

# ApiraSol

## E-CIGARETTES IN THE UNITED STATES 2024/2025 – Q2

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SUPPLY CHAIN INTELLIGENCE  
APRIL 2026



# Overview

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**1**

**INTRODUCTION &  
METHODOLOGY**

# Introduction

**ApiraSol has been investigating the routes, brands, and entities involved in the trade of illicit e-cigarettes across various countries worldwide for several years.**

In this particular research conducted in 2025, ApiraSol focused on the global illicit e-cigarette trade, drawing from trade data as well as open sources such as enforcement news, press releases from customs agencies, academic research papers, and online intelligence reports. The period covered for trade data spans January 2024 to December 2024, while enforcement-related news generally covers the years 2024 to 2025.

## The Illicit E-Cigarette Trade: A Growing Global Challenge

The illicit e-cigarette trade is becoming a significant force reshaping the global nicotine market, fueled by rapid growth and mounting regulatory complexity. According to Euromonitor International, the illicit e-cigarette market was valued at **USD 47 billion in 2024**, representing over **70% of global spending** and roughly **three-quarters of total volume—equivalent to 605 billion cigarettes**. Furthermore, Euromonitor reported that illicit e-cigarette products exceed **80% penetration in North America, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa, and Asia Pacific**,

while Western Europe, though lower, continues to face persistent illicit trade despite increasing legislative pressures.

## Regulatory Frameworks Driving Illicit Trade

Stringent bans and fragmented regulations often unintentionally fuel underground trade. Bans do not necessarily eliminate demand for e-cigarettes; where consumer interest persists despite such measures, gaps in legal supply may arise, creating opportunities for illicit suppliers to fill unmet demand. Even in countries with robust regulatory frameworks, unintended consequences may arise—strict compliance requirements and high taxation can make legal products more expensive and less accessible, while the convenience of illicit channels, including online and delivery-based sources, may further draw consumers toward cheaper, non-compliant alternatives. These conditions typically incentivize smuggling and the use of transshipment hubs in regions with weaker oversight, allowing illicit goods to infiltrate regulated markets.

Complex regulations also often create loopholes that illicit networks exploit, such as mislabeling products or routing shipments through multiple jurisdictions to obscure origins. While strong regulations aim to protect public health, without equally strong

enforcement, these often end up driving demand for illicit products rather than curbing it.

## China's Regulatory Gaps and Insufficient Enforcements

China produces the vast majority of e-cigarettes globally, making its regulatory framework critical to controlling illicit trade. The **Administrative Measures for Electronic Cigarettes** (effective May 1, 2022) require that all e-cigarette products comply with mandatory national standards and that producers, exporters, and retailers obtain licenses from the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration (STMA). Similarly, the **Administrative Rules for E-Cigarettes Import-Export Trade** (issued October 2022) stipulate that only licensed exporters can ship products abroad, and exported goods must either meet the destination country's regulations or adhere to China's national standards.

In practice, however, exports are not sufficiently controlled. Loopholes in licensing, weak oversight of small-scale producers, and limited monitoring of export compliance allow unlicensed operators to bypass official channels.

Compounding these issues is weak enforcement in many destination countries. These challenges are amplified by the growing use of digital platforms such as social media, messaging apps, and

informal online channels, which make detection and enforcement even harder.

Without stronger controls and enforcement mechanisms in China, and investment in monitoring capabilities in destination countries, illicit trade will continue to thrive despite regulatory efforts.

On December 18, 2025, China's General Office of the State Council issued a policy document titled "Opinions on Combating Tobacco-Related Illegal Activities Across the Entire Chain", which sets out a comprehensive enforcement strategy against illicit tobacco and nicotine products. The Opinions explicitly bring electronic cigarettes and other nicotine-containing products under strengthened regulatory scrutiny, calling for full-chain enforcement against the illegal production, wholesale, transportation, sale, and "export re-flow" of e-cigarettes and related products. This includes tightening oversight of e-cigarette manufacturing and supply chains, cracking down on unauthorized operations, and treating unlawful export and smuggling back into China as enforcement priorities alongside traditional tobacco smuggling.

The text of the Opinions does not designate exports to overseas destination markets as independent enforcement targets; rather, references to other countries and cross-border cooperation are tied specifically to preventing illegal e-cigarette exports from re-entering China's domestic market. This confirms that the

primary focus is safeguarding China’s domestic regulatory objectives, public health, and market order, with international cooperation positioned mainly as a means to curb the re-flow of illicit products back into China. The effectiveness of China in stepping up its enforcement efforts to control the illicit trade of tobacco and nicotine products remains to be seen.

**Amid the alarming surge of illicit market activity and mounting regulatory complexity, ApiraSol’s 2025 investigation into the global e-cigarette trade will map illicit trade flows, analyze seizure patterns across countries and regions, and uncover the mechanisms enabling this shadow economy.**

## Methodology

This report has been prepared using various data sources, including (but not limited to):

- Publicly available customs trade data for the period January 2024 - December 2024. For those countries covered in this report that don’t make their customs data publicly available, data has been obtained from the mirrored data of other countries.
- Statistical data for the period January 2024 - June 2025.
- News articles relating to enforcement and seizures.

## Terminology and Definitions

**Statistical Data** - Numerical information representing measurable aspects of economic, demographic, social, or environmental phenomena, as produced by national statistical offices, government agencies, or intergovernmental organizations.

