

## RESEARCH PAPER

General Topic: America's War On Drugs

Research Paper Question: How is the elimination of Drug supplies going to affect the economies and social concerns involved in the trade?

Research Thesis Statement: The total elimination of illegal drugs in circulation will decrease employment in the US and increase unemployment in Afghanistan and Colombia.

### **ABSTRACT:**

The "War on Drugs" is a campaign undertaken by the Federal government of the US with the assistance of participating countries such as Colombia and Afghanistan, intended to reduce illegal drug trade to curb supply and diminish demand for certain psychoactive substances deemed harmful by the government. This initiative includes a set of laws and policies that are intended to discourage the production, distribution, and consumption of targeted substances.

### **COST:**

The U.S. government estimates the cost of the War on Drugs by calculating the funds used in attempting to control the supply of illegal drugs, in paying government employees involved in waging the war on crack, and to satisfy rehabilitation costs. This total was estimated by the U.S. government's cost report on drug control to be roughly \$12 billion in 2005. Additionally, in a separate report, the U.S. government reports that the cost of

incarcerating drug law offenders was \$30.1 billion — \$9.1 billion for police protection, \$4.5 billion for legal adjudication, and \$11.0 billion for state and federal corrections. In total, roughly \$45.5 billion was spent in 2005 for these factors. The socioeconomic costs, as well as the individual costs (i.e., the personal disadvantages in income and career), caused by the incarceration of millions of people are not included in this number. Nor are the many real wars fought in the name of the "War on Drugs" included. In 1998 the total cost of drug abuse in America was estimated at \$143.4 billion. This number, however, includes indirect costs and includes some costs of drug policy enforcement, and so is not directly comparable.

#### **EFFECTS:**

Drug use has increased in all categories since prohibition. Since 1937, the use of marijuana, once an activity seemingly limited to Mexican immigrants and jazz musicians, has become one undertaken by up to 50% of the youth of the United States. Between 1972 and 1988 the use of cocaine increased more than fivefold. The usage patterns of the current two most prevalent drugs, methamphetamine and ecstasy, have shown similar gains. It was, however, successful in reducing the amount of marijuana being illegally imported into the country. As an unintended consequence of the War, drug smugglers turned to cocaine, which was easier to move and gave a much higher profit margin for the weight and volume of their product. It also gave incentive to U.S. marijuana growers who moved to meet the demand by increasing domestic marijuana production and improving its quality.

A number of economically-depressed Colombian farmers in several remote areas of their country began to turn to what became a new, illicit cash crop for its high resale value and cheap manufacturing process. Local coca cultivation, however, remained comparatively rare in Colombia until the mid-1990s. Drug traffickers originally imported most coca base from traditional producers in Peru and Bolivia for processing in Colombia, continuing to do so until eradication efforts in those countries resulted in a "balloon effect". Despite the Reagan administration's high-profile public pronouncements, secretly, many senior officials of the Reagan administration illegally trained and armed the Nicaraguan Contras, which they funded by the shipment of large quantities of cocaine into the United States using U.S. government aircraft and U.S. military facilities. Funding for the Contras was also obtained through the illegal sale of weaponry to Iran. When this practice was discovered and condemned in the media, it was referred to as the Iran-Contra affair, but the large cocaine shipments into the US to fund the Administration's illegal foreign policy agenda were much less known. Another milestone occurred in 1996, when 56% of California voters voted for Proposition 215, legalizing the growing and use of marijuana for medical purposes. This created significant legal and policy tensions between the federal and state governments. Courts have since decided that neither this nor any similar acts will protect users from federal prosecution. Regardless of public opinion, marijuana could be the single most targeted drug in the drug war. It constitutes almost half of all drug arrests, and between 1990-2002, out of the overall drug arrests, 82% of the increase was for marijuana. In this same time period, New York experienced an increase of 2.640% for marijuana possession arrests. As of 2006, marijuana has become the United States of America's biggest cash crop.

**United States domestic policy:**

For U.S. public policy purposes, drug abuse is any personal use of a drug contrary to law. The definition includes otherwise-legal pharmaceuticals if they are obtained by illegal means or used for non-medicinal purposes. This differs from what mental health professionals classify as drug abuse per the DSM-IV, which is defined as more problematic drug misuse, both of which are different from drug use. In 1994, it was reported that the War on Drugs results in the incarceration of one million Americans each year. Of the related drug arrests, about 225,000 are for simple possession of marijuana, the fourth most common cause of arrest in the United States. In the 1980s, while the number of arrests for all crimes was rising 28%, the number of arrests for drug offenses rose 126%. The United States has a higher proportion of its population incarcerated than any other country in the world for which reliable statistics are available, reaching a total of 2.2 million inmates in the U.S. in 2005. The U.S. Dept. of Justice, reporting on the effects of state initiatives, has stated that, from 1990 through 2000, "the increasing number of drug offenses accounted for 27% of the total growth among black inmates, 7% of the total growth among Hispanic inmates, and 15% of the growth among white inmates."

