



RAYSECUR®

# ANNUAL MAIL SECURITY REPORT

20  
22



## Mail-Based Threat Detection: A Key Component of a Holistic Security Strategy

Our annual mail security report has remained a constant amidst an ever-changing global security landscape. The increasing complexity of new and emerging security risks, compounded by strained resources, whether staffing, budgetary, or otherwise, are the two most significant factors driving change across the industry. Succeeding in this environment requires a behavioral shift from viewing security risks in isolation to data-forward approaches capable of keeping pace with today's dynamic threat landscape.

Access to accurate, timely, and relevant data is critical for organizations to understand the full scope of the problem to develop informed strategies to mitigate these security risks. To that end, this report attempts to compile disparate sources of information ranging from official government statistics to open-source, public domain threat incidents, to provide security practitioners with comprehensive data and a complete view of the threat landscape, covering both the prevalence and impacts of mail-based security threats to drive informed decision making.

Over the past year, our security teams have conducted numerous risk assessments and conferred with leading global enterprises and government agencies at all levels covering their mail security operations and best practices. The data presented in this report underpin these conversations, and the resulting approaches are centered around several key themes, with a common trend namely being the increased risk for smaller quantities of potentially more potent substances sent concealed in increasingly smaller mail items.

Nowhere is the problem more acute than in prisons and correctional facilities, which see harmful substances such as fentanyl, isotornitazene (ISO), and related chemicals smuggled through the mail daily, putting staff and the people under their care at serious risk. Included in this expanded report, for the first time, this data highlights the extent of the problem facing law enforcement and the potential spill-over risks to the private sector, which has seen similar trends of increasingly more toxic and harmful substances sent in smaller mail items over the past several years.

As a result, this report now covers public- and private-sector data, spanning both United States (US) domestic and international geographies. While the emphasis remains on current and emerging chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosives (CBRNE) mail threat data, the inclusion of mail-based contraband data, particularly drugs and other harmful substances, provides a much clearer picture of just how pervasive the problem is.

Looking to the year ahead, we can expect forward-thinking organizations to take a hard look at the data first to tailor holistic risk mitigation strategies informed by intelligence unique to their organization and circumstances. Advanced technologies and common-sense risk-based approaches are making it easier than ever to implement effective solutions once the scope of the problem is accurately understood.

Thank you for your interest in our 2022 Mail Security Report. I sincerely hope you find the material both informative and actionable to enhance the safety and security of your people and organizations.

**Alex Sappok, Ph.D.**  
Chief Executive Officer

*Corporate security leaders have come a long way in advancing their physical security practices and better leveraging technologies to protect the business and their employees. However, security leaders must continually act with urgency to proactively address ever-evolving security risks, changes in tactics, and the convergence of digital and physical attacks.*

**– Mike Howard,**  
Former CSO of Microsoft



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## Domestic Mail Threats Continue Trending Upward

The most recent government data from the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) reveals that in 2021, the Dangerous Mail Investigations (DMI) unit of the USPIS responded to 2,010 mail incidents involving suspicious items or substances, including powders and liquids. Data from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) shows an increase in suspicious packages reported in 2021 over the prior year, totaling 4,935. Taken in the aggregate, the data indicates that almost 20 mail or suspect package incidents per day rise to the threshold of triggering a USPIS or ATF response or reporting action.<sup>1,2</sup>

Mail-based threats are the concealed distribution of dangerous substances or threatening content intended to harm the recipient.



BIOLOGICAL



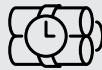
CHEMICAL



DRUGS



DRUG-TREATED PAPER



EXPLOSIVES



LIQUID



POWDER



RADIOLOGICAL



THREAT LETTER



WEAPON

# 2022 ANNUAL MAIL SECURITY REPORT

RaySecur's Chief Security Officer reviews global mail threat incidents affecting corporate, law enforcement, and international institutions over the last 12 months.

Our 2021 Mail Security Report highlighted the continuation of mail threats due to the increasingly turbulent social, economic, and political events occurring across the globe. And while those trends continued, mail-based threats remain overlooked because of the lack of information in the aggregate to accurately assess risk and prioritize solutions relative to other security requirements.

Our 2022 Annual Mail Security report aims to elevate awareness and disseminate actionable intelligence. The lack of reporting requirements – at all government and private sector levels - leaves a sizable threat vector across all industries. Yet it is especially worrisome to those at critical risk and increasingly targeted such as pharmaceutical, finance, data-centric technology, sports and entertainment, government agencies, and law enforcement.

Without a 360° view of the threat landscape, it's challenging for any security leader to take the proper steps to effectively protect their employees and businesses from the potential bodily harm and operation disruptions that mail threats often cause. All entities, enterprises, and government agencies alike continually weigh priorities on where best to spend their budgets. The pull for ironclad cyber defenses and obvious physical vulnerabilities, such as the main entrance and executive security are strong. However, the risk of mail threats is real, and even if benign, the cost to respond and remediate them can far outweigh efforts

to prevent them. Unfortunately, many organizations learn this after the event, when the cost is much higher than initially assessed, based on limited or incomplete information.

We collect data on mail-based threat incidents from media reports and other public-domain sources. The information in this coverage is valuable as it provides context and insight into the motive for the attack. These data points, representing hundreds of incidents, show that the mail stream remains a reliable attack vector for reaching high-value or high-profile individuals, organizations, and government agencies, often with little effort and under the guise of anonymity for the perpetrator.

While the ramifications of the COVID pandemic continued to impact mail security, new societal, political, and economic issues took center stage in driving aggressions over the past year. The US Supreme Court's repeal of Roe vs. Wade caused outrage nationwide, resulting in several justices receiving mail threats. Similarly, individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQ community and organizations catering to their needs, including healthcare, educational facilities, and others, also faced increased risks and threats as a result of federal and state policy changes. The unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine sent shockwaves across the globe with wide-ranging security ramifications for governments, private sector corporations, and individuals. Toward the end of the year, the US economy also took a hit when multiple technology giants executed massive layoffs, placing more stress on an economy still recovering from the pandemic and supply chain issues. Each of these issues motivated affected individuals to lash out through the mail, as one means of expressing frustration or attempting to effect change.

Data from prisons and correctional facilities are included in this report for the first time, as these sectors are targets for illicit drug smuggling via postal mail, putting corrections and law enforcement professionals at risk while contributing to a significant rise in overdose deaths for incarcerated individuals. From 2001 to 2018, drug and overdose deaths increased by 600% in state prisons and by 200% in jails.<sup>3,4</sup> A significant

portion of the fentanyl and other drugs responsible for overdoses originated in the mail. As noted by the "Detection and Prevention of Illicit Drugs in a Correctional Facility" report issued by the Florida Department of Corrections, outside of guards and holding areas, mail that includes both personal and fraudulent legal correspondence is a major pathway into the incarcerated population.<sup>5</sup> Many facilities are significantly understaffed, leaving little to no support for the mailroom to accurately assess these threats and implement effective responses.

As in years past, we aggregate individual events with official government statistics from organizations including the USPS, ATF, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to generate the intelligence in this report. Readers should be aware that considerations have been made as each government agency views and categorize threats differently. For example, the definition of a "suspect package" differs when categorized by the USPS, ATF, and FBI.

In addition to presenting summary statistics, individual mail-based threat incidents provide further details relevant to the security practitioner.

This report is just one of the ways that we continue our commitment to providing security professionals with data and analysis on an underappreciated threat vector – inbound postal mail and packages. I sincerely hope the information provided here helps inform and mitigate mail-related risks to you and your organization.

Your Security Partner,



**Will Plummer**  
Chief Security Officer



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**10%**

increase in mail incidents on average over prior year



**6.9K**

mail incidents reported in the US by USPS and ATF



**242k**

mail items subject to USPS forensics exam



**9 OUT OF 10**

suspect items sent in letters and small parcels

The Threat Data Center (TDC) is an informational product prepared by RaySecur utilizing open-source reporting to present a comprehensive view of the state of mail-borne threats.

While official government data sources provide a historical view of the prevalence and magnitude of dangerous mail threats, the publication of official statistics typically lags behind actual incidents by six to twelve months. This report aims to summarize key statistics from official data sources to frame the problem, while providing accurate and timely information on current threats.

The RaySecur Annual Mail Security report is constructed using open-source reporting of 2022 mail-based threats compiled by the TDC and 2021 US Government data. The USPS 2021 Annual Report and the United States Bomb Data Center (USBDC) Explosives Incidence Report (EIR) reported 6,945 mail incidents that elicited a response.<sup>6</sup> This number represents a 10% increase over the previous year. In addition, the USPS report notes that examinations were completed on over 242,000 suspicious items and that the forensic laboratory services (FLS) experienced a 23% increase in examination requests, along with a 32% increase in investigations of controlled substances.<sup>7</sup>

RaySecur's global analysis of open-source mail incident data, targeting both public- and private-sector recipients, is consistent with the general trends observed in official USPS and ATF reports. Of note is that, on average, 9 out of 10 mail-related incidents utilized small mail items, including letters and parcels, which can be deposited anonymously in a curbside drop box. Incidents involving larger packages are in the minority, making up less than 10% of all incidents tracked. These observations are consistent across all of the target sectors covered in this report: (i) US domestic mail threat data, (ii) international mail threat data, and (iii) mail-related smuggling of drugs and contraband in correctional facilities. Small mail items tend to be the preferred delivery method for sending threats and contraband, as larger packages require the sender to drop off the item in person at a post office or shipping and logistics provider, thereby incurring additional risks.

The odds of a mail-related security incident are much higher for small mail items than large packages by a significant margin, and the substances contained within those mail items have become smaller and more potent. The increased availability and low cost of dangerous opioids such as fentanyl

What does a lethal dose of Fentanyl look like?



is one example. Fentanyl can be deadly in a dose of as little as 1-3 mg, and new synthetic compounds continue to emerge with even higher toxicity.

Historically this report has focused on mail threats, defined as substances concealed in mail items that could disrupt, harm, or otherwise negatively impact the recipient, whether intentional or not, and whether real threats or hoaxes. In addition to mail threats, this year's report includes data covering smuggling drugs and contraband through the mail into corrections facilities. By including corrections data it emphasizes the pervasiveness of the problem across this market segment and highlights methods, techniques, and trends that may be copied by bad actors intent on deploying ever-more sophisticated mail threats targeting organizations in the public or private sector.

White powders and drugs continue to be the most common substances found in the mail-security incidents reported over the past year across the US, making up 55% of all mail threats tracked. While the majority of white powder mail threats turn out to be hoaxes, the past two years have seen a shift from harmless powders such as baking soda or talcum powder to the inclusion of materials intended to cause harm or illicit a reaction, such as commonly-available chemicals, drugs, and caustic powders. Offenders seemed to understand that the perception of a real threat is as good as the real thing, and adding chemical substances enhances this perception. Until the material is rendered safe, the hoax triggers a response including evacuations, shut-downs, and medical treatments, can still cause considerable disruption, incur significant costs, and negatively impact the brand and employee morale.

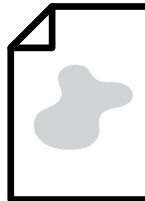
On an international scale, powder threats comprised 40% of all mail threats tracked over the past year and were evenly split between white powders and drugs. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) came in second at 24%. Of note is a marked increase in the use of biological substances, particularly linked to threats against government officials at Ukrainian or Russian embassies motivated by the war in Ukraine.<sup>8</sup>

According to the 2022 Global Terrorism Risk Index Report (GTI), politically motivated threats have now overtaken religiously motivated threats with respect to all terrorist events tracked worldwide.<sup>9</sup> This shift is consistent with RaySecur's reporting on mail threat incidents, which saw a doubling of threats against government targets over the previous year. In the US, 47% of all mail threats tracked targeted local, state, or federal government facilities, while the proportion outside the US was even higher at 61%, based on public-source media reports.