**Trade Data** - Information on the movement of goods and services between countries, typically reported by customs authorities and presented in terms of import and export volumes, values, origin, and destination.

**Enforcement News** - Reports and updates issued by law enforcement, customs, or regulatory agencies on activities such as investigations, product seizures, arrests, policy actions, and other official measures.

In the trade data, Origin and Destination Countries refer to the following:

**Origin Countries** - Shipment Origin Countries declared in publicly available trade data between January 2024 - June 2025.

**Destination Countries** - Shipment Destination Countries declared in publicly available trade data between January 2024 - June 2025.

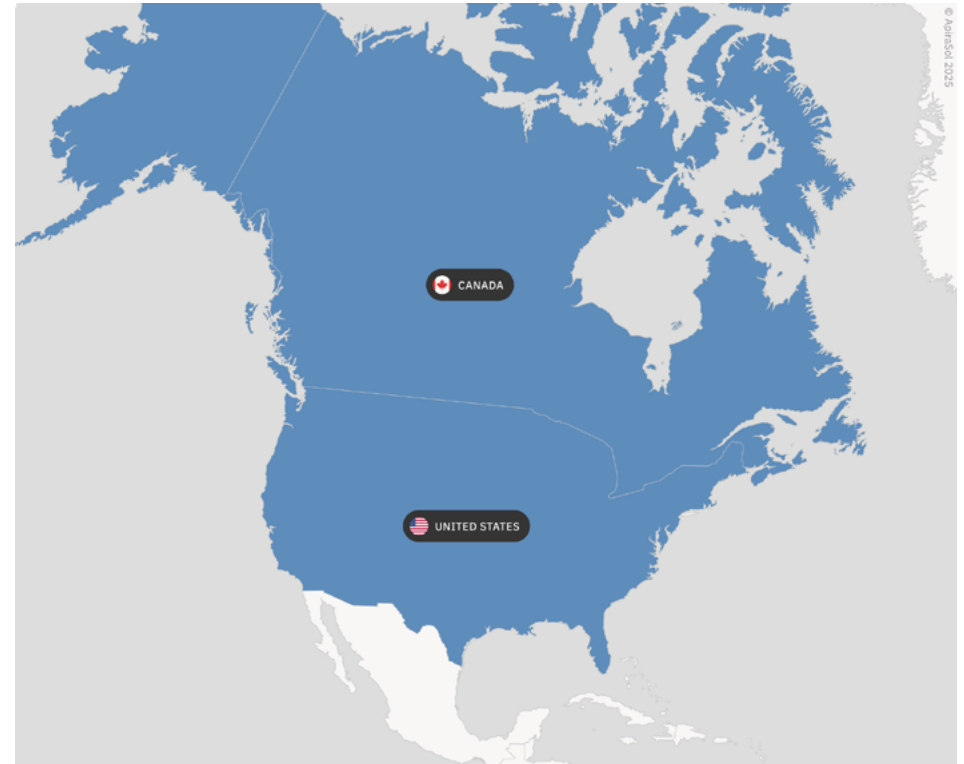
**2**

**E-CIGARETTE TRADE -  
NORTH AMERICA**

# E-Cigarette Trade - North America

This report examines the trade of e-cigarettes in the **United States**.

North America's regulatory landscape for e-cigarettes is characterized by strict controls aimed at protecting public health and reducing youth access. E-cigarettes in the **United States** are regulated by the FDA as tobacco products under the Tobacco Control Act and the 2016 Deeming Rule, requiring all products to undergo the Premarket Tobacco Product Application (PMTA) process. As of 2025, only four manufacturers have received FDA authorization for sale in the U.S. market, primarily for tobacco and menthol flavors, while most flavored disposable products remain illegal. Individual states impose additional rules such as flavor bans, retail licensing, indoor vaping restrictions, excise taxes, and packaging requirements, creating a complex compliance landscape focused on youth protection and curbing unauthorized products. In **Canada**, e-cigarettes fall under the Tobacco and Vaping Products Act (TVPA), which governs manufacturing, labeling, advertising, and sales to protect youth and public health. Manufacturers must report ingredients and sales data, and several provinces already ban all flavors except tobacco.



The **United States** is China's largest e-cigarette export destination, valued in the billions, yet declared U.S. imports from China account for only a fraction of that amount. This multi-billion-dollar discrepancy strongly suggests large-scale smuggling and misdeclared shipments entering the U.S. market. In contrast, Canada shows the opposite trend, with declared imports from China exceeding China's reported exports to Canada—an indication that **Canada** being used not only as a destination but potentially as a transit point for illicit e-cigarettes into the U.S. and other markets.

In this region, enforcement actions against illicit e-cigarettes are widespread and persistent. In the **United States**, federal agencies have seized millions of unauthorized products at ports, airports, and warehouses, uncovering shipments disguised as everyday goods to evade detection. **Euromonitor estimates that over 80% of e-cigarettes in the U.S. market are illicit**, underscoring the scale of the challenge. Raids have targeted logistics hubs, retail outlets, and border crossings, revealing a steady influx of products—often originating from China. Recent investigations show that organized crime plays a growing role, with intermediaries and cartel networks helping move Chinese-made e-cigarettes through established smuggling routes. **Canada** faces similar challenges, with authorities intercepting illegal vaping products at border points, in vehicles, and through postal channels. Based on Health Canada's latest compliance report (April 2023–March 2024), 38% of specialty e-cigarette shops inspected were non-compliant, leading to seizures at 109 stores, plus 51

gas stations and convenience stores. Violations included flavored e-cigarettes and cannabis e-cigarettes sourced from both domestic and foreign suppliers. Raids across provinces have exposed a diverse and adaptive illicit market operating through convenience stores, warehouses, and online platforms. Despite these enforcement efforts, illicit e-cigarette trade in North America remains entrenched and continues to adapt.

