

# Intertwined Epidemics of Illicitly Manufactured Fentanyl in Canada and the United States

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# Illicitly manufactured fentanyl (IMF)

- Acetyl fentanyl and other analogues,
- 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine
- Blood tests do not distinguish from pharma-fentanyl
- Linked to the larger opioid epidemics in the US and Canada, and to ER visits and overdose deaths
- IMF powder has been found laced with heroin, cocaine and synthetic marijuana
- IMF has been found in counterfeit opioid and sedative medications

Pill press plus 1K NPF = \$100,000  
Street value = \$20,000,000



# Methods

**The Drug Diversion Program of the RADARS ® prescription drug surveillance system conducts quarterly surveys of 250 law enforcement agencies.**

**Surveys questions include:**

- **Number of new cases of pharmaceutical drug diversion by product**
- **Open-ended query about new drug trends in the reporter's jurisdiction**

**Data were compiled from the new drug trends section for the period 1/1/2013 through 3/31/2016. Maps were created to signify reports of IMF in both powder and counterfeit pill forms over time.**

**Law enforcement and public health news reports were researched to compile the history of IMF distribution in Canada.**



# 2012: New IMF Trafficking through Canada

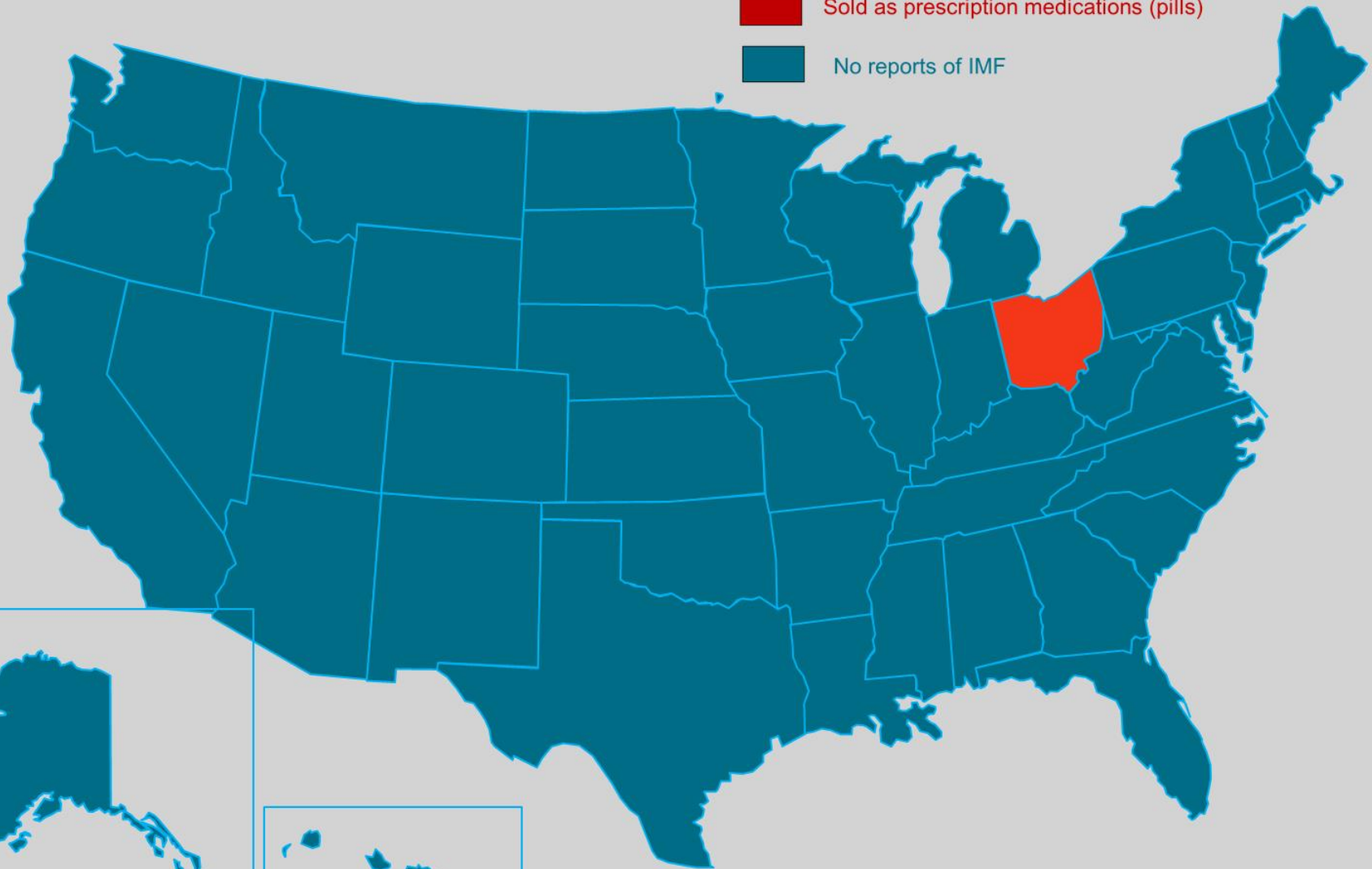
High volume Chinese trade through Vancouver  
No searches of parcels under 30 grams in weight  
Distant from Mexico heroin sources