**United States foreign policy:**

The United States has also initiated a number of military actions as part of its War on Drugs, such as the 1989 invasion of Panama codenamed Operation Just Cause involving 25,000 American troops. The U.S. alleged that Gen. Manuel Noriega, head of government of Panama, was involved in drug trafficking in Panama. As part of Plan

Colombia, the U.S. has funded coca eradication through private contractors such as DynCorp and helped train the Colombian armed forces to eradicate coca and fight left-wing guerrillas such as the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and right-wing paramilitaries such as the AUC (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia), both of which have been accused of participating in the illegal drug trade in their areas of influence. In 2000, the Clinton administration initially waived all but one of the human rights conditions attached to Plan Colombia, considering such aid as crucial to national security at the time. Subsequently, the U.S. government certified that the Colombian government had taken steps to improve respect for human rights and to prosecute abusers among its security forces. The U.S. has later denied aid to individual Colombian military units accused of such abuses, such as the Palanquero Air Force base and the Army's XVII Brigade. Opponents of aid given to the Colombian military as part of the War on Drugs argue that the U.S. and Colombian governments primarily focus on fighting the guerrillas, devoting less attention to the paramilitaries although these have a greater degree of participation in the illicit drug industry. Critics argue that Human Rights Watch, congressional committees and other entities have documented the existence of connections between members of the Colombian military and the AUC, and that Colombian military personnel have committed human rights abuses which would make them ineligible for U.S. aid under current laws. In January 2007, U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales met in Mexico with his counterpart Eduardo Medina-Mora Icaza to discuss ways to stem growing drug-related violence in Mexican border towns associated with the illegal drug trade to America. More than 2,000 Mexicans died in gangland-style killings in 2006, prompting a petition by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration to

open new offices in Nuevo Laredo, Matamoros, and Nogales. The requested expansion would bring the total number of Mexican offices to 11 and increase the number of DEA agents from 81 to nearly 100.

**U.S. government alleged involvement in cocaine trafficking:**

A lawsuit filed in 1986 by two journalists represented by the Christic Institute, alleged that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and other parties were engaged in criminal acts, including financing the purchase of arms with the proceeds of cocaine sales.

Senator John Kerry's 1988 U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations report on Contra drug links, which was released on April 20, 1989, concluded that members of the U.S. State Department "who provided support for the Contras were involved in drug trafficking...and elements of the Contras themselves knowingly received financial and material assistance from drug traffickers."The report went on to say that "the Contra drug links included...payments to drug traffickers by the U.S. State Department of funds authorized by the Congress for humanitarian assistance to the Contras, in some cases after the traffickers had been indicted by federal law enforcement agencies on drug charges, in others while traffickers were under active investigation by these same agencies." In 1996, journalist Gary Webb published reports in the San Jose Mercury News, and later in his book *Dark Alliance*, detailing how Contras had distributed crack cocaine into Los Angeles to fund weapons purchases. These reports were initially attacked by various other newspapers, which attempted to debunk the link, citing official reports that apparently cleared the CIA. The Wall Street Journal reported on January 29, 1997 on activities at the Mena, Arkansas airport allegedly involved then-governor Bill

Clinton in a coverup of illegal drug-trading activity. The Wall Street Journal article goes on to state:

One of the most successful drug informants in U.S. history, smuggler Barry Seal, based his air operation at Mena. At the height of his career he was importing as much as 1,000 pounds of cocaine per month, and had a personal fortune estimated at more than \$50 million. After becoming an informant for the Drug Enforcement Administration, he worked at least once with the CIA, in a Sandinista drug sting. One of his planes--with an Arkansas pilot at the wheel and Eugene Hasenfus in the cargo bay--was shot down over Nicaragua with a load of Contra supplies. In 1998, CIA Inspector General Frederick Hitz published a two-volume report that substantiated many of Webb's claims, and described how 50 contras and contra-related entities involved in the drug trade had been protected from law enforcement activity by the Reagan-Bush administration, and documented a cover-up of evidence relating to these activities. The report also showed that the National Security Council was aware of these activities. A report later that same year by the Justice Department Inspector General also came to similar conclusions.

### **Impact on growers**

The US's coca eradication policy has been criticised for its negative impact on the livelihood of coca growers in South America. In many areas of South America the coca leaf has traditionally been chewed and used in tea and for religious and medicinal purposes by locals. For this reason many insist that the illegality of traditional coca cultivation is unjust. In many areas the US government and military has forced the eradication of coca without providing for any meaningful alternate crop for farmers. The

status of coca and coca growers has become an intense political issue in several countries, particularly in Bolivia, where the president, Evo Morales, a former coca growers' union leader, has promised to legalise the traditional cultivation and use of coca. In Afghanistan, the implementation of costly poppy eradication policies by the international community, and in particular the United States since their military intervention in 2001, have led to poverty and discontent on the part of the rural community, especially in the south of the country where alternative development policies have not been put in place to replace livelihoods lost through eradication. Furthermore, poppy cultivation has dramatically increased since 2003 as has support for anti-government elements. Although alternative policies such as controlled opium licensing have been suggested and are supported by many in Afghanistan and abroad, government leaders have still to move away from harmful eradication schemes.