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## E-CIGARETTE TRADE - UNITED STATES

# Summary

China remains the central source of e-cigarette and vaping products entering the U.S.; however, official statistics for 2024 reveal a dramatic gap of more than \$3.2 billion between China's declared exports and U.S. recorded imports. This gap underscores several factors linked to illicit trade and challenges in international reporting:

- **Regulatory Environment:** U.S. regulations on e-cigarettes have tightened, with restrictions on flavored products, youth-oriented marketing, and non-approved devices. Enforcement efforts have increased, but persistent loopholes and varied enforcement across jurisdictions create opportunities for non-compliant shipments.
- **Transshipment and Re-Routing:** A significant share of shipments is re-routed through third countries or U.S. logistics hubs, obscuring the true origin and final destination. Not all imports remain in the U.S.; a noticeable portion is re-exported—most notably to Canada—further blurring accurate trade tracking and creating risk of cross-border diversion.
- **Misdeclaration and Evasion:** Products are frequently misdeclared under different HS codes or as unrelated items (toys, shoes, electronics) to bypass customs, regulations, and duty payments. Inconsistent reporting standards between China and the U.S. further contribute to bilateral trade data distortions and large discrepancies.

- **Incomplete or Delayed Reporting:** Some shipments lack complete data—such as shipment weight or transport mode—hampering transparency and granular reconciliation.
- **Customs Data Limitations:** Differences in classification standards, documentation practices, and valuation methods between the United States and its trading partners exacerbate discrepancies, making reconciliation of bilateral trade figures challenging.
- **Prevalence of Smuggling and Illicit Trade:** Informal distribution and smuggling networks exploit regulatory gaps and weaknesses, supporting the entry of non-compliant or counterfeit products. Enforcement has revealed frequent use of third-party intermediaries and intentional design changes (including youth-targeted products) to escape scrutiny.

In 2024, U.S. authorities intensified seizures of illegal e-cigarette products at major ports (Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami), airports, warehouses, and border checkpoints. Federal raids targeted logistics centers, retail outlets, and storage facilities, highlighting an ongoing struggle to combat smuggling and deceptive import tactics.

China's trade dominance, coupled with persistent re-routing, misdeclaration, regulatory adaptation, and resilient illicit supply chains, continues to challenge U.S. authorities in their efforts to

control the e-cigarette market and safeguard public health.

## Regulatory Overview

In the United States, e-cigarettes—legally classified as Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS)—are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act. Oversight is managed through the FDA’s Center for Tobacco Products (CTP), which governs the manufacture, marketing, distribution, and sale of these products.

All new vaping products must undergo the Pre-Market Tobacco Product Application (PMTA) process, requiring manufacturers to submit scientific evidence demonstrating that their products are “appropriate for the protection of public health.” By 2025, only four manufacturers have secured FDA approval to sell e-cigarettes in the U.S, while many—including flavored disposables—remain unauthorized and are subject to enforcement actions. The minimum legal age for purchasing e-cigarettes nationwide is 21, and retailers must verify age at the point of sale. The FDA has launched educational initiatives targeting over 300,000 retailers to ensure compliance with product authorization and sales restrictions.

Packaging regulations mandate child-resistant and tamper-evident designs, along with health warnings such as “This product contains nicotine. Nicotine is an addictive chemical.” While

nicotine-free e-cigarettes are currently regulated as consumer products, proposed legislation may bring them under the same regulatory scope as nicotine-containing devices. Since January 2024, all e-cigarettes—regardless of nicotine content—have been classified as electrical and electronic equipment (EEE), subject to e-waste regulations.

At the state level, regulations vary widely. Some states have implemented flavor bans, excise taxes, and retail licensing schemes, while others maintain broader access. A growing number of states are considering or have enacted bans on disposable e-cigarettes, citing youth usage and environmental harm.

Beginning October 2026, a federal excise duty of \$0.22 per mL of e-liquid is expected to take effect, marking a significant shift toward taxing vaping products similarly to traditional tobacco.

## Statistical Data (China as Origin)

China’s declared exports of e-cigarettes to the United States in 2024 totaled \$3,737,502,000, while the United States declared imports from China reached \$466,084,000—creating a discrepancy of approximately \$3,271 million. The pronounced statistical gap can be attributed to several factors. Chief among these are divergent customs reporting practices, the possible transit of goods through intermediary countries, discrepancies in product classification, underreporting of imports, differences in the tim-

ing of data capture, and potential informal or unregistered trade channels. This discrepancy underscores significant challenges in accurately tracking international trade flows and highlights the ongoing need for greater transparency and harmonization in global trade data reporting.