Overseas, there were threats against government officials targeting Ukrainian or Russian embassies, as well as embassies and government offices of countries aligned on either side of the conflict.<sup>10</sup> Domestically senators, supreme court justices, and other government officials were frequently targeted.<sup>11</sup> Threats against embassies abroad were motivated by intimidation and retaliation due to the war in Ukraine. In comparison, many US events were driven by reactions against the reversal of the Roe vs. Wade decision, which resulted in an influx of mail threats at government facilities and private residences. After government offices, businesses and private residences rounded out the top three most targeted recipients.

While corporate organizations are mainly concerned about mail threats, correction facilities almost exclusively focus on detecting contraband in an incarcerated individual's mail, ranging from drugs to weapons, electronics, currency, and more. Mail sent to incarcerated individuals is a main entry point for contraband driven by addiction and the lucrative drug trade inside correctional facilities. The black market inside prisons and jails is thriving, with a single sheet of drug-treated paper selling upwards of \$35,000 or a cell phone for up to \$6,000, depending on the facility.<sup>12,13</sup> These factors account for the increase in smuggled drugs in the corrections space observed over the last several years, which became readily apparent when in-person visitations were canceled as part of the COVID-19 restrictions. Still, contraband continued to flow into facilities unabated, as reflected in the rising rates of overdoses, and increased medical expenses.<sup>14</sup>

Similar to corporate and government targets, the vast majority of items smuggled into correctional facilities, 80%, were sent via letters and small parcels. The smuggling of contraband via letters, marked as legal mail, is quickly becoming a preferred method, as legal communications are constitutionally protected. These protections significantly restrict options for inspecting legal mail items. The increased potency and prevalence of illicit drugs and opioids sent into correctional facilities is



### **Drugs and Powders Illude Screening Methods**

In 2022, most mail-related injuries were due to harmful chemicals and drugs, including powder and treated-paper forms. Trace amounts of caustic substances and drugs continue to be challenging as the typical screening methods of X-ray and physical inspection miss small, well-concealed threats. Most troublesome is the rise of treated paper where paper is sprayed or soaked in chemicals or with liquid drugs, such as fentanyl. Once the liquid is dried, it is invisible to the human eye. The chemical compounds frequently change, making chemical identification devices and test kits ill-suited to keep pace with the problem.

reflected in a 600% increase in overdose and drug-related deaths observed in correctional facilities between 2001-2018, according to data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics.<sup>15</sup>

The consequences of smuggling illicit drugs or targeting mail attacks against governments, businesses, or private residences can be significant. Despite the prevalence of these incidents, their impacts can be mitigated by raising awareness and implementing relatively straightforward measures once the risks are adequately understood.



# US GOVERNMENT DATA: FINDINGS AND RESPONSES



**20**

mail threats per day  
eliciting USPI or  
ATF response



**400 of  
the 1,300**

USPI Inspectors focus  
on Dangerous Mail  
Investigations

**U.S. POSTAL  
INSPECTOR**

**POLICE**

## Two government agencies issue official data on mail-based threats - the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF).

Even so, they provide useful insights into aggregate trends and the types of threats these agencies are responding to.

The 2021 USPIS Annual Report noted that the agency responded to 2,010 suspicious mail incidents with over 242,000 items subject to further forensics analysis. The suspicious mail items contained a mix of substances, including powders, liquid and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), other suspects items, and hoaxes. Over the year, these investigations and others led to 23 arrests and 26 convictions, pointing to the ease with which mail is used threateningly with a limited chance of being caught and prosecuted.<sup>16</sup>

The USBDC, managed by the ATF, collects and analyzes data on explosives-related incidents, including mail and package threats. The USBDC annual Explosives Incident Report for 2021

includes information compiled from several sources, including the Technical Resource for Incident Prevention (TRIPWire) and the Bomb Arson Tracking System (BATS), in collaboration with the Office for Bombing Prevention (OBP) and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

According to the USBDC, 4,935 suspicious or unattended package incidents were reported in 2021, an increase of nearly 25% over 2020 and slightly below the trailing five-year average of 5,464. 2021 was also the first year in the past five where the BATS and TRIPWire data diverged, with TripWire reporting an additional 219 incidents.<sup>17</sup>

Of the incidents documented in the 2021 EIR, 40% were distributed via letters, packages/parcels, or other suspicious containers. In addition, 860 explosion incidents, of which 381 were classified as bombings, occurred in 2021, resulting in 100 injuries and 27 fatalities.<sup>18</sup>

When interpreting this data, it is important to note that USPIS and ATF catalog incidents differently, and the methodology for reporting, may vary from year-to-year, even within the same agency. Complicating matters further, many of these events do not make it into the news cycle or rise to the status of eliciting a response from either of these agencies.

## US Government Resources for Capturing and Investigating Mail-based Incidents

The USPIS's main priority is ensuring mail security and the DMI unit leads investigations into mail threats. The DMI unit was formed as a response to the 2001 nationwide anthrax events and employs over 400 agents specially trained in HAZMAT procedures and how to handle dangerous substances. The DMI leads investigations involving threats toward federal and state government officials, religious organizations, foreign embassies, corporations and private residences, and news media agencies, among others. USPIS also implements mail inspection programs at high-profile events nationwide, including the Super Bowl, the NBA All-Star game, and the Masters Golf Tournament.

In addition to the USPIS, the ATF and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) maintain official data sources and intelligence resources. The ATF USBDC maintains BATS, a web-based system for storing and communicating data on explosives and arson-related incidents, including mail and suspicious package incidents. The DHS administers TRIPWire, an information-sharing network, to raise awareness and prevent bombing incidents.



# 2022 RAYSECUR THREAT DATA CENTER DATA OVERVIEW

The RaySecur TDC compiled 434 mail-based threats and illicit items reported in the public domain across the United States and globally in English-language media sources in 2022.

These events very likely represent a small fraction of the total, as many are handled internally or are reported to local law enforcement but do not make it into the public media. The charts, data, and analysis presented in the following sections of this report are based on the incidents captured by the TDC.



Further complicating reporting is that private- and public-sector organizations are under no legal obligation to report mail-based threats in many cases.

There is also often a desire to minimize negative impacts by handling incidents internally. In addition, most law enforcement agencies do not publish their logs in a manner conducive to aggregate analysis, and the data is often delayed. Nonetheless, the statistics and incidents presented here paint a picture of general trends, targets, and methods used to send dangerous mail items over the past twelve months.

In addition to mail-based threats sent to corporate, government, and residential recipients, this expanded report includes public-source data on illicit items, drugs, and contraband targeting the public safety and corrections sectors. The past several years have seen a large uptick in drugs and other illicit items flowing into these facilities through the mail. The trends of using small mail items, including letters and manilla envelopes, to send smaller quantities of increasingly toxic substances may serve as a bellwether for other industries – given the ease of procuring harmful substances, including fentanyl, and the relatively low cost and anonymity that sending a letter through the mail presents.

“  
*Looking back at 2022, it's clear that security incidents uncovered some surprising weaknesses in corporate physical security. This prompted many security leaders to take a closer look at their protocols and make necessary changes. These events highlight the need for organizations to take a more proactive approach, informed by conducting comprehensive risk assessments and real-world data to most effectively develop strategies and bolster defenses against both external and internal threats.*

**- John L. Sullivan, Global Chief Security and Resiliency Officer, Boston Scientific**



# US CORPORATE AND GOVERNMENT MAIL SECURITY OVERVIEW



**24**

Injuries reported in the US



**91%**

of mail threats delivered via letters or small parcels



Police were most often the first responders



Last mile couriers introduce additional risk





## Key Findings and Trends

The data and analysis presented in this section cover US domestic mail threat incidents targeting the private sector and federal, state, and local governments, and excludes illicit items sent to correctional facilities.

Mail threats are often public reactions to positions an organization or high-profile individual takes on a societal, economic, or political issue or policy. In today's digital world, these positions are often shared via highly-visible platforms, including public appearances, media reports, internal dialogs, and social media posts.

Previously, mail-based threats often targeted senior leadership, such as a Governor or CEO. While senior leaders and public spokespeople are often targets, organizations have increasingly developed their own identities. The public may view the entire entity as the target, not solely an individual working for the company. The widening of the organization's threat vector means that threats can come from all fronts, and target any location (not just the headquarters), significantly increasing the scope for security and executive protection resources.

In 2022, the reversal of the *Roe vs. Wade* decision provides an example of a very public and highly-controversial event with broad-reaching security ramifications for a wide range of organizations. Many private sector organizations, large and small, voiced their support for workers' access to healthcare and vowed to assist when needed.<sup>19</sup> These views triggered expressions of anger and called for the banning of brands and products.<sup>20</sup> It also led to the DHS issuing a memo warning about expected threats from abortion rights activists on both sides of the issue, and detailed social media threats already received.<sup>21</sup> A report published by the National Abortion Federation notes increased violence across the board, including an uptick in suspicious packages.<sup>22</sup>



### Many Mail Incidents Go Unreported or Misclassified

Only a small fraction of mail threats elicit a response from a federal agency. Even fewer are reported in the media, with many hoaxes and benign threats handled by organizations internally or by local first responders. Additionally, for mail-based events that are reported, they are often classified as "suspicious packages," but upon further review, envelopes were the actual delivery method. As a leading provider of mail security technologies globally, RaySecur has a unique view into the prevalence and types of mail threats facing global corporations, high-profile individuals, and government agencies worldwide.

Similarly, the war in Ukraine contributed to increased mail security risks and an uptick in mail-based threat incidents on a global scale including overseas US entities. At the start of the war, sanctions were placed against Russia by US and European governments and organizations alike. Russian citizens, products, and businesses were restricted in their travel, export, or import of products and faced credit limitations.<sup>23</sup> In addition, a significant portion of the European Union refused to accept Russian oil imports as retaliation for the invasion of Ukraine.<sup>24</sup> Global economic markets were thrown into turmoil, and the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry reported numerous mail threats containing animal eyes and other body parts sent to government embassies in Spain, Netherlands, Poland, Croatia, Italy, and Austria.<sup>25</sup> The US wasn't immune to threats as the US Embassy in Spain received a suspicious package where security forces detonated it.

In today's environment, bad actors are not limited to outsiders. According to the USPIS, threats from current and former employees or disgruntled customers have long comprised a significant fraction of all mail threats. These individuals may have a grievance with the organization and, in the case of employees, may be able to circumvent security policies and procedures. USPIS research shows that former business partners or employees may seek revenge when business relationships go south or businesses downsize through layoffs or firings, and caution organizations to screen incoming communications from those parties.<sup>26</sup>

Economic uncertainty also often leads to heightened mail security risks. The most recent examples are the waves of layoffs in the technology sector, where the largest tech companies, including Google, Facebook, Twitter, and Amazon, let go of thousands of employees.<sup>27</sup> These reductions occurred for various reasons, including over-hiring during COVID in

response to increased demand for remote services, slower than expected economic growth coming out of COVID, inflationary pressures, and preparation for a potential recession.<sup>28</sup>

The sheer size of the layoffs led to a significant amount of media attention, increasing anxieties nationwide. On top of that, the conduct of executives during the reduction in force was not well received – by the employees or the public at large.<sup>29</sup> Leaked recordings of CEOs making negative statements about the lack of worker efforts and dedication to the company went viral across social media. The layoffs and the insensitivity led to high aggression levels inside and outside the organization and increased pressure on corporate security teams.<sup>30</sup>

While much of the public focused on larger enterprise layoffs, smaller technology companies were confronted with similar business challenges.<sup>31</sup> As a result, they faced many of the same threats as their larger peers but with fewer security resources to respond.<sup>32</sup>

In many cases, thousands of laid-off employees, many of whom had been working remotely since the pandemic, were instructed to return company equipment through the mail. This exposed companies to incoming mail threats from former employees, yet in most cases the organizations had not put processes or resources in place to mitigate these new risks. The remaining employees took on an increased workload leaving them overworked and disgruntled, thus creating the potential for additional retaliation.<sup>33</sup>



*Putting in place strategies to prepare for and lessen the effects of threats a business may face — and ultimately mitigating risk — is as important as corporate compliance or ensuring internal policies, procedures and behaviors, as well as external regulations, are met. Clarity around roles and responsibilities, communications, collaboration, processes and reporting, and special training to be able to address volatile situations, can mean the difference between a catastrophic event destroying a business or the event being averted. This is critical to long-term business resilience.*

- Ontic Research 2022 Mid-Year Outlook  
State of Protective Intelligence Report<sup>34</sup>



# Mail Threat Statistics

In 2022, the total number of mail-based threats reported in the media remained fairly consistent with the previous year, within 3%, based on the open-source data tracked in this report.

