

In the 2023 Chicago HIDTA Threat Assessment, the proliferation of counterfeit Oxycodone pills containing fentanyl was identified as a significant threat contributing to the fatal drug overdose epidemic in the region. In response, the Chicago HIDTA Investigative Support Center (ISC) and the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) task force member (TFM) assigned to the ISC began analyzing data regarding the importation of pill presses, pill press parts including stamps and dies, and the binding agents necessary to operate an illicit pill press operation. The Chicago HIDTA ISC and the CBP TFM discovered an alarmingly high volume of these items being shipped to the region from overseas and that many of the recipients had significant criminal histories, usually associated with narcotics trafficking. ISC analysts and the CBP TFM identified approximately forty separate drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), many with street gang affiliations, suspected of operating illegal pill presses in the Chicago HIDTA region. The Chicago HIDTA ISC named this intelligence-gathering project “Operation Press Your Luck”.

As a result of Operation Press Your Luck, an investigation was initiated that involved the collaboration and partnership of multiple law enforcement agencies operating in different states. This investigation resulted in the identification and dismantlement of a street-gang-affiliated clandestine pill press operation and the seizure of 6.3 kilograms of pills containing suspected fentanyl, 1.3 kilograms of powder containing fentanyl, various dies/stamps with fentanyl residue, 3.3 kilos of suspected marijuana, and two pill presses. The pill presses seized from this investigation could produce approximately 5,000 fentanyl-laced pills per hour. Two subjects were arrested and were charged with several Class X Felonies in Cook County, Illinois. On May 28, 2025, the primary subject charged in this investigation was sentenced to 10 years in an Illinois State prison while the second subject received a four-year sentence.

Media Link: <https://cwbchicago.com/2025/05/10-years-for-fentanyl-pill-making-operation-driving-car-toward-federal-agents.html>