

United States. In many remote areas of Mexico, marijuana and poppies are the sole cash crops for the population, and the spraying program endangers the social and economic existence of these populations.

Many Mexicans whose sole source of income has been destroyed by the spraying program leave their rural homes for the larger cities of Mexico or become illegal aliens in the United States.

"The spraying program has also reduced the supply of heroin entering the United States from Mexico. This has caused the price of heroin sold in the United States to increase, and the purity of heroin sold 'on the street' to decrease from about 6.5 percent in 1976 to below 5.0 percent in 1978, Environmental Impact Statement (April 1979) ... The increased price and decreased purity of heroin sold in the United States has resulted in increased robberies and other criminal acts committed by heroin addicts to support their habits.

"The addition of paraquat to marijuana con-

sumed in the United States constitutes Cruel and Unusual Punishment, in violation of the Eight Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The severity of the health risk for paraquat bears no relationship to the seriousness of the offense of smoking marijuana, the program violates 'evolving standards of decency,' and it punishes the 'status' of being a marijuana user."

As NORML makes all too clear, there is little if any interest in the mental or physical health of the American population. The politics of paraquat hits squarely on the political economy of drugs. Eliminate drugs in Mexico, Colombia and elsewhere and the International Monetary Fund and World Bank are stripped of a source of cash from their Third World debtors. Eliminate drugs, and the \$200 million a year illegal drug business goes into bankruptcy, going a long way toward restoring America to its place as the world's industrial leader.

—Martha Zoller

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## Mexico's war on drugs

In 1972, Mexico superseded Turkey as the main supplier of heroin and marijuana to addicts in the United States, supplying, by 1974, 89 percent of the demand for heroin and 75 percent of the demand for marijuana. Today, as the current deputy director of the Mexico Drug Control program has assessed it, "there is less Mexican heroin in the U.S. and ... its purity is down to about 4 percent from 40-50 percent three years ago." In addition, Mexico is no longer a marijuana exporter.

That startling reversal is the result of a two-phase drug eradication program launched in 1974 by Mexico's President Luis Echeverria, with U.S. assistance.

Mexico's war on drugs, termed Operation Trize, first mapped out the targeted zones. Using ultra-modern detection equipment, perfected during the 1960s, photographic studies of the zones were made, detecting the location and size of the marijuana and poppy fields. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency began to train the Mexican Federal Judicial Police and antinarcotics personnel to be able to continue directing the drug eradication program once U.S. advisory assistance was no longer necessary.

These areas were then put under military control,

road blocks were set up, and the lands of the latifundist drug cultivators were expropriated. The poppy and marijuana fields were sprayed with 2-4D and paraquat, respectively. Paraquat was recommended and chose by the Drug Enforcement Agency as one of the few herbicides proven to have no harmful effects on personnel using it or on the soil.

Phase one lasted four months and netted the destruction of 14,000 acres of poppies.

Phase two began on May 10, 1975 with the launching of a 25-day reconnaissance by mission using U.S. aircraft flown by DEA pilots and crews, accompanied by Mexican Judicial Police spotters. An additional 9,000 square miles were brought under surveillance.

Operation Trize then moved in with herbicides to destroy, in 1976, 14,705 acres of marijuana fields and 32,284 acres of poppy fields; in 1977, 23,449 acres of marijuana and 45,90 acres of poppy; and in 1978, 9,794 acres of marijuana and 20,725 of poppy.

This is the sort of drug eradication program which the Anti-Drug Coalitions in the United States and Colombia have recommended for implementation in Colombia, a major source of drugs to the U.S. today. This is also the program against which NORML and their friends have initiated legal action.