**Total Value 2024:**

- Total Exports from China 2024: \$3,737,502,000
- Total Imports from China 2024: \$466,084,000
- **Statistical Gap: \$3,271,418,000**

## Statistical Data (Indonesia as Origin)

Indonesia’s declared exports of e-cigarettes to the United States in 2024 totaled \$248,163,000, while the United States declared imports from Indonesia reached \$250,466,000—creating a discrepancy of approximately \$2.3 million. The minor statistical gap of approximately \$2.3 million, with U.S. reported imports from Indonesia slightly exceeding Indonesia’s declared exports of e-cigarettes, likely reflects differences in data recording, exchange rate fluctuations, shipment timing, and possible classification variations. This relatively small discrepancy indicates broad consistency in reported trade between the two countries, with only limited discrepancies arising from routine procedural or technical factors.

**Total Value 2024:**

- Total Exports from Indonesia 2024: \$248,163,000
- Total Imports from Indonesia 2024: \$250,466,000
- **Statistical Gap: \$2,303,000**

## EXPORTS OF E-CIGARETTES FROM CHINA TO THE UNITED STATES - STATISTICAL DATA (ITC DATABASE)

| HS Code       | HS Code Description  | ORIGIN COUNTRY | DESTINATION COUNTRY | Value in 2024 (Unit : US Dollar thousand) | Value in 2025-Q1 -Q2 (Unit : US Dollar thousand) |
|---------------|--|----------------|---------------------|---|--|
| 24041200      | Other products containing nicotine, intended for inhalation without combustion             | CHINA          | UNITED STATES       | 2,975,779                                 | 1,189,069  |
| 24041990      | Other products containing nicotine substitutes, intended for inhalation without combustion | CHINA          | UNITED STATES       | 36,077                                    | 10,059   |
| 24041910      | Other products containing tobacco substitutes, intended for inhalation without combustion  | CHINA          | UNITED STATES       | 0   | 0  |
| 85434000      | Electronic cigarettes and similar personal electric vaporizing devices                     | CHINA          | UNITED STATES       | 725,646                                   | 365,721  |
| <b>Total:</b> |  |                |                     | <b>3,737,502</b>                          | <b>1,564,849</b>                                 |

## IMPORTS OF E-CIGARETTES TO THE UNITED STATES FROM CHINA - STATISTICAL DATA (ITC DATABASE)

| HS Code       | HS Code Description  | ORIGIN COUNTRY | DESTINATION COUNTRY | Value in 2024 (Unit : US Dollar thousand) | Value in 2025-Q1 -Q2 (Unit : US Dollar thousand) |
|---------------|--|----------------|---------------------|---|--|
| 2404129000    | Nicotine products intended for inhalation without combustion, nesoi                                    | CHINA          | UNITED STATES       | 132,429                                   | 7,132  |
| 2404120500    | Nicotine mixtures for personal elec/electronic vaporizing devices, contain 5 percent or more           | CHINA          | UNITED STATES       | 20,609                                    | 5,385  |
| 2404121000    | Nicotine mixtures for personal elec/electronic vaporizing devices, non aromatic                        | CHINA          | UNITED STATES       | 2,270                                     | 1,667  |
| 2404190500    | Mixtures for personal elec/electronic vaporizing devices, containing 5 percent or more by weight       | CHINA          | UNITED STATES       | 11,398                                    | 3,307  |
| 2404191000    | Mixtures for personal elec/electronic vaporizing devices, non aromatic, nesoi                          | CHINA          | UNITED STATES       | 193                                       | N/A  |
| 2404199000    | Products containing tobacco or nicotine substitutes, intended for inhalation without combustion, . . . | CHINA          | UNITED STATES       | 0   | 296  |
| 8543400040    | Electronic cigarettes and similar personal electric vaporizing devices                                 | CHINA          | UNITED STATES       | 212,038                                   | 65,534   |
| 8543400030    | Electronic cigarettes and similar personal electric vaporizing devices                                 | CHINA          | UNITED STATES       | 87,147                                    | 4,533  |
| <b>Total:</b> |  |                |                     | <b>466,084</b>                            | <b>87,854</b>                                    |

## EXPORTS OF E-CIGARETTES FROM INDONESIA TO THE UNITED STATES - STATISTICAL DATA (ITC DATABASE)

| HS Code       | HS Code Description  | ORIGIN COUNTRY | DESTINATION COUNTRY | Value in 2024 (Unit : US Dollar thousand) | Value in 2025-Q1 -Q2 (Unit : US Dollar thousand) |
|---------------|--|----------------|---------------------|---|--|
| 24041210      | E-cigarette liquid or gel  | INDONESIA      | UNITED STATES       | 247,995                                   | 160,170  |
| 24041290      | Products intended for inhalation without combustion, containing nicotine, other than e-cigarette . . . | INDONESIA      | UNITED STATES       | 0   | 12   |
| 24041910      | Products intended for inhalation without combustion, containing tobacco substitutes                    | INDONESIA      | UNITED STATES       | 0   | 80   |
| 24041920      | Products intended for inhalation without combustion, containing nicotine substitutes                   | INDONESIA      | UNITED STATES       | 0   | 0  |
| 85434000      | Electronic cigarettes and similar personal electric vaporising devices                                 | INDONESIA      | UNITED STATES       | 168                                       | 4,880  |
| <b>Total:</b> |  |                |                     | <b>248,163</b>                            | <b>165,142</b>                                   |

