



Office of the Administrator

Springfield, VA 22152
January 8, 2025

MEMORANDUM – VIA EMAIL

TO: William Kimbell, Chief of Operations
Hallie Hoffman, Chief Counsel
Ed Kovacs, Chief Compliance Officer
Tim Flaherty, Chief Inspector

CC: George Papadopoulos
Principal Deputy Administrator

FROM: Anne Milgram
Administrator

SUBJECT: Transportation Interdiction Program

The Inspector General recently issued a Management Advisory Memorandum on DEA's Transportation Interdiction Program (TIP)¹, and on November 12, 2024, the Deputy Attorney General (DAG) ordered the suspension of all consensual encounters conducted as part of the program pending an evaluation of the utility of such consensual encounters and a broader review of the costs and benefits of the program given DEA's priorities and limited resources. The DAG directive further indicated that the TIP may not be restarted without the DAG's explicit approval. The DAG directive further specified that consensual encounters at mass transportation facilities that are not connected to an ongoing investigation are prohibited, including encounters that are solely based on travel information from a confidential source. However, Special Agents in Charge may authorize lawful and DOJ-compliant consensual encounters at mass transportation facilities that are part of pre-planned activity relating to an ongoing investigation involving one or more identified targets or criminal networks. If a confidential source in the transportation industry is utilized in an ongoing investigation, supervisors must ensure compliance with DEA policies and the DAG directive mentioned above.

During the last several months, the Office of the Administrator has conducted a review of DEA's TIP during which we evaluated the program's effectiveness, assessed the risks of continuing the TIP, and the extent to which it supports our core mission - to save lives by defeating the two criminal networks in Mexico, the Sinaloa and Jalisco cartels, which are responsible for the deadliest drug threat our country has ever faced. To meet this unprecedented moment and be most effective, we are focused on targeting entire criminal networks and disrupting their global supply chain. Our strategy is working – the number of people that died from drug poisoning is down for the first time in 5 years and the toxicity of fentanyl in seized pills has also dropped for the first time since 2021 – but we must continue to evolve to meet the threats we face today and those that we will face in the future.

¹ Management Advisory Memorandum, 25-005, Notification of Concerns Identified in the Drug Enforcement Administration's Transportation Interdiction Activities, November 2024, identifying concerns with use of consensual encounters unconnected to an existing investigation of individuals at mass transportation facilities.

Our comprehensive internal review looked at data from across the agency, including drug and money seizures and arrests at mass transportation facilities. After reviewing this data and the operating costs of the TIP and comparing it to our traditional investigations, it became clear that the TIP is not an effective way to utilize our limited resources. For example, from 2022-2024, TIP seizures totaled approximately \$22 million in drug proceeds and resulted in a total of 57 arrests. During the same timeframe, our predicated investigations focused on criminal networks, illicit financing, etc., seized more than \$1.4 billion and arrested thousands of individuals. Global criminal networks, like the Sinaloa and Jalisco Cartels, have expanded their money laundering methods, and today increasingly use cryptocurrency. The internal review also found that we did not fully comply with DEA TIP policy, including to document all consensual encounters when they occurred.

Based on the internal review and after considering the potential risks of continuing the TIP, I have directed the Operations Division to immediately cease the program and to work with Special Agents in Charge to redeploy those resources to global supply chain and illicit finance investigations. The Operations Division and Office of Training will also increase our focus on illicit finance, global money laundering to new methods, including, cryptocurrency investigations.

If an exigent circumstance arises in which it would be appropriate to conduct a consensual encounter that otherwise would be prohibited, such an encounter may be approved by the Administrator provided prompt notice is given to the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, the consensual encounter complies with law and current DEA policy and is appropriately documented regardless of its investigative outcome.

I am confident that DEA will continue to save lives and achieve our strategic objectives by strengthening our network targeting strategy focused on the global supply chain, illicit finance, and cryptocurrency investigations.