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## Interview: Dr. Pedro Rosello González

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# The war on drugs can be won in the Americas, says Puerto Rico governor

*Dr. Rosello is the governor of Puerto Rico. Iván Gutiérrez del Arroyo interviewed him on Dec. 6, 1995 at La Fortaleza, the official residence of the head of government of the island. The interview has been translated from Spanish*

**EIR:** Within the strategy for a war on drugs which President Clinton has initiated, what is the strategic value of the anti-drug radar which is planned to be installed in Puerto Rico?

**Dr. Rosello:** The strategic value is that if we look at Puerto Rico: Puerto Rico, on account of the same characteristics which make it a natural bridge for trade and economic development in the Americas, for this same reason, becomes a bridge for the transshipment of drugs which get into Puerto Rico, but which also, once they get into Puerto Rico, go directly to the United States. Puerto Rico lies inside the [U.S.] customs barriers, and therefore, if the drugs are already in Puerto Rico, it is as if they were in any state [of the United States.] Ninety percent of the drugs which come into Puerto Rico end up in one of the states of the American Union. Therefore, we understand that the port of entry for many of these drugs is via Puerto Rico.

The radar will add to an armamentarium against this illegal transshipment, because it complements the systems that are in Virginia and Texas to look at that area, where the trafficking starts, an area which at present is hidden, which cannot be spotted by traditional methods and which also at the moment allows [the traffickers] to go by different routes than those covered by the two radars. Thus, from the perspective of the nation, it is important to shut the door on the entry of illegal drugs, not just into Puerto Rico, where about 10% remain, but the whole rest of the nation.

And for me, the efforts we have made in Puerto Rico are very important, because we have tried to utilize all the help we can get to control illegal drugs in Puerto Rico. This starts from the local initiatives: increasing the security forces in Puerto Rico, professionalizing the security forces, carrying out some initiatives at the points where drugs are trafficked locally in Puerto Rico. And nationally, we have requested and have been granted the designation of Puerto

Rico as a HIDTA [High-Intensity Drug-Trafficking Area], which allows for the integration of the federal and state forces for the control of the drug traffic. This is for me a very effective instrument—not a “magic bullet,” but one which adds significantly to the effort to control the transshipment of drugs through Puerto Rico and into the United States.

**EIR:** Many people have referred to the radar technology as obsolete, saying that a more modern technology is needed. What is your view of this criticism?

**Dr. Rosello:** From all that I know, this is a modern technology, which will allow the radius of coverage what can be seen by radar to be widened, and I understand that, unless someone brings us an alternative that would not only be more advanced, but more cost-efficient, this is one of the new generations of technology.

**EIR:** President Clinton recently stressed in his speech at the United Nations, that one of the principal points in his campaign against drugs is to get rid of the companies and financial centers that act as drug-money laundries. You mentioned, in a column that appeared in the [U.S.-based Spanish daily] *Diario de las Américas*, the possibility of holding a continental anti-drug summit in Puerto Rico early next year, in which joint strategies could be discussed by all the countries of the hemisphere against the financial centers that launder drug money. What importance do you ascribe to the battle against the financial centers that launder dirty money?

**Dr. Rosello:** I think that the drug issue has to be seen from a very broad perspective. It is a very complex problem, a problem where the drug traffickers have been able to establish very powerful operations with a great deal of financial backing. We have to see this not from the perspective of countries that produce drugs, nor the countries which are transshipment points for drugs, nor the countries which are consumers of drugs. The drug problem is affecting us all, and it does not matter what may be the principal role of each of these societies.

Therefore, what we are trying to do is, that, here in



*Governor of Puerto Rico Dr. Pedro Rosello González (left) is interviewed by EIR correspondent Iván Gutiérrez, in San Juan.*

Puerto Rico, we might bring together countries, leaders, and experts who are in each of these phases, and that we might join our efforts; not saying that my problem is to see how we can stop producing drugs, or my problem is to see how we can stop consuming drugs, or my problem is to see how we can stop drugs from being transshipped. But that we might all see, that if money-laundering is allowed, it is going to affect me, no matter where it occurs. And our intention is that this conference take place here in Puerto Rico.

We are planning it for February of next year, and more than a conference, it is a meeting to search for solutions, where we would set aside our traditional roles and set aside the attitude that the problem of drugs is in who produces them, or who consumes them, or who allows them to pass through. That's not the issue, the issue is that the problem affects all of us.

**EIR:** I read a series of articles published by the daily *San Juan Star*, where it is said that the war on drugs has been a failure, and that we need to study the possibility of legalizing drugs. David Noriega, the candidate for governor for the Puerto Rican Independence Party, who is close to the pro-legalization Inter-American Dialogue, and other persons in Puerto Rico, are promoting this possibility. What do you think about legalization of drugs?

**Dr. Rosello:** I am adamantly opposed to it. First, the premise

that the war on drugs is being lost, is a farce. Here in Puerto Rico, the statistics are overwhelming, in confirming that the initiatives that we have begun here are giving results. I can give you the latest figures, which in fact we discussed today in the meeting of my administration's Security Council. Statistics are published today in one of the newspapers of the capital, which clearly indicate that after a decade of increasing drug trafficking and its result, which is violent crime, these figures have started to go down during the last three years.

Therefore, the premise is incorrect. We *can* effectively combat the illegal use of drugs here. It seems to me that this attitude is throwing in the towel. It seems to me that it is like saying that it is such a hard problem, that we are going to ignore it. And I, as a health care professional, as a medical doctor, don't believe that any of us can accept legalization, something which we know eventually ends up with sickness and death. So I find it totally illogical that a society would assume the position of saying that it can accept for a certain number of its citizens, voluntarily and without the State doing anything to prevent it, to take on lifestyles which are totally destructive.

For me, I say this emphatically, it is a mistake. I could never support drug legalization, because I think that it means giving up in the face of what I know, which is that right now in Puerto Rico, we are obtaining obvious positive results.