## IMPORTS OF E-CIGARETTES TO THE UNITED STATES FROM INDONESIA - STATISTICAL DATA (ITC DATABASE)

| HS Code       | HS Code Description  | ORIGIN COUNTRY | DESTINATION COUNTRY | Value in 2024 (Unit : US Dollar thousand) | Value in 2025-Q1 -Q2 (Unit : US Dollar thousand) |
|---------------|--|----------------|---------------------|---|--|
| 2404129000    | Nicotine products intended for inhalation without combustion, nesoi                                    | INDONESIA      | UNITED STATES       | 557                                       | 0  |
| 2404120500    | Nicotine mixtures for personal elec/electronic vaporizing devices, contain 5 percent or more . . .     | INDONESIA      | UNITED STATES       | 143,056                                   | 85,683   |
| 2404121000    | Nicotine mixtures for personal elec/electronic vaporizing devices, non aromatic                        | INDONESIA      | UNITED STATES       | 70,846                                    | 48,844   |
| 2404190500    | Mixtures for personal elec/electronic vaporizing devices, containing 5 percent or more by weight . . . | INDONESIA      | UNITED STATES       | 17  | 0  |
| 2404191000    | Mixtures for personal elec/electronic vaporizing devices, non aromatic, nesoi                          | INDONESIA      | UNITED STATES       | 0   | N/A  |
| 2404199000    | Products containing tobacco or nicotine substitutes, intended for inhalation without combustion, . . . | INDONESIA      | UNITED STATES       | 0   | 0  |
| 8543400040    | Electronic cigarettes and similar personal electric vaporizing devices                                 | INDONESIA      | UNITED STATES       | 2,855                                     | 1750   |
| 8543400030    | Electronic cigarettes and similar personal electric vaporizing devices                                 | INDONESIA      | UNITED STATES       | 33,135                                    | 21,929   |
| <b>Total:</b> |  |                |                     | <b>250,466</b>                            | <b>158,206</b>                                   |

 **UNITED STATES**  
STATISTICAL DATA



Exports from China to the US  
**3,737,502,000**  
 Total 2024 Value (USD)  
 1H 2025 Value (USD): 1,564,849,000

Imports to the US from China  
**466,084,000**  
 Total 2024 Value (USD)  
 1H 2025 Value (USD): 87,854,000

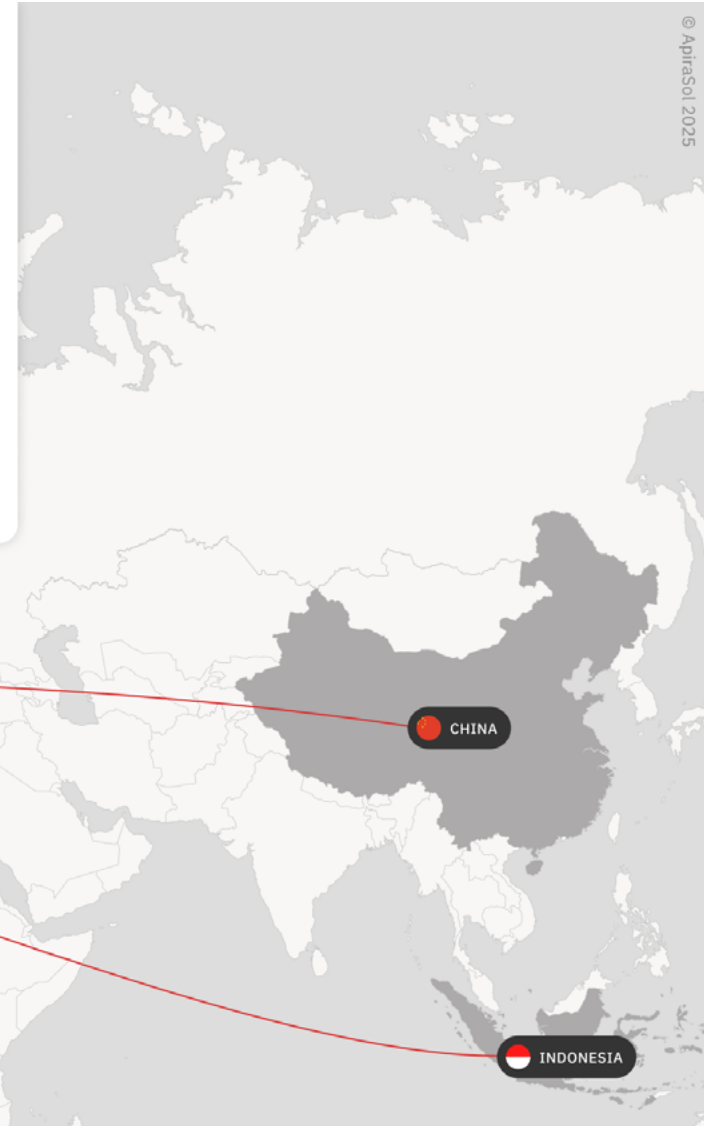
**Statistical Data Gap \***  
**3,271,418,000**

Exports from Indonesia to the US  
**248,163,000**  
 Total 2024 Value (USD)  
 1H 2025 Value (USD): 165,142,000

Imports to the US from Indonesia  
**250,466,000**  
 Total 2024 Value (USD)  
 1H 2025 Value (USD): 158,206,000

**Statistical Data Gap \***  
**2,303,000**

\* Difference between the Exports and the Declared Imports (USD)



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## UNITED STATES

### TRADE DATA (INDONESIA MIRRORED DATA USED AS PRIMARY SOURCE)

Despite China being the leading exporter of e-cigarettes to the U.S., the available trade shipment data is minimal. In addition, in 2024, the U.S. imported e-cigarette products from Indonesia. These shipments were distributed through several major U.S. ports and included a diverse mix of popular brands and product types.