Of those mail threats, 50% were delivered in the form of letters, 41% were parcels, and 9% were packages. In other words, the vast majority of mail threats, 91%, tracked in this report were comprised of letters or parcels small enough to fit in a curbside drop box.

This statistic is unsurprising and similar to 2021 data showing that letters and parcels comprised 89% of mail threats tracked. Small mail items can be dropped off anonymously at any curbside USPS drop box, reducing the risk of apprehension for bad actors. Packages and larger items, on the other hand, must be dropped off in person, establishing a chain of custody and inherently incurring more risk for potential perpetrators. As a result, small mail items are the preferred delivery method for mail threats and often present the greatest risk to recipients.

Powders contained within these mail items made up 55% of all mail threats, with 27% being unknown white powders and 28% determined to be drugs or narcotics. Initially, all white powders raise concern, as they are often accompanied by threatening content referencing anthrax, ricin, or other potentially harmful material. Powders remain a predominant threat vector as they can be sent in small envelopes and parcels and often trigger serious disruption and distress for the recipient, even if benign.

Although not all of the powders classified as drugs or narcotics are initially intended as threats and may be more accurately characterized as illicit items when not received by the intended recipient – whether by a mail handler in a corporate mail room or an unassuming third party at a private residence – these materials often trigger the same initial response as a legitimate threat. In particular, the past few years since the beginning of COVID-19 saw a significant increase in the distribution of drugs through the mail, requiring organizations to update policies on handling and responding to these illegal items.



Targets of mail threats in 2022 saw a marked shift in the distribution of threats, with the proportion of threats received by state and local governments nearly doubling over the prior year. On the whole, including data for federal government agencies, 47% of all mail threats tracked in media reports in 2022 in the US targeted government entities. Residences were the second most frequently targeted, followed by businesses.

Residences, in particular, have remained particularly vulnerable for the past several years, given the ease with which personal information can be found online and the general lack of mail security awareness and processes in place, making them relatively soft targets. The public's underappreciation of mail threats is important for executive protection teams to keep in mind when implementing a comprehensive security strategy for their clients and principles.

Slightly more than half of all mail threats tracked in 2022, 52%, proved successful at eliciting a response from first responders, indicating that recipients are treating suspicious mail items seriously as a result of harm, the perceived potential for harm, and/or disruption caused by the receipt of the item.

This sense of urgency aligns with the type of first responders called to handle mail-based threats. The top three entities responding to mail threats in 2022 were local police, who responded to 34% of mail threat incidents, followed by USPIS and hazmat teams, who responded to 29% and 14% of mail threat incidents, respectively. Of note is an increase in events triggering a USPIS response or investigation over the prior year, likely attributed to the rise in threats targeting government agencies.

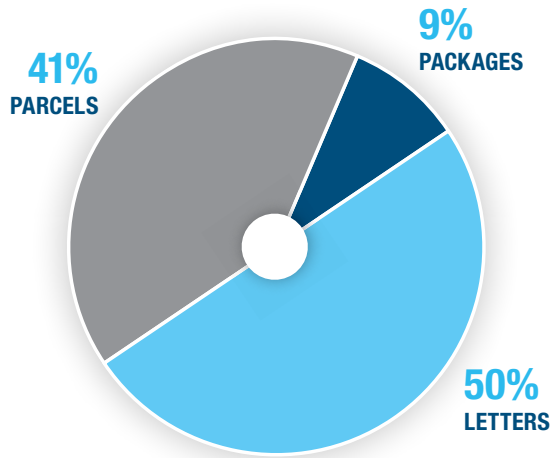


## SUCCESS RATE

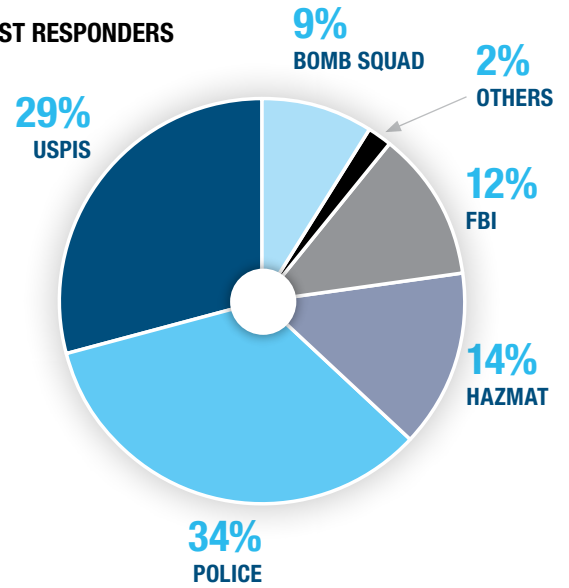
**63%**  
CAUSED A  
RESPONSE

Mail-based threats were successful in causing harm or disruption to the recipient.

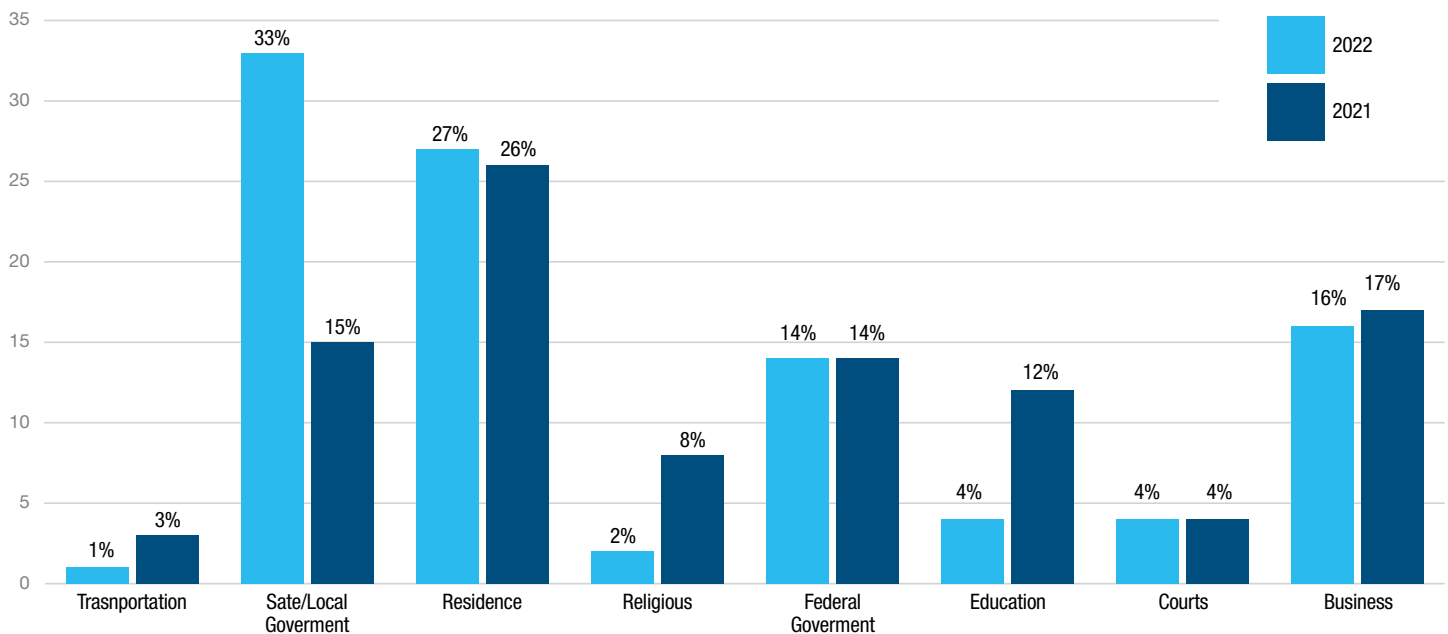
### DELIVERY METHOD



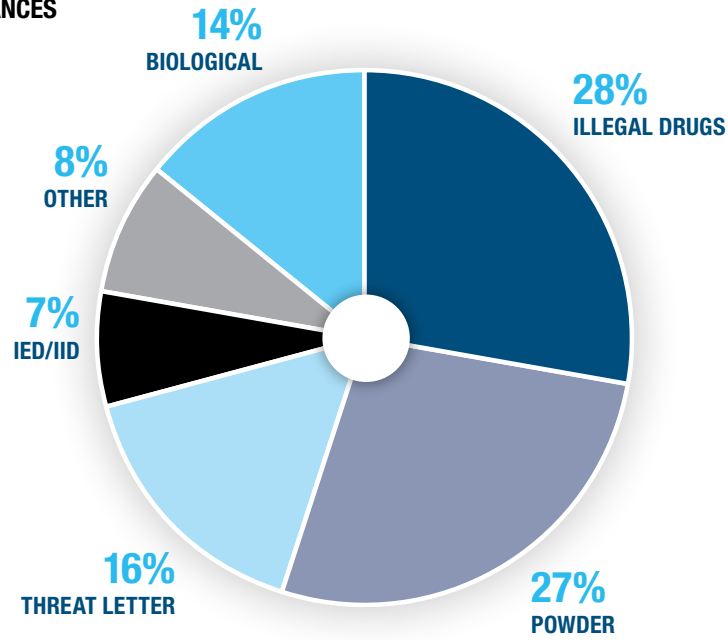
### FIRST RESPONDERS



### TARGETS



**SUBSTANCES**



**TOP FIVE SUSPECTED SUBSTANCES**

RICIN/ANTHRAX	24%
DRUGS (Fentanyl most prevalent)	24%
BIOLOGICAL	14%
IED	7%
THREAT LETTERS	4%



**TOP FIVE US STATES**

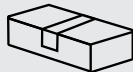
OHIO	17%
CALIFORNIA	10%
FLORIDA	8%
NEW JERSEY	5%
TENNESSEE	5%

# Mail Threat Snapshots

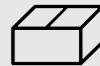
## CATEGORIES OF MAIL



The USPS classifies letters and large envelopes as items that can fit inside the size restrictions of a curbside drop-off box at a maximum thickness of ¾" thick and no more than 10 ounces.



Parcels also fit within a curbside drop box and are packaged in a container.



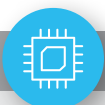
The USPS defines packages as thicker than ¾" and must be dropped off at a Post Office for processing.

## MAIL DISPATCH METHODS



Residential Mailbox, USPS Blue Collection Box, Post Office

Mail threats reported in 2022 affected a wide range of organizations, from high-profile Fortune 500 companies to small businesses, residences, and government agencies. The highlighted media reported incidents in this section provide additional insights and details into the mechanisms, targets, impacts, and motivations of mail-based threats mail-based threats not apparent in the aggregate data alone.



