

**Prepared Statement by U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa)**  
**Co-Chairman, Caucus on International Narcotics Control**  
**Hearing on The Nexus Between the Illicit Drug Trade and Corruption**  
**Wednesday, November 17, 2021**

Corruption threatens economic, social, and political development. The illicit drug trade is a massive barrier to ending corruption. We're here today to discuss this complex nexus.

Many countries struggle with regulating and stopping the flow of illicit drugs. This impacts Americans, as evidenced by the ongoing drug overdose crisis, which is driven by fentanyl. China ships fentanyl precursors to drug cartels in Mexico, who then funnel it over the southwest border.

For nearly fifteen years, the U.S. has sought to work with allies in Mexico to stop the flow of drugs into the U.S. through the Merida Initiative. Yet Mexican-based drug trafficking organizations maintain control of the drug trade through violence, intimidation, and corruption.

Some progress has been made in this space. For instance, a few weeks ago, Mexico recorded the largest seizure of fentanyl in the country's history. Also, our nations are having ongoing talks about how to stop the supply and demand of drugs.

Rooting out corruption isn't confined to Mexico. So as we review our efforts, we must ensure strong oversight.

In August of this year, the Justice Department Inspector General reported that DEA hasn't been keeping track of the partnerships with foreign law enforcement to combat the flow of illegal drugs.

When the OIG checked, the DEA's headquarters didn't even have a complete record of the foreign law enforcement units DEA personnel established.

And according to the OIG, after serious incidents involving alleged intelligence leaks and corruption, the DEA had failed to perform programmatic reviews on the causes of those incidents and to prevent similar events again.

Another country on the front lines in our effort to stop the illegal flow of drugs is Haiti. In that country, we also have a need for strong oversight.

Since the Haitian President was assassinated in July, we've learned that two Haitian nationals wanted in connection with the assassination have past associations with the DEA.

Haiti's DEA office was also the subject of recent whistleblower allegations and a damaging report issued in July by the U.S. Office of Special Counsel.

Yesterday, Senator Durbin and I sent a letter to the DEA raising concerns related to both the OIG and OSC reports. I look forward to getting prompt answers to our questions.

Today's hearing is on a broad and complex issue. So I want to learn about the best ways to address the connection between the illicit drug trade and corruption, what tools can be used, and what programs the federal government has in place.

But it's also our job to ask if these tools and programs are effective; if they're a good use of the taxpayer dollars; and how to improve them. I look forward to having interesting and important discussions with our witnesses on these topics.