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>Shipments:</b>      | <b>1,292 Trade Shipments</b>  |
| Period:                | January - December 2024   |
| Origin Countries:      | Indonesia: 95 %, China: 5 %   |
| Origin Ports:          | Tanjung Perak: 74 %, Cengkareng Soekarno Hatta U: 6 %, Denpasar Ngurah Rai U: 6 %, Yantian: 4 %, Surabaya Juanda U: 4 %, Batu Ampar: 2 %, Sekupang: 1 %, Taicang: 1 %, Shanghai: 1 %, Nansha: 1 % |
| Destination Countries: | <b>United States</b>  |
| Destination Ports:     | Norfolk: 58 %, Oradell: 16 %, Los Angeles: 12 %, Long BeachCalifornia: 7 %, Boston: 1 %, Southampton: 1 %. Other destination Ports: 5 %   |
| Products:              | <b>Atomizer devices, finish atomizer products, electronic cigarettes, disposable e-cigarettes, etc.</b>   |
| E-Cigarette Brands:    | <i>[REDACTED]</i>   |
| Mode of Transport:     | Unknown: 95 %, Sea: 5 %   |
| Value declared:        | <b>248,092,453.52 USD</b> (95 % of shipments)   |

## UNITED STATES

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Weight declared:                | 2,608,359.54 KG (100 % of shipments)  |
| Number of exporters:            | 25  |
| Number of importers:            | 29  |
| Top Exporters:                  | <i>[Redacted]</i>   |
| Top Importers:                  | <i>[Redacted]</i>   |
| HS Codes declared in shipments: | <p><b>240412:</b> Other products containing nicotine, intended for inhalation without combustion (1,212 shipments)</p> <p><b>854340:</b> Electronic cigarettes and similar personal electric vaporising devices (69 shipments)</p> <p><b>240419:</b> Other products intended for inhalation without combustion (11 shipments)</p> |



## UNITED STATES

TRADE DATA (Mirrored Data from Indonesia as Primary Source)



Shipments (Period FY 2024)

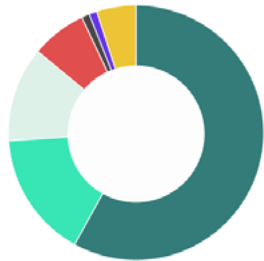
1,292

Quantity

248,092,453.52

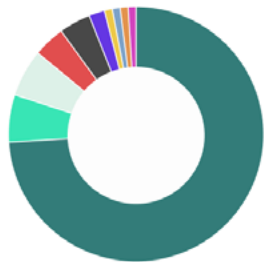
Value (USD)

All included shipments and brands are recognized by regulatory authorities and involve only companies operating in compliance with legal requirements.



### Destination Ports

- Norfolk (58 %)
- Oradell (16 %)
- Los Angeles (12 %)
- Long Beach California (7 %)
- Boston (1 %)
- Southampton (1 %)
- Other destination Ports (5 %)



### Origin Ports from Indonesia

- Tanjung Perak (74 %)
- Cengkareng S. H. U (6 %)
- Denpasar N. R. U (6 %)
- Yantian (4 %)
- Surabaya Juanda U (4 %)
- Batu Ampar (2 %)
- Sekupang (1 %)
- Taicang (1 %)
- Shanghai (1 %)
- Nansha (1 %)

### Mode of Transportation

Unknown: 95 %, Sea: 5 %

### E-Cigarette Products

Atomizer devices, finish atomizer products, electronic cigarettes, disposable e-cigarettes, etc.

### Legal Brands at Time of Shipment

Legal brands at time of shipment

### Top Importers

Top importers

### Top Exporters

Top exporters

## The online articles report on **seizures of illegal e-cigarette products in the United States.**

Enforcement news reveals that U.S. authorities have carried out sweeping actions against illicit e-cigarettes, seizing millions of products at ports, airports, and warehouses in cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, and Miami. Many shipments originate from China and are disguised as toys, shoes, or household items to evade detection. Raids have targeted logistics sites, retail shops, and border crossings, with federal agencies intercepting large-scale imports and uncovering new product designs aimed at youth.

In September 2025, the FDA and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) executed the largest-ever seizure of illegal e-cigarettes in Chicago, confiscating 4.7 million units valued at \$86.5 million. Almost all shipments originated from China and were misdeclared to avoid duties and safety checks.

Investigation reports also reveal that Mexican cartels have integrated illicit Chinese e-cigarettes into their trafficking pipelines, using the same routes as fentanyl and counterfeit tobacco. These networks exploit weak enforcement and high profit margins, smuggling brands like [REDACTED] [REDACTED] across borders. Analysts warn that this convergence of narcotics and e-cigarette trafficking is fueling cartel revenues and expanding their reach into U.S. communities.

Despite these efforts, the majority of illegal e-cigarette imports continue to slip through, driven by increasingly sophisticated smuggling tactics and widespread mislabeling. Authorities and policymakers are calling for tougher penalties, enhanced data sharing, and greater coordination between customs, the FDA, and international partners to close enforcement gaps and address the evolving risks posed by these products—particularly with regard to youth protection and consumer safety.