## Technology

### APPLE: APPLE PARK EVACUATED FOR HOURS AFTER WORKER FINDS A SUSPICIOUS WHITE POWDER

Santa Clara authorities report that a portion of Apple Park was evacuated Tuesday after a suspicious substance was found inside an envelope. A fire alarm was pulled at Apple Park when a white powder substance was discovered. Workers in the immediate area were evacuated while the Santa Clara County Fire and Sheriff's office investigated. Once it was determined that the powder did not pose a threat, workers were cleared to return to the office.<sup>35</sup>

### VERIZON: SUSPICIOUS POWDER AT CRANFORD VERIZON'S BUILDING PROMPTS HAZMAT RESPONSE

Union County's Hazmat team was called to the scene after a report of an unknown powder substance in the Verizon building, police said. Cranford Police and Fire Departments rushed to the Verizon building in Cranford Friday morning after a fire alarm was activated. Cranford spokesperson Matthew Nazzaro said an employee told emergency units on the scene that they found an unknown powder substance on a package.<sup>36</sup>



## Non-Profit and Religious

### CHURCH SEEKS TO FIND MAN DROPPING OFF SUSPICIOUS PACKAGE

On Saturday, January 29th, the pastor of the First United Methodist Church reported that a suspicious male had dropped off an unknown package at the church. This package was addressed to the pastor and said “warning” on it.<sup>37</sup>

### LOCAL OFFICIALS EVALUATING UNKNOWN SUBSTANCE LEFT AT SPRING VALLEY JEWISH PRIVATE SCHOOL

An unknown substance from a suspicious package that was delivered to a private Spring Valley Jewish school on Monday is being tested with the hope of finding out what it exactly is. No word on how long it’ll take to identify the substance or how it got to the school.<sup>38</sup>



## Finance

### POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING AFTER A LETTER WAS SENT TO FIFTH THIRD BANK WITH THE WORD “BOMB” WRITTEN ON IT

Police are investigating after a letter was sent to Fifth Third Bank with the word “bomb” written on it, according to an investigator on scene. Police have determined there is no threat at the building. Fifth Third said the threat has been cleared and the building will continue operations as normal.<sup>39</sup>

### SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES REMOVED FROM PENN SQUARE IN LANCASTER

Penn Square in downtown Lancaster has reopened after two suspicious packages were removed on Wednesday afternoon. An unknown person dropped off the packages at Fulton Bank. Authorities do have photos and videos of the person. Police are looking into who that individual is and why they left the packages.<sup>40</sup>



## Transportation

### SUSPICIOUS PACKAGE SENT TO ROCKY DISTRIBUTION CENTER TURNS OUT TO BE RETURNED BOOTS

A suspicious package sent to the Rocky Brands Distribution Center in Hocking County turned out to be a pair of boots returned by a disgruntled customer. On Tuesday, a caller called 911 and reported they had received a suspicious package at the distribution center warehouse that had a threatening message written on it and visible wires hanging out of the box.<sup>41</sup>



## Government

### COUNTY POLICE INVESTIGATE REPORT OF SUSPICIOUS PACKAGE AT DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY IN GERMANTOWN

Investigation by the county fire department’s bomb squad of a possibly suspicious package at the Department of Energy in Germantown did not find any explosives, authorities said early Wednesday evening. The county’s fire department said they were investigating a report of a possibly suspicious package received by Montgomery County Emergency Communications.<sup>42</sup>



## Government (Cont'd)

### **BOMB SQUAD CLEARS SUSPICIOUS PACKAGE AT FEDERAL BUILDING IN TAMPA**

A bomb squad responded to a call on Polk Street to investigate a suspicious package at the federal courthouse in Tampa on Tuesday afternoon. Tampa Fire Rescue said a suspicious substance was found in an envelope. Officials later announced on social media, “At this time, the powder has been collected and the situation is mitigated. E. Polk Street reopened and the Federal Annex Building has been cleared for routine operation.”<sup>43</sup>

### **NO THREAT DETECTED AFTER ‘WHITE POWDER LETTER’ AT FBI JACKSONVILLE OFFICE UNDERGOES TESTING**

The Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office and the Jacksonville Fire Rescue Department were called Friday to the FBI Jacksonville Field Office on the Southside “to assist in processing a white powder letter,” according to the FBI. Testing was done on the letter, which an incident report from JSO shows was found around 10:30 a.m. in the mail room, and preliminary results showed that “no biological threat was detected.”<sup>44</sup>

### **CLEVELAND POLICE EVACUATE SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE AFTER WHITE POWDER SCARE**

The Cleveland Social Security Office was evacuated Tuesday afternoon after white powder fell out of an envelope an employee opened. Homeland Security officers, Cleveland firefighters, Cleveland police and FBI agents all responded to the scene. According to first responders, one employee was opening up a letter in the hallway when the white powder came out of the envelope.<sup>45</sup>



## Sports and Entertainment

### **MYSTERIOUS PACKAGE AT HALAS HALL**

The Chicago Bears locked down Halas Hall in the lunch hour as police arrived on the premises to investigate a suspicious package. Team officials announced no one would be able to leave the campus or come in, and the package was put in the parking lot for the police to examine. Team officials didn’t reveal what was found when the package was opened.<sup>46</sup>

### **HEAT-HAWKS GAME DELAYED BY SUSPICIOUS PACKAGE OUTSIDE ARENA**

The NBA playoff game between the Miami Heat and the Atlanta Hawks was delayed Friday night after a suspicious package was found outside State Farm Arena. The tipoff was pushed back nearly an hour while police investigated the package. Three gates were closed while security personnel made sure there was no danger. The package was found near the stairwell that provides access to a MARTA subway station at the arena.<sup>47</sup>

### **UTA OFFICES EVACUATED OVER SUSPICIOUS PACKAGE**

Headquarters of the United Talent Agency were evacuated this morning over a perceived bomb threat in the form of a suspicious package. Out of precaution, everyone was asked to leave the building on Civil Center Drive. After the threat was investigated by police, employees were allowed to return to their offices.<sup>48</sup>



## Personal Protection

### **KARI LAKE CLOSES CAMPAIGN OFFICE OVER ENVELOPE WITH WHITE POWDER**

Arizona's Republican gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake closed a campaign office after an envelope containing "suspicious white powder" was delivered to the premises on Saturday. A member of the candidate's staff unwittingly opened the envelope and is now under "medical supervision", campaign spokesperson Colton Duncan told CNN.<sup>49</sup>

### **SUSPICIOUS WHITE POWDER SUBSTANCE SENT TO UTAH LAWMAKER**

A local government official recently received suspicious mail containing a powdery substance and now Utah lawmakers are being warned. In a statement to ABC4, FBI spokesperson Sandra Baker said: "I can tell you that we responded to the call of a suspicious letter last week and determined it did not pose a threat. I'm not able to comment any further."<sup>50</sup>

### **FEDS: MAN THREATENED JOURNALISTS, SUBJECTS OF RACE-RELATED STORIES, SUPREME COURT JUSTICES**

A Connecticut man with a history of threatening public figures mailed threatening letters to local journalists who wrote stories on racial issues, the subjects of those stories, and US Supreme Court justices, said federal authorities. A number of the more than 100 threatening letters were sent to the homes of reporters and editors at Hearst Connecticut Media Group. Those reporters had written stories with subjects who are Black and covered race-related issues. A number of the people named in the stories also received threatening letters.<sup>51</sup>




## Healthcare

### **BOSTON POLICE AND EOD RESPOND TO CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OVERNIGHT AS STAFF REMAIN ON HIGH ALERT FOR THREATS**

Boston Police officers and the Bomb Squad responded to a 911 call reporting a suspicious package in the Children's Hospital parking garage. When they arrived, the Bomb Squad immediately canvassed the garage for anything else that seemed suspicious. Their primary mission was to quickly clear the threat since another bomb threat was called in at Northeastern University the same night. Additionally, there was a bomb threat at the Children's Hospital just days prior to this particular incident.<sup>52</sup>

### **PACKAGE WITH WHITE POWDER ARRIVES AT KETTERING WOMEN'S MED CENTER; HAZMAT CALLED**

A suspicious package containing white powder arrived Wednesday at the Women's Medical Center in Kettering, prompting police and hazmat crews to respond. The building was evacuated by Kettering Fire Department first responders "But no injuries were reported. The location has been a target of threats in the past. The identity of the sender, the package's origin and motive remain under investigation." said Officer Tyler Johnson, Kettering Police Department.<sup>53</sup>



# WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2023?

Mail threat activity in 2023 is already shaping into a busy year. Continued hostilities against government institutions are ongoing, especially with increasingly polarized political parties, charges and indictments of former president Trump, and the 2024 election campaigns picking up speed. Politicians often take controversial positions to gain media attention and appeal to the bases that heavily influence voting results.<sup>54,55</sup> US Senators in three states received over 100 letter threats containing white-powders triggering responses by police, FBI and DHS.<sup>56</sup>

Roe vs. Wade's after-effects continue to ripple through the state and appellate courts. Now that federal protections are stripped, lawmakers are rushing to establish, solidify, and secure state laws.<sup>57</sup> These new laws or political actions will likely increase security risks for politicians, religious, non-profit women's health organizations, and corporations that take public positions on the issue.<sup>58</sup>

The ongoing economic uncertainties of inflation and rising interest rates will pressure corporations and consumers alike. If there isn't an improvement, layoffs outside of the technology sector could occur, making an already tenuous situation worse. The highly publicized bank collapses at several major regional banks dealt another blow to the technology sector and caused increased consumer unease.<sup>59</sup>

In 2022, several states legalized online betting on professional sports teams, and the expected result is that more threats will be directed at the sports and entertainment industry because of it. The potential hefty monetary impact of betting and the strong emotional feelings tied to players and teams could lead to mail-based threats as a means to disrupt gameplay, stadium operations, or target players. Corporate security and executive protection teams should prepare for increased threats and strengthen security strategies and protocols.<sup>60</sup>

Another emerging trend concerns "phygital" threats, which describes the convergence of physical and digital tactics. For example, postal mail containing battery-operated micro-computers with wireless capability to access local networks or even IEDs disguised as USB sticks are real threats to organizations.<sup>61</sup> Leaders will need to become more familiar with the convergence of cyber and physical security, given the severe impact that cyber attacks can inflict on organizations – private and government alike. Security teams should be extra vigilant of packages arriving for employees that predominantly work remotely, which run the risk of sitting unopened for long periods, or take the added precautions of using a network scanner to find packages seeking to access network infrastructure.<sup>62</sup>

Finally, the ease of access to extremely potent substances, like fentanyl, is an emerging concern. A leading indicator is the influx of highly toxic drugs in small quantities of powders and liquids infiltrating corrections facilities nationwide through the mail.<sup>63</sup> Corporate security teams will be caught off-guard if these same tactics are utilized to send legitimate powder threats, such as fentanyl and similar compounds, instead of benign hoaxes if effective screening approaches are not in place.<sup>64</sup>

# 2022 INTERNATIONAL MAIL SECURITY OVERVIEW

Based on five-year averages for the number of terrorist incidents from 2015 to 2020 (the last year public data was available) from the GTD database:<sup>65</sup>





# Increased Risk For Mail-Related Incidents Abroad Based On Global Terrorism Risk Data

International threats follow similar tactics observed in domestic incidents. Letters and small parcels remain the primary delivery mechanism, although IEDs are 3x more prevalent.



