

**Statement of Robert Cintron  
Vice President, Network Operations  
United States Postal Service  
Before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the  
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee  
United States Senate  
January 25, 2018**

Good morning, Chairman Portman, Ranking Member Carper, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you, Chairman Portman, for your continued focus on the public health emergency addressing the opioid crisis.

My name is Robert Cintron, Vice President, Network Operations, for the United States Postal Service. I oversee the Postal Service's national distribution network, including international operations. For international mail, Network Operations is responsible for the mail once it arrives at one of our International Service Centers (ISCs) and after it is cleared by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), up until it has been sorted and transported and is ready to be sent out for delivery.

On May 25, 2017, I testified before this Subcommittee on our efforts to combat opioids in the mail, highlighting advancements in the collection and receipt of customs advance electronic data (AED). Increasing the amount of AED, which includes fields such as the item identifier, sender's full name and address, recipient's full name and address, stated content description, unit of measure and quantity, weight, declared value, and date of mailing, has been and remains one of the highest priorities for the Postal Service.

Together with our federal agency partners, we have committed to aggressively increasing data on inbound packages coming into the United States in order to improve the targeting of illicit drugs entering the country.

Since the May hearing, the Postal Service, in collaboration with CBP, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (Inspection Service), Department of State, and other federal agencies, has made significant strides to combat the flow of opioids, as detailed in this testimony.

### **The Growth in AED**

Since May 2017, the United States and a number of other industrialized countries have improved technical capabilities to provide AED. In early summer 2017, the Postal Service improved its methodology for calculating AED percentages to reflect more accurately the types of mail being received. We have also improved the methodology for accounting for all received volume at the ISCs. We collect AED for more than 90 percent of outbound international mail and in the past three years, we have gone from receiving almost no

AED on inbound shipments to receiving more than 40 percent as of December 2017<sup>1</sup>.

Since last January, the number of countries sending AED to the Postal Service has grown from 8 to 23 countries. We currently receive data on a substantial amount of the overall inbound shipments, including a majority of those originating in China. We are testing data for untracked packets (lower value packages on which the sender has not paid to receive tracking information) received from China, which represent a substantial amount of inbound mail. Data for untracked packets from China are expected to be provided by the end of 2018. This will result in a significant increase in the amount of AED the Postal Service receives as a whole. Generally, the increase in the percentage of inbound items with AED is expected to continue to grow, especially as more countries develop their capacities.

### ***Bilateral and Multilateral AED-Sharing Agreements***

As noted in my May 2017 testimony, the Postal Service has prioritized obtaining AED from the largest volume foreign postal operators (FPOs), which collectively account for over 90 percent of all inbound volume. We have leveraged AED on outbound package shipments to incent FPOs to provide AED in bilateral and multilateral relationships.

The Postal Service requires AED to accompany any package flows for which rates are established under bilaterally negotiated arrangements with FPOs. The Postal Service has entered into bilateral agreements with AED requirements for certain letter post, parcel post, and/or EMS (express) package flows with the FPOs of Australia, Canada, China, Hong Kong, and Korea; a few additional FPOs had agreed to furnish AED in connection with EMS shipments. The agreement with Canada Post was implemented since I last testified before this Subcommittee. Additionally, posts from other countries have entered into voluntary data sharing agreements (DSAs) with the Postal Service, which is the first step to providing AED. Since the May hearing, we've signed DSAs with 22 additional countries, bringing the total number to 56 countries.

The Postal Service is also pursuing the exchange of AED through multilateral agreements and strategic alliances. The Kahala Posts Group (KPG) is an organization composed of several large volume postal operators, including China. Through that organization, the Postal Service has shared AED best practices, assisted in the development of a DSA, and encouraged members to commit to the collection of AED and set performance standards for themselves. As a result, KPG continues to prioritize AED efforts. Each of the 11 members submitted AED 2018 targets and timelines to support those goals. The Postal Service continues to engage members to track progress on those project plans as well as monitor their performance.

### ***Actions Through the Universal Postal Union***

The Postal Service continues to work closely with the Department of State, which has lead responsibility for representing the United States Government in the Universal Postal

---

<sup>1</sup> Volumes measured exclude letter- and flat-shaped letter post items and military mail.

Union (UPU), the 192-member international organization charged with facilitating the exchange of mail among member countries through treaty agreements. At the UPU, United States initiatives are focused on advancing AED requirements which have resulted in mandatory barcodes on all packages, standardized AED electronic messaging, and contributing to capacity building efforts, to name a few. These initiatives have resulted in UPU members increasing their adoption and implementation of AED messaging and security standards. Since May, we have assisted foreign posts in regional UPU organizations to increase their capacity to collect AED.

### **Ongoing Postal Service Efforts**

The Postal Service has been working collaboratively with several agencies to improve the targeting of illicit opioids. Ongoing efforts to date include the following:

#### ***Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)***

The Postal Service has the responsibility to process and deliver inbound international mail, while CBP has the primary responsibility and authority to screen items at the first point of entry into the United States for security. These distinct responsibilities, however, complement our shared goal to fight the importation of synthetic opioids. To that end, a MOU between the Postal Service and CBP was completed on September 1, 2017. It defines the participants' roles and responsibilities in relation to their mutual cooperation, and provides guidelines for mail inspection. The MOU solidifies the ongoing interagency partnership between CBP and the Postal Service at exchange offices.

