
What War on Drugs?—Part I

Washington targets nations, not mafias

by D.E. Pettingell

Washington is suffering from xenophobia and is trying to spread the disease to the American people. The U.S. government has found it easier to declare war on sovereign nations where drugs are produced, than confront the Eastern Establishment international banks that make drugs the most profitable business in the world. In trying to justify their failure, the U.S. government and media have blamed Panama, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia, for the drug-related deaths of thousands of Americans.

The American public is being told that those nations are to blame for production and trafficking getting out of control, beyond the ability of any single government to suppress. It is being told that Colombia's Medellín Cartel, responsible for 80% of the cocaine that enters the United States, is corrupting every government and is capable of taking over the entire Western Hemisphere. It is being told that drug-related corruption has already taken over Panama and Mexico and is moving fast to control Colombia, the Bahamas and Honduras. This propaganda willfully confuses the drug mafia that has murdered Ibero-America's police, military, and cabinet ministers, with the governments themselves. The reprisal proposed is to take away the already paltry aid for fighting drugs, and to apply economic sanctions that force impoverished nations to fight, unarmed, the strongest international enemy that any nation has ever confronted.

So great is the hysteria being whipped up against producing countries that if Washington were to decide on a military action against any of those countries in the name of "fighting drugs," the American people would put up little or no resistance. "Do you think that we would actually wage real war, declare war on any country that does this, and send our troops in and make it a military national-security issue of that high a proportion?" Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) was asked during a television interview Feb. 28. "Yes, we have to be prepared to move in that direction and make it clear this isn't just rhetoric," he responded.

Kerry's call has found adherents within Reagan's cabi-

net. Speaking before a White House conference for a Drug Free America March 2, Secretary of Education William Bennett urged the full and forceful use of the U.S. Armed Forces to eradicate drug production in developing nations and block shipments to the United States. "It is to be hoped we can do this in collaboration with foreign governments," Bennett said, "but if need be, we must consider doing this by ourselves."

Adding a particular flavor to the "debate," New York Mayor Edward Koch called President Reagan a "wimp" in the drug war, and demanded a total aid cut and trade embargo against producing nations. "The Communists aren't crossing our borders. The drugs are," Koch stated, demanding a massive military interdiction effort. In a full-page ad paid for by Koch in the *New York Times* Feb. 29, Koch blamed Mexico and Panama for the recent "cold-blooded" murder of a young New York City police officer shot by the mafia in Queens, New York while on duty. Koch has been trying to direct the outrage of the citizens of New York, a city that has become a drug haven during Mayor Koch's tenure, against those two countries. He has called on New Yorkers to boycott Mexican goods.

Six years after Reagan declared the "war on drugs," production, supply, and consumption are higher than ever, and predictions are that more drugs are to come into the United States in 1988 as supply and demand increase. Reagan's failure consists of the fact that he has never had a strategy against drugs. The administration's "war on drugs" boils down to the First Lady's "Just Say No" campaign among schoolchildren.

There is no question that the only way a war on the drug empire can be fought is through military means. In March of 1985, Lyndon H. LaRouche issued a 15-point war-plan to stop drugs where he proposed that the U.S. and Ibero-American governments sign a "treaty of alliance" to join political and military forces against the common enemy. This, LaRouche insisted, must be done within a framework of mutual respect among sovereign nations. What Kerry and company are proposing has nothing to do with this type of approach.

Weakening the military

The Reagan policy toward Ibero-America is to weaken and eventually dismantle the armed forces of the region—a green light for narco-terrorism. In January, the U.S. government announced that as part of the budget cuts in the Pentagon, Ibero-America and the Caribbean will no longer get any military aid.

Only three countries were exempted from the cuts because of "Communist threats" against them: Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Military assistance to the Andean countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia, where the mafia is fully collaborating with terrorists, was entirely cut off. The last year Colombia received \$3.5 million in military aid and Bolivia \$1 million, was 1987. Peru has not received a cent in several years.

All this is thanks to Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams. In testimony before a Senate Committee, retired Gen. Paul Gorman, former commander of the Panama-based U.S. Southern Command, denounced the State Department for having ordered U.S. ambassadors in Colombia and other nations to discourage those countries' militaries from engaging in the fight against drugs. The State Department's argument is that an active military "threatens" democracy. Drugs don't, evidently.