# 3Q 2014

## Key

-  Powder alone or combined with heroin
-  Sold as prescription medications (pills)
-  No reports of IMF

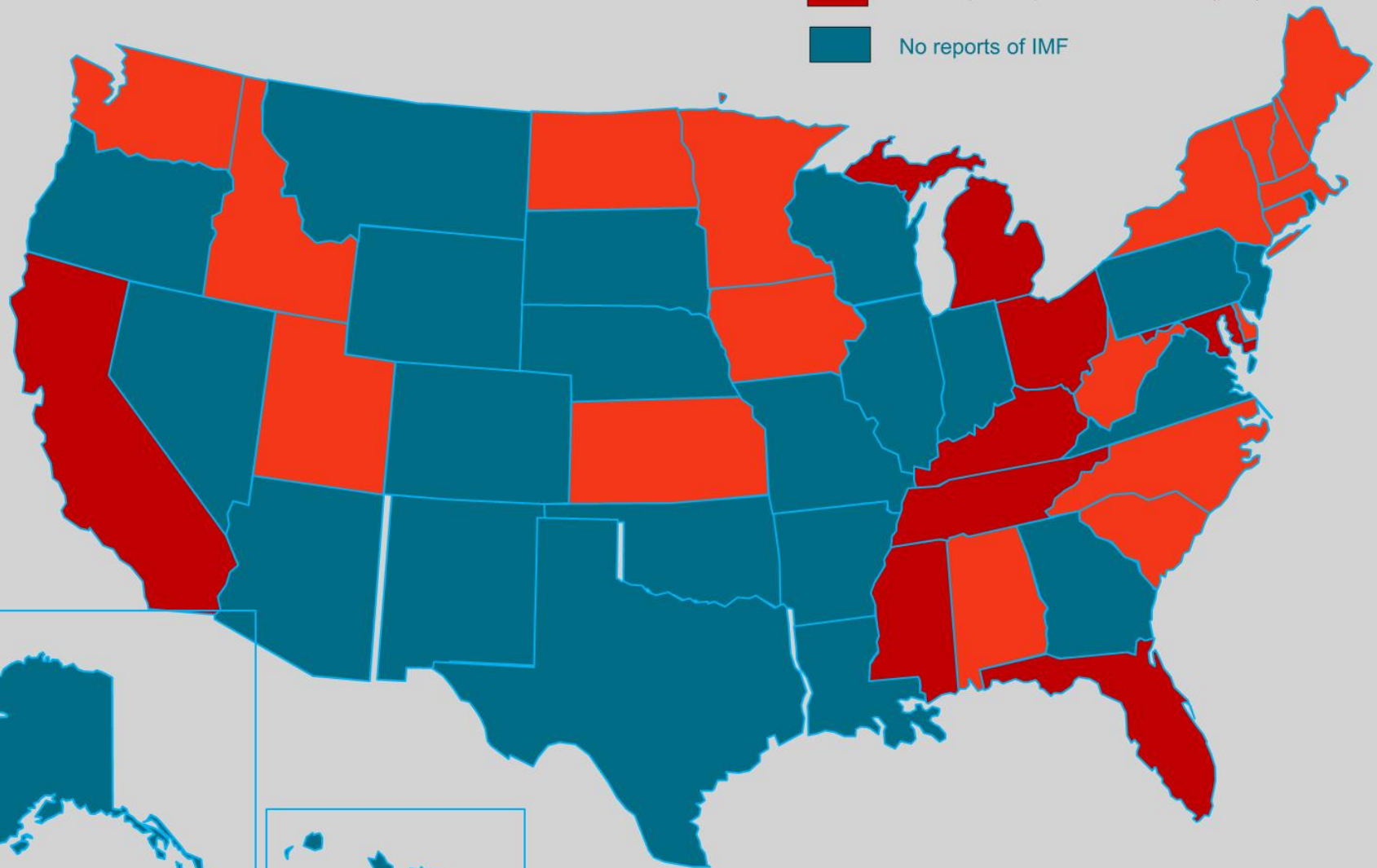


Alaska

Hawaii

# 1Q 2016

### Key



# Conclusion

- Canada and US have different but complementary drug trafficking routes
- Illicit drug trade adapts to Rx opioid misuse trends and control measures
- Most worrisome:
  - high potency illicit fentanyl analogues are easily camouflaged and transported
  - mass produced counterfeit Rx products



# Public health policy issues

- Law enforcement reports of Rx diversion and illicit drug seizures are an early warning system for the public health system
- The systematic surveillance data in the U.S. signaled the entry of IMF into the US six months before public health notices.
- Also needed:
  - International cooperation Prevention measures targeted to young people
  - Pain management treatments that work
  - Treatments with low abuse liability
  - Access to opioids for patients that need them
  - Drug treatment access
  - Harm reduction, including needle exchange, safe injection sites, and OD reversal