#### ***Expansion of ISC Program***

The Postal Service began a pilot program in mid-2015 at the New York ISC to use inbound AED to facilitate more advance targeting by CBP. The Postal Service provides AED to CBP that can be used to review and target specific mail pieces prior to arrival at the ISC. CBP identifies the individual target items, and the Postal Service locates the target items within the inbound receptacles based on AED. Once located, the Postal Service presents the targeted items to CBP for inspection.

We have now enabled targeting based on AED at all ISCs. With the lessons learned from the original pilot, the Postal Service and CBP expanded the program to an additional ISC in June 2017 and another in August 2017. The pilot was expanded to two other ISCs earlier this month.

The Postal Service and the Inspection Service are continuing to coordinate with CBP to enhance operational processes at the ISCs. Over the last six months, the Postal Service has provided hundreds of thousands of records per day to CBP, expanded the countries and types of packages available for targeting, and advanced sorting from manual to automated processes. As the Postal Service continues to advance mail sorting technology, these successes will grow.

## ***Enhanced Network Operations***

Since May, we have continued to work to enhance our operations:

- Enhanced the automation process to identify mail requested by CBP by updating software and equipment. Software updates have been completed and an additional piece of equipment is scheduled to be installed this summer to automate and facilitate the selection of targeted pieces for CBP.
- Ensured recurring training to ISC employees to reinforce proper processes for handling and presenting mail in accordance with CBP requirements. Training is provided on an on-going basis, both for new employees and as a refresher for current employees in the ISCs.
- Deployed additional mobile scanners with augmented capability at the ISCs to capture the physical movement of packages and ensure it is streamlined for reliability.
- Implemented the capability to intercept CBP holds at specific downstream processing facilities to improve the identification of AED target packages.

## ***Formalized Interagency Work Group (IWG)***

The Postal Service, CBP, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) formalized a tripartite working relationship on actions related to combatting opioids in the mail through establishing the IWG. The objective of the work group is to improve the federal government's coordination of oversight over inbound international items containing goods entered through international mail facilities, and to disrupt illegal supply chains that exploit the international mail environment, including illicit opioid/fentanyl shipments.

The IWG is working on short and long-term efforts to build stakeholder capacity to provide AED, identify and develop detection technology, encourage information sharing in the international mail environment, provide technical assistance for legislation, and improve physical and IT infrastructure.

## **The Role of the Inspection Service**

As suggested throughout this testimony, the Postal Service works in close collaboration with its law enforcement branch, the Inspection Service. While the Postal Service has the responsibility to process and deliver inbound international mail, the Inspection Service investigates mail-related crime and works closely with other law enforcement agencies, including CBP, to share intelligence, coordinate cases and conduct joint enforcement operations. Through enhanced investigative methods, deploying resources as needed, and strengthening strategic partnerships, the Inspection Service has seen significant improvements in its ability to seize fentanyl and synthetic opioids from the U.S. Mail. From fiscal year 2016 through 2017, the Inspection Service achieved a 375 percent increase in international parcel seizures and an 880 percent increase in

domestic parcel seizures related to opioids.

Without disclosing sensitive law enforcement techniques, some of the current investigative approaches of the Inspection Service include:

- Creating an internal team of cross-functional subject matter experts specifically focused on narcotics trafficking through the mail, both international and domestic.
- Assigning full-time personnel at the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA's) International Organized Crime Center (IOC-2), the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Fusion Center, the International Service Centers and the CBP National Targeting Center (NTC). Being embedded in these locations allows the Inspection Service to share intelligence, coordinate cases, and conduct joint enforcement operations domestically and internationally.
- Partnering with High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Task Forces, OCDETF, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to coordinate investigative information and real-time intelligence. These relationships strengthen cohesive communication and data sharing partnerships that enable the identification of criminal networks, which would not be possible without interagency cooperation.
- Participating in the ONDCP Federal Law Enforcement Secure Conference Group, the Interagency Implementation Group, and the DEA's Heroin/Fentanyl Task Force to stay abreast of the latest trends in criminal activity and transnational threats.
- Evaluating numerous pieces of technology in collaboration with CBP that will assist us with detecting narcotics in the mail.
- Launching a Cyber and Analytics Unit to enhance investigative techniques, including expanded use of AED with historical seizure data and criminal intelligence to better forecast and target international parcels.
- Working with Postal Service management to enhance operational processes and equipment that utilizes advanced technologies, which includes transitioning from manually sorting parcels to automated operations at the ISCs.

## **Conclusion**

The Postal Service understands and continues to share the concerns about illegal drugs and contraband entering the U.S. through the mail and commercial carriers. As CBP Operations Support Acting Executive Assistant Commissioner Robert Perez indicated in his May 2017 testimony before this Subcommittee: "Interdicting illicit drugs, particularly synthetic opioids, is both challenging and complex. The majority of U.S. trafficked illicit fentanyl is produced in other countries such as China, and is principally smuggled through international mail facilities, express consignment carrier facilities (e.g., FedEx and UPS), or through Points of Entry (POEs) along the Southern land border."

The Postal Service is committed to partnering with CBP and other federal agencies, as evidenced by initiatives to date to enhance CBP's ability to target synthetic opioids and other illicit drugs from entering the country. In collaboration with federal agencies and state and local law enforcement, improved investigative techniques have increased our ability to interdict opioids such as fentanyl.

We have worked closely with CBP to complete the MOU, expand the ISC program, increase the countries and products for which AED is provided, and use technology to improve the process of intercepting hold items to present to CBP.

As it has done throughout its history, the Postal Service is committed to taking all practicable measures to ensure our nation's mail security, and provide the American public the best, most efficient service possible. Again, thank you for this opportunity to testify, and I look forward to your questions.

###