

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 2, 2025

The Honorable Pam Bondi
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Bondi:

We write to request information on the Department of Justice's plans to terminate its Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) program. On May 5, 2025, Bloomberg reported that DOJ has begun the process of "closing down" OCDETF and "zeroing" out its budget in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026.¹

As the Department's website notes, OCDETF "is the centerpiece of the Attorney General's strategy to combat transnational-organized crime and to reduce the availability of illicit narcotics in the nation."² OCDETF oversees coordination of thousands of federal, state, and local law enforcement officials to implement a national strategy to dismantle transnational drug cartels, the financial networks that support them, and the flow of drugs from these cartels into the United States. By leveraging resources from its participating and partner agencies, OCDETF can pursue investigations into the highest-level criminal actors behind these drug crime networks.

OCDETF's intelligence products and insights enhance the capacity of federal, state, and local law enforcement. In FY 2023, OCDETF Fusion Center analysts disseminated 4,141 intelligence products to 36,693 law enforcement personnel across the country.³ These resources buoy state and local agencies that may otherwise lack the expertise or funds to launch longer, more complex investigations.

According to DEA, "since OCDETF's inception tens of thousands of arrests have been made and hundreds of tons of narcotics and billions in currency, real property, and conveyances have all been seized."⁴ And as the Department of Justice noted upon the 40th anniversary of President Reagan's establishment of OCDETF, "[s]ome of the department's most notable successes against drug cartels have resulted from OCDETF coordinated investigations and prosecutions."⁵ These successes include "taking down the powerful Colombian cartels of the 1980s, the notorious and

¹ Jason Leopold, *Trump Team Set to Dissolve Reagan-Era Transnational Crime Unit*, Bloomberg (May 5, 2025), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-05-05/trump-team-set-to-dissolve-reagan-era-transnational-crime-unit>.

² U.S. Dep't of Justice, *About OCDETF*, <https://www.justice.gov/ocdetf/about-ocdetf>.

³ U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., GAO-25-106568, *ILLICIT FINANCE: AGENCIES COULD BETTER ASSESS PROGRESS IN COUNTERING CRIMINAL ACTIVITY* 37 (2025).

⁴ U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, *Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF)*, <https://www.dea.gov/operations/ocdetf>.

⁵ U.S. Dep't of Justice, Press Release, *The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces Celebrates 40th Anniversary* (Oct. 17, 2022), https://www.oig.dol.gov/public/Press%20Releases/Organized_Crime_Drug_Enforcement_Task_Force_Celebrates_40th_Anniversary_DOJ-OPA_10172022.pdf.

violent Mexican cartels . . . in the 1990s; and the methamphetamine, heroin, fentanyl and opioid threats from all over the world in the last two decades.”⁶

OCDETF investigations continue to deliver. This month, DOJ announced that “three members of a prolific Chinese money laundering organizations plead[ed] guilty to laundering tens of millions of dollars in drug proceeds.”⁷ In April, DEA reported that two individuals operating a clandestine fentanyl lab in South Carolina “were each sentenced to 15 years in federal prison after pleading guilty to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute fentanyl.”⁸ OCDETF resources were used for both cases.

Many OCDETF-supported investigations that result in financial forfeitures or seizures channel money into government funds, which can be used to pay for the expenses associated with forfeiture operations, as well as certain investigative costs.⁹ In FY 2023, closed OCDETF investigations resulted in forfeitures and seizures totaling \$423.1 million.¹⁰ These benefits are in addition to money judgments resulting from ODCETF investigations, which ranged between \$125 million to over \$750 million from FY 2019 to FY 2023.¹¹

We seek to fully understand the Department’s plans to cease OCDETF operations. We also seek to ensure that the federal government continues to have a coordinated strategy for working with state and local stakeholders to investigate and hold accountable transnational criminal organizations operating in, or financing the operations of organizations that operate in, the United States. Thus, we request that you provide answers to the following questions.

1. How many cases has OCDETF led, or supported with funds, intelligence, or other resources, that disrupted fentanyl traffickers’ production, distribution, financing, or money laundering networks?
2. Does the Department intend to cease or significantly reduce OCDETF operations? If so, please specify how.
3. If the Department intends to cease or significantly reduce OCDETF operations:
 - a. Why is the Department choosing to cease or significantly reduce OCDETF operations?

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ U.S. Attorney’s Office, Western Dist. of N.C., Press Release, *Three Members Of A Prolific Chinese Money Laundering Organization Plead Guilty To Laundering Tens of Millions Of Dollars In Drug Proceeds* (May 1, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdnc/pr/three-members-prolific-chinese-money-laundering-organization-plead-guilty-laundering>.

⁸ U.S. Attorney’s Office, Dist. of S.C., Press Release, *York County Men Sentenced to 30 Years in Fentanyl Distribution Scheme* (Apr. 29, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sc/pr/york-county-men-sentenced-30-years-fentanyl-distribution-scheme>.

⁹ U.S. Dep’t of Justice, *Assets Forfeiture Fund*, <https://www.justice.gov/afp/assets-forfeiture-fund-aff>.

¹⁰ U.S. GOV’T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., GAO-25-106568, *supra* note 2, at 71. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-25-106568.pdf>

¹¹ *Id.*, at 70.

- b. How will the Department ensure that ongoing OCDETF investigations and prosecutions continue uninterrupted?
- c. According to GAO, “OCDETF cases must have a financial component” to facilitate the targeting of financial networks underpinning drug trafficking organizations.¹² How will the Department ensure that OCDETF-enabled inter-agency coordination on investigations into the financial networks of fentanyl traffickers and transnational criminal organizations continues uninterrupted?
- d. How will the Department ensure that federal, state, and local law enforcement relying on OCDETF’s Fusion Center intelligence products are not hampered by a cessation or reduction of OCDETF operations?
- e. Does the Department intend to designate another entity to coordinate investigations and prosecutions of transnational criminal organizations, unrelated to low-level offenders? If so, which entity?

Please provide your response to our questions no later than June 13, 2025.

Sincerely,



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



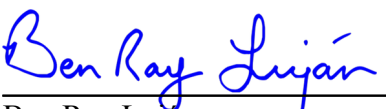
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator

¹² *Id.*, at 68.