Dirty money is piling up in Los Angeles. In the last three weeks, federal agents made three seizures that each netted more than $1 million in suspected drug proceeds.

The reason, according to the city's top drug enforcement official: The coronavirus pandemic has slowed trade-based money laundering systems that drug trafficking groups use to repatriate profits and move Chinese capital into Southern California.

With store fronts closed, supply chains in disarray and the global economy in peril, these complex schemes are hobbled and cash is backing up in Los Angeles, Bill Bodner, special agent in charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration's Los Angeles field division, said in an interview.

The recent million-dollar interceptions were reminiscent of seizures the DEA made before drug traffickers embraced trade-based money laundering, said Bodner, a 28-year agent.

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