

The top doctor for CBP tried to order fentanyl lollipops for a helicopter mission in New York, whistleblowers say

The whistleblowers also allege Dr. Alexander Eastman was already under investigation for trying to procure narcotics for a friend who worked as a chopper pilot for the border agency.

Feb. 16, 2024, 6:00 AM EST
By Julia Ainsley

The chief medical officer for Customs and Border Protection pressured his staff to order [fentanyl](#) lollipops for him to take to the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York in September, according to a whistleblower report sent to Congress on Friday.

The whistleblowers said Dr. Alexander Eastman's staff raised questions about why he would need to order [fentanyl](#) lollipops to take with him, and he answered that it was part of his duties to make sure that any injured CBP operators were cared for, making the argument that the lollipops would be necessary for pain management should an emergency occur.



— Then-senior medical officer of operations, Dr. Alexander Eastman appears before a House Homeland Security Subcommittee in Washington, D.C., in 2020. Courtesy C-Span

“Eastman spent copious hours of his and Office of the Chief Medical Officer staff time directing the OCMO staff to urgently help him procure [fentanyl](#) lollipops, a Schedule II narcotic, so that he could bring them on the CBP Air and Marine Operations helicopter on which he would be a passenger in New York City,” the whistleblowers said in the report. “Dr. Eastman claims that his possession of fentanyl lollipops was necessary in case a CBP operator might be injured, or in case the CBP Air and Marine Operations team encountered a patient in need.”

Recommended



2024 ELECTION

Ronald Reagan's daughter: Cognitive tests for president would 'probably be a good idea'



JOE BIDEN

Biden's allies are stepping forward to vouch for him amid age questions

Customs and Border Protection is the chief agency responsible for detecting and stopping the illegal flow of fentanyl into the U.S. across international borders.

Eastman's staff initially responded to his request by explaining that Narcan, which can save the lives of those who overdose on fentanyl, has been requested for CBP operations in the past, but not fentanyl itself. The whistleblowers say staff members raised questions about how he would store the lollipops and what he would do with unused fentanyl at the end of the operation, according to the report.



Eastman responded by writing his own policy regarding procurement of Schedule II narcotics, which omitted any mention of how narcotics were to be stored and disposed of, the whistleblowers allege.

Eastman was ultimately unsuccessful in procuring fentanyl lollipops, because a vendor could not be found in time for the U.N. General Assembly.

It was unusual for the medical officer of CBP to attend the General Assembly, a meeting of diplomats and heads of state to discuss international issues, but Eastman made the argument to his staff that his presence was needed because CBP's Air and Marine Operations division was helping the Secret Service with security.



The whistleblowers, represented by the nonprofit Government Accountability Project, also allege Eastman was under investigation by CBP's Office of Professional Responsibility at the time regarding improper ordering and securing of narcotics for a friend who is a pilot for Air and Marine Operations. The friend worked as a helicopter pilot for Air and Marine Operations in New York during the General Assembly, the report says.

In a statement, a CBP spokesperson said, "CBP takes all allegations of misconduct seriously. This matter has been referred to the CBP Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) for review. Consistent with our commitment to transparency and accountability, we will provide updates as they are available."

Eastman was installed as acting chief medical officer in June, when the agency made an abrupt change in medical leadership following the death of an 8-year-old girl in CBP custody after on-site medical personnel allegedly ignored warning signs and pleas from her mother.

According to his LinkedIn page, Eastman is still in the job as chief medical officer for CBP.



Julia Ainsley

Julia Ainsley is homeland security correspondent for NBC News and covers the Department of Homeland Security and the Justice Department for the NBC News Investigative Unit.



[ABOUT](#)

[CONTACT](#)

[HELP](#)

[CAREERS](#)

[AD CHOICES](#)

[PRIVACY POLICY](#)

[CA NOTICE](#)

[TERMS OF SERVICE \(UPDATED JULY 7, 2023\)](#)

[NBC NEWS SITEMAP](#)

[CLOSED CAPTIONING](#)

[ADVERTISE](#)

[SELECT SHOPPING](#)

[SELECT PERSONAL FINANCE](#)

© 2024 NBC UNIVERSAL

[/NBC NEWS](#)

[/MSNBC](#)

[/TODAY](#)