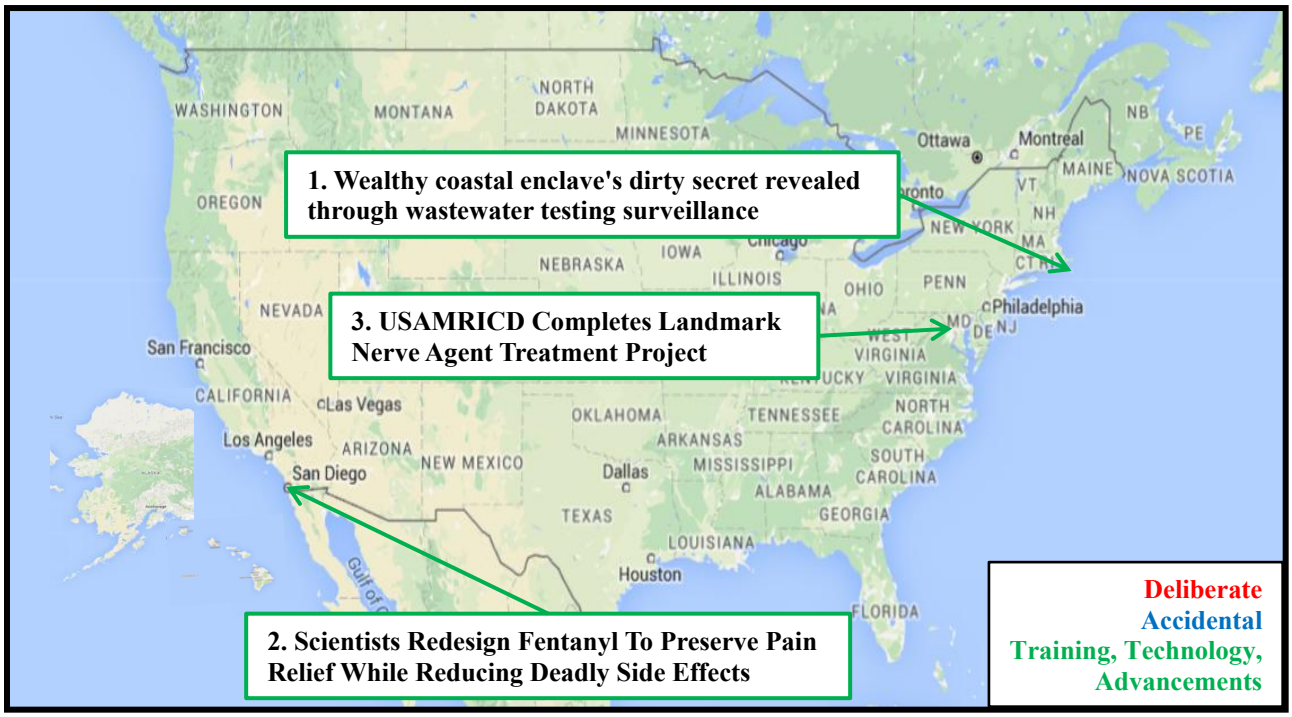
Domestic Open-Source News



1. Wealthy coastal enclave's dirty secret revealed through wastewater testing surveillance. February 18, 2026 (Fox News). Nantucket - Nantucket may be the perfect summer destination for coastal New England vibes, but new data shows that the famously picturesque island off the coast of Massachusetts is not without some flaws. Recent wastewater surveillance reporting shows once again, as it has before, that cocaine levels in sewer water have been well above the national average from July 2025 to February 2026. In October, levels spiked to 2,948.70 nanograms per liter, while the national average remained under 1,000 [nanograms per liter]. There was another spike of 2,815.50 nanograms per liter on Nantucket in December while the national average was just over 1,000 [nanograms per liter], the same reporting shows. There were an average of 40,000 visitors on most days in July and August between 2021–2022 — with peak days welcoming above 60,000, according to Cape and Islands, a local publication. The same tests found below-average levels of fentanyl, a deadly synthetic opioid blamed for overdoses around the country. https://www.aol.com/articles/wealthy-coastal-enclaves-dirty-secret-161854878.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuYmluZy5jb20v&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAIqBp3YQRUqbTHBCl9X_riu9r69I5gR0h2XO6ga3WshCYtaeYaSodA2CDdVvxJdwRrrtSN_xTdxu1GHejstHzSGJdoL0M5Q7G2HRGFzqzjr_lSm8LD4n-muiatJn4tDTosYZR6FO_vCGGzFeAE5GmlMs60U2Xa-OgsZjcklV0C31

Nantucket Wastewater Surveillance - https://www.nantucket-ma.gov/3705/Wastewater-Surveillance

