

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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<http://oversight.house.gov>

October 2, 2017

Ms. Tammy Whitcomb  
Acting Inspector General  
U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General  
1735 North Lynn St  
Arlington, VA 22209

Dear Ms. Whitcomb:

We are writing to request the Office of Inspector General conduct an audit examining how the Postal Service is training and equipping its workforce to respond to the risks posed by the illegal shipment of synthetic opioids. The safety of the nation's 600,000 Postal Service employees is of critical importance, and we would like to understand the measures the Postal Service has put in place to mitigate these evolving threats.

Specifically, we are concerned about the escalating importation of drugs such as fentanyl, a synthetic opioid 50 to 100 times more powerful than morphine.<sup>1</sup> On June 6, 2017, the Drug Enforcement Administration released a video warning emergency responders about the dangers of fentanyl and urging them to use extreme caution. In the video, Acting Administrator Chuck Rosenberg warns viewers to "assume the worst . . . don't touch this stuff or the wrappings it comes in without the proper personal protective equipment."<sup>2</sup>

Some synthetic opioids are even more dangerous and create major challenges for law enforcement officers and emergency responders. For example, an amount of carfentanil no larger than two grains of salt can kill a person, and police officers have overdosed after brief contact with small quantities of this drug.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on Government Operations, Testimony of Executive Assistant Commissioner Todd C. Owen, Customs and Border Protection, *Hearing on Examining the Shipment of Illicit Drugs in International Mail: Hearing before House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcomm. on Government Operations*, 115th Cong. (Sept. 7, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> "Don't Touch this Stuff": DEA Warns Officers That Coming Into Contact With Fentanyl Could Be Deadly, Washington Post (June 6, 2017) (*online at* [www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/dont-touch-this-stuff-dea-warns-officers-that-coming-into-contact-with-fentanyl-could-be-deadly/2017/06/06/9ace6042-4ade-11e7-a186-60c031eab644\\_story.html?hpid=hp\\_hp-cards\\_hp-card-world%3Ahomepage%2Fcard&utm\\_term=.84588d98e108](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/dont-touch-this-stuff-dea-warns-officers-that-coming-into-contact-with-fentanyl-could-be-deadly/2017/06/06/9ace6042-4ade-11e7-a186-60c031eab644_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-cards_hp-card-world%3Ahomepage%2Fcard&utm_term=.84588d98e108)).

<sup>3</sup> *Heroin Is Being Laced With a Terrifying New Substance: What to Know About Carfentanil*, TIME (Sept. 12, 2017) (*online at* <http://time.com/4485792/heroin-carfentanil-drugs-ohio/>).

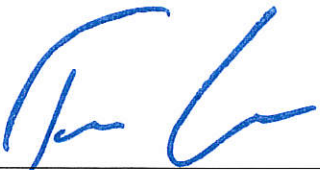
Todd Owen, the Executive Assistant Commissioner for Customs and Border Protection (CBP), testified before the Subcommittee on Government Operations on September 7, 2017, about the various safety procedures in place to protect CBP officers, including the provision of naloxone, an antidote to opioid overdoses, as standard equipment.<sup>4</sup> We request you review the Postal Service's measures to protect its personnel from the risks of contact with synthetic opioids and assess their adequacy and effectiveness.

In order to review these measures at the Postal Service, we request that the Office of Inspector General review:

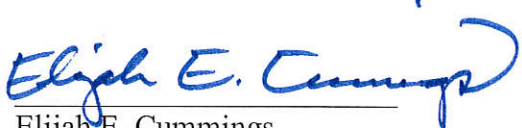
- (1) Procedures, training materials, and communication plans used to help postal employees and inspectors at international mail centers, in domestic processing centers, and on mail delivery routes identify and protect themselves from synthetic opioids;
- (2) Documents referring or relating to the availability of naloxone or other opioid overdose medication for employees at international mail centers, in domestic processing centers, and on mail delivery routes, including the type of products available and the actual or estimated overall and per-unit costs of supplying such medications; and
- (3) Documents referring or relating to procedures the Postal Service implemented following the 2001 anthrax attack available to protect employees from synthetic opioids.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Drew Baney of the majority staff at (202) 225-5074 and Mark Stephenson or Lena Chang of the minority staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,



Trey Gowdy  
Chairman



Elijah E. Cummings  
Ranking Member

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<sup>4</sup> House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on Government Operations, Testimony of Executive Assistant Commissioner Todd C. Owen, Customs and Border Protection, *Hearing on Examining the Shipment of Illicit Drugs in International Mail: Hearing before House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcomm. on Government Operations*, 115th Cong. (Sept. 7, 2017).