exploited by criminals.

## 7. QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

- How can INTERPOL establish coordinated international operations despite several differences in national laws, resources, and interests?
- How should INTERPOL balance operational urgency with ethical considerations, including human rights and sovereignty?
- How can INTERPOL ensure that joint operations respect local laws and cultural contexts?
- How can INTERPOL improve capacity-building for less-resourced member states?
- How can INTERPOL neutralize advanced drug trafficking routes?
- How should agreements be reached with states that are sensitive about their sovereignty rights?

## 8. FURTHER READING

**UNODC World Drug Report 2024:** The 2024 Annual World Drug Report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime provides an in-depth analysis of global drug trends and their comparative analysis. In the page, there are five visualised main heading that are clickable.

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/world-drug-report-2024.html>

**INTERPOL General Regulations:** The General Regulations of INTERPOL provide detailed rules governing the organization's internal procedures, including the roles of its main bodies, decision-making processes, elections, finances, and language policies. They serve as a practical framework for implementing the principles set out in the INTERPOL Constitution and guiding the organization's day-to-day operations.

[General Regulations](https://www.interpol.int/content/download/file/General_Regulations)[Interpol](https://www.interpol.int/content/download/file/General_Regulations)[https://www.interpol.int › content › download › file](https://www.interpol.int/content/download/file/General_Regulations)

**INTERPOL Constitution:** The Constitution of INTERPOL lays out the legal framework, aims, and organizational structure of INTERPOL. It defines the organization's mission to promote police cooperation among member states, sets limits on political and military involvement, and details the roles of its main bodies, including the General Assembly, Executive Committee, and General Secretariat.

[Constitution of the ICPO-INTERPOL](https://www.interpol.int/01_E_Constitution_2024)[Interpol](https://www.interpol.int/01_E_Constitution_2024)[https://www.interpol.int › 01 E Constitution 2024](https://www.interpol.int/01_E_Constitution_2024)

**CDC - Understanding the Opioid Overdose Epidemic:** This webpage by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers a clear overview of the opioid overdose epidemic in the United States. It outlines how the crisis began, the three major waves of opioid-related deaths, and the ongoing public health challenges caused by prescription opioids, heroin, and synthetic opioids like fentanyl.

<https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/about/understanding-the-opioid-overdose-epidemic.html>

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