

# Bennett plan: still no war on drugs

by Jeffrey Steinberg

It was with considerably less fanfare that White House Director of National Drug Control Policy William Bennett issued the second edition of the Bush administration's National Drug Control Strategy on Jan. 25. Compared to last September when President George Bush personally took to the airwaves with multi-media fanfare to deliver his first presidential address proclaiming the war on drugs as his administration's number-one priority, the release of the second volume, minus the media hype, said a great deal about what the Bush administration's anti-drug strategy is—and isn't.

Above all else, it isn't a war on drugs. And it is clear that Bush doesn't ever intend to wage one.

Drug czar Bennett himself admitted this in the introduction to the January report: "A strategy devoted to reducing drug use by careful and deliberate measures, rather than in one fell swoop, will take its victories as they come, neither minimizing nor glamorizing them but building from them steadily toward the larger goal of reducing drug use."

Translated into specifics, the Fiscal Year 1991 National Drug Control Strategy sets out as its optimum objectives nothing more than a 15% decrease in drug use and drug availability over the next two years, and a 55% decrease over the next decade.

For FY1991, Bennett is seeking \$10.6 billion, an increase of over \$1.1 billion from the previous year's drug control budget. But this represents little more than an up-tick in a too-little-too-late effort at catching up with a national disaster that has already struck.

## A hidden agenda?

If last December's illegal invasion of Panama, and the U.S. imposition of a government dominated by drug-linked henchmen, is a measure of how the Bush administration intends to carry out its so-called drug control strategy in the rest of the Western Hemisphere, then the FY1991 Bennett plan contains a not-so-veiled threat that the next target for gunboat drug diplomacy is Mexico.

Under the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, Bennett is required to designate High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas. These areas are to receive both increased federal anti-drug funds and other support. In this latest drug control strategy, the U.S.-Mexican border is singled out. Three of the five

designated High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas, are listed as Los Angeles, Houston, and the U.S. southwest border. The only other areas designated are New York City and Miami.

While paying lip service to recent cooperation with the Salinas government of Mexico, the Bennett report contained singularly harsh words for America's southern neighbor: "Mexico is a principal source for drugs entering the United States, both as a producer of marijuana and opium, and as a major transit country for cocaine. Mexico cultivates sufficient cannabis to satisfy an estimated 25% of the U.S. marijuana demand, accounts for a significant amount of the heroin supplied to the U.S. market, and is a transshipment area for at least half of the cocaine that enters the United States."

Likewise, the continued focus on the Andean nations of Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia contains a disturbing not-so-veiled threat of financial warfare. Speaking about the three principal coca producing countries, the Bennett document states, "The strategy also incorporates expanded economic assistance, beginning in Fiscal Year 1991 and conditioned on the drug control performance and the existence of sound economic policies of the host countries, to offset some of the economic dislocations associated with successful drug suppression efforts."

The Andean strategy places first priority on government restructuring and only third priority on inflicting "significant damage to the trafficking organizations which operate within the three countries."

The Bennett report also laments the lack of support among the nations of the Western Hemisphere for the Bush administration proposal for the creation of a Multinational Counternarcotics Force, as a flagrant attempt to denigrate of national sovereignty.

## Thornburgh muscles in

Among the new initiatives cited by Bennett is the establishment of a National Drug Intelligence Center to centralize all law enforcement data relating to drug trafficking and drug-related violent crimes. The intelligence center is under the control of Attorney General Richard Thornburgh. As *EIR* recently reported, Thornburgh had run a brutal behind-the-scenes bureaucratic guerrilla war against Bennett during the first year of the Bush administration, vowing, according to several drug enforcement sources, to sabotage the Bennett effort to protect his position as the nation's "top cop."

Also buried by the latest National Drug Control Strategy is any serious focus on drug money laundering. This may be yet another indication of Thornburgh's increased clout. Just days after the Bennett report was issued, Justice Department attorneys concluded a sweetheart plea-bargain deal with senior officials of the Bank of Commerce and Credit International (BCCI), a major international private bank that grabbed big headlines last year when it was busted for laundering billions of dope dollars. The bankers walked.