- **Locations of Seizures:** Major ports (Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami), airports, border crossings, retail stores, and warehouses in states such as Louisiana, Mississippi, and North Carolina. Federal raids have especially concentrated on logistics hubs and retail outlets throughout 2024 and 2025.
- **Products Seized:** Millions of illegal e-cigarettes, including disposable e-cigarettes, nicotine pouches, counterfeit and youth-targeted devices, and flavored products—all predominantly sourced from China. Many batches were intentionally disguised as toys, shoes, electronics, or other household goods to evade detection.
- **Brands Seized:** [REDACTED] [REDACTED] are repeatedly named among confiscated brands. Numerous seizures included unbranded products and counterfeit versions of popular Chinese labels.
- **Methods:** Chinese exports frequently entered on misdeclared shipments, routed through third countries (including Mexico with cartel involvement) or U.S. ports, and distributed via in-

formal networks, middlemen, and major logistics corridors. Devices targeting youth and non-compliant designs were widely documented. Some shipments were destined for re-export into Canada.

- **Enforcement:** Federal agencies including the FDA, CBP, and HHS coordinated joint operations seizing more than 4–7 million e-cigarettes in single raids, with dollars involved totaling \$34 million, \$76 million, \$86.5 million, and even \$865 million in some cases. State and local law enforcement participated in multi-location raids, resulting in arrests, business closures, and criminal charges. Seizures extended to retail chains and distribution warehouses, illustrating broad market penetration and the resilience of illicit supply channels.



## UNITED STATES ILLCIT TRADE OVERVIEW

U.S. authorities have carried out sweeping enforcement actions against illicit e-cigarettes, with millions of products seized at ports, airports, and warehouses in cities like Los Angeles, Chicago, and Miami. Many shipments originate from China and are disguised as toys, shoes, or household items to evade detection. Raids have targeted logistics sites, retail shops, and border crossings, with federal agencies intercepting large-scale imports and uncovering new designs aimed at youth.

### Legend



Seizure



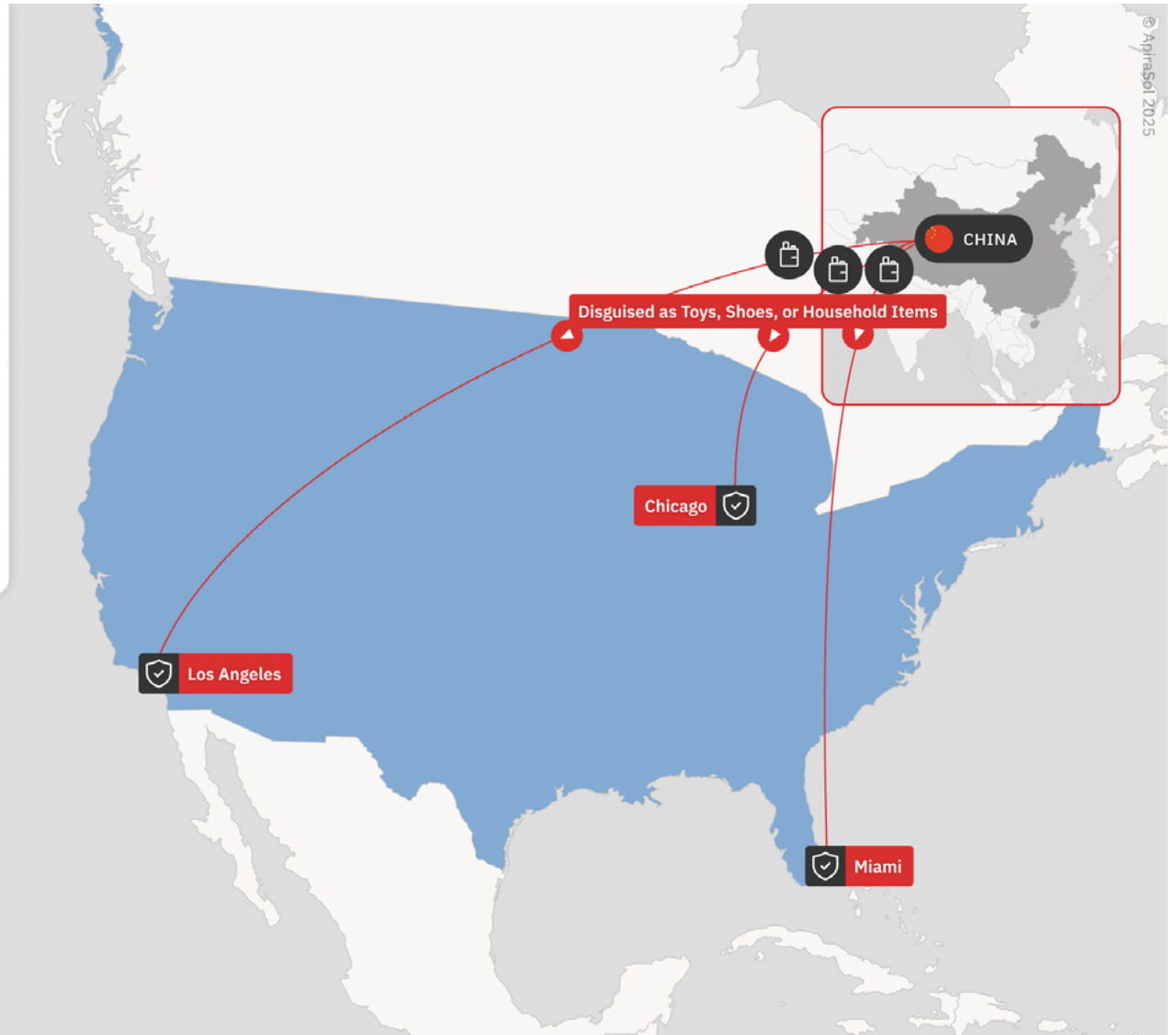
Illicit Shipment



China-Made Illicit E-Cigarettes



ENDS are regulated



U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the FDA seized over 4 million illegal e-cigarettes, worth \$86.5 million, during a weeklong operation in Chicago—the largest such seizure ever in the U.S. Almost all products originated from China and were intended for various destinations across the country. Over 6 million illegal e-cigarettes have been stopped from entering the U.S. so far in 2025.

