

SFPD's joint operation with federal partners nets charges against 18 mid-level Tenderloin drug traffickers, massive seizure of fentanyl 21-192

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Operation with U.S. DEA and ATF results in seizures of firearms and two 30-round high-capacity magazines in addition to millions of doses of controlled substances

A joint investigation and operation recently undertaken by the San Francisco Police Department in partnership with federal law enforcement authorities from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and Explosives have resulted in state or federal charges to 18 alleged mid-level traffickers of fentanyl and other controlled substances. The joint operation netted seizures of nearly 17 pounds of illegal narcotics — including 12.5 pounds of fentanyl — three firearms, and two high-capacity magazines each holding 30 rounds of ammunition.

Narcotics investigators developed evidence over the course of their investigation that Southern California-based drug trafficking organizations were bulk sourcing fentanyl and other narcotics to mid-level traffickers based largely in Oakland, Calif., who in turn supplied street-level dealers in San Francisco's Tenderloin District. In some instances, mid-level suppliers themselves engaged in street-level trafficking.

During the course of a three-day operation last week, law enforcement officers from the three agencies executed 11 search warrants — six state and five federal — at nine different locations. A total of 18 suspects are facing charges as a result of the joint investigation, including eight who have already been charged federally by the U.S. Attorney's Office. In addition, two suspects will face federal ATF charges; and eight defendants will face state charges in Alameda County. Approximately 12.5 pounds — or 5.7 kilograms — of fentanyl was seized in the operation. With an estimated minimum lethal dose of just 2 milligrams, the operational haul of fentanyl theoretically represents enough to fatally overdose 2.85 million people. (Source: Moffat, et al; Clarke's Analysis of Drugs and Poisons, 3d ed., vol. 2, p. 1030.) Other seizures in the SFPD federal operation included: approximately 1.5 pounds (.68 kilograms) of methamphetamine; approximately 1.5 pounds (.68 kilograms) of cocaine base; approximately 1.25 pounds (.57 kilograms) of heroin; 22.8 grams of oxycodone; nearly \$27,000 in U.S. currency; three firearms; and two 30-round high-capacity magazines.

Investigators believe that the heightened prevalence of fentanyl trafficking is largely fueling a sharp increase in gun violence in SFPD's Tenderloin District, which has endured a more than 71 percent increase in fatal and

nonfatal shootings over this time last year — from 21 such incidents in 2020 to 36 in 2021, including one drug-related shooting in April that claimed the life of a 15-year-old boy.

San Francisco's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner last week released the latest update on accidental drug overdose deaths in the city. Through the end of September 2021, 511 people have died as the result of drug overdoses, primarily due to fentanyl. San Francisco's total 2020 death toll due to accidental drug overdoses was 712.1

“The staggering loss of life we’ve seen due to drug overdoses is a public health calamity San Franciscans haven’t witnessed since the height of the AIDS crisis,” said Chief of Police Bill Scott. “Our street drug trade has been nearly twice as deadly as COVID-19 in San Francisco. While the primary chemical culprit is fentanyl, drug-related gun violence is beginning to take an increasingly troubling toll. We are incredibly thankful to Acting U.S. Attorney Stephanie M. Hinds; DEA Special Agent in Charge Wade D. Shannon; ATF Special Agent in Charge Patrick Gorman and their enormously dedicated investigators and prosecutors who’ve been our full partners in this operation. I also want to acknowledge the outstanding work of SFPD officers directly involved in this operation, from the SFPD Narcotics Unit, which played a lead role in this case; our Crime Gun Intelligence Center officers; and our police officers from Tenderloin Station, who work so hard to safeguard a neighborhood disproportionately victimized by drug trafficking.”

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