90%

of international mail threats tracked delivered via letters and parcels



74%

of incidents caused a response



24%

IED/IID



20%

White Powders



20%

Drugs

## Top 3 substances

There are several sources for international terrorism risk data. The Global Terrorism Index (GTI), generated by the Institute for Economics and Peace, details global trends and patterns in terrorist attacks and activities.<sup>66, 67</sup>

The GTI leverages the DragonFly Terrorism Tracker database recording open-source terrorist incidents worldwide.<sup>68</sup> In addition, the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), part of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism (START) managed by the University of Maryland, tracks open-source data on terrorist events on a global scale.<sup>69</sup>

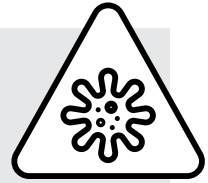
Accurately assessing mail threat risk globally is complicated by several factors, the most significant being the fragmented nature of the data. Unlike the data for the US, where official source data on mail threats is regularly cataloged by government agencies, including USPIA, ATF, and FBI, there is no single source for international mail threat data. Further complicating the analysis is that many countries do not publicly report mail threat statistics, and in some regions, media reports are censored. One proxy for gauging the potential for mail threats in a particular part of the world is the global terrorism risk index. Mail threats and dangerous mail incidents are generally categorized as terrorist events.

According to the 2022 GTI report, the number of deaths from terrorism declined slightly (by 1.2% relative to the prior year); however, the total number of attacks increased by 17%, marking the largest number of attacks recorded since the index began tracking the data in 2007. Despite this increase, the report also noted a decline in counter-terrorism budgets due to a diversion of monies to fight the COVID pandemic. The full impact of reducing counter-terrorism funds isn't well understood yet, but it could lead to increased vulnerabilities.<sup>71</sup>

Based on open-source media reports tracked by RaySecur for 2022, mail threats outside the US increased by 13% globally over 2021. The motives behind mail threats on the international front range from social unrest to insider threats targeting corporations. In addition, unstable local or national government infrastructure, internal political conflict, or other destabilizing factors that vary from country to country also play a role.

One notable shift in the motivation for terrorist attacks globally, and highlighted in the 2022 GTI report, is the shift away from religiously motivated attacks toward politically-motivated terrorism. Over the last five years, there have been five times more politically motivated terrorist attacks than religiously motivated attacks perpetrated by far-left and far-right extremist ideologies targeting government and political figures.<sup>72</sup> These trends are consistent with data tracked by RaySecur for the US in 2022, which also showed a shift in mail threats away from religious targets and increased mail threats received by federal, state, and local governments.

**Bioterrorism – According to Bill Gates, bioterrorism is the next big threat humanity isn't worrying about enough.**



According to Interpol, bioterrorism refers to “the intentional release of biological agents or toxins for the purpose of harming or killing humans, animals, or plants with the intent to intimidate or coerce a government or civilian population to further political or social objectives.”

In a 2015 Ted Talk, Bill Gates, former CEO of Microsoft, warned that civilization wasn't prepared for a pandemic and that it was only a matter of time before one hit. In less than five years, the world experienced firsthand the devastation caused by COVID. Lately, his warnings have centered on another growing threat to global security: bioterrorism.

Gates feels these two scenarios are similar because bioterror and pandemics expose mankind to dangerous and even deadly diseases. Still, bioterror is a little harder to defend against because whoever's trying to do it is [doing it] consciously and understands your defense system, so they can be trying to design around them.”

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that if a bioterrorist attack were to happen, it would most likely involve the bacteria causing anthrax which was used previously in an attack. In 2001, powdered anthrax was placed in letters sent through the US postal system. Twenty-two people, including twelve letter carriers, contracted anthrax, and five of these twenty-two people died.

Gates has been calling for greater investment in technologies to detect and respond to bioterror attacks and believes we must also strengthen our international cooperation and global health systems to be better prepared against biological threats.<sup>70</sup>

The invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 is one example of a global geo-political event with far-reaching ramifications for mail threats on a global scale.<sup>73</sup> Not long after the start of hostilities, both the Ukrainian and Russian embassies received dangerous mail threats.<sup>74</sup> Countries across Europe were also the victims of threats, with over fifty incidents reported. Spain alone received six threats targeting the US Embassy, the Spanish defense ministry, an air force base, and a weapons manufacturer. A package delivered to the Ukrainian embassy resulted in a security guard suffering injuries when a package containing an explosive device detonated.<sup>75, 76</sup>

While not as harmful, other mail items sent to embassies contained biological threats in the form of animal body parts and were intended to send a message and intimidate.<sup>77</sup> Aside from embassies and government offices, companies and individuals taking public stances on the war also faced heightened risks and security threats.

Based on open-source data tracked by RaySecur, international mail threat incidents in 2022 targeted government offices and government facilities 61% of the time. Private residences were the targets of 14% of all mail threats, and businesses were targeted 11% of the time. Similar to open-source data for the US, the reader is advised to consider potential reporting biases as government targets may be more likely to receive media coverage, whereas residences and businesses may be less likely to report mail threats.

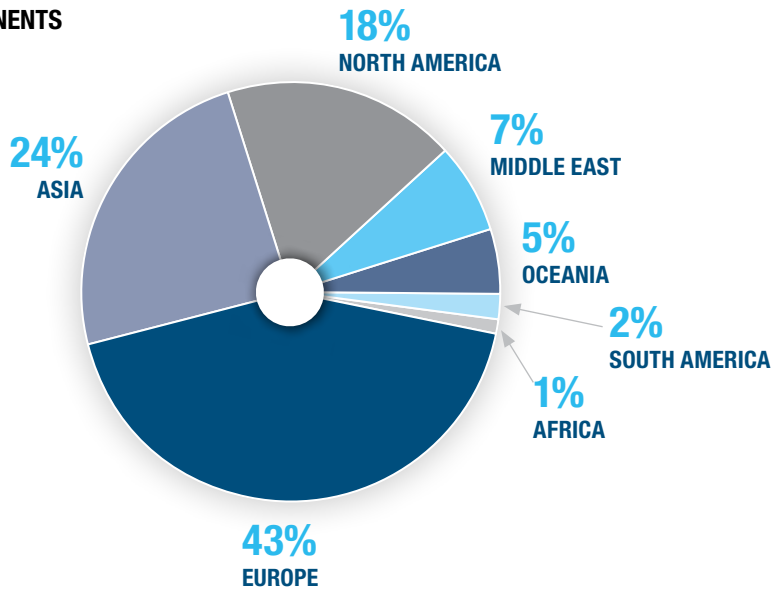
While large packages often make the headlines, the primary delivery mechanism for global mail threats in 2022 consisted of letters and small parcels, which comprised 90% of all international mail threats tracked by RaySecur in public media sources. The most prevalent threats included IEDs, comprising 24% of all threats tracked, followed closely by white powders and drugs, both at 20% of all threats tracked. These threats are often determined to be hoaxes but trigger significant disruption and an emergency response nonetheless. These threats are often determined to be hoaxes but trigger significant disruption and an emergency response nonetheless.

While not all mail-based threats were hoaxes, the proportion of potentially viable threats, or those intending to harm, made up 74% of all observed open-source threats. Viability and intention of harm refer to those threats which go beyond benign hoaxes, such as the use of caustic white powders as opposed to harmless powders or the inclusion of viable triggering devices in the case of a victim-operated explosive, for example. The total number of injuries from mail-based threats rose by 53% in 2022, with most of the injuries, 65%, caused by parcel deliveries.

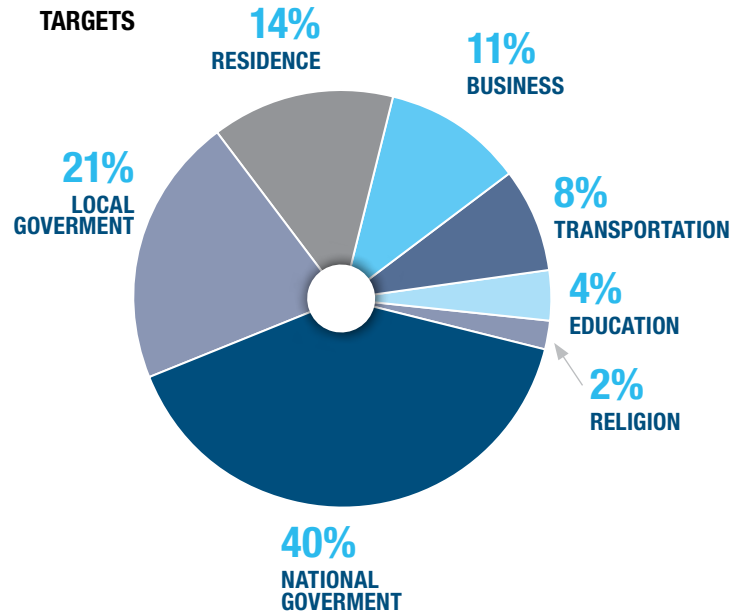
Mail threats continue to serve as a simple and relatively low-risk method for bad actors to make their voices heard, intimidate, disrupt, or inflict real harm on the intended recipient across the globe. More often than not, these threats succeed as the recipient has little or no security measures in place to guard against them. For those that do, the primary method of detecting mail threats remains manual screening processes, visual and tactile inspection, perhaps supported by X-ray scanners, to catch a suspect item before it is delivered. Yet, these threats continue to evade detection even by some of the world's leading government security teams, as evidenced by the events observed over the past year.

It should be noted that while the data presented here provide an indication of the frequency and types of dangerous mail incidents which occurred globally in 2022, the data is aggregated from reports in the public media. As such, it is most likely biased toward legitimate and high-impact events focused on high-profile targets which garner international media attention. Reporting on these events also varies from country to country. The reader is advised to consider these limitations when interpreting this data.

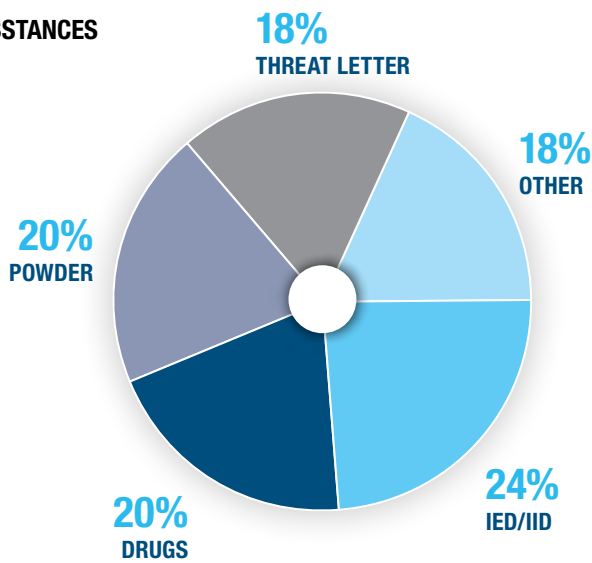
**CONTINENTS**



**TARGETS**



**SUBSTANCES**



# Threat Snapshots

Below are a portion of reported mail-based threats from across the globe. The incidents are indiscriminate, targeting all industries and personas. The media reports provide valuable insights into the type of threat and motivation, but often lack specific details.