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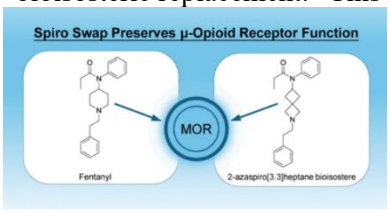
2. Scientists Redesign Fentanyl To Preserve Pain Relief While Reducing Deadly Side Effects. February 18, 2026 (Scripps Research Institute). La Jolla, California - Researchers at Scripps Research have redesigned fentanyl at the molecular level, challenging decades-old assumptions about opioid chemistry. Fentanyl ranks among the most powerful medications available for treating intense pain. However, its benefits come with serious hazards. Because of these risks, doctors must carefully restrict it's use even though it is highly effective. At the same time, fentanyl is inexpensive and relatively simple to manufacture, which has led to widespread illegal production and distribution. That surge has contributed to a devastating overdose crisis that claimed more than 70,000 lives in the United States in 2023. Researchers at Scripps Research have now redesigned fentanyl at the molecular level, creating a new version that maintains its strong pain-relieving effects while reducing its tendency to suppress breathing. The study, published in [American Chemical Society]ACS Medicinal Chemistry Letters, indicates that further refinements could lead to safer opioid medications with lower risks of addiction, overdose, and death. In the new study, [researchers] applied a medicinal chemistry approach known as "bioisosteric replacement." This technique involves modifying a molecule so it retains similar biological activity while potentially improving certain properties. Instead of making small adjustments, the researchers swapped out fentanyl's central ring for a completely different structural framework called 2-azaspiro[3.3]heptane, which resembles linked paper chains. This arrangement differs sharply from fentanyl's original core structure, marking a significant redesign of the molecule's architecture. Despite this significant structural shift, the bioisosteric replacement of fentanyl's central core was remarkably effective in blocking pain. This critical anchor point allows the receptor to recognize and respond to the drug. The structural redesign preserves this essential anchor while changing many of the other molecular contacts, maintaining enough receptor activation to produce pain relief even though it has a different overall binding pattern than fentanyl. Notably, the new compound showed no detectable recruitment of the beta-arrestin pathway, a cellular signaling corridor that scientists believe contributes to respiratory depression and other dangerous side effects. The research indicated that slowed breathing occurred only at very high doses and was temporary, with breathing returning to normal within 25-30 minutes. The analog also left the body quickly, with a half-life of approximately 27 minutes—a short-acting profile that could be beneficial in controlled medical settings. https://scitechdaily.com/scientists-redesign-fentanyl-to-preserve-pain-relief-while-reducing-deadly-side-effects/



3. USAMRICD Completes Landmark Nerve Agent Treatment Project. February 6, 2026 (DVIDS hub). Fort Detrick, Maryland - Researchers at the Defense Health Agency Research & Development-Medical Research and Development Command's Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense have developed a new model for testing nerve agent exposure and drug efficacy that more accurately replicates human responses to toxic substances. The model, developed with funding from the Joint Science and Technology Office for Chemical and Biological Defense, Chemical and Biological Technologies Department, Research and Development Directorate, Defense Threat Reduction Agency (JSTO CBDP, RD-DTRA), is already being used in studies that could lead to the fielding of the next generation of nerve agent countermeasures – ensuring improved Warfighter survivability, resiliency, and lethality in chemically contaminated environments. The new testing method makes it possible to conduct precise "apples-to-apples" comparisons of different countermeasures to assess their efficacy more precisely than before. The model uses human acetylcholinesterase to mimic how a healthy person responds to nerve agent exposure and life-saving medical treatments more accurately than other laboratory models currently in use. As a result, the team was able to successfully evaluate the effectiveness of four different nerve agent countermeasures using the new model. https://www.dvidshub.net/news/557617/usamricd-completes-landmark-nerve-agent-treatment-project

