



## **Attorney General: 25 People Charged in Fentanyl Trafficking Operation**

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TAMPA, Fla. — Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody and Florida Department of Law Enforcement officials announced Wednesday that 25 people had been charged with more than 60 first-degree felonies linked to drug trafficking and other violent crimes.

Moody linked many of the suspected traffickers to a Mexican drug cartel and gangs whose influence stretched across the United States.

"The Mexican cartels, many of which are involved in this specific case, do not value human life. Human life is an expense on their balance sheet, on their income statement," she said. "Human life has no meaning to them. They care about profit, and they care about power."

Moody, a Republican who is in a re-election battle with Democrat Aramis Ayala, pointed the finger at President Joe Biden, claiming many of these crimes were a result of political policy at the southern border. Just one individual charged in this bust, she said, had been identified as a person in the U.S. illegally, so far.

A writer for the libertarian-leaning CATO Institute states that the president has the power to admit as many refugees from abroad as he wants, and President Joe Biden is on track to admit the fewest refugees in history. One problem that he faces is the sheer volume of people arriving at the border. FDLE Commissioner Mark Glass said in Wednesday's case, the large seizure had a direct connection to a current inmate, Carlos Martinez, who's serving a 30-year prison system for attempted murder. He, too, is said to have a connection to a California gang called Southern United Raza gang, also known as Sur 13 or Sureños X3.

"From inside a correctional institution, he and his co-conspirators were able to move large shipments of narcotics and this atrocious drug (fentanyl) throughout the United States and into the state of Florida," Glass said.

Glass claimed investigators seized more than 45 guns, \$150,000 in cash, 48 pounds of fentanyl, 15,000 fentanyl pills and 350 pounds of methamphetamines

The two-year investigation linked the gang's activity from across southwest to central Florida. Moody claimed the amount of fentanyl seized is enough to kill half the state's population.

In September, Moody said fentanyl is flooding into the state at a rapid pace and authorities are seeing it presented in new ways.

Moody urged families to have conversations with their kids and loved ones. In part, she said, "I'm warning parents — I'm a mother of a young school-aged child — I have had these difficult conversations in my own home. And if you have hesitated or think your child is too young or haven't wanted to do this yet, do it tonight."

According to Live Tampa Bay, the overdose rate in our area is 10 percent higher than in the rest of the state.