## AFRICA

### **RUSSIAN OFFICIAL IN AFRICA WOUNDED BY PACKAGE BOMB, MOSCOW SAYS**

A Russian official active in his country's efforts to gain a stronghold in the Central African Republic was wounded by a package bomb in the country's capital, Bangui, on Friday, according to the Russian foreign ministry and state media. The Russian foreign ministry said in a statement that the attack on Mr. Sytyi was a "terrorist act" and an attempt to derail its good relations with the Central African Republic. Mr. Sytyi was in critical condition in a hospital, a Russian government official said.<sup>78</sup>



## AUSTRALIA

### **'SUSPICIOUS PACKAGE' IS DELIVERED TO THE RUSSIAN EMBASSY IN CANBERRA AS FIREFIGHTERS WEARING HAZMAT SUITS RUSH TO THE SCENE - AND FURY MOUNTS OVER UKRAINE INVASION**

The Russian Embassy in Canberra has been evacuated after a suspicious envelope was delivered on Thursday morning. Dozens of emergency service vehicles, including a special breathing unit, were on hand at the building after an envelope containing a white powder was discovered. Two packages were investigated, with police confirming one will require further analysis. The second package was deemed non-suspicious.<sup>79</sup>



## CANADA

### **SASKATOON TEEN ARRESTED AFTER ATTEMPTING TO IMPORT GUN PARTS: POLICE**

A 16-year-old boy from Saskatoon is facing charges after an attempt to import restricted gun parts led police to uncover a trove of weapons, weapon parts and ammunition. In early September, Canada Border Services Agency officers working at a mail centre in Vancouver intercepted a suspicious package heading to Saskatoon. The package contained two gun barrels and two 9mm magazines that are prohibited in Canada due to laws limiting magazine capacity.<sup>80</sup>

### **POLICE INVESTIGATE THREATENING LETTER SENT TO LAWYERS ACROSS VERNON**

A threatening letter sent to multiple Vernon law offices says "It's time to pay for what you have all done." The all-caps, anonymous rant threatens harm over what the author calls the "big lie" over vaccine mandates. Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) say they are investigating to determine where the letters originated. The letter states "You judges and lawyers and court support staff are no longer safe."<sup>81</sup>

### **POLICE NO CLOSER TO SOLVING MYSTERY OF SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES SENT TO POLITICAL OFFICES**

The mystery deepens as to what was in suspicious packages mailed to various political offices in Nova Scotia recently, and who sent them. RCMP say they have only been able to figure out what wasn't in the packages. In a release issued Thursday afternoon, the police said testing has determined the mysterious substance is not chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or explosive. Since then, packages have also been delivered to provincial constituency offices in Meteghan, Liverpool, Yarmouth, Kentville and Kingston. "In two of the cases, people who handled the packages had an adverse reaction to whatever was inside." Cpl. Chris Marshall, Royal Canadian Police said the "Packages are similar and police believe they were all sent by the same group or individual." In addition to the mysterious substance, they also contained documents that included anti-COVID messages and references to the Nuremberg trials, where Nazis were prosecuted for war crimes committed during the Second World War.<sup>82</sup>

### **MP ELLIS' AMHERST OFFICE AMONG THOSE TO RECEIVE SUSPICIOUS PACKAGE**

In reference to #82. Add Cumberland Colchester MP Dr. Stephen Ellis to the list of provincial and federal politicians to receive suspicious mail in the last couple of weeks. "We did receive a package in Amherst with similar writings to what you saw with other members of parliament," Ellis told the SaltWire Network. "There was certainly no powder or noxious substances in what we received."<sup>83</sup>

### **LUCKILY, NO MP HAS RECEIVED BODY PARTS BY MAIL BEFORE, BUT THEY'VE GOT A LOT OF OTHER STRANGE THINGS**

From poop to hate mail and wacky crafts, members of Parliament have seen a lot of interesting — and sometimes alarming — items delivered to their offices. Fortunately, there seems to be no precedent in Canada for an official receiving something as gruesome as a human body part. Police were looking for a suspect in the posting of a human foot to the Conservative party's headquarters this week.<sup>84</sup>



## INDIA

### MINOR DETAINED FOR PUTTING HOMEMADE BOMB IN PARCEL

According to police, a boy was apprehended in Mumbai on Saturday for reportedly building a low-intensity homemade bomb and packaging it in a courier container in order to claim insurance money. The package caught fire at the courier company's office creating panic. No one was hurt in the incident. The company later informed the police.<sup>85</sup>



## LITHUANIA

### SUSPICIOUS ENVELOPE BROUGHT TO LRT, POLICE ON SITE

A suspicious envelope was brought to the Lithuanian National Radio and Television (LRT) building on Thursday. Due to the potential threat, the police have been called to the site. According to the police, a woman brought an envelope to the LRT building and asked the security guards to hand it over to the management.<sup>86</sup>



## ROMANIA

### THE EMBASSY OF UKRAINE IN ROMANIA RECEIVED TWO SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES

The Embassy of Ukraine in Bucharest, Romania, received two suspicious envelopes. Police were on the scene to secure the area. Pyrotechnic teams were also on-site to conduct specific inspections. Bomb disposal teams went to the Embassy of Ukraine today following a call to 112 that several suspicious envelopes had been received. Pyrotechnics have begun the standard procedure of investigating them.<sup>87</sup>



## SINGAPORE

### FORMER TEACHER ADMITS SENDING 'DEATH THREAT' POEM TO PRINCIPAL OVER STUDENT'S DEATH

After a recent fatal incident killed a student from his school, a former teacher of the school wrote an enigmatic poem to the principal, who believed that the poem may be a "death threat." The former teacher, Lee Lit Meing, also made an anonymous call using a public phone and accused the principal of being a murderer. Besides these, Lee sent nineteen other anonymous letters with the same poem addressed to the school's deputy principals, the human resource manager, a secretary, deans and directors. He also sent them to principals from three other schools and a church elder.<sup>88</sup>



## SPAIN

### SPAIN BOOSTS SECURITY AS PRIME MINISTER AND US EMBASSY TARGETED AMID SERIES OF LETTER BOMBS

Spain said Thursday it was boosting security measures after a series of letter bombs was discovered in the country, including one that was sent to Spain's prime minister last week and another to the US embassy. The sixth and latest bomb was detected Thursday afternoon and sent to the US embassy in Madrid. The envelope was detonated in a controlled environment, according to two US officials. No one was injured in the process, the officials said.<sup>89</sup>



## TAIWAN

### TAIPEI TAOYUAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT GETS BOMB THREAT LETTER ATTEMPTING TO 'STOP PELOSI VISIT'

Taiwan's Taipei Taoyuan International Airport received a bomb threat on Aug. 2, the day of a possible visit by US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi that has sparked regional tensions. Taiwan's Central News Agency reported that a bomb threat letter was received by the Taoyuan International Airport Corporation. The letter notified the airport corporation that three explosives will be planted at the airport in a bid to "stop the visit of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan".<sup>90</sup>



## UNITED KINGDOM

### UK BUSINESS EVACUATED AFTER 'UNKNOWN WHITE SUBSTANCE' DELIVERED TO IT

A business in Clifton Village was evacuated last week after an 'unknown white substance' was delivered. Firefighters and police were called to the building on Friday, July 8 at around 1:13 pm after the substance was discovered. Samples of the substance were taken and tested, and the substance was determined to have been a non-hazardous white powder, according to an Avon Fire and Rescue Service spokesperson. They added that no one was injured and no sicknesses have been reported.<sup>91</sup>

# WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2023?

Geo-political conflicts are expected to remain a key driver of mail-related threats globally in the coming year. The most significant will likely continue to be the war between Russia and Ukraine, which continues to drag on with no clear resolution in sight. Early in 2023, several white powder letters were sent to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) headquarters in Brussels.<sup>92</sup> Increasing sanctions pressures, the hardening of public opinion for and against governments and corporations openly supporting one side or the other, and mounting losses on both sides further motivate unconventional threat vectors, including mail, similar to the incidents witnessed in the previous year.

The war in Ukraine is by no means the only factor influencing mail threats on the world stage. Growing tensions between China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the West presents a growing risk within the APAC region. Elsewhere, conflict in the Middle East, including increased hostilities between Israel and Palestine, as well as domestic concerns within Israel over the governing by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have already resulted in mail threats.<sup>93, 94</sup>

While not widely reported, there are documented uses of phygital devices, also referred to as warshipping, as mail threats. Recently a string of USB “bombs” were mailed to five Latin American journalists at different media outlets. One USB bomb detonated when the recipient plugged it into a computer, causing injury.<sup>95</sup> Authorities intercepted and examined the other devices before they exploded. All of the USB sticks originated from the same region, and while each contained only a small quantity of explosives, it was enough to cause significant harm.<sup>96</sup> The ease with which components for USB-based IEDs can be obtained, and combined with the fact that they are small enough to fit in small mail packages sent anonymously, should be a cause of concern and warrants additional vigilance for high-risk targets.

Outside of the US, countries in North America are not immune to mail threats. Earlier this year, Canada announced the distribution of panic buttons to all members of parliament in response to increasing threats and heightened risk.<sup>97</sup> Canada has seen an increase in mail threat incidents recently, with one targeting the revenue office, where two suspicious packages were discovered after several days inside the facility. The contents burned a staff member who handled the package, while the other package proved harmless.<sup>98</sup> Another incident targeted a police station where a suspicious package was left outside, prompting an investigation by the explosive disposal unit.<sup>99</sup>

In summary, ongoing geo-political conflict, economic and societal stressors, and polarizing internal domestic issues all contribute to increased risks for global mail threats. The massive worldwide disruption caused by COVID is a stark warning of the consequences of low-probability but high-impact events, which can increasingly be carried out with small quantities of dangerous materials concealed within small and seemingly harmless mail items.

*It is important for organizations to align global security measures to ensure the safety of their employees and operations, regardless of their location. Events in one part of the world can have an impact globally, potentially leading to unforeseen security risks. By adopting a global mindset, security leaders can promptly identify and resolve potential issues before they become a problem, ensuring all of their sites are protected at the highest level.*

**- Dean Geribo, Vice President and Chief Security Officer, Moderna**

# 2022 US CORRECTIONS FACILITIES MAIL-BASED SMUGGLING OVERVIEW



**72%**  
of smuggling  
originated in letters



**Constitutional  
protections**  
of Legal Mail make it a  
main smuggling avenue



**2M**  
incarcerated people  
receive millions of pieces  
of mail per year<sup>100</sup>



**Fentanyl**  
is **50 to 100x**  
more potent than  
morphine



**Synthetic opioids**  
are **20x** more potent  
than fentanyl<sup>101</sup>

# USPS Contraband Interdiction and Investigations (CI2)

Postal inspectors on the frontline of stopping drug trafficking in the mail.



2.3k

Cases initiated



2.3k

Arrests



1.7k

Convictions



33k

Illegal narcotics  
seized

Corrections facilities across the US are under the assault of drugs and contraband smuggled through postal mail.

A report, "Detection and Prevention of Drugs in a Correctional Facility," issued by the Florida Department of Corrections, states that mail is a main source of drug entry outside of prison intake areas.<sup>102</sup> Another report from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service confirms that a primary entry point is the mailroom, as it is easy to conceal substances in innocuous materials such as handwritten letters or other mail items.<sup>103</sup> These reports are consistent with the open-source data tracked by RaySecur in 2022, where 92% of substances smuggled through the mail were sent in letters and small parcels.

Leadership and staff must overcome several challenges to effectively and safely screen mail, including: (i) outdated and ineffective manual screening techniques, (ii) restrictions on legal mail handling, and (iii) high risk of exposure to dangerous substances. The most common mail screening techniques, X-ray and manual inspection, are not well-suited to finding concealed illicit drugs and contraband like tiny quantities of powders, liquids, and drug-treated papers. Some facilities utilize drug-sniffing canine units to detect drugs with success. However, the rapidly evolving nature of synthetic drug compounds means those substances flood the market before the dogs can effectively be trained to detect them. Chemical identification technologies and test kits face these same challenges, as their capabilities lag behind the introduction of new types of synthetic drugs and their altered chemical variants.

Paper sprayed or soaked in drugs are difficult to detect because, once dried, the substance is imperceptible to the human eye, making it an attractive and lucrative medium for smuggling. Criminals have capitalized on the inability to find these substances, and the smuggling of drug-soaked paper has become a favored tactic, with 24% of the total open-source reports of drugs entering correctional facilities through the mail introduced via treated papers.