Not only is Ibero-America's military capability being slashed. Coast Guard Adm. Paul Yost recently stated that half of the Coast Guard drug fleet is currently sitting idle. The reason, he said, is the equivalent of the missing horseshoe nail that caused the loss of the war in the old English maxim. "I need a horseshoe nail," he said, "and the horseshoe nail is \$60 million" to send out drug patrols. That money is tied up in the budget fight between Congress and the administration. Major cuts in the Coast Guard's budget have already taken place.

Blacklist

The drug "debate" heated up March 1 when the administration released the 1988 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report. Under a 1986 law, the President is to report to Congress which countries are "fully cooperating" and which are not in the U.S. anti-drug efforts. In turn, Congress has 45 days to revoke the "certification" if it wishes to do so.

This year's certification list is being used to fuel the campaign against producing countries. There were no complaints about the "decertification" of Panama, where the administration has been trying to depose Gen. Manuel A. Noriega in an all-out war. Since the U.S. has already cut all aid to Panama, the "decertification" will not have any concrete effect. It is meant to make it clear that Panama is regarded by the U.S. as a top enemy. Panama shares the "blacklist" of "decertified" countries with enemies such as Iran, Afghanistan, and Syria, none of which receives official U.S. aid.

Reagan's decision to certify Mexico, Bolivia, Peru, Paraguay, and Bahamas, is being challenged by Congress. Rep. Larry Smith (D-Fla.) introduced legislation March 10 to "revoke" Reagan's decision. If Smith's motion is passed by both houses, the administration will be mandated to cut off anti-drug aid to the five nations. This on top of the fact that this year's budget for foreign anti-drug programs dropped to \$98.750 billion from \$118.439 billion in 1987.

Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics Affairs Ann Wroblewski, the official personally responsible for drafting the strategy report, admitted that, in a way, the "certification" is political. It is a way for the United States to tell the world which countries are "drug-producers" and which are not. And, as she put it, "who would like to be regarded by the United States as a drug producer nation?"

In trying to counter the criticism, Wroblewski explained

that Mexico and Colombia were "certified" but with a "justification" attached to the report. According to Wroblewski, the "justification for the certification" amounts to "an asterisk" meant to send Mexico and Colombia a "signal," that if they do not "improve" their performance in 1988, they might not be "certified" again.

The certification of Mexico, in particular, was preceded by an internal fight within the agencies involved in the process. According to some media reports, the Drug Enforcement Administration and Elliott Abrams were opposed to a "full certification" of Mexico.

Other sources believe that the "certification" of Mexico was intended to stir up the anti-Mexican campaign in Congress without the administration's having to get into a "diplomatic confrontation." In fact, this is what has happened.

Reviving Mexico-bashing

In hearings at the House and Senate to discuss the report, both Mexico and Panama became the target. "FDR's Good Neighbor policy has now stepped in the way of our war on drugs," U.S. Customs Commissioner William Von Raab told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee March 14. He told the committee that, "out of frustration" with what he described as "pervasive high levels of corruption" in Mexico's law enforcement and military agencies, U.S. Customs has "ceased" all contact and cooperation with Mexico. He said that in a letter to the State Department, he opposed the certification of Mexico and called on the U.S. government to "take strong actions" against Mexican corruption.

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), who in 1986 chaired Mexico-bashing hearings, echoed Von Raab. Helms demanded to know from Von Raab the "names" of Mexican officials alleged to be involved in drugs. Von Raab agreed to give them but only in private session. The Customs Commissioner insinuated that there was "enough evidence" for indictment against Mexicans if the green light from the federal government were given, as happened with General Noriega.

The alleged lack of collaboration in the war on drugs has little to do with why Mexico and Panama are being targeted. As a matter of fact, both countries are among the most combative anti-drug fighters in the hemisphere. Drugs are the new tool for intervention. They want Noriega out, so he gets indicted. They want Mexico to stop interfering into the U.S. war games in Central America and guarantee that the next President of Mexico will continue to be a Wall Street asset, so Mexico gets attacked for not collaborating because of "endemic" drug-related corruption.

Mexico, as even the State Department points out, is waging a real war on drugs. Sixty percent of the Attorney General's office budget is allocated for the anti-drug campaign, 25,000 Mexican troops are involved in fighting drugs, the Mexican government has recently bought 15 helicopters for the war, and a legal assistance treaty between the U.S. and Mexico has been signed.