### CBP, HHS Seize \$86.5 Million Worth of Illegal E-Cigarettes in Largest-Ever Operation

**Release Date:** Wed, 09/10/2025

**CHICAGO** — During a weeklong operation, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, in collaboration with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, seized over four million units of unauthorized e-cigarette products with an estimated retail value over \$86 million – the largest-ever seizure of this kind. The seizures were part of a joint federal operation in Chicago to examine incoming shipments and prevent illegal e-cigarettes from entering the country.

This operation was a result of months of

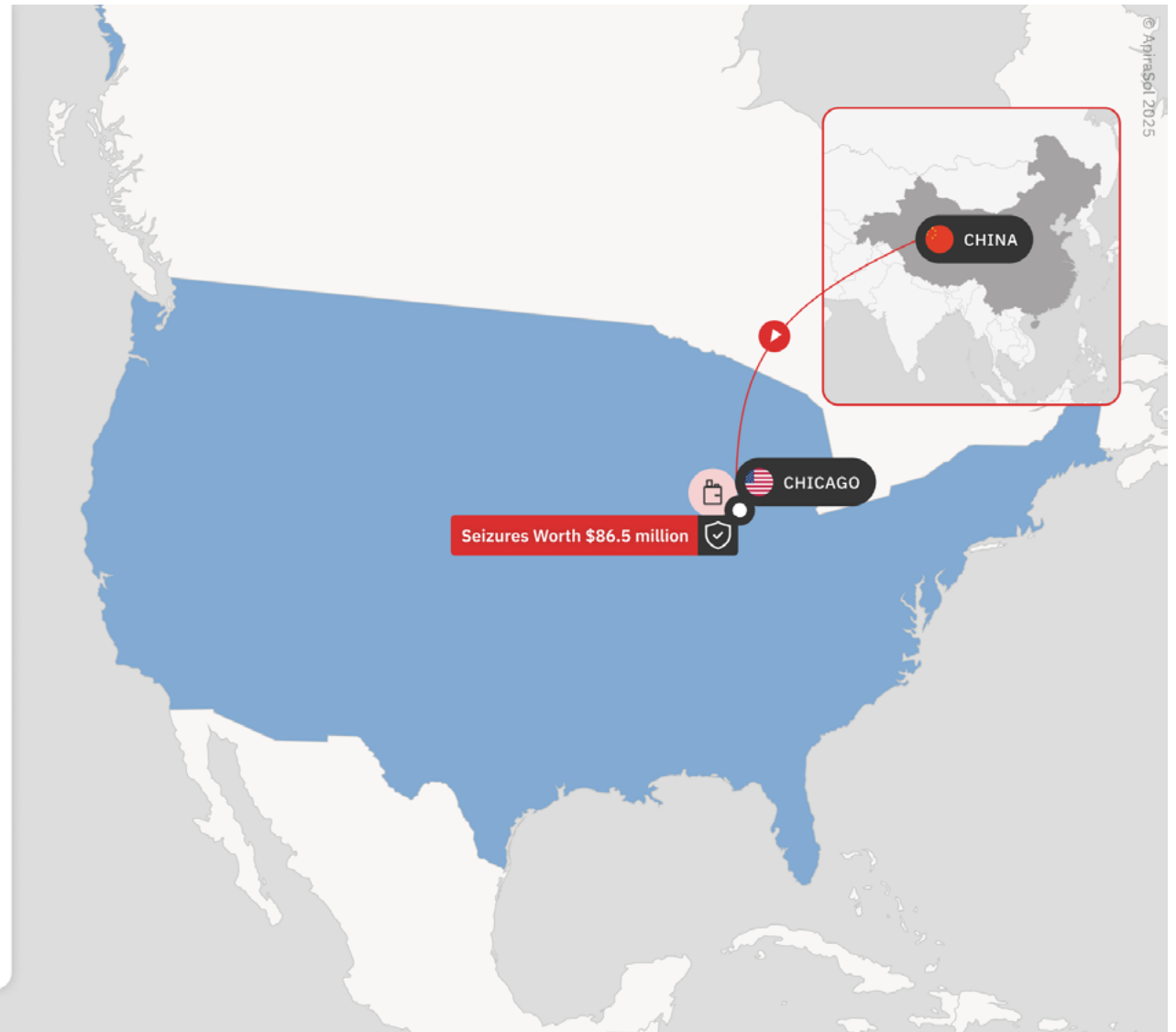


#### Legend

-  Seizure
-  Illicit Shipment
-  Illegal E-Cigarettes
-  ENDS are regulated

#### Source

<https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/local-media-release/cbp-hhs-seize-865-million-worth-illegal-e-cigarettes-largest-ever>



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