Other common drugs smuggled in mail items include suboxone, methamphetamines, and fentanyl. Suboxone is an oral film commonly used to treat dependence on opioid drugs and reduce withdrawal symptoms, which can also be misused and abused. This drug is often and easily concealed behind stamps or return address labels, taped between pages in a stack of documents, or hidden in

*The smuggling of drugs and contraband continues to be a pervasive problem for law enforcement and corrections officials across the country. New approaches, including screening technologies and updated security protocols are needed as part of a comprehensive interdiction strategy. These approaches must focus on ensuring the safety of both staff and those in their care, and keep pace with the constantly changing tactics and unknown substances used by smugglers.*

- Jim McDonnell, former LA County Sheriff

## Drug-treated Paper Presents Unique Challenges



Papers sprayed or soaked with a toxic or narcotic substance dry quickly and often are indistinguishable from normal sheets of paper to the human eye. The influx has increased the exposure risk for mail screeners and correctional staff when they handle the paper for tactile inspection. Without better and more effective screening solutions, treated papers will continue to be a major contributor to overdoses and deaths and an ongoing safety risk to staff.





books, magazines, or newspapers. The increased prevalence of fentanyl, often combined with other drugs, is concerning, given its high toxicity even in small concentrations. Fentanyl is distributed in various forms, including pills, powder, mixed in liquids, or applied to paper.

Screening becomes even more challenging when contraband is smuggled inside legal documents.<sup>104,105,106</sup> Legal mail is broadly classified as correspondence from an incarcerated individual's legal counsel or the court system. This mail stream is protected under the Constitution to maintain attorney-client confidentiality. Preserving Sixth Amendment rights severely limits a facility's ability to inspect legal mail to detect contraband. Internationally the United Nations specifies that an incarcerated individual's right to mail is a minimum rule for the treatment of prisoners, and the Geneva Convention has similar language.<sup>107</sup> These screening limitations and Constitutional safeguards have resulted in the increased use of legal mail for smuggling drugs and contraband into prisons and jails.

Given that X-ray based screening technologies are ineffective at detecting small quantities of drugs and drug-laced papers, corrections staff often resort to physical inspection, with limited effectiveness in detecting the most common smuggling methods. These inspection processes may include opening the mail item (in the presence of the incarcerated person in the case of legal mail) and putting screeners and officers in danger of accidental drug exposure by handling the mail contents.

Across the country, there are examples of officer injuries from exposure to drugs and harmful chemicals in the mail almost every week. In January, a New York City Correction Officer was exposed to fentanyl when opening an incarcerated individual's mail for inspection. Coworkers administered Narcan, and the officer was hospitalized for treatment.<sup>108</sup> In addition, the New York state Department of Labor found that mail screeners and officers were exposed to fentanyl, suboxone, synthetic marijuana and other chemical drugs at two different New York facilities. As a result, the agency directed that "prisons put more protections in place in mailrooms."<sup>109</sup>



### Federal Lawmakers Call for Mail Safety Reforms

"We write with concern about reports of unsafe conditions for correctional officers in opening mail for incarcerated persons," the letter written by Rep. Cherri Bustos, D-Il., and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Dick Durbin, D-Il., said. "We know that it is critical for incarcerated persons to have access to correspondence while serving their sentences. Unfortunately, mail is also one of the ways in which drug contraband can be brought into correctional facilities," the lawmakers wrote.

In Illinois, three Bureau of Prisons employees were exposed to drugs while inspecting mail, and upon further investigation, it was determined that 19 pieces were soaked in amphetamines.<sup>110</sup> One day later, another staff member at the same facility was rushed to the hospital after exposure to synthetic marijuana.<sup>111</sup>

Fueling the drug and contraband smuggling into correctional facilities is a significant financial gain, attracting organized gangs and drug syndicates. Between 2018 and 2019, the Florida Department of Corrections seized large quantities of contraband items, including over 10,000 knives, 8,000 cell phones, and 561,000 grams of tobacco. Similarly, the Colorado Department of Corrections experienced a drastic uptick in drug seizures in 2021, with 400 grams of cocaine seized in the first half of the year, compared to 48 grams in all of 2018. Heroin confiscated in the first six months of 2021 also outnumbered the amount seized in 2018 by a factor of three.<sup>112</sup>

### Three considerations for effective mail screening



The financial incentive is significant. Contraband phones can sell for anywhere from \$300 to \$6,000 in a correctional facility, and the devices are often used by incarcerated persons to earn money, whether by engaging in criminal activity or legitimate business purposes.<sup>113</sup> Drug-treated paper is even more of a money-maker, with one example in Colorado selling for \$4,000 a sheet to an extreme case in Massachusetts of \$35,000 per sheet.<sup>114</sup> One piece of drug-treated paper, which may be cut up into postage stamp-size pieces, can hold up to 96 doses of drugs, which may be cut up into postage stamp-size pieces and resold. Incarcerated persons may consume the drugs by eating or smoking the piece of paper.<sup>115</sup> Criminals have a captive and hungry audience in prisons, as the National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that upwards of 85% of the prison population has an active substance use disorder.<sup>116</sup>

An example of organized smuggling is a case in Colorado, where Larimer County authorities disbanded a twelve-person drug ring using mail to smuggle drugs into the prison. Officers became suspicious and intercepted coded phone calls and texts providing information on sending drugs into the facility along with payment arrangements.<sup>117</sup> The smuggled drugs included powders hidden within envelopes and liquid sprayed on papers or used as ink on the paper.<sup>118</sup>

Other incidents in corrections facilities have proven to be more benign, such as a case in Illinois where a white-powder exposure turned out to be a harmless concoction of baby powder, acetaminophen, and paracetamol. However, twenty-two officers received hospital care as a precautionary measure, significantly disrupting prison operations.<sup>119</sup> Whether hazardous or not, bad actors can cause significant damage and disruption by forcing shutdowns and triggering an emergency response in concern for the safety of corrections staff and incarcerated persons.

### US STATISTICS\*

\*As determined through open-source media reports

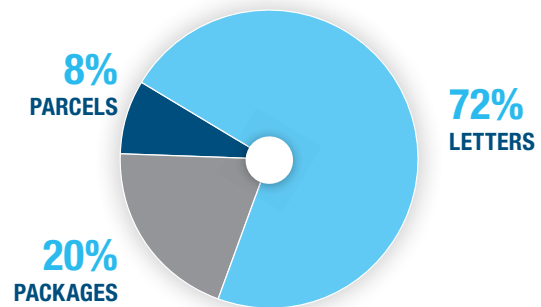


TOP 5 SUSPECTED SUBSTANCES	2022
SUBOXONE	24%
DRUG SOAKED PAPER	24%
FENTANYL	14%
METHAMPHETAMINE	12%
MARIJUANA	4%



TOP 5 STATES	2022
* As reported by news media	
COLORADO	17%
WASHINGTON	10%
MINNESOTA	8%
ILLINOIS	7%
NEW YORK	5%

### DELIVERY METHOD





# Drug and Contraband Smuggling Snapshots

The smuggling incidents highlighted give insight into the prevalence of and severity of mail smuggling.



## Officer Exposure

### **2 ONEIDA COUNTY CORRECTIONS OFFICERS WERE SENT TO HOSPITAL FOLLOWING FENTANYL EXPOSURE**

For the first time ever, Narcan had to be used on two corrections officers at the Oneida County Jail Thursday, after they were exposed to fentanyl in the mailroom. Sheriff Robert Maciol says the officers were exposed to the substance when they opened a suspicious piece of mail that was sent to an inmate. The piece of mail was made to look like it was from an attorney.<sup>120</sup>

### **OFFICER HOSPITALIZED AFTER DRUG EXPOSURE IN USP THOMSON MAILROOM**

A Thomson Federal Prison officer was hospitalized Tuesday after the American Federation of Government Employees said he was allegedly exposed to drugs during a mail screening. According to the President of AFGE Local 4070 union, Jon Zumkehr, the union was told the officer was sorting mail in one of the prison housing units when he was exposed to drugs used frequently by inmates.<sup>121</sup>

### **3 BUREAU OF PRISONS EMPLOYEES HOSPITALIZED OVER DRUG-LACED PRISONER MAIL**

Three Bureau of Prisons employees at United States Penitentiary Thompson in Illinois have had to go to the hospital over the past two weeks, according to the local union president, prompting two members of Congress to write a letter to the agency questioning how mail for prisoners is processed “We write with concern about reports of unsafe conditions for correctional officers in opening mail for incarcerated persons,” the letter written by Rep. Cherri Bustos, D-II., and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Dick Durbin, D-Il., and obtained by ABC News, said.<sup>122</sup>



## Threat Mail to Staff

### **SUSPICIOUS PACKAGE DELIVERED TO OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS HEADQUARTERS**

The Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) headquarters building in Salem received a suspicious package addressed to the DOC Director on Tuesday. The mailroom area was secured and the building was evacuated. Officials said Oregon State Police were able to evaluate the package for any hazardous substances or materials and none were detected.<sup>123</sup>



## Drug Infused Paper

### **ST. PAUL MAN PLEADS GUILTY IN DRUG-SOAKED LETTER MAILING PLOT**

The U.S. Attorney for Minnesota has announced a guilty plea from a St. Paul man who attempted to mail drugs to inmates at several Minnesota prisons. Walter Davis pled guilty to several charges including attempted distribution of a controlled substance analog, firearms possession as a felon, and fentanyl possession with intent to distribute. A March 2021 investigation by the Department of Corrections on the introduction of narcotics into prisons led authorities back to Davis.<sup>124</sup>

### **METH, KETAMINE MAILED TO BOULDER COUNTY INMATES**

Four people have been arrested for allegedly providing drugs to inmates at the Boulder County Jail through the mail, the Boulder County Sheriff's Office said. A six-month-long investigation uncovered 109.82 grams of methamphetamine-soaked paper and 137.92 grams of ketamine-soaked photos entered the jail via mail to inmates and had been distributed around the facility.<sup>125</sup>

### **DEPUTIES: INMATE, GIRLFRIEND TRY TO SNEAK DRUG-INFUSED PAPER INTO JAIL**

A county jail inmate and his girlfriend are facing charges after deputies said they conspired to smuggle paper laced with ecstasy into the facility. Deputies received a tip that the pair was trying to disguise the narcotics as legal mail, officials said. Alexander Gary McKay, 27, who was already in custody at the Indian River County Jail, was charged October 21 with unlawful use of a two-way communications device, introduction of contraband into a detention facility, and two counts of sale and delivery of narcotics. McKay remained held Wednesday at the county jail without bond.<sup>126</sup>

# WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2023?

Corrections facilities must prepare for a continual evolution of smuggling methods and using more potent substances in smaller quantities to evade detection. Fentanyl dipped or sprayed on paper is currently one of the most common substances, and staff are becoming more skilled at detecting it through advanced screening technologies. Emerging drugs such as xylazine and isotonitazene mixed with common street drugs, new types of synthetic compounds and formulations, and even household chemicals sprayed onto papers are trends to watch in the coming year.

Since soaking paper with liquid drugs has proven to be a successful method of smuggling drugs into facilities, dealers are seeking to make it even better and more foolproof. Historically, drugs smuggled in from China took the form of powders or pills, but more recently have trended toward drug-treated papers. These “professional” papers are even harder to discern from regular paper with the naked eye relative to the homemade versions created by local drug dealers. The drugs applied to these papers, whether fentanyl, K2, spice, or various other chemical compounds, are also becoming more concentrated, making them that much more lethal.

While this report largely addresses postal mail security, intake areas in prisons and jails present another avenue for documents to enter facilities. Each time an incarcerated individual returns to a facility, they pass through an intake area and are searched before reentering the population. This provides a smuggling opportunity, as illustrated by a recent case in Pennsylvania where an incarcerated individual returned with seven grams of methamphetamine and seven grams of cocaine after a meeting with a probation officer.<sup>127</sup>

Documents obtained during legal proceedings and trips to court are increasingly used for smuggling. These materials fall under the category of legal mail and are thus protected. Court appearances present ample opportunity for friends, family members, and even compromised lawyers to pass documents to their clients under the guise of legal documentation before they are returned to the facility. Correction officials must have processes for screening hand-carried legal documents, in addition to legal documents sent in the mail.