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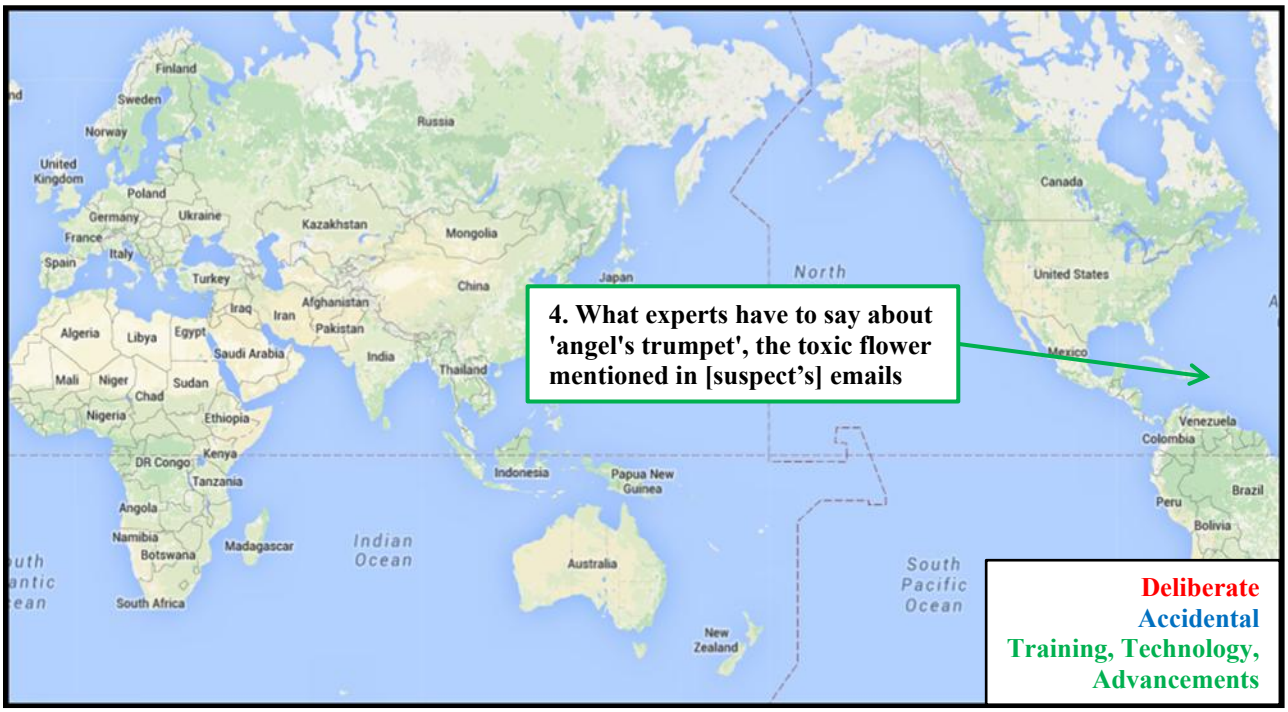
Domestic Open-Source News (larger map)



4. What experts have to say about 'angel's trumpet', the toxic flower mentioned in [suspect's] emails. February 18, 2026 (Inquisitr). Little St. James, Virgin Islands - Newly reviewed files are shedding light on an unusual detail — a toxic flowering plant known for its powerful effects on the human brain. The plant, often called Angel's Trumpet or "Devil's Breath," has long been linked to memory loss and extreme suggestibility — and experts say its documented medical impact is very real. In a 2014 message, according to UNILAD, [the suspect] referenced having "trumpet plants" in a nursery. Months later, in January 2015, [the suspect] was forwarded a news article about scopolamine — the plant's primary active compound — describing its ability to "eliminate free will" and erase memories. Angel's Trumpet is the common name for plants in the Brugmansia genus, native to South America. The flowers hang downward like bells and are often grown for their dramatic appearance. But beneath the beauty sits a potent mix of alkaloids, including scopolamine and atropine. According to the U.S. National Library of Medicine, ingestion of Brugmansia can trigger anticholinergic toxicity, a condition that affects the central nervous system. Symptoms may include delirium, hallucinations, agitation, rapid pulse, elevated body temperature, muscle weakness and persistent memory disturbances. Severe cases can lead to convulsions, paralysis or even death. Scopolamine itself is not illegal. In controlled medical settings, it is used in low doses to prevent motion sickness and nausea. The difference, toxicologists note, is dosage. In high or unregulated amounts, the compound can have dramatic neurological effects. Reports from Colombia over the years have linked scopolamine to criminal activity, where it has been referred to as "Devil's Breath." Media investigations have described cases in which victims appeared conscious but highly suggestible, later reporting little or no memory of events. Medical experts caution that while the drug can impair memory and judgment, some sensational descriptions may overstate its effects. A clinical review published in medical literature notes that severe intoxication can produce confusion so intense that patients require hospital care. Treatment typically involves supportive measures, and in certain cases,

intravenous physostigmine may be administered to counteract toxic effects. Experts warn that all parts of the plant are toxic if ingested. https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/what-experts-have-to-say-about-angel-s-trumpet-the-toxic-flower-mentioned-in-epstein-emails/ar-AA1WBYIS?ocid=BingNewsVerp

Is Angel Trumpet Poisonous? Signs and Emergency Steps - https://biologyinsights.com/is-angel-trumpet-poisonous-signs-and-emergency-steps/

Scopolamine - https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/compound/Scopolamine

Foreign Open-Source News

No foreign open-source news was selected for this report.

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