Many corrections facilities also allow deliveries of books, magazines, newspapers, religious items, and similar materials from trusted or verified vendors, including companies like Amazon. Increasingly smugglers exploit these platforms by listing obscure used books or other materials concealing drugs and contraband on these platforms, which incarcerated persons purchase. These items frequently contain suboxone strips, powders, and pills hidden in the spines of books and even drug-treated pages. Deliveries of these materials also require screening protocols to address this growing smuggling avenue.

The one constant highlighted in the trends outlined above is continual change. Contraband and drug interdiction strategies must constantly evolve to keep pace with the rapid changes in smuggling methods, whether via legal mail, court documents, or literature purchased from approved vendors, as well as changes in the chemical compounds and drugs themselves which may range from the latest highly-potent opioids to common household chemicals. Keeping these harmful substances out of correctional facilities will require flexible screening processes and technology tools that can readily keep pace with these changes, maintain a high level of detection, simplify operations, and above all, prioritize the safety of corrections staff and the people in their care.

The background image shows a close-up of a forensic evidence bag. The bag is light-colored and has several labels and markings. A prominent label reads 'EVIDENCE - EVIL' with 'DATE: 5/18' and 'BY AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY' written on it. There are handwritten numbers '120510' and '10' on the bag. A blue label with 'FORENSIC REPORT 12005109' is also visible. A dark stamp with the word 'MEXICO' is partially visible at the bottom. The overall scene suggests a forensic or law enforcement context.

# MAIL SECURITY OUTLOOK FOR 2023

The data presented in this report, whether from aggregated official government reports or compiled from individual public media sources, highlights one clear trend spanning both private and public sector organizations – small mail items, including letters and parcels, continue to outpace larger packages by almost a factor of 10 when it comes to mail threats. Similar trends hold true for mail used to smuggle drugs and contraband into corrections facilities. All indications are that these trends will continue in the coming year, predominantly due to the relative anonymity and perceived low-risk these delivery methods present. The low prosecution and conviction rates, cited in the 2021 USPS Annual Report, further support these findings.

Regardless of the target and intent, small quantities of increasingly toxic substances present the greatest risk. Nowhere is the problem more acute than in the corrections sector, where corrections staff and the people in their care suffer dangerous exposures, hospitalizations, and even overdose deaths from fentanyl and similar substances.

The prevalence, relative ease of procurement, and low cost of these toxic materials is a growing concern, and must be adequately addressed in any comprehensive mail security program.

When it comes to mail security, the data is clear - insiders, those with intimate knowledge of the organization (or at the very least have some prior relationship with the target organization) are the most likely perpetrators of mail-related attacks. Revenge is often the main motivator, as the USPIA highlights, and mail often serves as an easy escalation path when digital or online threats fall on deaf ears. Even threats that turn out to be harmless hoaxes, such as benign white powder threats, result in significant disruptions to business operations and may have lasting psychological effects on their targets and the perceived safety and security of the organization and brand as a whole. For these reasons, the mail is expected to remain a relatively soft attack vector, easily exploited by bad actors.

Across the security industry, physical and digital threats continue to converge. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of so-called phygital threats, or warshipping. Off-the-shelf devices such as credit card-sized mini-computers can easily be concealed in common mail items and packaging to intercept digital communications or compromise networks. Once received inside a secure facility, these devices can readily transmit that data via a conventional cellular connection or offer direct access to vulnerable networks. With most of the focus on cyber threats and remote hackers, raising awareness of these risks is the first step to implementing security processes to address them.

A number of factors are expected to continue to drive heightened mail security risks in the coming year. Social, political, and economic stressors fuel increased aggression levels going into 2023 and the potential for mail-based

threats. On a global scale, the war in Ukraine, tensions with China, unrest in Africa and the Middle East, and mass refugee migration are just a few examples of current events driving increased risks to public and private entities alike.

Over the next twelve months, the outlook for the US mirrors many of the risk factors observed globally, with some key differences influenced by domestic policies and events. Uncertainty around inflation, the potential for a recession, and resulting layoffs, such as those observed in the technology sector in 2022, are key risk factors contributing to the potential for mail threats targeting employers. Social and political issues ranging from fallout resulting from the ongoing January sixth prosecutions, to the indictment of former President Trump, the reversal of Roe vs. Wade, and immigration policy all contribute to heightened mail security risks for public and private organizations alike. In addition, the 2024 Presidential election campaigns will kick into high gear over the coming year, contributing to additional risk, given increasingly entrenched and polarizing positions held by the extremes on both sides.

Looking beyond mail threats, smuggling illegal drugs, contraband, and illicit substances into correction facilities is not expected to diminish. The dependence on substance use across the general population, as evidenced by the opioid epidemic, and particularly amongst incarcerated persons, continues to fuel the demand for these substances, particularly the introduction of more potent drugs. As a result, smuggling of these items through the mail is expected to continue for many of the same reasons as mail threats, due to the low-cost and relatively low-risk avenue that mail, particularly small mail items provides.

Despite these increasing risks, there are simple, straightforward, and effective solutions security practitioners can implement to reduce the risks to their respective organizations proactively. The first step, as presented in this report, is an accurate and complete understanding of the magnitude and extent of the problem. This understanding, coupled with a risk analysis specific to the organization, provides the foundation upon which effective security plans and procedures may be built. Implementing those plans into concrete steps for action requires communication of the risks and the benefits of mitigation strategies across all levels of the organization. Advanced technology tools can play a key role in detecting, deterring, and preventing mail-related threats from adversely impacting the organization, but only if the risks are accurately understood.

# MAIL SECURITY RESOURCES

## MAIL SCREENING AND SECURITY

- **United States Postal Service Handling and Processing Mail Safely**  
[https://about.usps.com/publications/pub166/pub166\\_v04\\_revision\\_112019\\_tech\\_015.htm](https://about.usps.com/publications/pub166/pub166_v04_revision_112019_tech_015.htm)
- **United States Postal Service Guide to Mail Center Security**  
<https://about.usps.com/publications/pub166.pdf>
- **United Kingdom National Protective Security Authority Screening Mail and Courier Services**  
<https://www.npsa.gov.uk/screening-mail-and-courier-deliveries>
- **United Kingdom Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure PAS 97:2021 Mail Screening and Security - Specification**  
<https://www.npsa.gov.uk/resources/introduction-pas-97>
- **United States Postal Inspection Service**  
<https://www.uspis.gov/>
- **2021 USPIS Annual Report**  
USPIS Annual Report 2021 <https://www.uspis.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/USPIS-FY2021-Annual-Report.pdf>
- **Department of Homeland Security Mail Screening Guidelines**  
<https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/isc-mail-handling-screening-nonfouo-sept-2012-508.pdf>
- **US Bomb Data Center 2021 Explosives Incident Report**  
<https://www.atf.gov/explosives/docs/report/2021explosivesincidentreporteirpdf/download>



## CONTRABAND DETECTION RESOURCES

- **Drug and Contraband Detection in Inmate Mail**  
<https://info.raysecur.com/wp-rscorrections-detect-drugs>
- **Webinar: Corrections Mail Security - Successfully Detect New Contraband Smuggled in Legal and Personal Mail**  
<https://youtu.be/zfWU68QHpQs>
- **Webinar: Hidden in Plain Sight - See Smuggled Drugs and Contraband in Inmate Mail - Without Opening It**  
[https://youtu.be/Oov\\_LPARFr4](https://youtu.be/Oov_LPARFr4)
- **Corrections1 ebook: How to Buy Fentanyl Protection and Detection Products**  
<https://www.corrections1.com/products/fentanyl-protection/articles/how-to-buy-fentanyl-protection-and-detection-products-ebook-d9juRPS2cEKuokGk/>
- **Corrections1 ebook: How to Buy Contraband Detection**  
<https://www.corrections1.com/products/contraband-detection/articles/how-to-buy-contraband-detection-ebook-wdgX9wqDhBfr4SOp/>
- **RaySecur Threat Data Center**  
Open-source database for tracking in near real-time dangerous mail incidents.  
<https://www.raysecur.com/threat-map/>

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<https://www.npr.org/2021/07/15/1015447281/overdose-deaths-state-prisons-increase>
- 4 **Inside The Nation's Overdose Crisis in Prisons and Jails**  
<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2021/07/15/inside-the-nation-s-overdose-crisis-in-prisons-and-jails>
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<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2022/12/01/spains-prime-minister-receives-letter-bomb-similar-ukrainian/>
- 11 **HazMat crews called to State Supreme Court mail room after white powder substance found**  
<https://who13.com/news/metro-news/hazmat-crews-called-to-state-supreme-court-mail-room-after-white-powder-found/>
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<https://www.bostonherald.com/2023/02/25/massachusetts-jails-grapple-with-drugs-smuggled-in-treated-letters/>
- 13 **The Many Ingenious Ways People in Prison Use (Forbidden) Cell Phones**  
<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2023/01/19/cell-phones-in-prisons-tiktok-education#:~:text=Even%20though%20contraband%20phones%20can,use%20them%20to%20earn%20money>
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<https://www.npr.org/2021/07/15/1015447281/overdose-deaths-state-prisons-increase>
- 15 **Inside The Nation's Overdose Crisis in Prisons and Jails**  
<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2021/07/15/inside-the-nation-s-overdose-crisis-in-prisons-and-jails>
- 16 **United States Postal Inspection Service Annual Report 2021**  
<https://www.uspis.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/USPIS-FY2021-Annual-Report.pdf>
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<https://www.atf.gov/explosives/docs/report/2021explosivesincidentreporteirpdf/downloads>
- 18 **United States Bomb Data Center (USBDC) Explosives Incident Report (EIR) 2021**  
<https://www.atf.gov/explosives/docs/report/2021explosivesincidentreporteirpdf/download>
- 19 **Companies Are More Vocal Than Ever on Social Issues. Not on Abortion.**  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/24/business/abortion-roe-wade-companies.html>
- 20 **Corporate America buckles down for culture war on Roe v Wade**  
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/08/us-companies-abortion-travel-assistance-roe-v-wade>
- 21 **Internal DHS memo warns of threats from extremists on both sides after Roe leak**  
<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/supreme-court/internal-dhs-memo-warns-threats-extremists-both-sides-abortion-issuer-rcna29409>

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<https://www.axios.com/2023/05/11/crimes-violence-abortion-clinics-roe-v-wade>
- 23 **List of Companies that applied sanctions during the Russo-Ukrainian War**  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_companies\\_that\\_applied\\_sanctions\\_during\\_the\\_Russo-Ukrainian\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_companies_that_applied_sanctions_during_the_Russo-Ukrainian_War)
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<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/eu-bans-majority-of-russian-oil-imports-as-punishment-for-ukraine-war>
- 25 **Ukrainian embassies in Europe receive ‘bloody packages’**  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/12/02/ukraine-embassies-bloody-packages-letter-bombs/>
- 26 **U.S. Postal Inspection Service Guide to Mail Center Security**  
<https://mailomg.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/uspis-guide-to-mail-center-security.pdf>
- 27 **Tech layoffs in 2022: A timeline**  
<https://www.computerworld.com/article/3679733/tech-layoffs-in-2022-a-timeline.html>
- 28 **Tech sector layoffs explained: What you need to know**  
<https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/feature/Tech-sector-layoffs-explained-What-you-need-to-know>
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<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2022/03/09/ceo-who-fired-900-employees-via-a-zoom-video-and-called-his-employees-dumb-dolphins-had-a-mass-layoff-some-workers-found-out-by-seeing-their-bank-account/?sh=7c37761f25fe>
- 30 **‘We probably pissed away \$200 million,’ Better.com CEO told employees in layoffs meeting’**  
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- 31 **2023 layoff tracker: The latest on which companies have announced job cuts**  
<https://www.cnn.com/2023/04/25/business/layoffs-2023/index.html>
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